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## Sherpa marriage customs

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Sherpa Marriage Customs

This is a transcription of "Sherpa Marriage Customs" as told by Mr. Ang Gelbu, who is at present residing in Kathmandu. The material was submitted by Luke and Marie Zylstra, August 13, 1968.

Though morpheme breaks have been inserted, the meaning of all of them is not clear to the authors at present, hence there may be inadequacies in the free translation. Tone is not indicated. Sherpa is a member of the Bodic group of the Tibeto-Burman family.

syer-wi gye ku-tju ki-tjang  
Sherpa-P marriage to make customs

1. syer-wi gye ku-tju gomaalaa makpi-ki  
Sherpa-P marriage to make first bridegroom-P

papaa tjang maaa-ki tji pum-bajaa tji khore  
father and mother-P that girl- that his

pujyung-laa gye ku-tju-laa lo-tjang djiku mi-djuku  
son- marriage to make- year- equal NEG-equal

lhe-wi // 2. tji pum tji pujyung-laa gaa laa-sung  
are- that girl that boy-to like feel-

maa-laa gomaalaa tii-kiwi // 3. pujyung tji-laa gaa  
NEG-feel first ask- son that-to like

laa-si giwi sa-si-ma papaa tji-ki mii ngii  
feel-PART is ask-PART-PERF father his men two

daljaa ti-ni aaraak pung kang-tang phe-mar  
help take- wine jar full-and flour-butter mixture

khur-ni pum tji-ki khangbaa djiwi // 4. gomaalaa  
carry- girl her house go first

pujyung tjang pum tji-ki lor-tjaa djiku mi-djuku  
boy and girl their age- equal NEG-equal

lhe-wi / per-mi ting-me tjang khyaawa gerpu osi  
are- wo-man small and husband big if

gye -kutju-laa pum tji-ki papaa tjang maaa  
marriage-to girl her father and mother

me-ngen-diwi // 5. lor-tjaa dik-si-maa pum  
NEG-accept- age- same-PART-PERF daughter

ter-kiwi // 6. syer-wi tji pum win-si-maa  
give- Sherpa-P that daughter offer-PART-PERF

dam-jyaang tjang pejyaang si-ru giwi // 7. dam-jyaang  
engagement call " dam-jyaang"

Sherpa Text

si-ru-tji gomaalaa du ke-lu-laa diwi //  
 call -that first grain bring- go

8. pyaa-jang syok saa-si-maa mii khaal-nga tuk  
 marriage to come ask-PART-PERF men score-five six

ti-ni jantji djokaarang diwi / tji belaang aaraak  
 take guests same go that time wine

khur-ni do go-kiwi // 9. gye kutju belaa lamaa  
 carry go OBL marriage time lama

mak-pi pati sur ti-ni diwi // 10. lamaa tji-ki  
 bridegroom side of take go lama his

kholu khur-kiwi janti dop belaa makpi  
 sacred clothes carry guest go time bridegroom

khalaak tjuwaa gari ti-ni diwi tji belaa majyaa  
 relative they all take go that time clothing

lemu-lemu kon-giwi // 11. dop belaa gari-ki sindjur  
 nice-nice put on- go time all- red-powder

ku-kiwi cilaa sisi mak-pi patti sur janti wou  
 put on- because bridegroom-P side of guest came

mii yin si-ru hak-ou lagi //12. buksyaal tji  
 men are call- knowing for cymbal that

mu-djung-giwi / geling tji-rang puuh-kiwi //13. na-mi  
 NEG-use- flute only blow- bride-P

khangba lep-u si-ru belaa mewaak kasse ge-kuwi //  
 house come call time gun much use

14. na-mi khang-bi patti tjuwaa sur-jyaang aaraak  
 bride-P house-P side they incense wine

kyong-ni lamaa la cye ti-kiwi / sur-jyaang  
 put- lama to worship give- incense-

sin-si-ma makpaa cye djen-du-laa nanglaa  
 finish-PART-PERF groom worship see- -at inside

ti-ni diwi // 15. mak-pa tjowa kho-wu aaraak  
 take- go bridegroom-NOM side take- wine

gari nami papaa aamaa la tjer-kiwi nami khalaak  
 all bride father mother to give- bride relative

gari nami khangbaa giwi // 16. nami tjowa sang  
 all bride house are bride side also

Sherpa Text

kacyaa wo-si tsukatji patti tjhak nyimu changga  
 invitation came which side close relations

nok tiki patti diwi // 17. mak-pi patti sur  
 are her side are bridegroom-P side of

kacyaa wo-si jaantji ung-gu gomaalaa gol-ni jaantji  
 invitation came guest came before go- guest

mulaa giwi // 18. goka sama so sin-si-ma  
 together come might food eat finish-PART-PERF

lamaa tjuwa yiki lap-kiwi goka cyuje sum ji-laa  
 lama their book read- might o'clock three four -or

gye-ku-kiwi / gye-ku-tju gomalaa nami patti cyangga  
 marriage- marriage- before bride side relative

tjuwaa-laa gari la phe-mar cyo-kiwi gari la  
 they-at all at flour-butter worship all at

phe-mar ma-long-si khatjaa jyo-kiwi // 19. yulki  
 flour-butter NEG-sufficient scarf put- village

pemwulaa phe-mar kutjuk rang cyik  
 representative flour-butter separate PL one

jyo-kiwi // 20. gye ku-tju belaa na-maa tang  
 put- marriage time bride-NOM and

mak-paa la kel-mi cyik cyik go-kiwi mak-pi-ki  
 bridegroom-NOM to friend-P one one OBL- bridegroom- -on

na-maa-laa sindjur paalaa sum ku-kiwi /  
 bride-NOM- red powder times three put-on-

kho-rang sang paalaa sum ku-kiwi // 21. sindjur  
 himself and times three put on- red powder

ku-tju belaa mewaak kasse ge-ku-wi // 22. tja-maa buksyaal  
 put on- time gun much shoot- then cymbal

tang geling djung giwi // 23. mak-paa tji  
 and flute play are bridegroom-NOM this

na-mi patti khaalak tang na-mi tji mak-pi  
 bride-P side relative and bride-P this bridegroom-P

khaalak la lakpaa goo-la jong-ni cyak pul-giwi /  
 relative to hand head-on put- respect pay

tju-wi belaa the-rang-bu si-wi na-mi patti tang  
 they-P time congratulations say bride-P side also

Sherpa Text

mak-pi patti nyi-kar lu long-giwi / tji  
 bridegroom-P side two-together song sing- that

goka nam tjok long-giwi //24. toplā na-mi khangba  
 night whole sing- morning bride-P house

samaa so sin-si-maa yulki mii ki denla ti  
 food eat finish-PART-PERF villager man of guest take

diwi // 25. ter tjho-ki tu-wi-ki ter-kiwi ter  
 give able they give- give

mo-tjho-wi ki me-tjer-u // 26. gari-ki samaa sin-si-maa  
 NEG-able- NEG-give- all food finish-PART-PERF

na-mi khangba giwi // 27. na-maa la tjang-gu  
 bride-P house come bride-NOM to send

belaa lep-si-ma na-maa cha-ni yanung paalaa cyik  
 time go-PART-PERF bride-NOM dress- again time one

gye ku-kiwi // 28. tja-maa na-maa mak-pi  
 marriage mark put- then bride-NOM bridegroom-P

khangba tji tjang-gu-wi // 29. na-maa mak-pi  
 house that send- bride-NOM bridegroom-P

khangba dop belaa alaa nyi-wi / mak-paa-laa na-mi  
 house go time much cry bridegroom-NOM-to bride-P

khangbaa sur khatjaa tja-ni tjang-giwi/ na-maa tje  
 house on scarf put send- bride-NOM that

kha-laa ti-ni tjong-giwi // 30. mak-pa khangba  
 horse-on take send- bridegroom-NOM house

lep-si-maa goka yanung / gye ku-ku-wi  
 reach-PART-PERF night again marriage mark put -

tji cyermu na-maa tjang mak-pa-la mu-la ngilak  
 that day bride-NOM and groom-NOM together sleep

cyi-kiwi // 31. na-mi mu-la kelmi ti-ni diwi //  
 give- bride-P together friends take- go

32. na tji-la kaki sol-si gye  
 two days after- last day eat-PART marriage

sin-si-maa yulgi cyang-ga-cyali gari ke kiwi //  
 finish-PART-PERF villagers relatives all go

33. na-maa tjang mak-pa laa cyik co kora  
 bride-NOM and groom-NOM month one Quan honeymoon

Sherpa Text

ge-kiwi // tji-ru mem khangba aaraak tjang  
 spend- after girl's father house wine and

phe-mar khur-ni lok-kiwi // 34. yanang ngi-kar  
 flour-butter carry- back- again both

pum ki khangba tjang pujuung khangbaa ke-ni nyima  
 girl P house and boy house go- day

katae-kiwi // 35. lo cyik gol-si-maa kyaakaa  
 spend- year one after-PART-PERF

le-teng aaraak tin kang-tang phe-mar khur-ni  
 year-every wine full flour-butter take

pum tji-ki khangbaa kel diwi // 36. ku-tjuk tjhen-dju  
 girl her house go separate time of

gal-si angaa kye-si-maa tji-rang na-maa tang  
 if after baby come-PART-PERF only bride-NOM and

mak-paa la na-mi papaa tjang ama-ki tongba  
 groom-NOM to bride-P father and mother-of property

ter-kiwi // 37. pum tjiki tjawaa sang tongba  
 give girl her side property

kho-si-maa pujuung patti sur tongba la-ni  
 bring-PART-PERF son side of property take-

sin-si-ma ngi-kar ku-tjuk tjhen-ni dje-kiwi //  
 finish-PART-PERF both separate go cut- live

Free Translation

1. If a Sherpa boy wants to marry, his father and mother must first find out whether his age is the same as that of the girl he wants to marry. 2. They then ask the girl whether or not she likes their son. 3. If the boy is liked, his father, with two men to help him, carries a jar full of wine and a flour-butter mixture to the girl's house. 4. The boy and girl must be of a similar age and the husband must be bigger than the wife, otherwise the father and mother of the girl will not accept the marriage proposal. 5. If the age is the same, the daughter is given. 6. When a daughter is offered for marriage, it is called dam-jyaang in Sherpa. 7. When dam-jyaang is called, grain is brought first. 8. The marriage having been arranged, five or six score of the same guests (as attended dam-jyaang) go, carrying wine. 9. During the wedding ceremony, the lama takes the side of the bridegroom. 10. At that time the lama wears his sacred clothes and the guests and bridegroom's relatives all put on their nice clothes. 11. All put on red powder, so that the guests will know who belong to the bridegroom's side. 12. Cymbals are not used; only the flute is blown.

Sherpa Text

13. They are hailed with many gun shots when they arrive at the bride's house. 14. At the bride's house, they present wine and incense to the lama. When the worship is finished, the groom is allowed inside. 15. The bridegroom's side give wine to the bride's father and mother. All the bride's relatives are at the house. 16. The close relatives on the bride's side had also received an invitation. 17. Those of the bridegroom's side who had received an invitation now meet together with the other guests. 18. The actual marriage takes place about three or four o'clock in the afternoon, after the lama has read out the sacred writings. Before this, all the relatives on the bride's side offer their flour-butter mixture. This alone is not sufficient; they also have to give a scarf. 19. The village representatives present the flour-butter separately. 20. At the time of the marriage the friends congratulate the bride and groom one by one. The bridegroom puts red powder on the bride three times, and then on himself three times. 21. While the red powder is put on, there are many gun shots. 22. Then the cymbals and the flutes are played. 23. The bride and bridegroom pay respect to each other's relatives by putting their hands on their heads. That whole night is spent on congratulating both sides, and singing together. 24. In the morning, after food is eaten at the bride's house, the villagers are taken in as guests. 25. They give gifts according to their ability to give. 26. All eat at the bride's house. 27. When it is time for the bride to leave, she once again has the marriage mark (butter) applied to her. 28. Then, the bride is sent to the bridegroom's house. 29. When it is time for the bride to go to the bridegroom's house, she cries very much. The bridegroom puts a scarf on the bride, and sends her away on horseback. 30. Having reached the bridegroom's house, the marriage mark is again applied. That night the bride and groom sleep together. 31. The bride's friends go home together. 32. After two days, having eaten, and the marriage being completed, the relatives and villagers go home. 33. The bride and groom go on a honeymoon of one month. Afterwards they return wine and flour-butter to the girl's father's house. 34. After their honeymoon they again return to their parental homes to live there during the days. 35. Year by year, a jar full of wine and flour and butter is taken to the girl's house. 36. Until a baby is born, the bride and groom live separately during the day. Only after a baby is born will their parents give them property. 37. After property has been received from both sides, they will live on their own.

Key

NOM = Nominative

OBL = Obligatory

P = Possessive

PL = Plural

NEG = Negative

// = Primary break

PART = Participle

/ = Secondary break

PERF = Perfect

Quan = Quantative