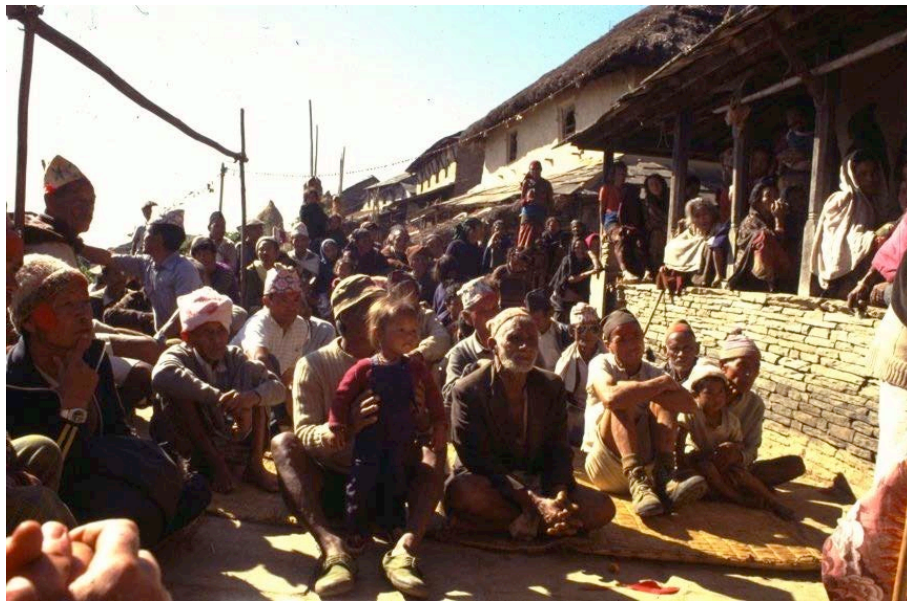


THE SOCIAL WORLD OF THE GURUNGS

Notes to accompany over eighty films made
between 1968 & 2014 in central Nepal.

Version 1:2



Sarah Harrison and Alan Macfarlane

This book, and the films to which they refer, are
dedicated with deep appreciation to...

Our Gurung family and friends

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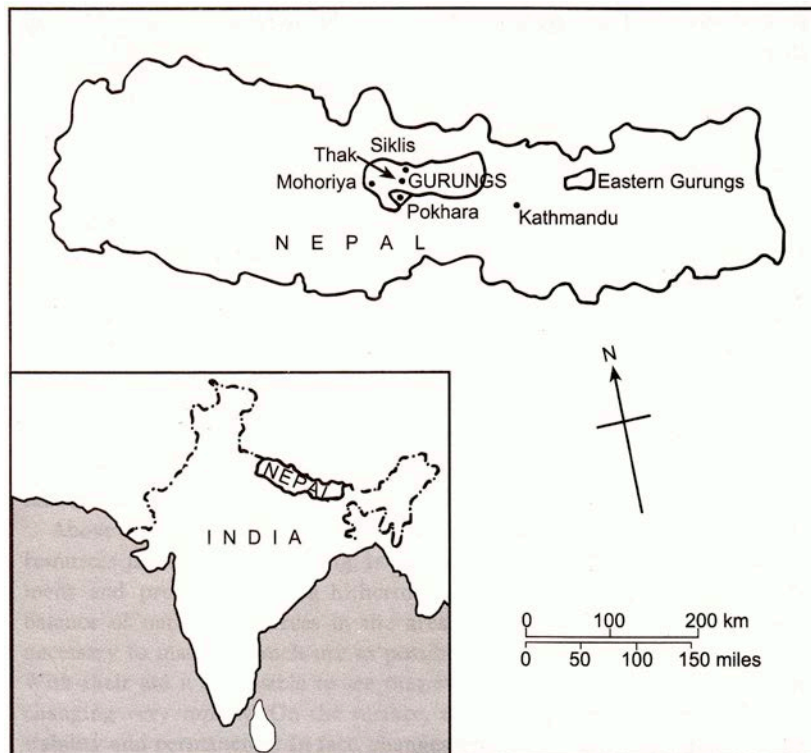
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Preface to the Series on 'Changing Gurung Worlds'

The Gurungs (who call themselves in their own language 'Tamu') are an ethnic group of about six hundred and fifty thousand people (inside Nepal) who traditionally lived at an altitude of between four and seven thousand feet in central Nepal. They are well known as one of the 'martial tribes' who are recruited into the Gurkha regiments of the British and Indian armies. The location of the group in the twentieth century is shown on the map below, though now there are many Gurungs in other parts of the world.



Alan first arrived in the village of Thak to do his Ph.D. in anthropology in December 1968. At that time it took about five or six hours to walk from the small town of Pokhara in central Nepal to reach the five thousand foot high village on the slopes of the Annapurna Mountains. Alan returned to Thak in December for

another visit. From then until 2002, Alan and Sarah visited the village almost every year for between three weeks and three months. After the interval of the Maoist insurgency (2003-6), they have been back another four times. In all, Alan has spent about three years of his life in Nepal, and Sarah over two years, principally in the village.

During these twenty visits we gathered as much data as we could about what was happening in this small village as it moved from a remote shamanic world into the present, where there is a road, electricity, mobile phones, and many of the Gurungs have left the village.

One question in our minds has always been that of the best way in which to make the very extensive and unique materials we have gathered usefully available to the Gurungs themselves as well as to others.

We wanted to go beyond the often rather dry anthropological accounts which only reach a small professional audience and exclude most Gurungs. We also hoped to convey something of the multi-level experience which living in such a place affords - the sounds, movements, colours, emotions and encounters. This is very difficult to convey with words alone, though film and photographs by themselves also have their limitations.

We also dreamt of allowing the “reader” the excitement of feeling that they were actually among the Gurungs, a virtual recreation which gave a sense that it was possible to explore that distant world at first hand. Most anthropological and even traveller’s accounts are mediated very strongly through the eyes and brain of the observer. We wanted to make the materials directly available.

Of course, all the materials presented in this series have been filtered. There is conscious editing to protect privacy, and there is unconscious filtering because of our personal biases.

Yet the use of extensive films and photographs alongside descriptive texts will hopefully give a deeper sense of a world which very few can have the experience of encountering.

This goal explains the deliberately rough form of the films. They are largely unedited and as a consequence it is hoped that viewers will feel that they are actually present during the events recorded. This also explains why we have erred on the side of including too much, rather than too little, footage. This is a portrait

which cannot be repeated now. The world we observed has gone. Few have had the opportunity to make the kind of record which is placed in these volumes.

What we are attempting to do would have been impossible to envisage before about 2010. Recent advances in publishing, the Internet and online storage media, means that it is possible to attempt a new form of publication which could be called a 'Multimedia Book. This comprises texts, films, audio and photographs and can be available in various different formats immediately across the world, to be read on new platforms by people who would have no access to a normal book.

The question is then how the many thousands of texts and images we have collected should best be made available. All divisions into themes are arbitrary, and this is especially the case when dealing with a holistic, undivided, world such as that of the Gurungs, where social, economic, religious and political are all deeply connected. Nevertheless, we have decided as a start to attempt a series.

The following are either completed, or in the late stages of preparation:

The Physical World of the Gurungs
The Social World of the Gurungs
The Spiritual World of the Gurungs
Dilmaya's world; the life and death of a Gurung woman
Fieldwork with the Gurungs

Further projected volumes are:
Social change among the Gurungs; analytic and descriptive essays
Encounter with the Gurungs; an anthropological memoir

These books extend the more conventional coverage of Gurung life in three books already published:

Alan Macfarlane, *Resources and Population; A Study of the Gurungs of Nepal* (Cambridge University Press, 1976; reprinted with a new preface in a second edition By Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu in 2003), xviii + 364 pp

Alan Macfarlane and Indrabahadur Gurung, *Gurungs of Nepal; A Guide to the Gurungs* (Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1992), 74 pp

Bernard Pignède, *The Gurungs* (in French by Mouton & Co, Paris, 1966; translated by Alan Macfarlane and Sarah Harrison, with new notes and appendices, published by Ratna Pustak Bhandar, Kathmandu, 1993), xlv + 523 pp

THE VILLAGE

Introduction to Thak and the Gurungs

A Gurung village will present the visitor with a haphazard collection of buildings separated by narrow, twisting, dung-filled lanes, but there are certain landmarks to look out for. At strategic points are the water taps or springs where women gather to fill their water pots, wash clothes, and wash their children and themselves. These are centres of gossip and laughter and are usually placed on the main pathways.

Most villages will also have a shop selling a limited range of goods - sweets, batteries for torches and radios, matches and cigarettes. In large villages the stock will generally include sandals, cloth, sugar, kerosene, rice, oil, noodles and even soft drinks for tourists. One can often get a cup of tea there, and sometimes a cooked meal and a bed for the night. On the outskirts of the village there are often one or two little temples to the local gods, with relics of sacrifices or flowers in front of them. The entrance to the village is often indicated by a string of flowers across the path.

Gurung houses were originally built with a wood and lathe framework, covered with mud and dung and thatched with grass. More recently, stone and slate houses have replaced many of the earlier type.

When one enters a house, the smoke, darkness and low ceiling, make it difficult to see anything at all for some time. Having taken off one's shoes at the door to prevent breaking up the smooth, earthen floor, one will be asked to sit either on a bed in the anteroom, or by the fire on a mat or stool. As one's eyes get accustomed to the gloom one is likely to see numerous pots and dishes on shelves and the vague pattern of the structure of the house.

Nearly always the Gurungs reverse the western habit by sleeping downstairs. The room above is used for storing grain, and baskets, mats and small tools when not in use.

The cooking area is the focal point of the house. A tripod sits in a square hole sunk into the floor and a variety of pans and dishes are used to cook over a wood fire. Above the fire is a large wooden rack suspended from the ceiling which is used to hang meat and

fish for smoking, to dry small amounts of grain, and to store some implements and rain shields. Around the walls are shelves with brass dishes, bowls and jugs, which are used on special occasions and are an indication of the family's wealth or poverty. Larger storage pots and baskets for grain, water, oil or millet 'whisky' stand on the floor. Other tools are wedged between the ceiling beams.

People tend to sit on the ground, cross-legged, the women having perfected the art of decently tucking their long skirts between their legs when sitting or crouching on their haunches. When sitting in this way it is less likely that someone will walk over one's legs. To walk over someone, or even to touch them with one's foot, is the height of bad manners. People eat with their hands, washing them before and afterwards. It is good manners to ask permission of the oldest member of the family before eating or drinking. Guests eat first, the family next, and the cook, usually the senior woman in the house, after the rest have finished.

People sleep wherever they can - sometimes on hard wooden beds, sometimes on the floor on mats, wrapped up in rugs or cotton coverlets. There is little separation of men, women and children, though sometimes a young married couple will be given a separate temporary 'bedroom' made with bamboo partitions on the veranda.

Annapurna mountains beyond Thak



The village in the middle near the top



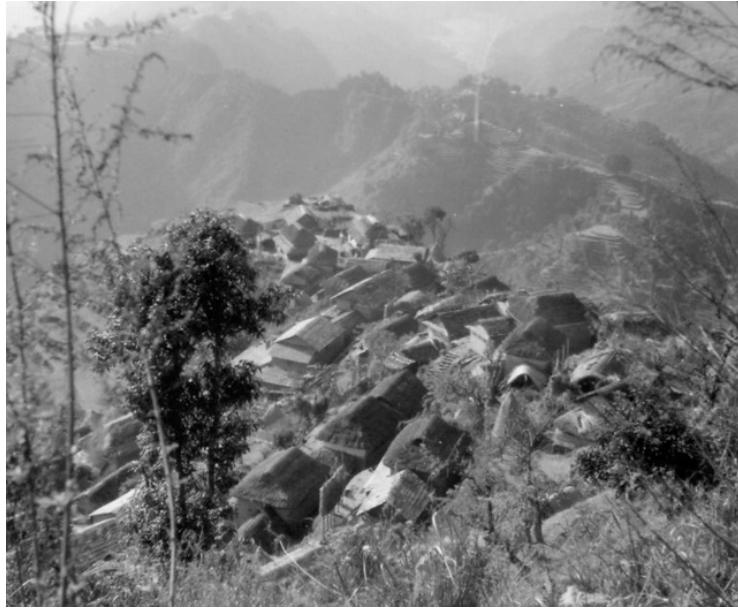
The cliffs below the village, which is at the top left



Looking down from the village



The Village from above



Village yards and streets

Yard with mountains beyond



Main path through village



Some sense of the location and nature of the village can be seen in a film of the walk to Thak in 1993.



A short rough film made from clips taken between 1990 and 2001 may help to capture a little of the surroundings of this mountain village.



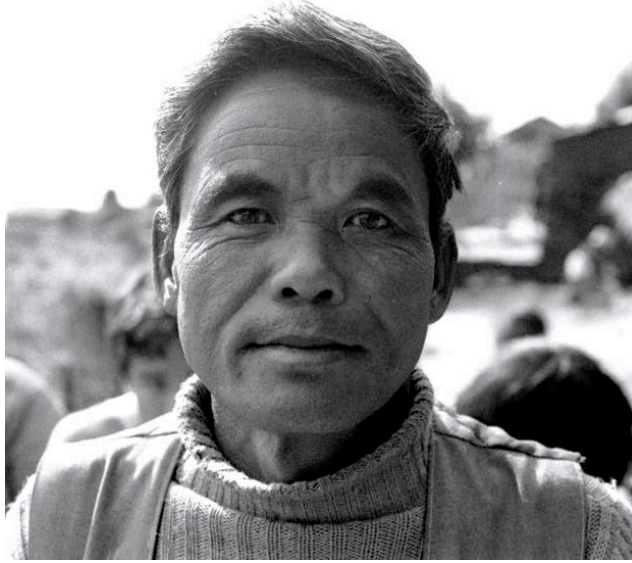
A few features of the village

It is worth introducing a few background features of Thak before dealing with particular aspects of the social structure through films. In the past, the mongoloid societies of Tibet and China from which the Gurungs came had no caste system and within themselves the Gurungs do not practice caste rules. Yet for several centuries, at least, the Gurungs and other hill peoples have been mixing with the caste cultures of Aryan India and they have been influenced by them in various ways. They have found themselves slotted into the caste system by the Brahmins and Chetris, as a clean caste, yet inferior to the Brahmins.

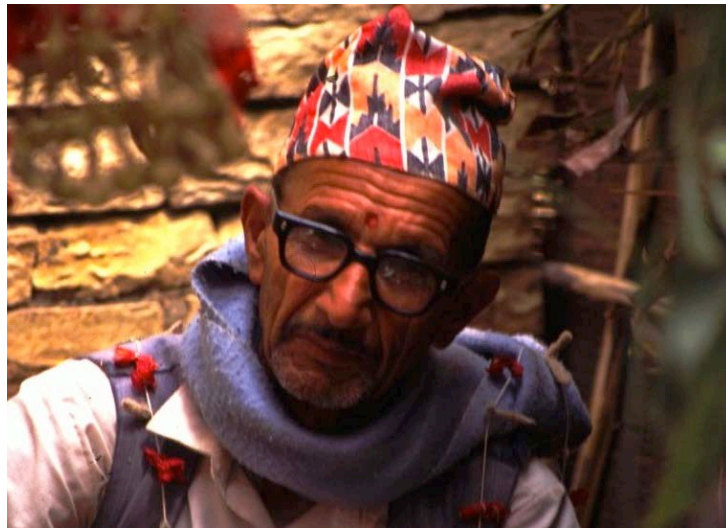
In turn the Gurungs regard the service groups who live with them as effectively dalits. Gurungs have traditionally not worked with iron, leather or made up cloth. Thus each village has for centuries had small settlements of Blacksmiths, Leather-workers and Tailors who worked for the Gurungs.

When I first went to the village it was mainly inhabited by Gurungs, with just one or two Brahmin families, a Magar and some service castes - Blacksmiths, Tailors, Leather-workers - who lived on the outskirts of the village. Over the period from about 1990, and particularly after 2000, most of the Gurung families have left the village for Pokhara or more distant locations, so it is currently largely inhabited by non-Gurungs. So my account is an historic one, largely relevant to the second half of the twentieth century. Film of the Blacksmiths and Tailors at work can be seen in the volume on 'The Physical World of the Gurungs'.

A Gurung



A Brahmin



A Blacksmith



Another background feature which can be examined in many of the films is the relation between men and women. In many traditional peasant societies women have a low status and their world is carefully demarcated from that of men. What will strike the visitor to this and other highland Tibeto-Burman areas is the confidence and openness of the women. Although they may eat after men, though they do not act as priests, or engage very actively in public life, or plough, they otherwise do most of the things that men can do and are considered to be their equals. Women can own property in their own right, and as widows or only daughters are sometimes the richest people in a village. They run shops and businesses; in their husband's absence they often run the farm, hire labour, sell crops and arrange everything to do with planting and harvesting.

Even a short acquaintance with a Gurung village will reveal that, if anything, the women work even harder than the men. While men relax by talking or gambling, women seldom rest. It is assumed that they will marry, give birth to their babies without anaesthetics or even a midwife, and breast-feed their children until a new baby is born, without stopping any of their other work. They are immensely tough, resilient and cheerful. They mix with young

and old men without any noticeable signs of deference. They join with gusto in the sometimes bawdy joking and singing, and they often lead the family rituals. Their blessing is necessary for their brothers at the festival of Tihar, and they play a crucial role in the memorial ceremonies to the dead. A detailed account of what it is like to be a Gurung woman is contained in the companion volume 'Dilmaya's World'.

*

It is important to understand something of the Gurung family since it provides the basis for the whole of their social and economic system within the village. What police, civil servants, employers, magistrates, psychiatrists, nurses and teachers provide in the West, is largely provided within the family. The Gurung temperament, un-aggressive and humorous and their ability to work collectively without quarrelling, grows out of the affectionate and tolerant bringing up of infants and young children. The elderly are treated with respect and, in the villages, there are few problems with adolescents.

The basic structure is provided by a number of clans. There is much contention and argument over this matter, but some older anthropologists have suggested that there were two main groups of clans. One is called the four or three jat (*carjat* or *songhi*) and consists of clans which vary a little in their names over different Gurung areas. The other group is called the 'sixteen-jat' or 'nine-jat' (*sorajat* or *kuhgi*). Within this there are more than thirty named clans. Clan membership is passed through the male line. Thus sons and daughters belong to their father's clan and group.

The importance and width of the clans will be illustrated below in a series of films of clan picnics held over the years by just one of the Thak-based lineage groups.

*

There are a number of other principles, as well as blood and marriage, upon which Gurung society is based. One of these is physical proximity or neighbourhood. The central village of Thak is divided for administrative purposes into two official wards, but it is also conceptually divided into a number of smaller units known as *tol* (Nep. ward) or *naasa* (Gg. a small town or hamlet). These 'maximal neighbourhoods' divide the central part of Thak into eight named sections; within each section there are subdivisions of

'minimal neighbourhoods', groups of neighbours (*ngie-mae* or *chema-gi*) who are recognized as having particularly strong bonds with each other. It is with such 'close neighbours' that Gurungs mainly gossip, do simple jobs and rituals, and constantly interacted.

*

The final thing to stress is that this is not a closed village world. The Gurungs have always been open to strong influences from around them and have migrated over the centuries through many countries, from northern China, down through Tibetan type of societies into Nepal. They are thus an amalgam of traditions and the men have for centuries been engaged in earning a living out of the village.

From the nineteenth century this was particularly emphasized by the recruitment of many Gurungs into the British, and later the Indian, army as Gurkha soldiers. Many thousands of Gurungs, as well as Magars, Limbus, Rais and other mountain people have experienced the wider world. This tendency has been rapidly increased in recent years with labour migration first mainly to India, Malaya and then to the Gulf States and elsewhere.

The rapid growth of Pokhara and Kathmandu, the recent development of electricity, mobile phones, roads, all of this has suddenly turned the village into something different. The second part of this book will examine some of this expansion of village society into the cities and foreign lands. Among the interviews at the end are also a series of interviews with Lt. Colonel John Cross who has worked with Gurungs for much of his life and who has retired to Pokhara. He gives something of the wider background.

THE YOUNG AND THE OLD

The closeness of the family system is emphasised by the way in which children are brought up. Children are very greatly valued and from birth are cherished by their parents. If a baby cries a mother will almost immediately try to pacify it at the breast, and small children are constantly watched in case they fall over or hurt themselves. Every growing gesture is commented on with pleasure and one hardly ever sees an adult strike a child in anger, though they occasionally shout at them. The devotion of older brothers and sisters is very evident and they will spend hours carrying the younger children on their backs or playing with them. There is little anxiety about the child urinating or defecating since few wear nappies and the floors can easily be cleaned.

After birth, a baby is protected against evil by having magical threads tied round its neck, wrists and ankles. It is fed on demand, washed and oiled daily, and spends much of its time sleeping in a basket cradle hanging on the veranda. At other times it is carried on the back of its mother, father or siblings. The first hair cutting for boys is delayed until the village priest gives an auspicious day for it so one sometimes sees little boys of five or six wearing their hair in plaits.

Up to the age of five children have no tasks and just play with each other. After that they are expected to take care of the baby or younger children while their parent's work, and to do small chores like fetching water. As they grow older and stronger, more work is expected of them, so that by the age of fourteen or fifteen they will be doing all the tasks an adult does, except ploughing. There are no particular rituals of ageing except the boy's hair-cutting ceremony and the older custom, that between the age of seven and nine girls were clothed in adult dress.

In general, children up to the age of five are cosseted but older children are treated like young adults. They obviously respect their elders, but are in no way deferential. This affectionate upbringing leads to a very closely bonded family. Sons are close to their mothers and respect their fathers throughout their lives. They accept parental rulings on matters such as marriage and the choice of a career which would not be tolerated in the West. They assume

it is their duty to protect and provide for their parents in old age,
just as they have been supported and protected in childhood.

Young



Old



THE YOUNG

Children playing - 1990



Children playing - 1991



Children imitating dances - 1992



Children playing 1992



Children gambling - 1994



Children observed 1993



Babies observed - 1994



Children observed - 1998



Children painting and drawing - 2010



THE OLD

Although infant and child mortality rates were traditionally high, an individual who survives to the age of ten is quite likely to live into his seventies or eighties. Thus a visitor to a Gurung village will see many old men and women. Two features of their life are worth mentioning. Firstly, they never lose their economic, social or ritual functions. Until death the old can be useful. They spin and weave, make baskets and mats, beat millet, pod beans, watch the babies and generally enable the young to get on with the heavier tasks. They are not seen as a drain on the wealth of a family. Furthermore, as they grow older, their spiritual position improves. They intercede with the spirits, go on pilgrimages, lead family rituals and act as the family priest.

In western societies, parents lavish a good deal of care, affection and money on their children, who then leave home and do the same for their own children. Little is expected in return except minimal respect, occasional visits and perhaps a little help in old age. In Gurung society children give as much as they receive; the parents can expect as of right that their children will respect them, honour them when they are old, and support them in every possible way. This is the most sacred duty. In the village, the idea of 'old peoples' homes' could not be further away from Gurung philosophy.

Children with grandparents



The old and the young



FORMAL EDUCATION

There has been a significant change in the pattern of childhood during the last forty years with the introduction of compulsory schooling. Every village now has access to a school and education is compulsory to fifth grade. Most children go to school. Although there is often a shortage of equipment - paper, pens, maps and books - children are introduced to other languages (Nepali and English), mathematics and science, as well as more practical things like health education and diet. Furthermore, education gives them a vision of a world outside the village and the possibility of escape from a life of grinding toil. Their parents, too, often place an extremely high value on education.

For the many who can't aspire to town life, a child's role in the family still requires much physical labour. A typical day might start with a climb to the forest to fetch wood or fodder followed by a meal. Then school from ten to four o'clock and possibly a long walk to reach it. On returning from school, there will be further work in the fields or around the house. At holidays and weekends they will work alongside their elders.

All this changes when children leave for schools in towns. Even if their parents stay in the village, their roots wither fast. The bazaars, tea-shops, cinemas, cars and buses enlarge their world and although they may return from time to time to the village, they rarely take any part in the work of the farm. The town schoolboy is often easy to distinguish from the village boy by his smart clothes and shoes. He is being trained to join an urban bureaucratic way of life.

Again, the best way to examine school life is through film. When I first went to Thak in 1969 there was only one school (teaching years 1-5) in the village area, and it was an hour down a very steep mountain side. Then in the 1980's a primary school was built above the village. This is the school which features in most of the films. More recently a secondary school has been built, again one hour down from the village.

So most of the film shows the very rough conditions in one primary school in the 1990's. The schools in Pokhara, represented by the last film, are a world away from what is shown in the earlier films, and even in the villages, the standard of schooling is now

improving quite rapidly and the scenes in these films are becoming a thing of the past.

THAK PRIMARY SCHOOL

1990



1992



1993



1998

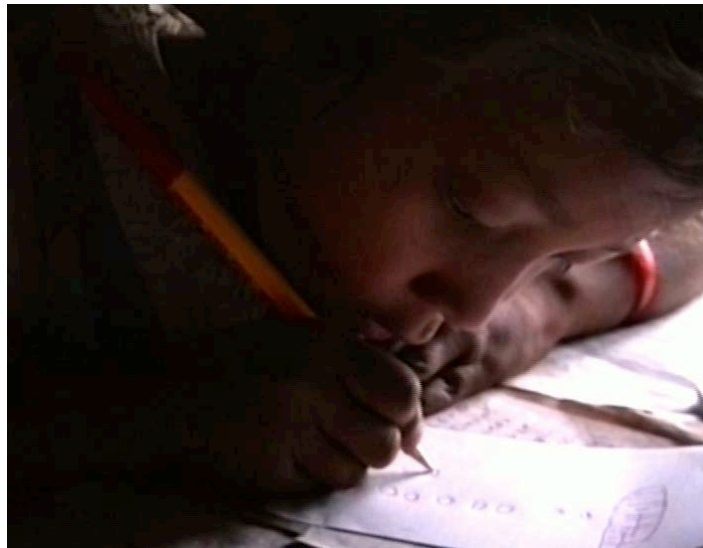


PWELU SCHOOL

(A small primary school with one teacher on the outskirts of the village)



Glimpses of the education of one girl in Thak



A POKHARA SCHOOL IN 2000



Visit to Hill Top School - 17.12.2000

From our diary:

We went from there to Hill Top School where Manu was recently a student and head girl. We were shown the science lab - 2 microscopes, 1 pair of scales and a few glass flasks and a burner - very little indeed. We saw a science lesson in progress with class 6, on James Watt and temperature. All chalk and talk and reliance on the appropriate text book for this stage in school. We saw the computer room. There were about 9 - 10 computers, all of different vintages. They have a small library and adjacent reading room and in all things are trying to provide a good education within the limitations of resources.

FEASTS, FESTIVALS AND SPORTS

Although much of life in the village has been one of grinding work and shortages of much of what people in more affluent societies would consider to be essentials such as running water, electricity, a good diet, warm clothing, nevertheless ordinary life is sometimes punctuated by special occasions. It is on these occasions, when people eat, dance or pray together that we can see society at work. Here are a few of those which we witnessed and filmed.

FEASTS

A communal feast in 1992



Village feast - 1994



Village feast 1999



Extended family having a feast together - 1999



Celebrations at Thak school 2006



VILLAGE SPORTS

New year's day sports at Siklis in 1990



Volleyball 1998



Village swing - 1994



Village swings and volleyball 1999



Village sacrifice and swings - 1999



Village swing - 1994



MUSIC - DANCING, SINGING AND THE TAILOR'S BAND

As shepherds, the Gurungs danced their way across the Himalayas, and they still love to dance and sing. There are still occasionally evenings when one hears the sound of a double-ended drum and a group of girls and boys singing. Traditionally the songs were in the Gurung language. Today, they tend to sing Nepali 'pop' songs. They are often extremely catchy, and boys and girls dance together or singly, performing for the rest of the group. Words alone cannot convey the animation and beauty of the dances, secular and sacred, in Gurung villages. Here are a few examples.

Dancing and singing at a funeral - 1991



Singing in a Gurung house - 1991

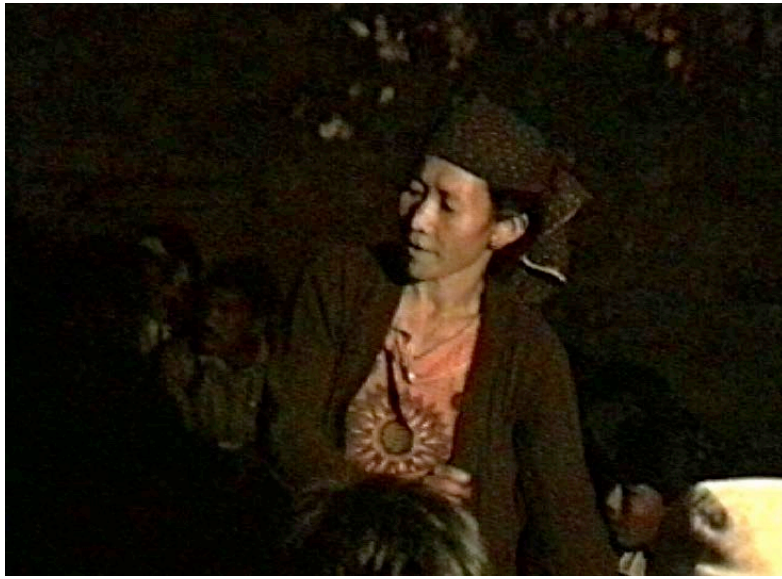


Ghatto dance in Thak in 1992

(This is from a performance from the ritual dance, described more fully in the volume on "The Spiritual Life of the Gurungs")



Village dance - 1994



Non-Gurungs dancing - 1998



Dancing and sheep feast - 1999



Visit to Pwelu school - dancing - 2006



TAILOR'S BAND

The village band is made up of Tailor's

Musicians - 1992



1993



2006



SOCIETY AND RITUAL

Gurung social structure is made visible and reinforced by the numerous rituals which occur in a Gurung village. Perhaps most explicitly this can be seen in the two main sets of rituals at marriage and death. These are dealt with more fully in the book on 'The Spiritual Life of the Gurungs'.

Here I will include just a few examples of films which illustrate society manifested through rituals.

A Gurung Wedding on 2.4.1991



There is often a feast for family and neighbours around the time of the death. This is often held on the morning of the third day after death and is called the *sonro bhaw saba* (third day funeral feast).

Funeral feast (bhaw saba) – 1991



The burial or cremation is another occasion for relatives, friends and neighbours to show their feelings of respect for the deceased and the close family.

Cremation October 12 October 1999



There are numerous family rituals which are also occasions to re-affirm social relations and to express closeness. Two examples are given here, while a number of others can be seen in the volume on 'Spiritual Life of the Gurungs'.

Ritual for family ancestors or Phailu 8th May 1992



The most important family rituals occur during the Dashain and Tihar celebrations. One of these is when brothers and sister's honour each other at 'Brother Tika' in Tihar.

Bhai Tika 5 November 1994



Opening of a shrine in 1997



SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

Communal Work Parties



Until the 1990's, when this film was taken, a good deal of the hard work, whether in the fields, or carrying from the forest or making of new houses, was done communally. Groups of people were assembled either on the basis of payment, or on an exchange basis.

Transplanting rice



Carrying wood bundles - 1991



Gathering and piling rice (Kongon) - 1994



SOCIETY AND POWER

At the village level, power relations are pervasive, but incorporated into family, economic and ritual relations. Here are just three small instances of explicitly political occasions which I filmed.

A group of people from outside Thak electioneering through the village - 1992



Off to vote in the elections in 1992



School governor's meeting - 1990



This meeting is one of the few occasions where it is possible to see local politics in action is at the meeting of the school governors, as at this meeting.

Similar meetings occurred periodically when the village was run by a local government or Panchayat system, as in the 1990's. These meetings were dominated by men, though some women would occasionally attend and speak.



**THE VIRTUAL VILLAGE
IN A WIDER WORLD**

CHANGING POKHARA

Pokhara was a remote and backward small town when I arrived by plane there in December 1969, as the first film below shows. There were only two or three hotels, half a dozen cars (which had been carried there in parts as there was no motorable road) and no electricity. The population was mainly non-Gurung and numbered a few tens of thousands. The shops contained almost nothing beyond simple foodstuffs and clothing.

The series of films below shows the extraordinary development that has occurred in the last forty years, gathering momentum over time and turning Pokhara into a bustling city with hundreds of thousands of inhabitants. There are thousands of cars and motorbikes, many schools, numerous hospitals and one can buy almost anything. There is even talk now of an international airport to be located nearby.

When I first arrived there were very few Gurungs from Thak in Pokhara. Now the majority of those who once lived in Thak are there. They have their village organizations, their rituals and their clan ties. A recently built motorable road to Thak as well as mobile phones, have converted Thak into a virtual suburb of Pokhara. And Pokhara itself, with internet and roads, is, at its heart, and certainly in its house prices and gleaming new amenities, not much different from many burgeoning cities across Asia. This amazing transformation has been recorded in these films, as have the changes we shall examine in family and individual lives.

1969



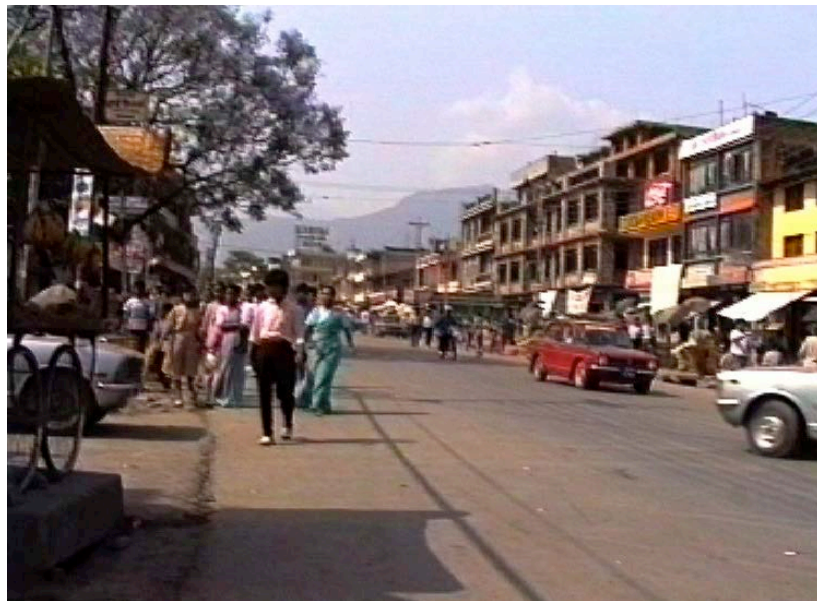
1987



1990



1992



1999



2001



2006



2008



2010



2014



GURUNG LIFE IN POKHARA

Visit to the Thak Village Association [samaj] in 1997



Night dancing in Pokhara in 2001



Visit to the Thak Samaj in 2006



Krishna Charitra dance in Pokhara on 10 October 2010



At the Thak village 'samaj' or clubhouse in Pokhara - 2014



Visit to house warming party, December 1995



Visit to new house - 1998



Gurung wedding party in Pokhara in 1997



Gurung wedding celebration in 2001



RITUAL LIFE

A shamanic ritual done in Pokhara in 1992



Ancestor ritual in Pokhara in 2010



Surje Memorial Service (Pae) in 2014

Part 1



Part 2



A GURUNG FAMILY IN POKHARA

When I first arrived in Thak at the end of 1968 I was adopted into the family of Lt. Bhuwansing Gurung. When his older son died tragically young, in some way I replaced him. So Sarah and I have become very close to the family and spent much time with his family on our visits to Nepal.

In between my first visit and my return in 1986 he and his wife had moved down to Pokhara. I filmed in his home and at the lineage picnics which he arranged annually to coincide with our visits.

These films, like those of Pokhara, provide a great deal of information on a changing world, this time within the context of a particular family, that of a middling level Gurung. Much of what I know about the Gurungs derives from the support which they have given to us.

When we first met the family in 1969





When we the family again in 1986





Bhuwansing in 1987



The family in 1990



FILMS OF THE FAMILY

1988



1990



1995



1998



1999



2006



2010



Clan picnics - the Kebje clan in Pokhara

As adopted members of the Kebje clan, we were fortunate to attend a number of annual clan picnics, originally inspired by the energy and organizational ability of my adopted 'father' Lt. Bhuwansing Gurung. These were often timed to coincide with our visits. I have film of six, covering a period of 24 years. I have edited these only slightly since they will become historical documents, showing the changing costumes, ethnic markers, wealth and social relations of one group of the Pokhara Gurungs.

Kebje family picnic at Begnas Tal 1990



Picnic at a river on the outskirts of Pokhara - 1992



Picnic at a river on the outskirts of Pokhara - 1994



Picnic at a temple on a hill above Pokhara - 1997



Picnic at a temple on a hill above Pokhara - 2000



GURUNG CULTURAL IDENTITY

As the Gurungs moved down from the hills and into the cities of Nepal or abroad, their sense of losing aspects of their customs and traditions became stronger. In particular, a number of them were worried that the rituals and myths which they had carried through their long migrations and were preserved by their traditional priests would be lost. As a frequent visitor to the village, and working with one of the most knowledgeable and interested of older Gurungs, Lt. Indrabahadur Gurung, with whom I had published a short summary of Gurung life in 1990 ('Guide to the Gurungs') I was naturally interested in this phenomenon. Like my Gurung friends I felt strongly that as much as possible of the rich religious traditions of the Gurungs should be documented and preserved. The explicit moment when the setting up of a Gurung cultural centre in Pokhara was planned was at a meeting of many of the Poju and Klehbri priests on 5th May 1992.

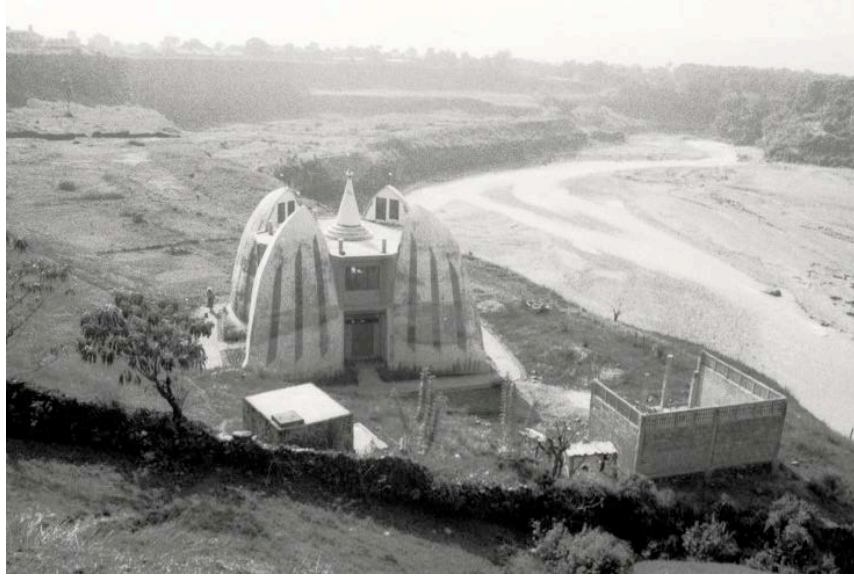
The meeting to set up the T.P.L.S. 1992

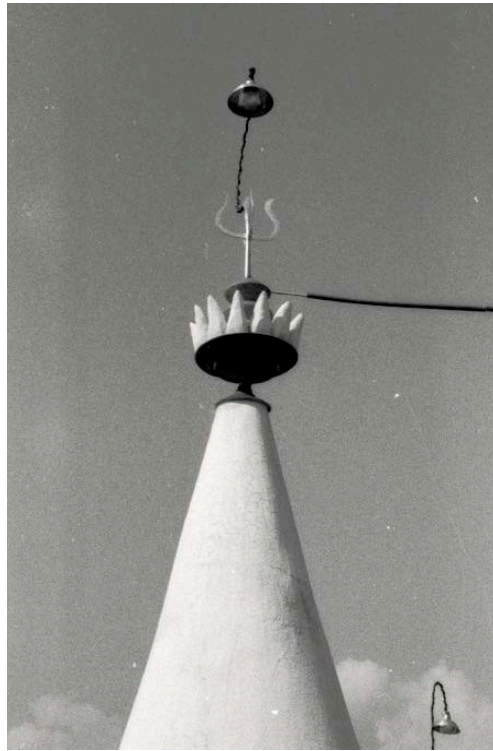
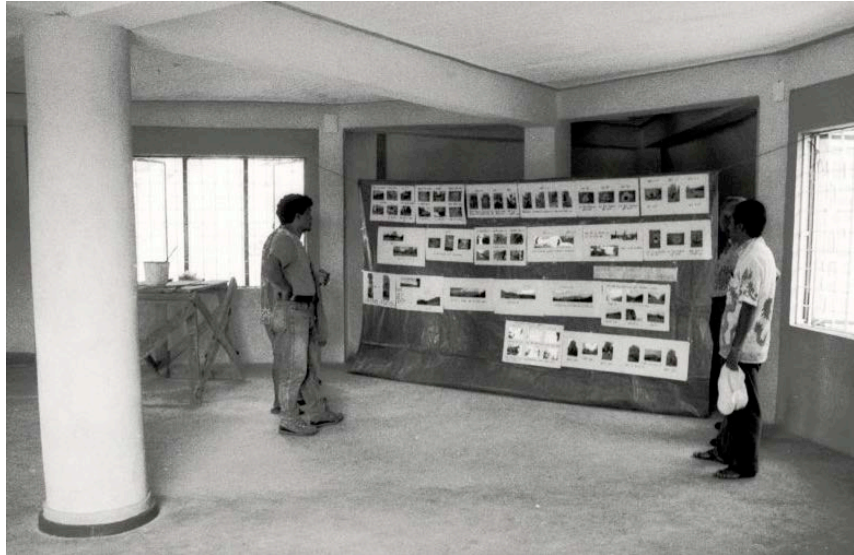


Building of the Khoimbo - 1993



Visit to the Khoimbo in 1994





Visit to the Khoimbo in 1995



Visit to the Khoimbo in 1997



Visit to the Khoimbo in 1998



Visit to Khoimbo in 1999



Visit to Khoimbo in 2000



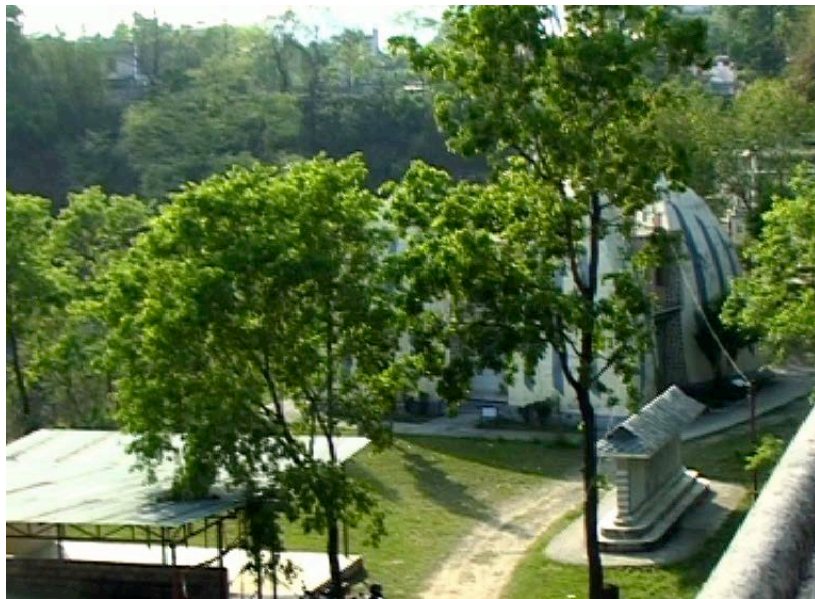
Visit in 2001



Visit in 2006



Visit in 2008



Visit to the Khoimbo in 2010



Visit to the Khoimbo in 2014



ELSEWHERE IN NEPAL

The main concentration of Gurungs from Thak outside the village is in Pokhara. But there are others in towns and villages all over the country.

Because of the Gurkha connection there was for much of the last quarter of the twentieth century a strong link between the Gurungs and the British funded Lumle Agricultural Centre to the west of Pokhara. This ran courses for retired Gurkhas and set up projects in a few test villages. After the accidental introduction of sheep disease from New Zealand, it also ran a series of campaigns to eradicate the disease in the flocks of the higher Gurung villages. We went on one of these expeditions with a group of Gurungs several of them from Thak.

A group of Gurungs and others on an expedition to attempt to eradicate disease in the Gurung sheep flocks.



We visited Lumle on several occasions and there met a family with whom we would be very close over the following years. Here is a little film of two of our visits.



A number of Gurungs from Thak also went to Kathmandu, although the flow seems to have ceased or reversed in the last years. The Gurung family we know best were not from Thak, but a short visit to their home will give an indication of the life style of a successful Gurung couple who started work at Lumle and then through work for the United Nations and in teaching, have bought a house on the edge of Kathmandu and educated their children at good schools.



A Gurung Migrant Worker in India

From my earliest visit, in 1969-70, I had noted that a number of villagers were going abroad as migrant labourers. The earliest wave tended to go to India, or to the army. Later there were many other destinations.

If they return to the village those who have been working abroad often speak very little about their experience, or tend to make it sound exciting and glamorous. The reality is usually very different and there is a great deal of exploitation and loneliness which I may document.

For the moment let me give just one insight into this process, which we gained from a visit to one of my closest friends from my first visit to Thak, Comal Gurung.

When I first went to Thak, Comal was aged twelve. The son of one of the richest and most senior Gurungs, he was unusually lively and helpful and he became one of my three closest informants. He collected data each day on household activities and diet and we became very close friends. I travelled to other villages with him and he was a regular attender at our evening Horlicks and guitar sessions. Here is a rather hazy photo taken from the school photo of 1969.



His house, in the centre of the wealthiest terrace in Thak, built in 1933, was as it appears in this later photo of 1987.



The census record for his family reads as follows: Comal's father, **DEBIPRASAD**, born 1933, his mother **DURGALACHMI**, born 1934, and several brothers and sisters. Comal was born in 1956, and went to Bombay in 1980. He was married to Mankumari. In 1990 he was a security guard at a bank. In 1994 he was still in Bombay and had 5 children, the youngest three.

*

When I returned to Thak in 1986, I learnt that Comal had gone to work in a town called Dombvili, not far from Bombay. I heard later that he was a security guard at ABC chemicals. He seldom came back to Thak. I obtained his address and wrote to him once or twice and when we found in 1997 that we were going via Bombay on our way to see family in Australia, and could stop for a couple of days, we decided to try to see him. We gathered that he was, in fact, one of several Gurungs from Thak who were working in the same area, a minor form of chain migration.

So in March 1997 we travelled by taxi from Bombay to a suburb called Dombvili. There I met Comal again, now aged 41.

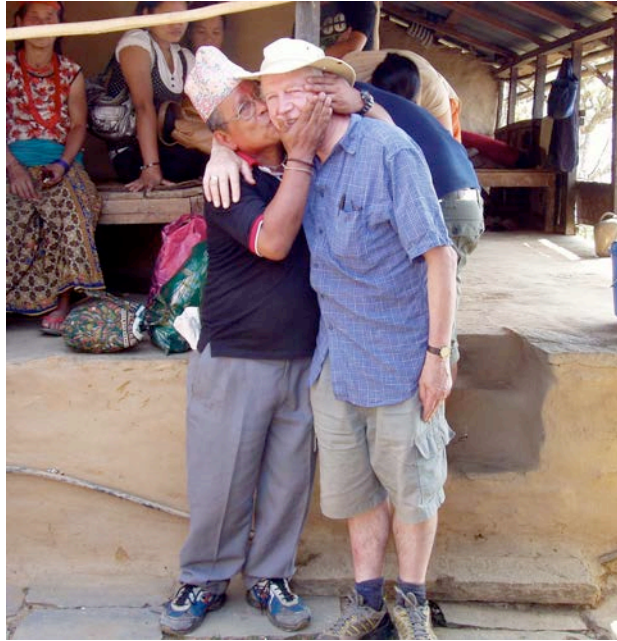


Here is a film of our visit, when we stayed one night with Comal and visited the local town with him.



On our 2006 visit to Thak we learnt that the factory where Comal and the others worked was closed, and Comal was doing odd jobs as a watchman. His wife is a laundress as were two of his daughters, but his eldest son is at university.

In April 2008 Comal and all his family came back to Thak for his father's memorial ritual or 'chempar'. It was an emotional reunion, some fifty years after our first meeting.



We noted in our diary: 'After the speeches, most went back to Pokhara but some stayed, including Comal and his wife. I asked him if he would come back to Thak. This is a possibility once he retires. All feeling rather exhausted after a long day but the four of us ate together in our house and there was a lot of cheerful joking.'

Yet, when we returned to Thak in 2014, we found the ultimate irony. Arguably the richest and most important Gurung family in Thak had sold their house to a village Tailor.

We noted in our diary: 'So far, no one is selling. It is the same with Kwonme houses. Only Comal has succumbed and his life will be spent in India so he needs money from Thak and not status, or potential access from Pokhara. So the Gurungs could return here, but it seems unlikely except for short holidays.'

GURUNGS IN HONG KONG

A number of Gurungs live and work in Hong Kong. We visited a few of them in November 2005. As with the visit to Dombvili, this visit was made special because I re-met one of my two closest childhood informants and friends from 1969, Servajid Gurung, who was fourteen when I first met him in the village in 1968. He was an intelligent and obliging young boy and we spent many evenings with him, and several meals with his family. Servajid, like Comal, undertook a daily meal survey of his family, and I gleaned a good deal of general information from him. We were very fond of him.

On one occasion (14 January 1970) when we went for a meal at his house, we took the following photo of the members of the family present in Thak at that point. In the group are Krishnabadur with his wife Jagatmukari with daughter Indrakumari on her lap, Gokumari and Servajid. Servajid's older brother Sherbahadur, who worked as a migrant worker in Malaysia for some years, is absent.



When we met Servajid again in 2005, he was working for the Kadoori farms.



With him was a group of other Gurungs we had known, especially Premjaji Gurung, who had been one of our most valuable research assistants in the 1990's.



We visited the Kadoori farms with them.



And celebrated at a local restaurant together.



Film of parts of the visit gives a tiny glimpse of an entirely different way of life from the village.



GURUNGS IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

During the 1960's and 1970's the main destination for those from Thak who wanted to earn money abroad outside the army was India. But later they went to further destinations and there are now large numbers of Gurungs all over the world. Perhaps a quarter of all Gurungs are outside Nepal.

A particular concentration is in the U.K. This is because of the Gurkha connection. Originally there were a few Gurungs, but changes in immigration rules which gave settlement rights to all those had served for a length of time in the British Gurkhas and their dependants, has meant that the number of Gurungs in the U.K. has risen dramatically. There are well over fifty thousand Nepali-born people in the U.K. and one might estimate that well over half of these will be from the Tibeto-Burman groups who were recruited into the Gurkhas.

These overseas Gurungs, to judge from those we know and from the external appearances - cars, clothes, jewellery - of those we meet at Gurung cultural events have been doing very well in the U.K.

The Gurungs in the U.K. keep in touch with their families and friends in Nepal through mobile phones and electronic media. As in Pokhara and Nepal, they maintain close links and knowledge of their Nepali friends and family and co-villagers living in the U.K. Several ways in which this is visibly done may be mentioned.

A number of villages have set up associations which run events to raise awareness and to gather money for charitable work in their home villages. For example, the village of Tonting which is to the north of Thak has several galas and events a year and sends money back for medical and other work.

Certain clans groups have also annual or twice yearly meetings. For example, as in Pokhara, we have been invited to meetings of the Kebje clan for picnics and BBQs and other events.

When there are weddings or other celebrations, large numbers of Gurungs may be invited. For instance we went to one of a wealthy Gurung where there were hundreds of smartly dressed Gurungs with their bejewelled wives and daughters and smart cars.

Most dramatically, twice a year there are very large gatherings of several thousand Gurungs. There are two of these bi-annual

meetings in different parts of the country. They are organized by a very active branch of the T.P.L.S. whose main centre was founded, as described in the last chapter. The T.P.L.S. branch in the U.K. has a website which has much information about current events, branches, contacts and rituals as follows.

Tamu PyeLhu Sangh
To Preserve & Promote Heritage Cultures & Religion of Tamu (Gurung)

YOU ARE HERE: HOME

तमु प्ये ल्हु संघले गर्यो भव्य समर कार्यक्रम 2014
१४ जुन, फार्नवोर्। तमु प्ये ल्हु संघ मुकेले यस बर्षको आठौं वार्षिक भेटघाट तथा समर विभिन्न कार्यक्रम विविध कार्यक्रमहरु सहित भव्य रूपले बुनधामसँग सम्पन्न गरेकाछ। सानुपल बोडी स्पेशलिष्ट स्पेसिअल कल...

पुर्मन्त्री बेच गुरुखालाई बेलायतमा सम्मान
४ जुन, आरुवामोड। तमु प्ये ल्हु संघ मुकेको विभिन्न अचोखनामा भूतपूर्व स्थानीय विकास र कानून तथा न्याय मन्त्री बेच प्रसाद डु तमुलाई ...

विभिन्न निर्णयहरु गरि तमु प्ये ल्हु संघ सुपईको बैठक सम्पन्न
तमु प्ये ल्हु संघ सुपईको शुक्रबार बसेको बैठकले विभिन्न निर्णयहरु गरि सम्पन्न भएको छ। माछाले तमु जातिको ऐतिहासिक गले बहोला सोभ...

Ghalek Film Show in UK trailers
Date will be published here once confirmed. Alternatively, please contact the Film Show Area Co-ordinator for further details.

Date	Area	Contact
23 Aug	Nuneaton	Rup Tu 07825 23924407825 239244
tbc	Hounslow	Chandra Yoja 07578 755133
tbc	Plumstead	Nar Tu 07859 990499 07859 990499
tbc	Wimbish	Surya Thimche 07886 333549 07886 333549
tbc	Wembley	As Bdr Kromchhai 07583 030659 07583 030659
tbc	Dover	Netra Tu 07727 692139 07727 692139
		Khem Tamu

We have been to a number of these events and watch them grow ever larger and more elaborate. They combine social events – eating and dancing – with a strong emphasis on the ritual traditions of the ancient religion. The poju and klehbris conduct rituals and ritual dances and bless those who attend.

The event we went to in December 2007 in Reading, for example, had roughly three thousand Gurungs attending. This is an extraordinary number, particularly as there was an even bigger event on the same evening in Kent.

The flavour of one such event can be seen from some films of that held at the Gurung New Year (around December 31st) in 2006.

The event centres on eating (and for the men drinking) together and much chat, photography and gossip. This goes on alongside several hours of presentation of prizes to young Gurungs who have passed various exams, or older Gurungs who have given significant gifts to the Gurung organization, and a welcome from the Lord Mayor and other British connections such as myself.



Later in the evening there is also a cultural program, mainly consisting of dances by young people. Many of them have been practicing variants of that mixture of Gurung and Nepali dancing which is also popular in the villages. (Notice the backdrop of the Gurung cultural centre in Pokhara.)



Early in the proceedings the poju priests start their long rituals, culminating in the blessing of those who attend.



The other Gurung priests, the Klehbri also do one of their characteristic rituals, but only as a staged performance.



The two sets of priests also dance together, as they sometimes do in the memorial service or pwe lava in the village.



Thus the younger generation, many of whom (particularly girls) wear Gurung costume for the occasion, are reminded of a tradition which they have perhaps never witnessed in Nepal. .

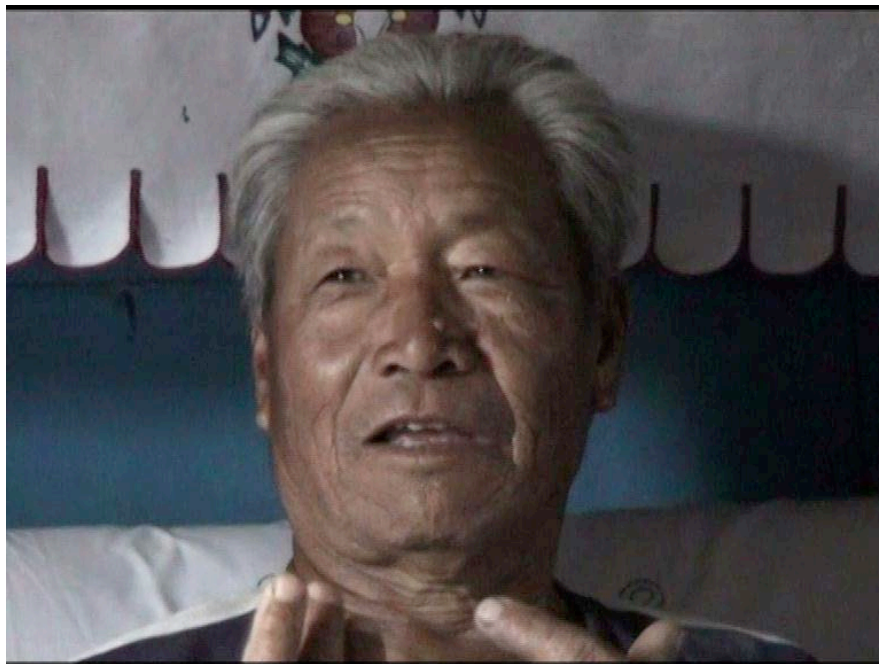
FOUR INTERVIEWS

Another way to see the interplay between the individual and society is to listen to life histories. This was the basis for the volume on 'Dilmaya's world', which examined one Gurung woman's life. Other less detailed accounts can be found in various interviews with Gurungs and a retired soldier who worked with them.

These accounts also fill in part of the otherwise largely missing dimension of the importance of army service in the generations of Gurungs up to the 1970's. Two of the interviews are of retired Gurung officers, and one of a Gurkha recruiting officer.

The rapidly transforming world of young Gurungs who have grown up after the main days of Gurkha recruitment are represented by one young man and one young woman. All four of the Gurungs whose interviews are placed here are relatives of Alan through the kebje lineage into which he was adopted by Lt. Bhuwansing.

LT. BHUWANSING GURUNG



SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW IN 1991

My name is Bhuwansing Gurung. Now I am 67. I was born in Thak. My father's name was Munbahadur Gurung. My mother's name was Saguna. I didn't go to school because at that time there was no school in the village.

I started to work when I was ten or eleven years old. When I was a boy I looked after goats and cows. Then I went off to the army, I went to India in 1943 and I joined at Dehra Dun. After that I went to the Middle East - Greek area in 1944. I fought with the Germans there.

After that when the war finished we came back to India and in 1948 we joined with the British army and we went to Singapore and Malaya. I was in Singapore and Malaya for 10 years and then we went to Hong Kong, after Malayan independence.

We fought the enemy several times and killed several of them.

I ended up as Lt. Then I came back on pension in 1967 - to the village.

I bought a new house in 1968. I had two daughters and two sons, the elder daughter and elder son got married.

Many things had changed in Thak - they started at school at Mailbort. The forest was going down. When I was a boy it used to find the forest close by, just above the village. In 20-30 minutes.

Now you have to go one and a half hours.

They were growing things at Mailo Dada and Garedi - maize, buck wheat. But nowadays they have all gone.

There were many animals then - every household had cows and buffaloes - many. Now the animals are gone and people keep just one or two.

If we keep a lot of animals we can get fertilizer for the fields for all the crops. Now there is little fertilizer.

Did people eat more meat? Yes, they did. We can get milk or meat.

When I tried to bring back ideas and experiments. We started another school above the village. We made a new water pipe. We tried improved crops - maize, wheat etc. from Lumle Agricultural Centre.

We tried but we were not successful because all the villagers had minds that had not changed, so they stuck to the old ways.

I went down to Pokhara in 1978. I went because everything had to be bought from Pokhara and it was very difficult to bring up to the village. Also we had to collect our pension down there and our children needed a good school in the town.

I like living in Pokhara. There are no bad things about living in Pokhara - sometimes a little hot in April and May. It is quite expensive.

I like visiting the village very much, to see old friends and places. Our old books (bunxawholi) say that the Gurungs came from China. They came from the north from a place called Sarpoti Khyelsa, then they came down to Chomrung. Then down to Mustang, Manang and Muktinath. Then they went to Kola Songbra. Our history book says that the 'Kugi line' came first up to Manang. There they met the Songi, where they lived together at Kola Songbra. Then they came down together over Kaski and Lamjung.

What will happen to the Gurungs in the future in the village?

Because all the pensioners and others are settled down in Pokhara, therefore all the village is getting poorer.

We hear of a dispute between the nine (Kugi) and four (Songi) - that is very bad. They have been quarrelling since this year. The four jat say they are the higher jat - but the Kugi say they came from the high lands.

I am an old man, but I am still working at the Lumle Agricultural Centre. I met Alan Macfarlane in 1967/8 in this village. He is my son.

LT. INDRABAHADUR GURUNG

First part



Interview on 14.4.2009

Born Thak Asuj 10 1994 (B.S.), now aged 72. Father in Indian Army, in 1st/8th Gurkha Rifles. Killed in Burma in 1942 when I was 5. Met him once in 1942 when he was on leave. Brought up by mother. Sister Kosu conceived on that leave. Joined the British Army at 13. From 1946 onward used to accompany mother to Kunraghat [in Gorakhpur] to fetch pension. My sister and I also got 5rs allowance a month. Elder brother also enlisted. Sadly we met very little. He died of TB in Thak. During first years Thak was much like it is now but there were many more activities. Had several 'rodee' where there was a permanent female - in Kwi Nasa, Koh Nasa and Danda Nasa - boys used to roam from one to another. 'Rodee Ama' controlled the girls who lived there. I never

experienced much in Thak but did in Lamjung, Siklis, Tangting. Thought Lamjung 'rodee' a good place to control the cultural side of life and the work groups. They would also arrange the pilgrimage programme and any dance programme. Religion controlled by the 'Khoimbo di', the houses of the chief poju and klehbri. Whenever rituals performed they had to give something to the 'khoimbo'. There was no explanation of any design of the 'khoimbo' but we believe it was something like the one we built in Pokhara. We call it the 'Phalina Khoimbo' - 'Phaimro' for the poju, 'na' for the lama, 'lubra' or 'libra' for the klehbri. Believe that until we were at Khola there was a 'Khoimbo' which was brought to Siklis, but after that it disappeared, probably because of Hindu pressure. We hope to find the 'Khoimbo' on further excavations at Khola. As a child, our job was to cut grass for the animals and fetch firewood. There was no school until my last year there, when I was twelve, which was at House25. Went to that school and learnt the alphabet. Was illiterate when I joined the army school. At that time danced the Ghatto and my grandfather, Kesar, was the guru. Not organized by the 'rodee' but by the whole village. Never saw the Kusun performed there. Only Ghatto, Krishna Salitra and Soroti. Panighat people used to do the Soroti which Raila can still do. Narbir and his son, Ujesing, were the poju. Doing 'di bar lava' and other rituals, also the timings for weddings, plantings etc. which he would give to the village headman. Did not do the Chempar then but did the Satynarayan Puja in each house. Thak was officially established by Hindu rulers. Kwonme came from Chyanglung, in Sardi Khola, to establish the kot in Thak. First they came to Garedi and established a kot at Mailo. At that time the people now living in Chachok, the Lemme, were living in Thak. They were probably driven out by Kwonme. They established a kot at Chorondhin, then shifted the kot to its present place at Kwi Nasa once they had settled Thak. Although the Kwonme were Gurungs, the King of Kaski who was a Tagadhari (nickname for Aryan). His men went to Changrung and witnessed an event where an old man predicted rain at a certain time. They returned to the King and told him of this wise man. The King called him and asked him how he knew that rain would fall. The old man said that he walked with a bamboo stick and when rain was coming the stick softened. King thought him wise and told him to go to Thak and establish a kot and to control from there up the valley. (Kesap knows this story

better than me). The Kwonme came with the Ngobje whom they needed as *epujarií*. Panighat Ngobje came from Chauru as well as the Kami and Damai. There is a story that the Kwonme came by a different direction, probably written by the pundits in the 'vamsavole' so don't think it is the actual history. Believe that all Gurung groups, including the Kwonme, came through Khola Sombre, but probably joined us later. Actually *ëKon meí* (ie. joined men). Possibly joined us in Tibet or Mustang or Manang. Favour Tibet. They are mongoloid but not from the Kugi side. Lamme and Lemme were originally the same as Kwonme and separated from each other. According to Tekansing Ghyapri in the Kyorlon book wrote that the people who went to Nar to learn from the Lama and passed became Lamme, those who failed became Lemme. This was either when they were in Khola or previously when in Mustang or Manang. The King of Lamjung was killed by Ghanpokhara Ghale King but later some Gurungs helped the Tagadhari King to kill the Ghale King, and got power in Lamjung and Kaski [these were presumably Kwonme]. Songi and kugi pe describes how the Songi should not marry Kugi or take rice from them, but very difficult to translate. Dates from the time that the Kwonme joined the Kugi and it was the latter that did not want to give their daughters to the new big men. The Kwonme leader did marry one in the end. Difficult to date this, whether in Tibet or Nepal. After Tibet, Humla, Jumla, Mugu, Dopla, Mustang and Manang only joined Nepal in the C17-18. Quite possible that Songi came from another part of China, not from Kokonor, but with us for a long time. There were possibly only 1000 Gurungs when in Khola Sombre and this was the total of Gurungs although the number can never be known. The Tamang and Gurungs separated at Lokha in Tibet. The Magars went off to Dolpa when in Mustang. There are two kinds of Thakalis of which the Panchgaule came from the East and then joined with other Thakalis in Mustang.

When I went with my mother to collect pensions in Kunraghat. The Towli Jemadar was there and we used to stay in his bungalow there. By that time the British and Indian Army depots were separated. The British Army depot was near the Ghyang ghar where all pensioners stayed when they fetched their pensions. Jemadar Jitbahadur's [House14] bungalow was near the Ghyang

ghar. Inspector Gungabhadur's father, Subedar Parsabhadur, was in that British depot and he asked me to join the army. I said I was too small and didn't want to join. He said I must. I went to the British depot and the recruiting officer there knew my father as he was from the same regiment. Subedar Parsabhadur said I was a son of Tirbahadur so the recruiting officer said I must join. Again I said I was too small but they measured and weighed me - only 56lb and 4'4" at that time. The rules said recruits should be 4'6" and 70lb. This sahib used to give me 10rs a day for food but at that time there was nothing but *suntala* and bread and every day I had to go to be weighed, but always the same. All our villagers used to travel to Kunraghat together and at that time my uncle accompanied my mother. My mother got her pension and was preparing to return to the village but was persuaded by the sahib to leave me in the army against my will. I was enlisted as a boy in the Boys' Company in Malaya and later we were taken via Varanasi to Calcutta and shipped to Penang and to Sungai Patani where the bh company was. After I was called a Pahadi. There for three years. Remember going via Rangoon. Enlisted 13th January 1950. Came home on leave either August or September 1952 at the time of Dassara and all my friends were preparing the swing chairs. At that time built it just below Sherbahadur's house, behind Debiprasad's house. Very happy to be back as homesick. For the first three months couldn't write and then didn't know my home address. In the Boys' Company, all my friends were ex-Indian army background and had been educated. I was called a 'pahadi' who didn't know anything, very depressed, but I started to learn very quickly. In the Boys' Company, in the morning did physical training, then spent time in school and in the evening did sport. At that time education quite good. Stayed in Boys' Company for four years as had to reach 100lb although all my friends went. Joined the regiment in 1953 and the Emergency started in 1948. Immediately after joining I had to go on an operation although there were only two or three occasions when I was engaged with these Communists (we called bandits or CT's - Communist terrorists). Only once in danger when we went to Slim's school which was in the middle of the Malay peninsular where there is an army school. We used to go there for vacation. On the way we were ambushed but no real problem. On another occasion after Dasher 1950-1951 went to Dambarsing (my brother) in Khrong in

south Malaysia and we went by train; after Kuala Lumpur the train was attacked by bandits. After Boys' Company joined 2nd/6th Gurkha Rifles which later became 2nd/6th Queen Elizabeth's own Gurkha Rifles.

Second part



When I joined in the British Army I was in the Boys' Company for three years, where most of the work was education; after completing training there I joined the Regiment; during the 4-5 years in Malaysia it was the Emergency and we were fighting with bandits; by 1958 they were decreasing and we were winning and then the independence of Malaya was declared; I stayed until 1960 as education instructor in the Boys' Company for two years; then went to Hong Kong to join the battalion, where we stayed for two more years; from there, in 1964, we went to Brunei in Borneo and stayed for another two years; in 1965 I went to UK for training because in the battalion I was a signaller and had to do a course at Hythe near Folkestone; I was there for about a year; during that

time I went to Wales, Scotland and around England; every weekend I spent visiting somewhere; after coming back to Brunei I had to work as a signal officer travelling round Sarawak and North Brunei because our companies were deployed there as there was a confrontation between Brunei and Indonesia; Brunei is a protectorate and was protected by the British so one regiment always remained there and is still there; returned to Malaysia for another two years and then went back to Hong Kong, where I retired; by that time I was a commissioned officer; I retired in 1970 although my pension started from 1971 as I had been given six month's leave; I then stayed for two years in Thak and started looking after village affairs, especially the drinking water; there was a school but it was not sufficient so the small children had to go from Thak to Mailbort; we decided to build a primary school in the village; before that we had to move the cemetery from that area which was very unpleasant work; we did some very strong rituals there; I also wanted to have a health post there but it was put in Taprang; we also wanted a Government post there but it also went to Taprang, as did the post office; at that time Taprang had a very good Pradan Panch, Chandraprasad; during that time Col. Langland came to Thak asking me to come to Lumle Agricultural Centre; first he said I should work there and come and have training; about six of us, Bhuwansing, Ramchandra, Damasing, another two and I went there for training for a month; it was like a holiday; we learnt about agriculture on the Lumle resettlement course; in 1975 Col. Langland asked me to come to Lumle to do a supervisor's job on a project concerning a foot rot campaign; I stayed for two years on a temporary basis but from 1977 became a permanent member; half my family was in Thak and only Yamprasad's mother was in Pokhara as Yamprasad and Robin were are school here; I used to travel Lumle - Pokhara -Thak; after 1977 Lumle took over all the foot rot area; previously it had been divided between UNDP for the Nepal Government and Lumle; from Tangting to Ghachok was Lumle area, Tangting to Lamjung was UNDP; after 1977 I had to travel in Lamjung, Manang, Mustang as well as Kaski, especially round Annapurna and Manaslu Himal; first we had to do a survey as to whether there was disease or not; if there was they we had to treat the sheep; the disease had been brought in from Australia when they introduced merino sheep; they were taken to Siklis and the disease spread

from there to Lamjung; it was a serious problem as it decreased the flock and the quality of the wool; it was never eradicated as it was so difficult to treat; we only managed to control it; until last year there was British aid given for it but now that has stopped; from then to when I retired I became quite experienced as I travelled through Gurung areas; I saw many rituals, funerals, 'pwe', and met many shaman; I was interested in poju and klehbri before but I did not understand them very well; now I do; I bought this land in 1972, the year after I retired; the house was build 7-9 year's later; I didn't live here permanently for a long time as my mother didn't want to leave Thak; when she was unable to work she came here; my mother wrote to me that a 'raba mih' was staying in the house; unable to meet then but met in 1986; had your papers in our house and found that you had been interested in witchcraft; I talked about you with my uncle (Ujesing); did not find any big mistakes in the work just small mistranslations; continued doing the sheep medicine until 1990; we went on our trip in 1987; had to retire in 1990 as there was official retirement age of 55; since then I have been working on the Gurungs in TPLS; in Pokhara the Gurung organization has gradually grown from Tamu Bauda Arghau Sadan to Tamu Di to Tamu Pe Lhu Sung, Tamu Samannue Rastrya Parisad, Chhoja Dhi, and now Chhoja Dhi and Tamu samunnue rastriya parisad are united and became Tamu Hyula chhoja Dhi; so many Gurung organizations have formed and are still functioning; it started at the meeting with poju and Klehbri in c1990; the main aim of TPLS is to preserve Gurung culture; to do that we had to have a central place which is the Khoimbo; to support that we had to build up the museum; also our main job is to preserve the priesthood - our poju and klehbri; we had to bring them together though we don't know how many there are of each but probably not more than 100 of either; now the Gurung population is over 600,000 so there are not nearly enough to serve them; also there are Gurungs in the East and West who do not know about the Gurung culture and tradition or the language; now we are concentrating on them to train some shaman and teach them the language so they can teach in their areas.

Gurung ritual are divided into two parts, for the living and the dead; the 'pwe' is the most important, we believe; the death ceremony is performed in two ways, one immediately after death

and that is to take care of the corpse; the second, 'pwe lava', is costly and time consuming and there is pressure to change it, but according to the ritual it can't be shortened; it could be less expensive; in the old tradition you had to bring all the people together but we could just invite important people only so it would be less expensive; to perform it properly need two sheep and two goats, also chicken, one for 'plah wiva', another to put in the effigy, but no other animals are needed; buffalo are just for feeding people; however as the incomes of Gurungs have increased the expenditure has also; it is difficult to control; the main problem now is that as poju and klehbri have spread out from Khola Sombre and Siklis they have deviated from each other in method and materials; to bring it back into one line is very difficult; we have poju and klehbri here from Lamjung, Ghandrung, Parbat, Syanaja, who all do it in different ways although the main principle is similar; this is especially true of Lamjung; I believe that people there went from Khola early on which the settlement of Siklis from Khola was later, so the old tradition and culture was preserved in Siklis; Ghanpokhara is older but settled earlier than Siklis; the Lamjung people were also nearer the Tamang and were influenced by them so they only do the 'plah pwe', not the 'ri pwe' as we do; the 'plah pwe' can be done in two days and one night, but to do both you need three days - 'pae chunba', 'pwe paba', 'pwe liba'; the other rituals for the living - protection and treatment - there is no difficulty as they are individual events; before Khola there were five pwes - 'kuru kala' for the worship of the sun and moon, for which there were two singers, then the 'ri' pae, 'plah pwe'; in Khola, a meeting, klehbri from Lupra, lamas from Nar, poju already there, and decided to form the three day *ëpweí* so they put the three *ëpweí* together; the first day the search for the souls around the area; on the second they build the effigy and do 'ri teba' - bring 'ri' from the river, then at night the soul is brought from Kokonor and then put in the effigy; they believe that a soul has gone there or even further on to Cho Nasa, which is mentioned, because there were five places where Gurungs were thought to have originated so called five 'phailus' and this may be in what is now Kyrgyzstan; the main thing is that the Black Sea is mentioned on the west of that area; at night when the soul is brought everybody is purified by the klehbri and during that everybody is happy that our ancestor is here and they try to entertain the ancestor by dancing, singing; on

the third day the soul is always asked to leave this area because it is dead and has to go to the place of the ancestors and it has to follow the route explained to it; in pwe you use two priests and their job is parallel - 'pwe chuba' done by poju 'keke lava' done by klehbri; 'ri teba', 'plah lava' done by klehbri; 'plah wiva' done by poju; purification done by klehbri; on the third day the poju mention the day the dead person was born to the day he died, and now he has to go to the land of the dead which this is recited in the last 'sherga'; klehbri also do the same thing; after finishing 'pwe liba' they will mention all the places up to the ancestors; I didn't realise the parallelism until I had studied all these things; now I understand all this and it is why I am trying to bring all these things into one place, and if possible shortening them; there is a lot of repetition; so if you do one ritual and chant the 'pe' why should you repeat it in another ritual which extends the time; they don't understand and insist that they must do it as they don't understand their own 'pe' and it is difficult to convince them; it is not just the 'chonkwi' but they don't understand why they are doing it, or why they are performing the 'pwe' and what they get by doing so; nowadays, it costs more than 1 lak to perform one and unless you have that it is difficult to do; fortunately the Gurungs have a lot of foreign income so they are able to do it; however the Tej bahadur Kebje line have never performed the 'pwe'; the Thak Kebje form three lines, one Bhuwansing's line from Yangjakot and this 'magara' line from Siklis, and our line from Ghabrung or Ghanpokhara; Yangjakot line and our line are clear but the others have not done it even though they now have people in foreign services; I am trying to encourage them to do so; we have covered everything, culture, ritual and the study of Thak; the new Samaj which the Thak people have formed where we are trying to bring them all together; still some remain outside because they can't pay the fee; that is only 1000rs but they have to give some donation to purchase utensils; they may be willing to pay the fee but not the donation; now we are linked with the village by the road and the electrification of the village in the near future; the water problem has been sorted out and we have schools, including a high school, there at Chachok; we have a health post and post office at Taprang and now we are applying for the telephone for the villagers; I am trying to put Thak on the short tourist route from Pokhara.

INTERVIEW WITH BIKAS GURUNG



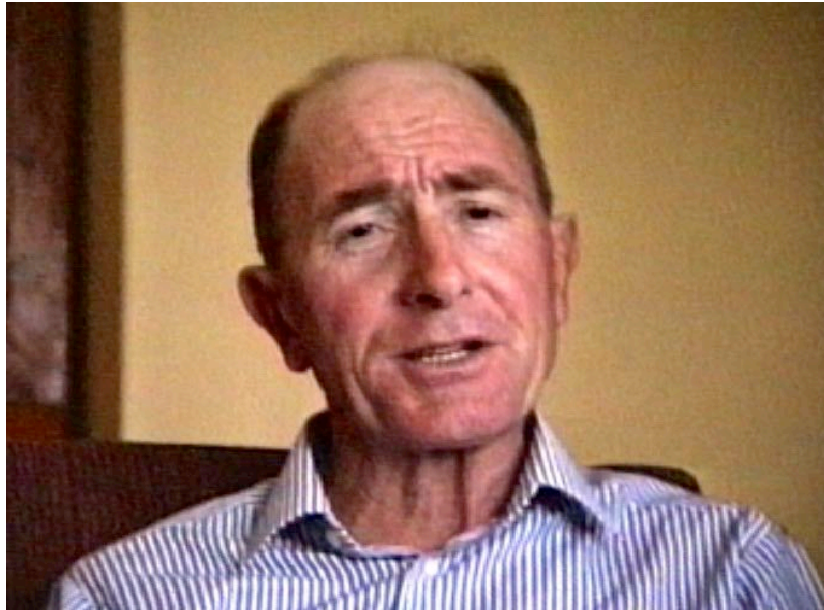
Interviewed on 20th October 2010, when Bikas was aged 30. He is sitting below the village of Thak, with the backdrop of the Annapurna Himalayas. Bikas is the youngest son of Alan's deceased 'sister' Dilmaya Gurung. We have worked with him for many years on the history and culture of the Gurungs.

INTERVIEW WITH MANU GURUNG



The interview took place on 16th December 2000 on the outskirts of Pokhara. Manu was born in September 1982 and was in her last year at school in Pokhara. She is the daughter of Kaji Soba, Alan's adopted youngest 'sister', and hence a niece by adoption. She would later emigrate to the U.K. with her parents and brother.

INTERVIEW WITH COLONEL JOHN CROSS



We had known John Cross for several years by the time of this interview. His impressive linguistic ability, the fact that he had commanded Gurkha troops in several parts of the world and acted for some years as a recruiting officer for the British Gurkhas, his wide travels through Nepal and various books on the history of that country, and the fact that he has retired to live in Pokhara with his adopted Gurung son puts him in a unique position to comment on the Gurungs in a wider context.

*

Col. John P. Cross interviewed in Pokhara, Nepal, by Alan Macfarlane, 16th April 1991

0:07 Birth, early childhood and education; Time in the Gurkhas as a soldier; In Pakistan at independence; Recollections of first meeting Gurkhas when joining regiment - their looks, size, communal spirit etc.; Difficulties of language of Gurkhas; Gurkhas as tractable people, innate qualities; country people who have to work together without selfishness, community spirit cheerful

acceptance of what is needed; Sense of humour of Gurkhas, slapstick; Degree of equality or inequality among Gurkhas; acceptance of orders;

Q: How competitive are Gurkhas?

A: Physique and physical strength of the Gurkhas; recruitment of the cream of the cream, as recruiting officer. Weak arms.; Relations with their families, wives and children; men, women and children, husband as dominant; Love their children, no nastiness or taking for granted

10:45 First visit to Nepal, February 1947; absence of roads, the 126th visitor to the valley since 1793; Three or four most notable changes in the Pokhara valley during the last forty years; Change of values; influence of India; degrading of honesty, becoming a nation of thieves and liars; Larger, bigger physically than before, taller; Opened up with roads, aircraft, television, video, radio - a sense of bemusement, blurred the responsibilities; Influx of tourists traipsing around, in new clothes, giving a false impression of western peoples; harder to get to know hill people deeply; Able to see inside the Nepalese person or character result of increased linguistic ability, and love them very much; Directness and honesty declining as result of Indian influence Brahmin and Aryan influence on hill people; government influence; Aryan administrators less honest and direct than hill peoples; bribes needed; people bend before them, bend gracefully

18:14 Q: What is your experience of aid and development projects?

A: Despite all the aid, Nepal sinking and becoming poorer and poorer; but some benefits (schools, bridges, taps etc.)

20:00 Q: What made you decide to live in Nepal?

A: Personal and other circumstances, lose eyesight, met Buddiman; Love; any difference in closeness or degree of involvement of the hill peoples in Nepal? Magars more concentric than the Gurungs, Magars radiate less differences within their whole; never unloved or

turned away by any Magar or Gurung - I cherish more than anything in the world, I feel entirely integrated; I yearn for this places, part of the family

24:05 Experience when you go into a hill village - impressions of it; compactness of dwellings, warmth and response of the people; hospitality; tact of people and thoughtfulness; remarkable intimacy; Deep involvement in a house after ritual of absorption into a Gurung household; intimacy; How much time spent in villages around Pokhara Walked ten thousand miles in this country

28:30 Q: Do the hill peoples feel deeply towards children, infants and each other?

A: Everything is directed to maintaining family stability and security. love and concern for the children, caring deeply, for a stable family and clan concern; This contrasts with Brahmin families relationship of husband-wife, father and son etc. is very different, much more subservience of wife etc. Gurung women are much better accepted as full members of the society; Are the Gurkhas or Gurungs aggressive? Being good soldiers; are they violent people? Opposite of love is apathy; myth of aggression inculcated by British officers. Bravery of the few subsumed of the many. Not fearless; fearful of the fear of fear. Only fierce when too much drink, and anger. "A Gurkhas anger never happens, but when it does, it is unable to be measured."; Seen any acts of wanton cruelty in your travels? No, I have heard of thoughtlessness, but not cruelty for its own sake.

35:09 Q: How would you described the religious system of the hill peoples? How far are they Hindus?

A: Muslims, Christianity, Animism is increasing. Cultural Hinduism, Hindu priests; Have you ever attended any hill funerals? The treatment of death through ritual; impressed by Gurung rituals, sending of spirits in correct method. Importance of performing the correct funeral rituals.

39:39 Q: Is there a growing ecological crisis in Nepal, what changes have you noticed?

A: Yes, a huge degradation - examples. Vast amount of deforestation, staggering amount. Erosion, the soil washed down to the Bay of Bengal and Bangladesh. Landslides and soil erosion. Trees will soon disappear; The Indian trade embargo led to huge tree felling; noticed huge ravaging on our walks; the forest rangers a danger to the forests; Why is the forest and trees cut down? Fuel, fodder etc. Expansion of house building in the plains.

44:12 Q: Any change in tradition of Gurkhas after retirement?

A: Used to return to villages and build houses there. Now? A great draw now to Kathmandu, Pokhara and the Terai towns. They have a taste of running water and electricity - so why should they return? The key to success these days is thought to be to get education but the water of the wells of Nepalese education poisoned from Bihar; How Bihar and West Bengal have poisoned Nepal, in particular badly affecting the education system; disorder in Calcutta, influence of anti-west Communism, spread to Nepal; Patna influence such a lot of negative, anti-western thinking; A time-warp in Nepal, still thinking along ancient anti-western, pro-Communist lines; raw Marxism-Leninism seen as an answer to all problems; In North Vietnam; problems with anti-communism etc; the double standard of Brahmins, low standard of ethical knowledge

51:01 Q: What are your views of the educational system and the expansion of the schools?

A: Used to visit schools, experiences of attempts to give funds to these schools; education looked on as a key to future enhancement; but quality of teaching very low, and the syllabus very old fashioned; poverty of school buildings - all produced a system that does not answer the problems attempt to re-organize education in 1975, keep children in the villages; So little imagination in the educational system in the schools; in the extramural activities, book-keeping and typewriting taught, where animal husbandry far more useful; Controversy of teaching medium; English or Nepali in teaching in the schools; growth of private schools, 'Boarding' schools; Present educational system built around the Indian system; the intermediate level at Campus leads

to disaffection. the new government will need to re-vamp the educational system which has been seen as a failure by the Nepalese; Girls studying and staying at school rather than marry too young to a person they do not like.

57:45 Q: Have you noticed any changes in health care and medicine in Nepal? A: Health posts have proliferated, but people do not have faith in the medicines that come to them. The workers in the health centres corrupt; in last eight years, an Ayurvedic campus, and a Sanskrit University. Saddened by paucity of medical facilities and uncaring attitude of those who administer them; The shocking conditions in the Pokhara hospital; unhygienic conditions; stories of arrogance and uncaring staff, people are not worth saving - a mind set caused by Brahminical influence

1:01:57 Q: What are the influences in administration and bureaucracy?

A: Influence of Brahmins; over-staffed offices, inability to take decisions of any importance; fear of superiors; blistering inefficiency; fitting to the Hindu calendar; time a western impediment; administration grinds inefficiently and so slowly that leads to waste; An example of administrative incompetence and arrogance - if a hill person, "Come Tomorrow"; bribes needed

1:04:29 The current political situation; difficulties of switch from autocracy to democracy, no tradition of decisions, whole concept of free vote is foreign; multi-party system came too late; personal good before the country's good; negative aspects of a personal monarchy, bribery etc; The four perks of a Brahmin; money, salvation - no matter what he does, elite thought; whole concept of multi-party democracy where each man and woman's vote gives him or her an intrinsic level of sameness is foreign; how long does it take from absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy? These last three fruitless decades of wasted opportunity.

1:10:40 Personal connection, patronage, 'aphno manche'; essential to know people; to work against the family is the worst thing you can do; to change needs three generations or something traumatic; Patronage, who you know, importance of means more than

anything else in this country, except, at times, when money is concerned; I have never been asked for a bribe because English are not in habit of giving them; I know very many people, every bus I travel on has someone I know on it; to know a person is very important; Three or four difficult things in this country - the first is to buy land; to marry someone with whom you can live the rest of your life; the right connection - "someone who stands at the door"; to make a person know what is needed once that person's feelings have been hurt.

1:14:20 Q: How many languages do you speak?

A: Nine Asian languages. Also written a number of books. What is your greatest achievement? Recruited 2149 troops; distinguished military career. Absorbed into a Gurung family (camera swings to Buddiman with his son); If you had to single out one or two things for which you would like to be best remembered, what would they be? The proudest thing is the total acceptance at the highest level to be worthy to be a Nepalese citizen, among some of the world's nicest people, almost miraculous - the status I have has never happened before. Eccentric enough to be regarded as having an inner strength, that many others do not have. A charmed life of miraculous proportions.

Video Films to accompany this book.

There is a set of films to accompany the booklet which are available in the Gurung society (T.P.L.S.) in Pokhara, and in the Gurung Cultural Museum in Siklis, along with other materials.

For those reading the printed version of the book there are three ways to find the films.

On Alan Macfarlane's website:

search for 'alan macfarlane' on the web or go to www.alanmacfarlane.com and look under 'Projects'.

On the Streaming Media Service of Cambridge University:
<http://upload.sms.cam.ac.uk/collection/1708041>

They can also be found on a 'playlist' on Alan Macfarlane's 'Ayabaya' 'Youtube' Channel.

It is also hoped one day that there will be an electronic version of the book, with active links to the films embedded in it. This will be available, along with copies of this book as print-on-demand hard copies on the various 'Amazon' sites around the world.

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