The Tharu Women of Sukhrwar

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THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEPAL

volume II part 3

THE THARU WOMEN OF SUKHRWAR

The Status of Women in Nepal

Volume II: FIELD STUDIES
Part 3

THE THARU WOMEN OF SUKHRWAR

DRONE RAJAURE

CEDA
Centre for Economic Development and Administration
Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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FOREWORD

The CEDA Status of Women Project was a multidisciplinary Research endeavor carried out by Tribhuvan University's Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA) under a grant from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The overall purpose of the project as stated in the project agreement between His Majesty's Government and USAID was

> " ... to collect and generate information on the status and roles of a representative range of Nepalese women in order to support planning to facilitate the increased integration of women into the national development process."

To achieve this broad purpose both secondary and primary research was carried out in consecutive phases. Phase I was devoted to collection and analysis of available secondary data on Nepalese women in a number of specific areas which helped the project team to clarify its research objectives for the second phase comprising the field work. It also resulted in the publication of the following monographs comprising the Volume I Background Report on the Status of Women in Nepal:

1. Statistical Profile of Nepalese Women: A Critical Review, Volume I, Part I (by Meena Acharya)

2. Tradition and Change in the Legal Status of Nepalese Women, Volume I, Part 2 (by Lynn Bennett with assistance from Shilu Singh)

3. Institutions Concerning Women in Nepal, Volume I, Part 3 (by Bina Pradhan)

4. Annotated Bibliography on Women in Nepal, Volume I, Part 4 (by Indira M. Shrestha)

5. Integration of Women in Development: The Case of Nepal, Volume I, Part 5 (by Pushkar Raj Reejal)

The present study is the outcome of the Project's Phase II which was intended " ... to develop methodologies and implement pilot socio-economic case studies of women in traditional rural communities." Altogether eight separate village studies on the Status of Women were carried out by the project researchers in the following communities:

Region/District	Community	Researcher
1. Eastern Terai (Dhanusha)	Maithili (Mixed Castes)	Meena Acharya
2. Central Middle Hills (Sindhu Palchowk)	Tamang	Indira M. Shrestha
3. Kathmandu Valley (Lalitpur)	Newar (Jyapu + Others)	Bina Pradhan
4. Central Middle Hills	Parbatiya (Brahman, Chhetri, and low caste Sarki)	Lynn Bennett
5. Western High Mountains (Mustang)	Baragaonle (Tibetan-Speaking People)	Sidney Schuler
6. Eastern Middle Hills (Sankhuwa Sabha)	Lohrung Rai	Charlotte Hardman
7. Far Western Inner-Terai (Dang Deokhuri)	Tharu	Drone Rajaure
8. Far Western Middle Hills (Rolpa)	Kham Magar	Augusta Molnar

Using both in-depth anthropological methods and quantitative survey techniques the researchers gathered comparative data on women's economic role and their status in the family and wider social group. Of particular importance in the project's effort to document the economic contribution of rural women was the observational time allocation study which each researcher conducted as part of his or her fieldwork.

The present monographs are the parts of the Volume II, Status of Women Field Studies Series which includes eight village studies written by the individual researchers. It also consists of a ninth monograph which analyses the aggregate data and summarizes the major findings of the village studies. The ninth monograph is an attempt to

distill the policy implications of the Phase I and Phase II findings and provide guidelines for a National Plan of Action to increase both the productivity and the status of Nepalese women.

It is our sincere hope that this pioneer research work on Status of Nepalese Women will contribute positively towards promoting equality of sexes in the Nepalese society.

All the members of the project team deserve thanks for their admirable research endeavor.

Dr. Govind Ram Agrawal
Executive Director

February, 1981

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project which is one of the first attempts to look at the present status of women in Nepal has been completed with the combined efforts of an inter disciplinary project team. Its success has to be attributed to a large number of people and it is not possible to identify their contribution in a compartmentalized fashion, as the project was quite broad in scope and also of a long duration encompassing about thirty-two months. CEDA would like to express its sincere appreciation to all those who have actively contributed to the successful completion of the project.

The project team had the privilege of working on specific issues with certain individuals and it is felt that their contributions be specially mentioned. The project team was constantly advised by a Board of Advisors consisting of Honorable Mrs. Kamal Rana as Chairperson, who is also the Chairperson of Women's Services Coordination Committee (WSCC). Her continuous interest and help in the project's success is highly appreciated. The other members of the Board, Honorable Dr. Ratna Shumsher Rana and Prof. Upendra Man Malla, Vice Chairman and Member of the National Planning Commission respectively, also provided valuable advice and guidance at different times to the project for which CEDA is greatly obliged.

The project team has worked very hard and it is basically their sincere dedication and commitment that have materialized in the final outputs. CEDA would like to express its special appreciation to Dr. Lynn Bennett who has contributed significantly both as a team member as well as in her capacity as Project Advisor. The other members of the team, Ms. Bina Pradhan, Ms. Meena Acharya, Ms. Indira Shrestha, Mr. Drone Prasad Rajaure, Dr. Augusta Molnar, and Ms. Sidney Schuler have also worked very hard from the beginning of the project to its end. Their individual monographs dealing with the different ethnic communities are the concrete evidence of their dedicated and committed efforts and admirable research endeavor. To all of them CEDA owes its deep gratitude and sincere obligation.

Apart from the team members, several other persons have also assisted the project with their expertise.
Mr. Narendra Shrestha's contribution as programmer, Mr. Shalik Ram Sharma's as statistician, and the contributions of

Dr. Chaitanya Misra, Ms. Padma Shrestha and Ms. Basundhara Dongal in the project are duly acknowledged. Mr. Govinda Sharma, Mr. Vishnu Nepal and Mr. Bishnu Bhakta Shrestha helped in the tabulation of the field data.

Several United States Agency for International Development (USAID) officials have helped in project completion. Mr. Samuel Butterfield, the former Director of USAID to Nepal deserves special appreciation. Mr. Thomas Rose took keen interest in the project and helped in the later part of the project. Dr. Laurie Mailloux's continuous interest and help has been a great source of encouragement in expediting the project work. Mr. John Babylon and Mr. William Nance also helped significantly at different times.

On behalf of the project team and myself, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to our present Executive Director, Dr. Govind Ram Agrawal, who has taken keen interest and has been a constant source of inspiration for the project, right from the time of his taking over the leadership of CEDA. His academic and intellectual input along with the kind of administrative support so much required for the successful completion of the project is deeply and sincerely appreciated. Mr. Sant Bahadur Gurung, Deputy Director of our Centre has always been a great help to us at different, and sometimes difficult, times. Dr. Khem B. Bista and Mr. Madhukar Shumsher Rana, our former Executive Directors helped us extensively during their tenure of office, and we owe a deep sense of gratitude to them. Dr. Puskar Raj Reejal also contributed to the project by taking over the Directorship of the project at the earlier period and Mr. Devendra Raj Upadhaya's contribution as consultant to the project is also appreciated.

The project team also received substantial help from Mr. Devendra Gurung, Ms. Pavitra Thapa, Mr. Iswor Narayan Manandhar and Mr. Manoj Shrestha in their different capacities. Mr. Dibya Giri deserves our special acknowledgement for his patience and hard work in typing and retyping the manuscripts. Mr. Prem Rai's contribution for the project is also duly acknowledged.

Apart from the contributions of the above mentioned persons, several other individuals and institutions have helped us. The CEDA administration and other professional colleagues at our Centre are duly acknowledged in a collective way for their help and assistance.

The project materialized due to the sincere desire on the part of His Majesty's Government for finding out the present status of Nepalese women and to suggest measures for improvements. This challenging task was entrusted to CEDA for which we owe a deep and sincere gratitude to His Majesty's Government. We hope and believe that the output will be of immense help in designing and implementing the future programmes aimed at the upliftment of the status of women in our country.

Last, but not the least, the United States Agency for International Development Mission to Nepal deserves special thanks and appreciation for funding this research.

Mr. Bhavani Dhungana
Project Director

February 1981

METHODOLOGICAL FOREWORD[1]

Research Objectives and Theoretical Perspectives

This monograph is part of the Volume II field studies series which represents the final outcome of a three year research endeavor on the Status of Women in Nepal. As its name indicates the general objective of the project was to analyse and evaluate the role and status of Nepalese women. In particular the project sought to focus on rural women and their relation to the development process. These specific objectives entailed first of all, recognition of the fact that Nepalese women are not a homogeneous group and secondly, a commitment to document as accurately as possible the actual contribution women make to the rural economy. The result was a research design involving two distinct phases. The first phase was to be an analysis based on existing data of the macro-level variables affecting the over-all socio-economic position of women in Nepal. This phase was completed with the publication of five monographs in Volume I.

The second phase was planned as a series of intensive field studies on the dynamics of the day to day life of village women and the diversity of ways in which women's roles and status have been defined by different ethnic groups within Nepal. Specifically, the objectives set for the second phase were to investigate those areas where the existing information on rural women was either inadequate or inaccurate.

Extended field studies were carried out to collect both qualitative and quantitative data on women in eight different communities in various parts of Nepal. The development of a unified methodological approach to be used in these eight studies was made simpler by the fact that despite our varied

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[1]For fuller discussion of the theoretical perspectives on which the Status of Women study is based and of the methodologies used in data collection see Chapter I of the Aggregate Analysis (Acharya and Bennett), The Rural Women of Nepal: An Aggregate Analysis and Summary of Eight Village Studies, Volume II, Part 9, C.E.D.A., Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu. (1981).

backgrounds as economists, linguists and anthropologists all the project team members shared the basic theoretical assumption that the concept of "women's status" could not be treated as a unitary construct having a single explanation. (See, Aggregate Analysis).

It was one of our central hypotheses that, despite the title of our project, it is misleading to speak of the status of women -- even within a single group. We expected that if we looked carefully enough, our studies of the various communities in Nepal would all reveal a good deal of ambiguity in the relations between the sexes. Specifically, we expected that women's status vis-a-vis men (in a given community) would vary with women's many roles and the contexts within which these roles are enacted. Since status is a function of the power, authority and prestige attached to a given role by society and since everyone, male and female, must enact a number of different roles in the course of a lifetime (or indeed in a single day or even simultaneously at a given instant), we would expect the status of any one individual -- or any social category like male or female -- to be a complex configuration arising from these many roles and the various powers, limitations and the perceived values assigned to them.

From the point of view of development, it is our conviction that an effective integration of rural women into the development process must begin with a clear-eyed vision and an unbiased understanding of who these women are, what they do and what they want. We must know not only where they are vulnerable and in need of support, but also where they are strong so that this strength can be further encouraged.

Research Design and Methodology

To address these issues we needed an approach that would allow us to erbrace the complexity of the phenomena of sexual stratification which we expected to -- and did -- encounter during our extended fieldwork. We decided that for purposes of data collection and for the initial stages of analysis we would distinguish the following "dimensions" of women's status:

1. Economic
2. Familial
3. Political/Community

4. Educational
5. Legal
6. Ideological/Religious

In formulating these "dimensions" we were influenced by Giele's (1976) typology of six major life options or areas of control or access to opportunity as determinants of women's over-all status. We modified the categories to make our "dimensions" more appropriate to the context of village Nepal and more useful to our basic focus on development issues. Yet we knew from the beginning -- and it became even clearer during the course of fieldwork -- that all the dimensions overlapped in numerous ways and that the divisions we had made were ultimately arbitrary. Almost all of us have ended up reorganizing the dimensions in the course of analyzing and writing up the data from our respective villages. Perhaps the main value of the "six dimensions" was to encourage each of us to look into aspects of village reality and the problem of women's status that are not usually dealt with in detail by our particular discipline.

In order to capture the diversity of the Nepalese situation and the multiplicity of factors affecting women's status it was necessary to make several departures from convention in our approach to the collection of field data.

The first departure was in the weight given to the cultural variable in the choice of survey sites. It is our conviction that the gender systems which essentially define male and female and their roles and relationships to each other within a particular ethnic group are socially constructed. This is not to deny that biological and ecological factors influence women's status and the relationship between the sexes. But it does mean that we must look beyond such factors if we are to either to account for the marked cross cultural variation in human gender systems or to fully comprehend the dynamics of the female role in any particular culture.

This conviction led the research team to attempt to cover in depth as many cultural groupings as possible within the resource constraint of the project. As a result eight communities were covered in the second phase.

Despite our emphasis on the importance of cultural factors we did not want to underestimate the role of economic

variables in the determination of women's status. It has been one of our hypotheses that substantial improvement in the economic status of a household might well be accompanied by an actual deterioration of status of women vis-a-vis men in that household (Acharya 1979). Therefore, for analytical purposes, we have classified all our quantitative data according to the economic strata. By inter-strata comparison we hoped to ascertain the role of economic factors in determining the status of women versus men.

All the sample households have been classified into three economic strata: top, middle and bottom. Income rather than property has been taken as a basis for this economic stratification. We considered income to be a better indicator of the actual economic well-being of the household than land holding since land is only one of the sources of income. In fact, although the landed gentry retains much of its former prestige and influence as a vestige of traditional systems of social stratification, in many parts of Nepal the landed gentry appears to be losing its economic predominance. Members of the emerging trading or bourgeois class are in many cases economically better off than the landed gentry. Moreover, classification of households according to land holdings alone would not capture the economic differentiation between landless but relatively well off businessmen and professionals on the one hand, and marginal farmers and landless laborers on the other.

Another consideration in economic classification in the current analysis is that the sample households have been stratified according to village economic standards and not national or international standards. The economic stratum of each household was determined on the basis of household production and income data. Using the average 1977 per capita income for Nepal of Rs. 1320 or $ 110 given by the Asian Development Bank (Key Indicators of Developing Member Countries of ADB, Economic Office, Asian Development Bank, Vol. X, No. 1, April 1979, p. 157) as the mid-point we established the middle stratum as being all those households whose per capita income was within 25% (or Rs. 330) below or above the national average. Thus our cut off points were

Rs. 990 for the bottom stratum and Rs. 1650 for the top stratum.[1]

The second methodological departure in our research design was the decision to use a balanced two pronged approach incorporating both in-depth anthropological and quantitative survey methods. This was a natural outcome of our equal concern to understand the cultural and the economic variables affecting women's status.

Qualitative Data Gathering

The most important element in our approach to qualitative data gathering was simply living with the people we wanted to learn about. Each researcher became a resident of the community he or she was studying, living with a local family and practicing techniques of participant observation and the unstructured interview with key informants. The period of fieldwork ranged from six months to several years (in the case of the co-operating anthropologists who had already been engaged in their own dissertation research in their communities). All the team members were fluent in Nepali and five of them were also able to communicate easily in the local language as well. This they reported was especially important, not only because it enabled them to understand casual comments and conversation in the family

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[1] Interestingly in 7 out of the eight villages this definition gave us the expected distribution between bottom, middle and top strata households. In Kagbeni however, all but two of the households were found to be in the top stratum. Although the people of Kagbeni do appear to be doing relatively well economically, it should also be remembered that the prices of basic food supplies and other commodities are very much higher in Kagbeni than in other areas studied so the increased income may not necessarily result in increased purchasing power or a higher standard of living. For the village monograph, the Kagbeni population was re-classified by the researcher into 3 economic strata applicable to the village. For aggregate analysis the original strata definition was retained.

where they lived, but also because in several villages[1] communication with women in particular would have been severely limited had the researcher not been able to speak the local language.

To guide the collection of descriptive, in-depth information a Field Manual was prepared containing sets of "leading questions" for each of the six dimensions. The Manual also contained "Key Informant Schedules" on certain topics such as child rearing practices,[2] legal awareness and kinship terminology where the number of people interviewed was not as important as having good rapport with the informant and being a sensitive listener. The Manual also included practical suggestions about how researchers might go about indirectly collecting certain types of sensitive information as well as how to informally cross check the quantitative survey data which they were also responsible for gathering.[3]

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[1]The Maithili speaking women in Sirsia, and the Tharu women in particular were unfamiliar with Nepali. Kham speaking Magar women, the Lohorung Rai, Newar and Tamang women and the Tibetian speaking women of Baragaon were fluent in Nepali but of course preferred communicating in their own language. Nepali was the mother tongue in only one of the 8 sites.

[2]The schedule used by the team was a revised version of one prepared by Mrs. Basundara Dungal of CNAS and generously shared with the Status of Women team.

[3]For further background on the type of qualitative data sought and approaches used see Field Manual: Guidelines for the Collection and Analysis of Data on the Status of Women in Rural Nepalese Communities, Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Kathmandu, Nepal. 1979. (Bound Mimeo).

Quantitative Data Collection

Site Selection and Sample Size

The sites for the eight village studies were purposively selected according to ethnic group and geographic area (Mountain, Hill and Terai). The map (Figure i) shows the locations of the research sites and the communities included.

Within each village[1] a random sample of 35 households was selected making a total of 280 households in all. In three of the villages (Sirsia, Bulu and Bakundol) which were of mixed caste populations the sample was stratified by caste. Within this sample a sub-sample of 24 households in each village was randomly selected for the observational time allocation study.[2] Households were defined to include all members who ate from the same kitchen[3] and who had lived in the village for at least 6 months during the previous year.

Survey Instruments

The team developed a series of survey instruments to generate quantitative information on the following aspects of the sample population:

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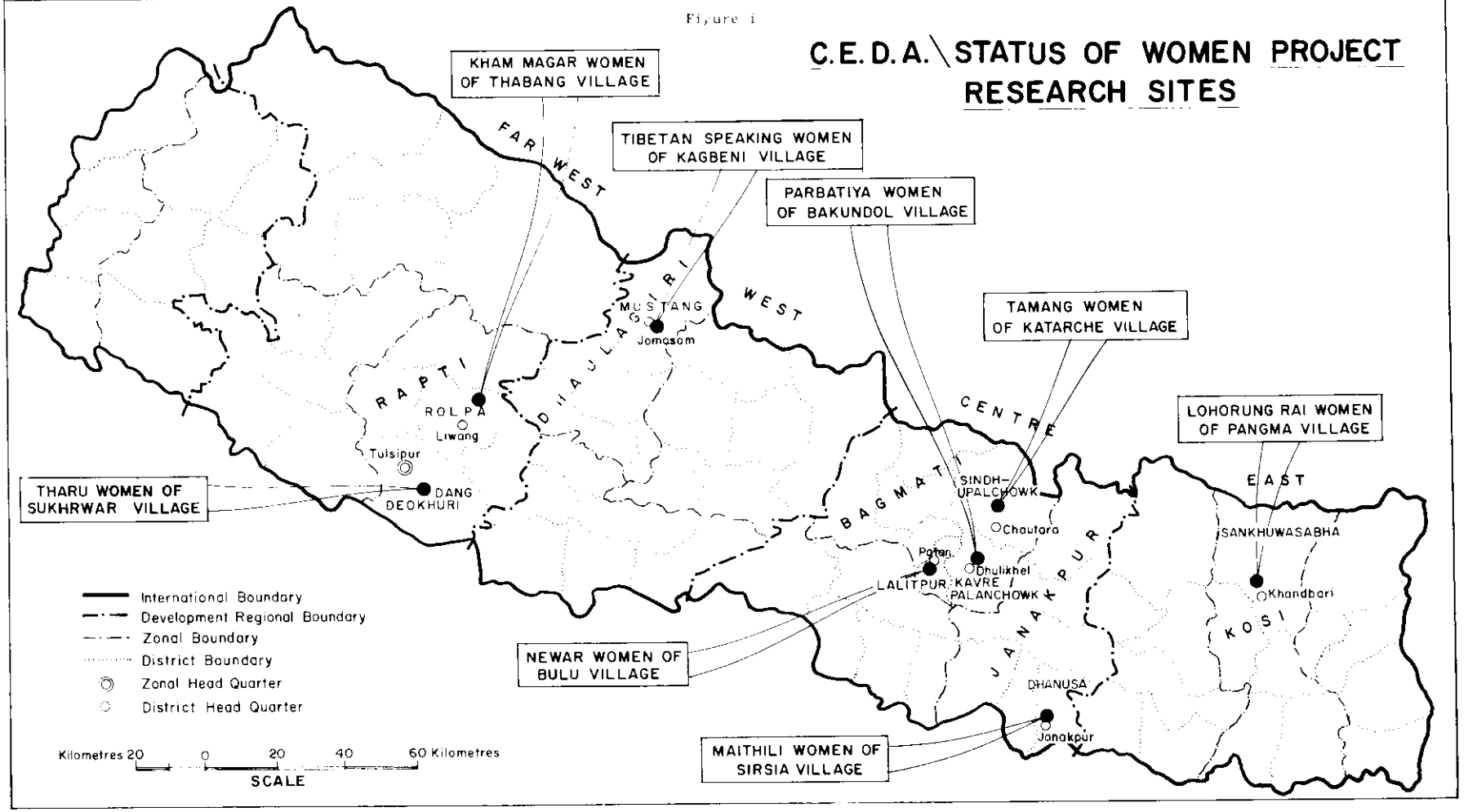
[1] By "village" we refer to a traditional residential unit locally known and named as such rather than to the larger administrative unit or panchayat which generally consists of several villages and is usually too large and unwieldy to study in depth.

[2] A smaller sample was selected for the Time Allocation Study because our methodology required that certain sub-groups of households be visited on alternate days within the period of one hour. We were concerned that we would not be able to visit more than six households within an hour so we limited the sample to 4 groups of six or 24 households. With the wisdom of hindsight we now realize that we could have visited more houses in an hour and included the entire 35 household population in the Time Allocation Study.

[3] In the case of communities like the Kham Magar where some family members spent extended periods in the families' high pasture dwelling, eating from the same kitchen meant sharing household food supplies.

Figure 1


C.E.D.A. \ STATUS OF WOMEN PROJECT
RESEARCH SITES
KHAM MAGAR WOMEN OF THABANG VILLAGE
TIBETAN SPEAKING WOMEN OF KAGBENI VILLAGE
PARBATIYA WOMEN OF BAKUNDOL VILLAGE
TAMANG WOMEN OF KATARCHE VILLAGE
LOHORUNG RAI WOMEN OF PANGMA VILLAGE
THARU WOMEN OF SUKHRWAR VILLAGE
NEWAR WOMEN OF BULU VILLAGE
MAITHILI WOMEN OF SIRSIA VILLAGE
FAR WEST
MID WEST
CENTRE
EAST
RAPTI
DHAULAGIRI
BAGMATI
JANAKPUR
KOSI
MUSTANG
Jomosom
ROLPA
Liwang
Tulsipur
DANG DEOKHURI
SINDHUPALCHOWK
Chautara
Patan
Dhulikhel
LALITPUR
KAVRE PALANCHOWK
SANKHUWASABHA
Khandbari
DHANUSA
Janakpur
International Boundary
Development Regional Boundary
Zonal Boundary
District Boundary
Zonal Head Quarter
District Head Quarter
Kilometres 20 0 20 40 60 Kilometres
SCALE

1. Demographic Variables: Besides the conventional demographic data on individuals such as sex, age, marital status, fertility history, education and literacy, this set of information includes data on marital history, type and forms of marriage, short-term mobility of household members as well as each individual's kinship position (relation to the household head) within the family. At the household level, information has been collected on the caste/clan and lineage identity of the households, composition of the households and family structure.

2. Time Use Data: Observational time use data was collected for all members of the sample households. (To be discussed below).

3. Income and Production: An attempt was made to capture the total household production with a detailed structured set of schedules matching the time-use categories. Five schedules were used each on different categories of income namely, agricultural production, industrial products and processed food, other production, (such as kitchen gardening, hunting and gathering) income from capital assets and wage/salary and income transfers.

4. Household Assets: The schedule on property holdings included questions on household property as well as personal property. It also included questions on rights of disposal of joint family property. The schedule was devised in detail to capture all likely items of household and personal assets including conventional items like land and animals, cash bank deposits as well as jewellery and valuable clothing, household utensils, furniture etc. There was also a schedule on women's independent income and their use of these earnings.

5. Credit: Access to and use of credit by men and women.

6. Employment: Employment opportunities and attitudes toward different kinds of work and employment outside the home differentiated by sex.

7. Exchanges at Marriage: Exchanges of cash, goods and labor between affinal families as part of the formalization of marriage.

8. Literacy and Education Levels: Educational attainment and attitudes to male and female education.

9. Social Images: Male/Female stereotypes and qualities appreciated in brides and grooms.

10. Women's Political Consciousness and Community Participation: Awareness of local, district and national political figures, voting records, panchayat meeting attendance, attitudes toward and involvement in extension and development activities.

11. Household Decision Making: This included seven different schedules covering decision making in the following areas: a) Household labor allocation, b) Agriculture, c) Cash and kind expenditure (food, gifts, travel, medicine etc.), d) Investment, e) Borrowing, f) Disposal of family food production, g) Disposal of other family resources.

It should be mentioned that data collection on personal property was problematic but instructive. In the process of interviewing we learned that the concept of "personal property" was ambiguous and irrelevant to the villagers. The data on exchanges in marriage were also found to be too complex for quantification in the way we had envisioned.

The project's questionnaires on decision making represent another innovation in data collection techniques. In these forms we avoided general questions such as "who makes decisions about buying clothing ?" Instead for each category of decision we asked what particular transactions or purchases had taken place in the past two weeks, month or year (depending on how important and frequent the type of transaction). After writing down the particular item decided (i.e. the sale of a hen, the taking of Rs. 500 loan or the purchase of a new cooking pot), we then asked questions about the stages of the decision making process. For each decision made we asked who had initiated it or suggested the idea, who had been consulted, who had finally executed the decision (and in the process decided the amount of money to spend for the purchase or to accept for the sale) and who if anyone had subsequently disagreed with the decision made. Since we are particularly interested in women's role in decision making and knew that in most communities men would be the culturally accepted "decision makers" in most spheres, we specifically administered this series to adult women -- trying whenever we could to talk to them when senior males were not present.

The fourth and most important departure from convention was our attempt to capture the full subsistence production of the household. The inadequacy of conventional statistics for the measurement of household production and subsequently, the contribution of women to household subsistence in developing countries, has been discussed by various authors (Boserup 1970, Lele 1975). Acharya (1979) discussed these issues in the specific context of Nepal in Volume I, Part 1 of the present Status of Women Project. For the field studies we tried to capture physical production within the household to the maximum extent. This is reflected in the detailed schedules on household production and food processing. Moreover we realize the importance of other activities within the household for the maintenance and reproduction of the household and have generated data on the time use patterns of all members within the household.

Collection of data on production of physical goods involved problems of valuation for aggregation. There are several alternative methods by which these goods can be valued. Most writers however, agree that for valuation of physical goods the use of market price or replacement cost is best. Since we had no intention of valuing the services produced within the household (i.e. services such as a mother's care for her own children for which we do not feel economic valuation is appropriate or feasible),we adopted a combination of first and third methods in valuation of the goods produced for household consumption. Traded goods were valued at the prevailing market price. Since much of the food processing involved home produced raw materials, the following procedure was adopted for the valuation of food processing done at home. The market cost of raw materials (e.g. paddy) and cash and kind cost involved in processing (milling charges if any) were deducted from the total market value of processed good (husked rice in this case) and the difference taken as the income generated by food processing

within the household.[1]

Non-traded goods like dried green vegetables were valued at the price of the cheapest vegetable in the off-season. Thus a conservative replacement cost approach was adopted for valuation of these goods.

The Time Allocation Study (TAS)

The Time Allocation Study (TAS) was in many ways the central component of the project's attempt to assess the actual economic contribution of rural women. Analysis of the available macro-level statistics, such as for example, labor force participation rates, in the first phase of the project (Acharya, 1979) revealed the inadequacy of conventional statistics for the assessment of women's real economic role in Nepalese villages. Therefore, in order to support long range economic planning, to stimulate the reformulation of government policy on women and to provide the kind of detailed, area specific information necessary for the incorporation of women into rural development programs, the team decided that micro-level data on women's work should be gathered to supplement the existing national level statistics.

We were particularly interested in the non-market, subsistence sector of the economy: the sector which is least amenable to conventional modes of economic measurement and where we hypothesized women's input to be the greatest.

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[1] It should be noted that the value added income from food processing activities such as liquor making, grinding, husking etc. was not included in the household income calculations used for determining economic strata. This is because the Asian Development Bank's per capita income figure used as a median for our stratification procedure was not based on such detailed accounting of home production income. The considerable amount of such income earned by these activities would have inflated the per capita income of the sample households relative to the national average.

This led us to focus on the household and to attempt to measure how its members — young and old, male and female — use their time in productive versus reproductive activities. In fact, we felt that the whole question of what is "productive" activity -- the whole definition of work itself -- needed to be reassessed on the basis of fresh observation of what village families do with their time to meet and if possible to surpass, their subsistence needs.

We adopted our methodology from an unpublished paper by Johnson (1974)[1] who had used the "spot check" technique of randomly timed household observations to gather time allocation data on the Machiguenga community in South America. This method may be described in the following stages:

1. Preparation of a detailed list of activities and their definitions is the first step in any attempt towards data collection on time allocation. A structured list of activities is a must for preserving uniformity in the definition of activities. Our list included 97 activities classified in 12 major categories.[2]

2. Selection of the sample households in the survey sites (which had already been selected as discussed above) was the next step. In villages with strict caste distinctions the households were classified according to the caste for sampling purposes and a random selection of households made within each group. Thus the caste distribution of the village households was also reflected in the sample distribution.

3. These 24 sample households were divided into four groups (A, B, C & D) of six households each. Each group consisted of six households because that was thought to be the maximum number of households which could be visited by the researchers

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[1]The findings of this study appeared in published form in 1975 as "Time Allocation in a Machiguenga Community" IN Ethnology 14:301-10.

[2]For complete list of all 97 sub-activities see Field Manual (CEDA 1979), Appendix VI or The Rural Women of Nepal: An Aggregate Analysis and Summary of Eight Village Studies, Vol. II, Part 9. (Acharya and Bennett, 1981).

within the specified hour. The researchers visited two groups of households each day at two different hours which were determined in advance by random selection. Each group of households was thus visited on alternative days for a period of six months in four villages and one year in another four villages.

We had wanted to cover the full agricultural cycle for all the village studies to obtain a complete record of the seasonal variation in women's and men's workloads. However, because of the limited time and funding available, the CEDA staff team members working in Sirsia, Sukrawar, Bulu and Katarche were only able to observe their sample households over a six month period. Fortunately we were able to time the field research to encompass most of the agricultural busy season and a portion of the winter slack season. The Kagbeni study was carried out over an eight month[1] period and the remaining three studies (in Thabang, Pangma and Bakundol) cover a full year.

The hours of daily visits for each group of households were selected randomly from within the universe of a 16 hour (4 a.m. to 8 p.m.)[2] day for 26 weeks. Thus each

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[1]This study was planned to cover a full year but had to be suspended when the research assistant, having been mistaken for one of the parties in a local faction, was murdered. His death was not related in any way to his role as a research assistant and theoretically someone else could have been trained to carry on the work. However, by the time the general shock and disruption caused by the murder had subsided in the community there had already been too long a gap in the data collection and the principal researcher decided to suspend the study.

[2]In Kagbeni the researcher was unable to visit families before six a.m. because of the large Tibetian mastifs which are let loose at night to protect households against thieves. Only after they are chained in the morning is it feasible to venture out and visit homes. Therefore the period of observation for this village was only 14 hours. Similarly the researcher in Sukhrawar village was able to begin his observation at 5 a.m. and covered only a 15 hour period. The reason we set our starting time so early is that we knew that in many communities women grind their flour at this time and also that during the summer months both men and women may begin work in the fields well before 6 a.m.

household was visited 78 times in six month studies and 156 times in one year studies. Total number of households covered in eight villages was 192. (For details on parameters of each field study see attached Figure ii).

4. The field workers were provided with Form 'A' (attached) and Code Sheets. Their job was to visit the households during the pre-determined hours (a chart of which was provided to them) and check the appropriate box on the Form 'A'.[1] Form 'A' has a precoded and predefined activity list on the vertical column and person code of the household members on the horizontal line. Field workers were asked to write the name of the household members in the horizontal line against appropriate person codes before visiting the households. (For more detailed discussion, see Aggregate Analysis).

The data collected by this method represented the frequency of observations of a given activity within the time horizon used. This was taken as the frequency of time distribution and the resulting time allocation data derived. There is an explicit assumption in this jump (which is supported by statistical probability) that if people devote in general more time to activity A than to activity B, people will be observed more times performing activity A than B. This data does not provide information on time intensity of operation A compared to operation B.

In other words, it was assumed if people spend more time cooking than washing their hands, we would encounter more people who were cooking at the moment of our spot check than people who were washing their hands. This assumption is valid provided the group of households being visited within the hour are more or less homogeneous in their major activity pattern.

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[1]As with Johnson's study our aim was to record "what each member of the household was doing before they became aware of our presence .... When members were absent, but nearby we went to observe them -- otherwise we relied on informant testimony about the activities of absent members, verifying where possible". Researchers report that other family members generally gave an accurate account of what members were doing.

TABLE i

PARAMETERS OF RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE CEDA/STATUS OF WOMEN TIME ALLOCATION STUDIES

	Code No.	115	121	123	124	226	228	237	239	All Villages
	Village	KAGBENI	PANGMA	THABANG	BAKUNDOL	BULU	KATARCHE	SUKRAWAR	SIRSTA	
	Ethnic Group	Baragaonle	Lohorung Rai	Kham Magar	Parbatiya	Newar	Tamang	Tharu	Maithili	
1.	Daily period from which observation points were randomly chosen	14 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	16 hrs.	15 hrs.	16 hrs.	Varies
2.	Number of months observed	8 mo. (34 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	12 mo. (52 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	6 mo. (26 wks.)	Varies
3.	Starting Dates	1 Jan. 78	26 Feb. 78	27 Feb. 78	26 Feb. 78	1 Aug. 78	4 Aug. 78	25 Jan. 79	31 Jul. 78	
4.	Number of Sample households	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	192
5.	Sample population for TAS study	110	123	133	146	115	119	307	168	1221
6.	Observation points per week per household	3	3	3*	3	3	3	3	3	3 random times per week
7.	Total observations per person in each village	(34x3) 102	(52x3) 156	(52x3) 156	(52x3) 156	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	(26x3) 78	Varies
8.	Approximate total number of observations per village	11220	19188	20748	22776	8970	9282	23946	13104	129234

* Dr. Molnar the Researcher working in Thabang actually made 6 visits a week to each household and collected twice the number of observations on each individual. This "double data" however, has not been included in the aggregate study. Through an analysis of this data at a future time the Researcher hopes to evaluate whether an increased number of observation points has any affect on the time allocation patterns that emerge.

Form A

Daily Activities

Village No. [ ] Household No. [ ] Month [ ] Date [ ] Hour [ ]

Activity Code and Description	Person Code and Name	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	-
Code	Activity										
01010											
01020	Animal Husbandry										
	Agriculture										

Monograph Content and Format

Although in a certain sense the Field Manual and the quantitative survey instruments provided a broad analytical framework for the data collection effort, the extent of the analytical uniformity intended for the village studies should perhaps be clarified. This is especially necessary with regard to the qualitative aspect where a great deal of flexibility in terms of both data collection and interpretation was expected and in fact, encouraged. The Field Manual was intended to ensure that certain basic information was gathered on all six "dimensions" while allowing the individual researchers to concentrate their attention on those areas which particularly interested them or which emerged as central to understanding the status of women in the community where they worked. Thus each team member has organized his or her material in a different way to address those theoretical issues which he or she felt to be the most important from among those discussed in the Manual.

The quantitative data gathered through the questionnaires and schedules were of course uniform for all villages. The same surveys were administered at each research site and a set of standard tabulations were prepared for all villages. Nevertheless, the final decision as to which statistics or tables to incorporate in each monograph and how to interpret them was left to the individual author. Some have relied heavily on their quantitative data and in the course of their analysis developed new ways to present it in tabular or graph form. Others have preferred to concentrate on the presentation and analysis of their qualitative data gathered through participant observation. To facilitate comparison between the villages a standard set of tables on demographic and socio-economic aspects of each community have been included in the Appendices of the summary and aggregate analysis monograph.

Research Team

Status of Women Project

CEDA

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LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF MAPS AND FIGURES

MAPS

FIGURES

LIST OF PHOTOS

* All photos are by Ane Haaland except those marked by * which are by Drone Rajaure.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Village Setting

The village chosen for the main part of this study of the Tharus is Sukhrwar, in Ward 7 of Saudiyar Village Panchayat of Dang Deokhuri District in Far-Western Nepal. I selected this village because I already knew the villagers and had established a good rapport with them during previous research there.* However, since Sukhrwar contains only twenty-nine Tharu households, I carried out some of the field research for this study also in Kanarrya, a village in another ward of the same village panchayat, about thirty minutes walk away from Sukhrwar. In Kanarrya, six households out of a total of twenty were randomly selected, bringing the total number of households covered in the questionnaire survey of this study to thirty five. The main reason for choosing Kanarrya was its close relationship with Sukhrwar. Many people in Sukhrwar, including my two field assistants, have relatives there. Intermarriages are frequent between the two villages. Borrowing and lending money, bartering farm products, and mutual exchanges of gifts on certain occasions are also frequent between the people of these two villages. Some of the educated Tharu of Sukhrwar also give advice to the Kanarrya Tharu on the operation of different district-level administrative offices, such as those involved with land, revenue and forests. These villages, along with a few others nearby, are also co-owners of the main irrigation canal. For the maintenance and management of the canal there is a committee, headed by the village-chief (mahatau) of Sukhrwar. I have restricted most of the descriptive parts of this monograph to Sukhrwar, since this is the village I know best and since it includes the major portion of the sample households. But most of the points raised in the following chapters reflect the situation in Kanarrya as well. An elderly informant told me (and this was confirmed by other villagers) that Sukhrwar village derived its name from the

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* The earlier field work was done (i) October-March (1973-74) for my M.A. dissertation on the Dangdeokhuri Tharu and (ii) December 1978 for the Tharu case study for the UNICEF sponsored "Status of Children in Nepal" research project.

word 'sukkhā', meaning 'dry' or 'drought'. According to this informant, in the old days most of the fields of Sukhrwar were rain-fed and dry most of the time. Thus the village became known as Sukhrwar i.e. a dry settlement or a dry hamlet. But according to this story, the meaning and the sense of the term Sukhrwar changed into 'a settlement or hamlet of happiness' (i.e. 'sukh' or 'sukkha', meaning 'happiness') when the villagers, with the help of the people of other neighboring villages, dug a canal and brought water for irrigation to the village.

The Ethnographic Setting

My presence in the village did not disturb the villagers since most of them had become familiar and friendly with me during my earlier field work. Quite often they came to my room to smoke cigarettes, drink tea and listen to Tharu songs, which I had recorded with my tape recorder. They also used to invite me to drink local beer or to taste Tharu roti (bread) during festivals. Often they brought me small gifts such as pigeons, fish, fruit, yogurt. A few small children, however, seemed to have some suspicions about me at the beginning of my work since some of them kept their distance from me. Perhaps it was because I never did any of the jobs other men did. It might also have been due to the influence of their mothers, who sometimes called me lāu lāu* in front of their young children. After some time though, my frequent visits and interactions with the villagers, along with the distribution of sweets to the children, helped in eradicating the children's fear of me as a lāu lāu.

During my field work, I stayed in a house that belonged to the tribal chief of the village. The house had been recently built and was non-Tharu in shape and construction. This house was conveniently located a short distance (about two minutes walk) from the main village and was more or less vacant before I moved in.

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* The term 'lāu lāu' applies to a suspicious stranger especially to a stranger associated with strange clothing and objects. Tharu mothers sometimes invoke 'lāu lāu' to stop their children from weeping or doing mischief, as some of the 'lāu lāu' are said to snatch away young babies.

However, during the evenings a portion of the house was used by about forty students (five or six of whom were girls) for a literacy class organized by the villagers.

I relied on local supplies for my day-to-day needs. Certain things, like spices, sugar, salt, kerosene and tea, were available in a local shop started recently by a Brahman of a neighbouring village. From the villagers' point of view, the most unusual thing that I had brought with me was my pressure stove, which was very useful not only in saving cooking time, but also because the thatched Tharu houses are vulnerable to fire.

During the early weeks of my field work the heavy monsoon rains presented many practical problems. On one occasion the jeep bringing me into the village was almost washed away in a sudden flood. Many times I had to endure a six-hour barefoot walk to Tulsipur airport, a hard job in the mud and rain. This walk became particularly difficult on one occasion when I had to cross one of the rivers between the village and the airport which was waist-deep after recent rains.

In the summer season it was extremely hot. This made people tired, and the collection of information was at times very difficult. I had already established a good relationship with the villagers in the past, so those who knew me came frequently to my lodging. During this period, however, they were too busy harvesting their crops and had little time to visit. From early morning till late evening most of the people (men, women and older children) were working in their fields. Only a few old or ill people, very young children or those responsible for cooking the mid-day meal remained in the village. During the late morning, when it was too hot to do outdoor farm jobs, people came back for their meal, after which most of the men and some old women went to sleep for one or two hours. Later, when the heat was less intense, they would go back to their fields. Women who did not sleep did the indoor household jobs, such as processing food and cleaning utensils. Whenever I could, I interviewed those few women who stayed in their homes longer than the others to cook and clean. In this way I was able to collect a few life-histories and other information regarding the lives and problems of Tharu women. It was easy to gather young boys and bachelors at my place in the late evenings. But I had difficulty in getting my adult female informants to visit, for they had work to do in their homes and they were shy. In the evening sometimes I used to go to their homes and try to create an environment suitable for

interviews, starting out with everyday topics of conversation which were familiar to them. Since I come from the same area and since Tharu is my second language, it was easy for me to mix with the villagers and discuss things of interest to them. When I thought people were more relaxed, I slowly switched the conversation to topics I wanted them to talk about in order to collect material for the study.

The most difficult part of my field work was the completion of the questionnaires. The type of information to be collected required that the questionnaires be filled in private, as the presence of other members of the household or of neighbors and relatives could make a difference in the answers of the respondents. However, privacy was very difficult to arrange. Very often a respondent's family members, neighbors and friends were around during interviews. It was very hard to keep my respondent's answers free from the censors or comments of those 'volunteers' who served as complementary informants. Moreover, the respondents often broke the sequence of questions when their household work interfered. At these times they gave little concentration to my questions.

At first I tried to meet my informants in their fields. But the distance of the villagers' fields and their frequent movement from one field to another made these interviews in the fields impossible. I soon gave up the attempt.

The problem was finally solved when I offered to provide a community feast as soon as my work was completed. The incentive was so great that my problem then became how to reduce the flood of villagers who clamoured to be interviewed first. Of course they also wanted to get the interview over as quickly as possible so that they could return to their fields and daily routine. I organized selected informants by a rotation system.

Another problem I faced lay in the type of questions that had to be asked. It was necessary to explain to some people the meaning of concepts like 'development' or 'problem'. It was also essential to explain to them carefully about the use of the information I was collecting, as most of the informants asked "What do you want to know this for ?" and some would give responses such as "It doesn't matter who applies the fertilizer - me or my spouse."

Apart from the above issues, there was one further

problem concerned with social behaviour and norms. Some questions, such as those concerned with menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and divorce, which had to be put to women, were very embarassing for me as a male researcher. Among the Tharu, people of the opposite sex (except husband and wife) are not supposed to talk about these matters. Moreover, these topics are not supposed to be raised in the presence of respected people, such as parents, parents-in-law, learned people, officials, or men of high caste. Similarly an 'educated' man like me was not supposed to ask 'silly' questions (i.e. on menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and divorce). To cope with this situation, I developed an alternative method of interview. Instead of direct questions and answers between me and my female informants, I asked their husbands to relay the question from me to their wives and the wives' answers back to me. Finally I was able to collect information indirectly on these subjects only from six women.

The District

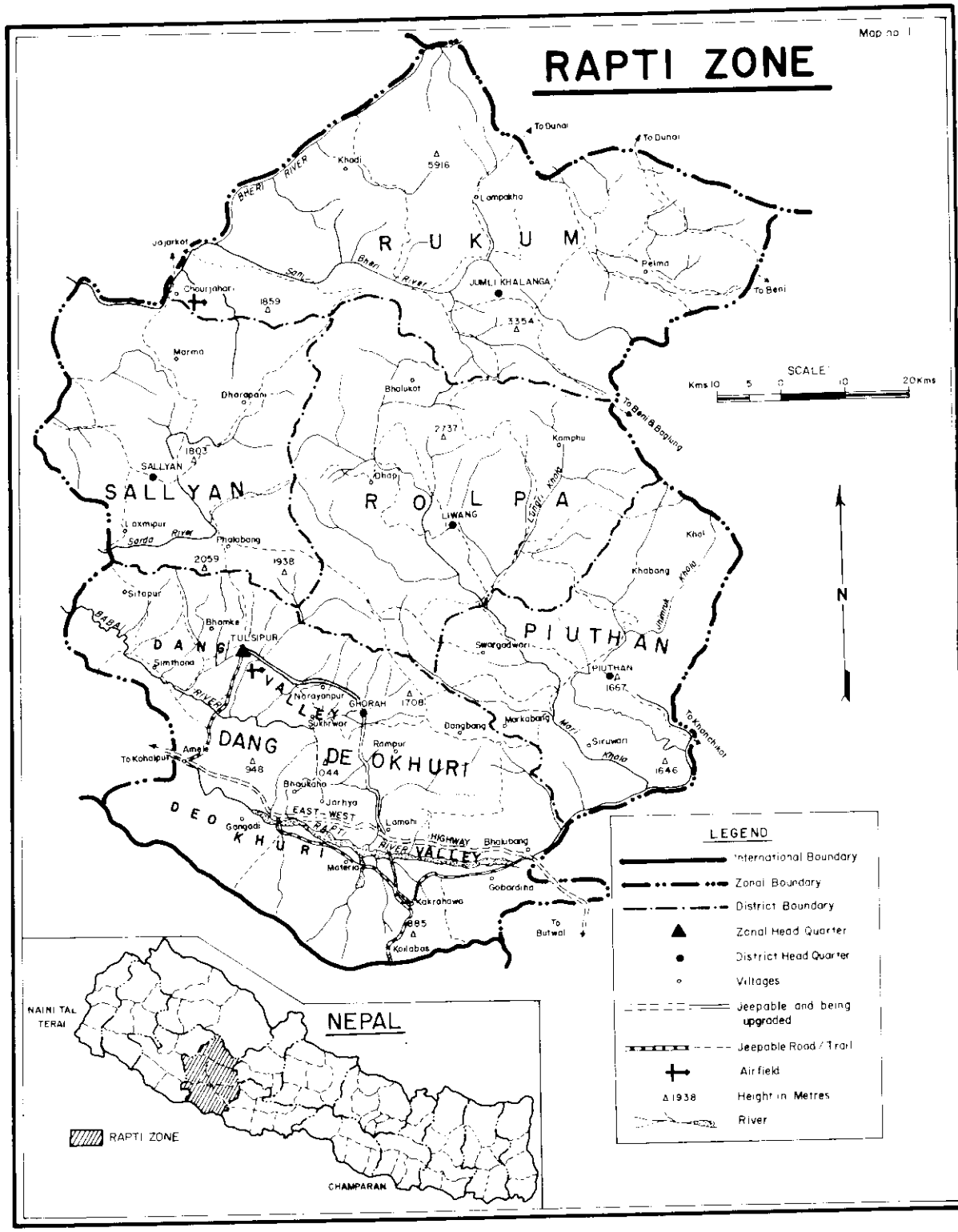
Dang Deokhuri is one of the six inner-Terai districts of Nepal. Administratively it falls in the Rapti Zone of Western Nepal. The district covers two separate valleys, Dang and Deokhuri, of which Dang is the larger and more populated. These two valleys lie between the Siwalik and Mahabbarat ranges of the lower Himalayas. A small range called Duruwa, or sometimes Dhuduwa, separates the two valleys. The elevation of Dang valley is around 2,200 feet, slightly higher than Deokhuri and the other parts of the lower Terai which are below 200 feet.

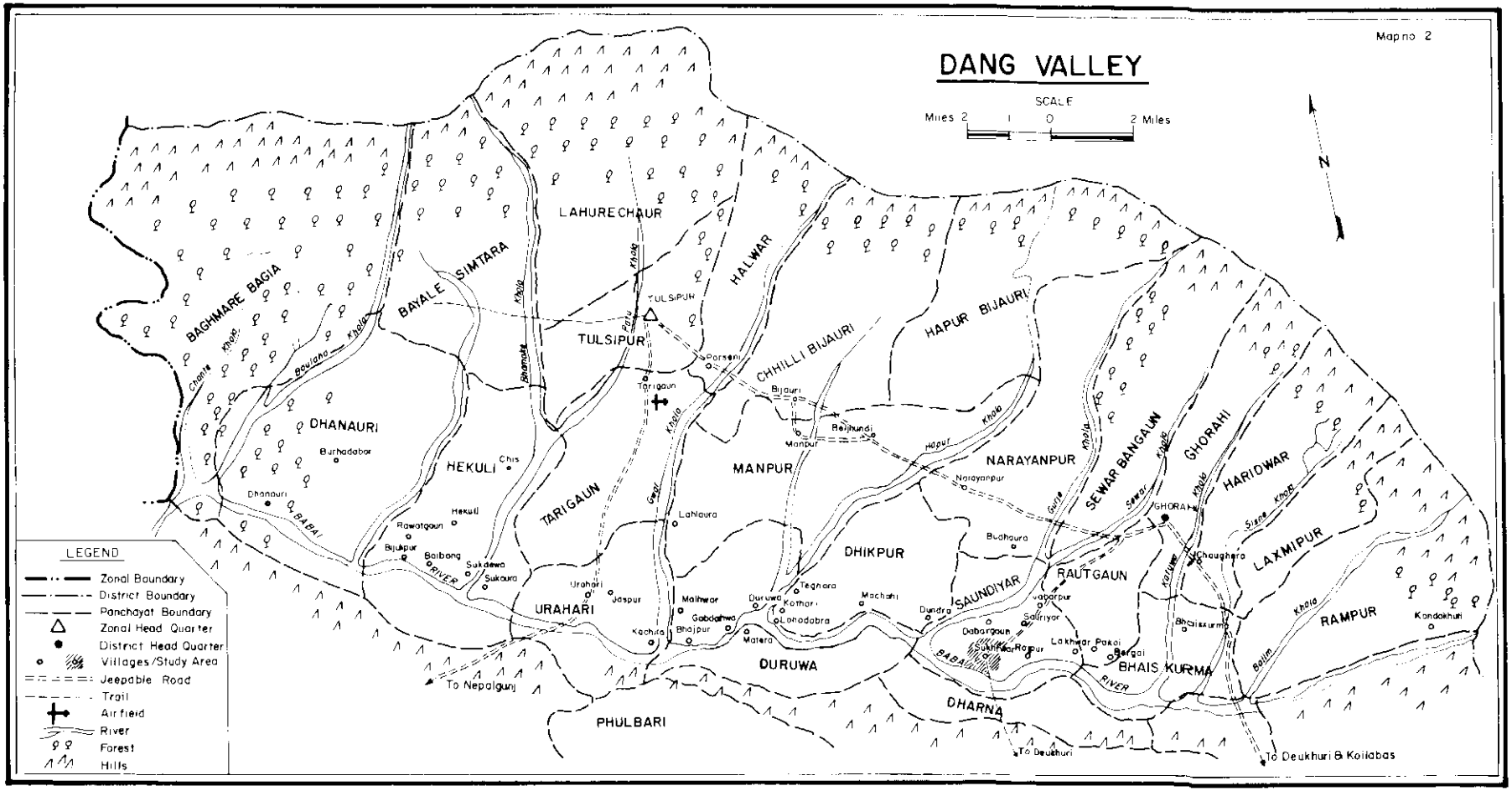
The land area of the district is 864 square miles and according to the 1971 census reports, has a total population of 167,820 (84,511 males and 83,309 females) of which 72,475 are Tharu. The valley of Dang is oval shaped and is approximately 32 miles long and 12 miles wide. Many small and medium sized streams and rivers flow south from the northern Mahabharat range and mix with the Babai River, which drains the valley from the south-western corner. Previously the whole valley was covered with thick jungle, but due to heavy deforestation only a few shrubs and trees remain in and around the surrounding hills. Only in the remote western part of Dang valley are there still some patches of good forest.

Sukhrwar village lies half a day's walk from the East-West Highway. The village is also only one and a half hour's walk from Ghorahi, the district headquarters.

Map no. 1

RAPTI ZONE




Map no 2
DANG VALLEY
SCALE
Miles 2 1 0 2 Miles
N
LEGEND
Zonal Boundary
District Boundary
Panchayat Boundary
Zonal Head Quarter
District Head Quarter
Villages/Study Area
Jeepable Road
Trail
Airfield
River
Forest
Hills
BAGHMARE BAGIA
BAYALE SIMTARA
LAHURECHAUR
HALWAR
TULSIPUR
CHHILLI BIJAURI
HAPUR BIJAURI
DHANAURI
HEKULI
TARIGAUN
MANPUR
NARAYANPUR
SEWAR BANGAUN
GHORAHI
HARIDWAR
LAXMIPUR
RAMPUR
URAHARI
DHIKPUR
SAUNDIYAR
RAUTGAUN
DURUWA
BHAIS KURMA
DHARNA
PHULBARI
To Nepalgunj
To Deukhuri
To Deukhuri & Koilabas
RIVER
BABAI

Ghorahi is now a fairly large town with all kinds of facilities, such as electricity, a post office, a telegraph and a hospital. The contact between Ghorahi and Sukhrwar is mainly administrative and commercial. At least one or two men from the village can be seen going to Ghorahi every day from Sukhrwar, except during the peak agricultural period. During the post-harvest season small groups of women also go to Ghorahi to shop. The villagers' main reason for travelling to Ghorahi is to sell and buy goods, although some visits are also occasionally made to certain administrative offices, such as the revenue office, the forest department or the land reform office.

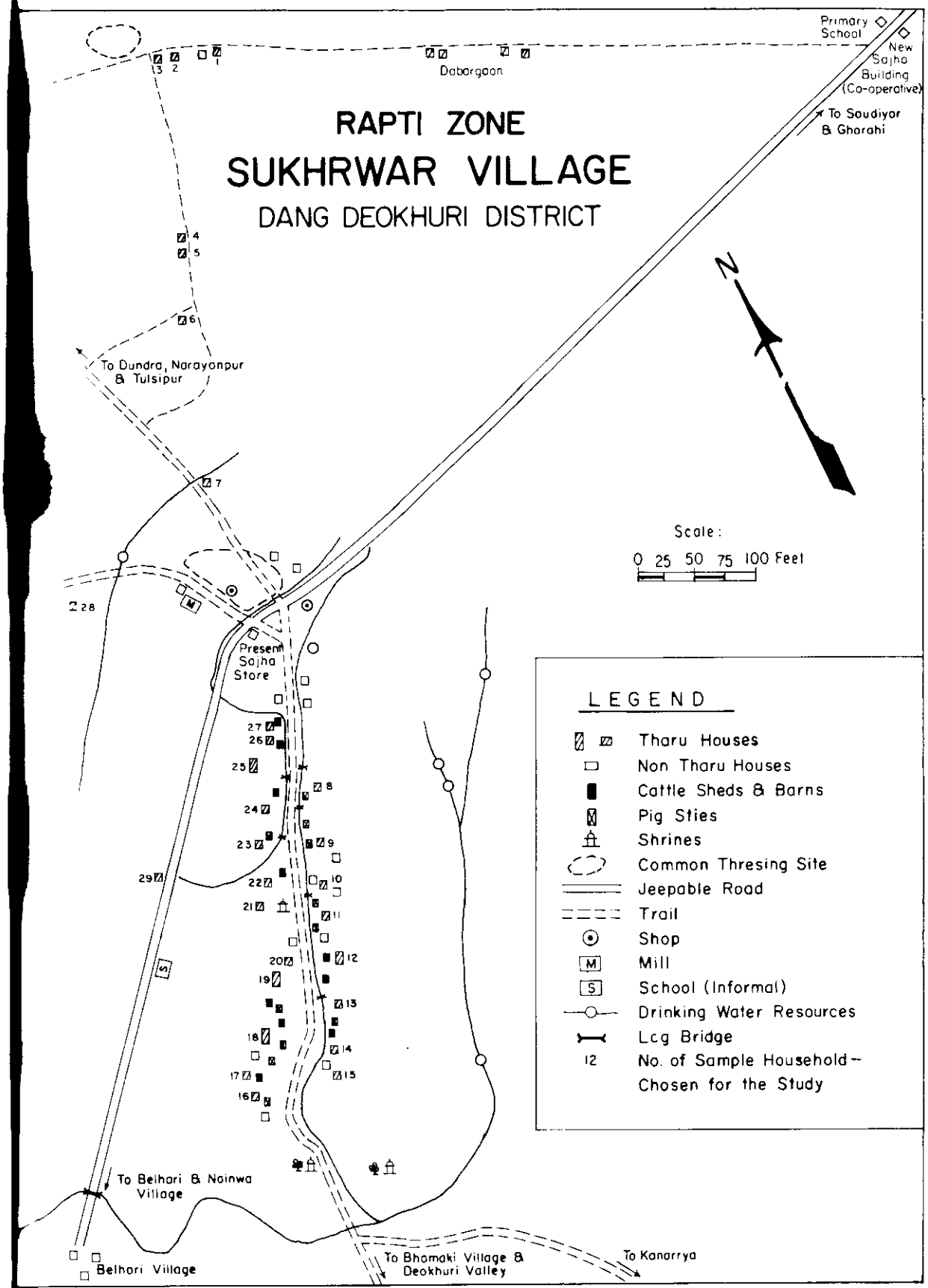
The only other large towns in the district are Tulsipur and Koilabas. For the Tharu of Sukhrwar, Tulsipur has no importance as it is a small bazaar, further away than Ghorahi, with zonal level administrative offices set up about a decade ago.

Loilabas, located at the border on the old trade route with India, still plays an important economic role in Sukhrwar village. In spite of the recent orientation towards Ghorahi, Sukhrwar Tharu men still go to Koilabas to barter their cereals and oilseeds for salt, kerosene, clothes and utensils.

The Village

Sukhrwar, the village in which I did most of my field work, lies in the southern part of Dang Valley of Dang Deokhuri District. Like most of the traditional and more densely populated Tharu villages of Dang, Sukhrwar is located towards the northern bank of the Babai River. The Jangwa River, coming out of the northern mountains and flowing down to Babai, forms the western and north-western boundary of the village area. To the north and north-east Sukhrwar is bounded by the fields of Dabargaun village, while to the south and south east a small stream called Bajya Gajri and the fields of Belhari village from the boundary.

The village is visible from a distance of about one mile from all directions. At this distance it appears as a cluster of trees, bamboo groves, kitchen gardens and long huts of grass and thatch, with their walls plastered with mud. The village looks calm and quiet except for the "tuk-tuk" noise of a mill, breaking the silence. This intruding sound contrasts with the green and peaceful landscape and


RAPTI ZONE
SUKHRWAR VILLAGE
DANG DEOKHURI DISTRICT
Primary School
New Sajha Building (Co-operative)
To Soudiyar & Ghorahi
Dabargaon
To Dundra, Narayanpur & Tulsipur
N
Scale:
0 25 50 75 100 Feet
Present Sajha Store
To Belhari & Nainwa Village
Belhari Village
To Bhamaki Village & Deokhuri Valley
To Kanarrya
LEGEND
Tharu Houses
Non Tharu Houses
Cattle Sheds & Barns
Pig Sties
Shrines
Common Thresing Site
Jeepable Road
Trail
Shop
Mill
School (Informal)
Drinking Water Resources
Log Bridge
12 No. of Sample Household Chosen for the Study

farm houses and fields where no modern machine has yet been employed. As one draws closer, Tharu men and women can be seen engaged in cultivation and other farm work while groups of naked, carefree children play about in the dust or mud on the outskirts of the village.

Sukhrwar village, though not linked by modern means of transportation and communications to the outside world, is not as isolated as many other Nepalese villages. There is a jeepable track joining the village to the main road (Lamahi-Ghorahi-Tulsipur) of the district. However, the bus fares are quite high for the villagers and the bus services are seasonal and irregular. Tharus prefer to walk. They also use pack-transportation with animals to carry heavy loads. Once or twice a year a government jeep or sometimes a few public tractors come to the village for administrative purposes or to take away village products (i.e. cereals and oilseeds) and bring in consumable items like sugar, salt, chemical fertilizers and improved seeds to be sold through the local cooperative store.

The village has two shops. One of them belongs to an Indian Muslim who is living there temporarily. The other shop belongs to a Brahman of a neighboring village. These shops stock necessities such as cigarettes, matches, sugar, kerosene, cosmetics, beads, bangles, tea, medicines and a few educational materials.

The shop belonging to the Brahman is larger and more spacious. It also serves as a common and informal meeting place for the villagers where they can enjoy a chance to chat, listen to the radio and play cards. Although women visit the shop to buy things like cigarettes or spices, they do not stay there to listen to the radio or play cards. No Tharu female plays cards. This is considered a luxury, for men, who can spare the time from farm labour for such recreation.

Besides this shop there is a mill which processes farm cereals and oilseeds (i.e. rice, wheat and mustard). The Tharu do not usually process their cereals and oilseeds in the mill unless they intend to market them.

Sukhrwar has a population of 399 people, of whom 198 are males and 201 females, living in 39 households. Twenty-nine of these households - the core of the village - are Tharu. The Tharu population of the village is 177 males and 176 females living in 29 households. Set slightly apart from the Tharu houses are the houses of some Brahman

and Chetri (7 and 2 households) and a recent immigrant Muslim (the shopkeeper). Since the Brahmans and Chetris are landowners, they are economically better off. Below the Brahmans in the Hindu ritual hierarchy are the Chetri, who enjoy more or less the same economic status as the Brahmans in this area. However, there is one poor Chetri household in this village that cultivates, like most Tharu households, rented land on a share-cropping basis.

The attitudes of the Tharu towards the Brahman-Chetri are mixed. In part the relationship is an economic one, as most of the Brahman-Chetri are landowners and most of the Tharu their tenants. It is not unusual for some of the Tharu to see the high caste people as potential exploiters. Yet both of the people - the landlords and the tenants - agree on one point: that only the villagers, and not outsiders, can be relied upon and called on for help, the tenants in the case of the landowners, and the landowners in the case of the tenants. For the Tharu the present landlords are the people who feed them when there is a drought or food shortage. By the same token the landlords cannot think of a farm life without the labour of the Tharu.

The Tharu of Sukhrwar belong to one of several endogamous groups of Tharu that are scattered all over the foot-hills of the Himalayas. Other Tharu refer to the group of Dang Tharu as Dangaura, although the Dang Deokhuri Tharu never use this term themselves. In the Far-Western Terai districts of Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur, where Tharu from Dang Deokhuri District have immigrated in large numbers, the Tharu are called Dangaura and are distinct from the Rana and Katharia Tharu groups.

There is considerable controversy about the origin of the Tharu. Some early theorists based their opinions on etymologies of the word "Tharu" while other scholars gave credence to a legend indicating an Indian origin from the Thar desert of Rajputana in North-Western India. Still other scholars have tried to trace the Tharu place of origin to south India (i.e. Dravidian).

According to S. K. Srivastava, Tharu are "definitely a Mongoloid tribe ... In features they possess, more or less, oblique eyes, mostly brown or yellow-brown complexion, very scanty and straight hair on the body and the face, thin nose of medium size; while in other features they resemble Nepalese more than any of the Australoid or pre-Dravidian castes and tribes." (Srivastava 1958:16). But

according to I.S. Chemjong "the Tharus of Kochila family of Morang and Saptari districts of Nepal seem to be the survivors of Koch Kirat people of North Bengal and who must have migrated from North Bengal to Morang and Saptari with Khan, their Royal family members, and spread all over the Terai districts of Nepal." (Chemjong 1967:195).

Compactness is one of the main features of Tharu villages. Before 1973, all Tharu households of Sukhrwar were located inside a compact area. However, after a large fire in April, 1973, in which about two thirds of all Tharu households were destroyed, eight Tharu households moved slightly apart from the compact Tharu settlement.

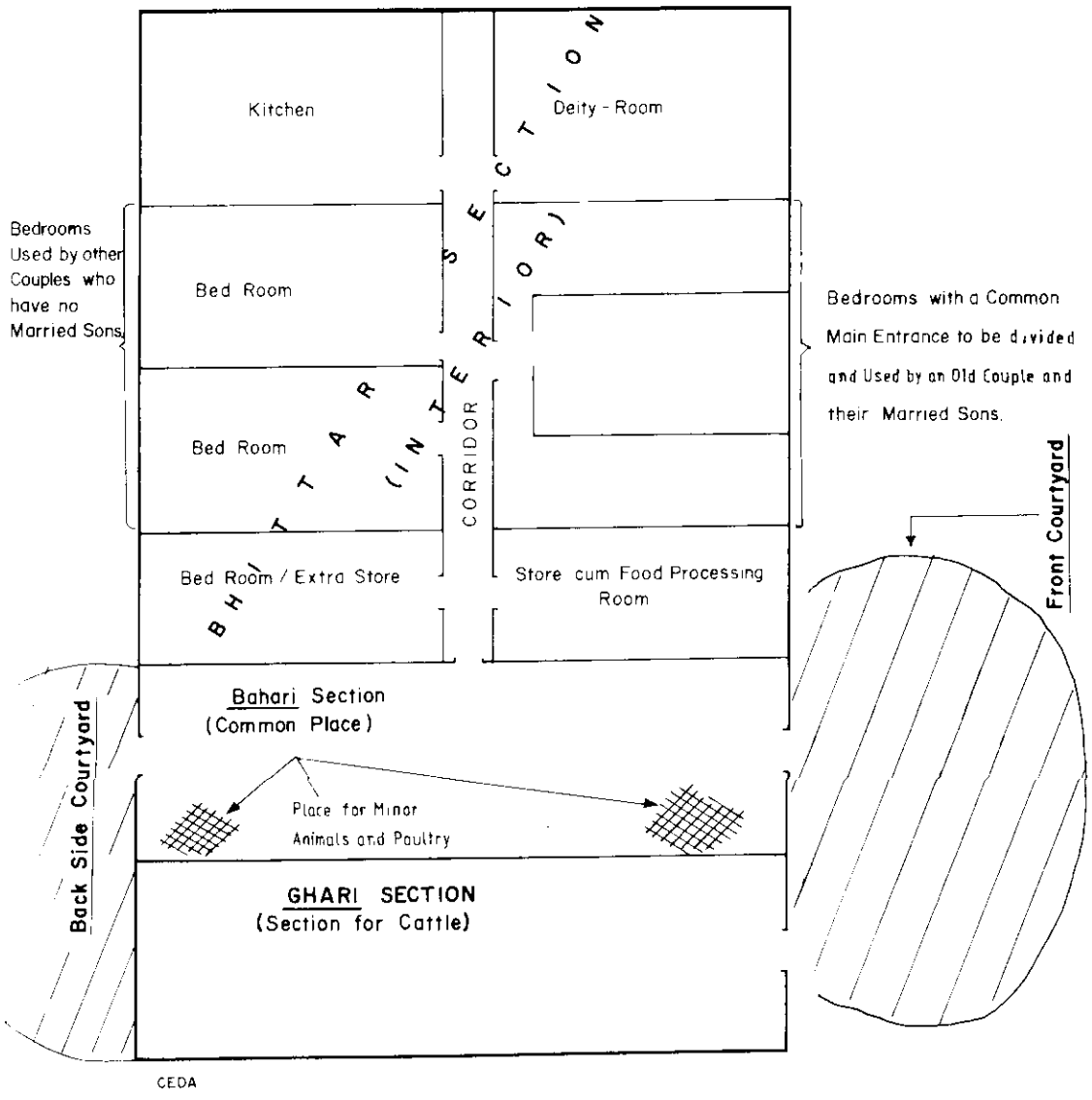
The following description of the plan of the village and houses of Sukhrwar is also applicable to other villages and households of Dang Deokhuri Tharu as well:

In the center of the village, a wide street runs north-south, dividing the whole village into two halves. From each side of the wide dusty street (muddy during the monsoon), houses stand fifteen to twenty-five feet back in a row. Though the houses are quite close to each other, there is a gap of at least a few feet between them.

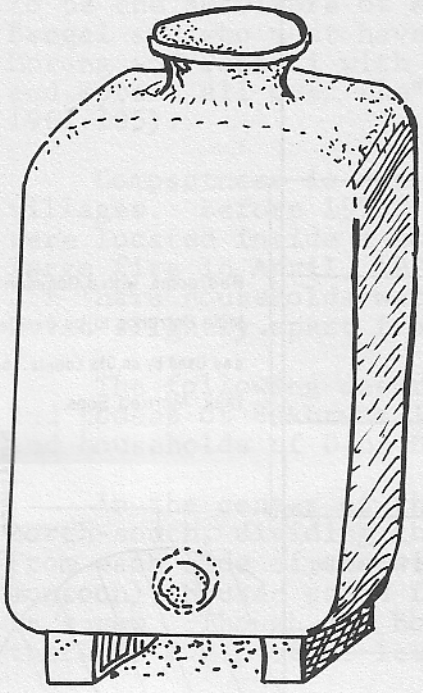
Each Tharu house lies lengthwise north to south, along with one or two huts used as storage places for fodder, cattle, fuel, baskets and fish traps. A Tharu house is a long, single-storey building 40 to 150 feet long and 20 to 30 feet wide. It has a thatched roof sloping towards two sides and supported by several wooden poles fixed inside the house in several rows. The poles in the interior (towards the center) rows are higher than those at the sides, so as to support the sloping roof. The external as well as some of the internal walls are made of straw or branches of bamboo or other bushes, plastered over with a mixture of clay, cow-dung and paddy-husk. There is considerable space between the floor and the summit of the roof. This space is used for storing household items hanging on ropes.

The interior space of the house is divided into several small rooms by "walls" of large clay-containers called dehri. The house is rectangular and can be roughly divided into three sections. The southermost section, separated by a small fence, takes up about a quarter of the total length. This section, called ghāri, is used as a cattle-shed. North of this section is the bahari, which forms another quarter of the total length. This section has two doors, one of which opens on to the street and the other one on to the back courtyard. Most of the section is used as a common

PLAN OF A THARU HOUSE



CEDA



DEHRI

KUTHLI

CEDA

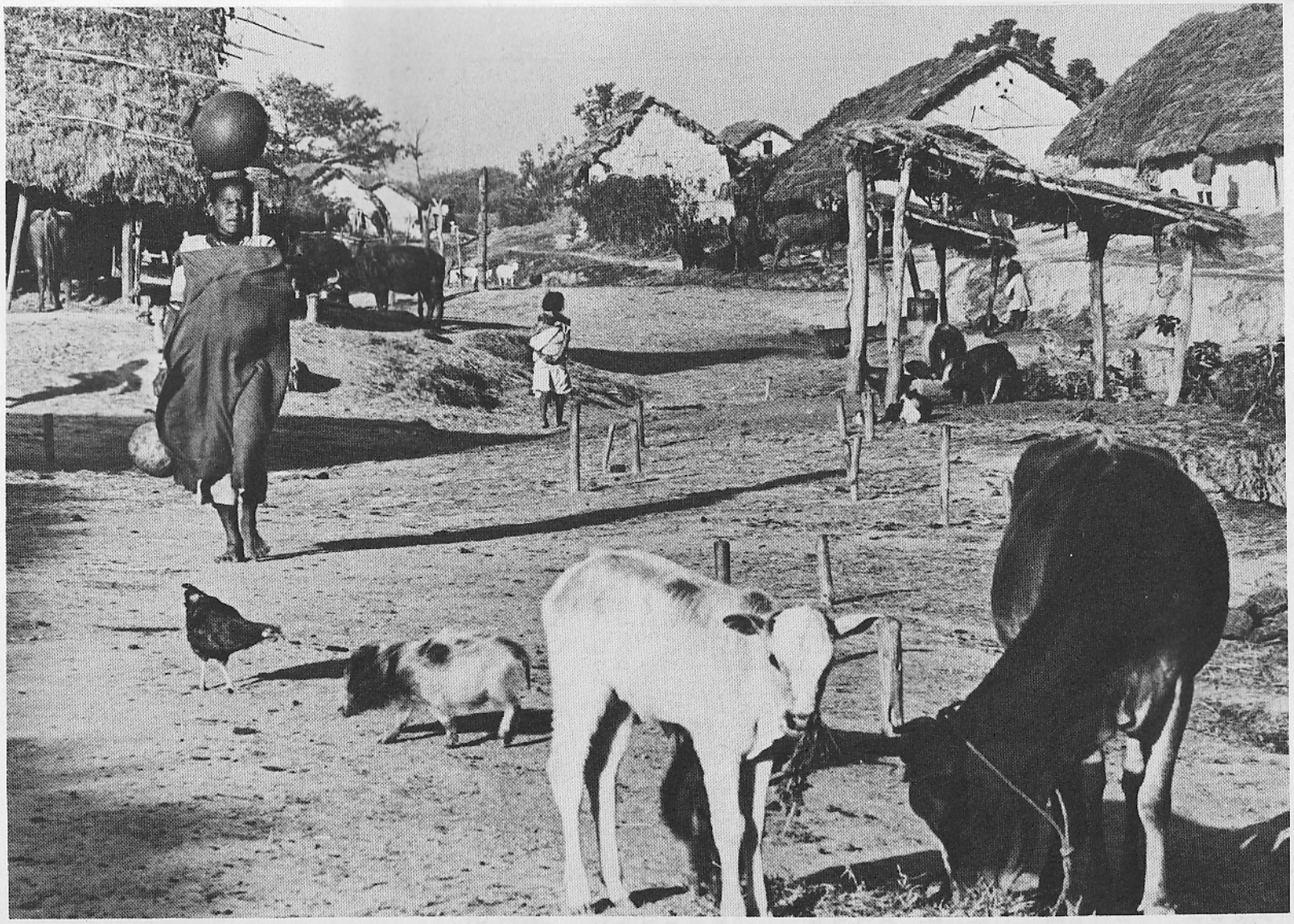
living area. It is also used as a passage to enter the next section (the most interior section, called bhittar) where several bedrooms, as well as the kitchen and the divinity room are located.

A Tharu village consists of several families living inside a compact social unit. Several families within this unit are related to each other by affinal and consanguineal relationships, and all are linked to each other at least by religious and economic ties.

However, relationships among the Tharu are not confined to people of their own villages. They have social as well as economic relationships with other villagers. Interaction is maintained with other villages for the purpose of establishing new marriages (though preference is to marry within the village) and old relationships are maintained by frequent visits and exchanges of gifts. They also have links with people in other neighbouring villages through bartering, borrowing and lending money or foodgrains.

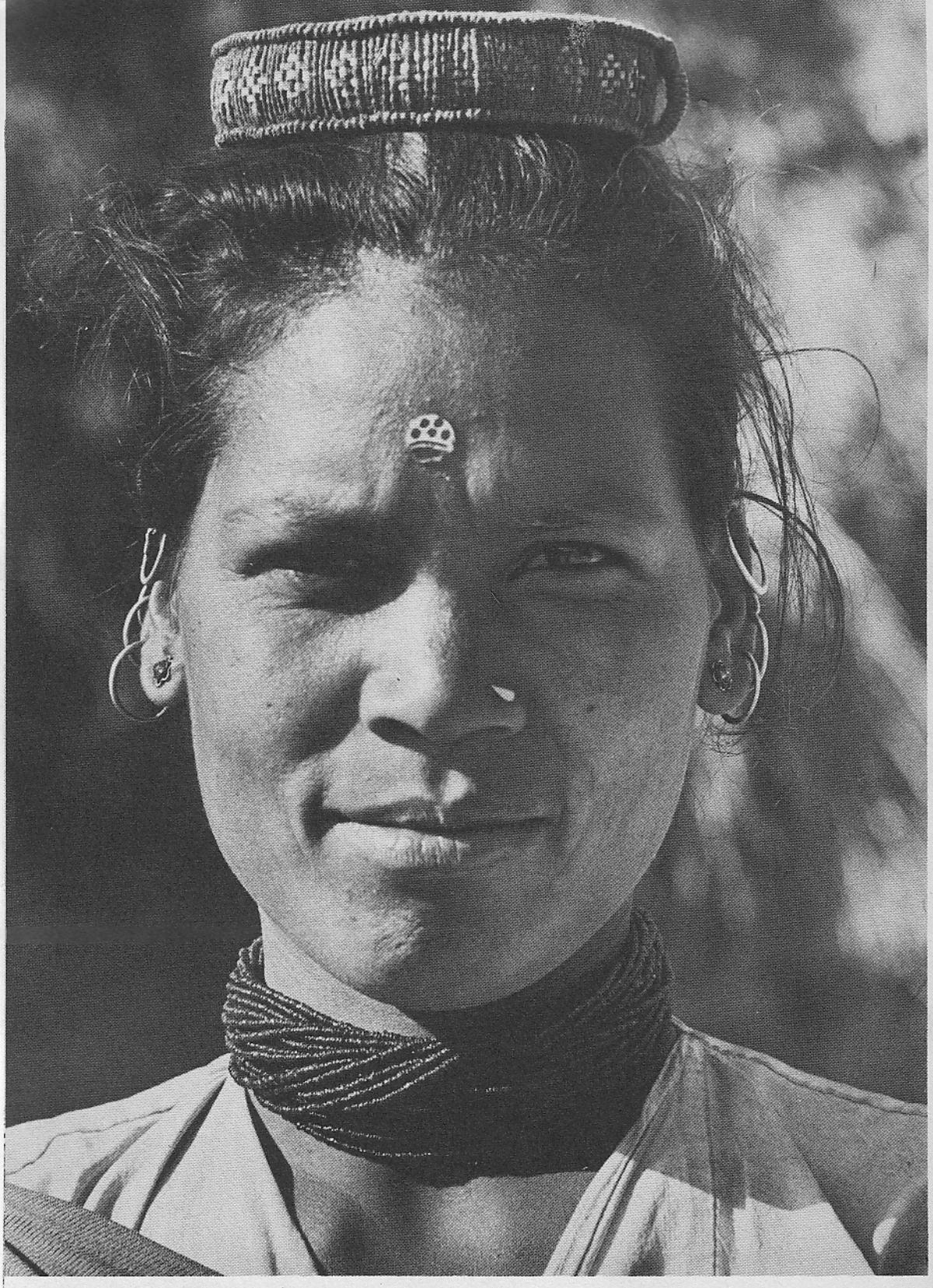
The economy of the Tharu of Sukhrwar, like other Tharu, is based on agriculture and animal husbandry. They grow several kinds of cereals, oilseeds and vegetables, the most important of which are rice, maize, wheat, barley, gram, lentils, mustard, linseed, onions, potatoes and several varieties of seasonal green vegetables. They keep cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, poultry and pigeons. These animals and birds are kept for both domestic use and sale.

Cattle are kept for manure as well as for ploughing; buffaloes for milk, pack transportation, and ploughing as well as for manure. A few houses also have one or two ponies used for pack transportation.

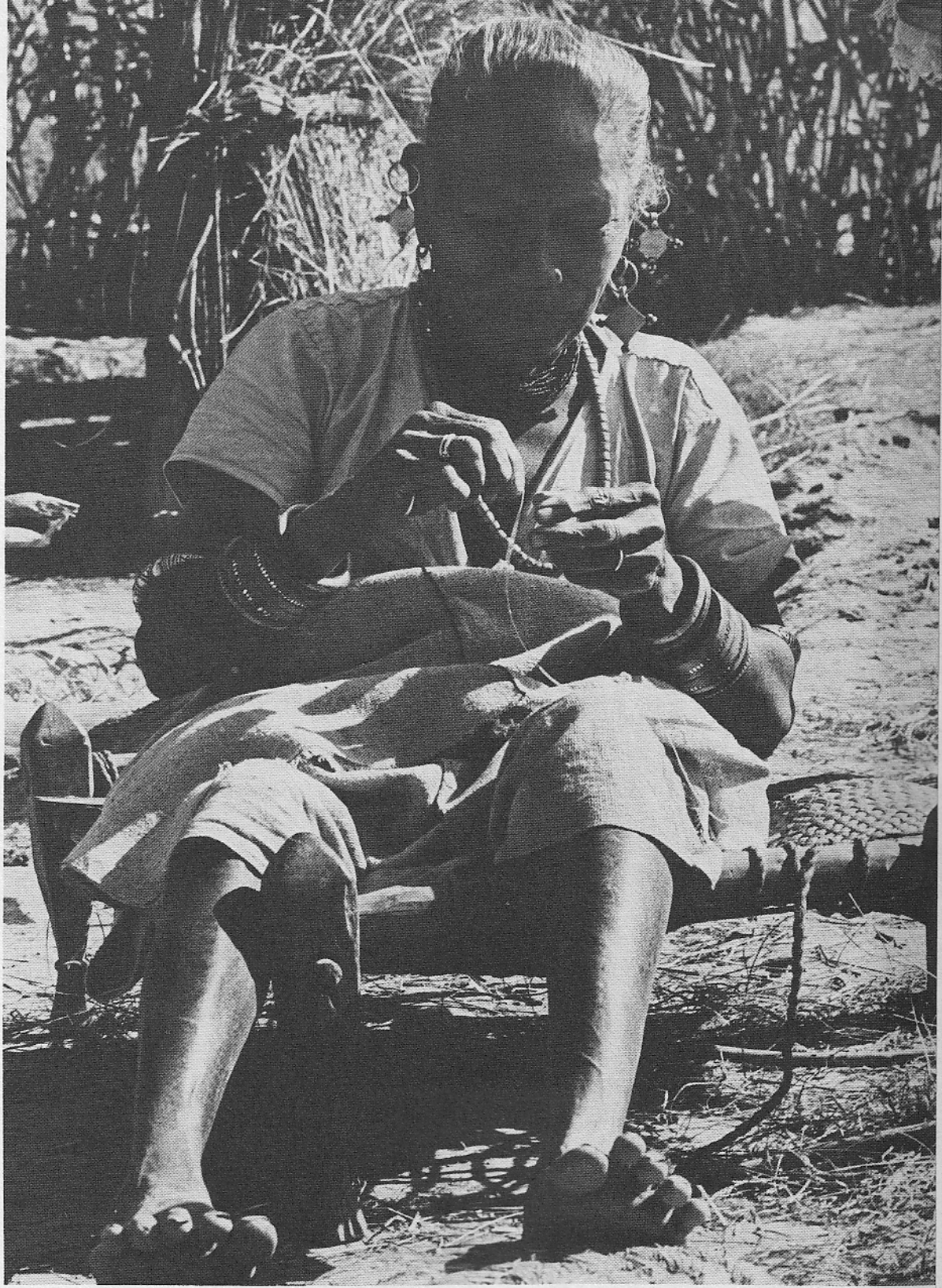


Street scene.

Young Tharu girl.



A Tharu woman ready to fetch water and wearing a berra. These coloured jute and straw rings are made by men and given to women to balance loads.



An older woman mending clothes. She is a well known tatooer in the village.

A Dasya dance.

CHAPTER II

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Sukhrwar Tharu divide themselves into several social units: ghar (a household), ghar phutlak (lit. split household, i.e. a group of immediate patrilineal lineages), gottyār (more distantly related patrilineal kin, who do not know the actual history of their splitting off from one another) and thahar (clan).* They also divide into two ritual groups: barīn (laymen or clients) and gharguruwā (priests).

Sukhrwar, like most Tharu villages, is a compact social unit of several households which are socially and economically interrelated with each other. As shown in Table 1,22.9% of these households are extended and consist of more than one nuclear family.

A household is a corporate group working as a single social unit of production. These nuclear families within the extended family become the co-parceners where the joint estate is divided upon partition.

Every Tharu household in the village has a name. The name could be after the location of the house, or after the clan name of the house members (if there are not many households of this clan in the village). Nammwāna, for example, is both the name of a clan and the name of a household of the nammwā clan. The name sometimes indicates the position of the household relative to other houses of the same clan, for example, barkā nammwāna (the eldest nammwā household), majhlā nammwāna (the second oldest nammwā household), and so on. The names of some households are also derived from the profession (other than agriculture) performed by the household or from a post held by a male member, for example, mahatāna (household of a traditional village chief, mahaton,) purnā mahatāna (the ex-mahaton household), panchāna (household of a pancha, the ward representative in the village panchayat), pardhāna (house of a pradhan pancha, the head of the village panchayat) and bhaisarāna (a household of

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* Thahar is a Tharu term derived from the Nepali term thar meaning a clan. Some of the Tharu clan names are either derived from or associated with the names of certain Tharu deities (i.e. Ghechkatwa, Ghatchwar, Sukhrorya Gurrwa). Thahar is also sometimes called pad.

TABLE 1

FAMILY STRUCTURE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In number of persons)

Economic Strata \ Family Structure	Family Structure			
	Total Nuclear	Extended Total	Others	Total
Top	2 (25.0) (40%)	3 (11.5) (60%)	0	5 (14.3) (100%)
Middle	2 (25.0) (14.3%)	12 (46.2) (85.7%)	0	14 (14.0) (100%)
Bottom	4 (50.0) (25%)	11 (42.3) (68.8%)	1 (100.0) (6.2%)	16 (45.7) (100%)
Total	8 (100.0) (22.9%)	26 (100.0) (74.3%)	1 (100.0) (2.9%)	35 (100.0) (100%)

Figures in parentheses indicate column and row percentages.

buffalo-breeders). Other houses are named after the village from which the household immigrated or after the household head's natal village. However, the last two types of names are used only when the earlier types of names would create confusion (i.e. names that would also be applicable to a few other households).

Most of the households in the village are related to each other by affinal or consanguineal relationships. There are the households of the descendents of male siblings who are grouped as ghar phutlak (broken or split from one household). Ghar phutlak households, often separated because of a family quarrel, may not have been on good terms with each other for some years. However, this emnity usually fades away with time, since the ghar phutlak households are tied by traditional obligations of mutual help and support as well as co-participation in certain rituals.

Some of the houses that have split off from one single main-house may also re-unite. But this usually occurs only as a result of natural calamities such as drought, or shortage of manpower due to the sudden deaths of some members, or the lack of an heir in one or more of such re-uniting households.

Ghar phutlak households have some affinal relatives in common, and these mutual links help the separated families to maintain cordial relationships. For example, whenever a woman visits her parents' or brother's house, she is also expected to visit the other ghar phutlak households as well. If the woman brings any pahurā (small gifts of cakes, sweets, fruit, vegetables, local beer, etc.) from her husband's household, it is traditionally divided up and distributed to the split houses and other close kin living in the vicinity of her parents or brother. Similarly, if a woman takes pahurā gifts from her laihar (woman's natal home) to her husband's house, this is also distributed among the split households and the nearest kin living in the locality of her husband's house.

Usually women visit their parents or brothers when they are called for any feast, ceremony or celebration to the parental house. A woman may also travel to her natal home to visit a sick member. Thus affinal women serve to maintain cordial social relations between ghar phutlak families. The distribution of pahurā is a symbol of well-wishing to all the recipient families. Though this distribution or "giving a share" of the pahurā is not compulsory, the

tradition is usually continued and helps maintain unity and cohesiveness among the families.

When ghar phutlak households have separated, they remain in a kind of suspended co-parcenary. If one household leaves no heir or successor, the remaining ghar phutlak households share its property and estate. It is also from a ghar phutlak household that Tharu prefer, if necessary, to take an adopted son. This usually happens when a man has no son to continue his bans (family line) after his death.

The gottyār are the relatives with whom some patrilineal connection is recognized, although the exact relation is not always known. Thus gottyār encompasses ghar phutlak. Sometimes a term 'konti' is also used to refer to a lineage. Gottyār are expected to offer fuel-wood for the funeral pyre for a deceased gottyār. Two gottyār households who live close together often consider themselves or treat each other as ghar phutlak households, except that neither side can claim a share of the estate or property of the other gottyār who has no heir. Gottyār among whom the patrilineal connection can be traced, can ritually substitute for members of a ghar phutlak household, if necessary. For example, gottyār (males) can join a funeral procession or carry a deceased person as would the male members of the deceased's own family or ghar phutlak family. Women are not allowed to join the funeral procession.

Aside from the gottyār there are also households of the same thahar or pad (clan) with whom a patrilineal link can no longer be traced. But Tharu sometimes also call these relatives gottyār. Thus 'gottyār' can be used as a vague term referring to a distant patrilineal relative as well as to a more distant member of the same clan (thahar or pad). Whereas members of a certain gottyar or ghar phutlak group maintain special relationships and ritual ties, this is not the case with members belonging to the same thahar. In day-to-day life the relationship between two households of one thahar is not very different from the relationship between two households of two different thahars, except that the two households of the same thahar are not supposed to inter-marry. The significance, therefore, of the thahar lies in its function as an exogamous unit.

A Tharu family is virilocal since women move into their husband's households after marriage. The descent system is patrilineal; children belong to their father's clan and women take their husband's clan name, giving up the clan

name of their parents at marriage. Property, except foodgrains and other farm produce, is owned and inherited through the male line. Women do not inherit any cash or immoveable property. They are supposed to share the property inherited by their husbands. A widow inherits a share from her dead husband to be held in trust for her son. In most cases a widow without a son has little chance of inheriting any kind of property from her husband's house. In fact, however, it is rare to find a widow of child-bearing age who has no son. A woman is not entitled to inherit any property from her parents' house unless her parents have no male successor. However, her parents may give her ornaments, utensils and a few farm animals (i.e. goat, sheep and cow) as dowry. Regarding the sharing of foodgrains during the time of the splitting of a family, usually each member of the family receives an equal share, regardless of age of sex.

Land is held by the joint family but when the family splits it is distributed equally among the sons. The widow of the deceased is given a proportion (10 to 20 percent) of her dead husband's property according to tradition.* Since widows tend to prefer the company and care of their married sons' families, they generally live with them, thereby losing any claim to an independent share of the estate. In return widows are granted a respected position within the family. They do not have to do hard labour for subsistence. Usually such women watch the house and look after the young children when the others are busy with farm work. If the widow is not too old, she may feed the poultry and pigs or make baskets. She is expected to contribute to household labour according to her rank in the family hierarchy. For example, if her own mother-in-law is living, she will be expected to perform the greater share of the labour.

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* Legally a widow can claim a share of her dead husband's property equal to that given to each of her sons.

Apart from two potential exceptions - the widow living alone, and the unmarried woman over age 35* - women do not inherit or own land. Nor can women inherit utensils, cattle or other valuable goods which make up the father's estate. On the other hand women are often given some moveable property as pewā or dāijo** by their husbands, parents, or brothers during or after marriage.

Since the Dangauras are the only Tharu group in Dang Deokhuri there is little chance for inter-marriage with other Tharu groups. However, even in the Far-West where Dangaura Tharu have migrated in large numbers and reside side by side with other Tharu groups, they still do not inter-marry with them. The only thahar (clans) found in the study area are Gammwa, Nammwa, Gheckatwa, Ghatchwar, Baman and Sukhrorya Gurrwa, although I collected as many as 22 thahar names from different parts of Dang Valley.

Marriage within the thahar group is considered incestuous. Marriage with a maternal cousin*** is forbidden, but after about seven generations**** marriage can be established between the descendents of such cousins. The maternal uncle's patri-kin and their descendents as well (as shown below) are one of the preferred marriage partners***** as some

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* Both of these exceptions in the Tharu context seem mere theory as I have not encountered a single example of either during my field study.

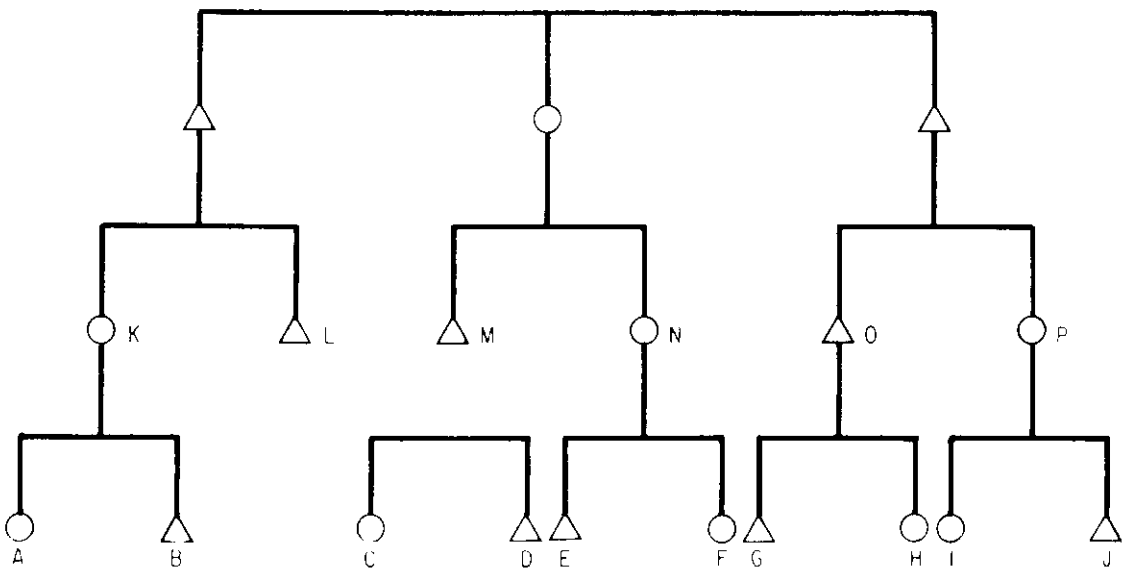
** Dāijo is moveable or immoveable property given to a woman from her parental family, or friends or relatives of her parental side, and any increment thereto is considered dāijo. Pewā is moveable or immoveable property as given in writing by the husband or coparceners on the husband's side with the consent of all the coparceners, or given by other friends or relatives on the husband's side, and any increment thereto, is considered pewā. (Mulki Ain, Section 4 of the Chapter on Property of Women).

*** In anthropologual terms "MZD,MBD", meaning "mother's sister's daughter or mother's brother's daughter".

**** The exact number of generations is not known by anyone.

***** For example, a man with his "MBFBD" (mother's brother's father's brother's daughter).

genealogies as well as stated opinions show. In the following diagram, A (a female) can marry with any of the males D,E,G,J,M and O. Similarly B(a male) can marry any of the females C,F,H,I,N and P.



Since many Tharu cannot trace their genealogies back beyond four or five generations, it is not unusual for them to establish marriage among descendents of cross-cousins after four or five generations.

The majority of Tharu marriages are arranged by the parents, in most cases with the agreement of the concerned partners (see Table 2).

Although only 19.6% of the total married males and 22.9% (21.9% + 1%) of the total married females have been shown in the statistics above to have been married through arranged marriage, the real figures on 'arranged marriage' should be more than these. Most of the married informants, when asked later on, agreed that they had described their marriage as 'own choice and parent's consent' simply because they had not disagreed with the marriage which their parents had arranged for them (in other words they 'had also given their consent'). Hence we can also add the figures for 'own choice and parent's consent (60.9% of the total

Table 2

FORM OF MARRIAGE & TYPE OF CEREMONY BY SEX

Form of Marriage	Own choice; No parent consent		Own choice; Parent consent		Capture; Consent		Arranged; No consent		Arranged; Consent		Total	
Sex	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Count	16	20	56	52	2	2	-	1	18	21	92	96
Percentage	(17.4)	(20.8)	(60.9)	(54.2)	(2.2)	(2.1)		(1)	(19.6)	(21.9)	(100)	(100)

married males and 54.2% of the total married females) to the figures for 'arranged with consent', which gives new figures, 80.5% and 76.1% respectively, for the males and females who had been married by arrangement.

Sometimes marriages are delayed. One reason for delay may be the reluctance to lose the labour of a sister or daughter to be given away in marriage. In such cases the marriage of a girl can be delayed until the family manages to get a bride for one of its unmarried males. There may also be a delay if an exchange marriage is sought. If an exchange marriage cannot be arranged, the groom's family must pay a bride price to the bride's family. But even in this case the marriage might be delayed since it can take a long time for the groom to earn money to pay the bride price.

The following are the forms of marriage prevalent among Tharu:

(i) Arranged marriage (pakkā pakki bhwāj, literally 'marriage after an agreement'). In this form of marriage parents or other relatives of the couple make an agreement for the marriage. In some cases, the dependents choose the spouse, and if the match is acceptable, the marriage is then arranged by the elders. An arranged marriage can be accomplished either through paying a bride price (jhāgā) or through exchange (sattāpatti) (see Table 3).

In an exchange marriage a household must give (or at least promise to give within one or two years) one of its females to the household from which it has taken a bride. People uphold their promises in exchange marriage, otherwise the village council or the elderly males could socially boycott such people and deprive them of community help, which is essential in Tharu socio-economic life.

(ii) Elopement (urhāri) - a form of marriage in which the couple initiate the union.

(iii) Marriage by capture (pakrāwā, literally 'arrest'). In pakrāwā a lover kidnaps his beloved (with her consent) and keeps her in the family of one of his relatives for a few days. Although there are some cases of marriage by capture, in fact no violence or strong force is applied. Moreover the girl who

is to be 'captured' tends to be in favour of the union. "Capture" is carried out by the men of a household who have neither received a bride nor a bride-price in return for one of their women who has eloped. Thus a "capture" usually occurs only after an elopement. According to the statistical data (Table 2) 2.2% of the married males and 2.1% of the married females have been married by capture.

In the case of elopement, the man usually promises to pay the girl's family back with a girl from his own family. For example, during the period of my field work, Bishram, of household 27, eloped with Thumannya, of household 17, in exchange for his elder sister, Saraswati who had eloped with Bharthi, of household 17, in a love marriage, some years ago.

In an arranged marriage, the couple usually agree with their parents' choice. However, if a man is old enough (over 25) he assumes the responsibility of selecting his wife himself and making all the arrangements. His parents or elder brothers have to agree with his decision. The elderly people often help in finding or suggesting a suitable bride for him.

If a girl disagrees with her parents' decision in an arranged marriage, she reacts openly. However, her parents often pressure her to agree. If an exchange marriage has been arranged the parents do not want to forego the marriage of their own son or brother, for whose wife the disagreeing girl is being exchanged.

Table 3

MEANS USED FOR GETTING A BRIDE IN ARRANGED MARRIAGES

Means:	By Exchange	By Paying Bride Price	None of the above (Marriage with a Pregnant Girl)	Total
No. of Cases	29	12	1	32
Percentage	59.4	37.5	3.1	100

After the marriage, the husband and his family try to keep the newly married girl happy, for she may run away with another man, which means a loss of manpower or partial loss of some of the bride-price money.* Let us again take the case of household 27 in which Bishram's wife, Thumannya, did not like her husband, because he was too young. As mentioned earlier she had been given away in exchange, when one of the males, Bharthi, of her parental family had eloped with a girl (her sister-in-law) from the husband's house. Thumannya reacted strongly against the offer. The girl's in-laws also knew of her opposition. Bishram, the husband, who was a quite young boy, did not pay any attention to the problem, for the marriage agreement had been made by his parents. The family of Bishram still wanted to proceed with the marriage, even though they knew that Thumannya was against the offer. They were more concerned about losing the bride-price or further expenses in a new marriage than about the bride's behaviour. So Bishram and Thumannya were married. Bishram's family was lenient towards Thumannya. The family thought that all would become normal once the husband was adult enough to 'handle his wife', and they expected that Thumannya would fit into the family after her 'teen-age' emotions and stubborn attitudes settled down with the passing of years. As Thumannya knew the weak point of her husband's family, she enjoyed a more or less 'free' life. All she had to do was a few chores like fetching water, cooking meals or carrying manure to the fields. She was not even forced to break off her relationship with her lover, a man in the same village whom she met quite often. She even went to local fairs with him. Bishram's family knew all this but did not take any action and Bishram himself did not care. Whenever Bishram's parents reminded their daughter-in-law that a proper wife should not behave in this way, Thumannya would threaten to elope with her lover. Finally Thumannya became pregnant by her lover and gave birth to a child. Bishram's family then asked her again to live as a responsible married woman in their house and to forget her past, as she had now become a mother and could no

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* According to the new National Code, no money or bride-price can be claimed at all from the new husband of an eloping girl or woman. However during the past, a part of that money could be claimed as jāri. Jāri is the money which was paid to a previous husband of a woman by the family of her new husband.

longer be an easy-going girl. I do not know whether Thumannya agreed, but there was no problem regarding the child. The child, Mangal, was fully accepted by Bishram's family, as if it were Bishram's own.

Among the Tharu there is no ritual or social hierarchy that governs marriage unions. However, wealthy Tharu families prefer marriages with other wealthy families. Thus a few families who stand economically far above other Tharu, have to look for brides further afield or even in another district (like Deokhuri valley or Banke, Bardia and Kailali districts.)

From a ceremonial or ritual point of view there are, according to my informants, two kinds of Tharu marriage:

(1) Barkā Bhwāj - a great marriage in which several elaborate ceremonies are performed.

(2) Chuti Bhwāj - a minor marriage in which only a few selected ceremonies (the most important of which is the parchanā, ritual sprinkling) are performed.

From my observations it appears that there are no absolute categories and that many wedding ceremonies fall somewhere in between in terms of ritual complexity and economic expense. Any form of marriage that recognizes a couple as legitimate husband and wife must be ritually confirmed by at least the parchanā ritual.

A Tharu bride does not remain very long with her parental family before moving in with her husband. Most newly married women move to their husband's house within six to nine months after the marriage. After this, they make frequent visits to their parent's family. They take gifts of special food to their parental family and bring food and items like baskets and needle-work back to their husband's family. During such visits women may stay in their parents' home for several weeks. However, if a bride is quite young (10 to 12 years), she may stay up to two years at her parents' home. But such cases of early marriage are not common.

As with opinions on the appropriate age for marriage, Tharu ideals regarding an "ideal spouse" are also changing (see Tables 4 and 5).

Table 4 shows that 28.2% of the male and 33.0% of the female respondents give first priority (as an ideal husband) to a man who is rich or at least can provide well

Table 4

OPINIONS ABOUT IDEAL HUSBAND

Opinions	Respondents:	Male	Female	Both
1.	Should provide well for family (should be rich)	31 (28.2)	34 (33.0)	65 (30.5)
2.	Should be good-looking	9 (8.2)	14 (13.6)	23 (10.8)
3.	Should be educated	34 (30.9)	26 (25.3)	60 (28.2)
4.	Should be from a reputable family	10 (9.1)	6 (5.8)	16 (7.5)
5.	Should love his wife	1 (0.9)	3 (2.9)	4 (1.9)
6.	Should have a good reputation in the village	9 (8.2)	6 (5.8)	15 (7.0)
7.	Should be hard working	9 (8.2)	5 (4.9)	14 (6.6)
8.	Should be respectful of his parents	1 (0.9)	0	1 (0.5)
9.	Others	6 (5.4)	9 (8.7)	15 (7.0)
	Total	110 (100.0)	103 (100.0)	213 (100.0)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

for the family. The second characteristic expected of an ideal husband is education (30.9% male and 25.3% female respondents). The third characteristic of an ideal husband is to be 'good-looking' (8.2% male and 13.6% female informants). Women seem to give more importance to facial beauty (of a husband) than men. The other characteristics expected of an ideal husband according to the order given in the table are 'from a reputable family', 'reputation in the village', 'knowing skills' (not specified in the table) and 'hard working'.

Table 5

OPINIONS ABOUT IDEAL WIFE

Opinions: Respondents:	Male	Female	Both
1. Should help the family by working outside	0	0	0
2. Should be pretty	25 (22.5)	32 (31.1)	57 (26.6)
3. Should be able to bear many children	1 (0.9)	0	1 (0.5)
4. Should be hard working	28 (25.3)	32 (31.1)	60 (28.1)
5. Should be from a reputable family	22 (19.8)	14 (13.6)	36 (16.8)
6. Should be respectful of in-laws	6 (5.4)	5 (4.8)	11 (5.1)
7. Should take care of her children	2 (1.8)	1 (1.0)	3 (1.4)
8. Should be respectful of the husband	2 (1.8)	3 (2.9)	5 (2.3)
9. Other	25 (22.5)	16 (15.5)	31 (19.2)
Total	111(100.0)	103(100.0)	214(100.0)

Figures within parentheses indicate column percentage.

As Table 5 shows, the most preferred characteristic for an ideal wife is 'hard working' (28.1% of the total male and female respondents). Although women consider 'should be pretty' equally as important (31.1%) as 'hard working' (31.1%), men give more importance (25.3%) to the 'hard working' characteristic than the 'should be pretty' (22.5%). 'Should be pretty', however, is the second most important characteristic of an ideal wife according to both

A woman may also receive ornaments from her husband's family. Although she wears them, they can be taken back by the family in times of economic crisis. The woman wearing these ornaments cannot sell or exchange them.

When asked about their personal possessions, most of the women only mentioned a few items like small cymbals, costume jewelry, nose pins (gold), beads and, of course, a little cash. These objects are bought from the money which they make by selling grain (about one to ten pāthi of rice, depending upon the economic stratum of the donating family) and blackgram which is collected and given to them by their brothers during the māghi* festival. Some women, mostly unmarried girls, invest some of their personal money in buying pigs, goats or chickens. Since these are raised by the joint family, the woman is given only a share of the profit, roughly 25 to 50% depending upon the type of animal. Some women make some extra money for their personal use by occasionally making and selling mats and baskets. A few women who are adept at tatooing and midwifery also earn a small amount of cash. Some women, especially those in large extended families, whose needs for small items like cigarettes and bangles are provided neither by their husband's family nor through their personal money, might occasionally steal small amounts of the family's cash crops and sell them.

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* For detail information on the māghi festival see MacDonald 1969: 275-280 and Rajaure 1978: 381-487.

A THARU SITTING ON A MACHIYA

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or with simple technology. Thus the economic importance of a hard worker is obvious and a daughter's marriage is felt as a great loss of labour. This is where the exchange-marriage system proves its utility. Yet it is not only the loss of a worker that affects the bride-giving household. Since a Tharu girl has considerable emotional ties with her parents, brothers and the family as a whole, it is neither easy for the girl to leave her home at marriage, nor for the parents to see her go. Indeed Tharu customs help to ease the severity and suddenness of the separation. The girl remains for some time (6 to 9 months) in her parents' home before leaving finally for her husband's house.

The departure of a daughter/sister is not completely compensated for by the arrival of a daughter-in-law or sister-in-law, even though the daughter-in-law, unlike the daughter/sister can bear children to the patriline. The emotions felt between the family and the departing daughter are expressed in several ways by the Tharu. A mother loses her closest companion to whom she can express her sorrows and problems in the sleeping room.* An unmarried daughter is the one whom a mother can approach at any time for any kind of help and care. This is why one mother, who was bidding farewell to her daughter in marriage, cried, "How can I pass my days now as my working hands are gone? Who will give me water to drink in the night when I am thirsty in bed? To whom can I express my sorrows in the lonely nights?" Although a father feels sad when bidding farewell to his daughter, he does not react like the mother. On his daughter's departure one father said, "After all we can not keep her forever. She was here as a trust. We had to give her away some time, so why should we cry?"

The arrival of a bride renews the presence of a female in the household, but the emotional situation is quite different. The new bride is in some sense a rival to other family members. She is the co-parcener and co-owner (through her husband) of the property of the household.

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* Old mothers usually sleep with their unmarried daughters while the father sleeps with the bachelor sons and brothers. However, if there are no unmarried children in the house the old parents may sleep in the same room.

There is also competition between a mother-in-law and her daughter-in-law, both trying to manipulate their son/husband to their own advantage. The situation becomes critical if the aged head of the house (the bride's father-in-law) dies and his son (husband of the bride) becomes the head of the household. The mother-in-law tries to retain her superior position. She expects to have authority over her son and the daughter-in-law just as before. The mother-in-law dominates her daughter-in-law while the mother-in-law's husband is still alive, but once he has died, the daughter-in-law often tries to become dominant. Through her influence on her husband, the daughter-in-law little by little gains authority in the household. At the same time the daughter-in-law must continue to treat her mother-in-law with respect. She has to pay attention to what others think of her, and how her husband would think of her attitude and behaviour towards his own mother. A daughter-in-law is expected to be polite and humble to her mother-in-law. She can assign her only minor and easy jobs, like taking care of babies, feeding the domestic animals, processing food. The mother-in-law must not be asked to do hard jobs like grinding or pounding cereals, fetching heavy loads of drinking water or digging the kitchen garden. A daughter-in-law must not forget to give her a share of any good food that is available in the house (i.e. good quality local beer, pork, chicken and fish). She should keep on eye on her mother-in-law's clothes and if they have become dirty or torn, she must wash or mend them for her mother-in-law.

It appears that Tharu women assume their full ritual status after marriage through their husbands. Before marriage a woman is not allowed to participate in pujā or to accept prasād (offering to a deity) in ceremonies such as Dewāri, Barkā Pujā or Pittar Pujā at her parents' house.

Divorce is frequent among the Tharu. There is no ceremony or ritual for divorce. If a woman wants to divorce, she elopes with a new husband or moves to her parental house, refusing to go back to her husband. This kind of divorce is called tharrwā chordenā (leaving the husband behind) or lauwā tharrwā lenā (accepting a new husband). If the husband is not happy with his wife, he does not usually expell her from the house but simply brings in a second wife. In this situation, if the first wife can adapt, or does not want to leave her husband, she can stay in the same house along with her new co-wife (as in the case of the two wives of Gobardhan of household 5). Alternatively

the first wife might go to her parents and refuse to come back to her husband (as in the case of Thakur's first wife in household 20). As already mentioned, a divorced Tharu woman does not lose her ritual status, unlike a Brahman-Chetri woman, although some Tharu disapprove of a frequently divorcing woman. Usually a divorce takes place in cases where:

(i) the couple were married by arrangement by the parents, without the couple's consent.
(ii) there is ill-treatment of the wife by the husband, the co-wife or the family in general.
(iii) there is physical disability or long illness of one or other party.
(iv) the husband was very young.
(v) there was migration of the parental family of the wife to distant areas (such as Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts). A married woman does not like to lose her contact with and support from her parental family. Hence, if the parental family move far away, she puts pressure on her husband to follow them (as in the case of Sitaram, parental uncle of Nandlal of household 9). If the husband does not want to do so, she might divorce him and go with her parents (as in the case of the wife of Durga of Sewar village, who left her husband to go to the Far Western Terai with her migrating parents).

If a woman moves back with her parental family, the husband cannot legally force her stay with him. Traditionally the husband could only ask for a refund of the järi (bride-price) and repayment of some of the marriage expenses. According to the new laws, a husband cannot claim repayment of the järi. But the Tharu have started to compensate for this by claiming refunds under other headings which are recognized by the law, such as 'marriage-expenses', or 'expenses for the ornaments given by the husband's family'. Some people even invoice more than the real amount when they want to give trouble to the new husband's family. However, such cases are usually judged by the village panchayat as well as the district courts, which scrutinize the figures of the amount claimed or fix a certain amount to be given to the ex-husband's family by the woman's natal family or by the new husband's family (if the woman has gone to a new husband).

Usually women divorce a husband only after making preparations to join a new husband. The woman's natal family sometimes helps her in such activities. Women with

children usually do not divorce. But if divorce does take place, male children usually stay with the father. Only very young daughters (if the father does not insist on keeping them with him) accompany their mother. The reason male children stay with their father is so that they can later claim their inheritence rights.

Sons, even if they are infants, are kept by the father, for they are the ones who can continue the patriline, whereas girls are given away in marriage. Moreover, a woman's new husband does not have difficulty in incorporating the woman's daughters into his household. A daughter, like any other person, helps in household chores as well as farm work in return for what is being spent on her subsistence.* In addition the step-father can exchange her in marriage, obtaining a bride for his own son, or receiving bride-price for her marriage. In contrast with these benefits from a step-daughter, a step-father may have to give a share of his property as inheritance to a step-son.**

As mentioned earlier, polygamy, though socially recognized, is not very common. There were only 2 polygamous unions out of 96 in the sample. Polygamy is practised only under the following conditions:

(i) When there are no male off-spring from the first wife.
(ii) If infant deaths are frequent among the children born by the first wife.
(iii) If the arranged marriage was imposed by the parents or the elderly people without the agreement of the husband.
(iv) If the husband has any serious love affair with another woman.

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* Bajracharya's analysis of the cost of Tharu children indicates that an extra child is no economic burden for the family and that in fact children, since they contribute to the household production, can survive by themselves. (See Bajracharya 1980:19).

** Traditionally a Tharu is morally obliged to give a share of his property to his step-son (similar to that given to his own son) in inheritence.

According to the new National Code, a man can bring in a second wife only in certain limited circumstances, such as in the case of (i) barrenness of the wife, (ii) absence of a male child and (iii) long-term illness of the wife. However, very few Tharu women know about the law. Moreover, little effort has been made by the administration to check the violation of these rules, partly because some authorities in the administration have disobeyed these rules themselves.

Widow-remarriage is both common among and recommended by the Tharu. Usually no female of child-bearing age remains a widow. A widow's natal family as well as the late husband's family help to arrange a remarriage for her. Traditionally it was common for one of the unmarried younger brothers of the late husband to marry his brother's widow* after a simple (but necessary) ceremony called parchanā.

Though both levirate and sororate marriage are popular among the Tharu, a union is only possible for a widow with the deceased husband's younger brother or for a widower with the deceased wife's younger sister. A widow cannot marry her dead husband's elder brother and a widower cannot marry his dead wife's elder sister. Nor can a man marry his dead younger brother's widow.

Unlike widows among the high castes, the Tharu widow does not suffer any loss of ritual status by remarrying, as the following case illustrates:

> When Garbhu, the son of Chotkanwa, died, the family was very worried. It was not only the loss of a son or a brother in the family; the most worrying issue was what would happen to Garbhu's widow and her children, since Budhiram (the younger brother of the dead man) had already married. As Kauki (the widow of Garbhu), had pleased the family with her polite and humble behaviour as well as her hard work, the family

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* When a woman thus marries her deceased husband's brother this type of union is called'levirate'. When the younger brother marries his elder brother's widow it is called 'junior levirate'. Similarly when a man marries his deceased wife's sister the union is known as 'sororate marriage'.

did not want her to go away to a new husband. Kauki herself did not really want to leave, but it was important that a new husband be found for her. The elderly people of the two concerned families (Kauki's in-laws and her parental family), as well as some other elderly male relatives from the village, helped in the search. The perfect solution was found in Kamal, a Tharu from Far Western Terai, who had come as a junior-level mechanic to work in the village mill. He agreed to become Kauki's husband and move into Chotkanwa's household. A ceremony called putkar lenā (adoption of a son)* was performed, after which Kamal became a member of the family as a son of Chotkanwa, a substitute for the late Garbhu. With this ceremony he was given exactly the same status in the family, as well as within village society at large, as the late Garbhu. Kauki was his wife and Kauki's children were his children. Kauki's parents were his parents-in-law and Kauki's father-in-law was his father.

Unfortunately, after some months, Kamal left for India for medical treatment as well as to visit his native village in the Far West. He did not return nor send any message. The family waited for several months, but finally Kauki was married once more to Songra (household 8) where she now lives along with her children from Garbhu. People said that

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* There are three types of such adoptions prevalent among Tharu - (i) adoption of a son suitable in age for a widowed daughter-in-law, called putkar lenā, (ii) adoption of a young child, especially male, by a couple who have no child or no son, also called putkar lenā, or sometimes dharam puttra lenā, and (iii) adoption of a male by a couple who has no son by bringing a man to their house as a son-in-law for their daughter and changing the name of his clan or family into their own. It is called bhwār paithnā.

Kamal had probably died, since he had been ill.

The above case clearly shows the contrast between the status of a Tharu woman and that of her counterpart in high caste society. No woman of child-bearing age is forced to live as a widow unless she so wishes. Furthermore Tharu women can divorce and remarry with relative ease.

The slight Tharu preference for a male child, and the sense of security which a male child evokes, seem to be more conceptual than economic. For in fact a daughter, too, can provide for her parent or parents. Still, it is not considered proper for an aged mother or father to live dependent on a daughter and her husband, and the desire for a son to support one in old age is strong. The ideal of patrilocal residence is so strong that the Tharu disapprove both of elderly people shifting to the daughter's house and of a son-in-law moving to his wife's parent's house, even if the wife's father has no male heir. Such practices are, however, tolerated by the society although there were no cases in Sukrawar.

The most senior person in a Tharu family is a gardhurryā (household head), who is normally one of the oldest men of the family. The position of gardhurryā traditionally goes from a father to his eldest son. But it is also essential for a gardhurryā to be clever, and, if possible, an all round "champion" (sakku cād jannā manai). Hence if the eldest son does not have these qualities the position may go to the second, third or to any son who seems the most suitable. If a man left no son capable (due to his age, or talent) of becoming a gardhurrya, or if the family of an ex-gardhurryā prefers one of the younger brothers of the ex-gardhurryā, the younger brother can succeed as the new gardhurryā. In some cases an old gardhurryā remains as a nominal gardhurryā, until one of his talented sons is old enough to take over the responsibilities. Bhagiram in household 29, for example, has become the de-facto gardhurryā, despite the seniority in age of his elder brother, Motiram, or his 'dejuro' gardhurryā father. Similarly, Amar of household 5, the second son of Jagatram, became the 'de-facto' gardhurryā long before his father died.

Cases of female-headed households are rare (two in my sample). Moreover the female "heads" of such households do not hold all decision-making power themselves.

There may be young sons, daughters or brothers-in-law who have some control over her decisions. Most important, it is always a male, even if he is quite young, who represents his mother or aunt (the female household head) at the khel, the village assembly of gardhurryā.*

Next to the gardhurryā in the family hierarchy come other elderly men and women of the family. After them come grown-up male children. The unmarried daughters as well as the daughters-in-law occupy the next position. Finally there are small children on the last tier of the family hierarchy.

The hierarchical order of the married-in women is largely determined by the relative rank of their husbands. Thus the wife of an elder brother is considered ritually superior to the wife of a younger brother even if the elder brother's wife happens to be younger in age and lacking in experience. This sometimes occurs if there is a second or third marriage of the elder brother after the death or elopement of a previous wife. The wife of a gardhurryā, because of her husband's position, becomes the female gardhurryā of the household. Traditionally a female gardhurryā assigns different household jobs to each working female of the household. She also decides the menu for family meals. A gardhurryā is exempted from grinding and pounding if there are other females to perform these tasks. But she is expected to do other household, as well as farm, work for the family. A gardhurryā is still considered ritually inferior to the wife of her husband's elder brother. Hence a gardhurryā is expected to be polite and humble before her jethāni (husband's elder brother's wife) as well as to her sasu (husband's mother).

Though unmarried daughters and married-in daughters-in-law do not have high rank, they can still influence the family decisions through the mother (in the case of a daughter) or through their husband. The hierarchical position of married-out daughters when they stay tempor-

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* Only male gardhurryā or male representatives (in the case of an absent gardhurryā) attend the khel, the assembly of gardhurryā. This assembly functions under the chairmanship of the village chief (mahaton).

arily in their parental home is not clear. From what I could observe, they have little authority but must be treated politely and affectionately by the family. A visiting daughter should be respected by her sister-in-law as well as by all family members junior in age to her.

The frequency of a woman's visits to her natal home depends upon the distance between the two households (see Table 6).

Table 6

DISTANCE TO THE NATAL HOME OF WOMEN
(In walking hours)

0 Hours (Same Village)	Less than 1 hour	1-3 Hours	3-5 Hours	Total
39 (40.6)	30 (31.3)	24 (25.0)	3 (3.1)	96 (100.0)

If the two households are apart, for example, in Bardia or in Kailali in the case of Dang Tharu, the visits may take place only once every five to ten years, or even less. If it is a matter of one day's walk, the visits may be once every three to twelve months on an average. If both of the households are located within the village (40.6%), or within one hour's walk (31.3%), the visits may take place twice a week to once a month on an average. For a woman whose natal home is located either inside the husband's village or within one hour's walk, it is likely that she will never stay the night at her natal home, unless it is absolutely essential, (during a ceremony or festival). Such a woman, however, may visit her natal home frequently, as often as twice or three times a day, on her way to the water source, to the fields or to the threshing sight, but she will not stay there long. The frequency of visits to the natal home also depends upon the age of a woman and her own responsibilities in her husband's home. Newly married women and women who do not have full-time responsibility looking after domestic affairs may visit their natal home more frequently than the wives of the gardhurryā or the mothers of several grown sons living in the same house (see Table 7).

Table 7

TIME SPENT IN NATAL HOME BY WOMEN OF DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS

(Number of visits)

	Length of visit (in days)					
Age-Group	0-0	1-3	4-7	8-14	15-21	Total
15–24 Yrs.	7	11	6	1	1	26
	(26.9)	(42.3)	(23.1)	(3.8)	(3.9)	(100.0)
25-44 Yrs.	23	18	4	1	0	46
	(50.0)	(39.1)	(8.7)	(2.2)		(100.0)
55 Yrs. and above	16	6	2	0	0	24
	(66.7)	(25.0)	(8.3)			(100.0)
Total	46	35	12	2	1	96
	(47.9)	(36.5)	(12.5)	(2.1)	(1.0)	(100.0)

Figures within parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 7 shows that the length of visits to their natal home by women of lower age groups are greater than those of women of higher age groups, and the frequencies of over-night visits by these women are not less than those of women of higher age groups.* The older women, however, visit their natal home for short periods of time more frequently than the younger ones.

Tharu opinions on the preference for a nuclear or extended family are not unanimous. Some informants, especially those of the older generation, prefer extended families, while others (a few older as well as many younger people) prefer nuclear families. According to some, there are both benefits as well as disadvantages in both of these family patterns. Some people suggest that one advantage of an extended family is that specific jobs (whether household or farm) are assigned to specific members, who come to specialize in a particular kind of work - whereas in a nuclear family all jobs have to be done by those few members who live together. As the traditional Tharu agricultural economy requires much manpower, an extended family is more practical. The Tharu family, based on subsistence agriculture, needs at least one or two indoor working females, one male and one female for household management, kitchen gardening, trade and contact with the outside world, although, if there is a shortage of manpower, these tasks can be shared. There are also arguments given in favour of the nuclear family, emphasizing that a nuclear family is more congenial and easier for the junior ranking members of the family.

The gardhurryā of joint families which have not yet split off, are sometimes blamed by relatives and neighbours for not treating all members in a just and egalitarian manner. Some gardhurryā, for example, are accused of paying more attention to, or caring more for, their own children and wives than for other members. In all extended families, the gardhurryā usually lives a more comfortable life than do the other members. He and his wife are as far as possible exempt from hard jobs like digging,

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* As the break-down of age groups in this table provides only 10 years for the 15-24 age group in comparison to at least 20 years for other age groups, the figures for the 10-24 year age group seem comparatively less here, unless further calculations are made.

ploughing, grinding and pounding. Most of these jobs are done by junior adult members. Thus there are more chances for quarrels to occur in an extended family. Some of the reasons of conflict in an extended family are:

(i) Economic conflicts among the wives of two or more brothers or sons caused by the fact that some couples have more dependent children. A konti* which has more earning hands and fewer dependents often prefers to live separately, since, in the large extended family they get an equal share in the day-to-day subsistence, whereas if they split and live separately, they feel they can earn and get more per person.

(ii) Status conflicts among the married-in wives. This frequently happens when the wife of a younger brother is older than the wife of the elder brother. As mentioned above, the wife of the elder brother is considered 'ritually' higher in authority than the wife of the younger brother. But in practice the wife of the younger brother is likely to be more experienced and more adroit in dealing with the household affairs than her younger sister-in-law. Almost inevitably, the active participation of the younger brother's wife in household affairs will annoy the wife of the elder brother. Such a situation quite often brings a clash between the two women.

In another situation, as previously mentioned, a younger brother who is more clever may in some cases become the gardhurryã after the death of the father, or may become the de-facto gardhurryã of the household, using the authority of the nominal household head, the father. Once her husband assumes power or higher rank a woman also regards herself as more powerful. She may try to display or use such power or authority over the other females and junior males, which may not be appreciated by the wife or wives of the

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* Konti literally means a bed-room, but the word also applies to a close family within an extended family, i.e. a couple and their children.

of the elder brothers who were passed over for the post (as gardhurryā). In such circumstances, if the responsible female (wife of the gardhurryā younger brother) cannot keep her sisters-in-law (husband's elder brothers' wives) content through appropriate behaviour, quarrels are likely to ensue. Quarrels probably arise in this situation because the woman herself is capable of playing the role of senior woman of the household, even though her husband is not capable of assuming responsibility. It is mentally easier for her husband (who accepts that he is not capable, mentally and physically, for this post) to recognize his younger brother's status as a household head than it is for her.

A split in a family is usually preceeded by a long series of quarrels among its members. The older generation tries to solve the problems and to prevent splitting for some years, hopefully until their death. But despite such efforts, the relationship among the family members may deteriorate to such a critical stage that it becomes necessary for the family to split.

In a nuclear family on the other hand, the members are less likely to feel unwillingness to do the hard jobs, since they do it for their own children, spouse or parents. In spite of the arguments given in favour of both the nuclear and the extended patterns of family structure, the extended family pattern is more common among the Tharu. Out of the 35 households in the sample 26 (74.3%) are extended and only 8 (22.9%) are nuclear (see Table 1, p.22).

Despite the fact that women are not kept away from family discussions and meetings (especially the father's older sisters when they visit, and elder brothers' wives), Tharu men say that their presence is not needed at village-level discussions and meetings. There is one formal assembly (khel) of all Tharu household heads of the village which is entirely composed of males; no formal counterpart assembly exists for females. However, this does not prevent village women from having their own informal gatherings and meetings. A few informants told me that women too have their own assembly, parallel to the khel of the male household heads, though according to the women, it is of a more informal and recreational nature than for any 'political' or problem-solving purpose. The women say that all village-level problems are discussed in the men's khel so they see no need to think about such matters when they meet. The female assembly consists primarily of the wives of the household heads

but is not limited to them. Related females or elderly women may join such meetings. The only occasions when these women's meetings have been reportedly held have been for fishing expeditions or for feasts.

Tharu village women also meet in small informal groups of relatives, neighbours or the senior generation females whenever they need to discuss extra topics, such as the celebration of the Astimki festival, the organization and management of Dasyā* dances, marriage proposals; or they may meet to exchange ideas and skills, such as those regarding traditional medicines, post-natal problems, child care, food-processing, basketry, or to schedule the collection of fire-wood or leaves from the forest for certain feasts and ceremonies.

The Hindu concept of kanyādān (giving of a virgin daughter without accepting a bride price), as well as the concept of hierarchy between 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers' has had a marked influence on traditional Tharu relationships and obligations between certain categories of kin, although only one case of real kanyādān was encountered in Sukhrwar. As mentioned earlier most Tharu marriages are arranged by exchange or by the transaction of bride-price money. However, the wife-takers (i.e. the daughter's husband or the sister's husband and all other members of their close family) are shown high respect by the wife-givers. For example we can look at a specific case of exchange marriage between two extended households as set out in the diagram on page 52. In this situation, couple (3) as well as its descendents will show respect to the family of couple (5) and its descendants. However, the family of couple (6) is the 'wife-giving' family to couple (2) and so must show respect to couple (2) and their descendants. Similarly, the family of couple (6) (of extended family Y) and its descendants will show respect to couple (2) (of extended family X) and their descendants. Couples (1) and (4), the two old couples, will behave towards each other with reciprocal respect.

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* For further information on Dasyā festival see Rajaure, 'Dasya Festival of the Tharus of Dangdeokhuri' Himalayan Culture (1) Kathmandu, 1978, pp. 37-42.

In the above situation, the two relationships and kinds of behaviour (i.e. one showing respect to the other) established between the two extended households at the same time, are the result of the marriage exchange of the two households. If the marriage had not been arranged by exchange, but by paying bride-price -- suppose, for example, only the son of couple (2) had married the daughter of couple (6), the whole extended family of household Y would show respect to the whole extended family of X.

The members of the family of the married-out daughter (in marriage by exchange) or all members of the extended household of a daughter married without exchange (i.e. by the transaction of bride-price or by kanyādān) are the most important guests in any family ceremony or ritual, such as barkā pujā ritual, māghi festival, marriage, child birth and the first hair-shaving ceremony of a male child. Funerals are an exception; for funeral rituals, the wife-takers are not invited. However- a damadwā (daughter's husband) and bhainā (sister's son) or a bhainī (sister's daughter) are also invited to accept dān (ritual donation) of utensils, clothes or cows in a post funeral ceremony.* The wife-givers also often send small gifts, such as cigarettes, soap, spices, cloth or minor utensils to the family of their 'wife-takers', especially whenever their daughter/sister visits her husband's house after staying at her paternal family for some time during the early years of marriage. The sending of vegetables, fruits, liquor and local beer as a gift may continue for a long time, even into the next generation. However, as mentioned earlier, these kinds of gifts are also sometimes given to the wife-giving households. Such frequent exchange of gifts is said to strengthen the relationship between the families.

There is also the māmā - bhainā (mother's brother - sister's son) or māmā-bhainī (mother's brother - sister's daughter) relationship which is connected with the concept of 'wife takers'. Like the damadwā (daughter's husband), bhātu (elder sister's husband), or bahnoiyā (younger sister's husband), their descendants are also

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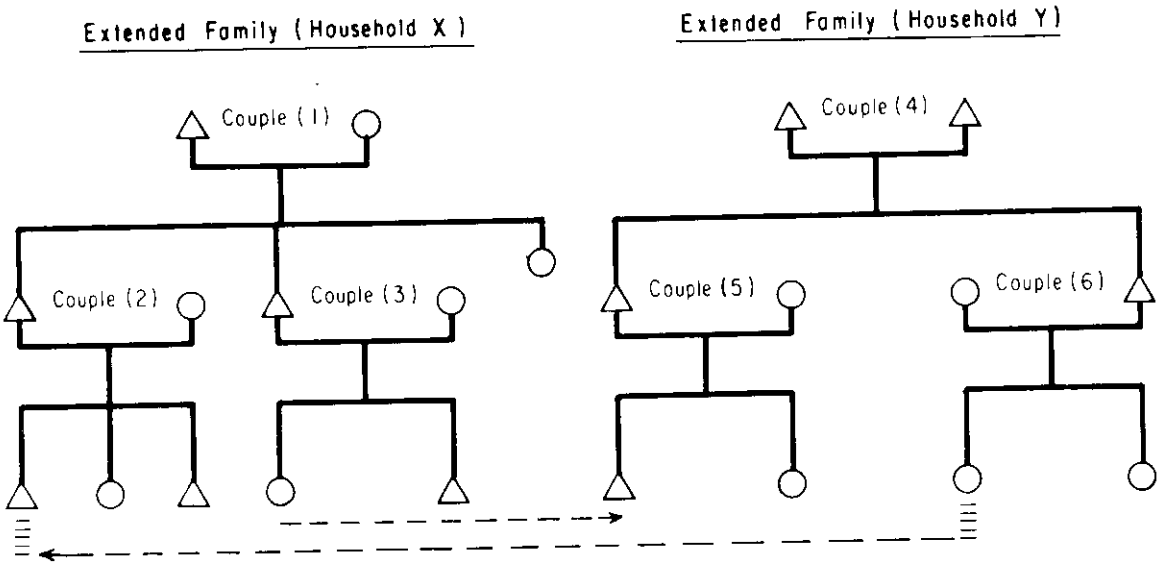
* For further information on Tharu rituals and life cycle ceremonies see Rajaure 1978.

AN EXCHANGE MARRIAGE BETWEEN TWO EXTENDED HOUSEHOLDS



i. The eldest son of couple (2) of extended family X has been married to the elder daughter of couple (6) of extended household Y and,

ii. The daughter of couple (3) has been married to the son of couple (5).

considered to be ritually pure. A mother's brother and all members of his close family are supposed to show respect and affection towards a bhainā, a bhaini or their children.

A maternal uncle, and the close members of his family as well, are expected to work as volunteer care-takers for the property of the bhainā or bhaini if the father, parents or the husband (of bhaini) had died before the children could look after the property themselves.

There are joking relationships among the Tharu. The most common of these, is the relationship between a bhātu (elder sister's husband) and a sāli (wife's younger sister). The theme of joking between them mostly concerns sex. In fact, a sexual relationship between an unmarried sāli and her bhātu is to some extent acceptable if it is kept private. If the sali becomes pregnant, either the bhātu marries her as a second wife, or a bachelor who wants to marry but cannot afford the bride-price is sought.

Between a bhauji (elder brother's wife) and a deur (husband's younger brother) joking is also permitted, though not as freely as that between a bhatu and sali. There are a few cases of deur and bhauji having sex, usually when the husband of the bhauji is away for a considerable length of time or is ill or old. A child born of such a union is easily accepted as the child of the husband of the bhauji. There do not seem to be strong negative attitudes against such behaviour. Indeed, it is an extension of the tradition whereby, if a woman's husband dies, her deur should be consulted and approached concerning her remarriage and he is given the first choice in marrying his widow bhauji. Only when her deur is already married does she re-marry someone else of another household.

The relationship between a bahurryā (younger brother's wife) and jetthwā (husband's elder brother) is completely opposite to that between a deur and bhauji. Neither is supposed to touch each other. Modest behaviour is expected from both sides. The jetthwā is treated this way by his bahurryā because he is a respected person, with some authority over her, since the bahurryā is his younger brother's wife and so junior to him.

CHAPTER III

WOMEN'S LEGAL RIGHTS AND PERSONAL PROPERTY

Legal Rights

Tharu society follows a strongly patrilineal ideology. Hence most of its rules regarding succession and inheritance give an unequal status to its females and males. However, in practice there is some flexibility in the application of the rules. Furthermore, although women may not own land or an estate in their name, they may enjoy and have control over land and property through their husbands, sons and grandsons.

Tharu divide property in two ways. Angsa (literally a 'portion') is the share of family property, or an estate, to be inherited only by male successors, whether by birth or by adoption. Sampatti includes movable property such as jewelry, utensils, valuable clothing and livestock -- such as cattle, buffaloes, goats, sheep and pigs -- which can be passed on in different ways from one person to another. Parents may donate one or some of these items to their daughter as well as to their daughter's husband. Sampatti may also be given to a bride and her husband in the form of dāijo (dowry) which consists mostly of cash and utensils, given by the invited guests (relatives, friends or neighbours) during the time of dāijo darnā (dropping the dowry) ceremony in a marriage.*

As already explained, angsa is family property, to be shared only by the male heirs. One might suppose that women have nothing to do with decisions regarding the angsa, but this is not so. If a woman thinks that a proposed transaction of any portion of her husband's estate is unwise, or that the proposed mode of its exploitation is not good for the welfare of the family, she can tell her husband directly. And normally a husband consults his wife before making decisions concerning property. If the husband tries to impose his own decisions on his wife, she may try to influence the elderly people of the joint household or, if necessary, the village chief and

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* See p.26 for an explanation of dāijo.

other senior people (local shamans, as well as political authorities, such as a pancha). These people might then pressure the husband to change his ideas.

A woman may also threaten her husband, saying that she will run away and divorce him if he does not consider her opinions regarding the transaction. The Tharus' involvement in agricultural subsistence production causes them to place a high value on a good and reliable woman, who can only be obtained by payment of a bride-price or through marriage exchange. They would hesitate to arrange a second, costly marriage. Furthermore, there would be less chance of getting a good wife, as the prospects for a man who has already married once and whose wife has left him are lowered. If a man remarries because of the death of his first wife, people are sympathetic, although from the ritual view point he is considered a "ghar bigral" (broken house, or one with a broken house) and thus inauspicious. He is not permitted to attend certain ceremonies, such as the rituals performed in the diety room by a bride-groom before the marriage procession goes to the bride's house. Nor is he permitted to touch certain auspicious materials, such as the sagunāhā machhi.* People are also sympathetic to a man who marries for a second time in the event that his first wife is barren, as long as he has not driven away the first wife from his house and is maintaining her well. But a man who brings in a second wife after the first wife has moved out, is suspected of not having treated his first wife well. He might try to convince people he had treated her well, but if he fails to do so people are suspicious of him and hesitate to give him their daughter or sister in marriage. The man might still obtain a woman, but she would be one that other men had discarded. In such circumstances men prefer to keep their wives happy by following their advice or by convincing them of their own views rather than unilaterally imposing their own ideas or decisions. If other means fail, women assert themselves by threatening their husbands with divorce or elopement and this seems to be an

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* This is a thread in which some fish are wound. It is held by a man who walks, together with other men, in the front row of the wedding procession, immediately after the drummers and the musicians. Only a man who has not been a ghar bigral can carry such a thread.

effective strategy which compensates for the lack of formal legal rights over angsa property. In the case of Sitaram, the wife's threat of divorce was enough to force him to migrate to Far Western Terai forever so she could be with her parental family who had decided to migrate there. Because of this Sitaram lost all his rights to the ancestral property both movable and immovable.*

As suggested, although women do not have any legal right over the ancestral property (angsa) they can enjoy it through their husbands. Hence a husband is an important source of security and potential power for Tharu women. In the Tharu context, a woman's right to ancestral property, which can be the 'de-facto' right of use as well as support for her subsistence, can only be claimed indirectly through her husband or through her sons after his death, either by 'threatening' the husband (if other means fail), or through a widow's temporary regency of the estate, as well as its patronage, until after the sons have grown up.

This makes it clear why among the Tharu there are few women of child-bearing age who remain widows. A widow without a son will have no secure access to regular support from her dead husband's family, hence a Tharu widow will go on remarrying until she has a son who is expected to survive and grow into adulthood. She will be assisted by her parental, and occasionally her ex-husband's family in making such remarriages.

The case of the woman Kauki (see pp. 41 - 42) illustrates this. Another case is that of an old woman, Bani Devi, the mother of Gothu of household 24, whose first husband died of cholera only a few days after her marriage. She was married to a second husband who also died after some time, and then had a third marriage to a lame man by whom she had one son, Gothu, and one daughter. Gothu would not receive a very large inheritance as he was the son of a poor man. Hence his parents-in-law (household 22) encouraged him and his family, including Bani Devi, to come and stay with them. They did so, assisting the in-laws in their farm work. After some time villagers helped to construct a new house for them. For

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* See also the case of Thumannya, p. 31.

their subsistence they started, and still continue, farming on others' land on a share cropping basis.

The strategy of 'threatening' may also be used for other purposes by women when they want to exercise their power over their husbands or husbands' families. But there is a limit of age and time for the use of this means. A woman can no longer threaten, nor does she need to threaten, divorce or elopement after she has become old and has grown-up children. Her threatening power loses force in proportion to her diminishing chances of remarriage. But this does not normally affect Tharu women adversely for by this time a woman has usually been fully accepted by her husband's family, enjoying and sharing the property rights through her husband. A man, too, would not normally maltreat his wife at this stage, especially if she has born children by him.

Apart from the power exercised by a woman's occasional threat of divorce, she can also assume power by becoming a guardian or regent for an estate after her husband's death, if her sons are too young to assume such responsibility. Such women can make all decisions regarding the estate, except selling the immovable property. Once the sons become old enough they take over such responsibility from their widow mother. However, such transfer of responsibility becomes only 'de-juri' in nature, and real power is often still held by the widow mother.

As women exercise rights over angsa only through their husbands or through their sons, they lose all such rights and power once they divorce or leave their husbands. Although the parental family of a woman is supposed to support her only until her marriage, in fact it also supports her temporarily after the termination of her first marriage and until her second marriage. During this transition period, usually between one and four years, the woman stays and works in her parental home. She works almost as much as other women do, eats what other women eat and wears what the family provides her. In addition she may be given a small amount of cash cereals (kharauni) once or twice a year, which she can sell or barter for minor things she might need in her personal life.

Unlike many other ethnic groups and castes of Nepal, Tharu families do not partition the joint estate for a long time, often not until three or four generations have passed. When a family splits into several 'branches',

most of the branches are still extended and only a few are nuclear (8 (22.9%) of the 35 in the sample). There were a number of extended families in the village which had recently split from their larger extended family (e.g. households 1,5,6, and 29).

In Tharu customary law, if a woman does not like either her husband, her parents-in-law or other members of the family, she has no right to force a split and claim a share of the ancestral property. If she does not like her husband, she may instead run away with another man. If she likes her husband but not his family, she may encourage him to move or migrate to a new place, most probably to her parents' village. In this case the husband would give up all claims to the ancestral property, as Sitaram did when he followed his wife's family.

According to the National Code (Mulki Ain) an unmarried daughter over the age of 35 is entitled to inherit a share equal to that of her brothers' shares of her father's estate. However, this law has had no impact on Tharu women since none of the women are aware of it. Moreover, when I told them about the law, they did not seem to be ideologically prepared to accept this legal privilege, since they could not think of a woman remaining unmarried beyond the age of 35. According to some Tharu women, only an abnormal or eccentric woman could remain unmarried this long.

Personal Property

Tharu women own a little personal property. Again, there is a difference between what they own in theory and what they own in practice. For example, the parents of a bride give a cow with its calf and also a few utensils and clothes to their marrying -out daughter, and some rich parents may also give milking buffaloes and ornaments. Although these items are supposed to belong to the bride as her personal property, in fact they are used by the whole extended family of her husband. When and if the married woman and her family separate from the extended family, the major utensils (if any), ornaments, as well as one cow and a calf (not necessarily the original one) are first given back to them by the extended family. The rest of the animals and ancestral property are then divided between the male successors. With the agreement of his wife, a husband can sell such property as was given to the wife upon marriage.

A woman may also receive ornaments from her husband's family. Although she wears them, they can be taken back by the family in times of economic crisis. The woman wearing these ornaments cannot sell or exchange them.

When asked about their personal possessions, most of the women only mentioned a few items like small cymbals, costume jewelry, nose pins (gold), beads and, of course, a little cash. These objects are bought from the money which they make by selling grain (about one to ten pāthi of rice, depending upon the economic stratum of the donating family) and blackgram which is collected and given to them by their brothers during the māghi* festival. Some women, mostly unmarried girls, invest some of their personal money in buying pigs, goats or chickens. Since these are raised by the joint family, the woman is given only a share of the profit, roughly 25 to 50% depending upon the type of animal. Some women make some extra money for their personal use by occasionally making and selling mats and baskets. A few women who are adept at tatooing and midwifery also earn a small amount of cash. Some women, especially those in large extended families, whose needs for small items like cigarettes and bangles are provided neither by their husband's family nor through their personal money, might occasionally steal small amounts of the family's cash crops and sell them.

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* For detail information on the māghi festival see MacDonald 1969: 275-280 and Rajaure 1978: 381-487.

CHAPTER IV

EDUCATION, HEALTH AND MOTHERHOOD*

Education

Although a few wealthy Tharu households have been educating** their children for five or more decades, there is a general reluctance towards educating girls (see Table 8).

Table 8

ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION

Questions & Answers	Is it important for a boy / girl to go to school?					
	Boy			Girl		
Respondents	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
Male	38	0	38	28	9	37
	(100.0)		(100.0)	(75.7)	(24.3)	(100.0)
Female	35	0	35	19	16	35
	(100.0)		(100.0)	(54.3)	(45.7)	(100.0)
Both	73	0	73	47	25	72
	(100.0)		(100.0)	(65.3)	(34.7)	(100.0)

Figures within parentheses indicate row percentages.

Table 8 shows that all respondents, both male and female, ideologically recognize the importance of a boy going to school, although practically (to be discussed further) not all of them send their sons to school. On the question of sending girls, opinions vary. 75.7% of the male respondents accept the importance of sending girls to school and 24.3% think it unimportant, while only 54.3% of the female respondents ideologically agree on sending girls to school and 45.7% (almost double the percentage of men) do not think it important.

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* Some of the information for this chapter was collected for the Tharu case study which I undertook for the UNICEF sponsored research work and appears in 'Status of Children in Nepal' Nepal, 1979-80, pp. 154-163.

** This education has been largely at informal schools.

Table 9

REASONS FOR KEEPING GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL

Reasons	Male Responses	Female Responses	Both
1. Because they are needed for farm work	6 (17.6)	7 (16.7)	13 (17.1)
2. Because they will have to mix with boys at school	0	0	0
3. Because it doesn't pay to send them to school since they are going to get married off and leave the family soon	9 (26.5)	2 (9.5)	13 (17.1)
4. Because it is difficult to marry off girls who have been to school	0	0	0
5. Because it doesn't pay to send girls as they are not likely to join service or salaried jobs	2 (5.9)	5 (11.9)	7 (9.2)
6. Because they are needed for house work	10 (29.4)	17 (40.5)	27 (35.5)
7. Because it costs too much	0	0	0
8. Because their husbands will take care of them	2 (5.9)	0	2 (2.7)
9. Others	5 (14.7)	9 (21.4)	14 (18.4)
Total	34 (100.0)	42 (100.0)	76 (100.0)

Figures within parentheses indicate column percentages.

According to Table 9 the most important reason (35.5%) given by both male and female respondents for not sending their girls to school is 'because they are needed for house work.' The other main reasons seem to be 'because they are needed for farm work' (17.1% of both male and female respondents) and 'because it doesn't pay to send them to school since they are going to get married off and leave the family soon' (also 17.1% of the total, though 26.5% of the male and only 9.5% of the female). The much greater number of males giving this answer is perhaps because they have more responsibility for the finances of the household.

The socio-economic life of the Tharu, as well as their traditional concepts of a happy life and a bright future, do not inspire Tharu children towards literacy and learning. The Tharu subsistence pattern has not changed substantially over the last few generations. In the past only a few literate people were needed who could consult religious almanacs for the selection of auspicious dates and times for certain rituals and festivals. These services could also be performed by literate non-Tharus, especially Brahmans. The main benefit of education, according to some Tharu, is that it provides people capable of reading and writing documents which are necessary when dealing with government offices (i.e. revenue office, land administration office), or when negotiating for land purchase and sale. Almost none of the Tharus held land in their names in the past, and they do not own much land now (see Pemble 1971: 34,234,235), thus they have not been motivated to send their children to school (see Table 10).

In spite of a general disinterest in literacy, a few rich Tharu households with land have attempted to make their male heirs literate to avoid being cheated.* Although the main purpose of literacy was to enable the Tharu to read and write documents concerned with the ownership or transaction of land, those who learnt

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* Some of the aged Tharu relate cases of malpractices in which illiterate owners were deprived of their land and estate by tricks and forgery. Such owners had been fooled into putting thumb impressions (as a sign of agreement) on false documents.

Table 10

LITERACY PATTERN BY ECONOMIC STRATA & SEX

(15 Years & Above)

Economic Strata	Sex: Male		Female		Total	
	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate
Top	10	6	0	15	10	21
	(62.5)	(37.5)		(100.0)	(32.3)	(67.7)
Middle	17	27	6	41	23	68
	(38.6)	(61.4)	(12.8)	(87.2)	(25.3)	(74.7)
Bottom	14	31	0	46	14	77
	(31.1)	(68.9)		(100.0)	(15.4)	(84.6)
Total	41	64	6	102	47	166
	(39.1)	(60.5)	(5.6)	(94.4)	(22.1)	(77.9)

Note: Figures within parentheses indicate percentage to total.

to read and write also wrote down Tharu songs, stories and mantras and made lists of the names of the village gods, along with the schedules and other details of their annual offerings.

With the opening of more and more schools closer to the villages, as well as the occasional free distribution of text books (up to grade III), a new trend towards education is developing among the Tharu. Due to increased penetration of the government administration in the day-to-day affairs of villagers, Tharu have now started realizing that there must be at least one or two literate men in the house to deal with different government agencies like the revenue office, land administration, forest department, the district court, or the village panchayat. Increased pressure on the land has also brought a consciousness of the value of landownership among the Tharu so that they now want to own land. And they have also developed an interest in non-traditional jobs, such as that of teacher, peon and junior level clerk in government and other offices.* As a result of these changes, villagers now realize the importance of sending children - at least, male children - to school. As shown in Table 11 the number of literate females is negligible ** and the number of girls attending school remains low. It is likely that this number will not increase proportionately to males in the near future unless efforts are made to lessen the burden of female household labour, as well as to devise some immediate opportunities or benefits for literate Tharu females, such as job opportunities as primary school teachers, family planning motivators, health aides, who could be employed either within the village or within the vicinity.

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* These kinds of jobs are held by a few Tharu males who are literate and also more or less educated, i.e. Lal Bahadur of household 12, Ammar Raj of household 5, and Bhagiram of household 28.

** Figures of school-going children (both male and female) suddenly increased (at least 60 more students than before) when an informal night school was started inside the village by the villagers themselves. 20 percent of these new students were girls according to my field observations.

Table 11

EDUCATIONAL PATTERN BY ECONOMIC STRATA & SEX

Economic Strata	Male		Female		Both	
	No Schooling	Primary	No Schooling	Primary	No Schooling	Primary
Top	2 (33.3)	4 (66.7)	5 (100.0)	0	7 (63.6)	4 (36.4)
Middle	11 (61.1)	7 (38.9)	31(96.9)	1 (3.1)	42 (84.0)	8 (16.0)
Bottom	13 (68.4)	6 (31.6)	22(100.0)	0	35 (85.4)	6 (14.6)
Total	26 (60.5)	17 (39.5)	58(98.3)	1 (1.7)	84 (82.4)	18 (17.6)

Sex & Schooling

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

It is a little unusual that female literacy is higher in the middle stratum than in the top stratum (see Table 11) where it might be expected that the 'luxury' of female education could best be afforded. This phenomenon may be due to the fact that in Sukhrwar all the affinal women 'married up' from middle and lower families who could probably not afford to educate them, while at the same time many top stratum families had to give their daughters to middle stratum households.

During my field work, only seven or eight households (out of 35) were sending their male children to the primary school. However almost all remaining households were sending at least one or two children to a night school started by Sukhrwar villagers. Although most of the children attending this school were boys, there were also some girls (mostly below ten years), mainly from wealthier families. Girls attend school only for a few years, since their labour is urgently needed at home. Villagers are also reluctant to allow their adult females to attend the night school. Poor households still view education for girls as a 'luxury'.

At present even the Tharu males have difficulty in getting higher education beyond high school as they can neither compete academically with others nor afford to undertake higher study. As the medium of instruction is Nepali or very occasionally English, Tharu students often have difficulty comprehending lessons, compared with the native Nepali speaking students. Hence they fall behind in class and later on give up. Given this situation, the chances for Tharu girls getting higher education are extremely low. However, with the passing of time, and the spread of education, the negative Tharu attitude towards female literacy and education is sure to change. The speed of change could probably be accelerated by the introduction of female teachers and special literacy classes within the villages, especially programmed for girls and adult females.

Health

The Tharu diet is more balanced than that of many rural Nepalese. They eat many kinds of vegetables, cereals and fruit which they cultivate on their own farms. Occasionally they also gather wild vegetables, roots and

fruit. They also frequently consume the meat of domestic animals and birds (goats, sheep, pigs, chickens and pigeons) as well as the meat of rats, quails, doves and shell-fish (e.g. crabs, oysters and shrimp). Apart from these, the Tharu eat many other wild birds and animals which most other Nepalese do not eat, i.e. crow, crane, heron, parrot, house-maina, sparrow, wild cat, jackal, locusts and the larvae of bees. This variety considerably increases the animal protein in their diet. However, lack of knowledge about the causes of diseases and bad sanitary habits, do cause many health problems.

Many Tharu do not understand the importance of clean and safe water for good health. It is hard for them to believe that round worms and several other intestinal disorders - which account for most of the diseases among the Tharu - are caused by drinking dirty water or eating contaminated food. According to the Tharu, round worms are the result of eating uncooked rice. They claim that diarrhoea, and to some extent also vomiting, is caused by excessive intake of certain 'cold' foods and liquids * e.g. oranges, sheep meat, and cow's milk. Children quite often drink or swallow water from the street drainage channel. Most of the adults also use this same water for several purposes other than drinking, such as cleaning vegetables and cereals, washing cooking utensils, and washing hands and face. Villagers fetch drinking water either from the village well, if they reside close by, or from the spring located on the eroded banks of the village streams. The water of these sources, too, is not safe for human health.

Very few mothers cut their children's nails, nor do they regularly and carefully wash the hands and mouth of their children. However, during their early childhood children are reasonably well cared for. Children up to six months are regularly bathed - every three to six days, weather permitting. They are oiled twice a day and have kājal** applied to their eyes occasionally.

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* Like many Nepalese the Tharu divide all food and drink into 'hot' and 'cold', but certain items of food or drink are considered 'hot' by some people, and 'cold' by others.

** An ointment produced at home out of fine carbon dust, vegetable oil and also camphor, if available.

Many Tharu start smoking from their early childhood (as early as the age of 10 or 11). Parents, or other older people who also smoke, do not discourage their children from smoking. As a result, many Tharu get bronchitis and serious coughs in later life.

From this description of the health practices of the Tharu, it is clear that most of their health problems are the result of their lack of knowledge about hygiene and proper sanitary habits. From my experience, I would suggest that villagers are not likely to change their 'traditional' habits and beliefs regarding health and hygiene for some time unless special health education and extension efforts are made.

A few villagers do realize the importance of safe water for good health, but this does not help them much, since the other villagers contaminate the water anyway. Fortunately, the new text books (though in Nepali) contain good material on modern health. With the growing number of children in the school, this may also help to change first the traditional beliefs about health and then the sanitary habits of the people. Nevertheless, these changes will take some time.

Motherhood

Children are highly desired by Tharu. The Tharu birth rate is high (4.4 children per married woman on average) but many Tharu children do not survive into adulthood (see Table 12). Very little preference is expressed over the sex of a baby. People express desires for babies, rather for sons or daughters. Most informants (both male and female) preferred to have an equal number of male and female children, as a son would share, and thus lessen, the work load of his father while a daughter would help her mother in the same way. Having an equal number of male and female children is also beneficial as parents can exchange a daughter in marriage with the family from which they obtain a patohyā (son's wife).

As Table 12 shows, the rate of infant mortality is higher in the bottom economic stratum than in the middle economic stratum, which is natural, as the women of the bottom stratum get less health and medical care. But the average mortality rate appears highest in the top economic stratum which looks a little strange. This could

be due to its women (above 15 years of age) being totally illiterate and uneducated in contrast to the females of the middle economic stratum (see Table 10).

No effort to prevent conception is ever made for it could deprive parents of the great pleasure and comfort a child can bring. Nor is there any serious problem of illegitimate children among Tharu (see the case of Thumannya, p. 31), which is the main motivation for the fairly frequent occurance of abortion among the non-Tharu Nepalese of the region.

A childless woman assumes a negative social position among Tharu. She is considered inauspicious and is sometimes referred as a niputri (a derogatory term, literally meaning 'a woman having no child'). A childless woman feels insecure, worried about an uncertain future. And her worries and fears are real indeed, as there is a good possibility of her husband bringing in a co-wife, and Tharu women feel that there is hardly anything worse than a co-wife, 'who must be accepted as one accepts death'.* A childless woman's in-laws will become suspicious of her, as they will think that there is no 'tie' to bind her with them. She can run away or may go to a new husband.**

According to the Tharu, the future of a childless woman, especially one who has been deserted by her husband, is dark. In old age there will be no one to help and care for her. A childless man can adopt a child (putkar lenā) who will genuinely care for him during his old age, since the adopted child will have an interest and motive - inheritance of the man's property.

However, an elderly childless widow can get help and care from her husband's adopted child and his/her family, or from a child adopted by the widow herself. Beyond his sense of duty and affection toward the person

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* Remark made by one of my female Tharu informants.

** Children are not always enough to bind a woman to stay with her husband, but my observations indicate that there is a higher chance of separation and elopement for a childless woman than for one with children.

Table 12

AVERAGE NUMBER OF CONCEPTIONS AND CHILDREN BORN BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Economic Strata	Conceptions	Born Alive	Males Alive (Now)	Females Alive (Now)	Total Living (Now)	Infant Mortality
Top	4.50	4.17	1.67	1.33	3.00(66.7)	1.5 (33.3)
Middle	4.44	4.40	1.56	1.72	3.28(73.9)	1.16(26.1)
Bottom	4.61	4.49	1.88	1.46	3.34(72.5)	1.27(27.5)
All	4.52	4.40	1.71	1.56	3.27(72.3)	1.25(27.3)

who reared him the main incentive for an adopted child to care for and help his/her adopted mother would be the widow's control of her deceased husband's estate.

The position of a sonless woman is better than that of a childless woman, because the sonless couple might induce one of their sons-in-law (daughter's husband) to stay with them as the heir to their estate (bhwār paithnā). The daughter's husband, who would inherit his parents-in-law's estate, is obliged to provide help and to care for his in-laws just as a son would provide for his own parents.

Tharus generally attribute a woman's inability to have children to either an attack or curse of certain spirits and deities, or to an organic or physical defect in the reproductive organs of either or both spouses. Although the Tharu know that conception is the natural outcome of the union of a male and female, their knowledge about how a foetus develops into a child is meagre. All they say is that sometimes (by chance) male sperm enters the body of a female and mixes with her blood, somewhere in the womb, where it grows and comes out as a baby after ten months.*

The generic term for conception is garbha rahnā. According to the expectations of most informants (both male and female) a woman should conceive within one or two years after marriage. The main characteristics of conception are a lack of appetite, morning nausea and dizziness. Most of the women crave certain foods which are sour and spicy hot, such as chutney and citrus fruit. Efforts are made to provide the expectant mother with such foods. There are no restrictions on daily food except that very strong liquor or very strong jār (local beer) is not recommended for pregnant women. It is considered that these liquids could bring a premature delivery or a miscarriage.

No special foods (other than food the woman craves) are given until delivery. Most Tharu are unaware of the value of nutritious food for the growth of an unborn baby. In fact, however, the daily food

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* Like many other Nepalese, the Tharu include the month menstruation ceased in calculating the length of pregnancy.

of the Tharu contains more vitamins and protein than the food of the other castes and population groups of the region.

No ritual or ceremony is performed to celebrate a conception. The pregnant woman is, however, exempt from hard work, like carrying heavy loads, since it is believed that such work may cause a miscarriage. Nor is a pregnant woman expected to go very far from the house (e.g. to the forest for fire-wood), especially when the delivery period approaches. It is considered that a woman might have trouble if the child is born in the forest or away from the home.

As mentioned previously, abortion is not practised by the Tharu. This can be explained in part by the tolerant Tharu attitude toward illegitimate births and their favorable attitude towards having a large number of children. In addition they calculate from experience that not all children born are going to survive. If a girl becomes pregnant before marriage her parents make arrangements to get her married as soon as possible (with no ceremony or only a very minor ceremony) to the man responsible for her pregnancy. If the man is already married, his family must agree to his bringing in one more wife. If the man who made the woman pregnant is not in a position to marry her, her parents offer her for a nominal bride price, or no bride price, with no bond of exchange - marriage, to a man who needs a wife but cannot afford to arrange a better marriage. The child born after such a marriage is considered the child of the legal husband.

According to most informants, the best age for child bearing is somewhere between sixteen and twenty-five, for the woman's body is considered laram (soft) at that age and so it is easier to deliver a baby. After that age the body becomes chhippal (overmatured and hard), making delivery difficult. Delivery takes place in the husband's house. As soon as severe and frequent pain is felt by the expectant mother, preparations are made in the delivery room. A fire is made in the centre of the room and paddy straw is put below the bed of the new mother and the child. In the case of minor complications, some experienced women and the sorinnyā (traditional midwife) from the village

are expected to come and help.* If the unborn child is not in the right position for delivery (i.e. head downwards), the sorinnyā tries to place the baby in the right position by pressing slightly and rubbing oil on the woman's stomach. The ultā (reverse i.e. breech) baby is considered dangerous for both the mother and the child.

A woman normally delivers her baby in her bedroom (konti). But sometimes babies are born in the fields, streets or courtyards when the woman in labour happens to be outside in the course of her household work. A pregnant woman can be seen doing her household work until the last hour before delivery. Besides the sorinnyā, or those who have to care for the mother and child, people are not supposed to touch or come into direct contact with a new-born baby and the mother since they are considered polluted and unclean.

After child-birth, attention is paid to whether the placenta (purin) has come out or not. If not, several methods are applied until it does. The woman may be given some water to drink and jhārphuk** may be performed, or she may be given an amulet to put around her neck. When the placenta has come out, the sorinnyā or any other experienced woman, ties the umbilical cord and cuts it with a knife. The placenta is then buried inside the cattleshed section of the house. The sorinnyā then bathes the new baby with some paste of mustard oil-cake and gives the baby to the mother to nurse.

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* For major complications regarding pregnancy frequent pre-natal care and precautions are taken according to the advice of the baidāwā (traditional herbal healer and expert on pregnancy) who is called whenever necessary.

** The simplest method of shamanic cure, in which the patient is cured by ritual blowing, either with or without the chanting of a mantra. A broom is also occasionally used to cause the disease to descend from the body of the patient.

The new mother and child are confined in the delivery-room until a ritual called ghatwā karainā (introducing the water resource) is performed.* In this ritual, the new mother goes to a water source, takes a purifying bath and applies some spots of vermilion over a small lump of cow-dung (as a sign of worship) which she will have brought from home.** Next, swān pāni (water ritually purified by contact with a piece of gold) is sprinkled over the mother and child for purification. During the period of confinement in the delivery room, twice a day the sorinnyā heats some mustard oil over the fire and rubs it over the body of the mother and the child. Most of the mother's body is exposed to the fire to keep her warm. Oiling of the mother is always done indoors, to prevent exposure of her body; but the baby can be oiled outdoors after the ghatwā karnainā ceremony.

In most households the sorinnyā (who is hired for eight to twelve days) comes twice a day to wash the dirty clothes and sheets of the mother and child as well as to rub oil on them. After completing her job she takes a bath to purify herself from the pollution, before mixing with other people or doing ordinary household work.

The newly born baby depends solely on mother's milk until six or eight months when he/she starts taking solid food. If the mother does not have sufficient milk in her breast, she is given a broth of jwānu (Corum copticum) seeds along with lentils.

Among the Tharu no special foods are given to the

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* This ritual is performed when the umbilical cord dries and drops away, roughly on the fourth or fifth day after the delivery. This ritual purifies the mother and the child from the pollution caused by child-birth. From this day, the new mother can touch water and food, as well as people, which she is forbidden to touch immediately after the child-birth.

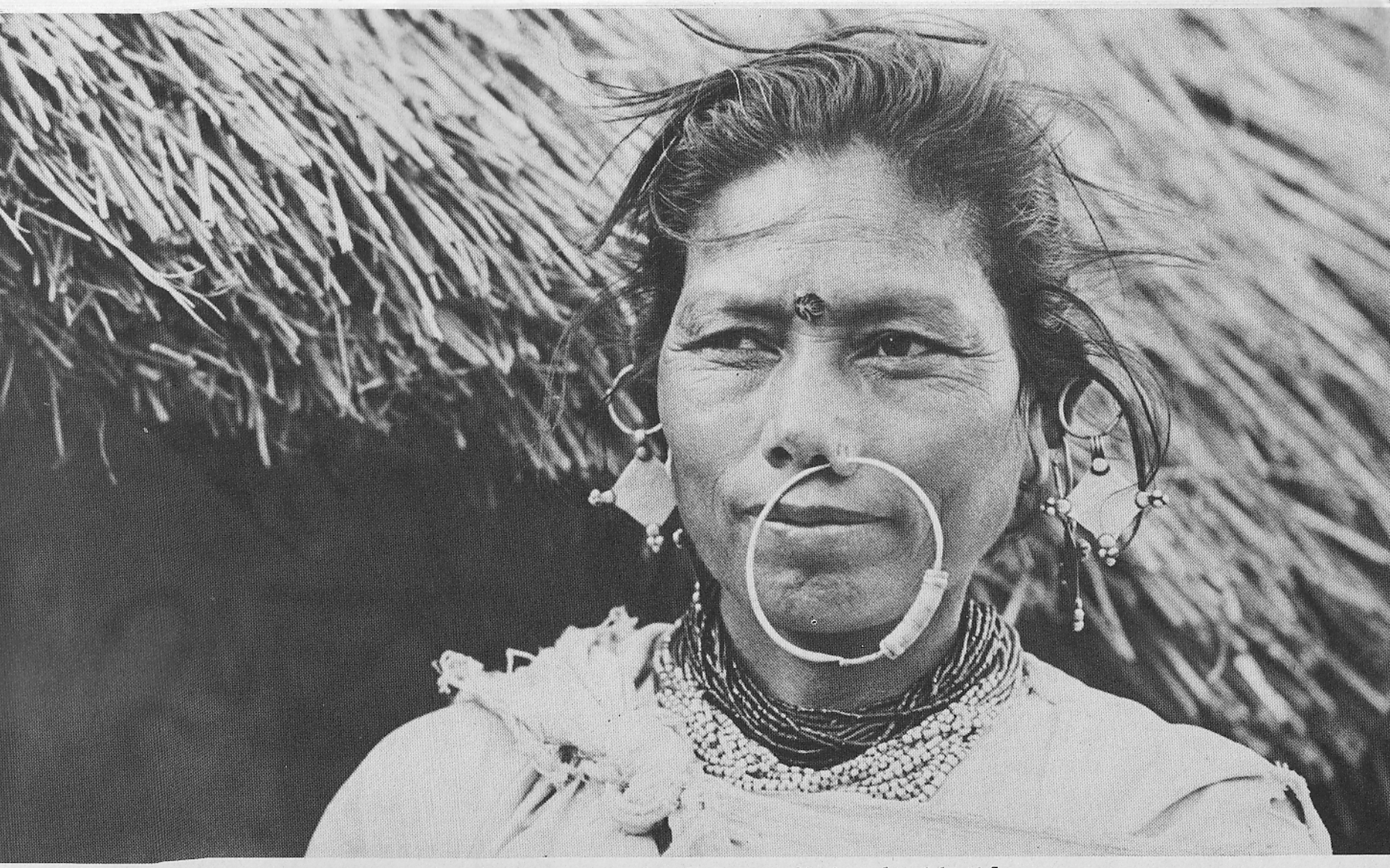
** Cow-dung is supposed to be a substance which cleans or purifies a floor or ground and thus also the mother and child from the pollution. It is considered sacred, as it is associated with the cow, the Laxmi or the goddess of prosperity.

nursing mother, in contrast to some other Nepalese ethnic groups like the Brahman-Chetri, Newar or Gurung who insist on giving rich and sweet food along with meat (except in vegetarian households). Nor do the parents of the new mother send any special food to their daughter. However, the household of the new mother tries to provide her with a regular intake of green vegetables, soups of different legumes and occasionally some chicken or pigeon meat.

Small girl looking after her younger sister.

Mother and child.

Young woman on her way to fetch water.



One of the village women who is a traditional mid-wife.

CHAPTER V

THE ECONOMY

Like the economy of most Indian and Nepalese villages, the economy of Sukhrwar Tharu is based primarily on agriculture supported by animal husbandry. Among the subsidiary occupations, the prominert ones are hunting and gathering, manufacturing, food processing and pack transportation.

For the Tharu, agriculture is important both for subsistence and for market production. As shown in Table 14 abcut 63.7% of the total subsistence production and about 79% of the total Tharu income from the market sector comes from household agricultural production. If kitchen gardening is added to agriculture, these two figures rise to 9 and 4.8 percents respectively.

Although agriculture is important in many ways to Tharu of all economic strata, it seems to be more important for the Tharu of the top economic stratum than for the others, since it provides them 69% of their market production. To the Tharu households of the middle and bottom strata, kitchen gardening seems to be more important and valuable as it gives them 9 and 10.6 percents respectively of their total subsistence production, unlike the top economic stratum which gets only 7.3% of its subsistence from kitchen gardening.

According to the time allocation study (Table 13), out of an average working day of 15 hours the time spent on agriculture is 2.65 hours by people of both sexes of 15 years and above, 1.69 hours by males and females in the 10-14 years old age group, .86 hours by children of both sexes under 9. If males and females are separated, agriculture remains the most time consuming activity for both sexes (3.62 hours for males, 1.85 for females) of the 15 years and above age group. The second most time-consuming task for the males of this age group is animal husbandry (1.91 hours) and for the females cooking and service (1.25 hours).

For the male 10-14 year old age group, agriculture comes only after 'outside income earning' activity (in-village) and education. For females of this age-group, animal husbandry (2.99 hours) and agriculture (1.69 hours) are the most important tasks.

For the 5-9 years old age group too, agriculture is

TABLE 13

TIME USE PATTERN BY AGE GROUP AND SEX

(In hours per day)

Activity			Age Group/Sex: 15 Years and Above			10-14 Years			5-9 Years		
			Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
WORK BURDEN	PRODUCTIVE	Animal Husbandry	1.91	0.61	1.20	2.57	2.99	2.78	4.03	1.05	1.60
		Agriculture	3.62	1.85	2.65	1.72	1.66	1.69	1.28	0.76	0.86
		Fuel Collection	0.24	0.55	0.41	0.03	0.53	0.27	0.14	0.13	0.12
		Hunting and Gathering	0.63	0.28	0.44	0.12	0.21	0.17	0.18	0.21	0.21
		Manufacturing	0.80	0.63	0.71	0.34	0.30	0.32	0.20	0.11	0.13
		Food Processing	0.07	1.21	0.69	0.08	0.63	0.35	0.20	0.09	0.11
		Outside Income Earning Activity (In-Village)	1.51	0.30	0.85	2.46	0.12	1.30	0.04	0.05	0.05
		Construction	0.79	0.12	0.42	0.52	0.04	0.28	0.49	0.08	0.15
	1.	Sub-total for Productive Activities	9.56	5.55	7.37	7.84	6.49	7.17	6.55	2.49	3.23
	DOMESTIC	Cooking/Serving	0.21	2.11	1.25	0.42	0.51	0.47	0.15	0.15	0.15
		Clearing Dishes/Pots	0.01	0.25	0.14	0	0.08	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03
		Cleaning House/Mud Plastering	0.04	0.39	0.23	0.01	0.11	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05
		Laundry	0.01	0.05	0.03	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.04	0.04
		Fetching Water	0.02	0.35	0.20	0.04	0.41	0.23	0.14	0.10	0.11
		Shopping	0.01	0.01	0.01	0	0	0	0.01	0.00	0.00
		Other Domestic Activity	0.00	0.02	0.01	0	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.00
		Child Care and Rearing	0.18	1.88	1.11	0.07	0.84	0.45	0.23	0.91	0.78
	2.	Sub-total for Domestic Activities	0.48	5.06	2.99	0.56	2.00	1.28	0.66	1.29	1.18
I		Work Burden (1 + 2)	10.04	10.61	10.35	8.40	8.49	8.44	7.21	3.78	4.41
	3.	Education	0.07	0.02	0.05	1.64	0.07	0.86	1.26	0.10	0.31
	4.	Personal Maintenance	0.65	0.69	0.67	0.60	0.81	0.71	0.74	1.25	1.16
	5.	Social Activities	0.41	0.04	0.20	0.12	0	0.06	0.11	0.01	0.03
	6.	Leisure	3.83	3.64	3.72	4.23	5.63	4.93	5.67	9.86	9.09
II		Sub-total (3+4+5+6)	4.96	4.39	4.65	6.59	6.15	6.56	7.79	11.22	10.59
III		Total for In-Village Activities (I + II)	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00	15.00

TABLE 14

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTION BETWEEN SUBSISTENCE AND MARKET SECTOR BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In rupees)

Economic Strata	Section \ Type of Production	Agricultural Production	Kitchen Gardening	Animal Husbandry	Hunting & Gathering	Manufacturing	Food Production	Total
TOP	Subsistence	74593	7840	7950	4537	1111	11815	107846
		(69)	(7.3)	(7.4)	(4.2)	(1.0)	(11)	(100)
		(82.6)	(90.8)	(81.7)	(97.2)	(93.3)	(96.8)	(85.1)
	Market	15680	792	1780	132	80	392	18856
		(83.2)	(4.2)	(9.4)	(.7)	(.4)	(2.1)	(100)
		(17.4)	(9.2)	(18.3)	(2.8)	(6.7)	(3.2)	(14.9)
	Total	90273	8632	9730	4669	1191	12207	26702
		(71.2)	(6.8)	(7.7)	(3.7)	(.9)	(9.6)	(100)
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
MIDDLE	Subsistence	118184	17184	14070	9387	2591	29692	191108
		(61.8)	(9)	(7)	(5)	(1)	(15.5)	(100)
		(83.4)	(90.8)	(76)	(97.7)	(85)	(97.1)	(86)
	Market	23508	1733	4435	220	456	880	31232
		(75.3)	(5.5)	(14.2)	(.7)	(1.5)	(2.8)	(100)
		(16.6)	(9.2)	(24)	(2.3)	(15)	(2.9)	(14)
	Total	141692	18917	18505	9607	3047	30572	222340
		(63.7)	(8.5)	(8.3)	(4.3)	(1.4)	(13.8)	(100)
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
BOTTOM	Subsistence	70323	12051	6291	5017	1627	18864	114173
		(61.6)	(10.6)	(5.5)	(4.4)	(1.4)	(16.5)	(100)
		(89)	(96.9)	(83.4)	(100)	(90.9)	(100)	(91.6)
	Market	8658	390	1252	0	162	0	10462
		(82.8)	(3.7)	(12)		(1.5)		(100)
		(11)	(3.1)	(16.6)		(9.1)		(8.4)
	Total	78981	12441	7543	5017	1789	18864	124635
		(63.4)	(10)	(6.1)	(4)	(1.4)	(15.1)	(100)
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)
ALL STRATA	Subsistence	263100	37075	28311	18941	5329	60371	413127
		(63.7)	(9)	(6.9)	(4.6)	(1.3)	(14.6)	(100)
		(84.6)	(92.7)	(79.1)	(98.2)	(88.4)	(97.9)	(87.2)
	Market	47846	2915	7467	352	698	1272	60550
		(79)	(4.8)	(12.3)	(.6)	(1.2)	(2.1)	(100)
		(15.4)	(7.3)	(20.9)	(1.8)	(11.6)	(2.1)	(12.8)
	Total	310946	39990	35778	19293	6027	61643	47377
		(65.6)	(8.4)	(7.6)	(4.1)	(1.3)	(13)	(100)
		(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)	(100)

1st line indicates rupees; 2nd line indicates row percentage; 3rd line indicates column percentage.

important but comes second to animal husbandry. A male of this age-group spends about 1.28 hours on it, while a female of this age-group spends only 0.76 hours out of the total 15 working hours each day (see Table 13).

Land Ownership and the Forms of Tenancy

Most of the land in Sukhrwar village is owned either by the descendents of Chandramani* or by the people who brought it from them. Such buyers are mainly Brahmans and Chetris, although some Tharu of the village too have bought land. One such Tharu household (household 19 of Mahaton Mohanlal) bought more than 12 bighäs, a size equal to or close to the size of the land held by several Brahman-Chetri landowners of the village. The other Tharu households, however, have little or no land at all. Table 15 gives an idea of the size and nature of the land and cultivation by the sample households.

As shown in Table 15 all 35 households in the sample own about 1.6 bighas of land on average as their personal land. All five Tharu households of the top economic stratum in the sample own about 4 bighas of land each on average, although household 19 (already mentioned) of this stratum owns the somewhat unusually large area (in the Tharu context of the village) of 13 bighas.

The fourteen households in the middle stratum own about 2.3 bighas of land each on average, although some households, such as households 16, 20 and 25, own more than 4 bighas each.

Of the total sixteen households of the bottom stratum, two households (3 and 4) do not own any land at all, while households 8, 11, 13, 15, 23, 24, 33, 35 own barley enough land for cultivation. The nominal amount of land owned by these families is mainly occupied by their homesteads and courtyards. On average a Tharu household of

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* The whole Sukhrwar land was originally one of the several birta (land grants made by the State to individuals, often taxable and conditional) donated to a Brahman named Chandramani by a Phalabangi ruler, and later on (after the unification of the Kingdom), confirmed to his descendants by King Rajendra Bikram Shah in 1820 A.D. (1877 B.S.). However, after the Birta Abolition Act, Sukhrwar land, like other birta, turned into raikar i.e. land taxable by the State.

TABLE 15

LAND CULTIVATION BY ECONOMIC STRATA
(In bighās)

No. of House-holds by Strata	Economic Strata	Nature of Land Cultivated	Self-Owned	Rented with Tenancy Right	Rented without Tenancy Rights
5	Top		19.8	28.6	0.2
	Ave.		3.96	5.72	0.04
14	Middle		31.5	66.2	0.7
	Ave.		2.25	4.73	0.05
16	Bottom		5.7	55.5	4.4
	Ave.		0.36	3.47	0.28
35	All		57	150.3	5.3
	Ave.		1.63	4.29	0.15

this economic stratum owns about half a bighā (0.4) of land.

The size of the land possessed by all Tharu households (except no. 19) is not enough for their subsistence. Hence all of them also rent others' land for cultivation on a sharecropping basis to fulfill their minimum subsistence needs. The land possessed by Mahaton Mohanlal of household 19, though, seems to be enough to provide the household with its subsistence needs but it also rents others' land for extra income.

As Table 15 shows, the larger size of land held by a Tharu household does not discourage it from renting others' land on a sharecropping basis (whether with tenancy right or without tenancy right). On the contrary, households of the higher economic strata, who have more self-owned land than the households of the lower economic strata, seem to be cultivating more rented land than the others.

The households of the bottom stratum, who have only a nominal amount (.36 bighās) of self-owned land, do not have even enough rented land for subsistence (only 3.75 bighās, including land rented both with and without tenancy rights). Although these households want to rent more land for cultivation, the landowners do not want to rent it out to them for fear of claims of tenancy rights in the near future. Moreover, after the land reform program, the sizes of the individual farms of the land-owners have become very small. Hence either the land-owners plough and cultivate their land themselves (if they are not either Brahman, who are not supposed to plough, or rich people who think it inferior to plough or cultivate themselves) or hire temporary labourers.

Forms of Tenancy

The two forms of share-cropping common in Sukhrwar are (i) Adhyā (the land owner receiving 50% of the yield on the condition that he pays for the seeds, as well as has the responsibility of paying revenue and other taxes) and (ii) Tikur or Tinkur (the land owner receiving one third of the yield on the condition only that he pays revenue).

The Traditional Classification of Land

There are several types of land in Sukhrwar. Unlike in the hills, there is not clear distinction between irrigated and non-irrigated fields. As the land is flat with small canals and sub-canals spread all over, generally all the land is irrigated. But as the rivers and streams dry up in the dry season the water in the canals is insufficient to irrigate all the fields, so only a portion of the land, not necessarily the same every year, is irrigated and cultivated intensively. Due to the scarcity of manure all fields cannot be manured equally. So some land (dihi or bāri, intensively cultivated with maize, wheat, mustard, potatoes and other vegetables) is heavily manured, while the rest is not (khet, paddy fields where either only one crop of paddy or sometimes also barley, lentils or linseed as a second crop are traditionally grown).

Land in the vicinity of the house or village is usually selected for dihi for convenience in manuring. Also land that is easily drained is preferred for dihi. Dihi land covers a small area, only about 9% of the total cultivated land of the village. As it is more fertile and scarce, its price is the highest. The crops most commonly grown in the dihi fields of Sukhrwar (and listed according to priority) are: maize, mustard, wheat, potatoes, lentils, gram, peas, several kinds of beans and other vegetables, such as radishes, cauliflower, cabbages, onions, and also some tobacco.

The crop grown on khet is mainly paddy. However on the fields which are close to the point of the canal from where irrigation water is discharged (mohrā khet) some secondary crops, such as lentil, barley and linseed, are grown. After the failure of maize crops in Sukhrwar during the last few years, because of unfavourable rain during the early growth of the crop and also because of the poor drainage system which is unsuitable for the flat topography of Sukhrwar, the villagers have started cultivating wheat as the second major crop in the khet by applying chemical fertilizers.

Animal Husbandry

Agriculture is supplemented by animal husbandry which is the job of all age-groups (see Table 16). However the 10-15 and 5-9 year old age groups spend more time on animal husbandry than the age group of 15 years and above. Both males and females participate in animal husbandry. The 15 years and above age group (both males

TABLE 16 TIME SPENT ON ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

	15 Years and Above			10-14 Years			5-9 Years		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
Herding	236 (5.79) (0.87)	41 (0.84) (0.13)	277 (3.08) (0.46)	128 (11.66) (1.75)	169 (15.55) (2.33)	297 (13.59) (2.04)	242 (22.64) (3.40)	209 (4.43) (0.66)	451 (7.80) (1.17)
Care and Feeding	88 (2.16) (0.32)	24 (0.49) (0.07)	112 (1.25) (0.19)	13 (1.18) (0.18)	6 (0.55) (0.08)	19 (0.87) (0.13)	11 (1.03) (0.15)	45 (0.95) (0.14)	56 (0.97) (0.15)
Fodder Collection	182 (4.47) (0.67)	128 (2.61) (0.39)	310 (3.45) (0.52)	46 (4.19) (0.63)	41 (3.77) (0.57)	87 (3.98) (0.60)	33 (3.09) (0.46)	74 (1.57) (0.24)	107 (1.85) (0.28)
Castration/Breeding	1 (0.02) (0.00)	0	1 (0.01) (0.00)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Shearing	1 (0.02) (0.00)	1 (0.02) (0.00)	2 (0.02) (0.00)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Milking	2 (0.05) (0.01)	0	2 (0.02) (0.00)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Butchering	5 (0.12) (0.02)	1 (0.02) (0.00)	6 (0.07) (0.01)	0	0	0	0	1 (0.02) (0.00)	1 (0.02) (0.00)
Other	4 (0.10) (0.02)	5 (0.10) (0.02)	9 (0.10) (0.02)	1 (0.09) (0.01)	1 (0.09) (0.01)	2 (0.09) (0.00)	1 (0.09) (0.01)	1 (0.02) (0.00)	2 (0.02) (0.00)
Total for Animal Husbandry	519 (12.74) (1.91)	200 (4.07) (0.61)	719 (8.00) (1.20)	188 (17.12) (2.57)	217 (19.96) (2.99)	405 (18.54) (2.78)	287 (26.85) (4.03)	338 (7.00) (1.05)	617 (10.67) (1.60)
Total for In-Village Activities	4074 (100) (15 hrs.)	4911 (100) (15 hrs.)	8995 (100) (15 hrs.)	1098 (100) (15 hrs.)	1087 (100) (15 hrs.)	2185 (100) (15 hrs.)	1069 (100) (15 hrs.)	4715 (100) (15 hrs.)	5784 (100) (15 hrs.)

1st line - Frequency of observation of in-village activities.
2nd line - Percentage of total in-village activities.
3rd line - Number of hours per working day of 15 hours.

and females) spend 1.20 hours (of the total 15 working hours) per day on animal husbandry, while the 10-15 age group spends 2.78 hours, and the 5-9 group about 1.60 hours on it.

Animal husbandry jobs consist mainly of herding, caring for and feeding the animals, and fodder collection. Of these three jobs herding is done mainly by the age group 5-9 (2.04 hours per day for both sexes). The males of the 5-9 age group spend more time (3.40 hours) on herding than any other group, but the care and feeding of the animals is done mainly by the males of the 15 and above age group (0.32 hours). Females spend less time on fodder collection than their male counterparts, and older males more time than the younger ones (males 15 years and above spend .67 hours of the 15 hour working day, the 10-15 year old males spend .63 hours and the 5-9 year old age group .46 hours). The older women of 15 years and above, however, spend less time (.39 hours) on this than the girls of 10-15 years of age (.57 hours), and the small female children of 5-9 years least of all. This is because the older women are more occupied with tasks keeping them around the house, and the female children help them.

Animals are bred both for sale and domestic use. Cattle and buffaloes are kept for the production of manure, milk and as draught animals. Bullocks and male buffaloes are used in ploughing and terrace preparations. Male buffaloes serve also as draught animals in pack transportation. Due to the lack of any market or town in the immediate neighborhood for the sale of milk or curd, the villagers prefer to produce ghee which can be stored for a relatively longer time and occasionally sold to the Brahman and Chetri clients of the neighbouring villages, who need it for certain festivals and ceremonies like Ekādasi, Teej, Dasai, Tihar, Sankrānti, marriage and shrāddha.

Goats, sheep and pigs are raised primarily to fulfill domestic needs. However, some families who have got an extra farm in Deokhuri valley, where fodder and pasture land is more abundant than in Sukhrwar, keep goats which are bred in large numbers for commercial purposes. Only the male goats are sold for meat. Occasionally she-goats are also sold, but only for breeding purposes. Horses, owned only by a few rich Tharu houses, are raised for riding and for pack transportation. In addition to these animals, some fowls (chickens and pigeons), from 5 to 20

in each house, are also raised. All Tharu households in the sample raise chickens but only seventeen of them have pigeons.

The meat of these edible animals and birds (sheep, goat, pig, chicken and pigeon) is eaten occasionally, especially during festivals and feasts. These animals and fowls are also sacrificed at several ceremonies, after which their meat is consumed.

Table 17 gives an idea of animal husbandry in relation to other assets of Tharu economic structure.

Table 17 shows that on average a household of the top economic stratum had 4.8% of its total assets in major animals and 4.7% of its total assets in minor animals and poultry. A household of the middle stratum has 3.2% and 3.3% of its total in these two assets, and a household of the bottom stratum has only 2% of its total in each.

From the household production view point, although animal husbandry comes only in third position after agriculture (kitchen gardening also included) and food processing, yet, from the marketing view point, animal husbandry surpasses food processing. Animal husbandry provides 12.3% of the total income (for all strata) from marketing in comparison to only 2.1% of the same type of income (also for all strata) from food processing. From the subsistence view point, animal husbandry provides 4.2%, 5% and 4.4% of the total subsistence respectively for the top, middle and bottom economic strata. Animal husbandry seems to be more important for the middle stratum than for the other two strata in the marketing sector, as it provides 14.2% of the total income from marketing in comparison to only 9.4% and 12% of such income respectively for the top and bottom strata. For the bottom stratum animals husbandry provides almost the only source of income from marketing, apart from agriculture.

For animal husbandry there is the problem of a shortage of pasture land due to the pressure on land. The original pastures or barren lands are being exploited for cultivation. Moreover, due to heavy grazing, wild vegetation is decaying day by day, resulting in erosion of the upper soil of such pasture land. In south Sukhrwar such barren land is turning into desert.

Other Economic Activities

Most of the villagers supplement their income with

TABLE 17

ASSET STRUCTURE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

(In rupees)

Number of Household	Economic Strata / Asset		Land Building	Major Animals	Minor Animals	Total Livestock	Agriculture Equipment	Transport Vehicles	Gold & Silver	Other Assets	Total
5	TOP	Total Assets	196250 (24.7)	55050 (23.9)	4292 (23.4)	49342 (23.8)	4292 (21.5)	x	12748 (18.9)	15263 (22.5)	287895 (24)
		Average Assets per household	39250 (4.9)	11010 (4.8)	858.4 (4.7)	11868.4 (4.8)	858.4 (4.3)	x	2549.6 (3.8)	3052.6 (4.5)	57579 (4.8)
14	MIDDLE	Total Assets	358475 (48.4)	104050 (45.1)	8423 (45.8)	112473 (45.2)	8895 (44.5)	x	31196 (46.3)	32719 (48.2)	570758 (47.6)
		Average Assets per household	27534 (3.5)	7432 (3.2)	601.6 (3.3)	8033.8 (3.2)	635.4 (3.2)	x	2228.3 (3.3)	2337 (3.4)	40768.4 (3.4)
16	BOTTOM	Total Assets	214150 (26.9)	71450 (31)	5661 (30.8)	77111 (31)	6792 (34)	x	23470 (34.8)	19867 (29.3)	341390 (28.4)
		Average Assets per household	13384.4 (1.7)	4465.6 (2.0)	353.8 (2.0)	4819.4 (2.0)	424.5 (2.1)	x	1466.9 (2.2)	1241.7 (1.8)	21336.9 (1.8)
35	ALL STRATA	Total Assets	795875 (100)	230550 (100)	18376 (100)	24826 (100)	19979 (100)	x	67414 (100)	67849 (100)	1200043 (100)
		Average Assets per household	22739.3 (2.9)	6587.1 (2.9)	525.0 (2.9)	7112.2 (2.9)	570.8 (2.9)	x	1926.1 (2.9)	1938.5 (2.9)	34286.9 (2.9)

Figures in parentheses indicate column percentages.

pack transport, basketry and rope-making. Pack transportation helps a family in bringing necessary household commodities from the market besides earning a cash profit. Horses and male buffaloes are the only animals used in pack transportation. Male buffaloes are used for pack transportation only during the non-cultivation months (from October to April or May), as they are also used in ploughing and field preparation. The most common destination for pack transportation is the southern border town of Koilabas. Each trip (about 5 days) gives a net profit of 100 to 125 rupees.

Manufacturing is also one of the sectors for household production. The Tharu make several types of baskets, mats, rope, nets and traps (see Chapter VI). But these products are made mostly to fulfill domestic needs, although some of the baskets, mats and rope are occasionally sold in the markets. Only a marginal portion of this production (.4% of the total income from marketing of the top economic stratum, 1.5% each of the middle and bottom strata) goes to market. Basketry and rope work is a perfect way for the Tharu to employ the hours of the non-agriculture days. However, to make it more commercial, this art needs to be made more practical and modified in patterns and shapes to please the clients, mostly non-Tharu.

The Agricultural Calendar and the Division of Labor by Sex

The Tharu agricultural year and session starts in Fāgun (February to March) after the Māghi Dewāni ceremony in which all agricultural agreements for one year between a tenant, or farm-employee, and land-owner are made.

During the months of Fāgun and Chait (March to April) winter crops, i.e. wheat, barley, gram, lentils etc. are reaped both by men and women. Dihi or bāri fields are then manured, dug and prepared. Women usually carry the manure to the fields, but if there is a shortage of women in the house, or if males are free enough from other work, they may also help in carrying manure. Men usually dig the large dry and hard dihi fields. Women usually dig and prepare only the small kitchen gardens.

In Baisākh (April to May), when one or two heavy showers of rain have fallen, the dihi fields, after the digging, are ploughed by men and maize is planted immediately.

During the month of Jeth (May-June), the canals and irrigation channels are scraped and cleared of silt and mud deposited during the previous irrigations. Seasonal barrages are constructed or repaired to raise water for a regular supply of water in the canals. Barrage and canal construction and repair work are done on a village basis by males, under the supervision of the mahaton (the traditional Tharu village chief) or of any other man assigned by him. One or two males from each household of the village, depending upon the size of the land and whether it is owned or rented by the household for cultivation, participate. For the construction or maintenance of the canals which are large and irrigate the land of more than one village, the different villages repair or reconstruct the portion of the canal which has been traditionally assigned to them. However, for the construction and repair of a large barrage or large canal, all the villages work collectively on a definite date and time. Meanwhile the maize crop, which has already grown up during these days, is also hoed and weeded. Weeding and hoeing of maize is done by all members of the household, whether male, female or children, but as the males are usually busy ploughing and preparing paddy fields, during this time of the year females and children do it.

In Asār (June-July) and Sāun (July-August) when the paddy fields have already been ploughed and prepared, the paddy seeds or seedlings are sown or transplanted immediately. Ploughing is done only by males, whereas loor phijnā (levelling the mudded fields) is done usually only by women. Chilly plants are transplanted in the kitchen garden during early Asār jointly by the family or by anyone who has time for it.

In Bhadau (August-September) the maize crop is harvested by plucking the cobs. Paddy fields are also weeded in this month. The harvested maize cobs are first dried in the sun by women and in the evening all the adults, as well as the boys and girls of the family, help in making bunches of maize cobs. To do this, first a few of the outer skins of the cobs are pulled down (without being separated) and then tied to skins similarly pulled down from other cobs. Such bunches contains about 8 to 10 cobs. They are then braided on the long wooden beams below the roof or put on the platforms in the main house. Later, during the leisure months, these are processed for eating. Most of the remaining processing is done by women although men also help in shelling the dried maize.

In Asoj (September-October) the bāri, from which maize has been already harvested, are cleared of the remaining corn-stalk and cattle are grazed on them. These fields are then ploughed well three or four times by men. After this women put manure on them, as this field preparation is mostly for mustard (the most important cash crop) or for wheat (an important food-grain after rice) to be sown.* When the monsoon has stopped and the weather is fine and there is little moisture in the soil, mustard, wheat, and other winter crops such as gram, beans and potatoes are sown. Several winter vegetables such as radishes, cauliflower, cabbages, beans, onions and some varieties of greens are sown or planted in the kitchen garden. Most of the kitchen gardening is done by women if it is only for domestic consumption and for gifts. If the vegetables are grown for sale, men also participate in the kitchen gardening, as in Amar's household (No. 5), Basudev's household (No. 16) and Sagunlal's household (No. 25).

During Kārtik (October-November) and the first half of Mangsir (last half of November) paddy is reaped by both men and women and stored in piles on the khalihān (common threshing-ground for the whole village).

In the last half of Mangsir (November-December) and Poush (December-January) the piled up paddy, with its stalk, is spread out in the khalihān and threshed by moving cattle over it. Men do this work, starting quite early (around 4 a.m.) in the morning. Once threshing has been done, men, using a small broom made of thorny wild berry branches, separate the straw from the paddy grains which are mixed with hay on the bottom. After this, when there is a slight wind, which is common at this season, women winnow the paddy with the help of a winnowing fan, (supā); the yield is then divided by the men between the land owner and the tenant, according to tradition or previous agreements.

Then men and women carry the food grains home for storing. All other work needed to turn paddy into a plate of rice is done by women. Such work includes drying the paddy several times, dehusking, cleaning and cooking.

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* Wheat becomes more important (after rice) than other cereals when continuous rains harm the maize crop during its early growth.

The month of Māgh (January-February) is usually the month of feasts and festivals, with little agricultural work.

Apart from these seasonal kinds of work, there are many other kinds of work which are the daily chores of Tharu life; these include cooking, cleaning, child care, grazing of pet animals, poultry feeding, fodder collection etc. Certain other jobs can be done once or twice a week, or once or twice a month, such as food-processing (grinding, pounding or dehusking food grains, crushing oilseeds, drying and processing seasonal vegetables), fishing, gathering wild leaves and roots, maintenance of the house, fencing fields etc.

All men and women, except the very old and the very young, get up early in the morning to begin their work. Women do the indoor work while men do the outdoor work. One or two women in the house help in cooking. Boys and girls either collect grass and look after the cattle and other animals or help their seniors.

Tharu children are expected to help a lot in the household chores, but what they do depends on their age as well as on the socio-economic background of the house. In most Tharu families a child around seven or eight (of any sex) usually does baby-sitting, feeds the chickens or pigs and gathers dried cow dung for fuel. A boy or girl around eight or nine collects fodder and grazes sheep and goats; at this age a girl also learns the skills of cooking and helps her mother in the kitchen when time permits. Around eight or nine boys also graze the major animals (cattle and buffaloes), while girls, if there are boys in the family, stop grazing animals and help in cooking, processing food, kitchen gardening and collecting cow dung from the pastures. At this age girls also learn skills in basketry. Both the boys and girls go with the seniors of their own sex to the forest to bring leaves (needed for feasts and festivals) and wood needed in day-to-day life. They also learn the use of an axe.

All food processing, i.e. dehusking, grinding, pounding, and the crushing of oilseeds for cooking-oil, is done manually by women. Unfortunately all these jobs are extremely time-consuming and laborious. Grinding is done with the help of a hand-driven stone mill (chakkyā) usually by a pair of women before dawn when no other work can be done, though a woman can also grind alone, but it takes a little more time. According to one

observation a pair of women can grind about one pāthi (approximately 7 lbs.) of grains per hour.

The crushing of oil-seeds (usually mustard) for cooking oil is done with the help of a wooden-mill (kolh). To operate this hand-driven mill at least two people are needed, although three can do it quicker and better. The main part of this mill is a section of a tree trunk with a hollowed-out cavity at the top and tapering at its base to a funnel-like extension from which the pressed oil flows. Mustard seed placed in the top cavity is crushed by a heavy wooden pestle which is moved in an anticlockwise circular motion. This pestle is attached from its top and another piece of wood which is in turn joined lower down to a plank. The plank's other end is supported by another wooden strut and rests against the main wooden cylinder without actually being attached in any way. Heavy stones are placed on top of the plank so that the pestle crushes the seeds better as it is pulled downwards. One woman, or two, pushes the plank around the cylinder, walking in a circle, while another woman, keeping just in front of the moving plank, also walks around the cylinder at the same time pushing down the seed so as to make the crushing more effective. A variety of wild grass (Ischaemum angustifolium) is placed in the cavity to increase the efficiency of the pestle as well as to filter the oil. The oil is collected at the base of the funnel extension in a small bowl.

De-husking of paddy is done with the help of a wooden pounder (dhiki or dhĕki). The main part of this mill is a long (about 6 feet) and heavy block of wood roughly fashioned with a cylindrical projection at one end which fits into a wooden receptacle fixed in the ground underneath. This projection, which is attached to the pounding head, has an iron rim at its top. The other end of the long block is fixed, by a rod running through it, to two wooden posts on either side. The end of the block extends between the two posts and is pushed downwards into a shallow pit by women using their feet; it is then released by them so that the pounding head at the other end will smash down into the grain placed in the floor receptacle. While the pounder moves up and down, somewhat like a see-saw, another woman pushes the grains into the receptacle with the help of a broom. She has to be careful and quick in pushing the grain in during the very brief moments when the pounder head is moving upwards before it descends again. Since the woman (or women) who is moving the block up and down has to stand on one leg while

pushing the block down with her other leg, she holds either the posts or ropes suspended from above for extra support. When the dehusked grains are being extracted from the receptacle for cleaning, the main block is propped up by a piece of wood so that the pounding head is kept out of the way.

While the size and the capacity of these devices (dhiki and kolh) differ from one house to another, according to my rough observation three women can dehusk about eight to ten pāthi of paddy in one hour. Similarly it takes about six hours for three women to produce oil out of six pāthi of mustard.

Food processing also plays an important role in Tharu household economy. It provides 14.6% of the total Tharu subsistence and 13% of the Tharu income from the total sale of household production. However most of the income from food processing (97.9%) goes on domestic consumption itself, and after selling the remaining portion, a household earns only 2.1% of it as cash. Households in the bottom stratum consume all of their processed food themselves and thus earn no cash from sales at all. The others (in the top and bottom strata) consume 96.8% and 97.1% respectively of their total processed food on subsistence and sell only the remaining nominal portion.

Out-migration and Mobility

The economy of the Tharu is based primarily on subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry, and it keeps them within the periphery of the village and its surrounding areas. No Tharu household in the sample (nor others outside the sample) is totally dependent on any work other than agriculture. Even those households who do not own any land cultivate rented land on a sharecropping basis or work as farm labourers getting a fixed amount of certain cereals. Tharu villagers, even those who are poor and landless, do not think of migrating to any urban or industrial centres, as many other Nepalese do. They consider themselves more secure and economically better off inside a Tharu village where they own at least a house to live in and enjoy the protection and care given by the villagers (mostly relatives and friends) on a volunteer basis. It is at least possible in a village to grow some vegetables, have a few trees with different seasonal fruit, keep domestic cattle, pigs and chickens on top of doing farm labour, whereas it is not possible for an immigrant Tharu to do

this in an urban or industrial complex. Some Tharu informants seemed very reluctant to move to a town, or even another village, to take up a job other than agriculture. They feel they can not earn any better salary or wages, as they are mostly illiterate with none of the skills needed in a town. Some informants said that they were ready to take temporary jobs or work which they could do during the non-cultivation months without giving up agriculture, and indeed some of the males did work like house-construction, roofing, making fences and portering, for non-Tharu in the vicinity. However, such jobs are not enough to employ the whole working age-group of the village needing such jobs.

Furthermore, after frequent interviews with the villagers (male as well as female), it became clear that in fact there was very little time left in the traditional Tharu agricultural calendar which could really be called 'a time free from agriculture', or 'the non-cultivation period'. The villagers did not sit idle, even in the period which can be called to some extent the non-cultivation period. Men made ropes, nets, traps, along with mending fences and preparing maize-fields, while women made baskets and clay pots, processed food (food grains, seeds, as well as vegetables), along with preparing kitchen gardens and scattering manure in the fields (for the maize crop). The people looking for seasonal jobs belonged to that small category of villagers who either knew certain skills (like making fences and roofs) better than others, were hard working or had some surplus of male man-power. Thus they wanted to earn a little more than what they could earn or save by making ropes, nets and traps.

Most women informants said they had no time left over from the daily chores of their household and farm work. From early morning until late evening they have constant work. Some of this, such as processing paddy, maize, wheat and oilseeds for rice, flour and cooking oil, takes a lot of time and hard labour. Furthermore, daily jobs, such as splitting fire-wood, collecting dried cow-dung, laundry, fetching water, cooking, child rearing, are usually left to women and have to be done in addition to the farm jobs in which men contribute equally. Thus there seems to be very little time left for women to do extra work for extra-earning.

One solution to this problem might be the introduction of improved technology suitable to these villages, so that the women could save some of their time and energy to invest

it in other jobs and skills which would give them some extra earnings. Although there are modern mills producing rice, flour and oil, either in the village or in a neighbouring village (at a maximum distance of 20 to 30 minutes walk), the villagers rarely use them to process their day-to-day cereals. Some female informants said that they did not have enough money to afford such processing in mills and that was why they do it in the traditional way at home. Some other informants said that processing at the mills is not economic, since they cannot get the by-products of the processed cereals (i.e. husks and oil-cakes) which they want, either to feed their animals, or to sell.*

Furthermore, some Tharu complained that the average yield of rice processed in mills is lower than the rice processed in dhiki at home.

According to impressions derived from several interviews, the main reason for the villagers not using the modern mills is the lack of a profitable way for women to utilize the time saved from doing the grinding themselves. They have no way of earning money to pay for the mill processing let alone earning something extra. Even though the women think it is hard work grinding, pounding and extracting oil in the traditional way**, they do not mind, as they can do several other minor jobs at the same time, almost without noticing, for example, child care, poultry and animal feeding, receiving guests and visitors.

Thus it becomes quite obvious that no program for the welfare and development of Tharu women can be effective unless income generating jobs and activities, which can be done at home or in the village without disturbing too much the daily routine of Tharu life,are

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* Mill owners charge extra money for the by-products of the processed cereals, since oil-cakes are exported to India by some dealers in the town.

** All households have their own dhiki and chakkyā although only a few (about 25% of the total households) have their own kolh. Those who do not have their own kolh go to their neighbour or nearest realtive to produce oil.

introduced side by side with time and labour saving devices.

Labour Exchange

There are two main forms of labour exchange among the Tharu, which are as follows:

(1) Begāri: literally meaning 'unpaid or ill-paid forced labour'. Although begāri was forced labour, in the past, in the present Tharu context, as will be clear, it is not totally unpaid or forced labour. It is more a kind of labour exchange, though the types of labour to be exchanged are different. Begāri is the labour provided to a person who has some sort of political or ritual authority in the village. Traditionally a mahaton, or sometimes a senior guruwā were the persons who were offered begāri by the villagers. Now-a-days begāri services are also offered to a pancha sadasya and occasionally also to a pradhān pancha. Men who employ services have to supply three meals a day to the 'volunteers'.

In exchange for their labour provided through begāri, the villagers are paid back by these authorities with other types of labour. For example, a mahaton works as a priest to worship all village-level dieties on behalf of the villagers. He also works as a traditional village-level administrator to enforce the customary Tharu rules and tradition in the village and to punish those in the village who do not abide by these rules and traditions. A guruwā works as a shamanic healer, a pancha sadasya as a village-representative, officially unpaid, and at the same time as a middle-man between the villagers and the local administration.

(2) Sakhlārā: 'assistance', 'assistance in finishing a certain task'. This is volunteer help provided by the villagers to a household when the latter asks for any such help to finish some work it cannot do without getting sakhlārā. Such assistance is sought mainly for sowing or harvesting a certain crop, or for the construction or mending of a house. Although a household providing volunteers in a sakhlārā is occasionally repaid by a sakhlārā in return, the villagers do not work directly with a sense of 'exchange', with the expectation that a sakhlārā will be given in return in the near future. They work more with a sense of 'assisting' the household of a needy fellow villager, who is or was related in some way,

either affinally, consanguineally, economically*, or religiously with all other households of the village. To them, it is a dharam (moral obligation) to assist a fellow villager. In Sukhrwar, there is one household (no. 13) which receives village-level sakhlārā from fellow villagers. The villagers feel sorry for this household because the head of it is a traditional expert on herbal medicines and is always busy visiting his patients, in other villages as well as in Sukhrwar, with little time to look after his own household affairs. As this expert works on a volunteer basis himself 'assisting' his people, he receives no renumeration, neither cash nor kind. So the villagers recently, two or three years ago, started providing community labour to his household.

There is also a minor version of sakhlārā which is popular among some immediate relatives and kinsmen. In this type of sakhlārā, only a few (one, two, or three) households, or close relatives, take part, joining together in agricultural work after they have finished their own work. For example, household 16, which has adequate labour but no one able to deal with the new local administrative matters, has been providing labour to household 17 for the last four or five years, and also recently to household 6. Household 6 gets some manual labour from household 17 in return, but household 16 has not needed or asked for any such help in return, only some advice on local administrative matters.

Most Tharu households use the labour provided by their own household members to cultivate the land they possess, whether owned or rented. However, some Tharu households who have rented more land then they can cultivate themselves, or who do not want to do much physical labour by themselves (households 19, 25, 5 and 29), also hire farm labour, who are paid in kind (i.e. with paddy, maize, wheat, mustard etc.). Certain Tharu households who have got some kind of authority in the village also employ the begāri type of community labour as extra labour in their fields.

There is no fixed rule or tradition as to whether males or females should work to provide sakhlārā. It is

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* Some Tharu households in the village work as farm employees to other Tharu households (e.g. households 4 and 15 for households 5 and 25).

more the type of work to be done that decides whether males or females should do it. For example, in community labour for the construction of a house for a fellow villager, males erect the structure of the house, make fences and roof the house, whereas the whole mud-work, mainly plastering fences for walls and plastering the floor, is done by women. Hence the males provide the community labour at the beginning and, when they finish this work, women take over. On some occasions, when the work is not of a specifically male of female type and can be done by both, for example reaping a crop, transporting timber or foodgrains, both males and females participate, but only one member of either sex is sent from one household.

Decision Making Roles

It is usually the household head, a man in most cases, who makes the final decision about who should participate as a labourer, whether in begāri or in sakhlārā. Table 18 gives an idea of the pattern of the decision making roles on labour and agriculture.

As shown in Table 18, most of the decisions (88.3%) regarding labour allocation are made by men, and only a few (11.7%) by women. However, more agricultural decisions are made by women (47.5%) than by men (20.4%), the remaining decisions being made either jointly by both sexes (4.8%), or according to tradition (27.3%). In deciding what crop to plant or cultivate, men are the ones who dominate the decision making (29.9%) in comparison with women (4.9%). In the selection and application of fertilizer, males seem to be the main decision makers (42.1%) in comparison with women (19.7%). In kitchen gardening women are the main decision makers (64.2%), whether in the selection of crop (50%), in the selection of seeds (81.4%) or in the selection and application of fertilizers (68.5%). Only when it is a question of improved method of cultivation do men make most of the decisions (60%) in contrast to women who apparently make none.

Regarding decisions on household expenditure (see Table 19), most of the decisions (43.8%) on food and small household necessities are made by men, although it is the women who mainly make the suggestions about them (70.3%). The women also suggest how much to spend (70.3%) but the men are usually consulted (73.3%) and the final decisions on how to spend are made mainly

Table 18

DECISION MAKING ROLES BY SEX

(Labour and Agricultural Decisions)

Subject	Decision Makers				Total
	Male	Female	Both	Traditional	
I. Labour Allocation	113 (88.3)	15 (11.7)	-	-	128 (100)
a. Arrange Parma	33 (100)	-	-	-	33 (100)
b. Arrange Wage	8 (100)	-	-	-	8 (100)
c. Control Others	60 (81.1)	14 (18.9)	0	-	74 (100)
d. Control Self	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)	-	-	13 (100)
II. Agricultural Decisions	119 (20.4)	277 (47.5)	28 (4.8)	159 (27.3)	582 (100)
a. 1. Grains	89 (22.1)	164 (40.8)	20 (5.0)	129 (32.1)	402 (100)
2. Planting	49 (29.9)	8 (4.9)	4 (2.4)	103 (62.8)	164 (100)
3. Seed	8 (4.9)	141 (87.1)	13 (8.0)	0	162 (100)
4. Fertilizer	32 (42.1)	15 (19.7)	3 (4.0)	26 (34.2)	76 (100)
b. Kitchen Garden	27 (15.3)	113 (64.2)	7 (4.0)	29 (16.5)	176 (100)
1. Planting	10 (14.3)	35 (50.0)	6 (8.6)	19 (27.1)	70 (100)
2. Seed	8 (18.6)	35 (81.4)	0	0	43 (100)
3. Fertilizer	9 (14.3)	43 (68.3)	1 (1.6)	10 (15.8)	63 (100)
c. Improved Method	3 (60.0)	0	1 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	5 (100)
Grand Total (I & II)	232 (32.6)	292 (41.1)	28 (3.9)	159 (22.4)	711 (100)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

TABLE 19

DECISION MAKING ROLES BY SEX (HOUSEHOLD EXPE

Questions / Answers	Suggested					Consulted				
	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total
I. Food & Small House-hold Necessities	27 (26.7)	71 (70.3)	3 (3)	0	101 (100)	74 (73.3)	9 (8.9)	3 (3)	15 (14.9)	101 (100)
a. To Cooking Particular Food	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
b. How Much to Spend on Food and Small HH necessities	27 (26.7)	71 (70.3)	3 (3)	0	101 (100)	74 (73.3)	9 (8.9)	3 (3)	15 (14.9)	101 (100)
II. Clothing & Durables	57 (50.4)	54 (47.8)	2 (1.8)	0	113 (100)	59 (52.2)	27 (23.9)	8 (7.1)	19 (16.8)	113 (100)
a. How Much to Spend on Clothing	46 (49)	46 (49)	2 (2)	0	94 (100)	50 (53.2)	26 (27.7)	5 (5.3)	13 (13.8)	94 (100)
b. How Much to Spend on HH Durables	11 (57.9)	8 (42.1)	0	0	19 (100)	9 (47.4)	1 (5.3)	3 (15.8)	6 (31.6)	19 (100)
III. On Education & Health	22 (42.3)	29 (55.8)	0	1 (1.9)	52 (100)	36 (66.7)	3 (5.6)	8 (14.8)	7 (13)	54 (100)
a. On Medical Treatment	20 (40.0)	29 (58.0)	0	1 (2.0)	50 (100)	35 (67.3)	2 (3.8)	8 (15.4)	7 (13.5)	52 (100)
b. On Education	2 (100)	0	0	0	2 (100)	1 (50)	1 (50)	0	0	2 (100)
IV. Gifts, Religious Expenditure & Travel	55 (32.2)	87 (50.9)	10 (5.8)	19 (11.1)	171 (100)	35 (20.6)	54 (31.8)	26 (15.3)	55 (32.4)	170 (100)
a. Gifts/Loan	14 (13.7)	80 (78.4)	0	8 (7.8)	102 (100)	14 (13.9)	42 (41.6)	1 (1)	44 (43.6)	101 (100)
b. Social/Religion	20 (57.1)	4 (11.4)	10 (28.6)	1 (2.9)	35 (100)	4 (11.4)	4 (11.4)	24 (68.6)	3 (8.6)	35 (100)
c. Travel	21 (61.8)	3 (8.8)	0	10 (29.4)	24 (100)	17 (50)	8 (23.5)	1 (3)	8 (23.5)	34 (100)
GRAND TOTAL (I TO IV)	161 (36.8)	241 (55.1)	15 (3.4)	20 (4.6)	437 (100)	204 (46.6)	93 (21.2)	45 (10.3)	96 (22)	438 (100)

INVESTMENT, BORROWING & OTHER RESOURCES ALL

I. Major Investment	67 (88.2)	5 (6.6)	4 (5.3)	0	76 (100)	40 (53.3)	7 (9.3)	25 (33.3)	3 (4)	75 (100)
a. Buy or Sale Land & Major Animals	41 (91.1)	1 (2.2)	3 (6.7)	0	45 (100)	19 (43.2)	2 (4.5)	22 (55)	1 (2.3)	44 (100)
b. Others	26 (83.9)	4 (12.9)	1 (3.2)	0	31 (100)	21 (67.7)	5 (16.1)	3 (9.7)	2 (6.5)	31 (100)
II. Borrowings	24 (80)	5 (16.7)	1 (3.3)	0	30 (100)	20 (66.7)	0	8 (26.7)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)
III. Disposal of House-hold Resources	106 (79.1)	22 (16.4)	5 (3.7)	1 (0.7)	134 (100)	55 (41)	41 (30.6)	22 (16.4)	16 (12)	134 (100)
a. Food Grains	37 (69.8)	12 (22.6)	4 (7.6)	0	53 (100)	24 (45.3)	11 (20.8)	15 (28.3)	3 (5.7)	53 (100)
b. Vegetables	25 (80.6)	5 (16.1)	1 (3.2)	0	31 (100)	12 (38.7)	13 (41.9)	3 (9.7)	3 (9.7)	31 (100)
c. Small Animals	44 (88)	5 (10)	0	1 (2)	50 (100)	19 (38)	17 (34)	4 (8)	10 (20)	50 (100)
GRAND TOTAL (I TO III)	197 (82.1)	32 (13.3)	10 (4.2)	1 (0.4)	240 (100)	115 (48.1)	48 (20.1)	55 (23)	21 (8.8)	239 (100)

Figures in parentheses indicate row percentages.

TABLE 19

; ROLES BY SEX (HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURE DECISIONS)

	Consulted				Decided					Disagreed				
e	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total	Male	Female	Both	Tradi-tional	Total
.3)	9 (8.9)	3 (3)	15 (14.9)	101 (100)	57 (43.8)	30 (23.1)	2 (1.5)	41 (31.5)	130 (100)	0	1 (1.0)	0	100 (99.0)	101 (100)
	0	0	0	0	23 (79.3)	6 (24.7)	0	0	29 (100)	0	0	0	0	0
74 73.3)	9 (8.9)	3 (3)	15 (14.9)	101 (100)	34 (33.7)	24 (23.8)	2 (2)	41 (40.6)	101 (100)	0	1 (1.0)	0	100 (99.0)	101 (100)
9 .2)	27 (23.9)	8 (7.1)	19 (16.8)	113 (100)	39 (35.5)	26 (23.6)	20 (18.2)	25 (22.7)	110 (100)	0	0	0	115 (100)	115 (100)
.2)	26 (27.7)	5 (5.3)	13 (13.8)	94 (100)	36 (39.6)	24 (26.4)	15 (16.5)	16 (17.5)	91 (100)	0	0	0	94 (100)	94 (100)
.4)	1 (5.3)	3 (15.8)	6 (31.6)	19 (100)	3 (15.8)	2 (10.5)	5 (26.3)	9 (47.4)	19 (100)	0	0	0	21 (100)	21 (100)
.7)	3 (5.6)	8 (14.8)	7 (13)	54 (100)	13 (24.1)	2 (3.7)	2 (3.7)	37 (68.5)	54 (100)	0	0	0	54 (100)	54 (100)
.3)	2 (3.8)	8 (15.4)	7 (13.5)	52 (100)	11 (21.2)	2 (3.8)	2 (3.8)	37 (71.2)	52 (100)	0	0	0	52 (100)	52 (100)
))	1 (50)	0	0	2 (100)	2 (100)	0	0	0	2 (100)	0	0	0	2 (100)	2 (100)
.6)	54 (31.8)	26 (15.3)	55 (32.4)	170 (100)	28 (16.4)	15 (8.8)	21 (12.3)	107 (62.5)	171 (100)	0	0	0	171 (100)	171 (100)
9)	42 (41.6)	1 (1)	44 (43.6)	101 (100)	8 (7.8)	11 (10.8)	0	83 (81.4)	102 (100)	0	0	0	102 (100)	102 (100)
4)	4 (11.4)	24 (68.6)	3 (8.6)	35 (100)	5 (14.3)	3 (8.6)	21 (60.0)	6 (17.1)	35 (100)	0	0	0	35 (100)	35 (100)
)	8 (23.5)	1 (3)	8 (23.5)	34 (100)	15 (44.1)	1 (2.9)	0	18 (53.0)	34 (100)	0	0	0	34 (100)	34 (100)
.6)	93 (21.2)	45 (10.3)	96 (22)	438 (100)	137 (29.5)	73 (15.7)	45 (9.7)	210 (45.1)	465 (100)	0	1 (0.2)	0	440 (99.8)	441 (100)

)RROWING & OTHER RESOURCES ALLOCATION DECISIONS

3)	7 (9.3)	25 (33.3)	3 (4)	75 (100)	44 (58.7)	3 (4.0)	16 (21.3)	12 (16.0)	75 (100)	1 (1.3)	0	0	74 (98.7)	75 (100)
2)	2 (4.5)	22 (55)	1 (2.3)	44 (100)	28 (63.6)	0	11 (25.0)	5 (11.4)	44 (100)	1 (2.3)	0	0	43 (97.7)	44 (100)
7)	5 (16.1)	3 (9.7)	2 (6.5)	31 (100)	16 (51.6)	3 (9.7)	5 (16.1)	7 (22.6)	31 (100)	0	0	0	31 (100)	31 (100)
7)	0	8 (26.7)	2 (6.7)	30 (100)	10 (34.5)	2 (6.9)	10 (34.5)	7 (24.1)	29 (100)	0	0	0	29 (100)	29 (100)
)	41 (30.6)	22 (16.4)	16 (12)	134 (100)	56 (33.2)	71 (42.0)	22 (13.0)	20 (11.8)	169 (100)	0	0	1 (0.7)	133 (99.3)	134 (100)
3)	11 (20.8)	15 (28.3)	3 (5.7)	53 (100)	26 (29.5)	45 (51.1)	15 (17.1)	2 (2.3)	88 (100)	0	0	0	53 (100)	53 (100)
7)	13 (41.9)	3 (9.7)	3 (9.7)	31 (100)	9 (29.0)	15 (48.3)	3 (9.7)	4 (13.0)	31 (100)	0	0	0	31 (100)	31 (100)
)	17 (34)	4 (8)	10 (20)	50 (100)	21 (42)	11 (22)	4 (8)	14 (28)	50 (100)	0	0	1 (2)	49 (98)	50 (100)
1)	48 (20.1)	55 (23)	21 (8.8)	239 (100)	110 (40.3)	76 (27.8)	48 (17.6)	39 (14.3)	273 (100)	1 (0.4)	0	1 (0.4)	236 (99.2)	238 (100)

according to tradition (40%), though the men decide quite often (33.7%) and the women sometimes (23.8%).

Regarding decisions on clothing and durables, men play the major role (35.3%) and women somewhat less (23.6%), while the rest of the decisions are made either jointly by both sexes or according to tradition.

In expenses on education and health women mainly make the suggestions (55.8% as opposed to 42.3% of the men), but the women take practically no decisions over these matters (3.7%) since they are mainly decided by tradition (68.5%) or by men (24.1%).

Regarding the question on gifts and loans most of the decisions are based on tradition (62.5%). The difference between the male and female decisions on gifts, religious expenses and travel is not much. Males make 16.4% of such decisions while women make 8.8%.

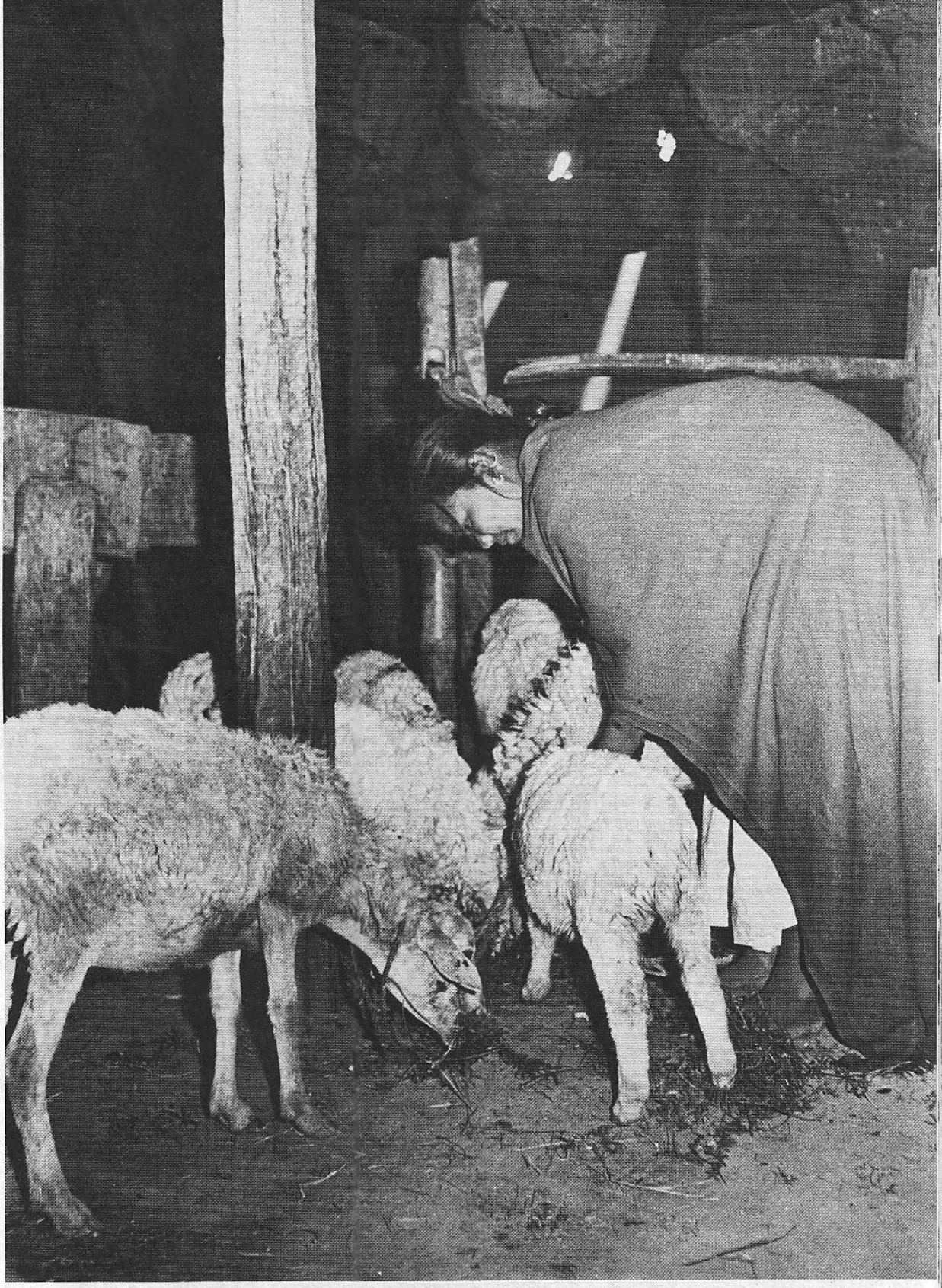
The most significant role played by women on making decisions on investment, borrowings and other resources allocation is on the disposal of household resources (i.e. food grain, vegetables and small animals). Women make 42% of these decisions, men make 33.2% and the rest of the decisions are made either jointly by both sexes or by tradition. In major investment decisions women play almost no part at all (4.0%) as opposed to 58.7% for men.

The only decisions in which women take slightly more decisions than men are in deciding on gifts and loans (women 10.8%, men 7.8%) though most of this is decided by tradition (81.4%).

Feeding cattle.

Group of girls going to collect fodder. Note that they are walking one behind the other, as all groups of Tharus do.

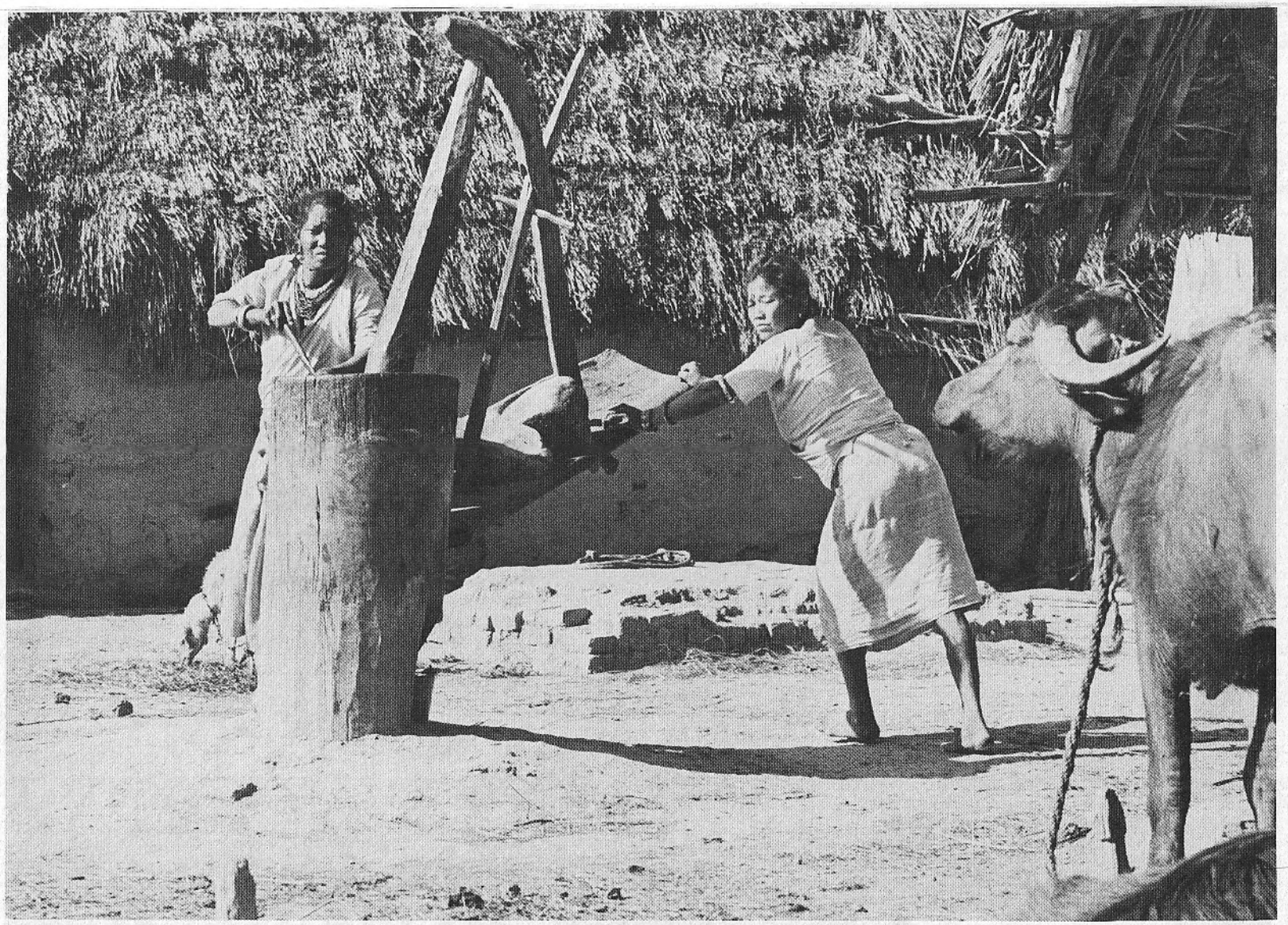
Carrying straw from the khalihan to store in the house to feed cattle during the dry season.



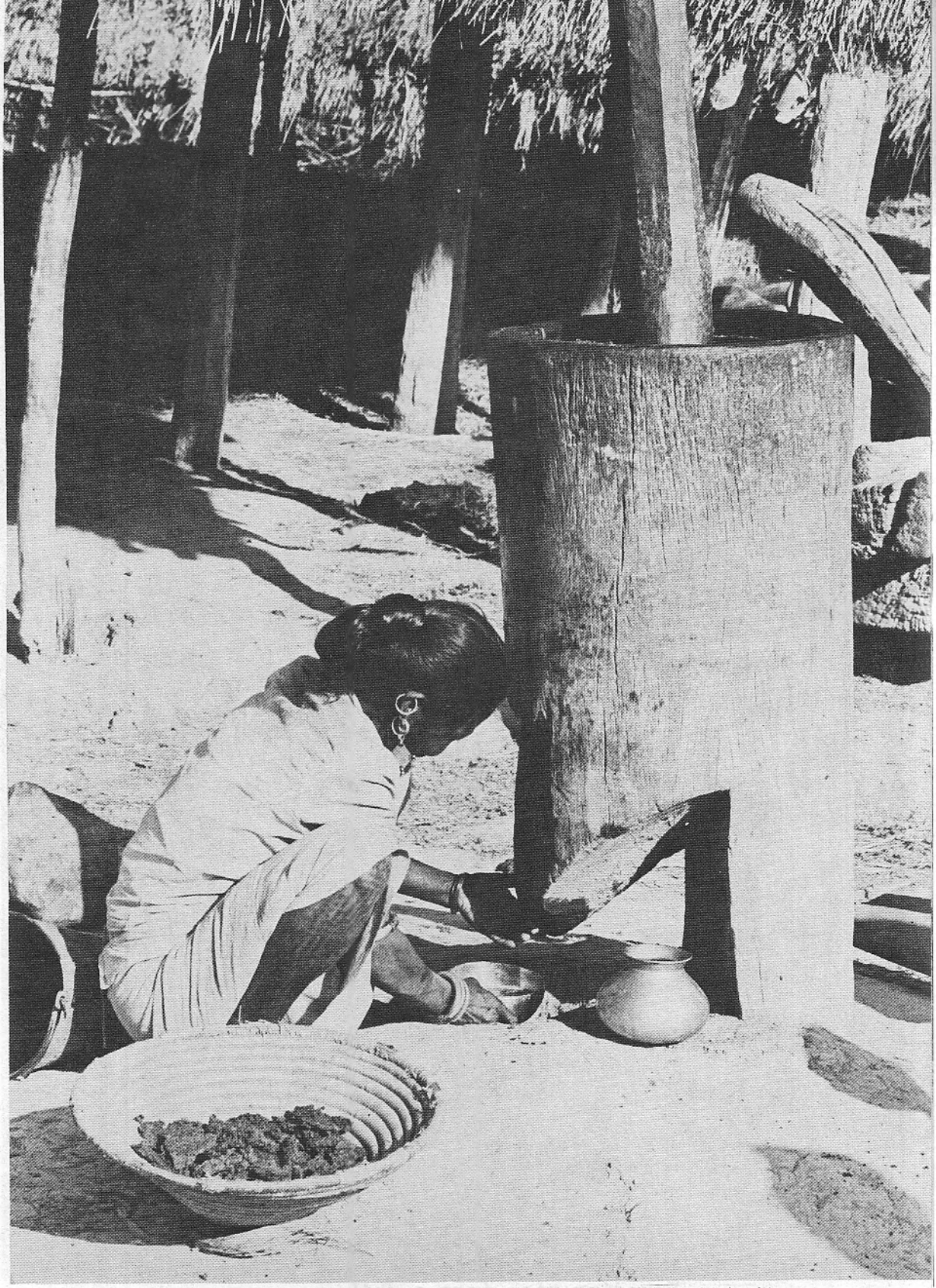
Feeding the sheep.

Feeding the pigs.

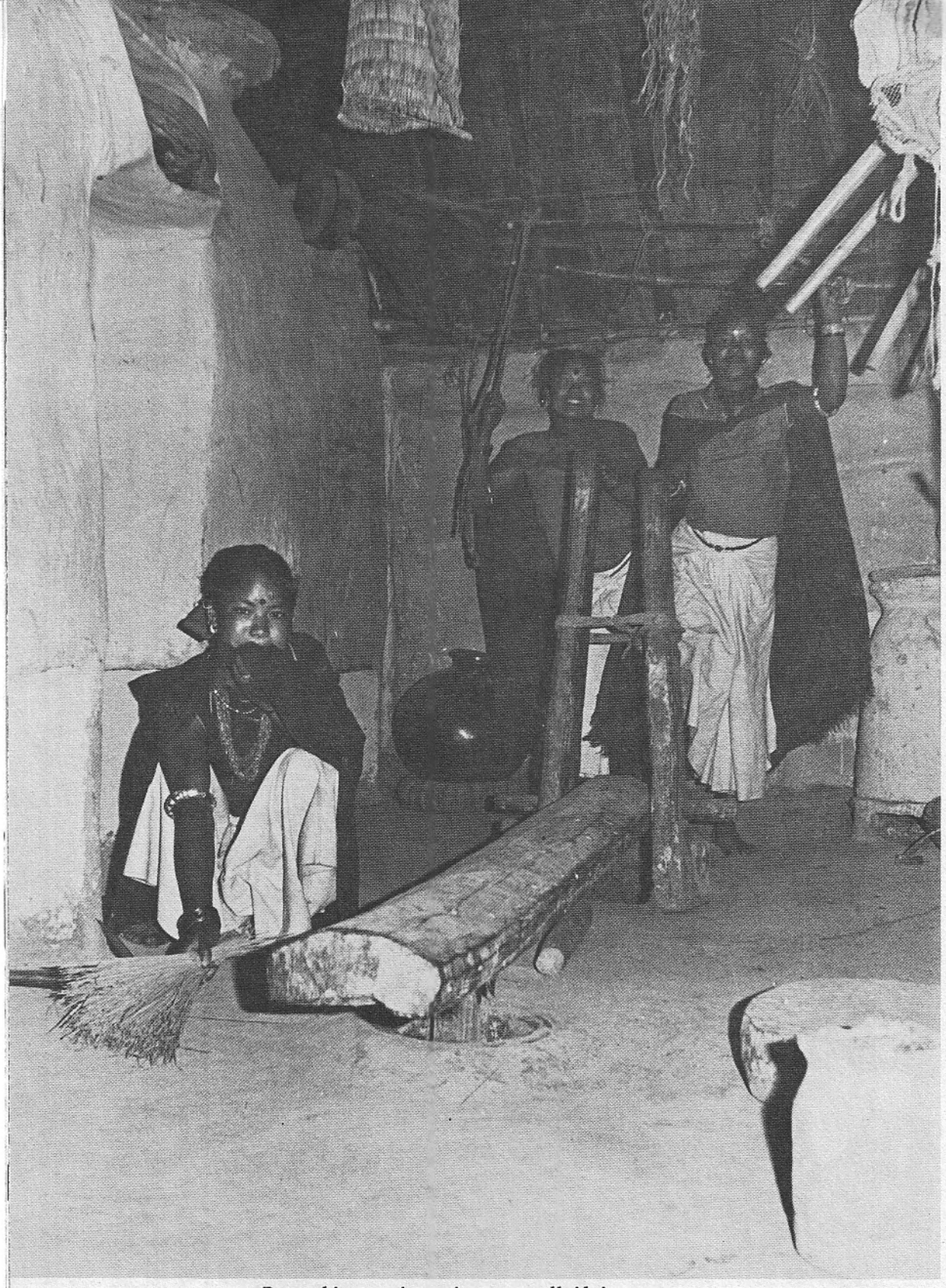
Woman hoeing.



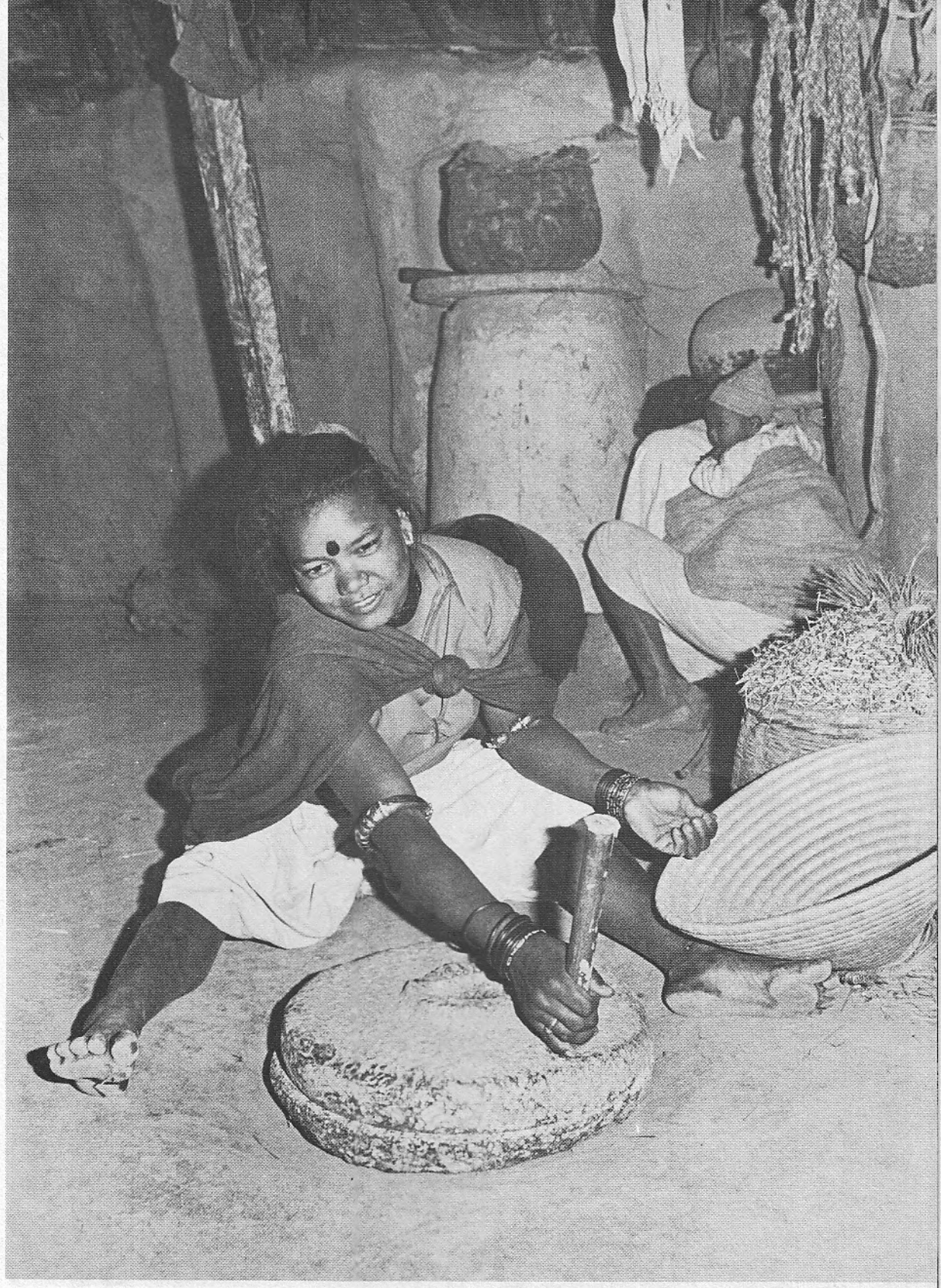
Pressing oil in a kolh.



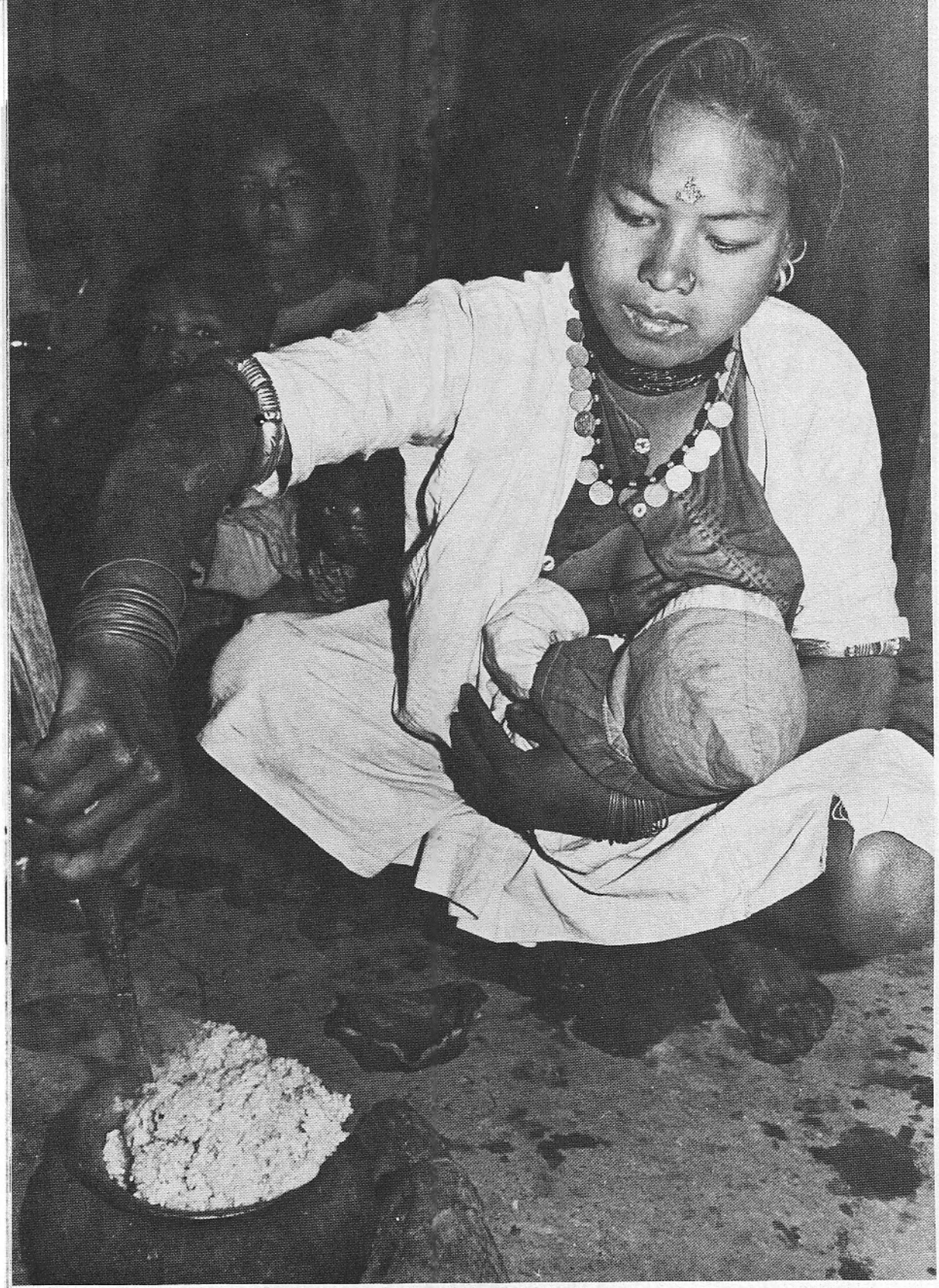
Collecting the oil as it is pressed out of the kolh.



Pounding rice into a dhiki.

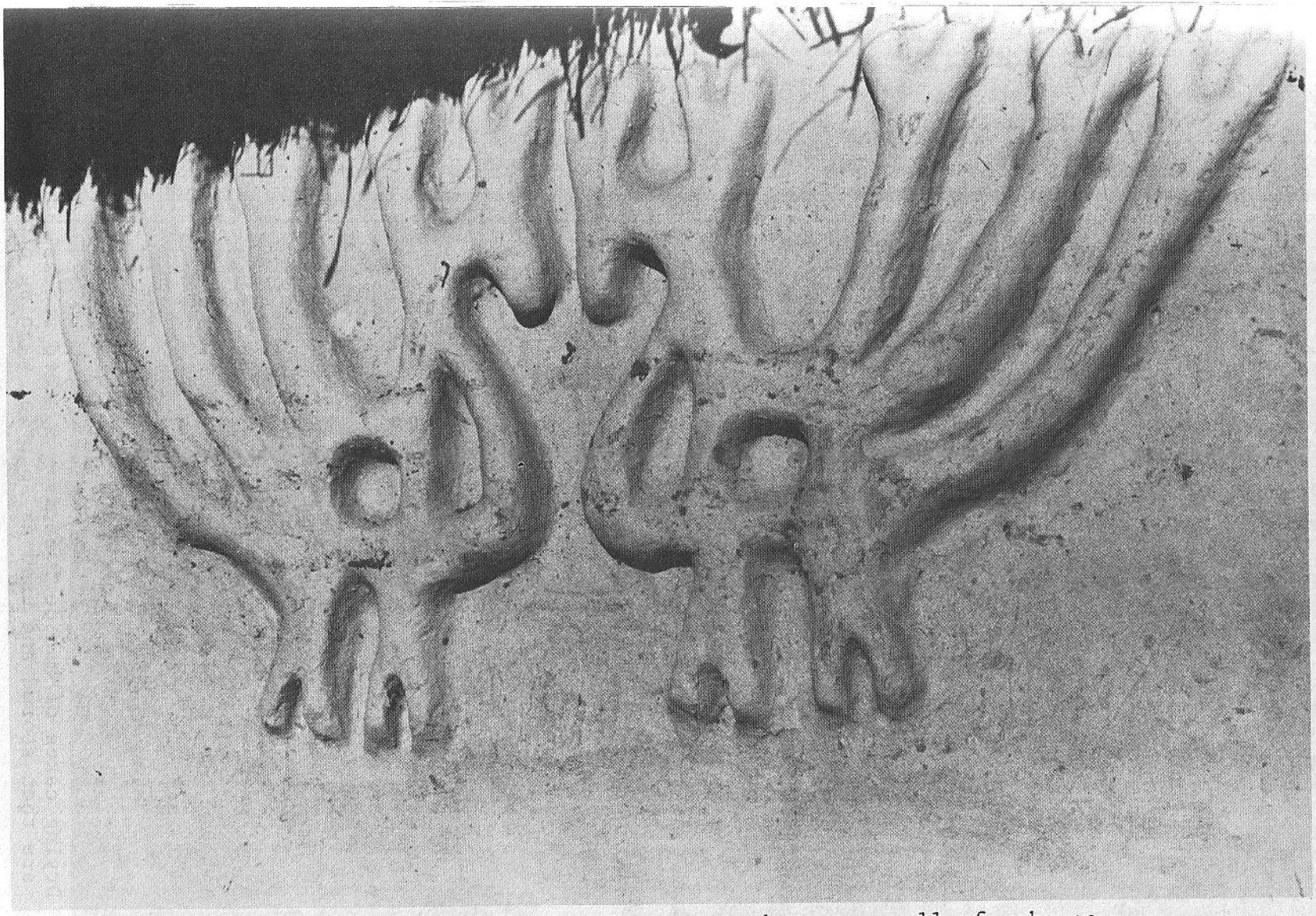


Grinding in a chakkya.



Cooking rice.

Drying cakes of ash derived from mustard stalks, which are then stored and used as soap for washing clothes.



Bas-relief peacock design in plaster on the outer wall of a house.

CHAPTER VI

THARU WOMEN AND THEIR ART

"... from the earliest times known to us men seem to have felt that beauty is its own excuse for being and the search for beauty is a universal human experience." (Brown 1963:63). Every society, whether simple or sophisticated, has its own ways of aesthetic expression as well as its own ways of rewarding its artisans and evaluating its artifacts. Although there is nothing like 'art for art's sake' (i.e art forms simply for the aesthetic pleasure) among the Tharu, there are several aspects of life in which Tharu artistic skills are expressed.

The most important of the Tharu arts are basketry, mat-making, pottery, carpentry, wood carving, embroidery and needle work, bead work, murals, wall reliefs and tatooing. Except for the carpentry and wood-carving work, all other arts and skills are either totally or mainly monopolized by females as their means for aesthetic expression. The arts in which men too participate side by side with women are basketry and mat-making. In both crafts there are special materials as well as models to be used by each sex.

There is no special institution for training members of Tharu society in such skills. Nor is there any special age when training in such skills begins. As the objects on which such artistic skills are lavished are those used in day-to-day Tharu life, the would-be artists become familiar with such objects from their early childhood. As soon as they start looking at these things, they begin to observe how they are made. A daughter observes carefully how her mother works on baskets, or a younger sister looks at her elder sister who is plastering a wall and making certain ornamental designs on it. The interested daughters or younger sisters are given chances at the beginning to try such skills, either on miniature baskets, or on separate sections of the wall. This is how the training starts. Later on, whenever there is any chance available, whether at home or at a neighbour's or relative's house, girls will try to practice the skill. Every year there are opportunities to participate in and practice such arts at home. The elder sisters, the sisters-in-law, the mother and the grandmother, all encourage the girls, as these skills will be the media through which the girls will earn appreciation and be able to impress others in their future life. Such skills will also help in bargaining for a

better husband, because an artistic hand is one of the important qualities of the ideal wife. A daughter-in-law can also raise her status among her affines by impressing her husband's joint family with her skills in comparison with those of the wives of her husband's brothers. Knowledge or experience in certain arts and skills helps women in many ways, for example, she can make friends with other women in the village through the young girls who come to her for training or advice beyond that which they get at home. The attitude of the girls being trained by her, as well as their mothers', will be sympathetic and favourable towards her. Thus such a woman can acquire status and even certain authority over other women. A woman who teaches such skills or works on such skills for others is rewarded by small gifts, such as beer, liquor, vegetables, chicken, pigeons, fish and small amounts of cash or occasional manual help in farming. She can also earn some money by selling art products, such as baskets and mats. If she is skilled in tatooing she earns money from the fees paid by the women who come to her to get tatooed.

In the following section a more detailed description will be given about each of the above mentioned female arts.

Basketry and Mat Making

Among the Tharu, basketry is something more than a mere means for expressing individual artistic expression. It is a perfect way to employ the hours of the non-agricultural days, especially in the hot dry months of April, May and June. The materials which the females use to exhibit their skills in this type of art are mainly the pũjhā (strands of a certain kind of grass with very long, thin and sharp blades) and kasungnā (the budding part of pũjhā). Both of these two materials are obtained from the same variety of grass but at two different seasons. The pũjhā is collected during the second half of August from those tracts of land which are left for the wild growth of this grass. The bundles of pũjhā are brought home and kept damp for two or three days inside the house so that the pũjhā gets yellowish in colour. After that these bundles are dried in the sun for five or six days and then stored hanging below the thatch roof. The kasungnā is collected around mid-September just before the grass blossoms. Only the budding part of the grass is collected and brought home.

The furry portion, which is of no use, is taken off and the leaves and the stalk below the bud are separated from it before it dries. The remaining material, kasungnā, is now dried in full sunlight and then stored in the same way as pũjhā. After a few days some of the kasungnā is dyed. Red, yellow, dark purple or dark green are the traditional colours for this type of basketry. Although these colours were obtained from herbs and minerals in earlier days, now-a-days people prefer to use the chemical colours which can be bought in local markets. The red dye is prepared by mixing pink and red colours with a little lime, turmeric powder and some water. Yellowish dye is prepared by boiling the yellow dye in water and then mixing it with a little lime and turmeric powder. Purple and dark green dyes are prepared simply by boiling the particular dye with water. The dyed kasungna is dried in the shade and then stored.

In making baskets out of pũjhā and kasungnā first of all some pũjhā is worked into a spiral shape with rings of about one inch in diameter. This spiral goes on until the basket is finished. But the whole spiral is not made at one time, since strands of kasungnā are wound around each ring, binding the spiral into the shape the basket will take and creating some decorations, since the interwound strands are of various colours. Thus the work of making a ring of the spiral with pũjhā and connecting it with the earlier parallel ring by winding kasungnā around it goes on alternatingly.

Some of the kasungnā - pũjhā type baskets have ornamental hanging motifs called phunnā on their rims. These phunnā are made of guĩji seeds (Coix lacharyma) or of cleaned and processed fresh water oyster shells wound in threads in several ways so as to make different patterns for different baskets.

Pũjhā - kasungnā type baskets are made in several models. The bhaukā and bhauki models are made for storing precious or semi-precious clothes (used mostly at festivals), ornaments, make-up kits and sometimes also for a few other small personal belongings such as torches, notebooks and small musical instruments. Generally women's clothes predominate inside the bhaukā, as a female needs more cloth to cover her than a male, and women have more varieties of clothes for different purposes and different physical conditions and periods (e.g. pre-natal nourishing) than men. The bhaukā -bhauki shape of baskets is a little different from other models

of pũjhā - kasungnā baskets in its shape. It looks as if one basket has been inverted upon another, with the bottom of the upper basket chopped off, thus making a wide open mouth on the top; but it is one single huge basket about three feet high. A common dhakyā type of basket (also made of the same materials) is used as a lid for a bhaukā which overlaps the above; the lids are mostly plain without any colour.

The smallest of the pũjhā - kasungnā baskets is the panchopni (water cover), a basket used to cover a jug or jar of drinking water against dust or insects, usually kept at the bed-side during the night. It is a flat basket with an average diameter of five or six inches. This basket is also used by little girls as a play-thing.

There are slightly bigger baskets with raised and funnel-like rims. These are called dhakli. Sometimes the rim of the dhakli is decorated with peacock feathers. Dhakli are used to store small quantities of rare grains or seeds, and also vegetables and medicines. Sometimes they are also used for carrying gifts. The diameter of these baskets is about six inches and the height of the rims is also about the same.

The dhakyā, though larger in size, is made in the same shape as the dhakli. Various designs are made on it. The designs are not floral, but are small lines, checks, lozenges and other geometrical designs, or alternating rectangles of several different colours, and are made on the raised rims of these baskets. The dhakyā is used to store small seeds, grains, flour or cakes, vegetables or whatever small foodstuffs the household needs stored at the time. It is about fifteen or eighteen inches in height and about the same size in radius.

Delwā are much more elaborate versions of dhakyā. They are decorated with hanging motifs (phunnā) and have a beautiful crown-like top made of peacock feathers for their rims. The delwā basket is necessary for marriage celebrations. The bride's dress and ornaments are carried in this type of basket. A bride must take this basket, along with other decorated baskets and a few other artistic objects, when she goes to stay with her husband permanently (aryāe jainā), roughly one year after the marriage.

The mats made by women are called petār. The material used for these mats is gwān (a kind of grass with pulpy

stalks which grows in water-logged areas). The strands of gwān, when dried and pressed, are woven up and down alternately cross-ways. Some dyed gwān strands are also sometimes used in weaving to make coloured designs on the mats. The design most common on such mats is criss-cross.

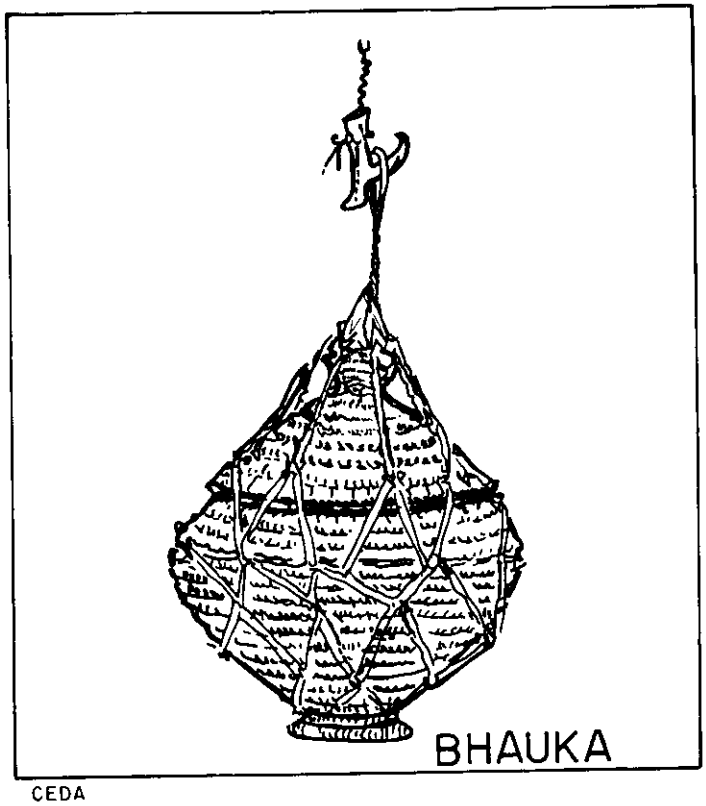
Pottery and Clay Art

Pottery is also one of the subsidiary occupations of Tharu women which is practised to meet household needs. But only a few rough pots, those with a broad mouth, such as cooking vessels and pots, are made by Tharu women. To make such pottery one vessel, already made and baked, is inverted on the ground and covered with a wet coarse cloth. Then prepared clay-mixture is plastered over the cloth, moulded by the shape of the vessel below, and is left to dry in the shade. When it dries, the inner pot and cloth are taken out. The new pot is dried well and later baked in an open oven made in a field, a short distance from the village to avoid fire. As the wheel is not used in the village, jars and vessels with narrow mouths are bought from outside potters.

Apart from the pottery, Tharu women are also experts in making huge earthen jars called dehri and kuthli. These are unbaked earthen vessels made of a mixture of clay, husk and hay. The dehri are about seven or eight feet high, and about three feet wide; the kuthli are miniature dehri, three to four feet high. These earthen vessles are used for storing food grains and oil-seeds, and are very efficient in protecting cereals and seeds against rats, certain insects and fire. It has been observed that the cereals kept in the dehri or kuthli of a house remain edible even after the house is gutted in a fire.

Apart from pottery, there is another type of artistic expression through clay among Tharu women. It is a kind of bas-relief art. Although this type of art is quite common, no Tharu informant could put a name to it. It seems to be an elaboration of the mud-plastering work done on the fences of branches and leaves of bamboo and other bushes, in making walls of houses. The figures of this bas-relief art are mostly pairs of male elephants or male peacocks, but occasionally a horse with or without a rider, a monkey, stags, a tree, or men in a boat are also depicted.

These figures (bas-reliefs) are made either on the outer walls, facing towards the street, or on the inside wall or dehri (which stands between the bahari and the



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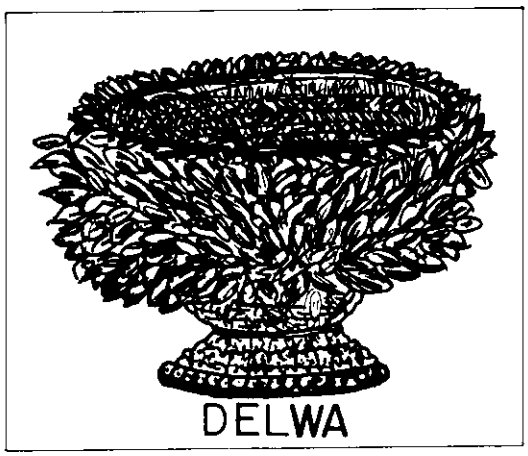

CEDA

bhittar section of the house*) facing towards the bahari section of a house beside the astimki** mural painting.

Tatooing***

Tatoo work among Tharu can be classed as two kinds:

(1) main or compulsory tatooing
(2) ordinary or optional tatooing

The first kind of tatooing is done on the legs of married women, generally during the month which follows marriage. This kind of tatooing is supposed to be compulsory for married women as, according to them, this tatooing is the sindur**** of Tharu women. Moreover, according to them, tatooing helps a married woman to compensate for the lack of beauty or decoration brought about by donning the white homespun clothing of married women (jhulwā) instead of the colourful black and red cholyā worn by unmarried Tharu women. This kind of tatooing follows a set of designs. The same set is used on both legs. It consists of several designs such as peacocks, dots, lines and crescents.

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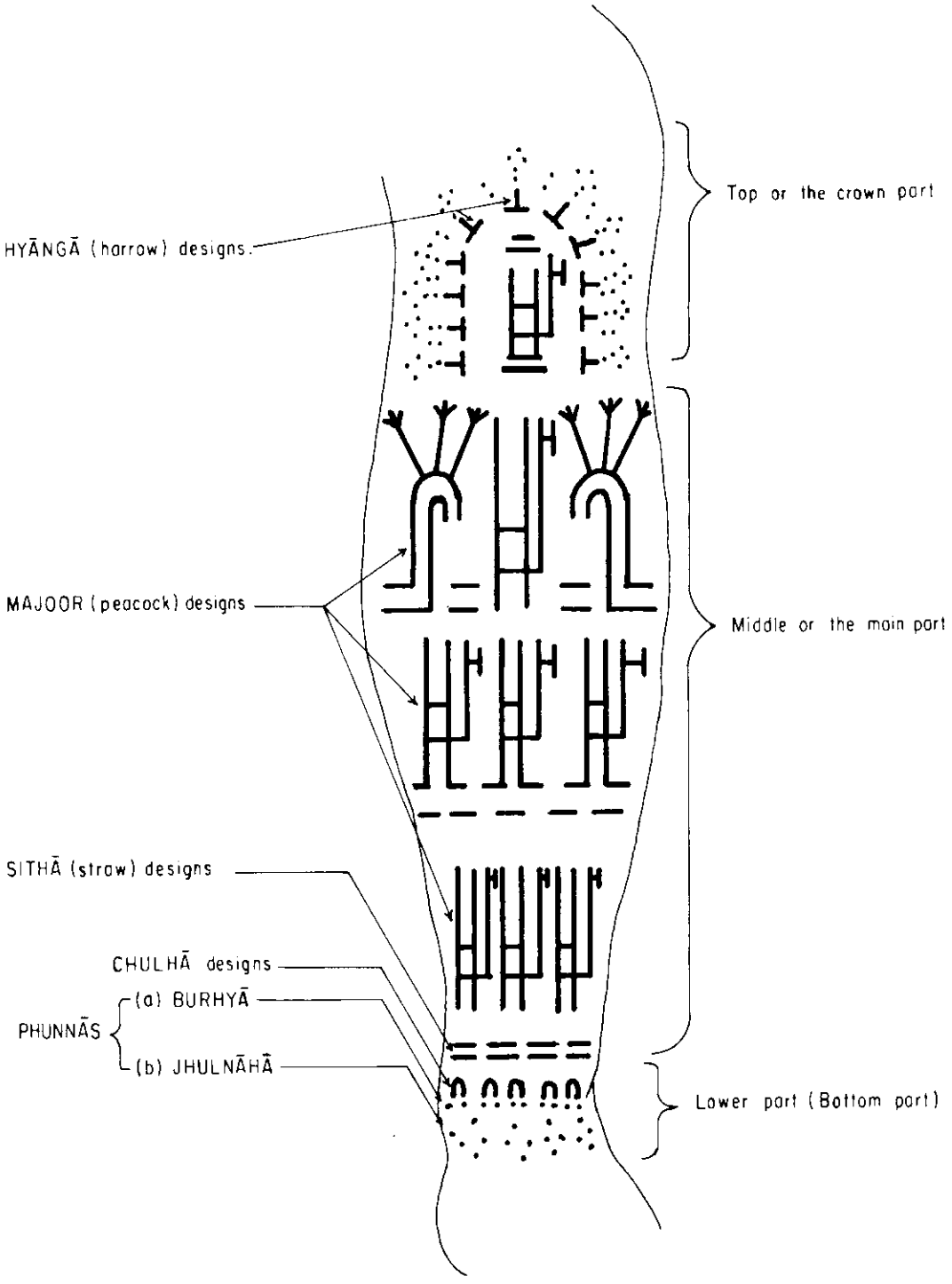
* Bhittar is the section of a Tharu house which includes all except the bahari and the section for cattle (ghāri) (see Plan of a Tharu House, p.13).

** Astimki - Tharu version of the famous Hindu festival Janmastami (birthday of Krishna). On this day Tharu women and girls assemble in front of a mural painting (usually in the house of mahaton) to worship and sing songs about Krishna. For further information on Astimki see Rajaure 1978: 405-411.

*** For further information see Rajaure 1975.

**** A sign of married women. Sindur (vermilion) is the sign of most of the married Hindu women (whose husband is alive) who apply some of this powder in the parting in their hair.

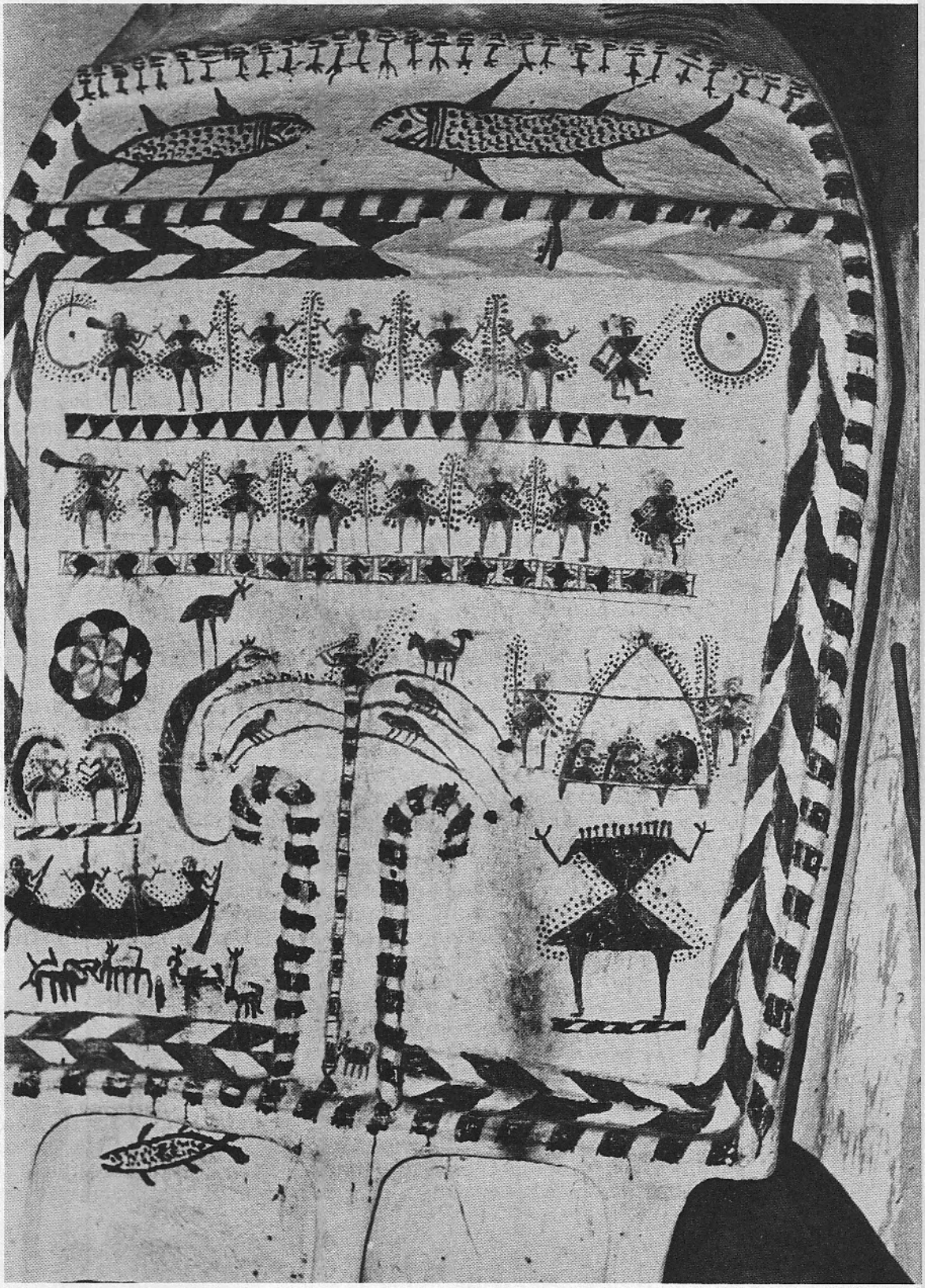
DETAILS OF A TATOOING ON LEG



The ordinary or common type of tatooing can be done on any person's skin if he or she so wishes. Hands, arms and face (especially a chin or a cheek) are the parts of the body usually used for this kind of tatooing. There is nothing like a "set" in this type of tatooing. Rather, a few designs, such as dots, a peacock, a flower or the name of a Hindu god and goddess, are tatooed on one or different parts of the skin, mainly on hands and arms.

Tatooing is usually done by an aged and experienced woman. Any Tharu woman of any clan can practise this art professionally if she has some sort of experience in it. A tatooer is a woman who makes many female friends and sympathizers in her life-time, since the relationship between a tatooer and her client does not terminate after their transaction. The beautiful tatoo design on a woman's skin always remind her of her tatooing lady. If the family of the tatooer is faced by a financial or labour shortage problem, her clients' families try to provide assistance. They also give moral support to the tatooer when necessary. The tatooer, who is usually an old and experienced woman, may also help her clients in their future life by giving advice on different topics, such as basketry, herbal medicines, child care, although such advice and counselling services are limited to those women who live in her vicinity.

Typical style of tattooing.



Astimki mural.

CONCLUSION

From the preceding chapters on different aspects of Tharu society vis-a-vis the role of women, it becomes clear that the status of Tharu women is complex. The status of Tharu women varies as much as the perspectives to see it vary. Moreover, their status varies in different spheres of activity in their day-to-day life. Despite such complexity and variations, however, a few general principles can be established which will help in evaluating the status of Tharu women in their society.

One such general principle is 'complementarity'. Differences regarding rank and role or concerning the relative degrees of authority of the two sexes are generally accepted by the Tharu as complementary rather than the domination or exploitation of one sex by another. For Tharu think that, similar to the manifest physical and biological complementarity between the two sexes, men and women are also complementary to each other in the field of economic production and subsistence. Traditionally men are supposed to be the out-door workers performing such tasks as ploughing, construction and hunting while most of the indoor work, such as food processing, cooking, child care and laundry, is left to women. Of course, there are also several other tasks in which both sexes take equal parts. Women play a role in decision making too. Although the senior male members of a household have the final authority in matters concerning family property and major household expenditures, they do not dare impose their decisions on other household members. Rather, all adult members of a household including women are fully consulted before final judgements are made. Moreover, on certain occasions the senior males of a household, who are supposed to give the final decisions, just endorse the decisions of their females. In certain households, such as household 16 and 24 of the sample, where senior female members of the household, like Masurni and Labari, are more intelligent than their husbands or other males of the household, the women have the final de facto authority on all household affairs, including family property and major household expenditures, even though their husbands are supposed to be the formal wielders of such authority. In some other households, such as households 4 and 9, where the senior-most members of the household are widows living with their married adult sons, these elderly women possess almost fully authority over all household affairs, although the land and immovable property of the household might be (as is the tradition)

formally registered in the name of one or more of the male members of their households.

The other noteworthy general principle is the flexibility which brings unanimity in household decisions. Without this principle, it would be very hard to manage large households like those of the Tharu, which can split easily unless their members both male and female are flexible in their decisions and ideologies. The Tharu do not have any negative attitude towards accepting those roles which are traditionally assigned to the opposite sex. For example, in household 15, Kalesu can be seen dehusking paddy himself or sometimes assisting his son's wife, Rupni, who, as the only adult female in the household, remains busy most of the time in other household activities or working for other households as a part-time domestic servant to earn extra food-grains for her family. Similarly, the women of a household which does not have enough male manpower, do almost all kinds of work except ploughing.

Tharu women have more alternatives than women in many other Nepalese groups if their life at their husband's house is not happy or successful. In such situations, a Tharu woman can go back to stay with her parental family, where she can subsist on the food and kharauni,* which are provided to her in exchange for her labour in the economic production of the family.

A Tharu woman may also divorce and remarry as many times as she thinks necessary until she succeeds in getting an appropriate chance for fulfilling her ideal roles (i.e. the roles of a wife and a mother). Usually such remarriages and divorces occur only when an earlier husband expires or if she has no child by him, especially a male child. The case studies of Bani Devi of household 24 and of Kauki Devi of household 8 are good examples of this.

The ideal roles of a woman, as explained already, are of great importance for a Tharu woman. It is only through a husband that she can exercise rights in an estate(that

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* Kharauni is that amount of grains and seeds, such as paddy, mustard and linseed, which is given to sisters and daughters (usually the married ones) after a harvest and which is later sold by them to get cash to meet their pocket expenses.

of her husband's family). When she bears a son her position in the family becomes more secure because she then gets some authority in the household as well as some influence in extra household affairs. A woman who has a child feels more secure as she will have someone to care for her and help her during her old age. At that age she will also be able to exert some authority over the family of her son. However, in Tharu society, for a woman who has neither a husband nor a child, there seems to be no future.*

Suggestions and Recommendations

To enhance the position of Tharu women vis-a-vis their society, efforts should be made to develop and promote some of those norms and principles of their society which had been neglected or looked down upon because they run contrary to some of the norms and principles of the dominant orthodox Hindu. In addition, programs should also be developed to allow Tharu women to be incorporated somehow in the process of national development and to have better access to government services, health education and trade. The following are some of the suggestions and recommendations which may prove useful in the future:

Economy and Employment

1. Women should be given preference while recruiting people for job training, especially in the field of agriculture, health and education. So far only a few Tharu males have been recruited as J.T.A.'s and as primary school teachers.

2. Skill-training programs for Tharu women, if any, must include basketry in its curriculum, as it is one of the most important and useful skills in a Tharu female's life. This skill must be developed to make it more economic and market-oriented. This would increase the income of the basket-makers as well as of their households.

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* Due to the system of putkar lenā (already explained in the footnote on p. 42), the Tharu do not give so much importance to a male child as the high caste Hindu if it is a question only of a successor.

3. Labour saving technology has to be introduced in the villages so that women may get relief from their household drudgery. Tharu women have to spend a lot of time in dehusking and grinding food grains and in crushing oil-seeds for oil.

4. Part-time jobs should be made available in the vicinity. As Tharu women are mostly busy in their day-to-day household jobs, they have only a little time to spare for other income generating jobs. Hence some part-time jobs would be useful for them.

Health and Education

1. Illiteracy is the main cause of Tharu women's and men's limited access to the benefits of development. Hence informal programmes for functional literacy should be launched, especially for the benefit of adult Tharu women. They could be also trained in better methods of food processing, animal husbandry, poultry farming, bee-keeping, general agriculture etc.

2. Modern health facilities should be more available. As women have a very little leisure time, they do not bother to go to the health centres for treatment unless they are seriously ill, because they are too far away.

3. The current family planning approaches are not effective among the Tharu. There is a need for more Tharu, especially women, to be recruited and trained as family planning workers. Infant mortality, too, has to be reduced for family planning to be accepted.

4. The traditional Tharu practice of being able to adopt a male heir * should be encouraged, as it reduces the pressure to have male children.

Legal Rights

1. There are certain traditions and practices among the Tharu which fit the spirit of the new laws concerning women in the National Code. For example, there is no loss of ritual status after remarriage, following divorce or widowhood; there is the putkar lenā system, in the case of death of a male in the family (son or brother of

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* See footnote on p. 42.

the household), of adopting a male from outside to become the husband of the widow and heir to the property. However, because the dominant culture does not have such traditional practices, the Tharu tend to feel that the practices are inferior and suppress their existence. Efforts should be made to encourage and support such norms and traditions, and where possible they should be given legal recognition.

2. Women must be made aware of their legal rights, as provided in the present National Code. Very few Tharu women are conscious of these rights, for example, the rights of inheritance for an unmarried woman of 35 years and above.

GLOSSARY OF THARU TERMS

angsa = (literally meaning 'a portion'). Share of a family property or an estate to be inherited only by a male successor, whether by birth or by adoption.

Astimki = Tharu version of the important Hindu festival Janmastami (birthday of Krishna), on which Tharu women and girls assemble in front of a mural painting to worship and sing songs about Krishna.

bahari = section of a Tharu house which serves as a common room. This portion is approached immediately after the entrance of the house.

bahrwar = coarse white textile.

bahurrya = younger brother's wife.

barin = client (of a priest family).

barka bhwaj = a marriage celebration with most of the ceremonies.

barka puja = (literally meaning 'big sacrifice' or 'big worship'). The greatest ritual of a Tharu family in which a variety of pet animals (except cattle and she-buffaloes) and fowls are sacrificed. It is performed every eight to twelve years usually with the joint efforts and expenses of the male line descendants within seven generations i.e. ghar phutlak.

bhaina = sister's son.

bhaini = sister's daughter.

bhatu = elder sister's husband.

bhauji = elder brother's wife.

bhauka = a set of two huge baskets; the upper one of the two serves as a lid. These are

kept hanging on a rope inside a room and are used for storing clothes, ornaments and other small semi-precious things.

bhauki = miniature bhauka.

bhittar = (literally meaning "inside"). The most interior section of a Tharu house, consisting of several bedrooms, kitchen, store and divinity room.

bhwaj = marriage.

bhwar paithna = (i) to get adopted (a male) by a family who has no son by marrying their unmarried daughter and accepting her parents' clan name. (ii) to get adopted (a male) as a 'son' for their widowed daughter-in-law (son's wife).

bigha = measurement of land equal to 1.68 acres.

birta = land grants made by the state to individuals, often taxable and conditional.

chakkya = traditional equipment for grinding or splitting cereals.

chuti bhwaj = a marriage celebrated with least ceremonies.

daijo = movable or immovable property given to a woman from her parental family or friends or relatives of her parental side and any increment thereto.

damadwa = daughter's husband.

dan = ritual donation.

Dasya = Tharu version of Dasai or the Vijaya Dashami festival of the Hindus.

dehri = huge earthen jars (unbaked) used in storing food grains and oilseeds.

delwa = an ornamented and colorful basket with hanging motifs.

deur = husband's younger brother.

dhakya = basket similar to delwa but less decorated and with no hanging motifs.

dharni = an avoirdupois measure equal to 2.27 kg. or approximately five pounds.

dhiki or dheki = rice-pounding machine.

dihi = manured fields where major crops other than paddy are cultivated.

gardhurrya = Tharu household chief.

gottyar = distant patrilineal cousin.

ghar = a house, household.

ghar bigral = (literally meaning 'a broken or spoiled house' or 'the one with a broken or spoiled house'), i.e. a widow or widower who is considered inauspicious during certain rituals in a marriage.

ghar guruwa = (i) a Tharu priest/shaman. (ii) a sub-group of Tharu composed of priest/shaman.

ghari = cattleshed section of a Tharu house.

ghar phutlak = (literally meaning 'split household'). Close patrilineal cousins living in split households (usually within seven generations).

ghatwa karaina = (literally meaning 'introduce to the water source'). i.e. a ritual which purifies a new mother and the child from the pollution caused by child-birth. After this ritual, they can touch or contact others' food, water as well as the people.

jari = money paid to an earlier husband of a woman by the family of her new husband.

jetthwa = husband's elder brother.

jhaga = bride-price.

kanyadan = giving out a daughter in marriage by ritual donation i.e. without asking for a bride price or a girl in exchange.

kasungna = the budding part of a particular grass, which after drying in shade and dyeing, is used to make a variety of basketry products.

kharauni = small amounts of cash cereals and grains such as paddy, mustard and linseed, given to sisters and daughters (usually the married ones) after a harvest. These are later sold by them to get cash to meet their pocket expenses.

khel = traditional village-assembly of the Tharu consisting of the household heads from all Tharu households of a village.

khet = paddy fields.

kolh = oil crushing machine.

konti = literally meaning 'a bed room', the word also applies to a close family within an extended family i.e. a couple and their children.

kuthli = miniature dehri.

laihar = parental home of a woman.

lauwa tharrwa lena = to take a new husband.

machiya = a stool-like object with a wooden frame and four legs. It is finely woven with colored hemp threads.

maghi = a Tharu festival falling on the first day of the month of Magh (Jan.-Feb.).

mahaton/mahatau= traditional village chief of a Tharu village.

mama = maternal uncle.

mulki ain = national (legal) code.

niputri = (literally meaning 'a woman having no child'), a derogatory term, sometimes used to refer a childless woman.

pad = a clan, same as thahar.

pahura = gifts of cakes, sweets, fruit, vegetables, and local beer etc.

pakka pakki bhwaj = arranged marriage.

pakrawa = (literally meaning 'capture' or 'arrest'). marriage by capture.

pancha = ward representative in a village or town panchayat.

panchayat = executive committee elected to administer the affairs of its constituency of one or more villages or a population not less than ten thousand.

parchana = 'ritual sprinkling' in a marriage or during an offering to the divinities.

pathi = an unit of measure by volume, equal to about seven to eight pounds, depending on the kind of grain.

patohya = son's wife.

pewa = movable or immovable property as given in writing by the husband or coparceners on the husband's side with the consent of all the coparceners, or given by other friends or relatives on the husband's side and any increment thereto (Mulki Ain section 4 of the chapter on property of women).

phunna = hanging motifs made on the rims of certain Tharu baskets.

pittar puja = an offering to ancestral spirits.

pradhan pancha = head of panchayat.

prasad = offering to a deity.

pujha = strands of a particular grass with very long, thin and sharp blades used as a basic material in most of the Tharu baskets made by women.

putkar lena = adoption of a son.

roti = flat bread.

sakhlara = community help (manual).

sali = wife's younger sister.

sampatti = property, estate.

sattapatti = exchange.

sorinnya = traditional mid-wife.

thahar = clan.

tharrwa lena = (literally meaning 'take a husband'). to marry or to re-marry.

urhari = elopement (for marriage).

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