

**NEWAR MARRIAGE AND KINSHIP
IN KATHMANDU,
NEPAL**

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Anil M Sakya

Department of Human Sciences, Brunel University

June 2000

Newar Marriage and Kinship in Kathmandu, Nepal

Anil M Sakya

Department of Human Sciences,

Brunel University, Uxbridge

June 2000

ABSTRACT OF PH. D. THESIS

This thesis presents a descriptive and analytical study of Newar marriage and kinship in Kathmandu. Essentially, this is a study about caste and the role that it plays in Newar life, in particular, the way that caste is expressed through marriage patterns and kinship rituals. This study also shows that although the link between one's caste and one's traditional caste occupation is breaking down, one's caste identity is still maintained through one's choice of marriage partner and one's participation in kinship rituals which occur at the various levels of caste organization.

Newar caste organizations are also undergoing a process of transformation. In addition to the traditional caste organizations, there are also new intercaste organizations which cater to the ritual needs of those in intercaste marriages. This recent phenomenon coincides with the professionalization of other caste organizations, which, in addition to performing their ritual duties, have also taken on the role of social and economic guardians to their caste members. It could be argued that although some forms of caste are no longer applicable, in other ways, caste in Newar society has never been stronger or more important. Despite the claim that intercaste marriages are on the rise, the data shows that the majority of Newars still practice caste endogamy. Membership into a caste organization - which is through the initiation ritual - is so important to Newar

identity that intercaste couples have started their own caste organization to ensure that their offspring will officially be a part of a caste group.

In sum, this study shows that despite the fact that caste is no longer recognized in the Nepalese constitution, caste is still the main vector of Newar identity, and this is seen most clearly through the analysis of Newar marriage and kinship.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract..... | i |
| Acknowledgement..... | xii |
| Terminology and transliteration notes..... | xiv |

CHAPTER ONE

| | |
|---|----------|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.2 Kathmandu and Newars: A historical background and contemporary context..... | 2 |
| 1.3 Research Setting: Southern Kathmandu | 12 |
| 1.4 Earlier works in the field..... | 18 |
| 1.5 Methodology | 28 |
| 1.7 Overview of the thesis | 31 |

CHAPTER TWO

| | |
|--|-----------|
| THE NEWARS OF SOUTHERN KATHMANDU | 33 |
| 2.1 The Religion of the Newars | 33 |
| 2.2 The Newar castes..... | 39 |
| 2.2.1 The Priestly castes | 43 |
| 2.2.1.1 Hindu priestly caste: Rājopādhyāya..... | 43 |
| 2.2.1.2 Buddhist priestly caste: Vajrācārya and Śākya..... | 46 |
| 2.2.1.2.1 The Vajrācārya..... | 47 |
| 2.2.1.2.2 The Śākya..... | 48 |
| 2.2.2 The high castes..... | 50 |
| 2.2.2.1 The Śreṣṭha..... | 50 |
| 2.2.2.2 The Udāy | 52 |
| 2.2.3 The agricultural caste: Maharjan..... | 54 |
| 2.2.4 The clean service castes..... | 56 |
| 2.2.4.1 The Mānandhar | 57 |
| 2.2.4.2 The Taṇḍukār | 58 |
| 2.2.4.3 The Nāpit..... | 59 |
| 2.2.4.4 The Nakarmi | 60 |
| 2.2.4.5 The Kāranjit | 61 |
| 2.2.4.6 The Mālākār | 66 |
| 2.2.4.7 The Citrakār | 67 |
| 2.2.4.8 The Raṅjitkār | 68 |
| 2.2.5 The unclean service castes..... | 69 |
| 2.2.5.1 The Khaḍgi..... | 70 |
| 2.2.5.2 The Kapāli..... | 71 |
| 2.2.6 The Untouchable castes | 72 |
| 2.2.6.1 The Dyahlā..... | 74 |
| 2.2.6.2 The Cyāmkhalaḥ..... | 76 |
| Appendix: List of new secularized caste-based organizations..... | 78 |

CHAPTER THREE

| | |
|--|-----------|
| THE NEWAR HOUSEHOLDS..... | 82 |
| 3.1 Indigenous definition..... | 82 |
| 3.2 Caste differences in household structure of Kathmandu Newars..... | 89 |
| 3.2.1 Comparison with Quigley's study of Dhulikhel..... | 101 |
| 3.2.2 Comparison with G. S. Nepali's study of Panga and Kathmandu..... | 106 |
| 3.2.3 Comparison with Toffin's study of Panauti..... | 108 |
| 3.3 Newar household size..... | 112 |
| Appendix: Household types proposed by Kolenda..... | 119 |

CHAPTER FOUR

| | |
|---|------------|
| NEWAR MARRIAGE PART I: DIVINE MARRIAGES..... | 120 |
| 4.1 Newars and divine kinship and marriage..... | 120 |
| 4.2 <i>Ihi</i> : the divine marriage..... | 125 |
| 4.3 <i>Bārḥāḥ</i> : the second divine marriage..... | 131 |

CHAPTER FIVE

| | |
|--|------------|
| NEWAR MARRIAGE PART II: NEWAR WEDDING..... | 134 |
| 5.1 Hypergamy and Newar marriage..... | 136 |
| 5.2 Isogamy: the ideal Newar marriage..... | 139 |
| 5.3 Territorial endogamy: a popular Newar marriage..... | 145 |
| 5.4 Typologies of Newar marriage..... | 152 |
| 5.5 Intra-caste verses intercaste/inter-ethnic and arranged verses 'love' marriages..... | 158 |
| 5.6 Arranged marriage: the majority Newar marriage pattern..... | 163 |
| 5.6.1 Traditional arranged marriage..... | 164 |
| 5.6.2 An arranged marriage with minimal ritual..... | 168 |
| 5.6.3 New wedding ritual..... | 168 |
| 5.7 Permitted love marriage..... | 170 |
| 5.7.1 'Mock-arranged' marriages..... | 171 |
| 5.7.2 Surreptitious arranged marriages..... | 171 |
| 5.8 Intercaste/inter-ethnic marriage: Forbidden love marriage..... | 173 |
| 5.9 Statistical analysis of intercaste unions..... | 177 |
| 5.10 Types of wedding in a forbidden marriage alliance..... | 180 |
| 5.10.1 Ritualized..... | 180 |
| 5.10.2 Civil marriages..... | 184 |
| 5.10.3 Surreptitious marriages..... | 185 |
| 5.11 <i>Dyaḥlā</i> Wedding..... | 185 |
| 5.12 Conclusion..... | 191 |
| Appendix: The New Newar Buddhist wedding..... | 196 |
| Appendix: Comparative summary of the elaborate Newar wedding..... | 201 |

CHAPTER SIX

| | |
|--|------------|
| EXPRESSION OF KINSHIP..... | 203 |
| 6.1 Public and Private Expressions of Kinship..... | 203 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.2 Changes in the expression of kinship..... | 204 |
| 6.3 Kinship Terminology..... | 213 |
| 6.3.1 <i>Lāhi thaḥ</i> : ‘flesh and blood kin’ | 215 |
| 6.3.1.1 Degrees of <i>phukī</i> | 219 |
| 6.3.2 Feminal <i>thaḥthiti</i> : ‘Feminal kin’ | 223 |
| 6.3.3 <i>Twāy thaḥ</i> : ‘fictive kin’ | 224 |
| 6.4 Levels of Newar kinship organization | 229 |
| 6.5 Conclusion | 237 |
| Appendix: Newar Kinship Terminologies | 240 |
| Appendix: Newar Kinship Terminologies (in English) | 241 |

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONSTITUTING KINSHIP IN NEWAR LIFE-CYCLE RITUALS 243

| | |
|--|-----|
| 7.1 Communicating Kinship: Marriage and Kinship as Process in Newar Society..... | 248 |
| 7.1.1 Creating Alliances through the Kinship Network | 249 |
| 7.1.2 Selecting Future Kin..... | 252 |
| 7.1.3 Wooing Future Kin: The Engagement Ritual..... | 255 |
| 7.1.4 Pre-Wedding Rituals..... | 256 |
| 7.1.5 The Wedding..... | 262 |
| 7.1.6 Post-Wedding..... | 296 |
| 7.2 Claiming the right over an unborn child by the wife’s kin | 273 |
| 7.3 Announcing the birth of a child | 273 |
| 7.4 Feeding ghee and beaten rice | 273 |
| 7.5 The birth purification..... | 275 |
| 7.6 To go to put on the bracelet on the child | 278 |
| 7.7 To go to see the child..... | 279 |
| 7.8 To be under the care of the maternal home | 279 |
| 7.9 The first rice-feeding | 280 |
| 7.10 The birthday celebration..... | 281 |
| 7.11 To cut the hair one is born with | 282 |
| 7.12 Initiation..... | 283 |
| 7.13 The divine marriage..... | 285 |
| 7.14 To place a barrier..... | 285 |
| 7.15 Old-Age Initiations | 286 |
| 7.16 Death Ritual | 287 |
| 7.17 Conclusion: The Maternal kin and Paternal kin | 288 |
| Appendix: Comparative summary of life-cycle rituals | 296 |
| Appendix: Lists of kin that should be invited for life-cycle ritual feasts | 298 |

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONSTITUTING KINSHIP IN NEWAR FESTIVALS 300

| | |
|---|-----|
| 8.1 Categorizations of Newar festivals | 301 |
| 8.2 <i>Nakhaḥ cakhaḥ</i> : A definition | 303 |
| 8.2.1 Festival involving household members (<i>cakhaḥ</i>)..... | 307 |
| 8.2.2 Festival involving agnatic kin (<i>digu dyah pūjā</i>)..... | 311 |
| 8.2.3 Festival involving married out kin (<i>nakhatyā</i>) | 315 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 8.2.4 Festival involving a single caste (<i>jāt bhway</i>)..... | 320 |
| 8.2.5 Festival involving all castes (<i>Jātrā</i>)..... | 322 |
| 8.3 Conclusion | 328 |
| Appendix: Annual festivals of Newars | 329 |

CHAPTER NINE

| | |
|-------------------------|------------|
| CONCLUSION | 333 |
|-------------------------|------------|

| | |
|--|-----|
| Appendix: The first intercaste of <i>bāhāḥ</i> Nepal | 339 |
|--|-----|

| | |
|--------------------------|------------|
| BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 362 |
|--------------------------|------------|

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|--|-----|
| 1.1 Map of Nepal | 3 |
| 1.2 Map of Kathmandu and its divisions | 14 |
| 1.3 Cremation grounds of southern Kathmandu..... | 17 |
| 3.1 A genealogy and its family divisions..... | 89 |
| 3.2 Family types of Kathmandu | 93 |
| 3.3 Comparative figure of Newar family in Kathmandu | 108 |
| 3.4 Household size of Kathmandu | 115 |
| 3.5 Comparison of Newar household size in 1965 and 1996 | 117 |
| 5.1 The location of <i>thaḥchē</i> of married women..... | 148 |
| 5.2 The location of husband's houses of married women..... | 148 |
| 5.3 Types of Newar marriages | 159 |
| 5.4 A marriage genealogy of a Śākya | 167 |
| 5.5 A news cutting of new Newar wedding | 169 |
| 5.6 Original caste of daughters-in-law | 179 |
| 5.7 Original caste of sons-in-law..... | 179 |
| 6.1 Marriage certificate form..... | 205 |
| 6.2 An example of condolence message of a Tulādhar | 207 |
| 6.3 An example of condolence message of a Kāranjit | 209 |
| 6.4 Kin nexus based on Figure 6.3 | 210 |
| 6.5 An inscription displaying kin on a golden plate | 211 |
| 6.6 An inscription displaying kin on a <i>caitya</i> | 211 |
| 6.7 Adoption of caste name in the past | 217 |
| 6.8 Diagram displaying degrees of <i>phukī</i> | 221 |
| 6.9 Types of feminal <i>thaḥthiti</i> | 223 |
| 6.10 Types of fictive kin..... | 226 |
| 6.11 A Kāranjit adopted kin | 228 |
| 6.12 Diagram displaying kinship organization among high-caste Newars | 232 |
| 6.13 Divisions of <i>kawah</i> and <i>khalah</i> | 235 |
| 6.14 Divisions of kinship organization among lower caste | 236 |
| 7.1 Severity of the bride from her natal kin..... | 261 |
| 7.2 Flow of main prestations between maternal and paternal kin..... | 290 |

LIST OF CASE STUDIES

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.1 The problem faced by intercaste offspring | 160 |
| 5.2 Intercaste marriage | 162 |
| 5.3 An arranged marriage | 165 |
| 5.4 Surreptitious arranged marriage | 172 |
| 5.5 Surreptitious arranged marriage of Dyahḷā..... | 173 |
| 5.6 Ritualized marriage..... | 181 |
| 5.7 Ritualized marriage between different religions | 182 |
| 5.8 Elopement | 185 |
| 7.1 Selecting future kin..... | 252 |

LIST OF TABLES

| | |
|---|-----|
| 1.1 Main historical periods and some important dates | 7 |
| 2.1 Sample of religious identity of Newars of Kathmandu..... | 37 |
| 2.2 Religious identity of Newars..... | 38 |
| 2.3 Main localities of southern Kathmandu based on caste | 40 |
| 2.4 Caste breakdown of southern Kathmandu | 42 |
| 3.1 Family composition of Kathmandu | 94 |
| 3.2 Family composition of southern Kathmandu in ward 21 | 97 |
| 3.3 Comparison of family types of ward 21 | 98 |
| 3.4 Types of occupations declared by Newars in ward 21 and 22..... | 100 |
| 3.5 Summary table of family composition of ward 21..... | 102 |
| 3.6 Comparative table of family composition of Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi..... | 103 |
| 3.7 Summary table of family composition of Dhulikhel..... | 105 |
| 3.8 Comparative table of family composition in Dhulikhel and Kathmandu..... | 106 |
| 3.9 Nepali's data reinterpreted using Kolenda's categories..... | 107 |
| 3.10 Average size of Newar household size | 113 |
| 3.11 Comparative table of Newar family gradation | 116 |
| 4.1 <i>ihi</i> and <i>bārḥāḥ</i> observance among Newars..... | 123 |
| 4.2 Numbers of <i>ihi</i> according to age and caste | 127 |
| 5.1 Typologies of Newar marriage..... | 153 |
| 6.1 Mourning periods..... | 222 |
| 8.1 List of <i>nakhatyā</i> | 316 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

Plates

Between 341-361

Plate 1. A member of the bereaved family from a Hindu Newar caste dressed as a symbolic cow walk along the ritual procession route of Kathmandu city during Sā pāru.

Plate 2. A girl member of the bereaved family from a Buddhist caste, Udāy, walking along the ritual route of Kathmandu during the first day of Kumari Jātrā. The bereaved family gives out clay lamps along the route. The lamps are of three different styles and it is given away according to the degree of intimacy with the family.

Plate 3. Khaḍgi, the Butcher caste taking part in a intercaste festival by playing their hereditary caste-based music, *Nāykhī bājā*.

Plate 4. Nāpit, the Barber woman cutting the toe-nails of a Śākya girls as a part of *ihī* ritual.

Plate 5. Dyahlā, the Sweeper caste still earn their livelihood by sweeping the public streets but are now paid by the local government.

Plate 6. A 86 year-old Cyamkhalah male.

Plate 7. Dyahlā, the Sweeper caste girls playing around in their locality at the border of the old Kathmandu.

Plate 8. A Dyahlā house in Kathmandu city.

Plate 9 and 10. A Tāmṛākār, member of the Lākhecā *guthi* transformed as the Dāgi, Indra's mother to lead mourners from all castes to visit their dead family.

Plate 11 and 12. An annual display of Bahi dyah, the Buddhas, during the festival of Bahidyah Bwayegu in Kathmandu city. At the same time, clothes of dead members of the *bāhāḥ* are also displayed and worshipped.

Plate 13. Five Vajrācārya priests perform a public ritual during the Kumari Jātrā.

Plate 14. The military recruits are helping to erect the ritual *yasī* pole during the *Yēyāḥ*. Traditionally, it was done by the Mānandhar caste but now a senior Mānandhar only supervises the work.

Plate 15. The researcher interviewing Maharjans who were preparing for Pacali Bhairav Jātrā at Pacali.

Plate 16. A Maharjan boy at his caste initiation, Waḥlā where his FZ who has come with food prestations at Pacali.

Plate 17. A modern Newar wedding procession led by a brass band .

Plate 18. The Maharjan of Jyā Bāhāḥ worshipping the god Indra before placing it on the highly-raised stage.

Plate 19. Newars of all castes participate in Jana Bāhā Dyaḥ Jātrā of Kathmandu city.

Plate 20. Pacali Bhairav, the guardian god of southern Kathmandu.

Plate 21 and 22. A couple of Uday caste celebrate their old-age initiation ritual, i.e. to be deified by their kin. The couple's grandchildren pull their chariot. The white headbands on the initiate indicates that he has many kin because all kin are ritually required to tie headband on the occasion, therefore, the bigger the headband, the more kin the initiates has.

Plate 23 and 24. Bhairav gods are displayed and worshipped all over Kathmandu streets during the Yēyāḥ festival.

Plate 25 and 26. Ihi or divine marriage of a Newar girl of Śākya and Maharjan castes.

Plate 27. Agnatic kin group (*phuki*) of a Maharjan caste gather for worship at their lineage deity shrine which is located in the outskirts of old Kathmandu city.

Plate 28. A Śākya man holds his household's *kikpā*, a head ornament belonging to the lineage deity. He is accompanied by a Vajrācārya priest.

Plate 29. In the *Ghaḥsu* ritual the Vajrācārya priest puts a hat on the mourner to make the end of the year-long mourning period.

Plate 30. A Mānandhar chief mourner performing *śradha* on the 45th day after a death in his family. The ritual is presided over by a Vajrācārya priest.

Plate 31. Jāko, the first rice feeding ritual of a Śākya family. The ritual is presided over by a Vajrācārya priest.

Plate 32. This prestation is sent by the WT to the WG to inform them of the birth of their daughter's child.

Plate 33. Mha pūjā or 'self worshipping' festival.

Plate 34. Kijā pūjā, or 'brother worship'.

Plate 35. The bride receives '*nikaḥmarhi*' or wedding confirmation prestation from the groom. There is a piece of paper stuck to the pot stating the auspicious date and time of wedding day (sent by the groom's family to the bride's family).

Plate 36. The Lākhāmadhi, the traditional wedding sweet given by the WT.

Plate 37. Didi aji, the mid-wife preparing several prestation and offering for household, local and city deities, during the birth purification ritual.

Plate 38. Prestations sent by the child's MB for the birth purification rite.

Plate 39 and 40. A Vajrācārya man and Śākya woman exchange marriage vows and tying holy thread in a specially created Buddhist wedding ceremony.

Plate 41. An old and new. The researcher as participant-observer in a funeral rite presided over by Theravada monks.

Plate 42. The members of *sī Guthi* or funeral organization are making a traditional bier to carry the dead to the cremation ground.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to His Holiness Somdet Phra Nyanasamvara, the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand. When I was 15 years of age, I travelled to Thailand as a novice (Sāmaṇera) where His Holiness trained me. Later, I was honoured to receive full ordination as a Buddhist monk (Bhikkhu), and since then, it has been my privilege to serve His Holiness as his assistant secretary. His Holiness has not only given me unconditional encouragement and support in my studies, but more importantly, His Holiness has led me onto the spiritual path of Buddhism which is the inspiration and foundation of my life.

I would also like to express my heartfelt gratitude to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulayadej and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit of Thailand. By Their Majesties grace and compassion, I am very honoured and privileged to receive a royal scholarship without which my study in England would not have been possible.

My research was supervised by Dr. David Gellner, whose support and guidance throughout the Ph.D. process have been invaluable. I am very grateful and forever indebted.

I would also like to thank Professor Adam Kuper who encouraged and inspired my work throughout my study in Brunel.

My studies have benefited greatly from the advice and support from my teacher in Nepal, Venerable Bhikshu Sudarshan. I also wish to express my appreciation for the effort by Alfiani Fadzakir, who has generously given her time to edit the thesis.

My research would not have been possible without the compassion and understanding shown by many families and friends in southern Kathmandu. I would like to express my profound gratitude to everyone who kindly invited me to their households, who went out of their way to meet me, let me observe their rituals and meetings, and shared with me personal details about their family. And also not forgetting my brothers: Dr. Keshab Man Sakya, Raja Shakya, Sanu Raja Shakya and Sunanda Shakya, who were all particularly helpful for contacting informants, accompanying me to the interviews and collecting census data.

Finally, I would also like to give special thanks to the authors – both Nepalese and foreign - of articles, theses and books on Newar society which have influenced me profoundly, in particular, Gérard Toffin and David Gellner, whose unparalleled ethnographic work made my task much easier.

Terminology and transliteration notes

In making decisions regarding the translation and transliteration of Newari words in the thesis, my aim was to find the balance between readability and precision. In this thesis I adopt the similar conventions for the spelling and transliteration of Nepal Bhāṣā or Newari words as were used in Gellner (1992: xxi-xxii, 35-8). Some exception are that *candrabindu* (ँ) and *anusvara* (ँ) over a vowel are replaced by the tilde (~).

For most of Newar caste names I give the honorific names as reference terms. Except in very few cases I refer to their colloquial Newari names to keep it in context. In spelling caste names I follow Gellner (1992) by using diacritic where necessary to be precise with the Newari spellings. However, when Newars write their caste names in English they follow conventions for Anglicization. This sometimes differ the way Newars spell their caste names in English with my use of diacritic. For example, Shakya (native spelling) and Śākya (with diacritic), Bajracharya (native spelling) and Vajrācārya (with diacritic), Tandukar (native spelling) and Taṇḍukār (with diacritic).

Basically, I follow Thakur Lal Manadhar's *Newari-English Dictionary*, even where I would take issue with his choices.¹ Except in the transliteration of Newari words, 'b' (ब) and 'v' (व). I use 'v' where the word has been used for Sanskrit-derived terms. If it is a Newari term I used 'w' instead of 'v'. For example, Manandhar use *kvaḥne* but I prefer to use *kwaḥne* instead in order to approximate the real pronunciation.

¹For example, Newars write both *bāhāḥ* and *bahāḥ*. Though I would prefer to write *bahāḥ*, I follow Manandhar's usage, especially as this is becoming the standard form in secondary sources.

The transliteration of personal names raises special problems. If an author's name consistently appears in print in a particular form, I reproduce or directly transliterate that spelling (according to whether it appears in Roman or Devanāgarī). In these cases I do not 'correct' the spelling. (Thus, the names Vajrācārya and Bajrācārya both appear in citations, and I do *not* refer to the dictionary editor as Thākur Lāl Mānandhar). Names of informants who are not authors are spelled according to the ordinary conventions.

For kinship relations I follow the conventional abbreviations viz.

| | |
|----|------------|
| B | brother |
| C | child |
| D | daughter |
| e | elder |
| F | father |
| H | husband |
| M | mother |
| S | son |
| W | wife |
| y | younger |
| Z | sister |
| WG | wife-giver |
| WT | wife-taker |

Thus MeBW denotes mother's elder brother's wife.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is a descriptive and analytical study of marriage and kinship of the Newars of southern Kathmandu. As Newar society is organized according to a hierarchical caste system, the main aim of this study has been to look at the relationship between caste, marriage and kinship. It asks the questions: What is the relationship between marriage and kinship in Newar society? In what ways does marriage and kinship define Newar identity? What do Newar marriage and kinship practices tell us about the role of caste today?

To date, the studies of Newars have focused on particular sub-castes in a particular geographical area. For example, Lewis (1984) on the Tulādhars of Asan of northern Kathmandu, Quigley (1984) on the Śreṣṭhas of Dhulikhel, Toffin (1984) on Maharjans of Pyangaon, and Gellner (1992) on Śākya and Vajrācāryas of Lalitpur. The most recent contribution to this field is the book edited by Gellner and Quigley (1995), which brings several anthropologists together to give their analyses of caste, kinship and marriage of the various Newar groups of the valley. Again, the castes that were studied were from various parts of the Kathmandu Valley—the Tulādhars of Asan, northern Kathmandu, Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs of the Kathmandu Valley, Śākya and Vajrācāryas of Lalitpur, Śreṣṭhas of Dhulikhel, Maharjans (Jyāpu) of Kathmandu and Lalitpur, Citrakārs of the Kathmandu Valley—and there was relatively little coverage on low castes.

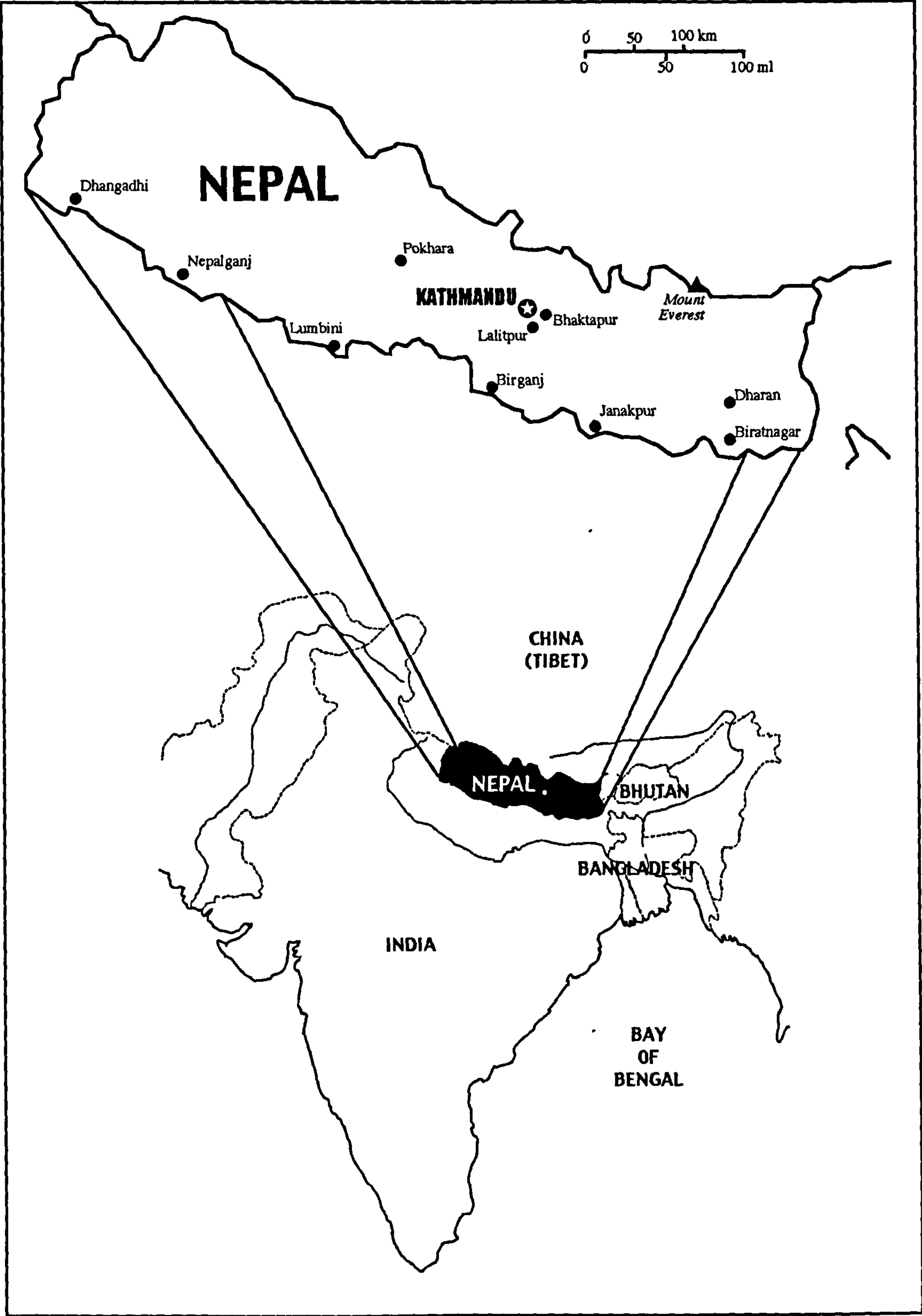
For this thesis, I limited my research to southern Kathmandu, in order to study the marriage and kinship practices of all Newar castes who were living there, from the highest priestly castes to the lowest Untouchable. It is hoped that in presenting marriage and kinship as it is practised and expressed by the

constituent parts of the Newar caste hierarchy, it will enable a better understanding of the way that caste operates in an urban setting such as southern Kathmandu.

1.2 Kathmandu and Newars: A historical background and contemporary context

Kathmandu is the capital of modern Nepal. It is the biggest city of the Kathmandu Valley and one of the key centres of the Newars. It is believed that the ancestors of modern Newars were the indigenous inhabitants of Kathmandu. From the beginning of Nepalese history, the Kathmandu Valley has been the cradle of Newar culture and civilization. Although in the past Newars were the dominant inhabitants of the Valley now they are found in all 75 districts of Nepal. On the other hand, Kathmandu itself has become a pluralistic urban city, the home of many varied cultures and ethnic groups. In the past, Kathmandu was melting pot where all cultures were encompassed by Newar culture or at least by Nepal Bhāṣā (Newari), the language of the Newars. It has now become a meeting point where the indigenous Newar culture is confronted by the culture of non-Newar Nepalese people and Western culture, along with the culture of the recent immigrants, especially Indians. However, 'diaspora' Newars who live outside the Valley still consider the Kathmandu Valley as their home and the origin of their culture. It was not even half a century ago when 'diaspora' Śākya and Vajrācārya Newars had to travel to the Valley to perform the main rites of passage like initiation (*cudākarma*). This not only proved and helped to continue with their original linkage of kinship with the Valley but to confirm their Newar identity by maintaining a close link with their ancestors, lineage and land where they originally came from.

Figure 1.1: Map of Nepal



The Newars often declare themselves to be the indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. Although the term Newar came into existence in the seventeenth century (Gellner 1995: 5), caste names like Brahmans were already appeared in Newar society in the Licchavi inscriptions of 5th century (Regmi 1960: 199). More convincingly, the appearance of clear Newar caste names began to appear more often on inscriptions of 10th century forward. However, many sources refer the King Jayasthitimalla of the late 14th century as the one who systematically arranged Newar castes into a hierarchy. Historical inscriptions also support the claim that it was during the 14th and 15th centuries that today's Newar caste names came into existence. In a document titled *Jātimālā* or 'the caste list' which is written in the time of Jayasthitimalla (Joshi 1981: 7-8), there were 82 different castes in the Kathmandu Valley, then called Nepal. Moreover, in the *Bhāṣā Vamṣāvali*, another genealogical work of 18th century but described as customs of the late 14th century, states that the Newars comprised as much as 725 castes and sub-castes. However, from January 6th, 1854 with the introduction of the new Civil Code (Ain) a new caste arrangement including all Nepalese was enforced. Accordingly, within this new Civil Code, Newars were divided into four caste groups of hierarchies: 1) caste group of the 'Wearers of the holy cord' (*tāgādhāri*), 2) caste group of the 'Non-enslavable Alcohol-Drinkers' (*namāsinya matwāli*), 3) impure, but 'touchable' castes (*pāni nacalnyā choi chiṭo hālnunaparnyā*), and 4) untouchable castes (*pāni nacalnyā choi chiṭo hālnuparnyā*). Moreover, in the Civil Code called Ain of 1854, a special Code was enacted for the Newars, and under the heading of Legal Code for Newars (*Newārjātko ain*) in which 21 *jāts* (castes) were mentioned: Rājopādhyāya, Nepali Malla, Asal Śreṣṭha, other Śreṣṭha, Bāḍā, Udās, Jyāpu, Sāلمي, Nakarmi, Chipā, Māli, Khusal, Musal, Dhubyā, Citrakār, Kasāi, Kusle, Kulu, Dom, Poḍe and Cyāmkhalaḥ. This legal code were amended several times and later known as the

Muluki Ain. In 1936 a special legal code on social and ritual behaviour of two Newar caste groups: Dyaḥ Bhāju Brāhman (Rājopādhyāya) and Śreṣṭha were enforced. It was only in 1963 amended version that the section on Newar caste was revoked from the legal code.¹ Thereafter, there is no category of people called Newars; instead the Newars are identified as those who speak the Newari language.

The 1991 census of Nepal puts the total population of Newars in the country at 1,041,100 or 5.6 percent of the country's total population of 18,491,097. Despite the diffusion of Newars all over the country, the largest clusters of Newars are still located in the three main cities of the Kathmandu Valley, Kathmandu itself, Lalitpur (also known as Patan) and Bhaktapur. Among these three main Newars cities, Bhaktapur is still a homogeneous town where 62.8 per cent of the inhabitants are Newars (according the 1991 census). Lalitpur and Kathmandu by contrast, are becoming more heterogeneous with an increasing number of representatives of all ethnic groups of Nepal, as well as an influx of Indian migrants. According to the 1991 census, Newars occupy only 46 per cent in Lalitpur and 38 percent in Kathmandu, where once the Newar population predominated. In Kathmandu, the second largest inhabitants after Newars are Brahman (19.4 %) and Chetri (17.8%). This percentage shows that, despite losing their overall majority in Kathmandu, the city is still dominated by Newars.

The early history of the Newars and of Kathmandu are heavily based on

¹ According to 1991 amended version of Muluki Ain (Section 19 No. 10 a): 'If anybody discriminates someone on untouchability or obstruct someone to be present in public places or using public properties based on caste discrimination he will be jailed up to one year or fined up to Rs. 3000 or both'.

myths and legends.² According to the *Bhāṣā Vaṃśāvalī* chronicle, Kathmandu was founded by King Guṇakāmadeva in the 10th century CE at the confluence of the Viśnumati and Bāgmati rivers (see e.g. Hasrat 1970: 46). However, other historical documents and archaeological findings prove that Kathmandu certainly existed at a much earlier date than the chronicle suggests. From a historical perspective the written history of Nepal was available only after the 5th century. But with new findings of archaeological artifacts gives some light on early civilization of Kathmandu Valley and Newars even earlier as to the 2nd century.³ This means clustered settlements might have existed along the river Viśnumati since the beginning of the first millennium.

The history of Kathmandu Valley can be roughly divided into three distinct periods: ancient, medieval and modern (see Table 1.1). According to the old records of *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, or ‘the chronicle of the cowherd kings’, this country was established as a kingdom under the Gopāla kings around the 9th or 10th century BC. After the Gopāla had founded their Nepal Kingdom and ruled for about two centuries, the Mahisapāla took over for a short period. Then the Mahisapāla were themselves overtaken by a group who went by the name of Kirātas. The Kirāta ruled Nepal for about eight hundred years right into the first century of the Christian Era. Thus it seems that Gopāla, Mahisapāla and Kirātas⁴ were among the early settlers of the Kathmandu Valley which was widely known as Nepal Valley.

The Licchavi kings ruled Nepal Valley from around 100 CE to 880 CE. In

² For the history of ancient Nepal, see Regmi (1960), Wright (1972), Slusser (1982).

³ In May 1992, a sculpture with the inscription dated 184/185 CE was discovered in Malimgaon of the Kathmandu Valley (Tamot and Alsop, 1996).

⁴ Some informants say that the present Farmer caste of Newars are the descendent of Kirāta.

southern Kathmandu alone there are many inscriptions which date back to the Licchavi period. The many Licchavi inscriptions referring to southern Kathmandu, in particular, prove that from at least the Licchavi period southern Kathmandu has been well established as a city.⁵ The Licchavi kings successfully raised Kathmandu to a high civilizational level.

Table 1.1: Main historical periods and some important dates (adopted from Gellner 1992: 10).

| <i>Kings</i> | <i>Dates</i> |
|--|---|
| Ancient Period | 900 BC ca — 880 CE |
| Gopāla ('cowherd') | 900 BC ca — 700 BC ca |
| Ahīr (Mahisapāla, 'buffalo-herd') | 700 BC ca — 625 BC ca |
| Kirāta | 625 BC ca — 100 CE ca |
| Licchavi | 100 CE ca — 880 CE |
| Medieval Period | 880 CE — 1768 CE |
| Thakuri | 9 th century-1200 |
| Malla | 1200-1768 |
| (Separation to three kingdoms 1482 — 1769) | |
| Modern Period | 1769 — present |
| Shah | 1769-present |
| (Rana period: 1846-1951) | |
| <i>Recent dates</i> | |
| 1769 | Prithvi Narayan Shah's conquest of the Kathmandu Valley establishes the modern state of Nepal. |
| 1846 | Jang Bahadur Rana seizes power and establishes hereditary Rana Prime Ministership. |
| 1854 | Jang Bahadur promulgates Law Code (Muluki Ain). |
| 1951 | Overthrow of the Ranas, and the coming of 'democracy'. |
| 1955 | King Tribhuvan dies; King Mahendra succeeds him. |
| 1960 | King Mahendra establishes Partyless Panchayat Democracy. |
| 1972 | Death of King Mahendra; King Birendra assumes the throne. |
| 1990 | A 'people's movement' (<i>jan āndolan</i>) overthrows the 30 years of Partyless Panchayat Democracy and replaces it with a multi-party democratic system. |

It is important to note that the inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley at different times throughout the history of Nepal have been variously called Nepā,

⁵In Licchavi Period southern Kathmandu was referred as '*drāga*' which means city.

Nebā, Newā, or Newā(ra). Malla writes that

Although originally the word Nepāla < Nhet-pā signified a specific clan of herdsmen, in course of time all the people who came to live in the Nepal valley came to be known as Newāra < Newāla < Nebāla < Nepāla. In the long run all the inhabitants of the Valley who spoke the Newari language came to be known as the Newars (1981: 19).

Malla makes the whole situation absolutely explicit when he says that

The modern Newars are related to one another, *not* by descent or race, but by a common culture and language; they are related to one another by the place and function they have in Newar social structure. Already by the end of the first millennium A.D., the ancient clans of the pastoral Nepalas (herdsmen), the Kirats, the Vrijjis, the Sakyas, the Kolis, the Mallas, the ruling families of Licchavis, the Abhira Guptas, and the Thakuri Varmanas—all were lost among the aboriginals of the Valley in the making of the Newars (Malla 1981: 18).

During the medieval period, however, Newar society developed a stratified hierarchy, thereby making it impossible for further integration of new people into it. This created a rigid and closed system, unable any more to integrate and assimilate newcomers.

Very little is known about the first few centuries of the medieval period of Thakurī kings. However, from the close of the 12th century, the Malla period, there are important materials that tell us more about the Newars. In fact, the Newars of today refer the Malla kings as ‘their’ ‘Newar’ kings, displaced by the Parbatiya dynasty of the present rulers in 1769 (Gellner 1999: 112). There are several examples of political efforts in modernization, such as the one of the 14th century king, Jayasthiti Malla (1380-1395 CE), who encouraged people to maintain their individual group identities within the broad spectrum of a caste system. During the 15th-18th centuries, the early Malla unity of the Valley disintegrated into three separate kingdoms: Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur,

each with its own specialties, within an overarching Valley-wide unity. Many cults and festivals were invented specific to each kingdom. However, some cults and festivals started in one part were imitated elsewhere. For example, the celebration of Indra Jātrā, although originated in Kathmandu, spread to other towns as well.⁶

The types of people the Malla kings tried to bring under their rule was large and varied. They spoke many different languages and practised many different religious cultures. Gradually, it became difficult to hold all different kinds of people together with the earlier style of the melting pot concept and still call all of them Newar (Newāh).

Towards the latter part of the Malla period the urban-based Newar society had developed an attitude of exclusiveness and isolation. This was definitely in contradiction to the open and receptive style of the earlier centuries, particularly the style of the Licchavi Period. It was the Malla kings who, despite their spectacular achievements in the refinement of Newar material culture, were also successful in developing an ethnocentric attitude among Newars.

The modern period can be said to have begun with Prithvi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal, in 1769. Unlike the Mallas, however, Prithvi Narayan Shah did not consider the Kathmandu Valley as the central feature of his Nepali kingdom. In fact, he regarded the three cities of the Valley as cold and worthy to be treated only as pleasure centres. He said, furthermore, that the Nepal Valley, a natural fort created by god, should be properly fortified for defence only (Dibya Upadesh 1959: 11-12). After 1769, with the Shah dynasty, the Newars

⁶ For detailed descriptions on combined sociological and historical analysis of the most important religious cults see Toffin (1993).

were marginalized and became subordinated to Parbatiyās. Newars were forced to fit into a bigger caste system which tried to accommodate all types of people of Nepal in one hierarchical caste system (see Höfer 1979). Newars being marginalized, and having become a minority in their own land, became more exclusive ever than before in order to protect their status (Gellner 1995: 12). Feeling powerless and marginalized some Newar informants refer the beginning of the modern period of Nepalese history as the beginning of the end of Newar culture and civilization as a whole. However, in exceptional cases on an individual basis, the Newarized process, the old nature of melting pot which allowed newcomers to be a Newar occasionally took place (see Gellner 1995: 12). For example, a genealogy I collected from a Vajrācārya of Lagan Bāhāḥ revealed that five generations earlier his ancestor was originally a non-Newar Upādhyāya Brahman.

During the 103 years of autocratic Rana period the situation of Newars got worse. Newars were insecure and one had constantly to be afraid of the Ranas. Such insecurity from the state encouraged Newars to be more ethnocentric and socially conservative. Gellner writes,

Lineage solidarity was much greater, because only among kin was there any security. Caste rules were kept strictly because they were encouraged by the state, and to be outcasted meant to be abandoned by one's relatives. Taking up the caste specialism of another caste was likewise punishable by law. An Untouchable who polluted food with his or her hand, even accidentally, could be made to reimburse the owner for the cost of food (1995: 12).

Many low-caste informants also confirmed similar stories. In my childhood I have

also witnessed the effects of strict caste exclusiveness.⁷

Since 1951 the Kathmandu Valley has changed tremendously with all modern material development. Modern education now plays a great role in a Newar life. However, Newar activists were still suffered from the state occasionally on their effort to promote their language and culture. In 1990, with a 'people's movement' (*jan āndolan*) and blood shedding Nepal was able to restore multi-party democracy system. For Newars of the Valley there are more freedom for promoting their language and culture. After a long history of struggles, Newars at present, at least, in the Valley have their own media: newspapers, radio and television shows which were unthinkable in the past.⁸ However, with new and fresh democratic wind the social structure of Newars is changing. With the legal concept of equality, also theoretically the concept of caste hierarchy among modern Newars is on the decrease. But on the other hand, the ideology of identity becomes very strong among Newars. In order to preserve and promote Newar culture many Newar organizations have sprung up. Furthermore, the awareness of

⁷ In Kathmandu, once, at the age of 12, in 1973, I was a shopkeeping at my family's grocery shop. An old street sweeper, a Cyāmkhalah, of about 50 years who was exhausted with sweeping a main street came to stand in front of the shop (without coming into the shop) and humbly requested me, a 12-year old boy, for some water to drink. Having pity on him, I asked him into the shop and invited him to help himself to the water jug. There was nobody in the shop at the time except myself. The old sweeper politely refused to enter the shop and asked me to pour drinking water into his hand which he held to his mouth. I told him that I did not mind him taking the water himself. He explained to me that he could not do that as he was an Untouchable (*thī matyo*) and if he did I would made an out-caste (*jāt wani*). Therefore, I would not touch him in any circumstances nor should I allow him to touch any of utensils in the shop either. I was obstinate. I told him I did not mind and tried to force him to help himself to a drink. With great difficulty the old sweeper briefly tried to explain again that he simply dare not as it would get me into such trouble and repeated that if I touched him I would be 'out-caste' (*jāt wani*) which, at the time, I did not understand. However, I was scared by the term 'out-caste' so I went outside the shop and poured water into his palm from a distance to make sure that I did not accidentally contact any part of his body.

⁸ Around 1958 there were a short period when Newars were allowed to have their own radio

caste identity gets stronger than ever before and as a result many caste-based organizations have already been founded in Kathmandu and the movement has the potential to spread to all Newar cities and towns. Interestingly, one of the objectives of most caste-based organizations is to promote caste identity among its members.

1.3 Research Setting: Southern Kathmandu

Kathmandu is a metropolitan city covering 395 square kilometres and a population of 675,341 (1991 Census). In the heart of the urban sprawl, however, is the old city of Kathmandu, whose ancient boundaries still exist to this day in ritual contexts (see Figure 1.2).

Socially, old Kathmandu can be divided according to caste. There is a division of thirty-two *twāḥ* (localities) of the agricultural caste (Maharjan/Jyāpu), and seven *sā'* (oil presser) according to oil-presser caste (Mānandhar). The city wall itself is marked by the localities of the untouchable caste. Some anthropologists interpret this feature of caste and residency in terms of a centre-periphery model (cf. Pradhan 1986: 381, Gellner 1992: 48). The religious topography of old Kathmandu is marked by the eighteen main Buddhist monasteries (*mahāvihāra*), thirty-five minor monasteries (*vihāra*), and about fifty more courtyards with shrines and small stupas.¹⁰ The areas around these monasteries are mostly inhabited by the Buddhist priestly castes—Śākyas and Vajrācāryas. Most of the *twāḥ* or residential quarters of the city are named after those monasteries, temples or courtyards.

show.

⁹ Literally means oil-pressure machine.

The old city of Kathmandu can also be divided into *thaḥne*, ‘upper,’ and *kwaḥne*, ‘lower’. From the time of Licchavi period [c. AD. 300—c.879], the Kathmandu city was divided geographically and culturally into two cities: upper-city or northern Kathmandu (*thaḥne*) and lower-city or southern Kathmandu (*kwaḥne*). These were originally two different cities called Dakṣinkoligrām (southern Kathmandu) and Koligrām (northern Kathmandu). They were also known as Yaṃbu and Yaṅgāla, the northern and southern cities.¹¹

Using historical and archaeological evidence, Slusser (1982: 90) states, ‘there is no question that the names Yaṃbu and Yaṅgāla once designated quite separate, and apparently at times rival, entities that only became united as one town in fairly recent history’. This division prevailed even into the late sixteenth century which is illustrated in a scroll painting of the restoration of Swayambhu dated AD 1565.¹² In the early nineteenth century during the Sithi Nakhaḥ festival, a battle between northern and southern Kathmandu used to take place annually. Slusser (1982: 339) writes:

the inhabitants of the northern half of the city (formally Yaṃbu) and the southern half (Yaṅgāla) assembled in the dry bed of the Vishnumati to fight and often kill one another in a battle of stones. Prisoners seized from the Yaṃbu faction were forthwith sacrificed to Kaṅkeśvarī, whose shrine lay in Yaṅgāla, and Yaṅgāla prisoners to Lutī-ajimā, in Yaṃbu territory.

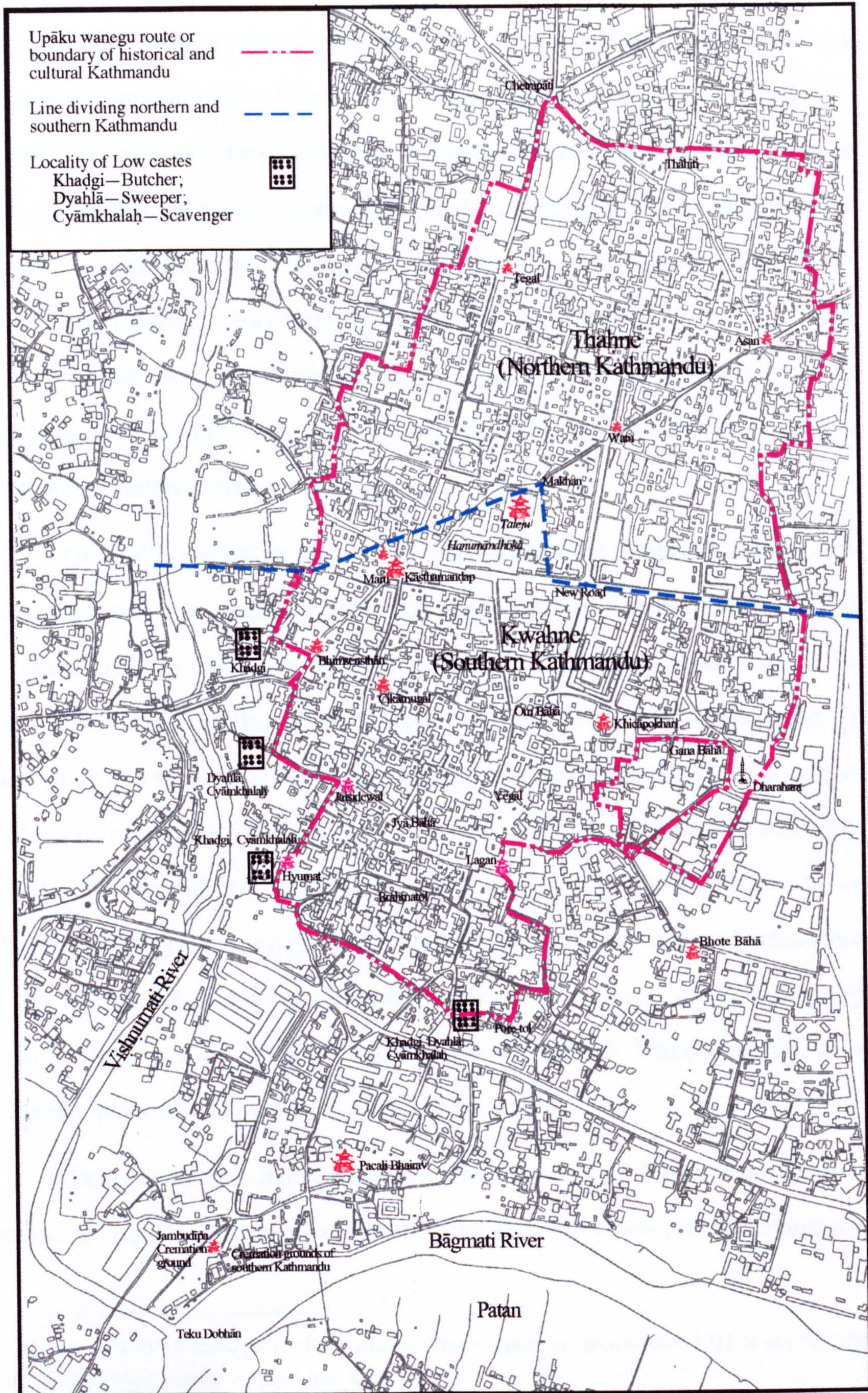
The cultural boundaries that separate north and south Kathmandu still remain and are kept alive through the various festivals and rituals (see Figure 1.2). Ritually, Kathmandu is divided according to different gods, goddesses and

¹⁰ See Gutschow and Bajracharya (1977: 1), Gutschow (1979: 249).

¹¹ See Vajracharya, G. (1974), Slusser (1982: 88-91).

¹² Slusser (1982: 90).

Figure 1.2: Map of Kathmandu and its divisions



Note: This map is developed based on Arial map surveyed in 1994.
The original map own by Nepal Telecommunication Corporation

temples, both Buddhist and Hindu, which mark and symbolize this different areas of the old city. From a psycho-cultural context, the concept of division of the city is deeply rooted in minds of Newars of Kathmandu. A Tulādhār of Asan referred *Kwaḥne* as ‘demon’s land’ because it is during the Indra Jātrā that the Lākhe or demon dance is out from southern Kathmandu. Similarly, a Jośi of Maru defined it as an ‘inauspicious land’. He associates the inauspiciousness with losing Newar kingdom to Gorkha. It was during the festival of Indra Jātrā of 1768 King Prithvi Narayan Shah took over Kathmandu city when the chariot procession was at southern Kathmandu at the time. It was coincident that both of them were not residents of southern Kathmandu.

Generally, the border between the northern and the southern Kathmandu is marked by the central square of the ancient royal palace, Hanumāndhokā, which is central to all the important religious festival and processions. Vajrācārya (1974: 91) points out that the boundary between north and south Kathmandu is clearly marked by two stone lions located at Makhan Tol near the Hanumāndhokā palace. However, in practice the actual boundary may vary according to each caste and ritual. The agricultural caste (Jyāpu) refers to the Gaṇeśa image at the Hanumāndhokā palace as a mark of division between the two cities whereas other castes refer to the Taleju Temple as their point of reference. A Butcher (Khaḍgi) caste informant used Nhughah (or Jaisideval) south of Hanumāndhokā as a reference point in demarcating the north-south border.

Despite cultural manifestation of the divisions of Kathmandu the first census of Nepal¹³ which was collected during 1853-6 followed such demarcation

¹³ The availability of some parts of the 1853-6 census report has proved that 1911 is not the first year of conducting census in Nepal (see Regmi 1991).

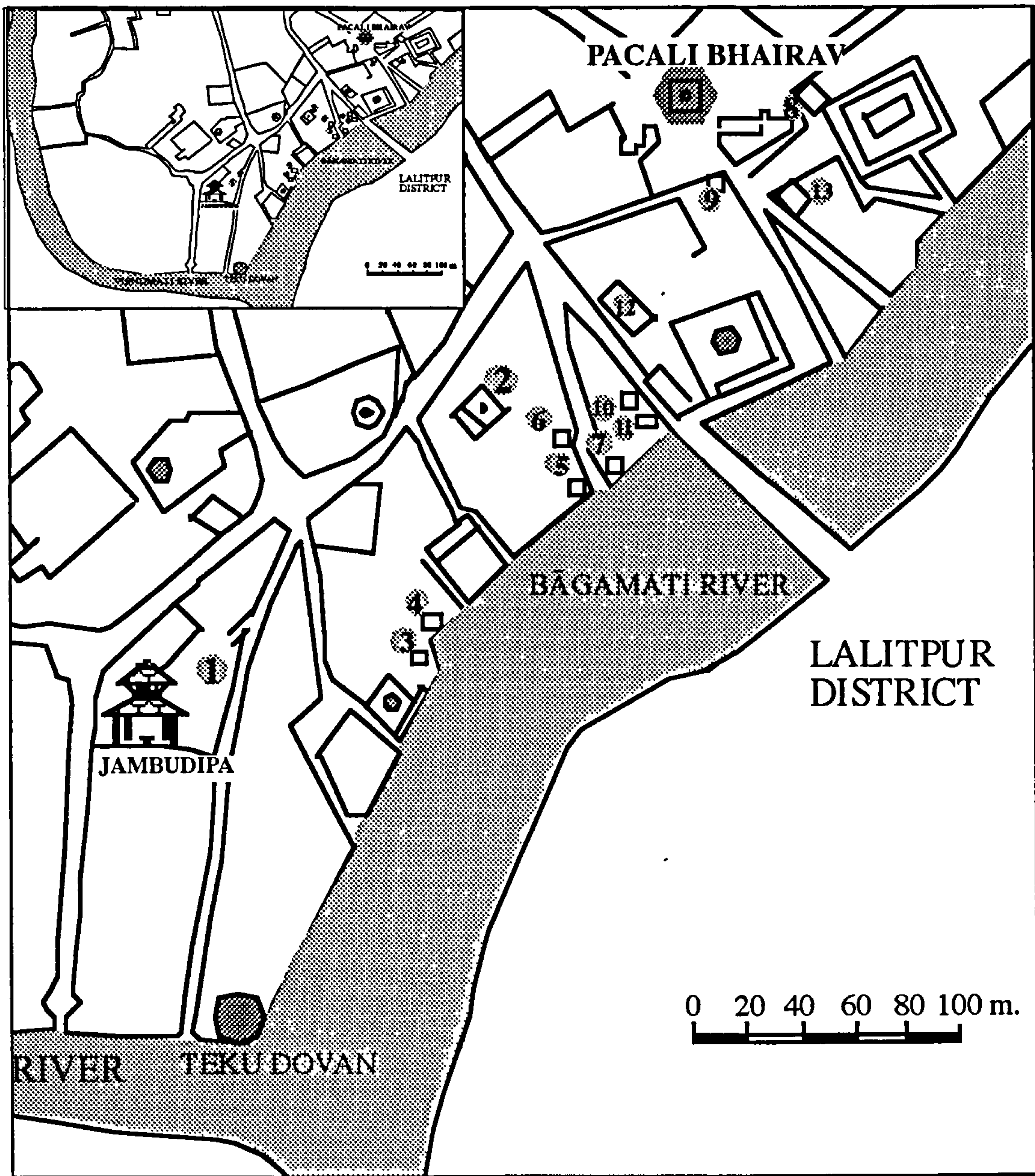
for the census enumeration. In that census the Kathmandu city was divided into three sides: ‘upper’ (*Māthllāpaṭṭi*), ‘lower’ (*Tallāpaṭṭi*) and ‘outskirts’ (*bāhirapaṭṭi*). Within the boundary of ‘lower’ or southern Kathmandu, the census lists 18 areas or *ṭols*¹⁴ with data comprised of a) total house number, b) total family number, c) total number of males and d) total number of female in each *ṭol*. It shows that in 1853 southern Kathmandu had total number of 3,333 houses with the total population of 21,101 (11,522 males and 9,559 females).

Another symbol of city demarcation is the cremation ground. People of southern Kathmandu have their cremation ground at Teku Dovan, the confluence of the Bāgmati and Viṣṇumati Rivers. All Newar caste of southern Kathmandu have their own cremation grounds marked separately to each caste group (see Figure 1.3).

For this research, I have restricted my study to the *kwaḥne*—the southern Kathmandu which is historically older than the northern (*thaḥne*) city. Southern Kathmandu is occupied mainly by Newars; my household survey revealed that only 297 out of a total of 5,057 households (5.9 per cent) are occupied by non-Newars (see Table 2.4). Newar inhabitants of southern Kathmandu can be categorized into six caste divisions which are arranged hierarchically according to purity and impurity. Within the hierarchy of ‘pure castes’ the priestly caste is at the top, followed by high, agricultural, and clean service castes. Within the ‘impure castes’ there are unclean service castes who are touchable, followed by untouchable castes at the bottom.

¹⁴ The 18 *ṭols* of southern Kathmandu: 1) Vabāhāl ṭol, 2) Poḍe ṭol, 3) Tavo ṭol, 4) Cikāmugal ṭol, 5) Madu ṭol, 6) Pokhalḍyāng ṭol, 7) Jhochē ṭol, 8) Siṣāmugal ṭol, 9) Lagan ṭol, 10) Mājeswarī ṭol, 11) Jyābāhāl ṭol, 12) Nhugal ṭol, 13) Kohiti ṭol, 14) Musūmbahāl ṭol, 15) Dhyācalakhu ṭol, 16) Brāhmaṇ ṭol, 17) Gophale ṭol, and 18) Podhyā ṭol.

Figure 1.3: Cremation grounds (*dipa*) of all Newar castes of southern Kathmandu located near Pacali Bhairav: 1. Jambudipa: Cremation ground shared by 5 high-castes: Vajrācārya, Śākya, Śreṣṭha, Udāy and Maharjan, 2. Cintāmāni Mahavihar: new initiation bāhāḥ for intercaste offspring of Śākya and Vajrācārya (established in 1980), 3. Cremation ground for intercaste offspring, 4. for general public, 5. Ranjitkār, 6. Tanḍukār, 7. Kāranjit, 8. Khaḍgi, 9. Mālākār, 10. Dyaḥlā, 11. Cyāmkhalaḥ, 12. Kapāli burial ground, and 13. Nakarmi.



Note: Castes which are not in Figure 3.1 are Nāpit, Mānandhar, and Citrakar. Traditional cremation ground of Nāpit of southern Kathmandu is at the bank of Vishnimati river near Khusi Bahī. For Mānandhar and Citrakār do not own their own cremation ground but share the Jambidipa cremation ground at Teku Dovan.

The basic caste divisions can be further divided into twenty main castes. Some of these castes are again divided into sub-castes or caste sub-groups. As Gellner (1995: 20) defines it 'caste sub-groups have a distinct surname, socio-religious identity, and (in many cases) profession'. For example, the Udāy and Jyāpu are divided into several caste sub-groups. The Śeśyaḥ are divided into two sub-castes, the higher Chathariya and lower Pāñthariya, which in theory do not intermarry. Within the Chathariya sub-caste there are various caste sub-groups (Joshi, Malla, etc.). Similarly, the Buddhist priestly caste, Vajrācārya and Śākya, although theoretically are considered to be the same caste group in common practice in southern Kathmandu shows that their marriage pattern works more like other sub-castes, i.e. there is a preference for the practice of sub-caste endogamy.

1.4 Earlier works in the field

Interestingly enough, although many studies have been done on the Newars of Kathmandu Valley, the writers hold different views of the various aspects of Newar kinship and marriage. I shall summarize and highlight the differences in the analyses of Newar kinship and marriage proposed by several western and local anthropologists and add to the debate the findings of my research.

One of the main issues raised from the literature is that of categorization. Can the Newar kinship and marriage system be categorized under the northern Indian system? Can it be said that Newar kinship and marriage is being sanskritized or in the process of sanskritization? In kinship terminology, Newars follow the 'prescriptive Dravidian-type' (Gellner and Quigley 1995: 29) system but without cross-cousin marriage. In what other ways does the Newar system compare or contrast with Dravidian system of south India? From the data, is it

possible to derive a separate system of kinship and marriage that is unique to Newars and distinguishes them from the other dominant kinship and marriage systems in the region? These main points have been explored by G.S. Nepali (1965), M.R. Allen (1987), G. Toffin (1977, 1984), D. Quigley (1986), D. N. Gellner (1991, 1995) and H. Ishii (1995).

In his path-breaking and widely cited book, *The Newars*, Nepali (1965) categorizes Newar kinship and marriage under the north Indian system, in which there must be a seven generation-gap between marriages within a particular descent group. However, he found that this prohibition was relaxed in several caste groups. For example, the strictest Hindu priestly caste, Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs or Dyabhāju, practises exchange-marriage (1965: 152), and the agricultural caste groups of Panga have started marrying their parallel and cross-cousin's daughter. Yet despite evidence that the seven generation gap is not strictly followed among the Newars, Nepali still maintains that north Indian exogamy is a valid description of Newar marriage practice. He writes:

the restriction on sexual relation between close relatives is very rigidly enforced. They taboo all sexual relations between brothers and sisters, including the parallel and cross-cousins, although many of the surrounding ethnic groups such as the Tamangs, Magars,¹⁵ Gurungs and Bhotias practise cross-cousin marriage(1965: 204).

Nepali also discusses relations with in-laws among the Newars. It is taboo for a man to marry his wife's elder sister whereas his wife's younger sister is a potential wife and he is allowed to have a joking relationship with her. Significantly, Nepali observes that kinship terminology also defines marriage rules. Nepali gives an example that Newars are prohibited to marry with their

¹⁵ As a matter of fact most Magars do not practise cross-cousin marriage.

wife's sisters' daughters (WZD) because the term for WZD (*sasaḥ-mhyāy-cā*) also designates her as his brother's daughter (*mhyāy-cā*). He writes, 'the restriction on marriage with one's wife's sisters' daughters is in consonance with the kinship terms used for them'.

However, on the significance of marriage, Nepali found that in contrast to the north Indian system, Newar marriage is not a sacrament. He explains social acceptance of divorce and remarriage as a direct consequence of the divine marriage 'Yihee' or 'ihi', when girls are ritually married to a god in their early years.

Another feature that contrasts Newar marriage with that of the north Indian pattern is the traditional marriage procession in which the bridegroom is absent. The bride is brought to the bridegroom by his elders and friends. However, Nepali (1965: 219) claims that recently, this practice has been modified through the influence of Hindu custom of the Parbatiyās and the Indian migrants. The presence of the bridegroom in the procession is for visual effect and is not ritually significant as there is no ceremonial act to perform at the bride's house.¹⁶

From the parallels and contrasts drawn between the Newar and the north Indian marriage system, it can be seen that the links are contentious, and that Nepali's attempt to delineate areas of Hindu influence gives only a partial, picture of unique Newar marriage system.

Nepali examines Newar caste groups according to the principles of commensality and intermarriage. Moreover, one of the significant contributions made by Nepali is his proposal that Newar marriage is characterized by 'territorial

¹⁶ The question of whether the groom accompanied the procession in the past is discussed further

endogamy' (1965: 207, 419) and/or 'local endogamy'. This is supported by Toffin (1977: 37), Vergati (1979: 118), Lewis (1984: 183), and Quigley (1987: 160). Nepali writes:

A Newar who wants to get his son married makes a search for a suitable mate in the locality, failing which he would try in the neighbouring regions. Only after having failed to find in the neighbouring areas, does he proceed to search in the distant areas. This local preference for marriage has resulted in the concentration of Newar marriage-ties over a limited area (1965: 207).

Thus Nepali found that marriage alliances are more likely formed with those from nearby localities than with distant towns and villages. However, Ishii (1995) argues that this practice varies according to geographical area. From my study I also found that this territorial endogamy varies according to the size of caste groups. Castes with large populations tend to limit their territorial boundaries whereas caste with small populations tend to have wider territorial boundaries.

Although Nepali is a local anthropologist, some errors in his interpretation of Newari words indicates insufficient linguistic knowledge of Nepal Bhāṣā or Newari, the language spoken by Newars. This is clearly evident from his speculation that Newar marriage was once polyandrous, based on Hodgson's earlier misinterpretation (1965: 238, 277-8). Nepali tries to prove polyandry among Newars through an analysis of language and ritual. This misinterpretation is also followed by Regmi (1966 II: 706) and Toffin (1975: 145) in their studies. Gellner (1991: 109), pointing out this mistake, accurately writes,

he [G.S. Nepali] confused the suffix *-bhata*, meaning “-in-law” (from a woman's point of view), with *bhāḥta*, meaning “husband”;

on p. 115-6 below.

and he wrongly thought that *bhāḥtapī* means “husbands” (in the plural), whereas in fact it means “husband’s people” (i.e. ‘family’). He also tried to argue deductively that “the customary freedom of a Newar woman for the successive re-marriages and divorces... could only be a step forward from the stage of polyandry”, and suggested moreover that “group of ownership of women” might be deduced from the custom of distributing to all the bride’s relatives betel nuts and special marriage cakes presented by the groom’s family.

In addition to the wrong interpretation on the notion of polyandry, Nepali also claims incorrectly that ‘a Newar brother has no ritual function in the marriage of his sister’. Among Newars there is a customary belief and practice that it is the duty of youngest brother to collect the remains of his sister’s ritualized farewell meal (*thāy-bhū*) before she is sent off to her new husband’s house; he has to throw it away at the local god of impurity (*chwāsāḥ*).

Nepali categorizes Newar marriage into three different types: traditional, *Swayambar*, and elopement. Traditional marriage as elaborated by Nepali is an arranged marriage with full wedding ritual practices. By *swayambar* he refers to the marriage with less ritual practice or a wedding in a temple without big feasts and in the absence of wider relatives. He insists that this type of marriage is gaining popularity among urban Newars whereas the elopement is more common among rural Newars. He noticed that among the agricultural caste (Maharjans) of Panga they prefer either traditional marriage or marriage by elopement.¹⁷

While Nepali’s study provides a broad overview of Newar kinship and marriage, it is flawed in its linguistic misinterpretation of key Newari terms which leads to an inaccurate theory of social structure. It also does not account for the fact that there is a great diversity of affinal relations and marriage practices

¹⁷ For details see the analysis of marriage typologies in the Chapter 5 below.

according to the different caste groups and geographical settings. Recent anthropological studies have sought to address the differences in kinship and marriage systems in various geographical areas. These can be analyzed according to a rural-urban dichotomy (Toffin 1984, Quigley 1984: 283, Gellner 1986: 109) or a trichotomy: fringe settlements, intermediate settlements, and large urban settlements (Ishii 1995: 153-4). Therefore, it is necessary to make a specific study according to caste and geographical settings in order to understand Newar society as a whole.

Allen (1987), following Quigley (1986), argues that Dumont is wrong to infer that the Newar marriages are either hypergamous or anagamous and therefore contrary to the caste ideal of endogamy. He believes that Newar marriages are 'isogamous alliances between the major named sub-divisions of endogamous castes'. Because 'sub-divisions relate to one another in terms of approximate status parity, affinal relations are also characterized by a high degree of complementarity and equality' (Allen 1987: 93).

Dumont, basing himself on Fürer-Haimendorf's data, carried out a detailed comparison of the Newars with India. Allen points out how paradoxical was the conclusion he reached that,

though marriage and status among the Newars 'do not on the whole contradict Indian principles (the hierarchical principles of caste-cum-endogamy), but on the contrary can be understood by reference to them' (Dumont 1964: 98), neither the Newars themselves as a totality, nor their various named sub-divisions, can be regarded as either castes or sub-castes (1987: 93).

Allen suggests that instead of looking at Newar marriage in terms of hierarchy, Dumont should have looked at a Newar marriage on the basis of 'kin group exogamy' which assumes equality among marriage groups. He also points out the fact which led to such misunderstanding of Newar society, namely the

complex segmentation of the Newar caste structure which is 'structured in conformity with principles derived from the domains of kinship and descent'. Allen strongly affirms that 'Newar marriage conform to the orthodox ideal of caste (*jāt*) endogamy' and, following Nepali, he points out how caste endogamy is reinforced by the concept of caste apostasy. He says, 'those who contract deviant marriages risk loss of caste membership'.

With regards to social mobility arising from hypergamous and anagamous marriage practices, Allen states that 'the Newar caste system was unusually lax in maintaining its caste boundaries'. But what we are here observing is

nothing other than relatively common caste phenomenon of wealthy and/or powerful individuals managing to distance themselves from their former peers and in so doing, succeed in establishing themselves as a separate and superior endogamous unit (Allen 1987: 96).

He, in fact, sees Newar marriage as highly orthodox based on caste boundaries, a feature indeed yet further reinforced by 'the high incidence of tightly circumscribed local endogamy,' which is also the point made by Quigley (1986: 83-84).

Comparing Newar marriage with the north Indian marriage system, which is characterized by sub-caste hypergamy and dowry disputes which leads to wife-burning incidents, Allen (1987: 96) writes, 'these features are conspicuously absent among the Newars where dowries are normally either modest or absent, and where wife-burning is literally unthinkable'. Supporting Hamilton's (1819) and Kirkpatrick's (1811) findings on the status of Newar women in the case of separation, divorce and re-marriage of widows, Allen summarizes B. Pradhan's (1981) recent finding of such exercises in a Newar village and makes an important point that such practice is a unique practice among Newars though in

urban areas it is lessened by the influence of Hindu belief.

In his seminal article on marriage pattern of Newars, Quigley (1986) attempts to settle the debate on Newar marriage patterns by concluding that isogamy is the dominant marriage practice:

According to different authors and sometimes even the same author, Newar marriage patterns are hypergamous, anagamous or isogamous. Either some reports have been mistaken or there is no one pattern generalisable to Newars from different castes or from different localities. While both propositions have some validity, my own view is that there is one dominant pattern, both statistically and normatively. In practice and principle, Newars are isogamous (1986: 76).

Quigley examines Newar isogamy on two main aspects: cross-cousin marriage, and social mobility. Comparing Newar marriage patterns with the south Indian type based on cross-cousin marriage, Quigley found that the Newar marriage system is similar to the cross-cousin marriage type in terms territorial endogamy and caste endogamy although cross-cousin marriage is strictly prohibited on the ground of kinship proximity. He says, 'the strategy of territorial endogamy achieves the same end as cross-cousin marriage' (1986: 91). He further clarifies Newar isogamy by classifying it with Parry's 'concealed repetition marriage' (1979: 286ff) but on the grounds of local endogamy.

Emphasizing the significance of geographical settlements among Newars, Quigley further believes that the Newar policy of endogamy is not pursued through kinship, but through territory, with much the same result. As one must marry locally the system is closed in the sense that there are limited numbers of families of the same caste living in the immediate proximity, and the exact status of these locals is known to everyone.

Attempting to refute the article by Rosser (1966), Quigley argues that

social mobility is not a normal aspect of Newar marriage but is a consequence of Newar social structure in which caste status is always being contested within the hierarchy. He writes, 'Newar society is made up of a large number of sub-castes, i.e. local groupings of intermarrying lineages, each of which claims equality with, or superiority over, other sub-castes of the same caste' (1986: 76). He distinguishes Newar sub-caste structure which shows the isogamous aspects as opposed to the dispersed and rather diffuse hypergamous groupings of north India or the Chetris of Nepal. Opposing Parry's finding, he shows that Newars' anisogamy or social mobility rather takes place between sub-castes rather than between different caste groups. He stresses that such fluidity is a feature of caste systems throughout Asian history. Like Allen, Quigley rejects Dumont's reanalysis of Fürer-Haimendorf's data according to which Newar marriage rules are lax and Newar society itself is a caste-less society. However, it should be pointed out that Quigley's conclusions on sub-caste competition were based on Śreṣṭhas, who are in many ways untypical of other Newar castes. Only urban Śreṣṭhas are traditionally divided into two ranked sub-caste, the higher known as Chathariya or '*six thar*' which they claim as a pukka Śreṣṭhas and the lower Pācṭhariya or '*five thar*'. In theory the two sub-castes are not supposed to intermarry. Applying the concept of the higher and lower ranks within Śreṣṭhas, some refer the division of Śreṣṭhas more than two sub-castes: Cārthariya or '*four thar*' and Sārḥetinthariya or '*three-and-half-thar*' (Rosser 1966: 101). Therefore, this can not apply to all Newar castes.

Ishii further illuminates Newar kinship and marriage with his recent work on caste and kinship in a Newar village (Ishii 1995: 109-157). He presents new findings on marriage affinal relations and Newar patrilineal kinship system. Arguing against Fürer-Haimendorf and Rosser on social mobility among Newars, Ishii follows Quigley, in concluding that although Newars practice both

hypergamous and hypogamous unions social mobility is not a normal feature of Newar society. The standard norm is isogamy.

Analyzing Newar marriage typologies presented by other anthropologists, Ishii proposed his own three types of marriage practices of Newars: to bring the bride by playing music, to bring the bride silently, and elopement (for details, see the following chapter). Gellner (1991) says there is stigma on divorce and widow remarriage but on the other hand B. Pradhan (1981) found it is normal practice and socially accepted in the village of Bulu. For Ishii divorce is infrequent but widow remarriage is practised, depending on whether there are children and on the age of woman. Using his most recent data on divorce and widow remarriage practices, Ishii places himself at the middle of the two approaches.

In response to the theory of territorial endogamy postulated by Nepali, Toffin and Quigley, Ishii believes that the theory of territorial endogamy varies according to caste groups. Moreover, he demonstrates that Newars living in the intermediate area between the cities and peripheries, are not territorially endogamous. Their marriage alliances extend beyond their own localities. He, therefore, suggests a tripartite typology of Newar settlements as a tool to study Newar kinship and marriage system. Pointing to the diversity of Newar social structure and its complex, Ishii concludes,

it is difficult to interpret other social aspects in the same way; we cannot admit that endogamy is (and was) also the norm in the localities of the 'intermediate' area nor that the unimportance of inter-caste service relations is (or was) their common feature. Nor should we assume that simple marriage types, elopement, and divorce were common in all the communities with here. More historical and ethnographic data are needed in order to make persuasive reconstruction and generalization on these points (Ishii 1995: 152).

Shedding new light into the study of Newars of Bhaktapur Parish (1994) examines Newar society from a new perspective. In his book of psychological anthropology, Parish argues that society shapes the human self and moral consciousness, and that the self and behaviour are in turn adapted to society and cultural life. After defining basic concepts and debates in the field, he takes up the topics of social relatedness, collective consciousness, morality, and emotion. He includes more material about notion of personhood and moral knowing than other books about the Newars. For Parish, culture and society plays a central role in the Newars' notion of personhood and their survival as a whole. He writes, "the moral self is a cultural self."

Emphasizing on the significance of marriage and kinship in Newar society, Parish (1994: 126) writes, "Where do Newars come from? One answer is that they grow out of a 'web of relatedness', they are the products of life in the Newar extended family. Mothers and fathers, siblings and kin shaped them and nurtured them...Most of them are people bound to a family world, a world of kinship...and remain rooted in the family circle for all of their lives".

The existing literature provides a useful framework for this thesis; in the following chapters, I shall attempt to add to, clarify and update the study of Newar caste, marriage and kinship.

1.5 Methodology

Research for this thesis was done in two parts: from July to October 1995 and from June 1996 to July 1997. I am myself a Newar from southern Kathmandu, where my fieldwork was conducted. Although I lived in southern Kathmandu until the age of 14, a large part of my life was spent in Thailand, where I was trained and received ordination as a Theravada Buddhist monk.

When I returned to Kathmandu two decades later for my research, my family became the foundation of my research, both professionally and personally. With four brothers active in local politics and a wide network of kin, my research was greatly facilitated by their unconditional support.

The data was mainly gathered through interviews that I personally conducted. The informants were found using my brothers' wide network of contacts; as they were active in politics, they were well connected to Newars from all castes and walks of life. My familiarity with the area, and my ability to speak the local Newari and Nepali languages also facilitated the interview process, which I recorded and transcribed. In addition to taped interviews, I also used a video-recorder to record Newar festivals and rituals.

The usual barriers to interaction with Newars, namely caste and gender, were not applicable in my case. I am a high-caste Sakya, I was able to visit the homes of Newars of all castes, which would not have been possible if I was from a low caste. In addition, my status as a Theravada Buddhist monk has earned me the trust of Newars who participated in the interviews with enthusiasm and sincerity. I was particularly touched by those who painstakingly searched for their old family documents and sacred objects to show me during the interviews. Gender was also not an issue; I was able to interview women in their homes and gain their perspective of Newar marriage and kinship without any fuss. I also noticed that it is the women who remember minor details of rituals and kin links both of her natal side and her husband's web of kinship.

However, familiarity also has its disadvantages. Because I am from southern Kathmandu, to my informants, I am either a relative, a neighbour or a long-lost acquaintance, and much of the time was spent reminiscing and catching up. Furthermore, as a Buddhist monk, my visits are often seen as an auspicious

occasions and lucky (*bhāgya du*) for my informants. On several occasions, I was asked to perform rituals for my informants to commemorate someone's birthday, death anniversary or just a blessing ceremony.

The Newars of Kathmandu are also not familiar with the concept of interviews. The idea of a specific time being set aside to 'talk' is considered as an anomaly. Time is continuous and activities blend into one another, giving outsiders the impression that Newars are very busy but not very organized. They are busy during the day and in the evenings; they are either at work or involving in discussions of political parties; visiting friends and relatives or attending feasts and festivals.

When they are finally at home, there is the television. Television culture has become a very important in the life of modern Newars. Because Nepal Television's limited hours of broadcast, most houses have satellite cable television connections which enable them to watch television twenty-four hours a day. For those without cable, the limited hours of broadcast means that the time for watching television is all the more precious. I learnt early on that I had to organize my interviews around popular television shows; in fact, my informants would request that I do not come during the popular Saturday afternoon film, as they regarded it as their 'family hour'.

When I was doing my fieldwork, the Nagar Pālikā or local government undertook a project to survey each ward in southern Kathmandu. Word had spread that I was also conducting research in southern Kathmandu, and I was asked by Slide Company which was commissioned to carry out the survey to help design the questionnaires for Wards 21 and 22. Once the questionnaires were designed, surveyors were sent to each household to administer the questionnaire. Because the surveyors were locals from southern Kathmandu, the response to the

questionnaires was high, with 92.4 per cent or 1,210 households out of 1,310 households surveyed. However, in Ward 22 the questionnaires were only administered to 31.7 per cent of the 659 households (209 households) because funding was prematurely terminated by the local government. The data gathered from the ward survey has become the backbone of my thesis on southern Kathmandu. Because I was asked to help with the design of the questionnaire, I was able to incorporate some of my own research questions on Newars and Newar households.

1.6 Overview of the thesis

Chapter Two begins with a brief introduction to the Newar castes in southern Kathmandu. Each caste is described according to the total population, the number of households, the average household size, their traditional and present occupations, settlement patterns, social organizations and marriage practices.

Chapter Three gives an analysis of Newar households in southern Kathmandu. The in-depth data on 1,419 households in southern Kathmandu challenges the common perception that urbanization leads to the disintegration of the joint family. It also looks at the differences in household sizes between various castes, and compares it with the data collected by other scholars who studied Newar society.

Most Newar girls are twice married to divinities. This forms the basis for Chapter Four, which describes and analyzes the *ihi* and *bārḥāḥ* as divine marriages and two significant life-cycle rituals in a Newar girl's life.

Chapter Five deals with the issue of Newar marriage. It looks at the arguments that are made by various scholars about Newar marriage patterns and

analyzes them using data I collected from 1,945 couples from seventeen castes from southern Kathmandu. It discusses the issue of isogamy - marriage between two equals - and how this is related to ideas about caste and territory. There are also case studies of inter-caste marriages and the repercussions it has on the families and castes concerned as well as the future of the offspring from the union.

In Chapter Six, Newar kinship terminology is analyzed to show the way that affines and consanguines are categorized in Newar society. The aim is to present a hierarchy of kin in terms of the ritual obligations that are required of the different status of kin. In addition, it also discusses the contexts in which the terminology is subjectively interpreted by the Newars, and the potential it has for transforming kinship relations.

Newar kinship is constituted through prestation exchanges and participation in the various Newar rituals and festivals that occur throughout the year. In Chapters Seven and Eight, life-cycle rituals and festivals are analyzed from a kinship perspective. From the cradle to the cremation of a family member, the groups of kin that were mapped out in Chapter Six are engaged in the ritual expression of their kinship with Ego. In a similar vein, Chapter Eight looks at Newar festivals which are celebrated at the household, agnatic, caste or inter-caste levels and involve different categories of kin.

Chapter nine, the Conclusion, suggests means by which we can make sense of the complex practices of marriages and kinship which leads to caste identity among the Newars of Kathmandu, and thereby provide altogether new way of thinking about Newar caste in Nepal.

CHAPTER TWO

THE NEWARS OF SOUTHERN KATHMANDU

2.1 The Religion of the Newars

Scholars often differentiate the three main Newar cities of the Kathmandu Valley—Kathmandu, Lalitpur (Patan) and Bhaktapur—according to the religion of its inhabitants. Levy, in his *magnum opus* on Bhaktapur (1992), portrays the city as being predominantly Hindu. In contrast, Lalitpur and Kathmandu are often regarded as predominantly Buddhist cities. ‘Patan, and to a certain extent even Kathmandu, preserved their Buddhist character very well in ritual as well as in environment/spatial structure, Bhaktapur’s ritual is dominated by Hinduism’ (Gutschow 1980: 57). This view is supported by Toffin (1991). In his comment on Gutschow and Kölver’s (1975) work, Toffin writes ‘in choosing Bhaktapur, the authors decided to study a mainly Hindu city in contrast to Lalitpur or Kathmandu where Buddhist elements play an important if not predominant role’ (Toffin 1991: 71).

In her study of the spatial symbolism of Kathmandu, Slusser (1982: 103) finds that it sits in the middle of the religious divide, with a ‘mixed’ population of Hindus and Buddhists. Elsewhere, she states that Kathmandu leans more towards being ‘Buddhistic’ than Hindu (1982: 102). Using secondary data collected by Rosser (1966) and Greenwold (1974), Pradhan (1986: 7) finds that ‘Kathmandu has roughly the same proportion of Hindus and Buddhists, unlike the other two former capital cities, Patan and Bhaktapur, which have predominantly Buddhist and Hindu population respectively.’ However, Rosser’s data (1966: 85-6) is based on an estimate of the population of the whole Kathmandu Valley and one would question the accuracy of extracting data from an estimate. On the other hand, the data presented by Greenwold (1974: 103-4) are the product of a survey he

conducted of 1,972 using research assistants. However, not all Newar castes were surveyed, and it is not clear which areas of Kathmandu were covered by the survey.

At the heart of the debate about the religious affiliation of Newars is a problem of defining the religion that is practised with respect to the terms 'Hindu' and 'Buddhist.' Although Newar life is heavily infused with religion, the exact nature of that religion has been the subject of controversy among scholars and politicians. One method which was used by government census enumerators to determine a person's religion was to ask which god he worshipped. If, for example, the god was Ganesh, then the person would immediately be categorized as a Hindu. On the other hand, if the person worshipped Buddha, then the person would be categorized as a Buddhist. These were 'objective' tests, based on the assumption that certain gods were exclusive to certain religions. However, this was far from the truth. Newars worship a pantheon of gods and goddesses, some with no name or form. Therefore, the same person who says that he worships Ganesh could also worship Buddha and the shapeless mound of stone at the side of the road, and hold each equally important in his religious life. Therefore, to use gods as a criteria for determining religious affiliation is an inaccurate way of describing the religious life of Newars.

Anthropologists, on the other hand, use the domestic priest used in household rituals to determine a person's religion. If a household uses a Hindu priest, i.e. Rājopādhyāya Brahman, then it is identified as a Hindu, if it uses a Buddhist priest, i.e. Vajrācārya, such a household is considered to be Buddhist. However, again, Newars seem to defy such pigeon-holing, as there are some castes who use neither or both Buddhist and Hindu priests in their domestic rituals. For example, there is a farmer caste group named Dāgol at Jaisidewal in

Kathmandu who use Hindu priest at the ground floor while using Buddhist priest at the top floor of the same house for the same domestic ritual (Bajracharya 1985: 61). Likewise there are some Śreṣṭha who also use both types of priest for their rituals. Then there are some of the lowest castes who use neither type of priest. It should also be noted that the role of the priest should not be over-rated, because domestic rituals are only one part of Newar religious life. In public festivals, the role of such priests is often insignificant. In cases where there is a priest who officiates the public festivals, participation in such festivals is not limited to any particular caste, which means that the reverse is not true, i.e. priests do not determine who participates in the public festivals.

In a survey which I conducted of 1,421 households, I asked Newars what religion they belong to and what priest they employ for their domestic rituals. What I found was that there is little correlation between the Newars' declared religion and the priest that they employ. I even found a small per cent of priests - Vajrācāryas - who are usually defined by anthropologists as Buddhists who declared themselves Hindu. The biggest discrepancy was with the Maharjan caste, out of which 51.9 per cent declared themselves as Hindu although they employed Buddhist priests for their domestic rituals. It is equally remarkable that 27 Śreṣṭha households who use Brahman priests declared their religion to be Buddhist.

Perhaps the reason for this is because some Newars continue to hold the Panchayat-era ideology that regards Buddhism as a Branch of Hinduism, or as a result of living with the politically dominant Hindu population, they have adopted Hindu identity, regardless of their religious practices. Many Buddhist Newars I spoke to commented on this point, saying that although they are Buddhist and follow Buddhist rites of passage they have to declare themselves officially Hindu for fear of discrimination in their professional field. This view is also shared by

many other non-Hindu ethnic groups of Nepal (cf. Yakharai 1996). However, I think that the problem of religious identity is the result of trying to fit Newar religion into categories which are in themselves ambiguous.

Another source of confusion about religious identity among Newars is the lineage deity. All Newar castes have their lineage deities which play a significant role in defining the patrilineal descent group. Generally, it is held that if there is a connection between the lineage deity and Buddhism or Hinduism, then those who worship the lineage deity would be Buddhists or Hindus respectively. However, there are some castes whose declared religion differs from the type of lineage deity they worship. For example, the Vajrācārya priestly caste of Gubhā Bāhāḥ, a traditional Buddhist monastery at Om Bāhāḥ of Kathmandu have a Hindu god, Bisankhu Narayan near Godavari, as their lineage deity. Also the Śākyas of the same Buddhist monastery have another Hindu god, Dumja Mahadya or Shiva, as their lineage deity (Locke 1985: 323). Likewise, the Maharjans, the farmer caste of Musum Bāhāḥ of Kathmandu, who are identified as Buddhist, also have Narayan as their lineage deity. On the other hand, some Śreṣṭha who identify as Hindus have a Buddhist deity as their lineage deity. The Rajbhandāri, a Śreṣṭha caste sub-group of lower Kathmandu, have Vajrayogini, a Buddhist deity, as their lineage deity.

According to their official declaration, the Newar population in wards 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu is mixed, with 52.1 per cent who are Buddhist and 47.9 per cent who are Hindu (see Table 2.1). However, when the same group is categorized according to the priest they employ for their domestic rituals, a different picture emerges. The Buddhists make up the majority—71.9 per cent—compared to only 15.1 per cent who are Hindu. However, 11.3 per cent of the population are unaccounted for, given that they are Untouchables who employ

Table 2.1: A sample of religious identity of Newars of Kathmandu based on domestic priests and official declaration according to 1996 ward survey carried out of every ward (a sample of 1,421 households which combine of 100 per cent Ward 21 and 40 per cent Ward 22)

| Caste | Surnames | Domestic priest | Official declaration by household (%) | | Total population |
|---------------------------|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|------------------|
| | | | Buddhist | Hindu | |
| Dyaḥbhāju (Hindu Priest) | Rājopādhyāya, Sharma | Hindu | | 4 (100.0) | 36 |
| Gubhāju (Buddhist Priest) | Vajrācārya | Buddhist | 59 (96.7) | 2 (3.3) | 462 |
| Bare | Śākya | Buddhist | 123 (99.2) | 1 (0.8) | 823 |
| Śeśyaḥ | Śreṣṭha | Hindu | 18 (12.9) | 121 (87.1) | 869 |
| | Amātya | Hindu | 1 (25.0) | 3 (75.0) | 25 |
| | Karmācārya | Hindu | 2 (33.3) | 4 (66.7) | 42 |
| | Pradhān | Buddhist & Hindu | 2 (7.5) | 25 (92.5) | 166 |
| | Rajbandāri | Hindu | 1 (5.9) | 16 (94.1) | 119 |
| | Joshi | Hindu | | 7 (100.0) | 53 |
| | Others | Hindu | 5 (29.4) | 12 (70.6) | 110 |
| Udāy | Tulādhār, Bainyā, Tāmrākār, Sthāpit Sikhrākār Udās Kāsākār, Baidya, etc. | Buddhist | 76 (88.4) | 10 (11.6) | 545 |
| Jyāpu/Kumā | Maharjan, Singh, Suwāl Prajāpati, Dangol, Duwāl, Singhsuwāl, etc. | Buddhist | 231 (48.1) | 249 (51.9) | 3018 |
| Sāyami | Mānandhar | Buddhist | 21 (70.0) | 9 (30.0) | 187 |
| Khusaḥ | Taṇḍukār | Buddhist | 9 (69.2) | 4 (30.8) | 88 |
| Nau | Nāpit | Buddhist | 4 (57.1) | 3 (42.9) | 48 |
| Kau | Nakarmi | Buddhist | 20 (69.0) | 9 (31.0) | 204 |
| Bhāḥ | Kāranjit | Hindu | 7 (33.3) | 14 (66.7) | 183 |
| Gathu | Māli, Mālākār | Buddhist | 2 (33.3) | 4 (66.7) | 35 |
| Pū | Citrakār | Buddhist | 3 (60.0) | 2 (40.0) | 28 |
| Chipā | Ranjit, Ranjitkār | Buddhist | 51 (67.1) | 25 (32.9) | 570 |
| Nāy | Khadgi, Shāhi | Buddhist (Taṇḍukār-Nāy Gubhāju) | 23 (22.1) | 81 (77.9) | 843 |
| Jogi | Kapāli, Kusle, Darshandhāri, Jogi, | Their own | 3 (23.0) | 10 (77.0) | 77 |
| Dyaḥlā | Pode, Dyaḥlā, Pore | Their own | 19 (17.0) | 93 (83.0) | 710 |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | Nepāli, Cyāme | Their own | 1 (3.0) | 32 (97.0) | 293 |
| Total | | | 681 (47.9) | 740 (52.1) | 9,534 |

priests from their own caste. There are also 1.7 per cent of Newars who employ both Buddhist and Hindu priests in their domestic rituals (see Table 2.2).

Nowadays, with the influence of religious movements and the increasing politicization of Newars, as religious boundaries are being defined and reinforced, Newars are more likely to take sides in the religious divide between Hindus and Buddhists. An example of this is the Buddhism awareness programs in the late 1980's and early 1990's which sought to educate the Newars on their Buddhist religion. The extent to which these religious programs affect the day-to-day beliefs practices of Newars is still not known, although there are some 'fundamentalist' Buddhists who are calling for the eradication of what they see as un-Buddhist practices of the Newars, such as animal sacrifice.

Table 2.2: Religious identity of Newars based on caste and priest they employed.

| Type of priest employed | N= 9,534 |
|-------------------------|----------|
| Buddhist | 71.9% |
| Hindu | 15.1% |
| Buddhist & Hindu | 1.7% |
| Unspecified* | 11.3% |

*Three castes have their own priests from the same caste group

In Newar society, religion, like caste, is prescribed by birth, not the product of individual choice. Individually a person might believe in any religion but communally they are bound by Newar rituals and festivals that reflect their religious identity in public sphere. During my fieldwork when I told Newars that I knew of a Sakya who converted to Islam, they could hardly believe me. They took it as a joke because for them, it is inconceivable that a Newar would change not so much his religion, but his whole relationship to his lineage deity and his caste.

Along with the new religious movements, there is also a strong Newar movement which seeks to define Newar identity. Within this group, there are a few native scholars led by Baldev Juju who are promoting the idea of 'Newar

religion.’ Rather than differentiating Newars based on Hindu or Buddhist categories, Juju points to a common religion, the elements of which have been provided with names and forms belonging to Hinduism and Buddhism. He writes:

In our place [Nepal] it is not moksa [liberation] but obtaining divinity or turning a person into a god that is the aim of the philosophy of Newar culture. Thus the philosophy of culture of this place, its Tantric nature, is not the same as anywhere else. The basic attitudes are different from everywhere; this is the unique feature of this place.

Baldev Juju (1995: 3) translated from Nepal Bhāṣā

2.2 Newar Caste

Caste is a key feature to understand the South Asian society and the Newar caste system is one of the complex systems of South Asia. In Toffin’s words (1984: 221), ‘the Newar caste system is certainly one of the most complicated and rich in South Asia’. The Newar caste system cuts across two religious groups—Buddhists and Hindus. Before 1950 the nature of caste was apparent in marriage and kinship, commensality, and hereditary jobs. In modern times this feature is most obvious in marriage and kinship. However, caste is still the key to define social hierarchy, ritual role, marriage and kinship in Newar society. Caste identity is simply defined by a person’s surname. In most cases, just by knowing a person’s surname one can identify his certain identity and ethnicity regardless of his language and geographical location.¹

Caste plays an important role not only in the cultural but also geographical

¹ There are a few names that are ambiguous (e.g. Tāmṛākār can refer to the Buddhist Udāy caste sub-group in Kathmandu or to a Hindu caste sub-group in Lalitpur) and there are others that are actually lineage or clan names which do not, of themselves, inform people of the bearer’s caste (e.g. Dhākhwā, Nyāchyō, Bijuckche).

aspects of Newar society. I once asked a Buddhist high-caste man, aged 70, to guide me on a tour of the historical sites of the old Kathmandu. Apart from telling me the legends and myths of each significant place, he also clearly identified each *twāḥ* or locality according to main caste groups who dominate each *twāḥ* (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3: Main localities (*twāḥ*) and the principal castes found in southern Kathmandu according to one knowledgeable informant.

| Localities (<i>twāḥ</i>) | Principal castes |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Jhochē | Śreṣṭha, Vajrācārya, Mānandhar |
| Om bāhā | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Tāmrākār |
| Nabahī | Vajrācārya, Śreṣṭha |
| Yaṅgā (Yaṅgāl) | Maharjan and others. |
| Manjeshwari | Ranjitkār |
| Iku bāhā | Śreṣṭha, Vajrācārya |
| Jyā bāhā | Śreṣṭha, Ranjitkār, Citrakār |
| Lagā (Lagan) | Śākya, Tulādhar |
| Nāy Pācho | Maharjan, Shāhi, Śākya |
| Podetwāḥ | Dyaḥlā |
| Brahma | Maharjan, Vajrācārya |
| Gophaḥ | Maharjan, Shāhi |
| Wande | Prajāpati |
| Dalāchē | Maharjan, Kāranjit |
| Khālchē | Śākya |
| Hyumat | Mixed |
| Kohiti | Maharjan, Śākya, Citrakār, Cyāmkhalah |
| Nhūghaḥ (Jaisideval) | Śreṣṭha, Citrakār and others. |
| Majipāt | Ranjitkār, Śreṣṭha |
| Chikāmuga | Ranjitkār, Śreṣṭha |
| Bhindyaḥ (Bhimsensthān) | Citrakār, Sthāpit and others. |
| Maru | Tāmrākār, Śākya, Joṣi and others. |

For example, Majipāt is the locality of Ranjitkār (Chipā) caste, Jyā Bāhāḥ is of Kāranjit (Bhāḥ) caste and similarly Lagan is of Śākya (Bare) caste. It is generally known among the Newars that if someone belongs to a particular caste they should be able to easily trace back their locality. This feature is more obvious

in relation to kinship and marriage practices. The Buddhist high castes identify their in-married brides based on their natal homes which is named after a Buddhist monasteries (*bāhāḥ/bahi*). Similarly, among agricultural castes the in-married bride is referred by adding a suffix *mi* to her natal *twāḥ*. For example, if a bride is from the locality named Wande she will be referred to by her husband's kindred as Wande-mi. Although the 1959 constitution and 1963 amended legal code (Muluki Ain) declared all citizens equal before the law, thereby effectively abolishing caste, in practice caste is still the governing principle of social interaction among Newars today. Variations in the composition of the Newar caste hierarchy across time and space is reflected in the different ways that it has been portrayed by various scholars. For example, Nepali (1965: 150) divided Newars into 25 castes, Rosser (1966: 85-6) 26 castes, and Greenwold (1974: 103-4) 19 castes.

In southern Kathmandu, I have used marriage patterns to define caste boundaries. Although there is a tendency towards endogamy within the 'caste sub-group'², in cases where caste sub-groups are exogamous, exogamy is limited to certain caste sub-groups with which marriage is still permissible. I would define all the caste sub-groups with which marriage is permissible as jointly constituting a caste. Using this definition, I have found 20 endogamous caste groups and have listed them according to the Newar hierarchy (see Table 2.4).

² The term 'caste sub-group', first used by Gellner (1992: 65), refers to the groups sharing the same surname and the same socio-religious identity. He states that the group is neither endogamous (like sub-caste) nor exogamous (like clans or lineages).

Table 2.4: Caste breakdown of southern Kathmandu (*kwahne*) residents

| Main divisions | Caste group divisions | Hereditary occupation | Non-honorific caste names | Honorific names of castes and caste sub-groups | House-holds | % |
|---|------------------------|---|---------------------------|--|--------------|------------|
| <i>laḥ cale jū pī</i> Water acceptable | Priestly castes | Hindu priests | Dyaḥbhāju | Rājopādhyāya | 11 | 0.2 |
| | | Buddhist priests | Gubhāju | Vajrācārya | 193 | 3.8 |
| | | Goldsmith, silversmiths | Bare | Śākya | 416 | 8.2 |
| | High castes | Merchants, civil servants | Śeśyaḥ | Śreṣṭha, Joshi, Malla, Pradhān, Rājbandāri, Vaidhya, Māthemā, Gorkhāli, Karmacārya etc. | 1108 | 21.9 |
| | | Traders and craftsmen | Udāy | Tulādhar, Kaṃsākār, Tāmrākār, Baniyā, Rājkanikār, Sthāpit Sikhrākār, Silpakār, Sindurākār, | 302 | 6 |
| | Agricultural castes | Farmers and Potters | Jyāpu, Kumā | Maharjan, Dāgol, Suwāl, Jyāpu, Siñ, Siñsuwāl, Munikār Prajāpati, | 1392 | 27.6 |
| | Clean service castes | Oil-pressers | Sāymi | Mānandhar, Sāymi | 349 | 6.9 |
| | | Palanquin bearers | Khusaḥ | Taṇḍukār | 36 | 0.7 |
| | | Barber | Nau | Nāpit | 33 | 0.6 |
| | | Blacksmiths | Kau | Nakarmi | 49 | 1.0 |
| | | Post-funeral duties | Bhā | Kāranjit | 36 | 0.7 |
| | | Flower sellers | Gathu | Māli, Mālākār | 16 | 0.3 |
| | | Painters | Puñ | Citrakār | 39 | 0.8 |
| | | Dyers | Chipā | Ranjitkār, Ranjit | 212 | 4.2 |
| Carriers | | Duī | Putuwār | 2 | 0.03 | |
| ----- -Water line----- | | | | | | |
| <i>laḥ cale majū pī</i> Water unacceptable | Unclean service castes | Butcher | Nāy | Shāhi, Khadgi, Kasāi | 342 | 6.8 |
| | | Musician, Tailors, post-funeral duties, | Jogi | Kapāli, Darshandhāri | 53 | 1.0 |
| | | Washermen | Dhubyā | Rajaka | 3 | 0.05 |
| | Untouchable castes | Fishermen and Sweeper | Pode | Nepāl, Dyaḥlā, Pode | 157 | 3.1 |
| | | Sweeper | Cyāmkhalaḥ | Cyāme, Nepāli | 11 | 0.2 |
| Non-Newars | | | | | 297 | 5.9 |
| Total | | | | | 5,057 | 100 |

There are six main caste divisions which are arranged according to purity and impurity. Within the hierarchy of 'pure castes' or 'water acceptable castes' (*laḥ cale jūpī*) the priestly caste is at the top, followed by high, agricultural, and clean service castes. Within the 'impure castes' there are unclean service castes

who are touchable, followed by untouchable castes at the bottom. This chapter gives a brief overview of each Newar caste, highlighting the location of each caste, number of households, their traditional and current occupations, their marriage patterns and the variations in the observance of Newar rituals and festivals.

2.2.1 The Priestly Castes: Rājopādhyāya, Vajrācārya, Śākya

2.2.1.1 Hindu priestly caste: Rājopādhyāya

The Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇs³ are the highest caste in the Hindu Newar hierarchy. In southern Kathmandu, there are eleven Rājopādhyāya households which constitute 0.2 per cent of the total households. The traditional role of the Rājopādhyāyas are domestic priests (*purohit*) of the Hindu Newars principally to the caste groups commonly known as Śreṣṭha⁴ who occupied 21.9 per cent of the Newar population in the southern Kathmandu. They are also temple priests (*pujāri* or *purohit*) of many important Hindu temples of the Kathmandu valley such as Cāgu, Ichangu, Śeś, and Bisākhu Nārāyans. They are commonly known as Newar Brahmins distinct from the dominant Parbatiyā Brahman of the country. Among Newars they are also known by Dyaḥ Brahmū, Dyaḥ Bhāju, Dyaḥju, Dyaḥjuju or simply Juju. However, Newars use honorific term *bājyā* which means grandfather in addressing those Rājopādhyāyas. In official contexts

³ Rājopādhyāya are also known to use 'Sharma' as their last name. For detailed description see Toffin (1995).

⁴ The Śreṣṭha castes are divided into Buddhist and Hindu, and the ones who employ the services of the Rājopādhyāya as their priests are considered Hindus. Some Kāranjit informants state that their domestic priests are Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ, but the Rājopādhyāya priests of southern Kathmandu whom I interviewed refused to acknowledge that they serve the Kāranjit. It may be that the Kāranjits were being served by a Rājopādhyāya from another part of Kathmandu. Similarly, Vajrācārya (1989: 167) states that the Rājopādhyāya Brāhmaṇ caste functions as a domestic priest to unclean Rajaka caste too which is also denied by the Rājopādhyāyas caste.

they also write 'Sharma' or 'Rimal' as their surnames in imitation of Parbatiyā Brahmins.

Rājopādhyāya of the Kathmandu valley are divided into three main *gotras* or lineages: Bhāradwāja, Gārghe and Kauśik. Families of these three lineages are the temple priests (*pujāri*) of three different Narayan temples of the valley. Bhāradwāja lineage is the temple priest of Cāgu Nārāyan temple at Bhaktapur, Gārghe is of Bisākhū Nārāyan temple at Lalitpur and Kauśik is of Icāgu at Kathmandu. Despite the connections between lineages and temples it also signifies the city's affiliation: Bhāradwāja lineage is based in Bhaktapur, Gārghe in Lalitpur and Kauśik in Kathmandu respectively.

On the Kathmandu level, Rājopādhyāya has one caste organization called 'Kāntipur Upākarma Guthi'. Every year on the *Gumpunḥī* day new members are recruited from newly initiated boys on payment of fee of Rs 5. On the same day a caste feast is given to all caste members.

In every Rājopādhyāya family there are at least one or two members of the family who inherits the priestly job. However, today 30.4 per cent Rājopādhyāya of ward 21 and 22 in southern Kathmandu work as civil servants in government offices, while 12.1 per cent are engaged in the private sector (business). It is interesting to note that the percentage of Rājopādhyāya who are students—12.1 per cent—is the lowest among all Newar castes in ward 21 and 22, lower than even the Untouchable castes, where the percentage of students is more than 17 per cent.

The Rājopādhyāya are considered relative newcomers to southern Kathmandu, having come from Lalitpur and Bhaktapur less than 200 years ago. There are four different partilineal clans (*khalah*) which are distinguishable by their middle names. Of the four clans, I interviewed three: the Jwālānanda

(originally from Patan), Dhar and Caran *khalahs* (both from Bhaktapur). They reside around Brahmatol, Dalāchi and Jyābāhā in southern Kathmandu. Despite having lived in southern Kathmandu for 4-5 generations, the Rājopādhyāya still have links with their place of origin. Pracandrardhar Rājopādhyāya, whose family migrated from Bhaktapur, said:

My ancestors (*purbaja*) were from Bhaktapur and because of our link to Bhaktapur, we celebrate Bhaktapur festivals such as Bisket Jātrā here in Kathmandu. Although I live here, I still consider myself as belonging to Bhaktapur.

He further confirmed and emphasized the significance of their spatial affiliation, saying that

...after a marriage it is necessary for us to bring the new bride to the lineage deity (*agā dyah*) to worship at the original shrine. Every new married couple must go there and perform the worshipping ritual (*pūjā*).

The marriage ceremony of the Rājopādhyāya, which is similar to those of the Indian Brāhmaṇs, sets them apart from other Newar castes. As for the marriage pattern, out of 30 marriages of the Rājopādhyāya that I recorded in southern Kathmandu, all were all caste-endogamous marriages, with no intercaste marriages. However, because of the small population of Rājopādhyāya in southern Kathmandu, the rule of patrilocality and the prohibition of marriage between kin linked within at least five generations explains the high proportion of married-in women who come from outside southern Kathmandu. Out of 17 marriages, 70.6 per cent of daughters-in-law come from outside Kathmandu city, 23.5 per cent come from northern Kathmandu and only 5.9 per cent are local girls from southern Kathmandu. For the same reason a high proportion of daughters are given to Rājopādhyāya men who are not from southern Kathmandu. Out of 13 marriages, 69.2 per cent of the son-in-laws were from outside Kathmandu, 15.4

per cent from northern Kathmandu and 15.4 per cent from southern Kathmandu. In all these cases, once a marriage link is made between Rājopādhyāya from two different areas, this is often repeated throughout the generations. In one case, I found that almost all marriages in a particular Rājopādhyāya family in southern Kathmandu were arranged with another Rājopādhyāya caste group in Patuko, Lalitpur.

Rājopādhyāyas do not observe the *ihī* ritual which is a key feature for Newars and is often taken to be a defining feature of Newariness. *Kanyādān* or 'the gift of a virgin,' which is commonly performed in the *ihī* ritual, is performed as the central part of the Hindu marriage ceremony in the house of the bride.

2.2.1.2 Buddhist priestly castes: Vajrācārya and Śākya

The Vajrācāryas (Gubhāju) and Śākyas (Bare) are the highest in Buddhist Newar caste hierarchy.⁵ They 'tend to be regarded as two castes' (Löwdin 1985: 33) with the Vajrācāryas occupying a higher status than the Śākyas. Although in theory they can intermarry, Rosser (1966: 126) noticed that '..about forty or fifty years ago Gubhāju families began to avoid the arrangement of marriage with Bare families, and today in Kathmandu, though they still occur, such marriages are rare.' In Bhaktapur and Lalitpur, Vajrācāryas and Śākyas are known to intermarry. At birth, children belonging to these castes are first treated as one caste, and it is only later that the children of Vajrācāryas go through a special initiation ritual called *Ācāḥ luyegu* or *Vajrācāryābhiṣek* which gives them the authority to be Buddhist priests and which confers a slightly higher status upon them than the Śākyas.

⁵ For detailed description see Gellner (1995).

In Kathmandu, Vajrācāryas are affiliated with 18 main *bāhāḥs* or Buddhist monasteries where initiation can be held. Similarly, Śākya of Kathmandu have 10 main *bāhāḥs* where they can traditionally held the initiation for their offspring. Twelve out of eighteen main *bāhāḥs* of Vajrācāryas have their own *sarvasangha* or territorial caste group comprised of pure Vajrācārya caste alone. The other six *bāhāḥs*' *sarvasangha* are made of with the combination of Śākya and Vajrācārya castes.

2.2.1.2.1 The Vajrācāryas

The Vajrācāryas, who are also known by their non-honorific name Gubhāju, are domestic and communal priests for the majority of Newar Buddhists down to the level of the clean service castes (with the exception being the Kāranjit). Today, few Vajrācāryas work exclusively as priests. 17.2 per cent of Vajrācārya of ward 21 and 22 are employed in the civil service, whereas 11.1 per cent are engaged in business. In 1988, a new secular-based Vajrācārya caste organization of Kathmandu was founded. The organization is called 'Vajrācārya Sārakṣhan Guthi' or 'Vajrācārya Preservation Organization'.

The Vajrācārya of southern Kathmandu are mainly clustered around six *bāhāḥs* in southern Kathmandu — Om Bāhāḥ, Iku Bāhāḥ, Mikhā Bāhāḥ, Lagā Bāhāḥ, outer Musum Bāhāḥ and Musum Bāhāḥ, Jāpātū. In the whole of southern Kathmandu, there are 193 Vajrācārya households, which account for 3.8 per cent of the total number of total households. According to the 1996 census of *de ācāḥgū* or Vajrācārya caste organization of the Kathmandu level there are 496 initiated members (*sarvasangha*) in southern Kathmandu (*kothu pwī*). Traditionally, once a year there was a feast celebrated among all Vajrācārya members of southern Kathmandu (*pwī ācāḥgū nyāyekegu*) which has not been

observed for many years. However, in order to keep the tradition seven Vajrācāryas of southern Kathmandu celebrate a miniature celebration of regional level of Vajrācārya caste group of southern Kathmandu (*kothu pwī ācāgū*) on the 15th day of the dark moon of Baisākha month (April-May). In my in-depth survey of wards 21 and 22, there are 61 households, with a total population of 462 people, making the average household size 7.6 persons per household.

Out of 83 Vajrācārya marriages in ward 21 and 22, 69.9 per cent were caste endogamous. 37.9 per cent of these were with Vajrācārya from southern Kathmandu, while 39.7 per cent were with Vajrācārya from northern Kathmandu, 5.2 per cent were with Vajrācārya from Lalitpur, and 17.2 per cent with Vajrācārya from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. Intercaste marriages with other Newars accounted for 21.7 per cent of all marriages which is relatively high rate compared to other priestly castes. There were 7 cases of marriage with Śreṣṭha, two with Ranjītkār, and one each with Maharjan, Mānandhar, Nakarmi, Nāpit, Kāranjit, Putuwār, Sthāpit and Rājkamikār. There were 7 cases of marriage with non-Newars.

2.2.1.2.2 *The Śākya*s

The Śākya are also known by their non-honorific name Bare. Traditionally, there were five Śākya sub-groups⁶ (Gellner 1992: 165), but nowadays, all of these call themselves 'Śākya.' In the caste hierarchy, they are categorized as a priestly caste. Nowadays, in addition to their traditional caste

⁶ The five Śākya sub-groups are (with non-honorific equivalents in parentheses): a) Śākyaavaṃśa (Bare) meaning 'of Śākya the lineage'; b) Śākyaabhiṣu (Bare) meaning 'Buddhist monks'; c) Brahmācārya Bhikṣu or Śrāvaka Bhikṣu (Bhikkhu Bare) meaning 'celibate monk'; d) Bauddhācārya/Buddhācārya (Bare) meaning 'Buddhist preceptor'; and e) Cailaka Bhikṣu (Cībhāḥ Bare) meaning 'caitya monk.' Some Śākya informants told me that the Śākya sub-groups of type

occupation as temple priests, goldsmiths and silversmiths, 18.1 of the Śākya of ward 21 and 22 are engaged in business, while 11.6 are in the civil service. The Śākya are served by the Vajrācārya priests for their domestic rituals.

Unlike many other caste groups in Kathmandu, Śākya of Kathmandu do not have a single caste *guthi* or organization on the Kathmandu level, either in the form of a ritually based organization or a modern secular one. In the past there was an organization called Śākya Samāj but it became inactive around 1960, few years after it was set up.⁷

In the whole of southern Kathmandu, there are 416 Śākya households, which account for 8.2 per cent of all households. As the Śākya are closely affiliated to various *bāhāḥ* and *bahī* (Buddhist monasteries), their households are usually clustered around them. In wards 21 and 22, there are 124 Śākya households, with a total population of 823 people, and the average household size is 6.6 persons.

Out of the 367 Śākya marriages surveyed in southern Kathmandu, 88.3 per cent (324 marriages) were caste endogamous. Out of the 324 marriages, 42 per cent were with Śākya from southern Kathmandu, 39.8 per cent with Śākya from northern Kathmandu, 11.7 per cent with Śākya from Lalitpur, and 6.5 per cent with Śākya from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. Among the 9.8 per cent (36

(c) and (e) they do not need Vajrācārya priest for their priestly services as they use their own.

⁷ According to Kanak Man Śākya, an informant and a founder member of Śākya Samāj the main reason behind the establishment of the Śākya Samāj was to fight against the traditional priest system (*purohitwād*) of Vajrācārya priests. When an economically poor Śākya male of Iku Bāhāḥ died in 1955 (20 Baiśākh BS 2012) his Vajrācārya domestic priest betrayed his family by refusing to preside over funeral rites for him. His rejection was based on the ground that he had sold off his clientship (*jajmāni* or *jaymāñ*) to other Vajrācārya living somewhere else. The first step Śākya Samāj then took forward is to reform social behaviour of Śākya in southern Kathmandu. The main successful reformation by Śākya Samāj was to modernize the practice of life-cycle rituals. For example, force to reduce the cost of rituals by minimization which was praised and followed

marriages) which were intercaste marriages with other Newar castes, 13 were with Vajrācāryas, 9 with Śreṣṭha, 4 with Tulādharas, 5 with Maharjans, 2 with Mānandharas and one each with Narkarmi, Ranjītkār and Cyāme. Marriage with non-Newars accounted for 1.9 per cent of all marriages.

2.2.2 The high castes: Śreṣṭha and Udāy

These two Newar high castes—Śreṣṭha and Udāy—are Hindu and Buddhist respectively. Although Śreṣṭha and Udāy are accorded equal status by the other castes, there is rivalry among them as they each claim the other to be inferior. Lewis (1984: 154) noticed that ‘Tuladhar-Srestha rivalry goes beyond economics and status: it reaches deep into primordial sentiments about Newar culture.’

2.2.2.1 The Śreṣṭha

The Śreṣṭha⁸ caste is the biggest of all Newar castes. Within this caste there are several caste sub-groups, including Śreṣṭhas, Malla, Joṣi, Pradhān, Rājbandāri and Amātya. Their traditional caste rôles also differ according to sub-caste group: for example, the Malla are the ritual kings, Joṣi, the astrologers, Amātya and Pradhān, the administrators and Rājbandāri are the royal treasurers. Nowadays, 17.8 per cent of the Śreṣṭha in wards 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu are in the civil service, 11.3 per cent are engaged in business and 0.1 per cent are engaged in agriculture.

by other groups as well.

⁸ For detailed description see Quigley (1995b)

Like the Śākya, Śreṣṭhas of Kathmandu also lack a single caste organization which includes all Śreṣṭhas of Kathmandu. However, at the level of the caste sub-group, at least the Jośīs of southern Kathmandu have a single caste organization. Most Jośī of southern Kathmandu originate from the area of Maru where the Jośīs' lineage shrine (*āgā chē*) is located. Among the Jośī of Kathmandu there is an annual caste reunion celebration which is called 'Maru Jośī Pariwār Milan Samāroha' or 'Maru Jośī Family Reunion Celebration' on the Nepalese New Year day at Guyheswari. A Jośī informant confirmed me that the objectives of the family reunion celebration is purely for introduction of kin, unification of kin and to increase mutual understanding among the members of Jośī families. The Maru Jośī are divided into two *khalahs* or clans with separate lineage shrines (*āgā*): *Dhwaj khalah* and *Sī khalah*. However, in 1991 these two *khalahs* or clans were reunited by allowing the lineage deity of *Sī khalah* to enter in the main lineage shrine room of *Dhwaj khalah*. I was told that the reason was to reunite all kin of Maru Jośī, to preserve and continue the traditional practice of religion and culture which Jośī have been followed from their ancestors. At present, Jośīs of Kathmandu have a single funeral *guthi* (*sī guthi*) with a membership of 47 Jośī households.

In the whole of southern Kathmandu, there are 1,108 Śreṣṭha households, which account for 21.9 per cent of the all households in southern Kathmandu. Settlement-wise, the Śreṣṭha households are not clustered around any particular locality. In a survey of ward 21 and 22, there are 225 households, with a total population of 1,517 and an average household size of 6.4.

In theory the two main Śreṣṭha sub-castes, the Chathariya and Pāñcthariya should not intermarry. In practice, the Śreṣṭha prefer to build marriage alliance within the same grade of Śreṣṭhas and even within the same caste sub-groups. For

the purpose of comparison with other Newar castes, the Śreṣṭha caste will be regarded as a whole, and all marriages among or between the sub-castes will be regarded as isogamous marriages within the Śreṣṭha caste.

Out of a total of 222 marriages surveyed in southern Kathmandu, 95.4 per cent or 212 marriages were caste endogamous, i.e. within the Śreṣṭha caste. Within the 212 marriages, 15.6 per cent were with Śreṣṭha from southern Kathmandu, 36.3 per cent with Śreṣṭha from northern Kathmandu, 23.1 per cent with Śreṣṭha from Lalitpur and 25 per cent with Śreṣṭha from Bhaktapur and other towns. There were also 6 intercaste marriages, all of which were with Maharjan, which accounted for 2.8 per cent of all marriages surveyed. There were only 4 marriages with non-Newars, which accounted for 1.8 per cent of all marriages.

The Śreṣṭha caste is regarded by the other castes as the most mixed caste because it includes not only those who are members by descent, but also those who have moved up the social hierarchy (see Rosser 1966). Generally, it is difficult to change caste name as it is ascribed status and used as a label of identity. However, Rosser (1966) has shown how such caste mobility occurs among the Newars. I have also witnessed a Dyaḥlā informant from my field area who changed the surname of his children to 'Śreṣṭha' for the sake of educational convenience, although he himself kept his traditional surname as Dyaḥlā⁹.

2.2.2.2 *The Udāy*

The Udāy¹⁰ caste is Buddhist and they are merchants and artisans by

⁹ The interesting question arises with this example of whether it would have been possible to have given the surnames of other castes.

¹⁰ Udāy are also known as Urāy or Udās. However, they prefer to write Udāy as in 'Udāy Samāj,' or 'Udāy Society,' a new Udāy caste association of the Kathmandu level established on 1995. For detailed description see Lewis (1995).

traditional occupation. According to Lewis (1995: 47) there are nine caste sub-group within the Udāy caste groups—Tulādhar (merchants), Kamsākār (metal-workers), Tāmrākār (coppersmiths), Baniyā (trader/herb seller), Rājkarnikār (confectioners), Sthāpit (carpenters), Śilpakār/Śilākār (stone masons), Sikrikār or Sikhrākār (tilers) and Sindurākār (powder-sellers). However, the constitution¹¹ of the Udāy Samāj or Udāy society of Kathmandu, founded in 1995, states that the Udāy *jāt* includes Tulādhar, Kāsākār, Tāmrākār, Sikhrākār, Sthāpit, Baniyā, Silākār, Silālik, and Sindurākār. They do not include the Rājkarnikār, the confectioner caste, as one of their fellow caste sub-groups. As for the marriage practices among these caste sub-groups, theoretically there are no barriers to intermarriage but my field survey shows that there is a tendency to marry within one's own caste sub-group. However, for the purpose of comparison with other Newar castes, the Udāy caste is taken as a whole to include all the caste sub-groups within it.

Among Udāy caste sub-groups, the Kāsākār have their own caste sub-group *guthi* which operates independently of the new Udāy Samāj. The Tulādhar likewise have at least two separate modern Tulādhar organizations that bring together Tulādhar sharing a lineage deity and based on a particular locality of northern Kathmandu.

The Udāy are traditionally traders who are famous for their long-distance trade with Tibet. Nowadays, 17.9 per cent of Udāy surveyed in wards 21 and 22 have jobs in business, while 13.3 are engaged in the civil service.

The Udāy households are clustered around the *bāhāḥ* and *bahī* (monasteries), although the places where they live are actually called *nani*. The

¹¹ Constitution of Udāy Samāj, unpublished constitution of Udāy Society (1996).

majority of the Tuladhars caste sub-group lives in northern Kathmandu. In southern Kathmandu the majority of Udāy caste sub-group are Sthāpits (in Lagan and Bhindyahtwah), Tāmṛākārs¹² (in Maru) and Sikhrākār (in Te bāhāḥ). There are 302 households in the whole of southern Kathmandu, which makes up 6 per cent of the total households. In ward 21 and 22, there are 85 households, with a total population of 540, making the average household size 6.3 persons per household.

The Udāy are caste endogamous: marriages within the Udāy caste accounted for 92.1 per cent of 202 marriages surveyed. Out of the 92.1 per cent (186 marriages), 23.6 per cent were with Udāy from southern Kathmandu, 73.7 per cent were with Udāy from northern Kathmandu, 1.1 per cent was with Udāy from Lalitpur and finally 1.6 per cent with Udāy from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. Intercaste marriages accounted for 6.9 per cent of the 202 marriages surveyed (14 marriages): 8 were with Śreṣṭha, 2 with Maharjan, 2 with Mānandhar, and one each with Śākya and Nāpit. There were also two cases of marriages with non-Newars.

2.2.3 The agricultural caste: Maharjan

The majority of Newar population in the Valley is made up of this single caste group generally known as Jyāpu or Maharjan.¹³ Among all Newar castes, the agricultural caste group 'Jyāpu' is believed to be the indigenous inhabitants of

¹² Tāmṛākārs of Maru are divided into three *guthi* groups: Tago Cībhā, Piḡaḥ Nani and Ilāchē. Ilāchē is also known as Lākhecā *guthi* because a member from this *guthi* portrays as the Dakī, or the Indra's mother during the Yēyā or festival of Kathmandu to lead mourners from all Newar castes of the year to walk around the old city.

¹³ For detailed description see Gellner (1995); Toffin (1994).

Kathmandu Valley. Within the agricultural caste, there are several caste sub-groups: Maharjan, Dāgol, Suwāl and Kumā/Prajāpati. Traditionally, Maharjan and Prajapati (Kumhā) are considered as different sub-castes and claimed to be exogamous groups. However, today these sub-castes are marriageable to each other or, in other words, they have become caste sub-groups rather than sub-castes. In southern Kathmandu they do not make any differences between them although they have separate localities. Toffin (1994: 435) writes, 'this group forms the backbone of the Old Kathmandu City and has played down to the present a prominent role in the religious urban life.' Their traditional occupation is agriculture, and in Newar festivals, they are the bearer of prestations between the higher castes and also for deities, and the carriers of the deities' palanquins. In ward 21 and 22, only 12.7 per cent are involved in agriculture, 9.8 per cent are in the civil service and 8.2 per cent are engaged in business.

When the United Nations announced year 1993 to be 'the International Indigenous Year', the agricultural caste group of Kathmandu founded a single secular-based caste organization called 'Jyāpu Mahāguthi' or 'Jyāpu grand organization' in order to claim that Jyāpu caste group are indigenous inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. However, after the establishment of Jyāpu Mahāguthi caste organization the main objectives have been to reinforce caste identity by preserving and promoting caste based culture and civilization among the members of the agricultural caste group of Kathmandu.

The Maharjan live in *toles* around Kathmandu which are named after them. In the whole of southern Kathmandu there are 1,392 households which make up 27.6 per cent of the total households. In a survey of wards 21 and 22, there are 460 Maharjan households with a total population of 2,884 and an average household size of 6.3.

Out of 487 marriages surveyed, 91.6 per cent (439 marriages) were caste endogamous. Out of 439 marriages, 45.3 per cent were with Maharjans from southern Kathmandu, 44.2 per cent were with Maharjans from northern Kathmandu, 1.8 per cent with Maharjans from Lalitpur, 8.7 per cent with Maharjans from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. Of the 35 intercaste marriages with other Newar castes, which accounted for 7.3 per cent of all marriages, 25 were with Śreṣṭhas, 3 with Tulādhar, 2 with Putuwār, 2 with Mānandhar, 2 with Śākya and one with Vajrācārya. There were 13 cases of marriages with non-Newars, which accounted for 2.7 per cent of all marriages.

2.2.4 The clean service castes: Mānandhar, Nāpit, Nakarmi, Kāranjit, Mālākār, Citrakār, Ranjitrkār.

In southern Kathmandu 15.23 per cent of the households belong to the clean service castes. Traditionally, castes of this group provide service to the higher castes and each caste is identified by its traditional occupation. There are eight castes which belong to this group: Citrakār (Painter),¹⁴ Taṇḍukār (Palanquin Bearers), Nāpit (Barbers), Nakarmi (Blacksmiths), Mālākār (Gardeners), Ranjitrkār (Dyers), Mānandhar¹⁵ (Oil-Pressers), and Kāranjit (Funeral Assistants). Except the last—Kāranjit—all castes use Buddhist priests (Vajrācārya) to officiate in their rituals.

¹⁴ For detailed description see Toffin (1995).

¹⁵ See Fürer-Haimendorf (1956).

2.2.4.1 *The Mānandhar*

The non-honorific name for Mānandhar is Sāymi. Traditionally, the Mānandhar are oil pressers and sellers, who also perform the role of fastening the chariot in Newar festivals. These days, 24.3 per cent of the Mānandhar of southern Kathmandu are engaged in business, while 8.7 per cent are in the civil service.

In 1986, Mānandhar of Kathmandu founded a single caste organization of Kathmandu which later developed it to be a Mānandhar nationwide caste organization. It is called 'Kendriya Mānandhar Sangha' or 'Central Mānandhar Organization'. This new caste organization unifies all the Mānandhar caste group (not just the Mānandhar of Kathmandu) and helps to build a strong caste identity among the caste fellows; it has also expanded its influence in reforming the traditional practices of life-cycle rituals and celebrations of feasts. The organization requires its members to follow newly reformed rules on life-cycle rituals which includes reductions a traditional lavish prestations and feasts.

The Mānandhar settlements are called *sāh*, of which there are seven in southern Kathmandu. There is a total of 349 Mānandhar households¹⁶ in southern Kathmandu, which make up 6.9 per cent of total households. Of the total population of 187 Mānandhars in wards 21 and 22, there are 30 Mānandhar households and the average household size is 6.2 persons.

Out of 38 marriages surveyed, 94.7 per cent were caste endogamous. The Mānandhar are also territorially endogamous, with 61.1 per cent of marriages

¹⁶ According to the 1996 census produced by Central Mānandhar Organization the total household number of Mānandhar in southern Kathmandu were 395 with total population of 3,440. They were divided into Bhindyaḥ guthi (28), Phalcāsāḥ (22), Casāndwa (64), Nhūsāḥ (134), Maru Dhwākhā (77), and Lāykūsāḥ (70).

with Mānandhars from southern Kathmandu, compared to 27.8 per cent with Mānandhars from northern Kathmandu and 11.1 per cent with Mānandhars from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. There was only one case of an intercaste marriage, which was between a Mānandhar girl and a Śreṣṭha boy. There was also one case of a marriage with a non-Newar.

2.2.4.2 The Taṇḍukār

The Taṇḍukār are also known by their non-honorific name of Khusaḥ. Traditionally, they are the musicians and palanquin carriers for Newar weddings. They also play a role in fastening the chariot for festivals together with the Mānandhar. Although they are served by the Vajrācārya priests for their rituals, the Taṇḍukār themselves are the domestic priests for the Khaḍgi, and are also known as the Nāy Gubāju. Today, in ward 21 and 22, the Taṇḍukār are employed in the civil service (17%) and the private sector (17%). Although the Taṇḍukār are traditionally allowed to do agriculture, I could not find any cases of Taṇḍukār who are engaged in agriculture in wards 21 and 22.

The Taṇḍukārs are scattered around Kathmandu, with no particular locality of their own. In the whole of southern Kathmandu, there are 36 households, which constitute 0.7 per cent of the total households. In wards 21 and 22, there are 88 people living in 13 households. The average household size is 6.7 persons.

In 1990, the Taṇḍukār caste group founded a new caste-based organization which includes all Taṇḍukārs of the Kathmandu Valley. It is called 'Nepāḥ Taṇḍukār Samāj' or 'Nepalese Taṇḍukār Society'.

2.2.4.3 *The Nāpit*

The non-honorific name for the Nāpit caste is Nau. Traditionally, they are the barbers and toe-nail-cutters to all castes from the Rājopādhyāya to the Maharjan. Nowadays, in addition to their traditional role, there are also some who are engaged as teachers.

Traditionally, in Kathmandu Nāpit were divided into three sub-castes: Paḥmā Nau, Dwī Nau and Ba Nau. Each of these sub-castes are endogamous group. Each sub-caste marry within the sub-caste. A Paḥmā Nau is not allowed to marry with Dwī Nau or Ba Nau and vice versa. These divisions are made according to the traditional services given by the Barber caste to the higher castes. I was told that in the past Paḥmā Nau gives service of a barber and pedicure to higher castes: Vajrācārya, Śākya, Śreṣṭha, Maharjan and the Ranas whereas Dwī Nau and Ba Nau give similar services to offspring born to intercaste concubines of Ranas and others. However, these internal divisions are not exist anymore and there is only one Nāpit endogamous caste group.

In southern Kathmandu, there are 33 Nāpit households, located mostly in their own locality called Nau cuka, although there also Nāpit households scattered in the other areas of the city. In ward 21 and 22 which I surveyed, there were 7 households with a total population of 48 people. The average Nāpit household size is 6.8 persons, just slightly higher than the average Newar household size which is 6.7 persons.

Out of 50 marriages surveyed, more than half - 56 per cent - of all Nāpit marriages are caste endogamous. 38 per cent were with other Newar castes, and 6 per cent were with non-Newars. Among the 38 per cent who married other Newar castes, 2 were married to Maharjans and 17 to Śreṣṭhas. The Nāpit are also territorially exogamous: only 3.6 per cent are married with other Nāpit from

southern Kathmandu, compared with 71.4 per cent who married Nāpit from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. Unions with Nāpit from northern Kathmandu accounted for 7.1 per cent of all marriages, while those with Nāpit from Lalitpur accounted for 17.9 per cent.

2.2.4.4 *The Nakarmi*

The Nakarmi are also known as by their non-honorific name, Kau. They are traditionally ironmongers. Although the Nakarmi are still performing their traditional roles, some are employed in the civil service. As the Nāpit are considered higher in the caste hierarchy, the Nakarmi are served by the Khaḍgi as their barber and toe-nail cutter.

Like the Vajrācāryas of southern Kathmandu Nakarmi also has a guthi on the regional level of southern Kathmandu called *kwaḥne guthi*. In 1990, the Nakarmi of Kathmandu founded a caste-based secular organization called 'Nakaḥmi Samāj Sewā Pucāḥ' or 'Nakarmi Social Service Group' representing all Nakarmi of Kathmandu. Like other caste-based organization the main aim is to promote one's caste identity in modern Nepalese society.

In wards 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu, there are 29 Nakarmi households with a total population of 204 people, making the average household size 7 persons. Their settlement pattern is scattered, without a particular locality.

The Nakarmi out of 196 marriages, 78.6 per cent of marriages occurring with other Nakarmi. The percentage of intercaste marriage with other Newar castes is 13.3 per cent, with 2 married with Vajrācārya, 2 with Sakya, 15 with Śreṣṭha, 2 with Maharjan, 3 Ranjitrkār, and one each with Mānandhar and Putuwār. Finally, 8.1 per cent of marriages were with non-Newars, including Joshi, Chetri and Gurung. The Nakarmi are also territorially exogamous, with a

preference for unions with Nakarmi from northern Kathmandu (52%). Marriages with Nakarmi from southern Kathmandu account for only 12.3 per cent. Other statistics show that 16.9 per cent of marriages are with Nakarmi from Lalitpur and 18.8 per cent are with Nakarmi from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns.

2.2.4.5 *The Kāranjit*

In the Newar caste hierarchy Kāranjit is placed among water acceptable (*lah cale jūpi*) caste group. They themselves claimed to be Hindu by religion and belong to Vasistha Gotra. The non-honorific name for the Kāranjit is Bhāḥ or Bhāgrā. In the past, they are sometimes known as Kārji, Kāljit, Kārjibhāt¹⁷ or Kānjikār¹⁸ or Bhāt.¹⁹ According to Rosser (1966: 150) there were 150 Kāranjit households in the whole Kathmandu Valley, scattered amongst most Newar settlements. Surprisingly, the survey collected by Greenwold (1974: 103) on Newar castes in the city of Kathmandu during 1970 to 1972 did not feature a single Kāranjit household. In my recent survey, I found a total of 220 Kāranjits in southern Kathmandu alone. Altogether, they make up 36 households or 0.7 per cent of the whole population, of which 29 are found in Dalāchi and Matlāchi, which is in the Jyā Bāhāḥ area. It is the only part of Kathmandu where Kāranjits are densely populated and there is no original Kāranjit settlement in other parts of Kathmandu. The number of Kāranjit households in wards 21 and 22 is 21, with a total population of 183 people, and the average Kāranjit household size - 8.7 persons - is among the very highest among all Newar castes.

Their traditional role is to dye woollen blankets and waist bands. They are

¹⁷ Referred in Jātimālāsūci of 14th century.

¹⁸ Referred in Wright (1877: 185-86).

¹⁹ Referred in the First Census of Nepal 1853-56 (1991: 80).

also the recipients of the *bhā dān*²⁰ given by the Śreṣṭhas.²¹ *Bhā Dān* is the offering of foods and other items in the name of their deceased on the 11th day after the death (some do on the 10th day). Traditionally (i.e. in the Rana period), they were allowed to practise agriculture but not shopkeeping. Nowadays, 21.7 per cent of the Kāranjit in wards 21 and 22 are employed in business and 15 per cent are in the civil service.

Regarding the recipients of death pollution, Ashaman Kāranjit, at 87 years of age, the most senior Kāranjit in Kathmandu, explained that it is the ritual task of the Kāranjit to make a Śiva (Mahādyah) from sand around the Bagmati river on the 11th day after the death. This Śiva (in a form of a linga or so-called phallic symbol) is called Hatkeśvar Mahādev because it is casted simply by hands. This casting of Śiva is an exclusive caste duty of Kāranjits. Once the Śiva is moulded, a Barber (Nāpit) caste man has to hold a bronze mirror before it (*jwālā nhāykañ kenegu*). And the chief mourner (usually the eldest son if the dead person is a man or the youngest son if the dead person is a woman) with the assistance of Rājopādhyāya Brahman, the family priest, offers three *gwaḥjā* or tiny *stupa* shapes made of rice flour dedicated to crow, dog and ghost which are called *kāgabali*, *swānabali* and *pretabali* respectively. In ancient days this form of ritual was done everyday up to 10 days after the death at the river bank by chief mourner with the assistance of Rājopādhyāya Brahman and Kāranjits. Later the ritual was shortened to one day, i.e. done on the 11th day by offering thirty *gwaḥjā* in one go instead of offering three each day.

²⁰ Toffin (1987: 223) calls it *kātto nakegu* or to feed with *kātto*.

²¹ According to Toffin (1984: 291-2) in Panauti Tāmṛākār also give *bhā dān* to Kāranjit.

Because of their role in the funeral rites, the Kāranjits are sometimes referred to as ‘funeral priests’²² or ‘para-priest’.²³ Others refer to them as Mahābrāhman²⁴ or Pretabrāhman,²⁵ terms which are originally used to refer to a type of Brahman who has ritual duties relating to death in North Indian society. However, in my conversations with them, Kāranjits do not refer to themselves as priests (*purohit*). Neither do they use the terms Mahābrāhman or Pretabrāhman for their roles in funeral rites.

The only person who made a link between Kāranjit and Mahābrāhman was Ashaman Kāranjit. He related a myth of a woman had 4 sons. The eldest (*Jeṣṭha putra*) was Kāranjit who was later known as Mahābrāhman. The second (*Māhilā*) was Brāhman, who was later known as Rājopādhyāya Brāhman. The third (*Sāhilā*) was Karmācārya and the youngest (*Kānchā*) was Kapāli (Jogi). Ashaman Kāranjit also recalled that Rājopādhyāya Brahmans used to pour water on his feet before they bowed at his feet because they regarded the Kāranjit as their elder brother. Similarly, two other Kāranjits of Kathmandu said that they once heard their Rājopādhyāya family priest stopped them to bow down (*bhāgi yāyegu*) to them because he claimed that Rājopādhyāya and Kāranjits castes are actually brothers. When I asked the Rājopādhyāya Brahmins about their relationship with the Kāranjit, they replied that they do not consider them as their elder brothers.²⁶

Within the Kāranjits of Kathmandu there are two types of Kāranjits: the

²² Toffin (1987: 222).

²³ Levy (1992: 360).

²⁴ Hodgson (1974), Toffin (1987: 222), Levy (1992: 361), Gellner (1992: 208).

²⁵ Toffin (1987: 222).

²⁶ In Levy’s (1992: 361) study of Bhaktapur Kāranjits are considered by Rājopādhyāya Brahman as a fallen Brahman group.

indigenous and 'tuigã' or migrated Kāranjits. Those who migrated from other Newar settlements (e.g. Lalitpur, Bhaktapur) are called 'tuigã' or foreigner (*pardeśi*) Kāranjits. The indigenous Kāranjit have their own *guthi* and Tantric shrine-house (*guthi chē*) at Dalāchi together with properties to support their *guthi*'s activities. The indigenous Kāranjits treat the 'tuigã' Kāranjits as one step lower than them. The 'tuigã' Kāranjits are not allowed to enter their main Tantric shrine-room (*āgã kothā*). However, the indigenous Kāranjits claimed that they help those 'tuigã' Kāranjits in their funerals (*sī uthe yāyegu*) by raising two rupees as the revenue from them. Those 'tuigã' Kāranjits are allowed to join their *guthi* but do not have access and right in the *guthi*'s activities apart from getting help at funeral. In the annual *guthi* feast, 'tuigã' Kāranjits are not allowed to eat with the indigenous Kāranjits. The feast is fed separately to those 'tuigã' Kāranjits. Referring to 'tuigã' Kāranjits Ashaman Kāranjit, said 'they are foreigners so they cannot move upwards (*thāhã wayemajyu*) to our *guthi*'. With the discrimination of the indigenous Kāranjits towards the 'tuigã' Kāranjits, the later group separately established their own *sī guthi* or funeral *guthi*. This makes them now two separate groups and two separate *sī guthis*: *mū guthi* which means the main *guthi* and *nhū guthi* which means new *guthi* (sometimes they are also known as *Taḥdhã guthi* or *Cīdhã guthi* meaning 'big' and 'little' *guthi*). The main *guthi* is formally known as Bhairādyah *guthi* or Pacali Bhairav *guthi*. The registration of new *guthi* members is done annually only in the fifth day of Aświn śukla (around October) according to Newar calendar. It is called *cyāgu hanegu*.

With the *Taḥdhã guthi* they have a main celebration once a year at Pacali Bhairav which lasts for 5 days and with the *Cīdhã guthi* they worship Manjuśri at Swayambhu which is known as Śaśu pūjā. In the past the *Taḥdhã guthi* also managed the *jajmāni* or patron-client system of receiving the *bhāḥ* or death prestation. There were fixed territories of responsibility and each had to respect

the others. The crossing of the boundaries was not allowed.

The internal divisions among the Kāranjits and the resulting split into separate *guthis* has led to competition for members. Originally, there were 25/26 members in the main *guthi* which has since declined to only 8/9 members at present. Ashaman Karanjit claims that due to ritual elaboration of the *guthi* it is very difficult for their members to take *guthi*'s turn (*guthipā kāye thāku*), so many have left for the new *guthi* in order to avoid having to take their turn to organize the annual rituals and feasts.

The main *sī guthi* or funeral *guthi* of Kāranjit of Kathmandu is registered in the royal palace at the time of King Tribhuvan. As a consequence, those Kāranjits have a customary practices of mourning (*bicā hāyeka wanegu*) for the dead king according Newar tradition.

Every 5/6 families has their one common Tantric deity (*āgā dyah*). Indigenous Kāranjits have their common Tantric deity at their Tantric shrine-house (*guthi chē*). Their Tantric deity is Bhairav (Bhairādyah). Originally, there was main shrine of Bhairav with a golden mask which has since been stolen. This is the only proper Tantric shrine-house (*guthi chē*) of Kāranjits of Kathmandu. On the outside wall of this Tantric shrine-house there is a stone inscription recording the adding fund into the existing *sī guthi* dating back to 1874. 'Tuigā' Kāranjits do not have such a house. All indigenous Kāranjits of Kathmandu have one common lineage deity (*digu dyah*) at Tahkhuti, bank of the Vishnumati river, just outside the territory of traditional Kathmandu. 'Tuigā' Kāranjits will not share the common lineage deity of indigenous Kāranjits as their lineage deity should be in their settlement of origin. Defining the 'otherness' of Kāranjits, Suryaman Kāranjit of Kathmandu expressed, 'We could not allow them to enter in our *guthi*. Obviously, they are not from here. Their lineage deity (*digu dyah*) is where they

came from. They cannot claim our lineage deity (*digu dyah*) as their own. For example, if one is migrated from Bhaktapur his lineage deity (*digu dyah*) should be at Bhaktapur and obviously they do not belong here'. However, marriage between indigenous Kāranjits and 'tuigā' Kāranjits are acceptable.

Out of 107 marriages surveyed in southern Kathmandu, 69 marriages (64.5 per cent) were caste endogamous. Of the 69 marriages, 34.8 per cent were with Kāranjit of southern Kathmandu, 17.4 per cent with northern Kathmandu, 23.2 with Lalitpur, 26.6 with Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. There were also 18 cases of intercaste marriages with other Newar castes, which account for 16.8 per cent. 9 were with Śreṣṭhas, 2 with Mānandhar and one each with Joshi, Vajrācārya, Nāpit, Maharjan, Ranjitrkār, Śākya and Citrakār. There were also 20 cases of marriages with non-Newars, which made up 18.6 per cent of all marriages.

As a result of social mobility there are some Kāranjits who try to hide their caste identity. I was informed by a few Kāranjit that some Kāranjits in Banepa, Tansen and Thimi use Śreṣṭha as their surnames. There are also some Kāranjits who use Karmācārya or Lawat as their surnames. However, a Kāranjit informant emphasized that their hidden identity is finally revealed when it comes to marriage. He said, 'They write Śreṣṭha but at marriage no one will marry them so they have to marry within their own *jāt*. It is not possible to hide an actual caste by stealing *jāts*.'

2.2.4.6 The Mālākār

The Mālākār or Māli are also known by their non-honorific name of Gathu. They also use the surnames 'Māli.' Their traditional role is as dancers (*gaṭhu pyākhā*) and gardeners. Nowadays, although some work as gardeners, I

also found some Mālākār who run sweet shops and some who are engaged in the civil service.

Traditionally, the Mālākār settlement is next to the Khadgi. However, nowadays, the Mālākār households are scattered in the city with no particular locality. In southern Kathmandu there is a total of 16 Mālākār households. However, in wards 21 and 22, there are only 6 Mālākār households housing 35 people thereby making the average Mālākār household size 5.8 persons per household.

Out of 32 marriages that I surveyed, 56.2 per cent were caste endogamous, while 34.4 per cent were intercaste marriages with other Newar castes. These Newar castes include 4 with Śreṣṭha, 2 Mānandhar, 1 Vajrācārya, 1 Ranjītkār, 2 Maharjan and 1 Tulādhar. As for marriages with non-Newars, there were three such unions - with Karki, Chetri and Tibetan - which account for 9.4 per cent of all marriages. Mālākār marriages are also mainly territorially exogamous, with 88.9 per cent of all marriages with others from beyond southern Kathmandu. This means that only 11.1 per cent of marriages are with Mālākār from southern Kathmandu, compared with 72.2 per cent with Mālākār of northern Kathmandu, 5.6 per cent with Mālākār from Lalitpur and 11.1 per cent with Mālākār from Kirtipur.

2.2.4.7 The Citrakār

The Citrakār are also known by their non-honorific name of Pū. Traditionally, they are painters, artists and brewers of alcohol. They are served by the Khadgi as their barbers and toe-nail-cutters. Nowadays, in addition to their traditional roles as painters and artists, they have diversified their craft to include selling works of art on canvas and photography. Some are also engaged in the

civil service.

In 1994, the Citrakār of Kathmandu founded the caste-based secular organization called 'Citrakār (pū) Samāj' or 'Citrakār Society'. Like other new founded caste-based organization, the Citrakār Society also reformed many traditional practices about life-cycle rituals.

Citrakārs in southern Kathmandu are divided into three *kawaḥs*: *Kwahiti kawaḥ*, *Nhūghaḥ kawaḥ* and *Bhindyaḥ Tabwa kawaḥ* with the total number of 39 Citrakār households. However, in wards 21 and 22, there are only 5 Citrakār households with a total population of 28 people. The average Citrakār household size is 5.6 persons, which is the lowest average among all Newar castes.

Out of 139 marriages that I surveyed, 67.6 per cent of Citrakār marriages were caste endogamous, while 20.1 per cent were intercaste marriages with other Newar castes. These Newar castes include 1 Vajrācārya, 1 Śākya, 18 Śreṣṭha, 1 Tulādhar, 1 Maharjan, 3 Mānandhar, 2 Ranjītkār and 1 Tandukār. As for marriages with non-Newars, there were 17 such unions which account for 12.2 per cent of all marriages.

In terms of marriage alliances with the Citrakār the highest unions were with 48.9 per cent of Citrakār of northern Kathmandu, with 48.9 per cent of all caste endogamous marriages. While there are only 25.5 per cent of marriage alliances established within southern Kathmandu, 18.1 per cent with Citrakār from Lalitpur and 7.5 per cent with Citrakār from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns.

2.2.4.8 *The Ranjītkār*

The Ranjītkār or Ranjit are also known by their non-honorific name of Chipā. Traditionally, their caste occupation is dyeing clothes and threads. They

are served by the Khadgi as their barbers and toe-nail-cutters. Nowadays, in addition to their traditional roles as dyers they also run business and engaged in the civil service.

In southern Kathmandu there is a total number of 212 Ranjitrakar households. However, among the clean service castes in wards 21 and 22, the Ranjitrakar are the highest in number, with 579 people living in 77 households. The average households size is also high, with 7.5 persons per household, compared to the average which is 6.7.

Out of 88 marriages that I surveyed, 56.8 per cent of Ranjitrakar marriages were caste-and territory-endogamous. 50 per cent of marriage alliances were with Ranjitrakar from southern Kathmandu while 32 per cent of marriage alliances were with Ranjitrakar from northern Kathmandu, 6 per cent of marriage alliances were Ranjitrakar from Lalitpur, and 12 per cent from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns.

28.4 per cent of Ranjitrakar marriage were intercaste marriages with other Newar castes. These Newar castes included: 2 Vajracarya, 1 Sakya, 15 Srestha, 2 Tuladhar, 3 Maharjan, 1 Citrakar, and 1 Cyamkhalah. As for marriage with non-Newars, there were 13 such alliances which made up of 14.8 per cent of all Ranjitrakar marriages.

2.2.5 The unclean service castes: Khadgi, Kapali,

The impure castes are strictly segregated from the castes mentioned above, both in society and religion. Although they are impure, they are touchable. This caste group deals with the higher castes' impurities. In southern Kathmandu, they constitute 7.6 per cent of households. There are three castes within this group: Kapali (Musicians and Tailors), Khadgi (Butchers), and Rajaka (washermen).

Unlike the Khaḍgi whose territory is at the edge of the city, the Kapāli castes reside in the city at *sataḥs* or public rest houses near the main temples. I was told by several lower Kathmandu inhabitants that originally there were no households of the Rajaka caste in *kwaḥne* but in upper Kathmandu they have their own locality which named after their caste name. If the informants are accurate, the three Rajaka households (which is 0.05 per cent of total households) that I found in lower Kathmandu must have migrated from upper Kathmandu.

2.2.5.1 The Khaḍgi

The Khaḍgi are also known by their non-honourific name of Nāy. Officially, they use the surnames 'Khaḍgi,' and 'Shāhi' (I have also seen some write 'Kasāi'). In southern Kathmandu, there are 342 Khaḍgi households. In wards 21 and 22 which I surveyed, there are 105 households, with a total population of 857 persons. The average household size is 8.2, one of the highest average household sizes among the Newars. The Khaḍgi settlements are mainly in Nāy Pācho and Casādo, one layer inside the old city boundaries, next to the Dyahlā and Cyāme. In 1973, Khaḍgi of Kathmandu founded the caste-based secular organization called 'Nepal Khaḍgi Sewā Samiti' or 'Nepal Khaḍgi Service Committee'.

The traditional role of the Khaḍgi is as a butcher, milk seller, messenger and musician, while the female Khaḍgi are toe-nail cutters for the clean service castes. Nowadays, apart from their traditional occupation, taxi-driving has become a popular profession among the Khaḍgi (Gellner 1995: 270), along with car maintenance. Some enterprising Khaḍgis are also known to be taxi-owners and suppliers of frozen meat to the big hotels in Kathmandu. On the whole, Khaḍgis are the most economically successful of all the lower castes.

Sixty-two Khadgi marriages were surveyed in southern Kathmandu, where it was found that all marriages were caste endogamous, i.e. there were no intercaste marriages. It was also found that the Khadgi are territorially exogamous: only 40.3 per cent of marriages were territorially endogamous, i.e. between Khadgis from southern Kathmandu, compared with over 59 per cent which were with Khadgis from northern Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. The actual breakdown of the figures are as follows: marriages with Khadgis from northern Kathmandu accounted for 29 per cent, marriage with Khadgis from Lalitpur 16.1 per cent and from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns 14.5 per cent.

2.2.5.2 *Kapāli*.

The Kapāli, whose non-honorific name is Jogi, are traditionally musicians, sweepers of Hindu temples (*degah*) and are the recipients of seven-days' death pollution prestations. In addition, during winter (around the month of Māgh or January-February) they are also known to dress as Mahādev (Shiva) and go begging from house to house while playing the *damaru* (hand-drum). However, nowadays, they are mostly employed as tailors. They are also locally known as Twāḥjā or Twāḥjana which literally means 'people of *ṭol* or locality.' They use different surnames: 'Kapāli,' 'Darśandhārī,' 'Kusle,' 'Darśan,' 'Yogī,' 'Jogi,' and 'Sucikār.' There are 11 households in wards 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu, which is 0.8 per cent of all Newar households. In the whole of southern Kathmandu, there are 53 Kapāli households in total. The total population of Kapāli in wards 21 and 22 is 77 persons, and the average household size is 7, slightly higher than the average. The Kapāli do not have any specific locality, and they live scattered within Kathmandu. It is often the case that each *ṭol* will have at

least one Kapāli household. In 1993, Kapāli founded new caste-based organization called 'Kapāli Samāj' or 'Kapāli Society'.

According to a Kapāli informant there are three different sub-groups within the Kapāli caste: Darśandhārī, serves as a priest for Kapālis; Kapāli in general and Danyā who are water unacceptable group within the Kapāli caste. The first two sub-groups are marriageable whereas Danyā are exogamous. Danyā serves as the Barber caste (i.e. to shave heads and to cut toe-nails in ritual occasions) and collect the death pollution for other Kapālis. However, in official papers they also use Kapāli as their identity and surnames.

Out of 76.9 per cent of 65 Kapāli marriages studied in southern Kathmandu were married with partners from the same Kapāli caste, while 13.8 per cent of marriages were with partners from other Newar castes and 9.2 per cent were with non-Newars. For marriages with other Newar castes, three were with partners from the Śreṣṭha caste, one with Joshi, one with Tulādhar, one with Śākya, two with Maharjan and one with Nakarmi. Marriages were also territorially exogamous: only 10 per cent of marriages were with partners from southern Kathmandu, compared with 48 per cent from northern Kathmandu, 8 per cent from Lalitpur and 34 per cent from Bhaktapur.

The one aspect of Kapāli culture that is different from other Newars is the fact that they do not cremate their dead, but rather bury them. Also, they do not perform *ihi* ritual, but they do observe the mock menstruation ritual (*bārhāḥ*).

2.2.6 The untouchable castes: Dyahlā, Cyāme

At the bottom of the caste hierarchy are the Dyahlā and Cyāme castes. Within the untouchable castes, there are two castes: Dyahlā/Pode and Cyāmkhalah/Cyāme. In southern Kathmandu, they constitute 3.3 per cent of

households which can be found around the periphery of the old city. They serve all the higher castes by carrying out 'defiling' works. The traditional occupations of both castes are fishing, sweeping and scavenging. The Dyaḥlā and Cyāme are different from other Newar castes in that they do not perform the *ihi* or mock menstruation rituals. They are also different from other Newars because pork is an integral part of their feast, whereas the pig is considered polluting to other Newar castes. Because the Dyaḥlā and Cyāme are not served by priests from the higher castes, it is not possible to categorize them as Buddhist or Hindu. When interviewed, they did not have a clear definition of their religious affiliation. Their rituals are officiated by their own senior caste members.

Some studies have identified another Untouchable caste called 'Hālāhulu' but my Dyaḥlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ informants do not recognize this group as a caste. However, they acknowledge that there are people called Hālāhulu who are called to collect their death-offerings : the *nhaynuhūmā* (taken for high castes by Kapāli). They do not live in a specific locality. They are usually found living in abandoned public rest houses (*sataḥ*) or temples (*deygaḥ*). Although many scholars identified the Hālāhulu as a separate caste (Toffin 1984: 231; Levy 1990: 79), it is my finding that they are more like homeless beggars and are not considered as part of the caste hierarchy. Rosser (1966: 86) estimated that there were fifty Hālāhulu households in the Kathmandu Valley which Gellner (1995: 296 n 33) is of the opinion that 'it is almost certainly a mistake.' This is also not supported by my household survey, which did not show any Hālāhulu households. According to Gellner's study of Lalitpur, the Hālāhulu exist only in Bhaktapur (Gellner 1995: 284); whereas in Levy's study of Bhaktapur, he states that they exist only in Kathmandu (Levy 1990: 85). On the other hands, Dyaḥlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ informants of southern Kathmandu denied the existence of Hālāhulu in Kathmandu either. Who are the Hālāhulu then? When I asked my

Dyaḥlā informants where to find a Hālāhulu when they need one they explained that generally people who spend nights in temples (*degale bāy cwanīpī*). If they could not find a person so-called Hālāhulu they will ask a beggar to accept their death-offerings. Therefore, I got an impression that Hālāhulu is a referring term for anyone who accepts the death-offerings of Dyaḥlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ rather than a caste by itself.

2.2.6.1 *The Dyaḥlā*

Traditionally, the Dyaḥlā are the guardians of *pīṭh* (various temples and inauspicious places of the city) a role that they still perform today. In addition, the Dyaḥlā are also known for their role as public executioners, although during the course of my fieldwork, I could not find any Dyaḥlā who had ever done this profession. The Dyaḥlā are most commonly known as sweepers. They use ‘Dyaḥlā,’ ‘Poḍe (Porḥe),’ ‘Śreṣṭha’ and ‘Nepāli’ as their last names. Out of 25 sweepers employed by the ward 21 office, 18 are Dyaḥlā caste, while 4 are Cyāmkhalaḥ, one is a Nepali low caste (Sārki) and another is a Taraian low caste (Mizar). Because the job of cleaning is considered degrading, it is the sole occupation of the Dyaḥlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ. The high demand for cleaners and sweepers mean that the Dyaḥlā often work two jobs, one in the government and another in the private sector.

From the data of ward 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu, there are 112 Dyaḥlā households which make up 7.9 per cent of all Newar households. Traditionally the Dyaḥlā are not allowed to live within the city compounds as they are Untouchables. However, with urban growth, the city boundaries have expanded, and the Dyaḥlā are now located within the new Kathmandu city boundaries, namely in Podyā Ṭol, Sabal Bāhāḥ, Tākeswar, and Kākeswar. Based

on the data on wards 21 and 22 (with a total population of 710 Dyahḷā persons), the average size of the household is 6.3 persons. This household size is slightly below the average household size of all Newar castes.

There are two *sī* (funeral) *guthis* which belong to the Dyahḷā caste of southern Kathmandu. *Taḥdhā* (big) *guthi* which has 75 members and *cīdhā* (small) *guthi*, which has 60 members. The life-cycle rituals of the Dyahḷā is officiated by specially appointed senior members of their own caste who act as their priest.

In a study of 76 marriages among the Dyahḷā, 92.1 per cent of all marriages are caste endogamous within the Dyahḷā caste, with only 7.9 per cent of marriages occurring with members of other castes (including non-Newar castes). Out of the six intercaste marriages, five involved the union of a Dyahḷā girl with a Vajrācārya (1), Sakya (1), Śreṣṭha (1) and Khaḍgi (2). Because Dyahḷā are dependent on the Khaḍgi for most of their rites of passage rituals and live in close proximity to each other, a union between a Dyahḷā and Khaḍgi can be explained due to these reasons. However, it is striking to note that three of these marriages are unions with the highest castes (Vajrācārya, Śākya and Śreṣṭha). For the high caste men who marry with the Dyahḷā, they are expelled from their caste group and have to live with the Dyahḷā. Given the rare case of intercaste marriage between two very different castes, the rule of patrilocality cannot support the anomalous union, and thus the high caste man has to live with his wife's family. Also, this shows that the process of Sanskritization (upward mobility) is not immediately conferred upon marriage to a higher caste. If the union is between two castes who are on opposite ends of the hierarchy, it is the downward movement of the higher caste to the level of the lower caste that occurs. On the other hand, there was only one case of a Dyahḷā man who married a girl from the

Śreṣṭha caste. In this case, the rule of patrilocality is applied, and the girl lives with her husband in the Dyahḷā locality.

Dyahḷā marriages tend to be also territorially endogamous: out of 76 marriages studied, 38.1 per cent were with partners from southern Kathmandu and 14.5 per cent were with partners from northern Kathmandu. As for marriages with people from outside Kathmandu city, 17.1 per cent of bride/grooms came from Lalitpur and 22.4 per cent were from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns. In cases where the partner comes from outside Kathmandu, there was also a pattern of exchange between two places once an initial union has been arranged. For example, once a girl from Place A is married into a family from Place B, through her connections, other marriages between partners from Places A and B can be arranged, resulting in an exchange of women between the two places.

2.2.6.2 *The Cyāmkhalaḥ*

In the caste hierarchy, the Cyāmkhalaḥ are the lowest. The Cyāmkhalaḥ also use 'Nepāli,' 'Śreṣṭha,' or 'Cyāme' as their last names.²⁷ Based on data collected from ward 21 and 22 in southern Kathmandu, there are 34 households, which make up 2.4 per cent of all Newar households. The average household size of Cyāmkhalaḥ is 8.8 persons, which is one of the highest among all Newar castes. There is only one *sī guthi* (funeral guthi) for the Cyāmkhalaḥ, which has 26 members. The Cyāmkhalaḥ settlements are mostly in Nāypāco and Kohiti.

As with the Dyahḷā, the Cyāmkhalaḥ are traditionally sweepers, but unlike the Dyahḷā, they are not employed in sweeping the streets of southern Kathmandu. According to Cyāmkhalaḥ oral history, the Cyāmkhalaḥ were

²⁷ In Lalitpur, the Cyāmkhalaḥ also sometimes use Konāju as their surname.

traditionally sweepers in the royal palace and Buddhist temples (*bāhāḥ/bahī*), whereas the *Dyaḥlā* were not allowed to enter and do work in those places. That is the reason why at present, the work of sweeping the streets of southern Kathmandu is the main responsibility of the *Dyaḥlā*, while the *Cyāmkhalaḥ* are engaged in cleaning temples. Occupationally, the *Cyāmkhalaḥ* are also more diversified: during my fieldwork, I came across *Cyāmkhalaḥ* who are engaged in metalwork and in the military.

The *Cyāmkhalaḥ* also practice caste endogamy. 82.1 per cent of 78 marriages studied were with partners from the same caste. 11.5 per cent of marriages were intercaste marriages with other Newar castes, while 6.4 per cent were with non-Newars. With the intercaste marriages, there was one union with Śreṣṭha, one with Maharjan, two with Ranjitkār, one with Rājkanikār, three with Khaḍgi and one with Rajaka. As for marriages with non-Newars, there was one union with Brahmin caste and another with a Muslim; in both cases it was a *Cyāmkhalaḥ* girl who was married out.

The *Cyāmkhalaḥ* believe that marriages should not occur with kin who are related to within seven generations, although because of their small population, they have narrowed it down to three generations. Despite this relaxation of marriage restrictions, their small population size in southern Kathmandu means that the *Cyāmkhalaḥ* are territorially exogamous. Only 25 per cent of marriages occur with partners from within southern Kathmandu. The bulk - 64.1 per cent - of marriages occur with partners from northern Kathmandu. 6.2 per cent of marriages were with partners from Lalitpur, while 4.7 per cent were from Bhaktapur and other Newar towns.

Appendix:
**List of new secularized caste-based organizations of
Newars of Kathmandu**

In the cases of Mānandhar, Jyāpu, Citrakār, and Udāy the objectives and activities are translated from their own published rulebooks (*vidhān*). Rest are translated from the summary paper 'Roles of Newar caste organizations' presented by Rajbhai Jakami in the second National Newar Federation conference on 21-22 September 1996 at Narayanghat, Nepal.

1. Caste: Khadgi

Name of the caste-based organization: Nepal Khadgi Sewā Samiti

Founding year: 1973

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) Award prizes to Khadgi students who pass SLC with high scores.
- (b) To organize a group initiation (*kaytā pūjā*).
- (c) To train professional skills.
- (d) To raise caste awareness.

2. Caste: Vajrācārya

Name of the caste-based organization: Vajrācārya Saṃrakṣhaṇ Guthi

Founding year: 1988

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) Award prizes to Vajrācārya students who achieve high scores in education.
- (b) To honour renown Vajrācāryas in different fields.
- (c) To train Vajrācārya to be a priest.
- (d) To organize a group initiation (*cuḍākarma*).

3. Caste: Taṇḍukār

Name of the caste-based organization: Nepāḥ Taṇḍukār Samāj

Founding year: 1990

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) To collect census of Taṇḍukārs within the Kathmandu Valley.
- (b) To organize a group ihi for girls.
- (c) To promote caste identity.

4. Caste: Nakarmi

Name of the caste-based organization: Nakaḥmi Samāj Sewā Pucāḥ

Founding year: 1990

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) Award prizes to Nakarmi students who pass SLC with high scores.
- (b) To honour renown Nakarmi in the fields of sports and social services.
- (c) To promote caste identity among Nakarmis.

5. Caste: Mānandhar

Name of the caste-based organization: Kendriya Mānandhar Sangha

Founding year: 1990

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) Attempt for the welfare, prosperity, progress and development of Mānandhar society.
- (b) To preserve and promote historical culture, religion and traditional customs, songs, education, profession, health and sports, etc. of Mānandhar society.
- (c) To research different customs of Mānandhar society and reform them scientifically.
- (d) To Encompass all Mānandhar communities who are living all over the country within the Organization and to help and develop mutual friendship between those Mānandhars.
- (e) To establish peaceful relationship with other communities of Nepal and help each other in development of the country.
- (f) To support financially to disabled and needy people.

6. Caste: Kapāli**Name of the caste-based organization: Kapāli Samāj****Founding year: 1993****Main objectives and activities:**

- (a) To reform traditional customs.
- (b) To raise caste awareness.

7. Caste: Jyāpu**Name of the caste-based organization: Jyāpu Mahāguthi****Founding year: 1993****Main objectives and activities:**

- (a) To unite on a national level all Jyāpus from the Kathmandu Valley, wherever they may be earning their living; to raise caste awareness; and in so doing to bring them on the road to the development of the country
- (b) To develop, preserve, and carry out research on the origins of the Jyāpu caste, its religion, culture, life-cycle rituals, festivals, occupations, customs. etc.
- (c) To advance the development of the Jyāpu caste by freeing it from economic, political, religious, and intellectual domination;
- (d) To protect and develop Nepal Bhāṣā, the mother tongue of the Jyāpu caste; to work to increase the feeling that 'we are Jyāpus, we are Newars, and we are Nepalis'.

8. Caste: Citrakār**Name of the caste-based organization: Citrakār (pū) Samāj****Founding year: 1994****Main objectives and activities:**

- (a) To preserve traditional religion, culture and customs of Citrakār community and to reform them accordingly.
- (b) To preserve and develop fine arts and art skills which this community's ancestors have left (to us) as a social occupation. To display such fine arts to the world by focusing on the national benefit and pride.
- (c) To reform customs of this community according to changing times and to carry out social reforming activities.
- (d) Make progress of this community's social, cultural, economical and other fields.
- (e) To support disabled, poor, people with no kin of this community.
- (f) To raise concept of unity, mutual understanding, and support to each other within this community.
- (g) To progress harmoniously with other communities in order to uplift Nepal nation and

Newar Jāti.

9. Caste: Udāy

Name of the caste-based organization: Udāy Samāj

Founding year: 1995

Main objectives and activities:

- (a) To bring unity within Udāy caste:
 - 1. To contact and exchange with people or group of Udāy caste who are living in different places, and divided into different groups.
 - 2. To open branches in different districts and places and choose a contacting person.
 - 3. To treat and behave equally to all Udāy castes who are linked by blood in order not to effect on religious beliefs and honour them.
 - 4. To exchange each other's ideas in different meetings, seminars and papers.

- (b) To acquaint with Udāy culture and preserve it:
 - 1. To establish an Udāy caste institution based on lineage, tradition, religion, virtue, etc.
 - 2. To research or let other people do research or to encourage research on the culture of Udāy caste.
 - 3. To publicize the preservation and development of culture of Udāy caste.
 - 4. To set up a fund for this purpose.
 - 5. Educate about one's culture to all from child to adult.
 - 6. Discourage not to leave one's culture and to imitate and bring in culture of outsiders.

- (c) To reform customs and behaviours of Udāy caste:
 - 1. To recognize corruptions on customs and behaviours of Udāy caste.
 - 2. To set strong rules to reduce lavish and unnecessary expenses for celebration of rituals.
 - 3. To abandon or reform old customs which does not fit to modern time.

- (d) To increase capabilities and abilities among Udāy caste:
 - 1. To eradicate illiteracy among Udāy caste and encourage highest education as much as possible.
 - 2. In order to cooperate with other caste communities we should learn about our own weakness and to get rid of it.
 - 3. To organize necessary arrangement for leadership training.
 - 4. To encourage persons who are capable of playing active roles in different fields.
 - 5. To make study trips to both in and out of the country, to do comparative study of other communities and societies, and increase knowledge To work bravely in other places by not limiting only in Kathmandu.

- (e) To prosper and secure financial condition of all members of the society:
 - 1. To provide jobs.
 - 2. To provide necessary support to person who wants to work.
 - 3. To set up co-operation institute to support business.

- (f) To provide supports for disabled, sick, old people and people with no kin:
 - 1. To arrange house for aged, guesthouse etc.
 - 2. To set up financial trust and financially support it.
 - 3. To encourage social worker for people who like it and prepare social workers.

- (g) Work together with other Newar groups, organizations and communities to uplift

Newar community.

- (h) To support each other and establish friendly relationship with other Nepalese ethnic groups, groups, organizations.**
- (i) To participate in the development of the country, and give necessary support for the progress of the country.**
- (j) To fulfil these objectives establish relationships with organizations of other countries and international organizations and exchange support to each other.**

CHAPTER THREE

Newar Households

3.1 Indigenous definition

Many anthropologists (see Toffin 1984: 110, Levy 1992:110) state that there is no specific term for the household or family in Newari language. In *A Concise Dictionary of the Newar Language* (Joshi 1987), 'family' is translated into different terms, *bhwachī*, *jahān* and *jaḥ* (Newari) or *parivār* (Nepali). The variety of local terms is also reflected in the work of various scholars: Toffin (1984) and Quigley (1985) state that Newars use the term *chē* (which also means 'house'), Pradhan (1986) claims that it is *bhwachī* and in the case of Bhaktapur Newars, Levy found that it is *jahān*.

However, there has been one common criterion for defining the basic family unit: sharing the hearth, or food commensality. For example, Levy (1992: 110) defines 'family' in terms of the sharing of boiled food, particularly rice, such as *chaga jāsi* 'one rice pot'. Likewise, Quigley (1985: 13) points out, 'a (Newar) household, often joint household, defined in terms of those who share a cooking hearth (*bhutū*)'.

In southern Kathmandu, these terms were also used by Newars when asked to define or describe *paribār* or 'family'. Despite those terminological variations I also came across a term which accurately defines the basic household unit: *bhukhā*. *Bhukhā* is the term used by a member of the farmer (Maharjan) caste of Kathmandu as a substitute for the more common Nepali (and recently also Newari) term *paribār*,¹ which means family in English. The *bhukhā* is a

¹ This term is derived from Sanskrit word *parivāra* which literally means 'dependent' of a master (see Inden and Nicholas 1977: 5). In Newari although it is spelled in writing as its original word

combination of two words in Newari, that is, *bhutū* which means a hearth and *khā* which is classifier for house. Literally, it combines the idea of the hearth being the core element of Newar family and the notion of sharing a common living space under the same roof. An extended joint household, for example, is sometimes described as belonging to the same *bhukhā* in the sense that it constitutes a single commensal unit living under one roof. Also, the head of the household is represented by the senior male member within the *bhukhā*. It should also be noted that this term is not used by all Newar castes (they often use the general Nepali term *paribār*). However, in terms of census taking, it is the *bhukhā* which represents the basic household unit. For this reason, the term *bhukhā* will only be used as an analytical tool to describe a commensal kin living under the same roof.

Commensality emerges as the key factor in determining kinship especially when we consider that the current trend in Kathmandu is for Newars to rent out part of their homes. This means that although a group of people may share the same living space, they do not constitute a single family or household from the Newar point of view. With regards to tenancy rate in Kathmandu, my survey of three administrative wards (i.e. ward 20, 21 and 23) of southern Kathmandu reveals that out of a total population of 30,262 people, 19.56 per cent are living in rented accommodation. Among Kathmandu Newars the most common pattern is to rent out few rooms or floors of the house instead of renting a whole house. For example, of 1,210 houses in ward 21 I found that there are only eight houses which were rented as a whole house. This means that about 20 per cent of the total population share the same roof but do not share food or more specifically the hearth.

but pronounce differently as '*paribār*'. The term is recently adopted in Newari presumably within this century.

Although he does not use the term *bhukhā*, Toffin (1984: 110) also defines a Newar family as ‘a group of persons who live under the same roof and share food’. Pradhan (1986: 28), while highlighting the common ideas about commensality and shared living space, uses different terms to define it: ‘the smallest economic and social unit in the Newar society is the Newar household which is referred to as *bho chē* (those who share common kitchen) or *chakhā chē* (all who live in one house)’. However, Purnamaya, a 70 years old Śākya woman of Kathmandu explained that the term *bhwachī* is only used in the context of inviting guests for a feast. For example, on a wedding invitation card, one might find the term *bhwachī* which means all members of the family, irrespective of whether they live under the same roof. Similarly, there are other specific terms which are used to define kinship units in this context e.g. *nimhatipu* for a married couple, *mācāchi* for a married couple with their children, *laikāpāhā* for a single male. Therefore, although *bhwachī* does denote family, it is not generally used by Newars to mean *bhukhā*.

However, there is a limitation to the use of *bhukhā* to explain Newar kinship structure. As the family size increases and living space becomes limited, and there is a tendency for the main household unit to divide into smaller units. Traditionally, the *paribār* live in separate households within the same compound (*cuka*) or neighbourhood,² but with changes in employment and land scarcity, the dispersal of kin is much wider in modern times. However, as mentioned earlier,

² Many different terms are used for neighbourhood some of which are associated with specific caste identities. For example, *nani* compound is associated with the Udāy caste group, *bāhāḥ* compounds are associated with Vajrācārya and Śākya caste group, *cuka* is associated with lower caste group as in *nau cuka* ‘barber compound’, *sāḥ* is associated with Manandhar caste group and Maharjan or farmer caste group is associated with *twaḥ* or locality. This is pointed out to me by a well known Buddhist priest, Badri Ratna Bajracharya of Kathmandu, and index lists of traditional Kathmandu neighbourhoods bear out these association too.

kin who have set up their own separate households are still considered *bhwachī* or *paribār* because members of a dispersed family often continue to be bound together by common rituals and activities. The central core of the family is still the hearth, although in the case of those who have separated from the main household, it is the *access* to the hearth that defines their membership, not their actual presence in the house (Pradhan 1986: 28).³

This is also the case in southern Kathmandu, where having separate hearths does not necessarily mean a separation of kinship ties. For example, in the membership of a *guthi*, a married son who lives separately from his parents is still considered to be part of the same *guthi* as long as he is represented by a single senior member of the family. However, if the married son decides to represent his own family (i.e. as separate from his natal group) then he is no longer considered part of the same family. This is clearly seen in the celebration of annual *mha pujā* or Newar New Year celebration which is the definitive ritual to establish the core kinship group (see Chapter eight below). If a male member decides to separate from this core group and represents himself in *guthi* affairs, he will no longer be included in the *mha pujā* ritual, and will have to perform the ritual separately on his own.

The different terms between *bhukhā* and *paribār* are best illustrated by the following case studies:

In his lifetime, Mr Ashakaji, aged 89, had three wives consecutively. From the first wife he had a son who passed away as

³ Pradhan (1986) uses the term 'household' to denote kin who live separately but still have access to the common hearth and property, although the more common definition of 'household' is limited to those who share food and living space (which is also the working definition in this chapter). I would categorize kin who live separately but have access to the common hearth and property under the more general term *paribār* or 'family'.

a child. After his first wife passed away, he married a second wife. Before her death the second wife bore him one son and one daughter. He then married a third wife with whom he had six children. In the household, there was Ashakaji, his third wife, his unmarried children, his married son from his second wife, his daughter-in-law and his grandchildren from his married son. As there was irreconcilable conflict between Ashakaji's wife and his married son's family, the joint household was split into two. His married son bought the adjoining house and lived next to his father's house.

Although the married son does not share the hearth or the same living space, his family is still considered as 'the same *paribār*' (*chagu he paribār*) in the eyes of the death *guthi*, because he is still represented by his father in *guthi* matters. However, in the event of the death of his father, his household will be considered as separate from his natal household and he will have to represent his own household in the *guthi*.

The effect of dispersal on the *paribār* is limited because developments in modern communication and transportation ensure that kinship ties are maintained, and geographical distance is no longer an important criterion for defining *paribār* (cf. Toffin 1984: 390). In one case, I was told about a male member of a Śākya household who was working in a remote part of the Tarai and who could not make it in time for the *mha pujā* ritual. His place at the ritual feast was nevertheless kept for him, and all the rituals done on his behalf, which means that despite his absence, he is still *paribār* (if not *bhukhā*) and part of the core kinship group.

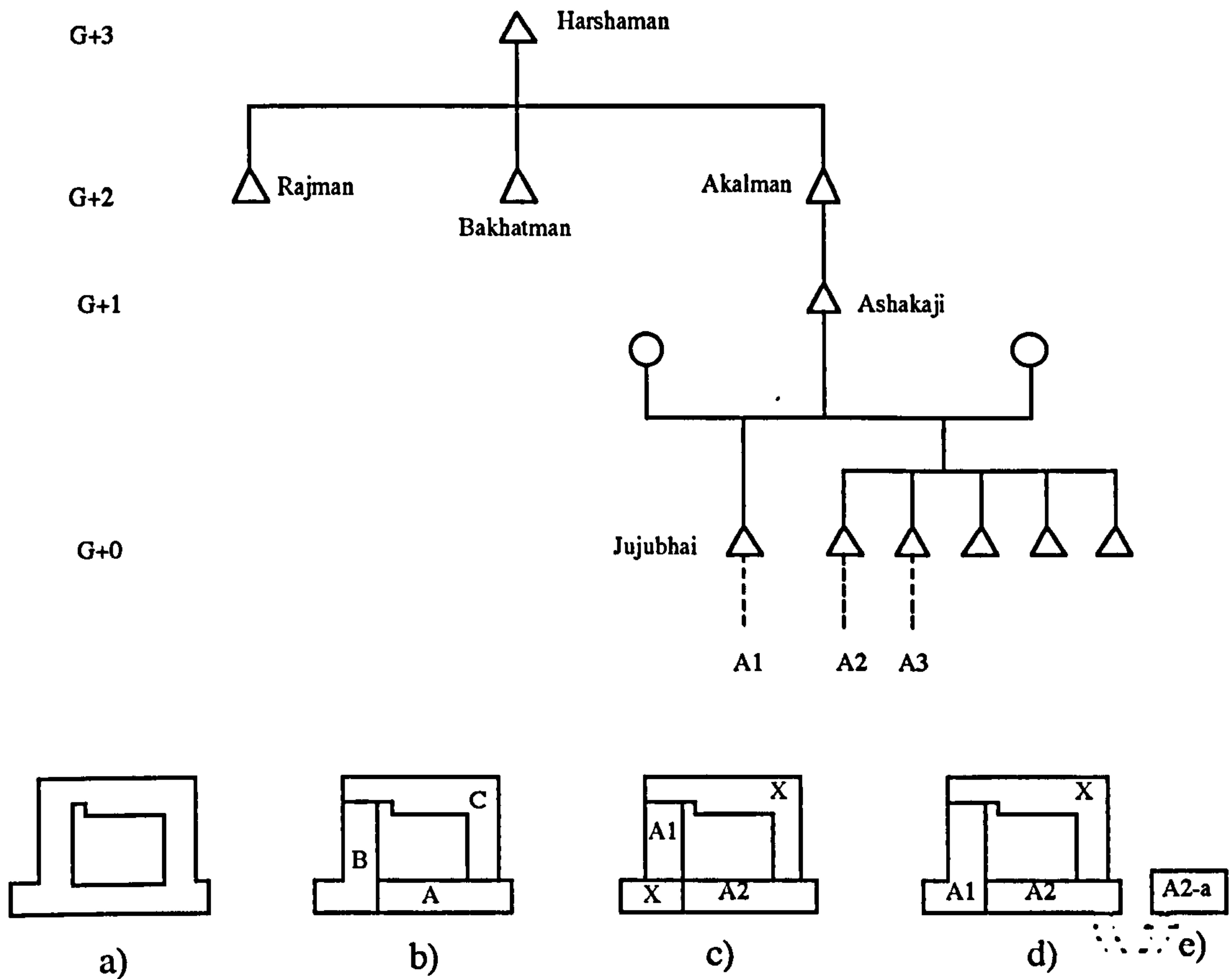
The earlier history of Ashakaji's family illustrates the break-up of a joint family (see Figure 1). The present generation of two half-brothers' families are originally of one house (*chē*) which is now split into three houses. One is next to the original house within the compound (*cuka*) and the third was built recently in the outskirts of Kathmandu. The first ownership of the huge building with a *cuka* compound a) was the great-grandfather of the present occupiers, Harshman, who was living around 1850. Harshaman had three sons who later divided into three separate households (see b). House B became the house of the elder son, Rajman, house C became the house of middle son, Bakhatman, and house A became the house of the youngest son, Akalman, Rajman and Bakhatman had no children so their houses were later sold off. Akalman who owned the house A had one son, Ashakaji. Ashakaji had six sons from two different wives: the eldest from the first wife and other five from the later.

Up to 1965 all six brothers were living as a joint family in the house A. The eldest son, Jjubhai had married with children shared the house and hearth with his father, stepmother and his half-brothers. Around 1965 Jjubhai's family split to form a new house A1 and bought back half of the original house B. However, at that stage the family split was not recognized by the death *guthi* as the family was still being represented by the senior-most Ashakaji for both houses. Later Jjubhai bought other half of original house B and made it house A1. With the growth of the family in house A2 with five brothers the house itself became too small. In 1980 the eldest brother who was married with two

children from house A2 went to build his own house in the outskirts of Kathmandu (see e). Later another married brother joined him in that new house A2-a. Although this recent separation was beyond the *cuka* compound areas they are still considered as the same family. After Ashakaji's death in 1990, Jujubhai now represents the family in the death *guthi*'s affairs (see Figure 3.1).

After the official split of the households in 1965 Jujubhai and his family, house A1, became totally independent from his half-brothers, house A2, in terms of family ritual of *mha puja*. The annual ritual of *mha puja* can be taken as a symbolic tool to define and redefine the core of family members every year. It is during the *mha puja* that Newar family is clearly defined in each household. The ritual requires that a place be reserved for every member who is considered part of the core family group. If any of a family member is abroad or cannot participate the ritual a place is reserved on his behalf (also for woman if she is unmarried). However, in the case of Jujubhai's family (house A1) they celebrate *mha puja* independently since the division of the household in the house A1 whereas in house A2 the celebration is done combined with a newly breakaway household, house A2-a. This means house A1 is considered as a separate *bhukhā* from house A2 but house A2-a is still considered as the same *bhukhā* as house A2 although the living space has been separated. Thus at present Ashakaji's descendants constitute one *paribār* (family), two *bhukhās* (households), and three *bhutus* (hearths).

Figure 3.1: A genealogy and its family division of *Jadhuchē* family



3.2 Caste differences in household structures of Kathmandu Newars

Goode (1963) predicted that as industrialization, urbanization and Westernization gather momentum, large families that include widowed parents, married children and other kin are likely to disappear, and in its place the predominant type of family will be nuclear in structure, i.e. parents and their unmarried children. This was echoed by a 40 year-old Śreṣṭha of Kathmandu who commented:

Nowadays, Newars in Kathmandu have a very high rate in breaking up the family (*paribār chute juyegu*) rather than living together (*nāpā cwanegu*). It is normal to see family disputes causing every family to break up, and this is happening in every

single household in every *tol*. Many are breaking away from their family after marriage.

This section investigates the validity of Goode's theory and Newar perception about changes in household structure. The discourse about household units is often based on three assumptions. Firstly, it is assumed that joint family is the norm in Newar society. Secondly, it is assumed that the joint family is in the process of breaking down to smaller units. Thirdly, it is assumed that urban households are more likely to be nuclear and, conversely, rural households are more likely to be joint. These assumptions should be questioned, because, firstly, there has been no comprehensive study of Newar households in Kathmandu Valley. Secondly, the few studies that have been done so far differ greatly in quality, which means that a fair comparison cannot be made.

In this section, I shall examine the various types of families in all Newar castes, both Buddhist and Hindu, from the highest priestly castes to the Untouchable caste groups. The only scholars to have collected data on Newar households are Nepali (1965: 255-261) and Quigley (1985: 22-24). Nepali's sample of 220 households consisted of two Newar castes ('Shrestha' and 'Jyapoo') in Panga and five castes ('Vanra', 'Shrestha', 'Udas', 'Jyapoo' and 'Manandhar') in Kathmandu. However, he only presents comparative data on caste in relation to household types for the 'Shrestha', 'Jyapoo', and 'Manandhar' castes, giving the percentage of joint families as 62.5 per cent, 44.7 per cent and 58.8 per cent respectively. On the other hand, Quigley's sample size include about 400 households of two castes ('Shrestha' and 'Kasai') in Dhulikhel with in-depth data on caste in relation to household type.

In order to make comparisons with previous studies, it is necessary first to establish a common basis for classification. This is because the classifications

used by Nepali and Quigley are not similar and thus their data cannot be compared *prima facie*. Nepali had chosen Panga, a small Newar agricultural village in the south of the Valley, and urban Kathmandu whereas Quigley studied a small Newar trading town in the east of the Valley. There is also a study of Newar family types in Panauti by Toffin (1984: 394-5) in which he also uses different method of classification. Therefore, it is not an exaggeration to say that no two scholars of the Newars have used the same set of definitions of family types in their studies.

It is interesting to note that despite the fact that no previous or follow-up research has been conducted to show changes in the household pattern, there is a common perception that the joint family is breaking up.⁴ Shrestha and Singh (1992: 70) note: 'Through joint family is still in practice among the Newars, disintegration has set in. The modern tendency is to break up from the joint family and to establish a new home whenever a great difference in the earnings of the male members of the family appears and dissension take place'. This is also the popular perception among Newars of Kathmandu.

This section presents data on household units in southern Kathmandu, for wards 21 and 22. The first survey was conducted with a sample of 1,419 households in wards 21 and 22 and includes all eighteen Newar caste groups. On the survey form, informants were asked to describe their family (*paribār*) types and were given two choices, either nuclear (*ekal*) or joint (*samyukta*) family. According to the Ward profile for ward 21 (1997: 9), 'if there is more than one

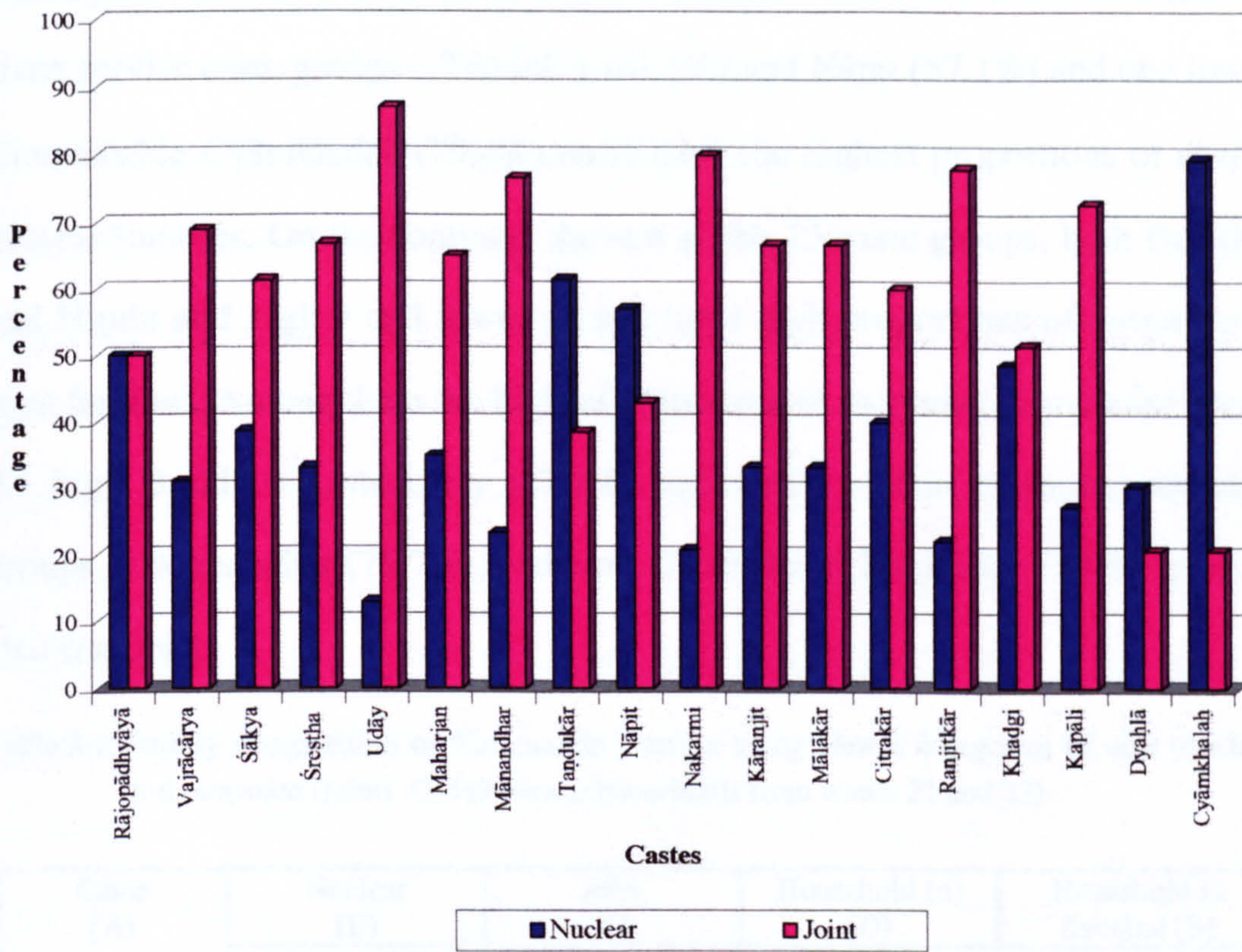
⁴ Parry (1979: 150) in his study of Kangara notes that another assumption about the rise in the number of nuclear families is that the extended family is incompatible with a modern economy and urbanization. Quoting Shah (1964 [1998]), Parry (1979: 154) also states that the evidence for a past in which the joint family is the norm is scanty, and such evidence as there is suggests that joint families were by no means universal.

paribār in one house, then it is considered as *samyukta*'. However, the word *paribār* or 'family' was not given a precise meaning, and its ambiguity has led to some difficulty in comparison, as will be demonstrated later.

When I asked Newars to define *ekal* and *samyukta* family types for me, some defined them according to the number of married couples that inhabit the same living space. In this way *ekal* (literally meaning single) can be defined as one married couple (or part thereof) living under one roof, with or without unmarried children, widowed or divorced kin. However, if there are two or more married couples or families—lineal and/or collateral—who inhabit in the same house, then it is considered as *samyukta* (literally meaning 'joint').

In Table 3.1, the data from the first survey of 1,419 households from wards 21 and 22 were analyzed according to Newar concepts of *ekal* and *samyukta*. It can be seen that overall the majority of Newar households 932 or 65.7 per cent are defined as *samyukta* or joint while 487 households or 34.3 per cent are defined as *ekal* or nuclear households (see Figure 3.2). However, it should be noted that these figures do not account for the number of unmarried children, widowed or divorced kin who share the same roof as these married couples, and therefore cannot be used to show the complexity of kinship structures within each household. Also, the definitions of *ekal* or *samyukta* households differ from household to household, such that what is considered joint in one case may be considered nuclear in another. Because it is not clear from the survey what criteria was used to define these categories, it cannot be assumed that the nuclear and joint categories correspond precisely with the categorizations of nuclear and joint that were laid down by Kolenda (1968: 346-7, see Appendix at the end of the chapter for the family types proposed by Kolenda). The size of the castes in wards 21 and 22 also vary greatly: for example, there were only four

Figure 3.2: Family types of Kathmandu Newars using Newar categories of *ekal* and *samyukta* (Based on Newar households from ward 21 and 22, N=1,419)



Rājopādhyāya households, compared with 460 Maharjan households. Nevertheless, the proportion of these castes roughly corresponds to the proportion of castes for the whole of *kwahne* or southern Kathmandu (see Table 3.1: columns D and E).

Table 3.1 shows that there is no correlation between Newar household types and caste status. For example, it cannot be said that the lower castes are more predisposed towards having joint families. In the case of the Untouchable Cyāmkhalah, the data show that they have the highest proportion of nuclear families (79.4%). However, this feature of the Cyāmkhalah cannot be generalized for all Untouchable castes because in the case of the Dyaḥlā (who are also Untouchables) only 30.4 per cent are nuclear households. This is also the finding by Kolenda (1968) who shows with her household study of India that there is no

general correlation between caste status and the incidence of joint families although it tends to be lowest among untouchable castes. It can be seen that two clean service caste groups—Tanḍukār (61.5%) and Nāpit (57.1%) and one lowest Untouchable Cyāmkhalaḥ (79.4%) caste have the highest proportions of *ekal* or nuclear families. On the contrary, the rest of the 15 caste groups, both Buddhist and Hindu and higher and lower castes, have high proportions of *samyukta* or joint families. Among them the highest proportion of *samyukta* or joint families is the high Buddhist caste Udāy (87.1%) followed by other clean service caste groups of Mānandhar (76.7%), Nakarmi (79.3%) and Ranjitkār (77.9%) who are also Buddhist.

Table 3.1: Family composition of Kathmandu Newars using Newar categories of *ekal* (nuclear) and *samyukta* (joint). (1,419 Newar households from wards 21 and 22).

| Caste (A) | Nuclear (B) | | Joint (C) | | Household (n) (D) | | Household in <i>Kwahne</i> (E) | |
|--------------|-------------|-------|-----------|-------|-------------------|-------|--------------------------------|--------|
| | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total |
| Rājopādhyāya | 50.0 | (2) | 50.0 | (2) | 0.3 | (4) | 0.1 | (7) |
| Vajrācārya | 31.1 | (19) | 68.9 | (42) | 4.3 | (61) | 3.7 | (177) |
| Śākya | 38.7 | (48) | 61.3 | (76) | 8.7 | (124) | 7.9 | (391) |
| Śreṣṭha | 33.2 | (78) | 66.8 | (157) | 16.6 | (235) | 21.1 | (1015) |
| Udāy | 12.9 | (11) | 87.1 | (74) | 6.0 | (85) | 6.1 | (291) |
| Maharjan | 35.0 | (161) | 65.0 | (299) | 32.4 | (460) | 28.8 | (1385) |
| Mānandhar | 23.3 | (7) | 76.7 | (23) | 2.1 | (30) | 7.3 | (353) |
| Tandukār | 61.5 | (8) | 38.5 | (5) | 0.9 | (13) | 0.7 | (35) |
| Nāpit | 57.1 | (4) | 42.9 | (3) | 0.5 | (7) | 0.6 | (30) |
| Nakarmi | 20.7 | (6) | 79.3 | (23) | 2.0 | (29) | 1.1 | (54) |
| Kāranjit | 33.3 | (7) | 66.7 | (14) | 1.5 | (21) | 0.6 | (28) |
| Mālākār | 33.3 | (2) | 66.7 | (4) | 0.4 | (6) | 0.3 | (16) |
| Citrakār | 40.0 | (2) | 60.0 | (3) | 0.4 | (5) | 0.7 | (33) |
| Ranjitkār | 22.1 | (17) | 77.9 | (60) | 5.4 | (77) | 3.6 | (172) |
| Khadgi | 48.6 | (51) | 51.4 | (54) | 7.4 | (105) | 6.9 | (331) |
| Kapāli | 27.3 | (3) | 72.7 | (8) | 0.8 | (11) | 1.1 | (53) |
| Dyaḥlā | 30.4 | (34) | 69.6 | (78) | 7.9 | (112) | 2.8 | (135) |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | 79.4 | (27) | 20.6 | (7) | 2.4 | (34) | 0.8 | (40) |
| Total | 34.3% | 487 | 65.7% | 932 | 100% | 1419 | 100% | 4800 |

At best, the data in Table 3.1 shows the perceptions that Newars have about their households. Now the task at hand is to establish in what way this perception is linked to the actual household composition. I have chosen randomly 550 households of all castes in ward 21 and they were asked how many people live in their household and what is their relationship with each other. With the exception of six caste groups—Śākya (60%), Śreṣṭha (30%), Maharjan (30%), Ranjitrkār (30%), Khaḍgi (30%) and Dyaḥlā (30%)—100 per cent of all the other caste households were surveyed. The data is analyzed and presented in three separate tables (Table 3.2 and 3.3). Table 3.2 looks at household composition according to Kolenda's (1968) 12 categories of family types. Table 3.3 is a summary of Table 3.2, where the data is condensed into three types of families: 'nuclear' (combining family types 1-5), 'joint' (combining types 6-11) and 'other' (type 12). Table 3.3 also compares Newar data on *ekal* and *samyukta* households with the data from ward 21 using Kolenda's typology (See Appendix: family types proposed by Kolenda at the end of the chapter).

According to Newar categorization of household types, 62.9 per cent of 1210 households in ward 21 were considered as joint. However, looking at Kolenda's classifications in Table 3.3, which analyzes data from 550 households from the same ward, the percentage of joint households falls to 44.7 per cent. This difference could simply be due to the disparity in sample size. However, in 12 castes (Rājopādhyāya, Vajrācārya, Tulādhar, Mānandhar, Taṇḍukār, Nāpit, Nakarmi, Kāranjit, Mālākār, Citrakār, Kapāli and Cyāmkhalah) 100 per cent of households of that caste were surveyed in both tables, which would enable a fair comparison to be made. Only in one caste – the Citrakār – is the percentage the same using both Newar and Kolenda's categorization. Otherwise, there is considerable discrepancy in the number of joint and nuclear households among the 12 castes highlighted above. A prime example is that of the Cyāmkhalah: out

of 31 households, 22 declared their household types as *ekal*. However, if one were to use Kolenda's categorization to analyze their genealogies, the Cyāmkhalahs actually live in large joint families, with an average family size being 8.2 members per household. Accordingly, the proportion of joint families are much higher (67.7 %).

The discrepancy could be due to a difference in definition—although *ekal* could be loosely defined as 'nuclear' and *samyukta* 'joint', the practical application of such terms is different for different people. In Kolenda's classification, the central basis of a household is the relationship between kin who physically inhabit a shared living space. In the Newar case, however, it may be more contextual, based on ideas about *commensality* and ritual participation, rather than just physical space. For example, in one agricultural caste of Maharjan house, there was a widow living with her married son, his wife and one unmarried daughter. If we were to categorize this household according to Kolenda's typology, it would be a nuclear family. However, it is well known that the other married sons of the widow return regularly to visit and to perform all the domestic rituals at their natal home, and according to the census survey data, which was collected in 1996, it was stated that the married sons are still living in their natal home, although at that time, they had already moved out. In addition, when the widow was asked what type of household she lived in, she replied 'samyukta' (joint) which includes the breakaway family of her married sons too. It may be that ritually they were still regarded as part and parcel of the same natal household although physically they may not be sharing the same living space.

Table 3.2: Family composition of southern Kathmandu in ward 21 according to castes using Kolenda's categories.

| Household Type Caste | 1. Nuclear | 2. Supplemented nuclear | 3. Subnuclear | 4. Single person | 5. Supplemented subnuclear | 6. Collateral joint | 7. Supplemented collateral joint | 8. Lineal joint | 9. Supplemented lineal joint | 10. Lineal collateral joint | 11. Supplemented lineal collateral joint | 12. Other | (n) | % |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------|-----|-----|
| | Rājopadhyāya | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Vajrācārya | 11 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 48 | 100 |
| Śākya | 17 | 12 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 9 | 1 | 0 | 72 | 60 |
| Śreṣṭha | 12 | 14 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 60 | 30 |
| Udāy | 8 | 8 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 29 | 100 |
| Maharjan | 43 | 21 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 3 | 25 | 8 | 0 | 2 | 126 | 30 |
| Mānandhar | 10 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 27 | 100 |
| Taṇḍukār | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 7 | 100 |
| Nāpit | 2 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 100 |
| Nakarmi | 7 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 7 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 21 | 100 |
| Kāranjit | 2 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 | 1 | 0 | 21 | 100 |
| Mālākār | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100 |
| Citrakār | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 100 |
| Ranjitkār | 5 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 23 | 30 |
| Khadži | 9 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 23 | 30 |
| Kapāli | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 10 | 100 |
| Dyahlāḥ | 8 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 8 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 33 | 30 |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 31 | 100 |
| Total | 145 | 88 | 33 | 15 | 17 | 22 | 57 | 12 | 98 | 53 | 4 | 6 | 550 | |
| % | 26.3 | 16.0 | 6.0 | 2.7 | 3.1 | 4.0 | 10.4 | 2.2 | 17.8 | 9.6 | 0.7 | 1.1 | 100 | |

Table 3.3: Comparison of family types of ward 21 using Newars perception and Kolenda's classification

| | Newars' categorization | | | Kolenda's classifications | | | | % of total hh |
|--------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| | Nuclear % | Joint % | Total (n) | Nuclear % | Joint % | Other % | Total (n) | |
| Rājopādhyāya | 50.0 | 50.0 | 4 | 25.0 | 75.0 | - | 4 | 100 |
| Vajrācārya | 37.5 | 62.5 | 48 | 52.1 | 47.9 | - | 48 | 100 |
| Śākya | 38.3 | 61.7 | 120 | 59.7 | 40.3 | - | 72 | 60 |
| Śreṣṭha | 34.3 | 65.7 | 216 | 58.3 | 41.7 | - | 60 | 30 |
| Udāy | 27.6 | 27.4 | 29 | 65.5 | 31.0 | 3.5 | 29 | 100 |
| Maharjan | 36.2 | 63.8 | 400 | 59.5 | 38.9 | 1.6 | 126 | 30 |
| Mānandhar | 25.9 | 74.1 | 27 | 55.5 | 40.8 | 3.7 | 27 | 100 |
| Taṇḍukār | 71.4 | 28.6 | 7 | 42.9 | 57.1 | - | 7 | 30 |
| Nāpit | 57.1 | 42.9 | 7 | 57.1 | 42.9 | - | 7 | 100 |
| Nakarmi | 28.6 | 71.4 | 21 | 52.4 | 47.6 | - | 21 | 100 |
| Kāranjit | 33.3 | 66.7 | 21 | 38.1 | 61.9 | - | 21 | 100 |
| Mālākār | 50.0 | 50.0 | 4 | 75.0 | 25.0 | - | 4 | 100 |
| Citrakār | 50.0 | 50.0 | 4 | 75.0 | 25.0 | - | 4 | 100 |
| Ranjitkār | 22.1 | 77.9 | 77 | 47.8 | 52.2 | - | 23 | 30 |
| Khadgi | 59.7 | 40.3 | 72 | 43.5 | 52.2 | 4.3 | 23 | 30 |
| Kapāli | 20.0 | 80.0 | 10 | 60.0 | 40.0 | - | 10 | 100 |
| Dyahlā | 30.3 | 69.7 | 112 | 48.5 | 48.5 | 3.0 | 33 | 30 |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | 87.1 | 12.9 | 31 | 32.3 | 67.7 | - | 31 | 100 |
| Total | 37.1% | 62.9% | 1210 | 54.2% | 44.7% | 1.1% | 550 | |

The case of the Maharjan widow is not unique. With urbanization, the family might break into smaller units living in separate houses, but ritual ties and membership of guthi would still bind the family as one. During my fieldwork I have seen a few Newar houses in the city occupied by elderly people alone. The stories they tell are the same: their daughters have married out, and their sons, who have also married, have built their own houses in other areas of Kathmandu. However, they still rely on their sons for economic support, and in the event of annual festivals and rituals, the sons who have moved away are expected to rejoin their parents in their natal homes. Participation in domestic rituals and

representation in the death guthi ensures that the person is still part of the household unit, regardless of whether that person shares the same living space.

It may also be that Newars have an ideal picture of joint household that may or may not be reflected in the actual composition of the household. In my survey I have found many cases of Newar households in which absent family members are still accounted for when household surveys are carried out. For example, if some members of a family are working or living outside Kathmandu or Nepal, their names are still included by other members of the family in the census survey. I also found many cases where in the questionnaire form it is shown that the family is living in joint household with the total family size of 12, but when I actually met and interviewed the family members, they are actually a nuclear family with seven members living in one household.

Looking at each individual caste group in southern Kathmandu, it is difficult to outline any definite principle behind Newar patterns of family structures. Nepali (1965: 252) and Quigley (1984: 125) hypothesize that the higher incidence of joint families among Newars is due to wealth. According to Nepali (1965: 260) good financial position is linked with a joint family structure as he notes, 'Well-to-do Newars always prefer to live under the joint family. The greater incidence of the nuclear family among the Jyapoos is mainly due to their poor economic condition'. Likewise, for Quigley (1984), it is the demands of their trading occupation that explain the high incidence of joint families among the Śreṣṭhas. Quigley (1985: 24) suggests that Newars who are employed in salaried work tend to break up into nuclear families whereas Newars who are traders tend to live in joint families because there would be someone back at home to look after rest of the family when other family members are away for business. It is also assumed that the Newar farmer caste prefer to live in joint

family because the nature of their agriculture where they demand more labour to work on the field.

Table 3.4: Types of occupation declared by Newars in ward 21 and ward 22 (N= 3,266)

| Job Types Caste | Salaried work | Business | Agriculture Etc. | Total |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Rājopādhyāya | 10 | 4 | 0 | 14 |
| Vajrācāryā | 80 | 51 | 12 | 143 |
| Śākya | 93 | 144 | 13 | 250 |
| Śreṣṭha | 271 | 172 | 27 | 470 |
| Udāy | 73 | 98 | 13 | 184 |
| Maharjan | 273 | 229 | 483 | 985 |
| Mānandhar | 16 | 45 | 4 | 65 |
| Taṇḍukār | 15 | 15 | 1 | 31 |
| Nāpit | 6 | 3 | 4 | 13 |
| Nakarmi | 18 | 41 | 7 | 66 |
| Kāranjit | 24 | 35 | 2 | 61 |
| Mālākār | 7 | 4 | 1 | 12 |
| Citrakār | 97 | 4 | 0 | 101 |
| Ranjitkār | 97 | 77 | 12 | 186 |
| Khadžgi | 9 | 180 | 59 | 248 |
| Kapāli | 9 | 15 | 4 | 28 |
| Dyaḥlā | 297 | 1 | 2 | 300 |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | 80 | 14 | 15 | 109 |
| All Castes | 1,475 | 1,132 | 659 | 3,266 |
| Percentage | 45.1% | 34.7% | 20.2% | 100% |

Pursuing the same hypothesis I have analyzed my data of wards 21 and 22 to see whether Nepali's and Quigley's theories applies to Kathmandu Newars. In the survey forms, I asked informants to fill their occupation by giving the choice of ten most common occupations.⁵ Out of 8,551 Newars from eighteen castes,

⁵ Ten occupations are: 1. Governmental civil servant, 2. Non-governmental civil servant, 3. Agriculture, 4. Business, 5. Student, 6. Small industry, 7. Unemployed, 8. Disable, 9. Householder and 10. Others.

only 37.4 per cent (3,198) are in some kind of paid employment (i.e. civil servant, agriculture, business, and small industry) whereas the rest of 62.6 per cent are financially dependent upon them or live with inherited wealth. These include students, unemployed, and householders. To simplify the analysis, I have further divided those ten categories of occupations into three simple categories: a) salary, b) business, and c) agriculture and others.

The results show that of the 3,266 who are employed, 45.1 per cent are engaged in salaried work, i.e. governmental and non-governmental civil service, 34.7 per cent are in business and 20.2 per cent are engaged in agriculture and other occupations (see Table 3.4). Analyzing these figures with respect to Newar family structure in Table 3.1 shows that although more Kathmandu Newars are employed in salary-based jobs (45.1%), the incidence of joint family is still high (65.7%). This therefore negates the hypothesis made by Quigley that salaried work is linked to a higher incidence of nuclear families.

3.2.1 Comparison with Quigley's study of Dhulikhel

In order to make comparisons with data from previous studies, it is necessary to translate the data into more common typologies. Table 3.5 is a slight adaptation of Table 3.2, using the same data from ward 21 but following Quigley's (1985) categorization of family types which he used in his analysis of the Newars of Dhulikhel. In this table, the 'nuclear' category refers only to Kolenda's nuclear type 1, which is defined as 'a married couple with or without children'. However, in the 'joint' category, Quigley included Kolenda's family types 6 to 11 (collateral, supplemented collateral, lineal, supplemented lineal, lineal-collateral, and supplemented lineal-collateral). The remaining types 2-5 (supplemented, subnuclear, single-person, and supplement sub-nuclear) and 12 ('other') were categorized under 'other'. To group nuclear types 2-5 with 'other'

category instead of 'joint' looks peculiar, however, in a written correspondence, Quigley explained that Kolenda's household types 2-5 were included in the category of "Other" because

Table 3.5: Summary table of family composition of ward 21 using Quigley's classification.

| Family Types Caste | Nuclear | | Joint | | Other | | Total no of Household |
|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| | % | (n) | % | (n) | % | (n) | |
| Rājopādhyāya | | | 75.0 | (3) | 25.0 | (1) | 4 |
| Vajrācārya | 22.9 | (11) | 47.9 | (23) | 29.2 | (14) | 48 |
| Śākya | 23.6 | (17) | 40.3 | (29) | 36.1 | (26) | 72 |
| Śreṣṭha | 20.0 | (12) | 41.7 | (25) | 38.3 | (23) | 60 |
| Udāy | 27.6 | (8) | 31.0 | (9) | 41.4 | (12) | 29 |
| Maharjan | 34.1 | (43) | 38.9 | (49) | 27.0 | (34) | 126 |
| Mānandhar | 37.0 | (10) | 40.8 | (11) | 22.2 | (6) | 27 |
| Taṇḍukār | 14.3 | (1) | 71.4 | (5) | 14.3 | (1) | 7 |
| Nāpit | 14.3 | (1) | 57.1 | (4) | 28.6 | (2) | 7 |
| Nakarmi | 33.3 | (7) | 47.6 | (10) | 19.1 | (4) | 21 |
| Kāranjit | 9.5 | (2) | 61.9 | (13) | 28.6 | (6) | 21 |
| Mālākār | 50.0 | (2) | - | - | 50.0 | (2) | 4 |
| Citrakār | - | - | 50.0 | (2) | 50.0 | (2) | 4 |
| Ranjitkār | 21.7 | (5) | 52.2 | (12) | 26.1 | (6) | 23 |
| Khaḍgi | 39.1 | (9) | 52.2 | (12) | 8.7 | (2) | 23 |
| Kapāli | 10.0 | (1) | 50.0 | (5) | 40.0 | (4) | 10 |
| Dyaḥlā | 24.2 | (8) | 48.5 | (16) | 27.3 | (9) | 33 |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | 12.9 | (4) | 67.7 | (21) | 19.4 | (6) | 31 |
| Total % (n) | 25.6 | (141) | 45.3 | (249) | 29.1 | (160) | 550 |

...the supplemented categories could be supplemented in a variety of ways and more often, it seemed, were reduced forms of other types because of the loss of a family member. So, for example, a supplemented nuclear could be a couple with children plus the husband's unmarried sister or it could be a couple with children plus the husband's widowed mother (i.e. really a reduced 'lineal joint').

From the phrase 'reduced forms of other types', this can only mean that by 'other types' he means types of joint families. Therefore, if households from

Kolenda's types 2-5 are considered as joint families (albeit in a reduced form), then the same data would show that there is a high incidence of joint households.

One of the major problems with comparing the data on households in southern Kathmandu with those collected by other scholars is that the surveys were done in different times and places and with different combinations of castes. Dhulikhel, where Quigley (1985) collected his data, is a small town outside the Kathmandu Valley, with Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi (in his terms 'Shrestha' and 'Kasai') being the largest castes in the area in terms size. On the other hand, southern Kathmandu is a large urban area, and the data presented in Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 includes eighteen Newar castes. Therefore it would be misleading to comment on, for example, changes in the structure of Newar households as a whole when the population samples are so different in quantity and quality.

Table 3.6: Comparative table of family composition of Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi castes in Panga Dhulikhel and Kathmandu based on Nepali (1965: 256), Quigley (1985: 23) and Table 3.4.

| | Śreṣṭha | | | | Khaḍgi | | | |
|------------------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|-----------|
| | Nuclear % | Joint % | Other % | Total (n) | Nuclear % | Joint % | Other % | Total (n) |
| Panga (1965) | 37.5 | 62.5 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Dhulikhel (1985) | 23.4 | 54.3 | 22.3 | (372) | 48.6 | 24.3 | 27.0 | (37) |
| Kathmandu (1996) | 20.0 | 41.7 | 38.3 | (60) | 39.1 | 52.2 | 8.7 | (23) |

However, Quigley's and a part of Nepali's data could be used to compare the household types of 'Shrestha' and 'Kasai' castes in Dhulikhel and accordingly Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi in southern Kathmandu (see Table 3.6), to see if there is any correlation between household types and urbanization. For the Śreṣṭha caste, the

proportion of nuclear to joint families in all three places was roughly similar. It can be seen that most of the households were joint families—41.7 per cent of Śreṣṭha households in southern Kathmandu, 54.3 per cent in Dhulikhel and 62.5 per cent in Panga. However, this comparison shows that among the high Hindu Śreṣṭha caste group there is a higher incidence of joint families in rural regions than urban of Kathmandu.

Both Nepali (1965: 258) and Quigley (1985: 24) argue that the high proportion of joint families among Śreṣṭhas is because of their better economic status. Nepali suggests that it is the influence of ‘Gorkha’ (who presumably tend to have nuclear families) which account for the low proportion of joint families among the Śreṣṭhas of Kathmandu. One could also argue that the percentage of joint families in Kathmandu is lower because of lack of space or a different urban lifestyle. If this is so, then the percentage of nuclear families should also be higher in Kathmandu than in Dhulikhel. Instead, the data show that the percentage of ‘Shrestha’ nuclear families in Panga is high (37.5%) compare to Dhulikhel (23.4%) and to southern Kathmandu (20%). The case for the Khadgi (or ‘Kasai’) castes also shows that family structure is not necessarily related to the level of urbanization. In fact, the percentage of Khadgi joint families in southern Kathmandu (52.2%) is more than double that of those in Dhulikhel (24.3%). Likewise, the data on the Khadgi shows that the percentage of nuclear families is higher in Dhulikhel (48.6%) compared to southern Kathmandu (39.1%). It could be argued that family structure is a function of wealth, in the sense that the urban Khadgi are more well-off than their rural brothers and thus have larger families, but this hypothesis is not supported by any data on household income of the Khadgi, and therefore cannot be tested. In fact, there is also the observation made by some Newar informants that wealth divides families, as it enables dissenting factions to split from the core group.

Comparing the data of Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi in Dhulikhel and southern Kathmandu (see Table 3.6), there is marked difference in the category of ‘Other’, with 22.3 per cent of ‘Shrestha’ households in Dhulikhel compared to 38.3 per cent in southern Kathmandu. With the Khaḍgi caste the figure for Kathmandu (8.7%) is much lower than that in Dhulikhel (27%). However, because Quigley lumps together Kolenda’s family types 2-5 and 12 within this category, little can be surmised from the differences found in Dhulikhel and southern Kathmandu.

Table 3.7: Summary table of family composition of Dhulikhel reinterpreted using Kolenda’s classification.

| Caste | Nuclear | | Joint | | Other | | Total | |
|------------|---------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| | % | (n) | % | (n) | % | (n) | % | (n) |
| ‘Shrestha’ | 45.4 | (169) | 54.3 | (202) | 0.3 | (1) | 100 | (372) |
| ‘Kasai’ | 75.7 | (28) | 24.3 | (9) | - | - | 100 | (37) |
| Total | 48.2 | (197) | 51.6 | (211) | 0.2 | (1) | 100 | (409) |

According to Kolenda’s categorization, household types 1-5 are regarded as nuclear types. Quigley’s data for Dhulikhel were re-evaluated according to Kolenda’s definition of nuclear and joint household types, then the results were very different (see Table 3.7). Under the heading ‘Nuclear’, Kolenda’s types 1-5 were included. The data for joint families, however, remain unchanged as Quigley had also included Kolenda’s types 6-10 in this category. The category of ‘Other’ remains as household type 12. Comparing the data of Śreṣṭha and Khaḍgi in Dhulikhel, but reinterpreted using Kolenda’s classification (Table 3.7) and in southern Kathmandu of the same classification (Table 3.3), it shows that for the Śreṣṭha caste, the proportion of nuclear to joint households is roughly half and half (see Table 3.8). The percentage of nuclear households is higher in southern Kathmandu (58.3%) than Dhulikhel (45.4%). The inverse is also true in the case

of joint households, where the percentage was lower in southern Kathmandu (41.7%) than in Dhulikhel (54.3%). This data fits with the assumption that joint households are lower in urban areas than in rural or less urban areas, but it should be remembered that nuclear and joint families are almost equal in proportion in both Dhulikhel and southern Kathmandu. The case of the Khadgi also challenges the assumption that the joint families are less common in urban areas. In Kathmandu, the percentage of Khadgi joint households is higher (52.2%) than that of nuclear families (43.5%). But the most surprising result is from Dhulikhel, where the data shows that as much as 75.7 per cent of the Khadgi households are nuclear, whereas only 24.3 per cent are joint. Following the hypothesis of Nepali and Quigley, this could be also argued from the point of economic status that the better financial status of Khadgi in Kathmandu enable them to live in joint families rather than nuclear. However, this hypothesis lacks economic data to back it up.

Table 3.8: Comparative table of family composition of Śreṣṭha and Khadgi castes in Dhulikhel and Kathmandu based on Quigley's data reinterpreted (table 3.5) and table 3.3.

| | Śreṣṭha | | | | Khadgi | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| | Nuclear % | Joint % | Other % | Total (n) | Nuclear % | Joint % | Other % | Total (n) |
| Dhulikhel (1985) | 45.4 | 54.3 | 0.3 | (372) | 75.7 | 24.3 | - | (37) |
| Kathmandu (1996) | 58.3 | 41.7 | - | (60) | 43.5 | 52.2 | 4.3 | (23) |

3.2.2 Comparison with G.S. Nepali's study of Panga and Kathmandu

Nepali (1965) also surveyed 222 households of five castes in Panga and Kathmandu, where he found that the proportion of nuclear and joint households

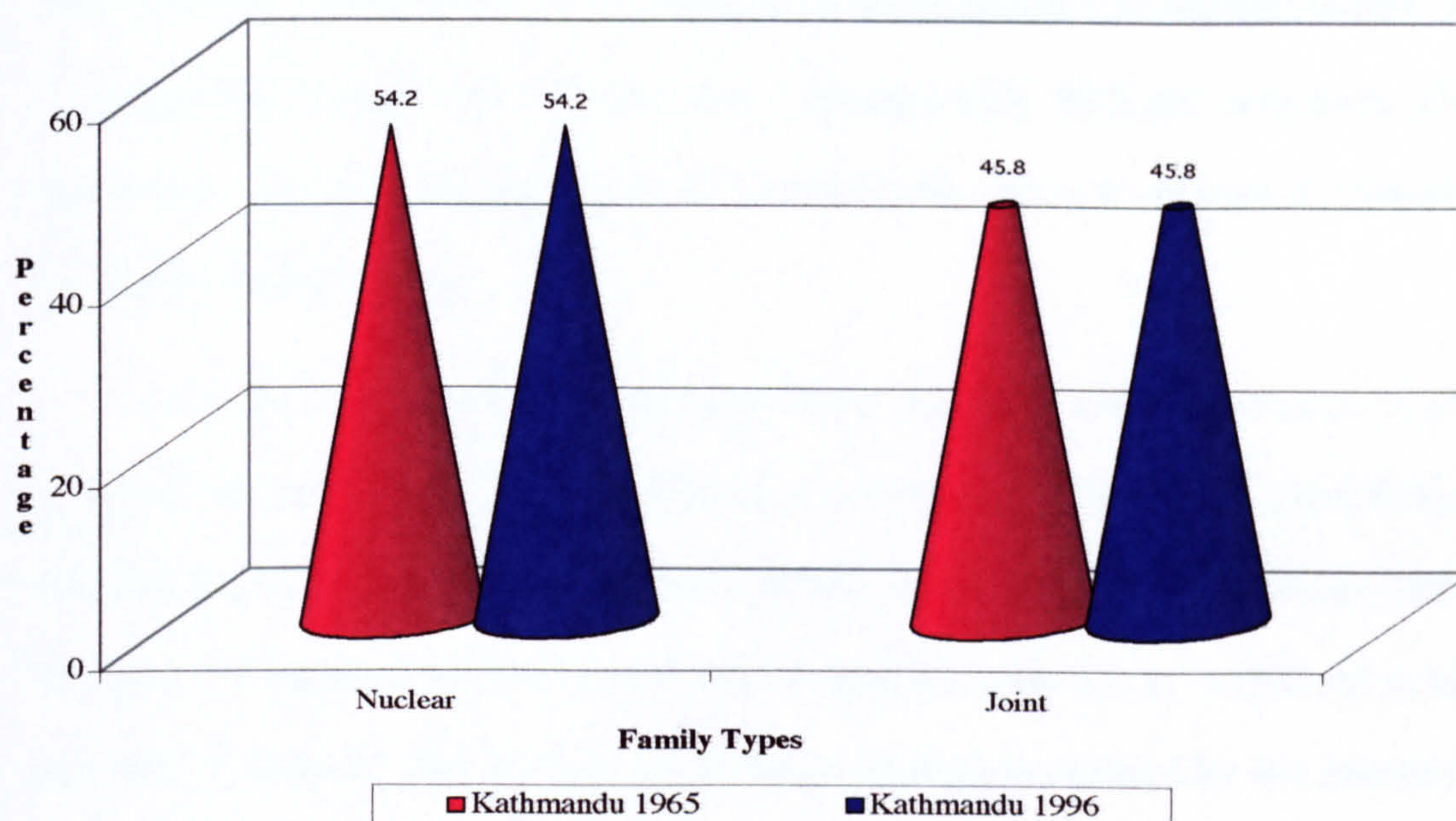
were roughly equal. However, as his work predates that of Kolenda (1968), his definitions of “nuclear”, “intermediate” and “joint” have to be re-interpreted so that comparisons can be made. Having looked at Kolenda’s categories of household types and the definitions and criteria set out by Nepali (1965: 255-6), it was found that his “nuclear” and “intermediate” categories fit into Kolenda’s nuclear types 1, 2 and 3, whereas the category of “joint” households corresponds with Kolenda’s “joint” household types 6, 7 and 8. Thus Nepali’s reinterpreted data are presented in Table 3.9.

Table 3.9: Nepali’s data reinterpreted according to Kolenda’s categories (cf. Nepali 1965: 257).

| Type of families | Kathmandu | | Panga | | Total | |
|------------------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|----------------|--------|
| | No of families | % | No of families | % | No of families | % |
| Nuclear | 91 | 54.2 | 28 | 51.9 | 119 | 53.6 |
| Joint | 77 | 45.8 | 26 | 48.1 | 103 | 46.4 |
| Total | 168 | 100.00 | 54 | 100.00 | 222 | 100.00 |

Comparing the re-interpreted data of Nepali (1965) of Kathmandu from Table 3.8 and the recent data (1996) of Kathmandu from Tables 3.3, it shows that the proportion of nuclear and joint households in Kathmandu has not changed in 30 years. Nepali (1965) found that 54.2% of households in Kathmandu were nuclear whereas 45.8% were joint and the data for southern Kathmandu (ward 21) collected in 1996 also showed exactly the same figure (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Comparative figure of Newar family types in Kathmandu in 1965 based on Nepali's data (reinterpreted) and 1996 (Table 3.3).



3.2.3 Comparison with Toffin's study of Panauti

Apart from Nepali and Quigley, Toffin (1984) also briefly discussed Newar household types in Panauti, a Newar town in the eastern part of the Valley. However, his definition and classification are different from that of Nepali and Quigley. Toffin (1984: 394-5) does not use the division of nuclear and joint but categorizes them into four types: a) the elementary family and their variants (57%), b) the simple family (27.7%), c) the complex family (11.8%) and d) the widows and the bachelors (4.6%). His division is made based on the number of married couples living in a household. A household with a single married couple with other kin living together is categorized as an 'elementary' family. A household with two married couples and other kin is categorized as a 'simple' family. A household with more than two married couples and other kin sharing the same space in the household is defined as a 'complex' family. A single person household he falls into the category of 'widows and bachelors'.

Applying Kolenda's classifications to Toffin's data, it shows that Toffin's types a) and d) fit into Kolenda's nuclear (type 1-5) and Toffin's type b) and c) fit into Kolenda's joint (type 6-11). This means the proportion of nuclear family was very high in Panauti, i.e. 61.6 per cent, whereas only 39.5 per cent were joint. These figures show once again that household types are not necessarily linked to the level of urbanization.

Overall, the data on Newar households show that the percentage of joint family is around 40 per cent and nuclear is around 60 per cent regardless of whether it is a city, town or village. However, it should be noted that the Newar definition of nuclear includes more than Kolenda's type 1, i.e. 'a married couple and their children'. The Newar definition of nuclear is defined by the number of married couples living in the household regardless of other kin sharing the same space. Therefore, within the Newar nuclear there might be many variants of nuclear including single person households. Obviously, if we take nuclear family in its strictest meaning, i.e. Kolenda's type 1, the percentage of Newar nuclear will fall drastically. In addition, there is substantial variation of household types between castes with some castes having more nuclear types while others joint.

Both Nepali and Quigley have suggested that the high incidence of joint families among Śreṣṭhas and Newars in towns and villages, is mainly due to economic reasons (Nepali 1965: 252; Quigley 1985: 24; Pradhan 1986: 30). For example, by virtue of their occupation, it may be necessary for the farmer castes to live as a joint family because this will ensure enough manpower to work their fields. This hypothesis may be valid with Newar villages where agriculture is still the main source of their livelihood. It should also be noted that there is among the

Newar tradition of co-operative labour system (*bolājyā*).⁶ When labour is needed it is normal among all kin to gather and help each other. Therefore, the argument on labour support may not be practical in modern Newar society. However, in southern Kathmandu the data show that only 4 per cent (336 out of 8,276 people) of the Newar population is engaged in agriculture. The majority of Newars in southern Kathmandu are civil servants (15.7%) followed by businessmen (9.7%).

Among the 336 farmers by occupation in ward 21, 98 per cent (329 people) are Maharjan or farmers by caste.⁷ However, this figure represents only 12.8 per cent of all members of the Maharjan or farmer caste (329 out of a total population of 2,562 Maharjan). The other members of the Maharjan castes are engaged in trade, civil services and education. Due to the fact that not many from the Maharjan caste of southern Kathmandu are involved in agriculture, there is less pressure to live in joint households, which would explain why there is a higher percentage of nuclear families among the Maharjan caste (59.5%) in southern Kathmandu. While Nepali and Quigley consider economic motives for living in a joint family, Shrestha and Singh (1992: 70) see economic factors as the main reason behind break up of the joint family. They write, 'The modern tendency is to break up from the joint family and to establish a new home whenever a great difference in the earnings of the male members of the family appears and dissensions take place'.

These 'reasons' for the consolidation and break up of the household unit are actually mere hypotheses because there is scarce economic data to refute or support it (cf. Quigley 1985: 24). The procurement of such data also made

⁶ For detailed description on *bolājyā* see Webster (1981); Toffin (1984: 317); Ishii (1993).

⁷ The rest of the 2 per cent of farmers are two Ranjitrkār and one each of Nāpit, Cyāmkhalaḥ, Pradhān, Khaḍgi and Śreṣṭha by caste.

difficult by the private nature of Newars, especially regarding their personal wealth. Even those who are willing to take part in such questionnaires under-declare their earnings for fear of taxation and to protect their privacy.

In summary, the majority of Newars in southern Kathmandu (65.5%) live in households that they define as joint. However, using Kolenda's categories of household types, there are more nuclear type households (54.7%) than joint (44.2%). Caste-wise, the households are more or less evenly divided into nuclear and joint, with the exceptions being Mālākār (100% nuclear) and Rājopādhyāya (75% joint). Again, these figures have to be analyzed with respect to the sample size. For example, in the case of the Mālākār and Rājopādhyāya castes, there were only four households in the whole of southern Kathmandu.

3.3 Newar household size

One of the unique features of Newar is their pattern of residence. Population density among Newars immediately sets them apart from the other ethnic groups in the Valley. Quigley (1984: 19) writes, 'one can *immediately* distinguish Newar settlements from non-Newar. The former always appear as tight clusters, the latter, very small scattered villages' (emphasis in the original). In addition to the geographical setting of households, another means to examine the density of Newar population is the size of Newar household. In this section I shall examine data on the Newar household size which I gathered from 1,419 households of ward 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu. The total population of study is 9,559.

There is a great range of Newar household sizes in Kathmandu from singular households to as many as 25 members living under one roof. As a result, an average household size may not reflect the range of household sizes as it is dependent on the sample size. For example, in the case of Kapāli caste, there are 11 households with household sizes ranging from one to seventeen members. Households with very small and very large members are very few in number. However, the make up of an average which is 7.0 members, does not reflect the actual range of household size. This applies to all the castes surveyed.

Caste variations aside, the average family size of Kathmandu Newars is 6.7 members⁸ living in the same household (see Table 3.10). However, this figure is different when we look at individual caste groups. The caste groups with the smallest average household size are the Mālākār and Citrakār with 5.8 and 5.6

⁸ In Nepali's (1965: 255) study of Panga and Kathmandu, he finds that the average size of the Newar household is 6.24. In Toffin's (1984: 395) study of Panauti, he finds that the average size of the Newar household is 6.16.

members respectively. Then there are eight caste groups which have an average of around six members per household: Śākya (6.6), Śreṣṭha (6.4), Udāy (6.3), Maharjan (6.3), Mānandhar (6.2), Tandukār (6.7), Nāpit (6.8), and Dyaḥlāḥ (6.3). Those with about seven members per household are Vajrācārya (7.6), Nakarmi (7.0), Ranjitrkār (7.5), and Kapāli (7.0). The Kāranjit (8.7), Khaḍgi (8.2) and Cyāmkhalāḥ (8.8) have an average household size of about eight members. Finally, the biggest family size recorded is nine members in the case of the Rājopādhyāya Hindu priestly caste.⁹

Table 3.10: Average size of Newar household size according to castes (based on sample data from ward 21 and ward 22 of Southern Kathmandu).

| Castes | Total No. of Households | Total caste population | Average size of Household |
|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Rājopādhyāya | 4 | 36 | 9.0 |
| Vajrācāryā | 61 | 462 | 7.6 |
| Śākya | 124 | 823 | 6.6 |
| Śreṣṭha | 235 | 1517 | 6.4 |
| Udāy | 85 | 540 | 6.3 |
| Maharjan | 460 | 2884 | 6.3 |
| Mānandhar | 30 | 187 | 6.2 |
| Taṇḍukār | 13 | 88 | 6.7 |
| Nāpit | 7 | 48 | 6.8 |
| Nakarmi | 29 | 204 | 7.0 |
| Kāranjit | 21 | 183 | 8.7 |
| Mālākār | 6 | 35 | 5.8 |
| Citrakār | 5 | 28 | 5.6 |
| Ranjitrkār | 77 | 579 | 7.5 |
| Khaḍgi | 105 | 857 | 8.2 |
| Kapāli | 11 | 77 | 7.0 |
| Dyaḥlā | 112 | 710 | 6.3 |
| Cyāmkhalāḥ | 34 | 301 | 8.8 |
| All Castes | 1,419 | 9,559 | 6.7 |

⁹ There are only 4 households of Rājopādhyāya caste in ward 21 and 22. With those 4 households one household has 14 members, one household has 8 members, and two households have 7

Although the survey data shows that the average size of Newar household in Kathmandu is 6.7 people, this figure should be regarded with some scepticism, given the fact that it is a common practice among Newars to list all family members in the census survey, regardless of whether those members are actually living in the same household.

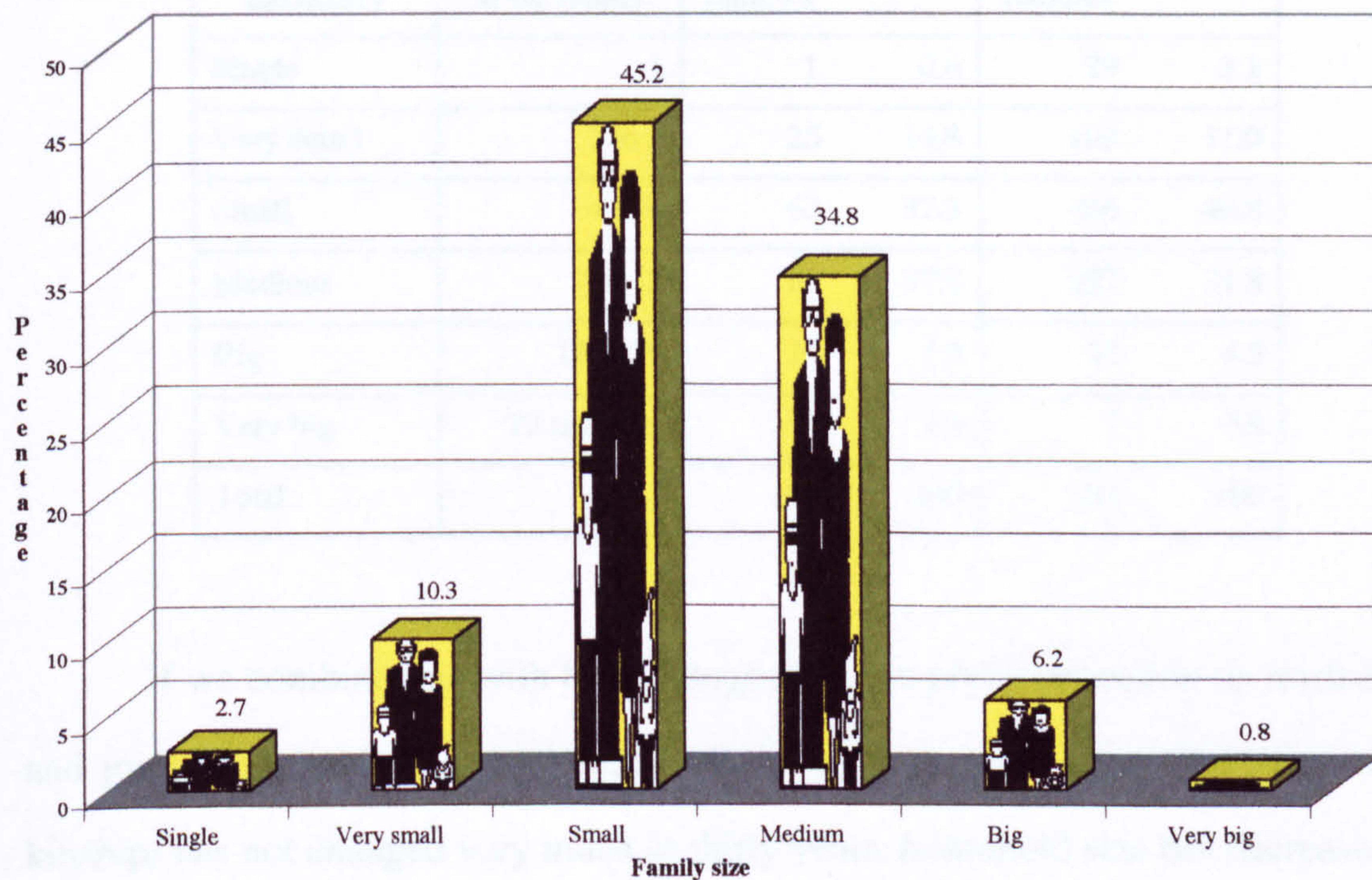
Now let us look at Nepali's 1965 data (1965: 253-4) on Kathmandu with five different castes—'Vanra', 'Shrestha', 'Udas', 'Jaypoo' and 'Manandhar'. His findings show that 37.3 per cent of households were 'small', with about 4 to 6 persons sharing the same household. The percentage of households with 7 to 12 persons, which he defined as 'medium' was also 37.3 per cent. However, the findings for Panga, where he surveyed the 'Shrestha' and 'Jyapoo' castes, was slightly different. The majority of the households were 'small' (40%), while the percentage of 'medium' family was 34.5 per cent.

Using Nepali's classification of household size, household data from ward 21 and 22 of southern Kathmandu was evaluated. Of the total sample of 1,419 households, as much as 45.2 per cent are 'small' family size with 4 to 6 persons. 'Medium' family households, consisting of 7 to 12 members is the second highest with 34.8 per cent. 10.3 per cent are 'very small' size with 2 to 3 persons in the family. 'Big' and 'very big' families are 6.2 and 0.8 per cent respectively while 2.7 per cent of all households are 'single'. The average size of the family in Kathmandu, therefore, is 'small' size or between 4 to 6 members living under the same roof (see Figure 3.4).

members living under the same roof. The result of the average nine is affected by the house with 14 members which in fact is the only house with such large number.

The 1996 data I collected cannot be fairly compared with the data from 1965 that was surveyed by Nepali. This is because, firstly, Nepali only surveyed five Newar castes whereas the data which I collected in 1996 surveyed eighteen Newar castes, and secondly, his sample size was only 169 compared to 1,508 that was surveyed in 1996. However, a brief glance at the figures shows that in 1965 the average family range between 4 to 12 members whereas in 1996 figure shows that the average size is between 4 to 6 members in each household. This implies that the average family size has decreased in the last 30 years.

Figure 3.4: Household size of the Kathmandu Newars based on the sample from ward 21 and ward 22 (N= 1,419).



For the purpose of comparative study of the Newar household size I have selected from my data the five caste groups which Nepali surveyed in 1965 and

re-organized it according to Nepali's classifications (see Table 3.11).¹⁰ Table 3.11 shows that the average family size of Newars in Kathmandu has decreased in the last thirty years. In 1965, 37.3 per cent of all households were 'small' and 37.3 per cent were 'medium'. In 1996, as the percentage of 'small' households has increased by 11.5 per cent to 48.8 per cent, whereas the 'medium' family has fallen slightly by 5.5 per cent to 31.8 per cent (see Figure 3.5).

Table 3.11: Comparative table of Newar family gradation of 5 caste groups (Śākya, Śreṣṭha, Udāy, Maharjan, and Mānandhar) in Kathmandu based on Nepali's data (1965: 253) and my survey data of ward 21 and 22 collected in 1996.

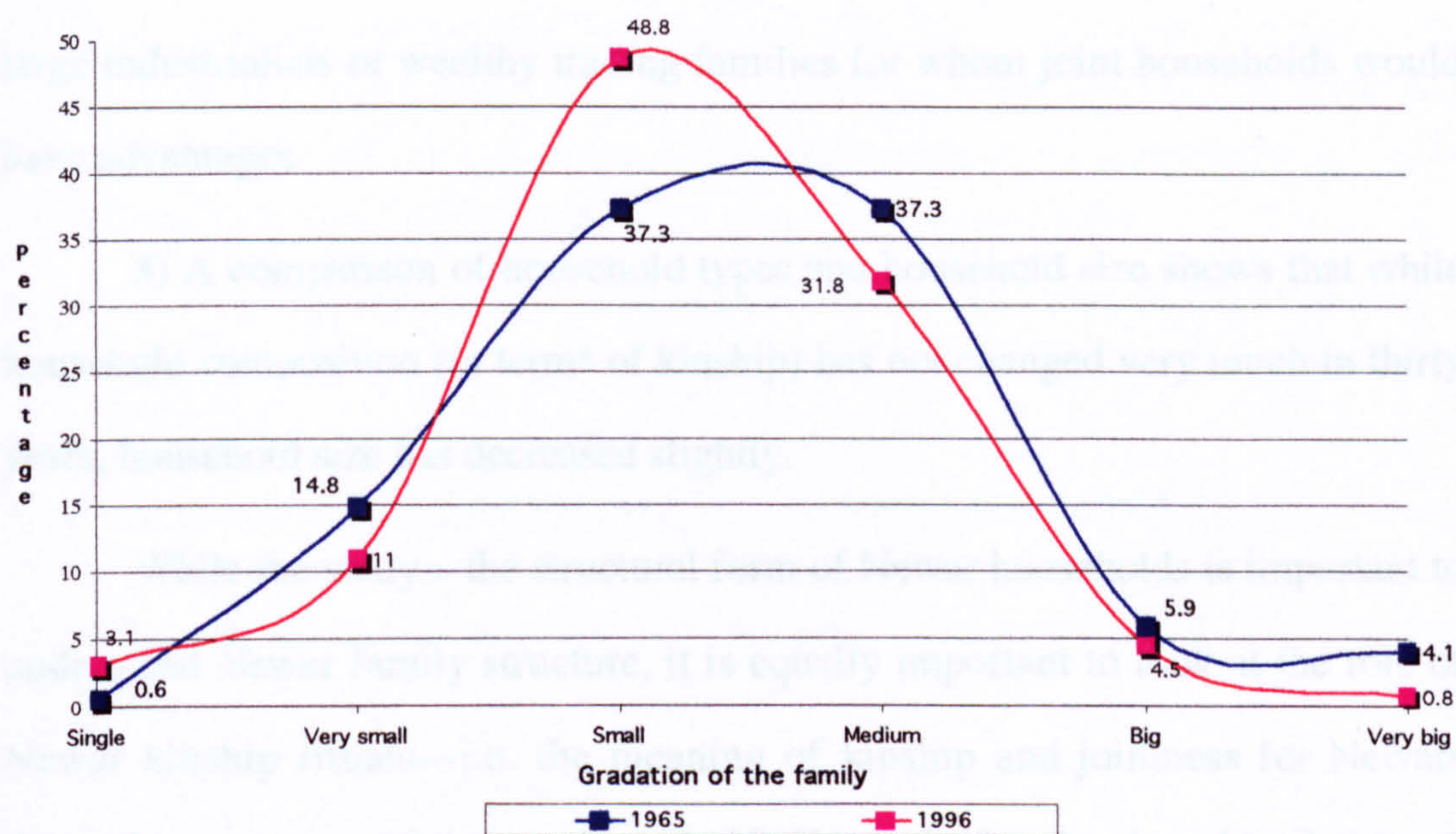
| Gradation of the family | No of persons in the family | Kathmandu 1965 | | Kathmandu 1996 | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|------|----------------|------|
| | | No of families | % | No of families | % |
| Single | 1 | 1 | 0.6 | 29 | 3.1 |
| Very small | 2 to 3 | 25 | 14.8 | 103 | 11.0 |
| Small | 4 to 6 | 63 | 37.3 | 456 | 48.8 |
| Medium | 7 to 12 | 63 | 37.3 | 297 | 31.8 |
| Big | 13 to 20 | 10 | 5.9 | 42 | 4.5 |
| Very big | 20 and over | 7 | 4.1 | 7 | 0.8 |
| Total | | 169 | 100 | 934 | 100 |

If we combine this with the findings from the previous section on nuclear and joint households, it shows that while household composition (in terms of kinship) has not changed very much in thirty years, household size has decreased slightly, with more people living in 'single' 'small' and 'medium' households. This also means that joint family living has decreased too. A possible reason for this is the growth of the family and scarcity of space. As Kathmandu is an urban

¹⁰ Again, it should be remembered that the sample sizes are different, with only 169 households

city, there is limited land with which to build adjoining homes. Houses are expanded vertically rather than horizontally, and even then the number of floors cannot increase indefinitely. With an aging population and scarcity of living space, it is foreseeable that the household sizes would become smaller, while the household structure remains intact.

Figure 3.5: Comparison of the Newar household size in Kathmandu of five caste groups surveyed by Nepali in 1965 and my data of the same caste groups surveyed in 1996.



Unfortunately, comparisons with data previously collected have been severely limited by different sample sizes and systems of categorization. Despite this setback, I have tried, where possible, to re-evaluate the data collected by other scholars, either by re-organizing my data according to their categories or by re-organizing their data according to mine. The following are the general findings:

surveyed in 1965 and 933 in 1996.

1) The proportion of nuclear and joint households has not changed in 30 years. Newar society is more or less equally divided between the two categories. So the hypothesis that joint families are breaking up cannot be substantiated by the data presented.

2) The percentage of nuclear families is slightly higher than that of joint families. This can be explained by the fact that Newars of southern Kathmandu, who live in an urban environment, are not dependent on labour-intensive methods of agriculture, and are thus not bound to live in joint households. Nor are they large industrialists or wealthy trading families for whom joint households would have advantages.

3) A comparison of household types and household size shows that while household composition (in terms of kinship) has not changed very much in thirty years, household size has decreased slightly.

While the study—the structural form of Newar households is important to understand Newar family structure, it is equally important to look at the role of Newar kinship rituals—i.e. the meaning of kinship and jointness for Newars themselves—in constituting the household. This is further developed in chapters 7 and 8.

Appendix: Household Types proposed by Kolenda (1968: 346-7)

1. Nuclear family: a couple with or without unmarried children
2. Supplemented nuclear family: a nuclear family plus one or more unmarried, separated, or widowed relatives of the parents, other than their unmarried children.
3. Subnuclear family: a fragment of a former nuclear family. Typical examples are the widow with unmarried children, or the widower with unmarried children, or siblings—whether unmarried, or widowed, separated, or divorced—living together.
4. Single-person household.
5. Supplemented sub-nuclear: a group of relatives, members of a formerly complete nuclear family, plus some other unmarried, divorced, or widowed relative who was not a member of the nuclear family. For example, a widow and her unmarried children plus her widowed mother-in-law.
6. Collateral joint family: two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond—usually a brother-brother relationship—plus unmarried children.
7. Supplemented collateral joint family: a collateral joint family plus unmarried, divorced, or widowed relatives. Typically, such supplemental relatives are the widowed mother of the married brothers, or the widowed father, or an unmarried sibling.
8. Lineal joint family: two couples between whom there is a lineal link, usually between parents and married son, sometimes between parents and married daughters.
9. Supplemented lineal joint family: a lineal joint family plus unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear families; for example, the father's widower brother or the son's wife's unmarried brother.
10. Lineal-collateral joint family: three or more couples linked lineally and collaterally. Typically, parents and their two or more married sons, plus the unmarried children of the three or more married couples.
11. Supplemented lineal-collateral joint family: a lineal-collateral joint family plus unmarried, widowed, separated relatives who belong to none of the nuclear families lineally and collaterally linked; for example, the father's widowed sister or brother, or an unmarried nephew of the father.
12. Other

CHAPTER FOUR

Newar Marriage

Part I: Divine Marriages: *Ihi* and *Bārḥāḥ*

*A Newar woman marries three times:
first, with a bel fruit, second, with the sun god, and finally with a human.*

(A Newar saying)

The path of marriage in a Newar girl's life is marked by three significant rituals. The first two — *ihi*, divine marriage and the *bārḥāḥ*, confinement—link her to divinity while the third links her to a man. Some authors look at divorce, remarriage and widow remarriage among Newars in the context of these rituals.¹ Newars say that once a girl has been married to a divinity, the breakdown of secular marriage (divorce, widowhood or remarriage) can bear no social stigma. However, there are some scholars who view the rituals as a rite of passage, and focus on the secular marriage as the definitive marriage for Newar girls. Such scholars emphasize that divorce, widowhood and remarriage do entail social stigma for women.² In this chapter, I shall look at these rituals from a Newar perspective to add an emic view on the issues that have been raised so far.

4.1 Newars and divine marriage and kinship

If we ask a Newar to describe his valley of Kathmandu, he would portray it with all the myths and legends that can be found in its rich culture. It was therefore highly appropriate that Mary Slusser named her magnificent book on

¹ See Nepali (1965: 239-51), B. Pradhan (1981: 68-75), Vergati (1982: 285), Toffin (1984: 120-1), Pradhan (1986).

the Valley *Nepal Mandala* (1982); and Robert Lévy similarly named his book about the Newar city of Bhaktapur *Mesocosm* (1990). The Valley consists of several cities, towns and villages which are inhabited by man and divinity alike. In fact, it is hard to ignore the divine in Kathmandu—it is a land of stupas and living goddesses, temples and semi-divine elders. It could be said that divinity literally runs in the Newars' blood. According to their myths, Pacali Bhairav (Āju Dyah), the guardian god of southern Kathmandu and *lākhe*, another famous protector demon, had love affairs with Newar girls from the Nāpit (Nau) and Ranjitrkār (Chipā) castes respectively, and are thus regarded as the ancestors of Newars. Newar women are also regarded as the consanguine of Pārvati, the consort of Lord Shiva.³

Through the *ihi* ritual, young girls are joined in marriage with Suvama Kumār, a form of Viṣṇu Nārāyan among Hindus, and to a personification of *bodhicitta*⁴ among Buddhists. And through the *bārḥāḥ tayegu* ritual, girls are joined in marriage for the second time with sun-god (Surdyah). During their lifetime, Newars are also elevated to the level of divine beings. For example, a young girl is specially selected to become the 'living goddess', who is worshipped by all Newars, including the King. The King is believed to be the incarnation of god Viṣṇu. In the attainment of old age, the elders in society are

² See Quigley (1984: 252, 260), Lewis (1984: 296), Löwdin (1986: 66), Gellner (1991).

³ Lévy (1992: 666) presents the legends relates to this as follows: 'Parvati was the daughter of Himavan, the deity of the Himalayas. When she was to be married to Shiva, Himavan gave Nepal (that is, the present Kathmandu Valley) to her as her dowry. One day as Parvati was walking through the Valley she heard an old woman crying. Parvati asked her why she was crying. "My husband is dead. A husband is necessary for a woman; without a husband a woman's life is terrible." Parvati pitied her and asked Shiva for a boon. "Can you do something for *the women of my natal home* so that they will not become widows?" Shiva answered, "Narayan and I will arrange it so that there will no longer be any widows in Nepal." Thus the Newars were given the Ihi ceremony. Narayan was the groom, and Shiva the witness (emphasis added).

⁴ Locke, 1980: 215. This is a learned identification. Ordinary lay Buddhists usually identify the divine parter of the young girl as Kumar.

deified in rituals that transform them into semi-divine beings. Defined by descent, reinforced by marriage and deified in old age, Newars therefore have a unique relationship with divinities which is both spiritual and physical.

There has been considerable debate among social anthropologists of the Newars about the significance of *ihi* or divine-marriage and *bārhaḥ tayegu* or mock-menstruation. All Newar girls, with the exception of those from some Hindu and lower castes, go through these life-cycle rituals which symbolize divine marriage to gods. This type of practice is also occasionally found in the other parts of South Asian societies, for example, the ‘tali-tying’ rite of Kerala (Fuller 1976) and the ‘token pre-puberty marriage’⁵ in central India (Good 1982: 47).

Among Newars, some castes observe both divine-marriage and mock-menstruation rites whereas some observe only mock-menstruation and some do not observe either (see Table 4.1). Nepali (1965: 106) had written that ‘with the exceptions of the Deo-Bhaju and the Du(n)-yee-ya(n) [i.e. Putuwār] Newars, all Newars observe this ritual’. Vergati (1982: 272), in her study of Bhaktapur Newars states more precisely:

mock-marriage (*ihi*) is, however, celebrated only by pure castes (*ju pim*). This statement must be qualified by drawing attention to the fact that the castes situated at the two poles of the social hierarchy, namely the Rajopadhyaya Brahmins or Deo Bajju, at the summit, and the Untouchables, at the base, do not celebrate it.

She listed the lower castes who do not celebrate it as the Untouchables (*ma ju pim*), butchers (Khadgi), tailor-musicians (Kapāli), fishermen-sweepers (Pode), tanners (Kulu), sweepers (Cyāme or Hālāhulu). The reason for this,

⁵ The ‘token pre-puberty marriage’ is the ‘marriage’ of physically-immature girls to objects. These are arrows among ‘tribal’ groups, branches among Raj Gond farmers, and wooden rice-pounders among Hindu castes which is called ‘first marriage’ (Good 1982: 47).

Table 4.1: *ihi* and *bārhāḥ* observance among Newar castes of southern Kathmandu (*kwaḥne*)

| Castes | <i>ihi</i> | <i>bārhāḥ</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Rājopādhyāya | No ^a | Yes ^b |
| Vajracārya | Yes | Yes |
| Śākya | Yes | Yes |
| Śreṣṭha <i>et al.</i> | Yes | Yes |
| Udāy | Yes | Yes |
| Maharjan | Yes | Yes |
| Mānandhar | Yes | Yes |
| Taṇḍukār | Yes | Yes |
| Nāpit | Yes | Yes |
| Nakarmi | Yes | Yes |
| Kāranjit | Yes ^c | Yes |
| Mālākār | Yes | Yes |
| Citrakār | Yes | Yes |
| Ranjitkār | Yes | Yes |
| Putuwār | No | No |
| Kapāli | No | Yes |
| Khaḍgi | No ^d | Yes |
| Rajaka | No | No |
| Dyaḥlā | No | No |
| Cyāmkhalaḥ | No | No |

- a. After the modern law banned child marriage some of Rājopādhyāya begun to practise *ihi* ritual. However it is a simplified version of the ritual and does not have ‘*kanyādān*’ part as it has with other castes (Toffin 1995: 201). My Rājopādhyāya informants strongly denied this claim that they practise *ihi*. Instead they do a ritual called ‘*sinhaḥ chāyegu*’.
- b. There is a slight difference in this mock-menstruation ritual between the Brahman and other Newars. The Brahman perform this at the actual physiological menstruation event which is called *bārhāḥ cwanegu* (lit. to stay in confinement) whereas other Newars practice mock-menstruation called *bārhāḥ tayegu* (lit. to keep in confinement).
- c. Some claim Kāranjit or Bhā caste does not perform *ihi* (Panca 1996: 5) but my Kāranjit informants of southern Kathmandu confirmed that they do.
- d. Vajracārya (1989:161) states that the Butcher caste do not observe *ihi* whereas Pradhan (1986: 114) writes that they do. See also Gellner (1995) ‘Low castes in Lalitpur’.

argues Vergati, is because of a lack of priests to officiate the ritual. I have also found a similar case in southern Kathmandu, where the Dyaḥbrahmu or Hindu priestly caste and some of the lower castes—Kapāli, Khadgi, Putuwār, Rajaka, Dyaḥlā, Cyāme—do not observe *ihi* ritual.⁶ However, I am not persuaded by the argument made by Vergati that the reason why these castes do not observe *ihi* is because they do not have priests to officiate. While it is true that the lower castes are not served by the higher priestly castes, they sometimes compensate for this by having their own priests who come from their own caste. For example, the Kapāli caste is sub-divided into various groups with specific ritual functions. Among the Kapāli, there is a priestly family whose role is to perform rituals for the Kapāli. There is also a caste sub-group called Danyā who performs the ritual role of the barber caste as well as pollution receiver for the Kapali.

Dumont (1980: 114, 118) makes a distinction between a ‘true and complete marriage’ from other kinds of ‘marriage’. More precisely, he uses the terms ‘primary and secondary marriage’ for girls and ‘principal and subsidiary marriage’ for boys. In the case of girls particularly, to support his statement he uses several ethnographic examples to clarify the distinction between primary and secondary marriage including the Newars. He writes:

In various groups, in order to secure for women great freedom of (secondary) marriage or of sexual unions in general, primary marriage is, or rather was, reduced to a mere ritual formality. Sometimes women are married in this way to a god, an object, a fruit, or a man who immediately disappears from their lives (Dumont 1980: 118).

While Dumont recognizes *ihi* as ‘true’ or ‘primary’ marriage, several other authors interpreted this ritual as the female initiation rite parallel to male initiation

⁶ However, the Kapāli and Khadgi castes do perform the second marriage, i.e. the mock-menstruation rite.

of *bare chuyegu* among Buddhist high castes and *kaitā pūjā* or *vratibandha* among other castes.⁷ Gellner suggests,

ihi and marriage to a human husband correspond not to Dumont's distinction between primary and secondary marriage, but rather to Fuller's (1976: 105) distinction between 'first marriage', which is a rite of passage by which a girl becomes an adult, and 'second marriage', which legitimates the offspring of her union with one or more men (Gellner 1991: 114).

The Newars regard *ihi* and *bārhaḥ tayegu* as two different marriages. The first is with Suvarna Kumār and second with the Sun god (Sūrdayaḥ). I have heard an adult Newar male from Buddhist priestly caste teasing an adult female from the same caste with the phrase 'you girls are married three times'. This is also the belief of many Newar married women I interviewed, who accepted that they have three marriages in their lives—first two being divine and the third secular.

4.2 *Ihi* : the divine marriage

Ihi is an old Newari word for marriage, and it usually refers to the first divine marriage ritual. As a conscious piece of revivalism, the Newars or specifically the Newari language activists have begun to use the term *ihi* for secular marriage. Generally, in Newar wedding feasts, a red banner bearing the Sanskrit term 'Śubhavivāha' (derived from Sanskrit meaning happy wedding) is placed above the gate. But those influenced by pro-Newari activist Newars now substitute the Newari term *Ihipā* instead of *vivāha*. In order to avoid linguistic confusion I shall use the term 'divine-marriage' to denote marriage to a divine spouse and 'secular' marriage for marriage with a human spouse. In Newari the only difference between the 'divine-marriage' and 'secular' marriage is a suffix -

⁷ See Nepali (1965: 106-112), Pradhan (1986: 110-128), Gellner (1991: 112).

pā as *ihi-pā* for 'secular' marriage, but literally its meaning (i.e. marriage) remains the same.

In *ihi* the orthodox Hindu marriage procedure is observed, including *kanyādān* which means 'gift of a virgin'. Compared with secular marriage in which there is less emphasis on Hindu wedding rituals, *ihi* is considerably more elaborate and has considerable social significance. Nepali (1965: 107) illustrates the importance of *ihi* by giving an example of Birgunj Newar girls who once abandoned the *ihi* ritual and were not accepted by Newar males of the Valley for marriage. Newars consider *ihi* as one of the most important rites of passage for girls. Many claim *ihi* as a unique identification of Newarhood to separate themselves from other Nepalese.

Newars refer to girls prior to *ihi* as Kumāri, the virgin goddess and after the *ihi* as Pārvati, the consort of Shiva. Once she has passed through the second divine marriage or mock-menstruation ritual she will be referred to as a symbol of Mahālaksmī, the goddess of wealth. In the secular marriage she is treated as 'goddess of wealth' by her husband's family members. *Ihi* must be performed on an auspicious occasion and is mostly done in a group. In the past it was performed when the girl's age is around 5 or 7. It is believed that it has to be at odd number, i.e. at the age of 5, 7, 9 or 11. Some go through this ritual even earlier at the age of three. In order to examine how effective this local belief is I checked the age of all girls of different castes who went through an *ihi* ritual in one of the mass *ihi* rituals organized to commemorate the king's silver jubilee of coronation in 1996. The number of girls who went through mass *ihi* were more than 425. I was able to get information on the caste and age of 402 girls (see Table 4.2). It seems right that the most popular age of *ihi* is the age of five, seven and nine as the percentage of those age groups are highest as 19.7 per cent, 23.4 per cent and 10.1

per cent respectively. However, the data show, a large number of girls are even numbered age who went through this ritual (16.2 per cent of girls age six). Interestingly, the data also show that the most relaxed caste group with the girls' age are Śreṣṭha and Maharjan with 36.4 per cent and 35.7 per cent of their girls are of even numbered age of 4, 6, 8 and 10.

Table 4.2: Numbers of *ihi* according to age and caste (N=402).

| Age \ Caste | <3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | n.a. | Total |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|------|-------|
| Vajrācārya | - | 1 | - | 2 | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 1 | 5 |
| Śākya | - | 1 | - | 2 | 3 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 6 | 14 |
| Śreṣṭha | - | 4 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 10 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 2 | - | 44 |
| Udāy | - | - | - | - | 1 | 3 | - | 1 | - | - | 3 | 8 |
| Maharjan | 3 | 13 | 31 | 64 | 49 | 65 | 16 | 18 | 3 | 2 | 13 | 277 |
| Mānandhar | - | - | - | 3 | - | 7 | 1 | 4 | - | 1 | - | 16 |
| Taṇḍukār | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 |
| Nāpit | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 |
| Mālākār | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | - | 2 |
| Citrakār | - | 1 | - | - | 1 | 2 | 2 | 3 | - | - | - | 9 |
| Ranjitkār | - | - | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | - | 1 | - | - | 8 |
| Nepāli | - | - | - | - | - | - | - | 1 | - | - | - | 1 |
| n.a. | - | - | 2 | 3 | - | 3 | 1 | 3 | - | 1 | - | 15 |
| Total | 3 | 21 | 37 | 79 | 65 | 94 | 24 | 41 | 7 | 6 | 24 | 402 |
| % | 1.0 | 5.2 | 9.2 | 19.7 | 16.2 | 23.4 | 6.0 | 10.1 | 1.7 | 1.5 | 6.0 | 100 |

In modern Newar society, as it is difficult and costly to organize *ihi* rituals, many new social groups or clubs hold this ritual as a community event instead of waiting for someone to organize it privately. Moreover, some have begun to invent new rites to replace the traditional ones. They take the girls into Theravada temples and ordain them temporarily as a nun. However, this is strongly opposed by traditionally minded people. Once when I was observing the traditional *ihi* ritual in Kathmandu and interviewed the priests and parents of the

girls who were participating in the ritual some parents were very upset with the fact that this ritual is being replaced by the Theravada invention of tradition. A Maharjan old woman said furiously: 'This ritual is nothing to do with being ordained. It is a rite of passage every Newar girl must pass through. Monks should not show contempt for this ritual at all. It is not their businesses.

Generally, this ritual can be joined communally by most Newar castes. However, in practice it makes a great difference as to what kind of priest performs the ritual. I was told by members of Buddhist castes⁸ that Buddhists do not participate in the *ihi* ritual presided over by a Hindu priest. Similarly, most Śreṣṭhas and Kāranjits will not participate in an *ihi* ritual presided over by a Buddhist priest. However, in practice most Śreṣṭhas are not strict about this. Whenever they have the occasion to join the ritual they do regardless of what priest presides. Similarly, I have also been told that some Maharjans joined in an *ihi* ritual presided over by a Rājopādhyāya Hindu priest. To sum up, there are two types of *ihi* according to which priest presides—Buddhist and Hindu [see Allen (1990) for Buddhist *ihi* and Pradhan (1986) for Hindu *ihi*].

Allen (1990: 189) describes *ihi* as a real marriage rite for a Newar girl. He writes: 'both the Sanskrit texts and most informants describe [*ihi*] as such [a marriage] and indeed many insist that it is the only true marriage for a Newar girl'. Because they are already married to a god, Newar women will never be widows and 'therefore never suffer from the stigma of widowhood in their society' (Vergati 1982: 283). Bina Pradhan (1981) in her ethnography of Bulu village, also finds that widowhood is insignificant among the Newars. The difference is that the inhabitants of Bulu village do not celebrate *ihi*. Neither do

⁸ Vajrācāryas, Śākyas, Tulādhars, Maharjans, Mānandhars, Citrakārs, Ranjītkārs, Nāpits, Mālākārs, and some Śreṣṭhas.

the inhabitant of the village of Pyangaon, the majority of which are Newar Maharjans (Toffin 1977: 38).

There is also evidence to support this argument from a linguistic perspective. There is no Newari word which denotes widowhood. It is only recently that the term *vidhavā* has come into use in Newari from Hindi and Nepali; otherwise a widow is referred as 'a woman without husband' (*bhāta madumha misā*).

However, Gellner's observation was that 'high-caste Newar women certainly do suffer considerable stigma, both from widowhood and from divorce' (Gellner, 1991: 117). For example, in a part of Newar wedding, there is a ritual called 'welcoming the bride' where the mother of the bridegroom has to perform the welcoming ritual to the bride. If the mother is a widow she is not entitled to perform this ritual and the task is taken over by the eldest sister-in-law instead. Gellner clearly states this loss of status among Newar widows: 'she may not fill the role of senior woman (*thakāli nakī*) in any ritual, since she is considered to be inauspicious. It is commonly widows who are suspected of being witches (*bwaksi*)' (Gellner 1991: 116). Apart from losing her ritual roles in the household as a consequence of widowhood theoretically she is free to remarry which is a taboo among the dominant Parbatiyā culture. However, in reality it may differ as it is a personal choice of the widow herself which is heavily influenced by her age, caste and whether there are children or not. Most marriages for the second or third time happen with widows, divorcées or lower caste women which is common in traditional Newar society.

Many Newars say that by doing *ihi* they save their girls from child marriage as well as differentiating them from the dominant Parbatiyas. Some even use it as an evidence to show that Newar culture gives higher status to women

than Parbatiyā culture. Pancha, a Maharjan activist, writes,

It is a unique feature of the Newar society that traditionally it gives its women equality, rights, and liberty in all aspects of religion, culture and society. This is not like in the Hindu culture where they consider their unmarried daughter as impure and some even do not eat food cooked by those daughters....If a girl's husband dies she has to be a widow and is not allowed to remarry regardless of her young age. She has to live in misery as an impure being till she dies (1996: 6-7).

If *ihi* is a marriage, to whom is she wed? A Hindu Newar informant explained that because the rite itself is formally called Suvarna Kumār Vivāha, the girl is married to Suvarna Kumār who is believed to be the Shiva's son. Another Hindu Newar informant said that the divine spouse is Nārāyana, an epithet of Viṣṇu (see Nepali 1965: 106). On the other hand, a Buddhist informant insisted that the girl is married to a personification of the Bodhicitta (see Locke 1980: 216).

When I asked the Newar girls who they are getting married to, they simply said that they are getting married to the *bel* fruit (cf. Allen 1990: 190). Outside the Kathmandu Valley (and to a lesser extent inside the Valley), *ihi* is referred to as *bel vivāha* (*bel* marriage). Others are of the opinion that the *bel* fruit (*Aegle marmelos*) is taken for a witness to the marriage and not in itself the object with which the marriage is performed (cf. Nepali 1965: 106).

Although *ihi* is referred to as a wedding ritual by Newars, its actual social importance is as a rite of adulthood, as Allen makes clear in his work (1990), a conclusion supported by many other anthropologists (e.g. Pradhan 1986; Gellner 1991). That is to say, after *ihi* girls are expected to follow adult purity rules and are entitled to an adult funeral if they die. But ideologically, *ihi* also removes from Newar women the stigma of widowhood. Because of the *ihi* ritual Newar

widows are theoretically free to remarry if still of marriageable age. However, this freedom varies according to caste and place. Bina Pradhan's (B. Pradhan 1981: 68-75) and Toffin's (Toffin 1984: 120-1) studies of agricultural caste in Bulu and Pyangaon respectively show high percentages of widow-marriage and no stigma to widowhood whereas other studies by Quigley (1984: 253, 260) in Dhulikhel, Lewis (1984: 296) among the Kathmandu Tulādhars and Gellner (1991) among the Śākyas in Lalitpur argue against Toffin's and B. Pradhan's statements and show that among urban Newars the practice of widow remarriage is rare. In this argument, Ishii (1995: 121-22) stands in the middle. With his detailed study on family history of Newars in Satungal he concludes that the frequency of widow remarriage is considerable. However, the age of the woman is a main factor of widow remarriage. Ishii found out that about half of widows who are still of marriageable age remarry without stigma whereas old widows tend to stay either in their natal houses or deceased husbands' houses.

However, it would be productive to analyze the question from a historical point of view as well. It could be that the influence of Nepali and North Indian culture has made widow marriage less popular among modern Newars, whereas it was accepted in the past. From my genealogical surveys and interviews with old Newars of the southern Kathmandu I found out that in the past widow remarriage was socially accepted even among high castes. However, in modern times widow remarriage is rare among high-caste urban Newars.

4.3 *Bārḥāḥ* : the second divine marriage

The second major life-cycle ritual for a Newar girl is the confinement or 'placing a barrier' (*bārḥāḥ tayegu*) which is observed some time after *ihī* but before the actual first menstruation. Many consider it as the second divine

marriage. However, the ritual itself is not elaborate and communal as the first divine marriage. It is done individually at home. This *bārhāḥ tayegu* rite is practised by both Buddhist and Hindu high castes. It is very similar to the Parbatiyās' rite of passage called *guphā basne* (literally 'sitting in a cave') (see Bennett 1978: 31-45). However, there are slight differences between Newar Brahman, Hindu high-castes and the other Newars' practices. Like the Parbatiyās' practices the Newar Brahman observe *bārhāḥ tayegu* when the actual physiological event occurs whereas all other Newars prefer it to perform prior to puberty. Allen (1990: 192) thus writes, 'in other words, just as *ihi* may be described as a mock-marriage, so too is the *bārhāḥ tayegu* a mock-menstruation rite'.

Bārhāḥ tayegu literally means to place a barrier. Newars sometimes use the term *bārhāḥ cwanegu* which means 'to stay behind a barrier', and for the Parbatiyā and Newar Brahman it means menarche. With this mock-menstruation the Newar girls are confined in a room with its windows blocked out for twelve days, during which they must not see any males or the sun. This is done at the age of 11 or 13 just before the menarche begins. At the end of the twelve days of confinement, they are led blindfolded to the rooftop or courtyard where they are shown ritually to the sun which is called 'taking out from confinement' (*bārhāḥ pikāyegu*). This is, as noted, believed by many Newars to be the girls' second marriage, this time with the sun god (cf. Lewis 1984: 277, Pradhan 1986: 135, Gellner 1991: 113). The sun god is identified by Hindus as a form of Viṣṇu whereas Buddhists identify him as Chandra Sri Kumār, a Bodhisattva (Lewis 1984: 277). However, Gellner (1991: 113) states that learned Newar informants deny the fact of a girl's second marriage with the sun god.

Bārhāḥ tayegu or confinement life-cycle ritual of Newar girls is less

elaborated than the *ihi* in its essence as regards to the marriage. However, there are no elaborate rituals symbolizing the wedding in *bārhāḥ tayegu*, as there are in *ihi*. There is only a ritual of putting *sindur* or vermilion mark on a girl's hair parting which could be counted as a symbol of marriage. Traditionally, the *sindur* rite concludes a marriage ceremony and may symbolize the beginning of a girl's sexual relations with her husband (cf. Campbell 1976: 92). As regards the supposed by sexual connotation of *sindur*, Kunreuther argues:

the eldest female of the father's family placed a strip of red vermilion in the centre part of the girl's hair. The sexual implications of this action in *bārhāḥ tayegu* are not explicit because a female applies the *sindur* and the girls are pre-adolescent (1994: 343).

Some anthropologists claim that *bārhāḥ* is a modified version of the Brahman/Chetri menarche ritual (Kunreuther 1994). Similarly, it is also said that this rite tempers the polluting aspects of menstruation (Allen 1982, Pradhan 1981, Levy 1992). Moreover, others interpret it as concerned with female fertility and sexuality (Pradhan 1986: 137). In line with this, one of the learned Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu told me that the actual essence of *bārhāḥ tayegu* is to make girls ready for maturity as during the twelve days of confinement she is taught about beautifying herself and how to be a mature woman.

Recently, some Buddhist Newars have entirely changed this practice of divine-marriage (*ihi*) and mock-menstruation (*bārhāḥ*) rites from its traditional practices (cf. Kunreuther 1994: 339-48). Under the influence of Theravada Buddhism they have replaced both rituals with temporary nun ordination (*ṛṣi prabajyā*) in Theravada Buddhist monasteries for a short period of 3-7 days. This means they entirely set aside the concept of 'first and second' marriage as observed traditionally.

CHAPTER FIVE

Newar Marriage

Part II: Newar Wedding

In this chapter, I shall analyze Newar marriage patterns and practices using data gathered from interviews, participant observation and household surveys. I hope to show how changes in Newar marriage practices are affecting the social organization of Newars. In some ways, these changes are also a reflection of the social and religious movements that are happening in Newar society, and due attention will be paid to the issue of the rising influence of Theravada Buddhism and pro-Newar movements which are having have a direct influence on Newar marriage.

Recent anthropological studies of Newar marriage (Quigley 1986, Ishii 1995) have emphasized isogamy, the marriage practice which distinguishes the Newars from the other hypergamic, North-Indian and Nepalese patterns. The definition of 'isogamy' as 'marriage between two individuals of the same status' (Dumont 1964: 87, Bernard and Good 1984: 107, Quigley 1991: 101) provides the structure for the discussion in the first section of this paper. The key word is 'status', and from my research, I have found that Newar status is subjectively defined, depending on the particular caste and sub-caste that is being studied. I shall look at the emic definition of status, and particularly the way that it is used as a basis of differentiation between one group and another within a caste. The fact that status is subjectively defined and contested between sub-castes and/or 'caste sub-groups'¹ makes it difficult to prove that marriage between them is

¹ The term 'caste sub-group' was introduced by Gellner (1992: 65). See p. 27 fn 1.

isogamous. Applying Marriott's theory of 'transactional strategy' (1976) to Newar marriage practice, I shall analyze the way that isogamy is both a medium of expression as well as a category of marriage practice.

Newar isogamic marriage is also characterized by the preference for territorial endogamy as emphasized by Nepali (1965: 419) and reaffirmed by Quigley (1987: 160). However, this theory is not totally supported by the works of Pradhan (1981: 58-60), Löwdin (186: 146), Gellner (1995: 219) and Ishii (1995: 121-5). These differences of outcome are heavily affected by places and castes they studied. There is a great difference between mono-caste and multi-caste villages, as well as between villages, towns and the big cities, the foci of Newars. My field area is heavily influenced by urban culture which have been stated as urban from the Licchavi period. It is where almost all Newar castes from highest to lowest live and interact with each other. It is the capital of the country where not only Newars intermingle within their different caste members but also with the politically dominant Parbatiyās, other Nepalese ethnic groups like Tamangs, Sherpas and even foreigners.

As far as the theory of territorial endogamy is concerned, my research reveals that it is prevalent among the higher castes with a larger population. With lower castes and these with a smaller population, territorial endogamy is much less salient. Linked with this is the issue of territorial marriage alliances, which has shaped the socio-cultural network of the Newars.

Defining whom one can marry is one aspect of Newar marriage. In addition to this, the *way* that one gets married has as much significance for the social structure as it does for the married couple. According to most anthropologists, the kaleidoscope of Newar marriage practices has given rise to many marriage typologies, which follow a basic scheme of traditional marriage at

one end and elopement at the other. In other words isogamy versus anisogamy or intra-caste versus intercaste. In between these two poles, each author has added further classifications to accommodate the various kinds of marriage that occur in his field or area of study.² The structure and terminology of these classifications of Newar marriage provide only a fragmented picture of the totality. Instead, I propose a new typology of Newar marriage that encompasses all the present marriage practices of the Newars in southern Kathmandu and by implication of other Nepalese as well.

5.1 Hypergamy and Newar marriage

An assumption in the study of marriage in North India and dominant Hindu Parbatiyās of Nepal has been that hierarchy is the dominant ideological feature structuring all aspects of the relationship between ‘wife-givers’ and ‘wife-takers’. Blunt said of Uttar Pradesh that ‘amongst all Hindus there is probably a tendency towards hypergamy’ (quoted in Dumont 1980: 378, fn.54b). Similarly, Parry (1979: 195) with his classic ethnography of Rajput in Kangra also concluded that ‘the practice of hypergamy is a very widespread feature of Rajputs social organization, and is general amongst Rajputs of the hill regions’. Hypergamy requires superiors and inferiors and superiority and inferiority are counted by castes’ status. Marriage practice is strongly governed by those rules. Moreover, the common practice in most studies of north Indian hypergamy is the practice of *kanyādān* or ‘gift of a virgin’ which manifests a certain type of hierarchy between wife-givers and wife-takers, at least in the ritual itself. This ideology specifically calls for the gift of a virgin bride to a superior and forbids

² See Nepali (1965: 230), B. Pradhan (1981: 58), Toffin (1984: 412), Löwdin (1986: 50, 60, 152),

the acceptance of anything in return. Therefore, the focus of many studies has been hypergamy, either analyzing the kinship terminology (Turner 1975, Carter 1974, Scheffler 1980) or cultural studies on marriage and kinship (Vatuk 1975, Dumont 1980, Bennett 1983, Gray 1980, Czarnecka 1986, Fruzzetti 1990 (1982), Van der Veen 1972).

Hypergamy is marriage to someone of a higher social status. It is very important that one thinks in terms of the man or of the woman in using this terminology, otherwise each marriage would be both hypergamous and hypogamous. In order to avoid such ambiguities, it is more accurate to understand it as 'marriage to a groom of superior status'. The term hypergamy was introduced by Ibbetson in 1881 to designate a different pattern which is sometimes encountered in north India, although it is not universal there. It is generally assumed among scholars that 'isogamy—bride and groom of equal status—is the dominant pattern in the south. In north India, both hypergamy—groom of superior status—and isogamy are permitted, with hypergamy often being the ideal' (Milner 1988: 145).

The term hypergamy however can be used variously. Czarnecka defines it in three ways in order to accord with modern studies.

(1) the marriage of a man from higher caste with a woman from an inferior caste, in which the descendants have a lower status than the father.

(2) the marriage of a man from a higher group with a woman from an inferior group (usually a clan or sub-caste) within the same caste, in which the descendants get the father's status.

(3) The post-marital relationship between two kin groups after an isogamous marriage. Many social anthropologists agree that the

Pradhan (1986: 153), Ishii (1995: 118).

marriage itself creates 'ritual superiority of the groom's people—and hence a hypergamous relationship — where there was formerly equality' (Bennett 1977: 263; Czarnicka 1986: 25).

Many ethnographical studies in North India and Nepal are mainly concerned with the third notion of hypergamy. Even a classical hypergamy presented by Parry (1979: 200-1) of Kangra Brahmans and Rajputs where each divided into four, hypergamously ranked birādaris and there are clear feature of upward mobility in marriage among those birādaris still concludes that there are no 'real' units which exchange women at all even though people normally talk as if marriage were transactions between groups. It is rather that marriage itself creates the inequality between the wife-giving and wife-taking groups (cf. Quigley 1995: 94-5, Vatuk 1975: 159, Gray 1980: 3).

The north-Indian pattern of hypergamy is also followed by the Nepalese Brahmans and Chetris. As among the Brahmans and Rajputs of Kangra, Nepalese Brahmans and Chetris also have caste and sub-caste structure of superiority and inferiority. However, there is a slight difference between Indian Rajputs and Nepalese Brahmans/Chetris in marriage practices. Fürer-Haimendorf (1964: 101) illuminates this point with a case of intercaste marriage. In the north Indian case, children born by intercaste marriage between Rajput and lower castes will fall to the mother's caste. By contrast, in Nepalese case, children born of an intercaste marriage, though they are lower than the father, will be higher than the mother.

In keeping with the North Indian practice of hypergamy, the practice of *kanyādān* is strictly followed among Brahman/Chetri of Nepal. However, the hypergamous feature among Nepalese is what Bennett (1983: 145) called an 'ad hoc hypergamy'. This is because there are no ranked clans among the Chetris and the Brahmans of Nepal (Fürer-Haimendorf 1966: 32) as among Rajputs and Brahmans of Kangra. Bennett (1983) argues that the marriage itself creates a

ritual superiority of the groom's people—and hence a hypergamous situation —where there was formerly equality.

Hypergamy, therefore, can exist either where there are ranked sub-castes, as among Parry's Rajputs, or, as among Parbatiyās, as a result of the marriage, so that after the wedding, and because of the wedding, wife-givers rank below wife-takers. Though hypergamy is the ideal type of Brahman/Chetri marriage in Nepal, isogamy is the ideal among the Newars. But anisogamy can be seen among the Newars in the case of intercaste marriages.

The only Newar caste that practices *kanyādān* at the time of marriage to a human are the Rājopādhyāya, who consider themselves to be Newar Brahmins.³ This is in contrast to the other Newar castes who perform *kanyādān* at the time of *ihi*, marriage to a deity.

5.2 Isogamy : the ideal Newar marriage

Badri Ratna Vajrācārya, a renowned Vajrācārya priest of Kathmandu explained the traditional values of marriage and modern practices as follows:

One should not marry within the same lineage⁴ or with relatives.⁵ Lineage has to be apart for many generations. Some say over three generations are marriageable. However, among Vajrācāryas and Śākya they are not allowed to marry members of the same Buddhist monastery (*vihāra*).⁶ Because they are considered to be children of the same *āju*, great-grandfather. It is incest. It is believed that incestuous marriage leads to disaster (*angabhanga*).

³ However, other Brahmins and Chetris (non-Newar) do not consider them to be real Brahmins.

⁴ *kule kule byāhā yāye majyū.*

⁵ *thaḥlākā byāhā yāye majyū.*

⁶ In this respect Gellner's finding in Lalitpur is different. His finding with Kwā Bāhāḥ shows that almost half of the Śākya brides of Śākya men come from within the monastic community of Kwā Bāhāḥ itself. (Gellner 1995: 219).

Nowadays all cultures are declining (*samskār hīn*) and it does not mean anything to anyone any more.

Having explained whom one should not marry he further went on to illustrate whom one should marry,

One should not marry one's own people but should marry people from another lineages (*kula*).⁷

Here we can see the differences he is making—*within* a lineage and *between* lineages. Alliance *within* a lineage is prohibited whereas the ideal alliance is *between* lineages. His use of the term 'lineage' or '*kula*' was complicated so I asked him to define what he meant by 'lineage'. He clarified it as follows:

My job is *Gubhāju* (Buddhist priest) so I should marry a *Gubhānī* (woman of Buddhist priestly caste). Only then can my household endure (*chē tekeju*). Being a *Gubhānī* it is her duty to prepare *pujābhaḥ* (a plate of things needed for the worship ritual) so she needs to know about it. If I marry a girl from the carpenter caste she would not know her duties in my house and this marriage would not work. Therefore, a marriage should be between lineages [of the same caste]. A goldsmith should marry a daughter from another goldsmith family. This will be the ideal marriage couple. If a Śākya (goldsmith caste) marries a daughter of a Tāmṛākār (metal worker caste) it does not match. Their conjugal family will not last long. If a Citrakār (painter caste) marries a 'Jyāpunī' (farmer caste) this is also unmatched and their marriage would not last long. Citrakār is a painter whereas 'Jyāpunī' is a farmer. They do not match at all. How can they live together? Therefore, an ideal marriage has to be between lineages (*kula*).

The ideal marriage therefore is a marriage between the one who has the same traditional occupation or caste (*jāti*) or with one who hold the same surname or marriageable surnames. However, he then continued, 'from *jyā* (occupation) it

became *jāti* (caste) and based on *jāti* people differentiate whether they can eat *jā* (boiled rice) together or not'. Although his etymologies are not linguistically sound, there is a kind of intuitive logic to his argument, because the Newar caste hierarchy is based on principle of boiled rice (*jā*) commensality. In other words, the ideal marriage alliance has to be established with people of the same profession (*vyā*) with whom you can share boiled rice (*jā*) who therefore constitute the same caste (*jāt*).

This belief and practice is an ancient tradition of the Newars as was attested by the oldest archives written in Nepal Bhāṣā (Newari) called Nyāyavikāsinī or science of human justice in AD 1380 (NS 500). Analyzing the text Sharma (1997: 117) interprets that there were two types of Newar marriage practices from the mediaeval period: isogamy and hypergamy. The ideal marriage was isogamy whereas hypergamy was acceptable in the second or third marriages. The term used for hypergamy is '*sāgrahinī bhāryā*' which according to Manandhar (1986: 252), in his Newari-English dictionary, translates it as 'king's concubine'. However, Sharma interprets it as a hypergamous union and confirms it with a quotation from the text: 'A Brahman caste can have a woman of Kshetri, Vaiśya, or Śūdra caste as a '*sāgrahinī*' or mistress'.⁸ He also remarks that such unions of *anuloma*, 'along the grain' are acceptable in a case of polygamy and it is necessary to be isogamous with a caste which practices monogamy.

Sharma confirms the importance of isogamous union among Newars by quoting a text: 'a child borne to the father and mother of the same caste is called a child with a caste (*savarṇa*)'.⁹ This indicates that if a child is borne to intercaste

⁷ *Thawāthaḥ byāhā yāyemajyu, kulā kulā byāhā yayemā.*

⁸ '*Brāhman jātiyā kshatrinī vaiśya strī sūdrinī thwatewū sagrahinītewa kha*'.

⁹ '*mā bā ujātijukoyā mwacā savarṇa dhāye*' (quoted in Sharma 1997: 125).

union that child would not get a caste membership from the father or it will be a caste-less child. Sharma's interpretation of hypergamous union relates to the term *sāgrahinī* still needs to be scrutinized. It throws up many questions about the Newars' practice of second or third marriages, because the whole question of a legitimate child born to hypergamous union and inheritance is not considered. Among Newars, in the past, it was normal to marry for the second or third time if the first marriage fails to give any offspring, particularly a son. Generally, this type of second or third union is still isogamy not hypergamy as suggested by Sharma.

Quigley (1986: 75-95) begins his article 'Introversion and isogamy: marriage patterns of the Nepal' with problems of the Newar marriage raised in earlier literature. Many authors interpret the Newar marriages differently. Newar marriage is characterized variously as hypergamous (Nepali 1960: 145), anagamous (Vergati 1982: 284), isogamous (Quigley 1986: 76, 90), endogamous (Fürer-Haimendorf 1956: 33; Toffin 1984: 71, 592; Quigley 1984: 240; Levy 1992: 104), and territorially endogamous (Nepali 1965: 419, Quigley 1987: 160). Moreover, many authors also differentiate Newar marriage from orthodox Hindu marriage by all or some such practices as elopement, divorce and widow remarriage.

The most recent anthropological studies on Newar marriage focus on 'isogamy', the practice which distinguishes Newar from the other dominant hypergamic north-Indian and Nepalese patterns. 'Isogamy' is generally applied to the practice or norm of marriage between partners of equal status. The term

'isogamy' was first used by Ibbetson in 1881 who defined it as the opposite of hypergamy:¹⁰

By isogamy or the law of equal marriage, I mean the law which arranges the local tribes [for our purpose: groups] in a scale of social standing, and forbids the parent to give his daughter to a man of any tribe which stand lower than his own. (1881: 356)

Ibbetson used the term within the context of Indian society, which was structured according to the Hindu caste system. Although the structure of the Newar society is heavily influenced by the Indian caste system, isogamy within a Newar context requires a more specific definition, as the Newar of Kathmandu has developed a unique caste system which is different to the Indian caste system.

As the Vajrācārya informant confirmed earlier in his statement, the primary determinant of marriageability among Newars is caste (cf. Quigley 1984: 290). However, the prescriptive marriage pattern is 'isogamy', that is marriage between two individuals of the same status (Dumont 1964: 87, Barnard and Good 1984: 107, Quigley 1991: 101). Status is subjectively defined and often contested among the Newars, as Toffin notes:

each group claims to occupy a higher status than the other. There is today no supreme authority which can decide on the rank of any particular group in a definitive way. The splintering into small groups which are endogamous, local and which disagree over their place in the social hierarchy, is, in the final analysis, an essential feature of the Newar caste system (1977: 41).

In order to prove isogamy, we have to show that the status between the individuals is undisputed and unambiguous. Only then can it be called a marriage of 'equal status'. Within each caste, sub-caste and 'caste sub-group' there are different rules which define marriageability, and these are determined by

¹⁰ cited in Dumont (1964: 87).

considerations of caste size and status. I have found that the larger the caste size and the greater the choice of marriage partners, the more likely it is that there will be differentiation among the sub-castes and caste sub-groups according to status and the greater the role of status in defining marriageability. In terms of marriageability, this means that not only does the prerequisite of membership within the same sub-caste and caste sub-groups have to be fulfilled, but also the prerequisite of similar status, which is defined by territory and economic power. For example, although in theory, intermarriage between the caste sub-groups of Udāy or merchant castes is allowed, in practice, there is a general preference (but not a rule) that the partners come from the same economic levels, the same caste sub-groups (Lewis 1995: 51), and the same locality (Lewis 1984: 13-14). Isogamy in the larger castes is more difficult to prove because marriageability is defined according to status, which is subjectively defined and is always in the process of being reinterpreted and redefined.

In the smaller castes, where the choice of marriage partners is limited, the only rule that defines marriageability is that the partners come from within the same caste. For example, within the Untouchables of Kathmandu, there are two different castes—Dyaḥlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ—who do not intermarry. Because of their small number, marriageability is defined by caste alone. In this case, status is objectively defined, and provides a clear case of isogamy.

Nevertheless, 'isogamy' here requires a more subjective interpretation, as it is applied differently according to the various castes and the sub-castes of the Newar society. The point of contention is status, which in some cases is subjectively defined, thus making it difficult to categorize marriages between two members from two different sub-castes or caste sub-groups. If one sub-caste or caste sub-group claims to be higher than the other, then how do we prove

isogamy? Or is the marriage itself proof that these two different sub-castes are isogamous which would be arguing in a circle?

In Newar marriage practices, when there is reciprocation of marriage partners between sub-castes and caste sub-groups, they are expressing that they are '*being made* much the same as each other, and therefore to be reckoned as equal' (Marriott 1976: 112; emphasis added). The essence here is the process of creating equality through the exchange of marriage partners between sub-castes. However, in the case where there is no exchange at all among the sub-castes, they are considered 'to be different in substance-code and to be potential antagonists; but since they lack asymmetrical relations, they must be scored as not unequal' (Marriott 1976: 112). The term isogamy (whether it is between or within sub-castes) implies much more than just a marriage practice. It is an expression of equality and inequality, substance-codes and more importantly, identity.

5.3 Territorial endogamy : a popular Newar marriage

Gautam, a 69-year-old Śākya, stated:

In the past we used to establish marriage alliances between upper and southern Kathmandu only. We hardly established any marriage alliances with other cities let alone villages. But now our marriage alliances go wider.

Similarly, Ram, a 39-year-old Maharjan man; said:

We did not marry people from Bhaktapur and Patan in the old days. We only married within Jyāpus (farmer caste) of Kathmandu, because we considered Jyāpus of Bhaktapur and Patan lower than us. When they gave birth to a child they had to make sure that the new born child's head was pointing towards Kathmandu because it was believed that Kathmandu was the best and highest place to be. It was also too far away for married women to travel between her husband's and parents' houses.

Based on these facts it is obvious that in the past another important aspect of Newar marriage was the practice of territorial endogamy in addition to isogamy. This leads to the theory of bride exchange among Newars. When I tried to find some facts between the northern and southern Kathmandu in terms of kinship and marriage, I was told by several informants that in theory Newars do exchange brides between upper and southern Kathmandu. However, this generalization needs to be tested in the light of further data of actual castes and marriages. Such generalization might not be applicable to all castes.

One of the main causes behind the theory of territorial endogamy is the arranged marriage. It also seems that in the system of arranged marriage, which is still strongly recognized, married women play a great role as a mediator in bringing in brides from their own natal locality. This strengthens the marriage alliances based on territorial endogamy.

Most anthropologists have accepted that 'territorial endogamy' and/or 'local endogamy' is fundamental to Newar marriage (Nepali 1965: 207, 419, Toffin 1977: 37, Vergati 1979: 118, Lewis 1984: 183, Quigley 1987: 160). However, Ishii (1995: 122-3) argues that the aspect of territorial endogamy varies according to geographical areas and analyzing data from Satungal he also shows that 'the theories of Newar endogamy have only a limited local applicability' and adds that the extension of marriage areas varies according to castes and the size of the caste population (1995: 122-6). In southern Kathmandu although it is an urban city I found results similar to Ishii's findings in Satungal village.

Here I examine the marriage area of isogamic (intra-caste) marriages of all castes of the southern Kathmandu and will argue that 'territorial endogamy' varies according to caste groups. Analyzing 1,945 married couples of all seventeen castes, I show the location of the *thahchẽ* ('own', i.e. parents' home)

of the married women living in the southern Kathmandu in Figure 5.1 and the location of the husbands' houses of women who married out from southern Kathmandu in Figure 5.2. These marriage data include up to 5 generations. In those figures, the settlements are grouped into the following three areas:

- (A) within southern Kathmandu or 'territorial endogamy'
- (B) within northern Kathmandu
- (C) out of old Kathmandu

From Figures 5.1 and 5.2 it is evident that the rate of endogamy and the geographical areas of alliance vary according to caste (cf. Ishii 1995: 123, Toffin 1984: 406). On the basis of geographical distance of marriage alliances my findings even show the different marriage patterns between Buddhist and Hindu Newars. With these figures it is also possible to show differences of gender. The majority of marriage alliances (more than 50 per cent in average) of most Hindu castes—Rājopādhyāyā, Śreṣṭha, Kāranjit and Kapāli—are exogamous or outside Kathmandu which means that with these castes the theory of 'territorial endogamy' does not apply. By contrast with other castes who are mostly Buddhists—Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udāy, Maharjan, Mānandhar, Citrakār, Ranjitrkār, Mālākār, Nakarmi, and Khaḍgi—the theory of 'territorial endogamy' fits much better. For example, in the case of Rājopādhyāya, the highest Hindu priestly caste, the total percentage of the brides (daughters-in-law) and bridegrooms (sons-in-law) from areas A and B is less whereas the majority (around 70 per cent) of the marriage alliances are from area C. This obviously proves that they are exogamous and 'territorial endogamy' is not applicable to this caste. Their marriage alliances are wider and beyond Kathmandu. This also indicates that they do not make a distinction between rural and urban as many castes do.

Figure 5.1: The location of *thahchē* (parent's home) of married women of all castes of southern Kathmandu (N=1,107).

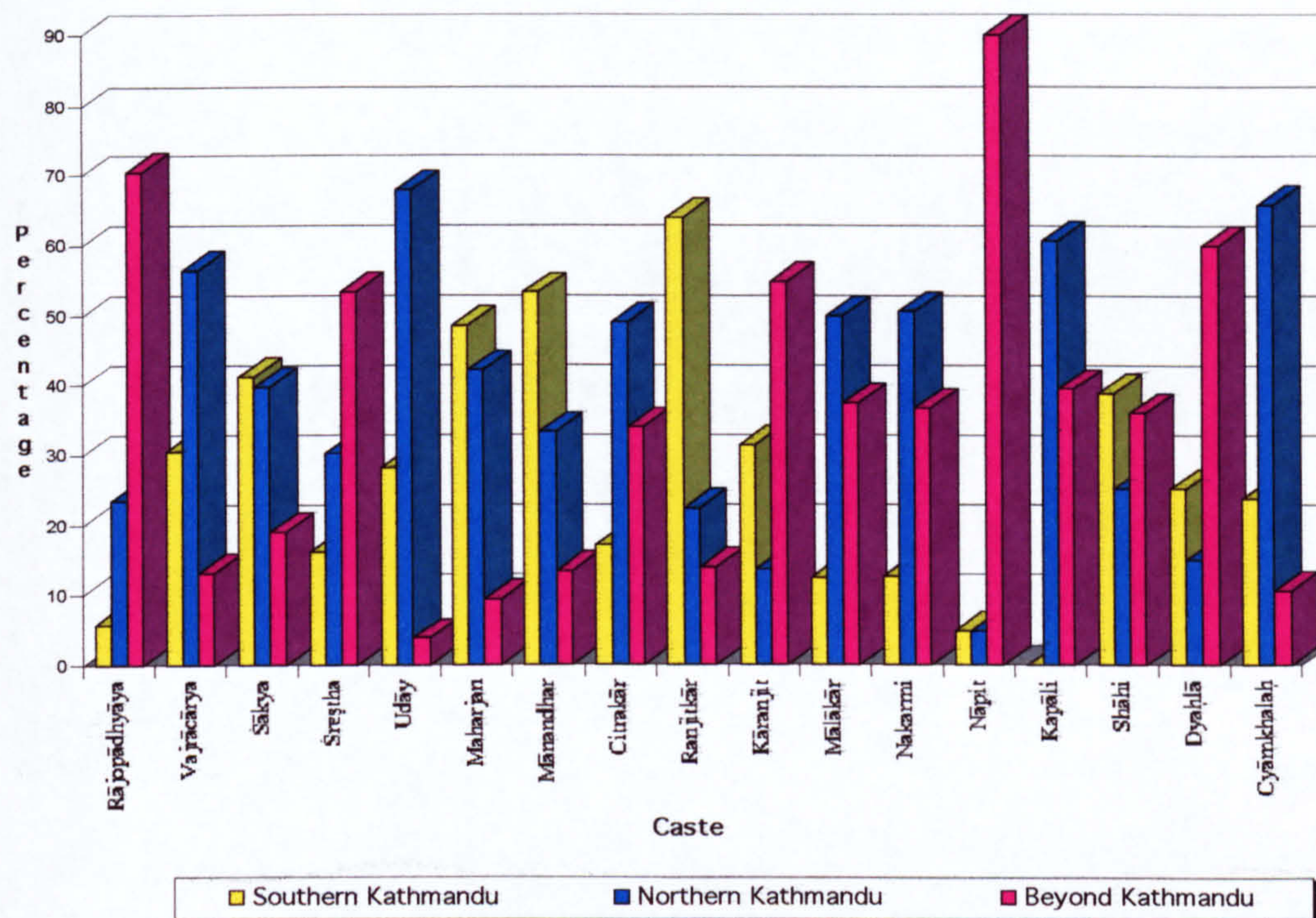
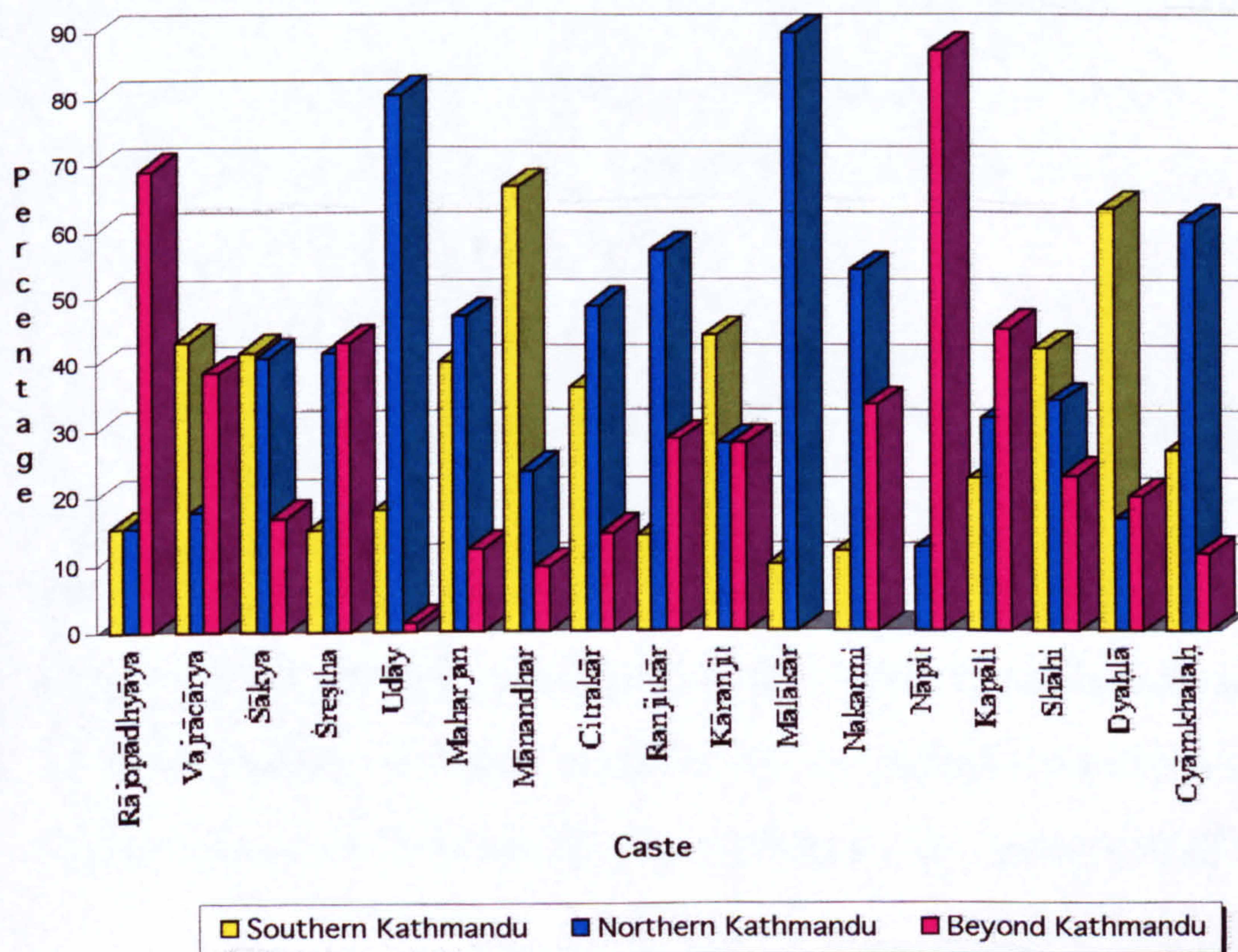


Figure 5.2: The location of husband's houses of married women of all castes of southern Kathmandu (N=838).



The marriage aspect of Vajrācārya and Śākya, the two Buddhist priestly sub-castes, are totally different from the Hindu priestly caste. Around 70 per cent of their marriage alliances are within Kathmandu. Moreover, 40 per cent of marriages take place even within southern Kathmandu which supports Quigley's theory of 'local endogamy'. He writes 'in theory, and still very much in practice, Newars marry Newars not only of their caste but of the *local* sub-caste. By "local" I mean usually within half an hour's walk and often much less (Quigley 1987: 160).

However, there are some exceptions among small and lower castes. Figures for the Nāpit and Dyaḥlā show that the majority of their marriage alliances are exogamous. This is surely because of their small number of population within Kathmandu. Therefore, their marriage alliances are established with other Newar communities outside Kathmandu. Significantly, the matrimonial unions do not occur without a previous relationship. The previously established chain of alliance is the main factor which comes to play an important role at the time of marriage choice. The existence of an established alliance means less doubt about their marriageability. For example, among exogamous marriage alliances among Rājopādhyāya of southern Kathmandu, 46 per cent of the alliances are in Patuko of Patan.

On the issue of gender the aspect of marriage links are slightly different. According to Newar marriage practices girls have to move into her husband's house after marriage. The cases where the husband moves into his in-law's house are very rare. With this fact in mind the Figures 5.1 and 5.2 also show that men of Kathmandu do not mind getting brides from outside Kathmandu because the overall percentages of location of *thaḥchē* (parent's home) of married women are slightly higher than girls married out of Kathmandu area. Urban women hesitate

to move out beyond Kathmandu whereas women from outside Kathmandu prefer to move into the urban area. Many people of the older generations said in interviews that they were skeptical of establishing marriage links far from Kathmandu. This also might be caused by lack of existing social ties, the difference of life-style, and the prestige factor attached to city life. There was discrimination between urban and rural. They referred pejoratively to rural Newars as 'villager' (*gāmā*). Such sort of discrimination even occurs between Newars of Kathmandu and Lalitpur which are in fact both urban and geographically close.

Surya Bahadur, a 65-year-old man, told me how strongly Newars held geographical discrimination in the past:

In Dhankuta there was a huge problem among Newars over their marriages. As they were only a small number living there they were blood related so they could not marry their daughters in marriageable age. Newars from Kathmandu did not want to marry them because they were considered as rural dwellers and villagers. It is just recently that such discrimination has reduced. When I visited Dhankuta in the 1960s there were many unmarried daughters in every Newar house. Whenever an eligible Newar man from Kathmandu visited them they would try every way to match him with one of their daughters. They brought out their daughters in row and asked him to choose one. It was really pitiful.

This shed a new light on the modern kinship pattern of Newar society. Because of their kinship obligations the Newars prefer to keep their marriage links closer in the sense of geographical distance. In the Newar context, virilocality is the strict consequence of a marriage rule. The gender-specific usage of Newar terms for marriage, *bihā yāyegu*, 'to marry' for boys and *biyā chwayegu*, 'to give away in marriage' for girls, shows that marriage signifies the acquisition of a woman who crosses over to live with her husband's family.

However, according to the Newar kinship structure, a married women has to maintain a very close relationship with her natal family. In fact, she is entitled to a real 'daughter' (*mhyāymacā*) of her own parents only after her marriage. Before marriage she is equal to other male children of her parents. She would not be addressed with the specific term as *mhyāymacā* or 'daughter'. Therefore, with all obligations of being a 'daughter' of her parents after marriage (see chapter 7 and 8 for her social obligations) most marriages tend to be in closer areas in order to make it easy to travel between the two houses: *thaḥchē*, 'own house' and husband's house. Therefore, expanding marriage alliances beyond Kathmandu in the modern times is a direct effect of modernization as means of communication and transportation are getting easier.

One of the reasons for different levels of endogamy is the size of caste groups. Generally, castes with a larger population tend to define their marriage alliances within limited territorial boundaries or nearby localities whereas those with small populations tend to have wider territorial boundaries. The data show that the majority of marriages within the lowest Sweeper (Cyāmkhalaḥ) caste, whose population is (only 0.2 per cent), are in Kathmandu. By contrast, the other lower caste, Barber (Nāpit) caste, whose population is as small as 0.6 per cent has a totally contrary pattern. Their majority of marriage alliances are beyond Kathmandu. Such differences are a direct result of the population and their settlement pattern. The total population of the lowest Cyāmkhalaḥ caste in the whole Newar society is small. Moreover, in many Newars communities they do not exist. They are not as widely scattered in Newar communities as other caste groups. They are concentrated in certain places like Nāypāco, Kohiti and Kāgaḥ

of Kathmandu and are very few in number outside Kathmandu.¹¹ Castes like Nāpit or Dyahlā exist in most Newar communities although in a small number of one or two households.

5.4 Typologies of Newar marriage

Although the majority of the Newar marriages are in the form of intra-caste/isogamous or endogamous marriage there are also other forms of marriage which is accepted in the society. The marriage unions of intercaste which means still within the Newar community and inter-ethnic which is beyond Newar community are increasing in practice and becoming normal. Fürer-Haimendorf (1960: 24-5) states, 'ideally all Newar castes are endogamous, but in practice intercaste and even inter-ethnic unions are tolerated'.

Anthropologists working on the Newars have produced different typologies of Newar marriage, which at first sight seem confusing (see Table 5.1). Some typologies have confused types of marriage with parts of the wedding rituals. Some have used misleading terminology. Summing up all those typologies there are three points to be scrutinized:

- 1) The actual meaning and definition of the 'traditional' type;
- 2) the *swayambar*;
- 3) the question of elopement.

¹¹ Gellner (1995: 284) finds that there are only eight household of Cyāmkhalah in Lalitpur and more than 200 in Kathmandu city. Similarly, N. Gutschow and Sharma's unpublished survey, given in Quigley and Gellner (1995: 275), revealed ten Cyāmkhalah households in Lalitpur. Levy (1990: 97) in his study of Bhaktapur does not find any Cyāmkhalah household.

Table 5.1. Typologies of Newar marriage according to several anthropologists

| | marriage types | Authors | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---------|------|---|----|---|----|
| | | N | B.P. | T | L | P | I |
| a | Traditional | √ | √ | √ | | | |
| b | Elaborate | | | | | √ | |
| c | Bring the bride with music | | | | | | √ |
| d | Marriage through match-maker | | √ | | | | |
| e | By giving <i>lakha</i> | | | | √ | | |
| f | By giving food gift in pairs | | | | √ | | |
| g | By giving food gift in fives | | | | √ | | |
| h | Modern | | | √ | | | |
| i | Swayambar | √ | | | √* | | |
| j | Bring the bride secretly | | | | | | √ |
| k | Intercaste or inter community | | | | | √ | |
| l | Casting of love spells | | √ | | | | |
| m | Elopement | √ | √ | √ | √† | √ | √† |

N = Nepali, G. (1965:209-210); B.P. = Pradhan, B. (1981:58); T = Toffin, G. (1984:412); Löwdin, P. (1986:49-50); P = Pradhan, R.P. (1986:153); I = Ishii, H. (1995:118)

Note: * Löwdin translates as 'love marriage'.

† Toffin, Löwdin, and Ishii give the Newari term *payenā wanegu* for elopement

Significantly, those typologies were drawn up based on the different criteria of both wedding rituals and marriage patterns themselves. So when they came to analyze patterns of Newar marriage they became so confused as to become misleading with wedding rituals. There are two issues to be considered: marriage and wedding. All types of Newar marriages so far involve both the actual marriage and the wedding ritual. However, summarizing previous literature on types of Newar marriages there are basically three:

1. Traditional/arranged marriage/ritually elaborate
2. Modern/less ritual and
3. Elopement/ 'love marriage'

The first point that needs making is that the term 'traditional' itself is ambiguous as there never has been a standard marriage pattern within Newar society. Though it is influenced by the north Indian cultural system, the Newar wedding ritual does not accord with any orthodox Hindu text. As Nepali, Pradhan, and Toffin use the term 'traditional' in their typologies they meant with full and elaborate ritual in contrast with other types of less ritualistic wedding. Through their ethnography it is given that there were and are other types of marriage along with 'traditional' or ritually elaborate one. If we consider only the ritually elaborate one as the traditional pattern of Newar marriage, what about 'love marriage' which also existed in the past? It was normal in the past to practise 'love marriage' and 'intercaste marriage' although neither was generally accepted as an ideal marriage type. Therefore, I rather support R.P. Pradhan in using the term 'elaborate' instead of 'traditional'.

As regards 'traditional' marriage practice, it is agreed by most scholars that one of the salient features of the Newar marriage is the absence of the bridegroom in the first part of the wedding. This is also confirmed by all my informants who are from the older generation. In the arranged marriage the bride and bridegroom first see each other only after the parents and go-between have brought the bride into the house of the bridegroom. This practice still prevails in some castes though most castes have modernized it now adapted by taking the groom with them to fetch the bride. However, I found it quite doubtful that this is the traditional Newar marriage practice as is now widely believed. In Hodgson's manuscript¹² on Newar ritual, which was recorded around 1830, this salient

¹² Hodgson's manuscript about Newar ritual written for him in Sanskrit by Amritananda Bandya (Vol. 29, No. 8 (34/4), ff. 48-51) is preserved in the Indian Office library, London.

feature of traditional Newar marriage ritual is not described. The manuscript (translated by Brough 1948: 71) has a section on marriage which goes as follows:

Marriage, and the householder's sacrament. In the fourteenth or sixteenth year—at all events, an even number of years—first of all, a girl is to be sought in a family of equal social status [equal *kula*], and ten betel-nuts, or something of the sort, according to individual capacity, are sent as the bride-price to the girl's home by the hand of a go-between—in the vernacular, *wakil* [actually this is a Hindustani loan word; the true vernacular term is *lami*]; and on the fourth day before the wedding-day the bracelet is tied on. *On the wedding-day, the bridegroom must go to the bride's house in the company of persons who are not his own relatives, preceded by musical instruments; and the wedding-ceremony of taking the bride by the hand takes place there. There the girl is given away by her father and mother, and the son-in-law takes her hand, and having lifted her on to the bridal litter, returns with her to his own home.* (emphasis added)

This manuscript raises a question about this feature of the Newar marriage, i.e. the absence of the bridegroom in the wedding, which is believed to be traditional by most Newars. Did it only become 'traditional' at some point in the nineteenth century, or did Amritananda consciously describe something that never actually happened? All my informants aged over 70 confirmed that in their marriages the bridegroom was absent from the actual wedding ritual.

The second important is the ritual of *swayambar*. *Swayambar* literally means 'self chosen husband'. The essence of *swayambar* is a ritual in which the bride circumambulates and garlands the bridegroom and in some cases the bridegroom presents ornaments to the bride. Löwdin (1986: 50) mistakenly writes that *swayambar* is the ritual of eating contaminated food of the bridegroom. In fact, it is another part of the wedding ritual called *hwākegu* which means to 'unite'. *Swayambar* can be understood in two different ways: (1) as the main wedding rite (according to Nepali 1965: 230; Quigley 1984: 253; Löwdin 1986:

50), and (2) as a part of the elaborate wedding ritual (according to Toffin 1984: 412; Lewis 1984: 290; Pradhan 1986: 154, 161-2). In the first case, it is a very brief and cheap alternative to the elaborate ritual.

As noted above, '*swayambar* marriage' is regarded as a separate type of marriage by G.S. Nepali and others. Nepali further claims that it is becoming a popular practice in Kathmandu. Generally, it is observed as the main marriage ritual in permitted non-arranged marriages or in order to economize on expense. In many cases when there is a non-arranged marriage which is later accepted by the parents, a *swayambar* marriage is performed. In a *swayambar* the bride and the bridegroom with a few family members simply go to a Gaṇeśa or goddess temple. The former garlands the latter and in return the bridegroom marks the bride's forehead with vermilion powder which is a symbol of marriage. With this simplified marriage ritual both the bride and the bridegroom are legally married and fully legitimized exactly as with the elaborately arranged marriage. For people who wish to economize on their financial expenses the simplified marriage ritual is also used. Further, *swayambar* marriage is also applied in the case of intercaste marriages. Therefore, this is sometimes denoted among Newars by the English term 'love marriage'.

Swayambar marriage or ritual is not found in the accounts of ancient Newar marriage practices (cf. Bajracharya 1959). Many authors thus consider *swayambar* marriage as a modern innovation¹³ and as a part of the elaborate marriage ritual. Toffin (1984) opines that it was introduced under the influence of Brahman/Cherri culture. According to several Newar informants, it was not practiced half a century ago. However, in modern Néwar marriage the *swayambar*

¹³ See Nepali (1965: 230); Lewis (1984: 290); Quigley (1984: 253-9); Toffin (1984: 412); Löwdin (1986: 50, 152); Pradhan (1986: 160).

rite is added in the bride's house where the bridegroom is circumambulated and garlanded before the parents of the bride hand her over to the bridegroom. In fact, *swayambar* is a repetition of the act of *kanyādān* or a virgin gift as in a Newar divine marriage. It has become an essential part of the wedding ritual in modern Newar marriages. Pradhan views the *kanyādān* repetition differently. He looks at linguistic usage and concludes that the second *kanyādān* is not seen as a virgin gift in the Hindu sense: the Newari term is *biyā chwayegu* which means simply 'to give away [one's daughter]' (Pradhan 1986: 150).

The repetition of a virgin gift (*kanyādān*) in the divine and secular marriage among Newars creates a problem with the traditional Brahmanical marriage values. In addition with the term *swayambar* as practised by Newars would also appear to conflict with Brahmanical values. Newar *swayambar* is not a self-chosen marriage as referred in the Vedic text. Regarding this a Rājopādhyāya priest of southern Kathmandu said:

Nowadays it is very awkward for us to recite Vedic text when we perform a wedding ritual. Newar marriage is not a sufficiently real *swayambar* to justify reciting it as the *swayambar* type of marriage. It makes it difficult for us to categorize the Newar marriage. We therefore renamed the Newar marriage as a 'ritual of entering the bride in the house'. In the wedding reciting Vedic text we replaced the term *swayambar* with '*bhartugriha praveś*' which means entering the bride in the house.

From the discussion above we can see that *swayambar* can be seen as two different things: a marriage type and a specific wedding ritual. Therefore to include it in marriage typologies alone is likely to be misleading.

The third important question to be dealt with here is that of elopement. There is an ambiguity in the characterization of most authors. Though the term 'elopement' gives a clear sense in English it is problematic in Newari. Most

anthropologists derive this notion of elopement from the Newari term *paynaḥ wanegu* which is used only for girls who run away with a boy without their parent's consent. This term cannot be used for boys. If a boy induces a girl to elopes they use instead terms like *bwayekā hayegu* 'to bring her by making her flying off' or *masīka hayegu* 'fetch without consent' or simply use the modern English term 'love marriage' which is widely used now, as in '*love yānā haḥgu*'. Generally, most elopements are blamed on the boy as one who causes the girl to run away. Therefore, if elopement is *paynaḥ wanegu*¹⁴ in Newari as most anthropologists interpret it, this is slightly misleading. It is more accurate to use English term without referring to the Newari term.

5.5 Intra-caste verses intercaste/inter-ethnic and arranged verses 'love' marriages

Considering all typologies of Newar marriages proposed by others, I would suggest to make new arrangement of those typologies. In addition to the above three types of marriages there are at least four other types of marriages which are not mentioned in the earlier literature but which now have become normal practices among Newar society. They are:

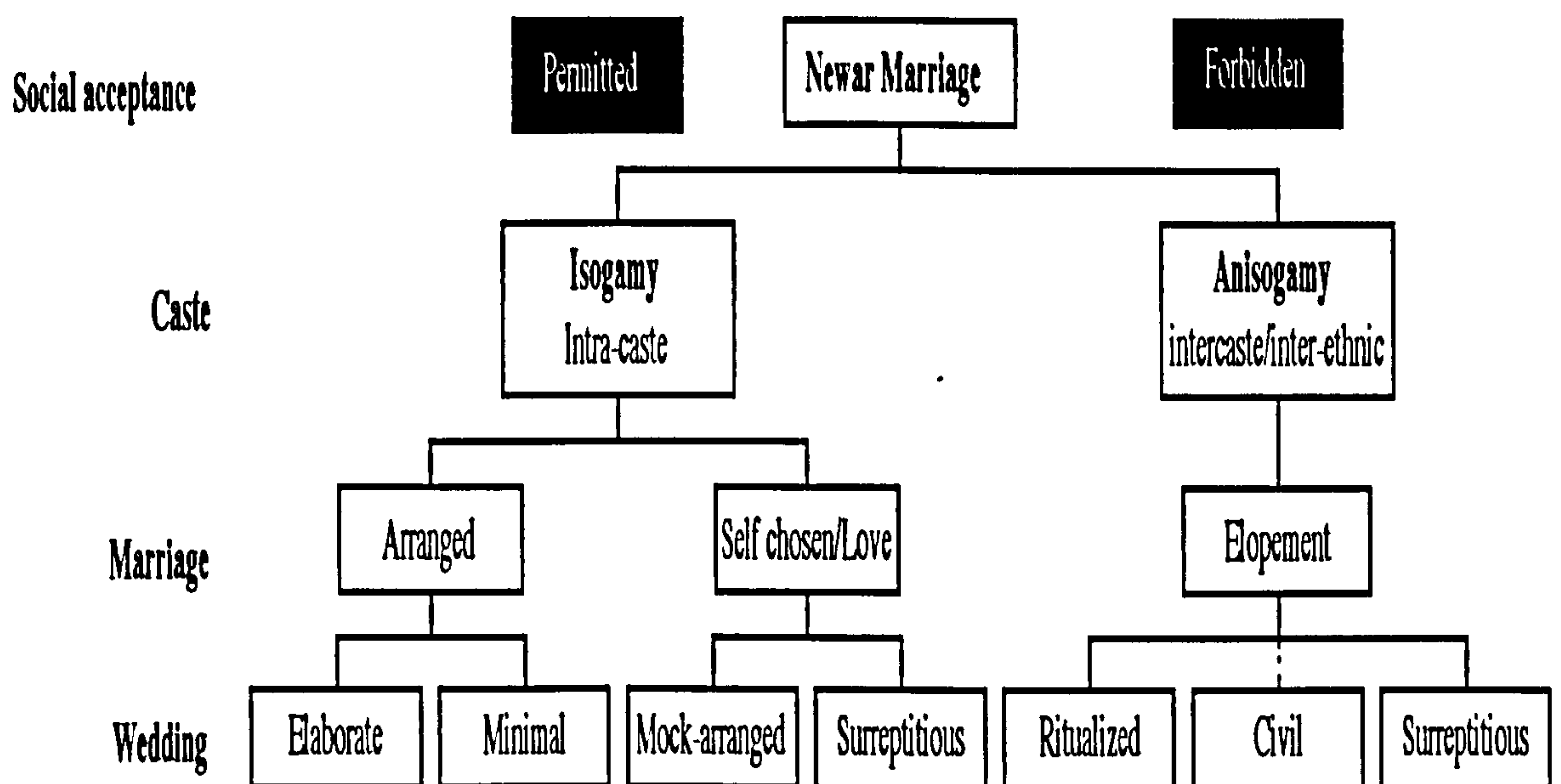
1. 'Mock-arranged' marriage
2. Surreptitious arranged marriage
3. Intercaste or inter-ethnic marriage with wedding, and
4. Court marriage

¹⁴ With regards to linguistic misinterpretation, Löwdin (1985: 61) mistranslates the term *paynaḥ* as 'intercourse'. To quote him, 'the feast at which the *putu goye* are distributed is known in Newari as *payena biyā bhoje*, lit. give to intercourse feast'. He mixed up with the verb *paye* (पये)

Broadly, there are two types of Newar marriages: permitted and forbidden. 'Permitted marriage' obviously covers the intra-caste or isogamous marriage which is the ideal, and the majority of Newar marriages, both in the past and present, are of this type. It is a union between people of the same caste or caste sub-group, i.e. marriageable castes not having the same surname.

The forbidden marriage is a union between two people from different Newar castes or with a person outside the Newar caste hierarchy. In the past such a union was unlawful and punishable, such that the only way for an intercaste union to be possible was for the couple to elope and, thereafter, to be separated or excommunicated from their family (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: Types of Newar marriages



which means intercourse with the similar term *paynah* (पयन्हः or पयन्) which means marriage or more precisely daughter-marriage. He has confused etymology and meaning.

The severe sanctions put upon intercaste marriages show the importance of caste to the Newars. The children born to this type of union have an awkward position in Newar society.

Case 5.1: The incident of problems faced by offspring of intercaste marriages which occurred in 1994.

A Newar Śākya man married a Spanish woman. They had two sons. When it was time for their sons to be initiated, there was opposition from other Śākyas, who believe that only the offspring of the union of two Śākyas or a Śākya and Vajrācārya can be initiated into the Śākya caste. But, the children's paternal grandfather happened to be a Śākya elder who officiates the Sakya initiation rituals, and he decided to go on with the initiation ritual for his grandsons. When it was time for the initiation ritual, he placed his grandsons among the group of initiates and the ceremony went ahead as planned. However, he was careful not to include the mother in the ritual, so hardly anyone knew the identity of the two boys who were not of pure Śākya blood. After the initiation, word got round that the boys were surreptitiously initiated, but by that time, nothing could be done about it. However, the *sangha* (Śākya order) of the *bāhāḥ* felt betrayed, and vowed not to let such an incident happen again. These days, the surreptitious initiation is common knowledge, but it still could not change the view of the Śākyas, who do not consider the boys to be pure Śākyas despite their having done their initiation.

This has had a direct effect on the initiation of another Śākya boy who is born of an intercaste union between a Śākya and a Maharjan, whose initiation is due. Because of the new stringent rules of the *sangha*, this boy would only be allowed a half-initiation, which means that he is not allowed to enter the main shrine of the Śākyas. Half-initiation ensures that the boy will be cremated at the Śākya cremation grounds and he will be able to participate in Newar festivals. However, in his adult life, he will not be allowed to perform rituals in the main Śākya shrine and will not be able to achieve the full status of a *sangha* member.

The sanctions of intercaste marriages can be so severe that the intercaste couple find no alternative but to create their own *guthi* to manage their rituals. In southern Kathmandu, there is one such *guthi*, which accepts all intercaste couples where the father is a Śākya or Vajrācārya and their offspring. The *guthi* will perform all the necessary rituals to ensure that Newar identity is still maintained. The intercaste *guthi* has even established its own *bāhāḥ* (monastery) at Teku Dobhan, which is served by some of the more liberal priests. There is also an intercaste cremation ground which caters specifically to intercaste couples and their offspring. The lesson that is learnt from these cases is that even if full initiation is given, society will not recognize the child as one of theirs as long as it is the offspring of an intercaste marriage. This shows that caste is still the main governing principle in Newar society today. (see also § 5.8 for intercaste marriages).

When the time comes for children born of intercaste marriages to marry they often suffer difficulty in finding partners because preference is given by the

majority to pure intra-caste marriages. The following case shows how difficult it is to find partner for a child born to a forbidden union.

CASE 5.2: Suryaman, a Śākya man, in 1970s, married to Sarada, a Ranjitrkār or Dyer-caste woman, has two sons and one daughter.

Suryaman, aged of 21, a Śākya eloped with Sarada, aged 17, a girl of the clean service caste called Ranjitrkār (Dyer caste). In general, the Dyer caste is looked down on by higher castes. All the neighbours of the locality began to gossip so much that Sarada even refused to come out of her husband's house. She was not welcomed by her natal family either. It was very tough time for them till a few months had passed by, gossip ceased and she was allowed to reconnect with her family. Later the couple split away from the joint family and ran a happy nuclear family together. In 1998 Rajes, the eldest son, was 25 and Ramila, the younger daughter, was 18. The parents were searching for an eligible girl and boy for their children to marry. Their mother was looking around and asking friends, family, and neighbours to search for a family who would agree to marry her children. She had little success. One day she went to request and get advice from a reputable go-between of a Śākya caste who was also her very close neighbour: 'Please keep on eye for an eligible girl and boy for Rajes and Ramila. It is a little late for them to marry and I still have not found any family who will accept them. It is really difficult and I am so worried about them'.

Later I asked the go-between for her opinion of the conversation. She said, 'It is really difficult to find any family who will agree to give their children to Ranjitrkār hybrids (*chipā khacarā*). They are too low to be accepted. If it was a 'Jyāpuni' (agricultural caste) hybrid it wouldn't be so difficult. The only chance is to find some families from the Dyer caste willing to accept them. Otherwise they will have to find their partners for themselves and clope with them'.

This story shows how Newars perceive intercaste marriage and how large differences of caste are still stigmatized even in modern urban society. Under modern legislation on marriage registration there is no caste discrimination and all boys at the age of 22 and girls at the age of 18 are marriageable (Shrestha, G. 1992: 35). However, the preferable marriage pattern is still intra-caste isogamic practice.

5.6 Arranged marriage: the majority Newar marriage pattern

When I started research in Kathmandu, I asked my informants how marriages are arranged. Higher castes tended to put more emphasis on arranged marriages whereas lower castes were more likely to talk in terms of 'love' marriages. Most high castes refer to their marriage as *bālāka hayegu* which means an arranged marriage with an elaborate wedding in contrast to *surukka hayegu* which means marrying surreptitiously. Among high castes most permitted intra-caste marriages are arranged whereas intercaste and inter-ethnic unions marry by elopement. The older generation generally answered that 'love' marriage is not acceptable, since it would jeopardize the relationship with their families. In the past they would not see and know their husband or wife till the wedding was over. As they frequently remark, this has now utterly changed.

In modern Newar society an arranged marriage is getting much more complicated. Scrutinizing different rituals and aspects of arranged marriage, two distinctly different types of arranged marriage emerged:

5.6.1 Traditional arranged marriage, and

5.6.2 An arranged marriage with minimal ritual

5.6.3 New wedding ritual

5.6.1 Traditional arranged marriage: The most popular marriage pattern is the traditional arranged marriage as in the case 5.3 which is economically costly and ends up with elaborate wedding rituals, exchange of prestations and the throwing of lavish feasts for kin and friends.¹⁵ There are many synonyms which Newars use to denote such union. For example, *bālāka hayegu* (to bring [the bride] properly), *bājā thānā hayegu* (to bring [the bride] with the beating of drums), *mwāhāli puyā hayegu* (to bring [the bride] with the playing of oboes), *dhāyekā hayegu* (to bring [the bride] by sending [a go-between]), etc.

I asked some eligible, unmarried, high-caste boys and girls about their future marriages. They said that it was not their business. It would be done by their parents when the time comes. Pracanda, a 26-year-old Rājopādhyāya young man, still unmarried and earning his living as a priest, responded:

It will be arranged by senior members of my family. They will find someone who is suitable for me. However, they will ask me for my consent before the decision is made.

This means that in modern Newar society this aspect of arranged marriage is changing. Both boys and girls are now given the chance to choose one partner

from a selection made for them. They do not enter marriage completely blind as in the past. The following case study is typical of marriage arranged by the parents as an alternative to the boy's own choice.

Case 5.3: In 1979, Rajendra, 28 years old, a Śākya male from a middle class family, university educated in India and working as a civil servant, was married to Bina, 26, another Śākya graduate from the same locality as a consequence of an arranged marriage. Now they live in a joint family and have two children of their own.

As a matter of fact Rajendra fell in love with a fellow student, a Newar girl of different caste than his own, while he was studying in India. Once he graduated he returned to Nepal and found a job. His parents pressured him to marry. He kept postponing it because he was afraid to reveal the truth that he was in love with a girl of a different caste. The parents are very conservative Newars. Eventually, Rajendra's parents suspected that he had someone in mind and that the girl did not belong to a Śākya family. His parents were furious about it and challenged Rajendra: 'If you are going to marry that girl do not consider us as your parents anymore. Go out and live with her. You cannot bring her to this house'. Because such an aggressive attitude had been taken by his parents Rajendra decided to leave his beloved girl friend and accepted his parents' choice of a girl they thought suitable. However, Rajendra put

¹⁵ For detailed description on wedding rituals see Chapter 7 also Nepali (1965), Toffin (1984),

forward the condition that the girl should be a graduate and not from a wealthy family. After that Rajendra's mother and the go-between showed him pictures of the girls one after another and told him all about them. It took several months before Rajendra found a girl he liked and asked the go-between to arrange a meeting with her before deciding anything further. Rajendra said the go-between was not happy with his request and told him: 'Oh dear! You are causing me a lot of unnecessary trouble! She is an old acquaintance of yours, so why do you still need to meet her?'

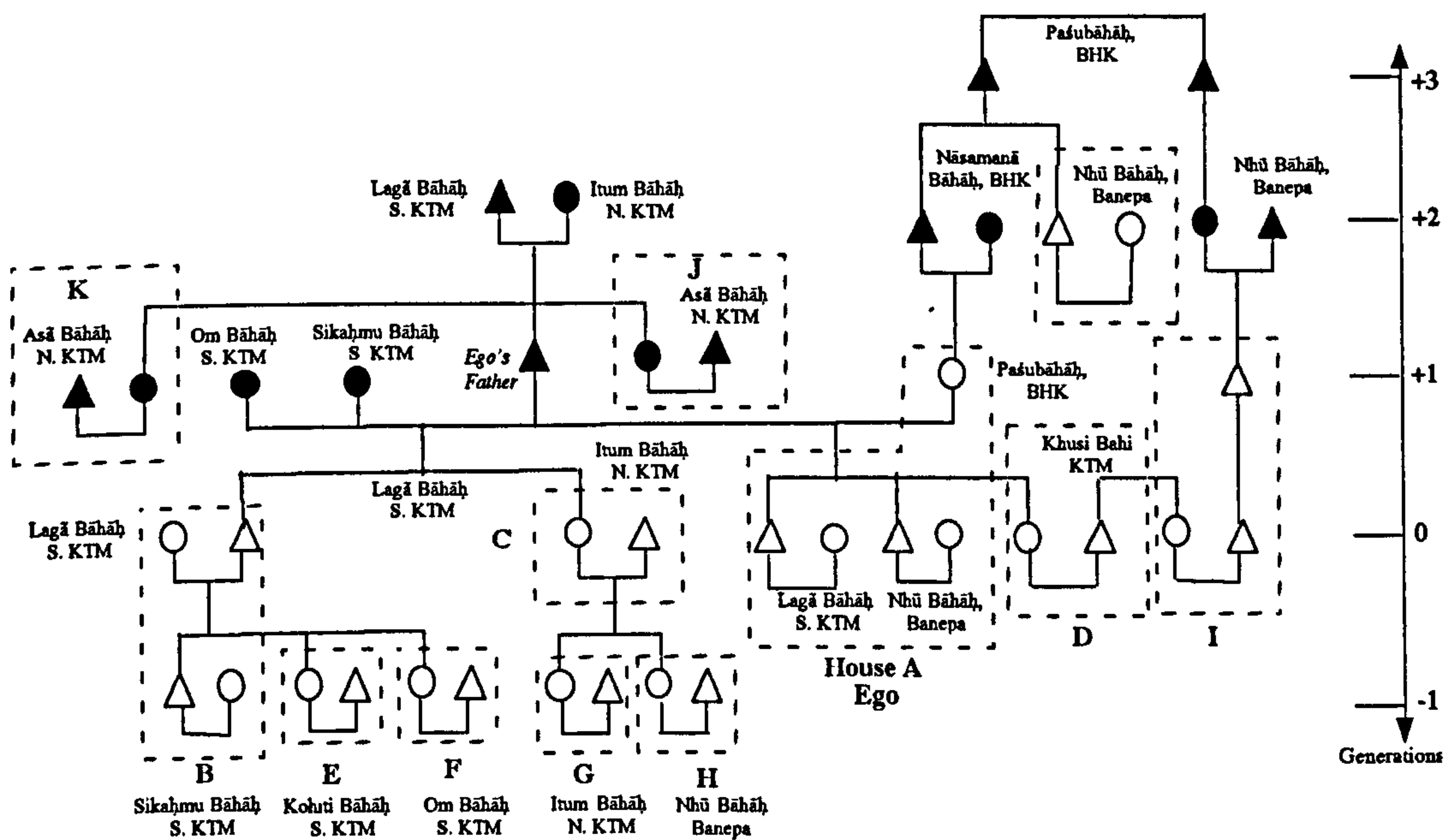
As a result of an arrangement made through the go-between they met each other at a picnic and talked it over together. Once they had decided that they would marry all the wedding procedure began with an exchange of prestations between two families. It took several months before they were married with fully elaborate rituals and feasts. They were married in 1979 and Rajendra's parents spent around £ 2,000 (Rs. 80,000) the whole wedding.

This case study shows that even in the 1970s among educated Newars the couple could discuss it fully before the parents began formally to establish the alliance. They would not marry someone they did not like even when the parents tried to insist upon it. Significantly, my genealogical survey shows that in the geographically arranged marriages alliances do not take place by chance. Generation after generation people go to the same localities to establish their alliances, thus unifying their lineage. This continuity means security for both families. Newars themselves seem unaware of this feature in their marriage

alliances. They always say that they can marry anyone as long as they are of their own kind. But the preferences from the genealogical survey confirm that they tend to repeat the alliances with a certain localities. There exists a similar feature in bride exchange from a geographical perspective (see Figure 5.4).

According to the marriage history of a Śākya family from Lagan Bāhāḥ in southern Kathmandu (see Figure 5.4), it can be seen that Ego's mother came from Itum Bāhāḥ, while his father is from Lagan Bāhāḥ. Ego's daughter married a man from Itum Bāhāḥ, and Ego's granddaughter also married a man from Itum Bāhāḥ. In another example from Figure 5.4, Ego's first wife was from Om Bāhāḥ, and his granddaughter also married a man from Om Bāhāḥ. These examples show a pattern of exchange of marriage partners between two localities, sometimes occurring within the same generation. This repetitive exchange of marriage partners is not a conscious choice. Most informants I interviewed were surprised when I pointed out the pattern that their genealogies revealed.

Figure 5.4: A marriage genealogy of a Śākya of Lagan Bāhāḥ. Letters denote different households and names denote the woman's natal bāhāḥs.



5.6.2 An arranged marriage with minimal ritual: Newars refer it as *swayambar yānā hayegu* which literally means bringing [the bride] by performing a *swayambar* ritual (for details see § 5.4). In most of these marriages a priest would not be present. It is organized by the consent of both families. The essence of the ritual is the handing over of the bride to the bridegroom by her parents. The feast which needs a communal participation may be given or ignored.

The main reason for such a marriage is financial. It could also be performed as a consequence of some senior member of either family having died. It is customary among Newars not to perform any auspicious activities for a whole year of mourning if a father or mother dies. Any auspicious ceremony would be considered polluted. These ceremonies include the marriage ceremony. Therefore, in the case of an arranged marriage, if the marriage and date are already fixed and suddenly some one dies from either family, they are obliged to postpone the marriage for a whole year and this is a frequent occurrence. However, if they do not want to postpone it and are determined to proceed, the alternative is to marry with minimal ritual involved. It will be considered simply as an internal matter between two families, without the participation of kin and the community.

5.6.3 New wedding ritual: A new wedding ritual emerged in 1999 which caught the eye of the media and became a hot topic of conversation among Newars (see Figure 5.5 the news report below). It claimed to be the first of its kind: a Buddhist wedding ceremony, officiated not by the usual Newar ritual

priests, but by Theravada Buddhist monks.¹⁶ The role of Theravada monks in Newar weddings is not a new phenomenon: in cases of intercaste unions, where the couples are unable to legitimize their union with a traditional ceremony, it is the Theravada monks who play the role of the wedding priest.

Figure 5.5: Translation of a news from Newari published in Anandabhoomi, a monthly Buddhist Magazine, year 27 no.1, Buddhist Era 2543 p.34 (February, 1999).

Changing the traditional wedding to a Buddhist wedding

Kathmandu, 20 February 1999: This year a family announced that they have held a real Buddhist wedding ritual instead the so-called traditional Nepalese wedding which the Buddhist Śākya and Vajrācārya perform, with *pujā* and other social norms. A wedding between an architect, Mr Sushilbahadur Vajrācārya, the son of Mr Silbahadur Vajrācārya of Tahacal, and a commercial artist, Miss Eureka Śākya, the daughter of Mr Shantaratna Śākya of Lagan, was performed with new Buddhist rituals, with Theravada Buddhist monks administrating the Five Precepts and chanting discourses. Instead of the Vajrācārya household priest performing the marriage-vow ritual (*vācāvidhi*) and blessings (*mangalavidhi*), the bride and groom exchanged vows and received blessings before robe-wearing Theravada Buddhist monks who are symbols of Buddha's disciples. The traditional wedding dialogue between the two fathers-in-law, which ensures a smoother family relationship and outlines the responsibilities [of each side] took place at the junction, witnessed by the bride and bridegroom who were sitting inside the wedding car.

Mr Shantaratna Śākya, the president of Swayambhu Gyānmālā Bhajankhalah, the revolutionary old Buddhist Association, who was also the father of the bride showed his devotion to Buddhism by following pure Buddhist practices, which received favourable response by the assistant teacher of Vipassana Meditation centre, Mr Silbahadur Vajrācārya, who happened to be the father of the bridegroom. This brave ritual is the first among the group of Śākyas and Vajrācāryas.

¹⁶ It should be noted that Theravada monks in other South Asian and South-east Asian countries do not take part in wedding rituals, and that this practice seems to be exclusive to Theravada Buddhism in Nepal.

This substitutes the traditional Newar weddings which only support the caste endogamous unions. The interesting point about the new wedding ritual is that the union is between two people from marriageable castes, and that the marriage was arranged between the two households. The biggest change in terms of the wedding ritual is the substitution of the traditional Newar priest with the Theravada monk, who officiates the wedding ritual. For the wedding, a small booklet was specially produced, which included the chants and vows for the monks and the couple (see the Appendix at the end of this chapter). However, despite the change in priests, other Newar aspects are still preserved, such as the exchange of betel nuts and the traditional wedding feast.

However, it should be noted that prior to this new wedding ritual, there was no standard 'wedding ritual' among Nepalese Theravada Buddhists. In weddings which are officiated by Theravada Buddhist monks, a group of Theravada Buddhist monks are usually invited for lunch and the monks recite the Buddhist discourses of blessings and prosperity (*paritrān*) in Pali and ends with blessing the couple. With this new wedding ritual, it shows that there is a new movement to institutionalize Buddhist marriage in Kathmandu.

5.7 Permitted love marriage

The ideal marriage in Newar society is that which is arranged by the parents for their children. Nowadays, there is a perception that 'love' marriages, where the children choose their own partners, are on the increase. It is hard to substantiate this statement, given the fact that there is no historical data to compare the present with. It is certainly true that with the rising age of marriage and universal, often coeducational education, that there are more opportunities for young people to arrange their own marriages. There is, however, some measure of

shame connected to having 'love' marriages, with most couples preferring to portray their marriage as a respectable arranged marriage. It is only after lots of probing and investigation that such unions are revealed. There are two different ways of camouflaging individually initiated marriages with less social repercussions. They are:

5.7.1 'Mock-arranged' marriages, and

5.7.2 Surreptitious arranged marriages

5.7.1 'Mock-arranged' marriages: These are a completely new marriage practice among Newars which only started a few decades ago. They are arranged marriages which is not an arranged as in the case of the traditional arranged marriage but instead it emerges from a self-chosen or love union. I call this type of marriage a mock-arranged marriage. With this type of the marriage couples fall in love prior to the parents' arrangement or consent. In such a union, if the couple are of the same caste or marriageable caste, it will not be frowned upon, but the wedding will be proceed as if it were an arranged marriage with the involvement of a go-between and an elaborate ritual in order to legitimize the marriage.

5.7.2 Surreptitious arranged marriages: There is a type of arranged marriage which is directly influenced by economic status. An arranged marriage with a fully elaborate wedding is very costly and is a matter of social honour. As the social value on such marriage is so high, many Newar families get in to a great debt after the marriage. Therefore if they are facing hardship financially and are willing to put aside the matter of social honour the only alternative is a surreptitious arranged marriages. Avoiding all costly expenses in performing religious rituals and throwing feasts, the bride is fetched to the bridegroom's

house surreptitiously without any rituals. In this type of arranged marriage the role of a go-between still might exist but generally it is played down by some members of the family.

This practice is popular among poor families and is found in every caste. It is very traditional and may have been more common in the past. Ishii (1995: 121) with his study of Satungal found that 40 per cent of the marriages are *surukka hayegu* or surreptitious arranged marriages. But in general Newars perceive it as a humiliation and no honour (*ijjat madu*). Regarding the nature of surreptitious arranged marriages a Vajrācārya woman told me: 'it is popular among Maharjans (*gyāpu*) and other lower castes (*kwajāt*). We do not marry like that no matter how poor we are'. The case studies below will show that how this surreptitious arranged marriage is done.

CASE 5.4: Bhalu, a 17-year-old farmer (Maharjan) man, raised in a very poor family. They do not own any land and earn their living by agricultural work in a rented field.

In 1973, his parents organized an arranged marriage with another farmer girl of a similar economic status from a nearby locality. On the marriage day Bhalu's mother just fetched the bride surreptitiously from her natal home after a very informal negotiation between the families. It was only known the next day that Bhalu was married when gossip went around the neighbourhood. Many friends and neighbours teased and humiliated Bhalu: 'Having married do you not need to give us feast?' It took few weeks for the gossip to cease.

Case 5.5: Shyam, a 45-year-old untouchable Dyahlā man, has 1 daughter and 3 sons.

Shyam, at his age of 22, married a girl of the same caste from Nala which is outside Kathmandu. This marriage was an arranged marriage initiated by his parents. There was no ritual. On the fixed date he went along with the parents and fetched the bride home. He called it a *swayambar* marriage. However, after a year she left him for another man and in 1982, he married another woman of the same caste from Citlang, again outside Kathmandu. This marriage was self-chosen and performed by elopement. There was no ritual involved.

For families in financial difficulty and for most untouchable and some lower castes this is the most popular type of marriage among Newars. However, Newars distinguish this type of marriage by using certain expressions and terms which differ from those of traditionally arranged marriages. It is noticeable among Newars what type of the marriage they had just by observing the terms they use when referring to the marriage. Some call it *surukka hayegu* or *masika hayegu*, 'bring [the bride] surreptitiously'; *bwayekā heyegu*, 'bring [the bride] by make her run away'; *payenah wanegu*, 'to run away with a man,' etc.

5.8 Intercaste/inter-ethnic marriage: Forbidden love marriage

In general, there is a strong resistance to intercaste or inter-ethnic marriage despite the fact that such marriages have always taken place, and still do. Toffin (1995: 246) writes, 'intercaste marriages have become considerably more

common since 1960-70, particularly in Kathmandu'. It is also the opinion of most Newars who feel that the tendency of intercaste marriage is increasing. Regarding the issue many Newars say, 'it does not matter nowadays'. I argue that although this might be true to some extent it is not always the case. This generalization has to be subjectively defined according to particular caste. A Rājopādhyāya, Hindu priest told me:

so far my lineage has never had any intercaste unions. I also have not witnessed any intercaste union with other Rājopādhyāyas either. At most I heard of two cases of such unions which took place out side Kathmandu.

This claim is also validated by my genealogical survey. No intercaste union took place within the Rājopādhyāya caste over the five generations of my survey. Similarly, Butcher (Khaḍgi) caste has the same marriage aspect.

Intercaste union still bear some stigma. In an extreme case, the person I concerned in such a union has to be expelled from his caste membership. If the union is hypergamous, as in many cases, the husband still does not eat *rice* cooked by his intercaste spouse and she is excluded from his caste membership and lineage membership. There is also a high possibility of the husband being cut off from the family and caste membership. Therefore, such unions live with insecurity. Toffin (1995: 254) gives a typical case study of such union and its repercussion:

Suku Bahadur was excluded from the caste because he had married a *jyāpunī*, a woman of the Newar farming caste. When he died, not one Citrakār was present at his funeral nor took part in the purification ceremony (*ghaḥsu*) which takes place on the twelfth day after the cremation

Similarly, I also witnessed a great humiliation experienced by Rabi, a Buddhist high-caste man when I was doing his genealogical survey. One of his

brothers married an Untouchable woman in 1960s. As a result, his brother was expelled from his family, lineage and caste membership. Since then he has not seen his brother at all. Only after the death of his brother he came to know whereabouts of his family. His family never talked about it and just pretended that it had not happened. He felt so worried and humiliated by telling me the story and requested it to be “off the record.”

Buddha Ratna, another man from a Buddhist priestly caste who has already split from the joint family recounted:

My brother married a *jyāpunī*, a woman from the Newar farmer caste, but he does not eat rice cooked by her. It is my mother, who is eighty years old, who still has to cook everyday for the family.

Likewise, Suryaman, a 64 years old Kāranjit informant from southern Kathmandu also shared his own story:

This happened before the 1950s. There was a kin of mine whom had an intercaste marriage with woman with whom rice commensality is not allowed (*jā nay majyumha*) As a result, he and his wife were expelled from his own caste group (*jātā bāhek yānāchwayegu*). Having been cut off the caste group, he was forced to leave Kathmandu and we were never able to locate him after that.

These stories show how Newars strongly resist intercaste marriages. G.N. Ramu who did research in urban India describes six different reasons of resisting the intercaste marriage (1977: 55-56):

1. The intercaste union does not have a consistent pattern of values and norms.
2. It blurred about the maintenance of the status quo of the caste hierarchy.
3. It signifies individualism and the reduction of parental authority over the selection of mates. It weakens the constitution of the family, kinship and caste system.
4. It disrupts the present norms of isogamous alliances.

5. The progeny of a mixed couple will fail to have a definite caste identity, and
6. The problem of finding appropriate mates for the children of mixed caste marriage.

All these six reasons apply to urban Newars as well. It can be seen from previous case studies that Newars have similar opinions regarding intercaste marriages.

Krishna, a 41-year-old Śākya man, described the difficulties of coping with Newar marriage practices in modern times:

It is difficult nowadays to deal with marriage. Before it was easy to find a bride or bridegroom according to the traditional practices, but nowadays society (*samāj*) is opening up beyond caste boundaries. There are many offspring from intercaste marriages who do not fit into the traditional social order but there is also no new social order for them to fit into. This makes it difficult for us to follow the traditional methods of marriage but at the same time the new type of intercaste marriage is not widely accepted by the society.

Generally Newars use the term *mathyāḥ* which literally means ‘not included’ for the type of marriage union which take place between intercaste or inter-ethnic. Joshi (1987: 473) defined the term *mathyāḥ* as ‘an unmatched caste (*bejāt*) wife, a child born to a hypergamous¹⁷ union, a child who is not allowed to enter in a *guthi* i.e. caste membership’. However, in everyday life it is more common nowadays to see Newars using the English term love marriage instead in order to denote an intercaste or inter-ethnic marriage. High-caste Newars regard such union as elopement and shameful. However, if the marriage union emerges between the marriageable castes through romantic love it can lead to the marriage as an arranged one and it can be regarded as an arranged marriage. But if the union is between intercaste or inter-ethnic it is regarded as love marriage. This

perception however differs with lower castes. With most untouchable castes and some lower castes the most common marriage is love marriage and elopement.

Particularly with untouchable castes, an arranged marriage and elaborate wedding is completely rare among them. Theoretically, their ideal marriage type is an arranged one with an elaborate wedding (see Case study 5.5) but I found only few informants whose marriage were an arranged marriage. Otherwise they refer it as an ideal marriage or simply a myth of sanskritizing process. Their normal marriage pattern is mostly love marriage whether the union is isogamous or anisogamous.

5.9 Statistical analysis of intercaste unions

Analyzing 2,263 marriage couple over the period of five generations with all castes of southern Kathmandu it shows that undoubtedly the most Newar marriages are intra-caste. However, there is also a high percentage of marriage unions between intercaste and inter-ethnic which again differ according to caste. Figures 5.6 and 5.7 give us a clear picture that intercaste and inter-ethnic unions are high among the clean service castes—Citrakār, Ranjitrkār, Kāranjit, Mālākār, and Nāpit.¹⁸ This is also supported by Toffin's study of Citrakār. In his study too he found roughly half Citrakār weddings involve a spouse of another caste (Toffin 1995: 246).

The main reasons for higher intercaste alliances among clean service castes is their very small size of population and their caste status. Compared to high and agricultural castes their population in southern Kathmandu is very small.

¹⁷ A union between a high caste man and lower caste woman.

¹⁸ The Nakarmi appear to be a partial exception.

This small caste size means that it has always been difficult for them to find partners within their own caste. Moreover, with modernization and education it becomes even harder as it is necessary to match educational qualifications as well. Their caste status is also another factor in intercaste alliances because these castes are not as low as unclean service castes or Untouchables. In other words the clean service castes are more acceptable to higher caste than other lower castes. This is also the reason why there are fewer, or no intercaste alliances with unclean service castes and Untouchables.

All Newars agree that the intercaste and/or inter-ethnic unions are not the corollary of an arranged marriage but begin with romantic love (*yaḥ tyah juyā*). In modern times there are many opportunities for boys and girls of marriageable age to come into contact with each other in urban Kathmandu. For example, in schools, colleges, universities, offices, and restaurants where boys and girls get together privately. This is different from the past as it was at communal festivals where unmarried boys and girls had a chance to meet each other. With this modern change in Newar society one informant told me:

Nowadays the role of a go-between is declining in Newar society. Schools, colleges, and universities take over the role of go-between instead.

Although it seems that the number of intercaste union is increasing it is still considered to be a forbidden marriage in Newar society. In the past this type of union was only possible by elopement. This is now changing drastically in modern urban Newar society.

Figure 5.6: Original castes of daughters-in-law (*bhamcā*) in Southern Kathmandu (N=1,313)

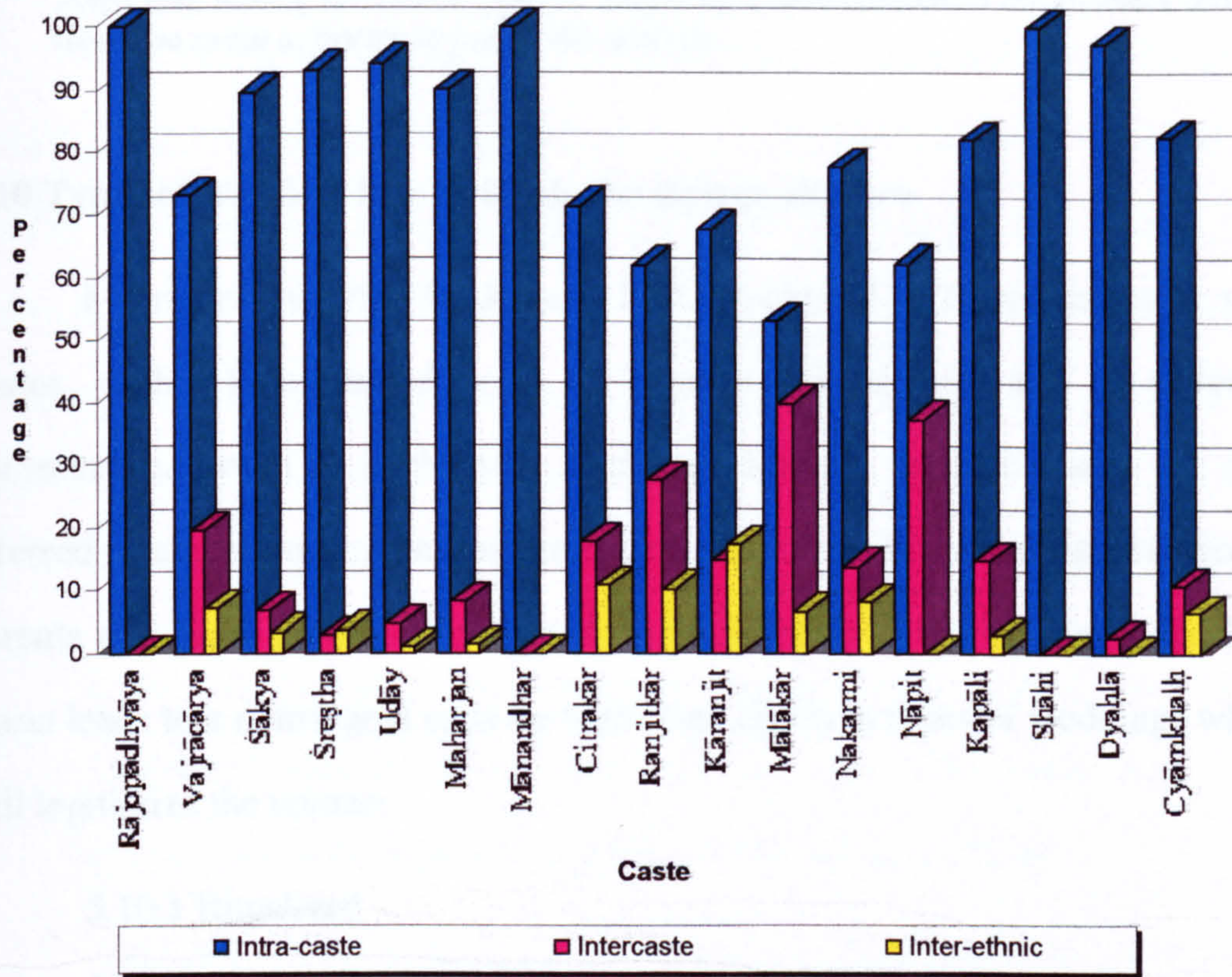
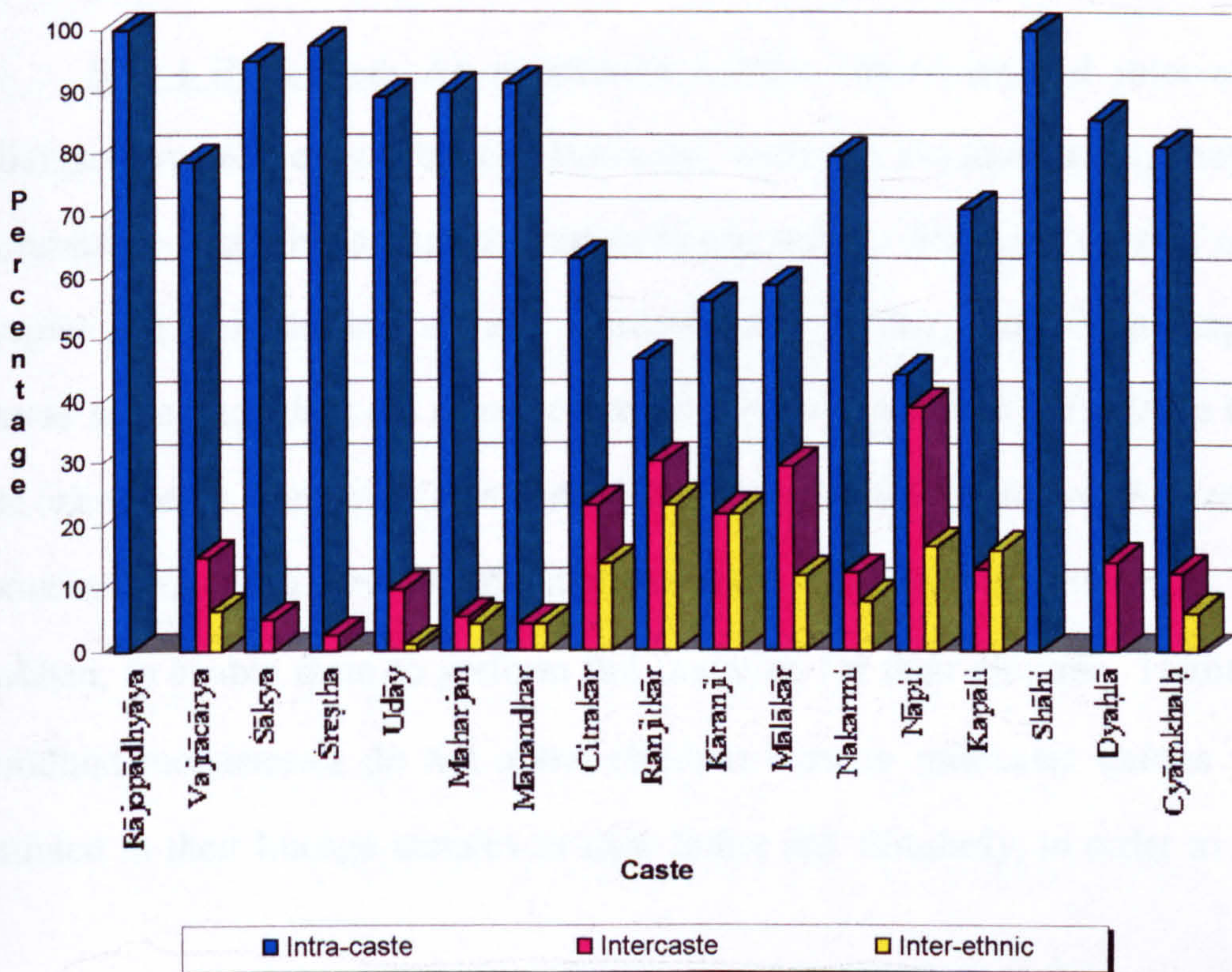


Figure 5.7: Original castes of sons-in-law (*dilājā*) in Southern Kathmandu (N=1,007)



Note: In the Figures 5.6 and 5.7 I have treated Vajrācārya and Śākya as two different castes just to analyze their marriage patterns which are slightly different. In terms of their caste hierarchy they are regarded as the same caste group and they are marriageable caste sub-group. But my findings show that they tend to reserve their alliances to their own kind rather than mixing two castes together. Therefore, I have considered the alliances between these two castes as intercaste just for this analysis.

5.10 Types of wedding in a forbidden marriage alliance

Marriage involving brides and bridegrooms of different castes or sub-castes, within forbidden degrees of kinship relationship, and of different communities (such as Parbatiyās, Tamangs, Magars, or foreigners) are also referred to as love-marriages, as are marriages undertaken either in defiance of parents and caste groups. With my research I found that if the forbidden love union leads to a marriage it ends up with three different types of weddings which will legitimize the unions:

5.10.1 Ritualized

5.10.2 Civil marriage, and

5.11.3 Surreptitious

5.10.1 Ritualized: As mentioned earlier, intercaste and inter-ethnic alliances are in theory tabooed. However, with the modernization, they are increasingly becoming accepted in urban Newar society. The population of mixed couples and their children are also increasing day by day, and this has required Newar society to adapt old rituals or invent new ones in order to facilitate them. For example, in southern Kathmandu, Śākya and Vajrācārya men with intercaste spouses founded a new Buddhist monastery, *Cintāṃṇī Mahāvihār* at Teku Dobhan, to enable them to perform full initiation for their children. Traditional Buddhist monasteries do not allow children born to intercaste unions to be initiated in their lineage temples as their father did. Similarly, in order to solve

problem with a death of intercaste and inter-ethnic union they also set up their own funeral organization (*sī guthi*).

With such changes in urban Newar society, intercaste and inter-ethnic marriages have begun to be carried out with a traditional elaborate ritual without causing prejudice. The Newar society is accepting this change. Therefore, it is becoming normal among urban Newars to see intercaste and inter-ethnic marriages taking place with traditional rituals and presided over by a priest. The following case studies will demonstrate this phenomenon clearly.

Case 5.6: In the 1990s, Rajan, an economically middle-class Vajrācārya man of 26, married Sashi from the Udāy caste sub-group, who is economically better off than Rajan's family.

According to the Newar caste hierarchy the Udāy caste sub-group is one level lower than the Buddhist priestly caste. But in terms of religious affiliation both use Buddhist priests for their domestic rituals. So there are not many differences in the values and norms expressed through personal beliefs, behaviour, attitudes, interest and general outlook on life between them. However, in terms of marriage alliances it is not a normative practice to establish alliances between these two different castes.

Rajan and Sashi met each other while studying abroad and fell in love. Once they returned home they were put under great pressure by both families about their relationship. Malevolent gossip went on around the neighbourhoods of both families even before they returned from abroad and as a consequence both families were badly affected. However, with negotiations both families became reconciled to the fact they wished to marry and eventually gave

their consent. This was important as they were not prepared to marry surreptitiously as in intercaste unions because this marriage meant honour and pride for both families. Finally, their marriage was organized with elaborate rituals and feasts as in an arranged marriage. But it was not fully ritualized as in the case of an arranged marriage. They ignored some rituals such as those prior to the wedding ceremony itself.

This type of ritualized intercaste or inter-ethnic marriage is becoming frequent in modern urban Newar society. But in some cases it gets very complicated and confused. With the case of Rajan and Sashi, although it was an intercaste union, it was a union between Buddhist castes with not too much of a gap between the caste hierarchies. It seems that intercaste union between people of different religion and a larger gap in the caste hierarchies causes many problems and often they resort to a surreptitious type of marriage.

There was a case where an intercaste marriage between a Śākya man, a Buddhist, and a Śreṣṭha woman, a Hindu, took place. This marriage caused huge problems for their families which forced them to postpone the previously fixed marriage date.

CASE 5.7: Rupa, a daughter of an intercaste union, Śākya father and Śreṣṭha mother, at the age of 23, married a Śreṣṭha man in 1996.

It was Rupa herself who told her parents that she chose to marry with the Śreṣṭha boy. Rupa's parents were shocked at first as they actually had been searching for an eligible boy for her. However, she succeeded in convincing her parents to let her marry her

Śreṣṭha boyfriend. But when they came to decide about wedding rituals they faced a huge problem. Obviously, Rupa's father is a Buddhist and demanded the wedding must be Buddhist with a Buddhist priest presiding over the ritual whereas her boyfriend's family who is Hindu demanded the wedding be Hindu with a Hindu priest presiding over it. There was a big debate over this matter which caused them to postpone their previously fixed marriage date. However, at the end of the day, they agreed a compromise Buddhist and Hindu rituals were performed on two different days. Finally, their wedding ended with elaborate rituals of both Buddhist and Hindu.

This does not mean that most intercaste marriages can be ritualized. It very much depends on the gap of caste hierarchies. If the intercaste union is established between high and lower caste the alternative would be civil marriage or surreptitious marriage. No one has any record of an elaborate wedding which took place between individuals far apart in the caste hierarchy. This means that even with modernity and urban culture Newar social values still resist alliances which bring together castes at opposite ends of the caste hierarchy.

According to personal communication with Gellner, the use of both priests, Buddhist and Hindu, to officiate the same marriage, traditionally happens in Lalitpur. For example, there were many cases when a (Hindu) Tāmṛākār marries a (Buddhist) Rājnikār or Śilpakār both Buddhist and Hindu priests officiate the wedding together. These unions are not intercaste marriage as they are of the same caste sub-group but they are different in terms of using domestic priests.

Marriage alliance of intercaste and inter-ethnic type cannot be an arranged marriage. It can only emerge out of a romantic love relationship. However, when it comes to the wedding ceremony between such union there are some families nowadays who perform the marriages as if it were a traditional marriage alliance although it is not. The tendency of such marriage is increasing specially with the support of the invention of new traditions. Many cases of intercaste wedding are presided over by Theravada monks with a simple ritual. This is recent development of Newar marriage.

5.10.2 Civil marriages: It was only at the end of 1971 that the government of Nepal introduced a new type of marriage to legitimize the relationship of a couple. It is called *Dartā vivāha*, which literally means ‘marriage by registration’. This civil marriage is also known as ‘court marriage’ among Newars. According to the 1971 legislation of civil marriage, authority is given to local government under Central District Officer. This type of marriage however is still not practical and popular among Newars. In 1997, a journalist¹⁹ of a local newspaper tried to access data from Central District Office of Kathmandu about the actual number of civil marriages which had already taken place in Kathmandu. The concerned authority refused to reveal any information about it. However, he found out from the counter where they sell forms for civil marriage that about 15-20 civil marriage registration form are sold per month. But no one knows how many forms really went back to Central District Office for further procedure. Similarly, during my research I heard people refer to it but I did not hear of anyone who had witnessed a civil marriage. Some informants commented that civil marriages are

¹⁹ *Sandhyā Times*, The Nepal Bhāṣā Daily, 20 June 1997.

not meant to be for Newars but for non-Newars who have migrated to Kathmandu.

5.10.3 Surreptitious marriages (*surukka hayegu* or *masika hayegu*): The most common wedding between intercaste and inter-ethnic alliances is the surreptitious marriage. Such marriages have always taken place among Newar society, and still do. Love-marriages are not publicly approved of. It generally creates turmoil at all points of the hierarchical, segmentary caste society; but they particularly affect members of the couple's households and kin groups, since love-marriages breach caste and kinship principles.

In cases of love-marriages, the parents of the couple and the immediate male-line members of the household are pressured by people of the neighbourhood and members of the same caste living in the locality to take a stand against the marriage by cutting off all relations with the offending couple. Even though the couple's parents are prepared to forgive their children for having a love marriage, there are cases where social pressures force them to ban the couple from their house (though some family members try to visit them privately). However, this is often a short-term arrangement. There are two alternatives: the couple could make a total break from both their families and localities, or the marriage could be annulled and the girl sent back to her house.

CASE 5.8: In 1996, Udab, a 23-year-old Rājbandāri man, i.e. a higher Śreṣṭha caste sub-group, lived in a joint family with his grandparents, parents and uncles' families in southern Kathmandu. He runs a video renting shop in Patan in a locality with many Maharjan (Newar farming caste). One day

Udab eloped with Ramila, a 16-year-old Maharjan girl from her school.

When Ramila's parents realized that their daughter was missing they started to investigate. After two days Ramila's parents went to see Udab's parents at their home in Kathmandu with the help of Udab's friend. When Ramila's parents requested Udab's parents to give their daughter back they were utterly shocked as they had no idea of what was going on. Udab had not been back home for weeks and never gave any hint of this elopement to his family. At first, Udab's parents thought that they were accusing their son unfairly. Moreover, when they found out Ramila's caste identity, Udab's family were furious and immediately denied the accusation without having any knowledge of the incident. Keshab, grandfather of Udab burst out to Ramila's parents: 'How could a Rājbandāri man marry a Maharjan girl? It is totally unacceptable. Do not insult me by accusing my grandson like that. Your daughter might be staying with her friends or she may have run off with someone else. My grandson wouldn't do such a thing. My caste cannot take daughter from your caste'.

With the prestige of caste Keshab automatically denied the accusation despite not knowing the facts. At the same time, Ramila's parents desperately also wanted their daughter back. At one point Ramila's mother begged Udab's parents with tears:

She is still young. She is still studying. Please at least finish her high-school. She is just an innocent girl and he used her. I have already planned an arranged marriage for her with a man from the same caste after her high-school. Please give my daughter back. Or

at least let me see her and speak to her for a moment. If Udab did not bring my daughter here he could have taken her to some relative's house. Please investigate this and give me my daughter back. I wanted to marry her properly. I do not want my daughter to elope with a man of different caste.

Having hidden for a few weeks from both families Udab surreptitiously fetched his eloped wife, Ramila, to join his joint family in Kathmandu. Ramila's parents had no choice but to accept this elopement.

Eloperments mostly end up with this type of surreptitious marriage. This would not need any ritual or feast, just a compromise within the man's family is enough to settle down the marriage life. There merely exist any legal charges made towards this surreptitious marriage. After sometime this union will be recognized as a marriage union by society even without any ritual, feast or civil registration.

Regarding the days of hiding some say that if a girl has eloped for more than four days she is regarded as a married woman. If the parents of an eloped boy or girl are able to send the spouse back before the four days they are considered to be still fresh and unmarried. In practice, there are many cases where the couple were hiding for a few months or more or only a few days. It depends upon how much objection both families have and also the amount of money the couple have at the time of elopement to survive during the hiding period.

5.11 Dyahlā Wedding

The wedding rituals examined so far are characteristic of most Newar castes. However, the Untouchables have some wedding rituals that set them apart

from other Newar castes. In this section, I shall look at the wedding rituals of the Untouchable Dyaḥlā (Sweeper) caste to illustrate the differences in their wedding rituals. According to Dyaḥlā informants there are two types of Dyaḥlā weddings: 1) bringing in [the bride] by stealing (*khuyā haḥmha*) and 2) bringing in [the bride] publicly (*sīka haḥmha*). Three things set the Dyaḥlā apart from other castes: the ritualized ‘stealing’ of women, the importance of the Khadgi caste as a witness to the wedding, and the presence of pork at the wedding rituals.²⁰

1. Bringing in [the bride] by stealing (*khuyā haḥmha*)²¹: According to this ritual, when a Dyaḥlā man has the intention of making a Dyaḥlā woman his bride, he will first inform his friends about it. The first part of the wedding ritual takes place in a local pub (*bhaṭṭi*) which is run by the Khadgi caste, which is generally located around the Dyaḥlā locality. At the Khadgi pub the Dyaḥlā groom buys his friends home made rice beer (*thwā*), wine (*aylāḥ*) and barbecued meat (*chwayelā*) and sets the date for stealing the bride. On the agreed day, the bridegroom’s friends steal the bride at an opportune moment, usually while the girl is shopping or fetching water alone. The Dyaḥlā woman, on the other hand, may or may not know of her suitor’s intentions, but this is not an important consideration. The bride is brought by force (dragged or carried on their back) to the groom’s house and locked up. Then, the senior lady of the groom’s household (*thakāli nakī*) hands over a sari (*parsi*) to her and says: ‘Now you have already come for

²⁰ The partaking of pork is unique to the Untouchable castes. Other Newar castes consider pig as a highly polluting animal. For the higher castes, just touching a pig requires elaborate purification rituals; to eat port is unthinkable for them, though some westernized your people have started to eat sausages from can.

²¹ Marriage by capture is not uncommon among several ethnic groups of Nepal. For example, Chepang, Magar, Tamang, Rais, Limbus, Thakali, Sunuwar and jirel also practice marriage by capture. However, it is unique among Newars as no other Newar caste have such tradition of marriage by capture. For marriage by capture of other ethnic group see Bista (1980), Majupurias (1989).

marriage so take this sari and wear it, girl' (*ā cha paynā wahe wala ā chā parsī syū nānī*). If the bride declines to wear the sari, the groom's womenfolk will put the sari on her by force. Once the sari is put on, the girl is considered as married. After the sari is put on the bride, the groom has to give two feasts to his friends for their help: one at his home, where he serves rice beer, wine and pork, and once again at the local Khaḍgi pub.

The next morning, the mother of the groom or a senior woman from the groom's family accompanies the bride to a Muslim shop in the market to buy *sācīkā*, a hair-piece made of thread and other clothes for her. In the afternoon, the bride's parents and family are invited to a local Khaḍgi pub where they are given a feast by the groom's family, and during the feast, the two families will be introduced to each other. Later, the groom is invited to visit the bride's family where he is introduced to all the bride's kin.

The 'stealing' ritual is considered an ideal marriage ritual among the Dyahlā informants I spoke to.²² In fact, it is lamented by one Dyahlā man that nowadays, the younger generations seem to prefer elopements or 'love marriage' as the informant called it, where the groom and the bride run away together and hide for few days. After some time, they will persuade their parents to accept the marriage, and once the union is accepted by both families, they will throw a feast at the local Khaḍgi pub. Such elopements are not considered as a proper wedding because it breaks away from the Dyahlā ritual of 'stealing' the bride.

The ritual of stealing the bride is so common among the Dyahlā that if a Dyahlā girl goes missing, her parents are unlikely to search for her. It is generally assumed that she has been 'stolen' for marriage. This can be contrasted with

higher caste Newars, for whom a wedding is a step-by-step process with both parties agreeing to the marriage beforehand. Although elopements do occur among the higher castes, they are considered aberrations, and are not considered as proper marriages. Also, among high castes, if the family of the girl can find their runaway daughter within four days of the elopement, she is still considered eligible for a proper marriage.

2. Bringing in [the bride] publicly (*sika hahmha*): In this respect, the wedding ritual is similar to the high castes' wedding rituals in that it involves a *lami*. For this type of wedding, a *Dyaḥlā lami* from the groom's side negotiates with the family of the girl. The *lami* assures the bride's parents that the groom's household has a large *jajmān* - ritual clients - so there will be no shortage of polluted food (*cipa*) in that house, and that their daughter will be happy in the household. The negotiations usually take 2-3 visits for the girl's parents to be satisfied. To finalize the decision, the girl's parents take the *lami* to a nearby *Khaḍgi* pub where the *lami* will be given a positive answer and a date and venue is set for the engagement ritual.

On the engagement date, both parents and close kin of the bride and groom meet at an arranged venue, which must be a *Khaḍgi* pub. For the engagement ceremony, the *lami* acts as a mediator, while the groom's family sponsors the food and drinks. A *Khaḍgi* man or woman – usually the owner of the pub - acts as a witness to the engagement.

On the wedding day itself the groom and his family go to the bride's house where they will be given feasts (including a pork dish). The bride's family then hands over their daughter to the groom, along with a trousseau. Then the groom's

²² It should be noted that my informants were all males, and that a female perspective may be

family brings both the bride and the trousseau home. This is followed by a wedding feast for the groom's kin and friends where the new bride is introduced. Three to four days after the wedding day, the bride's family goes to the groom's house to fetch both the groom and their daughter back to the bride's house. At the house of the bride, a feast is given to the kin of the bride and the groom is introduced to the bride's kin. In some cases, they are kept in the bride's house for few days. Among Dyaḥlā son-in-law has an important role to the bride's household. When the bride's parents die, it is the duty of their son-in-law to carry the dead body to cremation ground.²³

According to my Dyaḥlā informants, the 'stealing' marriage is a traditional and ideal marriage pattern; however, such marriage is not practiced anymore in Kathmandu. Many older-generation informants confirmed that their wedding had been done according to such marriage by capture. With economic prosperity among Dyaḥlā castes at present many informants were married by 'proper' marriage: bringing in the bride publicly. However, the Dyaḥlā themselves say that the majority now practise what they call 'love marriage' as it is attested by a 30 years old Dyaḥlā man by saying: 'Nowadays, everybody bring his wife by love marriage'.

5.12 Conclusion

The ideal marriage practice is an arranged intra-caste marriage as it is generally believed that it is an essential duty of parents to arrange marriages for their children before they die. An elaborate Newar marriage varies according to

different.

²³ This is also the case among Jyāpus of Pyangaon (Toffin 1984: 166).

caste. With high castes it is usually performed by priests and includes numerous exchanges of marriage prestations. A ceremonial wedding includes a marriage procession with music and big feasts with rituals held both on the bride's and the bridegroom's sides.

The Newars compare marriage to a business investment. There is a Newari saying that 'In business if one incurs a loss, the loss can be recovered. But if one chooses wrongly in marriage, the loss will last for a lifetime'.²⁴ Therefore, in a way the Newar marriage is very delicate subject.

Despite the traditional Newar preference for caste-cum-territorial endogamy, there are several other important factors that must be considered when looking for a suitable in-law. With modernization, the cultural value placed on arranged marriages is shifting in favour of individually initiated relationships and caste barriers are becoming less important, which leads to what many believe to be a greater incidence of intercaste marriages. However, by itself this does not prove that the rate of intercaste marriages is increasing. Though caste barriers are less strict than in the past, restrictions on interaction between 'clean' caste, on the one hand, and low castes and Untouchables, on the other, still prevail in Newar society. Gellner points out that intercaste marriage between 'clean' castes and low castes causes problems. Moreover, unions of high castes and Untouchables are 'simply unthinkable' (Gellner 1995: 289). In southern Kathmandu, however, I have found four such unions between clean caste men and untouchable women, although it is true that the men involved were boycotted by their relatives. Thus it can be said that although there is a trend towards change in marriage relationships, it is not entirely accepted by the majority. It is no surprise,

²⁴ *Byāpāray dyāsā chaka jaka dyāi, misā thikmajusā jīndagi bhar dyāi.*

therefore, that Newars consider marriage an extremely delicate subject. Marriage to Newars is not only a matter of two individuals but two households and the whole world of kin.

In the attempt to accommodate their traditional marriage patterns with new cultural values, Newars are in the process of introducing new types of wedding rituals. As discussed above, it is now quite normal to begin the process with an individually initiated relationship and conclude it with an elaborate ritualized marriage, as would have been held for an ideal arranged marriage. Alternatively, among some Buddhist Newars, Theravada rituals are introduced to solemnize intercaste relationships and accepted types of love marriages.

The obvious repercussion of intercaste marriage is the problem of entering caste *guthi* or socio-religious organizations, particularly the *sī guthi* or funeral organization. As Newar society is ruled by these socio-religious organizations it is difficult to be a Newar while not being a member of a *guthi*. Many informants of mine recalled incidents where a woman of intercaste marriage died but no one from her husband's caste group willing to help in the funeral. In some worst cases the dead body was left lying down for few days before fetching it to cremate in the common cremation ground (According to Newar custom the dead body has to be cremated on the same evening of the death). Intercaste unions face the severe problems if not in the marriage it is when they die. According to Gyanman, age 70, a Buddhist priestly caste informed me that in southern Kathmandu, in an attempt to solve this social problem of caste barrier, a new *sī guthi* or funeral organization catering specially for all types of intercaste unions and their offspring has been established. The members of this *sī guthi* are Newars who do not fit into any of the traditional caste order because their marriage has not been accepted by the husband's descent group.

As I have mentioned briefly, the trend in marriage is shaped by several factors, including the size of the caste's population and the identity of the caste itself. It is interesting to note that in the modern politico-economic situation, though in theory and in conversation Newars often take a negative view of caste barriers, in practice each caste has begun to rebuild caste barriers and has attempted to formulate its identity as a sub-group within the Newars. Many castes have established a modern form of caste organization, modeled on modern social organizations. These new organizations are therefore different from traditional *guthis*: instead of covering only a limited number of patrilineal groups, they govern all members of castes and administer it throughout the city.

Each caste organization holds annual conferences and attempts to redefine and regulate existing social and ritual practices. Many caste organizations have published new rules for life-cycle rituals and have set fines for caste members who do not follow the rules. They are called *byabahār sudhār niyamāwali* or 'rules for the reform of customary behaviour'. In order to understand Newar society it is necessary to examine each caste's practices individually and to see how their rituals are both changing traditional practices and, at the same time, preserving traditional caste identity and values. I was told by an untouchable informant that even if their daughter marries a high-caste Newar who is willing to interact equally with them, they will not accept him as one of themselves unless he goes through a special ritual. In this ritual the high-caste in-law has to offer a feast to his wife's untouchable society and he has to eat the contaminated food of Untouchable—which is an extremely humiliating act for Newars. Similarly, a man of the Maharjan, Newar farming caste of southern Kathmandu told me that one of his caste's daughters was about to have an intercaste marriage with a man of the (higher) Śreṣṭha caste. But when members of her family's *guthi* found out from his genealogy that the would-be son-in-law was not a pure, high-caste

Śreṣṭha, they forbade the marriage. I was also told that these extreme positions would not have been taken in the past. It can be seen, therefore, that the caste identity of Newars is changing, and becoming more assertive, in parallel with modernization. One of the most affected areas of these manifold and seemingly paradoxical changes is marriage, which itself further affects kinship and society as a whole.

Appendix: The New Newar Buddhist wedding

Following is the detail ritual of the new Newar Buddhist wedding adopted by the wedding of Miss Eureka Śākya with Mr Sushil Bahadur Vajrācārya on the 20th February 1999 in Lagan tol of southern Kathmandu. On the 18th February 1999 the married-out feast (Newar dinner) was given by the bride's family to her kin and friends and on the 20th February 1999 was the wedding day itself when the bridegroom's party went to the bride's house to fetch the bride home. Following ritual is performed on the 20th February at the house of the bride.

On the occasion, the bride's family has published a red covered wedding booklet (8 pages) which gives details of the new wedding ritual. Regarding this new wedding ritual the parents of the bride have published their opinion on the first page of the booklet which I have translated below.

Namo Buddhaya.

Respected Readers,

Buddhist life-cycle rituals are the simple rituals which are celebrated from birth to death by Buddhists. For the worthy life of Buddhists and Buddhists who are proud to call themselves a Buddhist should follow this custom.

Today people are very busy with their lives. Therefore, it is becoming difficult to survive under the archaic norms and values. Buddhists are unique compared to other religious followers. It is not nice for Buddhists to live by the ideology of traditionalist, blind-faith, narrow-minded and be dominated. Change is another name of Buddhists. Therefore, it is not nice for Buddhists to be attached to the Vedic way of celebrating life-cycle rituals.

Remembering the proverb 'lightening but no rain' (*naḥ nyāyā wā magāḥ*) [i.e. all talk but no action] I have observed the rituals

according to the Buddhist life-cycle rituals for the funeral and post-funeral period with the death of Ratna Shobha Śākya, my late mother. Likewise, I am arranging a wedding for my beloved daughter, Miss Eureka Śākya with Mr Sushil Bahadur Vajrācārya according to the custom of the Buddhist life-cycle rituals.

Buddhism, beneficial and good to many, is very useful and should practice it. I believe that following the customs of the Buddhist life-cycle rituals from birth to death will benefit all Buddhists.

Lastly, may the married life of my daughter, Eureka Śākya who is wedded according to Buddhist life-cycle rituals be successful. May they be happy. Best wishes.

Shantaratna Śākya

Lakshidevi Śākya

Ratna chē, Bhotebāhā, Kathmandu

20th February 1999

The second page of the booklet listed the goods which are needed for the new wedding ritual and the preparations for the married couple. Page three and four are Pali verses for taking refuges in Triple Gem and Five Precepts. Page five and six are the wedding vows (*āwāha wiwāha*)²⁵ for the bridegroom and the bride to exchange. Page seven is Pali verses for blessings and the last page is the wedding programme itself. I have translated below the wedding vows and the wedding programme from the booklet:

The vows (*āwāha wiwāha*):

The vows taken by the man (the bridegroom).

Following the teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha on the rules for householders (*griha vinaya*) I shall fulfil five duties below towards my wife to honour her for the rest of my life:

²⁵ *Āwāha* means taking a girl in marriage; *wiwāha* means giving a girl in marriage.

1. **Sammānanāya** : I shall honour my wife.
2. **Avamānanāya** : I shall be courteous to my wife and shall not dishonour her.
3. **Anaticariyāya** : I shall be faithful (vyabhicār yāye makhu) and trustworthy to my wife.
4. **Issariyavossegaṇa** : I shall content my wife with the wealth I earned by right livelihood with my capability.
5. **Alaṅkarānuppādāya** : I shall please my wife by providing her with ornaments as much as I can.

The vows taken by the woman (the bride):

Following the teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha on the rules for householders (*griha vinaya*) I shall fulfil five duties below towards my husband to honour him for the rest of my life:

1. **Susāvihita kammantā** : I shall well manage the household affairs.
2. **Sāgahita parijanā** : By pleasing family members of my own and of my husband, other friends and servants I shall keep them in discipline.
3. **Anaticariyāya** : I shall be faithful and trustworthy to my husband.
4. **Sammatassa anurakkhaṇa** : I shall take good care of the wealth my husband has earned with right livelihood.
5. **Dakhā ca analasā ca sabbakiccesu** : I shall be skilful and industrious in all my duties.

Wedding programme according to the Buddhist rituals (*baudha samskāra*)

1. Welcoming the bridegroom party (*janti lasakusa*) at 12.00 hours.
2. Ask the bridegroom and the bride to take seat on wedding ceremonial ground (*ihipā mandapa*) at 13.00 hours
3. Observing Five Precepts administered by the senior monk.

4. Worshipping the Buddha (*Buddha puṣā*): Offering flowers and *khāta* cloth to the Buddha statue.
5. Recital of Buddhist chantings by monks (*paritrān pāṭh*): The chantings are: Take refuge in Triple Gem (*triratna śaraṇa*), Recollection of the virtues of the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (*Buddhagūṇa, Dharmagūṇa and Sanghagūṇa*), Discourse on loving-kindness (*maitri sutra*), and Stanzas of great victory (*mahā jaya mangala sutra*), the recital for blessings and prosperity.
6. Exchanging wedding vows (*bacā lhākegu*) in turn.
7. The senior monk ties the sacred thread on the wrist of the bridegroom.
8. Receiving the sacred thread from the senior monk the bridegroom ties the sacred thread on the wrist of the bride.
9. Standing at the wedding ceremonial ground, firstly, the bride places a garland around the bridegroom's neck and as a wedding symbol she places a ring etc. on the bridegroom's finger and greets him. In exchange, the bridegroom also places a garland around the bride's neck and as a wedding symbol he places a necklace etc. around the bride's neck.
10. [monks] sprinkles the holy water consecrated by chanting over the bodies of the bridegroom and the bride
11. While the bride places her hand in the bridegroom's [the bride's father] pours the holy water over their hands 3 times.
12. A sermon by a senior monk.
13. Family members and close kin (*syāḥ nyāḥ pī*) give presents [to the bride].
14. Receive blessings from all monks, nuns and honourable people. Offering gifts (*dāna*) to monks and ends the ritual in the wedding ceremonial ground.
15. Wedding reception given by the bride's family to the bridegroom's party (*lā swa bijyāpī*)
16. Farewell the bride by her family members receiving betel nuts from the bride and the bride's family follow the wedding procession up to the bride's natal's lineage Buddhist monastery

(*lagã bāhā*) where two newly related families (*nhū samajipī*) exchange good wishes and take leave of each other.

This ends the Buddhist wedding.

Good wishes to all beings. May all beings be happy.

Appendix: Comparative summary of the elaborate Newar wedding among most castes of southern Kathmandu

These are only main events of the elaborate Newar wedding. In detail some castes have more events than the list and it differs from caste to caste. Prestatations and the involvement of specific kin are also differ from caste to caste. However, the main roles are played by MB and FZ in all castes studies. This list is constructed based on Vajracārya (1989) and my own fieldnotes. Caste names are represented by first three letters of each caste name.

| | Event | Timing | Prestation flow From→To | Rāj | Vaj/ Śāk | Śre | Udā | Mah | Mān | Tañ | Nāp | Nak | Kār | Māl | Cit | Ran | Kha | Kap | Pod | Cyā |
|----|---|--------------------------------------|---|--------|-------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----|--------|--------|-----|--------|--------|--------|-----|--------|-----|-----|
| | Engagement | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Giving betel nuts (<i>gway biyegu</i>) | 1-12 months before the wedding | WT→WG | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | with 3 | No | No |
| 2 | Sending seasonal fruits (<i>Sisābusā nake chwayegu</i>) | 2 weeks after (1) | WT→WG | No | Yes | No | with 3 | No | No | Yes | with 3 | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| 3 | Giving the <i>lākhā</i> sweet (<i>Lāikhā biyegu</i>) | 1-3 weeks before the wedding | WT→WG | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | with 1 | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | with 4 | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 4 | Sending confirmation sweet (<i>Nikah madhi chwayegu</i>) | 8 days before the wedding | WT→WG | with 3 | Yes | with 5 | with 5 | with 3 | No | No | No | with 3 | No | No | with 4 | with 3 | No | No | No | No |
| 5 | Sending bracelet to put on (<i>kalyā hnyākāh chwayegu</i>) | 4 days before the wedding | WT→WG | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No |
| 6 | 'Farewell' rice meal (<i>paynah jā nakegu</i>) | 1- 4 days after (5) | Phuki→Bride | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| 7 | Sending milk and curd (<i>durudahi chwayegu</i>) | 1 day before wedding | WT→WG | with 3 | Yes | with 5 | with 5 | No* | No | No | No | No | No | with 3 | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| | Wedding (at the bride's place) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | Groom's wedding procession (<i>janta wanegu</i>) | Wedding eve or the wedding day | WT→WG | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 9 | Wedding feast (<i>paynah bhway</i>) | Wedding eve or the wedding day | (trousseaus) Phuki→Bride MB→Bride | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 10 | Giving the bride away (<i>swayambar & kanyādān</i>). | Wedding eve or the wedding day | WG→Groom | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 11 | Distributing betel nuts (<i>gwe sāyegu</i>) | Wedding day | Bride→her family, Phuki | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 12 | Wearing leg ornament (<i>uii baggi nhyātegu</i>) | Wedding day | WT→Bride | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| 13 | Bridal talk (<i>bhaumacā khā ihāyegu</i>) | Wedding day | | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |

| | Event | Timing | Prestation flow From→To | Rāj | Vaj/ Śāk | Śe | Udā | Mah | Mān | Tañ | Nāp | Nak | Kār | Māl | Cit | Ran | Kha | Kap | Pod | Cyā | |
|----|---|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----|----------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|
| 14 | Waiting for auspicious time (<i>sisi yāyegu</i>) | Wedding day | | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |
| | Wedding (at the groom's place) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | Welcoming the bride (<i>laskus yāyegu</i>) | Wedding day | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | |
| 16 | The marital union (<i>hwankegu</i>) | Wedding day | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | |
| 17 | Distributing betel nuts (<i>gwe sāyegu</i>) | Wedding day | Bride→H's family and Phukis | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | |
| 18 | Wedding feast (<i>pasiāh bhway</i>) | | | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | |
| | Post-Wedding (at the groom's place) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | Family uniting feast (<i>nikshābhū bhway</i>) | 1 day after wedding | WG→WT | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | |
| 20 | Caring of the room (<i>kothā bicā</i>) | 1 day after wedding | WG→WT | No | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |
| 21 | Wetting the bride's hair (<i>sā pākēgu</i>) | 1-4 day after wedding | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |
| 22 | Witnessing to the family deity (<i>wānjālā wanegu</i>) | 1-4 day after wedding | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | |
| 23 | Worshipping the husband (<i>tilād hū cāyēgu</i>) | 1-4 day after wedding | WG→WT | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |
| 24 | Seeing the bride's face (<i>khwā swawanegu</i>) | 4 day after wedding | WG→WT | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | |
| 25 | Admission of the bride into the husband's <i>guhīs</i> (<i>du kāyegu/dekhā bigu</i>) | Any day after wedding | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | |
| | Post-Wedding (at the bride's place) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 26 | Accepting son-in-law and uniting two families (<i>ducāyēgu/samjhi swākegu</i>) | Any day after wedding | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |

Note: Among the Maharjan they have a tradition called *nikahkhyaḥ wanegu*. It is the event when the groom's MB and FZ parties go to see the bride at her house by offering her family with prestations. † Among the Khadgi called it differently: *kwaḥjikaḥ wanegu* meaning 'go to confirm'.

CHAPTER SIX

Expressions of Kinship

In this chapter, I wish to explore some aspects of Newar kinship, in particular, the various kinship terms that are used by the Newars to define their kinship network. This is done to achieve three aims. Firstly, it is to further the study of Newar kinship using ethnographic data from southern Kathmandu. Secondly, the aim is to develop a link between kinship roles and ritual roles, in order to show how kinship is constituted in Newar society.¹ Thirdly, a study of kinship terminology sets the stage for the study of Newar society in terms of household and social units, beginning with the smallest household unit to the largest caste group.

6.1 Public and Private Expressions of Kinship

‘Kinship is a very private and personal matter for Newars,’ a native anthropologist once advised me at the start of my research. By that he meant that Newars do not generally openly discuss kinship with strangers. However, I would argue that kinship—at least in terms of the cultural and legal practices of the Newars—has always been a public matter. For example, in legal documents three generations of patrilineal descent line are required. Similarly, in inscriptions on *chaityas* and temples and in publicly performed religious rituals at least three

¹ See Gray (1995) who studied a Brahman-Chetri village at the edge of the Kathmandu Valley and describes how as householders villagers construct social relations both within and between domestic groups and how these relations inflect their understanding of asymmetry and its various dimensions, such as purity, power and dominance in wider social contexts.

generations in the patriline are remembered, for example, in the annual ancestor worship day.

These are public domains where kinship is expressed, where one's kin is publicly known. In contrast, there is also a private domain, that which the native anthropologist was warning me about. In this domain, personal expressions of kinship may run contrary to public knowledge. For example, a man can publicly deny he has a brother although everyone knows that he has one. In this way, the genealogy that is collected may be distorted to omit kin who have been excommunicated. The complete picture can only be discovered by having intimate knowledge about the community being studied, and by gaining the trust of the informant and those around him/her.

In Schneider's (1972: 51) critique of the study of kinship, he highlights the fluidity of kinship, that it is contextual, rather than a set of fixed categories. The Newar concept of kinship reveals the notion of choice in kinship, that instead of accepting one's kin as a given, the relationship can be manipulated and changed by the individual.

6.2 Changes in the expression of kinship

As mentioned above, a public display of kinship can be found in the local temples and *chaityas*. It is common to see names and kinship reference terms inscribed near deities or different parts of temples that have been offered by the family of a deceased person. This is an age-old practice among Newars. Most inscriptions show up to two or three generations of the deceased family. Commonly, using the grandfather as a point of reference, the name of the father (in some cases the mother's name too) with their reference terms and the donor's

name (sometimes donor's brothers, sisters and probably the donor's wife are also included) were recorded and displayed publicly.

The importance of the three-generation reference is not only cultural, but it is also a legal requirement in Nepalese society. Legal documents concerning property, bank, marriage, etc. require the names of three generations of the applicant's descent line (ego, ego's father, and ego's grandfather). Significantly, there is no place for the matrilineal kin to be recorded officially. For example, in the form of marriage certificate² according to Nepalese law it is not required to have mother's name or feminal authority in the form at all (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Marriage Certificate issued by the government (translation from Nepali)

| |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">Marriage certificate</p> <p>The grandson of Mr....(<i>name of the groom's grandfather</i>)...., son of Mr....(<i>name of the groom's father</i>)....resides at....(<i>groom's home address</i>)...., of age....., Mr....(<i>name of the groom</i>)....and the granddaughter of Mr....(<i>name of the bride's grandfather</i>)...., daughter of Mr....(<i>name of the bride's father</i>)....resides at(<i>bride's home address</i>)...., of age....., Miss....(<i>name of the bride</i>)....on(<i>date</i>)....came to this office and married each other as the husband and wife according to the Law of Marriage Registration 2028 (1971). Hence this is granted to Mr....(<i>name of the groom</i>).../Mrs....(<i>name of the bride</i>)...to certify that their marriage is registered according to the Law.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Marriage Director,..... Date.....</p> |
|---|

² Unlike the property certificates, marriage certificate is not a necessary document in Nepalese context. It is said that marriage certificate is only required in some circumstances e.g. for issuing passport or visas for some countries.

Likewise, most Newar families who keep their genealogical records keep only their patrilineal descent line. Usually they keep records of only three generations, but some are known to keep records up to eight, or even thirteen generations above ego (which was the case in a Tāmrākār family).

The question arises: Why only three generations? A practical answer would be that it is an administrative abbreviation of kinship that is at once useful and specific. However, alongside this very public display of a person's kinship ties, there is also the belief that one should avoid speaking about the dead. This has the effect of truncating generations of a person's kinship system, as I found in my interviews with some Newar of the older generation.

Asta Maharjan, age 75, did not speak at all when I tried to get his genealogy. Other Maharjan informants who were also present at the interview were more forthcoming with the information, but I noticed that Asta Maharjan was not so comfortable with his peers speaking the names of the dead. Finally, in a burst of anger Asta Maharjan said that he would not speak any of the names of his dead relatives because once he does, it means that he is inviting their spirits to receive something from him. Those names should only be remembered only for specific rites, for example during the ritual of *śrāddha*. Speaking of the dead without any purpose or *śrāddha* ritual is inauspicious. This belief inhibits some Newars from keeping elaborate records of their dead ancestors.

Nowadays it has become a growing trend among Newars not just to speak of the dead but to publish a condolence message for the recently deceased in local papers, a practice which was unknown to the Newars three decades ago. With the exception of the untouchable castes of Dyahlā and Cyāmkhalaḥ, this is now widely practised by almost all Newar castes. Most of those condolence messages published are from the bereaved family themselves with their full names and

kinship reference terms with the dead person. Those condolence messages not only serve as a noticeboard to announce the death and to thank friends and family who gave their sympathy and support during the time of bereavement, but also to declare the dead man's genealogy in public.

Figure 6.2: An example of a typical display of kin published on a newspaper condolence (A condolence of Ratnaman Tuladhar published in Bishwa Bhoomi daily newspaper dated 13 January 1997).

| | |
|---|---|
| Picture of the dead [Male] | |
| Born: July 1931 Died: 30 November 1996 | |
| On the meritorious occasion of 45 days after the death of an honourable family member of our house (<i>chē</i>), Ratnaman Tuladhar we pray to god that his soul may reside in Sukhavati heaven forever. Also we would like to thank all our relatives (<i>thaḥthiti</i>) and friends who supported us during our bereavement. | |
| W (<i>jahānpī</i>) : | Laksmidevi Tuladhar and Keshari Tuladhar |
| yB (<i>kijāpī</i>) : | Suryaman Tuladhar (not married) and Chandraman Tuladhar |
| yBW (<i>jahānpī</i>) : | Bhagyaprabha Tuladhar |
| yZ (<i>kehēpī</i>) : | Chandrakeshari Bajracharya, Ratnakeshari Baniya, Amarshobha Tuladhar |
| yZH (<i>kehē jilājāpī</i>) : | Harsharatna Bajracharya, Dirghaman Baniya, Nhucheratna Tuladhar |
| S (<i>kāypī</i>) : | Rajman Tuladhar (married), Vinodman Tuladhar, Rabiman Tuladhar, Sunilman Tuladhar, Anilman Tuladhar |
| SW (<i>bhaupī</i>) : | Junu Tuladhar [H died and name is not given], Karuna Tuladhar |
| D: (<i>mhyāypī</i>) : | Ratnalaksmi Hart, Sakun Tuladhar, Utpala Tuladhar, Rahina Kamsakar |
| DH (<i>jilājāpī</i>) : | Paul Hart, Arunman Tuladhar, Kanchanman Tuladhar, Pravinratna Kamsakar |
| BS (<i>kāycāpī</i>) : | Anupman Tuladhar, Sushilman Tuladhar, Vinayman Tuladhar |
| BD (<i>mhyāycāpī</i>) : | Nilima Tuladhar, Reshma Tuladhar |
| BDH (<i>mhyāycā jilājā</i>) : | Rupakratna Tuladhar |
| SC & DC (<i>chaypī</i>) : | Darshana, Mahima, Sirapa, Lasata, Ronesh, Palistha |

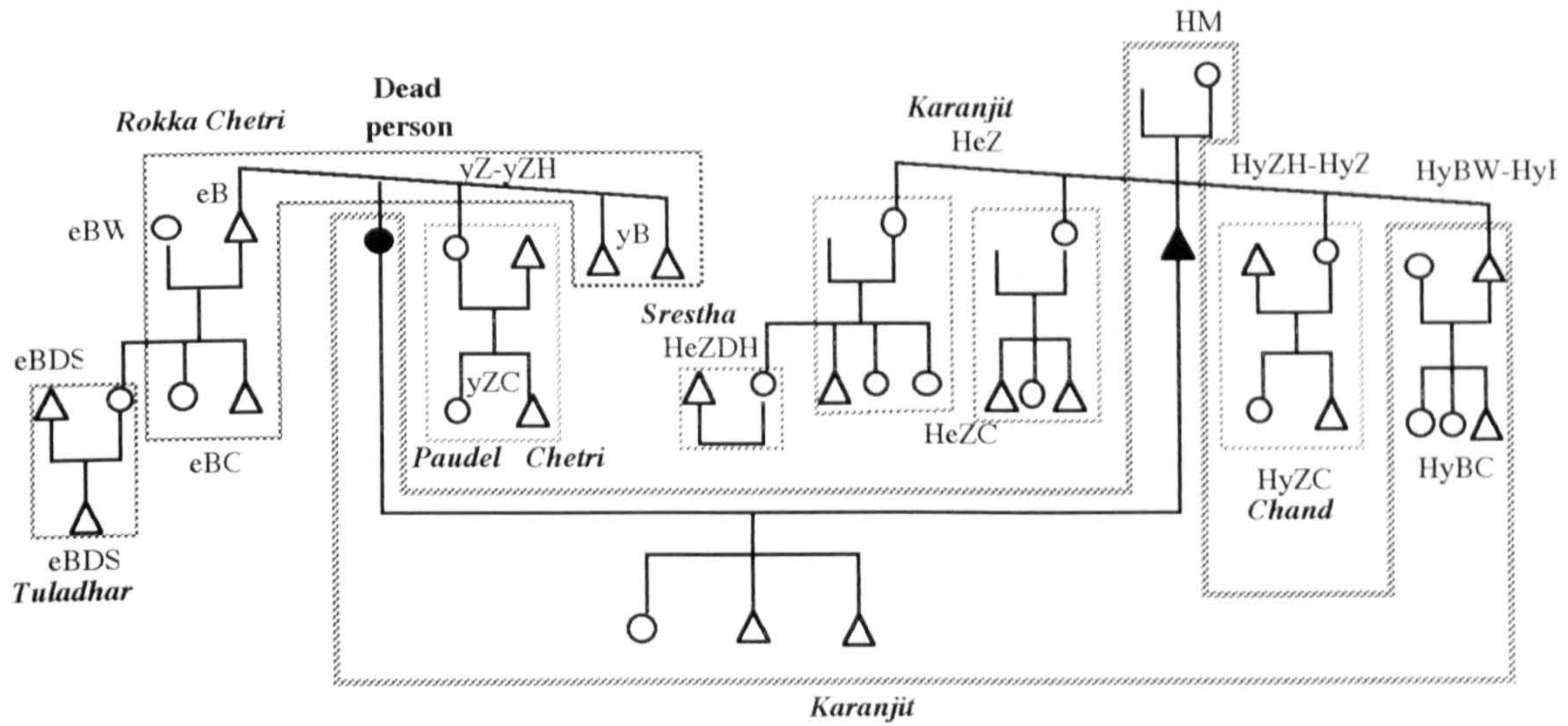
Note: This condolence message publicly acknowledges two marriages out of caste, one with a Vajrācārya, another with a foreigner.

Like the three-generation genealogies that are found in the *chaityas* and temples, the genealogies in the condolence messages also show at least three generations. The kin on display are usually cognatic kin regardless of cohabitation or household, and the emphasis is given equally to both consanguines and affines.

The common practice is to display their elementary family and/or consanguinal kin. Figure 6.2 lists three generations of the deceased's family—the deceased's wives and collateral brothers and sisters (W, yB, yBW, yZ, yZH), the deceased's sons and daughters (S, D, SW, DH) and the deceased's grandchildren, nephews and nieces (SC, DC, BS, BD, BDH). It also shows the kinship reference terms that establishes their relationship to the deceased.

As Newars are a patrilineal society, if the deceased is a married woman the list of her public kin would be only her married husband's family, whereas if the deceased is a man his consanguines and affines are all listed. This is because a woman's *guthi* membership becomes that of her husband's upon her marriage. A Newar woman, upon her marriage is totally cut off from her natal *guthi* membership. However, I came across a rare case in which the condolence message for a deceased female displayed both consanguinal and affinal kin (see Figure 6.3). The families shown in these case studies (see Figures 6.2 and 6.3) were high in intercaste marriages. Moreover, it was not only intercaste among Newars but there were interethnic marriages with non-Newars as well. The dead woman was a (Parbatiyā) Chetri who married into a (Newar) Kāranjit family. The greetings as revealed by the public announcement contains two further Newar-Parbatiyā marriages and one Kāranjit-Śreṣṭha union.

Figure 6.4: Living kin nexus of the dead with their reference terms shown in the published condolence (Fig. 6.3).



A sample of 20 condolences which were published in different local papers both in Newari and Nepali languages by the deceased family during the period of 1997-1999 shows that nine families publicly acknowledge intercaste marriages while eleven families were entirely caste-endogamous (at least on paper). Although the sample is small, it shows that at least 45 per cent of the Newar families who publish their genealogies in the papers appeared to have experienced intercaste marriage.

As a public expression of kinship, these condolence messages can be a powerful tool for the manipulation of kinship. Firstly, it can cement kinship ties on a public level for the purpose of social recognition and/or inheritance. Conversely, to be left out of the list of kin is a serious omission: it means that kinship ties have been severed and that the person is no longer considered kin. Secondly, in revealing cases of, for example, intercaste marriage or polygamy, it is an indication of changing public perception of such marriages. These condolence messages show that kinship is a personal choice and like the

inscriptions in the *chaityas* and temples in the past, are a public platform for the articulation of these choices.

The crucial differences between the traditional public display of kinship i.e. the inscriptions along the *chaityas* or copper plates in temples and the modern method of displaying kinship through condolence messages in local papers is surname or caste name. According to old inscriptions in temples if it is very old no surname or caste name is given although it might mention that who is the grandfather, father and sons are (see Figure 6.5). At most, in some inscriptions the common term ‘bhāro’ or ‘poha’ are used which simply means ‘noble man’ or ‘courtier’ (see Vajrācārya and Malla 1985). However, in medieval period some did inscribe their surnames but as a whole family (see Figure 6.6). Unlike in

Figure 6.5: Inscription on a golden plate on the *chaitya* inside the main shrine (*kwāpādyah*) of Lagan Bāhāḥ of southern Kathmandu displaying names and kinship relations but no surnames or castes are given.

In N.S. 540 (1393 AD) the Friday the second (*dutiyā*) of Bhādra Kṛṣṇa pakṣha month, on Uttarāphālgun nakṣhatra, on the name of Śri Śri Akṣhobhya Buddha of Kirtipunya Mahāvihār, the donor son jaya jayata casted this image wishing his late father Śri Jaya Yakṣkhaju to enter Śukhāvati heaven.

Figure 6.6: Inscription on a *chaitya* in Lagan Bāhāḥ of southern Kathmandu displaying kinship relationship with a surname which covers both names.

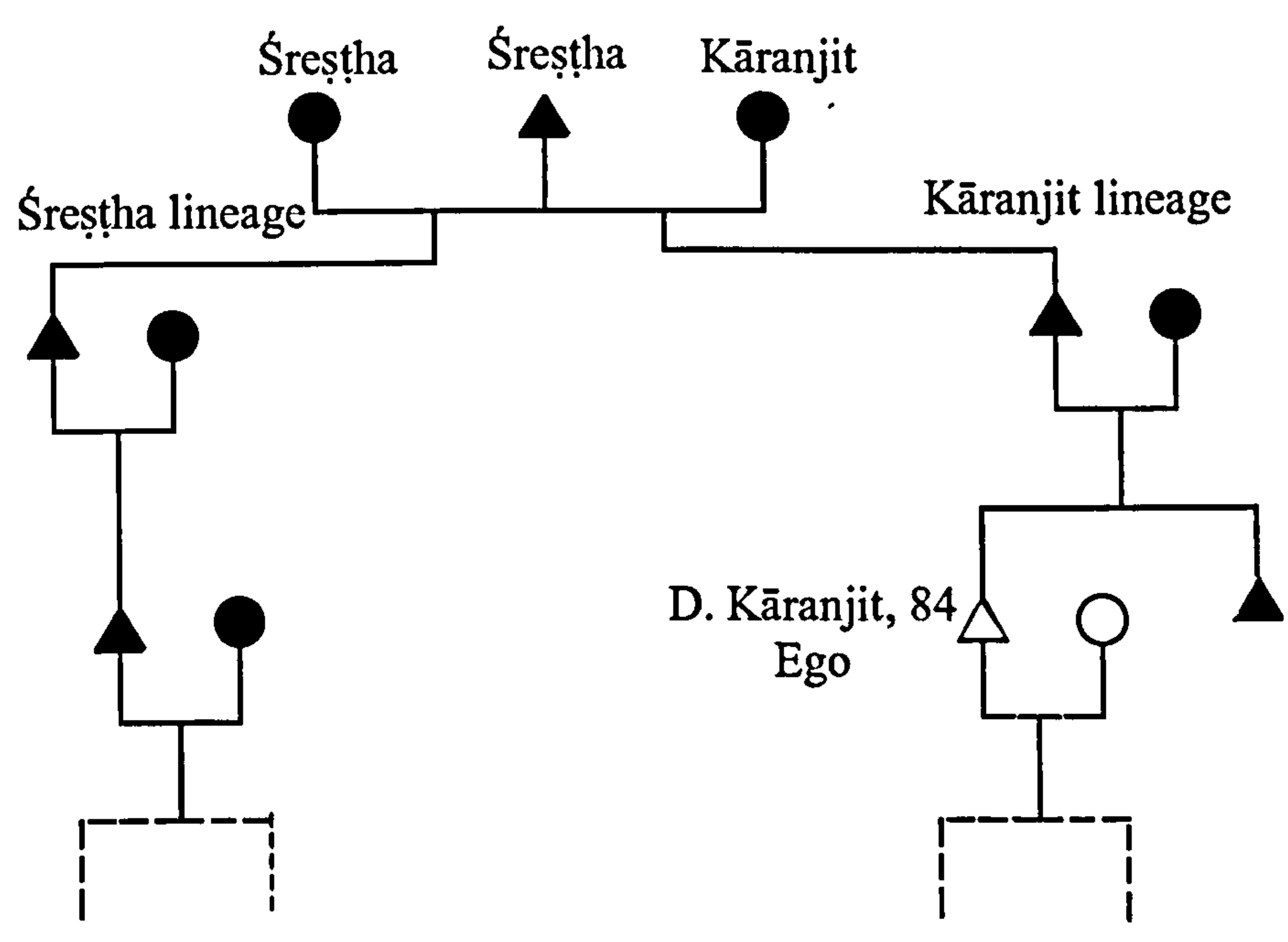
In N.S. 796 (1649 AD) on the Wednesday the 13th day (*trayodasī*) of the month of Kārtik Śuklapakṣhe the donor Śri Surya candra Shākyabhikshu of Mahāgauri household built this Śri 3 Vajradhātu chaitya on the name of his late son Mahāmuṇi and established in Kirtipunya Vihār.

modern expressions where an individual surnames is given regardless of caste. But even in the modern public display of kinship it is also noticeable that only adults are given their surnames not to their children. Most children of

grandchildren level if he or she is not married only first name is given not the surnames unlike all adults regardless of marriage condition.

Another crucial change between traditional and modern public display of kinship is adopting surnames by women. During my interviews with Newars of different castes I found many cases with intercaste relationship where they inherit their mother's surname rather than the normal way of inheriting the father's surname as in patrilineal society. Because in the past hypergamous marriage leads offspring of the union to adopt their mother's surname rather than the father who is higher in the caste hierarchy. The case in Figure 6.7 shows that a Śreṣṭha man (the grandfather of my 84-year-old Kāranjit informant) had two wives, one Śreṣṭha and one Kāranjit. The children of the caste-endogamous marriage retained their caste according following the father. But the son born to the Kāranjit woman had to inherit his mother's lower-caste name instead. By contrast, nowadays urban Newar women marrying hypergamosly adopt the husband's surname, as do the children.

Figure 6.7: Adoption of caste name among Newars in the past



6.3 Kinship Terminology

Literature on Newar kinship³ describe Newar kinship in terms of: an extreme patrilineal descent, a preference for patrilocal joint extended family residence (this phenomena is changing more towards a nuclear family), importance of the mother's brother (*pāju*) in relation with mother's kin, with status and power formally resting in the eldest males of the lineage. In terms of inheritance, women receive trousseaux while men (along with unmarried women over 35) divide the father's estate equally. Although these features are similar to Northern Indian kinship system Toffin (1975) argues that Newar kinship has retained structural characteristics of its own which relate back to the Tibeto-Burman domain. Beyond the basic opposition between consanguines and affines, there emerges a system in which alliance plays a predominant role.

In our conversations about kinship, my Newar informants mentioned the term *thaḥthiti* so frequently that I began to wonder whom exactly they were referring to. It was like the English word 'relative', a convenient but vague word to describe a person with whom one is linked to either by blood or marriage. A good example is the condolence message in Figure 6.2, where the family of the deceased used the term *thaḥthiti* to mean all relatives, both consanguines and affines.

One of the main causes of confusion about Newar kinship terminology is that the same term can sometimes denote two (or more) different things. The meanings attached to kinship terms are often subjective and contextual, thereby making generalizations problematic. A good example is the term *thaḥthiti*. Although *thaḥthiti* is commonly used to designate consanguines and affines alike,

the term is also used more specifically to denote the kin of married-in or married-out females.

A Dhākhwā woman who is married to a Śākya man (a caste endogamous marriage) described to me that she is addressed by all of her Dhākhwā lineage group as their married-out daughter (*mhyāy macā*) and she refers all of them as her *thaḥthiti*. In fact, in a broader context, a few informants stated that almost anyone could be considered as a *thaḥthiti*. Informants often consider everyone of the same caste group from their own house to the whole *twāḥ* or locality as their kinsmen. This view is confirmed by the way Newars address each other with kin terms like ‘elder brother’ (*dāju*), ‘father’s younger brother’ (*kakā*), ‘grandfather’ (*bājyā*), ‘elder sister’ (*tatā*), ‘younger sister’ (*kehē*).

To avoid this confusion, hereafter I shall use the term ‘generic *thaḥthiti*’ to denote all consanguines and affines and the term ‘feminal⁴ *thaḥthiti*’ to denote the kin of married-in or married-out females.

Generic *thaḥthiti* can be divided into three groups:

6.3.1 *lāhi thaḥ*

6.3.2 feminal *thaḥthiti*

6.3.3 *twāy thaḥ*

³ See Fürer-Haimendorf, C. (1956), Nepali, G. (1965), Rosser, C. (1966), Toffin, G. (1975, 1984), Sresthacharya (1977) Gellner, D and Quigley, D. (1995), Quigley, D. (1987).

⁴ Because this group is the opposite of agnatic kin, Mandelbaum (1970: 150) has defined the kin of married-in or married-out females as ‘feminal kin’.

6.3.1 *Lāhi thaḥ*: ‘flesh and blood kin’

Lāhi thaḥ literally means flesh (*lā*) and blood (*hi*) kinsmen (*thaḥ*), and it can be divided into two separate groups: *sadde* and *phukī*. *Sadde* is a prefix to denote ‘one’s own’ kin or ‘full’ kin, e.g. *sadde kijā* (full younger brother) or *sadde pāju* (one’s own mother’s brother). *Sadde* kin is the primary unit of Newar kinship, the central core which can extend to two generations above and below ego and which consists of only consanguines. Although *sadde* kin are obliged to participate in all the domestic and life-cycle rituals in the family, it is not required for *sadde* to live in one household: one’s *sadde* kin can be living in a different household and still have full ritual obligations.

Despite the volume of research done on Newar kinship terminology, there has been no single definition for the word *phukī*. Instead, there is a plethora of definitions, varying according to the group and region being studied. Fürer-Haimendorf (1956: 27) in his study of Mānandhars of Kathmandu, Vergati (1995: 38) in her study of Newars of Bhaktapur, Quigley (1984: 153) in his study of Śreṣṭhas of Dhulikhel, R.P. Pradhan (1986: 33ff) in his study of Hindu Newars of Kathmandu, B. Pradhan (1981:33) in her study of the Newar women of Bulu and Gellner (1995: 225) in his study of Vajrācāryas and Śākyas of Patan all define *phukī* as ‘lineage’. For Lewis (1984: 165) who studied Tulādhar of Kathmandu and Herdick (1987: 237) in his study of Newars of Kirtipur, *phukī* is ‘patrilineal group’ or ‘clan’ respectively, while Toffin (1984: 74-5, 168) defines it as a ‘group (of agnatic kin)’, ‘lineage’ and ‘agnates’ (1984: 168, 174). Levy (1992: 138-9) somehow managed to avoid problems of definition by using only Newari terms. Nepali (1965: 194) tried to do the same, but ended up drawing a parallel between *phukī* (‘*fukee*’ in his spelling) and the ‘*dewali guthi*’ (lineage group). The strongest critique of attempts to define *phukī* comes from Ishii (1995: 141) who

suggests that *phukī* does not even denote a particular group⁵ and he ended up defining *phukī* as ‘persons who are related patrilineally and never lineages’.

The confusion is not just among anthropologists. Even Newars become confused when asked to define *phukī*. I asked an elderly Citrakār couple: ‘Whom you have to invite for a marriage?’ They answered, ‘All our *thaḥthiti* and *phukī-phākī*.’⁶ When asked to differentiate between the two terms they became very confused and realized that they did not know how to give precise definitions of the two words.

A review of anthropologists’ expositions of *phukī* shows that there are different categories of *phukī* which are differentiated by three common criteria: 1) the extent to which a person is polluted by birth or death within that *phukī*, 2) the obligation to worship the lineage deity, and 3) whether intermarriage is permitted with another member within the *phukī*. However, there has been no consistent use of these criteria to differentiate between *phukī*.

Toffin (1995: 197) describes three levels of *phukī* among Rajopadhyaya Brahmans: a) *Phukī* which he interprets as ‘near kin’ i.e. extended family or sub-lineages; b) *Tāpā phukī* as ‘distant kin’ i.e. lineage; and c) *Āgā phukī* as ‘kin sharing the same *āgā dyaḥ* (lineage deity)’, i.e. clan. But among Maharjan of Kathmandu, Toffin (1994: 446) explains that they distinguish only two degrees of agnatic links: 1) up to the third generation, the close agnates, *phukī*; 2) up to the fifth generation, the distant agnates, *jhinu*. As a rule, lineage includes all the *phukī* kinsmen and some *jhinu*.

⁵ See also Toffin 1975: 53 n.7.

⁶ *Phukī-phākī* is a rhythmic term which means the same as *phukī*.

Gellner (1995: 225-6) looks at *phukī* as a lineage on two levels: (*tāpā*) *phukī*, ‘distant lineage’ or ‘distant patrilineal relations’ who will observe minimal restrictions on each other’s death, and *syāḥ⁷ phukī*, ‘marrow or inner lineage’. He also found that among the Śākyas of Lalitpur, *phukī* is also used to denote *dāju-kijā* (brothers) or *sikāy bukāy hwāpī* (those who stick together in birth and death), i.e. those who observe seven days’ death pollution (1995: 225).

In his study of Udāy of northern Kathmandu Lewis (1995: 50) defines *phukī* as ‘an important family unit, designating members united by patrilineage who perform special rituals (e.g. to clan deities) and together undergo pollution restrictions at times of birth or death’. Little has been written about marriage within the *phukī*, but there is a mention by Nepali (1965: 196) who states that those who are *bā phukī* (distant or split kin) are marriageable (although he found no incidence of such kind). This implies that those who are within the close *phukī* are not marriageable, a rule which is followed by Newars I interviewed in southern Kathmandu. However, Gellner and Pradhan (1995: 174-5) describe such a case took place in Lalitpur though it was contested.

According to Levy (1992: 138) Newars of Bhaktapur define *syāḥ phukī* or *syāphū* as ‘nuclear family members, then add others in the household, and then mother’s brother (*pāju*) and his household, father’s sister (*nini*) and her household, their own married sisters and their children, and last (and in the case of men not always included) their own spouses’. However, Levy’s definition of *syāḥ phukī* does not apply to the Newars of Kathmandu. Newars of all castes in Kathmandu consider mother’s brother (*pāju*) and his household as pure uterine *thaḥthiti*, not agnatic *phukī*. Similarly, father’s sister (*nini*) and her household are

⁷ According to Levy (1992: 138) the term ‘*syā*’ is given various local etymologies and thought to be derived from *syā gu*, ‘to hurt’.

also considered to be feminal *thaḥthiti*. Although father's sister was a *phukī* member before her marriage, upon her marriage she is no longer a *phuki* member of her natal household but a member of her husband's *phukī* group. This applies to married sisters as well. However, in some cases (Śreṣṭhas of Kathmandu) married daughters are referred to as *pyenhu phukī* or 'agnates of four days'. But this does not mean that they are part of their natal *phukī* — rather it means they are agnates for only four days while they observe the death restrictions, not full death pollution (cf. Ishii 1996: 145). This implies that there is a difference in the way that Newars of Kathmandu and Bhaktapur use the same kinship terminology.

Some scholars choose to define *phukī* purely in terms of genealogy. Sharma (1998: 98) uses the term *bhochī* to define family members of up to two generations who live in the same house. Kin who have a distant relationship to the *bhochī*, i.e. the families of one's own brothers, are called '*thaḥpī*' or 'own people'. Within this category Sharma includes father's brothers and their children. Further distant kin are called *syāḥpī*. *Thaḥpī* and *syāḥpī* cover family members of 3-5 generations whereas family members of 5-7 generations he calls *phukī*. *Phukī* later split into *bā phukī* (split kin) which Sharma also called *khalah* as an exogamous clan group.

The problem with defining *phukī* purely in terms of genealogy is that there is great variety in the findings of scholars on the subject. Perhaps this is because Newars themselves use these terms subjectively; for example, one person's *tāpā phukī* may be another's *syāḥ phukī*. However, synthesizing these approaches and definitions, I shall put forward the most common definition of *phukī*: it is a group of agnatic kin who are bound by the observance of birth and death pollution, the lineage deity and rules on intermarriage. Drawing on the ethnographic data of Newars of southern Kathmandu, I also have found that *phukī* only applies to

agnatic kin who are not considered *sadde* kin, and that it also includes women who are married to *phukī* kinsmen and their unmarried daughters. Adopted children are also regarded as *phukī* and have to bear full ritual responsibilities although he is considered a slightly lower than the real *phukī* members.

6.3.1.1 Degrees of *phukī*

In the preceding section, I have outlined the definition of *phukī* and introduced some of the criteria for differentiating between the different degrees of *phukī*. In this section, I shall attempt to break down *phukī* into its constituent categories and attach the rules and ritual obligations which apply to each *phukī* category.

Under the umbrella of *phukī*, there are many degrees of *phukī* which indicate the degrees of closeness or distance between kin. The closest *phukī* is *syāḥ phukī*⁸ which literally means ‘kin who feels pain’ or ‘kin who are as close as one’s bone marrow’. The most distant kin, but still considered one’s flesh and blood, is *bā phukī* which means ‘split kin’. Some said that although one’s split kin are descendants of the same ancestor, marriage with them is possible. With regards to *phukī* marriage Nepali (1965: 196) writes that although theoretically it is possible but he found no incidence of such union. Against Nepali, Gellner and Pradhan (1995: 174-5) found few cases among Maharjan of Lalitpur where lineage is split because of marriage itself between the *bā phukis*. In other words, if a marriage between members of the same lineage take place the lineage divide

⁸ *Syāḥ* in Newari means ‘hurt’ or ‘pain’. It is also very close to other term *syāḥ* which means ‘bone marrow’. Therefore, some interpret it as ‘kin who feel pain’ (Levy 1992: 138) or as ‘bone marrow kin’ (Gellner 1995: 226).

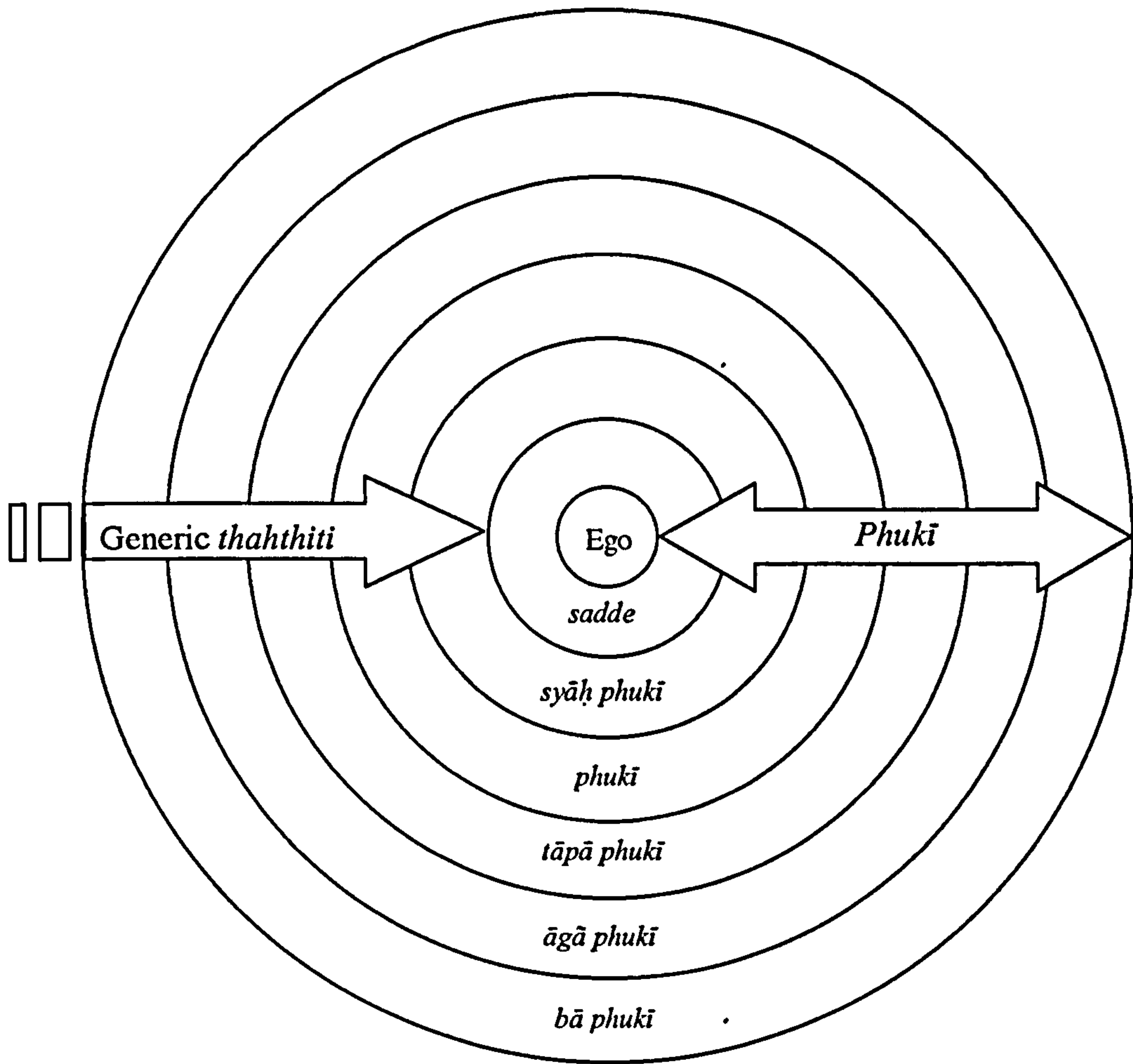
into two lineages which will legitimize the marriage itself because upon the split of the lineage it is considered that two lineages are marriageable.

Between these two extremes there are other categories such as *tāpā phukī* and *āgā phukī*. *Tāpā phukī* literally means ‘distant kin’ and *āgā phukī* means *phukī* members who share the same lineage deity.

If we were to visualize *lāhi thaḥ* as a series of concentric circles (see Figure 6.8), then the central core would be *sadde* kin, after which comes the *syāḥ phukī*, *phukī*, *tāpā phukī*, *āgā phukī* and finally *bā phukī*. The further a *phukī* category is from the central core the less it is considered ‘close’ kin, and the fewer its ritual obligations in cases of birth and death pollution. The yardstick to measure closeness or distance between kin is the extent to which that kin is polluted by birth or death within the *phukī*. For example, if one is polluted by death in the same way as that of the central core (*sadde*) kin they are the closest kin because they are the group of people called *sikāy bukāy hwāpī*, ‘those who stick together at birth and death’ or *syāḥpī*, close kin (See Table 6.1 for mourning periods). These terms do not signify specific groups, but rather degrees of closeness or ‘relation among agnatic kin’ (Toffin 1975: 53 n7, also Ishii 1995: 141).

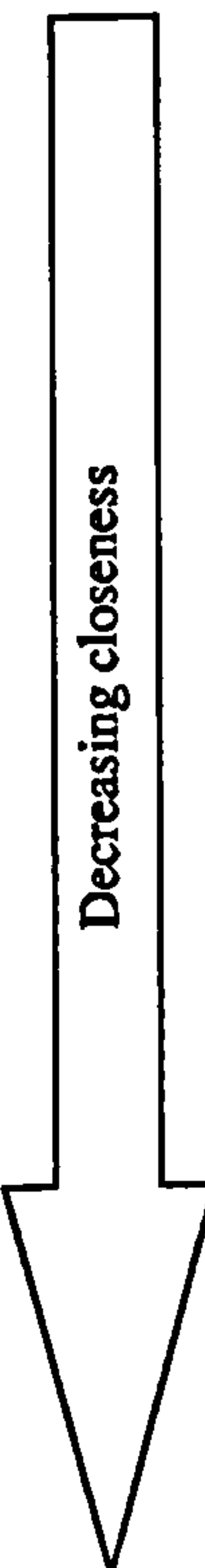
The mourning period which is observed by a married woman shows that she is more affected by death pollution in her in-law’s family than in her natal family, implying that a married woman is more closely affiliated to her in-laws household more than her natal home.

Figure 6.8: Diagram displaying closeness among different degrees of *phukī*.



Beyond these circles of *phukī*, i.e. ‘lineage kin’ (*āgā phukī*) and ‘split kin’ (*bā phukī*), people are not affected by any death pollution or death restrictions although they may help and partake in funeral as being a member of the same funeral socio-religious group (*sī guthi*). One of the elements which become a part of linkages of agnatic kin with ‘lineage kin’ and ‘split kin’ is that the sharing of the same crematorium ground for the funerals.

Table 6.1 Mourning periods for a deceased adult observed by Newars of Kathmandu (adapted from Gellner 1992: 207).

| Degrees of closeness | Degrees of death pollution | |
|--|--|--|
|  | Sons and wife of deceased (<i>sadde</i>) | Observe death pollution for 7 ^a or 13 days; remain at home for 45 days; remain in year-long mourning for rest of year |
| | 'Bone marrow' agnatic kin (<i>syāḥ phukī</i>) | Observe death pollution for 7 ^a or 13 days; remain at home for 45 days |
| | Agnatic kin (<i>phukī</i>) | Observe death restrictions for 7 ^a or 13 days; |
| | Feminal <i>thaḥthiti</i> (especially married daughters) | Observe restrictions ^b for four days |
| | Distant kin (<i>tāpā phukī</i>) | Observe restrictions ^b till cremation |
| | Lineage kin (<i>āgā phukī</i>) | A male member may need to join in funeral as a member of the same funeral <i>guthi</i> (<i>sī guthi</i>) |
| Split kin (<i>bā phukī</i>) | A male member may need to join in funeral if he is of the same funeral <i>guthi</i> (<i>sī guthi</i>) otherwise nothing is related apart from sharing the same crematorium | |

Notes:

^a Among four castes of Vajrācāryas, Śākya, Kapāli and Dyaḥla periods of death pollution is 7 days whereas all other castes observe for 13 days before they are purified.

^b To observe restrictions means to avoid eating meat, onions, garlic, tomatoes beans etc.; avoid beautification; avoid god's shrines and accepting *prasād*; avoid leather or wearing cap.

Based on the length of the death pollution some people distinguish *phukī* members accordingly. For example, *jhīswanhu phukī* or 'agnates of thirteen days' for one who observe death pollution for thirteen days. Alternatively, this is also sometimes refers as *jhīnḥu phukī*⁹ or 'agnates of ten days' although theoretically

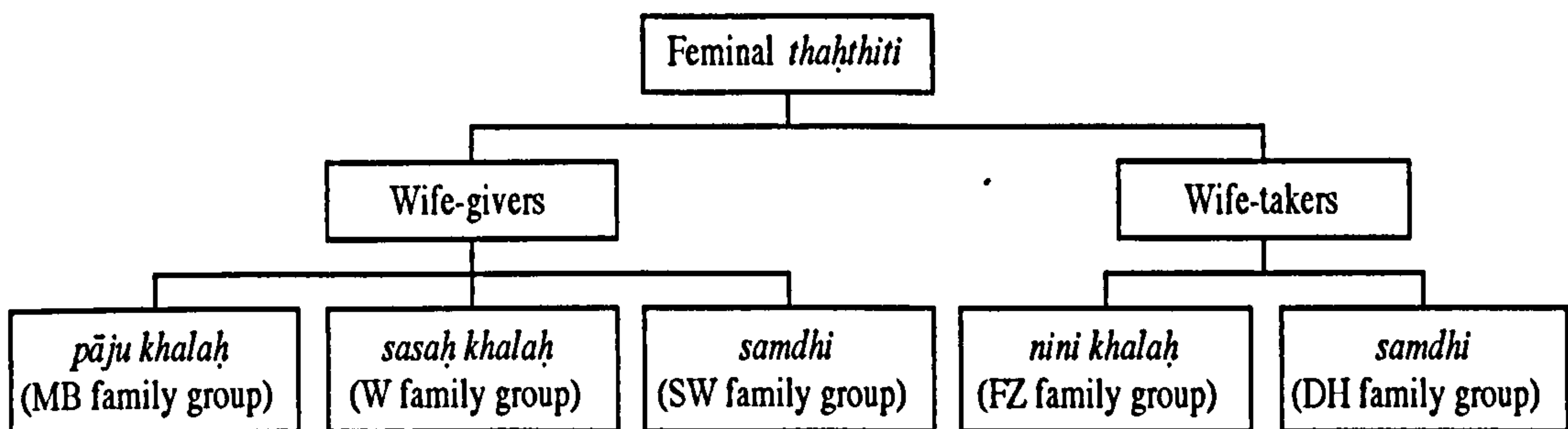
⁹ '*Jhīswanhu phukī*,' agnates of thirteen days and '*jhīnḥu phukī*,' agnates of ten days are in fact the same group of kin. It is just an alternative way of saying '*jhīswanhu*'.

the death pollution lasts for thirteen days; *pyenhu phukī* or ‘agnates of four days’ for one who observe death pollution for four days.

6.3.2 Feminal *thaḥthiti*: ‘Feminal kin’

Like *phukī*, *thaḥthiti* is often used to define one’s kin, but again the meaning is ambiguous. *Thaḥthiti* is made of two words: *thaḥ* means ‘one’s own’ and *thiti* means ‘custom or rite’, i.e. anyone linked through the married-in or married-out females. Basically, they are families of wife-givers and wife-takers. These include mother’s brother’s families (*pāju khalah*), father’s sister’s husband’s families (*nini khalah*), married sisters’ families (*jiḥā khalah*), wife’s families (*sasaḥ khalah*), and children’s in-laws families (*samdhi*) (see Figure 6.9).

Figure 6.9: Types of feminal *thaḥthiti*



Each of these categories of feminal kin is categorized not only by terminology but also ritual and social functions each has to fulfil. The most common are periodic visits (*nakhatyā*) and fulfilling ritual duties in life-cycle rituals. Among all four types of feminal kin, the uterine kin (*pāju khalah*) and father’s sister kin (*nini khalah*) are considered the closest kin, and as such uterine kin has more ritual obligations than other kin. For example, a child’s mother’s brother and father’s sister are not only essential for the child’s life-cycle rituals,

but the bond between them lasts as long as they live, with the mother's brother and father's sister playing a semi-parental role.

The difference between feminal *thaḥthiti* and *phukī* boils down to the issue of gender. Feminal *thaḥthiti* are kin that are connected by females (i.e. daughter's husband's family, sister's husband's family, father's sister's husband's family, etc.) whereas *phukī* are all the kin that are connected by males (i.e. all consanguinal kin minus the women who have married out). Maharjans of southern Kathmandu have a similar way of distinguishing these two groups. They use the term *kaytā thaḥ* (loincloth kin) to denote *phuki* and *parsi thaḥ* (sari kin) to denote feminal *thaḥthiti*.

6.3.3 *Twāy thaḥ*: 'fictive kin'

Kin from this third group are not related cognatically but by ritual or mutual friendship. This feature of fictive kin is common in many South Asian societies. It can be extended by both males and females but between the same gender. It is also not restricted by caste or ethnicity. Sometimes, it is used for benefits of business. People who used to travel for trade often had interethnic *twāy*. A Śākya informant described how a goldsmith (*lūkami*) would use *twāy* to create links with specific Parbatiyā customers—they would *twāy cinegu* their children—and they would then bring all their co-villagers to him as goldsmiths (personal communication with Gellner). A man's close male friend can become his 'fictive brother' and a woman's close female friend can become her 'fictive sister'.

In becoming fictive kin, they become subject to the same marriage restrictions, at least in relation to close kin, as a biological or classificatory 'brother' or 'sister'. *Twāy* kin are invited to major feasts held in the family (e.g.

marriage feast). Most people only have one *twāy*. However, in some cases, a trader with connections in several communities may have several *twāys* representing his interests or major connections in various communities. Unlike the relationship between consanguinal and affinal kin the *twāy* relationship generally only lasts during the fictive kin's life-time. Once either party dies the kinship ties ceases as well.

Women conventionally and usually form their *twāy* kin at the time of their *ihi* (mock-marriage) ritual whereas men can form them at any time during their lives. The formation of *twāy* kin was very common for both sexes in the past, but it is now less common for men. In modern *ihi* rituals I have witnessed adult women telling their girls to make *twāy* with the girls who are in the same *ihi* ritual but I have not seen any girl really establish such *twāy* relationship as in the past. Nowadays it is a symbol of cementing a friendship rather than the heavily moral and emotional responsibility that was assumed by such kin in the past.

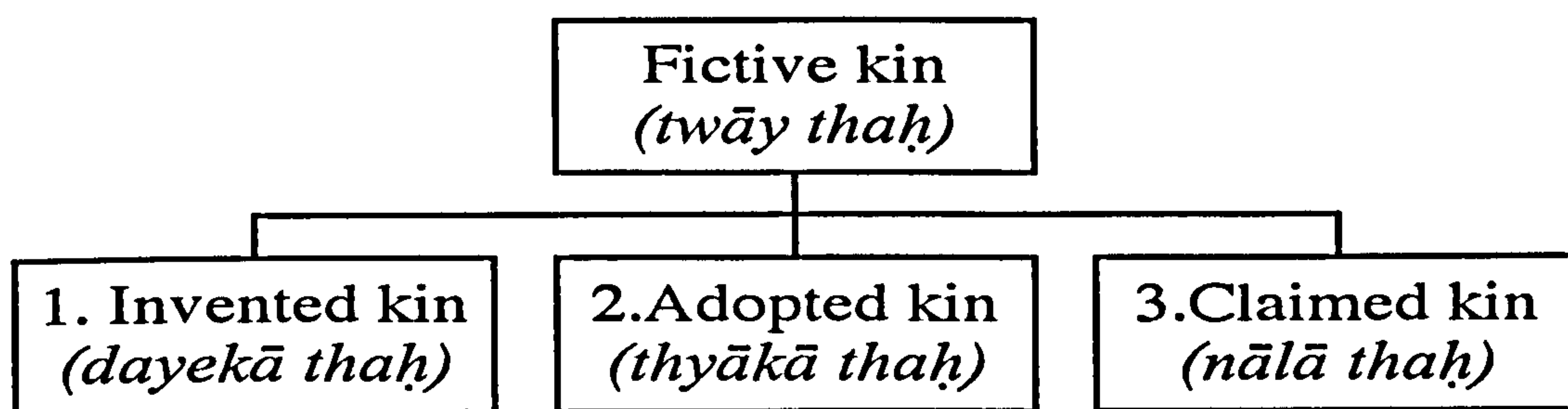
Although theoretically *twāy* kin can be extended without any restriction of caste, ethnicity or social status, it does not cut across the boundary between touchable and untouchable caste groups. If the *twāy* relation is with someone very different in terms of social status or ethnicity, the caste commensality rule still applies between them regardless of being a *twāy* kin.

An 85 year-old man, Ashakaji, Śākya by caste and a goldsmith by profession, told me that when he was a young man he travelled beyond the Valley to seek work from other ethnic groups. In one of the villages he travelled he had formed his *twāy* kin with a Parbatiyā, non-Newar Brahman, a relationship which existed throughout his life. Speaking of the advantage of having *twāy* kin Ashakaji said, 'I feel safe and homely when I go to those remote villages. It is like visiting another relative of mine. I do not need to worry about where to eat or

sleep. In return, when he visits Kathmandu I offer the same hospitality to him'. However, when the Brahman visits his Newar *twāy* kin in Kathmandu, he does not accept boiled rice from his host Newar *twāy*. Instead, he cooked for himself on a stove lent by his Newar *twāy*.

Newars classify their *twāy* kin into three different types: invented kin (*daykā thaḥ*), adopted kin (*thyākā thaḥ*), and claiming kin (*nālā thaḥ*) (see Figure 6.10).

Figure 6.10: Types of Fictive kin



1. Invented kin (*daykā thaḥ*) are kin formed through ritually bonded friendship. Entering into a bonded friend relationship with someone generally takes place between the same gender and of the same generation, although there is no restriction on caste, ethnic background or social status. Any best friend can be upgraded to *daykā thaḥ* by ritual or just mutual bond. When invented kin is formed they are then called *twāy* or respectfully *twāyju*. Once the *twāy* relationship is formed all kin of that friend would be the ego's fictive kin and treated equally as kin who is related by blood or marriage (e.g. invited to the same feasts, however, they may not subject to the same mourning period. It will be depends on personal choice). They are referred and addressed using the same kinship terminology as a *twāy* would refer to his/her kin members but with the prefix of *twāy* (e.g. *twāy dāju*, fictive elder brother; *twāy bājyā*, fictive grandfather, *twāy bhau*, fictive daughter-in-law). However, this practice is less

common among urban Newars at present compared to the past. I have not found any cases of *twāy* kin among the younger generation of today.

2. Adopted kin (*thyākā thah*) occurs when a family without children adopts a child of others' legally or culturally and takes care of them as their own. Those children are sometimes called '*thyākā macā*' or adopted child (in Nepali *dharmaputra* or *dharmaputri*). These kin are entitled to inheritance and obliged to ritual duties within the family as if a son in case of boy and daughter in case of girl. Significantly, the adopting child must be a close kin or of the same lineage. The present Nepalese legal code of Muluki Ain (1996: 140) provides a separate section on adoption which specifies that an adopted son must be:

1. An offspring (*santān*)¹⁰ born to the same abdomen (*bhūdi*);
2. If there is no offspring of type 1 an offspring born to sons of mother's sisters;
3. If there is also no offspring of type 2 an offspring born to a grandfather;
4. If there is no offspring from the grandfather side an offspring born to daughters' sons;
5. If there is no offspring of type 4 an offspring born to the grandfather's father's sons;
6. If there is also no offspring of type 5 a son born to sisters;
7. If there is no offspring of type 6 too a son born to brothers of one's lineage (*gotra*).

Not having any of these kinsmen only then allowed to adopt someone from other lineage.

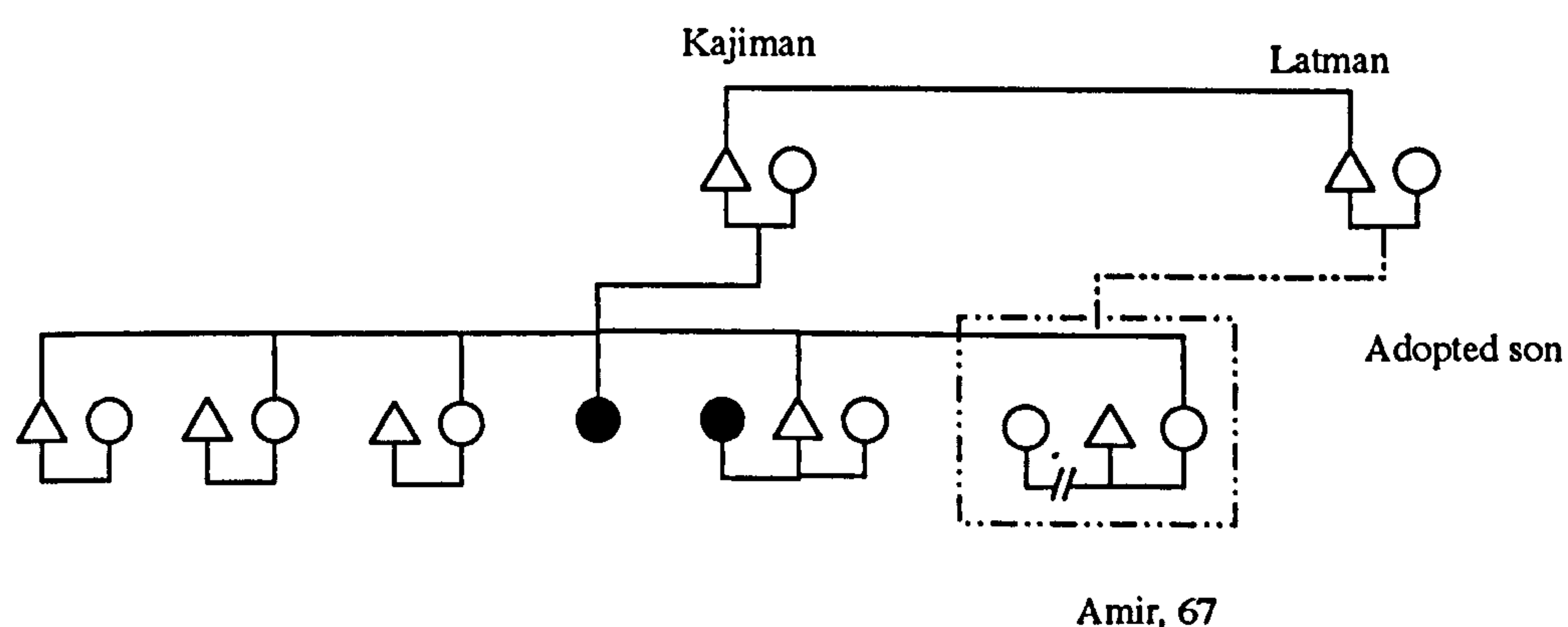
Surprisingly, if we interpret this legal code in kin terms the first priority of adoption is given to a brother or half-brother (son born to the same abdomen). Only then to a son of MZS, FFS, DS, FFFS, ZS, and BS (of the same lineage or *gotra*). The least priority is a son from other lineage. By essence, this legal code gives priority to a son of the ego's lineage than a son from different lineage. It is

¹⁰ *Santān* here means sons.

also interesting to note that feminal kin come higher up the pecking order.¹¹ With regards to the marriage of the adopted son the same rules are applied as a natural born sons. This can be seen in the following case study (see Figure 6.11) where a nephew is adopted by the Ego as his son.

3. Claimed kin (*nālā thaḥ*) arise from claiming someone to fulfil religious or social duty for an individual. For example, if one does not have brother or sister to perform an annual ‘brother worship’ ceremony he or she may claim some boy or girl of the same caste to fulfil that duty. They are then called *nālā dājukijā* (claimed brothers) or *nālā thaḥkehē* (claimed sisters). Similarly, if a family does not have a daughter but need a woman to fulfil the daughter’s role the family may request some girl of the same caste to be their ‘claimed daughter’ (*nālā mhyāy*). Importantly, in this category a caste restriction is applied as a *nālā thaḥ* is required to participate in domestic rituals.

Figure 6.11: A case of adopted son among Newars (this case is of a Kāranjit family)



¹¹ The legal code amended in 1976 added that a daughter can be adopted too, however, it does not state any pecking order as with an adoption of a son.

A Śreṣṭha woman of age 60 told me that she had claimed a younger man from the same caste to be her younger brother (*kijā*) as she does not have any brother in her family. As a *nālā kijā* or ‘claimed younger brother’ she ritually worship him annually on the occasion of younger brother worship festival. She sends him a grand feast and sweets at his house as a *kijā pūjā ku* or ‘younger brother worship load’. In return, the claimed younger brother gives her presents. In terms of other social relations there are no other obligations to follow apart from addressing each other with kinship term: elder sister (*tatā*) and younger brother (*kijā*). And indeed the marriage union between claimed *thaḥ* is prohibited.

6.4 Levels of Newar kinship organization

In the previous section, it is established that the term *phukī* does not signify a group but rather a relation between agnatic kin (Toffin 1975: 53 n7; Ishii 1995: 141). This section continues the analysis of Newar kinship terminology with the terms *kawaḥ* and *khalah*, to show that in contrast to *phukī*, *kawaḥ* and *khalah* denote specific patrilineal kin groups. This section shows the constituents of Newar caste, from the household, *kawaḥ*, *khalah*, territorial caste sub-group and finally to territorial caste level in order to show Newar kinship organization. Caste itself is based on the kinship nexus, as Kolenda (1978: 4) observes: ‘the constant feature in caste is its kinship or descent-group structure’.

Rabindra, a 38 year-old Śākya of Kathmandu, was on a visit to Tibet in 1987 when he came across a Newar goldsmith, also a Śākya, who had migrated from Kathmandu and settled in Lhasa. After introducing themselves, the goldsmith told Rabindra that they are both *thaḥ pare jū* (related) because they belong to the same

caste, i.e. they were both Śākya and from the same *bāhāḥ* or Buddhist monastery.

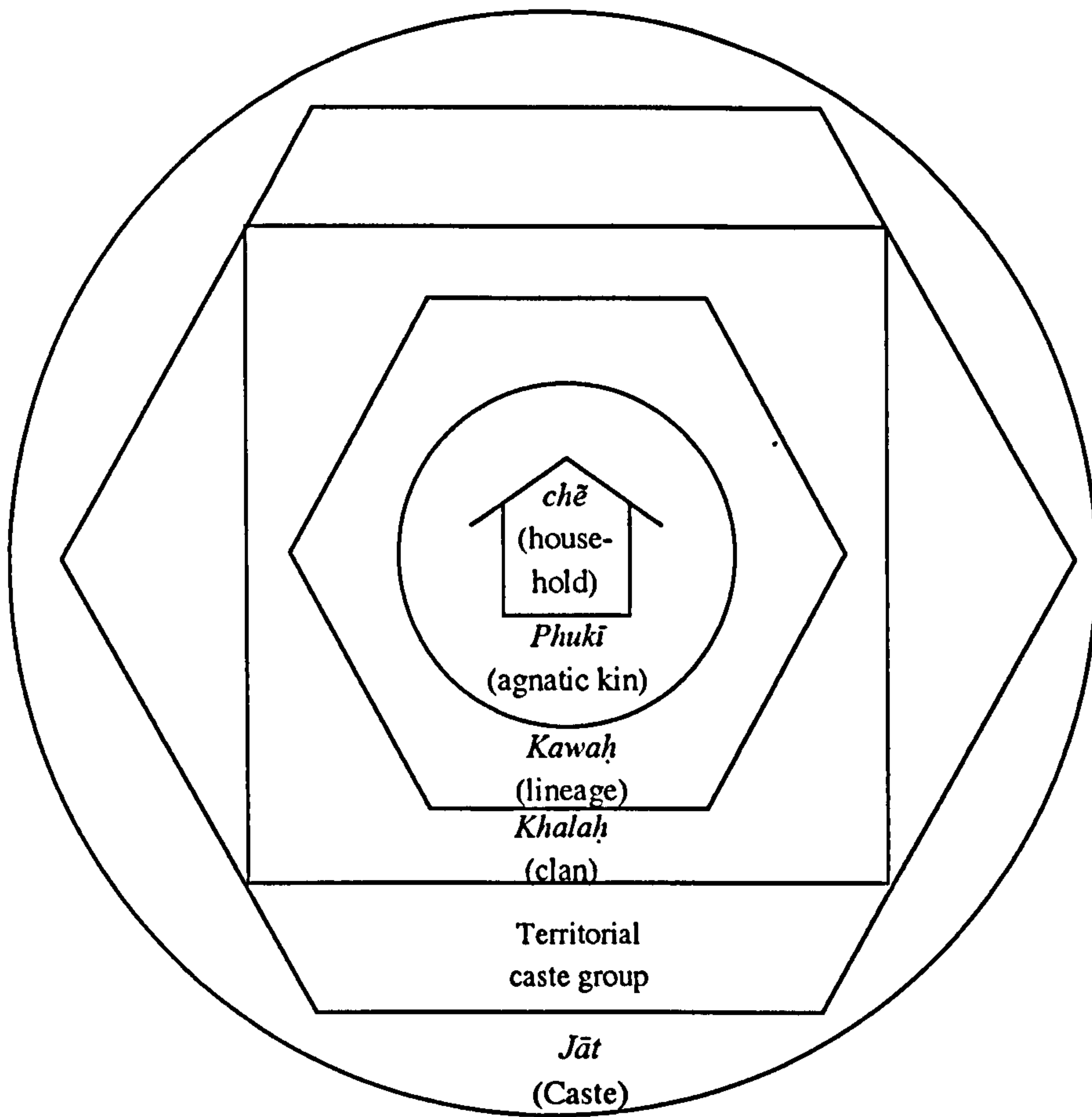
The case study displays that for Newars, two people belonging to the same caste and having a common ancestor (*āju*) are considered to be relatives, although the exact descent line may not be known or remembered. The most common criteria among Newars of Kathmandu to claim relatedness are the sharing of the place of initiation, having the same lineage deity and sharing the same cremation ground. Each Newar caste in the caste level in southern Kathmandu has their own cremation grounds which are located in the area where the Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers converge. These cremation grounds are exclusive to the Newars of southern Kathmandu; for example, a Śākya from Lalitpur or Bhaktapur may not be cremated at the Śākya cremation grounds in southern Kathmandu simply because he is not from southern Kathmandu. In this way, the cremation grounds are the definitive landmarks of identity for Newars in southern Kathmandu¹². Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that of all the Newar castes in southern Kathmandu, those which are recent immigrants to southern Kathmandu are not represented by a cremation ground. One example is the Rājopādhyāya. According to their genealogy, they first settled in southern Kathmandu about around 150-200 years ago, thus making them a recent addition to Newar society in southern Kathmandu. Nowadays, when a Rājopādhyāya in southern Kathmandu dies they raise their own temporary special cremation pyre on the middle of the river to cremate the body. However, there is also a general cremation ground for public use which Newars of southern Kathmandu themselves refer it as an 'insignificant cremation ground' (*bhārā bhuru dipa*). In

¹² Special mention should be made of the Kapali caste who bury their dead. Therefore, instead of a cremation ground, they have their burial ground (*cihān*) in the same area.

many cases, Newars or non-Newars who live in the areas of southern Kathmandu without having their own cremation ground take their dead body to cremate at Paśupati.

A caste can be divided into various groups (see Figure 6.12). The largest group is the territorial caste group, i.e. a group which is known by the locality in which it lives and use the same surname. For example, within the Vajrācārya caste, there are six territorial Vajrācārya caste groups in southern Kathmandu which are named and referred after their main *bāhāḥs*: the Vajrācārya of Lagā Bāhāḥ, Om Bāhāḥ, inner Musum Bāhāḥ, outer Musum Bāhāḥ, Mikhā Bāhāḥ and Iku Bāhāḥ. The territorial caste groups each have an ancestor deity which they call *āju* (great-grandfather). *Āju* is considered to be the ‘founder’ of the territorial caste group (cf. Locke 1985: 9) and it is he who presides over the initiation rituals for both boys and girls. For example, all Vajrācāryas and Śākyas of Lagā Bāhāḥ of Kathmandu believe that their ancestor (*āju*) is Āyudeva or locally known as *hyāukhwāḥ āju* or ‘red face ancestor’. Therefore, all members of Lagā Bāhāḥ are related by having the same legendary ancestor. Likewise, among the Maharjan of southern Kathmandu there are ten Maharjan territorial caste groups. They have Pacalī Bhairava, the guardian deity of southern Kathmandu as their *āju* or legendary ancestor and they perform initiation (*waḥlā*) for their boys at the temple of Pacalī Bhairava. They are also grouped and named after the localities where they live. The nine Maharjan territorial caste groups are: Bākāchē, Kohiti, Musum Bāhāḥ, Nāypāco, Phasigā, Om Bāhāḥ, Tukā Bāhāḥ, Yāgā, and Yutanani (Toffin 1994: 451).

Figure 6.12: Diagram displaying Newar kinship and caste organization



The territorial caste group is usually a term of reference: in introductions, in addition to one's name, one is often asked which locality one comes from. However, nowadays, some territorial caste groups have mobilized to provide support and services to their members. An example of this is the group of Śākya musicians from Lagan who established an organization to teach and provide music exclusively for their fellow caste members from Lagā Bāhāḥ. The territorial caste group also has the duty to maintain the cremation ground which is shared with other territorial caste groups. The *sī guthi* (funeral association) of Śākyas and Vajrācaryas of Lagā Bāhāḥ which is known as *Pacali Bhairav sī guthi khalah* has 33 members. This *sī guthi* represents the territorial caste group of the

priestly caste group of Lagā Bāhāḥ, at the business of a larger caste group of southern Kathmandu. In 1987, *Pacali Bhairav sī Guthi khalah* contributed amount of Rs 501 to the Jambudipa¹³ Cremation Ground Renovation Committee which is a bigger caste group work at the level of southern Kathmandu as one unit.

Below the *āju* deity are other deities which are in essence, parts of the *āju*.¹⁴ When a territorial caste group splits into *khalahs* or clans, each *khalah* will take a part of the main ancestor deity and with it, create another deity for their particular *khalah*. These 'derivative' deities are at the apex of the *khalah*; they are worshipped daily and they preside over the life-cycle rituals. Just as the territorial caste groups are named according to the locality, the *khalah* are also named according to particular landmarks, for example, *Alaḥtū khalah* (named after the well called *alah*). However, membership of *khalahs* is not restricted to particular localities, although the *khalah* name is still carried by the descendants of the *khalah*.

At the *khalah* level, there are some *guthis* which organize annual feasts which commemorate the *khalah* deity. Traditionally, marriage between two people from the different *khalahs* was not encouraged. As the elders would say, 'We have the same *āju* [great-grandfather]'. *Khalahs* are considered to be members of the same territorial caste group and therefore, same kin group. Nowadays, with population growth, the number of *khalahs* has increased, and the difference between *khalahs* is now large enough for marriage to be permissible between them, although there are some elders who would oppose such marriages. At the *khalah* level, there are *sī* (funeral) *guthis*, which oversee the funeral rituals

¹³ Jambudipa is a name of the cremation spot at Teku Dobhan of southern Kathmandu shared by five different castes of southern Kathmandu: Vajrācārya, Śākya, Śreṣṭha, Udāy, and Maharjan.

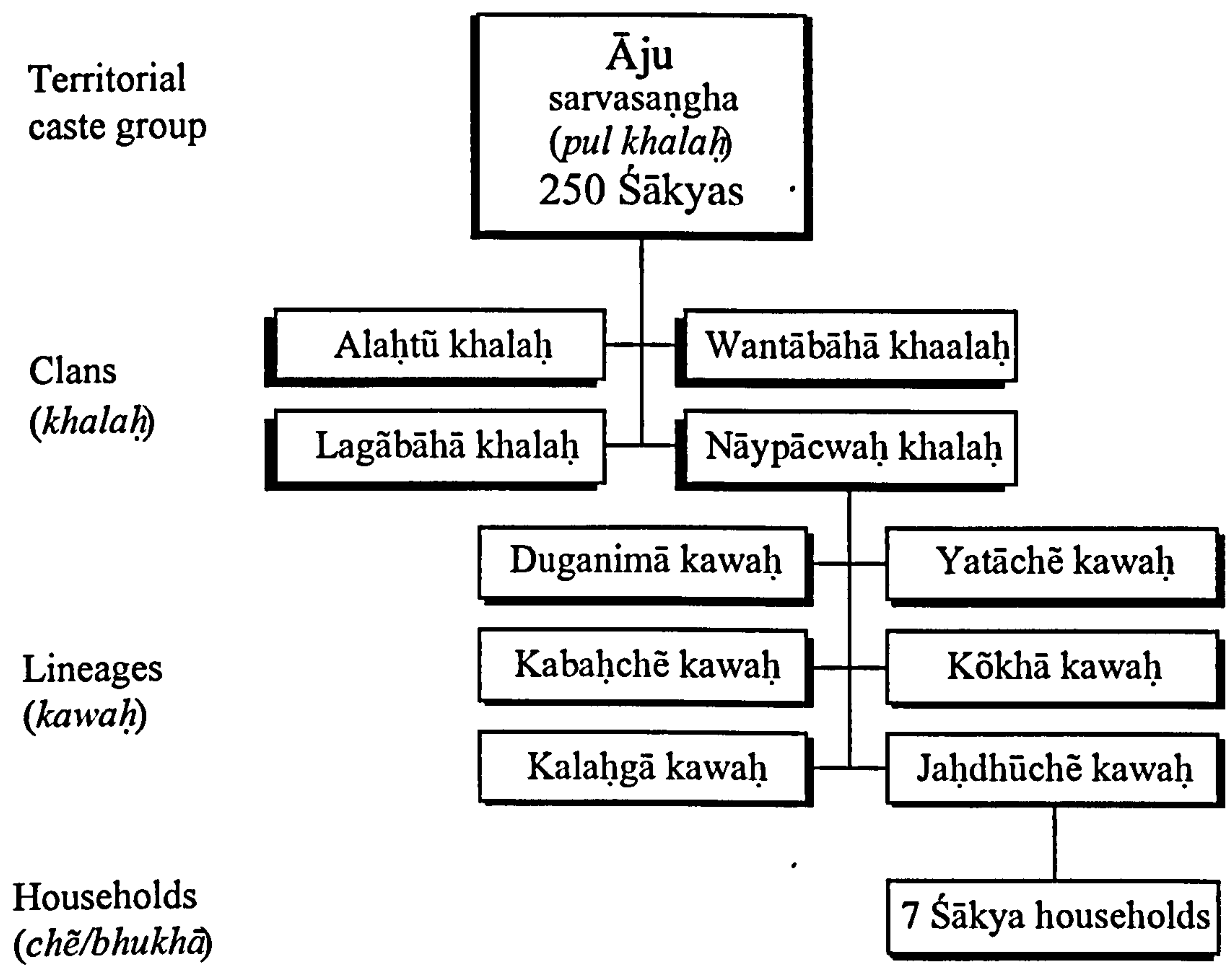
for the *khalah* members. The number of *sī guthis* in each *khalah* would depend on the size of the *khalah*. Each *sī guthi* is normally responsible for 40-70 households, beyond which it would be difficult to manage, and another *sī guthi* would be formed.

In case of Lagā Bāhāḥ on the largest level of the territorial caste group (*sarvasaṅgha*) which is known as *pul khalah* is composed of two hundred fifty Śākyas (Locke 1985: 313). The territorial caste group is divided into four different *khalahs* or clans. The *khalah* is generally made up of various *kawahs* or lineages. However, if the membership is manageable the division may not take place. A *khalah* may or may not have its own deity. However, all four Śākyas *khalahs* of Lagā Bāhāḥ have their own Tantric shrine (*āgā*) and Tantric god-house (*āgā chē*) within the same *bāhāḥ* located in the different direction of the *bāhāḥ*. Each *khalah* of Lagā Bāhāḥ is made up of several *kawahs*. A *kawah* is an extended patrilineal kin group (Gellner 1992: 66 and Lewis 1995: 52) and may include one or more households. For example, with the Śākyas of Nāypācwaḥ *khalah*, there are six *kawahs* (originally there were eight but two *kawahs* has collapsed), each with a different name, usually after landmarks¹⁴ in the area. In one of them, the Jaḥdhūchē *kawah*, there are seven households (see Figure 6.13). In terms of communal duty, members of each Śākyā *kawah* takes turns to be the guardian (*dyah pālāḥ*) of the Tantric shrine. The division into various *kawah* is arbitrary, depending on level of the social organisation and group cohesion. For example, in cases where the group is united and well-managed, a single *kawah* may made up of many households. However, if a group is too large to be

¹⁴ See detailed description on how a lineage deity split to smaller group among Newars on Toffin (1984: 199-203).

managed properly, it may split into smaller *kawaḥs* with fewer households. Toffin (1994: 446) states, ‘quarrels and migrations contribute to the process of fragmentation whereby a single lineage group splinters into new autonomous *kavā* [*kawaḥ*]’. Most *kawaḥ* group rarely have any common property and they have little influence in the collective life of the community (Toffin 1995: 194, 245). Marriage between two people from the same *kawaḥ* is strictly prohibited and is considered incestuous.

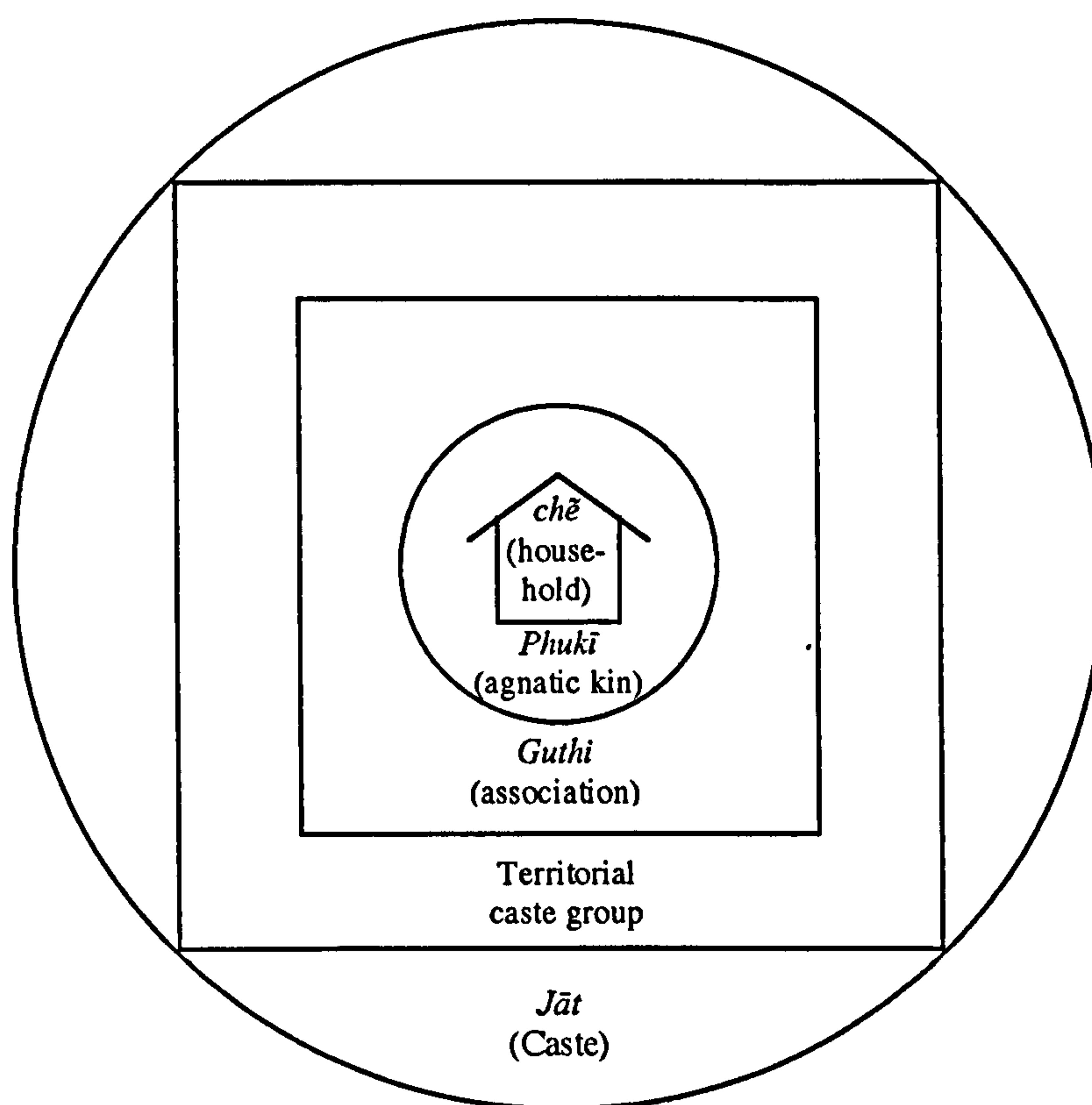
Figure 6.13: Divisions of *kawaḥ* and *khalah* of territorial Śākya caste group of Lagā Bāhāḥ



¹⁵There are also other nicknames which are not necessarily linked with landmarks, such as ‘mongoose’ *nawacā* (a Maharjan *kawaḥ* in southern Kathmandu) and ‘demon’ *lākhe* (a Ranjitkār *kawaḥ* in southern Kathmandu).

However, above structure portrayed in Figure 6.12 does not apply to all Newar castes. Among the clean service castes and Untouchables, those with a small population are not divided into *kawaḥ* and *khalah*. Instead, there are several funeral association (*sī guthi*). Their kinship organization is made up of household, *phukī* groups, *sī guthi* groups, territorial caste groups and caste groups (see Figure 6.14).

Figure 6.14: Division of kinship and caste organization among lower and small-sized caste groups.



After the *phukī* kin group, the larger caste group is organized in the form of funeral association (*sī guthi*) and they are named differently based on either the member size, deity, or locality. For example, the Kapāli caste group of Kathmandu has originally four funeral associations (*sī guthis*) which later split into nine *guthis*: two groups are called *tahdhā guthi*, *cidhā guthi* (according to the size of the membership and original group), *waṭuk bhairab guthi*, *gorakhānāth*

guthi, *pacali guthi* (named after deities), *makhā guthi*, *brahmaṭol guthi* (named after the locality) and *sewā guthi* (named after the aim of the *guthi*, i.e. to help). Likewise, on the level of territorial caste group among the Untouchable Dyaḥlā caste in Sabal Bāhāḥ of southern Kathmandu the caste group division are made of two funeral *guthis* (*sī guthi*): *taḥdhā guthi* with 75 members (representing 75 households) and *cidhā guthi* with 60 members (representing 60 households).

5.5 Conclusion

In Newar society, kinship defines one's identity. This is evident from the inscriptions at the various temples and the legal documents, which show the patrilineal line up to three generations from Ego. However, recently, there is a new medium for the expression of Newar kinship: the condolence message. The kin whose names are published are usually cognatic kin regardless of cohabitation or household, and equal emphasis is given to both consanguines and affines. However, one important aspect which has emerged is the public declaration of intercaste or inter-ethnic unions, an issue which was hitherto considered private. This indicates that intercaste marriages are not the taboo subject they used to be, and that Newars are becoming less concerned with publicly denying intercaste marriages although the preferred marriage pattern is still caste endogamy.

The contextual use of Newar kinship terminology has been the cause of some confusion among scholars. In this chapter, I have shown how the term *thaḥthiti* can be divided into three categories: *lāhi thaḥ*, feminal *thaḥthiti* and *twāy thaḥ*. *Lāhi thaḥ* literally means 'flesh and blood kinsmen', and can be divided into two mutually exclusive groups: *sadde* (consanguines up to two generations above and below Ego) and *phukī* (agnatic kin who are bound by ritual obligations and marriage prohibitions). Feminal *thaḥthiti* is anyone who is linked

through the married-in or married-out females. The difference between feminal *thaḥthiti* and *phukī* boils down to the issue of gender. Feminal *thaḥthiti* are kin that are connected by females whereas *phukī* are kin that are connected by males. *Twāy thaḥ* on the other hand, are 'fictive' kin. They are related not cognatically to Ego but by ritual or mutual friendship.

Although these kinship terms are clear in defining the ritual duties, marriage prohibitions and birth/death pollution that have to be observed, they are imprecise in that they do not tell us the exact relationship between two people. For example, two brothers who are born of the same uterus may be *sadde* in one case, and distant *phuki* in another, depending on the relationship between the two brothers. In showing the contextual nature of Newar kinship, this chapter highlights the fact that kinship is not defined by birth alone, but is constituted through ritual obligations and marriage rules.

Newar castes are also divided according to lineage (*kawaḥ*), clans (*khalah*) and territory. Like the term *phukī*, *kawaḥ* and *khalah* are not used entirely consistently by Newars; what is consistent is the underlying logic of the structure of Newar kinship and caste organization. However, unlike *phukī*, *kawaḥ* and *khalah* refer to specific patrilineal kin groups, membership of which is defined by birth and are thus not changeable. Therefore, while relations between kin may change, the identity of a Newar vis-à-vis his *kawaḥ* and *khalah* remains for life. In the cases where the caste group is too small for sub-division into *kawaḥ* and *khalah*, it is the *sī guthi* (funeral association) that represents the various groups within that caste.

Ishii (1995: 137) also finds similar social layers in the Newar village he studies. He summarizes Newar patrilineal kinship to:

Household → *dyah pūjā unit* → *maximal lineage* → *sanāḥ guthi* → *local caste* → *village*.

Although using different terminology this can be related to my findings of kinship layer of high-castes, big-sized, and pure-castes Newars in urban Kathmandu:

Household → *agnatic kin group (phukī)* → *lineage (kawaḥ)* → *clan (khalah)* → *territorial caste group* → *Caste*.

And also in some extent the kinship layers of low-castes and small-sized Newars in urban Kathmandu:

Household → *agnatic kin group (phukī)* → *association (guthi)* → *clan* → *territorial caste group* → *Caste*.

To conclude, kinship is the lifeblood of the Newar caste. From the household to the *phuki* to the *kawaḥ* and *khalah*, relations between members of these groups are defined by kinship and are thus bound by ritual obligations to their ancestors, deities and to each other.

Note: With the influence of dominant Parbatiyā culture some Newars replace some of the Newar kinship terms in urban Kathmandu with Parbatiyā kinship terms in daily usage. For example:

| Newar terms | (replaced with) | Parbatiyā terms |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| Tatā | (eZ) | Didi |
| Kehē | (yZ) | Bahini |
| Tatāju | (eBW) | Bhāju |
| Jicādāju | (eZH) | Bhināju |
| Nini | (FZ) | Phuphu |
| Pāju | (MB) | Māmā |
| Taḥbā | (FeB) | Jethābā |
| Taḥmā | (MeZ) | Thulmā |

However, last few decades with the influence of Western culture it is noticeable that some kinship terms are even superceded by English kinship terms. For example:

| Newar terms | (replaced with) | English terms |
|--------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Ba | (F) | Daddy (also dadi, daidi) |
| Ma | (M) | Mum (also Mummy, Mami) |
| Kaka | (FyB) | Uncle |
| Cirma | (MyZ) | Aunt (also aunti, annti) |
| Kaki | (FyBW) | Aunt (also aunti, annti) |
| Nini | (FZ) | Aunt (also aunti, annti) |

CHAPTER SEVEN

Constituting Kinship in Newar Life-cycle Rituals

Quoting Fustel de Coulanges (1956), Levy (1992: 22) argues that the characteristic of Bhaktapur, a Newar town has a particular formal features of Fustel's 'Ancient City' where the citizen of the city moved via a series of *rites de passage* over many years into membership in successively more inclusive units. Each increasingly inclusive level of structure had its proper gods and cults. 'In the beginning the family lived isolated, and man knew only the domestic gods...Above the family was formed the phratry with its gods...Then came the tribe, and the god of the tribe...Finally came the city, and men conceived a god whose providence embraced this entire city...a hierarchy of creeds and hierarchy of association. The religious idea was, among the ancients, the inspiring breath and organizer of society' (Fustel 1956: 132).

It seems not so far away from the concepts of the Kathmandu Newars when they portray their social structure in a similar tone. The magnitude of life-cycle rituals Newars emphasized in their lives and the involvement of gods and cults in each ritual speak out for themselves. In my interviews with Newars of all castes in southern Kathmandu, the one thing that emerged was the pride with which they spoke about their culture. When I asked my Newar informants the question "What is a Newar?" the answer was usually in the form of a long narrative about the various Newar rituals and festivals, infused with rich oral history about lineage, caste and geographical origins. It is a discourse on caste identification and Newar identity, about the way different Newar castes perform

rituals and how the rituals themselves mark Newars as being different from other ethnic groups who do not perform the rituals that they perform.

As Mauss (1979) observed, it is society that creates and imposes the attributes, capacities and signs by which a 'person' may be known. The definition of a person and the means of acquiring the attributes vary across societies. As in most South Asian contexts, among Newars of Nepal it is through the life-cycle rituals that such attributes are conferred or terminated. Participation in rituals is a pivotal tool to constitute and affirm one's social identity and place in the social nexus. Conversely, it can be used as a tool to deny social identity and place: for example, not to participate in or be invited to a family ritual can be tantamount to the termination of existing kinship links.

As Ramchandra Maharjan was telling me which of his relatives he has to invite for his daughter's wedding, I noticed that he omitted a household which, according to his genealogy, is his close kin. When I asked him why he omitted them, he explained:

Them (*ipī*)? They are the enemy. I do not consider him as my kin (*thaḥthiti*) anymore. They corrupted our property inheritance (*āsabanda*) and since then they do not speak with us. Moreover, in their son's initiation (*wājalā*) they did not invite us for the feast which means that they do not see us as their kin any more.

In his influential book van Gennep (1977) argues that all rites of passage, within he included both life-cycle rituals as well as calendrical rituals, have a tripartite structure which is constituted by the relations between rites of separation, transition, and re-incorporation. Using van Gennep's formulation, scholars have devoted volumes of work describing and analyzing the rites of passage of various societies in south Asia (Srinivas 1952, Dumont 1980, Inden and Nicholas 1977, Carter 1983). In the study of Newar life-cycle rituals,

Nepali's (1965) seminal work not only has detailed descriptions of the rituals themselves, but also provides a structural-functional framework with which to understand their significance. Pradhan's (1986) work on the Hindu Newars highlights the sequential differences between various life-cycle rituals, while Ishii's (1995: 128-31) detailed study of life-cycle rituals illustrates the affinal kinship structure in the Newar village of Satungal. There are also various scholars who focus specifically on male or female initiation rituals (Locke 1975, Allen 1990, Vergati 1982) or incorporate life-cycle rituals as a part of their work (Levy 1992, Lewis 1984, Toffin 1984, Gellner 1992).

To be born a Newar is to be connected to a complex social and religious network which is embodied in rituals. Through such rituals, a Newar person learns about his/her place in the kinship network, the nature of the relationship between his/her kin and the salient aspects about his/her caste. Central to the study of Newar rituals is the role that is played by the various actors and the links that they have with one another. In this chapter, I wish to explore the kinship aspect of Newar rituals, in particular, the way that participation in rituals and ritual transactions reveal hierarchies in the kinship structure.

Baldev Juju, a Newar scholar and Rājopādhyāya priest of Kathmandu, is of the opinion that Newars are born as a deity and through rituals they maintain their divinity throughout their lives. Furthermore, according to Juju's 'Newar philosophy' (Juju 1995, 1999) it is not only the human kin that the Newars are constituting, affirming and terminating through the rituals but also divine kin. Based on the significance that Newars have given to worshipping all kinds of deities in all types of rituals and the references they make to different deities denote that Newars consider all deities as a part of their kinship nexus. At old age, they are virtually transformed to be semi-deities in human world with *jyā jākwaḥ*

ritual and when they die they are still remained as family deities. Moreover, many oral histories and legendary in the Valley also point towards the fact that major deities that Newar have been worshipping are actually human beings which become gods and goddesses. For example, the legendary of Pacali Bhairav, the most important regional god of southern Kathmandu tells us that he was in fact a king from Pharping. Juju (1995: 32) also states, 'According to the principle of the Newar philosophy there is a strong evidence showing that Newars consider all deities as their members of the family (*pariwār*) and all deities and human beings are the same'. Juju's argument is drawn from the reality of the Newars' way of life. I have seen during my participant observation that most old aged Newars offer food to deities by throwing a tiny amount of food before they eat every meal (this practice is becoming rare among the younger generations). During any feast and event Newars set up special portions and seats for deities at the beginning of the row. Moreover, in all life-cycle rituals the family deities have to be informed by worshipping. At the wedding, the bride has to be severed from her human kin as well as her divine kin and to incorporate her with the nexus of her husband's human and divine kin. Famous Newar scholars, Śreṣṭha and Juju (1988: 17, 19) write,

Nepalese who live in the Nepal Valley have to worship deities before doing anything. On the occasions like birthday, first rice-feeding, initiation, wedding, oblation to the deceased (*śrāddha*), at the times of feasts and festivals (*nakhaḥ cakhaḥ*) and even at the times of travelling faraway from home it is necessary for them to worship deities. When one builds up a new house a worship has to be done both before and after the construction... All these acts of worship, in fact, are processes of transforming oneself to be a deity himself or herself. This is a true Newar philosophy behind their ritual observations.

Their arguments are sound as Newar themselves refer to a child who has not initiated as a deity, e.g. *kumār* for a boy or *kumāri* for a girl. Those children are beyond all taboos and pollution which apply to adults (e.g. eating polluted food (*cipa*) or socializing with Untouchable castes). By initiation children are incorporated to human world with a very close connection to deities. Girls are married to deities before they are married off to humans (see Chapter 4). Newars believe that they become semi-divine of different levels when they attain certain ages over 77. Finally, they are incorporated into the ancestor deities after they die and become their family deity which have to be updated with news and changes in the family through the observation of regular ritual and worship (*pūjā*).

Based on these arguments it can be said that Newars have two different kinship nexuses: human and divine. Human kin are constituted and affirmed by participating in rituals and fulfilling one's ritual obligations according to the status within the kinship nexus. On the contrary, by avoiding the participation and not fulfilling one's ritual obligations his kinship relations are severed. On the other hand, divine kin are extended and affiliated by performing a worship (*pūjā*) in all occasions and events. When a family breakaway occurs due to a normal development cycle of the family or personal conflict, the divine kin also breaks away accordingly. It is done by copying the deity or splitting the deity.

Every ritual in Newar society focuses on a deity, even where the deity has no other name than that of the ritual itself (e.g. *digūdyah*, *chwāsādyah*, etc.). All rituals are commenced by involving the presence of those deities. In describing various life-cycle rituals, I shall point out the linkage with deities where it differs from the normal, otherwise I shall describe how Newars constitute, affirm and terminate their kinship relationships with human kin in and through rituals.

Newar rituals can be divided into two major categories: life-cycle rituals and annual rituals. Although the rituals are the same for all castes in terms of meaning and significance, the way that these rituals are celebrated (in terms of prestations and services) depends largely on the religion, caste and economic background of the household. The heterogeneity of Newar society, divided along the lines of caste and religion, is also reflected in the rituals that they perform (see Appendix: Comparative summary of life-cycle rituals performed by Newars of all castes in southern Kathmandu). In the following sections I shall analyze these rituals to show in what ways these rituals embody the rules that govern Newar kinship.

7.1 Communicating Kinship: Marriage and Kinship as Process in Newar Society

When two people are married, the Newars often say *nikhā chē nā chakhā jula* which means ‘two houses become one’. In this section, I shall attempt to show how marriage is a process of selecting, wooing and claiming one’s kin. In this section, I shall firstly describe the Newar engagement and wedding ceremony¹, which are complex, elaborate and laden with symbolism. Two common themes run through them—union and separation—and these are communicated through go-betweens, priests, feasts and ritual prestations. I shall also analyze the ways in which marriage transforms the relationship within and between two households.

¹ For details of the wedding ceremony of high Hindu castes see Pradhan (1986: 148-79); for high Buddhist castes see Bajracharya (1959: 418-23); Lewis (1984: 281-95); for the Maharjan wedding of Pyangaon see Toffin (1984: 142-44); for weddings in Bhaktapur see Levy (1992: 673-76); for Newar weddings in general see Löwdin (1985: 59-66).

7.1.1 Creating Alliances through the Kinship Network

Once a person has reached a suitable age to marry, in most cases it is the person's mother who will initiate the search for a suitable partner. Usually, the person's mother contacts a *lami* or go-between who will do the search for her. However, nowadays, it is quite common to find the two parties discussing the union without any intermediaries.

Traditionally, *lamis* are associated with 'arranged marriages', where the two parties do not have any contact prior to the marriage. Nowadays, despite the fact that more marriages are 'love' marriages (i.e. the girl or boy decides on their choice of partners independently of intermediaries), the services of the *lami* are still indispensable as they perform an important ritual and social role in the marriage ceremony. In fact, no proper (*bālāka*) marriage ceremony would be considered complete without one.² With few exceptions, this rule applies to all Newar castes from the highest priestly castes to lowest Untouchable castes.

Usually, it is the *lami* from the boy's side who approaches the girl's side to ask for her hand in marriage. Newars refer to this as *dhāḥwahpiñ du* which means 'there are people who came to ask for her hand'. However, it is equally possible for the *lami* from the girl's side to approach the boy's family. Newars refer to this as *byūwahpiñ du* which means 'there are people who come to offer their daughter'. However, many informants expressed that they prefer the boy's

² The necessity of a *lami* is limited to isogamous marriages. In cases of hypergamy, there may not be a *lami* present at the wedding. I have also found a few cases in which some members of the Rājopādhyāya Hindu priestly caste and the Dyahlā Untouchable caste proclaim not to use any *lami* in their marriage rites. In the case of Rājopādhyāya caste it is the parents themselves who initiate the union whereas Dyahlā caste expressed that among them 'love-marriage' is more common. I would argue that these cases are the exceptions rather than the rule.

side to initiate the move, although in practice, if the girl is not approached it is then responsibility of her parents and kin to make the first move.

In many cases, the *lami* are professional matchmakers, who have a profile of the prospective girls and boys who are ready for marriage. It is they who know the family background of each boy or girl, and who make the suggestions based on the requirements of their clients. However, it should be noted that while many informants I spoke to knew of the existence of such professional matchmakers, none of them would admit that they employed one in their matchmaking. There are also the unofficial *lami*: aunts, uncles, other kin and friends (except the immediate family members) who use their knowledge of their kinship network to search for a suitable match. If the matchmaking is initiated by immediate family members—brothers or sisters—a *lami* is appointed for later developments. Many high-caste Newars told me that ideally the *lami* should be the mother's brother or father's sister's husband. However, I also found that it is common among the Maharjan caste to refer any *lami* who does the job of matchmaker with the reference term *pāju* (mother's brother) in case of a man and *nini* (father's sister) in case of a woman.

The fact that immediate family members cannot be the *lami* can be explained in two ways. Firstly, immediate family members have specific ritual roles to play during the wedding ceremony and would not be able to carry out the duties of the *lami* at the same time. The role of the *lami* is a demanding and exhausting one. It is she or he who will make repeated trips to and from the boy's and girl's house while inquiries and arrangements are taking place. Also, she or he will have to bear a heavy ritual burden as the person who is solely responsible for the well-being of the bride during her transit from her natal home to her in-law's household. Apart from having ritual functions in wedding, among Śreṣṭhas

it is believed that if the bride dies before the wedding ritual is over, it is the *lami* who is responsible for the bride's funeral. The *lami* has to cremate the body and perform the funeral which is called *lami dukhā cwanegu* or the 'mourning *lami*'. An Untouchable Dyaḥlā informant referred to an old Newar saying: *misāyā lami dhanyā jamān*, which means 'to be a go-between is to be the guarantor of money', illustrating the heavy responsibility that is borne by a *lami* in performing her duty as a go-between.

A second reason why the immediate family members cannot be the *lami* has to do with the idea that, ideally, there should not be direct contact between the two households. This is due to the difference in status between the wife-givers and the wife-takers. Even if the two households are familiar with each other, the services of a *lami* is still required. In one case, I observed an arranged marriage between two households which were neighbours to each other. Despite their close proximity and their familiarity with each other, communication between the two households concerning the marriage was through an appointed *lami* who happened to be another woman living on the same street. Similar to other South Asian patterns (Madan 1994), wife-givers in Newar society are considered to be lower in status than wife-takers. While Newars themselves do not see the hierarchical status between wife-givers and wife-takers, it is obvious from the use of honorific language and the attitude towards sons-in-law that wife-takers are ranked higher than wife-givers. This is in keeping with the hypergamous pattern of marriage as described by Bennett (1977: 263), where marriage creates a ritual superiority of the groom's people.

7.1.2 Selecting Future Kin

The central role of caste in selecting marriage partners has been discussed above (see § 5.3 in Chapter 5) as has the Newars' practice of isogamous marriages. However, the criterion of the caste alone is not enough to make a decision about selecting one's future kin. The common rule that is often quoted to me by my informants is that couple should not be related by at least three generations, although it is preferable that they are seven generations apart. The other considerations include educational background, geographical origin, age, economic status of the family, physical beauty, horoscope and personality.

It is at the point of choosing the bride or groom that one is able to actively engage in and manipulate the kinship nexus. This can be seen in the following case study from.

CASE 7.1: In 1998, Ratna (a Śākya man from southern Kathmandu) is 28 and his mother is keen to find him a bride. So she sent word to her relatives that her son is of a marriageable age. Later, some photos of eligible girls of the same caste arrived, and Ratna's mother, together with other senior members of the family, discussed the qualities and merits of each girl.

One of them is a girl from Banepa, which is a small Newar town located about 20 km east of Kathmandu. Through her relatives in Banepa, Ratna's mother knew that the girl, Pramila, is the youngest child and only daughter of a rich family. Pramila's photo and particulars were shown to Ratna and he agreed to an initial meeting with her.

Word was then sent to the *lami*, who was one of Ratna's mother's relatives in Banepa. Pramila's parents also showed some

interest in Ratna. A request from someone from Kathmandu city is considered to be a great social boost, and they agreed to a meeting with Ratna.

Ratna finally met Pramila at one of her relative's house. At this point, he cannot enter her house, as he is not their kin. Neither can she enter his. So her relative's house, which is considered neutral territory, is the most suitable. After their meeting, Ratna returned to his family and said that he agreed to the match. He then asked that arrangements be made for a formal engagement. Meanwhile, Pramila's side were contemplating the proposal.

The plus points about Ratna is that he is of the same caste from Kathmandu city, has a secure job, a reputable family and most importantly, he is not related to within seven generations. The minus points are that Ratna's family is not as economically well-off as theirs, and that he has a dark complexion. The prospect of having a dark son-in-law (and indeed, dark offsprings!) was so serious that it became one of the main reasons why they wanted to turn down his proposal. However, it was Ratna's economic status that finally won them over. In order to demonstrate that he is worthy of their daughter, he sent lavish gifts to Pramila. With the help of the *lami* both Ratna's and Pramila's families finally agreed that they should be engaged.

A fellow scholar of South Asia once cited an opinion they had heard expressed: 'Arranged marriages are good because you have a choice. If you have a love marriage, you are so blinded by love that you have no choice but to love

your partner. If you have an arranged marriage, you can pick and choose all the characteristics you really want!’ In the case study I have just presented, both parties knew what they wanted in a partner, and through the *lami*, they were able, to a certain extent, to negotiate and determine the future of their kinship network.

From the survey I conducted for all castes in southern Kathmandu, out of a total of 2,320 marriages, 80.2 per cent were arranged marriage and only 19.8 per cent of marriage were declared as unions of ‘love-marriage’. However, this figure may differ according to individual caste group (see Chapter 5 for details). During my interviews, I asked a few castes about their preferences and here are some of their replies:

Suryaman (Kāranjit): Some Kāranjits disguise themselves as a higher caste by calling themselves Śreṣṭha. However, when it comes to marriage no real Śreṣṭha will accept their children, so they have to marry within their own caste (*thaḡu he jātyāpī byāhāyāyemā*). There are many cases like that. It is not right to marry someone of higher caste than oneself by stealing the caste (*jāt khuyā thajātpī byāhāyānā mile majyū*).

Chandralal (Dyahlā): I prefer my own Poda caste when it comes to choosing a marriage partner. Unlike some others Podas who disguise their castes by not writing or telling others. I am proud to declare myself as Poda.

Sumitra (Nakarmi): Nowadays, it is very difficult to find daughters-in-law. Before making any decision about giving away their daughter they will investigate all kin and genealogies of your family. You cannot fool them by telling a lie. Even if you have succeeded in fooling them and have married their daughter, when they find out the truth after the marriage there is a high possibility of them taking their daughter back. Therefore, I am very worried about my own son. I am so scared that my son will bring an unacceptable girl (*mathyāpī*). However, if he brings a woman of a higher caste the *guthi* will accept her but there will be a big problem if he brings a girl of lower caste than himself. To avoid

any further problem we have been keeping our eyes on eligible girls for him of the same caste before he brings any girl with 'love marriage'.

7.1.3 Wooing Future Kin: The Engagement Ritual

Having satisfied with all aspects of the match, legitimization of the union begins with the engagement ritual which is called *gway biyegu*³ or 'giving betel nuts'. For this first formal communication between these two households, an auspicious day has to be set according to Newar astrology, and Thursday is generally believed to be an auspicious day for such an event. On the chosen day, the groom's side send a *gway yākegu* (taking betel nuts) or engagement set through the *lami*. The engagement set consists of a worshipping tray, yogurt, new clothes, fruit trays, sweets, ten betel nuts with its container, silver vermilion box, a light yellow *tikā* powder, a piece of red cloth and other goods. The engagement set goods have to be presented to the father of the girl or to a senior member (*thakāli*) of the girl's family in case of the father's absence, as a formal declaration of the intentions of the boy to marry the girl.

Betel nuts are very important objects that symbolize the union or termination of kinship bonds in Newar society. It can be a symbol of commitment or severance and is used in various ritual throughout a person's life. Once the father of the bride accepts the gift of betel nuts, it means that he has accepted the proposal of marriage from the boy's side. During the engagement ritual, the bride is offered a new set of clothes which she has to wear for the engagement ceremony. Vermilion is then applied on the bride's forehead by the bride's mother or a senior woman of the family (*nakī*). Pradhan (1986: 158) states that

³ *gway biyegu* from the bridegroom's side and *gway kayegu* or 'receiving betel nuts' from the bride's side.

the very act of applying the vermilion sent by the bridegroom's family on the forehead or specifically on the hair parting of the bride suggests the transfer of the girl's sexuality to the wife-taker's side. After this engagement ritual the bride is regarded as belonging to her fiancé and fed her with food (*cipā thikegu*) sent to her by the wife-taker's family.

To be engaged in Newar society is akin to being married. If the girl were to die, her fiancé would be the chief mourner, and the funeral would be the responsibility of her fiancé's family (Nepali 1965: 213). They would also have to observe the death pollution of a family who has lost a daughter-in-law. Therefore, engagement periods are usually kept to a minimum. Engagement periods can range from a few weeks to more than a year in some cases but many informants told me that the most common period of engagement is 1-2 months prior to the wedding itself. Having established a formal communication between two families through a *lami*, during this engagement period, kinship ties between the two households are established indirectly through prestations which are periodically sent from the boy's household to the girl's.

7.1.4 Pre-Wedding Rituals

The gradual transformation from being a daughter to a wife and daughter-in-law can be seen as a simultaneous process of separation and union. As the following rituals will show, the prestations which are sent from the groom's household serve as agents of separation, to untie the bride from her kinship bonds with her natal home.

1. Sending seasonal fruits (*sisābusā nake chwayegu*): About two weeks after the engagement until the month of wedding itself, the bridegroom's family will occasionally send trays of seasonal fruits to the bride's household through the

lami. This ritual of occasionally sending prestations is to assure the girl's family that their future son-in-law is capable of taking care of their daughter. It also serves as a gentle reminder that the responsibility for her care is being shifted to her fiancé. I was told that this is common practice among the Buddhist high castes of Vajraācārya, Śākya and Udāy because the time gap between engagement and the wedding itself is longer than other caste groups. I was also told that some of these Buddhist high castes used to arrange the engagement as early as 1 or 2 years prior to the wedding.

2. Sending *lākhāmadhi* sweets (*lākhā biyegu*): A few weeks before the wedding day, the bridegroom's family will send some wedding sweets to the bride's house. The most important of these is the *lākhāmadhi*. The amount will vary according to the size of the bride's family, as these have to be distributed to various households of her kinship network. The distribution of *lākhā* itself is an exercise in defining one's kin (Nepali 1965: 215). If a family were to receive a full-size *lākhā*, it means that the family is considered close kin and is obliged to give a big present to the bride in return. Conversely, a smaller size *lākhā* is given to those kin who are not so close to the family. A relative who is not given a *lākhā* is considered as someone who has been excommunicated from the family's kinship network. Because this is a most severe implication, the bride's family has to be very thorough in their distribution of *lākhā* confectionery.⁴ The gift of *lākhā* from the boy's family to the girl's kin has a dual purpose of informing them about the impending wedding and also to announce the fact that they will be kin in the near future. One could also look at the *lākhā* as a compensatory gift, an agent of separation as it were, as the girl will soon belong to the boy's household.

⁴ For a complete list of kin who should receive *lākhā*, see Nepali (1965: 214).

3. Sending *nikahmadhi* sweets: Eight days prior to the wedding day, *nikahmadhi*, which is another kind of matrimonial sweet, is sent to the girl's house. It is shaped like a ball and is kept in a well-decorated clay pot. On the side of the pot is a piece of paper that states the auspicious time for fetching the bride as fixed by the astrologer. It is also accompanied with other foods and fruits.

These gifts are received with ceremony and formality in the bride's house. The bride has to put on the clothes which are given to her by her fiancé, and she has to distribute the sweets to her family and to her lineage and household deities. A portion of the sweets will be sent back to the bridegroom's family which will then be used to worship his side of lineage and household deities. This is again more common among high Buddhist castes. With the high Hindu caste, Śreṣṭha, this part of the ritual is combined with the ritual of sending the bracelet (see 4 below)

Again, these sweets are highly symbolic in their role of separating the bride from her family and uniting her with her future in-laws. If we regard these gifts as agents of separation, at this stage the gifts serve to compensate the bride's immediate family for their future loss. On another level the fact that a portion of the sweets are sent back to the bridegroom's house and are used to worship the lineage and household deities signals her future link with her in-law's household.

4. Sending bracelet (*kalyāṅ nhyākah chwayegu*)⁵: Among the Buddhist high castes this ritual is performed on the four days prior to the wedding, while with the Hindu high castes this is done on the day before the wedding. In this ritual the bridegroom's family sends another round of gifts and food to the bride's family. However, this time, the gift is a bracelet which has to be taken to her by the

bridegroom's mother's brother (*pāju*) who is accompanied by the *lami*. Depending on the caste, a goldsmith (*Śākya*) or a metal-smith (*Tāmrākār*) will be on hand to adjust the bracelet on the bride's wrist and an assistant (generally a male of the farmer caste) will carry all the food and fruits to the bride's house. However, many Śreṣṭha informants confessed that this part of ritual is not widely performed nowadays. It should also be noted that this ritual does not appear to be much in vogue among the agricultural caste groups of Maharjan and other lower caste groups.

The bridegroom's mother's brother puts on the bracelet on his would-be niece in-law to show that she now belongs to his side of the family. On this day, the bride must eat only food that was brought to her from the bridegroom's side and in return, the bride's family also need to send food back to the bridegroom. Similarly, the bridegroom can only eat the food sent by the bride on that day. The indirect exchange of food between the bridegroom and the bride is confirmation of their union. The visit by the bridegroom's mother's brother is also significant, because it is the first time that a member from the bridegroom's family makes formal contact with the bride's family and establishes himself as their future kin.

5. Farewell meals (*paynā jā nakegu*): Four days prior to the wedding day, it is a time for the bride's consanguine and affinal kin to invite her for a farewell meal in their houses. First she has to visit her patrilineal kin and the last kin would be her mother's brother. These feasts represent her kin acknowledging her departure and separation from her kinship network.

6. Sending milk and curd (*durudāi chwayegu*): One day prior to the actual wedding day, the bridegroom's family again sends gifts of milk and curd

⁵ Apart from the high Buddhist castes, the *kalyāṅ nhyākaḥ chwayegu* and *nikaḥmadhi* are combined

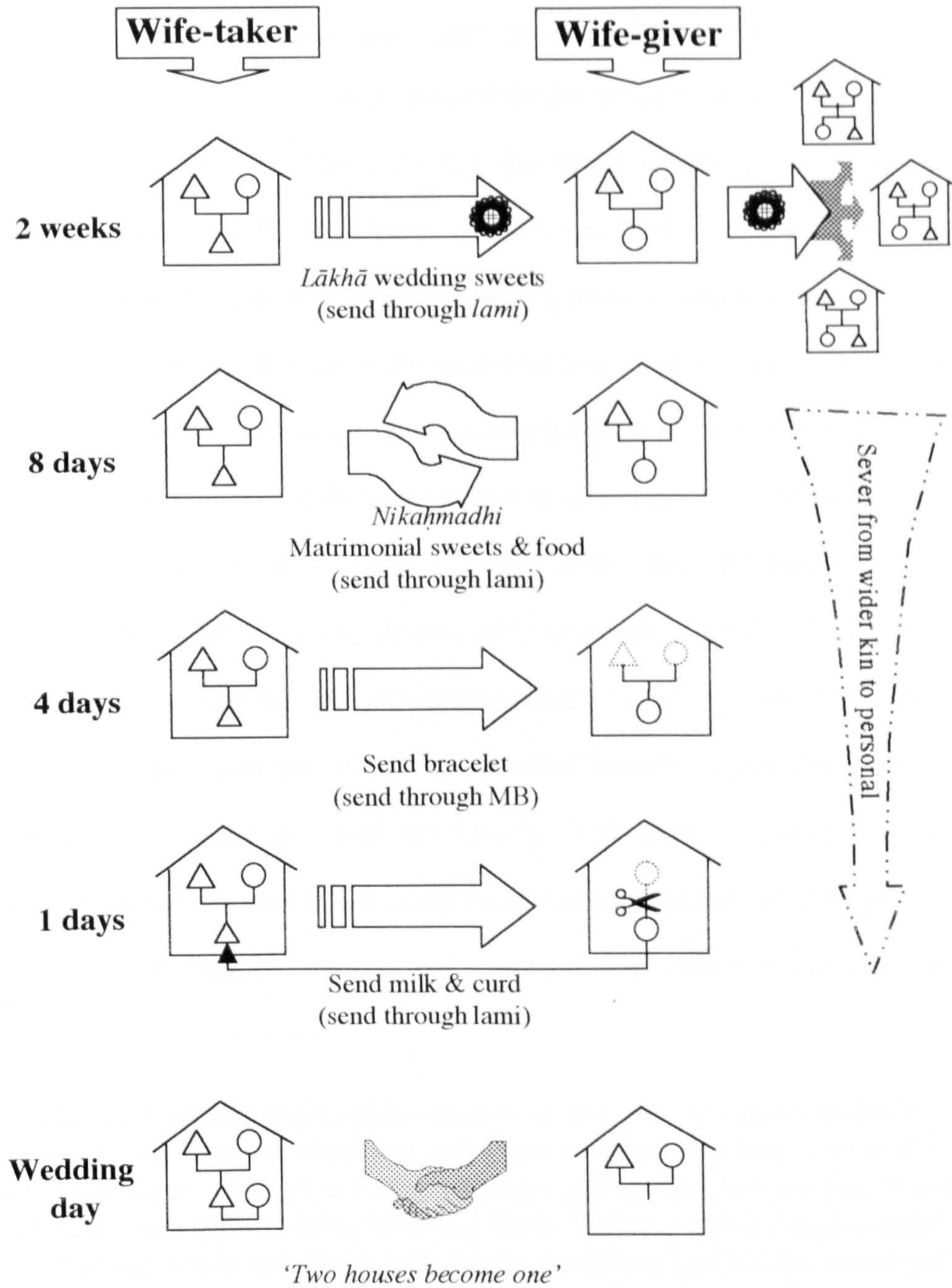
accompanied with other dry foods to the bride's family. My informants describe this as a ceremonial repayment to the bride's mother for the milk she had fed her daughter. This represents the most personal of all compensatory gifts, because it enters into the close mother-daughter relationship, and seeks to sever this bond.⁶

Through these different rituals and prestations, we can see the gradual separation of the bride from her kinship network and the increasing presence of her husband's household in her life. The separation begins from the wider kinship network right through to the intimate relationship between mother and daughter. Although Newars say that all these rituals and social practices of marriage lead to the union of two households, in reality, the stress in most of these rituals is on separation rather than on union (see Figure 7.1).

into one ceremony.

⁶ The severance of ties between parent and child is also evident from terms used to describe 'daughter' and 'married-out daughter'. While the former denotes a close relationship, the latter is more impersonal and distant.

Figure 7.1: Severity of the bride from her natal kin



7.1.5 The Wedding

After the periods of feasting, ritual and prestations the day comes for the bride to formally leave her natal home.

1. Severing ties with her natal home (*paynah bhway*): On the wedding day itself, the bride's parents will host a farewell wedding feast for her. Their relatives and friends will come to offer gifts for the bride which is regarded as her trousseau and farewell gift.⁷ When it is almost time for her departure, the happy occasion of marriage turns into a heart-breaking ritual of separation when all her consanguinal and affinal kin from the eldest to youngest will each receive betel nuts from the bride⁸ which is known as *gway sāyegu* or ritual of distributing betel nuts. It is not only human kin she would have to take leave from but also with her family's deities, lineage deity, ancestors, and the spirits of the dead. She begins with offering those betel nuts to deities and then to her family. When the turn comes for her close kin and her immediate family members to receive the betel nut, it is usually the most tearful part of the ritual because it symbolizes the final separation between the girl and her family. The bride's immediate family members get *putugway*, which are small size of areca nuts specially tugged into a small golden cloth bag, in addition to ten normal betel nuts as other kin. Lastly,

⁷ Traditionally, there are certain gifts which are more or less fixed to certain kin members. For example, among high-castes of Vajrācārya and Śākya, in addition to other trousseaus MB is expected to give a goat. Although in modern wedding a goat may not be a necessary trousseau many informants who got married in 1970s and 1980s confirmed that they still got goat as a trousseau. Most importantly they did not know what to do with that goat in urban houses and they had to sell it off after the wedding. Other kin who were invited the whole household (*bhopāhā*) have to give bigger wedding gift according to the kind of wedding sweet they received when they were invited. In most cases are brass water pots (*ghah*) or brass storage pots (*bātā*). In modern wedding the trousseau are getting modernized. In addition of giving traditional pots and pans and other kitchen utensils with some financially rich family also give refrigerator, television, wardrobe, etc.

⁸ In some castes, it is the opposite, with the youngest to oldest receiving betel nuts in turn.

the parents of the bride receive the normal betel nuts and *putugway* which were provided by the bridegroom's father. These betel nuts are meant to be kept by the parents of the bride forever. An old Śākya woman showed me some of her *putugway* collections from her daughters' marriages, including her first daughter's marriage more than a half of century ago.

Betel nuts in Newar society has dual purpose of usage both for termination of the kin and joining of the kin as I mentioned above. Moreover, the special bag of betel nuts defines the immediate family members of the bride. Through the gift of betel nuts, the bridegroom is indirectly participating in the separation of the bride from her kin, family and parents, while at the same time cementing his kinship ties with them.

For most castes, the wedding ritual at the bride's house ends with the offering of *putugway* to the bride's kin. However, the high-caste Hindus and Buddhists, along with the *putugway* the bridegroom's father also presents the girl with a pair of foot ornaments made of silver called *tuti baggi* (which literally means a carriage for the feet). This is called *tuti baggi nhyākegu* or 'wearing the ankle bracelets'. However, there is a slight difference in the way that the Buddhist (Vajrācārya, Śākya and Udāy) and Hindu castes (Śreṣṭha) perform the ritual. I was told by Buddhist informants that the ankle bracelet is handed over to the bride by the bridegroom's father and the bride has to put them on by herself. On the contrary, among the high Hindu caste I was told that the ankle bracelet must be attached by the bridegroom's father (*bāju*) and this is the only time that the father-in-law touches his daughter-in-law's feet. They also use this ritual as a symbol of honour as the father-in-law will refer her in future as the bride 'brought in by wearing ankle bracelets' (*tuti baggi nhyākāḥ hayāḥ tayāmha*). This also serves to separate the bride from her family and allows the bridegroom's father to

claim her as his daughter-in-law. In the past, this would be final separation of the bride from her household because the bride would then be fetched by the party of the bridegroom - led by the father of the bridegroom – without the bride ever meeting the bridegroom.

Many senior Newars recounted that in the old days the bridegroom was not allowed to go to the bride's house even on the wedding day. He will be allowed to enter the bride's natal home only after the whole wedding has completed and has to be invited by the bride's family. As Harkha Ratna, a 60 years old Śākya male recounted,

At my wedding I didn't have to go to the bride's house until the wedding was over and I was invited for the 'accepting the son-in-law' (*dilājā ducāyekegu*) ritual. The bride was fetched by my father and the bride-fetching procession (*janti*) party to my house where the joining ritual (*hwākegu*) for me and my bride was performed. Nowadays, this has changed entirely as it is necessary for the bridegroom to join the bride fetching procession to the bride's house to bring her over. Moreover, the *swayambar* (or *swayamvara*) ritual has to be performed at the bride's place. Before, there was no *swayambar*, it is a new part of the wedding ceremony.

Although the *swayambar* (literally means 'choosing the groom') is a new ritual it too legitimizes the entering of the bridegroom into the bride's household.

2. Fetching/handing over the bride (*swayambar*): On the same night, a wedding procession from the bridegroom's side come to fetch the bride from her house. The wedding procession is called *janta wanegu* (or *lāswah wanegu*). The procession is made up of the male members of the bride's household, and the more people there are in the procession the better, as it gives honour to the bride and also symbolizes the strong kinship network the bridegroom's side. The procession is led by a musical band, which is also a sign of prestige because a

bride who is married honourably is called the ‘bride brought with musical band’ (*bājā thākāḥ hayātamha*). When the groom’s group arrives, it is a significant moment as it is the only time when kin from both sides actually meet face to face. At birth and death, there will be such unions, but not with such numbers.

After the separation rituals for the bride are over, the bridegroom is then invited for the *swayambar* ritual, which is the point at which the bride is ‘given’ to the groom. The ceremony is officiated by priests from both sides. However, it should be noted that there is no oath taken by the bride and groom and no contract is signed. The marriage ritual is non-verbal on the part of the bride and groom. The bride’s parents will put the right hand of their daughter in the hand of the groom, after which there will be an exchange of garlands and rings. Then the bride is carried or led by her mother’s brother on his back to the car, while her father holds her hand.⁹ Once the bride and groom are in the car, the groom’s father places a golden cloth (*du phāgā phāyekegu*) upon the car and they set off.

The crowd watches to see who places a golden cloth upon the car as it is a symbol whether the bride is accepted by the bridegroom’s party with honour or not. Preferably, it should be the groom’s father who places the golden cloth on the car, and if it is put by anyone other than him, it may trigger some doubt as to whether the bride has been accepted by her new family.

3. Handing over the bride publicly (*bhamcā khālhāyegu*): Behind the car is a procession of male kin from the bride and bridegroom’s side. Midway through the journey, at a temple of Gaṇeś, the car stops and the final hand-over takes place. This is the time when communication between the two households is at its

⁹ In the past the bride was often very young, and carrying her piggyback was easy.

most formal and public. The two priests representing the two parties will negotiate the hand-over.

With the deity Gaṇeś as witness, the priest on the girl's side will say in essence, 'Now hereafter, our daughter belongs to you people. She is so innocent; please treat her kindly—as your own daughter. See that she is happy.' The groom's priest will reply 'Don't worry, she is as much our daughter as yours. We shall make our best efforts to make her happy.'¹⁰ Then the two parties separate and the bride will go to her in-laws' home accompanied by her *lami*¹¹ and the male entourage who had come to fetch her. After this point, with the deity Gaṇeś as witness, the girl is no longer considered a member of her natal household.

4. Welcoming the new bride (*bhamcā dukāyegu* or *lasakus yāyegu*): Now, as she approaches her in-laws' house, the senior female members of that household will prepare to receive her. The in-coming bride is regarded as Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, and her reception has to be in keeping with the status of the goddess. Water has to be poured to cleanse her path, another would sweep it, while groom's mother would lead the bride by holding a key in her hand. This key is the key to the family's treasure room, and symbolizes the hand-over of the family's resources (and responsibilities) to the bride.¹² At this stage she is given a responsibility to her new house and she is initially accepted by the bridegroom's family with honour and the process of uniting her to the new house begins.

Once inside the house, the rituals are the very opposite of those which she performed in her natal home. Instead of rituals to sever ties, these rituals

¹⁰ For full text of the wedding dialogue see Gellner (1992: 228-30).

¹¹ With high-castes there is often a Jyāpunī, a Farmer caste woman chaperone the bride and stays with her till the 4th night.

¹² In reality, of course, it will probably be many years before she is entrusted with the real key to the storeroom.

symbolize her union with her husband and her new household. While the distribution of betel nuts in her natal home symbolized her separation from her kin, the same act of distributing betel nuts to all the consanguine and affinal kin of her husband symbolizes her integration into the family. While she is offering the betel nuts, the *lami* will introduce each member of the family to her. She also has to offer betel nuts to all the deities worshipped by her husband's family. By doing this she is now introduced formally not only to the human kin of her husband but to her husband's ancestor kin and deities too. In the case of wedding where there is no ritual of unification through the gift of betel nuts, the consequences will be evident in the event of birth and death pollution. When a child is born to such a couple, no kin members of the husband's lineage will be polluted by birth pollution as would happen when betel nuts are presented. Therefore, this ritual would be omitted in the case of an intercaste marriage and they would refer to such a bride pejoratively as 'one whose betel nuts I have not accepted' (*gway kayā tayāmha he makhu*). It can be seen that in Newar marriage 'betel nuts' play a fundamental role in connecting or terminating kinship ties.

5. The unification (*hwākegu*): In Newar marriage the union of two households takes precedence over the union of the individual as the couple's formal introduction happens only after all arrangements and negotiations between two households have taken place. Traditionally, it is only at the unification ritual that the bride and groom meet each other and are joined formally. Once the bride has been officially introduced to the bridegroom's kin, she then joins the bridegroom for the unification ritual with the help of *lami* and the priest. The bride hands over ten betel nuts to the bridegroom and bows down at the bridegroom's feet with her forehead. Then with the help of the bridegroom's father their heads are brought together as a symbol of couple's unification. This is called *hwākegu*, literally means 'to unify'. Bajracharya (1959: 421) states that

‘This is the most important ceremony of the marriage, since it is the time when the bridegroom is recognized as husband and the bride as wife’.

After a unification between the bride and the bridegroom has been established by the *hwākegu* ritual they are further joined together by the ritual of eating the food from the same plate which is called *thāybhu nakegu* or *sabjā nakegu*. *Thāybhu* is the name for a special large round bronze ritual plate whereas *sabjā* is derived from a Sanskrit term *sahabhojan* which means eating together. The *thāybhu* plate is filled with varieties of food’ metaphorically ‘eighty-four savours’ (*caurāsi vyañjan*). This special matrimonial feast has to be eaten by the marriage couple by taking food from the same plate. The sharing of food is considered an act of intimacy, because food that has been touched by another is considered polluted by contact with the lips (*cipa*). Accepting *cipa* itself denotes hierarchy within the family. Within the family, the wife will accept her husband’s *cipa* and children may take their parent’s *cipa* but not vice versa. This is the only time in their married life when the husband and wife eat other’s *cipa* or eat from the same plate. By eating each other’s *cipa* two individuals are intimately united.

6. Introducing the new bride to the bridegroom’s family and friends (*pastāh bhway*): On the evening of the wedding day, the bridegroom holds a big feast called *pastāh bhway* or wedding feast to all families, relatives and friends of the bridegroom. This is the time when the bridegroom’s family publicly display their new daughter-in-law to all their friends and families. This occasion is also used to define kinship status within the bridegroom’s family as each member has a specific role to play. During the feast, a son-in-law of the bridegroom’s family serves the curd; the bridegroom’s mother, assisted by the groom’s maternal aunt, serves wine; the bridegroom himself, usually assisted by his maternal uncle,

follows his mother, and serves sweets. At this time the bride is placed along with the *lami* where all the guests can meet her.

7.1.6 Post-Wedding

On the following day, the bride will take her first rice meal with her new family in the kitchen. This is called *nikshābhū yāyegu* or ‘dining together’. Dining together with the family is a symbol of an approval of commensality with the bride by the bridegroom’s family.¹³ The daughter-in-law is given polluted *cipa* food of her mother-in-law to be eaten during the ritual and the bridegroom’s mother’s brother (*pāju*) has to offer her sweets.¹⁴ She is now called a *bhaumacā* or ‘daughter-in-law’ by her husband’s family and as *mhyāymacā* or a full ‘daughter’ by her natal family. It is important to note that in Newar society a girl is known as a ‘full’ daughter only after she is married out, whereas an unmarried daughter is called *mhyāy* which is a general reference term for a daughter. This implies that a Newar woman gains her full female status only after marriage.

1. Claiming sexual right over the wife (*sā pyākegu*): Either the next day or four days later, the husband performs another ritual in the presence of the family priest. It is called ‘wetting the hair’ (*sā pyākegu*). The wife’s family has to send all the necessary materials for her hair dressing and the husband will comb and dress his wife’s hair. Pradhan (1985: 171) states that this is a symbol of claiming the sexual right over the wife by the husband, but here we see that even in this rather intimate ritual, it is still the wife’s family who has to supply the materials,

¹³ This is the case of an isogamous and hypogamous marriage, between two of the same caste. In cases of hypergamy, where the girl is of a lower caste, she will not be allowed to partake of the rice, nor is she allowed to cook for the family.

¹⁴ According to personal communication with David Gellner in Lalitpur this event takes place during the groom’s wedding feast.

implying that there is still a link between the new bride and her family and that they are still responsible for her well-being.

2. Introducing new bride to a family deity (*wanjalā wanegu*)¹⁵: Although the new wife has been introduced to the ancestors, household deities and human kin of the husband, she is yet to be introduced to the family (or specifically marriage) deity of her husband. On the same day or the day after the 'wetting the hair' ritual the married couple, accompanied by the close family members of the husband, will go to a local marriage deity, such as Bhadrakālī, Guhyeswari, or Bijeshwari. In front of the shrine the husband applies a vermilion *tīkā* on the forehead of his wife. This is called *wanjalā* and makes a second very important stage of marriage, because by this ritual she obtains permission to see and to worship her husband's lineage deity. This means she now fully belongs to her husband.

3. Communicating between two families (*khwā swah wanegu*): On the fourth day after the unification ceremony, or two days after the *wanjalā*, the bride's male kin from her natal home will visit her led by the bride's father. This is called *khwā swah wanegu* literally means 'going to see her face'. On this occasion, the bride's family brings her a set of clothes, fruits, sweets, etc., and in return, the bridegroom's family provides them with refreshments. However, this ritual is not held at the house of the bridegroom but in another house near their own, which suggests that the bride's relatives are not allowed to enter the groom's house. The reason why the bride's relatives are not invited to the groom's house is not mentioned in any of the literature on Newar marriage. When I asked my informants, they explained that it is because of practical reasons: that their house

¹⁵ In Kathmandu and Bhaktapur this ritual is performed both by Buddhist and Hindu castes, however, according to Gellner (1992) it is not performed by Buddhists in Lalitpur.

is too small to hold such a gathering. But after speaking with various informants of different economic status, it emerged that even those with spacious houses still hold the ceremony in someone else's house.¹⁶

I would suggest that the exclusion of the bride's family from the groom's natal home can be explained by the power relations between the two households.¹⁷ Once the wife-givers have accepted the marriage proposal, it is the wife-takers who have upper hand during the marriage process. Throughout the engagement and marriage rituals, it is the groom's family which dictates the date of the wedding ceremony, whose representatives enters the sacred space of the bride's home to ask for her hand, to offer gifts and to fetch the bride from her home. However, the same cannot be said of the bride's family. Up to the point where the bridegroom comes to fetch the bride, no member of the bride's family has formally set foot into the bridegroom's house. The ritual of seeing the bride's face is not an offer from the groom's side to the bride's kin. Rather, it is seen as a request by the girl's family to see her and to check to see whether she has been properly treated and if she likes her new home. Therefore, it has to be held at a venue other than the groom's house. There is a local saying *mhyāymacā bīpī kwah swayemā* which means 'those who give daughters have to bow' (Pradhan 1986: 156) which implies that the wife-takers are higher than wife-givers in terms of status.

Relations between the bride and groom's family are kept distant until the groom's family formally invites the bride's side, as in the case of another marriage within the groom's family, or the birth of a child. While the bride and

¹⁶ In Lalitpur it is held in the groom's house.

¹⁷ The literature on marriage practices in South Asia highlights the fact that wife-givers have a lower status than wife-takers, at least in ritual.

groom may enter each other's households with relative freedom, with the exception of formal feasts, the two households remain as separate entities.

4. Connecting kin (*samdhi swāyegu*): After the ritual of 'seeing the face', the bride is taken back by her father to her natal home. At the same time, her husband will be formally invited to his wife's natal home (*kalāyā thaḥchē*), where he will offer betel nuts to the bride's deities and all consanguine and affinal kin of the bride as the *lami* introduces each one in turn. In this ritual the bridegroom's father and mother are also present. This ritual is called *samdhi swāyegu* or connecting in-laws kin or *jilājā dukāyegu* which means 'accepting the son-in-law'.

By accepting the betel nuts from the bridegroom, they accept him as a member of their group and over a period of time, the new bride's husband becomes a part his wife's natal household. This becomes visible on certain rituals such as other marriages in her household because he will have to fulfil his ritual duty towards his wife's kin. At a later time, there is also a ritual in which the bride's parents are invited to visit their in-laws' household.

Although Newars describe marriage as a union of two households, the above examples show that the process is much more complex than this simple statement implies and involves rituals of separation as well as union. Although ritually united, the social relationship between wife-givers and wife-takers remain rigid and formal, with the wife-takers having a higher status than wife-givers. The relationship between the wife-givers and wife-takers continues into the marriage of the couple, through the various life-cycle rituals which will be topics dealt with in the following sections.

7.2 Claiming the right over an unborn child by the wife's kin

The channels of communication between the wife-takers and wife-givers are re-opened when the wife becomes pregnant. In Newar society pregnancy marks the first phase of an individual's life-cycle. When the pregnancy is in its final stage, about 8-9 months into the pregnancy, the first ritual, known as *dhau-baji nakaḥ wanegu*, literally 'taking curd and beaten rice to feed (the pregnant woman)', is performed for the benefit of the unborn child and the mother-to-be.¹⁸

Pradhan (1986: 76) describes this ritual as follows: 'Two or three weeks before the expected date of delivery, the pregnant woman's natal female relatives (for instance, mother, sister, brother's wife) come to her conjugal home to feed her curd, flattened rice and rich nourishing food such as meat, eggs, sweetmeats'. However, I was told by a Śreṣṭha informant that the mother is not allowed to visit her daughter in the son-in-law's house until the delivery of the child, so only other female relatives will visit the pregnant woman to feed her.

Although this ritual is explained functionally by Newars, i.e. to ensure the good health of mother-to-be and for easy delivery (Pradhan 1986: 77), it can also be interpreted as the child's maternal kin staking an early claim on the child, by ensuring that the mother-to-be is fed with food from her natal home. As in the case of the engagement and wedding ceremony, the process of claiming one's kin can be seen in terms of the flow of prestations, but this time, it is from the mother's (bride's) household to the father's (groom's) household.

¹⁸ Despite the popularity and importance of this ritual to all Newar castes, a Newar ritual specialist, Ratna Kaji Bajracharya, insists that this ritual is an innovation (1989: 6).

7.3 Announcing the birth of a child (*sicupālu kenegu*)

When the baby is born, a messenger is sent with ritual objects from the birth house to mother's natal home. Traditionally among the high castes, the messenger has to be a person from the Maharjan caste, but among Maharjans and lower castes a member from the child's paternal group will suffice. The ritual objects include a round piece of jaggery, one piece of nutmeg and one *pāu* each of ginger, *imu* seeds, salt, ghee if the child is a son. If it is a daughter, the same items are sent, but in half the amount. The actual composition of the ritual objects may vary according to different castes, and the ritual may be called by a different name, but the essence of the prestation is the same: to inform the child's mother's kin of the birth. When the ritual objects are received, the mother's brother or the mother's natal home will then return the same object with increment.

Newars consider this as 'informational' or 'solicitory' gifts (Dumont 1983; Inden and Nicholas 1977). However, from the perspective of kinship, the birth of the child re-opens a channel of communication between the maternal and paternal groups that has been closed after the formalities of the marriage ceremony are over, the only difference being that the maternal side is represented by the mother's brother. The ritual prestations which make their way to and from the two households serve to establish links not only with the new-born child, but also between the two households with regards to the care of the child.

7.4 Feeding ghee and beaten rice (*ghyahbaji nakah wanegu*)

Within twelve days of the birth, the female relatives from the mother's natal home bring ghee, beaten rice and other food items for all members in the paternal household. In return, the women of the paternal household prepare a special meal for the guests (*kaulā*). The physical presence of members from the

natal home and the gifts of food that they bring for the mother, the new-born child and other members of the paternal household is an indication of the role that the mother's kin will play in the upbringing of the child. Among Śākya caste there is a special extra ritual called *pāḥ thyākaḥ wanegu* which literally means 'to go to claim the right'. On the day after the birth of the child, male and female members from the mother's natal home will visit her in the paternal household, bringing sweets, wine, and eggs for all the members in the paternal household. This reinforces the idea that kinship ties to the child have to be made or claimed at the outset of the birth.

7.5 The birth purification (*macābu byēkegu*)

From the time of birth, both mother and child undergo by birth pollution (*jaybili*) which lasts for four days. During the period of pollution, there are restrictions to the diet of the mother. In particular, she is not allowed to eat pulses, salt or black soyabean. Traditionally, the umbilical cord is cut on the fourth day after the birth, after which the birth pollution extends to all *phuki*, agnatic kin of the father. The cutting of the umbilical cord (*pi dhyanegu*) and extension of pollution to *phuki* members signifies the child's separation from the mother and constituting a new link with the wider agnatic kin or *phuki* group. Likewise, in order to constitute relationship between female agnatic kin and the new-born child, the father's sister (*nini*) comes to play important roles. Ritually, it is believed that the father's sister has the power to protect the new-born child from all kinds of evil. Therefore, to extend her protection she has to sit on the purified ground with her brother's child on her lap. She then applies mustard oil on the head of the child and kohl on the child's eyes. During the birth purification ritual, the child is also given a name by a Vajrācārya or astrologer of the Jośī caste based on a reading of the horoscope, which is not revealed to outsiders. In addition to

establishing a relationship with his/her kin it is also necessary for the new-born child to establish a link with his family's lineage deity and ancestor's spirits. A ritual is then performed before the *āgā dyaḥ* (family deity) on behalf of the new-born child, to incorporate the child into the spiritual cosmos by presenting it to the gods.

Among the Śreṣṭha, the birth purification ritual is performed on three separate days: on the fourth (*pyaynhū*), sixth (*chaitihī*) and tenth day (*jhinhū*) after the birth of the child. Traditionally, the umbilical cord will be cut by a woman from the Khaḍgi caste¹⁹ and it will then be offered to the goddess of the crossroads (*chwāsa ajimā*) in the locality. Some locals compare the goddess *chwāsa ajimā* to the civic registrar because it is only at the time of birth and death that one would pay her a visit. These days, when babies are born in hospitals, the umbilical cord is cut by the doctor or nurses and then discarded. However, the ritual of cutting the umbilical cord and the purification of the birth pollution (*macābū byēkegu*) is still performed, albeit symbolically in the case of the umbilical cord. A day is chosen after the mother and child have returned from hospital,²⁰ and a Khaḍgi woman is invited to perform both the cutting and purification rituals on the same day. In this case, the birth pollution for the *phuki* is only a matter of a few hours. The purification/cutting of umbilical cord ritual can be made on the fourth, sixth, tenth or twelfth day after the birth, or in cases of

¹⁹ For a child from a caste lower than the Kasāi or Khaḍgi, the umbilical cord will be cut by their own midwife. Traditionally, there was a small caste group called Śuddhakār or Nābhichedakār or colloquially Bhamwa whose womenfolk cut the umbilical cord of children of high- and middle-caste families. However, no informant mentions about this caste in modern Kathmandu. Vajrācārya (1989: 185) lists it in his disappeared caste list.

²⁰ In the case of caesarian birth, when the mother and child have to stay at the hospital for a longer period, the umbilical cord cutting and birth purification ritual will be usually be performed on the fourth day without the mother and child actually being present in the house.

emergency, it can also be performed one day after delivery (*wahlāḥ chī byēkegu*).²¹

In Newar society, the birth and death of a relative, *thaḥthiti*, creates impurity and it pollutes close kin. However, it is not the birth and death itself which create the pollution but the stage of separation thereafter. Thus, the periods of impurity are said to begin with the rituals of separation. For birth, the ritual of separation is the cutting of the umbilical cord, for death, the firing of the body on the funeral pyre. In case of a female, the impurity also extends in the time of the mock-menstruation ritual, *bārhā tayegu* which is known as *khaybili* period.

On the purification day, the house has to be cleaned, every member has to take a bath, have their toe-nails cut, all the clothes have to be washed and the floor has to be coated with red soil mixed with cow dung (*bā ilegu*). Among the higher castes, the presence of the family priest is necessary, otherwise it is the midwife, *didi aji* who usually for high castes comes from the farmer caste of Maharjan who will perform the purification ritual. The *phuki* members will bring rice, oil and coins for the ritual.

It is significant that, the mother's kin are not affected by the birth pollution. However, the relationship between maternal kin and the new-born child is established by sending over prestations which are the key items needed for the purification ritual (*macābu byēkegu ku chwayegu*). The items that make up the prestation varies from caste to caste, but usually it includes a set of clothes for a new-born child and its parents, mattress, pillow, quilt, 'child poles' (*māca kathī*) to support a cloth to protect the child from sunlight, herbal medicine for the child,

²¹ In the case of the Maharjan caste, if the child is male, the birth purification can only be made on the tenth or twelfth day after the birth. If the child is female, the ritual can be done on the fourth, sixth or twelfth day.

vessels, utensils, foods (beaten rice, rice, various meat dishes, vegetables, curd, ghee, jaggery, liquor (and a buffalo head or its half if the first child is a daughter on the birth of the first child. For those who are economically better off, they might even include an electrical heater too (see picture). The sending of the birth purification prestations (*macābu byēkegu ku chwayegu*) by the child's maternal kin is obligatory only at the birth purification ritual of the first male child. Again, this can be seen as an attempt by the child's maternal kin to claim their rights over the new-born child, by providing for the material needs of the child and providing food for the child's paternal household to strengthen the link between the two households.

Among the high Hindu castes, the child's mother's brother's wife (*maleju*) has an important role in affirming the kinship relationship between the newborn child's maternal and paternal kin. The child's mother's brother's wife offers auspicious symbols (*dhau sagā*) which is a bowl of curd and piece of cloth for the child, the child's mother, and father. Then she rubs mustard oil and sprinkles a few grains of uncooked rice on the child's head. Like the child's father's sister, it is also believed that this will protect the new-born child from all kinds of evils. Also on this day, midwife hands over the child to father and he pays a small fee to the midwife. Through this ritual it is believed by Newars that a child is socially recognized as the child of the father.

7.6 To go to put on the bracelet on the child (*pyūcā nhyākaḥ wanegu*)

Two weeks after the birth of the child (for the high Buddhist castes) or on the sixth day (for the high Hindu castes) a ritual called *pyūcā nhyākaḥ wanegu* which literally means 'going to put on bracelets (*pyūcā*)' is performed. On this day, grandparents from maternal home visit the new-born child at the child's paternal home. They will bring a sweet called *postigā*, a special kind of

nourishing confectionery for their daughter, and a bracelet for the child. During the ritual, the child's maternal grandfather will put the bracelet on the child. However, among the Śreṣṭha caste, although the maternal grandfather brings the bracelet for the child, it is the child's father's sister who puts the bracelet on the child. In addition, the maternal grandfather also has to bring one gold and one silver ring for the child, which will also be put on the child by the child's father's sister. The act of putting the bracelet on the child is the mirror image of the act of putting the bracelet on the bride which was described earlier. In the case of the child, it is the maternal kin who is claiming him/her as their kin, whereas in the case of the bride, it is the groom's kin. Essentially, the bracelet is a symbol of union between two households, and the wearer has a dual identity of belonging to two households, although he or she may spend the larger part of his/her life in only one.

7.7 To go to see the child (*macā bu swaḥ wanegu*)

About 2-3 weeks after the birth of child kin from the mother's natal home bring food for the child's mother and sweets for the whole family (*macā bu swaḥ wanegu*). It is the custom that upon seeing the child's face, an offering of money has to be made to the child. In return, kin from the natal home will be given a special meal of fried egg, meat and sweets.

7.8 To be under the care of the maternal home (*macā bū lahikaḥ wanegu*)

About a month after the birth of the child, both mother and child are brought to her maternal home to be looked after. The duration of stay at the maternal home varies from case to case, but on average it is about one month. During this time, other maternal kin who may not have had the chance to visit the child at the child's father's house will take the opportunity to visit the natal home.

It is also the time for the members of the natal home to participate in the upbringing of the child. The child's father will stay at his natal home, and occasionally comes to visit.

7.9 The first rice-feeding (*macā jāko*)

If the child is male, it is done on the sixth or eighth month, if it is a girl, it is done on the fifth or seventh month. Among the high-caste Newars, the presence of the priest and midwife is necessary for this ritual but with the agricultural caste and other caste below it, it is performed without the priest, with only the midwife and kin present. The maternal kin has to send clothes for the mother, father and child, and other materials for the ritual and food. They also bring a pair silver ankle bracelets (*wahayā kalijwaḥ*) for the child. In this ritual, the child is fed with boiled rice and other foods such as meat, egg, vegetables and lentils. Up to this time, the child will have been fed purely on breast-milk. In addition to the rice feeding, it is also the day to publicly name the child by the child's father's sister. Then a selection of items such as pen, brick and soil is brought before the child. These items are brought by the mother's brother. The child's future is also predicted, based on the items that the child has chosen from the selection. For example, if the child selects a pen, it is likely that he will become a writer, a brick, a builder and so on.

On this day, the midwife will perform ritual worship to local goddess, *chwāsa ajimā* and familial deities (*agā dyah*) as in the birth purification rites. In addition, it is role of the MB (*pāju*) of the child to carry him to the neighbouring Gaṇeś shrine. They are accompanied by the child's father's sister (*nini*) who worships the Gaṇeś on the child's behalf. The local Gaṇeś shrine is an important part of Newar life as from this first worship he will frequently worship there throughout his life.

Traditionally, this ritual was celebrated by the households of the maternal and paternal kin of the child. However, nowadays it has become an occasion to throw a feast for all friends and family in addition to kin from both maternal and paternal side of the child. People are invited by cards and come to the feast with gifts for the child.

According to Toffin (1975), the maternal and paternal kin who are represented at the *jāko*, the wife-givers and wife takers, play a complementary role. The child receives from his paternal line, his name and caste affiliation, while from his maternal line, gifts and ritual worship of *dhau sagā*²² and *khē sagā*.²³ The ritual marks his passage into becoming a full-fledged member of his patrilineal caste. If the child were to die before the *jāko*, he would be buried and there would be no death pollution to observe for any member of his family. However, if the child dies after *jāko*, he will be cremated and the death pollution will extend to the whole *phuki* group.

7.10 The birthday celebration (*yaḥmarhī kwakhāyekegu*)

The Newars celebrate their birthdays every year with a simple ritual of *khē sagā* and distributing *dhau-baji* mixture (mixture of beaten rice, curd and sugar) to children in locality. However, for first few year of a child it is specially celebrated with *yaḥmarhī* pastry.²⁴ In the second year, especially, the birthday is celebrated with a garland of two *yaḥmarhī* pastries. On that day, the child's maternal uncle has to send him sixty *yaḥmarhī* and from the father's sister, ten,

²² *Dhau sagā* consists of curd and piece of cloth use as a part of auspicious ritual.

²³ *Khē sagā* consists of hard boiled egg, fish, beans-bread (*woḥ*), and liquor (*ailā*) also use as a part of auspicious ritual.

²⁴ *Yaḥmarhī* pastry is a type of Newar steamed pastry made of rice flour and stuffed with sesame mixed with jaggery.

and other households of maternal kin, also ten each. The child's mother's brother also has to send one shirt. On the fourth birthday, the birthday celebration is done with four *yaḥmarhī*, but the kin are not required to send *yaḥmarhī* as on previous birthdays.

7.11 To cut the hair one is born with (*Busākhā khāyegu*)

Apart from Buddhist priestly castes, many other castes observe the *busākhā khāyegu*, ritual of cutting hair one is born with the boy when he attains the age of 6 or 7 years. Traditionally, this ritual is observed separately from the initiation; however, nowadays this ritual is incorporated with the initiation (*kaytāpujā*). This life-cycle ritual ascertains the child's gender as a male and prepares him for adulthood. A boy who has not gone through this ritual and a girl who has not gone through *ihi* are considered by Newars as a genderless child. Upon these ritual a boy and girl is identified by their gender and crosses the threshold of adulthood. After these rituals Newar children are subject to rules about avoiding polluted food (*cipa*). In this ritual the child's mother's brother (*pāju*) and father's sister (*nini*) also play significant roles.

Traditionally, the *busākhā khāyegu* ritual is celebrated over two days. On the first day, the purificatory rites (*niśī yāyegu*) are observed and the child's mother's brother (*pāju*) ties the topknot of hair (*āsā*) with a gold and silver ring. On the second day of the ritual, the child is symbolically saved by his mother's brother by leaving the topknot uncut, and the job is then finished by the barber who will cut the boy's hair. For the Buddhist priestly castes, the whole head will be shaven, but for all other castes, the topknot is left intact. The hair will be collected by the child's father's sister, which she will dispose of it in the river. Once the head is shaven, the child's mother's brother will symbolically pierce the child's ears. The actual piercing is then done by someone from the Barber caste.

7.12 Initiation (*cudākarma*)

When a male child is between seven and twelve years of age, he has to undergo an initiation ceremony (*cudākarma*). This ritual is different between Buddhist priestly castes and other castes. For Buddhist priestly castes of Śākya and Vajrācārya, it is called *bare chuyegu* (to make *bare*, a non-honorific name for Śākya castes) while for the other castes, it is called *kaytāpujā* which means ‘worship of putting on loincloth’ or ‘worship involving (putting on) the loincloth’.

1. *Bare chuyegu*. Four days before the initiation, the child has to go to his lineage *bāhāḥ* (temple) and perform a ritual (*gwaydā̃ tayegu*) to inform the deity and the gurus (priests) of his intention to be initiated. He has to bring with him ten betel nuts and two *gwā* (betel leaf packets). Two days before the initiation, the child’s family has to offer a feast to senior members of the *bāhāḥ* to the priest, his mother’s brother and his father’s sister. This ritual is called *chwaylābhū* (literally meaning a plate of barbecued meat, but more generally refers to the feast before a main ritual). The day before the initiation, a small ritual (*duswah*) is performed to purify the child. From that moment, the child is not allowed to eat anything that is considered impure, including meat, wine, etc. and he is not allowed to touch dogs or wear leather. Meanwhile, another feast is offered to all maternal and paternal kin, except the initiate.

On the day of the initiation, the boy is ordained as a Buddhist novice, and another big feast is offered to all his kin. His mother’s brother and father’s sister will bring *bārā̃ jwalā̃*, meaning rice, money for offering, clothes for the initiate. Other kin are allowed to bring any offering for the initiate. The initiate’s head is shaven by the barber caste, but before this can be done, the mother’s brother has to symbolically snip a few strands. The initiate’s father’s sister will hold up a tray

to prevent the hair from falling onto the floor. In return, the initiate has to offer a blouse for his father's sister.

The initiate has to remain as a novice for four days, during which time the boy has to observe the ritual taboos of not eating impure foods and has to go begging for alms from his maternal and paternal kin daily. On the fourth day, the initiate undergoes a disrobing ritual. The initiate has to be given new clothes by the mother's brother. The ritual up to this point is the same for both Śākya and Vajrācārya. However, for Vajrācārya there is another ritual called *ācāḥ luyegu* (to make Vajrācārya).²⁵

After the completion of the initiation rituals, the child is considered as a full member of the caste group and the *bāhā* (temple), which means that if he were to die, he will be given the full death rites as an adult and if there is a death in the family, he would have to observe all the pollution rules that applies to the household generally.

2. Kaytāpujā (Worship involving [putting on] the loincloth). This ritual is roughly similar to the Buddhist priestly caste initiation, but the main difference is that instead of becoming a Buddhist novice, the initiate becomes an ascetic. The ritual is also shorter, performed over two days instead of the four days required for the Buddhist priestly castes. The other main difference is that on the second day, the initiate has to pretend to run to the forest, and it is the role of the mother's brother to stop him from doing so.²⁶

²⁵ For detailed description see Locke (1975) and Gellner (1988, 1998).

²⁶ For detailed description see Pradhan (1986: 102-10) and Toffin (1984: 134-40).

7.13 The divine marriage (*Ihi*)

As for initiation to boys *ihi* is for girls. *Ihi* literally means ‘marriage’ (as discussed above in Chapter 4) but it is a symbolic marriage with a *bel* fruit. This is observed communally in public generally coincided with the old-age birthdays or consecration of new Buddhist shrines. Nowadays, it is becoming more common for different caste organizations and/or secular organizations to hold it annually. This is done when the girl attains the age of 7, 9 or 11 years and the ritual is performed over two days (see Chapter 4 for details). *Ihi* can be seen as the female equivalent to the male initiation rite as a girl who has performed the *ihi* ritual becomes a full-fledged member of her father’s caste.

I asked a woman of Kāranjit caste, ‘Whom do you have to invite for *ihi*?’ She replied, ‘Only *pāju khalah* (maternal kin); there is no obligation to invite any other kin for the *ihi*’. I further asked, ‘Does anyone have to give anything to the girl on the occasion?’ She replied that the girl’s mother’s brother must give clothes to the girl if he is invited, but if the mother’s brother is not present, it is the duty of the parents to provide clothes for the girl. I have observed a few *ihi* rituals initiate receives *bārā chuyegu* which are rice, sweets, other goods as well as money from both female maternal and paternal kin in addition to the new clothes provided by her mother’s brother. Also, during the ritual the *ihi* girl has to offer a piece of cloth for her father’s sister.

7.14 To place a barrier (*Bārhāḥ tayegu*)

Bārhāḥ tayegu is a mock-menstruation ritual for girls when they are confined in a room for 12 days, during which the girl is polluted by menstruation and referred to as *thīyematyaḥ juyegu* which means ‘becoming untouchable’ (see Chapter 4 for detail). Once confinement is begun her father and mother are

affected by the menstruation pollution (*jaybili*) too. During the ritual the girl will be locked in a room which is sealed and where no male nor sunlight is allowed to enter. Other *phuki* (agnatic kin) are also affected by the pollution on the fourth or sixth day. Once the pollution extends to all *phuki* members, they are not allowed to eat salt (*khaybili*). For this ritual, a priest is not necessary as all ritual worship is done by the *nakī*, a female senior member of the family. Generally *jaybili* is used and refers to 'birth pollution,' but I have noticed that many Śreṣṭhas and Kāranjits use the terms *jaybili* and *khaybili* for menstruation pollution.

During the confinement period the girl's female maternal kin will come to visit the girl, bringing dry food, yogurt, betel nuts and sweets, fruit, etc. as prestations to the girl's family. From the paternal side, the father's sister also has to bring food for the girl during this time, including sweets, fruit, one litre of milk, an amount of peanuts. On the twelfth day, the menstruation period ends and she has to worship the sun god. This is followed by feast for friends and family. On this day, the girl's mother's brother and father's sister have to offer her one blouse each and some rice as a gift.

7.15 Old-Age Initiations (*Jyāḥ Jākwa*)

When Newars reach an old age, they celebrate special initiations known as *jyāḥ jākwa*, 'an old age birthday'. It is said that one can celebrate such initiations up to six occasions. However, it is common to celebrate only three initiations. The first is when the person is 77 years, 7 months, 7 days, 7 hours old. It is called *bhimarathārohaṇa* ('riding the chariot of *bhima*'). The second one is observed upon attaining the age of 83 years, 4 months, 4 days and 4 hours, which is called *devarathārohaṇa* ('riding the chariot of gods') or *candrarathārohaṇa* ('riding the chariot of the moon'). However, some celebrate this when they attain 80 years. The third initiation is celebrated upon reaching 99 years, 9 months, 9 days and 9

hours of age, and it is called *mahārathārohaṇa*. These rituals last for four days, and all *syāḥ phuki* (closest relatives), married-out daughters, grandchildren, and all *phuki* kin are expected to participate. All the married-out daughters and grandchildren have to give Ego one shirt and all *phuki* kin will each bring a piece of cloth to wrap around Ego's head in case of male and golden *tikā* in case of female. For this ritual, it is customary among Newar's to let the son and daughter-in-law do the ritual work which would normally be done by the senior male and female of the family. A main part of the ritual on these special initiations is to place Ego on a cart and which is pulled around the vicinity by all sons, daughters, sons-in-laws, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

7.16 Death Ritual

When a person dies, the *sī guthi* (death *guthi*) have to be informed. The *guthi* then prepare for the person's funeral. During that time, the married-out daughters bring a blanket made of cotton to be put on the dead body. However, these days, they will put a piece of *khātā* cloth instead as cotton blankets are hard to find. Before the body is taken away to the cremation ground, a female representative from the *phuki* has to cry and take the clothes of the dead man to the crossroads goddess (*chwāsa ajimā*). During the death procession, members of the family and the *phuki* kin will weep alongside the dead body while a woman from the farmer caste will spread flowers, rice and vermilion on the road. In some castes, women are not allowed to participate in the procession.

Once the body has moved away from the house, the female member of the *phuki* will sweep the house, especially where the dead body had been placed, and all the dust and the straw mattress where the dead body had been laid is disposed off at the crossroad goddess. Once the body is cremated, a married-out daughter or granddaughter brings dry food consisting of wine, sweet and beaten rice to feed

the household, as they are not allowed to cook, while observing the death pollution. The next day, all the maternal kin come to give their condolences to the family. Four days after the cremation, the married-out daughters and granddaughters will bring food to feed all the *phuki* kin. On the seventh day, the house is cleaned and at the threshold of the house, several dishes of food which have been prepared by the married-out daughters are placed, and are collected by a member of by the Kapāli caste. The death pollution as it applies to the various kin groups have been discussed in a previous chapter. But here I wish to reiterate that it is at the point of death that kinship ties are made obvious, as the number of days that one has to observe death pollution is a clear indication of the closeness or distance to the deceased.

Among Vajrācāryas and Śākyas, on the seventh day, the whole house is be cleaned and a ritual is performed to purify themselves from the death ritual. The one who ignites the funeral pyre will be chief mourner, and he has to change his clothes and begin the mourning period which will last for one year. All male members are required to shave their head. Also within a year of the death, no auspicious rituals or festivals can be celebrated by the family. Among other castes, the purification period terminates only on the thirteenth day. On the forty-fifth day, on the third month and sixth month after the death, there will be a gathering of all kin and the deceased family will have to provide a feast for them.

7.17 Conclusion: The Maternal kin and Paternal kin

Next to Ego's own parents, the most significant person in the life of a Newar is Ego's *pāju* (mother's brother). In Newari, the word *pāju* is used so widely as a reference term for Ego's maternal links that it is immaterial whether Ego's mother actually has a brother. For example, when a child has to go to his mother's natal home, he would say that he is going to *pājupinthāy* (*pāju*'s place),

regardless of whether his mother has a brother. Nowhere is the role of MB more important than in Ego's life-cycle rituals. If Ego's MB is not available to perform the ritual for some reason, then MB's son can take his place (Toffin 1984: 166). If Ego's mother does not have a brother, another person may assume the role or be 'adopted' as Ego's *pāju*. It is interesting to note that in the list of people who can act as substitutes for Ego's MB Ego's own father is usually considered as the least favoured choice.

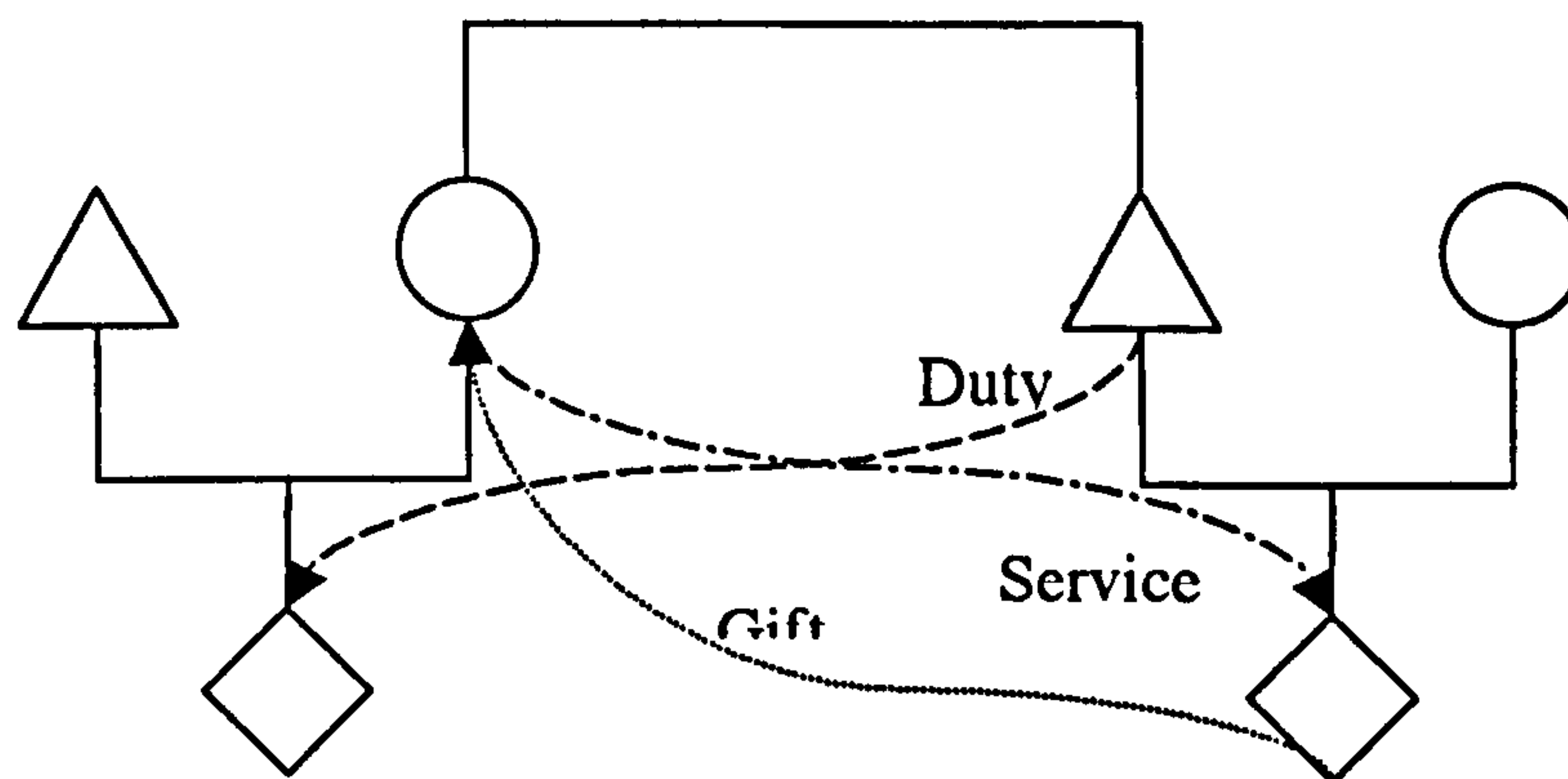
Ritually, as I have shown above, the mother's brother's role in various Newar rituals is sometimes more important than that of the child's parent. The mother's brother represents the whole of the child's maternal kin, and his presence at the child's life-cycle rituals can be interpreted as the active participation of the child's maternal side in the child's passage into becoming a full member of society. Likewise, the FZ also plays an important role in several Newar life-cycle rituals. The duties and presence of MB and FZ in Newar society are not only important in terms of ritual obligations but also for the kinship nexus as a whole because it is through them the kin networks of a Newar grows both on the paternal and maternal sides.

The ritual role of MB in the life of a child grows in importance as the child gets older, while the reverse is true in the case of the child's father, whose ritual role gradually diminishes (Toffin 1984: 166). However, in life-cycle rituals, the child's paternal links is represented by the child's FZ (*nini*), who, together with MB play the role of substitute parents. The reversal of roles, with the child's maternal side represented by a male, while the paternal side is represented by a female, suggests that life-cycle rituals are liminal periods during which the imbalances of a patriarchal society are redressed through the central role that is accorded to the child's maternal kin. On the contrary, it could also be argued that

the central role of MB is an additional duty put upon the child's maternal kin, relieving the paternal kin of some of their economic and ritual duties towards the child.

There are, however, some differences in the ritual roles of MB and FZ. For example, during the initiation ritual, MB symbolically cuts hair while FZ collects the hair and toe-nail on a tray and disposes of them. For her services, FZ is given a blouse or piece of cloth by BC, but MB does not receive anything. The fact that FZ is given a gift suggests that the relationship between Ego and FZ is not between equals; FZ has performed a service for which she is paid. In contrast, the relationship between Ego and MB is of a different nature; MB is performing his duty towards his sister's son, for which there is no material reward (see Figure 7.2.).

Figure 7.2: Differences between MB and FZ



Adam Kuper (1987: 105-6) usefully summarizes two contrasting perspectives on the significance of MB and FZ among the patrilineal societies of South Africa.

1. According to Radcliffe-Brown (1924) the peculiar importance in many societies of the mother's brother/sister's son relationship was a function of matriarchal institutions and 'their presence in a patrilineal

people could be regarded as evidence that that people had at some time in the past been matrilineal’.

2. According to Junod (1927) it has to be explained with reference to the institution of bridewealth and the claim of a sister’s son to a symbolic portion of his mother’s brother’s estate.

Although Radcliffe-Brown’s hypothesis has been widely criticized in anthropological circles, some Newars have in recent years reached similar conclusions. Keshab Shakya, a Newar informant argued that the Newar society might have been a matrilineal society in the past. Based on the fact that the Newars pay much attention to cult of Mother-goddesses²⁷ either on the symbolic construction of the city or its importance in several rituals and importantly the main roles played by MB and FZ in Newar society.

Like Junod focusing on the institution of bridewealth in the case of South Africa, Toffin (1984: 163-6) in the case of Newars proposes to look at the argument of MB and FZ from a perspective of prestation exchanges between ‘wife-giver’ and ‘wife-taker’:

Two groups of parents participate actively at these ceremonies: the family of a child and the family of the mother. These groups have relationships of ‘taker’ and ‘giver’; they are mutually designated by the terms *jicāpi* and *sasapi*. In relation to the father of the child, on one side there are the agnates, *phukita* or *tha:pi*, and on the other side are the parents-in-law, *sasapi*. (Toffin 1984: 163).

He further emphasized that

The ritual functions and the ceremonial prestations are held before all the groups of the parents and not individually isolated....The

²⁷ For detail see Slusser (1982: 323-6).

important thing to note in these cases is that the person or persons must be in the relation of 'giver' or 'taker' vis-à-vis of Ego' (Toffin 1984: 165).

However, Toffin using his ethnography of the unusual Newar village of Pyangaon, argues that until the actual marriage, all prestations flow from the wife-givers to the wife-takers. Upon marriage this flow is reversed, or at least becomes more reciprocal. However, the 'debt' which the wife-takers incurred upon marriage is finally paid off when a man (DH) has to carry his father-in-law's dead body to the cremation ground:

While making and transporting the stretcher of his father-in-law at the funeral ceremony, the *jilājā* not only release a debt towards his parents-in-law's family but also a debt that he had contracted in marrying their daughter. All happens as if the gift of a woman, in return, drags a series of obligations for the 'taker'. Thus during his whole life the son-in-law is obliged to work in the account of the parents of his wife: he must help them to harvest their crops, to grind their grains, to pound their paddy, etc. He takes the risk of being disconsidered in the community if he refuses to obey these work. (Toffin 1984: 166).

Nevertheless, he also points out that his findings and hypothesis based on Pyangaon Newars do not fit with the North Indian system of 'wife-giver' and 'wife-taker'²⁸ where the relations between the two groups are structured by hierarchy but it is more similar to other Nepalese tribes:

thus the system of prestations and the ritual services of Pyangaon deserve to be more affiliated to the Nepali tribes than to the Hindu populations of North India. (Toffin 1984: 166).

It has been mentioned earlier in the chapter on Newar marriage that wife-givers are considered as being lower in status than wife-takers. From this angle,

²⁸ See Dumont (1975: 210-14).

the mother's brother's role and the prestations from wife-givers to wife-takers in the child's life-cycle rituals allows for the wife-giver's side to stake their claim in the child and adjust the balance of power that has so far been with the wife-takers from the point of marriage. However, according to Ishii (1995: 132-3), the flow of prestations after marriage is not only about the 'exchange between wife-givers and wife-takers'; it is also about the ritual ties that bind a sister and brother.

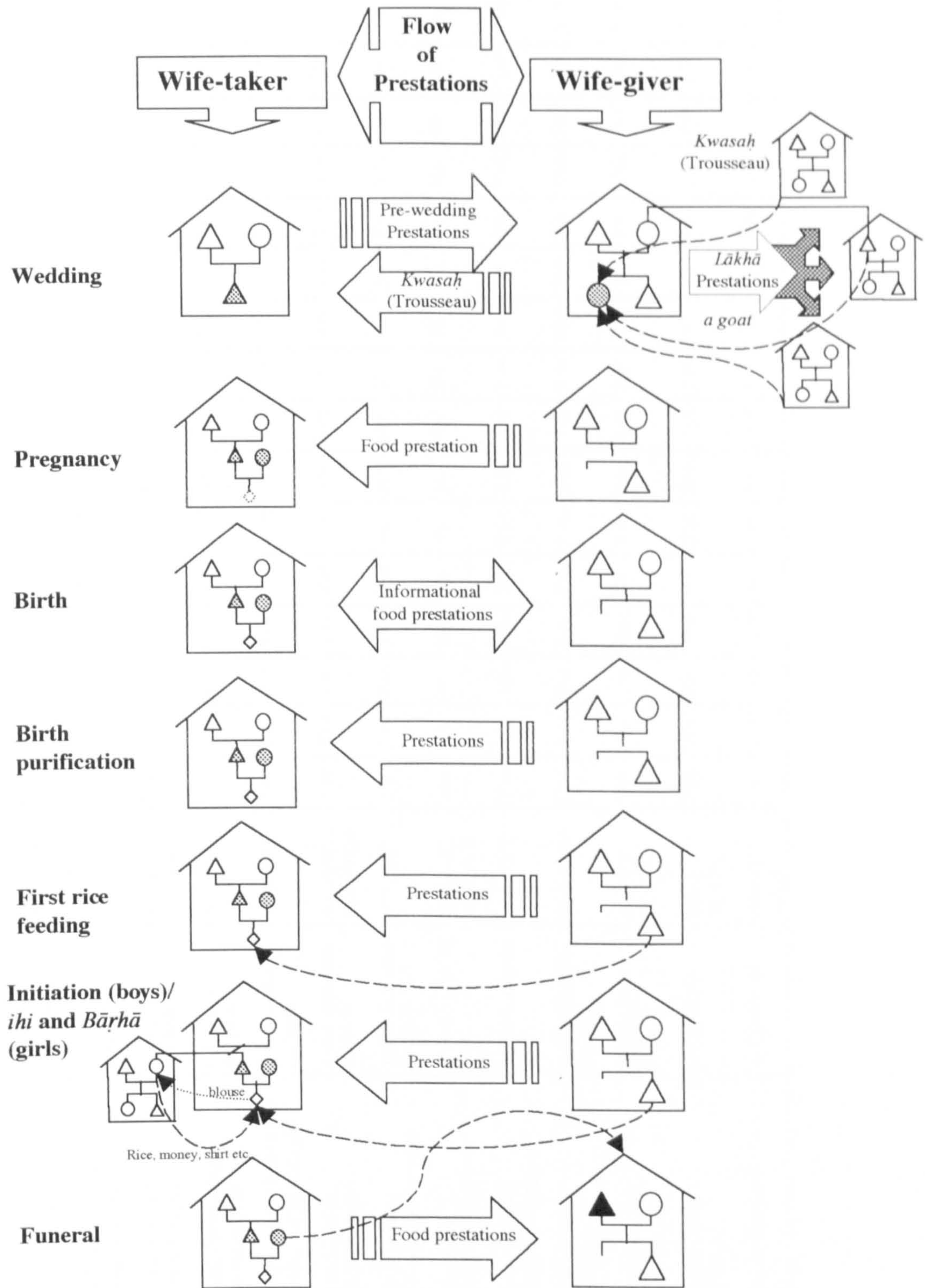
Based on his ethnography of Satungal village, Ishii follows G. S. Nepali's (1965: 279-80) argument which says that all obligations FZ fulfills to her BC are not as a FZ but as the daughter of her natal home. It is in her interest to serve her brother and keep a close relationship with her brother's family, so as to obtain support not only for herself, but for her children (who will need their mother's brother for their life-cycle rituals).

Along the line of FZ relationship as a daughter of the house, Quigley (1984: 162) further developed another argument that FZ or married out daughters are 'both insiders and outsiders' and 'presence of married daughters is required at all the main life-cycle rituals and is particularly marked at death'. According to Quigley a married daughter is an 'insider' by blood whereas by marriage she becomes an 'outsider'. By being 'insider' she is pure that she can assist and participate in any of her natal household's rituals and she is obliged to join in all main rituals and festivals of her natal household as a family member. However, her transformation to being an 'outsider' by marriage becomes extremely helpful when death occurs in her natal home because she is less polluted by a death pollution in her natal home. This allows her to 'undertake *pūjā* and the preparation of foodstuffs on the seventh day for the departed spirit which is forbidden to lineage members' (Quigley 1984: 162).

The close link between MB and sister's son can also be explained as justification for the patrilineal structure of Newar society. The financial support given by the mother's brother for the various rituals is an indirect way of channelling the family's resources to his sister, as she is not able to inherit anything from her natal home after marriage (e.g. Gellner 1995: 26). However, it should be noted that the support given by the mother's brother is often in kind (in terms of food, clothing) and also, if financial support was given in cash, the money is not for the woman to keep. In the event of a separation or divorce, the woman may only take what she arrived with, i.e. her trousseau. On the other hand, now that many young women work at salaried employment, they get to keep their wages—it is not taken at all by the joint household—i.e. treated like her trousseau.

In sum, I would suggest that the life-cycle rituals not only provide as a platform where kinship nexus are displayed (see Appendix: List of Kin that should be invited for life-cycle ritual feasts) but it provides the backdrop for the negotiations of power balance between male/female and wife-giver/wife-taker axes (see Figure 7.3). In an alternative view, this can also be seen as a power justification in patrilineal society of Newars. Although the material right and power of the household lies merely on males, the power of females are balanced by their ritual importance. Ritually married daughters are a part of most life-cycle rituals, the status of senior woman is higher in most rituals and males have ritual obligations to support his sisters and his sisters' children throughout life.

Figure 7.3: Flow of main prestations between maternal and paternal kin



Appendix: Comparative summary of life-cycle rituals performed by Newars of all castes in southern Kathmandu

| | Event | Timing | Prestation flow From-To | Raj | Vaj | Sak | Sre | Uda | Mah | Man | Tan | Nap | Nak | Kar | Mal | Cit | Ran | Kha | Kap | Pod | Cya |
|----|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | Feed the pregnant woman (<i>dhou bajī nakaḥwanegu</i>) | 8-9 months of Pregnancy | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No Δ | No Δ | No Δ | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| 2 | Announce the birth (<i>sicu pālu kenegu</i>) | Soon after the birth | WT→WG, WG→WT | Yes § | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| 3 | Claiming membership (<i>Pathyaka wanegu</i>) | 1 day after the birth | WG→WT | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| 4 | Feeding ghee and beaten rice (<i>ghyaḥbajī nakaḥ wanegu</i>) | 4-5 days after the birth | WG→WT | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | No |
| 5 | Birth purification (<i>macābū byēkegu</i>) | 4 or 6 days after the birth | WG→WT, Phuki→Ego | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 6 | Put on bracelet (<i>pyūcā nhyākāḥ wanegu</i>) | 15-20 days after the birth | WF→DC | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No |
| 7 | Feeding meat (<i>lā nakaḥ wanegu</i>) | 2 weeks after the birth | WM→WT, WT→WG | No | No | No | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| 8 | Go to see the child (<i>macābū swaḥwanegu</i>) | 1 month after the birth | WG→WT | Yes ¶ | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| 9 | First rice feeding (<i>macā jāko</i>) | 5/6 months after the birth | WG→WT | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| 10 | 2nd year birthday (<i>nidā bunhi</i>) | 2 years after the birth | MB→ZC, FZ→BC | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | No | Yes |
| 11 | Cutting birth hair (<i>busākhā</i>) | 6/7 years old | MB→ZC, FZ→BC | Yes | No | No | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Yes |
| 12 | Divine marriage (girls) (<i>ihi</i>) | 5, 7 years old | MB→ZC, FZ→ZC | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No |

| | Event | Timing | Prestation flow From-To | Raj | Vaj | Sak | Sre | Uda | Mah | Man | Tan | Nap | Nak | Kar | Mal | Cit | Ran | Kha | Kap | Pod | Cya |
|--|---|-----------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|
| 13 | Initiation (<i>bratabandha</i>)† | 7-11 years old | MB→ZC FZ→ZC | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes* | No | Yes |
| 14 | To place a barrier (girls) (<i>bārḥāḥ</i>) | 7-12 years old | MB→ZC FZ→ZC | No | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | No |
| 15 | Caste initiation (<i>waḥlā tayegu</i>) | 12 years old | MB→ZC FZ→ZC | No | No | No | No | No | Yes | Yes | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No | No |
| 16. | Marriage (<i>ihipā</i>) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| (See separate table at the end of Chapter 5) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17. | Old-aged initiation (<i>jyāḥ jāko</i>) | After 77 years | DH→Ego SW→Ego | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | No | Yes |
| 18 | Death ritual (<i>mṛtyu kriyā</i>) | After cremation | MD→PF | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

Note: This comparative list is based on Vajracārya (1989) and my own field notes. These are the main life-cycle rituals, however, some castes have more rites than I listed here. Caste names are represented by first three letters of each caste. ◊ Many castes combine cutting birth hair with initiation, † Among Vajracārya and Śākya it is called *cuḍākarma* other castes *kaytāpūjā*, § called *gway sinha pwaḥ chvayegu* ¶ called *daḥṣhinā chā wanegu*, * call *Jogi chuyegu* meaning initiate as a *jogi*. Δ These castes do not send *dhau baḥ* to WT house but feed the pregnant daughter when she visits her natal home about 8 months of pregnancy, WG = wife giver, WT = wife taker, WF = wife's father, DC = daughter's child, WM = wife's mother, ZC = sister's child, BC = brother's child, DH = daughter's husband, SW = son's wife, MD = married daughter, PF = Paternal family.

Appendix: List of Kin that should be invited for life-cycle ritual feasts

Following are the list of kin should to be invited for main feasts on different life-cycle rituals of Newars. The list was listed to me by a Citrakār informant however most Newars agree that if they have to invite in full extent this list is valid and applied. Otherwise, list of invitees can be reduced depends on individual basis. Most importantly, every Newar asserts that there are three groups of kin: MB, FZ and married daughters who are the mandatory list in most Newar feasts.

1. First rice feeding feast (*macā jāko bhway*)

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| - child's mother's brothers (<i>pāju</i>) | household |
| - child's father's sisters (<i>nini</i>) | household |
| - Agnates (<i>phuki khalah</i>) | household |

2. Initiation feast (*bratabandha bhway*)

Child's mother's side

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| - child's mother's brothers (mother's natal home) | household |
| - child's mother's mother's brother (mother's MB) | household |
| - child's mother's sisters | household |
| - child's mother's sisters' daughters | household |
| - child's mother's fictive kin (if exist) | household |
| - child's mother's father's brothers (<i>kakāpī</i>) | household |
| - child's mother's father's brothers' daughters | household |

Child's father's side

- | | |
|---|------------|
| - grandfather's mother's brothers | household |
| - grandfather's father's sisters | household |
| - grandfather's brothers (<i>kakāpī</i>) | household |
| - grandfather's brother's daughters | household |
| - grandfather's brother's daughter's daughters | individual |
| - father's brothers (child's <i>taḥbā</i> and <i>kakāpī</i>) | household |
| - father's brother's daughters (<i>ninipī</i>) | household |
| - father's sisters (child's <i>ninipī</i>) | household |
| - father's sister's daughters (<i>bhināmacā</i>) | household |
| - father's MB (child's <i>pājubājā</i>) | household |
| - father's father's sisters (father's <i>ninipī</i>) | household |
| - father's brother's daughter's daughter (<i>bhināmacā</i>) | individual |
| - father's fictive kin (if exist) | household |
| - father's MBD (<i>ninipī</i>) | household |
| - initiate's eZ | household |
| - <i>Guthi</i> members (<i>guthiyā</i>) | all |

3. Feast on the occasion of placing a barrier (*Bārḥāḥ bhway*)

- girl's father's sister (*nini*) household
- girl's FZD household
- girl's MB household
- girl's MBD household
- girl's FB (*taḥbā and kakāpī*) household
- girl's MZ (*taḥmā and camāpī*) household

4. Wedding feast (*Pasatāḥ bhvaye or byāḥ bhvaye or biyā chvaya bhvaye*)

- All kin invited for initiation feast
- Ego's Brothers-in-law families (*sādhi khalah*) household
- Ego's Sisters-in-law families (*sādhi khalah*) household

5. Old-age Initiation Feast (*Jyāḥ Jāko bhway*)

- All kin invited for initiation feast
- Initiate's MB *khalah* household

6. Death Purification Feast (*Ghaḥsū bhway*)

- MB *khalah* household
- FZ *khalah* household
- Daughters (*mhyāymacā*) household
- DC (*bhināmacā*) household
- *Samdhi* or in-laws *khalah* (dead's side only) household
- *Guthi* members *Guthiyāḥ* all
- Agnates (*phukī*) household

7. Funeral feast (*Pāḥāⁿ bwanā bhway*)

- Agnates (*phuki khalah*) household
- All who send *byāḥ* (death food prestation) household
- *Guthi* members (*guthiyāḥ*) and assistants all

CHAPTER EIGHT

Constituting Kinship in Newar Festivals

In Nepal, Newars are famous for their elaborate feasts¹ which are held to celebrate the many Newar festivals that occur throughout the year. There is a very popular saying among non-Newars that goes '*newār bigriyo bhojale*' which literally means 'Newars are ruined by feasting,'² which shows that feasts and festivals are a central preoccupation among the Newars.

Festivals are celebrated in a number of ways. More often than not, it is celebrated with a festive feast held within the confines of the home, commencing with the worshipping of household deities and ending with a specially prepared meal for the family. Then there are the grand festive feasts for all caste members, where hundreds gather for a meal, and the festive processions which snake through the narrow streets, involving hundreds if not thousands of people from different Newar castes.

Feasts and festivals provide us with a unique insight into Newar kinship; it is during this time that identities and kinship links are reinforced, be it at the household, intra-caste or inter-caste levels. Nepali (1965: 381) writes, 'There are a great many festivals which provide the reinforcements to solidarity among the

¹ I wish to differentiate between feasts and festivals because not all festivals are celebrated with a feast, and not all feasts are linked to festivals. I will use the term 'festive' feasts to denote specifically the feasts that are linked with festivals, as opposed to, for example, life-cycle feasts.

² The full saying goes '*bāhun bigriyo lobhale, parbatiyā bigriyo mojale, newār bigriyo bhojale*' which means 'the Brahman is ruined by greed, the Chetri is ruined by luxuries and the Newar is ruined by feasting'.

*Dewali*³ group members and members of the joint households. In other words, these festivals go to provide the basis of the kinship bonds among the Newars'. My contribution to the study of Newar festive feasts and festivals is to draw out these aspects of kinship that are expressed, in order to show how kinship is constituted in Newar society.

There is no shortage of books on Newar festivals of the Kathmandu Valley describing the festivals as well as the myths and legends behind them.⁴ Many anthropologists⁵ have also dedicated a large part of their studies to the description and analysis of Newar festivals, the emphasis has been more on the caste, local and mythical aspects of such festivals. The kinship aspect of festivals, although usually mentioned, is not elaborated.

8.1 Categorizations of Newar festivals

Nepali (1965: 343-413) classifies Newar festivals into two main categories according to the level of social organization: community and domestic. Under 'community events' Nepali groups all festivals which are participated by all castes, whereas under 'domestic events' he includes all celebrations which are confined to either members of the household or kin group. Also using the criteria of social organization to categorize Newar festivals, Toffin (1984: 501-7) divides Newar festivals into 7 types: local festivals (*des jātrā, mul jātrā, jātrā*), local festivals celebrated by all Newars (*jātrā*), territorial deity festivals (*jātrā*), lineage and funeral-associated festivals (*digudyaḥ puḥjā, sī guthi*), domestic festivals (*nakhaḥ or cakhaḥ*), inter-villages celebrations (*jātrā*) and fairs (*melā*). However,

³ *Dewali* group is the wider kinship group linked by lineage deity, sharing the same crematorium etc.

⁴ For example, Anderson (1971), Sayami (1980), Vajrācārya (1964).

in his categorization, aspects such as religion, territory and lineage are also recognized, showing the different levels at which the festivals are celebrated.

Lewis (1984: 337-441) in his study of the Tuladhars of Kathmandu gives a detailed account of the 31 festivals which are celebrated in the course of a year. He also highlights the differences between the Buddhist and Hindu celebrations. Pradhan (1986: 236-47) categorizes Newar festivals into three groups: domestic, cosmic and calendrical rituals. Firstly, he groups all rituals related to life-cycle rituals which are celebrated at the household level by members of the household and other households related to him or her by blood and marriage into 'domestic' rituals. Secondly, by 'cosmic' rituals he includes two groups of festivals: *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* and *jātrā*. According to Pradhan (1986: 237) *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* are feasts and festivals celebrated in honour of some deity or spirit or to mark seasonal changes. *Jātrā* are festivals where deities, represented by icons or human beings, are taken in an ordered procession along a fixed route, usually inside a city, town or village. He states that cosmic ritual locate human activities in the context of various categories of supernatural beings, such as gods, goddesses and evil spirits. These rituals are collective in nature, which means they are performed for the benefit of the whole community. Thirdly, Pradhan categorises the remaining festivals into 'calendrical' rituals.

Levy (1992: 577) in his study of Bhaktapur adopts a unique way of looking at Newar festivals by introducing the notion of cyclical time. During these festivals, social units, space, actual and legendary history, gods and time are all woven together in an eternally returning annual cycle (two alternate cycles—solar and lunar—with different socio-logics). Gellner's (1992: 213-20) study of

⁵ See Nepali (1965), Toffin (1984), Lewis (1984), Pradhan (1986), Levy (1992) and Gellner (1992).

Newar Buddhism in Lalitpur lists 42 festivals with emphasis given to Buddhist observance of such festivals. Finally, Sharma (1998: 147-8) divides Newar festivals into 13 different categories based on different aspects of the festival, such as the deity worshipped and the activity of the participants.

Through Newar festive feasts and festivals are essentially religious, there are also good grounds to view them from the perspective of the kinship nexus. Unlike life-cycle rituals where the expression of kinship is shown mostly in the exchange of prestations between two households, Newar festivals involve the gathering of various combinations of kin for feasts.

8.2 *Nakhaḥ cakhaḥ*: A definition

Firstly, let us look at the term Newars use to refer to festivals: *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ*. Because of the repetitive and cyclical nature of the festivals and its relation to the seasons, in the *Newari-English Dictionary* by T. L. Manandhar, the term *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* is translated as 'seasonal festivals' whereas Pradhan (1984: 236) loosely defines it as 'feasts and festivals'. According to Phradhan (1986: 236), it is a combination of two separate terms: *nakhaḥ* and *cakhaḥ*. *Nakhaḥs* refer to festivals which feature feasts called *nakhatyā*,⁶ which are held usually a day after the main festival celebrations to which married-out sisters and daughters (*mhyāymacā*), their children (*bhināmacā*) and on some main occasions also husbands (*jilājā*) are invited (Gellner 1992: 217). *Cakhaḥs*, on the other hand, are festivals which do not feature *nakhatyā*, and are celebrated among the members of a household, lineage, caste or region without the involvement of married-out

⁶ According to Sharma (1998: 157) *nakhatyā* might derived from the archaic term '*nakati*' which was used in counting the calendrical months.

kin⁷ (cf. Pradhan 1986: 236). However, Newars do not use the term *cakhaḥ* on its own except some differences made by scholars for comparative analysis. The only exception example Newars use the term *cakhaḥ* is with the word *kāymacā cakhaḥ* which refers to the beginning of the festive seasons of the year. Otherwise, the term *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* is in origin a typical rhyming reduplication. Bajracharya (1964: 17) notes that within a calendrical year there are six *nakhaḥs* and six *cakhaḥs* which means that at least six times a year married-out sisters and daughters with their children are formerly reunited with their natal kin. Although the term *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* is commonly used to describe the various Newar festivals, it is actually quite restrictive in its literal meaning, i.e. the categorization of festivals according to the participation of married-out kin. In reality, the term *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* is widely used to denote all festivals, irrespective of the participants, and includes the *jātrā*, processions which may involve a large number of participants from not only different households but different castes as well.

Newars say that their annual *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* begin with the *gathā mugaḥ* festival (which falls around July-August) and terminates with the *sithinakhaḥ* festival (which falls around June-July). The festival dates are fixed based on the Newar calendar which is calculated according to lunar cycle. Interestingly the first festival, *gathā mugaḥ* is also known as *kāymacā cakhaḥ* or ‘the sons’ festival’, whereas the epilogue of Newar festivals, *sithinakhaḥ*, is known as *mhyāymacā nakhaḥ* or ‘the daughters’ feasts’. Although these definitions are based on gender, they also reveal certain aspects about Newar kinship. The sons’ festival (*kāymacā cakhaḥ*) is celebrated among immediate household members

⁷ The Newar household is centred around the male. Therefore, the term ‘married-out kin’ refers to the women who have married out of Ego’s household, specifically, Ego’s sister and/or daughter

only. The gender-specific usage of Newar terms for marriage, *bihā yāyegu* or ‘to marry’ and *biyā chwayegu* or ‘to send away,’ shows that marriage signifies the acquisition of a woman who separates from her natal home to live in her husband’s family. Therefore, the reference to the daughters’ festival (*mhyāymacā nakhaḥ*) implies a reunion of the married out or ‘sent away’ daughters with their natal kin at their natal home. The essence of *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ*, therefore, lies in affirming solidarity within a household and reunion of married-out kin.

Festive feasts are celebrated by consuming special dishes, some of which are related to the season in which the festival occurs. For example, mixed beans soup (*kwāti*) is usually prepared for the *gūpunhī* festival (July-August), beaten rice, ginger, blackbean, and barbecued meat (*samaye baji*) for the *yēyāḥ punhī* festival (September-October), various meat dishes for the *mohanī* festival (October), ghee and jaggery for the *ghyaḥcāku sānhū* festival (January-February) and bean cakes (*wah*) for the *sithinakhaḥ* festival (June-July).

At every festival, household, lineage and territorial deities are also worshipped, reconstituting the link between humans and deities. In fact, the deities that are worshipped are considered as kin, either ancestral (as in the lineage deity from whom one is a descendant) or the spirits of the recently deceased (who have passed over into the realm of the divine). Some festivals feature processions (*jātrā*) and dances (*pyākhā*) in honour of certain gods and goddesses.

In southern Kathmandu alone there are more than 35 main festivals (see Appendix: Main calendrical festivals celebrated by Newars in southern Kathmandu at the end of the chapter) and four main *jātrās*: a) *Janabāhādyah jātrā*

(and their families).

which is celebrated during *khāi sānhu* (March-April). It is a chariot pulling procession of a Buddhist deity Janabāhādyah also known as Sctomacchendranāth; b) Ajimā dyah *jātrā* celebrated during *pāhācahre* (April-May): it is a palanquin procession of local Mother goddesses; c) Kumāri *jātrā* celebrated during *yēyāḥ punhī* (September-October): it is a chariot pulling procession of the living goddess, Kumāri, and the gods Gaṇeś and Bhairava; and d) Pacalī Bhairava *jātrā* celebrated during *mohanī* (September-October): it is a procession of the territorial deity of southern Kathmandu, Pacalī Bhairava.

Some festivals are a one-day affair while some last for several days and nights. Although festivals are celebrated by all castes of southern Kathmandu the importance given to each festival, and the manner in which the festival is observed, may differ according to caste group. In the next section, I shall attempt to examine the essence of *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* in the light of kinship studies in order to see how Newars use these festivals to express their kinship and caste ties at the household, affinal, agnatic, intra-caste and inter-caste levels. In order to facilitate the analysis I have categorized Newar *nakhaḥ cakhaḥ* into five groups based on the level of kinship participation and household involvement (see Appendix: Main calendrical festivals celebrated by Newars in southern Kathmandu, Column ‘festival categories’):

- 8.2.1) Festivals involving household members (*cakhaḥ*)
- 8.2.2) Festivals involving agnatic kin (*digu dyah pūjā*)
- 8.2.3) Festivals involving married-out kin (*nakhatyā*)
- 8.2.4) Festivals involving a single caste (*jāt bhway*) and
- 8.2.5) Festivals involving all castes (*jātrā*)

8.2.1 Festivals involving household members (*Cakhaḥ*)

By the term *cakhaḥs*, I refer to ‘household festivals’, festivals which are celebrated within the home by members of the immediate household (*bhwachi*), without the participation of kin from other households. *Cakhaḥs* usually involve the worshipping of the household deity (*agā dyah*) and a feast which features food that is highly symbolic and often connected to the season in which the festival is celebrated. There is a saying among Newars that there are six *cakhaḥs* to celebrate throughout a year. Once the festive ritual has been performed, a red *tikā* is put on the foreheads of the household members as a blessing and also to mark the observance of the festival. As the following sections will show, *cakhaḥs* define the basic unit of a household and reinforce the link between the living members of the household and the spirits of deceased family members.

8.2.1.1 Mha pūjā: *the definitive household festival*

The *mha pūjā*⁸ ritual is performed on the first day of the bright half of Kārtik or Kachalāthva month, which is also known as the Newar New Year’s Day. It is part of the *swanti nakhaḥ* festival and is considered to be unique to Newars. For the last two decades, the day that *mha pūjā* is performed has been an occasion for Newars to express their solidarity by participating in rallies in the city. It is also used by Newar politicians to promote Newar language and culture and to voice their demands for the government to adopt the Newar calendar as its official standard.

⁸ For detail of the *mha pūjā* festival see Nepali (1965: 381-82), Toffin (1984: 539-40), Lewis (1984: 399-402).

In terms of kinship, *mha pūjā* is the only ritual which clearly defines the basic unit of a Newar household: ‘...its significance lies in perpetuating the kinship bonds among the members of the family, joint or nuclear’ (Nepali 1965: 381). *Mha* etymologically means ‘[one’s own] body’ and *mha pūjā* is therefore, the worship of one’s own body. Despite its cultural and religious meanings, in doing so, the self is affirmed in relation to the household (*bhwachī*) as *mha pūjā* only involves members of one’s immediate household. Exclusion or absence from *mha pūjā* has severe implications for the composition of the household. If a member of the household is excluded, or if he/she refuses to take part in *mha pūjā*, it means that he/she is no longer part of the household. Therefore, the *mha pūjā* becomes a platform for the expression of kinship ties or divisions. Therefore, if a member of the household is unable to attend *mha pūjā*, a place and a portion of food has to be set aside for him or her, to indicate his/her membership in the *bhwachī*. The ritual also has to be performed on their behalf, either by the senior lady (*thakāli nakī*) of the house or by the person who is seated next to the absentee’s place. Similarly, if a family breaks up and the household is parted the *mha pūjā* is celebrated separately as a new unit.

In *mha pūjā*, it is not only the living members of the household that are accounted for; the household deity and the spirits of the deceased kin are also given a place and a portion of food at the celebration. If *mha pūjā* defines a household, then the Newar household is made up of humans, spirits and deities, all of whom are linked by their participation or inclusion in *mha pūjā*. The link between humans, their spiritual ancestors and deities is also reinforced at other festivals, as examples in the later sections will show.

Before the ritual is performed, the floor is purified by water and a simple *mandah* or ritual diagram is drawn using several materials (water, rice flour, oil,

etc.) to mark the place of each member of the household, including one or more for the household deity and another for the deceased kin. As for the seating arrangement, the household deity is first, followed by the male members of the household (according to seniority), the female members, and finally, the deceased kin. The married-out daughters are excluded from the ritual, i.e. a place is not set aside for them, whereas daughters-in-law are included, which illustrates the fact that married-in women belong to the households of their husbands and are no longer regarded part of their natal household.

Each *mandah* drawn for the *mha pūjā* is significant not only for its ritual symbolism but also in defining the number of members in the household. During one such *mha pūjā* ritual which I witnessed, an additional *mandah* was accidentally drawn and had to be wiped away. But the incident was taken to be an omen that the family was going to increase either by the birth of a new member or the entrance of a new bride. As it turned out, the omen was realized when the daughter-in-law of the family became pregnant and gave birth to a child in the same year.

If a male member of the household has been engaged to be married prior to the *mha pūjā* festival, i.e. the betel nuts have been sent to the girl's house (*gway biyegu*) and the engagement bracelet has been put on her wrist (*kalyā nhyākegu*), the girl is then considered to be the responsibility of her fiancé. Therefore, when it is time for *mha pūjā* the bridegroom's household is obliged to send all the necessary materials for the girl to perform *mha pūjā* at her house. It is known as *mha pūjāyā dhalā bwaḥ* or ritual set for *mha pūjā*. This shows that although a wedding has not taken place, the bride ritually belongs to her fiancé's household. To avoid the complexity and ambiguity of being engaged but

unmarried at the time of *mha pūjā*, Newars often try to arrange short engagement periods, and ensure that the wedding is done before the *mha pūjā* festival.

8.2.1.2 Mohanī: *The national festival*

Another main festival that is celebrated at the household level is *mohanī*. It is one of the longest festivals as it begins on the first day of the bright half of Āśvin or Kaulāthva month and runs until the eleventh day with series of festivities. In contrast to *mha pūjā*, which is celebrated only by Newars, *mohanī* is widely celebrated by both Newars and non-Newars. Among non-Newar it is known in various names: *dasai*, *vijayā dasami*, *navarātri*, *tikā*, *durgāpūjā* (the worship of the Mother goddess Durga). Nepali (408-9) states that ‘...the [*mohanī*] celebration is restricted to one’s own consanguineal relatives.... If any consanguine fails to attend this feast all the social and ceremonial obligations of the family in respect of that person are regarded to have ceased to exist’. However, among the Newars of southern Kathmandu the first part of *mohanī* is celebrated by the *mohanī nakhatyā*. For the second part of *mohanī*, the celebration is confined within the *bhwachī* or household. With regards to the *mohanī nakhatyā* Newars of southern Kathmandu have a slightly different practice. Instead of inviting after the actual festival, as is the norm for *nakhatyā*, the *mohanī nakhatyā* occurs before the actual festival because it coincides with *pacimarhaḥ* when Pacali Bhairava *jātrā* or the procession festival of the guardian deity of southern Kathmandu⁹ is celebrated. It is a unique practice among Newars of the southern Kathmandu to invite married-out kin and their husbands for *mohanī nakhatyā* feast prior to the *mohanī* itself on the *pacimarhaḥ* day.

⁹ It falls on the fifth day of bright moon of Kaulathva or Asvin (September-October)

Mohanī is a national holiday in Nepal, and among the Newars, it is an occasion for family get-togethers.¹⁰ However, *mohanī* does not have the same significance in defining the household as the *mha pūjā* ritual and a person's absence during *mohanī* does not necessarily mean excommunication from the household. However, there is a saying among the Newars that of all the festivals that are celebrated, it is compulsory to invite one's the married-out kin for *mohanī nakhatyā*. This contradicts the statement by Nepali (1965: 408-9) that only consanguineal kin are invited for *mohanī*.

Ritually, *mohanī* is performed by the head of the household on behalf of all members, whereas in the *mha pūjā* ritual, the ritual has to be performed by each individual member of the household. In terms of significance between these two festivals it is the *mha pūjā* which is more important to Newars than the *mohanī* festival which is celebrated nation-wide. This supports the statement by the Newar scholar, P. Vajrācārya (1964: 51) who states that for Newars *swanti*, which includes *mha pūjā*, is the most significant ritual from which Newars draw their ethnic identity.

8.2.2 Festivals involving agnatic kin (*Digu dyaḥ pūjā*)

Between *akṣaya tṛitīya*, the third day of the month of *Baisākh* (April-May) and *sithinakhaḥ*, the sixth day of the month of *Jeṣṭha* (May-June), all *phuki* or agnatic members visit their lineage deity on the occasion of *digu dyaḥ pūjā* or worshipping the lineage deity. Each *phuki* has their own deity, and the identity of the deity varies. In some cases, the deity is a Buddha image (for Māthemā of southern Kathmandu), a Vajrayogini (for Rājbandāri of southern Kathmandu)

¹⁰ For detail of the *mohanī* festival see Nepali (1965: 408-11), Anderson (1977: 142-55), Toffin (1984: 531-7), Lewis (1984: 380-92), Pradhan (1986: 268-313).

but often the deity's identity is unknown, represented only by a mound of stones. A Tāmrākār informant claims that the form of the deity is significant in determining the status of a Newar: if the deity has a specific form, for example, in the image of the Buddha or Shiva then those who worship the deity are considered as newcomers to the area, whereas those whose lineage deities are formless mounds of rocks are considered as descendants of the original inhabitants of Kathmandu.

Traditionally the location of the deity is outside the boundaries of the old city, but now that the city has expanded, the deities are located within the city itself. It is believed that the *phuki* are descendants of the deity; thus marriage is prohibited between *phuki* members as it would be regarded as incest. The *phuki* group is made up of many different households, and it is the responsibility of each household to take turns to keep the proxy god, which is usually made up of *kikīpā*, a head ornament representing the lineage deity. Each year, when it is time to worship the main lineage deity, whichever household has possession of the *kikīpā* will have to organize the feast for the whole *phuki* group.

Like the development cycle of the joint family, it is a natural cycle for agnate or *phukī* group to grow, split and grow again, so the number of *phukī* groups are constantly breaking up, and always growing. However, comparing with joint households the *phukī* group is in much greater decline than the joint family. The importance of the ritual solidarity of *phukī* group definitely has been a decline. Gellner (1995: 26) states, 'The joint family has not declined to nearly the same extent as the lineage'. Gellner suggests that the main reason behind such a decline among *phukī* group is the property inheritance and lack of support needed from the *phukī* group in times of hardship. Similar point my informant also made about it. In the past, *phukī* group not only own land from which they

get fund for organizing and celebrating different rituals and feasts among *phukī* members but also help in times of hardship. A Śākya informant informed me that his *phukī* group had a *guthi* house (*guthi chē*) where they used to accommodate their members whenever they were in need. For example, if the family breaks up and no place to stay then the *phukī* group helps out by accommodating the broken family till they could build a new house. However, at present his *phukī* house is taken over by the last *phukī* member who resided there on the ground of *phukī*'s compassion and help. Now he has turned the *phukī* house to become his private property. Legally, it is too much troublesome to claim the house back so *phukī* members just ignore it. However, the *phukī* members still have access to a shrine room inside the house for the annual celebration.

The communal property of the *phukī* group, which generates some income to the *phukī* group is decreased drastically as a result of the land reform law and the corruptions by the *phukī* members themselves. Therefore, at present there is little chance of inheriting land or property from the *phukī* group. In addition, the role of *phukī* group with the household is also reduced to nil except for some annual ritual or death occasions. Regarding such feature of Newars, Gellner (1995: 25) correctly argues, 'With the new political, economic, and legal order of post-1951 Nepal, there is little chance of inheriting land or property from lineage mates without male issue. There is also less likelihood of needing the backing of a lineage in times of hardship or disputes (and less likelihood of their giving it in any case)'. Despite such decline of *phukī* group there are also cases with many castes where the *phuki* group have mobilized themselves to set up a fund (in a bank) for the communal worship of the lineage deity and annual celebration .

The significance of *digu dyaḥ pūjā* is not only solidarity among *phuki* members but to accept new member into the lineage. On the day of the *digu dyaḥ*

pūjā, new daughters-in-law are introduced to the lineage deity, who will then be considered as full members of their husband's lineage.¹¹ Having entered the *phuki* group she is entitled for proper funeral by her husband's *phuki* and funeral *guthi* when she dies. Traditionally, a single *phuki* group is represented by a lineage deity, but there are cases whereby the *phuki* is split into smaller units, as in the case of marriage (see Gellner and Pradhan 1995: 175). When such a split occurs, the splinter group will then be excluded from the common worship of the lineage deity and it will have to organize their own worship of the same lineage deity. As for taking turns with the *kikīpā*, the splinter group may take a section of the original *kikīpā*, or create another one for themselves in the image of the original *kikīpā*. To the older generation, marriage between these smaller *phuki* groups is still prohibited as they are still considered as part of the same *phuki*, although there are cases where marriage between these members of these *phuki* have taken place.

By participating in the *digu dyaḥ pūjā* the agnatic kinship ties are defined and reinforced. New members of the kin group are also fully constituted, including new daughters-in-law and the newly initiated boys. Those who do not participate in the ritual are considered as separate from the agnatic group. Therefore the *digu dyaḥ pūjā* is an occasion to express solidarity with or separation from the agnatic group.

However, I also found that many high caste Newars of southern Kathmandu have given up this annual worship of the lineage deity in recent years. Those who still observe the festivals do so in groups of two or three *phuki*

¹¹ For Hindu Śreṣṭhas, the new daughter-in-law is excluded from the *digu dyaḥ pūjā* for the first year, and in the second year, although she is allowed to attend the ritual, she is not permitted to

households. Maharjan and other lower castes confirm that they still observe this although in a smaller scale (cf. Gellner 1995: 25).

8.2.3 Festivals involving married-out kin (*Nakhatyā*)

The reunion of married-out kin is a uniquely Newar practice, and is significant part of Newar festive feasts called *nakhatyā*. *Nakhatyā* in social implication affirms the relationship between ego's household and the married-out kin. Newars say that they invite married-out kin for *nakhatyā* at least six times a year and invite *jilajā* (*dilajā*) or husbands of married-out female for the major festivals only, i.e. 2-4 times a year. According to many Śākya women of southern Kathmandu they list eleven festivals when *nakhatyā* has to be invited (see Table 8.1 and Appendix at the end of the chapter.).

The *nakhatyā* is an important festival for a married woman, and those who do not have a natal home to go to are often looked down upon by Newar society as the following case study shows:

Hirashobha, a woman of Sakya caste from southern Kathmandu, was married to another Sakya from a wealthy family in Lalitpur. Soon after her marriage, her father passed away, precipitating the break-up of her natal home. Her five brothers had a big quarrel, after which they separated into different households. Her mother who was left alone in the natal home decided to sell off her property and went to live in India. Because Hirashova's natal kin were too far for *nakhatyā* festivals, she was trapped in her husband's household, when other daughters-in-law would be

perform any ritual. Only in the third year is she allowed to perform the full rituals for the *digu dyah pūjā*. (Vergati 1995: 46-7)

visiting their natal home and taking their children to visit their maternal kin. Similarly, she could not invite her husband to the *nakhatyā* feast. Her presence in her husband's home during the *nakhatyā* festivals drew sarcasm from her in-laws. Her children were also unable to understand why they could not visit their mother's natal home as other children did. The situation was further exacerbated when her in-laws used her isolation to their advantage and mistreated her. She felt abandoned and alone without the support of her natal home.

Table 8.1: List of *nakhatyā* celebrated in southern Kathmandu

| Festivals | Invitees | Inviting day |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| 1. De-pūjā | Married-out daughters and her children | On the festival day itself |
| 2. Sithinakhaḥ | Married-out daughters and her children | On the festival day itself |
| 3. Gathāmugaḥ | Married-out daughters and her children | Next day of the festival |
| 4. Guṇipunḥi | Married-out daughters and her children | Next day of the festival (Sāpāru) |
| 5. Yēyā punḥi | Married-out daughters and her children | A day before festival (Cahre) ^a |
| 6. Pacimarḥa ^b | Married-out daughters, her children, and husband, granddaughters and their husbands | On the festival day itself |
| 7. Pāhācarḥe | Married-out daughters and her children ^c | Next day of the festival |
| 8. Mohanī nakhaḥ | Married-out daughters and her children | A day before of the festival |
| 9. Swanti nakhaḥ | Married-out daughters, her children and husband | Next day after Kijā puḥjā |
| 10. Yomadhi punḥi | Married-out daughters and her children ^c | On the festival day itself |
| 11. Disi pūjā | Married-out daughters and her children | On the festival day itself |

- Note: ^a It is the day when Kumari chariot is pulled in southern Kathmandu areas
^b This is the main festival of southern Kathmandu.
^c For these nakhatyās among Maharjan they also invite sons-in-law.

This example illustrates how *nakhatyā* is a vital link between a married woman and her natal home, her place of refuge in times of trouble, and how links to the natal home are a source both of security and of status for a married woman.

8.2.3.1 Nakhatyā: *Inviting married-out kin to their natal homes.*

In previous chapters, it was pointed out that a married-out woman is considered a part of her husband's household and lineage. However, at some festivals the married-out woman is invited back to her natal home with her children. On these days, the married-out daughter not only comes back to her natal home but also resumes her duties as a daughter for the day, which means helping to prepare and serve food at the feast as well as partaking in the feast.¹² The return of the married-out daughter (or the absence of the daughter-in-law, depending on the household) shows that the kinship tie between the daughter and her natal home is not completely severed. In fact, the re-admittance of the daughter into her natal household and the resumption of household duties reinforces her ties to her natal home. The married-out daughter would also bring with her her children, which is a chance for her natal kin to reinforce their kinship ties with her and her children. On some major occasions, the married-out daughter's husband is also invited for the evening feast at her natal home which is

¹² The movement of married-out daughters to their natal homes also means the absence of the daughters-in-law, and in households where there is no married-out daughter to return to help in the feast, the job falls on the remaining female members of the household.

another chance for women's natal kin to tie affirm kinship ties with her husband and her husband's household.

The fact that married-out kin are not invited to the main festivals, but rather to what is called *nakhatyā*, the feast after (or sometimes before) the main festival reinforces the idea that married-out kin are not part of the main household unit, but rather a secondary part of it. The role that she has to play during this time is also ambiguous. The female usually has to go to her natal home in the morning and help prepare for the feast, to which her husband is invited. While her husband is considered as guest in her natal home, she is not. On this day, she will replay her role as the daughter of the household, preparing and serving the food. In southern Kathmandu, there are at least seven main festivals (*mohanī*, *swanti*, *ghyaḥcāku sānhu*, *yomarhi punhi*, *gūpunhī*, *pāhācaḥre* and *sithinakhaḥ*) and two main *jātrās* (Indra Jātrā and Janbāhādyah Jātrā) for which the married-out daughter will return to her natal home. *Nakhatyās* are social obligations followed by all castes, however, with some castes and households they may invite *nakhatyā* more often than others because some festivals have more significance to particular caste groups than others, or just simply following individual choice.

It is not for every *nakhaḥ* that husbands of married-out sisters and daughters are invited to participate in their natal homes. However, it is obligatory among all Newars of southern Kathmandu to invite husbands of married-out sisters and daughters at least twice a year on the occasions of *mohanī* and *svanti*. Some castes invite their married-out kin more than twice a year. For example, among the Maharjans, they also invite husbands of married-out sisters and daughters for the *yomarhi punhi* (during November-December) festival because the festival itself is closely related with farmers' harvesting cycle. Likewise, among Untouchable caste of Dyahlā they also invite their husbands of married-

out sisters and daughters for *pāhācahre* festival because it is their biggest festival of the year.

8.2.3.2 *Kijā pūjā: Worshipping one's brothers*

Kijā pūjā is part of *swanti*, which is the definitive festival for Newars.¹³ It is celebrated the day after *mha pūjā*. On this day, sisters worship their younger brothers and provide for them a feast. In return, the younger brothers will bring gifts for their sister, usually a sari, blouse, a piece of cloth, jewellery or money. In the case where the sister is married, the younger brothers will go to their sister's husband's house to attend the ritual and feast. However, there are also some castes whereby the married sister will return to the natal home to perform the ritual. The procedure of the ritual is the same as that for *mha pūjā*, the exception being that the main performer of the ritual is the sister. In cases where there is no elder sister, the younger sister will perform the ritual, or if there are no daughters in the family, then a girl from another household will be 'adopted' solely for the purpose of this ritual. Also, although the word *kijā* means younger brother, in the case where there are no younger brothers, then the elder brother will step in to participate in the ritual. Likewise, if there is no brothers in a household to perform the *kijā pūjā*, a male from another household will be 'adopted'.

According to Newar legend, a boy who was on the brink of death was saved by his elder sister who performed a ritual. It is this ritual which is re-enacted on the day of *kijā pūjā* by sisters to prolong the lives of their brothers. *Kijā pūjā* is also an occasion when there is movement between two household

¹³ For detail of the *Kijā pūjā* festival, see Nepali (1965: 382-3), Anderson (1977: 172-3), Lewis (1984: 402-3), Toffin (1984: 541-2).

joined by marriage. In cases where the sister hosts the *kijā pūjā* ritual in her husband's house, her younger brothers from her natal home will visit her, bringing gifts. It is also believed that the *kijā pūjā* ritual enables the younger brothers to show their support for their married sister. At the same time, it also demonstrates the important role of the mother's brother in her married life. Finally, the feast which the sister provides for her younger brothers is paid for by her husband, which could be interpreted as his regard for his wife's brothers' role in their family life, especially in the case of his children.

8.2.4 Festivals involving all members of a caste (*Jāt bhway*)

One's caste affiliation is an extension of one's kin group (Leach 1960: 8, Karve 1990: 5) As such, caste membership is bound by rules and obligations concerning marriage, initiation and death. Newars often refer to their caste members as their brothers. For example, Śākyas in Kathmandu they always claim that Śākyas of the same *bāhāḥ* are brothers and are all descendants of the same *āju* (literally means 'grandfather') or the ancestor, thus making marriage between incestuous. Similarly, among other castes, caste-based kinship ties are defined primarily by having a common lineage deity, although no one can actually trace their genealogy to the deity or, for that matter, their links with each other.

There are festivals and rituals which are celebrated at the caste level, some of which are specific to certain castes. For instance, in Kathmandu, the Vajrācārya Buddhist priestly caste celebrate *de ācāḥ gū*; the Tulādhar Buddhist merchant caste have *digukhyah guthi*; the Mānandhar oil-presser castes have a caste feast called *svayambhū bhway* (literally means *swayambhū* feast), which is

also traditionally known as *nhyesaḥ sāymi bhway* or 'feast for 700 *sāymi*'¹⁴; and the Citrakār painter castes have their own 'caste feasts' (*jāt bhway*). However, only some of the smaller caste groups have such single traditional caste organization and caste feast to celebrate annually.

Every year on the eighth and ninth of the full moon (*cillāthwa*) of *Caitra* (*durū cyā cyā*) which falls around March-April, the Vajrācāryas of the Kathmandu have a traditional caste gathering at Śāntipur on Svayambhu hill which is known as *de ācāh gū*. *De ācāh gū* is the regional caste organizational *guthi* of Vajrācāryas, the Buddhist priestly caste of the Kathmandu which consists of 2152 Vajrācārya members (in 1995). At this festival, all the Vajrācārya members of the Kathmandu from 18 Vajrācārya *bāhās* gather to perform a ritual and for a communal feast. This is an exclusive only to Vajrācārya of the Kathmandu city. The celebration includes the ritual of accepting of the newly initiated Vajrācārya to be members of the *de ācāh gū*.

With increasing politicization and urbanization, the traditional caste organizations (*guthi*) have diversified their interests from ritual roles to include monitoring the social and economic status of their members as well as regulating rules concerning marriage and divorce. This example has also been followed by other castes organization which are not as developed or established as the caste *guthis* mentioned above. Even traditional rituals are being revised by the caste organization, as the 'rules for social improvement' (*samāj sudhār niyamāvali*) testify. These dictate the performance of life-cycle rituals right down to the

¹⁴ In 1995 there are 1210 Mānandhars who participated in that year of *svayambhū bhvaye*. Traditionally, this feast is celebrated only by Manandhars of Kathmandu which are divided into nine localities of Manandhars: *lāykusaḥ*, *phalcāsāḥ*, *daisāḥ*, *nhusāḥ*, *casāḥn*, *pukhudyā*, *vātu*, *tālāchi*, and *thāhiti*. The feast was also exclusively for male members alone, however, from 1994 new brides of the year are invited to the feast and other women can join if she wish to.

quantity and quality of the prestations involved and the number of persons that should be included in the rituals. With regards to the caste feast, it is the duty of these new organizations to co-ordinate the caste feast, calculating the costs and raising money for the feast. Now almost every caste group in Kathmandu has such caste organization (see chapter II for list of caste organizations). Caste festivals vary according to caste. Some organize a feast for all caste members, while others may have a procession through the city.

8.2.5 Festivals involving all castes or Inter-caste festivals (*Jātrā*)

Newars in Kathmandu often claim that they are children (*macā khācā*) or kin of certain gods and goddesses, and this is reflected in the reference terms that they use. For example, the guardian deity of southern Kathmandu, Pacali Bhairav, is referred to as *āju* or grandfather. Likewise, *āju dyaḥ* or *indrāju dyaḥ* refer to the grandfather god Indra, for whom the Indra *jātrā* is held. The festivals which are celebrated in southern Kathmandu reflect the kinship ties that bind man and god, and each caste to each other. The kinship ties are often found in myths and legends, but they take on a physical manifestation when we consider the various actors in the festivals and the roles that they play. Like members of a family at *mha pūjā*, each caste has its specific role to play at such festivals, and changes in the allocation of duties has severe implications on the unity of Newars in the territory. Because some of these festivals are unique to southern Kathmandu, participation in them is to define one's identity as a Newar of southern Kathmandu. This in turn affects one's decisions affecting kinship, not least marriage alliances.

Annually there are few main festivals which are celebrated and participated, directly and/or indirectly, in a regional level by all castes of Kathmandu. They are known as *jātrā*, or festival which involve a palanquin or

chariot processions of some images of gods and goddess or humans portraying as some gods and goddesses. In southern Kathmandu alone there are three main *jātrās* which are celebrated in such regional level: Yēyāḥ or Indra *jātrā* (August-September), Pacali Bhairav *jātrā* (September-October) and Janabāhādyah *jātrā* (March-April). On those *jātrās* the whole city is in jubilant mood. The street are packed with all walks of life both spectators and participants of the *jātrās*. The music and dances of different castes fill the streets and see the co-operation among different castes.

The successful organization of these events require a huge involvement from the different castes of Kathmandu. It is a public display of all castes working together for the completion of the *jātrā*. Each caste has their duties in the *jātrās*. Despite the socio-religious aspect of the *jātrā*, the participation on the *jātrā* itself has significant meaning to Newars of Kathmandu. Many informants often refer the participation to such *jātrā* as an evidence to support their long residence in Kathmandu. During my fieldwork, some informants used the fact that they are a part of the *jātrā* as an evidence of their indigenusness in Kathmandu. To maintain their claim to be children of certain gods and goddesses each caste has to fulfil its ritual duty towards those gods or at to least participate in *jātrās* which are performed in honour of those deities; they also have to offer worship to those deities at least once a year.

Newars of southern Kathmandu often refer three *jātrās* to link themselves with the *kwahne* territory. The most referred one is Pacali Bhairav, the guardian god of the southern Kathmandu and its *jātrā* during *mohanī*. Secondly, the Kumāri *jātrā* and thirdly the Janabāhādyah *jātrā*. Although these festivals are religious occasions supported with myth and legends of the city it binds different deities with local Newars of different castes.

8.2.5.1 Yēyāḥ: the Kathmandu festival

One of the main festivals of Kathmandu is yēyāḥ¹⁵ or the ‘Kathmandu festival’. The yēyāḥ festival is made of series of festivals. It is a festival within a festival, so to speak. The yēyāḥ festival¹⁶ includes four sub-festivals: *upaku wanegu*, Indra *jātra*, Kumari *jātra* and the public exhibition of the Bhairav masks and images of various gods in the city.

However, the first festival is the *upāku wanegu* ritual, the ritual circumambulation of the old Kathmandu in commemoration of the deceased kin takes place. With the fact that this festival has a lot to do with deceased kin it is also called ‘the dead people’s festival’ (*śīpinigu nakhaḥ*) (Gellner 1992: 219). During this festival, each caste will make a procession which marks the boundaries of city walls of old Kathmandu. R. P. Pradhan (1986) has argued that it also marks the boundaries between the physical and the spiritual world. This clearly shows *upāku wanegu* is an occasion to express the link with one’s deceased kin. However, not all castes are involved in the procession. Hindu castes such as Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭhas, Kāranjits and Kapāli, perform this kind of circumambulation of the city on another occasion, i.e. on the *sāpāru* (*Gai Jātrā*) or procession with cows for dead (during August-September). In the *upāku wanegu* parade the Untouchable castes do not participate; however, they visit different open shrines (*pīṭha*) on behalf of their recently deceased kin prior to the yēyāḥ festival itself (on the eighth of the bright half of Bhādra (September-October). The Udāy caste, in addition to observing *upāku wanegu*, have an additional day when the entire family of the recent dead family, led by a young

¹⁵ yē = an old name of Kathmandu and yāḥ = festival with a procession

girl of the family and accompanied by Maharjan attendants bearing lamps, and other wick clay lamps follow along the Kumārī procession route in honour of their recent deads (*pālcābyū wanegu*) on the first day of Kumārī chariot procession in southern Kathmandu (*kwaḥneyāḥ*). The family men give out clay lamps as they call upon all of their friends who have houses and shops along the route. Udāy give out three different styles of lamps according to the degree of intimacy with the family.

The name of the festival itself, 'the Kathmandu festival', clearly shows that it is the unique festival related with Kathmandu; therefore, it is both a regional festival focused in Kathmandu and a pan-Newar festival celebrated elsewhere. The *yēyāḥ* festival lasts for eight days from the twelfth of the bright half of Bhādra or Yālāthva (August-September) until the fourth day of the dark half of Āśvin or Yālāgā (September-October). It 'involves nearly all the Newar city dwellers of Kathmandu, Buddhist and Hindu, *jyūpī* (pure castes) and *majyūpī* (impure castes)' (Toffin 1992: 74). However, this festival belongs not only to Newars but is also participated in by the King, and accordingly it is appropriately named by Toffin (1992) as a royal festival. Several descriptions of *yēyāḥ* festival has been written by other authors¹⁷ so I shall limit myself to describing how different Newars castes co-operate together to celebrate the festival.

In the Indra Jātrā, only the Maharjan and Vajrācārya castes are involved in the making of the Indra icon in the public spheres. In southern Kathmandu, there are two sites where the Indra icon is assembled: Maru and Jyāḥ Bāhāḥ. The

¹⁶ For detail of the *yēnyāḥ* festival see Nepali 1965: 358-69; Sayami 1972: 10-17; Allen 1975: 16-17; P. Vajracharya 1975: 24-37; G.V. Vajracharya 1976: 169-81; Anderson 1977: 127-137; Pradhan 1986: 378-414; Koirala 1986, Toffin 1992: 73-92

¹⁷ See Toffin (1992), R.P. Pradhan (1986: chapter 10), G. Vajracarya (1976: 172-81), Anderson (1977: 127-37), Koirala (1985), etc.

Vajrācāryas have the specific role of performing a ritual for the deities a day before the festival begins (on the eleventh day of bright half of Bhādra). The Maharjan caste are the guardian of the Indra in Kathmandu. The other castes, however, take part in the festival on a household basis, with each household sending a representative to worship Indra. For those households who have had a mourning in the same year, oil lamps have to be placed at the icon in remembrance of the dead.

Inter-caste participation is most obvious during the Kumārī *jātrā*. For this festival, all castes are involved, from the highest to the lowest. The main living gods and goddesses who are worshipped on that day come from the Śākya caste. The Vajrācārya and Karmācārya priestly castes have the duty to perform rituals to the gods and goddesses prior to the chariot pulling. When the Gaṇesh and Bhairav gods are summoned from their homes in Lagan, they are accompanied by the Kapāli caste, who will perform music as they make their way to Kumārī house. The Citrakār caste has the job of painting the chariot for the procession (Toffin 1995: 242), and prior to the chariot procession, the Untouchable castes have to clean the streets. During the chariot procession the Maharjan castes join the procession with their traditional music bands and Kumārī dances in several places. Ranjitkār caste personified as the Lākhe demon and dance along the procession with the music played by their caste as well. However, it is in the pulling of the chariot that we find all the Newar castes united: all castes are allowed to participate in pulling the chariot. As the chariot passes along the route, Newars of all castes will offer oil lamps when the chariot passes their doorstep. Recently, the pulling is done by military recruits. However, in 1998 Newars of Kathmandu ran a campaign to revive their traditional customs and have Newars pull the chariot by themselves, as it used to be. Even from the gender point of

view the revolutionary practice has begun. The chariot is now pulled by Newar women for one day.

On the night of the Kumārī *jātrā*, a man from the Tāmrākār¹⁸, a caste-sub group of the Udāy caste, assumes the role of Dāgī, the god Indra's mother. According to Newar legend, the Dāgī led a group of Newars who had lost their loved ones to heaven for a reunion. However, the Dāgī abandoned them, and a group of Mānandhar was sent to fetch them back. In Kathmandu, the procession, which is usually made up of women from all castes, will end in Yākī Dahāḥ. In keeping with the legend, when the Dāgī procession has ended, the Mānandhar caste begin a Baumata procession, which follows the same route, symbolically fetching the Newars back.

Toffin (1993: 109) gives a good example of a Newar town where not only all castes of the town celebrate the festival together but share meat from the same buffalo sacrificed to Taleju, the city's god during the *Mohanī*. He points out that in Panauti a sacrificed buffalo is divided into 25 parts of meat and distributed to all castes accordingly.¹⁹

¹⁸ Previous scholars (local and foreign) mention that the role of Dāgī is performed by a member of the Maharjan caste. However, I was told by a Tāmrākār informant that in fact, the role of Dāgī is assumed by a Tāmrākār male from Lakhecā *guthi* of Ilāchē at Maru.

¹⁹ 4 parts for Maharjans, the Farmers; 1 part for Kumāḥ, the Potters; 1 part for Karmācārya priest; 1 part for Brahman priest; 3 parts for Śreṣṭha merchants who carry torch during the procession night; 4 parts for Khaḍgi, the Butcher; 1 part for Dyaḥlā, the Fisherman and Sweeper; 1 part for Kapāli, the Tailor and Musician; 1 part for Tamang living outskirts; 1 part for musical association; 1 part for senior representative of quarters; 4 parts for religious *guthi* of Brahmāyani; 1 part for staff of municipality; 1 part for *dwārḥe*, a senior leader of the town.

8.3 Conclusion

From the household feast to the grand processions, man, spirits and gods come together to reaffirm and recreate the tripartite structure that is Newar kinship. Household festive feasts define the *bhwachī*, the basic unit of Newar kinship, which includes all members under one roof - be they man, the spirits of deceased kin or the ubiquitous household god. Aside from the *bhwachī*, other permutations of kin groups are highlighted from the study of Newar festivals. There is the *nakhatyā*: festivals during which the married out sisters and daughters of Ego are invited. There is also the *digu dyah pūjā*, during which time all agnatic kin have to worship their lineage deity. Running through these examples is the idea that kinship in Newar terms is not only the relationship between humans, but also between spirits and deities. From this perspective, the celebrations such as Indra Jātrā are extensions of the same idea - only this time, all Newars of southern Kathmandu are considered descendants of the same ancestor god, and are thus members of the same family. There is an old Newar saying that Newars of southern Kathmandu should ideally seek a partner from northern Kathmandu. This is reflected in the marriage of Newars of southern Kathmandu (see chapter 5): over 70 per cent of all marriages in southern Kathmandu are exogamous, i.e. with partners who are from northern Kathmandu or beyond. Thus the solidarity that is constituted during inter-caste festivals such as Indra Jātra creates a unique identity for Newars of southern Kathmandu that has repercussions in their marriage pattern. Therefore, festivals for Newar is like a heartbeat of Newar society which regulate the flow of kinship networks within a household to a wider spectrum of the city level and keeps it alive.

Appendix: Main calendrical festivals celebrated by Newars in Southern Kathmandu

| | Festival name | Timing | Religion | Events take place at | Festival categories | Special role played by | Celebrate mainly by | Ritual activities | Remarks |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------|--------------------|---|---------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Śrāwan (Jul-Aug) | | | | | | | | | |
| 1. | Gathā mugāḥ | kr̥ṣṇa 14 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Crossroads | 1 and 3 | Cyāmkhalah | All castes | Evil spirits driven away from house, locality and city | Newar festival season begin |
| 2. | Guñlā | śukla 1 | Buddhist | Swayambhu | 5 | | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udāy, Mānandhar | Beginning of holy month: fasts, reading scriptures, visiting temples | |
| 3. | Nāg Pancami | śukla 5 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | Head women of the household | All castes | worship snake by sticking picture of snake god at the front of the house | For protection against snake bite |
| 4. | Bahidyah Bwayegu | śukla 12 | Buddhist | Buddhist <i>bāhāḥs</i> and <i>bahīs</i> | 5 | Vajrācārya, Śākya | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udāy, Maharjan, Mānandhar | Displaying of the <i>Bahi dyaḥs</i> (Buddhas and other deities) | Ancestor worship as their dresses are in display |
| 5. | Guṇpunhī | śukla 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 and 3 | | All castes | Drinking soup made of 9 types of bean | To cure and protect indigestion |
| | Rakṣhā bandhan | śukla 15 | Hindu | Home | 1 | Rājopādhyāya | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, some Maharjans | Rājopādhyāya changes holy thread, Hindus ties protective thread | For protection from evil |
| Bhādra (Aug-Sep) | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. | Sā pārū | kr̥ṣṇa 1 | Hindu | Kathmandu city streets | 5 | Mourning families of Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, Kāranjīt Maharjan | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, Maharjan, Kāranjīt | Procession of cows/boys dressed as cows/street plays etc. | To help deceased kin reach heaven |
| 7. | Kṛṣṇāstami/ Kṛṣṇajātrā | kr̥ṣṇa 9 | Hindu | Home, <i>Kṛṣṇa</i> temples | 1 | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha | Worship of Krishna, | Display picture of Krishna on the front of the house |
| 8. | Yē Pañca dān | kr̥ṣṇa 13 | Buddhist | Only in Kathmandu | 5 | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udāy etc. | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Udāy | Offering rice and sweets to Buddhist household priests | Lower than Uray castes only givers |
| 9. | Bauyā khwā swayegu | kr̥ṣṇa 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home or Gokarna | 1 | Sons, daughters --> father (Father's Day) | All castes | Give gifts and sweets to father | Perform <i>śrāddha</i> at Gokarna if dead |

| | Festival name | Timing | Religion | Events take place at Home/river | Festival categories | Special role played by Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, | Celebrate mainly by Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, Kāranjit | Ritual activities | Remarks |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|---------|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|--|--|
| 10. | Tij | śukla3 | Hindu | Home/river | 1 | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, | Rājopādhyāya, Śreṣṭha, Kāranjit | Body purification for women | For the good of their husbands or future husbands |
| | Cathā | śukla3 | Buddhist/Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Worship moon | Thieves worship moon |
| 11. | Yosiñ thanegu | śukla12 | Buddhist/Hindu | Hanuman dhoka | 5 | Mānandhar | All castes | Set up <i>Yosf</i> pillar | |
| | Upāku wanegu | śukla12 | Buddhist | City boundary | 5 | All Buddhist castes | All Buddhist castes | Circumambulating the city boundary on behalf of the dead kin of the year | |
| 12. | Indra jātrā or Yēyāh (kwaḥne yāh) | śukla14 | Buddhist/Hindu | Southern Kathmandu | 3 and 5 | Śākya, Udāy, Mānandhar, Maharjan, Ranjītkār | All castes | Main day of chariot procession of Kumari | |
| | Pālcā byuwanegu | śukla14 | Buddhist | Kumārī Jātrā route | 5 | Udāy bereaved families | Udāy, Maharjan | Placing and giving away earthen lamps from a mourning family | Small girls are dressed elegantly to the city tour |
| | Dagī wanegu | śukla14 | Buddhist | Kumārī Jātrā route | 5 | Widow/widower of the year | All castes | Mourning procession of the city route led by <i>Dāgī</i> , a Tāmākār man | Assisting deceased in reaching a good heavenly abode |
| | Baumata | śukla14 | Buddhist | Kumārī Jātrā route | 5 | Mānandhar | Mānandhar | Light procession by Mānandhar | |
| Āswin (Sep-Oct) | | | | | | | | | |
| 13. | Pacimartha/Pacali Bhairav Jātrā | śukla5 | Buddhist/Hindu | Southern Kathmandu | 5 | Maharjan and Khadgi | All Castes | Late night procession of Pacali Bhairav | |
| 14. | Kūchibhway | śukla 8 | Buddhist/Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Special feast within the household | |
| 15. | Sikabu | śukla 9 | Buddhist/Hindu | Home Lineage shrine | 1 and 2 | | All castes | Special feast among families | |
| 16. | Mohani | śukla10 | Buddhist/Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Planting barley, visiting <i>pithas</i> , animal sacrifice, sword procession | To defeat evil force |

| | Festival name | Timing | Religion | Events take place at | Festival categories | Special role played by | Celebrate mainly by | Ritual activities | Remarks |
|------------------|------------------------|-----------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| Swanti | | | | | | | | | |
| Kārtik (Oct-Nov) | | | | | | | | | |
| 17. | Kwah puja | kṛṣṇa 13 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | Senior women of the family by all castes | All castes | Offering food to crow | Means offering food to ancestor |
| 18. | Khicā pūjā | kṛṣṇa 14 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | Senior women of the family by all castes | All castes | Offering food to dog | Means offering food to king of death |
| 19. | Lakṣmī pūjā | kṛṣṇa 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Worship of cow and Lakṣmī goddess | For wealth |
| 20. | Mha pūjā | śukla 1 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Worship of self/body | Newar New year |
| 21. | Kijā pūjā | śukla 2 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 and 3 | Between brother-sister of all castes | All castes | Worship of younger brother by elder sister | Protective rites by sister |
| 22. | Sakimila punhī | śukla 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 | | All castes | Eating sweet potatoes | Beginning of winter |
| Mārga (Nov-Dec) | | | | | | | | | |
| 23. | Yomahri punhi | śukla 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home | 1 and 3 | | All castes | Eating yomahri offering to Mahalakṣmī | To avoid famine |
| Paus (Dec-Jan) | | | | | | | | | |
| 24. | Disi Pūjā | kṛṣṇa 10 | Buddhist | Home | 1 and 3 | | Buddhist castes | Worship of Cakrasamvara | |
| Māgh (Jan-Feb) | | | | | | | | | |
| 25. | Gīyah cāku sanjhū | Māgh 1 | Buddhist/ Hindu | House | 1 and 3 | | All castes | Eating Ghee, jaggery, molasses etc. | To promote health |
| 26. | Bhī Ekādasi | śukla 11 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Bhimsensthan | 5 | | All castes | Worship of Bhimsen god | For good trading |
| Phāgun (Feb-Mar) | | | | | | | | | |
| 27. | Silā caḥre (Śivarātrī) | kṛṣṇa 14 | Hindu | Pasupati temple | 5 | | Bon fire by all caste | Worship of Pasupati and bonfire in communities | |
| 28. | Holi punhī | śukla 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Basantapur | 5 | | All castes | Setting up Cir tree, throwing colour on kins, affines and friends | |
| Caitra (Mar-Apr) | | | | | | | | | |
| 29. | De ācāgu | kṛṣṇa 8/9 | Buddhists | Swayambhu | 4 | Vajracārya | Vajracārya | Caste solidarity | |
| 30. | Pāñcaḥre | kṛṣṇa 14 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Courtyards | 1, 4, and 5 | | All castes | Worship Shiva | Main festival of Dyahā and Cyāmkhalah |

| | Festival name | Timing | Religion | Events take place at | Festival categories | Special role played by | Celebrate mainly by | Ritual activities | Remarks |
|-------------------|--------------------|----------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| Vaiśākḥ (Apr-May) | | | | | | | | | |
| 31. | Dyaḥ Iwākegu | kṛṣṇa 2 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Asan | 5 | Maharjan | Maharjan | Worship of Avalokitesvara | Celebrate in Kathmandu city only |
| 32. | Janabāhādyah Jātrā | śukla 8 | Buddhist | Kathmandu city | 3 and 5 | Vajrācārya, Śākya, Maharjan | All castes | Gift of sweets to mother if alive <i>śrādhā</i> if M is dead | |
| 33. | Māyā khwā swayegu | kṛṣṇa 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home or Mātātirtha | 1 | Sons and Daughters (Mother's day) | All castes | Beginning of lineage deity worship | |
| 34. | Sākhaṭi twanegu | śukla 15 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Home, lineage shrine | 2 | | All castes | Celebrating Buddha's birth day | |
| | Swāyā puni | śukla 15 | Buddhist | Swayambhu and Theravada monasteries | 5 | All Buddhist castes | All Buddhists castes | | |
| Jyeṣṭh (May-Jun) | | | | | | | | | |
| 35. | Sīṭhi nakhah | śukla 6 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Nhūghah | 1 and 5 | | All castes | Eating <i>wah</i> , cleaning public wells, Kumar procession at Jaisideval | Marking end of the festival year |
| | Degu pūjā | śukla 6 | Buddhist/ Hindu | Lineage shrines | 2 and 3 | | All castes | Lineage deity worship | Agnate (<i>phuki</i>) solidarity |

Note: Dates are given according to Newar lunar calendar. Festival categories: 1 = festival involving household members; 2 = festival involving agentic kin; 3 = festival involving married-out kin; 4 = festival involving a single caste; and 5 = festival involving all castes.

CHAPTER NINE

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to present the marriage and kinship practices of Newars in southern Kathmandu, in the hope that it would enhance the understanding of caste as it exists in an urban context. Rather than taking caste as a given category, I have looked at the way in which caste is defined in terms of marriage and kinship practices. For example, over 80 per cent of all marriages are arranged with partners who are considered to be from the same caste; 'caste' here defined as the groups with whom marriage is permitted, and with whom a full marriage ceremony is accorded. This rule of caste endogamy also ensures that the offspring of such unions are given a full initiation, which confers upon them the rights of a full caste member, i.e. the right to participate in caste rituals, to have a say in the running of the caste organization, and to be cremated in the caste cremation grounds.

However, the importance of caste endogamy is clearest when we consider cases of those who break this rule. Not only is inter-caste marriage frowned upon in Newar society, but in cases where the father is from the higher caste, the offspring of such unions are not accepted as full members of the higher caste group. In the case where the woman is from the higher caste, the offspring is not accepted into his mother's caste at all.

In the past, among the Śākya and Vajrācārya, the offspring of such unions had to accept half-initiation or risk being downgraded in their caste. However, for some Śākya and Vajrācārya males in southern Kathmandu who have married outside their caste, this practice is perceived to be discriminatory. In the words of

Subarna Śākya, 'the practice [of half initiation] is like having two kinds of citizens in one country. It is a public humiliation that a man's son is treated as a second-class citizen by his own lineage' (Vajrācārya 1997: 7). In order to remedy the loss of status that befalls the offspring of intercaste marriages, a new inter-caste *bāhāḥ* (see Appendix: Cintāmaṇi Mahāvihāra) was established in southern Kathmandu in 1980, whose activities not only mirror that of other *bāhāḥs*, but most importantly, performs the full initiation ritual to the offspring of intercaste marriages. However, this new inter-caste *bāhāḥ* is exclusive to Śākya and Vajrācārya men, their offspring and their wives, so long as the wives are from the Touchable castes.

Moreover, recently a new group of Vajrācārya priests of Kathmandu went one step further by initiating not only the offspring of intercaste unions of Śākya and Vajrācārya men but offering it to every one, regardless of his caste and ethnicity background. With this new movement the *Bare chuyegu* initiation, which has been the means of legitimizing a son of a Śākya and Vajrācārya to gain his caste identity and membership is changing drastically. Now everyone can be initiated in the same way as all Śākyas and Vajrācāryas but the result is not to gain the caste identity as it used to be. The ritual has become a tool to claim religious affiliation rather than the traditional caste identity. Nevertheless, regardless of liberal ideas of the new group of Vajrācārya priests the traditional existing initiation *bāhāḥs* still do not support and allow this new movement to take place in their *bāhāḥ* grounds. Therefore, a new *bāhāḥ*¹ was founded in

¹ Installing Akṣhobya Buddha as the main shrine (*kwāḥpāḥ dyaḥ*) Jinasāghavihār, the second *bāhāḥ* for intercaste initiation is founded on the 7th July 1997 at Vairocana Tirtha (cremation ground), below the Swayambhu hill. On the founding occasion 33 offspring born to Citrakār, Mānandhar, Śreṣṭha, Nakarmi, Maharjan, Sthāpit, Śākya and Vajrācārya were initiated (Vajrācārya 1997: 20). It is assumed that these offspring are born to intercaste unions between Śākya and Vajrācārya man and lower caste women although it is not mentioned in the publication.

Kathmandu in 1997 where initiation is not restricted only to Śākya and Vajrācāryas and their intercaste offspring but is offered to all Newars and non-Newars alike.

The establishment of new *bāhāḥ*s has caused a stir among conservative Newars, who believe that it is challenging Newar ideas about lineage and identity. A Newar's identity is defined by his lineage and the purpose of the initiation ritual is to affirm his full membership into his lineage. The fact that the offspring of intercaste unions are initiated at the intercaste *bāhāḥ* means that father and son belong to different lineages and *bāhāḥ*s. Also, the fact that the *bāhāḥ* is not an offshoot of traditional lineage *bāhāḥ* means that it is not recognized by other Śākya and Vajrācāryas, nor are the initiates from the intercaste *bāhāḥ* considered to be equal of other Śākya and Vajrācāryas. It is for the fathers to 'preserve some semblance of their traditional ways and to make sure that their sons get the essential caste initiation' (Locke 1985: 413).

The case of the intercaste *bāhāḥ* illustrates that caste is still an important vector of identity, so much so that new *bāhāḥ*s, rituals and organizations are set up to maintain caste identity in the event of an inter-caste marriage. Although intercaste marriages have been blamed for the dilution of caste, the emergence of intercaste *bāhāḥ*s which initiate the offspring of such unions are an attempt to enforce caste identity upon these otherwise marginal persons. The main motive of those who are advocating the full initiation of intercaste children is the continuation of caste through the father, at least in name and ritual, although not in lineage. Therefore, what we see is not so much a decline of caste, but the strengthening of caste identity and the creative addition of new categories which support rather than challenge the ideology of caste. In addition, despite claiming

one's caste identity, with many Buddhist castes the same ritual also works to strengthen one's religious identity.

From the household feast to the grand processions, man, spirits and deities come together to constitute the tripartite structure that is Newar kinship. For Newars, deities are not regarded as external beings; instead Newars claim kinship with deities, whom they refer to as their *Āju* (forefather). Some of these deities are exclusive to particular castes, while others are shared, although the two castes do not consider themselves related despite worshipping the same ancestor. From this perspective, the ritual of *mha pujā*, which is the worship of one's own body, is essentially the worship of the embodied sacredness that is inherited through the Newar bloodline. Although everyone in a caste is related by virtue of the common ancestor deity, marriage is not considered incestuous as long as it is between members of different clans (*khalah*). However, the existence of a common ancestor deity is at odds with the ideal of caste endogamy, since it means that technically, marriage between those who have the same ancestor deity is tantamount to incest. This is counterbalanced by the existence of derivative deities, which head the *khalahs* and serve to differentiate between members of the same caste. In terms of marriage practices, unions between people from two different *khalahs* is permitted, which ensures that the ideal of caste endogamy is still maintained. There is also the seven-generation rule, which prohibits union between two people who are related to each other within seven generations from Ego. In this way, caste identity is maintained through endogamy despite their links with each other through a common ancestor deity.

The role of the ancestor deities in uniting and differentiating between groups can also be seen from the example of the Pacali Bhairav *jātrā* festival. At this level, all Newars of southern Kathmandu are considered descendants from the

same ancestor god, and are thus members of the same family. The solidarity that is constituted during inter-caste festivals such as Pacali Bhairav *jātrā* defines a unique identity for Newars from southern Kathmandu, and defines southern Kathmandu as a separate entity from northern Kathmandu. This idea was described in the work of Levy (1990: 16) who likens the city space to a 'marked stage' upon which the 'civic ballet' is performed. The various festivals that are celebrated are but different rhythms and tempos which mark the movements in the ballet, and they serve to define the spatial and symbolic boundaries of the city.

These examples show the extent to which religion and social organization are deeply interwoven in Newar society, an idea that Toffin sees as fundamental: 'If there is one thread which characterizes Newar society, it is the pervasiveness of religion at all level of social structure. Ritual and belief on one side and social relations and institutions on the other appear together without either domain being clearly distinguished from the other' (Toffin 1984: 593).

While this study has tried to delineate patterns of marriage and kinship, it also recognizes the exceptions and variations when it comes to the individual castes. Factors such as caste population and position in the caste hierarchy play a role in determining the types of rituals that are performed and the level of caste organization. During my fieldwork, I have also perceived some changes in the performance of traditional caste duties, most notably with the Kāranjit and Kapāli castes in southern Kathmandu. Traditionally, the Kāranjit and Kapāli are the recipients of the death pollution of the higher castes, but from the early 1990's, the caste *guthis* of both castes moved to ban all members from accepting the death pollution. In 1995, the ban was fully enforced, such that members who disobeyed would be excommunicated by the *guthi* and their own caste fellows. As a result, the death pollution prestations of the higher castes are simply thrown away into

rivers. However, among the Kapāli and Kāranjit, the ban, although observed, has not been accepted across the board — a few elders I spoke to lamented the loss of their traditional duty which they considered as their *dharma* or moral duty, but they are powerless against the younger reformist elements of their caste. The conflict of interest between the old and new generations which was highlighted by Toffin (1984: 593), is particularly relevant to the case of the Kāranjit and Kapāli caste of southern Kathmandu. It shows the dynamics of defining caste identity; that caste profession and, indeed, caste identity is not simply a given attribute but rather the product of inner conflicts and tensions within the caste itself.

In sum, although intercaste marriages have been blamed for the dilution of caste, the emergence of intercaste groups and secular caste organizations are attempts to enforce caste identity. Although many educated Newars may now claim that intercaste marriages are acceptable, in practice caste endogamy is still the highest norm even in the urban context of Kathmandu. Although Newars claim that the joint family is declining, my figures tend to show that it is still intact regardless of the city's modern development. The practical importance of Newar lineage (*kawah*) and clan (*khalah*) is declining fast but the bigger caste organizations are taking their place. In Newar feasts, in addition to the importance of kinship nexuses, the circles of friends are increasing. Some modern Newars have replaced many traditional ways of observing life-cycle rituals with new invented Theravada Buddhist rituals. Despite all these on-going changes in Newar society, it remains essentially true to say that caste is still an important vector of Newar identity. Behind all kinds of reformations and transformations, the preferred marriage pattern is still caste-endogamous and the nexus of kin is still highly relevant and necessary throughout the life of a Newar.

Appendix: Cintāmaṇi Mahāvihāra, the first intercaste *bāhāḥ* of Nepal

According to the interview with Mr Subarna Shakya, Mr Buddhiharsha Bajracarya and Mr Subarna Shakya founded a *Sarbahit Guthi*, meaning ‘welfare to all’ ritual organization on October 1978 (32 Bhādra BS 2035) at Om Bāhāḥ, Kathmandu Ward 23. This was the first unprecedented *bāhāḥ* of its kind. The objectives of the *Guthi* are:

1. To incorporate the offspring born of intercaste marriages between men from Śākya and Vajrācārya castes and women from other castes into the offspring’s father’s ancestor’s lineage by performing the traditional customs of the lineage from birth to death without discrimination.
2. To give full initiation (*Vandhyābhiṣek bīgu* or *Bare chuyegu*) to the offspring according to the custom of the lineage as a protest against the Śākyas and Vajrācāryas of Nepal who uphold the value of caste hierarchy and discriminate against the offspring born to intercaste unions by means of expelling them from their father’s lineage (*kula*) and treat them as second class citizens by not allowing them to be fully initiated into the lineage (*kulayvandhyābhiṣek*).
3. Following the traditional practice of Śākyas and Vajrācāryas of Nepal, [the *Sarbahit Guthi*] will establish its own *bāhāḥ* which will allow the offspring [of intercaste unions] to enter the main shrine room (*kwāhpāḥ dyah*) during the initiation ritual and to form their own caste group (*sarvasāgha*).
4. Reform customary behaviour to reflect the changing times in order to prevent the extinction of caste identity.

Establishment of the Bāhāḥ: Cintāmaṇi Vihāra was originally founded in 1941 as a branch of another monastery (*bāhāḥ*) at Teku Dovan, the confluence of the Bāgmati and Viśṇumati rivers. The *bāhāḥ* later became defunct, but in 1978 the Sarbahit *guthi* took over the *bāhāḥ* and renamed it as 'Cintāmaṇi Mahāvihāra'. The rituals were performed to consecrate the *bāhāḥ* to enable full initiation rituals to be performed.

So far 38 intercaste boys have been initiated in this *bāhāḥ* on three different occasions:

1. The first initiation was held on February, 1980 (2037/10/24) 16 boys;
2. The second initiation was on March 1987 (2044/11/23) 13 boys
3. The third initiation was on April 1995 (2052/12/24) 9 boys.

The members (*sarvasāgha*): The *bāhāḥ* has 71 members, including those who were initiated at Cintāmaṇi Mahāvihāra and those who originally had been initiated at their lineage *bāhāḥ* but who have left their lineage *bāhāḥ* and become members of Cintāmaṇi Mahāvihāra.

The management of the *guthi*: Every year on the fifth day of the full moon of Kārtik (Kārtik śukla pācami) the *sī guthi* (funeral association) will observe the occasion with rituals and a feast without caste discrimination.

Comment: Although the constitution of the *Sarbahit guthi* states that all combinations of intercaste unions are allowed to be members of the *guthi*, in practice it is understood that only intercaste unions within the touchable castes are permitted. Unions with Untouchable castes are not allowed or recognized.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Plate 1. A member of the bereaved family from a Hindu Newar caste dressed as a symbolic cow walk along the ritual procession route of Kathmandu city during Sā pārū festival.



Plate 2. A girl from the bereaved family from a Buddhist caste, Udāy, walking along the ritual route of Kathmandu during the first day of Kumari Jātrā. The bereaved family gives out clay lamps along the route. The lamps are of three different styles and it is given away according to the degree of intimacy with the family.



Plate 3. Khaḍgi, the Butcher caste participating in a intercaste festival by playing their hereditary caste-based music, *Nāykhī bājā*.



Plate 4. (back to camera) Nāpit, the Barber woman cutting the toe-nails of a Śākya girl as a part of the *ihi* ritual.



Plate 5. Dyahlā, the Sweeper caste still earn their livelihood by sweeping the public streets but are now paid by the local government.



Plate 6. A 86 year-old Cyamkhalah male.

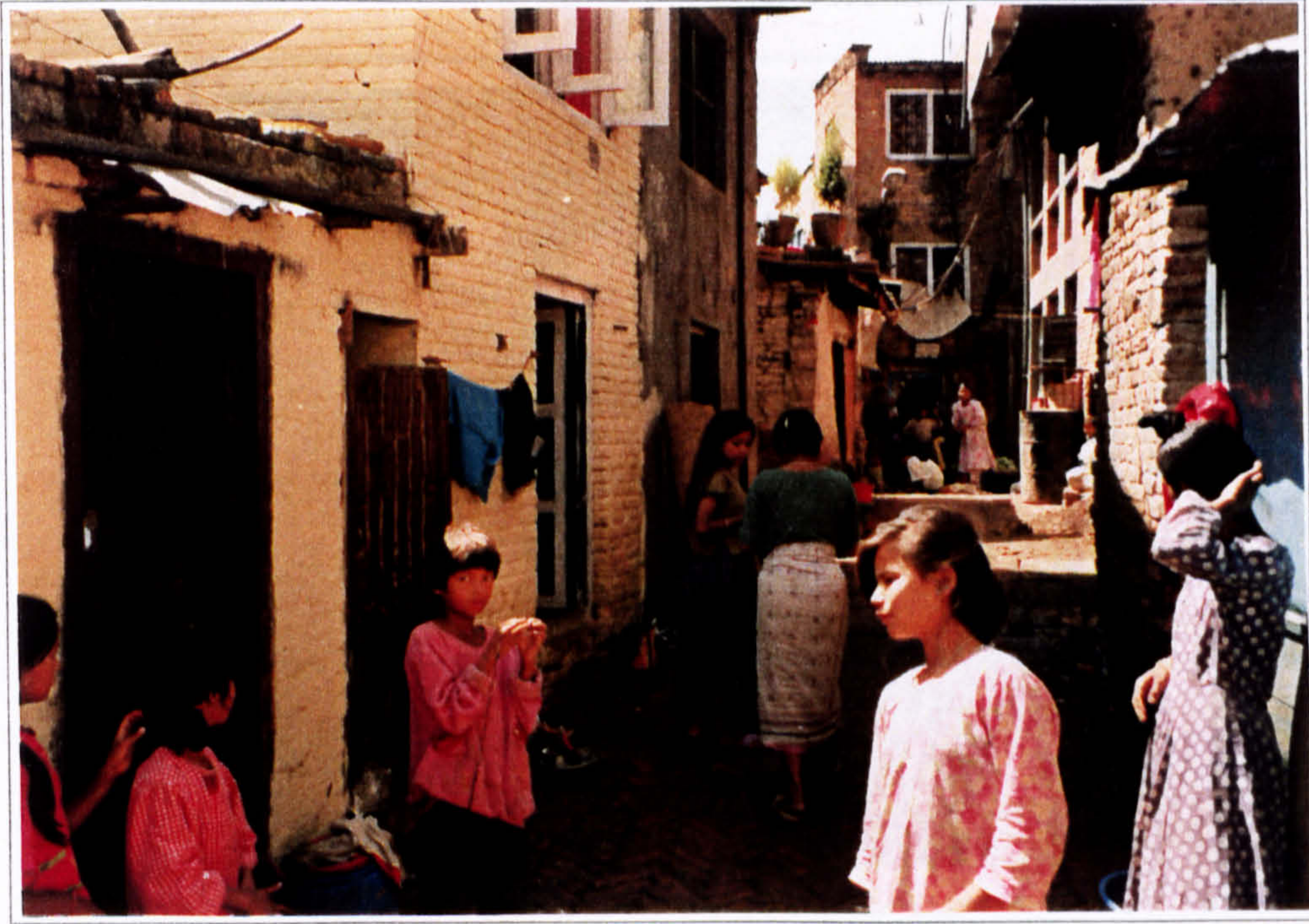


Plate 7. Dyahlā girls playing around their locality



Plate 8. A Dyahlā house in Kathmandu city.



Plate 9 and 10. A Tāmṛākār, member of the Lakheca *guthi* dressed as the Dāgī, Indra's mother (with face mask) to lead mourners from all castes (dressed in white) to visit their dead families in heaven.

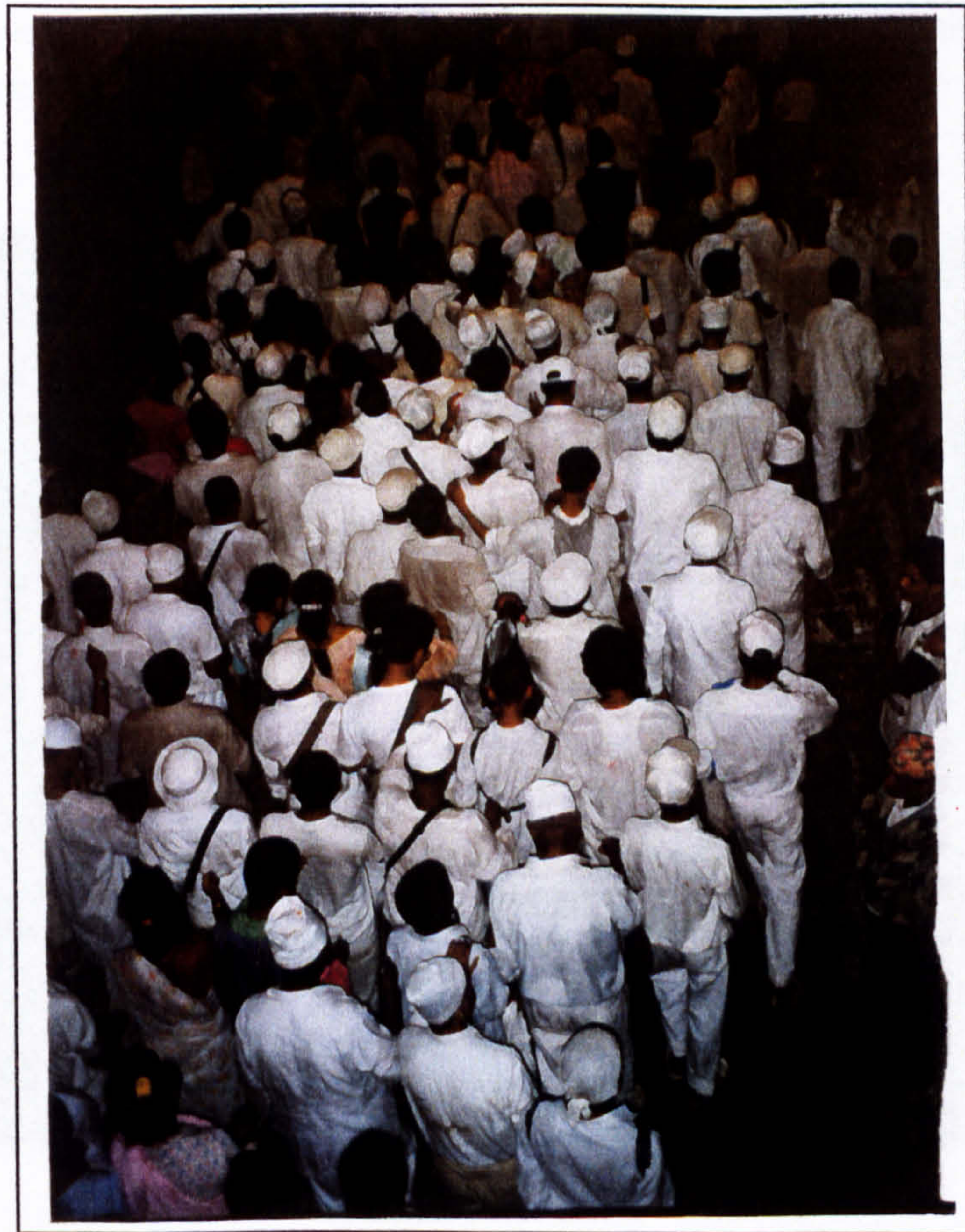




Plate 11 and 12. An annual display of Bahi dyah, the Buddhas during the festival of Bahidyah bwayegu in Kathmandu city. At the same time, clothes of the dead members of the *bāhāh* are also displayed and worshipped.





Plate 13. Five Vajracarya priests perform a public ritual during the Kumari Jatra.



Plate 14. The military recruits are helping to erect the *yahsi* pole during the *yeyah* festival. Traditionally, was done by the Mānandhar caste, but nowadays a senior Mānandhar only supervises the work (man in circle).



Plate 15. The researcher interviewing Maharjans who were preparing for Pacali Bhairav Jātrā at Pacali.



Plate 16. A Maharjan boy at his caste initiation, Wahḷā. On the right as his FZ, who has come with food prestations at Pacali.



Plate 17. A modern Newar wedding procession led by a brass band.

Plate 18. The Maharjan of Jyā bāhāḥ worshipping the god Indra before placing it on the highly-raised stage for the Indra Jātrā.



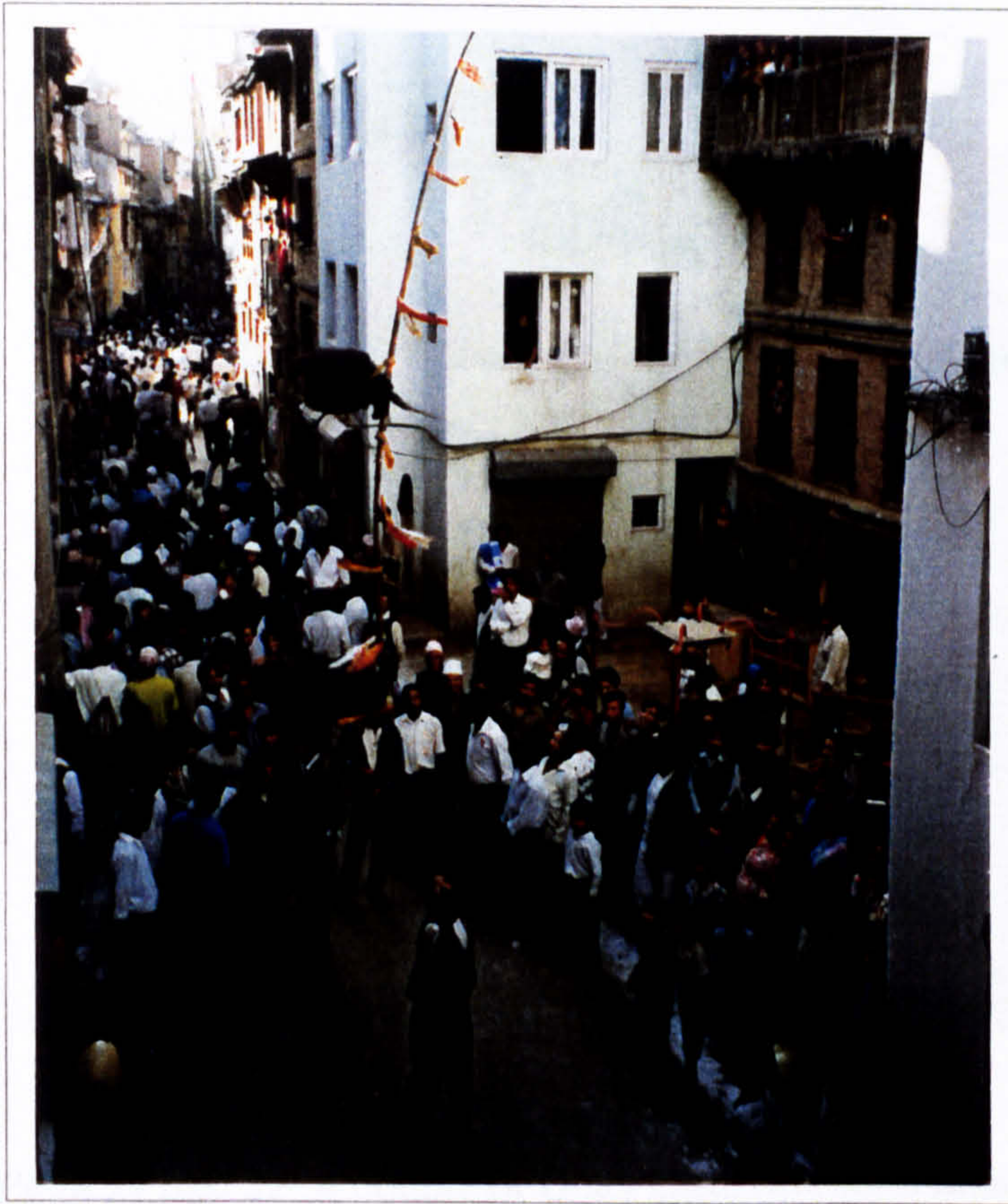


Plate 19. Newars of all castes participate in the Jana Māhā Dyah Jātra of Kathmandu city.



Plate 20. Pacali Bhairav, the guardian god of southern Kathmandu.



Plate 21 and 22. A couple of Udāy caste celebrate their old-age initiation ritual, i.e. to be deified by their kin. The couple's grandchildren (foreground) pull their chariots around the city. The white headbands on the head of the initiate indicates that he has many kin because all kin are ritually required to tie headband on the occasion, The male kin pull the man and female kin pull the woman. Therefore, the bigger the headban, the more kin the initiate has.





Plate 23 and 24. Bhairav masks are displayed and worshipped all over Kathmandu streets during the yēyāḥ festival.

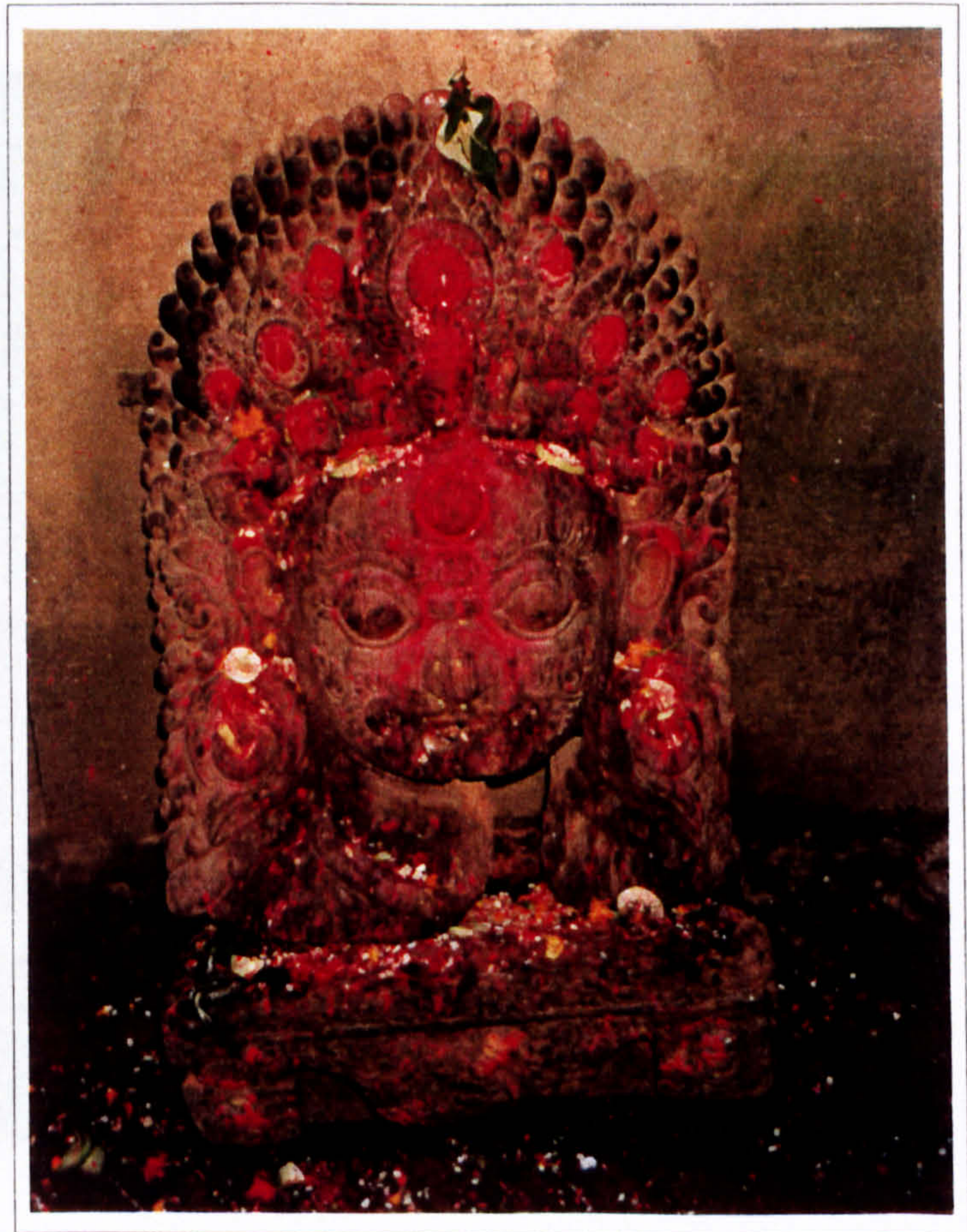




Plate 25 and 26. *Ihi* or divine marriage of Newar girls of Śākya (above) and Maharjan (below) castes.





Plate 27. Agnatic kin group (*phukīs*) of a Maharjan caste gather for worship at their lineage deity shrine which is located in the outskirts of old Kathmandu city.



Plate 28. A Śākya man (far left) holds his household's *kikpā*, a head ornament of belonging to the lineage deity. He is accompanied by a Vajrācārya priest (right).



Plate 29. In the Ghahsu, the Vajracarya priest (right) puts a hat on the mourner (left) to mark the end of the year-long mourning period.



Plate 30. A Mānandhar chief mourner (bottom right) performing śradha on the 45th day after a death in his family. The ritual is presided over by a Vajracarya priest (bottom left)



Plate 31. Jāko, the first rice feeding ritual of a Śākya child.
The ritual is presided over by a Vajrācārya priest.



Plate 32. This prestation is sent by the WT to the WG to inform them of the birth
of their daughter's child.



Plate 33. Mha pūja or
'self worshipping'
festival.



Plate 34. Elder sister
worshipping her younger
brothers on the occasion
of Kijā pūjā or 'brother
worship' day.



Plate 35. The bride receives 'nikaḥmarhi' or wedding confirmation prestation from the groom. There is a piece of paper stuck to the pot stating the auspicious date and time of wedding day (sent by the groom's family to the bride's family).

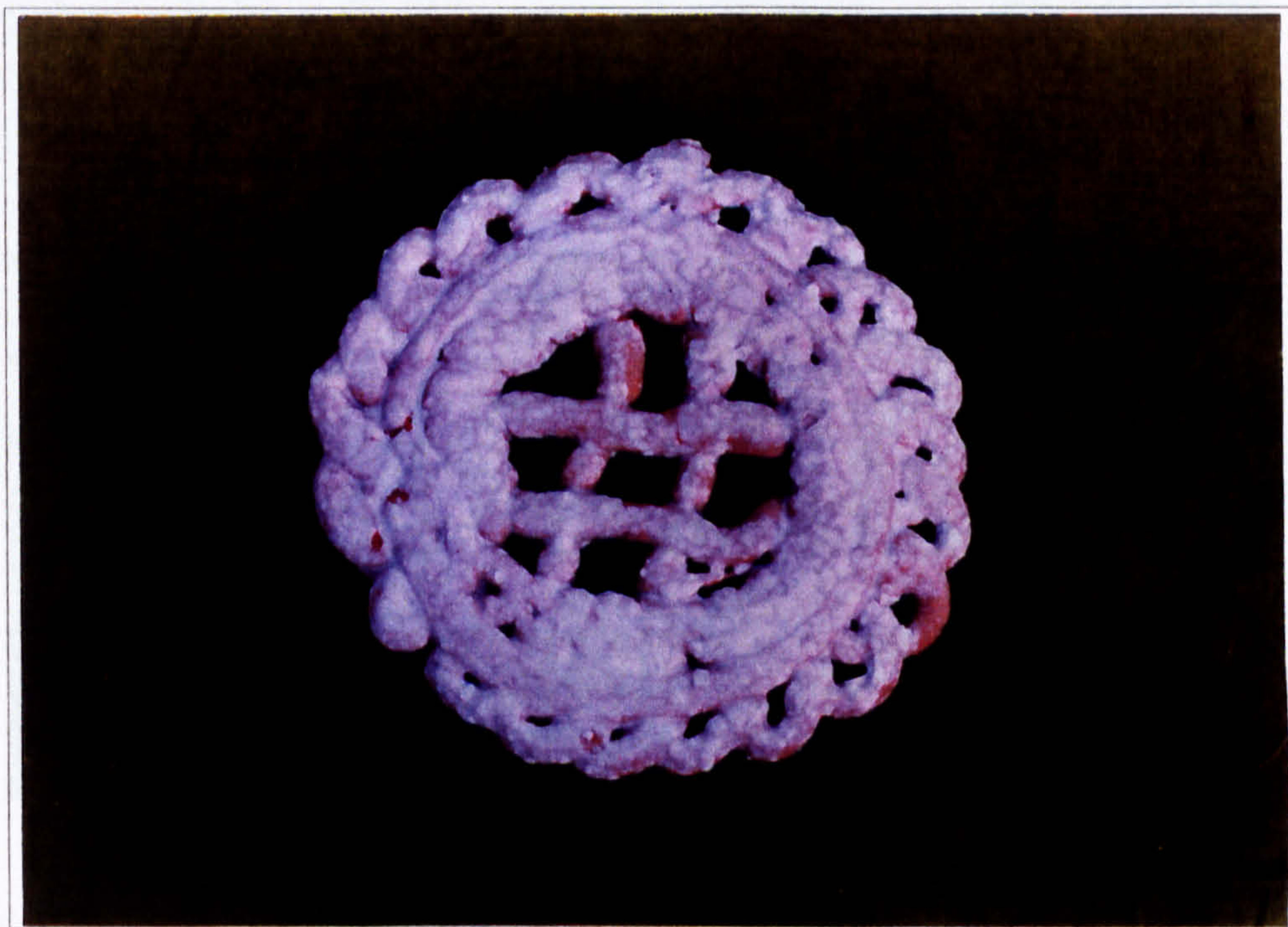


Plate 36. The Lākhāmadhi, the traditional wedding sweet given by the WT.



Plate 37. Didi aji, the mid-wife preparing several prestations and offerings for household, local and city deities during the birth purification ritual.



Plate 38. The child's MB sent these prestations for the birth purification ritual. It includes food for the WT's family, a set of mattress, clothes and medicine for the child and also clothes for the child's mother and father.

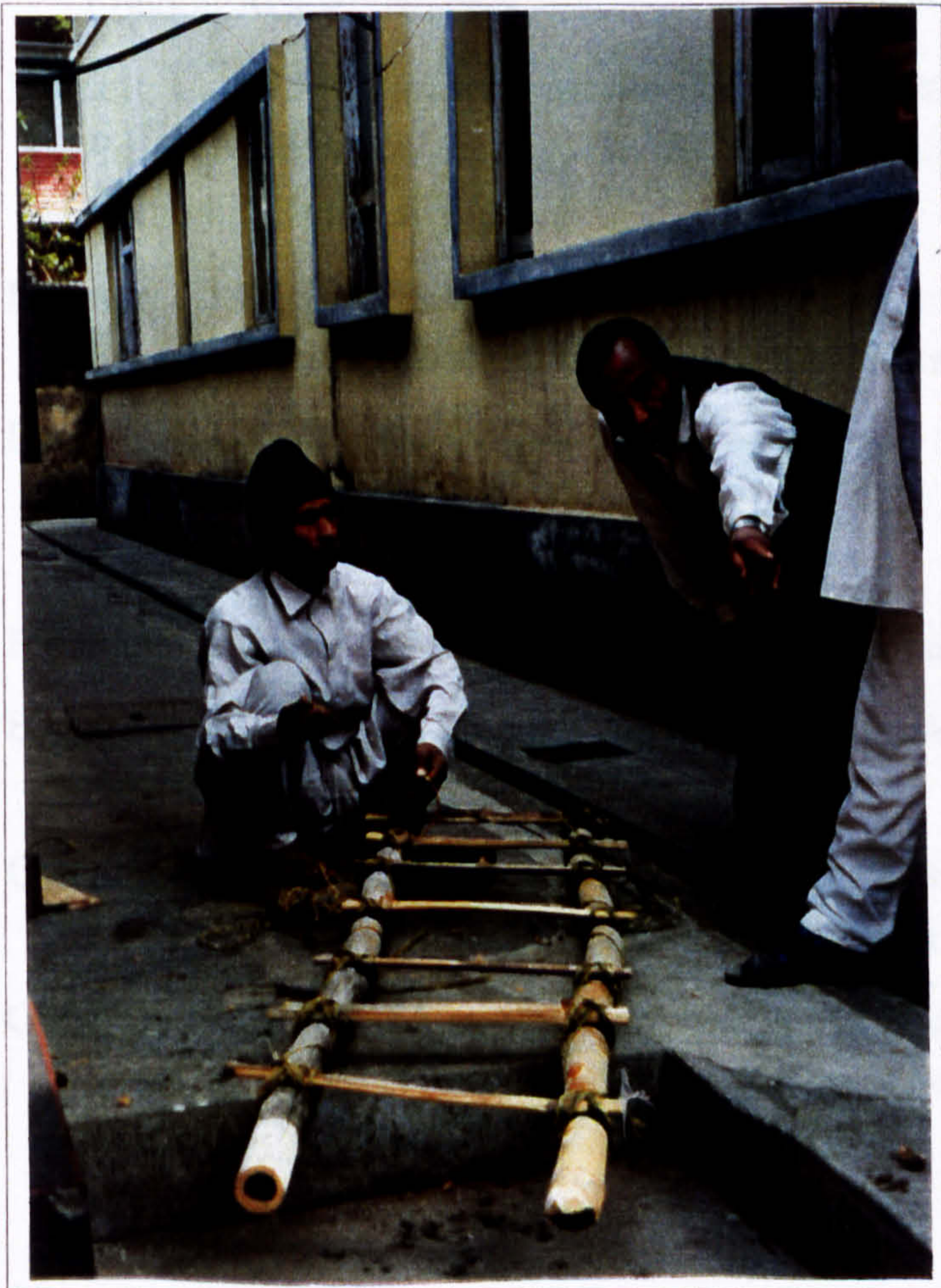


Plate 39 and 40. A Vajrācārya man and a Śākya woman exchange marriage vows in a specially created Buddhist wedding ceremony. The wedding is presided over by Theravada Buddhist monks (see Appendix at the end of Chapter 5).





Plate 41. An old and new. The researcher as participate-observer in a funeral rite presided over by Theravada monks. *Plate 42* the members of *sī guthi* or funeral organization are making a traditional bier to carry the dead to the cremation ground.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, M.R. (1987), 'Hierarchy and complementarity in Newar caste, marriage and labour relations', *Mankind*, 17 (2): 92-103.
- Allen, M.R. (1990), 'Girls' Pre-Puberty Rites among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley', in M. Allen and S. N. Mukherjee (eds.) *Women in India and Nepal* (Australian National University Monographs on S. Asia, 8; included as Chapter 5 of 1990 reprint of 1975).
- Anderson, M. M. (1977) *The Festivals of Nepal*, Calcutta: Rupa & Co.
- Bajracharya, Cunda. 1985. 'Farmer caste division: An introduction' (*Jyāpu jātyā bwathalā: chagu paricaya*) [in Nepal Bhāṣā] in *Gā: the only annual literary magazine in Nepal Bhāṣā*, published from T.U. Central Campus, Nepal Sambat 1105 gūlā. pp. 58-72).
- Bajracharya, Punya Ratna (1964), *Our Seasonal Festivals (Jhīgu Nakhaḥ Cakhaḥ)* [in Nepal Bhāṣā], Kathmandu: Cwasāpāsā.
- Barnard, A. and Good, A. (1984), *Research practices in the study of kinship*, London: Academic Press.
- Bennett, L. (1977), *Mother's Milk and Mother's Blood: the social and symbolic Roles of Women among the Brahmand and Chetris of Nepal*, HRAF, Columbia University.
- Bennett, L. (1978), 'Sitting in a cave: an analysis of ritual seclusion among Brahmans and Chhetris in Nepal', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 6 (21).
- Bennett, L. (1983), *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Bista, Dor Bahadur (1980), *People of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Brough, J. (1948), 'Nepalese Buddhist Rituals', *Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies* 12: 668-76.
- Campbell, G. (1976), *Saints and Householders: A study of Hindu ritual and myth among the Kangara Rajputs*, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Carter, A. T. (1974), 'A comparative analysis of systems of kinship and marriage in South Asia', *Proceedings of the Royal Anthropological Institute for 1973* (London): 29-55.

- Carter, A. T. (1992) 'Hierarchy and the Concept of the Person in Western India', in Á. Östör, L. Fruzzetti and S. Barnett (eds.) *Concepts of Person: Kinship, Caste, and Marriage in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal (1993), *Population Census-1991 Vol.1 Part VII*.
- Chattopadhyaya, K.P. (1980), *An Essay on the History of Newar Culture*, Kathmandu: Educational Enterprises.
- Cohen, Yehudi, A. (1968) 'Food: Consumption Patterns', *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* vol. 5. Pp. 508-13
- Czarnecka, J. (1986), 'Status of affines among high caste Hindu in the Nepalese hill area', K. Seeland (ed.) *Recent Research on Nepal*. Munich: Weltforum.
- Dumont, L. (1964), 'Marriage in India: The Present State of the Question: Postscript to Part I: Nayar and Newar', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 7: 77-98.
- Dumont, L. (1975), 'Terminology and prestations revisited' in *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, vol. IX, no. 2, pp. 197-215.
- Dumont, L. (1980), *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and Its Implications* M. Sainsbury, L. Dumont, and B. Gulati (tr.), Chicago and London: Chicago University Press.
- Dumont, L. (1983), 'The Debt to Ancestors and Category of Sapinda', in Charles Malmound (ed.) *Debts and Debtors*, Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
- Fox, R. (1994), *Kinship and marriage: An anthropological perspective*, (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Fruzzetti, L.M. (1990), *The Gift of a Virgin: Women, Marriage, and Ritual in a Bengali Society*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (First edition was 1982 by Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey).
- Fuller, C.J. (1976), *The Nayar today*, London: Cambridge University Press.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, C. von (1956), 'Elements of Newar social structure' in *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* vol. 86: 15-38.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, C. von (1964), 'Comment on Dumont's Marriage in India the present state of the question', *Contribution to Indian Sociology* vol. 5-8: 77-102.
- Fürer-Haimendorf, C. von (1966), 'Unity and Diversity in the Chetri Caste of Nepal', in C. von Fürer-Haimendorf (ed.) *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon* (Bombay: Asian Publishing House).

- Fustel de Coulanges, N. D. (1956), *The Ancient City* (Translation of *La Cité Antique*, 1864), New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- Gellner, D. N. (1984), 'Cities and Mandalas' *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* vol. 12 No.1 December pp. 115-126.
- Gellner, D. N. (1986), 'Language, Caste, Religion and Territory: Newar Identity Ancient and Modern', *European Journal of Sociology*, 27: 102-48.
- Gellner, D. N. (1988), 'Monastic Initiation in Newar Buddhism', in R. F. Gombrich (ed.) *Indian Ritual and its Exegesis* (Oxford University Papers on India, ii, 1), Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gellner, D.N. (1991), 'Hinduism, Tribalism, and the Position of Women: The Problem of Newar Identity', *Man*, ns 26 (1): 105-25.
- Gellner, D.N. (1992), *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual*, (Cambridge: University Press).
- Gellner, D.N. (1995), 'Introduction', in D. N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.).
- Gellner, D. N. (1999), 'From Cultural Hierarchies to a Hierarchy of Multiculturalisms: The case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal' in SPF (ed.) *Multiculturalism: Modes of Coexistence in South and Southeast Asia*, Washington: Sasakawa Peace Foundation.
- Gellner, D.N. and Pradhan, R.P. (1995), 'Urban Peasants: the Maharjan (Jyāpu) of Kathmandu and Lalitpur' in D.N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.).
- Gellner, D.N. and Quigley, D. (eds.) (1995), *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Gennep, Arnold Van (1977) *The Rites of Passage*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Good, A. (1982), 'The Female Bridegroom: Ritual of puberty and marriage in South India and Sri Lanka', in *Social Analysis* No. 11:35-55.
- Goode, William J. (1963), *World revolution and family patterns*, London: The Free Press of Glencoe, Collier-Macmillan.
- Gray, J. N. (1980), 'Hypergamy, kinship and caste among the Chettris of Nepal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* ns 14 (1) : 1-33.
- Gray, J. N. (1995) *The Householder's World: Purity, Power and Dominance in a Nepali Village*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Greenwold, S.M. (1974), 'Buddhist Brahmans', in *Archives Européennes de Sociologie* vol. XV (1): 101-23.
- Gutschow, N. (1979a), 'Kathmandu: Historical Development, Spatial Structure, Social and Ritual Topography' in *Khumbu Himal* 13/3 247-251, Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
- Gutschow, N. (1979b), 'Ritual chariots of Nepal' *Aarp* (Art and Archeology Research Papers), 16, pp. 32-38.
- Gutschow, N. (1980), 'Functions of Squares in Bhaktapur' in *Ritual Space in India: Studies in architectural anthropology*, AARP 17, pp. 57-64.
- Gutschow, N. and Bajracharya, M.B. (1977), 'Ritual as Mediator of Space in Kathmandu', *Journal of the Nepal Research Centre* 1:1-10.
- Gutschow, N. and Kölver, B. (1975), *Bhaktapur: Ordered Space, Concepts and Functions in a Town in Nepal*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Gutschow, N. and Michaels, A. (eds.) (1987), *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*, (Nepalica, 4; Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag).
- Hamilton, F. (1971 [1891]), *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal* (Bibliotheca Himalayica, 10; New Delhi: Manjusri Publishing House).
- Hasrat, B.J. (1970), *History of Nepal, As Told by Its Own and Contemporary Chronicles*. Hoshiarpur, Punjab: V.V. Research Institute Book Agency.
- Herdick, R. (1987), 'Death ritual in Kirtipur in relation to urban space-on the evolution of a complex ritual', in *Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley: Proceedings of an International Conference in Lübeck, June 1985*. Eds by Niels Gutschow and Axel Michaels. Sankt Augustin: VGH-Wiss.-Verl.
- Hodgson, B.H. (1972[1874]), *Essays on the languages, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*, (Bibliotheca Himalayica, ii. 7; New Delhi: Manjusri Publishing House).
- Höfer, A. (1979), *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal, A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Innsbruck, Universitätsverlag Vagner.
- Ibbetson, D.C.J. (1881), *Report on the Census of the Punjab*, Calcutta.
- Inden, R. and Nicholas R. (1977) *Kinship in Bengali Culture*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Ishii, H. (1993), 'Agricultural Labour Recruitment among the Newars and Other Groups in the Sub-Himalayan Areas', in C. Ramble and M. Brauen (eds.)', *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya* (Zurich: Ethnological Museum).

- Ishii, H. (1995), 'Caste and Kinship in a Newar village' in D. N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.).
- Joshi, Hari Ram (1981), 'Jātimālā' (Caste list) in *Rolamba* (Journal of Joshi Research Institute) vol. 1 no. 1 (Jan-March), pp. 7-8, Kathmandu: Joshi Research Institute.
- Joshi, Satya Mohan ed. (1987), *A Concise Dictionary of the Newar Language*, Kathmandu: Lacaal Publication.
- Juju, B. (1995), *Newar Culture and Newar Philosophy* (Newāḥ Sāskriti wa Newāḥ Darśan), in [Nepal Bhāṣā] Lalitpur: Lok Sāhitya Pariṣad.
- Juju, B. (1999), *Newar life-cycle rituals and its rites* (Newāḥ Sāskār wa ukiyā widhi) [in Nepal Bhāṣā], Kathmandu: Vaidik Pratiṣṭhān.
- Junod, H. A. (1924), *The Life of a South African Tribe*, London: Macmillian (first edition 1912).
- Karvey, I. (1968), *Kinship Organization in India*, New York: Asia Publishing House.
- Kirkpatrick, Col. (1975 [1811]), *An Account of the Kingdom of Nepal*, (Delhi: Asian Publication Series).
- Koirala, Kulchandra, (1985), *Indra Jātrā*, [in Nepali], Kathmandu: Guthi Samsthan.
- Kolenda, Pauline M. (1968), 'Region, Caste, and Family Structure: A comparative Study of the Indian "Joint" Family', in *Structure and Change in Indian Society* (eds.) by M. Singer and B. Cohn Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Kunreuther, L. (1994), 'Newar Traditions in a Changing Culture: An Analysis of Two Pre-Pubescent Rituals for Girls', in M. Allen (ed.) *Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Process*. Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Kuper, A. (1987) *South African and the Anthropologist* London & New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Lamshal, D. P. (1966), *Bhāṣā Vamśāvalī* (Nepali) Kathmandu: Rāṣṭriya Pustakālaya.
- Leach, E. R. (1960), 'Introduction: What should we mean by Caste?' in E.R. Leach (ed.), *Aspects of Caste in South India, Ceylon and North West Pakistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lévi, S. (1905), *Le Népal: Étude historique d'un royaume hindou* (3 vols.; Paris: Leroux; reissued 1986, Kathmandu and Paris: Raj de Condappa, Le Toît du Monde, and Éditions Errance).

- Levy, R. I. 1990 (Reprint 1992), *Mesocosm: Hinduism and the organization of a Traditional Newar City in Nepal*, Delhi: Motilal Banarassidass Publishers.
- Lewis, T. T. (1984), *The Tuladhar of Kathmandu: A study of Buddhist tradition in a Newar merchant community*, Unpublished PhD thesis (Columbia: University Microfilms International, 8506008).
- Lewis, T.T. (1995), 'Buddhist Merchants in Kathmandu: The Asan Twāḥ Market and Urāy Social Organization', in D. N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.) 1995.
- Locke, J. K. (1975), 'Newar Buddhist Initiation Rites', in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, vol. 2 No. 2 June 1975 pp. 1-23.
- Locke, J. K. (1980), *Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal*, (Kathmandu: Sahayogi).
- Locke, J.K. (1985), *Buddhist Monasteries of Nepal*, Kathmandu: Sahayogi Press Pvt. Ltd.
- Löwdin, P. (1985), *Food Ritual and Society Among the Newars*, Ph.D. thesis, Uppsala University, Sweden.
- Madan, T. N. (1994), 'The Structural Implications of Marriage in North India: Wife-givers and Wife-takers among the Pandits of Kashmir', in Patricia Uberoi (ed.) *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Maharjan, Tulsi R. (1996), *Ji Newa? Am I Newar?*, <http://www.rvc.raritanval.edu/~global/dabu/jinewa.html>
- Mandelbaum, D. G. (1970), *Society in India: Continuity and Change* Vol 1, Berkley: University of California Press.
- Manandhar, Thakur Lal (1986), *Newari-English Dictionary: Modern Language of Kathmandu Valley*, Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan.
- Majupurias, Indra and TriLok Chandra (1989), *Marriage Customs in Nepal*, India: M. Devi.
- Marriott, M. (1976), 'Hindu Transactions: Diversity Without Dualism' in B. Kapferere (ed.) *Transaction and Meaning*, Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues.
- Malla, Kamal P. (1981), 'Linguistic Archaeology of the Nepal Valley: A Preliminary Report' *Kailash*, VII, 1-2, 5-23.
- Mauss, M. (1979) *Sociology and Psychology*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul

- Milner, M. Jr. (1988), 'Status relations in South Asian marriage alliances: Toward a general theory', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* ns 22 (2) : 145-169.
- Muluki Ain 2012 (1955), *Nepali Laws* vol. 5, Kathmandu: Gorkhapatra Chapakhana.
- Muluki Ain 2052 (1996), *Nepalese Legal Code* [in Nepali], Kāṭhmāṇḍu: Kānun, Nyāya tathā Samsadiya Vyavasthā Mantrālaya.
- Needham, R. (1971), 'Remarks on the analysis of kinship and marriage' in Rodney Needham (ed.) *Rethinking kinship and marriage*, (London: Tavistock Publications).
- Nepali, G. S. (1988 [1965]), *The Newars: An ethno-sociological study of a Himalayan community*, Kathmandu: Himalayan Booksellers.
- Nepali, G.S. (1960), 'The Newars of Nepal', *Journal of the University of Bombay* 29: 144-48.
- Oldfield, H. A. (1981), *Sketches from Nepal*, 2 vols. Delhi: Cosmo Publications.
- Pancha 'Jyapu' (1996), 'Ihi: what I have heard and what I know' (in Nepal Bhāṣā) (Ihiḥ jī nyanāthē wa syūthē), Ihi munā souvenir, Makhāmi Jyāpu Khalah.
- Parish, S. M. (1994), *Moral Knowing in a Hindu Sacred City: An Exploration of Mind, Emotion, and Self*, New York: Columbia University Press.
- Parry, J. (1979), *Caste and Kinship in Kangara*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).
- Pradhan, B. (1981), *The Newar Women of Bulu*, (Status of Women in Nepal, vol. ii: Field Studies, part 6; Kathmandu: Tribhuvan University, CEDA).
- Pradhan, R. P. (1986), *Domestic and cosmic rituals among the Hindu Newars of Kathmandu, Nepal*, Unpublished PhD thesis submitted to the University of Delhi.
- Quigley, D. (1984), *The Social Structure of a Newar Trading Community, East-Central Nepal*, Ph.D. thesis (London School of Economics).
- Quigley, D. (1985a), 'Household Organisation among Newar Traders', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu) vol 12, No 2, April 1985: 13-44.
- Quigley, D. (1985b), 'The Guthi Organisations of Dhulikhel Shresthas', *Kailash*, 12: 5-61.
- Quigley, D. (1986), 'Introversion and Isogamy: Marriage Patterns of the Newars of Nepal', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, ns 20: 75-95.

- Quigley, D. (1987), 'Ethnicity without Nationalism: The Newars of Nepal', *European Journal of Sociology*, 28: 152-70.
- Quigley, D. (1991), 'Hocart's Theory of Caste and Kingship', in *Eastern Anthropologist*, 44/4: 315-44.
- Quigley, D. (1995a), *The Interpretation of Caste*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Quigley, D. (1995b), 'Śreṣṭhas: Heterogeneity among Hindu Patron Lineages' in D. N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.).
- Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. (1924), 'The mother's brother in South Africa', in *South African Journal of Science*, vol. 21, pp. 542-55.
- Ramu, G.N. (1977), *Family and Caste in Urban India: A Case Study*, New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd.
- Regmi, D.R. (1960), *Ancient Nepal* Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya.
- Regmi, D.R. (1966), *Medieval Nepal*, vol. II (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay).
- Regmi, Jagdish Chandra (ed.) (1991), *The First Census of Nepal 1853-1856*, Nepal-Antiquary, Joint Special Issue No. 70-75, June 1991, Kathmandu: Office of Nepal-Antiquary.
- Rosser, C. (1966), 'Social Mobility in the Newar Caste System', in Fürer-Haimendorf (ed.) *Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon* (Bombay: Asian Publishing House).
- Sayami, Dhooswan (1980), *The Lotus and the Flame: An account on Nepalese culture*, Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Scheffler, H.W. (1980), 'Kin classification and social structure in North India.' *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (N.S.) Vol. 14 No. 2: 131-167.
- Schneider, D.M. (1972), 'What is Kinship All About?' in Priscilla Reining (ed.) *Kinship studies in the Morgan centennial year*, (Washington: The Anthropological Society of Washington).
- Shah, A. M. (1998), *The Family in India: Critical Essays*, London: Sangam Books Limited.
- Shah, Prithvi Narayan (1959), *Dibya Upadesh.* [in Nepali] ed. by Yogi Naraharinath, Kathmandu.
- Sharma, P. R. (1997), *Lineage, territory and kingdom: The social study of pre-medieval period of the Nepal Valley*, (Kul, bhūmi ra rājya: Nepāl upatyekāko purva-madhyakālik samājik adhyayan) Kathmandu:CNAS.

- Shrestha, C. B., Khattry, P. K., Sharma, B., and Ansari, H. (1986) *The Historic Cities of Asia Kathmandu*. Kathmandu: CNAS, Tribhuvan University.
- Shrestha, D.B. and Singh, C.B. (1992), *Ethnic groups of Nepal and their ways of living*, Kathmandu: Mandala Book Point.
- Shrestha, G. (1992), *Family Law (Pāriwārik kānun)* [in Nepali], Kathmandu: Pairavi Publication.
- Shrestha, S. M. and Juju, B. (1988), *Kantipur (Kāntipur)* [in Nepal Bhāṣā]. Kathmandu: Friends.
- Shresthacharya, Iswaranand (1977), 'Newar Kinship Terms in the Light of Kinship Typology' in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* vol. IV No.2 pp. 111-128.
- Slusser, M.S. (1982), *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*, Vol. I. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Snellgrove, D. (1957), *Buddhist Himalaya*. Oxford: Bruno Cassirer.
- Srinivas, M. N. (1952) *Religion and Society Among the Coorgs of South India*, Bombay: Media Promoters and Publishers Pvt. Ltd.
- Sudarshan, Bhikshu. 1991, *Injustice towards Buddhism in Nepal, the Buddha's birth land* (in Nepali), (*Buddhako janmabhūmi nepālmā buddha-dharma prati asahiṣṇutā*) Kathmandu: Dharmkirti Baudha Adhyan Gosthi.
- Tamot, K, and Alsop, I. (1996) *A Kushan-period Sculpture: from the reign of Jaya Varma-, A.D. 184/185 Kathmandu, Nepal*, Published at <http://www.asianart.com> on July 10, 1996.
- Toffin, G. (1975a), 'La Terminologie de parenté Newar: Analyse descriptive et comparative', *L'Homme*, 15: 81-98.
- Toffin, G. (1975b), 'Un peuple à la recherche de son identité: Les Néwar du Nepal', *Pluriel*, 3: 29-39.
- Toffin, G. (1977), *Pyangaon: Une communauté Newar de la vallée de Kathmandou: La Vie matérielle* (Paris: Centre National de Recherche Scientifique).
- Toffin, G. (1978), 'Intercaste Relations in a Newar Community', in J.F. Fisher (ed.) *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan Interface* (The Hague and Paris: Mouton).
- Toffin, G. (1984), *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal*, Paris:CNRS

- Toffin, G. (1987), 'Funeral Priests and the Caste System in the Kathmandu Valley', in Gutschow and Michaels (eds.).
- Toffin, G. (1991a), 'Urban Space and Religion: Observations on Newar Urbanism', in G. Toffin (ed.) *Man and his House in the Himalayas: Ecology of Nepal*, New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Toffin, G. (ed.) (1991b), *Man and his house in the Himalayas. Ecology of Nepal*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers.
- Toffin, G. (1993), *Le Palais et le Temple: La fonction royale dans la vallée du Népal*, Paris:CNRS.
- Toffin, G. (1994), 'The Farmers in the City: The social and territorial organization of the Maharjan of Kathmandu' in *Anthropos* vol. 89, 1994: 433-459.
- Toffin, G. (1995), 'The Social Organisation of Rajopadhyaya Brahmans', in D. N. Gellner and D. Quigley (eds.).
- Toffin, G et al., (1981), *Panauti: une ville au Népal*, Paris: Berger-Levrault.
- Turner, J. (1975), 'A formal semantic analysis of Hindi kinship terminology', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (N.S.) Vol. 9 No. 2: 263-291.
- Uday, K.B. (1997), *Hey! Newar, who are you? (E newāḥ, cha su khaḥ?)* [in Nepal Bhāṣā] in *Viswabhūmi Nepal Bhāṣā Daily*, January 7, 1997.
- Vajrācārya, D. and Malla, K.P. (1985), *The Gopālarājavamśāvali*, Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.
- Vajracharya, Gautam Vajra (1974), 'Yaṅgala Yaṃbu' [in Nepali] *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* Vol. I No. 2: 90-98.
- Vajracharya, Gautam Vajra (1976), *Hanumandhoka Royal Palace* [Hanumāndhokā Rājdarwār] in Nepali, Kathmandu: CNAS, Tribhuvan University.
- Vajracharya, Phanindra Ratna (1997) (ed.), *Pravrajyā Sāvāra*, Souvenir No.2, Kathmandu: Baudha Dharma Sangha of Nepal.
- Vajrācārya, Purna.Harsha. (1959), 'Newar Marriage Customs and Festivals', *South-Western Journal of Anthropology* 15:418-28.
- Vajrācārya, Ratna Kaji (1989), *Cultural Heritage of the Newars* (Newāḥ Saṃskāra Saṃskṛtiyā Tāḥcā) [in Newari], Kathmandu: Vajracharya Prakashan.

- Van der Veen, Klaas W. (1972), *I Give Thee My Daughter: A Study of Marriage and Hierarchy among the Anavil brahmans of South Gujarat*, Assen: Van Gorcum.
- Varya, Tank Vilas, 'Gift and affines in North India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, (N.S.) vol. 9 No.2: 155-195.
- Vergati, A. (1979), 'Une divinité lignagère des Newar: Digu-dyo', *Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient*, 66: 115-27.
- Vergati, A. (1982), 'Social consequences of marrying Visnu Narayana: primary marriage among the Newar of Kathmandu valley', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.) Vol. 16 No. 2: 271-287.
- Vergati, A. (1995), *Gods, Men and Territory: Society and Culture in Kathmandu Valley*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors.
- Vatuk, S. (1975), 'Gifts and affines in North India', *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (N.S.) Vol. 9 No. 2: 155-195.
- Ward Profile of Kathmandu Municipality Ward No. 21* (1997) Kathmandu: Slide Consult.
- Webster, P. (1987), 'Bolajyā: The Social Organisation of Labour amongst the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley', in Gutschow and Michaels (1987) (eds.).
- Webster, P. (1993), 'Some Epistemological Aspects of Caste among the Newars in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal', in C. Ramble and M. Brauen (eds.) *Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalaya* (Zurich: Ethnological Museum).
- Wright, D. (1972 [1877]) (ed.), *History of Nepal*, tr. from Nepali [of Cambridge University Library MS 1952a] by Munshi Shew Shanker Singh and Pandit Shri Gunanand (Kathmandu: Nepal Antiquated Book Publishers).
- Yakharai, Durgahang (1996), *Brahmanism Against Ethnicity and Oppressed Group* (in Nepali) (Brāhmaṇvād viruddha janajāti + utpīditvarga), Kathmandu: Dhanarani Yakharai.