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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 maaaa-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 maaaa  
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