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TALKING ABOUT THE HOUSEHOLD: A TAMANG CASE FROM NORTH CENTRAL NEPAL

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The importance of the household for a fuller understanding of village socio-cultural organization and economy has been acknowledged in anthropology since Fortes' (1958) early essay on the developmental cycle. Indeed, hardly an anthropologist who has worked in Nepal has failed to notice the special place of the household in village life. For the Gurung, the household is the primary "labour, ritual, commensal, and child-rearing group" (Macfarlane 1976: 15). Further west, Magar family life centers around "farmstead households", spatially and psychologically distinct from one another (Hitchcock 1966: 35). And for the Tamang, too, the household provides a critical focus for the organization of work and exchange (Fricke 1984). In spite of this, few studies in the Himalaya have concerned themselves directly with household processes.

The literature on these processes straddles disciplines and is growing rapidly. A recent bibliography (Smith 1983), for example, includes selections from sociology and history in addition to anthropology. Most of these listings come after 1970, with many of them devoted to shattering the myth of a rigid evolutionary sequence from large, extended family households to the post-industrial nuclear family home of contemporary society (see, for example, Laslett 1972; Goody 1972; Wilk and Netting 1981). Two other trends of special interest in this literature are (1) the efforts to define exactly what we mean when we talk about the household (cf. Bender 1967; Yanagisako 1979) and (2) continuing discussions of the household developmental cycle (Berkner 1972; Hareven 1974; Foster 1975, 1978). In this paper I will use the case of a Tamang village in North Central Nepal to illustrate problems of definition and to highlight factors constraining household developmental cycles.

The Setting

The Tamang whose households I am describing live in the village of Timling, comprised of 132 households and 639 people and lying at about 6,500 feet at the headwaters of the Ankhu Khola. Although a part of Sertang Gaon Panchayat at the time of fieldwork, Timling was historically an independent chiefdom with status equal to the other chiefdoms in the upper Ankhu Khola valley—Sertang, Borang, and Laba. Even today, in spite of being joined administratively to Sertang, the traditional territory of Timling is topographically distinct and the people of this village and its daughter settlements tend to exploit the resources within the traditional boundaries, some 67 square miles of the most rugged country in the Ankhu Khola valley.

The 639 people of Timling are divided into four clans and one other group, the Ghale, who can be treated as another clan (see Toffin 1976 for a discussion of the Tamang of this area based on Sertang). Each of these clans has its own tradition about arrival into the village and worships its own deity (Tm. kulgi lha) represented by a stone near the hearth. The clans and their numbers in Timling are: Ghale (278), Damrong (181), Gomtsa (72), Mamba (77), and Mepa (31). According to informants, the Gomtsa and Mepa are actually subgrouops of the Lama clan and cannot intermarry; the traditional occupation of the Gomtsa is shaman (Tm. bombo), while that of the Mepa is lama. Each of the village neighborhoods is to some extent defined by a dominant clan and are often referred to by a clan name rather than by the more formal name of the area.

Timling's people pursue an agro-pastoral subsistence typical of the Nepali hills, although with a somewhat larger pastoral investment than people at lower elevations. Table 1 shows average household capital investment for various categories in Timling and the Gurung village of Thak.

Table 1: Average household capital investment in two villages

Type	Timling 1981		Thak* 1969	
	Rs.	%	Rs.	%
Land	24340	61.9	28150	68.5
Livestock	5685	14.5	1423	3.5
Housing	4950	12.6	5060	12.3
Household goods, tools, etc.	3049	7.8	5617	13.7
Clothing	1300	3.3	856	2.1
Total	39324	100	41106	100

* From Macfarlane (1976: 109).

Other features of Timling's subsistence also parallel those for the Gurung. Agricultural land available per person is about the same with about .654 acres in Timling compared to .64 for Thak (Macfarlane 1976: 47), although this obviously ignores differences in productivity. Moreover, the Tamang are faced with a declining land base with which to support their population and consequently increasing dependence on outside wage labor as documented elsewhere (Hitchcock 1966: 105; Macfarlane 1976: 199).

The Tamang Household

The problems involved in cross-culturally valid definitions of the household have been amply reviewed by Yanagisako who suggests that the most appropriate focus be on activities "central to the domestic relationships in each particular society, rather than with its domestic groups" (1979: 186). Wilk and Netting offer a similar antidote to proceeding from a priori constructs: analysis must proceed from a focus on behavior—production, distribution, transmission, reproduction and co-residence—and then determine the overlapping personnel who act.

As it happens, the concept of household organization favored by the Tamang themselves agrees substantially with some of the traditional assumptions about peasant family and household; there are, however, differences and any attempt to discover a strictly bounded unit filling all of the functions attributed to households must be discarded. For the people of Timling, the existence of the household is best determined by the presence of a cooking hearth. The hearth defines this social space even in the absence of solid walls or a separate doorway. Identifying those activities vital to the maintenance of social life does not challenge the primacy of the hearth as an organizing principle in Tamang society.

Beginning with production, we see that Timling's subsistence economy is geared to extracting resources from a more or less bounded environment within which land use rights are extended either to the whole population or to specific segments of it centered around hearths.

In another part of the adaptation, individuals leave the village territory for extended periods to earn money as porters, laborers, or as soldiers in British and Indian Gurkha regiments. Wages are expected to be contributed to the common good of the hearth.

With arable land, the produce from plots go to the very people who work them. Likewise, with the extraction of forest resources, those people who do the cutting will take their lumber to their own hearths for their own fires. In both of these cases, the units of production and consumption are essentially the same even though the same people may not be involved in all aspects of production; work is for the common good of those who share the hearth. Grain and timber are stored and used by that collection of people sharing the hearth and when individuals from other hearths are invited to partake of this production, there is a clear sense of their being given a product that is not theirs to freely take.

Agriculture dominates the Tamang economy with some 26% of the average household's capital being tied up in land. But other segments of Timling's subsistence pattern ratify the identification of hearth members as the essential group in village production. Livestock are owned by these same members and even when their care is entrusted to others, the products that come from them—milk, wool, meat--can be distributed only through the authority of these same people.

The transmission of property and the creation of new domestic units in Timling further underline the role of the hearth. At its most fundamental, the hearth group consists of a husband and wife and new members are recruited through childbearing. It is sometime after marriage that a son will ask to establish his own hearth, in effect demanding the economic independence of his production and consumption unit. At the creation of a new hearth, the land held by the older unit is divided and separate stores of grain, potatoes and timber are created.

Ritual serves to emphasize this separation. Even when poverty forces the establishment of the new commensal unit to be no more than the construction of a new firepit at one end of the same building, the kulgi lha must receive the first food cooked on the hearth each day. This offering must be made by the household head to prevent any affliction caused by the jealousy of the hearth god from hurting the members of his domestic unit. Other rituals focus on the hearth: shamans and lamas are called periodically to cleanse a site of ghosts and their ministrations always center around the hearth and are for the benefit of those who share it.

The Tamang household, so defined, bears a clear resemblance to Marshall Sahlins' Domestic Mode of Production (DMP) (1972: 74-79). The sine qua non of the DMP is the organization of the economy around domestic groups, usually the family, although co-operative links must necessarily be established between them (1972: 78).

Sahlins begins with the bounded domestic group and proceeds to the question of what that group actually does, the reverse of what I have done here, but his conclusions about the nature of the group are very similar. The Tamang household is a unit that produces for its own use; kinship relations are the important relations of production; and the mode of production guarantees variation in the fortunes of households. Also introduced by Sahlins is the issue of authority within the household itself. In Timling, primary responsibility for household decisions inheres in the oldest adult male. It is he who decides the co-operative herding arrangements that will be made with other households and the nature of the property division when a son claims his inheritance. And it is to him that wage earning household members are expected to surrender the money they have saved in jobs outside the village.

Variation between household fortunes is a function of a large number of factors, both within and outside of household control. In a setting where the primary means of recruiting new household members is through sexual reproduction, the household labor force is largely determined by the facts of birth and death. Some households will have many sons; some none at all. And the extent of property that the household begins with will itself be determined in part by the size of sibling groups within which land and other capital must be divided.

Even if every household followed exactly the same pattern of growth and dispersion, a cross section of the village at a single time would reveal wide divergence in the composition and,hence, the labor potential of each domestic unit. Fortes explicitly addressed the stages through which households must move as they run a course parallel to the biological development of their individual members (1958). The cycle through the phases of expansion, dispersion, and replacement (1958: 4-5) is determined by a combination of social and biological factors: life span, death, birth, marriage, and the transmission of property. It is at the level of the household that individual life transitions are integrated into village economy in the DMP.

The Household Developmental Cycle in Timling

To glance at the cross-section of household types in Timling is to get a picture of a society in which the nuclear family is the dominant form. This is not a surprising picture and, indeed, is consistent with what we know from other peasant societies in the Himalaya and elsewhere. Table 2 demonstrates the clear importance of nuclear family households for three mountain villages with expected similarities between Tamang and Gurung cases. Yet, a bald reliance on static typologies of household structure would mislead us. This is particularly true because the Tamang life cycle implies a process of household formation in which productive units grow and fission through definable transitions.

Table 2: Household composition in three Nepali villages.

HH Type	Timling		Thak*		Mohoriya*	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Nuclear	89	67.4	44	57.1	59	67.9
Stem	32	24.2	20	26.0	25	28.8
Joint/Extended	6	4.5	—	——	1	1.1
Other	5	3.8	13	16.9	2	2.2
Total	132	100.0	87	100.0	120	100.0

* From Macfarlane (1976)

Cross-sectional descriptions of household types fail to give an understanding of the processes by which households are formed, mature, and break up because they ignore the time element in social systems (Fortes 1958: 1; Goody 1972b: 17). While Fortes brilliantly placed the household into processual perspective, his lead has not been followed until recently when Berkner gave new life to the analysis of domestic groups (1972). Here again the time element was invoked to clarify processes left obscure by static typology. A key element of Bernker's thinking, however, is his recognition that three distinct cycles—individual, family, and household—intersect in village economic and social life (1972: 418). Further elaboration by Foster has demonstrated the close correspondence between household developmental cycles, demography, and culturally defined transitions (1978: 415), while Cain has linked these cycles to the economic status and potential of households (1978: 428).

The culturally recognized life transitions that most directly shape the household developmental cycle in Timling include childbirth, marriage, inheritance, and death. From a strictly demographic point of view, the facts of birth and death interact with these. Our first task, then, is to describe the cultural features of these transitions to show how cultural values help shape certain behaviors in individual cycles.

Contributing to the expressed pattern of fertility is the strong desire of all women to bear children. No Tamang woman in Timling wished to limit her childbearing and the expressed desire for children is often put in frankly economic terms:

Parents without children have a life of sorrow. They do all the work themselves. Who goes to Trisuli to haul salt for them? When they are old who will care for them? And when they die, their brothers will eat their land—their brothers who have done nothing for them (Sankyathapa Tamang, male, age 23).

Children are necessary. Some might die, but having as many as possible means there will always be others. One can be a lama, another a shaman; others can watch sheep and cattle and cut wood...I want to send one to school, too, to learn to be rich (Surti Mepa, male, age 32).

Having many children divides the work and makes sure there are more if some die. Parents will be taken care of. Children tie us to other households. They teach each other their skills (Tiksarani Ghale, female, age 32).

The desire for children is ratified in Timling by women who take recourse to both shamans and lamas in order to guarantee their fertility and the survival of their offspring.

This desire for children is expressed in an average total fertility rate of 5.43 births per woman, a number which, although high, is tempered by a number of socio-cultural features that affect exposure to the risk of pregnancy. Approximately one fifth of these children will die in the first year of life while over two thirds will survive until at least age 20 (see Fricke (1984) for a more complete discussion of Timling's demography).

A second important transition for shaping the household developmental cycle is that of marriage. The Tamang may marry anytime after the first twelve years although there is clearly tension between the conflicting desires to retain women in the household when they reach their full labor potential and the usefulness of marriage for extending reciprocity relationships with other households. As in village societies throughout the world, marriage in Timling is much more than the simple erotic union of two people; it ties whole households and clan segments together into a web of mutually supportive relationships.

Marriages may be arranged by the parents of two spouses, arranged by the husband asking his wife's parents for their daughter, or simply entered into by two people quietly choosing to live together. Although only the first two types of marriage involve ritual and some expense, the outlay is even there dwarfed by the preparations for more important rituals such as mortuary rites.

There is a feeling current in Timling that arranged marriages can lead to complications because of their potential to end in divorce. In spite of this, 41.6% of 149 village marriages were reported to have been arranged. I was unfortunately not able to discover in all cases whether "arranged" referred to actual negotiations between two sets of fathers without the couple's consent or to the more participatory act of requesting a father's permission through intermediaries. Thus, the more interesting statistic from the point of view of shattering obsolete notions of the "traditional" peasantry is that 58.4% of all marriages were reported to have been solely the choice of the spouses.

The average age at first marriage for Timling women is 19.8, while that for first marital cohabitation is 20.2. Marriages are concentrated between the ages of 17 and 20 for women, but they tend to occur at a slower rate than that reported by women in the Nepal Fertility Survey (Banister and Thapa 1981: 44) where some 94% are married by age 24 compared to the smaller percentage of 87% in Timling. In addition, the rate of cohabitation lags behind that of marriage. By the end of the 18th year, 43.6% of the women of Timling had married but only 37.5% had moved in with their spouses. One advantage of this pattern for natal households is that a woman gives her father's household the use of her labor for slightly longer while links of reciprocity can already be established with other households.

Finally, arranged and choice marriages differ on a number of temporal variables. Arranged marriages for women tend to occur at younger ages than choice marriages, an average age of 18.0 compared to 21.0 for choice marriages. Similarly, women whose marriages have been arranged tend to cohabit with their spouses at 19.0 and their husbands are 2.3 years older on the average. Women in choice marriages tend to cohabit immediately, while their spouses are 3.5 years older on the average.

The consistently earlier ages at marriage and cohabitation for women with arranged first marriages would suggest that these women have more children than the others. Other evidence indicates that the wealthier households are the most inclined to arrange marriages for reasons that include their ability to handle the expense and their desire to expand co-operative links with other households. At the same time, an equalizing factor in the form of a greater rate of marital dissolution for arranged marriages might cancel this reproductive advantage. When the ages at which women entered their final union is compared, the averages for the two groups are much closer—22.10 for women whose first marriages were arranged and 22.72 for those whose were by choice. Thus, the greater risk of divorce in arranged marriages may work to equalize exposure to the risk of pregnancy during the reproductive years.

As important as marriage in the household developmental cycle is the taking of a son's inheritance (Np. angsa). A son may claim his inheritance anytime after age 16 and the father theoretically has no right to refuse him his share. Once again, there is the tension between the father's desire to keep his son in the household as long as possible after his full productive ability is realized and the threat of the son leaving. In practice, however, Tamang sons rarely claim their angsa at an early age for a number of reasons: once they take their inheritance, they cannot make any additional claims on property added after that time; leaving early would not only be a blow to the father's household labor-force, but it

would incline the father to withhold his assistance on future projects the son may wish to enter; leaving too early would leave them with an imperfect knowledge of subsistence techniques and only tenuous co-operative links with other households. Also, the father has some discretion in the land that he immediately parts with and an improvident leave-taking might not incline a father to part with cuts of the choicest land.

Thus the real impetus for a son to claim his inheritance comes with the arrival of his new wife who, as an outsider in her husband's natal home, is anxious to escape the discomfort of being subordinate to those women already in the household. In most cases, marriage and cohabitation are the prelude to household fission.

The items included in the inheritance are carefully divided with consideration to the number of sons who will share in it and the needs of the father and his wife. Typically, a father attempts to make some contribution to building an older son's new home by donating land, material and labor, although poorer households will sometimes find it impossible to give little more than a gesture. Inheritance is a continuous process that depends on the number of brothers born to each generation, marriage, and survival of older males in the patriline. In an ideal process, land will continue to enter the new household as it grows since, even though new consumers will be added to the home with each birth, new land can potentially be added with deaths in the ascending generations as grandfathers and fathers die and their remaining land is divided. Data from Timling suggests that the average age of inheritance for males is about 27 (Fricke 1984). If we assume that the son marries at about age 23 and his wife at about age 20 and that the first child is born when he is 26, then we begin to define a process of household development in which productive units begin to reach a kind of critical mass through recruitment of new members prior to fission.

The final important transition critical to household processes is death. The rituals associated with death are the most important and expensive in Tamang culture. Ceremonies associated with death dominate the life of the community throughout the year; their length and elaborateness will vary with the wealth of the household although the effects of losing productive household members can be as devastating for rich and poor alike. Because the impact of a household member's death will vary with her or his age and the point in the developmental cycle at which it occurs, the complexity of ritual may differ from one to another. Children below the age of twelve receive minimal ceremonies that usually involve only the immediate household. Anytime after that, the number of people involved grows steadily with the connections and age of the dead individual.

Death creates widows, men without wives, and households without fathers or mothers. Or death can take away only sons or daughters. I would not suggest that the Tamang calibrate their emotions to the economic implications of a relative's death, but the significance of a person's death must clearly vary with who that person is. In our own society, we talk about "untimely deaths." Similarly, a man or a woman's death in Timling can be an untimely interruption of the process of household-building. It can radically transform the prospects of a household from a successful to a failing domestic economy.

The expectation of life at birth in Timling is close to 40 years (Fricke 1984). This low figure is a reflection of the high levels of mortality at earlier years. For the model of the household developmental cycle that follows I will be describing an average case that assumes survival until marriage age, after which I use the average number of years lived from that time.

Timling's Household Developmental Cycle

By starting with some of the bare facts of individual life cycle events, we can begin to construct a model of the household developmental cycle. Figure 1 takes a husband and wife and diagrams average ages for important life cycle events. Thus, a man marries at age 23 and can expect to live until age 64 (assuming that he has already survived to have the last son at age 42). The household as a production unit defined by the authority of this man, then, lasts some 37 years. In that time its character will undergo dramatic changes both in its own composition and in its relationship with other households.

Although this figure provides us with a fair representation of the sequence of events that constitute the household cycle in Timling, we are still left in the dark about the nature of the changing labor force in the domestic unit and of the possible influence that the changing composition of the household will have on individual events. Figure 2 makes up for some of these shortcomings by joining individual and household life cycle events into a single picture. We thus have an idealized but very useful

portrait of the household developmental cycle along with its components. The following assumptions have been made:

1. Average ages for the whole population have been used to define the timing of events.

2. The exception here is the age at death for men and women which has been set to the lifetable average for men and women who have survived until the birth of the fifth child.

3. Women bear five children, slightly less than the actual figure, but more useful as a model—none of these children die.

4. Units of production and consumption are calculated as in Macfarlane's Gurung research (1976: 114, 165).

Figure 2 (see below) shows the importance of the time element to the household as a bounded economic unit containing most of its labor force and producing for itself. Household time is defined by the line furthest to the left while the biological aging of individuals is represented by separate lines, husband and wife to the left and individual children by the angled lines to the right. Recruitment to the domestic group is almost entirely through biological reproduction except at the marriage of male children when full female production units join the household for a time. The addition of spouses to the household is represented by a thickening of the lines for sons; as with the parental generation, they are assumed to cohabit with their husbands at age twenty. The household itself then becomes an entity largely affected by the biology of reproduction and aging, but with an important array of social facts affecting its composition, too. We can see this very clearly by noting that a household is not established immediately after marriage or even after the birth of a first child. Rather, a son takes his inheritance from his father only after his soon to separate unit has proven its viability by producing a child, at an average age of 27 for the husband. The household continues for 37 years until this person's death at about age 64, after which the continuing members of the old unit are reincorporated into a very different household.

The household portrayed here goes through two very distinct phases, the first a long period of nuclear family organization and the second a shorter 15 year period of stem family organization defined by a serial set of sons and wives living with the son's parents. The stem family system is organized very much like that of rural Thailand (Foster 1978); the last male child eventually remains with and inherits the household while older sons bring in wives and live in a sequential stem family arrangements with their parents. The structure of the household remains more or less the same in this phase although the individuals change. One divergence from the model should be noted here. Where the graph indicates that the oldest son and his wife leave to establish their own household before the marriage of the second son, it is usual for there to be more overlap between their length of stay. Older sons will stay at least until a younger son has married and brought in his own wife. Thus, the stem phase is more continuous than the diagram indicates.

In this idealized case, we can see a marked increase in the production potential of each household through time. Even when the diagram implies very abrupt transitions in labor potentials (as when a daughter leaves the household at marriage or when a son claims his inheritance) reality is not quite so severe. A daughter's husband is, for example, expected to contribute a certain amount of labor to his wife's natal home throughout the year and sons who have taken their angsa automatically own land adjacent to their father's and will continue to work co-operatively with their natal household. These abrupt lines, then, are more accurately viewed as transitions in the allocation of resources and production and not complete breaks in work. When sons and daughters leave the household, the web of relationships with other production units is extended into new reciprocal rights and responsibilities.

The sources of variation from this model process are numerous. Children die or marry at later or earlier ages. A daughter's divorce can bring her back to her natal household. Parents may have fewer children than the model suggests or the sex composition can be wildly different. The process can be radically changed by the death of a spouse before completion of the lifecourse outlined here. Nevertheless, the diagram represents an average condition for Timling.

To show how a small change, the death of one male child, can cause a major transformation in the household developmental cycle, I have drawn figure 3 with the second son dying before age 5. Superficially, at least, the differences are dramatic, affecting not only the developmental cycle of the primary household, but the timing of household events for the oldest son's new unit since he will be more likely to remain until the death of his father. Rather than forming a household at age 27, he

waits until he is 38. As a direct consequence, the life of his own household will be considerably shortened, the stem phase will take up a proportionately greater time, and, most important, his household will begin its existence with a great deal more autonomy (already containing a household labor force beyond the husband and wife) than it otherwise would. Similarly, the original household will be more likely to take on a three-generation character even though the rules of formation and the basic processes remain the same.

Table 3: Production and Consumption Units in the Life of a Tamang Household Using Two Assumptions of HH Development.

HH Age	Assumption 1: No Deaths		Assumption 2: 1 Child Dies	
	Production	Consumption	Production	Consumption
1	1.80	2.00	1.80	2.00
2	1.80	2.25	1.80	2.25
3	1.80	2.25	1.80	2.25
4	1.80	2.25	1.80	2.25
5	1.80	2.50	1.80	2.50
6	1.80	2.50	1.80	2.50
7	1.80	2.50	1.80	2.50
8	2.00	2.50	2.00	2.50
9	2.20	3.00	2.20	2.75
10	2.20	3.00	2.20	2.75
11	2.20	3.25	2.20	3.00
12	2.20	3.25	2.20	3.00
13	2.60	3.25	2.60	3.00
14	2.60	4.00	2.60	3.00
15	3.00	4.00	2.80	3.00
16	3.20	4.25	3.00	3.75
17	3.20	4.50	3.00	4.00
18	3.40	5.00	3.20	4.50
19	3.60	5.75	3.00	5.25
20	3.60	5.75	3.00	5.25
21	3.60	5.75	3.00	5.25
22	4.20	5.75	3.40	5.25
23	4.60	5.75	3.80	4.75
24	4.60	5.75	3.80	4.75
25	4.60	5.75	3.80	4.75
26	5.00	6.75	4.00	5.75
27	3.40	4.25	4.20	5.50
28	3.40	4.25	4.20	5.50
29	4.00	4.25	3.80	5.50
30	4.80	6.00	4.80	7.25
31	4.80	6.00	4.80	7.50
32	4.00	5.00	5.00	6.50
33	4.00	5.00	5.00	6.50
34	2.20	3.00	4.00	6.00
35	2.20	3.00	4.40	6.00
36	2.20	3.00	4.40	6.00
37	2.20	3.00	4.40	6.00
Average	3.04	4.05	3.17	4.34
SD	1.06	1.40	1.07	1.63

Labor units that have reached or are close to their full adult potential are indicted by blacked-in lines on the diagram. Husband and wife labor is always for the household and the only change through the life of the household is the husband's declining capability. Children, on the other hand, may contribute to the domestic unit for a limited time subject to the timing of their removal to other households. The diagram displays the process by which the household labor potential increases and diversifies through time. Not only does subsistence work within the village economy become easier as the household ages but a variety of tasks can be undertaken simultaneously with the increase in productive individuals. The importance of this last point should not be underrated for the viability of domestic units in Timling. As historical processes of changing landholdings and greater dependence on the outside wage-labor economy accelerate, households will find it increasingly necessary to strategically retain some of their members within the village while sending some out to earn cash. One implication of this is that maturing households will find their development paralleled by a maturing household economy that will reach its point of greatest diversity shortly before fission. This issue is taken up in more detail in Fricke (1984). Here, it should be mentioned that the Tamang try throughout the life of their households to increase landholdings. This assures three things: an increase in the productive potential of the household as the number of consumers increases, an amount of land that permits a son's new household some measure of viability when he claims his angsa, and the retention of a viable amount of land for the original household when the fissioning begins. Although different individual interests are served, the rationality of acquiring new land holds true.
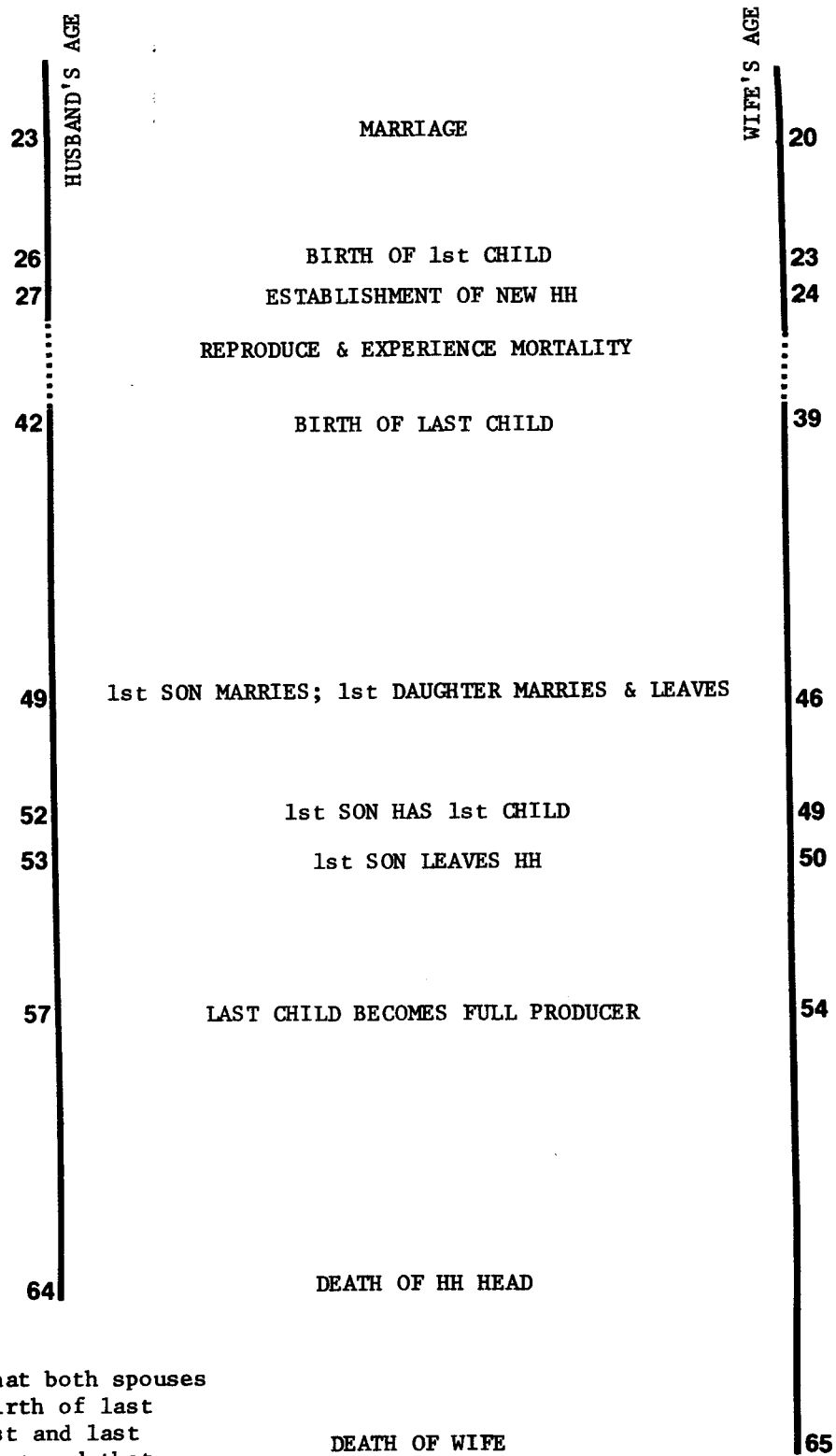
Table 3 gives the changing composition of productive and consumption units throughout the life of the household. Based on weights for each age used by Macfarlane, it shows how both units increase and decline in the developmental cycle and how deaths can affect the pattern of these changes. An important point not evident from the diagrams is that the average number of production and consumption units remains very similar throughout the life of the household in spite of differing composition. Variation in these numbers throughout the years also remains remarkably similar; the slightly higher standard deviation in the number of consumption units for assumption 2 is an expected consequence of the greater number of individuals and rapid changes in individual consumption during childhood and early adolescence.

Summary and Conclusions

This descriptive essay has examined the range of social, cultural, and demographic components that determine the household developmental cycle in Timling. It has shown that the timing of household events are intimately connected to the demographic regime of the village while culturally prescribed norms of marriage and inheritance further constrain the shape of the household at any point in its development. The economic implications of the developmental cycle are only hinted at here, but a few major features suggest themselves. First, the process of household development is paralleled by the development of economic potential within the household unit. From a small nuclear unit with tenuous economic viability in isolation, the household grows into a viable collection of productive

individuals with a large potential for diversified pursuits. The increase in flexibility within the household has a corollary in the changing flow of obligations which has not been developed in this essay. Early on, when the household is composed of the young nuclear unit, the flow of obligations extends outward to other units composed of ascending generations of kin. As the household matures, it becomes in its own turn the center of a net of obligations in which other households owe labor and resources to its members. Finally, the two models of household development I have examined show how the rules of household formation and dissolution can recoup the loss of potential sources of labor. Table 3 demonstrates that the average number of production and consumption units throughout the life of the household will remain virtually unchanged in spite of the death of a child.

My other purpose in writing this essay has been to bring the literature on household and family to the attention of Himalayan anthropologists and to suggest that this line of analysis has great potential. It can not only open new avenues of exploring the relationship between ecology and dynamic human systems, but offers a real contribution to the study of the family. The similarity of Gurung and Tamang indices examined here suggests that this type of system may be widespread in the Himalaya and that there is a third system other than idealized models of "European" versus "Asian" household formation systems in need of explication.

HUSBAND'S AGE | | WIFE'S AGE

| 23 | MARRIAGE | 20 |

| 26 | BIRTH OF 1st CHILD | 23 |
| 27 | ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW HH | 24 |

REPRODUCE & EXPERIENCE MORTALITY

| 42 | BIRTH OF LAST CHILD | 39 |

| 49 | 1st SON MARRIES; 1st DAUGHTER MARRIES & LEAVES | 46 |

| 52 | 1st SON HAS 1st CHILD | 49 |
| 53 | 1st SON LEAVES HH | 50 |

| 57 | LAST CHILD BECOMES FULL PRODUCER | 54 |

| 64 | DEATH OF HH HEAD | |

Assumptions: that both spouses survive until birth of last child; that first and last children are sons; and that events occur at average ages for for Timling village population

DEATH OF WIFE | 65 |

Figure 1: LIFE CYCLE EVENTS

First birth ♂
Second birth ♀   3
Third birth ♂   4   7
Fourth birth ♀   5   9   12
Fifth birth ♂   4   9   13   16

23

20

23

NUCLEAR PHASE

STEM PHASE

HOUSEHOLD TIME LINE

HUSBAND'S AGE

WIFE'S AGE

CHILDREN'S AGES

◼ = adult or near-adult productive power controlled by household

Assumptions: that no children die and events occur at the average ages found in Timling's population
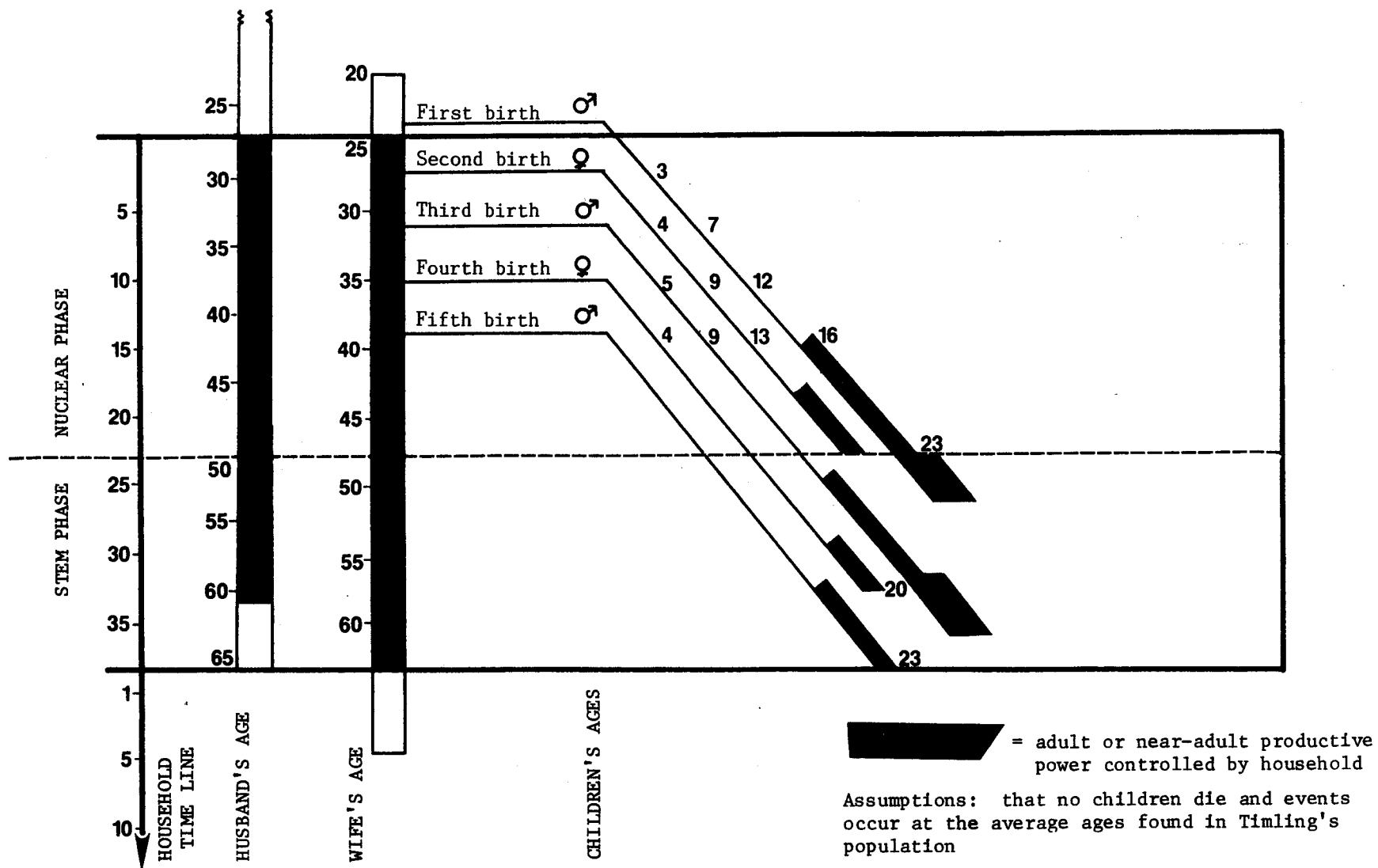
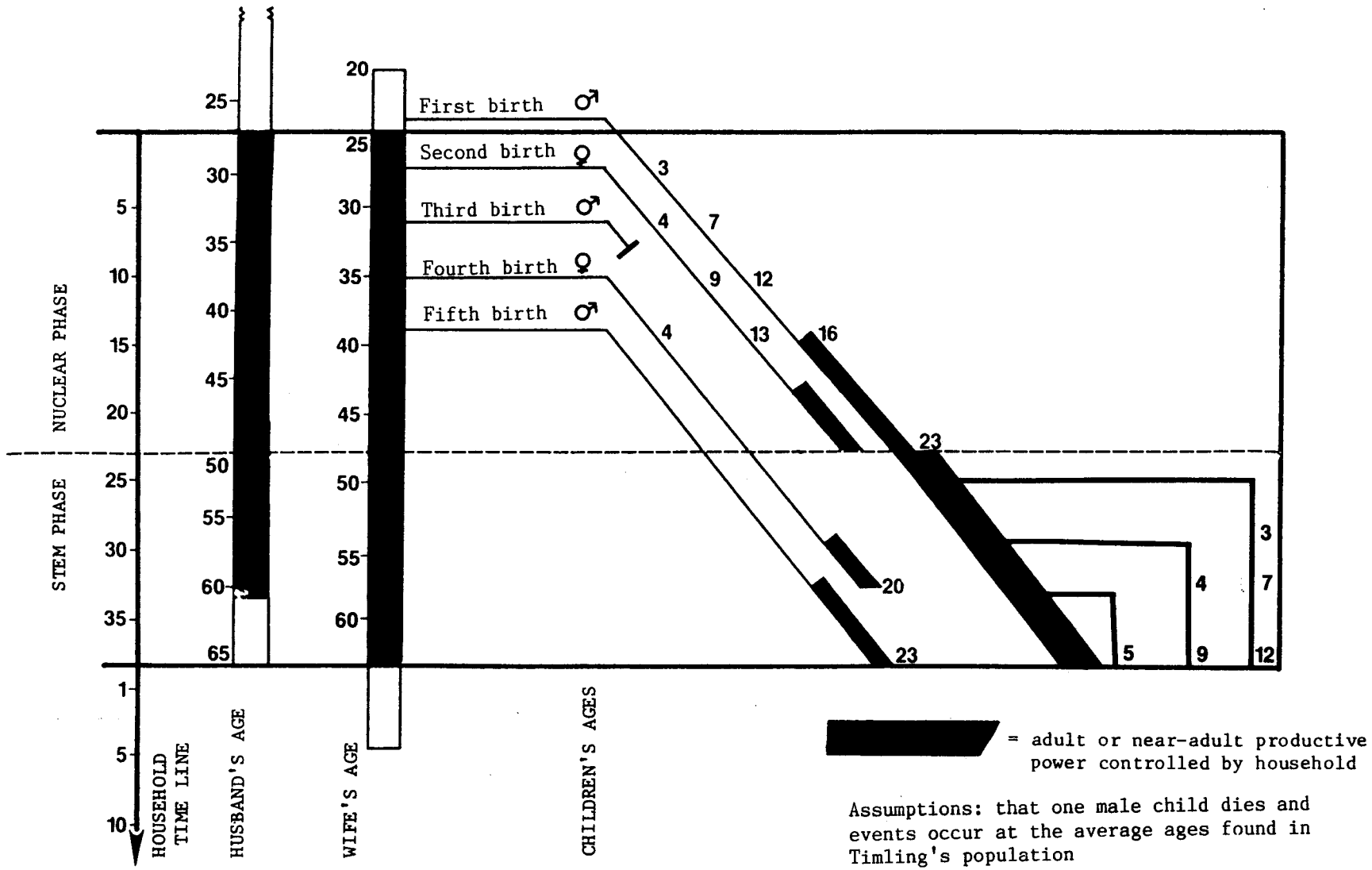**Figure 2: TAMANG HOUSEHOLD GROWTH**
(no deaths)

Figure 3   TAMANG HOUSEHOLD GROWTH
(one death)

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