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# The Women of Baragaon

- sidney schuler



**THE  
STATUS OF WOMEN IN NEPAL**

volume II part 5

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# THE WOMEN OF BARAGAON



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# The Status of Women in Nepal

Volume II: FIELD STUDIES

Part 5

# THE WOMEN OF BARAGAON

SIDNEY SCHULER



Centre for Economic Development  
and Administration

Tribhuvan University  
Kathmandu, Nepal

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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:

<u>Region/District</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Researcher</u>
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 (WSSC). 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<sup>1</sup>

### 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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<sup>1</sup>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 embrace 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 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.<sup>1</sup>

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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<sup>1</sup> 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<sup>1</sup> 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,<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>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 Tibetan 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.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>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<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> Households were defined to include all members who ate from the same kitchen<sup>3</sup> 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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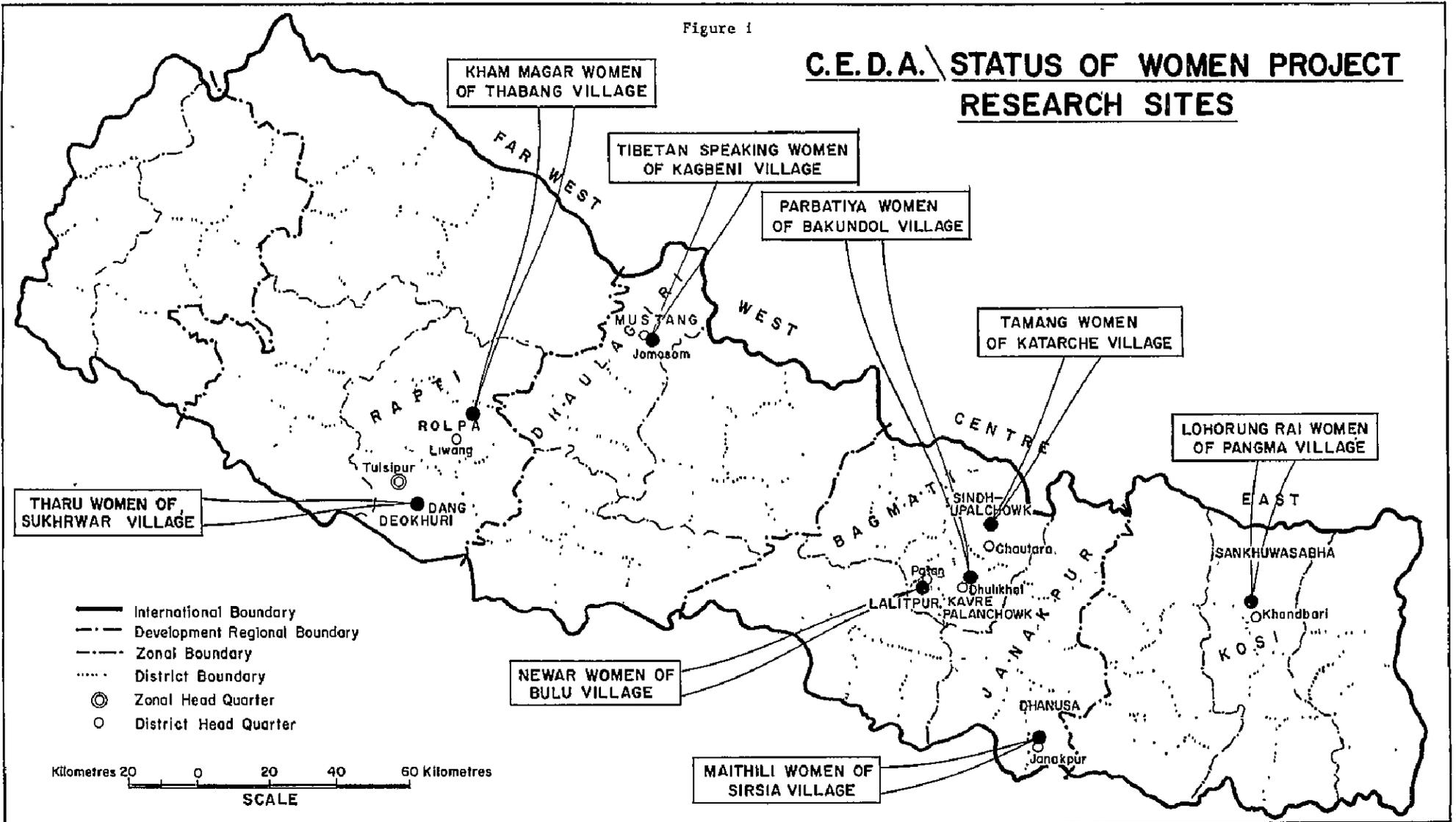
<sup>1</sup>By "village" we refer to a traditional residential unit locally known and named as such rather than to the larger administrative unit or panchayat which generally consists of several villages and is usually too large and unwieldy to study in depth.

<sup>2</sup>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.

<sup>3</sup>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



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.

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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<sup>1</sup>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)<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
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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<sup>1</sup>The findings of this study appeared in published form in 1975 as "Time Allocation in a Machiguenga Community" IN Ethnology 14:301-10.

<sup>2</sup>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<sup>1</sup> 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.)<sup>2</sup> day for 26 weeks. Thus each

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<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>In Kagbeni the researcher was unable to visit families before six a.m. because of the large Tibetan 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 Sukhrwar 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'.<sup>1</sup> 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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<sup>1</sup>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	KATARGHE	SUKRAWAR	SIRSIA	
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.



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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## INTRODUCTION\*

Baragaon, in Mustang District, is part of rural Nepal. Its women share ecological and economic constraints with other rural Nepalese women. The work they do is physically taxing and often unrelenting. They work until the final stages of pregnancy and resume most tasks within a few days after giving birth. They are frequently ill with various preventable diseases, which they lack the resources and/or knowledge to prevent, and they must continue working, regardless of illness and old age.

Nepalese women's life expectancy at birth is low. According to different estimates, it was 41.1 for females, and 43.3 for males in 1976 (Demographic Sample Survey Introduction, see Acharya, 1979: p. 16); 41.8 for females and 44.7 for males between 1974 and 1976 (U.S. Department of Commerce, Table A-5); and 32.5 and 34.7 for females and males respectively in 1961 (U.S. Department of Commerce). By comparison, life expectancy at birth for Indian females was estimated at 40.6, and for males at 41.9 between 1951 and 1960; for Sri Lanka females at 61.4 and males at 61.9 (1962); for Japanese females at 67.7 and males at 63.0 (1965) and for American females at 73.8 and males at 66.7 in 1977 (U.N. Demographic Yearbook 1967, Table 3). Table 1 presents a summary of this information. As the estimates above reveal, the life expectancy of Nepalese females is lower than that of males. Although this pattern is also found in several other South

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\*This study is based on field research conducted in Baragaon between September, 1976 and May, 1979. As explained in the Methodological Foreword to this series, the data referring to a 35 household sample from Kagbeni village were collected in conjunction with the CEDA Status of Women Project. The statistics derived from larger samples, and the majority of the non-quantitative data were collected as part of my Ph.D. dissertation research, under the Department of Anthropology, Harvard University.

TABLE A

ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY IN YEARS : NEPAL, INDIA, SRI LANKA, JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

Source Year or Period	NEPAL		INDIA		SRI LANKA		JAPAN		U.S.					
	US Dept. of Commerce*	US Dept. of Commerce, Table A-5	HMG Demographic Sample Survey**	UN Demographic Yearbook 1967, Table 3										
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1952-4	31.6	29.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1951-60	-	-	-	-	-	-	41.9	40.6	-	-	-	-	-	-
1961	34.7	32.5	34.7	32.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1962	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61.9	61.4	-	-	-	-
1965	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	67.7	73.0	-	-
1966	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	66.7	73.8
1971	46.1	36.8	41.9	39.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1974-6	-	-	44.7	41.8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1976	-	-	-	-	43.4	41.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

\* Calculated by means of the Arriaga Technique (1968).

\*\* Acharya, 1979 : 16.

Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh) the reverse obtains in most other countries of the world.\*

Baragaonle women, like the majority of Nepalese women, have had little access to education. (The 1971 census reported only 4 percent literacy among females, compared with 25 percent among males.)\*\* And they have had little opportunity to participate in local politics. Whatever solidarity Baragaonle women may feel among themselves is informal. They belong to no organized groups; other than kin groups, based on their mutual interests.

For the most part Baragaonle women do not inherit productive property in their own right, and they are unaware of many of the property rights and other rights that the National Legal Code theoretically provides for them. In all of these aspects, Baragaonle women's lives resemble the lives of other rural Nepalese women.

Yet in many ways Baragaon is not typical of rural Nepal. The extreme seasonal variation in work patterns and the changeable nature of migratory trade demand a degree of physical mobility and social flexibility that is largely absent in traditional Nepalese societies. To achieve material success, Baragaonle women and men alike need to blend shrewdness, individualism and materialism with a sense of humor and a readiness to adapt to new circumstances.

Since residential groups are in continuous flux, it is as often women as men who make the family's day-to-day economic decisions. Baragaonle women also make life choices which are not available to women in many other traditional societies. Marriage in Baragaon tends to take place after maturity; spouses are often self-chosen; and a substantial proportion of the adult population--about 20 to 25 percent of the women and 10 percent of the men-- never marry.

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\*U.S. Department of Commerce (not paginated), and H.M.G. Central Bureau of Statistics, 84. The mortality rates among women of child-bearing age are much higher than for men in the same age groups. Many women die in child-birth. Poor health and nutrition among women and inadequate medical facilities are contributing factors. In addition, Nepalese women's high fertility contributes to the risk of death in child-birth (Sigrid Anderson, U.S.A.I.D. Nepal, personal communication).

\*\*Based on all Nepalese aged 10 years and above. See H.M.G. Central Bureau of Statistics, Table 5.2.

This is a case study, presenting new data pertaining to women's status in "Baragaon", a small Nepalese mountain society of about 2,200 people. The data on Baragaon result from my own field research, conducted between July, 1976 and May, 1979. I have incorporated, for comparison, other scholars' data on high caste Hindus and other Nepalese groups (see bibliography), and H.M.G. statistics based on the whole of Nepal.

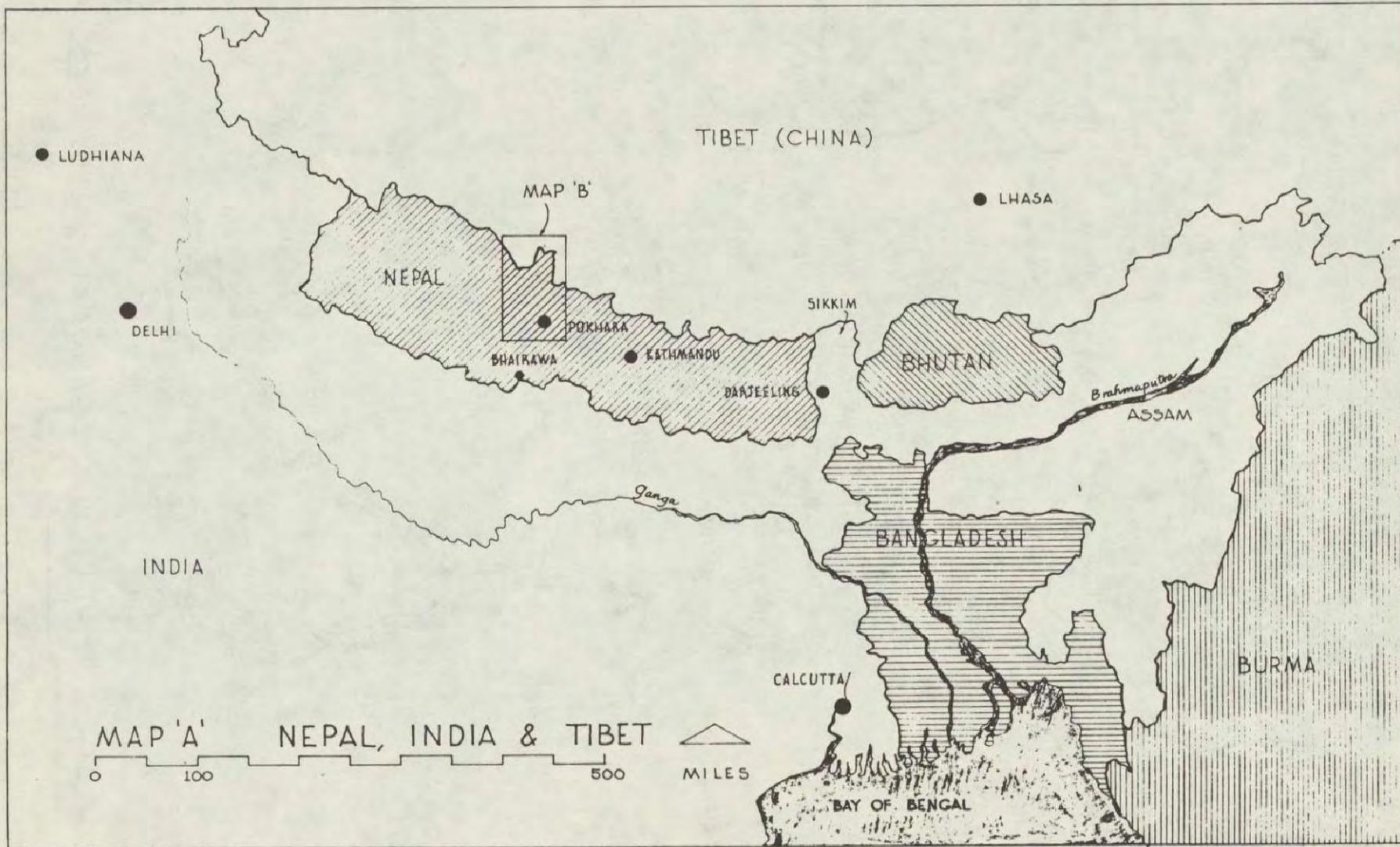
The data presented here illustrate the particular conditions and problems of women in one small population, but it is hoped that the profile of Baragaon will also serve a more general purpose; that it will help to create a clearer picture of the range of variations in the socio-economic conditions that affect the lives of Nepalese women. A basic assumption of this study is that in order to maximize women's participation in development, cultural differences must be taken into account. Development strategies need to be appropriate to the multitude of local conditions that exist in rural Nepal. Specific information pertaining to women's economic roles in traditional Nepalese societies, their customary rights and privileges, and the bases of the social recognition and esteem achieved by women can be useful for development planners. Only after identifying those aspects of traditional socio-economic systems--both the material and cultural aspects--which benefit women, and those which limit women's economic, social and political participation, can specific programs be devised which provide new alternatives without under-cutting women's existing roles, and options.

#### Setting: Baragaon

My research specifically included twelve villages which I refer to in this study as "Baragaon".\* The

---

\*I have used the name "Chumik" elsewhere. "Baragaon" is primarily an administrative label, not an indigenous name. It was probably first used during the Rana regime. Although the inhabitants of the 12 villages that I studied are a culturally and linguistically unified group, and they describe themselves as a group, they have no collective name. I have used the name "Baragaon", since it is known in Nepal and appears on some maps. In this study it refers only to the 12 villages in Kagbeni and Mukti-nath Panchayats, and does not include the group of villages directly to the north, in Chuksang Panchayat, which are sometimes considered part of Baragaon (See



● LUDHIANA

TIBET (CHINA)

● LHASA

MAP 'B'

NEPAL

● DELHI

POKHARA

SIKKIM

KATHMANDU

BHUTAN

BHATKAWA

DARJEELING

Brahmaputra  
ASSAM

INDIA

Ganga

BANGLADESH

BURMA

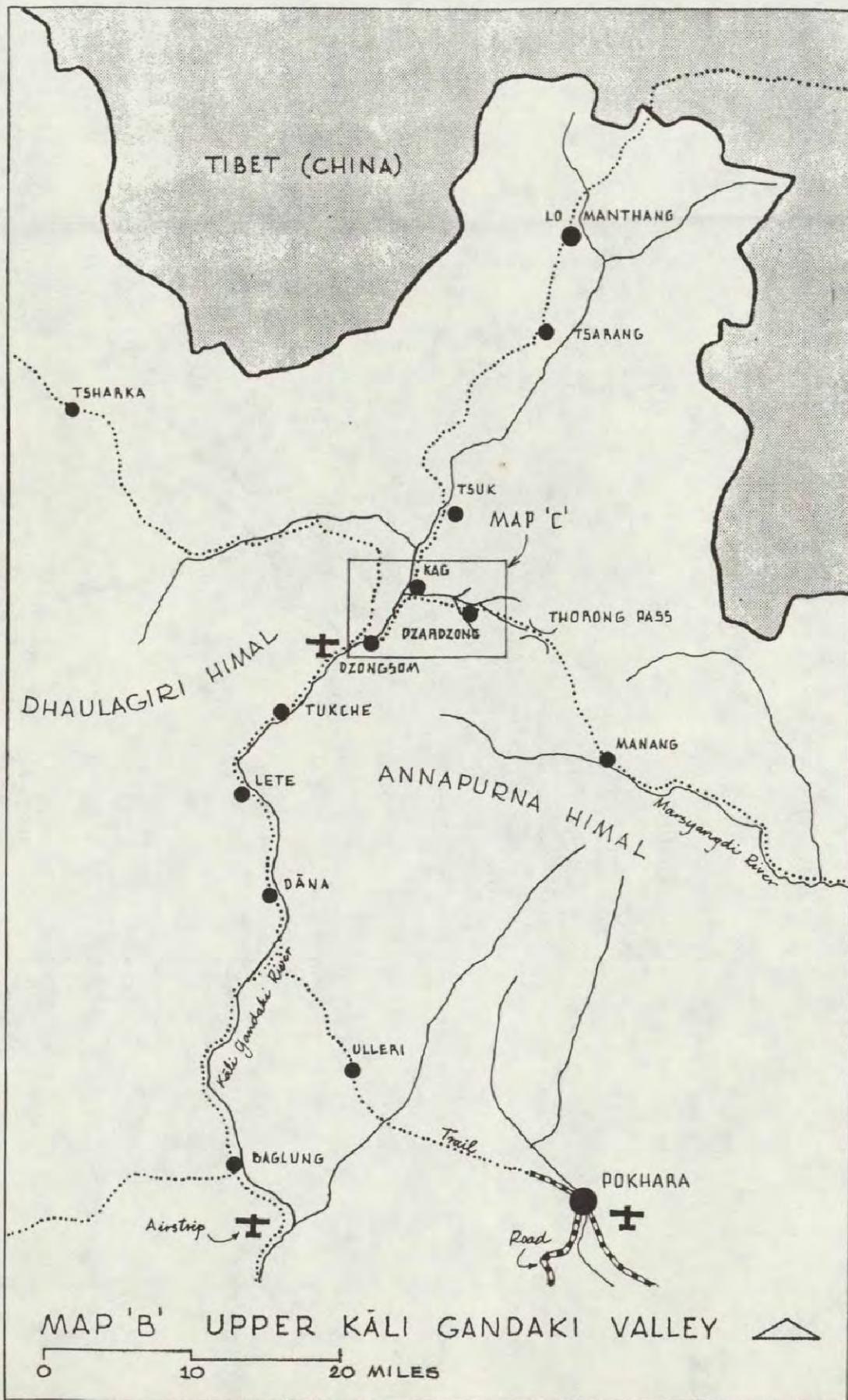
● CALCUTTA/

MAP 'A' NEPAL, INDIA & TIBET

0 100 500 MILES

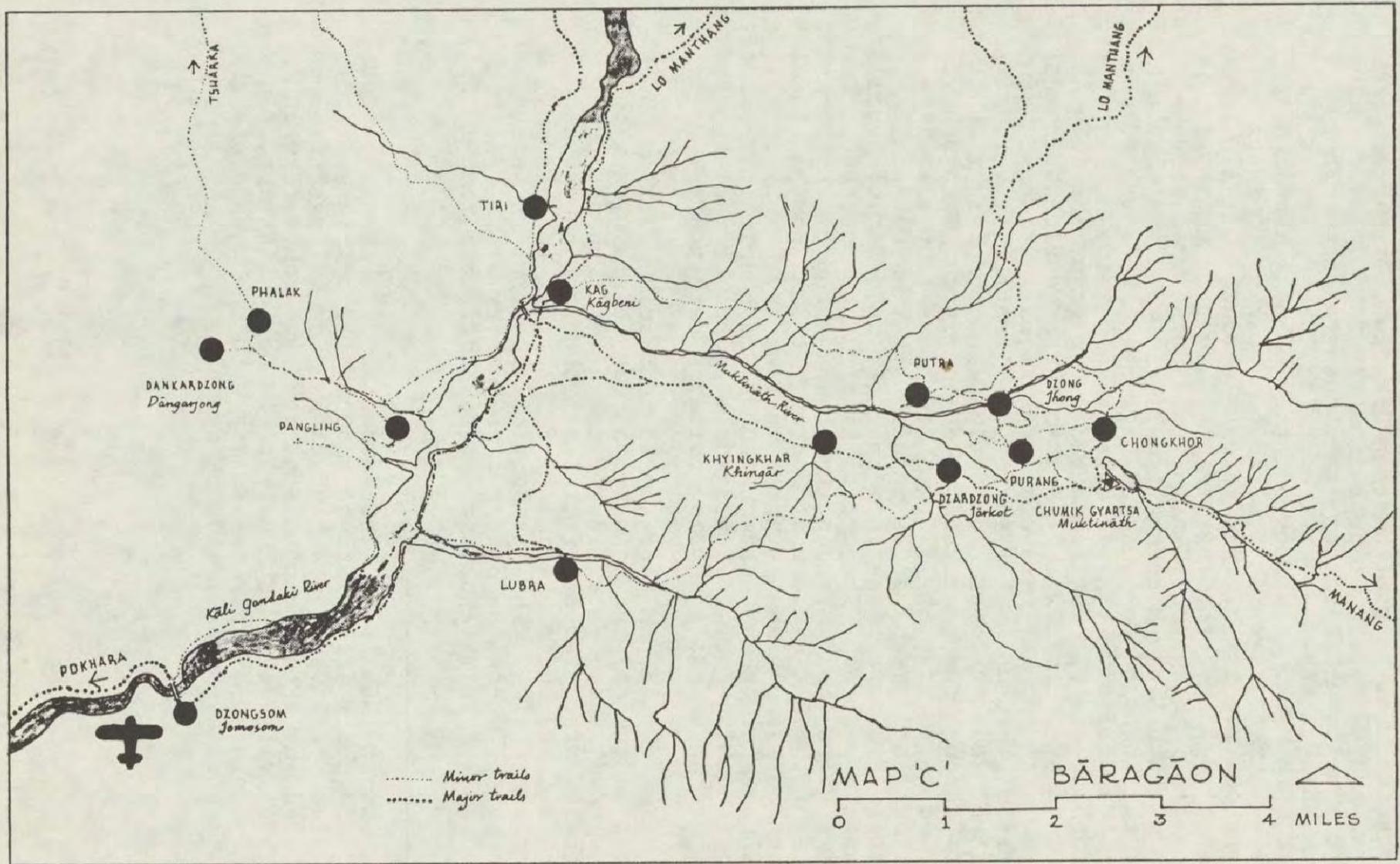
BAY OF BENGAL

5



MAP 'B' UPPER KĀLI GANDAKI VALLEY

0 10 20 MILES



villages are located in Kagbeni and Muktinath Panchayats, in the central part of Mustang District, Dhaulagiri Zone, northcentral Nepal, at approximately 28° 5 latitude and 83° 6 longitude. Baragaon is bounded to the north by Chuksang Panchayat, to the south by Thak Khola, to the east by Manang, and to the west by Dolpo. Although it takes five to seven days strenuous walking to reach Baragaon from the nearest motorable road, some 120 kilometers to the south, the region is surprisingly well travelled. Baragaon is situated along a traditional trade route which links Mustang (and Tibet) with the middle hills and the towns of Pokhara and Baglung. The route follows the Kali Gandaki River, as it cuts its way between the towering Annapurna and Dhaulagiri Ranges. Baragaon, and in particular the village of Kagbeni, has considerable traffic of mule and donkey caravans and seasonal migrants. Hindu pilgrims, bound for the sacred confluence of rivers at Kagbeni and the complex of springs and temples at Muktinath, pass through Baragaon, and so do tourists. Baragaon was opened to tourism in 1976. A few hours from a small airport (at Jomsom) and a week's walk from Pokhara, Baragaon is more accessible than the majority of Nepal's mountain regions. The accessibility, the spectacular views, both from Baragaon itself and enroute, the romantic lure of the old kingdom of Mustang, to the north, of which Baragaon seems almost a part; the archaic beauty of the villages themselves, and the humor and hospitality--albeit profitseeking-- of the Baragaonle people attract increasing numbers of tourists and mountaineers each year.

The climate in Baragaon is semi-arid. Barley, buckwheat and wheat, the main crops, can be grown only on irrigated land. Water is clearly a limiting resource. Lack of water prevents families from clearing new land for agriculture, and occasionally forces them to abandon existing fields. This is particularly true in Kagbeni Panchayat, where the desert-like quality of the pasture lands makes animal husbandry less profitable than in Dolpo,

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Haimendorf 1966:153). This group of villages is culturally and linguistically distinct from the 12 villages that I studied. I have also excluded the tiny village of Sangdak, located in Kagbeni Panchayat, along the route between Kagbeni village and Charkabhot, in Dolpo District, since the people of Sangdak intermarry with the people of Charkabhot as well as with Baragaonle.

Thak Khola and many other of the surrounding regions. Aside from goats, domestic animals in Kagbeni subsist mainly on crop residue and weeds from the fields.

The Muktinath Valley is somewhat sheltered from the fierce, dust-bearing wind that sweeps its way up the Kali Gandaki Valley, through Kagbeni and Mustang, into Tibet. There is more rainfall in Muktinath than in Kagbeni, and more vegetation. Forest and pasture land are less scarce, and there is more cultivated land per family. Due to the higher altitude, however, the six villages of the Muktinath Valley tend to be colder than Kagbeni, with a shorter growing season and lower crop yields. The people of Muktinath and Kagbeni Panchayats alike depend on various sources of income. Agriculture is important, but it requires only a few months intensive labor each year. During the long winter slack season many Baragaonle trade or seek employment outside the local region. In fact, there is considerable pressure on the healthy and able to migrate south to the lowlands. Since there are few local employment opportunities during the winter months, many of the individuals who remain in the villages remain idle, a drain on their households' food reserves.

The villages lie at various altitudes between 10,000 and 12,500 feet above sea level, and range in size from 72 to 308 inhabitants each. The total population in early 1978 was approximately 2,200. The Baragaonle language is a dialect of Tibetan, resembling but not identical to the dialect spoken in Lo Manthang. Baragaonle are followers of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion. Their architectural and dress styles are distinctively Tibetan as, by and large, are their family and village organization and customs concerning marriage. On the other hand, some Baragaonle customs, such as preferential cross-cousin marriage, are common among many of the ethnic groups who inhabit the middle hill regions of Nepal.

### Theoretical Perspectives

This study covers only certain aspects of women's status in Baragaon. Women's access to resources and participation in the economy have been emphasized at the expense of ideological aspects of women's status in religion and ritual. Any particular focus, of course, possesses limitations. Nevertheless a concerted attempt was made, in the process of data collection as well as organization and writing, to present a balanced account. Care was taken to

avoid, in particular, three kinds of systematic distortions that often pervade both anthropological description and studies of women's status. These are biases which may impede constructive change by making a society appear more homogeneous, orderly, and resistant to change than it actually is.

One kind of systematic distortion or bias often occurs because anthropologists expect to discover neat sets of principles by which social relations are ordered. They emphasize what is easy to classify and ignore what is not. They confuse ideal with real behavior and often fail to provide statistics to show how often the various phenomena they describe actually occur. Tilly makes this observation in a review of several books pertaining to the social sciences and the study of women. "In order to test the strength and ascertain the meaning of cultural prescriptions, we have to understand the incidence of anomalous situations and the realities contained within them" (1978:172).

The other two forms of systematic bias that I will describe here have been discussed at some length by Rogers (1978), in an excellent article called "Women's Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory". As Rogers explains, one form of bias which has pervaded anthropology until recently results from the fact that women were generally not viewed, in their own right, as appropriate objects for study. They were ignored by male and female researchers alike because they seemed inarticulate or peripheral in respect to the activities and institutions that social scientists studied.

Some writers on women's status continue to focus on male-dominated spheres. They emphasize the importance of formalized authority and power, participation in the public domain, and overt control over productive resources and over what is produced. Having implicitly (or even explicitly) defined male-dominated spheres of activity as primary, a few writers have proposed that male dominance is a universal phenomenon. Others have rejected this emphasis. They maintain that in traditional societies the domestic sphere tends to be more important than the public sphere. It is the androcentric bias implicit in social scientists' own thinking, these writers argue, that leads to devaluation of the domestic sphere in ethnographic description as well as theoretical analysis. (See Rogers 1978:146-53 for a more detailed discussion.)

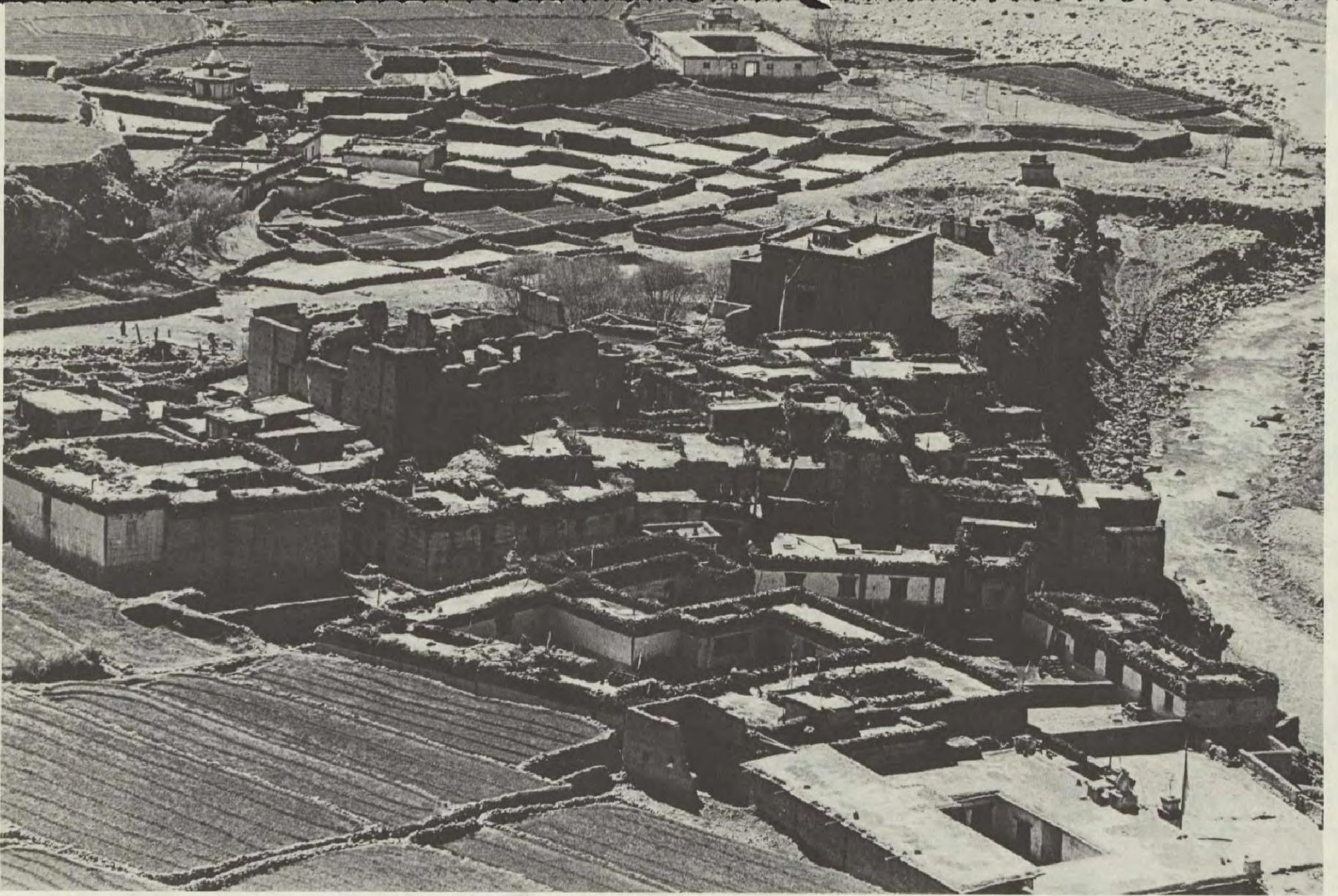
Devaluation of the domestic sphere is not confined to social science. It also appears in economic analyses and becomes reflected in national statistics. The value of goods that are made for home consumption rather than for exchange is generally not included in Gross National Product (GNP) calculations. This is one reason that women's contribution to the economy is often grossly underestimated. In the 1961 and 1971 Nepalese censuses, many women who engage in some agricultural activities, in addition to kitchen gardening, food processing, weaving and animal tending are classified as "economically inactive", since their work takes place in or near the home and what they produce is consumed in the home and not sold on the market. (See Acharya 1979:37-50).

A third kind of systematic distortion can arise when non-formal power, women's non-formalized roles and channels of information and influence within the private domain, their perceptions, means of self-expression and so on, are over-emphasized. Basic structural facts concerning property inheritance, women's political participation, and their legal status vis-a-vis their husbands and other relatives appear unimportant. As Rogers explains:

"The major problem with much of this work is the distortion resulting from overemphasis on women. Because this problem is defined, for the most part, as one of understanding the relationship between male and female roles (particularly in terms of power distribution), one would expect more balanced information on both sex groups. It might, of course, be argued that it is information on women that is missing from the ethnographic record: we already have information on men, so it is appropriate to emphasize information on women. Exclusive focus on female forms of power, however, may give the impression that women are relatively more powerful than they are: it is possible to overstate the case. Particularly if one is arguing that a complementary or dialectical relationship exists between the two sex groups, overemphasis on one or the other makes it impossible to adequately understand the relationship between the two." (153)

With the above considerations in mind, an attempt was made in the present study to describe relationships between males' and females' positions in Baragaonle society, rather

than "women's status" per se, and also to look beneath formal rules and norms at actual behavior, using descriptive statistics when possible. It was a central concern to examine Baragaonle women's perceived options; to discover in which aspects of life women make deliberate decisions and in what contexts they feel that they have no choice, and how this varies with economic and social status.



Kagbeni village.



Four Baragaonle girls.

## CHAPTER I

### THE CYCLE OF SUBSISTENCE

The six villages of Muktinath Valley are famous. Their land is abundant. The people know lots of songs. But try as they might, they just can't get good crops. Even the water is no help. The only way they manage to survive is by eating radishes and weeds. The dried radishes get washed away, carried downstream. The dry weeds blow away in the wind. In all of the six villages there isn't a single reason for staying nor a single thing worth seeing. If the people there are well off in any way it is only because they have Muktinath (the sacred springs and temples). They only keep from starving by eating bitter buckwheat.

This is a rough translation of a song sung by teenage girls from Kagbeni about the six higher-altitude villages located in the Muktinath Valley. Some of the girls have friends or relatives in Muktinath who call them to help out at harvest time. They sometimes go, but they claim they find it difficult to stay because the food is so bad; the buckwheat is bitter and the barley beer inferior, despite its being brewed from the sacred waters of Muktinath. What a place! The people work hard but it's hopeless. It rains so much at harvest time that they can barely manage to dry the grain and straw. Fields are ploughed in the pouring rain. The winters are long and cold and the agricultural season is short.

The people of Muktinath admit that they envy the Kagbeni people for their superior fields. No one prefers bitter buckwheat to sweet. But Kagbeni too has its disadvantages, and the girls of Muktinath have plenty of fuel for snappy rejoinders to the Kagbeni girls' songs. They joke and compose songs of their own about the murky black water that the people of Kagbeni are forced to drink, and they compare it with the clear sacred stream from which they draw their own water. They laugh as they describe the merciless wind that envelops Kagbeni in clouds of dust.

Sentimental attachments and local rivalries aside, both Muktinath and Kagbeni are difficult places to live in. Watercourses become blocked and fields have to be

abandoned. Houses, fields and trails slide away into the riverbed. A number of my informants have lost valuable fields and houses, and according to local legends, there were times when whole villages had to be abandoned due to earthquakes and landslides. The outlines of abandoned fields and the extensive ruins, some half buried and others clinging inaccessibly to the sides of cliffs, attest to the truth of the legends.

Despite Muktinath's harvest-time rains, which cause landslides and make crop drying such a time-consuming chore, extensive irrigation canals are necessary to provide sufficient water at the appropriate time. Each household is obliged to contribute several days of unpaid labor each year for the construction and upkeep of the commonly used canals. In several of the lower six villages (Kagbeni Panchayat) fields are frequently left uncultivated due to the shortage of irrigation water, and the drinking water in several villages, including Kagbeni village, is dark and contaminated with the runoff from the fields and villages upstream.

### Seasonal Migration

Residents of all twelve villages complain that no matter how hard they work, the barley, wheat and buckwheat that they grow is never sufficient to feed their families. Most families import rice, lentils, and other foods or buy imported rice of sub-standard quality in Jomsom, the district capital, at double what it costs in the lowlands. During the winter of 1976-7, 28 percent of the population of Baragaon migrated south, and 32 percent migrated south during the winter of 1977-8. A few of the migrants travel by plane, but most make the five to seven day trek from Baragaon to Pokhara on foot. People of all ages migrate, but it is the young adults, who have the physical stamina not only to withstand but also to enjoy life on the trail, and who are best able to navigate profitably outside the local region, who comprise the majority of the migrant population. While 47 percent of all men and 28 percent of all women migrated during either 1976-7 or 1977-8 or both years, 73 percent of the men and 35 percent of the women aged 20 to 44 years migrated one or both years.

In some contexts the household rather than the individual person is a more appropriate focus for describing migration, since decisions as to who will migrate, how much capital each person will take along, how much money will be borrowed or lent and what will be imported from the south, are often made jointly by

household members.\* 61 percent of all households sent at least one migrant south in both 1976-7 and 1977-8, and 77 percent sent at least one migrant one of the two years or both. Married women normally do not migrate unless their husbands do, although even when the husband and the wife both migrate, they are likely to live separately for most of the winter. In the typical nuclear household the husband migrates and the wife either remains in the village with the children, or settles with the children in Pokhara for the winter. Teenage children, especially sons, often accompany their fathers in order to help out and gain experience. A young mother who lives in an extended family household may migrate without her children, or she may take a nursing infant along with her and leave the rest of the children home. Even when the children are left behind, the husband and the wife are more apt to migrate separately than together.

Migration takes place mainly during the long winter months, from October to March. The wealthier, worldlier, younger and more modern crowd, bound for sweater and ready-made clothes dealing in India, leaves first. Each year the number of intrepid and capable young women among them increases, but on the whole the Indian contingent is dominated by males. Those who migrate to India travel by rail to the sweater factories in Uttar Pradesh, or to major cities such as Calcutta, where they buy used clothing. From there, many go to Assam, where they rent a tiny shopfront or spread out their wares on the ground

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\*This does not mean that every household member has an equal say. In general it is the male household head who tends to have the most input, or perhaps the final say, in decisions which entail major dispersions of household resources, although this pattern varies from household to household. But no matter who makes these decisions, and no matter how many months are spent with family members living separately, the basic decisions are still made in reference to the household as a unit, and the household is still thought of as an economic corporation. When the individuals return home, their money and their purchases (aside from a certain amount of personal clothing and jewelry) are supposed to be put back into the family pot.

in a main bazaar. The small groups based on trading partnerships merge informally to form larger groups, which live and travel together, moving on every couple of weeks to a new town.

A few weeks after the departure of the India-bound migrants, when the buckwheat has been harvested, small groups leave for Pokhara and various villages along the trail between Pokhara and Baragaon. Some of the male migrants conduct mule or donkey caravans. In a single season they make as many as ten trips back and forth between Pokhara and Jomsom or Baragaon, where the foodstuffs and other goods are delivered to shops for local, government, army or tourist consumption. The petty traders who ply the hill areas near Pokhara also trek from village to village, carrying their wares on their backs. This type of trade is popular among religious specialists, who are often too poor to engage in large scale trading, and whose exotic appearance and knowledge of herbal medicines and charms gives them something to sell which requires little or no capital investment.

Whereas male migrants tend to keep moving, female migrants, with some exceptions, live relatively settled lives once they have reached their destinations. They set up housekeeping in Pokhara, in rented rooms, or build makeshift shacks at caravan stops along the trail. They brew beer and distil liquor, usually from rice or millet, and purchase raw wool to process and sell, or they card and spin wool for wages. Most of the yarn is sold to Tibetan carpet factories.

A successful trader, with luck and adequate capital, can make enough profit during four months in India to buy good quality clothing, manufactured consumer items (wristwatches, transistor radios, thermos jugs) or perhaps gold ornaments, as well as the foodstuffs that his or her family will need during the coming year. Individuals who are less clever and/or lacking in capital and unable to secure loans may make negligible profits, but by migrating south they manage to feed themselves and take the burden off the family grain store for a few months.

### The Seasonal Cycle in the Villages

The people who remain in the villages during the winter lead relatively slow-paced lives, carding and spinning wool, weaving, and doing other small tasks that

are not related to the seasons and are therefore done whenever there is nothing else that needs doing. Small informal neighborhood groups, composed mainly of middle aged and old women, gather in sheltered, sunny places to pick nits and gossip. They move en masse to a new spot as the shadows overtake them, dragging blankets, spindles, brushes, baskets of raw wool, strings of prayer beads, and various infants that they are tending.

In the chill of the late afternoons and evenings and the early mornings, cooking fires are kept going longer than they need be for cooking, despite the scarcity of fuel. Informal visiting is much more common in winter than in summer. A neighbor or passer-by, seeing the smoke of a fire, will find some pretext for calling out or approaching an open door, in order to be invited in to get warm by the fire and perhaps drink a cup or two of the ubiquitous salted butter-tea. Brushwood and dzoba dung are used as fuel and even these are precious because of the time it takes to gather them from the mountainsides. Hearths are shifted from semi-outdoor spaces to small windowless rooms where the dense, caustic smoke blackens faces and causes eye and respiratory ailments.

Even though most of the fields in Baragaon can produce two crops per year, most agricultural work takes place during the summer, leaving the winter slack season for migratory trade and other activities. The people of the twelve villages complain of a shortage of agricultural labor, but this perceived shortage is not a result of seasonal migration; it is felt almost exclusively during the barley harvest, a time when practically every temporary migrant has returned home. In Kagbeni and the other lower-altitude villages the barley is planted in early October\*, just after the buckwheat harvest, but in most of the villages near Muktinath, it is planted in mid-January or February when the coldest part of the winter is over and the days have begun to get longer. Some of the migrants staying in or around Pokhara return to Baragaon for the late winter ploughing and planting. Households whose migrants have gone to India

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\*This varies. The decisions about when to plant are based on astrologers' prognostications and past years' experience. One informant told me that in his village barley planting used to be done earlier, but that one unusually severe winter the seed was ruined, so planting time was postponed in the years that followed.

make do with what labor they have and some use hired or borrowed labor.

Most of the migrants return from India to Pokhara or Kathmandu during the months of February and March. They gather in the migrant women's taverns and inns and spend days or even weeks over cups of beer and liquor, boasting, comparing profits and new acquisitions, describing their adventures and encounters with robbers on trains, gullible customers, dog and cat-eating natives, high-handed officials, astoundingly high or low prices, lucrative deals, skyscrapers with elevators, and so on. Loans are paid back and profits divided among trading partners. Husbands and wives are reunited; they pool their profits or display them, and then discuss what will need to be bought to take back to the village.

A substantial part of the wife's earnings has probably already been spent on her own and her children's winter living expenses. What remains will be spent on clothing for herself and her children, and a few items for the household; sugar, tea, chillis, spices, etc. The husband buys his own clothing and perhaps a wristwatch or a gold ring for himself, or his wife, as well as rice, lentils and oil. A young woman who is unmarried may turn her profits over to her parents if she is a "good" daughter and if they need the cash for subsistence. If the family's income is adequate she is more apt to spend some of it on herself, to buy a few gifts for the family, and to keep the rest for continuing entrepreneurial activities. Some of what is bought is sent back to Baragaon by mule train and some is carried on the owners' backs. Husbands and wives fly to Jomsom or trek back together, or in the company of friends, relatives or trading partners.

Even though the fields are still brown, or at most, dotted with green shoots, and there is no agricultural work to be done, there is a virtual flurry of activity in the villages that coincides with the gradual return of the traders. The jangling of the mule caravans' bells is heard daily. Litters of goat kids and other baby animals scamper along the paths and courtyards. Winter clothes and their owners are festooned on rocks to dry after an annual post-winter wash. New houses are built and stone walls, field barriers and water canals are repaired. The town crier roams the paths frequently, announcing that there will be a mandatory labor contribution from each household for one or

another communal project: constructing or repairing a bridge, a path or a water canal, building a school or a Panchayat (local government) meeting house. Expeditions are made to the forest to replenish dwindling wood piles. The women roast grain for snacks and grind it into flour in the water-driven mills. They brew beer and distil liquor to serve to the returning migrants. During March and early April men and women alike turn their efforts to wool processing, dyeing and weaving. Blankets and mufflers, as well as fossils from the riverbed are sold to Hindu pilgrims, who appear suddenly by the hundreds to bathe in the icy waters at Kagbeni and Muktinath in celebration of Ram Navami. Scantily clothed, they make ideal customers for woolen goods and high-priced bundles of firewood.

The migrants return to the villages and are welcomed with round after round of drinks. Locally-made loans are repaid and the newly imported goods are displayed, delivered, sold, given as gifts, and stashed away. This is a popular time of year for old age celebrations, weddings, and other family rituals, since it is a post-migration but pre-agricultural season. The individuals who travel with the mule and donkey caravans are the last to return for the summer. They make periodic appearances in Baragaon throughout the winter, stay a few days, and then set out again for the south. This continues until the animals are too emaciated or lame to walk, or until the first rains of the monsoon make travel difficult.

The barley fields, planted at various times during the winter, are irrigated every two or three weeks, beginning in late April or early March, until approximately the third week in June, when the harvest begins. The various tasks connected with irrigation can be performed by men or women or both, depending on availability of personnel. A man and a woman will often work together. In this case it is usually the man who lets the water into the field from the main canal, using a hoe or spade. Most of his time is spent standing and waiting with the spade in his hand. The woman scrambles around the field on her hands and knees, guiding the water's course by modifying the shape of the furrows with her hands.

After the first irrigation the fields are weeded constantly. Weeding is done to some extent by people of all ages and both sexes, but mainly by women and teenage girls, who go out singly, in pairs, and sometimes in larger groups.

A medium-sized household with average land holdings might send one to three females per day for weeding. They go out for an hour or two at a time, usually in the morning or the late afternoon, and return with a large basket or blanket-wrapped load of weeds, to be used as fodder for the family's cows or dzoba. Weeding and fodder collection is also done by young girls, but in a less concerted fashion. A girl nine or twelve years old might go out with a girl-friend or two, and perhaps a few baby goats or a calf to tend, to a distant field where she and her friends play, pull a few weeds, forage for edible green plants, and braid flowers and young barley stalks into chains. Nursing infants are often tied to their mothers' backs or left to sleep, play or scream on a blanket at the edge of the field that the mother is weeding. In nuclear families the husband often stays home to watch young children and prepare food while his wife goes out for weeding. If the fields are some distance from the house, the husband may carry a picnic lunch to the fields for his wife. In an extended family it is more apt to be the mother-in-law who prepares the meals and carries lunch or snacks to the fields.

In higher altitude villages, double cropping is made possible by alternating naked barley (Nep. uwa, B. ne) with fast-growing bitter buckwheat (drop). Wheat (tro) and sweet buckwheat (Nep. phaphar, B. gyabre) require more growing time. Some households set aside a few fields for a single crop of wheat, which is sown at the time the barley is sown and harvested in mid-July or early August. Sweet buckwheat is sown in late June and harvested with the bitter buckwheat. During the last couple of weeks before the barley harvest begins, the women roast grain for snacks and grind it into flour. They brew beer in great quantities in order to feed the family and the hired and borrowed laborers during the barley harvest. The harvest begins in middle to late June in Kagbeni and the other lower altitude villages, and in early to middle July in the villages of the Muktinath Valley, depending upon the weather, astrologers' advice, and the location and orientation of the fields.

The length of time a household will require to harvest its fields depends upon a number of factors: the amount of land planted, the size of the parcels and their distance from the house, the number of able-bodied workers in the household, and the household's success in recruiting laborers on a paid or a labor exchange basis. A few dozen wage laborers come from Mustang at this time. A household

that owns an average or above average amount of land might spend five to seven days cutting the crop and transporting it to the threshing ground, and fifteen to twenty days threshing, drying, winnowing, bagging, bundling and storing the grain, straw and chaff. Virtually everyone, including old people and small children, work from dawn until after dusk at harvest time, and most operations are performed by both sexes, although not always equally.

Cutting the crop with sickles, bundling, and carrying are done by everyone who is physically fit, regardless of sex. The mistress of the house will usually stay home for part of the day to prepare food for the workers. In an extended family household it is usually the senior woman who cooks, as long as she is still able, but this varies. If there is a younger woman (daughter or daughter-in-law) in a late stage of pregnancy, the cooking and serving will probably be done by her, since cooking is lighter work than harvesting. The evening meal and morning tea are served in the house. Lunch, beer and snacks are usually carried out to the fields.

After the barley is carried to the threshing ground, the heads of the plants are separated from the stalks by pulling the stalks through a large upright metal fork mounted on a wooden stand. Men do more of the separating than women do. Threshing is done equally by both sexes and by children as well, with wooden sticks with a rotating paddle attached to the end. Women do most of the winnowing, using straw trays. The winnowed grain is spread out to dry on wool mats and blankets, and watched over by elderly people to prevent birds, cows, and other animals from eating it. The chaff and straw are kept for animal feed. Men and women work together at bagging the grain and carrying it to the house. Everyone, including children and old people, helps bundle the straw after it has dried. Infants are tended by the elderly, or strapped on to older children's backs. Children try their hand at practically every harvest operation.

Despite the long hours of back-breaking work, the barley harvest is a time of gaiety, high spirits, and gossiping, joking and singing. Those who employ wage laborers normally work side by side with them. There are a few families in which the male household head and the house mistress spend their time directing the workers and

preparing food and drink for them, but the children of these older couples usually work along with the paid laborers. The joking continues throughout the evening meal, during which the laborers sit side by side with the employer family members. The food that the laborers eat is generally equal in quality, including meat, cheese or buttermilk at least once a day, and more in quantity than what the employers eat. Any stinginess on the part of an employer may result in a labor shortage the following season. The young people of Mustang, male and female alike, are said to be the strongest and hardest working, the biggest eaters, the bawdiest in their joking and carrying on, and the most ready to liven up the atmosphere with their songs and dances. They are in great demand at harvest time.

A household of average or above average means might employ the equivalent of forty to sixty person-days per year in wage labor. It is more often women than men who take charge of labor recruitment (see Table 1.1), and it is more often women than men who are recruited. The thirty-one land-owning households in a thirty-five household sample used a total of 753 man-days and 1007 woman-days hired labor in a year, averaging 24 man-days and 32 woman-days per household. I would guess that at least half of all the wage labor is done by Baragaonle and nearly half by migrants from Mustang, Charkabhot, and the two panchayats just north of Baragaon: Chuksang and Charang.

Wealthier families tend to employ laborers rather than participate in labor exchanges (lakchap), but many households have a suitable able-bodied worker who can fulfill the reciprocal labor obligations. In 1978 the prevailing wage for agricultural and most other non-specialized labor was 8 rupees (\$.67) per day, or the equivalent in grain, plus food and beer worth about 20 to 25 rupees (about \$2.00). I have never heard paid laborers complain about the food and drink. But I have heard them complain that 8 rupees per day is barely enough to compensate for the wear and tear on a laborer's clothing, which degenerates with astounding speed, especially when it is made from synthetic fabrics rather than hand-woven wool. Men, women and youths are paid at the same rate, except that (so it is said) larger individuals who do more work also eat more.

TABLE 1.1

RECRUITMENT OF LABOR AND PARTICIPATION IN LABOR EXCHANGES :  
SEXUAL DISTRIBUTION OF TASKS WITHIN 31 LAND-OWNING HOUSEHOLDS

Question	Mainly Males	Mainly Females	Both Equally	Neither
Who recruits hired laborers ?	11	16	1	3
Who organizes labor exchanges ?	1	19	1	10
Who works in labor exchange groups ?	6	10	5	10

In all thirty-one land-owning households in our sample, the household members themselves worked in the fields, and twenty-eight out of thirty-one used hired labor as well. Twenty-one of the households participated in labor exchanges (see Table 1.2). Normally the labor exchanges (lakchap) are not kin-based. Kin are expected to help one another upon request, and although reciprocity is expected among kin it should not be overtly negotiated.

Labor exchanges are usually organized by women, and the members of the lakchap groups are most frequently, but not always, females (see Table 1.1). Neither the work groups nor the exchange networks are fixed. To assemble a lakchap group the mistress of a household sends a messenger to "call" particular individuals, often her teenage daughter's friends, for the following day's weeding, fertilizing, or harvesting. Teenage girls and young women are often exchanged because they are considered the most

TABLE 1.2

## AGRICULTURAL LABOR USE

Source of Labor	Number of Households
Household labor only	2
Household labor and hired labor	8
Household labor and labor exchange	1
Household labor, labor exchange and hired labor	20
Total	31

able and because their work is likely to be equivalent. A group of girl-friends may work together for several days in a row, weeding each of their families' fields in turn. The fields' owners must supply meals, beer and snacks for the lakchap team. A girl's mother and younger siblings, for example, will visit the fields several times during a day to serve beer, butter-tea and roasted barley. Enlivened by the beer, the fresh air and the company of friends, the girls become more and more exuberant as the work progresses. They sing and compose new songs, and giggle at passers-by, provoking lengthy exchanges of banter and flirtation that travel surprising distances across the fields, to the amusement of many.

As soon as the harvest is finished, and in some cases before, each field is ploughed and the buckwheat is sown. The iron-tipped wooden plough is pulled by a pair of yak-cattle crossbreeds (dzoba, male; dzomo, female) and guided from behind by a man, never a woman, who whistles and sings the directions to the animals. Despite the sweet hypnotic tunes, the dzoba are often seen galloping wildly across the fields, heads tossing and eyes rolling in defiance. A

woman or a couple of children may scamper along after the plough, collecting weeds and small stones that have been turned up. After the field has been ploughed, the clods are broken up with a flat wooden harrow. The ploughman stands on the harrow as he drives the dzoba around the field. It is often, but not always, a woman who walks along behind the harrow, broadcasting the seed. To bury the seed the ploughmen and the dzoba make one more round of the field with the plough.

After the harvest the work-pace slows somewhat. Hay is cut from the borders of the fields with sickles--by both sexes, but predominantly by women--and carried up to the rooftops to dry in the sun. House building and wood-gathering resume. Women dye wool and weave. They roast grain in huge iron skillets to grind into tsampa (parched barley flour). They grind barley, buckwheat and wheat into flour in water-driven mills, and churn butter and make dry cheese from the buttermilk. Some of the men go on short trading trips to nearby areas (Mustang, Manang, Tsharkabhot, Thak Khola). They deal mainly in animals (yaks, goats, horses), animal products (wool, butter, cheese), potatoes and grain. The trade follows a few general patterns; e.g., animal and animal products are bought or brought from where there is more pastureland and sold in Baragaon. But there is also a good deal of variation in the details of what is traded and where the buying and the selling take place. Supply and demand play a major role, and people who own transport animals have an advantage over those who do not.

Most households' beer supply is likely to be exhausted by the time the harvest is over. Huge amounts of beer and distilled liquor will be consumed during the summer festival (yartung) which takes place at Muktinath two or three weeks after the completion of the harvest (four or five weeks after Kagbeni's harvest). During these few weeks a large proportion of the women's time is spent in beer and liquor production.

Just before the festival begins, a few animals are butchered and many of the young women go to Muktinath in order to stake out patches of ground where they will set up their tents. Some go singly, others form partnerships with a sister, a cousin, or a friend or two. Simple canvas tents are erected; the inside of each tent is lined with carpets or mats for sitting and sleeping and a few wooden crates for tables and storage shelves. A mud

hearth or firepit is constructed, usually just outside the door of the tent, and a drainage ditch is dug around the periphery. (It rains almost every day during this season.) There is a brief scramble to borrow the mantle lamps that a few households own, and various other items, such as large plastic tubs, water jugs and thermos bottles. The women send out younger brothers and other village youths to scour the twelve villages for eggs. They make dozens of trips back and forth between tent and village, carrying these things plus firewood, meat, butter, flours, herbs and spices, oil, cooking utensils, bottles and jugs of distilled liquor, fermenting grain and beer-making equipment. They will camp at Muktinath for several days and nights, selling barley beer, liquor, steamed meat-filled dumplings and other foods to the hundreds of merry-makers from Baragaon and nearby areas.

Every day or two, for about a week, there is a procession of people from one or more of the twelve villages. Many of the men and a few of the women arrive on horseback and others come on foot, colorfully adorned and singing, carrying food and drink, and oil to burn in offering to the gods. They parade around the springs and temple complex, stopping to pay homage at each sacred spot. Then they congregate on the hillside below, in small groups, for picnics, horseracing, dancing and singing. The young men are decked out in gaudy-colored clothing, hats with feathers, ribbons and flowers, sunglasses and the like. They flirt with the teenage girls and young women (also splendidly attired), trying to outdo one another in various ways. They show off their horses and their riding skills. They boast and joke and buy round after round of drinks, tipping lavishly and conspicuously. The proprietresses of the tents, along with their various sisters, helpers and companions, act as catalysts for the men's potlatching. They flirt, tease and laugh, and hover over the beer glasses, flask in hand, ready accomplices in the men's game of forcing drinks and food on one another. With the right combination of shrewdness and charm a woman can earn a few hundred rupees profit in a few days. Some of the women do their own potlatching, but on a lesser scale, forcing free drinks on customers and treating their female friends.

After the villagers return from Muktinath there is another several days of feasting in the villages. The buckwheat fields are weeded and irrigated. Then village meetings are held, taxes collected, and various other

communal matters decided. A little money is borrowed and lent locally, and the India-bound migrants begin to trickle out of the villages, auspicious white scarves draped around their necks.

This is another good time of year for holding wedding and other celebrations, since there is not much agricultural work to be done. The buckwheat fields are weeded and irrigated two or three times, and then harvested in early October. Then potatoes, and finally turnips are harvested. Horses, cows, and other animals are let loose in the fields to eat the stubble after the grain and most of the straw has been removed. The manure they leave behind will be used as fertilizer.

In October or early November, the composting manure is dug out of the barns with shovels and rakes by women, teenage girls, and occasionally men, and dumped in huge heaps in the courtyards and paths. The compost includes a little straw and ash and sometimes clay, dry evergreen needles and rotting leaves from the forest, as well as various kinds of animal and human manure. The amount of manure depends in part on the number and variety of animals that the household owns, and also on the industriousness of the household's women. Many women go out every morning and evening to sweep goat dung from the paths after the goats are taken out to graze on the hillsides, or brought back to spend the night in barns or pens. A person can claim the dung that falls on the path in front of her (or his) own house, regardless of whose goats can be gathered by anyone. Women or children who are not too busy, or too lazy dash out of their houses when they hear the sound of caravan bells to gather up the dung in the animals' wake. The fertilizer is carried to the fields in wool bags and baskets, on animals', women's and a few men's backs. A field is ploughed once and then the fertilizer is dumped in small piles spaced throughout the field and spread with rakes.

Some time after the fields have been fertilized, often in November, the irrigation canals and the rock and bramble barriers which surround the fields are repaired. Barriers made of thorny bushes which have grown too high are burned. Around the last week in November the fields in Kagbeni and the other lower-altitude villages are irrigated, and a few days later, in early December, the barley is sown. In the higher-altitude villages, as explained earlier, the date of the barley planting varies.

Most of the year's butchering is done in October and November, since the animals are fattest after a summer's grazing. Households that can afford it buy a half or a quarter share of a yak. The meat is hung on rafters above the fireplace or in a small separate drying room on the roof. Small hard chunks of meat are cooked and eaten as much as eight months later.

During this time, and on into December, until the mountainsides get covered with heavy snow and ice, informally-organized groups set out from the villages daily to gather wood. The groups consist of one or two people from each of several households. When the destination is a distant forest with heavy timber that requires chopping with axes, and particularly if the party plans to spend a night in the forest, it is usually males who go. They wake up before dawn and gulp down several cups of butter tea; then they meet and set out, each carrying a blanket, a flask of beer, and three large pieces of wheat or buck-wheat bread and perhaps some roasted grain or tsampa flour. In some cases this food will have to last them 36 hours. Some groups take along dzoba, mules, donkeys or horses to carry home the wood. Others send a person or two back on the second day to fetch the animals, and those who own no animals and cannot borrow any carry their wood on their backs. The same group may go out three days in a row, then rest for a day, then go out for three days, and so on. Women go out separately to collect brushwood and tumbleweed from the hillsides. They heap it into baskets or tie it up into blankets, creating enormous bundles which they carry on their backs, using a leather strap to shift the weight to their foreheads.

#### Division of Labor: Specialization and Concepts of "Appropriate" Work

In every society certain kinds of work become associated with certain social statuses, but the degree to which work is status-typed, the particular kinds of work that are status-typed, and the specific valuations placed on various kinds of work (e.g., whether artisans' work carries more or less prestige than agriculture) can vary tremendously. Sex-typing is one form of status-typing. In Baragaonle society there is some sex-typing of work; there is some avoidance of manual labor by wealthier people, and there are a few tasks that religious specialists

are not allowed to do, but in general there is a great deal of flexibility as to who does what work.

There are a few non-Baragaonle low caste blacksmith and tailor families who have immigrated to Baragaon, probably from the middle hills of Nepal. These families maintain their separate caste identities and occupations, establishing jajman-like\* arrangements with a particular village or a group of households. There are also a few landless nomads from the Tibetan border region, some single and others with families, who work as animal herders on a year to year contractual basis. In addition, there are native Baragaonle tailors, wool boot-makers, tanners and carpenters, who work on a freelance basis. Some of their work is done in their own homes, but more often they are invited to live in the employer's house for a few days or, in some cases, weeks. Under this arrangement the food and drink that they consume constitutes a substantial part of their wage, as it does for agricultural laborers.

Occupational specialists are usually paid a few rupees more per day than agricultural laborers, depending on the current demand and the individual's skill. Sometimes the rate is negotiated explicitly, in advance, but more often the employer simply pays what he (or she) thinks is appropriate, realizing that an underpaid specialist may refuse to come the next time he is called. Occupational specialists are usually male. Although the skills are often passed from father to son, so far no indigenous occupational castes have emerged.

As for sex-typing of work, there are essentially two tasks (aside from certain ritual activities) that women are forbidden by custom to perform: ploughing and slaughtering of animals. These two tasks are proscribed for religious specialists as well. There are several other tasks that are occasionally done by women but are normally considered men's work: chopping wood in the forest, collecting pine needles and dead leaves from the forest to make compost, laying mudblocks and stones in walls, constructing walls by pounding earth inside a form with a wooden tool, and in general, any work that involves tying a load on to an

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\*Jajman is an institutionalized relationship commonly found in caste societies, whereby services are rendered in exchange for goods on a customary, contractual basis.

animal's back and walking with the animal. Finally, most political roles, both traditional ones and those within the Panchayat system, are filled by men.

Weaving is considered women's work, although it is not actually prohibited for men, and men occasionally assist in the yarn production and dyeing. There are a number of other tasks that are done mainly by women but occasionally by men: weeding the fields and collecting fodder, collecting brush-wood, collecting manure for fuel and fertilizer, seed selection, winnowing, grinding flour in water-driven mills, milking, churning butter and tea, fetching water, dyeing wool, cleaning pots and dishes, sweeping, washing and oiling infants, manufacturing beer and liquor, and most other cooking and food processing activities. In general women do more of the work that entails carrying a load on one's back, while men, as noted above, use animals to carry their loads. Poorer men do more carrying, however, than wealthier men. Women are generally considered more skilled than men at the tasks described above. In weeding, for example, they are patient and discerning enough to identify a certain weed that appears almost identical to the young barley plants. Men often fill in at one or another of these tasks when women are busy at something else, but they are tasks preferably done by women.

Since Baragaonle households tend to be small, and since household composition fluctuates considerably due to seasonal migration, a rigid sex-typing of tasks would be impractical. Work is often organized on an ad hoc basis. There are few ideological constraints governing who does what, even though there are definite patterns and preferences associated with sex and with socio-economic status as well. Time allocation data is presented in Tables 1.3 and 1.4.

TABLE 1.3  
ACTIVITY PATTERNS BY AGE AND SEX

Ages		Mean Per Capita Hours Spent in Various Activities					
		Productive Work	Domestic Work	Total Work Burden	Education	Social, Leisure etc.	Total
5-9	Males	.51	.18	.69	3.77	9.54	14
	Females	.53	.31	.84	3.18	9.98	14
10-14	Males	1.72	.41	2.13	4.16	7.71	14
	Females	1.70	2.28	3.99	3.49	6.51	14
15 & Above	Males	5.99	0.81	6.80	-	7.20	14
	Females	4.74	4.04	8.78	-	5.22	14

TABLE 1.4

TIME USE PATTERN OF IN-VILLAGE ACTIVITIES BY SEX FOR  
POPULATION OVER 15 YEARS

(In number of hours per day)

Activity		Sex		
		Male	Female	
W O R K E	P R O D U C T I V E	Animal Husbandry	0.61	0.36
		Agriculture	1.71	1.25
		Fuel Collection	0.59	0.07
		Hunting and Gathering	0.03	0.01
		Manufacturing	0.47	0.80
		Food Processing	0.17	0.74
		Outside Income Earning Activity (In-Village)	1.68	1.23
		Construction	0.73	0.30
	1.	Sub-Total for Productive Activities	5.99	4.74
B U R D E N	D O M E S T I C	Cooking/Serving	0.31	2.17
		Cleaning Dishes/Pots	0.05	0.42
		Cleaning House/Mud Plastering	0.03	0.25
		Laundry	0.02	0.13
		Fetching Water	0.06	0.26
		Shopping	0.06	0.06
		Other Domestic Activity	0.13	0.19
		Child Care and Rearing	0.15	0.56
	2.	Sub-Total for Domestic Activities	0.81	4.04
	I.	Work Burden (1 + 2)	6.80	8.78
	II.	Social/Maintenance/Leisure	7.20	5.22
	III.	Total for In-Village Activities (I + II)	14.00	14.00



A senior woman of the house roasts barley to be carried to the fields as a snack for family and hired laborers.



Weeding barley.



Harvesting barley. A photograph of Her Majesty Queen Aishwarya is worn alongside a photograph of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



Collecting stray heads of barley after the harvest. The all female group includes wage as well as family laborers.

4



Threshing.



A group of young women en route to the temple complex at Muktinath. They carry tents, fuel and provisions to equip their makeshift tavern-restaurants for the harvest festival.

6



Women celebrating at the harvest festival.



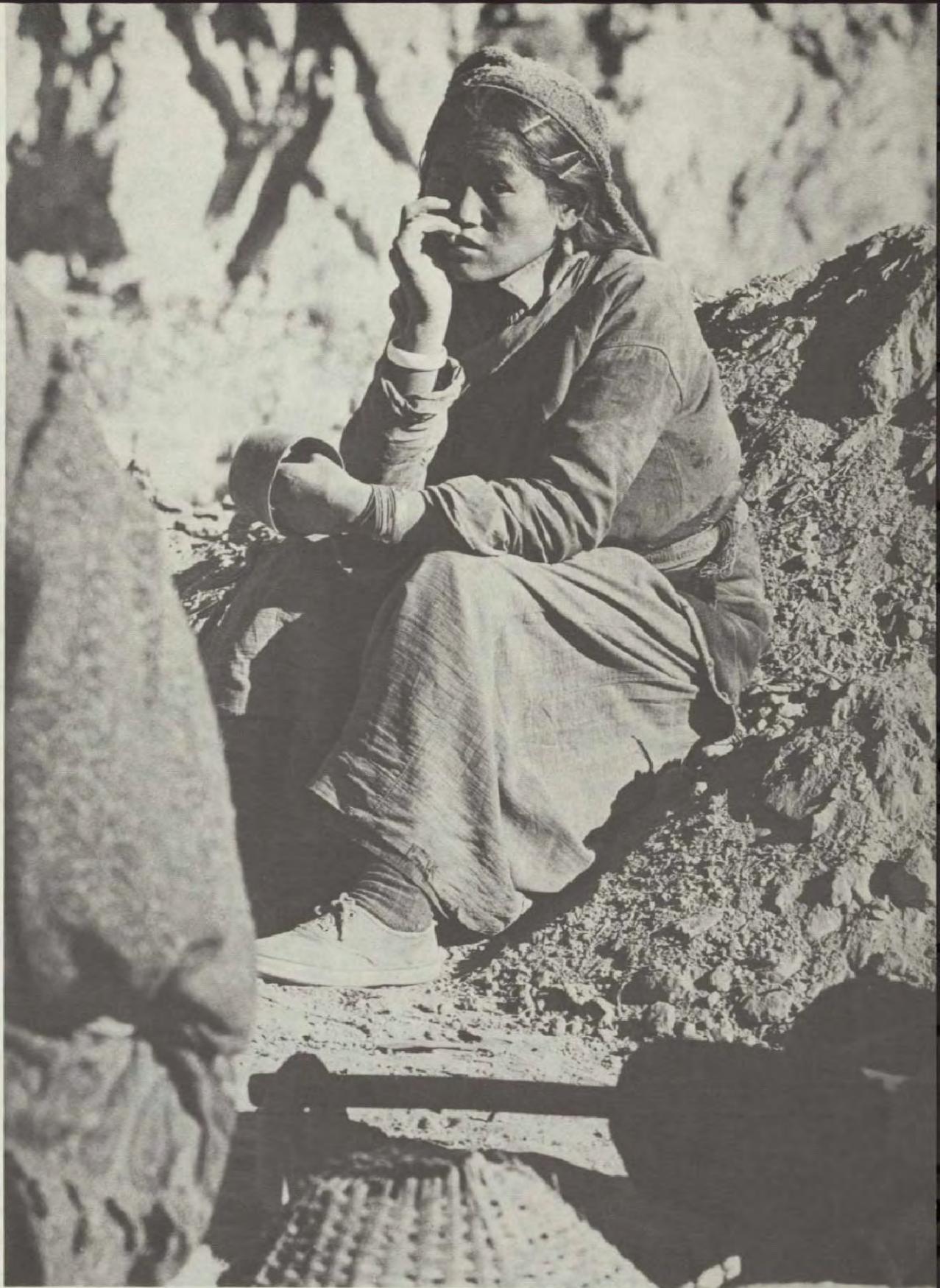
Husband and wife ploughing their family's fields with a pair of dzo. As the husband drives the animals around the field his wife collects the weeds and stones unearthed by the plough.



Late autumn ploughing in Kagbeni.



Loading organic fertilizer on to pack animals.



A young woman stops to rest after hauling baskets of earth for the better part of a day. The villagers were called upon by the government to contribute voluntary labor in order to install waterproof plastic underneath the flat mud roofs of the village schools. The plastic was provided by UNICEF, as part of an HMG Small Area Development Project.



12  
A group of women repairing the retaining wall of a communal water canal. Men and women normally work together on collective projects, but in late autumn, after the India-bound migrants have left the villages, most of the work is done by women.



A small girl stays home from school to care for her baby brothers.



A winter afternoon. Seated in a sunny courtyard, sheltered from the wind, a neighborhood group of women card and spin wool. From time to time they pause for de-lousing.



Weaving woolen cloth for a blanket.



Roasting barley for tsamba flour.

## CHAPTER II

### RESIDENCE AND OWNERSHIP: THE DOMESTIC GROUP

#### RESIDENCE

##### The Composition of Domestic Groups

Traditional-minded Baragaonle advocate economic co-operation and co-residence among brothers and between parents and children. They point out the economic advantages of the corporate family estate: larger parcels of land are more profitably cultivated than small ones; family labor is more efficient and dependable than hired labor or reciprocal exchange labor (Nep. parma, B. lakchap), especially during harvest season, when the demand for laborers exceeds the supply. Economic differentiation is more feasible when there are a number of adults in the household. Agriculture, liquor production and sale, animal husbandry, local animal trading, transport, and migratory trade can be carried out simultaneously by a large corporate household. A single individual or a couple, on the other hand, is limited by the need to concentrate capital resources and personal energy. Many of the younger, modern-thinking Baragaonle would agree that in principle this is all true, but true or not, many have chosen to live separately from their brothers and parents.

Generally speaking, there is nothing particularly "Baragaonle" about the traditional ideal, nor about the modern option described above. The same ideals--solidarity, co-residence, and economic partnership between fathers and sons and among brothers--and the same deviation from the ideals through family division are typical throughout Nepal, among a wide range of castes and ethnic groups. The type of family usually associated with the above ideals is the patrilineal joint family, in which several brothers remain economically corporate and co-reside, each with his own wife (or wives) and children, in a single house or a group of houses.

But in Baragaon there are no joint families. When brothers live corporately, according to the traditional ideal, they take a single wife and produce a single set of children, to whom they are all "father" (awu). This polyandrous family embodies two basic ideas which underlie family and household organization in Baragaon:

1) Brothers (as expressed above) should be residentially and economically corporate.

2) There should be only one female running a household. When there are two or more mistresses there can rarely be peace or efficiency. Tradition also maintains that even after the sons marry, and the family estate is handed from parents to sons, the sons should care for their parents in their own household. But when a mother lives with her married son, the result is two women (mother-in-law and daughter-in-law) vying for control. In this situation conflict often occurs, and when the pitch of the conflict becomes intolerable the household is likely to divide. Inter-generational household division usually amounts to moving the parents out of the big house and into a small converted barn.

The nuclear family is the most common residential unit in Baragaon. In the 35 household sample only five (14 percent) of the households contained more than one married couple (or "triple", in the case of polyandrous unions). None of these five extended family households contained two couples or triples of the same generation. In addition, there were three households which consisted of a married couple (triple) plus a single parent. In other words, less than one fourth (23 percent) of the households contained parents living with their married children.

Only 22 percent of all the (471) households in Baragaon contained three or more generations (two households contained four). 63 percent contained two generations and 16 percent contained only one generation\*. A majority of the one generation households consisted of a single person (44 out of 73). These solitary people were, on the whole, middle aged or elderly. 84 percent (37) were forty years of age or older.

#### Fluctuation and Evolution of Domestic Groups

On paper, and particularly in statistical representations, the Baragaonle household tends to appear as a clearly defined, unchanging entity that lends itself

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\*The 101 percent total is the result of rounding.

easily to categorization. Real households, however, continually change in composition as a result of vital events (births, deaths and marriages) and inter-personal relationships (conflicts leading to household partition, adoptions and other additions of household members). Statistics pertaining to household composition can be useful, as a still photograph can be, for showing what the collectivity of Baragaon's households looks like at a particular point in time, but to understand the social and economic functions of the household and the importance of the domestic unit in women's lives we need to consider the ways in which the Baragaonle household fluctuates and changes.

Births and deaths are of course irreversible in their effects on the structure of the household. Marriage, as well as opened-ended visits from relatives, adoption, and the employment of live-in servants can be temporary or long term. A destitute, perhaps orphaned, distant relative often takes on a role somewhere between servant and adopted family member. The structure of the household fluctuates as a result of partition, separation and divorce, as well as marriage, adoption and other means of residential joining.

In fact, the Baragaonle household is a constantly changing entity. An individualistic, materialistic outlook and a self-assertive style are virtual prerequisites for success in entrepreneurial trade, but they are not traits which contribute to domestic peace or stability. Quarrels erupt frequently in day-to-day family life, and such quarrels often result in the departure of a household member. A flamboyant exit is in many situations the most honorable course of action and the most effective tactic as well.

Suppose, for example, that a series of quarrels breaks out between a woman, Sermo, and her mother-in-law. Sermo complains to her husband, Tashi, but he refuses to become involved, so Sermo packs up and leaves. Tashi and his family are forced, now, to realize that Sermo's complaints were more than just words. Her departure is a visible event, a public statement as well as a private one. If they want her back they will have to send mediators to persuade her, and persuading her will probably entail some sort of concession. If she is stubborn enough and confident that Tashi will go to some lengths to get her back, Sermo may hold out until Tashi

and his family propose household partition (between mother and son). Tashi no doubt realizes that he not only stands to lose Sermo, but that his reputation as a desirable husband is also at stake. He could easily do worse in a second marriage were he to lose Sermo in this way. But if Sermo's own reputation in the community is inferior to Tashi's (say, for example, that he is known as a level-headed, intelligent guy and she is considered lazy, incompetent and/or unreasonable), then Tashi may stand to do better by remarrying. And if Sermo leaves by her own volition, Tashi will not be obliged to contribute to her support. Under those circumstances Sermo might not be called back.

In most domestic disputes the situation is ambiguous. People perceive that there is no single individual who can be blamed and no predictable outcome; that everyone involved has his or her faults and that stubbornness unmitigated by practical considerations is far from the best strategy. Thus wives, sons, sisters and even fathers and mothers pack up their belongings in response to domestic discord and depart from their homes for days, weeks, months and even years. They may be coaxed back only to depart again amid the dark smoke of rekindled antagonism. Some such individuals take refuge with relatives or friends. Others simmer in solitary anger in a converted barn, or find a convenient position as a caretaker for a family that migrates south for the winter. Some migrate south themselves; some go as far as India and return years later sporting gold rings, wristwatches and imported clothing. In this way, intra-familial conflict spins its way outward through time and space, and Baragaonle households expand and contract to accommodate this social process.

The architecture of the villages lends itself readily to the continuous fluctuations in household composition. Houses have attached, semi-detached and detached barns and sheds that are easily converted into human dwellings. Mud walls and separate entrances can be quickly constructed or removed. There are abandoned buildings in various stages of ruin, habitable after a little renovation.

The mobile lifestyle of the Baragaonle, largely a product of seasonal migration and trade, also lends itself to the use of physical distance in working out

intra-familial conflicts. Running away from home is not difficult or impractical for a trader, and it can serve more than one purpose. The Baragaonle who abandons his or her home and leaves the village in response to conflict invariably knows his way around, and will make use of a large network of friends and business contacts. The typical network includes Baragaonle emigrants and seasonal migrants, members of neighboring and other groups with whom the Baragaonle feel a strong cultural affinity: Manangi, Thakali, Mustangi, Tibetan, and various others whose inns Baragaonle patronize and with whom they have business dealings.

#### Seasonal Fluctuations in Household Size and Composition

The mean household size in Baragaon is 4.7 and the median size is 4.5. Households range in size from one to seventeen members, but only 6.5 percent have more than eight members and only 1.4 percent (7 households) have more than ten. There are more single person households (9.3 percent) than households with nine or more members. These figures would be even lower if they were based on full time residential groups. Since seasonal migration splits up most families for several months each year, the statistics above represent Baragaonle concepts of household membership rather than actual full time co-residence\*.

During the agricultural season in Baragaon, domestic groups are composed predominantly of nuclear families: married couples (or polyandrous triples or quadruples) and their children. During the migratory season the houses in Baragaon are inhabited predominantly by old people and children, and the domestic groups set up in

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\*People were asked: "How many people live in your house?" The answer almost invariably included family members who were absent for up to 8 months each year, but on the whole economically corporate with the other members, and excluded live-in servants and other employees who lived in part-time. The existence of such people was often discovered after further questioning or cross-checking. For the statistical profile I included them in the households where they were employed if they were not affiliated with any other household.

Pokhara and other towns are largely non-conjugal. Some of the female migrants are unmarried and childless; some are married mothers whose children have been left in Baragaon in the care of grandparents or other relatives, and some have children in tow.

With their husbands absent--and given that in Baragaon joint families are non-existent and patrilineal extended families less common than nuclear--consanguineal ties (blood ties) are often reaffirmed. Married women often form trading partnerships and live for several months each year with their mothers, sisters or female cousins. Some prefer to live with friends, and a few choose to live alone or with only their children, believing that they will make more profit in their beer and liquor sales by remaining independent. Although the majority of the women's residential groups are based on economic partnerships, there are a few women who have access to capital, who buy wool and hire others on a live-in basis to produce yarn.

Only a few of the migrant husbands reside with their wives for the whole winter. The sweater dealers live mainly in Assam; others are engaged in the transport of foodstuffs and consumer goods, travelling back and forth between Pokhara and Jomsom with trains of mules, horses and donkeys. And others buy and sell herbs, spices and other items from village to village. The men, as described in the previous chapter, form partnerships and travel in small groups.

## OWNERSHIP

### Village Organization

Traditionally, in Baragaon non-cultivated land, including forests, pastures, springs, streams, man-made water canals and wasteland, belonged to individual villages and various combinations of villages. Ownership depended on the location of the resource, the history of its use, and the outcome of various disputes and battles. Contemporary usufruct rights and patterns of use derive mainly from the traditional patterns.

Most of the fields and houses in the twelve villages are owned by individual households. Under the traditional system there were a fixed number of landed households in each village, and for each household there was a single

household head. In polyandrous households this was normally the eldest brother. The landed households (trongba) had a number of rights and duties: they paid taxes and fulfilled labor obligations to the village by sending a family member or a dependent relative or servant to work on community projects. They supported the upkeep of the village temples and gave specified amounts of grain, oil and butter each year for use in village rituals. The second born out of three sons or three daughters would have to be given as a celibate monk (trawa) or nun (jomo). The household head and his wife (khyim pamo) were expected to perform various roles in secular rituals. And the household head himself was obliged to fill rotating political positions, and to serve the village, or send a substitute, as town crier and stray animal catcher, also on a rotating basis.

Theoretically, the trongba household estates and the rights and duties that accrued to them were impartible. The status of household head would pass from eldest son to eldest son. No distinction was supposed to be made between the sons of polyandrous brothers. An individual who split off from the household would often receive moveable property and a few fields, which might or might not revert to the trongba upon his or her death, but the majority of the fields remained with the trongba household. In present-day Baragaon the trongba system still exists, but now less land is included in the trongba than formerly, and some of the trongba are co-owned by two or more households, who share the political, community service and tax duties. Baragaon has apparently become more prosperous in the last several years, due to new trade and transport opportunities and to tourism. There is more buying and selling of land and animals than there was in the past, and the trongba estates no longer constitute monopolistic concentrations of productive resources, although they still occupy a central place in village organization.

### Economic Stratification

Baragaon is characterized by a fairly pronounced, but by no means rigid, economic stratification. Tradition indicates that in former times the inequality was much more pronounced. During Rana times for instance, there were petty aristocratic rulers who kept slaves and controlled

large tracts of land.\* In contemporary Baragaon there is still a vestigial aristocracy (comprising about seven or eight percent of the total population) which is by and large endogamous. The aristocratic (ponpo) households, along with the trongba households, still enjoy some degree of land-based economic and political dominance, but the economy of Baragaon was never based on land alone, and in the present day this is even more true. The agricultural season in Baragaon is relatively short, and agriculture is limited by the availability of irrigation water and by the supply of seasonal labor. While the existence of relative differences in land holdings must be considered in evaluating the development needs of different segments of the population, it is probably true that few, if any, households are capable at present of producing a substantial surplus of food. Baragaonle do not consider agriculture alone a sensible economic strategy. Trade plays an important role in the economy; and as a result there is a relatively frequent rise and fall of fortunes. Thus, economic inequality is in part structurally based, in that it is related to traditional inequalities in land ownership, and in part the outcome of chance and individual effort.

#### Household Property

A typical trongba household in Baragaon might own about .75 hectares of cultivable land, on which barley, buckwheat and sometimes wheat, and small quantities of mustard, potatoes and turnips are planted. The house might be a one, two or three-storied, flat-roofed structure made of rammed earth or mud blocks. It would contain rooms for animals and crop storage and a courtyard for threshing and crop drying, or else separate barns and a threshing ground with a simple shelter for crops, and a few animal pens.

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\*Although slavery was abolished in 1924, local traditions indicate that the aristocratic families maintained their political and economic dominance until relatively recently. The Tibetan "Khambas" who set up military headquarters in the fortified village of Kagbeni in the early 1960's helped to undermine the aristocrats' power. Expanding trade opportunities provided an economic basis for the common peoples' increasing independence.

Livestock in a trongba household of average means, or in a medium to large non-trongba household, might consist of three small mountain cows (Nep. lulu gae, B. palang), kept for milk, a pair of yak-cattle crossbreeds (dzoba, male; dzoma, female) for ploughing and carrying loads, particularly firewood and fertilizer, ten to twenty-five mountain goats (Nep. chyangra, B. ra), kept primarily for dung but also for wool, meat and milk, a couple of chickens to produce eggs for sale, and perhaps a horse or two for pleasure, prestige and load carrying and a few donkeys or mules if the household engages in transport work during the winter.

Some households own a few poplar trees, from which they get wood for house and furniture building, or peach or apricot trees of both native and recently introduced varieties. One or two households own their own water-driven mills, but most trees and mills are collectively owned by villages or village sub-sections.

Most agricultural implements, such as ploughs, rakes, sickles and threshing sticks are not particularly valuable. The exceptions are goats' wool sacks, used for transporting grain and fertilizer and for grain storage, and goats' wool mats and sheep's wool blankets. Wool mats and blankets are used for a multitude of purposes in agriculture (e.g., for drying grain and carrying straw and fodder) and transport (padding the wooden pack-saddle on an animal's back), and for household furnishing and personal use as well (for carrying infants, as bedding and seating, and in winter as clothing). A household that owns horses, mules or donkeys is also likely to have invested considerable money, materials and labor in costly paraphernalia such as saddle carpets and blankets, bridles, bells, plumes, and other headgear and decorations for the animals, as well as leather saddlebags and additional goats' wool bags and ropes.

Aside from personal clothing and ornaments, the more valuable among the items used indoors are brass and copper cauldrons, pots, water jugs and teapots, brass and stainless steel plates and cooking implements, wooden and brass churns for butter production and tea preparation, silver and wooden tea bowls with ornamental stands and covers, blankets and mats, and carved wooden tables and storage boxes.

Baragaonle ornaments (traditional coral and turquoise necklaces, earrings and ceremonial headdresses, silver bracelets and shawl clips, and modern gold rings, gold and silver earrings, gold teeth and wristwatches) can be very valuable. But ornaments are bought only when surplus cash is available, for example, at the culmination of a successful trading trip. Most of the traditional pieces are inherited and are rarely sold, except in times of dire need. Traditional clothing is also valuable, but unlike jewelry it wears out and needs to be replaced. Warm, durable clothing (woolen dresses, pantaloons, heavy, finely-woven back and front aprons for women, long belts, shawls, blankets, coats, and boots) is considered a necessity, given Baragaon's long, cold winters, the incessant driving winds that blow year round, and the rough, rocky terrain. Traditional clothing is costly both in terms of materials (mainly wool and dyes) and in the time it takes to produce (carding and spinning, dyeing, weaving and sewing). The individuals who escape the cold by migrating south during winter tend to see clothing and ornaments as important indicators of status. Their wardrobes contain items which are lighter and flimsier than traditional clothing, but also flashier, and often equally expensive, since they require frequent replacement.

Nowadays some households also possess non-traditional, machine-made items such as transistor radios, lanterns, flashlights, thermos flasks, china cups, plastic water jugs, and other less valuable household equipment. This is particularly true of households in which informal taverns or tourist inns have been opened, since machine-made eating and cooking utensils are often cheaper and more convenient to use than traditional ones.

The household sketched above could in some contexts be described as "typical". For instance, you might ask a Baragaonle what a Baragaonle house is like: what size it is, what animals and goods it contains, and so on. He or she would probably describe a trongba household of moderate means, with an inventory of fields, livestock and household goods similar to that described above. Baragaonle informants tend to underestimate the number of households in their villages because they are so used to thinking in terms of trongba households. Trongba are the most basic units in village organization, although empirically they comprise only about one half to two thirds of the total number of households in each village.

In describing the trongba household as "typical" one defines the status quo as "typical". One could, instead, construct an "average" household based on mean numbers of livestock, etc. Thus, the "average" Baragaonle household would own 2.3 cows, one dzoba or dzomo, .8 horses, 1.2 chickens, .5 mules, .5 donkeys and approximately 11 goats. It is true that dzoba and horses are sometimes owned jointly by two or three households, but by and large the statistically based "average" household is of little descriptive value, since it reveals very little about the way that resources are actually distributed. For development purposes it is probably more useful to know that approximately one fifth of all the households in Baragaon are landless or virtually landless; that approximately 77 percent of all households own at least one cow but only 9 percent own mules, 10 percent own donkeys, 36 percent own goats, 39 percent own one or more horses, 49 percent own at least one dzoba or yak (the most frequent number of dzoba and dzomo owned is two, since a pair is needed for ploughing), and 43 percent own chickens.

#### Distribution of Wealth: General Patterns

Who are the wealthier people and who are the landless and landpoor people? Along what lines are productive resources and other types of property distributed? As mentioned above, the aristocratic households (ponpo or shalunga) and trongba households tend to have more land than other households. They also tend to have more animals, both because they need manure as fertilizer and because the greater quantities of fodder and straw that their land yields allow them to support more animals. Agricultural land can only be profitable when there are enough laborers to cultivate it. Fields are sometimes rented out on a share-cropping basis, but it is considered more profitable to cultivate them oneself. Similarly, family (or household) labor is considered more efficient and dependable than hired labor. Thus in wealthier households there is more reason to opt against partition. A polyandrous son or a daughter-in-law who for personal reasons would rather divide the household is often subjected to considerable social pressure.

This being the case, it is not surprising that in Baragaon extended and polyandrous families are more characteristic of wealthier than of poorer households. In the 35 household sample there were five polyandrous

households, and four of these were in the top economic stratum.\* Five households contained extended families; three of these were in the top and two in the middle stratum. The monogamous, nuclear family households fell predominantly in the middle stratum (11 out of 17 households) and the households classified as "other", single-person and non-conjugal, were found to be the poorest; five out of eight were in the bottom stratum.

Among the eight households in the lowest economic stratum, five were female headed; 22.5 percent of all the 471 households in Baragaon are female headed. Some of these consist of single women living alone. By and large, these households tend to be poor.

There are two basic questions to be asked in regard to female headed households: 1. What is their origin? and 2. Why are they poor? The first question can be partially answered by looking at the statistics on marriage. As noted in the introduction to this study, 20 to 25 percent of all Baragaonle women spend their lives unmarried. Some of them live with their fathers or married brothers, but given the common tendency of co-resident adult women to quarrel, and the common "solution" to domestic conflicts, household partition, unmarried women often end up as heads of independent or semi-dependent households. In addition, there are households headed by widows and divorcees.

## WOMEN'S ACCESS TO PROPERTY

### Patterns of Property Transmission

Why do these households tend to be poor? This question is easy to answer, at least superficially: Baragaonle women's primary access to property is through males. With the exception of personal clothing and ornaments, virtually all of the property described above, including houses, fields, animals, equipment and furnishings is normally inherited patrilineally; it passes

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\*There were three strata in all. The rankings were based on my own judgement, in view of land holdings, trading income, and a ranking test in which three independent local informants ranked all the households in their village according to wealth, using five categories.

from father to son(s).

In regard to distribution of the patrimony among sons, there is no hard and fast rule stipulated by tradition, but there is an ideal model. The model advocated by tradition is the polyandrous household, in which brothers remain corporate and marry a wife in common. This was described above. In cases where brothers do not remain co-resident, it is typically the eldest son who gets the majority of the property. This is particularly true in trongba households, since it is the eldest son who retains the rights and duties associated with the trongba. In the present generation, due to the increasing influence of the National Code, some families have divided the patrimony equally among sons, but there are also cases in which sons have left polyandrous marriages with nothing but the clothes on their backs and perhaps a little cash in their pockets to elope with another woman.

When there is no son in the family, a daughter, usually the eldest, inherits the patrimony and brings a husband to live in her parents' home. About eight to nine percent of the married women (of 340 known cases) in Baragaon have their own inherited estates, on which their husbands live with them. Many of these (magpa) husbands are younger sons who forfeited their shares in their own patrimony by leaving polyandrous marriages, and some are former monks who abandoned their vows to marry. An additional three percent of the married women have inherited estates which they have joined with their husbands'. In total, then, about eleven to twelve percent of all married women have their own landed estates.

These propertied women, according to popular anecdote, tend to have more say in the day-to-day management of their households' economic resources than does the average woman who lives on her husband's patrimony. And in the occasional case in which the husband proves to be a drunkard or an incurable gambler, the wife can turn him out of the house with nothing more than the clothing he brought with him to the marriage. Of course this rarely occurs, but it is popularly maintained that it does happen. It is interesting to note that not a single heiress is married polyandrously, although several are married

polygamously with younger sisters.\*

Daughters who inherit a patrimonial estate do so because there are no sons in the family; in other words, they function as a substitute for a male heir. More commonly there is a son who inherits the landed estate and daughters are given a dowry at marriage. On the day that the groom and his party come to fetch the bride, the bride's paternal and maternal relatives (phasen and masen) and a few close friends assemble in her parents' house. The dowry is displayed to them, item by item, and carefully listed by a village scribe. The express reason for listing the dowry is to ensure that in the case of the marriage ending in divorce there will be minimal grounds for dispute over what the departing wife takes with her. In the event of divorce and immediate remarriage, the woman may keep the same dowry and retain the document, particularly if the marriage is an elopement and no wedding ceremony is held. Otherwise the dowry can be redisplayed and relisted. Occasionally parents refuse to give a dowry a second or third time on the grounds that their daughter is obviously fickle and likely to return home again. In first marriages, as well as second or third, the parents often list and display the dowry and then withhold part of all of it for several months or even several years, until they feel fairly confident that the marriage will be a lasting one. Frequently the dowry is given a few months after the birth of the first child.

The content of the dowry is rarely revealed before the day of the wedding. It would be unthinkable for prospective in-laws to bring up the subject with the girl's parents, although they inevitably engage in considerable private speculation. Daughters often find ways to make their wishes

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\*But I know of no cases in which an heiress is married polygamously with a co-wife who is not her sister. Polyandry, unlike polygamy (polygyny), is not very widespread in the world, and it has often been misconstrued as a sort of matriarchal mirror-opposite to "patriarchal" polygyny. The polyandrous woman, it is sometimes thought, is free to marry several husbands of her choice. Polyandry in Baragaon, to the contrary, could be better described as 'a group of brothers taking a wife'. Baragaonle polygyny, however, could be described as the opposite of polyandry, since it consists of a group of sisters (normally two) taking a husband.

known to their parents, but the matter is not supposed to be discussed openly. When the time comes and the guests have assembled, the bride is seated with the groom(s) on one side and a female ceremonial companion (bayoma, literally "bride's servant") on the other. The bride, her face hidden under a white cloak, weeps noisily as the dowry is brought out. If she notices that a favorite item of clothing or jewelry is missing she may whisper to the bayoma, who passes on the message to the girl's mother. It is said that the mother's heart is softened by her daughter's tears.

The main contents of the dowry are the girl's own clothing and ornaments, including a few new items. The quantity and value of this can vary considerably, depending upon the resources and generosity of the girl's parents, the number of daughters in the family who will be given dowries, and the extent to which the girl's parents approve of the match. If the marriage was arranged by the parents themselves, they will probably feel obliged to give more. In addition to clothing and ornaments, two traditional items--a brass plate and a tea bowl--are included in every bonafide dowry. Optionally, there may be more dishes, pots and pans and the like, some cash or grain, a cow or a few goats, and occasionally a field. The field, in the infrequent cases in which it is included, often reverts to the woman's patrilineal family upon her death. But if this is to happen, it needs to be stipulated at the time the dowry is listed.

Since dowry property consists mainly of clothing and ornaments, its value is often considerable. But this is not the rule, and in some cases the dowry amounts to virtually nothing. Valuable or not, an essential feature of dowry is that it is non-productive property.\* Even when fields are included in the dowry their function is largely symbolic. Since the quality of dowry-fields is notoriously poor, it would be inaccurate to describe them as a productive resource.

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\*Levine (1981) makes this point in regard to dowry property among the Nyinba of Humla District in western Nepal.

### Ownership within the Household

What does it mean to "own" something? So far this question has been skirted. In the discussion of collective ownership of forest, water and other resources which are used on a communal basis, and in the description of the productive resources and other property owned by various types of household, the question of what it means for a household to own property was not addressed. The discussion that followed concerned property inheritance and dowry property, and implicit in this discussion was the assumption that individuals inherit property and receive dowries at marriage.

But in the case of the polyandrous household, in which brothers remain co-resident and cooperate in exploiting their household's resources, is it correct to say that the household property is owned jointly? When a younger brother leaves the polyandrous household to marry monogamously and receives little or no property to take with him, do we say that he did not "own" the property in the first place, that it was "owned" by his eldest brother, or by the household as a corporate unit?

It may be useful in some contexts to refer to the household as a property owning unit, but there are other contexts in which it seems more accurate to say that individuals, not households, own property. Consider dowry property, for instance. Dowry property is taken by a female from her natal household to the household into which she marries. Would this be best described as a transfer of ownership from one household to another? Or would it be more accurate to say that dowry property is given by the corporate household to the bride as an individual, or transferred to the married couple?

The fact that dowry property is listed in detail so that the woman can reclaim it in case of divorce indicates that she does, in some sense, "own" her dowry property. I heard many accounts of marital conflicts and divorces, and among these there was not a single case in which the husband or his family tried to deny the right of the departing wife to take her dowry along with her. But what are a Baragaonle women's rights over her dowry property while she is married?

A questionnaire was administered (by a Baragaonle research assistant and myself) to sixty-one women and

sixty-one men (including forty-nine married couples, in which the husband and wife were always questioned separately). The object was to learn about Baragaonles' knowledge of the National Code, but in the course of administering the questionnaire it became clear that the answers we received reflected the respondents' understanding of Baragaonle customary law, not of the National Code. There were a few items on which the responses were unanimous and others on which there was considerable disagreement. This suggests that customary law (or behavioral norms) are more ambiguous in some areas than in others. For example, in response to the first question: "Can a married woman sell her dowry property?" 61 percent (37) of the men and 82 percent (50) of the women answered "yes" and the rest answered "no" 59 percent of the husbands' answers agreed and 41 percent disagreed with their wives' answers.

In response to the second question: "Can a man or his parents sell his wife's dowry property?" all the respondents said that the husband's parents could not, but 98 percent (60) of the men and 90 percent (55) of the women maintained that the husband does have the right to sell his wife's dowry property. There was 86 percent agreement between husbands and wives on this question.

The sale of dowry property is not a common occurrence, but it is not unheard of, and I know of more than one case in which a serious quarrel resulted when the husband sold or gambled away a piece of jewelry from his wife's dowry. It is undoubtedly those issues on which customary law is ambiguous that provide the most fertile ground for conflict, and it is probably meaningful that insofar as there were systematic differences between the men's and the women's answers, the tendency was to interpret customary law as being more favorable to one's own sex.

There was another questionnaire, in which we were to ask: "Do any of the members of your household own any personal property? If yes, who owns what type of property, what is it worth, how was it acquired and what rights of disposal does the owner have over the property?" I tried asking this in many different ways, with the help of a Baragaonle assistant, leaving out the question of the value of specific individuals' assets, since this tends to be a sensitive topic.

It became obvious from the long silences and the confused and often contradictory responses that Baragaonle do not think of household property as a collection of individually-owned items. There is no simple set of principles spelling out who, within a household, has the right to dispose of what, although in general men's rights to property are more extensive and more clearly defined than women's. Even women who "owned" inherited or dowry property, when asked: "Could you sell this property if you wanted to?", tended to answer: "I don't want to."

It also became clear that Baragaonle normally do not conceptualize the corporate household estate as containing a fixed number of potential shares. Because of this it was practically impossible to determine the "number of co-parceners" in each household. There are a few guiding principles, e.g., the eldest son has priority, and normally inherits the trongba; the second son out of three in a trongba household becomes a celibate monk and inherits only a single "monk's field"; daughters inherit productive property only when there are no sons. But on the whole, property division is haggled out on an ad hoc basis.

Not surprisingly, property ownership patterns in households containing only one adult, whether male or female, were markedly different. Although these individuals tended to be poor, they nearly always said that they could sell what property they had if they wanted to do so.

### The Role of Property in Inter-personal Relations

There are three general points about property that need to be taken into account in order to understand how women's status in Baragaon is affected by the way that rights over property are distributed. Firstly, property rights are distributed unequally. Women in particular tend to be either poor or dependent. Secondly, customary norms concerning property rights tend to be loosely defined, leaving considerable leeway for individual manoeuvring in establishing control over property. Thirdly, property is an important factor in Baragaonle social relations. Even marital and other relationships within the household are often colored by an overtly materialistic orientation. As noted above, it is popularly held that a woman who inherits her own patrimonial estate will have more chance to exert authority in her household than will the average woman who

shares her husband's patrimony. The quantity and quality of a woman's dowry is also relevant in determining her status in her husband's household.

The following case history illustrates the central role of material property in Baragaonle marital relations. Dolma's is an extreme manifestation of a typical dilemma, rooted in Baragaonle women's basic lack of economic security.

When Dolma was 18 years old she was married to a cousin (a matrilateral cross cousin) two years her junior. It was an arranged marriage and the two were not fond of one another. They quarrelled constantly. Dolma felt depressed because she imagined that the marriage would drag on for several years and then end in divorce. There were not many aristocratic boys of her age (she knew them all well) so finding another husband might be difficult. Her father was dead and her brother was in jail. What would become of her?

Anxious over her future, Dolma began smuggling small amounts of barley out of the household storage boxes when the rest of the family was away from home, hiding it at a girlfriend's house. If worst came to worst she could use this cache of grain to brew beer for sale. But the husband and his father began to suspect her. She denied their accusations, but the husband drew a design in the grain which would be erased if any was removed, and Dolma was cornered. A loud quarrel followed and Dolma packed up and left, knowing that no mediators would be sent to call her back.

Dolma's mother was worried; with ugly rumors already circulating, Dolma would need to remarry quickly, or people would begin to label her "morangmo" (unmarried and more or less unmarriageable). There was another cousin, ten years Dolma's junior, whose mother and Dolma's mother were lifelong best friends. He would have to do. So Dolma's mother appealed to Jugme's and another year passed before the wedding was held. Dolma's dowry consisted of three fields (which no one had bothered to cultivate for years because of their poor quality), a cow, and

her own clothing and ornaments. These items were to be handed over "later", and even though Dolma was already 25 years old, marrying for the second time, and marrying into a close relative's household, what little clothing she brought along was kept locked in a trunk.\*

Dolma was quite happy for the first few years, although Jigme was too young to have sex with her, but as he began to mature, she began to worry. She was so much older than he; what if he married a younger wife and the two of them found it impossible to coexist? She still had not borne a child. So Dolma left her clothing in the box. When she was 30 years old she contracted tuberculosis; she took

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\*In Baragaon the labor of young women is highly valued, and the typical enthusiasm with which an incoming bride is received is in part because she is recognized as an economic asset. From now on she will work for the benefit of her husband and his family, and everything she needs should be supplied by them. On the day of the wedding the husband's family sends a full suit of fine clothing, including coral and turquoise ornaments, to the bride's house. Only after she has taken off the clothing of her natal household and put on the new bridal clothing can she be taken, in procession, to her husband's house. Her own clothing, i.e., whatever clothing is included in her dowry, will be kept in a locked box or, as noted above, it may remain for several years in her natal household. A married woman should not need to wear her own dowry clothing, since the clothing provided by the husband's household should be ample enough to meet her needs, but most women like to be practical. Of what use is clothing locked in a box? So typically, after a few years, perhaps after a child or two has been born, when a woman feels that her marriage is a stable one, the clothing is taken out of the box and worn. Fellow villagers, in particular women, watch with interest to see how long such clothing remains locked up, since this reveals a lot about the current state of the relationship.

medicine for six months and recovered most of her strength, but remained thin. She worked hard in the fields and felt bitter when Jigme and his mother accused her of laziness.

The villagers gossiped and criticized Dolma for continuing to keep her dowry locked up after six years of marriage. Ashamed, she took it out and began wearing one item after another. She made a big point of keeping her own clothing in a separate place but her mother-in-law treated it as household property, borrowing whatever she pleased without so much as asking whether Dolma minded. Dolma said nothing but her eyes burned.

She bore daughters two years in a row, but neither lived more than a few months. Eventually Dolma began stealing grain again. The vigilant mother-in-law detected it and accused her. Jigme spent the whole of that winter in India, and when he returned he was greeted with a barrage of accusations and counter-accusations on the part of the two women. They wanted to divide the household but Jigme would not hear of it. He cajoled his mother in the presence of his paternal relatives: "I have only one mother; a mother is irreplaceable. My father died and left me at a young age and now we are only two: mother and son. I won't leave my mother". After that he began to take his mother's part against Dolma, and he even laid traps to catch Dolma in the act of stealing, but he was not successful.

Jigme knows that this is a vicious cycle. It was he who pointed out to me that it is fear and anguish that drives Dolma to steal. He would occasionally taunt her with remarks-like: "You're much older than I and you don't have a single living child. I think I'll look for a younger wife". Later he began to feel guilty, and resolved to stop saying such things. But spoken or unspoken, the facts weigh on all of their minds: Jigme is young and attractive and would just as soon be rid of Dolma; Dolma has no property of her own and no better options than her present marriage. She would get her own dowry back in case of divorce, but she would have no claim on anything earned or produced in Jigme's household.

Ten years have passed since Jigme and Dolma's wedding, and they still have not gone to the house of Dolma's elder brother to formally request and collect her dowry property. Jigme would just as soon leave it so that he can continue to lord it over her when they have an argument: "What did you bring to my house? Nothing!" Besides, the fields are not worth cultivating. Dolma might strengthen her position temporarily by bringing her dowry to Jigme's household, but she is probably reluctant to wear out the clothes, since these represent some security.

A wife in a more secure position would pack up and leave. Jigme can name a number of young women who run away frequently in response to abuse or accusations, but Dolma knows that if she runs away no one will call her back. Jigme and his mother would never turn Dolma out of the house, even if they caught her stealing, but they may eventually provoke her into leaving.

## CHAPTER III

### AGE AT MARRIAGE AND PROPORTION OF WOMEN REMAINING UNMARRIED

#### Age at Marriage

In 1975, legislation raised the minimum age at marriage for Nepalese females from 14 to 16 years of age. However there is disagreement as to whether age at marriage among females is actually increasing.\* Among high caste Hindus in particular, traditional beliefs continue to provide rationale for early marriage, and marriage of girls before puberty or at puberty is still a preferred pattern. The implications of early marriage for women's status are potentially negative in several ways. Firstly, a woman's potential for making important life decisions is pre-empted when the decisions are made for her, before she has reached maturity. A girl who is married young is not likely to take much part in deciding who or when she will marry, and a young, immature wife, probably shy and without allies in her husband's house, is not likely to have much control over the course her life will take once she arrives there. She is apt to begin bearing children at an age so young that her health is endangered, and once she has children she is likely to feel that a number of alternative courses of action are no longer viable for her, e.g., education, wage employment, divorce.

Another subtle but far reaching adverse effect of early marriage on women's status has to do with the relationship between the perceived value of female labor and the position of daughters relative to sons in the household. When residence is patrilocal (actually "patri-virilocal"; that is, sons remain in their fathers' houses and daughters marry out), daughters may be perceived as costly in economic terms, and less valuable than sons. Daughters, like sons, need to be fed, clothed, and cared for, but as soon as they are old enough to make a significant economic contribution, they marry and leave their parents' households. In addition, a daughter may require a costly dowry. The females whose labor will

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\*See Nepal Fertility Survey (35-6) and compare Acharya (1979:21-4). The first legal minimum age at marriage was established in 1963, at 14 years of age for females and 18 for males (Bennett 1979:69).

benefit the household are women who marry in, not daughters. In view of this structural fact, it makes economic, not to mention psychological, sense to favor sons over daughters in allocating scarce resources such as nutritious food, health care and education.

Baragaon represents a deviation from the pattern of early marriage for females which predominates in Nepal. The average age at marriage for Baragaonle females is between twenty-one and twenty-two years,\* roughly five years later than the national average. In Table 3.1 the marital structure of Baragaon is compared with that of Nepal as a whole. About 61 percent of all Nepalese women are married by the time they reach ages 15 to 19; 92 percent by the time they reach ages 20 to 24. But only 11 percent of the Baragaonle women aged 15 to 19 are married, and only 58 percent are married by the time they reach ages 20 to 24. Not surprisingly, the labor of daughters is highly valued in the Baragaonle household.

#### Baragaonle Perceptions of the Economic Value of Daughters

As part of a questionnaire on child-bearing and socialization, I asked nine Baragaonle women, independently, "In your opinion, is it better if the first child (a woman bears) is a son or a daughter? Why?"

Seven of the nine women said that it is best if the first-born is a daughter. Six of them explained this preference by saying that daughters can help with their mothers' work. The seventh gave no explanation. One

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\*The mean age at marriage for Nepalese females, based on 1971 census figures, was estimated at 16.7 (Tuladhar, Gubhaju and Stoeckel 1978), and at 15 by the Nepal Health Survey, HMG 1977b:36). The results of a census conducted in selected districts in 1975 show that age at marriage tends to be slightly lower in the Terai (the means ranged from 10.4 to 14.4 years for different age groups) than in the hills (15.1 to 17.1), but nearly all the mean ages were lower than the estimates based on the 1971 census. A small survey conducted in 1974 among 57 Brahman and Chetri women from a village near Kathmandu (Bennett 1976:2) showed a mean age at marriage of 17 among women aged less than 35 years and 13 among women aged 35 and over. In Baragaon the mean age at marriage (based on 265 women) is 21.7.

TABLE 3.1

## FEMALE MARITAL STRUCTURE : BARAGAON COMPARED WITH ALL-NEPAL

Ages	Total Number of Women (Baragaon)	Percent Never Married		Percent Ever Married		Percent Currently Married		Percent Widowed*		Percent Divorced	
		Nepal	Baragaon	Nepal	Baragaon	Nepal	Baragaon	Nepal	Baragaon	Nepal	Baragaon
15-19	97	39.3	88.7	60.7	11.3	60.2	10.3	0.5	0.1	0.2	0
20-4	86	7.9	42.4	92.1	57.6	91.1	55.8	0.8	0	1.3	1.2
25-9	65	2.6	25.4	97.4	74.6	95.4	66.2	1.7	0	0.4	6.2
30-4	76	1.4	13.3	98.6	86.7	95.0	78.9	3.3	1.3	0.3	5.3
35-9	76	1.1	12.0	98.9	88.0	92.0	71.1	6.7	9.2	0.4	6.6
40-4	67	0.9	12.1	99.1	87.9	86.6	68.7	12.2	13.4	0.4	4.5
45-9	44	0.8	31.8	99.2	68.2	80.6	54.5	18.4	9.1	0.4	4.5
50-4	55	0.7	25.5	99.3	74.5	70.8	47.3	28.3	14.5	0.3	11.4
55-9	50	0.7	25.0	99.3	75.0	66.6	44.0	32.6	14.0	0.3	14.0
60+	103	0.6	23.4	99.4	76.6	44.4	26.2	55.0	38.8	0.4	4.9
Total	719										

\* As percentage of ever married women.

Source: All-Nepal Data: Tuladhar, et. al, 1978.

woman, an unwed mother, answered that she would prefer to remain childless. Only one woman maintained that it is best to have a son first. Sons, she explained, can earn more money than daughters can.

According to data from the Nepal Fertility Survey (Table 6.4, p. 54), among women who had not yet borne a child, and who stated a preference, nearly 100 percent indicated they would prefer that their first-born be a son.

Raising a daughter, only to give her away in marriage, entails psychological as well as economic costs. Baragaonle acknowledge this fact symbolically by means of the nu rin, a token payment of 8 rupees which the groom presents, along with beer and a white ceremonial scarf, to the bride's mother. This payment, it is said, is for the mother's milk that nourished the bride.

Many parents expect more than a merely symbolic repayment for what raising a daughter has cost them, and for this reason parents often try to delay their daughters' marriages. The parents' formal agreement to a particular marriage is often followed by what amounts to a verbal tug of war between the two families. This is particularly true when the negotiation takes place before the girl has reached nineteen or twenty years of age. Attempts on the part of the boy's family to set a specific date for the wedding are met either with non-committal responses or with a firm demand that marital co-residence be delayed for a year, or even several years. Parents who explicitly refuse to relinquish their daughter typically argue that they need her labor. A widowed father, or a set of parents whose sons have not yet married can make a fairly persuasive argument. The existence of another able young woman in the household weakens the argument of the future bride's parents.\*

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\*The compensation paid to the bride's parents in cases of marriage by capture is often itemized. In one case that occurred during my stay in Baragaon, the payment included 4 rupees (a token amount) to compensate the girl's family for three years of her labor. The girl's family, by far the richest family in the village admitted that they had little need for her labor, but the fact that this item was included (along with fines for various breaches of

Some parents settle for promises that, once the marriage takes place, both the daughter and the son-in-law will help out by working in their fields. Promises of this sort tend to be vague and open-ended, and as a result they are often broken in the eyes of the girl's parents. Sometimes the two sets of parents make an agreement, generally in writing, that after the wedding the girl's parents will be entitled to her labor for a specified length of time, usually one to three years. If the two families live in the same village, the logistics of this arrangement are fairly simple; the girl visits her natal household daily to work in the fields or do household chores, returning to her in-laws' house in the evening. During slack seasons the visits may amount to brief social calls. If the two households are separated by a distance of several hours walk, the girl's parents will probably insist on less frequent but more extended visits. They will send a messenger to call her at harvest time and for particular tasks such as preparation, hauling and spreading of organic fertilizer, wood gathering, beer-making, etc.

In one case two families agreed that during the first three years of marriage, the girl would sleep at her husband's house but spend most of each day working at her parents' house. Her food and clothing would be supplied by her parents. In the winter time she would migrate to India. Her husband would supply her with capital for sweater trading but the profits she earned would be turned over to her parents. (In the winter of 1978-9 she made a profit of approximately 1,500 rupees, about \$125.) My (male) informant considered this an extreme case but not a deviant one. In his opinion the girl is a "good" daughter. He did not see anything inherently objectionable in the arrangement.

In other cases, parents with debts relinquish their claim to the daughter's labor on the condition that the son-in-law agrees to take over a portion of the debt. Although uncommon in present-day Baragaon, it is said that this arrangement was common a generation ago, when poverty and indebtedness were widespread.

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etiquette) indicates that according to Baragaonle social norms, a girl's family has a right to her labor.

Some parents, particularly single parents, fearing abandonment in old age, negotiate openly to induce their daughters to postpone or forgo marriage. For example one of my informants, "Korchung", had lost her mother at a young age. As a teenager she was obliged to take on the responsibilities of housekeeping and caring for her four younger siblings. When Korchung was twenty-one years old, her father made an offer: he would give her a large field and a house, as well as some of the ornaments left by her mother, if she would agree to stay and manage the household for an additional five years. In five years her twelve year old brother would be old enough to marry, and a daughter-in-law could take over Korchung's duties. Korchung agreed, but after three years had passed, a clandestine love affair resulted in pregnancy. Her father, aware of her predicament, reacted sympathetically when she eloped. He gave her gold ornaments weighing two tolas (approximately 2/3 oz.), several turquoise and coral beads, and 2,000 rupees (\$170), but he kept the field and the house. Unless such ornaments are explicitly willed or given to a daughter, they will remain part of the patrilineal estate--to be inherited by the eldest son and his wife (or by a group of polyandrous brothers and their wife).

In cases of partition between parents and sons, the trongba, or the majority of the estate, is normally handed over to the eldest son. The parents retain a smaller share, the genzang, for their own maintenance. If a younger son or a daughter remains co-resident with the parents, he or she can eventually inherit the genzang\*. If no one in particular cares for the parents, the genzang is re-incorporated, at their death, into the

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\*It is the act of caring for someone, shabtok, that provides a legitimate basis for non-patrilineal inheritance. A written will, in the absence of shabtok, would probably be considered meaningless. Baragaonle customary law, as explained in Chapter 3, is often ambiguous. When it is a son who cares for the parents, his right to the genzang property is relatively indisputable. If the parents wish to leave the genzang to a daughter, or to someone other than their own offspring, they will probably make a written will. The more distant their relationship to their chosen heir, the more likely a dispute will result between the chosen heir and the patrilineal, potential heirs.

original estate. Thus, an aging parent who is neglected by his or her sons can use genzang property to secure the support and companionship of a daughter.

A single parent whose economic resources are meager may try to prevent desertion in old age by compelling a son or a daughter to take religious vows. During my stay in Baragaon I witnessed a public confrontation between a mother and her daughter, in the aftermath of the daughter's elopement. The daughter, a nun with an illegitimate infant child, had been living with her mother prior to the elopement. When I came upon the scene, the mother was sitting on the ground, sobbing and shouting reproaches, in front of the house where the daughter and her new husband had taken refuge.\* The mother's words, in edited form, were as follows. The daughter remained inside the house throughout. She did not reply, and would not be expected to reply.

Mother: We are only three in our house, and I am unwell. Now you cast me off!...You ate good food and wore good clothing in my house and now you desert me...You have wronged me. The fields need weeding and harvesting but now you leave me....Didn't I treat you well? Ask the neighbors. I was the daughter and you were the mother. I did all the work and let you stay inside the house.

Neighbors: Yes! And you (the daughter) always had nice clothes!

Mother: Live to regret it!...My husband died. I had only my jomo (nun) daughter to take care of me. Now she has discarded me....I didn't scold her when she got pregnant with an illegitimate child. Now see how she repays me!

Friends: Don't cry! Don't cry!

Mother: Now I'm nothing but a wandering mendicant (lama yogi)....If I have troubles or joys there is no one to share them...

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\*The mother's sobbing and carrying on was exaggerated in a conventional way, but it is my impression that what she expressed was deeply felt.

Neighbor: Don't cry. If your daughter is happy you should be happy too.

Head nun: She's already agreed to the marriage. Let's get on with it. Let's carry out the custom (i.e. impose a fine on the girl for abandoning her vows).

There is no need to over-simplify by positing a direct causal relationship between age at marriage and valuation of daughters' labor. It makes as much sense to say that daughters' labor is valuable because late marriage or non-marriage allows for more productive years in the parents' household, as it does to say that because daughters' labor is perceived as valuable, they are married relatively late. In any case, the relationship seems to exist, and several of the other studies in this series suggest that where early marriage of females is prevalent, the differential valuation and differential advantages given to male and female children are often frankly explained in terms of the fact that girl children will be married off before they have made a significant economic contribution to their natal household.

While the economic rationality of marrying daughters late is fairly obvious, the reasons behind early marriage are often more complicated. It has been pointed out that among high caste Hindus early marriage of females is fostered by a preoccupation with female purity and, in particular, virginity at marriage. The complex symbolic dimensions of this preoccupation have been discussed elsewhere.\* For our purposes it should be sufficient to note the existence of two contrasting syndromes. One is characterized by early marriage of females, a strong preoccupation on the part of males with the purity of their sisters and daughters, a strong preference for boy children over girl children, allocation of family resources in favor of sons, and a low estimation of daughters' potential labor contribution. This syndrome is probably the more widespread of the two. The second syndrome which, generally speaking, represents Baragaon, is characterized by the relatively late marriage of females, the absence of a strong ideological concern on

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\*Bennett 1976a, 1978.

the part of society with the sexual purity of females, a more symmetrical attitude towards girl and boy children (boys may be preferred, but the preference is weaker) and a more symmetrical allocation of family resources (sons sometimes get more nutritious foods and usually get more education than daughters, but the differences are not very pronounced) and finally, an explicitly high valuation of daughters' labor in their natal households.

### Incidence of Non-marriage

Statistics show that marriage is practically universal in Nepal. According to the 1971 census, only 0.8 percent of all Nepalese women aged thirty-five and above had never married. The marital structure of Baragaon reveals a marked contrast. Here the incidence of non-marriage is 20.6 percent for women aged thirty-five and above and 25.7 percent for women aged 45 and above\* (see Table 3.2). A rate as high as this is exceptional for a non-industrial society; it is high even for modern industrial societies. According to Davis and Blake (1956) "It is mainly in urban industrial societies that the proportion of women never marrying by the end of the reproductive span exceeds 10 percent." (p. 219) "Only rarely can a population be found where more than 20 percent of the women complete the reproductive period without ever having married." (p. 218)

The role of wife-and-mother is virtually the only socially valued role for the high caste woman in a traditional Hindu society, where divorce is uncommon and where even widows, defined as inauspicious, are liable to suffer social stigma. In Baragaon, by contrast, there are viable alternatives to marriage. Among the alternatives, the role of religious celibate for a woman who is genuinely dedicated to the religion, is the most respected. "Religious celibate" is probably a more appropriate term than "nun" for describing these women, since there are no longer any more active monasteries or nunneries in Baragaon with religious specialists living as a community.

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\*The difference may, in part, be the result of random fluctuation, but it probably also reflects an increase, over the past two or three decades, in the proportion of women who marry. The probable reasons for the increase will be discussed later in this chapter.

TABLE 3.2

## INCIDENCE OF NON-MARRIAGE AMONG BARAGAONLE FEMALES

Ages	Total Number of Women	Never Married		Ever Married		Currently Married	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
15 +	698	226	(32.4)	472	(67.6)	360	(51.6)
20 +	601	140	(23.3)	461	(76.7)	350	(58.2)
25 +	516	104	(20.2)	412	(79.8)	302	(58.5)
35 +	378	78	(20.6)	300	(79.4)	199	(52.6)
45 +	237	61	(25.7)	176	(74.3)	99	(41.8)

About 6 percent of the whole female population and about 8 percent of the females aged 15 and above live as religious celibates--jomo or tsamba, depending upon the type of Tibetan Buddhism or Bon that they study, and whether or not they have lived in seclusion for a prescribed period of time. The incidence of religious celibacy among males is also 6 percent; 7 percent among males aged 15 years and above.

Most of these people live in villages with relatives, or alone in small houses that are loaned to them, and a few live on temple premises as caretakers. Some spend three years or more meditating and studying in seclusion in caves or huts. The families of religious celibates usually provide part of their support. They also receive gifts and payments in exchange for their services. Besides making routine ritual offerings in the temples and performing periodic rituals for the benefit of the community as a whole, they are often called upon to perform exorcisms and other rituals in individual households.

In many cases it is initially custom, not personal inclination, that dictates whose lives should be devoted to religion. According to traditional custom, every trongba (estate) household in which three sons or three daughters are born must give the second-born as a monk or nun. The religious training normally begins in childhood. Some individuals become genuinely devoted to religious life and well versed in the doctrines and religious procedures. Others become more interested in secular affairs, and some abandon their vows to marry. Although the second-born children from trongba households probably comprise the majority of the religious celibates, there are also a few people, predominantly spinsters and unhappily married women, who have become jomo, tsamba (or trawa for males) later in life. Approximately 43 percent (45) of the women aged 25 and above who have never married (19 percent of those currently unmarried) are living as religious celibates. The life situations of the unmarried lay women will be examined later in this chapter.

The institution of religious celibacy contributes to the relatively high incidence of non-marriage among both sexes. The practice of fraternal polyandry, the relative absence of polygyny (polygamy) and the fact that there are more adult women than men in the population, all contribute to a higher incidence of non-marriage among women than

among men. A high incidence of non-marriage, whatever the causes, would be untenable in any society without viable alternative modes of life, and the existence of a range of socially sanctioned life-styles means that women can choose among various life options. Some Baragaonle women choose spinsterhood, religious celibacy or divorce over what they consider undesirable marriages. In conjunction with the frequent occurrence of non-marriage, the relatively small household size, the fluctuating character of residential groups, and the variety of subsistence activities in Baragaon result in a flexibility and variety in life-styles which is often absent in traditional societies. These conditions provide a certain degree of de facto autonomy for women.

On the other hand, non-marriage among Baragaonle women is not always by choice. It is my impression that, in general, most would prefer marriage to spinsterhood. As described in Chapter 2, although girls without brothers can become heiresses, it is normally by means of marriage that women secure access to landed property, and because of this, married women tend to have a higher standard of living and more material security than unmarried women. In addition, only married women can produce legitimate children.

It would be misguided to argue that non-marriage is necessarily positive or negative in terms of women's status. We should not consider non-marriage itself an indicator for evaluating women's status, since it is not the mere fact of non-marriage but the conditions associated with non-marriage that constitute constraints and options in women's lives. It is these particular conditions that need to be taken into account in evaluating the needs of Baragaonle women and their potentials for participating in economic development.

### Non-marriage and Poverty

It was noted that unmarried women in Baragaon tend to be landless, or virtually landless, and generally poor. Their poverty is not only an effect, but also a cause of their unmarried status, since socio-economic status is an important factor in determining a woman's chances of marriage. It has often been observed that there is a strong materialistic tendency in Tibetans' orientation to life. For instance, Aziz writes: "The people of D'ing-ri attach a great deal of importance to

economic status. It is generally the first remark they make about a person when introducing him--or when gossiping. Wealth is important--no matter what rank it is associated with, the D'ing-ri-wa, like most Tibetans, keep that uppermost in their minds and in their social behavior." (1978:114) Baragaonle are similar in this respect. In Baragaon the fruits of wealth are not only material; wealth confers prestige, power, and an aura of substantiality. The economic status of individuals is continually taken into account in social relations. It is not surprising, therefore, that economic status is a primary consideration in choosing spouses for oneself, one's children, or one's sisters.

A poor man is likely to have to resort to capture to secure a wife that he considers worth marrying. If one or several captured girls refuse to stay with him he may give up or he may remain single until a relatively late age, and finally settle for a woman who has no better prospects, for instance, a woman with one or more dependent illegitimate children. A female from a particularly poor family who is also lacking in redeeming qualities such as beauty or cleverness in business does not even, as a man does, have recourse to capture. If her poverty is compounded by low hereditary status or illegitimate children, or if she herself is illegitimate, she may have no choice but to remain unmarried all her life. Poverty is by no means synonymous with non-marriage, but given the role of wealth in determining marital eligibility, it is more often the poor than the rich who spend their lives unmarried, marry late, or remain unmarried after a divorce or the death of a spouse. Moreover, poor families often have reasons for preventing daughters from marrying early. If sons are too young to marry, or if the family's poverty makes it difficult to obtain a wife for the son(s), a daughter's labor may be indispensable.

I was often told that in the recent past, particularly under the Rana regime, poverty was rampant in Baragaon, and there is evidence that late marriage and non-marriage were even more prevalent then than at present. The fact that the incidence of non-marriage is higher among older than among younger women suggests that this is the case, as does the existence of an abandoned nunnery above the village of Tiri, which is said to have contained one hundred cells. An influx of Khamba Tibetan refugees during the

1960's created a temporary surplus of males. This, no doubt, contributed to a decreasing incidence of female non-marriage, as well as to a decrease in the number of female religious celibates. In one village of sixty households, twenty-seven women married Khambas, and twenty-four of these emigrated with their husbands when the Khambas were forced to leave the area.

In discussions about the past, Baragaonle informants themselves sometimes attributed changing marital practices and residence patterns to changing economic conditions. For instance, people claim that polyandry was more prevalent in previous generations because times were harder. Most households could not afford partition. Late marriage was common, it is said, because young people so often had to leave their villages for years to work as porters in the middle hills. Their inherited debts were so high that many lacked the resources, or, in any case, the freedom to settle down and raise families. Some households were compelled to send one or two members to money-lenders' houses to work as indentured servants, and these individuals would normally remain unmarried, at least during the period of servitude.

The association between non-marriage and poverty in present-day Baragaon becomes visible when the thirty-five households in our sample are compared on the basis of economic strata and family structure. As noted in Chapter 2, there were eight non-conjugal households in the thirty-five household sample, all headed by women, and five of these fell in the bottom of the three economic strata (see Table 3.3).

### Illegitimacy

Illegitimacy is another cultural phenomenon associated with non-marriage and with poverty. Approximately 9 percent of all Baragaonle are illegitimate (nyolu, male; nyolmo, female). Since the labels "nyolu" and "nyolmo" are considered insulting they are rarely used in an illegitimate person's presence, except when offense is intended, or occasionally in joking. To a certain extent, illegitimacy itself confers low status, but in my observation it is mainly in connection with property and, in particular, disputes over property, that illegitimacy becomes a relevant issue in social interaction.

TABLE 3.3  
 FAMILY STRUCTURE BY ECONOMIC STRATA

Economic Strata	Family Structure			
	Nuclear	Extended	Other*	Total
Top	8	3	0	11
Middle	11	2	3	16
Bottom	3	0	5	8
Total	22	5	8	35

$\text{Chi}^2 = 11.68730$ , Significance 0.0198

\* Single-person and single-parent plus son or daughter.

A nyolu or nyolmo whose mother is unmarried at the time of her death, and who has no legitimate (cholu, male; cholmo, female) siblings, is entitled to inherit the mother's self-earned property, but under any other circumstances an illegitimate person has no inheritance rights whatsoever.\* Furthermore, the father of a nyolu or nyolmo, although his identity is usually made known to the community, is not obliged to contribute to the child's support. Understandably, then, illegitimate people tend to be poor. An illegitimate child may be raised in a maternal uncle's or a step-father's house, or it may be supported by the mother alone. Property that the mother may have inherited, or which has been loaned to her, can be repossessed at any time by her patri-kin. In theory, such property should be reappropriated at the time of her death, but in practice illegitimate offspring often continue after their mother's death to occupy houses and land loaned by the mother's relatives. Such land may be unofficially "inherited" for a generation or two before someone attempts to reappropriate it. This is a fairly common source of disputes which, although they may be long and bitter, are usually resolved in favor of the "legitimate" person, the cholu.

In rare instances, an illegitimate male whose mother marries, and who grows up with "legitimate" brothers--the children of his mother and his step-father--may be included with the legitimate brothers in a polyandrous marriage. I know of two households in which this was the case. But the inclusion of a nyolu in a polyandrous marriage is contingent upon the legitimate brothers' generosity. Unlike his legitimate brothers, the nyolu will not be included on the basis of birthright. More commonly, lacking the right to bring a wife to the house of his legitimate brothers, lacking the right to share their wife, and lacking a house and land of his own, the nyolu's ability to marry depends upon his ability to earn a living by means of trade or wage labor.

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\*Goldstein reports a very different situation in Limi, northwestern Nepal: "The genitor is jurally responsible for his children, illegitimate or not, and is required to provide a variety of items such as a yak, clothes, a sword, and often some plots of land." (1977:51)

Since an illegitimate female is not likely to be endowed with property, her chances of marrying depend upon her personal qualities. In fact, the rate of non-marriage for illegitimate people of both sexes is between one and two thirds and two times as high as the rate for the whole population (see Table 3.4).

Illegitimate children also affect the economic status of the unwed mother, and diminish her chances of subsequent marriage. An unmarried woman without children can support herself by means of wage labor and beer and liquor sales, or she can earn her keep as a productive member of her brother's or of some other relative's household. But the more children a woman has, the less welcome she is in relatives' houses, and the more difficulty she will have in supporting herself. An unwed mother with countervailing qualities such as beauty, wealth, or a flair for business might succeed in finding a husband who would agree to raise her illegitimate child or children along with the legitimate children-to-come. But on the whole, the stigma (not severe, but nonetheless present) and the economic burden that illegitimate children represent diminish the unwed mother's marital eligibility. In my sample of 84 Baragaonle women who had borne at least one illegitimate child, the proportion who had never married was nearly one and a half times as high as in the total population.

Since illegitimacy is so often associated with poverty, it is difficult to say whether it is mainly the poverty that diminishes a person's prospects of marriage, or whether the "illegitimate" or "unwed mother" status per se is the more important factor. In many contexts one creates an artificial dichotomy by trying to analyze "economic status" and "social status" separately, since empirically it is so often the case that these two kinds of statuses co-vary in a chicken-and-egg fashion. Poverty, as we have seen, often derives from a person's social status; for instance, a person's poor economic circumstances may be a function of his or her illegitimate status. On the other hand, economic status is an important determinant of social status.

In an obvious way, the prevalence of illegitimacy in Baragaon is a function of relatively permissive attitudes concerning pre-marital sex, a lack of preoccupation with female chastity, and a corresponding lack of emphasis on controlling female sexuality. It should be kept in mind, however, that illegitimacy is a cultural, not a natural

TABLE 3.4

## RATES OF NON-MARRIAGE AMONG ILLEGITIMATE PEOPLE IN BARAGAON

Ages		Total Number of Illegitimate	Number Never Married	Percent Never Married	Percent Never Married in whole population (including illegitimate and legitimate)
MALES	20 +	40	13	.33	.16
	25 +	31	5	.16	.10
FEMALES	20 +	37	13	.35	.21
	25 +	31	9	.29	.17

phenomenon. A bastard is a bastard only in relation to the culturally defined concept of legitimate versus illegitimate reproduction and, in fact, in Baragaon the definition varies from village to village. In at least half of the twelve villages a child born out of wedlock is defined as nyolu or nyolmo regardless of whether the parents subsequently marry. In other villages, however, the child becomes legitimate and entitled to inherit its father's property if the parents marry.\*

The very existence of the categories "legitimate" and "illegitimate", the fact that they are used as a basis for denying access to inherited property, and the fact that illegitimacy diminishes marital eligibility, all reveal the presence of underlying ideas that in some ways

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\*My informants gave inconsistent reports regarding several other villages.

contradict or belie the permissive attitudes towards pre-marital sex. The cultural ideology that surrounds female sexuality is decidedly ambivalent, and the phenomenon of "illegitimacy" reflects this ambivalence. Even though severe negative sanctions against extra-marital or pre-marital sex are absent, both unwed mothers and illegitimate off-spring are "punished" in that they are socially defined in ways that limit their future prospects of marriage and their access to property.

#### Effects of Late Marriage and Non-marriage on Reproductive Patterns

Statistics indicate that the level of fertility in Baragaon is significantly lower than in Nepal as a whole. According to the Nepal Fertility Survey (HMG 1977b:49) the average number of children ever born for ever-married women ages 45 to 49 is 5.7. Since 99.3 percent of all Nepalese women have married by the time they reach this age (see HMG 1977b:35), the difference in the average number of children would be negligible if all women, married and unmarried, were considered. The average number of children ever born to ever-married Baragaonle women ages 45 to 49 is approximately 4.7 (4.5 for ages 45 and above)--at least one child less per woman than the nation-wide average.

When all women, married and unmarried, are considered, the average number of children ever born is 3.9 for women ages 45-49 (3.8 for women ages 45 and above). In other words, the average number of children ever born is nearly two less for Baragaonle women than for Nepalese women as a whole. Several other measures of fertility are included in the Appendix. The mean numbers of children ever born to Baragaonle women are presented in Table 3.5, and compared with the nation-wide means.

The difference of nearly one child in the averages for ever married and for all Baragaonle women shows that the high incidence of non-marriage has a definite impact on the over-all level of fertility in the twelve villages, these twelve villages comprising a more or less endogamous group. The effects of late marriage are not as easy to measure as the effects of non-marriage, but in general, later marriage is thought to have been an important factor which has contributed to reduced fertility levels in pre-modern Western Europe and in a number of contemporary developing countries in Asia as well (China, Hong Kong,

TABLE 3.5

MEAN NUMBER OF CHILDREN EVER BORN BY AGE GROUP OF WOMEN.  
COMPARING BARAGAON WITH ALL-NEPAL

Ages	(Nation-wide) Mean Number of Children Ever Born for Ever Married Women*	(Baragaon) Mean Number of Children Ever Born for Ever Married Women**	(Baragaon) Mean Number of Children Ever Born for All Women including Unmarried***
50 ±	-	4.5	3.7
45-9	5.7	4.7	3.9
40-4	5.5	4.4	4.0
35-9	5.1	4.4	4.0
30-4	4.1	3.6	3.3
25-9	2.9	2.3	1.9
20-4	1.4	1.2	0.8
15-9	0.3	0.2	0.1

\*Since 99.3 of all Nepalese women are married by the time they reach ages 45-9, a difference in the mean number of children ever born would be negligible for the later age groups if all women, married and unmarried, were considered. (Nation-wide figures from Nepal Fertility Survey, HMG 1977b:49).

\*\*Calculated on the basis of all women (N=376) for whom the information is known.

\*\*\*Calculated on the basis of all women (N=563) for whom the information is known.

Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Sri Lanka). (See Population Information Program 1979:106, also Davis and Blake 1956, Dixon 1971, Lesthaege 1971.) Given the magnitude of the difference between the average age at marriage in Baragaon and in Nepal as a whole--nearly five years--it is probably safe to assume that the difference in fertility is related at least to some extent to the difference in the average age at marriage.

Given the traditional patterns of nuptiality and fertility, over-population does not appear to be a serious problem in Baragaon at present, but this situation could change dramatically in a relatively short time. There are indications that the proportion of Baragaonle women who never marry is decreasing, and it will probably continue to drop if economic options continue to expand and the practices of polyandry and religious celibacy continue to decline. An increase in fertility is likely to result. If, simultaneously, health conditions and nutrition are improved and the mortality rate drops, the rate of population growth may increase drastically.

Fortunately, though, the prevailing cultural attitudes concerning family size suggest that Baragaonle would be very receptive to family planning methods if these were made available in ways that were consistent with their own social norms and cultural views. In response to questions about ideal numbers of children,\* the most common answers were: "one boy and one girl", "two boys and one girl", and "two boys and two girls". Eighteen women and six men who were interviewed wanted an average of about one and one half boys and one and one fourth girls each. Three of the women said "none"; one of these was a poor married woman with six children (and she may have been joking). Another was an even poorer unmarried woman with one illegitimate child and another on the way (she was probably not joking). And the third was a well-

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\*The question was: "How many boys and how many girls do you think it's best to have?" I was actually surprised to find that most people considered this a reasonable question to ask. No one answered: "We don't know; it's up to god", or anything to that effect.

to-do but unhappily married (polyandrous) woman around 26 years of age who had never been pregnant (she was probably expressing how she genuinely felt in her present circumstances).

Two of the 25 informants told me that the ideal number would differ, depending on whether the parents were rich or poor. The informants who gave this answer were both relatively poor women. One said "two boys and two girls if the parents are rich; one boy and one girl if they are poor". The other said "three or four children in all for rich people, two children for poor people, and no children for very poor people." I have often heard the same idea expressed in non-structured conversations. For example: "Poor Korchung, she ran away because her husbands beat her and now she is destitute. If a woman is childless she can make beer and sell it, but how can a woman with no house, no fields, and no money support children?"

The economic cost of children is clearly a vital consideration for Baragaonle. Since children tend to cost more and contribute less in modernizing contexts (see, for example, Polgar 1978, Nag 1978, Easterlin 1978), there is no reason to expect that Baragaonle will begin to want larger families as economic development proceeds.

#### Unmarried Women: Subsistence and Life-styles

The social and economic status of the unmarried Baragaonle woman is peripheral in a number of ways. As explained earlier, there are a traditionally fixed number of landed estate-owning households (trongba) in each village, which form the core of community organization. Taxes, communal labor, traditional political participation, and often religious and secular rituals as well, are organized with reference to these units. The non-entitled people who do not inherit trongba estates nor marry into trongba have to fit themselves into the community as best they can. It is not only unwed women who are peripheral in respect to the trongba. The position of illegitimate people, religious celibates, immigrants, and men who split off from polyandrous marriages is similar to that of the unmarried woman vis a vis the trongba. And not all of these people are poor; some of them have acquired considerable wealth through trade, bought land, and established power and stature in the community. However,

it is more often men or married couples than single women who have achieved this. This discussion will focus primarily on the unmarried women.

In what ways do they "fit themselves in"? Most basically, they do so in their residence and their work patterns. The majority do not own houses or land. Some live with parents or married brothers, others in borrowed quarters: a small house, a converted barn, or even a single room with a separate entrance, attached to another person's house. Often it is a brother who lends the living space, but it can just as well be anyone who has room to share. It often varies from year to year, or with the seasons. A family that migrates south for the winter will often install a single woman in their house to feed the animals and look after the property. Some become live-in servants, but rarely for more than a few months at a time. Some migrate south in winter. Like other migrant women they live in rented rooms in Pokhara or in makeshift shelters along the trade route, manufacturing and selling beer and liquor, spinning wool into yarn, and working at various other odd jobs.

Since their means of support is their own labor, yet steady employment is unavailable, unwed women need to be willing to accept employment whenever it is offered. Agricultural work (as described in Chapter 2) is extremely seasonal, and for several months each year agricultural laborers are considered a scarce resource in Baragaon. The pool of unmarried females and other peripheral people is a convenient source of seasonal labor for the landed households. Peripheral people, landless or virtually landless, have no communal work obligations of their own, and no use for exchange labor (B. lakchap; Nep. parma). Nevertheless, they are rarely absent from communal projects and labor exchange groups, since wealthier individuals hire them to work in their stead.

An informal patron-client relationship often emerges, in which one or two of the same individuals who do paid agricultural labor in a particular household are invited to visit during the slack season for periods of a few days or even weeks, in order to engage in crafts such as weaving, and to assist in other miscellaneous chores. This frees the host family members to engage in trade, household management and food preparation. Meanwhile, the blankets, mats, grainsacks and other locally-made items that are

needed in a large household are produced under the host family's supervision. Most peripheral people, and in particular poor, single women, establish informal relationships of this kind with one or more patron families, often their own relatives or neighbors. They do not always work on a live-in basis; they can simply be called when an extra hand is needed.

Their pay consists mainly of meals, plus occasional small gifts of food, clothing, money, or loans of money, food, implements, living quarters, etc. Even when there is no work to be done, the patrons frequently offer cups of tea, glasses of beer, snacks, gossip, a warm place by the fire in winter, and so on. The interaction between the propertyless person and the patron or patrons tends to be friendly and informal; so much so, that a casual observer might not detect the hierarchical nature of the relationship. However, there is an underlying assumption in patronage relationships: the propertyless person cannot afford and has no right to refuse employment when it is offered.\*

### Conclusions

Demographic data show that unmarried women comprise a substantial segment of Baragaon's adult population. My findings regarding modes of subsistence, ownership and control over productive resources, and residence indicate that these women are the most economically depressed segment of the population, but that in terms of productive skills, physical mobility, adaptability, and willingness

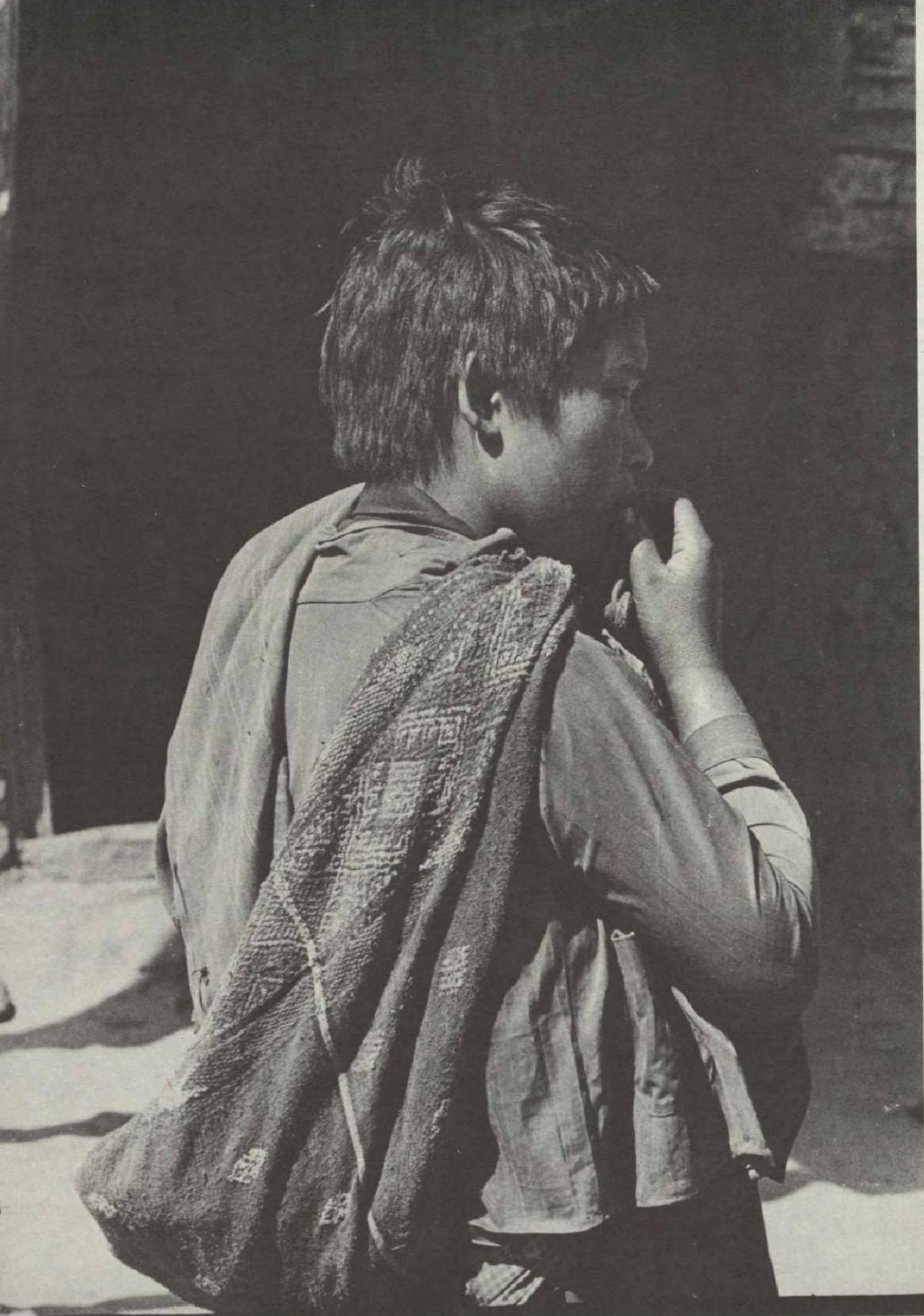
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\*I have heard this idea expressed indirectly in many instances, for example, when a well-to-do family is planning the following day's work and they decide to call so-and-so to help out, they never seem to have any doubt as to whether the person will come. She (or he) must come. I have also heard it explicitly articulated. A propertyless woman who received free housing from a wealthy young heiress once refused a job that I offered her. When the woman was out of earshot the heiress criticised her indignantly. The gist of what she said was: "Who does she think she is? Someone with no house, no fields.... My sister and I have given her so many things! We have even given her a house because she has nothing. A person like that is supposed to do whatever work she can get."

to engage in whatever work seems profitable, unmarried women are a valuable resource and a logical focus for income-generating, health and other projects. These women tend to be landless, or land poor; they depend on wage labor and labor paid in kind for subsistence, and they are relatively free of familial constraints. Thus, they are potentially available for participation in new income-generating activities.



Wealthy married woman.



Young Buddhist nun.



Woman mourning her father's death.

CHAPTER IV  
MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

Arranged Marriage, Elopement and Marriage by Capture

Turning from non-marriage to marriage, what is the range of possibilities in regard to participation in spouse selection? What options do females have, compared with males, in determining whom they will marry?

Generally speaking, there are three different methods by which Baragaonle can contract a legal marriage.\* Arranged marriage is the most common. About 44 percent of all marriages are arranged by the couple's parents, and a substantial proportion of these are between cross-cousin.\*\* In arranged marriages between cross-cousins, the betrothal (yar) usually takes place in early childhood, and for this reason the individuals concerned are rarely

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\*'Legal', in this context, means legal according to traditional custom. Children whose parents' marriage was contracted by any of these three methods are recognized as legitimate (cholu) and are entitled to inherit their parents' property. The National Code (Mulki Ain) also defines as legal marriages that are recognized by traditional custom.

\*\*In anthropological jargon, the children of a person's father's sister(s) and mother's brother(s) are called "cross-cousins", while his or her father's brother's and mother's sister's children are referred to as "parallel cousins". Societies like Baragaon, which permit marriage between some kinds of cousins and prohibit it between other kinds, often classify cousins into two categories that more or less correspond to the "cross-cousin"/"parallel cousin" categories used by anthropologists. In Baragaon there are also distant cousins (e.g., certain second cousins) who are classified as cross-cousins (azhang-ki piza, azhang-ki pomo, ani-ki piza, ani-ki pomo, azhang-ani-ki piza, azhang-ani-ki pomo). It appears that the majority, but by no means all, of the cross-cousin marriages that take place in Baragaon are between first cousins.

consulted. A young man who was not betrothed as a child (or whose fiancée elopes or is married by capture to another man) may be consulted, or he may persuade his parents to initiate negotiations with the parents of a particular young woman. Or he may even initiate the negotiations himself, by means of a go-between, and solicit his parents' co-operation after determining that the young woman's parents are likely to agree to the match. Since negotiations are normally initiated by the male's side, 'arranged marriage' usually means that the bride is a passive participant in the process of spouse selection. Some parents, however, give their daughter the right to refuse. As one informant described the process:

The boy's parents send a delegation of 3 (or 5 or 7) people to the girl's house with a flask of beer, topped with a dab of butter and a white ceremonial scarf. The delegates explain in a respectful manner that they have come to ask for the daughter as nama (wife, daughter-in-law) on so-and-so's behalf. They then offer the beer to the girl's parents. If the parents agree to the marriage they may reply that it's up to the daughter. When they call her to ask her she is likely to respond by running away in embarrassment. The intermediaries will chase after her and try to persuade her; if she refuses or continues to run away, the whole thing may be dropped. But sometimes the parents decide to disregard their daughter's wishes. They use a housepost as a substitute for the girl's head, and they proceed with the betrothal (yar) ritual. After the girl or her parents have agreed, the parents drink the beer and one of the intermediaries smears two or three dabs of the butter on the girl's head, or on the post.

With the drinking of the beer and the smearing of the butter, the relationship becomes legally binding. From this time on, the boy is entitled to visit his fiancée in her bed at night. But due to shyness or lack of interest, most boys begin the semi-surreptitious visits only when they have reached their late teens. If the betrothed girl elopes or is married by capture, the jilted fiancée is entitled to a compensation payment from the new husband.

Approximately 30 percent of all marriages are contracted by elopement, in which the female as well as the male plays an active role. Elopement is the least prestigious of the three types of marriage. Orphans, immigrants and illegitimate people, lacking families and resources to meet the expenses of a wedding celebration, elope, and in many cases so do people who are divorced or widowed and marrying for a second time. But elopement is not only a way of saving on wedding expenses; in fact, some elopements are followed by costly wedding celebrations. Often elopement is simply a means of asserting individual preferences over parents' decisions, and this often entails breaking off an engagement and paying a compensation. Baragaonles' mobile life-style and the fluid character of their residential groups and informal social groups provides plenty of contexts in which unmarried people of the opposite sex can interact, and can form friendships that sometimes develop into secret love affairs. A love affair may become a basis for elopement, and in some cases, for marriage by capture.

About 27 percent of all Baragaonle marriages are by capture. Marriage by capture is practised among a number of ethnic groups in Nepal.\* In some contexts, however, the capture or abduction amounts to a purely symbolic display of force. In Baragaon the use of force is not merely symbolic. I discussed bride capture in various contexts with literally dozens of Baragaonle informants, and they almost invariably described it as an attempt on the part of a male to bring about by physical force a marriage that could probably not have been brought about about by normal means (because the girl's parents or the girl herself or both would have refused).

What does this imply about women's status in Baragaon? Does the practice of marriage by capture put a huge constraint on Baragaonle females' potential for autonomy and mobility and their freedom to make important life decisions? In Baragaonle society women are relatively free from certain psychological constraints

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\*For instance, it has been reported among Magar (Hitchcock 1966: 40-1; Jiro 1974:326-8), Kulunge Rai, Limbu, Tamang, Magar, Thakali (Bista 1967:40,47,56,66,91), among the people of Nar-Phu in Manang (Gurung 1977:236) and in Mewa Khola and Shing-Sa in the Arun Valley (Etter n.d.).

that are present in the lives of many Nepalese women; for example, the ideologically-based preoccupation on the part of society with female chastity and purity. Do we find, instead, that Baragaonle custom allows men to dominate women by brute force?

The answer to this question is not a simple one. Occasionally a captured girl is raped, and under those circumstances the answer is "yes". More often, however, the use of force is a show for the benefit of the public, and in some cases the capture is merely staged, a mask for an elopement. An important feature of marriage by capture in Baragaon is that the abduction of the girl is followed by marriage only if the captive eventually gives her consent.

In a typical capture, the boy (or man) elicits the help of a group of male friends. He bolsters their courage and enthusiasm by serving them large quantities of alcoholic drink. They kidnap the prospective bride and then imprison her for three days in the house of a respected villager. During the time that she is kept prisoner, the would-be husband tries to seduce the girl and win her affection and her consent to marriage. With her consent as his goal, he presents her with gifts of clothing or jewelry and describes the actual and potential wealth that he wishes she would share. One by one he sends mutual friends or influential members of the community to speak persuasively on the subject of his sterling character and his great potential for success. On the third day, two or three of her female relatives will be admitted inside to question her. If the captive wants to go ahead with the marriage she prostrates herself at the women's feet, begging their forgiveness. If she is resolved not to marry her captor she weeps and tells them so and, triumphantly, they take her home.

Under what circumstances does a young woman agree to marry her captor? To what extent can we say that a woman's consent, in this context, is the result of a voluntary decision? Is two or three days time sufficient for a woman to consider her options? She is in captivity, and under pressure. She is not given the opportunity to consult her family or friends--to what extent is she likely to be coerced? When a capture occurs, villagers watch to see what happens: is she eating the captor's food, drinking his beer? Does she

talk and laugh, or weep continuously? Has he succeeded in seducing her? The details of the girl's behavior during her three days in captivity become grist for ceaseless gossip. If she is raped, the community will probably come to know about it. Many young women seem to feel that their reputations can weather the effects of discrete sexual liaisons but most of them fear capture and rape. Do some captives agree to marriage because they would feel humiliated returning to their families? Do they fear stigmatization and spinsterhood?

In idealized hypothetical accounts the young man always manages to seduce his captive, thus winning her over. In reality, since the bride is in any case expected to put up a show of fear and resistance, even the successful captor himself may never know whether his success was the result of the capture-seduction-persuasion or whether she would have eloped with him anyway. Some captures, as noted above, are staged. In most cases the public is left to speculate as to whether and to what extent there was collusion on the part of the bride.

Suppose that a girl from a wealthy or an aristocratic family is in love with a boy from a poor or a low status family. An arranged marriage would be virtually out of the question. Even if she were pregnant and even if her parents were relatively unconventional at heart, the parents would be reluctant to anger their kindred and to excite the community's scorn by consenting to an arranged marriage. If the girl had an eligible cross-cousin, the indignation of her kin would be all the more energetic. The girl could elope, but she would know that elopement often entails severed relations with family and kin. Only an extremely self-reliant, self confident young woman would be willing to lose her primary support network. In most cases relations can be restored, but the process often takes years, and it is generally during the first few years of marriage that a girl or young woman is most in need of support from her natal family.

Suppose that she were captured. Her parents would remain blameless in the eyes of the community. They would respond, according to custom, with shows of outrage and grief, and they would keep it up until the new son-in-law and his family paid an appropriately large monetary compensation. What the girl's parents actually felt would lie practically invisible beneath the conventional

displays. The girl herself would be blamed initially, but when her parents (having consulted the bilateral kindred) had finally accepted the compensation payment and drunk the conciliatory beer poured from the flask of their new son-in-law, normal relations could be resumed. There are a number of reasons why a woman might marry a lower-status captor. She might be in love with him or pregnant with his child. She might have been betrothed to a person she dislikes, perhaps a cross-cousin. She might crave wealth, and might see her captor as a potentially or already-successful trader. She might become caught up in the romantic spirit of the capture, and imagining that she could easily do worse, might agree without any compelling reason.

In conclusion, 'marriage by capture' in Baragaon is a conventionalized procedure which covers, like a mask, a wide range of situations and relationships. In some cases it provides social legitimation for the coercion of females. In other cases, however, it permits a woman to assert her personal preference, to make an unconventional decision without sacrificing social prestige or seriously alienating her primary support group, her natal family.

In Table 4.1., the bride's and groom's roles in spouse selection are compared in relation to the three methods for contracting a legal marriage.

#### The Married Woman and her Natal Family

In some societies marriage can be a traumatic event for the bride. For a Brahman or a Chetri girl, for example, marriage may entail leaving one's family at a young age to join a household-full of strangers in a distant and alien village. Visits to one's parental home may be few and far between. Baragaonle girls marry at relatively later ages, and even after marriage they often reside for extended periods with their natal families, particularly during the first few years of marriage, before the birth of the first child.

As noted earlier, married women often form partnerships with their sisters or mothers during the migratory trading season. A Baragaonle friend once questioned me extensively about my own relationship with my parents. How was it, she wondered, that I could go

TABLE 4.1

## VOLUNTARY DECISION MAKING VS. PASSIVE PARTICIPATION IN SPOUSE SELECTION, COMPARING THE GROOM'S AND THE BRIDE'S ROLES

Percentage of All Marriages*		Type of Marriage	Groom's Role in Spouse Selection	Bride's Role in Spouse Selection
44%	(est.) 24%	arranged (cross cousin, with betrothal at young age)	passive participant	passive participant
	(est.) 20%	arranged (not cross cousin; age at betrothal varies)	sometimes passive; sometimes consulted; sometimes initiates the arrangement	sometimes passive; sometimes given the right to refuse
27%		capture** (no betrothal)	independent actor	has the right to refuse (but the conditions under which the decision must be made are not always conducive to a voluntary decision) ----- ambiguous bride's role is concealed
30%		elopement	independent actor	independent actor

\*Based on 321 currently married women

\*\*Staged captures were classified as 'elopement', but it is possible that there were additional staged captures that were reported to me as real captures. After all, the object in a staged capture is to make it appear real. In view of this, the above percentages should be treated as approximations.

off to Nepal for over two years without going back to visit them. The long separations from my husband, who was living in Kathmandu, did not strike her as anything out of the ordinary. A young Baragaonle woman, she told me is expected to visit her mother daily if she is married in her natal village. (Roughly half of all marriages are village endogamous.) If her brothers are unmarried she might even go twice a day to help her mother with the work. A girl who neglected to visit her mother for several days running would be criticized by the other villagers. There would be gossip and speculation as to the causes of the supposed rift between mother and daughter. The visiting may taper off somewhat as the brother's wife establishes her position in the household, and later in life it may be the mother who visits the daughter regularly. A young woman who marries outside her natal village will have less opportunity to visit. Depending on the distance, she might go weekly or monthly.

Baragaonle girls who marry cross cousins sometimes marry young, in many cases between the ages of sixteen and nineteen. But when a girl marries her cross-cousin she marries into the household of her aunt, uncle and cousins. Their home is familiar to her, and the fact that so-and-so will be her husband is not a new idea. She will have heard it repeated hundreds of times in the form of playmates' teasing. Thus, for the bride of a cross-cousin the transition from unmarried to married status is not apt to be an emotionally traumatic experience. Yet there is an inherent structural problem. Normally a Baragaonle woman turns to her natal relatives for support in case of a serious marital conflict. Her customary rights are protected mainly by the weight of social pressure, not by any formal legal apparatus, and it is mainly her own kin who will apply social pressure on her behalf. In a cross-cousin marriage, however, there is an overlap, and in some cases a complete overlap, between the wife's kindred and the husband's. The result is that a woman cannot always count on her own kin to take her part in a marital dispute. Even if she feels that she would be better off divorced or separated, her kin are likely to press for reconciliation.

Divorce and Widowhood: Women's Rights and Options under Customary Law

On a general level, the property rights of divorced and widowed women in Baragaon can be simply described. The woman who divorces her husband gets nothing except her own dowry property. She has no right to anything she may have earned or produced while living in her husband's household. If the divorce is her own choice, and regardless of whether or not she elopes with another man, she may even have to pay several hundred or a thousand rupees to her husband before she can collect her dowry property. The woman who is widowed, by contrast, gets everything but only for her lifetime. She cannot sell any of her husband's ancestral property, nor will it to a person of her choice. The property reverts to her deceased husband's patrilineal relatives at her death.

The existence of children alters the situation. A widow's children have full inheritance rights to their deceased father's property. In case of divorce, the children's inheritance rights are not unambiguously defined by customary law. In abstract discussions, informants usually say that sons remain with the father and inherit his property, while daughters are raised by their mother. They may request and receive a dowry from their father at marriage, but this depends upon the father's generosity. He is not obliged to give anything. In practice it appears that sons as well as daughters usually remain with their mother following divorce. Under these circumstances the sons usually retain their inheritance rights, although the amount that they will inherit is determined more or less ad hoc, by means of lengthy discussions, negotiations and arguing. Several informants maintain that if there were sons by a second wife, the son or sons of the first wife would be entitled to take half of the father's property. If the divorce is by mutual consent, and if the wife has no known plans to remarry, a well-to-do man might hand over a large portion of his children's inheritance at the time of the divorce, for their maintenance, but the wife would have no right to demand the property.

There is a general rule that a man or a woman who divorces his or her spouse must pay 1,000 rupees to the deserted person in compensation. In actual practice, however, it is not always completely clear who divorced

whom. In principle, a polyandrous husband who leaves his wife and brothers to elope with another woman is also liable to pay 1,000 rupees. I know of one case in which the husband actually paid, but it is my impression that at present non-payment is more common.

Aside from cases in which one polyandrous husband leaves, a husband is not apt to 'leave' his wife, since this would mean leaving his own house and land. When serious marital conflicts occur and the husband or the wife or both wish to extricate themselves, the typical scenario is a war of nerves, which may rage on for months or even years. Both parties want public sentiment on their side, and if there is a compensation to be paid, both would rather collect than pay. If the husband begins to resort to repeated physical violence, the wife will probably run away to her parents' home or to the home of some other close relative. The relatives may then call together a group of elders or Panchayat members to work out a separation or divorce settlement.

If he had driven her away by means of physical violence, the husband would probably be obliged to give his wife a divorce and pay her the 1,000 rupees compensation, or to hand over part of his children's inheritance so that she and the children could live separately from him. If the husband's offenses were less dramatic, or if his family were influential in the community and his wife's family were not, the wife would probably receive little or nothing as a result of the settlement. A man might induce his wife to leave him by taking a second wife, or simply by provoking her. Although she would have a lot to lose, pride would probably prevent her from returning unless she were invited back by her husband. And she would get none of her husband's property if she stayed away.

In the case of a man taking a second wife, the first wife's position is more favorable under the National Code (Mulki Ain) than under Baragaonle customary law, but most Baragaonle are not aware of this. On a questionnaire pertaining to knowledge of the National Code,\* the sixty-one

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\*The responses to the questions on disposal of dowry property were discussed in Chapter 2.

male and sixty-one female respondents were unanimous in saying that a man could legally take a second wife if he had obtained written agreement from the first wife. None of the respondents were aware that bigamy is only legal under certain conditions, such as childlessness after ten years of marriage. The Code also states that if a man takes a second wife, the first wife can separate from him and, as a legal co-parcencer, take with her a full share of his property. 67 percent of the female respondents, however, and 77 percent of the male respondents said that the first wife could not claim a share, but 52 percent of the female respondents and 57 percent of the males added that her children could claim a share. A few of the respondents specified "sons", but most said "sons and daughters". This is interesting, since in Baragaonle daughters are entitled to inherit only if there are no sons. What they receive as dowry depends on their parents' wishes.

The responses obviously reflected what Baragaonle knew about their own customary law, not the National Code. The fact that the responses were far from unanimous does not mean that a large proportion of Baragaonle are ignorant about their own customary law. Rather, it shows that customary law is ambiguous on some points. The outcome of marital and property disputes in particular is more often determined by ad hoc negotiation than by application and enforcement of a set of legal principles. In each particular case a multitude of idiosyncratic details come into play.

In the following account, a woman who was physically abused by her polyandrous husbands decided to present her case to the local police court. She had been led to believe that she had more theoretical rights under the National Code than under Baragaonle customary law, but she discovered that there is often a large gap between one's theoretical rights and one's ability to secure what they provide.\*

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\*Her rights, even under the Legal Code, are not extensive nor well defined. In order to obtain a legal divorce--which would entitle her to five years maintenance for herself and maintenance for her child up to legal adulthood--she would have to convince the court that

Mendok was betrothed as a young girl and sent to her polyandrous husbands' house at an unusually early age: fifteen years. When she was seventeen years old she gave birth to a daughter. For the most part she was content with her life, but now and then one of her husbands, or the pair of them, would come home drunk, pick a fight over some trivial matter, and then beat her up. She could not easily turn to her family. Her parents had both died, and although she had four brothers and a sister, the nearest lived several hours distance from her husbands' home.

One night, after a severe beating, she took refuge with a neighbor. The following morning she tied her baby onto her back and hiked for five hours along the ravine to her brother's house in Jarkot. After a few days had passed, the senior husband arrived on horseback. He apologized to her family but said nothing to her, and they agreed to send her back.

For several months there were no serious quarrels, only minor ones. Then one night the two husbands came home drunk and bad tempered. She too found it hard to hold her tongue. The three began quarrelling and Mendok was badly beaten by both husbands and threatened with a knife.

It was late but the moon was full, so Mendok bundled up her baby and set off for Jarkot. The river was deep and fast flowing due to seasonal snow melt, but she forded it and reached the house of her older sister before daybreak. She spent the next several months in various relatives' houses, working hard and moving on each time she began to fear that she was overstaying her welcome. She was young, strong and diligent, but with a baby screaming for attention, she could not contribute as much labor as she felt she ought to.

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her husbands' actions were designed to result in severe physical suffering for her. She might, however, obtain a legal separation on the grounds that she was frequently beaten up or harrassed. This would entitle her to take a share of her husband's property. (See Bennett 1979:60,62.)

Mendok's family was well off, but the property had already been divided between the four brothers: As a female she could claim nothing. Had she remained unmarried she could perhaps have lived in her father's house. But she had married young and given up her place there. Her father and mother were dead and she did not feel at home among brothers who had grown up in her absence.

Her relatives would never have let her go hungry, but Mendok's pride made it difficult to accept their charity. She often thought of going back. She liked her husbands' village, liked their house, and even liked them as long as they stayed sober.

The junior husband arrived one day to call her back, but he was rude and arrogant. Without any apology at all he presented her with an ultimatum: either come back immediately or break off the marriage for good. One of her cousins scolded him for his rudeness and he went away angry, shouting abuses as he stormed off.

Mendok shifted again from her cousins' house to her sister's house. After a month had passed the senior husband arrived and made the same demand: "If you're coming back, say so: if you're not coming, let us know now!" This time she answered: "I'll come back to you. I never said that I wouldn't. I'm your wife. But why should you beat me up and try to kill me with a knife? If I agree to come you must sign an agreement swearing that you won't beat me or hurt me. Otherwise how can I come? I'm alone there, with no family to protect me!" Her cousins had prompted her to demand the signed statement.

The husband was angry. "I'm your husband!", he shouted, "Why should I sign such a thing!" And he rode away on his horse.

A few days later the family heard a rumor revealing the purpose of the husbands' ultimatum. They planned to rent out their house and land, sell all their animals, and move to India for several years' trading. Mendok and her relatives felt that she and her child ought to occupy the house and cultivate the fields during husbands' absence.

One of Mendok's cousins who had had a few years education, eager to inflate his own status in the community, sought the support of local government officials. He visited the police court at the district headquarters, a few hours journey by horse from Jarkot, and as a result Mendok and her two husbands were summoned by the court for mediation.

The husbands explained that she had had her chance to stay with them in their home. Now she could accompany them to India if she liked, but if she insisted on living independently they would refuse to support her. Mendok answered that she had never been to India and had no experience at business. She would stay in the village and work the fields--half the fields and a few goats would be sufficient--and whatever profit she made would be theirs. The husbands replied that the animals had already been sold and the fields already rented out for a period of five years. There was no resolution that day.

Several days later Mendok went back to the court with her older sister, to ask once more for court intervention. After a long day in the waiting room, the women were told to go home: since the marriage was polyandrous it was not legal. Therefore she had no legal claim to support for herself or her baby. The two sisters went back to their village.

Publicly, the husbands reacted with anger when they heard that Mendok had gone to the court on her own, but they also felt smug and self-righteous on account of her resounding failure. Now she had not much hope of obtaining a favorable settlement in the traditional manner.

Several years and several temporary reconciliations later, Mendok was living in a rented room in Pokhara, brewing beer and spinning wool to support herself and her daughter. Mutual acquaintances told me that she was suffering from tuberculosis.

Transitions from customary legal systems to modern codified systems are rarely smooth, and it is most often the powerless and the poor who suffer when they are caught

in between.

### Written Agreements concerning Marriage and Divorce

As mentioned earlier, a woman's dowry property is listed on the day of her wedding, with the express purpose of keeping track of each item to ensure that she can reclaim everything in case of divorce. In addition, a kanja (contract or agreement) is often written on the wedding day, and signed with thumbprints by the couple and several witnesses. What is the kanja's function? In what ways does it establish or protect women's rights in marriage?

It is not the written kanja that makes a marriage legal; in Baragaon any marriage that is socially recognized is legal and binding. Often the kanja is merely decorative. It reasserts that the couple is marrying in good faith, and that everyone hopes the marriage will be a harmonious one. Sometimes the husband promises in the kanja not to drink, gamble or beat his wife, but informants tend to agree that it is a rare husband who never drinks and never plays cards. No one really expects a man to refrain from these activities merely because he has signed a kanja.

As for not beating the wife, the common explanation is something to the effect that a kanja is an expression of good intentions; although it cannot actually prevent wife beating, the inclusion of a clause against it is not a bad idea. Often this clause is followed by a statement saying that in the event that the husband does drink, gamble and/or beat his wife, or if he is unfaithful or leaves his wife, he will have to pay her 1,000 rupees and hand over her dowry. Similarly, should the wife be unfaithful or leave her husband without good cause, she will have to pay him 1,000 rupees. Again, since 1,000 rupees is the standard amount that is supposed to be paid under such circumstances, the role of the kanja is largely decorative or reinforcing. It does not necessarily define the terms of the marriage relationship. A kanja pertaining to a polyandrous marriage may state that any husband who leaves will be obliged to pay a compensation to the wife. In cases where a propertyless man marries an heiress, a clause may be included to affirm that their children will inherit the mother's patrimony.

There are occasional exceptions, where it appears that the kanja is actually being used to alter the terms of the marriage relationship (or to assert that the terms have been altered by mutual agreement of the parties concerned). For example, the amount to be paid in case of divorce may be raised to 2,000 or 3,000 rupees, or the bride and groom may agree that the bride will work an additional one to three years in her parents' household. In the event of a second marriage the kanja sometimes stipulates how the property will be divided among the children. A man may agree in a kanja to make his first wife's daughter a nun, so that children born to the second wife will have full inheritance rights. Even conditions as specific as these, however, are not necessarily upheld merely because they are written.

A kanja is considered good to have in case of a dispute, but it does not guarantee anything. This is particularly true in regard to the rights and protection that the kanja appears to provide for women. The majority of the divorced women I interviewed had not succeeded in collecting any compensation from their former husbands, and they invariably responded with sarcasm when I raised the subject of the kanja.

#### Divorce, Widowhood, and Remarriage: Demographic Aspects

In Table 3.1 (see p.75) Baragaon is compared with the whole of Nepal in respect to the proportions of divorced women in various age groups. In the whole of Nepal the proportions of divorced women are practically negligible; in Baragaon they appear high by contrast. However, in comparison with other Tibeto-Burman speaking Nepalese hill societies, the divorce rate in Baragaon appears to be about average. Approximately 25 percent of the Baragaonle women and 30 percent of the men who have ever married have been divorced at least once. This includes polyandrous divorces, which in most cases were only partial, in other words one of the polyandrous brothers left and the other(s) remained married. Baragaonle consider this a divorce (kha dalgen). Counting only the women whose marital status changed from "married" to "unmarried" as the result of divorce, roughly 20 percent have ever been divorced. Molnar (1980) reports that 26 percent of the men and 23 percent of the women among a group of Kham Magar were ever divorced. 21 percent of the ever-married Limbu women interviewed by

Jones (1976:179) had ever been divorced, and 16 percent of the Gurung women surveyed by Pignede in 1958 (MacFarlane 1976:227) had been divorced one or more times.

According to Nag, roughly speaking, a rate of 20 percent or more ever-divorced among ever-married people of either sex is "high" for a non-industrial society and anything below that is "low". Similarly, he considers the divorce rate "high" if 5 percent or more of the ever-married individuals of either sex are currently divorced at any given time (1976:98). In Baragaon 8 percent of the ever-married women and 4 percent of the ever-married men are currently divorced. Thus, the rate of divorce is moderately high. But there is a much greater proportion of never-married women (55 percent) than divorced women (14 percent) among those over age nineteen who are currently unmarried. The remaining 31 percent are widows.

There is no particular stigma against divorced or widowed people in Baragaon and no proscription against remarriage for either sex. For other reasons, however, the rate of remarriage is not as high as it might be. As described earlier, Baragaonle adhere strongly to the idea that a household can rarely be run smoothly by two or more mistresses. There should be at least one nama (wife, daughter-in-law) in a household, but two or more will likely come to blows. On the other hand, it is widely held that household partition is a poor economic strategy. A common outcome of this combination of beliefs about household structure is the following: that if a man's wife dies after bearing a child--preferably but not necessarily a son--he will try to keep the household going without taking a new wife, leaving the position of house mistress empty until his son's marriage or his daughter's maturity. By forgoing remarriage he avoids future domestic conflict which might lead to partition.

In one case, the exception that proves the rule, a Baragaonle woman died, leaving her husband, Wangdi, with a daughter. Rather than remarry, the widower gave his estate to his daughter and married her to a propertyless man who would share the estate with her. Several years later, Wangdi fell in love with a widowed woman his own age and began visiting her at night. He would often bring her small gifts of food or drink. He was fairly

discrete, but the daughter and son-in-law caught on, and they were outraged. One night as Wangdi crept out of the house, a bottle of home-distilled liquor in his hand, he was ambushed by the son-in-law. There was a scuffle on the path in front of the house; the bottle was smashed and Wangdi's head was cut by the broken glass. The son-in-law scolded him: "Why don't you just stay home and let us take care of you!" Wangdi's answer was something to the effect of: "You're getting it--why shouldn't I?" Later he married the widow and moved out, taking a small share of property. If he dies before his new wife does, she will be entitled to keep this property as long as she lives, but at her death it will revert to Wangdi's daughter and son-in-law.

Among all ever-married Baragaonle, about 11 percent of the women and 27 percent of the men had married two times or more. Among the Kham Magar, 41 percent of the women and 58 percent of the men had remarried (Molnar 1980). Bennett (1981) calculated a surprisingly high rate of remarriage for Parbatiya (the majority of whom were Brahman or Chetri): 11 percent for women and 46 percent for men.



Woman in ritual marriage procession.



The bride's companion tries to comfort her with a cup of beer.

## CHAPTER V

### HEALTH, EDUCATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

#### Health

By the standards of rural Nepal, the average Baragaonle is well nourished. The typical diet in Baragaon includes dairy products such as butter, served daily in salted tea, buttermilk, and dried cheese, as well as dried and, occasionally, fresh meat. The meat is cooked with dried chilli peppers to make a sauce, which is eaten with buckwheat porridge, wheat bread, buckwheat bread, or rice. It may only amount to a bite or two per person, but in households of average or above average means, meat is eaten daily throughout much of the year. Meat (usually yak or goat) can be preserved for months by cutting it into strips and hanging it from rafters above the hearth. When the supply runs out, dried cheese or buttermilk is used as a substitute. Poorer people have only potatoes and radishes to eat with their grain and some, especially the elderly and the solitary, live mainly on salted butter tea and parched barley flour. A meal of tea or barley beer and flour requires very little fuel to prepare.

Although fresh fruits and vegetables are usually not available, buckwheat greens, native peaches and apricots, radishes, and a few wild green plants and fungi are eaten in season and dried for consumption during the long winter. The cereals vary from meal to meal rather than from season to season. For example, if rice or wheat bread is eaten in the morning, the evening meal will probably consist of buckwheat porridge or buckwheat bread. Barley flour and beer are often consumed as snacks, between meals. Given the rather limited variety of foods, the ways in which they are combined probably provide a fairly good nutritional balance. The low protein diet of the poorer Baragaonle might be improved by encouraging the consumption of beans, peas and lentils, and making them easier to obtain locally, since they are considerably cheaper than meat and dairy products. Beans can be grown in Baragaon, but only a few households grow them; peas are sometimes imported from villages located farther north in the same district, and a few households import lentils (dal) from Pokhara. An increased supply of

vegetables, especially green vegetables, would improve everyone's diet.

At present a few families have kitchen gardens, but most of the vegetables are consumed by tourists, police and government officials. One problem is that these newly introduced vegetables are often damaged by insects which many villagers, as Buddhists, are reluctant to kill. Several Baragaonle admitted to me that they would use insecticide if it were available, although they could not bring themselves to pick the caterpillars off the plants and crush them by hand.

The most pressing health problems in Baragaon are probably related to factors other than nutrition.\* Many of them could be alleviated by improved hygiene and living conditions. Respiratory diseases such as pulmonary tuberculosis, bronchitis, pneumonia and influenza are common, and these are probably related to, or at least exacerbated by, the smoky, inadequately ventilated kitchens and the incessant wind that often engulfs the villages in clouds of dust. The smoke and dust also contribute to the prevalence of conjunctivitis (an infectious inflammation of the eyes), which becomes a virtual epidemic in Baragaon during some seasons. Water and food-borne diseases such as gastro-enteritis and intestinal parasites are rampant. Ear and skin infections are common, and there is some incidence of goitre. Seasonal migration, given the conditions of life on the trail, contributes to the spread of disease, particularly skin and gastro-intestinal infections.

Both illness and death are generally attributed to supernatural causes. When treatment is sought it is most often local religious specialists who are consulted first. After determining the cause of the ailment by one of various methods, the specialist will usually recommend an

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\*The following is a general sketch, not a definitive report on health conditions. Since no systematic study has been done, the information is based on my own impressions and on discussions with Mr. Sankar Karki, the Senior Auxiliary Healthworker from the Healthpost at Mustang, and an American M.D., Janice Stevens, who spent three weeks with me in Baragaon. Thanks are owed to these two people.

offering or an exorcism ritual, or both. There are a few local specialists with some knowledge of traditional Tibetan medicine, who also prescribe and sell vegetable and mineral medicines.

Despite their traditional beliefs about the nature of illness, Baragaonle often show a receptive attitude towards modern allopathic medicine. Many individuals request and receive medicines from visiting trekkers and mountaineers, and those who visit Pokhara or Kathmandu often go to hospitals there for treatment of chronic and acute ailments. Many are reluctant to visit the hospital in Jomsom, two to six hours walk south of the various Baragaonle villages, but their reluctance should probably not be attributed to traditional attitudes. The inadequacy of the facility and its inconvenient distance may be more important factors.

There is obviously a great need for preventive medicine in Baragaon. Curative treatment alone is a waste of resources in situations where constant reinfection occurs due to lack of sanitation and inadequate hygiene. Unfortunately, preventive medicine tends to be more difficult to promote than curative medicine, since it often requires changes in lifestyle. Junior Auxiliary Healthworkers (JAHW's) were recently stationed in several of the villages as part of a government program (the Integrated Community Health Program), but apparently they have had little success. Two of the main problems are 1) the failure to recruit local people who could be trained to promote preventive health care in their own villages, and 2) the failure to recruit women. Since childcare and socialization as well as food preparation and housekeeping are tasks performed mainly by women, education in personal hygiene and sanitation must be directed towards women. The communication problems experienced by the JAHW's in Baragaon were probably related to the fact that they were young men or teenaged boys from outside the local area, who did not speak the Baragaonle dialect.

Attempts were made to recruit local people, including women, for the JAHW training, but the attempts were not successful. In regard to women, the chief problem was that the educational requirement was too high. Not a single female in Baragaon has an eighth class education. Even if this requirement were lowered, it is likely that

Baragaonle females would feel uneasy going outside the local area for training. In order to incorporate local women into the program, the training probably ought to be conducted in Baragaon rather than outside. The lessons should be designed for trainees who are intelligent but illiterate, and presented in very simple Nepali or in Tibetan.

Another problem was that the Baragaonle (males) who did have enough education to qualify for the training were not interested because they felt that the salary was too low. The cost of living in Baragaon is high in comparison with many other parts of Nepal. A substantial amount of food is bought rather than produced locally, and the cost of transporting it makes imported food expensive. Adjusting the JAHW's salaries to the cost of living would be another means of attracting local recruits. At present, according to the Senior Auxiliary Healthworker (SAHW)\* whose jurisdiction included Baragaon at the time of my research, the people of Baragaon feel that they do not need the JAHW's. They have no idea as to what the JAHW's might teach them, and they are not interested in finding out. All they want is medicine. If the SAHW is correct, then the only real hope for a successful preventive health program in Baragaon is to use Baragaonle themselves as educators, so that new ideas can be presented by known and trusted people in ways that make sense to Baragaonle.

The problems surrounding Family Planning promotion are similar. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is evidence that traditional Baragaonle values and ideas concerning the economic cost of children would encourage rather than discourage fertility control. Since the rate of population growth is likely to increase, and is probably already increasing, as health and economic conditions improve, family planning will need to be explained and made available in ways that are acceptable to Baragaonle, that is, consistent with their own traditions, norms and views. Most importantly, the information and contraceptive devices should be offered to Baragaonle women by Baragaonle women.

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\* Mr. Sankar Karki.

## Education

Many of the male and a few of the female Baragaonle religious specialists, but only a handful of lay people, are literate in Tibetan. Since the government schools were introduced into Baragaon only a few years ago, very few adults have become literate in Nepali. At the time of this study the local primary schools provided education up to the third class level. For education beyond the third class, children had to go to Jomsom, the district headquarters. Many parents, however, felt that boarding their children in Jomsom was too expensive, so children's schooling often ended on completion of the third class. In 1979, a new school building was constructed in Kagbeni village, so that two more classes could be added. This was funded in part by contributions from Baragaonle villagers. A few children have been sent to school in Pokhara, Kathmandu and India, but not many parents feel that they can bear the expense. As far as I know, only one Baragaonle, a young man who had a government scholarship, has passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam.

In a sample of thirty-five households from Kagbeni Village, there were 96 people fifteen years of age and above. Of these, 21 percent (33 percent of the males and 9 percent of the females) were reported to be literate in Nepali or Tibetan. 22 percent (33 percent of the males and 9 percent of the females) had had some primary schooling. The statistics on schooling indicate that the proportion of girls sent to school is increasing. Compared with 9 percent (4) aged fifteen and above, 57 percent (8) of the girls aged ten to fourteen and 70 percent (7) of the girls aged five to nine have had primary schooling or are currently enrolled in school. Schooling of boys is also increasing. While only 33 percent of the males aged fifteen and above had had primary schooling, 100 percent and 67 percent of the boys aged ten to fourteen and five to nine respectively have had primary schooling or are currently enrolled in school. (The above information is summarized and the raw figures are presented in Table 5.1)\*

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\*Kagbeni is one of the largest villages in Baragaon. Its central location along the route between Jomsom and Mustang, and between Jomsom and Muktinath brings a

TABLE 5.1

EDUCATION BY AGE GROUP AND SEX FOR A SAMPLE OF 35 HOUSEHOLDS

(Kagbeni Village)

Ages	Males		Females		Both Sexes	
	Primary Schooling	No Schooling	Primary Schooling	No Schooling	Primary Schooling	No Schooling
5-9	6 (67)*	3 (33)	7 (70)	3 (30)	13 (68)	6 (32)
10-14	9 (100)	0 -	8 (57)	6 (43)	17 (74)	6 (26)
15+	17 (33)	35 (67)	4 (9)	40 (91)	21 (22)	75 (78)
Total	32 (46)	38 (54)	19 (28)	49 (72)	51 (37)	87 (63)

\* Percentages given in parentheses.

Baragaonle often joked about how lucky I was to be able to earn a living "without working", by simply sitting around all day writing. Several mothers asked me whether, if they educated their daughters, the daughters could get government jobs and enjoy a life of leisure, like me, instead of carrying loads and working in the fields. Questionnaire results also showed that most parents, in principle at least, wanted their children to be educated. The majority of the respondents, males and females alike, said that girls as well as boys should be educated, and that they should stay in school for eight to ten years or longer if possible (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3).

Despite the positive attitudes that Baragaonle parents expressed in response to the questionnaire regarding education for daughters, and despite the relatively high enrollment of girls in the local primary schools, literacy among Baragaonle girls is almost negligible. I am personally acquainted with only two females in the whole twelve villages who can read and understand much more than their first or second class lessons. According to the questionnaire results, 12 percent of the 42 children in the sample aged five to fourteen years were reported to be literate. The 12 percent was comprised of four boys and only one girl (see Table 5.4).

Many parents have told me that their daughters do nothing but play in school, and many parents do not think twice about keeping a daughter home from school when they need an extra worker in the house or the fields. According to the school teachers as well, girls' attendance tends to be sporadic, and my own impression was that the teachers felt they had to substitute songs, dances and games for reading and writing in order to lure the children--girls

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considerable number of government personnel, foreign trekkers, local travellers and traders, and pilgrims. Relatively speaking, Kagbeni has probably been subjected to more modern influences than the other eleven villages. It is the only village in which primary education has been expanded from three to five classes. For these reasons, one would expect to find a slightly higher level of literacy and schooling in Kagbeni than in most of the other Baragaon villages.

TABLE 5.2

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS EDUCATION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Attitudes	Male Respondents		Female Respondents	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
<b>A. <u>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</u></b>				
Is it important for a boy to go to school ?	28	0	32	0
Is it important for a girl to go to school ?	25	3	29	3
<b>B. <u>REASONS FOR KEEPING GIRLS OUT OF SCHOOL</u></b>				
Because they are needed for farmwork.	1		1	
It does not pay to send them to school since they are going to be married off.	3		3	
Because they are needed for housework.	1		1	

Note: The number of reasons given exceeds the number of respondents who answered "No" in Part A, because two respondents of each sex gave more than one reason.

TABLE 5.3

## DESIRED LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

Level of Education	Male Respondents		Female Respondents		Total Respondents	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Less than 3 years	0	1	0	0	0	1
3 to 7 years	6	7	8	7	14	14
8 to 10 years	8	6	10	9	18	15
More than 10 years	13	12	14	14	27	26
No answer	1	2	0	2	1	2
Number of Respondents	28		32		60	

TABLE 5.4  
LITERACY BY AGE GROUP AND SEX FOR A SAMPLE OF 35 HOUSEHOLDS  
(Kagbeni Village)

Ages	Males		Females		Both Sexes	
	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate	Literate	Illiterate
5-14	4 (22)*	14 (78)	1 (4)	23 (96)	5 (12)	37 (88)
15+	17 (33)	35 (67)	3 (7)	41 (93)	20 (21)	76 (79)
Total	21 (30)	49 (70)	4 (6)	64 (94)	25 (18)	113 (82)

\* Percentages given in parentheses.

in particular--to school. Song and dance may not be a bad strategy, but it does not solve the problem of demonstrating the value of education to the children and their parents.

One problem is the language barrier. Since none of the teachers know the local dialect, and the local culture is also new to them when they first arrive at their posts, most of their time is spent teaching the children Nepalese language and culture. If local people could be recruited and trained as teachers, bilingual education would be possible, and more immediately relevant and culturally appropriate ideas could be incorporated into the lessons.\* Since there are virtually no educated Baragaonle women at present, and female teachers are scarce, the schoolgirls lack role models. It appears that immediate, short term incentives are needed to induce girls to seek education. Even a single Baragaonle schoolmistress could have a great impact in introducing the idea that education can be relevant and rewarding for females.

#### Women's Political Consciousness and Participation

As described earlier, although Baragaonle men and women are not on equal footing vis-a-vis their control over productive resources, there is very little sexual segregation. The Baragaonle lifestyle is varied and mobile for men and women alike. Since they are dependent on a variety of economic occupations and family size tends to be small, a strict sex-typing of labor would be impractical. Males and females are often required to fill in for one another, and in many contexts they work side by side. In ritual and in informal social situations as well, women participate along with men.

The political sphere, however, is an exception. Whatever informal influence they may have, Baragaonle women are almost completely excluded from organized political participation. Within the traditional system,

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\*The incentive for learning to speak Nepali would probably remain high. As traders, Baragaonle consider the Nepali language a valuable acquisition. Many learn to speak it outside of school.

to my knowledge, women have never served as village leaders or elders (gowa, gemba) nor do they normally attend village meetings as heads of households. Women are not actually forbidden to attend, but they are not encouraged. It is only occasionally, when there is no adult male in an estate household--for example, when the head of an estate household dies before his sons reach maturity--that a woman will fill in. The same is true in regard to participation in the local Panchayat government, which in many contexts has become merged with the traditional system. So far, women have been excluded. Essentially, the only role in which women appear at village assemblies is the role of disputant, or supporter to a disputant, in conflicts brought to village assemblies for mediation by the village leaders.

Theoretically, of course, women as well as men are entitled to participate in the Panchayat government, but women's lack of participation is not merely a theoretical problem. As part of the Status of Women Project, a Baragaonle research assistant and I administered a questionnaire pertaining to women's political awareness and participation. For the most part, the women's responses were homogeneous, and even where they were not, they were given in such an alienated fashion that a detailed analysis of them would only misrepresent the underlying attitudes. The gist of what the women told us was that they knew a few basic facts, such as the name of their Panchayat and the identity of their Pradhan Pancha, but that they had never participated directly in any way, and had no interest in doing so. When asked why, the typical answers they gave were evasive: "I don't have time", or "What do I know about such things?" The women were polite. None of them actually refused to answer the questions. And although in most cases they said they "couldn't remember" when asked what development projects had been done in their village, they invariably said that they were very grateful and had derived great benefit from every project that we specifically mentioned.

Several months earlier, in the same village where the questionnaire was administered, there was a heated conflict connected with a small government-sponsored drinking water and irrigation project. A group of influential families (having got wind of the imminent project) had bought a piece of wasteland from the village. The waterpipe supplied by the government was

to be used for irrigating this land, en route to the site of the public tap. Each household in the village was required to donate several person-days of labor, as is customary in communal projects. Some individuals, however, believed that there was only enough pipe for the first phase of the project; the irrigation of the privately-owned land. In any case, even if there was enough pipe to supply a village water tap as well, they did not want to donate their labor for the benefit of private individuals. The various accounts that I heard were not completely consistent in the details, but the upshot was that a number of families were forced to contribute labor against their will. At least three of the same women who answered the questionnaire had on previous occasions related this incident to me, and had expressed considerable anger over the fact that people were forced to work. Not a single woman spoke about it, however, during the questionnaire interview.

In an abstract way, most Baragaonle are sincerely loyal and grateful to their government. According to popular accounts, life in Baragaon is much better now than it was one and two generations ago, during the Rana regime. Debt slavery, heavy taxation, and other forms of exploitation are major themes in Baragaonles' tales and accounts of their recent history. They place great value on their current freedom to travel and trade. Despite this very positive general disposition, there is a pervasive alienation, skepticism and incomprehension, especially on the part of women, in regard to the government's activities at the local level. The idea that they might assess their own needs and secure government assistance in carrying out a development project of their own devising seems completely absent. Clearly, this situation could be changed.



School children.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

Strictly speaking, Baragaonle society is not stratified by caste. Nevertheless it is stratified, especially along economic lines, and this must be taken into account in evaluating Baragaonles' development needs. The stratification is not rigid; migratory trade in particular contributes to fluctuation. Nor is it entirely land based, despite the fact that those who own the most land are likely to have the most capital to invest in trade and, as a result, often realize greater profits than the landless and the land poor.

Demographic data show that unmarried women comprise a sizeable part of Baragaon's adult population. Our findings concerning subsistence activities, ownership and control over productive resources and residence indicate that these women are the most economically depressed segment of the population. However the findings also suggest that in terms of productive skills, physical mobility and adaptability, and willingness to engage in whatever work seems profitable, unmarried women are a valuable resource and a logical focus for income-generating and other projects. These women tend to be landless: they depend on wage labor (including labor paid in kind) for subsistence, they are relatively free of familial constraints, and they are eager to improve their standard of living.

In regard to planning development projects that would benefit the poorer sections of the population, including unmarried women, a few general points can be made:

1. Agricultural projects, while they might benefit all Baragaonle indirectly by increasing the amount of food locally available, would not directly benefit landless and land poor individuals, whose livelihood depends primarily on labor and petty trade. Agricultural work in Baragaon is extremely seasonal, due to the high altitude of the villages. During the short agricultural season there is ample demand for agricultural laborers. Expansion of agriculture would not provide employment opportunities to span the long winter months.

2. Wealthier families already have access to enough capital to engage in trade on a profitable scale. It is the poorer families and individuals who have little or no capital to invest, and nothing that they would dare risk as collateral, who might benefit most from low interest short term loans. The average Baragaonle, given capital to invest, needs no "expert consultant" to tell him or her how to engage profitably in trade or beer and liquor production.

3. There may be some potential for expanding cottage industry and making it more profitable. Weaving would be the most obvious industry to develop. As described in Chapter 4, it is often the poorer people--particularly women--who are most skilled at crafts such as weaving. Individuals who do paid agricultural labor in a particular household are often invited during the slack season to engage in crafts and assist in miscellaneous household chores. They spend long hours weaving, carding and spinning wool, bootmaking or sewing in the host household, and in this way many develop impressive skills. Wool blankets, mats and sacks are used extensively in Baragaon; blankets and mufflers are also bought by Nepalese and Indian pilgrims, and more recently by foreign tourists. A project aimed at increasing and improving the supply of raw materials, expanding the market for woven goods, and increasing profits might have a good potential for success. It would be soundly based on skills and cultural traditions that already exist, and it would be relevant in view of the needs, the skills and the life-style of the poor.

Additional training in dyeing techniques, etc., and loans for looms and raw materials could be provided on an individual basis, allowing women to weave in their own homes, or a small cooperative weaving center could be built. The weaving center (factory) arrangement, although it would require more initial capital investment, would have several advantages: 1) It would potentially provide an independent economic base for landless and land poor people, freeing them from patron-client relationships. The patron-client pattern would be more apt to continue if the weaving continued to take place in individual households. 2) Raw materials could be obtained more efficiently and cheaply in quantity, and time-consuming processes such as cleaning and dyeing wool could be done

more efficiently. 3) A building designed to provide adequate light and conserve radiated heat would make it possible to work longer hours in winter. 4) Depending upon marketing potential, additional training could be offered and production expanded to include Tibetan-style carpets. 5) Baragaonle women tend to enjoy working in groups. This is one reason that labor exchanges (B. lakchap, Nep. parma) are often organized among groups of households, even though tasks such as weeding can be done just as efficiently by working alone or in household-based groups in one's own fields. 6) Services such as childcare could be provided in a communal situation. 7) The factory group, based on women's common economic interests, could provide a structure for introducing other projects for women. A common problem in trying to implement educational programs concerning health, nutrition, literacy, agricultural innovations, etc., is that it is often difficult to persuade women to drop their work and leave their homes in order to attend educational sessions. Women who are employed outside their homes could be more easily addressed as a group, and they might be more willing to participate and to express their ideas in the context of a "natural", pre-existing group than in a group newly created for the purpose of education alone.

4. Suggestions regarding health projects and education are discussed in Chapter 5.

5. Development planners and Baragaonle alike are aware that tourists bring new problems as well as cash to undeveloped local areas like Baragaon. Tourism often strains local food supplies and contributes to deforestation and fuel scarcity because the rate of fuel consumption is increased. The imported luxury foods consumed by tourists compete for precious cargo space in planes and on porters' backs. In some cases the transportation of materials needed for development projects has been delayed in order to transport tourists and their food and gear. The new income provided by tourism tends to benefit the few people who handle the importing and run tourist hotels. The average villager does not benefit, but suffers, due to the depletion of communal resources. Finally, expensive new tastes for western-style clothing, imported beer and other prestige items absorb much of the new income that tourism provides.

Baragaon was officially opened to tourists in 1976. Resources have already been invested, and tourism has already become an important source of income for some Baragaonle; new tastes and consumption demands have already begun to take shape. Most Baragaonle who discussed the issue of tourism with me seemed in favor of it. Closing Baragaon to tourism would probably be an unpopular step and would result in additional economic problems. As an alternative, the income-generating potential of tourism might be extended to benefit poorer Baragaonle if a co-operatively run tourist hotel or tent camp could be subsidized by means of government loans. Loans (or grants) could be provided for the first year or two, with the stipulation that the restaurant(s) would serve no imported luxury foods or drinks. (This could be easily defined.) Sanitation training and inspection could be provided, perhaps in conjunction with a village health program. Local recipes could be adapted to meet tourists' tastes and sanitary standards.

For example, barley beer could be made with boiled water and advertised as such. Fresh butter could be prepared with sanitary utensils, to replace rancid butter in soups, stews, and tea. Dried cheese could be prepared in a more dust-free environment. More and higher-quality dried vegetables could be produced. More beans could be grown and used in a variety of ways. Non-indigenous, high yield varieties of apple, peach, and apricot trees, as well as several non-indigenous vegetables have already been introduced with some success, thanks to the efforts of the HMG personnel at the horticultural station in Marpha, a few hours walk south of Baragaon. Seedlings and vegetable seeds can be obtained there at subsidized prices. By increasing the local production of fruits and vegetables and finding ways to make traditional and cheaply-imported foods palatable to tourists, the extravagant trend towards importing prestige foods could be reversed. Baragaonle as well as tourists could benefit from improved hygiene in restaurants and taverns.

In regard to designing a long term strategy for Baragaon's economic development, as well as the development of similar local regions (e.g., Mustang, Charang and Thak Khola), there are broader questions which must be answered, which are clearly beyond the scope of the present study. Firstly, what is the potential for increasing agricultural productivity? At present Baragaon

is not self-sufficient in foodgrains, and there is no historical evidence nor local tradition indicating that the region ever was self-sufficient. Currently, some foodgrains (mainly rice), as well as other foodstuffs (oil, sugar, spices, etc.) are imported, but the volume is not sufficient to feed the whole population year round. Seasonal migration takes the burden off the local food supply; approximately a third of the population lives outside of Baragaon for three to six months each year. If the region can never become self-sufficient in foodgrains, would it be more economical in the long run to discourage seasonal migration by emphasizing income-generating projects (crafts, tourism, horticulture, etc.) in the local villages, and to increase the volume of imported foods and raw materials? Or should seasonal migration be encouraged and supported by means of short-term loans for trade, and emphasis directed towards towns such as Pokhara, which receive the greatest numbers of seasonal migrants from the north? Since seasonal migration is a historically rooted tradition for the Baragaonle and other similar populations, the development of small-scale seasonal industries located in accessible towns might be a practical alternative, or at least a good supplement to projects located in Baragaon itself. In any case, seasonal fluctuations in the need for employment must be taken in account to make income generating projects effective.

is "high".

3) The maternity ratio (MR) for the Baragaon twelve village sample (N=494) is 2.96. When this measure is used, the fertility level appears somewhat higher than when other measures are used;\* nevertheless it falls within the "low" range. On Nag's scale a MR of 2 or less is "very low"; 2.02 to 3 is "low"; and 3.01 or higher is "high".

4) The child-woman ratio (CWR) in Baragaon is 592 for women aged 15 through 44 (twelve villages; 471 women). This falls within Nag's "low" range. He counts 475 or less per thousand as "very low"; 476 through 625 as "low"; and 626 and higher as "high". For women aged 15 through 49 (N=516) the CWR for Baragaon is 541. This also falls within the "low" range. On this scale 450 or less is "very low", 451 through 600 is "low", and 601 and higher is "high". The CWR for Nepal as a whole was calculated at 640, on the basis of women aged 15 through 49 (Central Bureau of Statistics: 108).

5) The gross reproduction rate (GRR) for a sample of four villages from Baragaon was 1.31 or 1.22, based on the births during 1977-8 and 1978-9 respectively. Both of these figures are "very low" or Nag's scale (1.67 or less is "very low"; 1.68 to 2.23 is "low"; and 2.24 or more is "high").

A measure similar to GRR is the general fertility rate (GFR), which is based on women aged 15 through 49 rather than 15 through 44. This came to 118 or 109 (using the 1977-8 and the 1978-9 births). By comparison, the all Nepal rate calculated by the Nepal Health Survey (23) (according to two different methods) was 257 or 219. The information above is summarized in Table B.

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\*The MR presented here may be slightly inflated because a disproportionate number of women ages 15-19, i.e., the women who will have had the least children, were excluded from the calculation, due to missing data regarding the number of children ever born.

TABLE B

## MEASURES OF FERTILITY : BARAGAON COMPARED WITH ALL-NEPAL

Fertility Measures	Nepal	Baragaon
Crude Birth Rate	42-43 (Tuladhar et. al.)	28-30
Total Maternity Ratio	6 (Nepal Health Survey)	3.6
Maternity Ratio	2.5 (probably inaccurate) (Tuladhar et. al.)	3.0 (probably inflated)
Child-Woman Ratio	640 (Central Bureau of Statistics)	592
Gross Reproduction Rate		1.2 - 1.3
General Fertility Rate	257 or 219 (Nepal Health Survey)	109-118

APPENDIX

MEASURES OF FERTILITY

Since the government census figures which are available for Baragaon are not broken down into small units such as villages and panchayats and since there is no vital registration system within the villages studied, the demographic data at my disposal is limited to what I myself collected during the course of my 2½ year study. Coupled with the lack of time depth is the inevitable possibility that patterns observed in a small population are the result of random fluctuations and do not reflect particular characteristics of the population in question. With these considerations in mind, I have attempted to the limits of my data to measure the fertility level in several different ways, comparing more than one sub-sample when possible, to avoid drawing mistaken conclusions. The five measures of fertility presented below have been adopted from Nag (1976: 15-16). They are as follows:

Total maternity ratio (TMR): average (arithmetic mean) number of live births per woman when all living women (unmarried and ever-married) of age 45 years and over are considered.

Maternity ratio (MR): average (arithmetic mean) number of live births per woman when all living women (unmarried and ever-married) of all ages are considered.

Child-woman ratio (CWR): ratio of the number of living children of age 0-4 years (under 5 years) to the number of living women of age 15-44 (less than 45) years.

Crude birth rate (CBR): number of births in a year X 1000/number of persons in the middle of the year.

Gross reproduction rate (GRR):  $i - 49$

$$\sum_{1 - 15} \frac{b_i}{p_i} \times 1000$$

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Where  $b_i$  = number of live female births in one year to mothers of age  $i$  years.

$p_i$  = number of women of the same age in the middle of the period.

1) The crude birth rate (CBR) for Baragaon was calculated for two successive twelve month periods. In 1977-8 it was 29.5 per thousand for a population of 1288 (six of the twelve villages) and in 1978-9 it was 27.8 per thousand for a population of 1800 (ten villages). The 1978-9 CBR based on the original six village sample was slightly lower: 25.2 per thousand.

The CBR for the whole of Nepal has been estimated at 34 (Krotki and Thakur), 40 (Sharma), 50 (David Chandrasekaran), 40-45 (Tuladhar, Gubhaju and Stoeckel) and 51-57 (Nepal Health Survey) per thousand. The estimates by David and by Tuladhar, Gubhaju and Stoeckel take the other estimates into account. It would probably be safe to say that the CBR of Nepal is between 40 and 50 per thousand, and that for Baragaon it is between 25 and 30 per thousand. According to Nag's relative scale of fertility levels in non-industrial societies (1976: 175) a CBR of 25 or less is "very low", 25.01 to 35 is "low", and 35.01 and above is "high".

2) The total maternity ratio (TMR), sometimes called completed family size, was calculated at 3.76 for a sample of all women aged 45 and over (N=174) from twelve villages. A second calculation was made using a sample from eight villages (N=61) which over-lapped in part with the first. The basis for selection was my own level of confidence in the accuracy of the data. The result was similar: 3.56. 18.4 percent of the women in the first sample and 23 percent of those in the second sample had never borne a child. In both samples the number of children born per woman ranged from 0 to 13.

According to the Nepal Health Survey the TMR for Nepal as a whole is 6.0. On Nag's scale 3 or less is "very low", 3.01 to 5.50 is "low" and 5.51 and above

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\*A few women, for whom my data was incomplete or of doubtful accuracy, were omitted from the sample.

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