

(identity)

This is a late draft of an article which appeared more or less in this form in *Nationalism and Identity in a Hindu Kingdom*, edited by David N.Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka & John Whelpton (Harwood, 1997). It is not corrected and a few changes were made between this version and that which was published. Those who wish to see the final version should consult the book.

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### **'IDENTITY AND CHANGE AMONG THE GURUNGS (TAMU-MAI) OF CENTRAL NEPAL'**

On the 13th of March 1992 I received a fax from Pokhara, which included the following:

"You may be interested to know that the following resolutions were unanimously agreed upon at the nation-wide Gurung conference held this week in Pokhara:

- (1) Gurung history was written and distorted by Brahmins.
- (2) There are no inferior and superior clan groups in Gurung society.
- (3) The traditional Gurung priests are the Pa-chyu and the Klabri; Lamas are a more recent addition.

In this paper I would like to give a little of the background to these interesting resolutions. In the process I would like to explore how the discussions of identity among the Gurungs have further broken down the gap between the observer and the observed, the anthropologist and the people s/he 'studies'.

#### **Some pressures upon the Gurungs**

The Gurungs are a Tibeto-Burman speaking group who mainly live in the Annapurna region of central Nepal. There are also many Gurungs now living in Eastern Nepal and in the cities

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and plains of Nepal and India. In all, there must be about 200,000 Gurung speakers in the world and another 50,000 or so who call themselves Gurung but do not speak the language. My own work among them started in 1968 and since then I have returned some seven times, in particular to work in the village of Thak, north of Pokhara.<sup>1</sup>

Over a period of twenty-five years I have watched the increasing pressures, material and cultural,

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the growing literature on the Gurungs is listed at the end of this paper. I am grateful to the Economic and Social Research Council, the Renaissance Trust and the University of Cambridge for financial support in this work. The work has been carried out with Sarah Harrison.

which have built up on the Gurungs. Many of these changes are similar to those which are occurring among all the mountain peoples of Nepal and neighbouring regions.

There are, first of all, the demographic pressures. Though the Gurung population is growing less slowly than the Nepalese population as a whole, which is doubling every twenty-five years or so, it is still growing relatively fast, perhaps doubling in twice that time. This is linked to the well-known ecological deterioration in the hills. Forests have been cut back, hill-sides eroded. For a number of different reasons there there appears to have been somewhere near a fifty percent decline in crop production over the last twenty-five years in the village of Thak, north of Pokhara, where my fieldwork has been concentrated. This is a result of a number of factors; a shortage of manure, over-cropping, heavy rains leaching the steep terraces, deteriorating standards of field use.

Meanwhile, the effects of the opening of the roads from the south and the development of Pokhara has been to push down the relative value of village land. While prices of land in the Pokhara plain have rocketed, in the villages the land prices have not even kept pace with inflation.

The decline in local productivity is matched by a decline in external sources of income. The major traditional source of income for migrant labourers, the army, and particularly the British army, is now a very minor source of employment in most villages. There are perceived to be very few chances of employment in the small civil service and professional sector in Nepal, which is thought to be dominated by the non-hill peoples. The availability of work in India has also declined and many villagers have told us that wages, if work can be found, are lower in real terms than they were even ten years ago.

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Equally serious, but more difficult to quantify, are cultural pressures. Over the twenty-five years since I first visited the Gurungs, the spread of Nepali-medium teaching, the effects of the radio, the growing dominance of the towns, have all eroded the language and culture. The cultural pressures which coincide with the forceful introduction of consumer capitalism, ostentatious tourism, foreign aid projects, television and radio, are apparent in a variety of ways that can only be alluded to here. There is a loss off confidence in the value of Gurung traditions and culture; a revolution of rising expectations, a growing frustration and disillusionment especially among the young.

Part of this cultural stress comes in the form of religious pressure. There is a growing threat from and dominance by the two competing literate world religions, Hinduism and Buddhism, which threaten the old unwritten shamanic religion of the Gurungs. Likewise, the long tradition of **de facto** political autonomy of the villages is threatened by rapid political centralization and mobilization with the movement from royal absolutism to a form of government modelled on western democracy.

These pressures can most easily be summarized by tabulating the answers to the simple question, 'What does it mean to be a Gurung?' for 1968 and 1992. If we answer this in terms of certain sub-questions, the answer might read thus:

Table 5:1

1968	1992
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Where do you live?	a Gurung village	a Nepali town
What do you do?	agriculture or army	various paid jobs
What do you wear?	Gurung clothes	Nepali clothes
What language?	Gurung (Nepali)	Nepali (Gurung)
What politically?	Gurung	Nepali
What hobbies?	dancing & singing	radio, sport
What leisure group?	age groups, rodi*	friends
What work group?	gola, nogora**	wages, share-crop
What religion?	shamanic, tribal	Hindu,Buddhist,tribal

Notes: \* rodi is the communal Gurung dormitory, which is based on age groupings; gola and nogora are communal work groups, usually based on friendship and neighbourhood)

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**Some practical reactions to the pressures.**

In this brief account I would like to look at some of the reactions to these pressures. The practical reactions have attracted more attention and I will merely list them, since it is the questions of symbolic reactions and discussions of identity which is the theme of this piece.

Within the village, probably the main change has been in the organization of labour, basically from co-operative farming to share-cropping, which was practically unknown in 1968 in Thak. The

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question of dwindling resources has continued to be dealt with by extensive out-migration and over the twenty-five years I have witnessed three major patterns. The first, roughly up to the early 1970s was for migration to the army, and retirement in the village. Then from the mid-1970's there was a wave of migration to Indian cities (Bombay, Delhi etc.), the Middle East, and retirement or movement down to Pokhara. In the last two years or so, young men have begun to search for work in the Far East - Malaysia, Singapore, Japan, Korea. They are also likely to have left the village for good.

**Some cultural reactions to the pressures.**

When I returned to Nepal after a long gap of seventeen years in 1986 and talked to my friends, it became clear that there was a

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new interest in Gurung history and culture. The rapid development of interest in Gurung identity manifested by Gurung cultural groups in both Pokhara and Kathmandu (**Tamu di, pye lhu sangha**), which hold large conferences and publish work on Gurung history and traditions has become increasingly evident.

Further evidence of this increased interest has been the discussion as to how the Gurungs should name themselves. For the last hundred years or more the Gurungs have taken the semi-Hinduized and external names. Now the most active insist on calling themselves 'Tamu', which is their own term for themselves, rather than 'Gurung', which is what they are known by outsiders. Furthermore, they are keen to drop the Hinduized endings, 'Singh', 'Bahadur', 'Maya' etc. Thus a person who might three years ago have called himself Debibahadur Gurung, will now perhaps call himself Debi Kromje Tamu, though 'Debi' of course, still retains its Sanskritic overtones. Kromje is an important assertion of his clan name, not to be concealed in the new more equal world which the Gurungs hope to achieve.

As an illustration of the re-assessments which this discussion is causing, I would like to discuss briefly some aspects of the process of translating and re-issuing the classic work on the Gurungs by Bernard Pignède.

In 1958 a young Frenchman, Bernard Pignède spent some seven months among the Gurungs, five months of which were in the village of Mohoriya at the western end of Gurung territory. He worked with his assistant Chandra Bahadur Ghotane to undertake the first extended study of these peoples.<sup>2</sup> Pignède returned to Paris where he drafted out most of the book, but died tragically at the age of twenty-nine in 1961. His colleagues, and particularly Professor Louis Dumont, brought the book to press and it was published in France in 1966. The book has become something of a classic, but was unavailable to many scholars and in particular those in Nepal, because it was written in French. Since it contains so much valuable material, we decided to translate the work, and add detailed footnotes and appendices to bring it up to date.<sup>3</sup>

I had earlier attempted a very small exercise in collaborative representation when I co-authored a small volume with Indra Bahadur Gurung, **Guide to the Gurungs** (1990). This was a title with

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<sup>2</sup> ref. to Pignède book: C.B. Ghotane's reminiscences on working with Bernard Pignède are published as a preface to Pignède 1993.

<sup>3</sup> The original translation was undertaken by Gill and Alan Macfarlane in 1969 and a copy deposited at Tribhuvan University. The whole was re-translated by Sarah Harrison, with assistance from Penny Lang, in 1990. Professor Dumont and the original publishers very kindly gave us permission to undertake this work, and the Centre D'Etudes de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris, were most helpful in making Pignède's papers available to us.

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a deliberate double meaning, for while it was on the surface a short and simple overview intended for trekkers, aid workers and others, I realized that it would also be used by present and future Gurungs as some kind of 'Guide' or statement of Gurung culture and customs. This small experience, however, did not really prepare me for the complexities of publishing a translation of Bernard Pignède's work.

What we did not fully realize when we started this work was as follows. Firstly, that the growing discussions of identity would mean that a number of leading Gurungs, including Pignède's own interpreter C.B.Ghotane, wanted to scrutinize the text and, if necessary, modify the interpretation. This kind of collaborative work, which necessitated writing and re-writing sections of the work, and working closely between Pokhara, Kathmandu and Cambridge, only became really possible as a result of some simple technological developments. In particular, the flexibility of new computers and desk-top publishing and the availability of fax machines, made it possible to attempt a new, multi-level work.<sup>4</sup>

Firstly, it was important to keep the integrity of Pignède's own text, and the annotations of his original editors. Then a layer of commentary was added by his current translators and editors, Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison, on the basis of their numerous visits to the Gurung area of Nepal, including three visits to Mohoriya. Thirdly, it was obvious that Pignède's original field assistant, C.B.Ghotane, who carefully checked the translation, had much to add. Now that the text was in English he could point to areas where Pignède, who worked under enormous pressure, had misunderstood the situation. Fourthly, two Gurungs particularly interested in the history and traditions of their people, Indra Bahadur and Bhovar Tamu, using their own oral traditions and the written vamsavali or histories, added their own comments. Finally, the secret history of the Gurungs as preserved in the **pye** or oral texts (myths) of the pa-chyu were scanned by Yarjung Tamu, a leading pa-chyu, and Pignède's very important work on the work of the priests was checked against Yarjung's own experience.

The integrity and identity of each interpretation has been maintained, for they often conflict. The conflicts between them are, in many ways, the most interesting indication of the current debates.

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In essence, it would appear that while Pignède leaned towards an Indianist interpretation of the Gurungs, the recent comments suggest a much more Tibeto-Burman slant to the material. We may illustrate this in relation to some of the key areas of disagreement, which are also among the major discussion points now among the Gurungs.

### **Marriage, Clan and 'Jat'.**

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Sarah Green did much of the work on the desk-top production of the work; the Pokhara fax was made available through the kindness of Dr. Don Messerschmidt. Judith Pettigrew orchestrated much of the work at the Nepal end.

One area of disagreement comes in the interpretation of the marriage system of the Gurungs. This has not been of burning concern among the Gurungs themselves, perhaps because most Gurungs were not aware of the way in which Bernard Pignède's writing had been interpreted to suggest links with the a-symmetrical marriage systems of India. Yet once the work is translated and widely available in Nepal, it becomes important to point out that Pignède appears to have been mistaken on this point. As summarized in a note to our joint translation, the situation is in fact as follows.

Pignède describes the system as if it is an asymmetrical one, with a marked preference for marriage with a mother's brother's daughter (matrilateral cross-cousin marriage). This would link it to the large group of societies in North India, Assam and elsewhere, which have this preferential marriage pattern.

As I argued some years ago (Macfarlane 1976; 19) "there is considerable evidence, however, that both in theory and in practice the system is more symmetrical than he suggests with marriages occurring with father's sister's children just as often and with a mixture of symmetry and asymmetry in the kinship terminology....Informants were adamant that both type of marriage were equally desired." The Glovers (Glover and Gurung 1977; 303) also report that "cross cousin marriages are preferred and, in Ghachok area at least, there is no expressed preference as to whether the mate is chosen through the maternal or the paternal link."

When we asked about this in Mohoriya in 1990, people said that both types of marriage were equally desirable and, they thought, equally frequent. Furthermore, the kinship terminology

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seems to be consistent with this equal preference. There is a strong distinction made between the terms for parallel cousins, who are addressed and referred to in terms used for brothers and sisters, and cross-cousins, who are referred to with special terms. These terms are the same for matrilateral and patrilateral cross cousins *nohlø* (M) and *nholon-syo* (F). It would be interesting to know how Pignède reached his conclusion, but, as we shall see, it fits well with his interpretation of the deeper level of Gurung social structure, and in particular the nature and relationship between the two jats' or sets of lineages in Gurung society.

Pignède's description of the clan system of the Gurungs is one of the best known and most influential parts of his work. The main section of his account has been published in English (1962) The analysis is based on the supposed dichotomies implicit in the four-fold structure of the Carjat (literally "four-jat", Nepali) and, less so, the structure of the Solahjat ("sixteen-jat"). An elegant argument is based on the opposition of two priestly clans (*lama* and *lamechane*) and two chiefly clans (*ghale* and *ghotane*).

Pignède was, however, aware that a later rigid classification was probably imposed on a more flexible earlier system. For instance, he noted that in the Central and Eastern region, marriage rules do not conform to the system he elaborated, and that the presence of the *paṛi* clan suggests that "there are in fact, more than four clans". This inconsistency has been confirmed by others; Messerschmidt, for example, found that in his area "there is no evidence of this duality in contemporary marriage practice" (1976: 54).

During the years since Pignède wrote there has been much discussion about these matters. On frequent re-visits, I began to be told of secret documents, **vamsavali**, which had been hidden even from other Gurungs, which revealed a very different picture from that in Pignède. The revelation of this new material is undoubtedly directly linked with the growing openness of the discussion about who the Gurungs are. Although the matter will require considerably more work, our first impressions, as summarized in an Appendix to the Pignède translation, are as follows.

We may look firstly at what Pignède calls the Carjat to see how far they are, in fact, a four-fold group. We have examined some

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evidence from several of the older histories of the Gurungs, the *vamsavali*, and these never refer to the Carjat at all. The word *jat*, of Indian origin, is not used, but *gi* (Gurung for group or peoples) preceded by the Gurung word for three, *song*. Thus certain *vamsavali* tell of the *song-gi*, or *minha song-gi* (*song-gi* peoples). These three groups are specified as the *lama*, *lema* and *kona/kone*. They may intermarry. The *klye* (*ghale*) are treated as an entirely separate group, which is itself divided into three intermarrying groups, *samri klye*, *relde klye*, and *kh-hyaldi klye*. In these early histories it is suggested that for a long time the "three-peoples" were separate, only joining up with the other groups and the *ghale* fairly recently. These early histories thus confirm that Pignède was right to be unsure about the four-fold nature of the classification.

When we discussed these matters with one of the so-called Carjat, he said that in fact *car-jat* had nothing to do with the Gurungs specifically. It actually referred to the four Hindu *varna*, namely Brahmin, Kshatryia, Vaisya, Sudra, which he said later multiplied into thirty-six *jats*. This would seem to be an acknowledgement that an external, Hindu, four-fold caste division was later imposed on or absorbed into the Gurung system.

C.B. Ghotane agreed that the word *jat* is inappropriate and that the various groupings are really *thar* or clans, but he included the *ghale* in this group, thus confirming Pignède's use of *plih-gi* as an alternative term for Carjat. He also disputed the existence of a *lama* clan.

Turning to the Solahjat, Pignède himself noted that he had also been given the name *ku-gi* ("nine-people"), and told that there were not sixteen but only nine clans. He stated that "no Gurung was able to give me a list of the sixteen Solahjat clans". The list given in one of the legends Pignède quotes is "fantastic enough" and corresponds hardly at all to any other lists.

Again it looks as if the "sixteen peoples" may have been something rather different. In the *vamsavali* that we have seen, the identifiable groups in the Solahjat include Daria, Danuwar, Bramu, Murmi, Hanjhi, Kumal, Hayu, Chepang, Khapang, Pahari, Neware Kumal, Panchhari, Kusalya, Palahari, Musahari, and Hurkya;

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there are sixteen named groups in all. They have nothing directly to do with the Gurungs.

In contrast to these, the early history in the *vamsavali* and the ritual songs (*peda luda*) of the

pa-chyu speak of the *ku-gi* or *kwo-gi*, sometimes later translated into Nepali as *nau-jat*. The lists of these original nine groups in different *vamsavali* match well, as follows (Pignède's spellings in brackets): *krommchhain* [*kromcae*], *yobachhain*, *nhansin*, *phijon*, *chormi* [*tohrcae*], *rhilla*, *yoja*, *p-hhachyu* [*paice*], *kepchhain* [*kupcae*]. The list given to Pignède overlaps with this for four of the names, with Pignède's informant giving *mahpcae*, *kercae*, *klihbri*, *lehne*, and *thimce* for the other five.

It is particularly interesting that on the basis of comparing various lists, Pignède gives a list of twenty-seven clans. It might be suggested that the three-fold structure of the nine-clans is one version of several systems which are based on multiples of the number three. In the older histories we have looked at, the *ku-gi* are often referred to as the "twelve-twenty-seven" peoples. Twelve is obviously three times four and twenty-seven, a curious number for a group, makes sense as three to the power of three, a perfect number for a three-fold system.

It would appear that in place of the rather binary oppositions of the system, with its Indianist moiety structure, the principles may be of a different, three-fold, structure. Only further research on the early histories and pa-chyu's mythical stories will illuminate this.

### **Gurung religion.**

Of equal, if not greater, importance to many Gurungs now is to decide what their 'true' religion is and how it is to be performed. This is the subject of very considerable discussion in the various conferences and meetings of Gurungs, where the relative merits and antiquity of Lamaism, Hinduism and the Pa-chyu and Klabri priests are debated. A general consensus has emerged, which is reflected in the mythical history partly elaborated at the end of this article, which states that, as in the resolution quoted above, the

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pa-chyu's are the most ancient and authentic priests, the Klabri's were the next, and the lamas are more recent.

The situation is complicated, however, by an internal dispute among the Gurungs about the central Gurung ritual, the **pwe lava** or three-day memorial to the dead. This can be seen as one part of that tension between Buddhist and tribal religion which is addressed at length by Mumford (Mumford 1989). One view is that the present funeral ritual, which involves animal sacrifice, should be simplified and purified. It is too expensive, time-consuming and, possibly, somewhat 'backward'. Some traditional Gurung priests, especially in the Lamjung area have agreed to give up animal sacrifice in the 'pwe'.

Other Gurungs take a completely contrary view. They believe that it is essential that some form of real sacrifice at death be continued - a blood sacrifice - as a gift to gods and ancestors. As one leading authority put it to me, "If you do not give blood you do not have a relationship". "We need blood and wine". He insisted that there must be some form of destruction of life, even if the object sacrificed has to be diminished down to an egg. He is not prepared to compromise with the lama and klabris who would do with blood sacrifice. He argued that this is the Gurungs real heritage - a blood sacrifice. If it is lost,

he argues, the Gurungs will lose all their special identity.<sup>5</sup>

Linked to questions of what kind of funeral the traditional priest should do is the question of what kind of shaman he is. Further revelations on this subject, which are not unrelated to the emergence of secret knowledge as discussions of identity grow, are worth briefly mentioning in the terms described in a note to the Pignède volume.

Pignède states that there are no trances or possessions or ecstasy in the pa-chyu's work. (Pignède 1966: 293). I thought the same on the basis of working with the Thak pa-chyu, who never mentioned possession, and did not appear to become possessed. If this were universally true, it would distinguish Gurung pa-chyus from the classic ecstatic shamanism of inner Asia.

It was therefore with considerable surprise that when attending the *mose tiba* ritual in 1990, at the point when the evil spirit brought down the departed soul and confronted the pa-chyus,

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we saw them go into what appeared to be a frenzy, beating their drums wildly and shaking back and forth.

Afterwards we asked Yarjung pa-chyu what had happened and he said "deota kaba". Now the word *kaba*, pronounced slightly differently, can have the meanings of "to come" (the God has come), or "to seize hold of". We confirmed with the pa-chyu informant that he was using the word in the second sense. He was quite explicit that he was possessed, using the same word, *tarava* (to shake), which is used to describe the very obvious possession in the Ghatu and Sorati dances. He said that he saw the god in his possession and wished that he could draw what he had seen. He was very surprised to hear that a pa-chyu who works just north of Thak said that he was never possessed.

On asking whether such possession occurred in any other rituals, we were told that it occurs in the *pwelu*, which is a special ritual done in a pa-chyu's own house to his personal god. We witnessed such a rite in the house of a man who, although not a practising pa-chyu, was of a pa-chyu lineage

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and hence kept the *pwelu* shrine in his house. On this occasion, rather than the pa-chyu becoming possessed, the person in whose house the rite was performed became possessed, convulsively shaking for three or four minutes. This was clearly possession. We were told that only a few persons have this gift (and it is considered to be a gift). The signs of the ability to become possessed start at about the age of ten or a little younger.

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<sup>5</sup> It is curious to note how the reverse is happening in parts of the Kathmandu valley where the vegetarian elephant god Ganesh has become a meat-eating deity for the Newars.

It might be suggested that this possession is a relatively new feature, perhaps copied from the *dhame* tradition spreading from India. Indeed, Pignède describes a pa-chyu going to study the science of the *dhame* (314-315). Yet this was denied by our pa-chyu informant. He said that his father since becoming a pa-chyu had always gone into a state of possession and shaken (*tarava*). Our informant had himself done so since he had learnt the pa-chyu skills in his late teens.

This alters our picture of the pa-chyu, taking him much closer to the shamanic priests of Mongolian and central Asia from where the Gurungs are said to originate. Further similarities to central Asian shamanism are described in Mumford, 1989. *passim*.<sup>6</sup>

### **The History of the Gurungs.**

All these debates concerning identity become encapsulated into the debate about the history of the Gurungs. In order to know who the Gurungs are, the Gurungs want to find out where they came from and when. Thus the largely oral history of the Gurungs becomes a major debating area for the question of Gurung identity. This has had the fortunate side-effect of again producing much fascinating and hitherto secret material. This is still very confused, but a few of the broad outlines, which are elaborated in greater detail in the notes and appendices to the Pignède translation, may be noted here. At the heart of the debate is the question related to the discussion of the jats above. Namely, are the Gurungs made up of one people or two? Also relevant, of course, is the question of their overlap with other groups such as the Tamangs and Magars who speak very similar languages and have many social customs in

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common. Finally, there is the question of the overlay of Gurung culture by Brahmins from the south.

Our conflicting view by 1989 were summarized briefly as follows: "The course of the long migration over forested mountain ridges is only remembered in myths and legends. Some suggest that the main route was down to Burma and then westward through Assam and eastern Nepal to their present settlements, where they have been for over seven hundred years. Other legends tell how the Gurungs were wandering shepherds who came down through the high pasture of Tibet, through the kingdom of Mustang to settle the southern slopes of the Annapurna range. Yet other traditions suggest a dual origin, with the 'four jat' as they are known coming from the south, from northern India, and the 'sixteen jat' coming down from the north." (Macfarlane and Gurung 1990:1-2).

Two other interpretations may now be added. One is by C.B.Ghotane, who writes in a note to the Pignède translation. "The root of the Gurungs, Magars, Tamang, Tharus, Sunwar and Danawar of central Nepal seems to be connected with the ancestors of ancient Kirats. They are ancient tribal group of modern India, who occupied Northern area of Indo-Gangetic plain and the foot hills of whole Himalayan range which extends from Kashmir to Assam, Naga Land, Manipur further to Burma. The ancient non-Aryan group of India had moved down....due to the exodus of Indo Aryan peoples...The

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<sup>6</sup> Further work on this subject has been undertaken by Judith Pettigrew and Yarjung Tamu; see their paper 'Tamu Shamanistic Possession' in M.Allen (ed.), *Anthropology of Nepal: People, Problems and Processes* (Kathmandu, 1994).

earliest civilization of ancient Kathmandu was founded by Kirats. Gradually the branch of Kirats moved towards green mountain tops to be safe from the intruders of the South after the downfall of the Kirat ruler in Kathmandu valley in the first century AD. These ethnic groups seem to have moved further north as a great number of Hindu moved into Nepal through many points of Southern border from 1398 onward as the Muslim invaders started destroying the social and religious order of the Hindus of India."

A very different and fascinating account of the history of the Gurungs has been provided by two Gurungs working in collaboration with Judith Pettigrew and ourselves. Yarjung Gurung, a pa-chyu,

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was able to draw on the myths and legends of the priests, written in a mixture of Chon-kwiyi' and 'Tamu-kwiyi'. Bhoovar Gurung had worked on the ancient histories of the Gurungs, the **vamsavali**. The account which they have pieced together is reproduced in full as an Appendix to the new translation of Pignède. In essence the story is as follows: direct quotations from the Appendix are placed within italics, the rest is a summary.

The Gurungs originated in Mongolia and Western China about eight or nine thousand years ago. They wandered down through China, reaching the Yarlu valley of the Lhoka region of Eastern Tibet in about one thousand B.C. They brought with them their traditional priests : "Here they were known as Tamu (Tubo) by 1,000 B.C. and during the course of time developed Bonism, the pre-Buddhist religion, with its priest, the 'Nam-bo' or 'Pa-chyu'...Bonism, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, was a very advanced form of animism. It is still preserved, almost solely, by the Tamu priests in the form of the 'Pye-Ta Lhu-Ta'."

"According to Tibetan mythology, Bonism is categorised as:

1. Nam-bo (Dol or Black Bon) whose priest is the 'Pa-Chyu' which is the oldest.
2. Kyar-bo (Striped Bon) whose priest is the 'Kyabri' which possibly dates from around 100 B.C.
3. Lam-bo (White or Gyur Bon) whose priest is the 'Lambo' which dates from 838 A.D."

"Some Tamus settled in the northern Bagmati region, having gone through the Kerung or Ku-ti Pass, and became Tamangs."

Others crossed over into Mustang. When they moved on to Manang, " Those remaining in Mustang became the Thakali when other Tibetan groups, and probably some Tamangs, arrived." "While they inhabited the banks of Mha-ri-syo (Marsyangdi river) in Manang, they adopted a new Klye' (master) as their

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chief or king. His descendants are called Klye (Ghale), an additional clan of the Tamu tribe."

They crossed over the Annapurna range onto the southern slopes to a large village called Kohla in about 500 A.D. "At Kohla, the Klye, Kugi, Kwonma and clan chieftains were king, ministers, administrators and Kroh' ('Mukhiya') respectively. Though they had different ancestors, Klye and Kwonma did not intermarry. However, both did intermarry with the Kugi."

From about one thousand A.D. they spread over a number of other villages along the slopes of the Himalayas. "A legend tells how some of the Kwonma clan went from Siklis to Nar in Manang to learn Lamaism from recently-arrived Tibetan Lamas. On their return those who had learned well were called Lam, those who had not, Lem. Then the Kwonma divided into three sub-clans, Kwon, Lam and Lem, according to the closeness of their kinship connections with each sub-clan. The Lam and Lem (followers of the Lama priest) formed marital links with the Kwon (followers of the 'Pa-chyu, Kyabri'). In fact, these sub-clans (Swogi) are the descendants of the same ancestor. Despite this they formed strong groups."

In about the thirteenth century the Rajputs started to move up from north India and began to encounter the hill peoples, entering Gurung territory in the sixteenth century. At this point the first false genealogies of the Gurungs made by Brahmins began to be constructed. "A royal priest, Bhoj Raj Purohit, composed the first pseudo genealogy of the Gurung (Tamu) on 9th Falgun 1594 V.S. (1694 V.S. is found in the published genealogy, but the historical events coincide with 1594 V.S.). In that false genealogy, the ancestors of the Gurungs were said to be Aryan, not Mongol, the migrations said to be

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from the south instead of the north, Nha-Tsan becomes Chanda Thakuri, and the accusations made against the Swogi were transferred to the Kugi with a view to elevating the smaller number of Swogi and adding them to the royal clan, Klye, which resulted in long-lasting conflict between the Swogi and the Kugi." This is the Brahminized genealogy which is reprinted as Legend II in Pignède's book (REF: ) In the early nineteenth century the Gurungs began to be recruited into the British army. Other false genealogies were constructed, especially in 1911.

## **Conclusion**

This account provides an alternative interpretation, which can be read alongside those provided by Pignède, Macfarlane and other western anthropologists, and the somewhat different version which is given in the notes by C.B.Ghotane. It is obvious that a number of different interpretations of the early history of the Gurungs, and particularly the origins of what Pignède calls the Carjat and Solahjat, are now being given. Some suggest different origins, some suggest a joint origin. Some place the origins in the north, others to the south. Some give high prominence to the role of Tibetan culture, others discount this.

Such contention is almost universal in the societies studied by anthropologists whose history is mainly held in oral texts. In the end there is no final way of settling the disputes and the observer will have to judge for his or her self. One way of reconciling the apparently diametrically opposed accounts given here would be to suggest that while all the Gurungs (and many other highland groups in Nepal with whom they share so much) originated from the north, probably from western China, different groups may have reached their present position by different routes. Then the various groups now named 'Gurung'joined up, as most legends agree, at the village of "Kohla" on the southern slopes of the Annapurna range.

I hope that it is apparent from this discussion, that if 'anthropology' was ever apparently value-neutral

or 'non-political',

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it is certainly not now. The anthropologist is actively engaged in the process of the creation and re-interpretation of ethnic identity. This is now a co-operative venture with the peoples themselves, whose lives it affects and who themselves are literate and able to communicate their views to the anthropologist, whether he or she is in Nepal or anywhere in the world.

It is not surprising that the Gurungs are asking fundamental questions about "Who are we?", about birth, marriage, death, about priests, history, social structure. Resolutions to these problems are as important as are those concerning the very many desperate practical problems facing the Gurungs. In the attempt to resolve them, the anthropologist is suddenly allowed to peer into a newly active volcano. In this, there is a unique opportunity for understanding of the deeper levels of both present and past.

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