

THE WILD BOAR AND THE PLOUGH
Origin Stories of the Northern Magar

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Foreword

This essay is composed of three parts. Part One presents three origin stories of the Northern Magar in the Rukum district of NW Central Nepal. Part Two compares the three different versions with one another, elaborating their common themes and the divergences therefrom. Part Three explores the ethnographic information contained in the origin stories and confronts it with present day realia.

The three stories are of different origin and are expressed in different media. One is a written document (I), forming part of a book preserved in Hukam that I photographed in April 1978. It is written in Nepali with Devanāgarī letters. The second origin story (II), is oral, but with a seemingly fixed wording. I recorded it twice in Taka on different occasions, discovering later that both recordings were identical, word for word. Some people tell it, some sing it. In either case, the language employed is Kham, the native tongue of the Northern Magar. The third version recounted below (III), was an ad-hoc oral rendering by one Magar of Taka. I did not record it, nor did I write down the original wording, for the improvisation was too spontaneous and too fast for my own documentarist's speed. The presentation of this story lacks, in consequence, a transcript of the original Kham telling.

The common themes of the three versions, differently told and yet basically the same, rotate around the origin of the first ancestors, their first alliances, the primeval migration movements in their homeland and the origins of agriculture and of hunting. Instead of trying to verify the historical kernel of truth or probability of these plots, I juxtapose the information contained in the mythical tales with present day ethnographic data. The myths reflect these realia, or : the facts of the myths are projected into the facts of the facts. This reduplication on the two distinct planes of primordial ideology on the one hand and present ethnographic reality on the other displays an astonishingly coherent feature of tautology.

VARIANT I

The written genealogy (vamsavali) of the Budha from Hukam

Salutations ! Once upon a time in the Golden Age (the Age of Truth) our common ancestry of the Deopahari Budha, or the Old-Ones-From-The-Rock-Of-

God, originated at a cave-rock called Daśvālatimājar¹ Golo, or the Rolling-Stone-Ten-Times-Kicked-And-Fallen-Down. The ancestors came out of that rock-cave (near Pelma) together with a male and a female spotted cow, with a black cow having a white spot on its head and with a brown cow. As a yellow cow was coming out, the door to the cave shut. The Jujāli (another clan-group, also called Jujāli Gharti and said to have been the servants of the Deopahari Buḍha) came out at another place.

All sons of the first father and mother were equal. The oldest son's name was Śāhi, the second son's name was Pāhi, the third's Mici, the fourth's Mirgem, the fifth's Bāmāth, the sixth's Cirkye and the seventh's Dāranti. These seven sons moved from the Rolling-Stone-Ten-Times-Kicked-And-Fallen-Down, known shortly as Timājar to the Place-Of-The-Conifer, called Jampoḷ, (also near Pelma). There they stayed and lived, clearing the ground around them.

Then later, there was a man named Pulevale sitting on a rock. He said: "I am doing a puja on this rock of Pimāchāre." And when the brothers arrived at that rock to make an offering, a mist had risen. So they said to the man: "Who are you?" and he retorted: "Why have you come to my field to kill a sacrificial animal?" But the brothers ordered the killing: "Why have you come to our field and why do you do a puja here?", they said. "I was first here." But the brothers said: "We were first." So they agreed: "Let us make a test and find out whose winter crops will come out first at harvest time." Then they waited and attended the harvest of the winter crops. And the harvest of the seven brothers' winter crops came first, whereas the crops of the puja man did not ripen at all. Thus he said: "You brothers must be the descendants of a god. You stay here on the cultivated land. I am only the descendant of a man. So, stay on your side," he said. And they did. Thus it can be read in the origin story of the Deopahari Buḍha, or the God-Rock-Buḍha, from generation to generation and from age to age.

Then a green dog² smelled out the clay-earth from Kāyam Dāṇḍā³, whilst they tested the water. Thus they came from the Place-Of-The-Conifer to Pelma. There they stayed and lived. They cut new fields out of the jungle and sowed maize crops in them. But the maize crops did not ripen. So they ground crackbeans from the marshes and ate them. From Pelma they moved to Yamakhar. There they stayed and lived. At Yamakhar they fertilized the land and had enough to live on. From

1 also called Pimāchāre

2 i.e. a dog of the gods

3 lit 'dog trail ridge' ; as a matter of fact, the trail on this ridge is very narrow. It runs above the Gustang Khola, between Pelma and Gustang Bridge.

Yamakhar they went to a goat pasture, by using dried bamboo torches at night. From the goat pasture they went on to the walled-in animal sheds of the Buḍha (*budha khor*). There they stayed and lived, clearing the ground around them. At Junā there roamed a bad *bhut* spirit, so they let the green dog return from Pharkambāng (which is above Yamakhar). From the walled-in animal sheds of the Buḍha they went to the Plain-Of-The-Edible-Supa-Root, to Supabāng. And although they killed all kinds of wild boars there that were digging out the roots of the supa, their blind old father, touching the hunted boars and their tusks, said to them: "The boar you have caught is not the right one". Thus he spoke. The sons thought: "Why does our father not rely on us, in whatever boar we shoot?" And they said to him: "What kind of boar should it be?" And when he touched the tusk of a brown boar, the father said: "My children, it is true, in this region you will not find any other kind of boar. No matter which (and how many) you may have caught, these wild boars keep damaging our fields." That is what the father said when they came to him.

Then they tested the water at Hukam and let their dogs smell the soil of clay there, where they stayed. And they did the same in Jangkot, where they stayed later. Comparing the two waters, that of Jangkot was exceedingly better. "But, my sons," the old man said, "the soil at this place (of Jangkot) is only of medium quality. So let us go back now. Besides, a tricky person will come here." So they quit this awful place and went to Pāgol (close to Hukam). There they lay down, rolled over and fell straight asleep. So they called the place, Straight-Away, Batpā. Then they came to a cave named Maser and there they stayed (a while). From Maser they came to a place named Brājās and there they stayed, clearing the ground around them. There they tested the drinking water and the water for the fields and it seemed exceedingly better than the water of Hukam.

At that place, when they tried to shoot a boar, the animal ate the arrows or averted them; so they cooked in the style of their original place at Pimāchāre, keeping curry and lentils on the fire. When a brown boar grunted at the river Gare, they let loose their dogs. But the wild boar killed the leading dog. And then it killed the eldest of the seven brothers, (before it was killed itself). So the brothers returned with three loads to their father, one load of the leading dog, one load of the dead brother and one load of a brown boar over their shoulders. But on the way, a man named Nilecān Buḍha, who was blind during the day and could see at night, said to them: "Hey, brothers, I'm your wifegiver! I have nearly finished my work, put the boar on the roast and include also hair and skin on it" After that episode, they quit that stretch of land, leaving one of their brothers for marriage behind them. From there they came back to Hukam.

When they reached Khorātibāng (in the Hukam area), they stayed. Dogs, chickens, cows and man, all stayed, but they found the fields barren. For eighty days they stayed and then moved on, saying: "This is not a place to stay" Then they came to Tamnam and as soon as they had arrived, they could see a snake called Kule, day and night. That snake made the old clan-chief of the Buḍha Brahā think: "Because of that snake," he thought, "there will be thieves here, many merchants and many poor people." But one of the seven brothers stayed. The place was named Jangkot. From Jangkot the rest of them returned to find a place to stay. And they came over to Taka, where they stayed, clearing the ground around them. It happened during a hunt when they were pursuing a deer that they came by chance to a plain named Chebāng. At that time this plain was filled by a lake. And in this lake the *mirga*-deer (that they were hunting) took a dive and vanished. So, coming there the remaining brothers put the newly born puppies of their hunting dogs into hemp-bags and hung them up in a tree. From inside the hemp-bags the puppies saw a *goral* goat up on the high pastures. And the brothers were able to kill it. And in the end, with great difficulty, they also killed the *mirga*-deer. Coming down to the river they put their prey on a roast and ate it. From then on they stayed there, vowing an oath not to leave. And they did stay.

VARIANT II

The oral genealogy (vamsavali) of the Gharti from Taka

From the clan of the gods a god emerged from a rock-cave under a waterfall, called Pimāchāre. There the god and a (human) woman recognized each other, and the woman became pregnant. From that time on, the god was no longer accepted by his father, mother and brothers. Then the new couple, man and wife, went to take their inheritance. The god said to his woman: "Don't be afraid when I go and bring the inheritance." And he left her behind. And indeed, when he came back with the divided inheritance of father, mother and brothers, which consisted of red, white, black and spotted cows, she was not afraid. But when green and tumeric-coloured cows arrived, she was frightened. So those cows returned and that is why nowadays cows of that kind do not exist. The divine parents also gave as dowry a servant to do the bodily work. They called that man Jujāli, or bodyguard⁴.

Taking their inheritance with them, they came to Lutabāng (near Hukam) or Itching-Plain, and lived there. While they lived there, they suffered a lot from

⁴ Julāli from N *jujhnu*=to fight. The first Jujāli is said to have brought an important tool for agriculture, a golden yoke.

the itching of scabies. From there they came to Jhānkribāng (also near Hukam) and lived there. And there, too, they suffered, being always attacked by fevers, so they had to call the jhānkri, (which is why the place was called Plain-Of-The-Shaman). From there they came to Hukam and lived there. To stay there was pleasant for both of them. They had six sons and one daughter. The daughter became pregnant with a son. She got into a very bad condition. "Why did you get into this bad condition?", the others asked her. She replied: "A certain man comes here. And I became pregnant with his son." They suggested: "Tie a cotton thread around the leg of this man, (when he comes again at night.)" And the man came there at night. And when he did not notice, she tied the cotton thread around his leg. This thread extended and extended, (as he walked away) and entered at the bottom of an overhanging rock. There they looked and saw a single bone tied to a string. (This means: the woman had slept with a *raksya* or dead soul, i.e. with a man, who had died before, but could not abandon or forget the life of the living.) The sons of that woman were called Sutpahari Gharti, or Cotton-Rock-Earth (*gharti* > *dharti* = earth). And even nowadays they still call these people Cotton-Cliff-Earth.

The sons of that first Gharti occupied themselves only with the work of hunting. Coming from Hukam on a hunt, they chased a wild boar down here to the lake of Chebāng (the plain of Taka), where the boar went swimming. And that is why it was called Chebāng, i.e. Plain-for-Swimming. That place looked very good to them, so they might return to it. And leaving behind them one of their brothers in Hukam, they came (back to Taka.) While they settled in the Taka area, they let one of their brothers settle down in the Khalibāng plain of Bacchi village. This brother was very clever. Thinking it might be useful later on, he moved to Bacchigaon which is closer to here (to Taka). The others asked him: "Why did you move here?" And he replied: "I shall be at a (short) distance from where I can hear your cocks crow and see the smoke of your fires. That is why I came closer." And they kept him as a keeper of a female calf. From that female calf came the name of Bacchigaon, Village-of-the-Female-Calf. Taka received its name, because from There-to-Here means *taka*. These first people of Taka made their firestands with twelve dharni of iron, (about 30 kg) and with four legs. But nowadays they have only three legs.

The clan of those who settled in Taka became Deopahari Gharti. One of the brothers produced a grinding stone at a place called Kwā, (a place towards the upper end of the plain, where in fact still today some grinding mills can be found). When the others called him: "Hey, Pāhi of Kwā", he did not hear them. Nowadays his descendants are called Kwāli Gharti.

When they used to go on a hunt they always drove the animals to one and the same place, in order to kill them. Therefore they called this place Kaljamui, Arrow-of-Death. They chased also crows from there, killing them always by the same spot. Thus, they called the place Kāpai, Crow's Place.

After that they went and spread out in all directions. Here and there, wherever they settled, they kept that clan name Gharti Magar (in the Taka region). When they spread their clan (in other regions) they became known as Budha in Hukam, as Gharti Magar in Taka and as Pun in Bacchi. One group of them became priests, in charge of worshipping the gods. When the annual time for weeding came, they were the first ones to weed and when the time for breaking the ground came, they also were the first ones to break the ground. This clan did not come from a foreign country, (i.e. from Mongolia).

All these people speak Kham language, whereas those who went away and were dispersed elsewhere do not speak Kham language.

VARIANT III

An ad-hoc origin story of the Gharti, oral, but not standardized

Before there were clans, people used to live around Hukao. There was a god (*deutā*), some say it was a ghost (*pret*), who dwelt at a rockcliff (*paharo*). At night he used to visit a girl of the village for amorous encounters. After some time, the girl became pregnant. She told her parents, who decided to spot her lover's whereabouts. They told their daughter to tie a thread around her lover's thumb the next night he would come. Thus she did and when the god separated from the girl, he left a trace, leading to a water source (*mul*) at the foot of an overhanging rock. When the girl pulled the string of the thread, one could hear the god cry out in pain : *aya, aya*, from inside the rock.

Having found (out) the living place of the supernatural, the father of the girl went there and demanded that he marry his daughter. But being a god, the supernatural could not fulfil this demand. Instead of feeling sorry for the girl, he offered the family a compensation complying with a wish they would have. After consultation, the family desired to be given agricultural tools by the god and to be taught the secrets of sowing, ploughing and harvesting. The god agreed and gave them everything needed for a farmer's life: he gave them a yoke (*gorkum*) and some oxen, as well as utensils of the household, such as big and small vessels (*kopara, khor*), watervessels, big and small (*honda, gāgri*), plates (*tathi*) and cups (*khuri*). And since then the god was not seen again. Meanwhile, the girl had given birth to a boy, who was named by the girl's father after the place of his birth, indicating also that he was fatherless, landless, rightless, i.e. Gharti. His full name was Deopahari

Gharti or the Landless-Of-the-God-Rock. Later, Gharti became a clanname. After the boy had grown up, he married a girl from Hukam. But soon he and his offsprings had to leave the area, for he owned no land there. He emigrated over the hill into the plain of Chebāng, at Taka, which was a lake. Here, he started to use the agricultural tools that had been given to his mother by the god. Soon groups from other clans came swarming into the area of Chebāng, for it seemed a rich soil. But none of them knew how to plough. They all learnt it from the Gharti. And to commemorate the fact that it had been the Gharti who first knew how to till the soil, that they were the rightful inheritants of the craft of agriculture, they were, from that time on, granted the right of the first annual tilling. The Gharti, therefore, open each year the annual cycle in the fields. If people of other clans started the season, the gods would become angry and bring a drought, which will not happen, if the Gharti start, for they are genealogically linked with that god, whose dwelling place was a watersource.

TRANSCRIBED VARIANT I

omnamo. aghi sati jugmā hāmī dev pahari buḍhā haruko sākā bākā utpanna
bhaeko daśavā latimā jara golomā utpanna bhae. jāle māle jālu mālu kāli kuplī
kaili mailī ko gāi saṅga niske pailo gāi niskadāmā ḍhokā thunyo jujālī ek thāu
bāṭa nikale. bābu matāriko naba sidhdī sabai ho. jethā chorāko nāu sāhi māhilā
pāhi sāhilā micī kāhilā mirgem rāilā bāmāth ṭhulo kānchā cirkye kānchā dāranti.
timājar golo bāṭa jampoj golomā āera rasti basti gare erā pherā gare. pachi pule
vāle dhūngāmā basīn. ma dhūngomā yomā pimāchare pujāle vali dhūngāmā dayā
dekhāmā sāt bhāi kole kuiro udāune koho. kina āyo merā jagāmā mār kāṭa bhani
sāt bhāi pathāyo. hāmro jagāmā kina āyo bhandāmā pujāle ma aghi āe bhandā
sāt bhāe le hāmī āeko bhandā ma rabi bālī bāta bicār garau bhani rabi bālī hernu
jāndā. sāt bhāi ko rabi bālī bhaeko pujāko rabi bālī napākeko honāle timī bhāiharu
dev santān sirti basauma maṅṣya santān bhani tira baschau bhani rasti gare. iti
dev pahari buḍhā haruko utpati vamsāvali hernu jug jug pusta pidipati. hariyā
kukar kāyam ḍāḍāmā mātō mātō sungi pāni jikhina jimpojā golo bāṭa pilmā
golomā āera rasti basti gare. khore kāti makai bālī chare. makai bālī pākēna
selāvtom pisi khāe. pilmage golo bāṭa yomākhār golomā āera rasti basti garyo.
tyas thāumā jhi ki khāe. yomākhār golobāṭa bākarā kharka golomā āe. bāng bālī āe.
bākarā kharka golobāṭa buḍhā khor golomā āera rasti basti gare. yerā pherā gare.
junā golomā narāmro bhut rahecha. pharkam bāng golo bāṭa kukur pharkāi deu.
buḍhā khore golo bāṭa supā bāng golomā supakhane kastai bīr māre pani andhā
buḍhāle chāp chām gari birko dārā chāmī timiharu ko jo rākhyo hoina bābu ho
bhane. chorāharule kasto bīr rahecha bābule kina patyāena kasto bīr chorāle bhane.

kaile virko dārā chāmī ho bābu ho yahā dekhi bir chaina yo ho timrā jo rākheko kheti noksān garinau andhā bābule bhane. hukām golo bāṭa pāni jokhi mātho sungī rasti basti jaṅkoṭ golo āe rasti basti gari. pāni jokhadā pāni jyādā bhayo. lau bābu ho yāhiko jagā madim ho āba pharkam paryo goloma candāl mānis hunechan. yas sālī chode bāṭa pāgōlmā āyo. batac loti sute batpā nāu rākhe. maser pup bhanne golomā āe rasti basti gare. maser golobāṭa brājās golomā āe rasti basti gare. erā pherā gare. pāni jokhi āi jagāko pāni bandā hukāmko pāni jyādā bhayo. khāyo bān bhani balle phalekomā pimachāre kāranaimā bhānsā garnu lāge tivan dāl basā leko thiyo. gare golomā kaile bir gar garje kukar chode mulī kukur phāle jeṭhā dāji phāle mulī ek bhāri jeṭhā dāji ek bhāri kaile bir ek bhāri tin bhāri gari jāda satvāko bābu dina andhā rātī ākhā decān bhanne nilecān budhāmā he māiti ho mero kuram purāuno thoro chan. pola bhani chara tāhāko bratalā chālā samet pola bhani āba bhui chode ek bhāile bihe linu bhani liye. tyahābāta hukām golo āe. khorātibāng golomā āera rasti basti gare kukur kukhurā laksmī mānis sabai khoriyā jagā hono bhani astāyā goloma āe rāt assi din assi garyo. golo hoina bhani. tamnam golo āe din dekhi yatā kule sarpa rāt din dekhie. tahā bāta budhā brahā bicar pani hunechan cor pani hunechan ṭhulo sāhu pani hunechan ṭhulo garib pani hunechan. ek bhāi vāhī basyo. goloko nāu jaṅkot bhannu bhani. jaṅkot golo bāta pharkī rasti basti gari āe. ṭaka golomā āe. rasti basti garyo. erā pherā gare. mirga khelāi khelāi marne bakhatmā cewā bhanne jagāmā daha thiyo. dahamā mirga dabiyo taimā āudā bheeko kukurko chāvri jābomā hāli jhuṅṅāeko thiyo. jacobāṭa ek goral buki tharāi rākheko rahecha. sāt bhāile vāhī māre. budhī āpatimā mirga māre poli khānu lāudāmā golomā āera rasti basti gari sēcā bēcā rasti basti gare. baseko thiyo.

TRANSCRIBED VARIANT II

Pimā chāreni deotā kulni pulusta. deotā sono miē memāni nisaressika, no memā zā gurkyo. nakin no khepālāi obābu oāmā odāju bhāirāi māsahikera. hokin jyari batāhā cānā bākinī. no batāhā ngā ngāraika tachenī. haidāde khyānaikyo abābu oāmā odāju bhāi rāsa bandā laida orāraika ghyāmo pālo molo jāle māle hārra yāhuke no memā macheke. pīw halide hārra yāhuke cheke. no hārra olkera. ājegāl nitāw hārra mālera. sono yen dāne mi ṭobo yekera. no milāi jujālī haidozyera no jujālī sunyo gorkum raida huke no batahā raida luṭa bānke hude likeni. naka nilika luṭaiye banai ni dukhaikyo. nakin jhānkri bānke huda likini. naka pālā joro wāze huda jhānkri socaine oṭake. nakin hugāmla huda likini. naka nilika cāo tāke. nizāra khepā cha watā ṭakera memā ṭobo ṭake. no memāe zā gurkyo. no memā banai mēcāo ṭake. kārāo ā: mēcāo natāo. hai yādoka āke ṭobo mi huzye. no miē ozā gurda ngā nai yādokyo. norāi mi lāi ukheṅta suta dhāgāie surdiyo dokera. hokin no mi rila huke. rila no mi omāsaida ukheṅta dhāgāie surdikyo. no dhāgā

obāka obāka ṭobo jhur kheṅla pasike. nala yāciuka ṭobo pāsulāta dhāgā sursiu rākera. noe ozālāi sut pahari gharti dokera. ājegāl no mirālāi pālā sut paharai gharti yārā dozyera. no khepārāi yāyen khālī sikhār wāza raisikera. hugāmkin sikhārdā yāhuke gallāi khepaida yeraike. āo cebāngla cyelke. āo minni cebāng tāke. āo po banai cāo rākera. phari āo pola hune jūni ṭobolāi hugāmla khyānaida hukera. āola yāleka ṭobolāi bācchī nākhārlāo khālī bāngla naikera. no chorya banai bāṭho oleo. chidā kām lāgiya lida āoe najik bācchī nākhārka sarike. kārāo ādā nasariu hai yādoka bhālera yākozyāw sono mē ukuzyaw ngā reṅya leda ngā huw. haiyārā dokyo. nolāi bācchī gāolā yānaiwa. hokin bācchī minni bācchī nākhār tāke. nakin āka line minni taka tāke. āo taka lāorāi yājhunggu bārā dhārni lāo cārtā ukhaṅg leo jaikera. tara ājegāl sōmbhare ukhaṅg leo wāze lizya. āorāi yajāt deopahari gharti tāke. āokin kwāla ṭobo yābhāi rāthai ohāizyake. yakika omāthaika kwāpāi yādoka ājegāl kwāli gharti yārādozyāra. sikhār yādoka ekore ṭobo poka raida yāsaika no polāi kālajā mui dozyāra. nakin kālāi khepaida ṭobo poka yāsaika no polāi kāpai dozyāra. nakin pāidā chuṭida bākera. hongā hongā pālā gharti magar jāt za naikera. āorāi jāt hugāmla buḍhā takala gharti magar bācchila pun. āo jāt rāi deotā pujine yenla pujārī tāra yē chune pālā āorāi chura. yē kine pālā chune āorāi chura. āo jāt muglīn ra māke, āo bhari pāie khām dozyāra ākin chutidā bāo bhari khām mādora. khyemke.

Variant Analysis

A parallel reading of the three stories presented above can leave no doubt as to the fact that they all deal with a single plot. They are variants to one and the same story. A comparison of the variants will confirm this. Moreover, it will sift out the differences in and digressions from the common theme.

All three versions are in agreement about the divine or semi-divine origin of the present day clans or tribal sub-groups of the Northern Magar. All three state that the first common ancestors emerged from a dwelling place of the gods, a cave under an overhanging rock, located roughly to the north of the ridge that divides the Uttar Ganga and the Pelma Khola valleys. This place of origin is called Pimāchāre in two of the versions (I/II) and is identified with a steep rock between the Kāyam Ridge and the Gustang Khola about three hours walk east of Pelma village (see map and photos no. 1 and 2). The divine origin from a rock cave is emphasized in all three cases by the clanname's signifier *deopahari*, i.e. *stone-rock-or cliff-of-the-gods*. As to the question how divine the first ancestors were and how they were transformed into human beings, the three versions tell graded stories.

In the written version from Hukam we are confronted with a sudden metamorphosis: Inside the rock of Pimāchāre live the gods; and those that emerge, become instantaneously humans. The rock is the boundary post between the two realms of the imm-

ortals and the mortal beings, a notion that can be found elsewhere in the Himalaya as well, as for example in the transcendental geography of the Lohrung Rai. In their interpretation or remodelling of the Tibetan concept of the Hidden Valley, Khempalung it is also a rock and a cave at its bottom that mark the boundary line between this world and the beyond, between the every day universe of the Rai and the paradise of the gods. And just like the border to Khempalung, the border at Pimāchāre has a door in the rock, through which the first ancestors stepped out, which very act made them humans. Likewise, this border is a dividing line for celestial and terrestrial animals. Inside, on the side of the gods, live animals of colours not seen outside, on the side of man, such as green dogs, yellow, green and tumeric-coloured cows. The cows in the paradise of Khempalung, for comparison, are golden in colour. As the gods in version I step out of their realm and become ordinary human beings, the animals that pass the transcendental door become ordinary domestic animals, whereas the extraordinary animals remain behind shut doors inside the rock. But, sudden as the transformation may be, the celestial pedigree of the first Magar ancestors is reaffirmed in the latter part of version I: When the ancestors quarrel with a foreigner over the ownership of some strip of land, the dispute is settled by a test: whose crops ripen first shall be the legal owner of the disputed land. And when the Deopahari-ancestors win the contest, the foreigner concedes: You won, because you are of divine extraction, whereas I am only a human.

In the oral versions II and III the anthropomorphosis of the gods requires intermediary steps, the mixing of divine and human blood. In version III it is a deity (*dev*) or a ghost (*pret*) who visits at night a human girl and makes her pregnant. The human relatives of the girl demand the identity of the nocturnal lover to be disclosed, but the girl doesn't know him herself. So they devise a trick. At the pitch of night the girl binds a thread round her lover's thumb and when he leaves before dawn, the thread leads the way to a water source at the bottom of the famous overhanging rock. Thus, the secret lover is made public and the pregnant girl's father demands in consequence that he marry her. But, being a god, he can't. As compensation for his refusal, however, the culprit god/ghost donates to the girl's family the tools of agriculture and of the household. In this way, the girl gives birth to a son, who grows up without a father, and having no father inherits no land. And, for this reason, the first purely human ancestor of the Magar is named by his grandfather—*Gharti*, a term which alludes to this fatherless, rightless and landless position. That *Gharti* marries another human girl from Hukam and emigrating with her over the hill in a search for land, settles for good in Taka.

In version II the breeding down of gods into humans takes even one generation more than in version III. At the beginning it is, again as in version III, a god of

purely divine extraction that mates with a human girl. But unlike the other story, he does not try to conceal his identity. He accepts responsibility for his deed and marries the girl, thereby losing his divine status. The anisogamy brings him down, as in Hindu practice, to the level of the lower girl. He becomes human. But he is not cast off as a son completely by his divine parents. From now on he has to live in the human world that is true, but his relatives grant him a fitting inheritance: in addition to cows of all varieties, as in version I, this first 'ancestor is given a servant to do all manual work for him and a golden yoke to establish the art of agriculture on earth.

This first couple of a male deity and a female human has seven children, as has the first couple in version I. But whereas these children are seven sons in the written version, they are six sons and one daughter in the oral one. Now, this single sister of six brothers has the same adventure as the girl in version III, only one generation later: She receives an unknown nightly lover, who, by the thread trick—this time tied around the leg instead of the thumb—is revealed as a non-human being. But whereas in version III the option is open as to whether the secret lover of the night is a god or a ghost, version II is explicit in its discovery. As the cotton thread leads to the overhanging rock, the girl's detective-relatives do not find a god tied to it, but a single shin-bone, which is an unmistakable indication that she has slept with a *rakshe*-ghost, i.e. with the spirit of a dead man, one who could not accept his role amongst the dead and therefore tried to disguise himself as a living being, forcefully drawn to his former existence amongst them.

Thus, in version II the supranaturals descend into human shape in steps. In the first generation a god sleeps with a girl. She becomes pregnant and he marries her. Their direct offspring, six sons and one daughter, are called Deopahari Gharti, correctly so, because their father was a god from a rock-cave. One of these Deopahari Gharti, the girl, has in her turn an amorous encounter with a supernatural being, an errant soul of a dead man. This lover, a ghost or *rakshe*, is both less supernatural and less real than the girl's own father, who was a god marrying a human female, the girl's mother. The supernatural lover of the second generation is less supernatural than the one of the first, because he was originally human and only by bad luck—not being able to turn into a pacified dead person—became a supernatural. And he is less real, because when his identity is found out by means of a cotton string tied round his leg, that also leads to the overhanging rock, nothing of him remains but a single bone. Yet, he is real enough to impregnate the girl and have sons by her, who are called Sutpahari Gharti, i.e. the Gharti-of-the Cotton-thread-Rock. The word Gharti, in version III openly associated with an unegalitarian note—we know that in other parts of Nepal the name Gharti is used for the descendants of slaves—is treated in the commentary to version II with the finesse of

etymological manipulation supported by the similarity of the Devanāgarī spelling of gh and dh: Gharti is said to be derived from *dharti* meaning *earth*, for it is the Gharti, who are closest to the soil, the ones with whom in fact agriculture began.

To sum up the alliances and unlegalized affairs in the three versions of the Magar origin story, encounters which gradually or immediately transformed supernatural beings into the first human ancestors, we can clearly establish a graded progression. In version I gods just walk out of their realm into the human world and become instantly humans. All that remains godly about them is the fact that with them emigrate the cows, also of divine provenance; and that their crops grow faster than those of plain humans. In version III it takes at least one generation, before the ancestors are mere human mortals. A human female cohabits with a non-human male, god or ghost/*pret*; being super-human, i.e. higher in rank than her he cannot marry her. Instead, he recompensates her and her family for her nightly favours and the troubles of giving birth to a fatherless and landless child with the tools of agriculture and the utensils of the household. This child, plainly human, later marries a girl from Hukam, also plainly human. Version II needs two generations to accomplish the task of turning the first ancestors into ordinary humans. First a male god and a female human *recognize* (*saresne*) each other—note the conceptual similarity between this and the Biblical description of the Hebrews for the first copulation—; then they marry and have children. One of the children, the only girl, starts an affair with the roaming spirit of the dead, thus doing the same thing as the female in the first generation of version III. The offsprings of this unlegalized match, at last, are plain and ordinary humans.

Seen in the light of alliance and gifts—inheritance, dowry, brideprice—the three versions contain divergent, yet related information. Versions II and III are related in so far as, in both, the encounters between a supernatural male and a human female results in the donation of agricultural and household tools to the human race. In version II a god marries a human girl and in consequence of this anisogamic act the divine inheritance is divided up. Instead of disinheriting their son, who entered into such an unequal matrimonial match, the god's parents impart to him a considerable dowry, cows of all shades found today on earth, a servant and a golden yoke. In version III a god or *pret* spirit does not marry the human girl with whom he had slept and whom he had impregnated. The girl's father's demand that he marry her is turned down. But the supernatural does not leave the scene ungratefully. Once detected as the lover of the girl, he offers her and her offspring, the Gharti, a yoke, some oxen (the agricultural necessities); a *kopara*- and *khoi*-vessel, a *hōnda*- and a *gagri*- water container, *tāthi*-plates and *khuri*-cups (the household necessities), as compensation for the sexual favours granted. In version I, no

such encounter between a god and a human female is mentioned and no gifts ensue. On the contrary! Whereas the other versions keep pointing out that the first Magar came into being on account of an unequal alliance, version I stresses the equality amongst the first seven brothers. But, here too, a matrimonial event is narrated, even though of a different kind. When those seven brothers, sons of the blind Budha ancestor, are on their way back home from a successful, yet costly hunt,—their prey is a capital wild boar, which had killed the eldest of the brothers and the leading dog before—they are stopped by another blind or half-blind man of the Budha clan. He addresses them with the plain suggestion of an exchange: his daughter for the boar! The brothers do not think twice—the boar goes on the grill and the girl into the hands of one of them, who takes, contrary to the present custom, uxorilocal residence. This intra-clan marriage between a Budha boy and a Budha girl on the mythical scale raises immediately a series of questions: What are these groups? Are they clans, in the strict sense of the word and is the match mentioned a primordial incest; or are they subtribes or even tribes within the Magar? I shall deal with these problems, tentatively, later on when the content of the origin stories is confronted with the actual ethnographic reality.

The three origin stories of the Northern Magar, which—as has by now been amply demonstrated—relate a common plot within the margins of narrative liberty, recount not only how the first ancestors came into being, descending from a supernatural platform into the present realm of man, but they recount as well the geographical movements of the primeval migrators. All three versions concur on some basic information. The Magar of the North, or at least the local branches of Taka, Bacchi, Hukam, belonging to the Deopahari-Gharti,-Pun and-Budha, do not trace their origin to an alien and faraway land. They say they are of local stock, born from the gods in the north-eastern sector of their present tribal territory. They do not say that the first ancestors lived *exactly* at the places where the present Magar dwell, but certainly not outside the confines of their topographical universe.

This autochthonous view is remarkable in two respects. First of all it seems unusual to say in an origin myth: Our ancestors came roughly from where we are now, for it takes the wind out of the story's sails right from the start. Nearly all the Himalayan origin stories I have heard – and sometimes they can be partly verified by historical investigation – propose an alien native place for an indigenous ethnic group. One may quote the example of the Sherpa, who claim to have originated in Kham in the Sino-Tibetan borderland, two thousand kilometers away from their present dwelling ground in Solu-Khumbu south of Mt. Everest⁵. This claim is supported

⁵ See: M. Oppitz: *Geschichte und Sozialordnung der Sherpa*, München/Innsbruck 1968.

by historiographic documents. Secondly, the three origin stories of the Northern Magar stating in unison a local origin of their first ancestors, stand in clear opposition to another oral tradition which declares that the ancestors – at least of the Buḍha group – immigrated to the area from Mongolia. To judge from the present style and appearance of the Northern Magar culture, especially as far as the rich shamanistic complex is concerned, and from the physical features of its bearers, this hypothesis can claim some probability. In fact, the two contradictory statements concerning the origin of the Magar tribe, may each be correct in their own rights, if one admits the possibility of a multitribal composition of the Magar. It would then appear that one of the present subgroups, the Gharti, being connected with agriculture, did indeed have their primordial homes near their present day ones, whereas another subgroup, the Buḍha, connected with semi-nomadic shepherding, did indeed immigrate from the north, from a distant land in Northern Tibet, in Mongolia or even in Siberia. But this, so far, is speculation and it is safer to stick with the documents and listen to what they say.

Beside the common assertion of an origin within the borders of present day Magarland the three versions also confirm the general direction of the first migrational movements. In all three cases these movements point from North-East to South-West, from the Hukam/Pelma side to the Taka/Bacchi side. Minor as these movements may be, their extensions differ in the three stories. The poorest description of primordial place-names with the laziest locomotion is given in version III. The original overhanging rock, from which the first ancestors are said to stem, is located somewhere in the vicinity of Hukam which, together with Taka and the lake in its plain called Chebāng, are the only place-names mentioned at all (see photo No. 7). The second oral version, variant II, is more talkative than this. From it a real itinerary of original territorial movements can be traced (see adjoining map). This itinerary starts at the primeval rock of Pimāchāre, South East of Pelma and then proceeds straight on over the Gustang Khola into the Kajarjung-Hukam (see photo No. 5) area, with places mentioned such as Lutabāng, Jhānkribāng and Hukam itself. From here the movement proceeds directly over the hill into the Taka/Chebāng-lake region, where it relates in full detail the founding of Taka and Bacchi, as well as the story of several minor places in that plain, such as Khalibāng, Kaljamui and Kāpai. The concentration of version II on places mainly in the vicinity of Taka can easily be explained by the fact that this version is a variant related in Taka – and there is always a greater interest in one's own history than in that of others, be this on the village level or on a national level. The same is true with the concentrated interest in place-names mentioned in the written version I. This is a Hukam document and consequently more than half of the names are of places in the vicinity of

Hukam, like Jangkot, Pāgol, Batpā, Maser, Brājās, Gare Khola, Khorātibāng and Tamnam. This document not only assembles the greatest number of locality names in the three variants, but also the migratory movements display the greatest extension. Thus, from the primordial rock of Pimāchāre the ancestral tracks lead two times further north, close to the Jangla Bhanjyang pass that separates the homeland of the Magar from the enclave of Tibetan culture, Dolpo. One of these places is Kāyam Dāḍā, the other Pharkambāng, the modern police checkpost (see photo No. 3 & 4). And before the migrational tracks guide the reader into the Hukam area, described in detail, several intermediary stops on the northern side are mentioned, all identical with present day village names. The twin settlement of Pelma and Yamakhar, (see photo No. 5) Budhakhor or Puchargaon; Juna—six hours north of Pelma; and Supabāng—3 hours north of Maikot. The final destination in the migratory movement of version I is the same as in the other versions; it is Taka and the lake in its plain, still known under the name of Chebāng (see also map). The mythical migrations of the Northern Magar ancestors, as traced out in the oral and textual tradition and as reconstructed in the adjoining map, received an unexpected support from the phonological studies of a linguist, who worked for five years amongst the Northern Magar. In a commenting letter on this essay David Watters writes: “The suggested migrations...have support from the language itself. By paying careful attention to phonetic change, etc., linguistic migrations can be traced quite accurately. Quite clearly, the Taka dialect comes from the area around Yamakhar. Maikot, which is geographically close to Yamakhar, is in fact quite distant linguistically. It is fascinating that Maikot does not enter into the myths—quite in keeping with the real facts. Shera, too, is left out of the stories. Linguistically, Shera is the northernmost outpost of a southern dialect. Nowadays Taka and Shera are growing closer through mutual linguistic borrowing.”

As to the motives given for the various migrations in the northern part of Magarland, they are again graded in the three documents. The ad hoc version III, which registers only one such movement, says the emigration of the fatherless and landless first Gharti from Hukam to Taka was motivated by his search for land. Given all the tools for agriculture by the gods, the boy has to find an unoccupied stretch of land to apply them. And since in the Hukam area no such land is available for him, he moves on to Taka, where the soil is rich, soon attracting other settlers from the surroundings. Version II gives two successive reasons for the ancestors' dislocations. First, they move on from one place to the next, because each new settlement turns out to be unhealthy (scabies and fever-infested). Later, after the intermediary stay in Hukam, the ancestors emigrate in search of prey. Being full-time hunters they look for good hunting grounds and, chasing a wild

boar that brings them to the lake of Chebāng near Taka, they discover that this is an appropriate site for their occupation. Version I also gives mixed reasons for the migrational drive. Here however the motives are really intertwined and simultaneous whereas in version II they are successive and sifted. What drives the first ancestors in version I from one place to the next is the search for good soil and good water. At the same time, the original seven brothers roam around in search of a wild boar that could satisfy the rigid desires of their blind father. In fact, all motives for their constant moves seem to fuse in the old grumbler's nagging character. Either a place is not good, because there are too many wild boars around that could destroy the fields or there are not enough of them; either a place is vexed by a *bhut*-spirit, by a human trickster or by a snake named *Kule* that attracts thieves, poverty and trade (sic!), or the crops don't come properly. Driven by the whip of the querulous ancestor's whims, they move on and on, checking the quality of the game, the water, the soil and the auspices until at last they come to a final halt in Hukam and, respectively, at the Chebāng lake of Taka.

After having investigated the thematic complexes of original alliances and of topographic migratory movements amongst the Magar ancestors, such as they emerge from the documents, a comparative survey of the subsistence activities remains to be done according to the descriptions in the texts. Two such activities dominate the scene: hunting and agriculture.

The theme of agriculture is prevalent in all three documents. In the versions II and III agriculture is introduced by the donation of its main and most obvious tool, the plough. In both cases the plough or more specifically the yoke is given to the human ancestors by a male supernatural being, after he has made love to a girl of the ancestral family. In one case (II), the yoke comes down to the humans as an *inheritance* from the gods, in the other (III) as a *recompense*. In version II the yoke is described as golden, a hint to the fact that it originated in the extraterrestrial realm of the gods, where animals and utensils have colours not encountered in the realm of the mortals. Together with the plough, the metonymy par excellence for the activity of agriculture, the main labour forces are given to the ancestors: in version II manpower in the guise of a Jujāli servant and in version III animal-power in the guise of oxen. In both versions, the first human heirs of the divine plough are called Gharti, one of the principal tribal names of the present day Magar and the one most closely associated to the activity of agriculture.

In both versions this association is expressly pointed out: The first annual rights of weeding and ploughing are in the hands of the Gharti, the first heirs to the divine tools of agriculture. Moreover, this *ius primae arationis* is presented in version III as an obligation. If it is not the Gharti who open the season of tilling the soil,

the gods will get angry and bestow upon the village a bad harvest. The link of the Gharti to the soil and to agricultural success is here connected with their link to a god, whose domain is a watersource – and water is the main element for luck in the annual game of the crops. One of the Gharti heirs of the first yoke and guarantors for the correct annual performance of the art of agriculture invents, according to version II, the first grinding stone, the harvest-time complement to the tools of sowing-time. Version I, in contradistinction to versions II and III, does not mention the Deopahari Gharti as the primordial performers of the crafts of the soil; it mentions the Deopahari Budha instead, not so surprisingly, for this document is a text of the Budha from Hukam, the mythical brothers of the Gharti from Taka.

In version I no golden yoke and no labour force to drive the plough are given to man as a divine counter-gift for a sexual favour, granted by a human girl to a supernatural male. The first ancestors, together with their cows (an indirect allusion to agriculture, for cows may imply oxen and oxen imply labour force to drive the ploughs) just walk out of the god's dwelling place in search of land in the wilderness of the human world. But the theme of primeval agriculture is touched upon on repeated occasions in this text as well. In their restless search for good soil and good water, the first ancestors of version I are pushed on from one place to the next, cutting fields from the jungle here, fertilizing the land there, waiting in vain for good crops at a third place. And when they finally come to a rest on a fertile and uninfested strip of land, they discover that someone else claims that land as his own. But this time they are lucky; being the descendants of a god, they are helped by him to win the crop-growing contest against the alien land disputer. All in all, version I is no less a text on primeval agriculture than version II and III. But instead of introducing the tools with which one handles the soil, it deals with handling the soil itself, slashing and burning the forest, clearing the ground, fertilizing the soil and fighting for the rights to own the land.

In terms of the second dominant subsistence activity, the hunting complex, the three variants are unequally stocked with information. Version III is blank on this subject; hunting is not mentioned. Version II, on the other hand, is quite outspoken on the primordial importance of hunting. It says, in a plain and unconcealed statement, that the sons of the first ancestor did nothing else but hunt. And it is on one such roaming hunt, a chase or battue with dogs, when pursuing a wild boar they discover by accident the lake in the plain of Taka which in the later history of the Northern Magar will become their uncrowned capital. Another reference to the hunting complex in version II throws light on the techniques employed in the mythical time. The form of hunting preferred is the battue, undertaken with specially trained hunting dogs. These dogs drive the game always to the same narrow foot

of a valley, where the hunters lie in wait for their prey. Such highly specialized dogs must be and in fact are very valuable (nowadays about Rs. 3000 per dog). No wonder, therefore, that the first dog mentioned in variant I is a dog with a feature of clearly divine distinction. It is a *green dog*, a dog-colour non-existent in the kynozoography of the real world. This primal dog that was part and parcel of the gods' inheritance, does not only smell and chase the game, it is also good for agriculture, for it is able to smell out the quality of the clay-soil and the quality of the water.

The game, especially mentioned in the first variant, are a type of deer, and goat, *mirga* and *goral*, and on one such hunt — in contradistinction to version II, where it was on a wild boar hunt—the roaming ancestral hunters discover the lake in the plain of Chebāng. Deer, goat or boar, in all cases the lake aids the fugitive game to escape the lethal intentions of their pursuers for a little while: the animals dive out of sight, only to be overtaken by their destiny later on. The dominant wild animal, both in version II and I, is undoubtedly the wild boar. In the first of the documents a whole bunch of them trample through the pages. They are both damaging (for the fields) and dangerous (for man and dog). One episode of a boar-hunt in version I recollects the danger of that major hunt. Seven brothers, sons of the first human Magar, a nagging blind old man, try to kill a capital boar with their arrows. The boar, however, deflects all these missiles with his tusks. And instead of being killed he kills first the leading and most valuable dog and a little later the eldest of the seven brothers. Finally, the pending catastrophe is turned into a happy ending. The boar is killed and its meat is exchanged for a woman, whom one of the remaining brothers marries.

This *mytheme*, as one may call it, has its pendant of striking resemblance in one of the shamanist epic cycles, in the story of the orphan girl Barchameni. This girl, relates the story, sung to the beat of the drum by the present day healers called *rama*, had seven brothers—see the numerical resemblance to the local origin story. These brothers, male witches themselves and married to seven witch-sisters, try to keep the girl in slavish conditions: She has to work all day tending the cows of her brothers; in return, she is given only rubbish for food. She gets thin and depressed. But a cow comes to aid her in her distress. The cow's dung turns into valuable food, rice and lentils and the orphan girl becomes healthy again. Meanwhile, the vicious brothers and their wives have found out about the miraculous transformation of the girl and decided to kill the cow. Before it is slaughtered the cow manages to have a word with the orphan, telling her not to eat its meat and, instead of giving the bones to the dogs, to bury them in a grave. This the girl does, while the brothers and a shaman enjoy the meat of the slaughtered cow. The buried bones of the cow take

root, grow and become the first bamboo, from which a peculiar type of cylindrical pot is cut, the birth place of the first wild boar. The metric beat of the shaman's song hammers this curious metamorphosis into the ears of its audience in the following way:

gepo cyenla gemo cyenla/
gopi bāsa jāte kal kalāndo ṭāyā/
gopi bāsa jāni māgābu bōke/
māgābu jāni glade bir jā bōke/
pholi galde jāye pāre daule jāye/ . . .

On the grave of the male and female oxen/
Grew the soft shoots of the gopi-bamboo/
From the gopi-bamboo came into being the plain bamboo pot/
From the plain bamboo pot came into being the wild boar/
The brown boar, the white-knuckled boar of the pariah-caste/...

This wild boar, always classified as low caste, becomes the new benefactor and protector of the orphan girl. After gathering a certain amount of medicinal roots and herbs, which the boar digs out of the jungle soil with its tusks, the two of them go on a trip to the south—to the market towns of the Terai in order to exchange their commodities for cloth and garments. The long and arduous road is facilitated for the girl as the boar carries her safely over rivers and fords on its back. This physical contact between the girl and the boar puts an idea into the head of the beast: The animal wants the human as wife. This intention is conveyed to her while they barter, far from home in the lowlands, by a meaningful change of kinship address:

thāde galli jāla terse galli jāla/
oyran roji jeni pairan roji jeni/
oyran nirojika pairan nirojika/
dhanna sāta bhāirālāi/
dhanna sāto baini rālāi/
galde bire ngā nānāra liḍa/
galde bir jāye bhalo nga je thura leda/ṭadā haijā lizye nedā haijā lizye/

On the steep road, on the lenient road/
The two chose fashionable clothes/
And the wild boar said: "As we choose/
The fashionable clothes, let's choose for the seven brothers/
And the seven sisters too my wife's brothers' wives"/
Thus he called the girl's brothers "my wife's elder brothers"/
And he said that time and time again/

Although the girl is sad and horrified at her matrimonial prospect, she accepts the role-game and tries to make the best out of the situation, anticipating what will happen when they get back to Taka:

dhanna tokenitā māla kāla jāla/
 asam bhārā garje dhanna tohoritā/
 pholi galde jāye pāre daule jāye/
 purkha ngā rājāe galde bir jāye/
 dhanna sātu bhāira sāta baini rālāi/
 ākāsmāsi nāni patāl dasi nāni/...

And for that address, in the far-away Terai/
 The unblessed orphan girl wept many bitter tears/
 But the brown boar, the white-knuckled boar of the pariah-caste/
 She spoke to thus: "My husband, wild boar, my master and my king/
 Throw up to the sky and push down to hell/
 The seven brothers and the seven sisters/"...

Sowing strife, her calculations come true. As she and her would be husband, the wild boar, get home the only solution to the hybrid aspirations of her protector is war with the hated kin of the girl/:

banbanelā huni pholi galde jāni/
 banbani jāni pholi galde jāye/
 dhanna sāta bhāirāi jethā ye dājulāi/
 jecho jithu dowo pholi galde jāye/
 napaikē ciro galde vir ge jowāi ledā/
 ṭabān rāsda yew dhanna sāta bhairāi/
 jethāye dājulāi dowo hāta cheojeo/
 bāw hāta cheojeo pholi galde jālāi/
 pāre daule jālāi osōndata pherje/
 ṭabān mālāgināi neban malāgināi/
 galde bira jālāi dhanna sāta bhāirāi dhanna boksā jāra/
 ākāś yādāsijew patāl yādāsijew/...

The brown boar and the orphan girl came to a place called Banbane/
 And from this place of Banbane the brown boar made his honours:/
 "Hail, elder brothers of my wife!" - the brown boar said to them/
 "You trifling pig, you wild boar, you want to be our younger sister's
 husband?"/

And they shot off an arrow, the seven unblessed brothers/
 But he, the brown boar, white knuckled boar of the pariah-caste/
 Cut off the right hand of the eldest brother/

Cut off his left hand too/
One arrow did not reach him, another arrow did not reach him/
They all bounced off the brown boar's tusks/
Instead he threw the seven brothers, the seven unblessed witches/
Up to the sky and pushed them down to hell/...

In the course of the fight between the boar and the seven brothers, all arrows shot at him are averted thanks to the animal's tusks and all the attacking brothers, one after the other, are smashed to death. Once they have been destroyed, the story comes to a sudden end, and it is not quite clear whether or not the boar will succeed in marrying his beloved orphan girl. Such a happy ending may be deduced, however, from the adjoining rite that always accompanies the recital of the Barchameni cycle in the course of a healing seance. For as soon as the song is over, a performing shaman tumbles down to the ground and making grunting noises, transforms himself into a wild boar. This is the wild boar spirit (*galde vir*), one of the traditional nine auxiliaries of the shamans. The shaman-boar roams around in the room for a while, rubbing his back on the glowing iron tripod or amusing the audience with other characteristics of that animal. Then the ill person is helped onto the back of the shaman, who is still on all fours, and is lifted: lifted by the boar from the underworld, into which his soul had fallen in consequence to the afflictions of malevolent spirits or witches. This physical contact between shaman-boar and client is of course the same as the one in the song between the amorous pig and the orphan girl—the re-enactment of myth in a rite. The suggested parallelism of a folk genealogy and a shamanistic song/rite—as far as the basic narrative element or mytheme is concerned—can thus be formalized in the following way:

Version I of the local folk genealogies relates a hunt, in which seven brothers chase a wild boar. A fight ensues. Together, the hunters try to kill the boar with arrows. The arrows are averted with the animal's main weapon, its tusks. Thus, instead of the human hunters killing the boar, the boar kills hunters, first a dog, then the eldest of the seven brothers. When the boar is at last killed, its roast meat serves as exchange value for a marriage, a marriage between a human Budha girl and a human Budha boy, thus a couple of equal social standing. The shamanistic song tells of a wild boar, who wants to take an orphaned human girl in marriage. This enrages the seven brothers of the girl. A fight ensues. Together, the brothers try to kill the would be brother-in-law, the boar, with arrows. The arrows are averted with the animal's main weapon, the tusk. Thus, instead of the offended witch-brothers killing the boar, the boar kills, first the eldest of the seven brothers, then all the others. When, at last, all brothers have been killed, a marriage seems to follow, a marriage between a human girl and a low caste animal, a wild boar, thus a couple of unequal social standing.

It is, I think, worthwhile to comment on this apparent isomorphism between an episode told in a prose genealogical account and another one told in a verse ritualistic text, because, first of all, borrowing from one type of lore and shifting narrative matter to a completely different type of lore, is relatively rare in Himalayan oral tradition. This does not mean that borrowing or plagiarizing is rare as such.

On the contrary: Once greater amounts of oral traditions from the different Himalayan hill tribes are made public, a real treasure-box of transformational interrelations may be unsealed and add to the obvious derivations from the Great (Indian and Tibetan, Hindu and Buddhist, as well as Bon) Traditions. And inside a single tradition as, for example, the shamanistic complex of the Northern Magar, one can observe the shifting of whole verse-blocks from one epic cycle to the next. But this verbal mobility is usually reserved to one type of oral lore, be it religious, ritualistic or on the plane of folk legend. To be more outspoken and more specific: The Northern Magar have several independent oral traditions, those of the *ramma* or *jhānkri* (shamans), those of the *dhāmi* (media) and those of the *jaṛsi* (astrologer), which together form the ritualistic tradition. They are distinct from each other in many respects, yet share at the same time a lot of common narrative matter. Quite apart from the ritualistic verbal tradition is that of normal folklore with its own stock of stories. And when one compares the two, one feels as if the bards of the first never went to the storytellers of the second, and vice versa. That, of course is not true in reality. A shaman may know quite a lot of folktales, just as every layman is acquainted with most of the mythological cycles of the magical healers, simply because all people share their whole culture. Thus, a borrowing over the wall, in practical terms, would in no way be surprising. But, and this is surprising, it practically never happens. The case introduced above is the only one I have so far come across, and that makes it remarkable. Another conspicuous feature of the plot reduplication in the folklore genealogy as compared to the shaman's song is that it is possible to detect the plagiarizer, the direction in which the narrative element went over the wall. The recounted mytheme of the wild boar fighting with seven brothers, averting their arrows with its tusk and being victorious over the eldest of them is inserted into the folk genealogy in its own right. The episode stands completely isolated, flanked as it were by less lively accounts of the ancestors' migrational movements. In the shaman's song, on the contrary, the same mytheme is part of a long story, of a whole narrative cycle. And for this very reason it cannot have been borrowed from the fragment in the lay folk tradition. The borrowing must have happened in exactly the opposite direction, the shamanistic tradition being the supplier, the laymen's lore the recipient.

In view of this isomorphism, it may be permitted to conclude with a question of hypothetical order : Is this unidirectional borrowing the rule or is, empirically, an exchange in both directions the rule? If it turned out that one sided borrowing is the general rule—the ritualistic traditions supply the lay traditions of folklore with narrative matter—then such a finding would support the assumption that the body of shamanistic oral traditions is the more solid one, the more autonomous one, the less penetrable one. And it is exactly this assumption that I can deduce from my ethnographic observations.

In order to give the reader a taste of how differently the shamanistic tradition presents the origin of hunting and agriculture—the two subjects contained in the folk genealogies of this essay—I shall relate in paraphrased condensation, a myth, which belongs to one of those narrative ritualistic cycles that explain the origin of things and codify proper present day conduct in the shaman's professional activities. This myth by good fortune embodies both the origin of hunting and of agriculture. It is the story of the incestuous couple Pударan and Biselme.

At the time of the creation of man, Biselme and Pударan, who himself is one of the seven witch brothers already encountered, decide to join in a pact of friendship. To seal this pact they decide to go on a common hunt. But as no one has done that before they have to invent and fabricate the first hunting bells (*kollēn*) and the first bow and arrow (*guleli* and *mui*) and to train dogs for the chase. That they do on a Monday of Kārtik month. Once up in the mountains, Pударan and Biselme decide to split up and divide their labour. While he and the leading dog follow the trace of a deer, Biselme hides at a narrow pass, with her bow drawn. The deer is driven down to her hiding place, but in her excitement she misses her target. Instead, the arrow hits and kills the locust, the master of fire and the unfortunate hunteress's own grandfather. Thus the first hunt is inaugurated with a kin-murder, an accidental crime. The next day, the two decide to invert their roles, Biselme as driver and Pударan as archer. Helped by her trackers the girl manages to drive another deer with a great clamour of hullabaloo and whistling down to Pударan's hiding place, who shoots the prey with two arrows. Then he dismembers the deer and puts together the heart, liver and lungs on a bamboo skewer. This he roasts on a fire in offering to the hunting spirit (*ihiri zyeā*), to the lord of the swamplands (*sepāserong*) and to the witches (*kāksī*). When the meat is roasted it is divided up. Biselme eats all her share like a glutton, whereas Pударan keeps most of his for the hunting spirit and the blind father of the girl. As she has eaten too much of the roasted meat, Biselme is overcome that night by a terrible thirst. But Pударan has dried up all the water sources. There may be, however, some rain-water in the fork of a walnut tree, the perfidious companion suggests. So, the girl climbs the tree, and

indeed there is some stale water, which stinks and tastes bitter. In fact, it is Pudara's secretly released urine that she drinks. This disgrace is followed by another one, as she descends the tree again, for Pudara kindles a blast of wind that blows up her skirt and bares her sex.

The next morning the two hunters return to Bisme's blind father Serja, in front of whom they deposit their respective prey as a gift, Pudara a loin of the deer, Bisme the locust. And the blind man sniffs at the prey—(a distant similarity to the act of the seven hunting brothers' blind father in the genealogical folkstory, who touches all the killed boars' tusks to test their quality), only to find out that the loin does not smell of Bisme's arrow and that she is the killer of the grandfather. Publicly he declares his sinful daughter as degraded and cast out of the clan. Hearing this judgement Bisme loses her senses. Deranged by madness she is driven into a snap trap. Head over heels she hangs down into the underworld. There she continues her unbroken series of crimes and misconduct, at a place where snakes and lizards live in incestuous relations, just as she herself has done with her *mit*-friend Pudara, who has followed her into the underworld. First she sits down by a loom, where male and female snakes lounge about. Those she chops up with a knife, only to multiply them in number. Then she hits them with a lathe of the loom and kills them. Again she picks up her knife, this time cutting Pudara's throat. Washing the blood off the knife at a river, she drops her *hānsa*-, *purus*-, *sātu*- and *pāli*-souls,—and her life goes out.

But even after her death the string of bad luck is not severed. Due to the curse of the locust her corpse does not putrefy for a solid twelve years. This scandal at last is dissolved by a joint effort of the animals of the underworld. They build a pyre. The wild boar digs out the soil, birds and wild beasts collect wood, creatures of the jungle cut it into pieces, snakes pile it up. Even the locust, master of the fire, renders assistance. From under its armpit it takes out a flintstone and lits up the pyre, on which the corpse of Bisme is burnt. All that is missing for a complete funeral is the "wayfood" for the dead girl. This is supplied by the pheasant, brother Panju, who comes flying from the west, carrying wheat-and barley seeds in his gullet. A hunter shoots him down with a clay-pellet; and the dead spirit of the pheasant reveals that he carries the required grains. They are extracted from his gullet, kept for three days in the darkest spot of the house and finally are strewn into the ashes of the pyre. On the grave of the mad girl Barchameni grows the first wheat and barley. The crops become green in the month of Mangsir and they turn yellow in the month of Pus. In the winter they are covered and protected by snow. They begin to ripen in the month of Cait. They blossom in the month of Baisākh, and are ready to be cut in the month of Jeshth. . .

If one listens to a story like this, it should be easy to admit that we are a long way from the genealogical folktales on the origin of hunting and agriculture, metonymically represented by the wild boar and the yoke and recounted in the first section of this essay. It may be noted, however, that in the shamans' epic chant of Pudaran and Biselme the origin of hunting and of the first grains, i.e. of agriculture are expressedly blended into a single story, thus giving these two economic activities equal weight. And yet, in terms of succession, hunting comes first and agriculture comes second.

The last section shall be reserved to ethnographic realia, to investigate how things talked about in once-upon-a-time myth extend into present day facts.

Projection of myth into ethnographic realia

The subsistence activities of the Northern Magar, as one can observe them this very day, are predominantly three in number: farming, shepherding, hunting, in this order of importance. The annual cycle of these activities can be abstracted into the following schema:

<i>Month</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Sheep Herding</i>	<i>Hunting</i>
Baisākh (Apr./May)	ploughing, sowing of beans (<i>sosta</i>) soyabeans (<i>bata</i>), millet (<i>randai</i>), mustard (<i>ramtori</i>), maize (<i>gogah</i>), harvest of lower wheat (<i>tam</i>) and barley (<i>sima</i>)	departure of sheep from village to summer pastures	hunts of short duration
Jesth (May/Jun.)	sowing of fast maize (<i>tin mase</i>) harvest of wheat and barley	shepherds climbing the slopes	hunts of short duration
Asār (Jun./Jul.)	weeding of the soil	sheep reaching highest pastures on the ridges	hunts of short duration
Sāun (Jul./Aug.)	harvest of potato (<i>batanji</i>)	on the ridges	hunting bears near village
Bhādau (Aug./Sep.)	sowing of barley and buckwheat (<i>phapar</i>), harvest of fast maize	return from the highest ridges	hunting bears, main hunt: high mountain expeditions
Asoj (Sep./Oct.)	sowing of wheat, harvest of soyabean, bean, millet, mustard and <i>sete-</i> , <i>penle-</i> , and <i>bhalu</i> -maize	on the slopes above villages, shearing the sheep and goat	long hunting expeditions in high mountains
Kārtik (Oct./Nov.)	sowing of wheat (<i>kole</i>) and of lower barley (<i>chika</i>), harvest of buckwheat	arrival of herds in village from summer-pastures	hunts of short duration
Mangsīr (Nov./Dec.)	ploughing	departure for winter-migration to the south	hunts of short duration

Pus (Dec./Jan.)		on the southward trail	shert hunts
Māgh (Jan./Feb.)		stay in the south on Mahābhārat range near Terai, second annual shearing of sheep and goat	short hunts
Phāgun (Feb./Mar.)	sowing of potatos, halsār: ritual opening of fields by jaisi and Gharti ploughman	slow return of sheep from hibernation in the south	short hunts
Cait Mar./Apr.	ploughing	arrival of sheep in village from the south	short hunts

From this general synopsis it is already clear that the mythological accounts deal with things that people actually do. And for this reason it is most surprising that the genealogical memory, embedded in the mythical tales, does not store any allusions to the pastoral complex, so important in present day economics⁶. The only hint at sheep herding in any of the three versions analysed above is that singular note in variant I that the first ancestors on their errant migrations passed a goat pasture (*bakarā kharka*) and some walled-in animal sheds or sheep-folds (*khor*), belonging to the Buḍha clan. The shamanistic tradition, too, keeps completely silent, never mentioning directly the origin of sheep and the pastoral activities. In short: Myth leaves out altogether the genesis of sheep. It would be deceptive, however, to conclude from this lack a relatively recent introduction of pastoralism into Magar culture. To judge from the biblical hue of its style, it seems quite evident that sheep herding and the culture of the Northern Magar are one, intricately interwoven since time immemorial. This assertion can be affirmed indirectly by some rites of passage which, amazingly, do not fall into the domain of the shamans' ritual activities. In these rites – and first and foremost those of death – the pastoral complex serves as a model: The transcendental journeys of the dead are conceived in terms of the pastoral migrations, and the souls of the dead are guided and accompanied into the beyond by real sheep. Through the mediation of the sheep routes, the shamanistic songs also partake in the testimony of the primordial importance of pastoralism. For the mythical trips of the witches, of the First Shaman and the wild boar spirit from the north to the south, recounted at length

⁶ The economy of the Northern Magar is dealt with in greater detail in two publications by Augusta Molnar: *Marital Patterns and Economic Independence, Contr. to Nep. Stud.* VI, 1, 1978 and *Economic Strategies and Ecological Constraints: Case of the Kham Magar of NW Nepal*, in; C.v. Fürer-Haimendorf (Ed.) : *Asian Highland Societies*, Delhi 1981, pp. 20-51

in the healers' epics, are identical with those of the sheep on their winter migrations towards the warmer plains in the south. As indirect as the circumstantial proof of the myths to the primeaval embodiment of pastoralism in Magar culture may be, it is not so in art. Here, in the magnificent and formally developed production of wooden sculpture, the eye of the viewer is drawn to a clearly ovic style. Water sprouts with sheep heads spitting out the running water; bridge-piles with ram heads, looking out into the eternal current of the river; or sheep heads embellishing the window frames.

After this short digression into non-mythic pastoralism, the relations of present day activities such as hunting and farming with those described in the myths can be further pursued. It has been emphasized that the three genealogical stories established an intricate connection between agriculture and the Gharti subgroup of the Magar. This is so, because according to myth it was the Gharti alone who were given the first golden yoke, the first oxen and the secrets for the art of tilling the soil. They alone could start the annual cycle of farming. This right, granted to the Gharti by the gods, is still attributed to them amongst the present day population of Taka.

Every year in the month of Phāgun, a rite of the soil is performed by the name of *halsār*. *halsār* means: to run the plough. It is the first ritual running of the plough in the year. Two men are the main executants, a jāsi or astrologer, as the officiant, and a member of the Gharti clan as the ploughman. The officiant can be any astrologer, the ploughman is chosen by him out of three Gharti candidates. These candidates are the three most successful Gharti farmers of the previous year. The right man is determined by correlating two sets of astrological constellations, those of the candidates and those of the plough, which both sets change from year to year according to the changing calendrical constellation of the stars. A plough has 13 constellation points. (See drawing c.) Their names are *sira*, *mukha*, *hidata*, *dāhina*, *daitara*, *dārābāje*, *bhāgepatra*, *ṣanta*, *bhoga*, *br̥ta*, *bastra*, *hani*, *dani*, and they are either positive or negative. The one of the three candidates, who has the most resembling number of positive and negative constellation points in his own constellation as compared to that of the plough, will be the winner, the first ploughman of the year. Due to the balance of equal disposition in the two sets of constellation points, it is thought that his luck and that of the plough will form a powerful unity. A fragment of a jāsi book which I found near an astrologer's grave—after his death the books of a jāsi are hung into the life-tree over the cairn of his grave, just as the smashed drum of a deceased shaman is hung into his lifetree—depicts the constellation points of a plough in an abstracted line drawing of that tool of the gods. In order to identify these points, marked with circles in the drawing, it is necessary to acquaint—oneself with the Magar plough as such, (see adjoining drawing a).

A Magar plough is constructed out of two main elements, the yoke (*kum*) and the ploughshare (*gor*). They are held together by a third big element, a shaft called *dāndi*. The whole plough is called *gor-kum*. By comparing the two drawings, the constellation points of a plough can be made out. The first and most significant of them is the hole (*kūng*) in the handle (*ukūi*) of the ploughshare. Next in rank, at the other end, comes the iron top of the ploughshare (*kothalā*.) The predominant importance of these two points over the equal importance of all the others, stems from the idea that the hole in the handle represents the intentions of the ploughman, his strength and know-how, and the iron top of the ploughshare the vigour of the plough. Where the ploughshare joins the shaft, two constellation points are found and identified with a wooden nail (*nakira*) at the end of a wedge that keeps ploughshare and shaft together, the wedge (*orkep*) representing the second constellation point. The elements of the plough that connect share and yoke through the shaft, are three in number: another wooden nail at the yoke end of the shaft, a cuneiform indentation in the middle of the yoke (*cakare*) into which the shaft-nail is fitted and a string of buff leather (*nārā*), which ties the fitted shaft and yoke together. These three elements of the plough as a tool represent three more constellation points of the plough as transmitter of divinational meaning. The remaining elements/points are on the yoke. Four of them are indentations (*okharante*) on the lower end of four pegs on the wings of the yoke. These indentations hold the leather strings (*jotārā*) that are slung round the oxen's neck. These strings end on both sides of the yoke in a knot on top of the yoke, and these knots represent the two final constellation points. As one may realize, the simple tools of ergology are not just utensils: they radiate symbolical and ritualistic signification, just as everything else in the Magar universe, and it is only in conjunction with the layers of meaning that the description of ethnographic objects makes sense.

Once the right ploughman of the Gharti clan has been selected astrologically by the jāsi, the actual rite of *halsār*, or running the first annual plough in the month of Phāgun can begin. The rite is a rite for the god of the soil, *bhume* or *bhumī*. This god of the soil is present during the rite in the form of a snake figure (*dān murti*), modelled by the officiant jāsi with a mixture of cowdung and mud. The snake-figure representing *bhume* is carried by the jāsi to the centre of the designed ploughman's field, where it is deposited on the ground surrounded by a square, drawn in the soil. This square points into the four cardinal directions. Meanwhile, the field has been secured against the malevolent intrusion of spirits on 13 different points with an offering of rice and yeast, as well as maize and wheat grains from the previous harvest. (Notice the numerical identity with the 13 constellation points). This field protection, furthermore, is augmented with red and white cloth stripes

attached to bamboo sticks (*dhajā*), stuck into the soil at the 13 mentioned spots and noted down in a ritual field-map that is found in the jāsi's book called *mudhe pātro* (see drawing d). The fragment of the book I found near Rangsi contains in addition a drawing of the snake, after which the cowdung figure of *bhume* is to be modelled for the rite. On this snake, depicted below (see drawing c), a certain number of circles can be detected, each of them charged with a peculiar degree of auspicious or inauspicious energy. And, while the snake-figure, god of the soil, lies in the square at the centre of the Gharti ploughman's field, the jāsi determines—thanks to his visionary abilities—the most auspicious point on the body of the reptile deity.

Once this point is determined, the ploughman's job begins. (First he determines the starting point for his ploughing at that border of the field, which stands in a right angle to the auspicious point on the snake's body. From there he sets his ploughshare into action, drawing a straight line through the field. Mid-way he cuts the snake figure into two pieces, pushing the plough through the auspicious spot, while continuing his furrow line to the other end of the field.) This bisection of the figure does not, however, symbolize a killing of the snake; its intention is to multiply the beneficial qualities of *bhume*, the god of the soil. After the ploughman has completed his first furrow line, he draws a second one through the field, which cuts the first one at a right angle at the marked centre of the field. At the intersection of the furrows, which by now have changed the field into a geometric structure with transcendental associations, the jāsi trickles blood from a sacrificial cock into the open soil, to gain the earth-god's compliance for the period of the coming year. And it is with this rite of the soil that the annual agricultural season is inaugurated—that the fields are *opened* (*ughārinye*). The peasants' lead in this annual rite of opening the fields is played by a Gharti, just like in the ancestral myth.

As for the actual fields of the Northern Magar, they can be found on three classes of altitudes: *aulo*, the low fields near the villages and the most valuable ones, *gōn*, fields on the slopes above the settlements and *kharka*, the fields at the alpine pastures at higher altitudes. The altitude range of these fields is roughly one between 2000m and 3000m. The lowest and the highest fields have one harvest per year, the middle ones two. Only one single type of crop is grown on each field. This constitutes a great difference to the practice of other Magar, who like those of the Kali Gandaki, sow their fields in a rotative three-field system, *tin paṭṭi* or *tin phāt*.⁷

Ploughing the fields, which are marked by border stones, is a male activity, (see photo no. 8) whereas sowing is mainly a female one. Thus one may see, on the preferred days for seeding, Mondays and Wednesdays, a couple working their way through their field: in front the man, bent over his plough, shouting the personal

⁷ Jiro Kawakita: *The Hill Magars and Their Neighbours*, Tokyo 1974, p. 9ff.

names of his two oxen, fastened to their common yoke, while he beats them or addresses them, inter punctuated by whistling or by sterner measures, if their lackey intelligence slows down; behind the wife or the daughter, taking seeds out of her apron and throwing them into the freshly turned soil. These fields are always owned by individual families and inherited in the paternal line in equal shares by the sons. Thus, the fields of the Magar are doomed to parcellation. This they understand all too well themselves, for they use a proverb to express it: 'People grow and multiply, land doesn't'. The only way to enlarge one's square feet of arable land is through purchase, - in the Magar's own homeland or in the Terai. Despite the barren looking, moonscape appearance of the area, Taka is an agricultural centre, with harvests that are plentiful enough to sell surplus grain, mainly maize and barley, to the surrounding regions of Nisi, Bubang and Lukum.

Each household has, as a visual declaration of wealth, its own corn silo (*dokorā*) standing on the roof of the lower neighbour's house (see photo no. 9). These silos are designed for several functions: to dry the crop, which is stored in it in a moist state; to keep the animals away, such as chickens, goats and sheep, as well as mosquitos; and to protect the wealth of grain from the hands of possible thieves. The silos consist of three parts: a cylindrically rolled up mat, *kāthe*, a blanket of goat-wool on top, *pherwā*, and a string, tied around the cylinder several times. The blankets, usually woven in stripes of two shades of brown, are pointed at the top, to prevent the penetration of rain. The same blankets are used as tent covers by the seminomadic herders.

As in the case of agriculture, where a direct correspondence between myth and present day praxis could be established, for various kinds of the crops, the techniques of tilling the soil, landownership and, above all, the rights and rites associated with the first annual ploughing, it is possible to establish similar correspondences in the hunting complex. In order to broaden the mythical platform for such a comparison, I shall not only consider the allusions to hunting in the genealogical tales, but also those of the shamans' epic cycles, as far as they have come up in the course of the essay. It will become evident that in the hunting complex as well the primordial activities on the mythical plane are not just relics or distant reminders of a previous phase in an ever transforming current of life: verbal descriptions in myth bear an amazing resemblance to present day anthropological details,—they almost seem to be taken from the most recent ethnographic accounts.

The hunts related in the mythical stories are group hunts, undertaken by several people with different functions; drovers and archers and trained hunting dogs for the battue. In the genealogical versions I and II there are seven and six brothers respectively, who cooperate in their collective chase of the wild boar, the *goral* and the *mirga* deer, or even for their crow hunt. And in the epic cycle of Pudaran and

Biselme, it is this incestuous couple who go on a common hunting expedition, after the two have invented bow and arrow and the hunting bells for the dogs they have specially trained as trackers. On the hunt itself they divide their functions; one goes with the trackers, in order to drive the game to a narrow gorge in the valley, where the other lies hiding with the bow drawn, ready to shoot the prey. Having been unsuccessful the first day, Pudarān and Biselme exchange roles on the second, the techniques remaining the same. This division of labour with the special characteristic of driving the game always to one and the same spot in the vast wilderness of the mountain landscape, where it is to be shot and killed, is expressly noted down in version II of the genealogical stories. This immutable location for the kill is indicatively called Kaljamui, Arrow-of-Death.

The same features can be found in modern hunting practice. First of all, nearly all hunts that are undertaken these days, are group hunts, uniting approximately a dozen men. The preferred form is the chase or battue with hunting dogs. Admittedly, there is one type of hunt, *gopwā* which may be carried out by a single hunter. In this type, the hunter secretly sneaks to the habitual grazing ground or water source of the prey and hides there until he gets a good chance for a direct hit. But even this type of hunt is preferably done by several hunting-companions. Hunting amongst the Northern Magar is considered a noble passion and it is first and foremost a communal passion, an event of social enjoyment.

A present day hunting expedition, which can be summoned at any season of the year, although the long ones of a month's or two months' duration take place in the late monsoon time of Bhāda and Asoj, is always headed by a group-leader, *shikāri sher*. He, an experienced hunter of recognized skill, divides the group into three functional units, the drivers, the archers or shooters and the watchers. The drivers go with the hunting dogs, setting them, once in the high mountains, on the trace of game they have seen or whose footprints they have spotted. The archers hide with their weapons, just as in the mythical times, at a single locality, always the same narrow gorge, to which the game is driven and where it is easy to shoot it down. The third group, the watchers, are only indirect participants. They hide at an elevated place, not too far away from the archers; they enter the scene of action only when they see that the drivers are losing track of their game or are driving it into the wrong direction. In such cases the watchers start shouting from their neutral observation points to correct the course of the chase, ending at the immutable location of the final showdown, *bathān*.

The importance of the hunting dogs in a battue is considerable, and that explains their extraordinary value and the great care and intimacy with which they are tended. In the genealogical version I, they are green in colour, an indication of

their divine origin; and they are given—in the Pudarān and Biselme cycle—special-ly fabricated hunting bells (*kollēn*), which they carry, just as today, high in the mountains during the chase. Nowadays, the Northern Magar classify their dogs, of which there are plenty, into three distinct categories: the hunting dogs (*shikāri kā*), which, by their mythical names, are subdivided into trackers (*ānsule*, *pānsule*) and those “who rattle with their bells” (*chan man*); shepherd dogs (*gukhī*), a ferocious breed of the Tibetan mastiff, and dogs that guard the houses, *kāthā*. The latter are said to descend from the divine hunting dogs. Their value is low (ca. 15 to 50 Rs.), and they are, as a rule, treated with little affection. A person who is bitten by one of these dogs, is entitled to kill the culprit—to shoot it or to hang it. If the biting dog has rabies, it is killed invariably, for its liver is used by the victim as an antidote against rabies madness.

The shepherd dogs, just as the herds which they keep together and protect against the nightly attacks of leopards and tigers, are practically never seen in the confines of the villages. They are to be found on the higher pastures in the summer or on the southward migrations in the winter. When they are on the move, these dogs run free, carrying their own chains tied round their bodies, for during the march they are considered non-aggressive, which is certainly not the case when they are chained up in the transhumant migrants' temporary camps. Then the murderous bass of their barking resounds through the valleys.

Besides the mentioned *goral*-goat, *mirga*-deer and the wild boar of the myths, the game that is hunted these days during a battue, consists of blue sheep (*nāur* or *bhāral*), wild goat (*jāral*), red panda (*thaūwā*), monkey (*iū*), muskdeer (*kasturi*), Himalayan tahr (*tāhr*), wild buffalo, (*rē*) and most frequently the red deer (*ratua*⁸).

Some animal species are hunted in an individualistic technique. Thus, the porcupine (*shinu*) is caught by digging a hole in its trail. As it always follows the same trail, it will inevitably fall into the trap. Once this has happened the hunters throw a pumpkin over its quills and wait for the animal's death. Bears (*nim*) are hunted from a hiding place, when they come into the fields during the months of Saun and Bhāda. The *kalij*-pheasants⁹ are hunted with dogs, who catch and kill

⁸ For some of these species, the Kham Magar terms of which are given in brackets I have been able to trace the scientific taxonomy, i.e. the Caprinae of the Bovidae Family: goral; - *Nemorhaedus goral*; blue sheep - *Pseudois nayaur*; wild goat - *Capra aegagrus*; muskdeer - *Moschus chrysogaster*; tahr - *Hemitragus jemlahicus*; and red deer - *Cervus elaphus*, see: G.B. Schaller: *Mountain Monarchs*, Chicago 1977, p. 21, 346f.

⁹ This and the other species of pheasant are depicted in R.L. Fleming: *Birds of Nepal*, Kathmandu 1976.

them with their own teeth. This differs from the common method by which other species of pheasants, such as the monal and impeyan pheasant (*rĕn*, *dāpĥe*) or other birds such as the chukor partridge (*chyakura*) and the jungle fowl (*ban bhāle*) are hunted: they are usually caught in snap traps, tipping up. The most dangerous animals in the region, leopards and tigers, are shot with automatically released shot guns (*janjar*). After one of these carnivora has killed a cow, a buffalo or a sheep, the people build a wooden fence around the carcass. In this fence they leave a single entrance gate, which is barred by a string tied to the trigger of a nearby hidden gun. When the hungry animal returns to its prey and enters the fenced area, it touches the string and sets off the gun. The method of encircling an area with a fence and leaving only one or a few entrances, where traps are installed, is also employed in thick jungle for all kinds of animals. Such traps are called passes or exits (*pāsā*). Other types of traps are the wooden *kum*, the small string tip-up snap trap called *mālā* for birds, a trap called *rān*, made of wood and horse hair and installed at the habitual waterplaces of mountain pheasants, and the string tip-up snap trap called *chĕ*, which has a mythological significance. It was such a trap that the deranged hunteress Biselme was caught and hung upside down into the underworld.

The shotguns used amongst the Northern Magar (see photo no. 10), mainly muskets named after their region of fabrication, such as Manipura, Pyuthani or Sallyani, naturally do not occur in the mythical tales. Instead, the most traditional hunting tool, the obvious emblem of this activity, the bow and arrow, are repeatedly mentioned. We hear, in both the shamanistic and the folklore episode relating the fight between the seven brothers and the wild boar, how the humans attack the animal: they shoot arrows (*mui*) with their bows (*guleli*). Furthermore, Biselme kills her grandfather, the locust, with an arrow, shot from a hiding place, just as her incestuous brother shoots a deer from the same spot the very next day,—with two arrows. The fixed locality where the hunters in the genealogical version II always waylay the chased-down game, is called Arrow-of-Death, indicating that the mythical game found its death with arrows.

The bows and arrows used at present are most likely of the same make. The bows are fabricated with slit, dry *gopi*-bamboo. The arrows, also made of bamboo with an iron arrow-head (*lāh*), are generally poisoned at the top. An interesting feature, which the Magar bows share with those of other Himalayan ethnic groups for instance, the Rai, is their double usage as catapults for arrows and for pellets, mainly made of clay¹⁰. There is only one slight difference between the arrow bows

¹⁰ A miniature from a 16th cent. manuscript, *Lights of Canopus* in the collection of the Marquess of Bute depicts a stone bow in the hands of a Muslim; juxtaposed

and the pellet bows: The string of the former is made of hemp, the string of the latter is made of *nigalo*-bamboo, with a small circular insertion for the pellet at the centre. One such pellet (*matengrā*) of clay, shot with a bamboo bow, hit, in the second part of the Pudara and Biselme cycle, brother Panju, the pheasant, and this shot brought down to earth the first grains, hidden in the bird's gullet. Clay pellets and stones are also shot with Y-forked catapults.

Bows and arrows are not only employed for the real hunt, they are also used in the ritual activities of the shamans, both as magical weapons and as sacred musical instruments. In all those séances where the ill person's disease is caused by magical arrows, shot at him or her by malignant spirits or witches, real bows and arrows of miniature size are used by the shaman and his assistants, in order to return, *to shoot back*, these causes with poisonous effects. This act of shooting back magical arrows with model size bow and arrow takes place both inside the house of the patient and at a crossroad outside the village in the middle of the night. In one type of séance, called *chāre*, which is ordered when a patient suffers from curvature of the spine, a bow and arrow replace drum and drumstick, used in all other séances, as the metric generator of the shaman's chant, (see photo no. 11).

A hunt in itself is not just a profane affair, as much as the tools of hunting are not just profane utensils. A hunt is inaugurated, carried out and concluded by ritual actions, mainly to please or appease the hunting spirits (*ihiri zyeā*) and other transcendental forces. As a hunting expedition starts off for the high mountains, an offering of chicken blood is first made to the gods of wet and dry soil, *sime* and *bhume*, and to the hunting spirits. This sacrifice is meant to win the supranaturals' favour for a successful hunt. Later on, when the expedition reaches the territory of the forest, a shaman or the hunt leader strokes all members of the party, including all the hunting dogs, with twigs of thorny bushes, in order to immunise them against the possible attacks of forest spirits (*ban zyeā*) and the hunting spirits.

If the hunt has been a successful one, the prey will be dismembered and cut up according to general rules. The jaw of the quarry is taken by the huntsman as a trophy; it is later stored in the rafters of his house. The upper half of the deer, including head and front legs, will be owned exclusively by the union of the hunters, the lower part may go to those people the hunters have encountered during their hunt. Small bits of the heart, liver, lungs, intestines, kidneys and the major parts of the body are then skewered on a Y-forked stick (*kāpche*) and roasted over a campfire, some miles down from the killing place. Once these bits have been

is a photograph of an archer from Nuristan, Afghanistan, taken in 1967, testifying a wide-spread use of this hunting weapon, see: R./S. Michaud: *Mirrors of the Orient*, Boston 1981, 3-4.

cooked tender, the whole stick is offered by the shaman or hunt leader to the hunting spirits, *ihiri zyeā* and other forces that could interfere during the hunt. The officiant names these forces in a prayer-like address, although it must be stressed that Magar people never pray; they even lack a word for this religious activity. The address goes: "You all are getting my offerings here/ Be happy, therefore, *lāgupā* (a hunters' witch of the forest)/ Be happy evil spirit, *bhut*/ Be happy, spirit of the forest, *ban zyeā*/ Be happy god *brāhā*/ Be happy spirit of the dead, *asān* and *masān*/ Be happy *sime*, *bhume*". After the offering is over, the Y-forked stick is taken back to the campfire, where it is consumed by the members of the party, which act is in no way considered as contradictory to the concept of an offering or gift. The same offering spirit prevails in the story of Pударan and Biselme, the incestuous hunting couple. While she, glutton that she is, devours all her share right on the spot, Pударan offers most of his prey to the hunting spirits (*ihiri zyeā*), to the lord of the swamplands (*sepāserong*) and to a witch-class called *kāksi*, together with heart, liver and lungs of their prey. And some of these offerings he brings back, a day later, to the blind father of the girl as a gift. Sharing the prey with others, who have not directly participated in the hunt, is also a feature in one of the genealogical stories: The seven hunting brothers of version I always carry back their prey as a gift for their blind father; the exception being the one occasion, on which they exchange their prey, the roasted wild boar, for a girl. The offering of meat to the spirits and sharing it with co-humans is connected with the idea that killing an animal brings about a disequilibrium in the universe of beings and that the very act of not keeping all the prey in the closed circuit of self, restores some of the original state of balance. At the same time, such an offering is considered a method to prolong the hunter's luck. Indeed, a successful hunt with an appropriate, subsequent offering is always a positive sign for the next day. Thus, the hunt is repeated, as long as the streak of luck lasts. Once it is interrupted, the last successful archer concludes the hunting sequence with a sacrifice of a chicken and the offering of a bottle of raksi (*māḍa*) to the hunting spirits and the gods *sime* and *bhume*, thus leveling out in a final gesture the transcendental round of give and take.

The hunters themselves must be pure. One who has had a recent death in his family or whose wife is with child is considered as *more* or impure. If he, by neglect, goes on a hunt, the most devastating thing may happen to him: He may fall off a cliff and turn into one of the hunter witches (*karbir*, *sobirām* or *purbir*), which in their turn are food for thought on the mythical plane.

It cannot have passed unnoticed that there is one obvious contradiction between the hunting habits of the present day Magar and those of the first mythical hunt, recounted in the shamanistic cycle of the incestuous couple Pударan and Biselme:

the sex of its participants. In the mythical tale the first hunter is Biselme, a woman, whereas today no woman ever goes hunting. On the contrary, women can only be obstructive to the successful execution of this exclusively masculine pastime. For instance, when a woman is pregnant, her husband is barred from hunting. Polluted by the state of his wife, he would not be pure enough for the semi-sacred task of hunting. Why then is the first hunter a hunteress, an amazon? Does that not run counter to the observation that amongst the Magar present day praxis and once-upon-a-time myth complement each other? A closer look at the events of the first hunt will dissolve the seeming contradiction.

It is true: the first arrow shot by man, was an arrow shot by a woman. Moreover it was she, in collaboration with her male companion, who invented bow and arrow, the major tools for the hunt. But what did she shoot with her first arrow? Instead of a deer, she killed her own grandfather, thus committing a capital crime. Consequently, her companion took bow and arrow out of her hands; they inverted their roles and the next day's hunt went well. The man shot a deer. Furthermore, all her behaviour during the first hunt is presented as scandalous. Instead of offering some of her prey to the hunting spirits, she egoistically gulps everything down. Made thirsty by her gluttony, she drinks her companion's urine, and climbing down from a tree, she bares her sex. These semi-incestuous acts are added to her criminal account and as a result she is cast out of her clan, tumbling in madness down into the underworld, where she continues her series of outrageous deeds. In other words, the first hunt has not served her well, nor anybody else. It ends in terrible disaster. Thus, the misogynist message of the myth is, in the end, the same as that of daily praxis, though through a seemingly inverted plot: no women ever on a hunt!

It may be unwise to conclude this essay with an unsolved problem, with a sociological riddle: the question of the Magar clans. But since in this section the relations between mythological information and present day ethnographical data about some of the fundamental activities of the Northern Magar—those of hunting and of agriculture—have been compared, it may be permitted to do so also on the plane of another fundamental issue: not subsistence, but the ideology of group procreation and the identity of such groups. Within the outer limits of the Self and the tribe, the Northern Magar distinguish between a variety of kin-group identities with clearly marked social functions. The smallest of them is the nuclear family, for which the term *jeare*, wife-and-husband, is occasionally employed. More often the term *jān* is heard for this social unit, but *jān* includes more than just the nuclear family: It denominates the extended family of brothers, who usually share a row of adjoining houses with a common roof. The 'house' or more inclusive, this row of

houses is called *zim*, a term also used to label the local, partilineal descent group. In further diachronic extension the patrilineal descent group, *zim*, leads into the patri-clan or *rus*, meaning *bone*. This is the largest standard exogamic unit, although it is not specifically named and it is said that after 14 generations the *bone* can be *broken* (*hād phorā*), i.e. the exogamic prohibition can be neglected. The Magar call this taboo-violation *sex-within-the-bone*, *hād khor*. Amongst the Kulung Rai this act is considered permissible after seven generations, exactly half the number of the Magar. There, *hād phorā* has quasi institutional character, regulating for this small ethnic group the whole clan dynamics, by allowing at such regular intervals the creation of new clans through clan-fission, an inherent option in *breaking the bones*.¹¹

The matrilineal equivalent to the *bone* (*rus*) or patriclan is called *milk* (*nuī*). *Milk* is the matriline-extension in time and space of the matrilineal local descent group called *māiti*. For both the paternal bone-line and the maternal milk-line the Magar employ the neutral term *pankti* i.e. *line*. The Nepali term *māiti*, denominating the matrilineal local descent group, is usually translated with "a married woman's parental home." In Magar parlance the meaning is wider and at the same time sociologically more pointed: it is the label for the *wife-givers*. The label for the *wife-receivers*, on the other side, is *bhānjā*, a term which also covers the concrete meanings of sister's son, daughter's husband, brother's daughter's husband. These terminological hints from the system of appellation tell us, where we are in the system of praxis: The Northern Magar have a kin-matrimonial regime of matrilineal cross-cousin-marriage. A prescriptive system of that kind exchanges its marriagable females always in one direction. Group A gives women to group B, group B to C and C to A. In other words, in order to function as a system, a regime of matrilineal cross-cousin-marriage is minimally constituted by an Ego-group A (*bihāute*), that gives its marriagable girls to a wife-receiving group B (*bhānjā*). Group B is a wife-giver (*māiti*) for C, just as C is a wife-giver (*māiti*) for the Ego-group A. This indirect form of woman exchange, which has been called *circulative connubium* by van Wouden and *échange généralisé* by Lévi-Strauss,¹² can incorporate any number of participant groups, three being the ideal minimum. It is evident, as one watches Magar society in action that these three types of kin-groups *bihāute* (Ego-group), *māiti* (wife-givers) and *bhānjā* (wife-receivers), which in fact are separate local descent groups, are of predominant social importance, not only in regard to marriage, but to

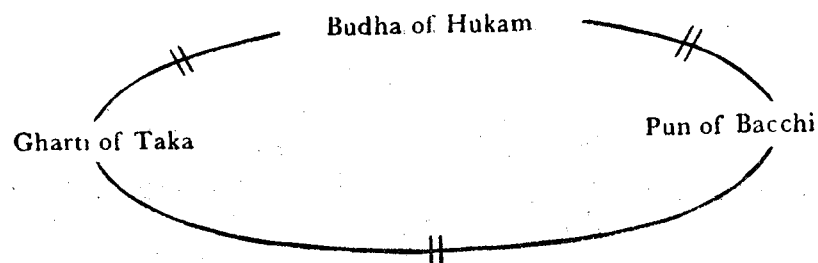
¹¹ C. McDougal: Structure and Division in Kulunge Rai Society, *Kailash* I 1973, p. 212 and in: *The Kulunge Rai*, Kathmandu 1978.

¹² F.A.E. van Wouden: *Sociale Structuurtypen in de Grootte Oost*, Leiden 1935 transl. by R. Needham: *Types of Social Structure in Eastern Indonesia*, Den Haag 1968; C. Lévi-Strauss: *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté*, Paris 1949 (1967)

practically all kinds of conduct within the society. Above the patriline (*rus* or *bone*) that sets the rules for exogamy and the local descent groups that constitute the functional marriage classes (wife-givers, wife-receivers and Ego), — there are *jāt* and *thar*, both porous terms that can be used for the subtribal names such as Gharti, Buḍha, Pun, or for outspokenly exogamous subgroups of the subtribes, such as: Ramjali Buḍha, Sijali Buḍha, Baijali Buḍha, Simjali Buḍha, Haimali Buḍha, Humjali Buḍha, Rumkani Buḍha, Ramjali Pun, Kwāli Gharti, Deopahari Gharti, Sutpahari Gharti. All these eponymic classifiers are derived from place names in Myakdi, Dolpo, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Baglung, Kaski and Humla, and indicate, from where this or that local line originally came from. In addition, the word *jāt* is employed for the Magar as a whole: *Magar jāt*.

After this sketchy rush through some major kin group identities of the Northern Magar and their terms, it is possible to return to the genealogical tales and investigate how they treat the ones they present. In the genealogical version II we are confronted with three subtribal or clan-names, Buḍha, Gharti and Pun, in fact the main ones in the whole area, (a smaller fourth one being Rokha). This trinity of names reminds one automatically of the necessary trinity of marriage-classes in the regime of matrilateral cross-cousin-marriage which the Magar have practiced up to the present with almost schematic purity. One is tempted, therefore, to interpret these three names Gharti, Buḍha and Pun as those not only of the primordial exogamic clans, but also of the primordial three marriage-classes, exchanging in an indirect circulative connubium their females. But the text dissolves these hopes immediately, for we are told that those of the common ancestors that settled down in Hukam were called Buḍha, those that settled down in Taka were called Gharti, and those that emigrated to Bacchi became known under the name of Pun.

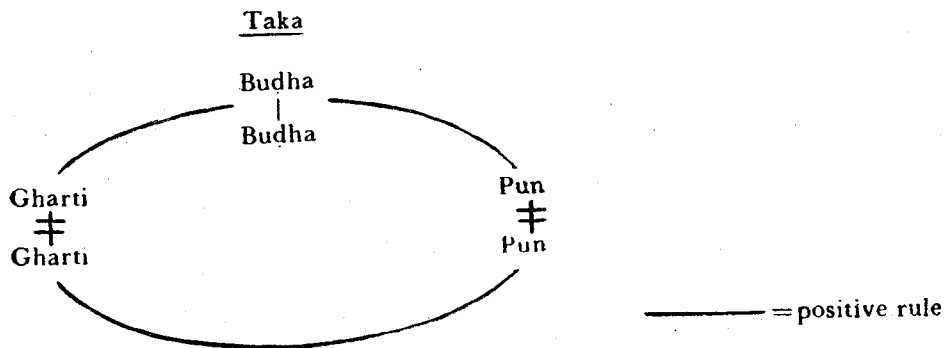
What should that mean? Nothing else but this: The Gharti of Taka, the Pun of Bacchi and the Buḍha of Hukam are one patrigroup, one single clan,—with all the marriage restrictions that go with that classification. That this is so, can be tested with present day marriage statistics: No Gharti from Taka ever marries either a Buḍha girl from Hukam or a Pun girl from Bacchi. Thus, the mythological and factual rule no 1 of regional exogamy can be formalized in the following fashion:



—||— = marriage restriction

A formula like this would be an absurdity, if it went along with an intra-clan marriage restriction and be carried into the infra-structure of the village: for no one could marry anyone any more. This is not so in reality. In fact, the proposal, made a few lines above: that the group names Budha, Gharti and Pun constitute primordial separate clans, is not futile any more, as soon as one steps from the regional platform down to the village level. For on the village level, say of Taka, the trinity's marriage proscription inverts itself into a prescription: inside the village of Taka Gharti should marry Budha or Pun, Budha should marry Pun or Gharti, etc. On the village level, the exogamic rule is restricted to the singular "clans": Gharti cannot marry Gharti, Pun cannot marry Pun and Budha...well, Budha *can* marry Budha. It is not clear, why this irregularity, except that a prototype-marriage of that kind is expessedly reported in one of the genealogical tales. In version I a half-blind Budha gives his daughter in marriage to one of the seven Budha-hunter brothers, in exchange for a wild boar.

If one formalizes this state of affairs on the village level, as for instance of Taka, one gets the following picture, showing how the restrictions on marriage between the three named groups on the regional scale have turned into positive rules on the village level:



In Hukam, I was told, the situation is very much the same as in Taka, whereas Bacchi, predominantly a Pun village, has closed down the option for marriage between Gharti and Budha, in commemoration of a vow of eternal blood-brotherhood, (with a subsequent marriage taboo), entered into several generations ago by each one member of the two groups in question.

What, then, are these named groups of Budha, Gharti and Pun, spoken of in the genealogical myths and regularly referred to in everyday parlance? Are they clans, tribal subgroups or even tribes? The sociological enigma that puzzles the ethnographer of the present day is not solved by the mythical tales; they rather expand its obscurity. Concluding from present day observation one may state the following. Gharti and Pun, on the village level, are practically identical with

patriclans (*rus* or *bone*), displaying a clearly marked rule of exogamy. The Buḍha apparently are not, for Buḍha can marry Buḍha. This either means that in an original clan situation amongst the Buḍha a clan-fission through an intra-clan marriage or *breaking the bone* has taken place, dividing the clan into two, without acknowledging this fact with the creation of new distinct clan-names. Or, and this is indirectly suggested by the genealogical story, version I, the Buḍha have never been an exogamic clan. They may have been a tribe and then, entering into regional and matrimonial contact with the "clans" of the Gharti and Pun, became a subtribe of the Magar, retaining within their own identity intra-tribal marriage permission and externally playing "clan", exchanging women with the Gharti and Pun.

But why, then, is it said that Gharti, Pun and Buḍha, distinct as they are on the village level, originally were one, stemming from a single ancestor of divine extraction, coming out of a rock on the northern side of the present homes of the Northern Magar? Is this just a statement promoting unity amongst the Magar subgroups, be they clans or subtribes? Or, is this posing the philosophical question how diversity comes out of uniformity or oneness, a type of "Adam-question?" Be this as it may, one point can be made in the light of the Magar marriage system. A regime of matrilateral cross-cousin-marriage, as practiced in this tribe, does not need clearly defined exogamic clans, in the large sense of the word; all it needs are clearly defined marriage-classes, be they unnamed patriclans or *rus/bone* or just local descent groups such as the *māiti*, *bhānja*, *bihāute*. And such groups the Magar do have, irrespective of the levels up to which they are exogamous units. What has to be investigated, therefore, in great statistical detail both on the village and on the regional level, are all local descent groups forming marriage classes in the above sense; the exact circles of woman-exchange they form; and the number of possible independant circles. This accomplished, the question of what the Gharti, Pun and Buḍha are sociologically, can be asked again, and the clouds of obscurity hanging over the facts and condensed by the myths, can then be lifted.

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For *Rana Prasad Gharti Magar* whose encyclopaedic memory in his own tribe's heritage was the necessary condition for this essay.

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