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STUDIES IN THE RITUAL TRADITIONS OF THE KUMAON HIMĀLAYA

by

BRENDAN QUAYLE M.A.

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ABSTRACT

Ethnographic investigations into the ritual traditions of Kumaon Himālaya have led to the isolation of a 'death-cycle complex', i.e. a unitary complex of ideas, functions and ceremonial performance concerned with the ritualisation of aspects of Kumaoni death and the inter-relations between the living and the dead.

The pattern of officiation and sets of traditions and practices characteristic of this complex are described and are shown to be distinct from, yet complementary to, brahmanical institutions and ritual traditions. One aspect of this is their striking contiguity with certain traditions of world renunciation.

The major ceremonial components of the death-cycle complex, rites of propitiation, possession, sacrifice and procession, are described and discussed in turn. Rituals of propitiation are viewed in conjunction with the orthodox death ceremony as rites of passage concerned with the symbolic transportation and transformation of the dead soul. Rituals of possession, during which the dead are re-incarnated as divinities among the community of the living, are analysed as sacred assemblies held to promote exchange, healing and regeneration. Following this, detailed attention is given to the Kumaoni Autumn Goddess festival, a ceremony which celebrates the annual death, propitiation and liberation of one of the region's major deities. This is seen as a death-cycle complex in miniature and the processes of the rituals are shown to symbolically correspond to cycles and processes within nature and the domain of agriculture.

Throughout the entire work particular attention is given to the elicitation from the ethnography of motifs suggestive of activities of ritualised journeying. The 'ritual journey' is viewed as the primary symbolic mode used to represent and effect passage within and between the various stages of the death cycle complex. By way of conclusion, consideration is given to the status of the concept of the journey within North Indian Hindu society generally. The ritual journey is then shown to be consonant with a more abstract concept altogether, that of movement, a motif which underlies not only journeys of transportation, incarnation and procession but also the notion of ritual passage itself. Finally, these various types of symbolic movement are viewed ultimately as providing abstract foci for a play upon power, the acquisition and utilisation of sacred creative power, and the winning of life out of death.

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NOTE ON THE TRANSLITERATION AND PRONUNCIATION OF KUMAONI AND HINDI WORDS; AND NOTE ON LAYOUT, FOOTNOTE AND REFERENCES

The following schema has been adopted throughout the text for the transliteration and pronunciation of indigenous terms:

Short vowels : a, i, u, ṛ (pronounce as 'ri').

Long vowels : ā, ī, ū, e, o, ai, au

Dentals : t, th, d, dh, n, s.

Cerebrals : ṭ, ṭh, ḍ, ḍh, ṇ, ṣ.

Palatals : c (pronounce as 'ch'), j, ñ, ś (pronounce as 'sh')

Aspirates : kh, gh, ch, jh, th, dh, ph, bh

(all pronounced as 'kh-h' etc)

Echo : ḥ (echo of preceding vowel, eg. agniḥ = agnihi).

All terms are underlined; anglicised forms (eg "tantric") are unmarked.

Svarita : ã̃, ũ̃. (circumflex: nasal pronunciation)

Note on 'Brahman' etc.

The word 'Brahman' is used to denote the varna 'Brāhmaṇ' and also the 'Brahman' social class represented in Kumaon. The words 'brahmanism', 'brahmanical' etc. are used without exception to refer to the priestly traditions and practices of the Brahman classes. Following Kumaoni usage, the term brahmin is used to denote a priest of the Brahman classes.

Note on Footnotes, Layout and References.

Footnotes are given at the bottom of each page, with the numbering (1, 2, 3 etc.) referring only to the page on which they are found. Bibliographic references are set out in the usual anthropological manner, as standardised in the journal MAN.

The names of informants are given in the text only where this is absolutely necessary. The names of the two villages in which I lived are not given. As the study was of culture-areas rather than single villages I have not thought it necessary to either give the actual names or invent pseudonums.

Quotations are indented and typed in single space. Texts are typed in single space and ethnographic passages referring to specific occasions are typed in one and a half space.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION : AIMS AND CONTEXT OF STUDY

A. AIMS AND FOCI

1. GENERAL ORIENTATIONS

Material for this thesis was gathered over a fifteen month period from January 1977 to March 1978 in the Almora District of the Kumaon Himālaya, Uttar Pradesh, India. Geographically, the Kumaon Himālaya is situated on the central northern periphery of the Indian subcontinent, and is lodged in a socio-cultural watershed bounded by the Indian Plains to the south, Tibet to the north, the marginal Bodic valleys to the north east, Nepāl to the east and the Garhwali pilgrimage realm of Uttarkhand located to the north west. Almora is the central administrative district of the region which now comprises the districts of Almora, Nainital and Pithoragarh (cf. diagram 1). Almora town is also the historic seat of the Chand Rajas who founded the original kingdom of Kumaon.

The primary aim of my fieldwork was to collect an exhaustive supply of ethnographic information on the local ritual traditions of the Kumaonis, a Hindu people living on the fringes of the Hindu world. My scope took in all aspects of belief, ritual organisation, tradition and practice, not only in the formal setting of specific ceremonies and religious festivals, but also in the context of everyday life. For in Kumaoni society, as in 'traditionalist' cultures generally, one cannot force a strict separation between ritual life and social life, formal classification and everyday existence. As Hindus, they live in an 'ordered' universe, wherein there exist written and unwritten ritual prescriptions or implicit and explicit guides for the framing and organisation of all aspects of human life and experience, from eating,

sleeping, socialising, making love and marriage, to thinking, breathing and even dying. However, I was particularly interested in examining the ceremonial context, as this would provide the most immediate mode of access to the fundamental tenets, principles or templates underlying Kumaoni social life in general. The material set out in this thesis accounts in fact for a very small part of the total data collected but is fairly representative of the whole. Information on the ritual complexes of propitiation, possession, sacrifice and their associated traditions which together provide the subject matter of this work, was originally obtained for its intrinsic interest in relation to the above considerations. And, like many anthropologists doing their first spell of fieldwork, I was largely in the dark about their symbolic and instrumental inter-connexions. Used to reading texts focussing on substantive categories (e.g. 'sacrifice', 'possession ceremonies', 'exorcism', 'shamanism') I remained ignorant until much later of the fact that I was dealing with a unitary complex of ideas and ritual performance concerned with the ritualisation of aspects of Kumaoni death and the inter-relations between the living and the dead. Needless to say this perceptual fog led unfortunately to the by-passing of certain areas of supplementary enquiry (e.g. the importance and place of śraddh among the Doms of Kumaon); and I was not aided by circumstances in my endeavours to investigate in the fullest detail the minute empirical particulars of the Kumaoni death ceremony proper.

Prior to commencing fieldwork I had also thought that data collected on local ceremonial practice in the fields of officiation, propitiation and worship would reflect on the extent of the influence on Kumaon's culture wrought by the religions and cultures of Kumaon's neighbours, the Buddhist and Bon Tibetans, the 'tribal' Bhotiyas and

the syncretistic Nepālis. As it turns out, Kumaoni culture owes more to the 'orthodox' Hinduism of the 'Plains', and of North Indian classical traditions in general (including those of renunciation) than it does to its Buddhist or tribal neighbours. But notwithstanding this qualification, a related ethnographic orientation which I evolved prior to fieldwork still remains valid, namely that data collected from this geographically and culturally marginal area would be pertinent to the ongoing debate in Indian sociology concerning the nature of the relationship between 'folk' and 'contextual' Hinduism, and between 'regional' and Pan-Hindu forms of ritual practice (cf. Dumont and Pocock, 1957-9; Das, 1977a; and Staal, 1963). My own observations in this work confirm Dumont's and Staal's position, by making it clear that, in Kumaon at least, there exists no clear division between the so called 'great tradition' and 'little tradition' (i.e. classical Hinduism and village Hinduism): Possession and blood sacrifice, for example, which are usually considered to be aspects of the 'little tradition' appear to fully complement the brahmanical practices of the 'great tradition'. They are inter-related types of ritual practice which, initially at least, serve slightly different purposes: brahmanical ceremonies in Kumaon are largely life-cycle rituals, and as I shall argue, the 'non-brahmanical' ceremonies are 'death-cycle' rituals. In any case, complementation is such that there occurs considerable superimposition between the domains. The ancestral dead of the possession 'cult', for example, are often worshipped by brahmins during life-cycle rites such as 'naming' and marriage; and possession ceremonies are often performed by brahmins who conclude the rituals with orthodox pūjās.

The results of my enquiry were also originally intended to make a contribution to the ethnography of the Kumaon area, a region for

which there are few detailed ethnographic studies in existence. The exceptions to this rule are Sanwal's (1976) account of Kumaoni caste and social stratification (based largely on historical sources), several folkloristic ollections by local authors (see below[1]) and three brief published papers by Marc Gaborieau (see below) on aspects of Kumaon's oral and ritual traditions. Indeed, it was the discovery of Gaborieau's work which finally prompted the choice of location, and I would consider my own interests and contribution to be in part a development of some of the ethnographic insights and directions of study contained within Gaborieau's collection.

Within these larger schemas I was interested in the general relationship operative between folk religion and the transcendentalism of the renouncer in Indian society (cf. Dumont, 1970) ; and my examination in parts of this work of the interdependence of these two domains represents a development of a previous essay (Quayle, 1976) on

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[1] Early definitive historical accounts of the Kumaon region are set out in Atkinson's chronicles (1882-6, 1973 edition) and Nautyal's (1969) archaeological reconstruction. Much of the detail elaborated in these is replicated in works by Hindi authors, Pande (1937), Pande (1925) and Pande (1962). Jośi (1929) has written on Khasa family law and Pant (1935) has produced a general survey of the social economy of the entire Kumaon region. The folkloristic collections consist of (a) a collection of Kumaoni local proverbs by Upreti (1894) and (b) summaries of local tales and legends by Oakley and Gairola (1935, 1977 edition edited by Gaborieau), Panṛeya (1962), Jośi (1971), and Jośi (1971). Brief but informative accounts on Bhotiya life and ritual have been written by Sherring (1905, 1906). Data on Bhotiya and Kumaoni Kinship terms and practice collected by Lall (1911) provides the background to a recent paper by Allen (1975) aimed primarily at examining the kinship terminology of the Byans Bhotiyas as an example of a 'symmetrical prescriptive' system. Sanwal's (1976) and Gaborieau's contributions (1974, 1975b, 1977) represent the only truly ethnographic investigations of Kumaoni society. Atkinson's (1882-6, 1973 edition) survey of all aspects of life in Kumaon is however still the most comprehensive existing source for general background data on the region, and surpasses the other Gazetteers (Batten 1851, Traill, 1851 and Walton, 1911) in its detail and scope.

the relationship between exoteric and esoteric religious orientations in society generally. Kumaon represented an ideal location for this kind of study because like Garhwal it has traditionally provided a haven for renouncers and pilgrims traversing the sacred routes between the Plains and the great pilgrimage centres of the High Himālaya (cf. Appendix III). Also, the early chronicles of the region by the British administrator, Atkinson, characterise Kumaon as having a strong regional folk culture, with a marked tendency towards 'non-orthodox' patterns of religious worship. In fact, as we shall see, a close relationship obtains between aspects of the renunciatory traditions or tendencies which qualify orthodox Hinduism generally and the specific ritual complexes which constitute Kumaon's 'non-orthodox' religious dimension. The apparent lack of orthodoxy in the Kumaoni traditions of worship turns out in fact to be none other than an external manifestation of a more covert sub-system of worship complementary to the 'orthodox' tradition and primarily concerned with the ritual passage, propitiation and worship of certain categories of ancestral dead. And as will be apparent in the chapters following, the mode and style of worship involved and some of its content, leans heavily upon certain north Indian renunciatory practices and traditions.

Gaborieau's three contributions to the study of Kumaon's religious traditions are based upon visits he made to the region between 1969 and 1971, while also continuing ethnographic investigations in the adjoining river valleys of western Nepāl where he had previously worked (cf. Gaborieau, 1976). The earliest of the three papers (1974), establishes a broad classification of Kumaoni and Western Nepāli songs, from some of which Gaborieau disengages a fundamental narrative structure and elicits

a celebration of romantic love which deviates from orthodox conventions current in Kumaoni social life. The second paper (1975b) contains a description of a jāgar (i.e. 'possession' ceremony), which Gaborieau proceeds to analyse in terms of the meaning of trance within the context of the ceremony and the cycle of exchanges involved. His third contribution of specific interest to us can be found in an editorial preface to a revised (1977) edition of Oakley and Gairola's (1935) Himalayan Folklore. In this he outlines a detailed classification of the wide range of songs and stories preserved and performed by Kumaon's bards, the hurkiyas and jāgariyās. One sub-category of this repertoire, songs concerned with the doings of 'culture heroes' and kings, is assessed in some detail for its value in illustrating 'chronological' cycles and geneological details in the tormented dynastic mytho-histories of the area.

Kumaon, Dotī (i.e. the adjacent regions of Western Nepāl) and Garhwal were linked together and jointly governed at various times in history (see Section C. below), and the three areas exhibit a range of common ethnographic traits and aspects of ritual practice, including the use of (formerly) royal bards and aspects of material culture, (e.g. dress style, drums, art and architecture), (cf. Gaborieau, 1977:xii). However, the local narrative mythologies of the three regions, although often homogeneous in their mode of preservation and presentation (i.e. in song-cycles performed by local bards), vary considerably (cf. accounts in Gaborieau 1974 and 1977, and compare also Berreman's 1963 account of a Garhwali pantheon, pp. 369-387). Indeed, Gaborieau points out that the ritual practices of the Kumaon area which incorporate these narratives are regulated by modes of officiation which are much more elaborate than the Western Nepali model. Unlike in the latter case,

functional pre-eminence is given to the musician or bard rather than (as is common in Nepāl generally) to the possessed oracle (1976:237). Regardless of these regional variations, it seems likely that the narratives, rituals and modes of officiation found throughout this broad region of the lower Himalāya defer to a common model which is basically Hindu in character and style (Gaborieau, 1977:xli; 1976: 237). Indeed, Gaborieau's discovery of renunciatory referents and motifs in the rite of jāgar (1975b) confirms his view that "the popular religion /of local Hindu groups/ cannot be studied independantly of the classical traditions"(1975b:170).

In chapter two of this work, I have endeavoured to build upon Gaborieau's intimations by showing that the Kumaoni bardic-ritual tradition as a whole participates within a wider pan-Hindu or pan-Indian schema comprising the structural complementation of the institutions of priesthood and possession (cf. Dumont & Pocock, 1959; and Ch 2, Section B below). The Kumaoni system corresponds to the possession 'cult' reported elsewhere and it is distinguished from, but complementary to, brahmanical institutions represented throughout the Kumaon area. In addition, I have suggested structural affiliations between the bardic functional organisation of Kumaon and corresponding systems of officiation found among Hindu groups to the south of the region. The members of one of the groups mentioned, although Hindu in most senses of the word, occupy the lowest level of Hindu society and are designated as 'impure' by birth, caste status and economic practice. Yet their intercession as priests of spirits and demons is highly valued by their caste superiors. This is also the situation in Kumaon, and within this set-up it is possible to see yet another dimension of the interdependence in Indian society between the pure and the impure (cf. Dumont, 1972). At

another level, a correspondence can be mooted between certain activities or types of renunciation (such as tantrism) and 'impure' laic ritual traditions such as possession and blood sacrifice. Indeed, the Kumaoni example, which is replete with explicit and implicit renunciatory referents, provides a test case for such a suggested correspondence. The Kumaoni bardic-ritual tradition can be viewed, on the surface at least, as a type of laic tantrism which puts asceticism back into the world of men and confers sacrality upon domains of ritual endeavour which contradict brahmanical tenets of purity and exclusiveness. To refer again to Gaborieau's work, one extension of this tendency within the Kumaoni 'unorthodox' tradition can be seen in the apparent glorification which Gaborieau reports (1974) of extra-marital romantic and adulterous liasons between the men and women celebrated as folk heroes in the narrative songs of the area. The characters and heroes of these are in many cases depicted as Saddhus, usually Kānphaṭā Nāth ('tantric') renouncers; and their unorthodox immorality can be seen as a celebration of the regenerative power of impure sexuality which is fundamental to tantric ideology. In the context of Kumaoni ritual this motif can also be traced in the symbolism of seasonal ceremonies performed to promote the fertility of the fields and crops (cf. Chapter 5 below).

On the whole however, the major thrust of Gaborieau's published work on Kumaon consists of an exploration of symbolic themes in the oral traditions (mostly narrative songs) popular in the region. My own contribution is designed essentially to complement this by providing an overview of the ritual complexes within which these traditions are allotted a place. In those places where I have reproduced and interpreted narratives (Chapter 3, Section C; Chapter 4), this is in

deference to their specific functions within ritual contexts, and the themes which I have extracted from them are those which link up directly with the performative ritual purposes to which they contribute.

The first part of Chapter Two (below) sets out the details of my argument that the ritual complexes illustrated in this work form a composite, coherent cycle of ritual endeavour. Within these complexes the roles of Kumaon's bardic officiants as repositories of sung narrative and local mytho-history appear wholly subsidiary to their overall performative functions as priests of the dead: officiants whose primary task is to liberate, incarnate, propitiate and offer annual sacrifice to certain 'marked' categories of Kumaon's ancestral Dead. In so doing they simultaneously perform essential mediatory services for Kumaon's living. Thus they create incarnations of Kumaon's deified dead to: (a) assist in the exorcism of malevolent unfulfilled spirits; (b) to confer healing and fertility upon men and women; (c) to divine and prophesy; (d) to create well-being and fertility among fields, crops and animals; (e) to mediate with nature in the promotion of physical sustenance through good harvests and sound husbandry; and (f) to promote the metaphysical sustenance or spiritual advancement of the devoted 'descendants' of the deified dead. Indeed, although the rituals performed can be viewed as further elaborations of primary mortuary rites designed to effect the complete disposal of the soul and body of the deceased, their incidence (mostly during sickness, at times of stress or during critical marginal points of the month or year) reveals a more emphatic concern for the

well-being of the living than for the fate of the dead.[1]

As mediators between the living and [various categories of] the dead, Kumaon's bardic functionaries service the interdependence which is believed to obtain between the living and certain categories of the dead. This function is directly comparable to that of the bari priests of the South American Bororo tribe discussed by Lévi-Strauss (1973) who operate on the basis of a vocation, the "central theme of which is the conclusion of a pact with certain members of a very complex community of evil, or simply awesome spirits, partly celestial, ... partly animal and partly subterranean"(p.236). In the Kumaoni case, these beings are regularly increased by the souls of the newly deceased (re-propitiated and deified by the bardic functionaries) and, like the dead of the Bororo in some respects, are responsible for movements within nature, for elemental and cosmic forces, and for wind, rain, sickness, fertility and death. Kumaon's functionaries, through intercession in rituals of propitiation, possession, divination and sacrifice, provide a mode through which the complex inter-relations of the living and the dead are maintained and furthered; fundamental contracts are forged and preserved, and specific alliances and exchanges beneficial to both categories are enacted and realised.

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[1] I am reminded here of Lévi Strauss's observation that some societies prefer to let their dead rest:- "... provided homage is paid to them periodically, the departed refrain from troubling the living. If they come back, they do so only at intervals and on specified occasions and their return is salutary, since through their influence the dead ensure the regular return of the seasons, and the fertility of gardens and women. It is as if a contract had been concluded between the dead and the living: in return for being treated with a reasonable degree of respect, the dead remain in their own abode, and the temporary meetings between the two groups are always governed by concern for the interests of the living" (1973:232).

As we shall see at various points in the present work, this intercession is greatly facilitated by a conscious identification by Kumaon's functionaries of their ritual roles with the activities of certain categories of renouncer. This provides a further dimension of intermediation, for the Hindu renouncer - India's most prestigious and ritually powerful individual - satisfies a fundamental criterion of the intercessory complex by personifying a position of supreme liminality: as an asocial being (Das,1977a:50), who has adopted a symbolic position of ritual death (Ghurye, 1964:93-4; Briggs, 1973:29) the renouncer is paradoxically neither living nor dead, yet is a member of both the community of the living and the community of the dead - he 'exists' in a liminal realm between the two.

Discussion of the death-cycle complex - a system of rituals and beliefs designed to secure the transportation of Kumaon's dead from the world of the living and secure their intercession with the higher gods of Hinduism on behalf of the living, commences in Chapter 3 with a description and discussion (Section B) of the primary mortuary rite. In the Kumaoni view, if this is performed properly (i.e. in accordance with tradition) and if there exist no irregular circumstances, such as an inauspicious or untimely death, then the remaining ceremonies in the complex (propitiation, incarnation and sacrifice) become largely redundant. The ancestor is assumed to have achieved safe transportation into the Land of the Ancestors and to have become merged (somewhat vaguely) with the godhead. Some Kumaonis believe the ancestor becomes reincarnated, others believe he becomes a kind of deity existing in a state of total bliss (mukti) or complete liberation from worldly influence or from rebirth. Whatever the ultimate fate of the fulfilled ancestor (pitri) he is remembered annually in śraddh ceremonials performed by

brahmins (or in the case of Doms by brahmin substitutes) in the second part of the month of Asoṣ (September-October). At first he or she is remembered by name, then he or she becomes merged within the class of household ancestral dead.

However, if for the reasons given above the spirit of the deceased remains unfulfilled, and returns to wreak havoc in his household or community of origin, then a secondary mortuary rite or propitiation ceremony termed a chal-pūjā is held. This is performed primarily by a functional associate of the Kumaoni bard (the jāgariyā), the pūchar, a diviner, priest or exorcist. The latter works in collaboration with the ḍã̃gariyā, or medium, who becomes possessed by the unfulfilled spirit, and by the jāgariyā himself who is responsible for creating and controlling the incarnation of the spirit in question. The spirit is appeased by the ceremony, offered sacrificial items which create the means of fulfillment by providing the necessary modes of transportation from the world of men, and is then exorcised with a sequence of rituals which sever the spirit's links with the world of men. Having been transferred from a category of immature (kaco) to mature (pako) spirit, the deceased will then be reincarnated in a possession ceremony (jāgar) one year later and is from thence either regularly worshipped as a deity or forgotten about altogether. Spirits who become, or have become, deities are worshipped annually as local gods (Kūmū-Devtas) or as manifestations of higher gods (sachavatārs) during the ceremonies of incarnation and sacrifice (jāgar, jūnar, bālidān) which provide the remaining components of the death-cycle complex.

Both the death ceremony and the propitiation rite are rites of passage designed to create both a transportation of the deceased person's soul across physical and metaphysical space and a transformation

in the status of the soul from either preta to pitri (ancestor) or preta to devta (god). But it is processes of transportation which are symbolically elaborated at great length in the rituals of both complexes and it is upon the metaphorical and performative modes used to effect transportation that I have chosen to focus my analysis. This decision is consistent with the overall pattern of symbolic movement (discussed in Chapter 6) which appears fundamental to each of the ritual complexes considered in this work and which connects them together both as a cycle and as a consistent complex of ideas and practices.

In my discussion of both these ritual complexes and the complex following (jāgar, described in Chapter 4) I have viewed the symbols and actions of transportation and (in the case of chal-pūjā and jāgar) incarnation as activities of ritualised journeying. Using the concept of the ritual journey, which I have adapted from Allen's (1974) reformulation of a shamanistic category developed originally by Eliade (1964), I have sought to elicit from the data a series of journey motifs which characterise the various ascensional, descensional, vertical and horizontal movements of the dead soul or spirit across space, through and out of the world of men. Such motifs are apparent for example in (a) the repeated use of cosmic axes (fire-altars, mandalas, shrines and trees) indicative primarily of vertical movement between the worlds (earth, heaven and the netherworld); and in the circumambulation of these axes, an activity which creates the conditions of metaphysical movement; (b) in the use of elemental, animal and even human vehicles (e.g. water, paths, cows, bullocks, goats, chickens and Doms); and (c) in the delineation of journey routes across space (e.g. downwards and southwards to the Land of the Dead; upwards and northwards to the

Land of the Gods, the directions of river-flow, mountain passes and pilgrimage routes).

After transportation is ritually effected in both ceremonial complexes by the appointed priests and the bereaved or afflicted social group in question the soul (preta) or spirit (chal) is represented as having well and truly progressed on its sacred journey towards the Land of the Dead (Yamalok). From there it will eventually pass on into the Land of the Ancestors (Pitrilok) and possibly even into the Land of the Gods (Devalok). Successful completion of the journey benefits the Living in a number of ways, and considerable efforts are made to ensure that the dead does not attempt to foil transportation by regressing on his or her journey and re-entering the world of men. To bar his way (rasta) the vehicles which formerly housed the spirit or soul (e.g. the body, statue, cart or animal) are destroyed or deconsecrated and available routes are barred (e.g. with thorns, pieces of iron or magical formulae).

Chapter four focuses on the institutions of jāgar and jūnar. These are ceremonial complexes performed respectively in the households and village temples of Kumaon to create the 'awakening' or incarnation of the spirit forms of dead ancestors. Jāgar rounds off the death-cycle complex by providing an occasion for the celebration of the attainment of liberation by the propitiated dead. But jāgar and jūnar as both occasional and regular functions provide an arena set apart in sacred time and space through which the dead can regularly re-appear in the world of men as divinities contracted to protect the lives and interests of their descendants and devotees. Hence, as rituals held in honour of the dead, they embody liminality and invert social normality. Almost the entire Kumaoni pantheon of deities, sub-deities, elemental

spirits, aides and lesser forms can at some critical juncture (calendrical or social) of the year be incarnated in the bodies of mediums (ḍăgariyăs) at the command of their guru or master, the jāgariyă. They come as honoured guests and during their visits they dance, demonstrate deific power and confer advice and healing. After worship, they return to their respective celestial, elemental or terrestrial abodes, bearing the gifts, tributes and blessings of their worldly hosts.

Jāgar and jūnar are viewed as types of social identity rituals. Their participants include the social unit in its entirety, a unit which consists not only of the household or community living but also its associated local dead. And in the rituals of these ceremonies we find expressed the simultaneous need to preserve and regenerate both the community of the living and the community of the dead. The overall symbolic function of their performance thus appears as a way of creating and strengthening the bond of communion which links these two categories by providing a platform of interactions and exchanges which regulate and service this communion.

The possession rite, its arena and performers, make up a kind of bridge which provides the essential movement between the worlds that paves the way for communion. The movement of gods, spirits and goods in and out of jāgar (i.e. between the worlds) is seen as prefacing another kind of movement altogether, the metaphysical movement of men through life and death towards salvation. As in the mortuary and post-mortuary rites considered in the previous chapter, the rituals and symbols of jāgar and jūnar are replete with journey motifs: gods descend into the bodies of men through sacred journeys across metaphysical and geophysical space. The routes traversed are carefully delineated

in the invocationary song-cycles of the jāgariya and later replicated in the mimes of the ḍāgariyā. After worship they undertake a further journey across the mountains to the shrine of Hardwar and to the netherworldly cosmic fire (dhūnī) of Gorakhnāth, the prime mediator, spiritual counterpart of the jāgariyā and master of all the devtas who incarnate in Kali Yuga. There they display deference to the guru and then proceed back across cosmic space towards their respective abodes of liberation (usually Mount Kailāś, the paradise of Śiva).

The renunciatory natures and aspect of almost all the spiritual personalities involved in the possession rite, together with the themes of death and renunciation extant in the invocationary narratives deployed, and the motif of symbolic death or 'temporary world renunciation' apparent in the role of the human officiants illustrate the prominence given to renunciatory ideology within the context of the rite. This feature not only highlights the mediatory power of the rite as a bridge which straddles the worlds, links macrocosmos and microcosmos, gods and men, the dead and the living, but it underpins its creative regenerative aspect. For the tapas, or asceticism, observed by all is conceived as creative power which is directed towards physical and metaphysical ends: healing, fertility, agricultural prosperity and spiritual advancement.

Aspects of this creative 'impulse' are embodied in the orgiastic union of deity and devotee provided by possession and in the cycle of gifts and unctions transferred between these interdependent categories Prominent among the latter are seeds and fruits, tokens of fertility and wholeness, and unctions which embody reproductive principles, the sacred conjunction of gender and cosmic opposites, male and female, water and fire, light and darkness, overworld and underworld.

Ultimately, the gifts of jāgar and jūnar passed between men, spirits, renouncers and gods are material representations of one primary prestation, the gift of life out of death.

Jūnar, and sometimes jāgar, ceremonials are often concluded with a sequence of animal sacrifice. This is fundamental to the death-cycle complex because of the vehicular power of the sacred animals slaughtered and it takes one stage further the theme extant in jāgar of creating life from death. In most Kumaoni village-areas, sacrifices are performed annually, generally during transitional periods of the agricultural year. To illustrate the sacrificial complex I have selected one ceremony in particular, the Devī-Pūjā or autumn Goddess Festival, performed towards the beginning of the rice harvest season in Asoṣ (September-October). This provides the subject matter of Chapter Five.

The Devī-Pūjā incorporates all the ritual processes considered in the previous chapters; i.e. the death of a (here metaphoric) member of the community, the Chand princess, Nanda; her propitiation as an unfulfilled spirit or chal; her incarnation in the body of a medium; and her projected liberation from the world of men through gifts, animal sacrifice and processional journeys across space. Interweaved within all this we encounter a range of symbolic referents which indicate that the goddess and queen is also the spirit of vegetation and reproduction within the Kumaoni agricultural and seasonal cycle. Her fate is closely associated with that of the rice crop with which she is identified; and her mythological untimely death at the hands of a buffalo-demon is avenged with a buffalo sacrifice which is linked to the impending violence of the harvest process. Again these are deaths which promote life, and throughout the seasonal 'career' or life and death-cycle of the goddess,

we find emphasised the idea of a symbolic coalescence of sexual reproduction, parturition and unnatural death. These motifs link up with renunciatory ideologies, discussed in earlier chapters, which involve the ritual celebration of symbolic death and sexual reproduction for purposes of obtaining magical power and transcendental passage.

The autumn Devī-Pūjā is possibly the most critical and best attended religious function in the Kumaoni ritual calendar: the correct observation of its rituals is thought to have a direct instrumental bearing upon the maturation of the rice crop and the success of the harvest. The major thrust of my discussion of these rituals focuses upon the metaphoric inter-linkage which obtains between the symbolism of the rites and the natural and agricultural processes associated with the autumn harvest period and the months which precede it. In addition to a quasi-Frazerian interpretation of the meaning of sacrifice within the context of the rite, I attempt a re-construction of the goddess's life-cycle and sacred marriage which culminate in the consummatory sacrifice; and I endeavour to link the principle of a creative conjunction of opposites realised in the hierogamous act to the various subsidiary ritual schemes (e.g. the cutting of the tree, its procession and immersion) incorporated within the festival. The overall processional pattern of the entire complex of rituals is dominated by an alternation between active and passive phases of heating and cooling, reproduction and death or quiescence. These in turn are linked with the passage of the seasons, a transition which the Devī Pūjā bridges and structures, and in so doing both defines and synchronically creates critical movements or simultaneous changes within the worlds of society, nature and cosmos. There is little room in the discussion for the elicitation and analysis of the detailed journey motifs elaborated

during earlier parts of the thesis, but a recognition of the principle of ritualised journeying is implicit throughout. Hence, the goddess is seen as taking birth in the Spring; as moving through the spring, summer and rainy seasons; and as embarking on her sacred journey through death and the season of Autumn (Śardī) and mourning (śraddh) for the departed ancestors.

In the concluding chapter I attempt to bring together some of the ideas and themes of symbolic journeying, renunciation and death discussed throughout the thesis. I open with a consideration of the status of the concept of the ritual journey in North Indian Hindu society, and the available ethnographic and theoretical literature pertaining to this is discussed in detail. In the light of the data adduced in the present work it is suggested that the current use of the ritual journey as an ethnographic category be further extended to include not only the shamanic journey (from which it was first formulated) but hitherto excluded magico-religious phenomena such as Hindu mortuary and post-mortuary rites, spirit possession, ceremonial procession and pilgrimage. The idea of a sacred journey is seen as fundamental to the internal voyage of the yogin and the 'motional' limen (cf. Turner, 1975: 117) of the asocial renouncer. Indeed, it is within the mythologies and symbolism of renunciation that we find a model rapprochement between activities of journeying and concepts of physical and symbolic death as ritual modes purposefully directed towards the generation of magical redemptive power.

Following this, I suggest a further refinement of the analytical and classificatory usage of the concept of the journey by showing how it is consonant with a more abstract concept altogether, that of 'movement'. Movement (or more precisely, symbolic movement) is seen

as a key construct which underlies not only the ritual journey and the various journey motifs of transportation, transference and procession elicited from the mortuary and post mortuary complexes considered in this work, but also the idea of ritual passage generally: a category which, in Hinduism, encompasses the cyclical passage of time, the changing of the seasons and the passage of macrocosmic deities such as Devī and Viṣṇu across and through cosmic space.

Fundamental to the symbolic mode of analysis utilised throughout the present work is the recognition that these Kumaoni rituals form a coherent symbolic schema, a system of relations founded upon basic principles particular to Kumaoni (and Hindu) society which equally could be elicited from societal domains other than that of death ritual. Among the types of principle relations elicited at various points in the work can be included the following: relations of opposition between Priesthood and Possession, Male and Female principles, the living and the dead; relations of identity between the renouncer and the oracular functionary, between macrocosmos and microcosmos, between the mythological cycle of the goddess, the social cycle of her devotees, and the Kumaoni seasonal cycle; and relations of transformation and inversion between purity and impurity, sacrality and profanity (e.g. in the worship of impure spirits, and deference to Dom priests). If nothing else, the types of relations which are apparent within this Kumaoni ritual complex demonstrate the extent to which Kumaoni culture is properly Hindu, for most of these relate to principles which are axiomatic to Hinduism (consider Dumont, 1970:37-46; 20-32). This is borne out at the level of formal structure. Hence we note in the Kumaoni rituals the recurrence of basic and familiar Hindu themes of an instrumental and/or processual

nature e.g. the creative power of asceticism (cf. O'Flaherty, 1973:40-42); the virtual obsession with a limen of motion as extant in pilgrimage, procession and circumambulation (consider Parry, 1981 and Bharati, 1965: 85-100); the idea of a continuum between the different categories of being (i.e. the living, the dead and the gods, cf. Dumont & Pocock, 1959: 72-72; Aiyappam, 1977); and the regenerative functions of the sacrifice (cf. Heesterman, 1964:2-4) and exchange (Mauss, 1970:53-39; and Khare, 1977).

But there is more to the adoption of a symbolic framework of data classification and explication than a felt need to pose an identity between regional and Pan-Indian ethnographic forms. What is involved here is the commencement of an attempt to study a system of representations (Kumaoni ritual forms) as a system of symbols and meanings containing modes of thought and classification by means of which a people (the Kumaonis) consciously and unconsciously attempt to make sense of the world, create meaning, "structure the reality around them" (Horton and Finnegan, 1973:28) and define a sense of personal and social identity. As such I would conceive of the present contribution as occurring within the interpretative traditions established originally by the writers of L'Année Sociologique who afforded primacy to the view of man as essentially a meaning-maker, "a self-defining species" (Crick, 1976:3). In recent years these traditions have been substantially developed in the formal structuralism of Lévi-Strauss (e.g. 1972), Dumont (1970, 1972) and Leach (1976) and in the symbolic anthropology of writers like Douglas (1970, 1973) and Turner (1974). Indeed, the field of Indian sociology has proved to be the testing ground of some of the clearest articulations of symbolic modes of enquiry, a feature apparent throughout the work of Dumont (1970, 1972), Dumont and Pocock (1959), Beck (1969, 1976), Das (1977a, 1977b) and Parry (1979, 1980, 1981). With a

structural or symbolic approach to the ethnography, the analysis of culture is seen not as a positivist or Popperian science formulated in terms of hypothesis building, experimentation and falsification, but as an "interpretative one in search of meaning." (Geertz, 1975:3).

The meanings we seek are both explicit and implicit whether we are looking at classical texts, social reality, folk exegeses or the relations between these. The interpretation of rituals as in the present work, or in any other domain of social life, is comparable to the piecing together of a jig-saw with a number of the pieces missing but with a specific set of clues available. The latter would include: (a) a rough image of the overall construct, the subject of the particular jig-saw (i.e. a ready-made hypothesis of the complete picture of the rite, such as its stated purpose e.g. to promote good harvests, create healing or dispose of a corpse); (b) the organisational patterns suggested by the shapes of the existing pieces, which would include the boundaries or (usually linear) edges of the puzzle (i.e. the behavioural relations acted out in the rite, including the constraints imposed upon these by the delineations of occasion, time and space established for the rite, its timing, beginning and setting); and (c) the content of the existing pieces, the objects or items represented and the colours, lines and shapes used to distinguish these from one another and connect them together (i.e. the themes and motifs or symbolic representations depicted during the process of the rite). The purpose of the exercise is to fill in the missing spaces on the jig-saw board (i.e. to bring to light the <u>implicit</u> elements in the ritual) and thus realise the completed image and all its subtleties (i.e. contribute towards understanding of the <u>total meaning</u> of the rite).

Before commencing reconstruction, one assumes (as always) the existence of an inherent consistency of form and content, (the ritual

contains an inner logic and there is a rational connexion, metaphorical and instrumental, between ends and means); the image of the jig-saw must 'make sense' and the patterning of the pieces must be limited and governed by conventions or rules regarding design, shape etc. Reconstruction proceeds by extracting from the available clues a series of constants of both form (the relations between the pieces, and the relations between the objects and colours depicted on the pieces i.e. relations of opposition and identity between the participants and the symbols of the rite) and content (the meanings or images of the picture-parts of the jig-saw, i.e. the themes and motifs suggested by the ritual).

In the rituals discussed in the present work I have endeavoured to continually unearth both the underlying forms and the symbolic content of the rites. And in each case I have combined these in order to reconstruct the complete picture or total meaning of each ritual. Hence I take account, in for example the Devī Pūjā (Chapter 5), of the formal organisation of the ritual participants (e.g. relations between god and goddess, male and female, brahmanic functionaries and non brahmanic functionaries) and the material symbols (e.g. relations between fire and water, red and white colours, animals and humans, earth and sky). But I combine this with an examination of the themes and motifs suggested by the process and symbolic content of the rituals (e.g. sacred marriage, sexual consummation, parturition, death, journeying, liberation). In this particular rite an overall picture emerges of an intentionally regenerative, instrumental and metaphorical play between different domains of existence and experience, the life and death-cycle of the body, the life and death-cycle of the seasonal rice crop, and movements of degeneration and regeneration within the cosmos. As these domains are held to correspond to one another, manipulations enacted upon one or two domains (the social body and material symbols

selected from nature and agriculture) are equivalent to manipulations enacted upon all the domains.[1]

In addition, the various ritual complexes outlined in the pages following, if taken together form a complete jig-saw image in themselves. Hence the concept of a death-cycle which links these ceremonies of propitiation, possession and sacrifice can be thought of as one complete image or construct of meaning. These ceremonies bear a close relation to the orthodox death ceremony and are analogous in parts to the śraddh rite or anniversary remembrance of the dead. They are also distinct from but complementary to the total complex of rituals performed in the Hindu household to create passage through the various stages of the life cycle (naming, puberty, initiation, pregnancy and marriage rites). The death-cycle complex does not mirror-image the life-cycle complex but there are correspondences in symbolism and a certain replication of attendant purpose in that death-cycle ceremonies also have life-giving, regenerative functions. However, the ultimate overseers of the death rituals are the dead themselves and these are reached through the symbolic dead (renouncers and temporary renouncers) and through the agents of pollution (Śudras and Doms), whereas the ultimate overseers of the 'life rituals' are the pure, transcendental gods (Vedic deities and sachavatārs) and these are worshipped through the

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[1] In the manipulations and correspondences of the Devī-Pūjā we can also see a good example of the symmetry between symbolic mode and performative idiom generally found in ritual endeavours: ritual is both expressive and, within the terms of the culture examined, pragmatic and efficaceous (cf. Douglas 1978:14-15). Hence, throughout the present work I have at no junction attempted to question the validity of the folk beliefs studied. To the contrary, I have constantly assumed a close inter-relationship between symbolic modes or processes and the ends of the rituals as evoked by my respondants. This is not a question of conforming to an "embarrassed silence" by anthropologists on the subject of the instrumentality of rituals which a recent contributor has suggested (Bourdillon, 1980:6). Rather it is a gesture in keeping with the spirit of the ideally objective yet non-ethnocentric styles of anthropological interpretation current to symbolic modes of enquiry (Douglas, ibid).

'renunciatory living' or agents of purification[1] (brahmin priests). Mortuary and post-mortuary continuity apart, it is worth noting that the closeness of the relationship between these death-cycle ceremonies and the death ceremony proper has to do with the fact that, as Das (1977a) has pointed out, Hindus do not include the rituals performed at death to be "included in the category of domestic rituals"(p.8). Hence, persons other than brahmins can officiate at these, and the brahmin himself risks his own purity by agreeing to act as intercessor (cf. Parry, 1980:89). Like the rituals of sacrifice, propitiation and possession considered in this work, the symbolic character of death and ancestral rituals is dominated by metaphors, themes and motifs of

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[1] Das (1977a), Parry (1980: 89) and Heesterman (1964, 1971) have all recently emphasised the renunciatory status of the brahmin. Pointing in particular to the ambiguous position of the latter in the world, Das (Ibid:47-56) contends Dumont's (1970) characterisation of the brahmin as man-in-the-world opposed to the renouncer or man-outside-the-world. She suggests instead that the role of the brahmin is one of mediator between another opposition, that of the "asocial" (represented by the renouncer) and the "social" (represented by the laity, i.e. brahmin, king and others). The brahmin's ambiguity as a 'renouncer in the world' is an aspect of his mediatory role which demands a certain ambiguity.

It seems clear however, that the brahmin is only a certain kind of renouncer and the type of renunciation involved represents a considerable modification of the truly asocial ascetic. Unlike the renouncer proper, brahmins are born into their position, and are not required to renounce worldly involvements, e.g. possessions, family life etc. At the time of investiture there is no question of the brahmin entering into a condition of symbolic death, whereas the initiation ceremony of the renouncer effectively numbers him among the dead (Olivelle, 1978:20-23; Ghurye, 1964:93-94). Consequently he does not embody the liminality incumbent upon the renouncer who exists in a liminal state of death-in-life; and his priestly mediation, unlike the mediation of the 'temporary renouncers' considered in the present volume, is based not upon impurity (from identification with the dead) but upon purity (from an identification with the highest gods).

inversion, marginality (Kaushik, 1976), impurity and liminality (Das, 1976).

Conventional ethnographic accounts of rituals of possession, propitiation and blood sacrifice among Hindu and 'tribal' groups of the sub-continent tend to deal with these ceremonies as isolated institutions devoid of an overall framework other than as aspects of an unorthodox tradition which is usually ascribed as 'non-Hindu' or 'non-Sanskritic', in character and possibly aboriginal or extra-Aryan in origin. Hence, possession is commonly defined in absolute terms as a "cult" (Dumont & Pocock, 1959:55-59), divination, sacrifice and the worship of local deities are "deviations" from the literate tradition and extraneous to Pan-Hinduism generally (cf. Berreman, 1963:137-139; Marriot, ed. 1955; Singer, ed., 1959; and discussion by Staal, 1963). The lack of an overall perspective on these complexes (Staal and Dumont apart), part of a general failure to treat Hindu society as a system founded upon a set of inner structural consistencies, contributes towards a dearth of insight into their true position within Hindu ritual life. From this, it requires but a short step for these ethnographers to move into precarious domains of substantivist analysis which view such socio-religious phenomena as being reducible to psychological or politico-economic motivation (e.g. Opler, 1958; Freed & Freed, 1964; Jones, 1976).

Substantivist analyses of Hindu society have in recent years become modified considerably under the influence of the 'ethno-sociologists' i.e. the work of Marriot and Inden (1977) and of Schneider (1968 and cf. theoretical discussion in Dolgin, Kemnitzer and Schneider eds., 1977; introduction; and overview of the literature by David, 1977:443-509). Recent contributions include Ostor (1971) and Wadley (1975, 1977). These give

priority in their investigations to the discovery of the principles of classification and symbolic meanings as explicated by the people themselves (usually through folk exegeses; etymological referents of key terms such as Śakti = power; or through reference to the precepts established in Hindu scriptures. The renewed forms of attention upon knowledge, ideology and the 'native' system of order is indeed welcome, but as Das (1977a) reminds us, we must be wary of simplifying the relations between thought and reality by merely cataloguing one as the reflection or replication of the other (p.4). The 'native order' can as often as not be nothing other than the folk-model which is only a part (sometimes a distorted part, cf. Lévi Strauss, 1972:282) of the total construct we seek; the complete range of implicit and explicit meanings, forms and themes of social life, and the constants or principles which underlie and frame both knowledge and reality.

2. PATTERN OF STUDY

In January 1977 I undertook two survey-tours of Almora District with a view towards selecting a suitable location in which to base my research activities. Because of the "political sensitivity" of the more northerly parts of the territory I was unable to visit or consider working in any of the ethnographically-uncharted Bhotiya tracts (e.g. the Upper Sarjū, Juhar, Byans, Darma or Chaudans valleys) lying to the north east. Also I wished to avoid working in the Plains - influenced southerly tracts lying south of Almora and Ranikhet and

incorporating Nainital district and the lower courses of the Ramganga and Kośi rivers. Eventually I compromised with the median region lying between Almora town to the south and the territorial boundary with Garhwal to the north west. I chose to base myself on the boundary between the two administrative sub-districts (Parganahs) of Barahmandal and Danpūr. The former includes the administrative centre of Almora town and the latter the temple town of Bageśwār. I decided to alternate my field base between two villages (gram) located on the ridge intervening between two adjoining valleys, Katyūr to the north and Borarau to the south.[1]

The ridge itself broadly divided into two parts a single culture-area defined by dialect and social convention. Villagers within the two valleys tended to confine their choice of marriage partner within this entire area, and they rarely attended temples or festivals located beyond it. The local dialect, Khasparjiyā, although rapidly falling into disuse, was seen by locals as a hallmark of local identity: those speaking the dialects of neighbouring or distant valleys were regarded as outsiders. Khasparjiyā is spoken only in Parganah Barahmandal and the adjoining parts of Danpūr (i.e. in the Katyūr valley) and is believed to be the closest in form of all the sub-dialects of Kumaoni to the language originally spoken by the Khas people, the earliest known Indo-Aryan settlers of the southern Himālaya (Grierson, 1916: Vol. IX. Pt. IV, p.I). An additional attractive feature of the location

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[1] Facing north, the ridge overlooked the entire Danpūr territory, the Katyūr valley, and a broad expanse (some 200 km.) of snow-capped High Himālaya ranging from Kedernāth and Mt. Nīlkanth (21,661 ft.) in the west to the Padchachūli peaks (22,673 ft.) which merge into the (Nepāl) Dhaulagīrī massif further east. Facing south the ridge overlooked upper Borarau and the upper Kośi valley leading south towards Almora town.

was the ease of access it provided to the villages surrounding the most prestigious goddess temple in the district, Ranchula Kot Mandīr, situated between the bazaar villages of Garuḍ and Dungholi. Near to this was also located the ancient temple complex of Bajināth, formerly Karttikkeya, the dynastic seat of the Katyūṛī Rajas, who controlled all of Danpūr and some of Barahmandal prior to the annexation of the territory by the Chand kings in the early Medieval period.

The choice of two villages rather than one was intended as a way of collecting not simply comparative data from two different types of communities, but data which would be broad in scope and could be synthesised to provide a broad overview of culture and social life in the wider region. I was anxious to secure ethnographic material which reflected the culture of the region as a whole, and which could be looked upon as providing a microcosm of tendencies within Kumaoni culture as a whole. My decision to approach fieldwork in this way rather than to isolate myself totally within one village was consistent with two ethnographic imperatives: firstly that my interests lay within the domain of culture rather than 'society' (i.e. micro-level inter-personal relations); and secondly I was aware from a very early stage in my investigations that the villages within Kumaon's compact river valleys were in no sense autonomous self-sufficient socio-economic and cultural islands but interdependent components of wider micro-regions consisting usually of groups of villages, a bazaar and a temple complex. Each village within a micro-region (e.g. upper Borarau, Upper Katyūr, Bageśwār area, Almora and its environs) served the other villages of the region in a number of ways, e.g. by providing priests (purohits and jāgariyās), economic services (artisans, menial workers etc.) and marriage partners). Remaining within one village or one caste group

would have given me a narrow cultural focus and a possibly stultifying and inaccurate picture of the social life and modes of subsistence characteristic of Barahmandal/Danpūr (and by extension Kumaon) as a whole.

The first of the two villages selected was a large community (Pop. 1,300) community of Brahmans and Doms lying at the foot of Pinakeśwār peak (site of the highest and most ancient Śiva temple in the area) situated at the head of Borarau valley, the source of the river Kośi. The village was set apart from the main Almora-Bageśwār road (some two hours walk) and was surrounded by steep hills draped with thick pine forest. The second village chosen was a hamlet (Pop. 85) of Rajputs (with some Doms housed nearby) which lay close to a road junction and bus point where there were some shops, an āśram and a post office. This was also the home of my guide and research assistant, Anand Singh Negi, whose close friendship, local contacts and considerable interpretive abilities, proved an invaluable asset throughout the entire fieldwork period.

The Brahman village was particularly useful for the observation of orthodox life-cycle rites, which are without exception performed in brahminical fashion throughout the central and southern parts of Kumaon (Doms do not use brahmin priests but have life-cycle rites performed by Dom purohits in the brahmanical manner but without agnihotras and Sanskritic text books). While there I also concentrated on collecting background data on economic practices, land holdings, genealogies and kinship terminology, material culture, socialisation, the agricultural cycle and the daily domestic routine. Through the help and guidance of my landlord, Hansa Dutt Kandpal, I was able to build up a range of friendships, contacts and sources of information from within the village.

My second home was conveniently situated for access to the road and forest paths leading into the Katyūr and Borarau valleys. The bazaar and teashops close by functioned as a meeting place and 'communications centre' among the villagers of the region, and this proved to be a useful source for procuring information about the events and ceremonies taking place in the area.

In both villages I lived in the adjoining rooms of my respective landlord's mud and stone two-tiered house, and for the duration of fieldwork adopted the daily routines, eating habits and life-style characteristic of my indigenous Kumaoni peers. Contrary to expectations, this attempt to live on as close terms with my contacts as possible aroused little curiosity; for although most Kumaonis have a stereotyped idea of how a westerner or Britisher should live and behave, it seemed perfectly natural to them (given the purpose of my stay) that I should live in the conventional village way. Unless I was to remain totally alienated (rather than partially alienated) from their trust and the pattern or rhythm of <u>their</u> everyday experience, it was essential that I should attempt to live and behave as a Kumaoni for the duration of my stay. The extent of my endeavour to conform led at times to considerable physical and psychological discomfort; but I mostly thrived on the experience and at the very end I felt able to say to myself that I had not only <u>observed</u> how my informants lived but to an extent had also <u>felt</u> and <u>experienced</u> <u>how</u> they lived.

The process of fieldwork never in fact stopped for the duration of my stay in Kumaon, but the collection of detailed information on myth and ritual traditions necessitated a strict working schedule involving considerable planning of visits to specific informants, villages and ritual occasions. Most of my best formal data on ritual exegesis

and oral tradition was collected on tape and later transcribed, edited and translated with the help of my interpreter, my local language teacher, Mathura Dutt Misra, and with additional local informants. Song cycles from possession ceremonies were usually transcribed with the help of the bardic officiant involved. After a few months in the field I had built up an extensive network of regular informants within the field of my interest, ritual officiation (cf. Chapter 2, Section A.) By constantly re-visiting these people I was able to gain their cooperation and friendship and through this gradually build up a composite picture of the ritual life, officiating techniques, beliefs and traditions characteristic of the area. Through their intercession access was secured to the ceremonies held in temples and clients' houses which I was keen to observe.

Relations with officiants and informants remained good throughout the fieldwork period and I was extended considerable warmth and hospitality at all times. I explained the research as a study of local customs and beliefs which would be written up in the form of a book. This would be made available to the libraries of Kumaon so that later generations of Kumaonis would have detailed access to valued traditions of their ancestors. The idealism of this task, combined with the simplicity of our life-style while in the field and our deference to local convention, led to us being characterised as modern versions of the ancient <u>rsis</u> (seers) and bards responsible for compiling the ancient <u>śastras</u>! Mr Negi also usually explained that I was collecting material on unwritten forms of Kumaon culture for my doctoral thesis and this was generally accepted as a worthwhile and learned endeavour.

Attendance at rituals held during the night (cf. Chapter 4)

was not always easy; often it involved treks of considerable distance in bad light across steep hillsides. Sometimes we had to cross thick forest areas in pitch darkness following arduous paths made treacherous by landslips and heavy rain. Hospitality was always offered at our place of destination, though sometimes we were unable to remain for long after a ritual, on account of the arrangements established by our strict schedule. Some of these 'night-tours' were journeys which local villagers would not themselves risk on account of danger of attack by malevolent spirits, wild animals (bears, cats, rabid jackals and snakes) or the gangs of 'dacũs' (bandits) which were popularly believed to be roaming the area. But the sense of excitement and adventure occasioned by these outings more than compensated for the discomfort which they entailed.

Prior to entering the field I had acquired a working knowledge of basic Hindi but this was to prove largely ineffectual in the field other than in the conduct of ordinary conversation and the acquisition of rudimentary information. My mastery of the language built up considerably in the field but still remained primitive in relation to the kinds of abstract information I was after. All Kumaoni males and most jãti (clean-caste) females speak and understand Hindi these days, and the local dialect has been somewhat relegated to the domestic realm, being spoken among intimates and neighbours, out in the fields or in the confines of the houses. The oral traditions of the hills have become Hindi-ised and like the conversation in the bazaar, bus-points, teashop and temple display a curious syncretism of standard Hindi and local dialect. So my Hindi training proved useful and through it I also built up a minimal vocabulary of Kumaoni words. Interpretation was however wholly necessary for the rapid collection

of field-data in the limited time (and resources) at my disposal. I was fortunate then to have acquired at an early stage the linguistic intercession of Mr Negi whose considerable skills as an interpreter and intimate knowledge of Kumaoni etiquette and custom made a number of short-cuts possible. This arrangement was not without the usual problems and interactional difficulties consequent upon the use of an interpreter in caste society (cf. Berreman, 1972:xxii-xlii), but these were largely outweighed by Mr Negi's own personal attributes, particularly his educated tolerance and open-ness and the esteem and reputation of his family throughout the area.

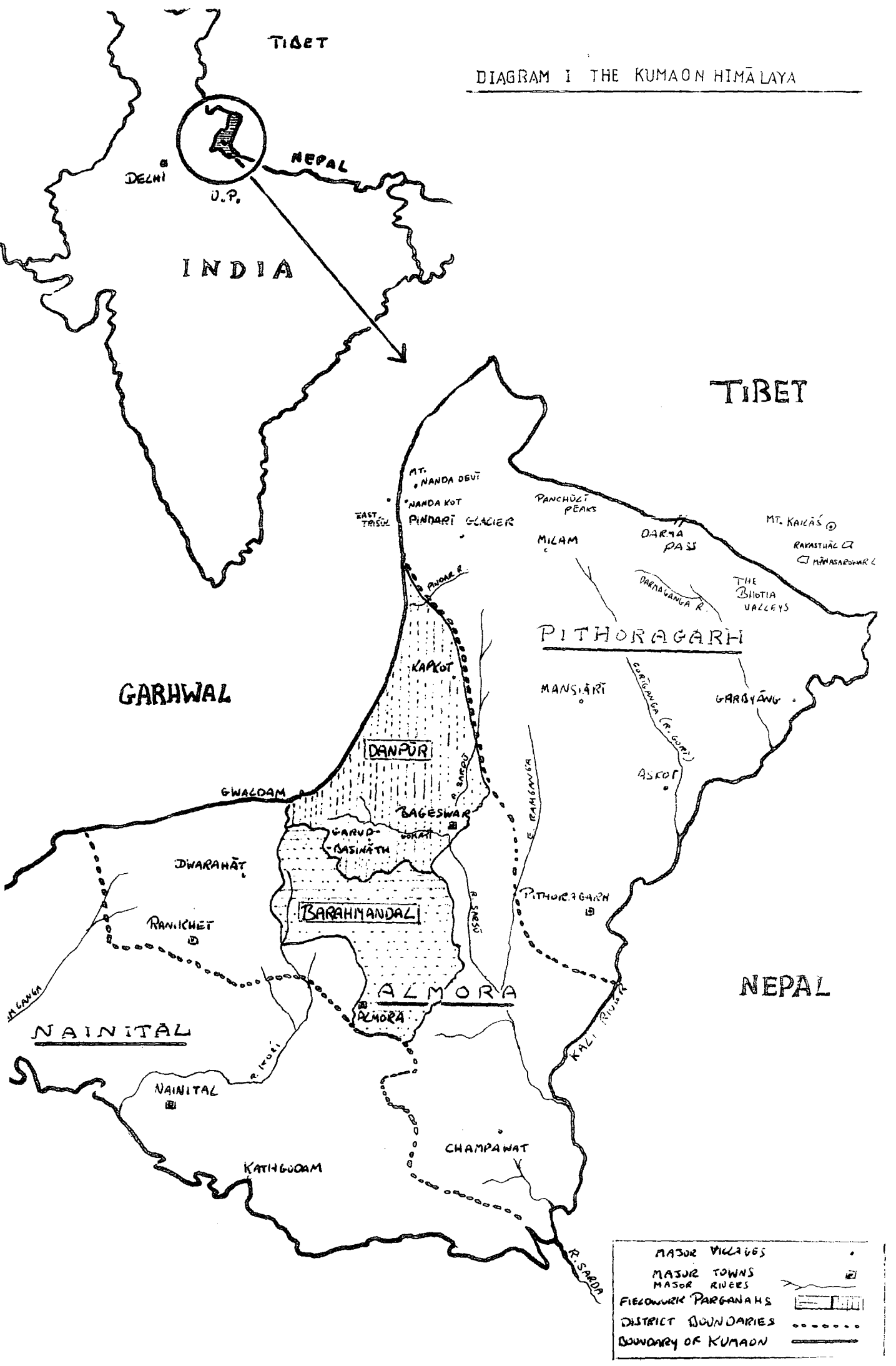
While I was setting up my project in Barahmandal my wife had secured a temporary teaching post at an English-medium school in the hill resort town of Nainital, lying some 110 kilometres to the south. Occasional visits to the school served not only as occasions for rest and (sometimes) convalescence from illness but introduced me to a contrasting but no less interesting dimension of Indian culture. Also with the aid of Mr. Raj Murch, an officer of the school, I was able to cross check terms and information gathered in the field with the servants attached to the institution, many of whom were natives of the Katyūr valley.

B. KUMAON AND ITS PEOPLE

Since I am not concerned in this work with presenting a general ethnography of Kumaoni social life, and as a considerable amount of background information on the region has been already set out in published works (Atkinson, 1973; Sanwal, 1976), I have provided in the pages following only the necessary minimum of background details. Where lengthier notes are provided, as in sections C, D and E following, it is because these bear a direct relevance to the religious, ritual and symbolic data upon which the thesis is focussed.

The name Kumaon or 'Kumuaon' is a modified form of 'Kyunam', the word used by early Tibetans to refer to the sub-Himalayan tracts lying to the south of the Darma and Niti mountain passes (Atkinson, 1973: 29). The Kumaoni people themselves consider the term 'Kūmū' to be the original and correct name for the area: initially this referred to the region immediately surrounding Champawat where the Chand kings founded their dynasty. As the Chands spread their territories and re-sited their headquarters at the site of the present town of Almora, the term Kūmū came to be applied to a much wider area, stretching from the river Kālī in the east to the rivers forming the watershed of the Ramganga in the west. The northern and southern boundaries of the kingdom were later expanded to encompass the Bhotia valleys adjoining Tibet and large sections of the inhospitable Tarai region bordering on the Indian plains. Prior to Chand domination the area thus encompassed was known to its various inhabitants as Khasdes, i.e. the 'country of the Khas' people, tribe or race.

Atkinson derives the term Kūmū from Kurmachal, which refers to the range of high peaks that, lying to the north, tower over the entire


TIBET
DIAGRAM I THE KUMAON HIMĀLAYA
DELHI
U.P.
NEPAL
INDIA
TIBET
MT. NANDA DEVĪ
NANDA KOT
EAST TRISUL
PINDARĪ GLACIER
PANCHŪLĪ PEAKS
MILAM
DARMA PASS
MT. KAILĀS
RAKASTHAL
MĀNASAROWAR
DARMAGANGA R.
THE BHOTIA VALLEYS
PITHORAGARH
KAPKOT
GARHWAL
MANSIĀRĪ
GURĪGANGA (R. GURI)
GARBYĀNG
DANPUR
GWALDAM
BAGESWAR
GARUD-GASINĀTH
DWARAHĀT
RANIKHET
BARAHMANDAL
ASKOT
PITHORAGARH
ALMORA
NAINITAL
NAINITAL
KATHGODAM
CHAMPAWAT
NEPAL
KALI RIVER
R. SARDA
MAJOR VILLAGES
MAJOR TOWNS
MAJOR RIVERS
FIELDWORK PARGANAHS
DISTRICT BOUNDARIES
BOUNDARY OF KUMAON

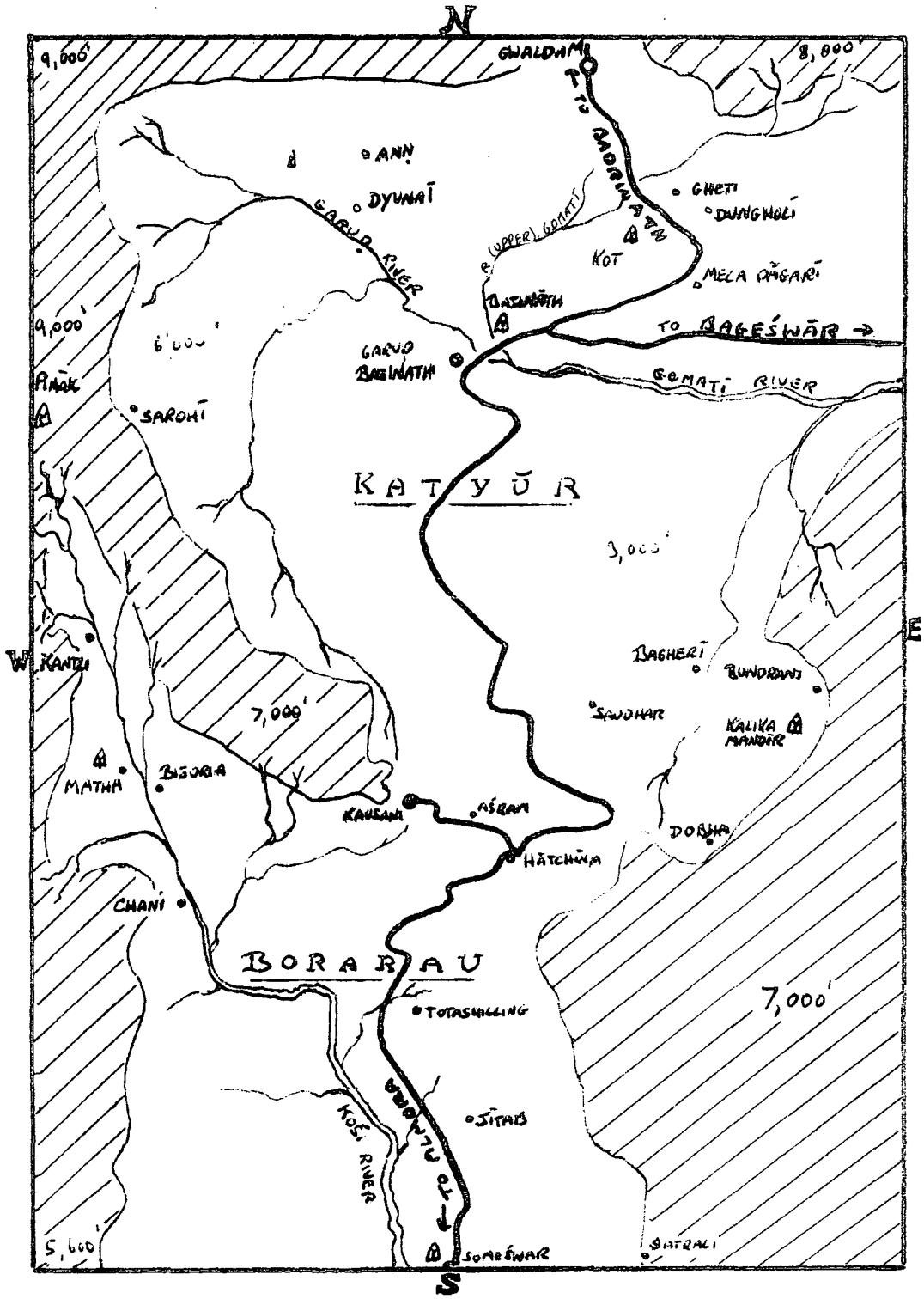


DIAGRAM 2: FIELDWORK AREA, THE KATYŪR AND BORARAU VALLEYS.

FORREST AREAS
CULTIVATED AREA
BUS ROUTE
RIVER
MAJOR VILLAGE

region. Kurmachal is also the name given to a peak lying to the east of Champawat, which according to one myth was so named after it had been "dwelt on for three whole years" by the god Viṣṇu in his tortoise incarnation (Ibid, 1973:506).

Kumaon possesses one of the most moderate climates in the whole of the sub-continent, and the towns of Almora and Ranikhet have long been established as hill resorts which offer sanctuary from the oppressive summer heat of the Indian plains.

Kumaonis divide their year into three major seasons: (a) Rūrī, the hot season, which corresponds to our Spring and Summer but lasts only from mid March until early June; (b) Chaumas, the rainy season which lasts from June until September; and (c) Hyun, the cold season, which lasts from October until the end of February. Rūrī is characterised by clear warm days with occasional rain showers in the evening. Heavy rains fall every day in Chaumas. The hills are enveloped with thick mists and the air is constantly damp and stifling with humidity. The best weather of the year occurs in the first parts of Hyun: the autumnal showers which follow the monsoon soon give way to a succession of clear days and cool clear nights. The two months of September and October (Asoṣ-Kartik) provide Kumaon's harvest period, a time also known by the classical term Śardī (i.e. Autumn). The later months of Hyun are cold but generally clear and dry with some snowfall and rain. Average temperatures for the Almora district vary from 40°F (4.4°C) in January, the coldest month, to 75°F (23.9°C) in June, the hottest month, and to 72°F (22.2°C) in August, the wettest month. The amount of average rainfall calculated for each year varies throughout the area from 90-94" in Nainital to 56-57" in Champawat.

Kumaonis traditionally divide themselves into three broad groups. (a) Khas, Khasi or Khasiya, (b) Asal or Thul Jat, and (c) Doms. The divisions between these groups cut across caste to a certain extent but caste hierarchies prevail within each division and the differences between them are closely aligned to ritual distinctions and the characteristic religious practices associated with each group.

The Khas or Khasiyas regard themselves as the 'original' inhabitants of Kumaon, being descended from the Dasyas' or 'demons' whom the Vedic scriptures depict as a dark race who "despised the rites and ceremonies of the Aryas" (Atkinson, 1973, Vol.3:276-7). This picture is also confirmed in the later scriptures which provide the only mytho-historic source to which Kumaonis can refer to trace their heritage. The Mahābhārata depicts the Khasi as both Dasyus and awesome warriors (Kśatriyas); and the Purāṇas regularly characterise the inhabitants of the Kumaon and Garhwal Himālaya (i.e. the Khasi) as dangerous demi-gods and malevolent spirits (e.g. Siddhas, Charanas, Yakśas, Rakśasas, Daityas, Danavas and Gandharvas). The Rāmāyaṇa awards them a Hindu status, and depicts them as being born from the sweat, urine and excrete-ment of Kamadhenū, the celestial cow (Atkinson, ibid:362-3). However, in the same epic text their unorthodoxy is noted and duly reviled, especially in matters of eating flesh, marrying freely, disregarding caste convention and not observing vedic ritual and sacrifice.

More conventional historic sources list the defining characteristics of the early Khasi as including widespread polyandry (still attested for neighbouring Jansar Bawar, Majumdar, 1962), the worship of non-brahmanical deities and an internal differentiation into four strata: Bamans (priests and cultivators), Jimdar (agriculturalists), Bainsi (buffalo keepers) and Sauks (Shepherds). It seems likely that

this stratification also had a caste dimension though Sanwal (1976) argues that caste was a later introduction by plains immigrants (p.43-62). The social unit par excellance of the Khasi Jimdar (who later adopted rajput status) and the Khasi Baman was the village (gaon), and from this they sometimes acquired their 'clan' nomenclature (gotra).

Of special interest to the present work are the types of deities traditionally worshipped by the agriculturalist Khasi and the manner of worship employed; for many of these beliefs and practices are current in the present day. Atkinson's chronicles, referring to the state of affairs in the period before the turn of the century show that even the great mass of Bamans, or priestly classes, served "Bhairavas, Bhuts and Bhutinis" (1973,Vol 3:430. These were the śaktas i.e. aides and incarnations of the god Śiva and his consort Śakti, and were traditionally worshipped with animal sacrifice, possession and at one time, even 'left-handed' or tantric pūjās (involving ritual intercourse), (cf. Atkinson, ibid:428-9, 448; Sanwal, 1976:65-66). In addition, as is still the case today, they were conventionally assisted by religious fraternities such as the PĪr, Jogi, Sanyāsi, Bairāgi, Gośain and the Kānphaṭā or Nāth, the last of whom acted as priests of all the Śiva and Bhairava temples in the area (Atkinson, ibid:430-1). They also employed musicians from the Dom category who were of inferior status to the Khasi. The latter officiated at sacrifices, performed spirit propitiations and conducted exorcisms (Sanwal, 1976:65-66).

The second division of Kumaoni society is constituted by groups of 'more orthodox' Hindus, termed Asal or Thul Jat i.e.'superior caste' who themselves claim to be recent immigrants to the area from the Indian plains. Indeed it seems likely that many such people, drawn from plains Brahman and Kśatriya gotra, were brought into the hills by

the Katyūri and Chand kings to act as administrators, priests and soldiers for the royal courts and there exists considerable archival and archaeological evidence to support this view (Atkinson, 1973:421-28; Sanwal, 1976:23-27). In time this group is believed to have expanded in numbers due to subsequent influxes from regions as disparate as Bengal, Maharasashtra, Kangra, Gūjerat and Bihar by people wishing to escape the oppressions of the Moghul emperors.

The Thul Jat are believed to have introduced the orthodox caste system with all its purity conventions and pollution taboos into Kumaon. They designated the indigenous Khasis with a śudra status at first, but later modified this as intermarriage with Khasi clans became widespread. Under the Chand kings the Khasi clans were 'officially' raised in status to become clean caste Brahmans and Rajputs. Distinctions between the two groups have been maintained however. Thul Jat are generally considered to be more 'pure' (suddh), and their brahmins more learned. Also they alone are allowed to wear the dhoti (ritual loincloth) to its full length (at the ankle). Khasi brahmins are only allowed to wear a half length dhoti and are generally derogated for maintaining 'impure' practices such as eating meat and ploughing their fields themselves. In many respects the Thul Jat continue to form an elite in Kumaoni society. As converted agriculturalists they invariably form the wealthiest land owning class, and provide most of the district's administrators, teachers and officials. An account of their social and political history is contained in the book written by Sanwal (1976), himself an Asal Brahman.

Regarding religious practices, the Thul Jat are by reputation uniformly orthodox; they are Vaiṣṇavites who use Sanskrit texts such as the Yajurveda for their rituals and study the Purāṇas. It is thought

that they originally 'imposed' their orthodoxy upon the general mass of Khasis, and made very few concessions to the religious practices of the latter (cf. Atkinson, 1973, Vol.3:422-33). According to Sanwal this spirit of orthodoxy has remained true up to modern times. One of the purposes of the present work is to demonstrate that this is not the case, and that supposedly non-orthodox religious beliefs and rituals command the attentions of every section of Kumaoni society..

The Doms or third division of Kumaoni society form the bulk of the untouchable classes of the region, and are generally thought of as the slaves, servants and manual workers of the original Khasi race. Linguistically they are indistinguishable from the latter, but there are cultural differences, for example they do not normally employ brahmins for their life cycle ceremonies. The Doms do not correspond totally to the untouchable classes of the plains, for in Atkinson's view, they are largely artisans not "scavengers" by profession (ibid:446). They are graded by profession into four major groups, which Atkinson maintains are also organised hierarchically in terms of relative purity and impurity. The four groups are as follows:

(1) Kolī (cultivators and ploughmen). Lohārī (blacksmiths), Tamtas (general craftsmen), Orh and Mistri (carpenters and masons).

(2) Rūriya or Barūrī (basketmakers), Chimyāra (woodworkers) Agari (miners), Pahris (messengers and coolies).

(3) Chamār (leather workers), Dhuna (cotton workers) Hāndkiyas (potters).

(4) Bādis (vagrant musicians), Hurkiya (drummers), Dholi (drummers, tailors and cultivators), Dūmjogis (beggars).

It should be emphasised that in modern Kumaon specialised occupations such as the above are less rigidly adhered to than before. Many of the Doms, who refer to themselves by the appelation 'Ram' or 'Das' rather than by their functional title, will turn their hands to most kinds of remunerative work. As a result of legislation many now own lands and it is quite common to find entire villages of these people living from agriculture alone.

Underlying the differentiation between Doms and others in terms of work type, social organisation, belief and religious practice is a caste-based ritual distinction between impure castes (Dom) and pure castes (Bith), (see below p. 59) as noted earlier, this is thought by Sanwal to have been a later evolution in the history of Kumaon; and originated in 'political' and 'feudal' inequalities (1976:21). Whatever the historical accuracy of this viewpoint, and it seems unlikely considering the role of ritual and religious constructs in the classification of Indian society in general (cf. Dumont, 1972) it is clear that cultural differences between Dom and Bith support or reinforce the distinction and provide for a basic relationship of interdependence. In addition to their economic services, certain sub groups of the Doms, as "animists" and priests of the "montane" or earth and mountain deities of the area, have traditionally provided the Bith with essential intercessory services and are duly honoured for this (Atkinson, 1973, Vol.3:446; Sanwal, 1976:65-66).

The Doms themselves claim ancestry from Gorakhnāth, the medieval reformer and tantricist (cf. Briggs, 1973), and their ritual and cultural traditions are closely aligned with those of the Śudra religious fraternities of the Śaivite jogis and pujaris who are attached to the Śaivite and Śakti temple complexes of Kumaon and Garhwal. Prominent among the latter groups are the Kānphaṭā Nāthas who claim spiritual

descent from Guru Gorakhnāth, and will marry only among themselves and the other Śaivite fraternities.

A further, fourth, division of Kumaoni society is provided by the Bhotiyas, a once-independent Bodic-speaking "tribal" group who have now become almost wholly assimilated within the Kumaoni system and way of life. Very little detailed ethnographic information exists on these people. Popular tradition and the accounts of the British administration (Atkinson 1973,Vol 3:112-50, Sherring, 1905) attest to an age-old connexion with 'Khasi' society and a long established residence in four valleys Juhar, Chaudans, Byans and Darma, lying to the north east of Kumaon. The term Bhotiya comes from the Kumaoni name for the district in which these people live, Bhot or Bhoti, which in turn derives from Bod, the original name for Tibet. Despite their linguistic and cultural affiliations with Tibet they are not confused with Tibetans by the Kumaonis who term the latter as Huniyas. The Bhotiyas are also known as Sauk or Saukpa, a nomenclature which derives from their activities as shepherds.

Originally the Bhotiyas were a non Hindu, non Buddhist, casteless society subdivided into exogamous clans and living in villages which bore their various clan names. However, they are now considerably Hinduised, have adopted a division into 'pure' and 'impure' groups (Rajputs and Dumraos), worship Hindu and local Kumaoni gods and have adopted (in the southernmost valleys at least) Hindu marriage practices; they employ brahmins to conduct their life cycle ceremonies. Formerly they engaged in totally transhumant economic activities: the shepherding of sheep and goats between high summer pastures and low winter pastures, and the trading of wool, cloth, salt and carpets between Tibet and India. Transhumance on a large scale came to an end with the closure

of the Tibet border but the Bhotiyas have retained a pastoral or trading way of life on a small scale. Those who have remained in their valleys raise sheep and goats for sale to the army installations in the border regions, while those who have migrated to Kumaon run shops and stalls.

The Bhotiyas traditionally favour the worship of 'non-brahmanical' deities such as Acheri, Śaim, Siddhuwa and Biddhuwa, Ghantakarn and Nanda Devī. They also honour the god Kailās, named after the mountain which houses the Hindu god, Śiva (Sherring, 1905: 100-1). They incarnate their gods in possession ceremonies and offer them animal sacrifices. Certain features of their supposedly indigenous religious practices appear wholly contiguous with the Kumaoni customs described in the present text, such as the use of trees in rituals, and the employment of ritual musicians who use instruments such as the hurki and thālī (cf. Sherring, 1905:100, 101, 104, 118). [1]

In general terms the people of Kumaon are classified by outsiders as 'Pahāṛīs' i.e. "of or belonging to the mountains" (Grierson, 1916:1), a nomenclature with which Kumaonis as a rule concur. This is also the official term for the larger language group of which 'Kumaoni' is a sub-branch and of which there are a number of local dialects including Khasparjiyā. Grierson assimilates Kumaoni with 'Central Pahāṛī'

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[1] Present day Kumaon also includes small populations of outsiders and immigrants e.g. Tibetans, Bhangi, Chamar and Dobhi untouchables from the Plains, Nepāli migrant workers and isolated families of Christians and Muslims. A few stalwarts of the British Raj era, a number of Anglo-Indians and a few more recent westerner migrants live in the townships of Nainital, Almora and Ranikhet.

the dominant language group of the central Himālayas[1]

According to Grierson the Pahāṛī languages have "little connexion with the Pañjābī, Western and Eastern Hindi and Bihāri spoken immediately to the south", but show instead "manifold traces of intimate relationship with the languages of Rajputana" (Ibid). His explanation for this accords with Kumaoni tradition in maintaining that many of the current inhabitants of the region came from the Indian plains. He sees the linguistic resemblances between the two regions as being due to the absorption of Gūjar and Rajput migrants from Rajasthān into the indigenous Khasi populace. The ease with which linguistic and cultural integration took place between the two communities can, he maintains, be explained by the fact that both the Khasi and the Rajasthānis originally entered India by the same route (from the north west) and spoke genetically related Aryan dialects. Thus re-assimilation during later migrations was quickly accomplished and early distinctions were quickly erased.

Grierson also suggests that the Khasi must have abandoned their original Khas language in favour of that of the immigrants. This however seems rather unlikely. Allen (1969:40) points out that Pahāris are linguistically very conservative, a feature demonstrated by the fact that the Pahāri 'language' has maintained a considerable uniformity over a wide area in spite of the fact that it was never written down. The existence of 'residuals' within Pahāri and the appelations Khaskura (the original name for Nepāli) and Khasparjiyā (the dialect of Barahmandal) suggest instead that the people of the area still retain their original Khas dialect and this has only been partially modified

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[1] 'Eastern Pahāri' and 'Western Pahāri' occur in the regions of eastern Nepāl and Himachal Pradesh respectively.

by the immigrant communities. As Allen suggests, the connexion between Kumaoni and Rajasthani is of a more ancient origin and is due probably not so much to the "introduction of common innovations" as described by Grierson, but rather to "the preservation of common original features " (cited from Turner, 1931:XII).

In contemporary Kumaon, however, considerable language modifications have occurred. Hindi is widely spoken in both towns and villages, though even this has assimilated a large vocabulary of alien words drawn from Kumaoni, Nepāli, Urdu and English. The standard unwritten dialect, Kumaoni, although relegated from its former position as the 'official' traditional language of the area differs itself in pronunciation and vocabulary from the localised dialects of the valleys and outlying hills. Of these I am concerned here only with the sub-dialect associated with Parganahs Barahmandal and Danpūr, Khasparjiyā or the "speech of the Khasa subjects" (Grierson, 1916:109). Of all the regional dialects, Khasparjiyā is, according to Grierson, the closest to the original spoken form of Khas.

Pronunciation of Khasparjiyā is more akin to western Nepāli than to Hindi, but a grounding in Hindi grammar and vocabulary provides a useful introduction ot its comprehension. Standard Kumaoni tends to shorten final vowels that are long in Hindi, but Khasparjiyā regularly omits them altogether. Thus admi, the Hindi for 'man' appears as adim in Khasparjiyā, darwaza, the Hindi for 'door' becomes daroj, chela, the Hindi for 'son' becomes chyal, and so on. Among the tendencies which distinguish standard Kumaoni from Khasparjiyā include the tendency of the latter to change the 'e' and 'o' of standard Kumaoni into 'ya' and 'wa' respectively (e.g. ghoro. H. 'horse' into ghwar or dekho. H. 'to see' into dyakh). In cases where the final vowel is not dropped

altogether it is replaced with a 'ū' sound; thus Śivji (H. the god 'Śiva', respectful form) becomes Śivjū.

In most other respects the phonetics and grammar of Khasparjiya resemble the standard Kumaoni dialect (for a detailed description of this, cf. Grierson, 1916:1-189). Most of the terms given in the present text belong to either Khasparjiyā or Hindi. I have thought it unnecessary to distinguish between these in the text, as in almost all cases even obscure ritual referents are usually interchanged with or substituted for the equivalent Hindi term.

According to the 1971 Government of India Census Reports[1] the total population of Kumaon is currently estimated at 1,953,865 persons. This figure comprises the total of estimates for the Districts of Almora (750,038), Pithoragarh (313,747) and Nainital (790,080). The population of Barahmandal and Danpūr is calculated as consisting of some 255,637 persons. There are no estimated figures for the Katyūr and Bora rau valleys, as these are not administrative but geographical regions. However, from the figures given for the corresponding census blocks (Bageśwār, Garuḍ and Tākulā), the populations of these two valleys can be considered to consist of not more than the following number of persons: Katyūr (45,000); Bora rau (18,000).

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[1] The 1971 Census report on Kumaon and its Districts was not publicly available in Delhi at the time of my visit to India. However, these have recently become available and the figures quoted are taken from a correspondence with an officer of the Ministry of Information (15.11.79).

C HISTORICAL NOTES

The details of Kumaon's empirical history bear little relevance to the present study, and reconstructions of these from archaeological, paleographical and official written sources have been already set out by Atkinson(1973,Vol.2:443-698) and Nautyal(1969).However, I have thought it necessary to extract from the available accounts some general particulars, and I have included within these details of the religious inclinations and observances of Kumaon's earlier dynastic overlords, some of whom feature as objects of worship in the oral traditions discussed in the present work.

The river valleys of Kumaon and Garhwal have, since early times, served as routes to the pilgrimage centres of Kedernāth and Badrināth, Mount Kailāś and Lake Mansārowār. Large settlements grew up along these routes. The valleys of the Gori and Alaknanda rivers, for example, were important centres of early civilisation. The first rulers of Kumaon for whom records can be traced, the Katyūri rajas, were originally based in Joshimath on the Alaknanda (in Garhwal). The rise of the dynasty of Katyūr is thought to have marginally preceded the arrival in the area of the Hindu reformer Śaṇkāra Achārya between the eighth and ninth centuries A.D.

Tradition holds that Śaṇkara Achārya was solely responsible for converting the entire population of the area (including perhaps the early Katyüris) from Buddhism back to Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite Hinduism. As part of his conversion process, he sacrificed animals in Buddhist temples in contravention of the central Buddhist principle of ahimsā (non-violence), thus effectively annulling their Buddhist dedication;

and he replaced Buddhist idols with Śaivite idols, dismissed temple priests and replaced them with South Indian brahmins.[1] Finally, he encouraged a revival of pilgrimages to the temples at Badrināth and Kedernāth, thereby establishing a pattern of constant influx into the area by orthodox plains Hindus.

Information about the early years of the Katyūri dynasty, which ruled western Kumaon from the seventh or eighth to the fifteenth centuries, has been preserved in the form of legends, and on inscriptions worked onto copper and stone (cf. Atkinson, 1973:469-481; Gaborieau, 1977:xxvii). Both sources demonstrate the preference among most of the Katyūris for brahmanical forms of worship. Their family deity was Narsingh, like Buddha, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. According to one legend the migration of the Katyūris from their original home in Joshimath (which houses the most important shrine to Narsingh in the hills) to contemporary Bajināth (formerly Kartikkeya) in the more spacious and fertile Katyūr valley, was prompted at the instigation of Narsingh himsef (cf. Gaborieau's version of this legend, 1977:xxv).

One early Katyūri raja, Nunvarata, was renowned for sponsoring numerous performances of yaŋna the brahmanical fire sacrifice. Most of the Katyūris encouraged brahmanism to the detriment of Buddhism; Istoyana Deva, for example, was known as a resolute "enemy of Buddha sravana" (cited from the Bageśwār stone inscription, translation and quotation furnished by Atkinson 1973 :469-481). However, another source, a plate recording a temple grant which was discovered at

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[1] A few Buddha images can still be found in Kumaon and Garhwal, notably the statue of Viṣṇu at Badrināth temple and a carving in the isolated cave temple of Bhubaneśwar. Badrināth temple itself conforms to a Buddhist rather than a Hindu architectural form.

Bhagadpur shows two rajas of the early period 855-895 A.D. (i.e. possibly before Śaṇkāra Achārya) Go Pala and Deva Pala, to be confirmed Buddhists (Atkinson, 1973:486-7). The precise religious affiliations of the early rajas, is thus something of a mystery, and no doubt reflects the state of transition and associated tensions between Buddhism and Hinduism current within the region before the eleventh century. It is clear, however, that the Katyūris laid the foundations for a Hindu orthodoxy in the Katyūr valley at least with the construction of a massive Śaivite temple complex at Bajināth.

Little is known about the actual rule of the Katyūr kings though legends collected by Atkinson (Ibid:493) attest to their tyrannical tendencies and to the fact that these ultimately led to their downfall. The dynasty's history appears to be one of slow decline until the twelfth century by which time their royal supremacy had become wholly nominal (see below). During their time, the Katyūris ruled Kumaon by means of an organised system of territorial divisions (mandals) and sub-divisions (thoks) administered by a royal servant or mandlik. Four mandals constituted a rajvati which was governed by a rajbar who usually belonged to the royal family. Clan leaders (thokdars) and village heads (pradhāns) were given military and juridical responsibilities within their respective domains, the clan territory (thok) and village (gram). This system of local government lasted well into the medieval period and some of the titles are still retained (e.g. mandal in 'Barahmandal'; pradhān and gram).

It is known that between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries all of Kumaon and much of Garhwal was ruled over by a foreign dynasty, the Malla Rajas of Dotī in (now) Western Nepāl). The Mallas exercised domination indirectly through the medium of local Khas "rajas"

termed mandalikas who were probably merely courtiers or agents of their Malla overlords. Evidence of this early Nepâli invasion and some indication of their syncretistic religious affliations is provided by two local temple inscriptions.

The first of these sources states that a raja of Dotī, Krachulla Deva, had apparently "destroyed the kings of the demolished city of Kartipura ... (or Karttikeyapura, home of the Katyūris) ... and established ... (his)... right therein, inspected the lands bequeathed by its former kings, all of which, with their revenues are all now made over to the (homage of) Śri Baleśwara, the sole Rudra" (Atkinson, 1973 :516).

The second source shows that another raja of Dotī, Aneka Malla, had subdued territories as far west as Kedernāth (Ibid:512). All the Dotī kings were apparently "devout buddhists" who also revered the Hindu pantheon having a special regard for Śiva (Rudra), the cow deity Kamdhenū and for brahmins. There is no evidence to suggest what the religious orientations of the local Khasi chiefs were at this time but a certain contiguity with the inclinations of their overlords can be safely assumed.

This was also the germinal period of the tantric movement which tradition holds to have spread across North India as the result of the labours of the legendary reformer Guru Gorakhnāth. The latter figures prominently in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and has long been regarded as the 'patron saint' or religious father of Nepāl. It would also appear that the tantric arts, "those marvellous combinations of the ritual of the worship of the female energies, necromancy and mysticism, were held in high repute" in the royal courts of the Dhotī kings (Atkinson, 1973, Vol 3:518) at this time. In addition, one temple inscription contains references to an officiant of tantra who is being

offered a land grant by the king in return for his (apparently considerable) sacerdotal and spiritual services. Atkinson translates this as follows:

> "The great king in council with his principal courtiers ... having determined with his friends and ministers and well considered the matter as in duty bound has given the aforesaid grant to the logician, tantrika, counsellor, saintly, forebearing, prudent, renowned in compositions of prose verse and poetry in this age of Kali, the poet, connoisseur of the purport of words, skilled in the calculation of horoscopes and the like, the son of Nanda, conversant in augary and renowned in the world" (Atkinson, 1973 :517).

While the Katyūris were declining in power, and prior to the Nepāli invasion, an Asal group of Plains Hindus entered the region known as Kālī-Kumaon in the south west and there established a royal dynasty. These were the Chand Rajputs. They built a fort at Champawat and a number of temples. They brought with them a number of Plains brahmins of the Asal Pande, Joshi and Bisht clans to act as priests and administrators. By the fifteenth century the Asal Chands began to expand their initial territorial foothold in southern and sub montane Kumaon, and as the power of the Dotī overlords declined they annexed the more northerly tracts of the Kośi and Sarjū valleys. As they progressed northwards the Chand armies, originally drawn from the plains Asal Rajput classes, began to intermarry with the local Khasi population. By approximately 1450 A.D. they were powerful enough to drive out the Malla Rajas of Dotī.

By 1593 A.D. the Chand dynasty had moved their headquarters from Champawat to Khagmara in central Kumaon and re-named it Almora. By 1670 they had destroyed the remnants of the Katyūri dynasty and added Katyūr to their territories. With the annexation of outlying districts such as Sor and Askot and by obtaining control of the Bhotia trade passes and pilgrimage route (for Kailāś) leading into Tibet, the

Chands effectively consolidated the territory now known as Kumaon.

The Vaiṣṇavite Chands retained the orthodox Hinduism of their Plains origin and according to Sanwal (1976) superimposed this over the Hinduism of the Khasis as a superior religious regime underlined by caste distinctions. They did, however, concede the Khasis a twice-born status even though the latter clearly did not absorb the orthodoxies of their rulers (25-32).

The reigns of the Chand Rajas were characterised by rapid successions (thirteen Chand Rajas ruled between 1473 and 1621: cf. Atkinson, 1973:493-554) and by much dynastic infighting leading to the occasional fratricide. There were also numerous wars with rebellious Khasi hill chieftains and several unsuccessful campaigns of conquest directed against the rajas of neighbouring Dotī and Garhwal. Kumaon suffered periodic invasions by bands of moslems but the moghuls never established a proper foothold in the area (leaving Kumaon relatively free from Islamic influence) and the Moghul emperors were content to receive minor forms of tribute from the hill dynasties.

In 1790 the reign of the Chands was put to an end by an invasion of Nepālis led by the Gorkha family, an upland dynasty who had recently established themselves on the Nepāli throne. The Gorkhalis took advantage of dissension within the Chand family to play off one faction against the other. In this manner they subdued an unstable Kumaoni army and established themselves at Almora. The Nepālis ruled Kumaon with great severity, they appear to have regarded their new subjects as little better than animals; imposing crushing taxes and enslaving those who became impoverished (cf. Atkinson, 1973:623-629). They did not interfere however with the religious predilections, institutions and caste system of the Kumaonis, and local temples remained

intact and public and private ceremonies continued to be held.

With the arrival of the British and the Anglo-Nepalese war of 1814-6 leading to the ejection of the Gorkhalis from Kumaon and Garhwal, we enter the sphere of modern history. As Gaborieau notes, "The political conditions which had prevailed for more than a millenium were thus transformed. Except for the autonomous principality of Tehri Garhwal, the small kingdoms with their courts and their warriors were destroyed." (1977:XL). The British introduced a new centrallised system of administration with civil, legal and military officers posted throughout the province under the charge of District Commissioners. This system prevailed until Independence (1947) and was responsible for a wide spectrum of changes which, however, do not appear to have unduly undermined the religious ideology and forms of worship traditional to Kumaon's Hindu population. That this has been the case is undoubtedly due to the laissez-faire attitude which the British adopted here, as elsewhere, with regard to traditional culture. Indeeed, it has been argued that the influence of the British effectively reinforced certain dimensions of Kumaoni traditionalism. Sanwal (1976) points out that the abolition of local caste-based autocracies in the village-areas and townlands led to an increasing emphasis on the ritual dimension of inequality: the superior castes (Thul Jat) were no longer in a wholly superior socio-economic position and were forced to strengthen ritual distinctions and foster stricter ritual orthodoxy among themselves in order to preserve differentiation from the lower Khasi and Dom groups (p.187). In the towns, the Thul Jat have, however, managed to re-emerge as Kumaon's administrative elite, and through education and 'progressive' management of resources have been able to maintain a certain distance from the low-status physical labour and menial agricultural work associated with the lower castes(cf. Sanwal, 1976:185-197). Also, the

acquisition by Doms of the right to own land has, it would appear, led not only to an intended re-allocation of resources and some status enhancement, but it has also strengthened caste consciousness and led (in the towns, at least) to open competition and conflict between previously interdependent caste groups (cf. Sanwal, 1976:187-9).

The only primary sources available on the early rule of the British are those written by the British administrators themselves. They at least considered their regime to be characteristically fair and tolerant and in their records compare themselves favourably against their Nepāli predecessors. This self-congratulatory attitude is well illustrated in the following rather pompous extract from Atkinson's Gazetteer (first published in 1883):-

> "The history of Kumaon under the British ... show the means whereby a peculiar people, sunk in the utmost depths of ignorance and apathy, the result of years of oppression and misrule, have been induced by the patient and intelligent efforts of a few Englishmen to commence again their national life. They show how whole tracts where formerly the tiger and the elephant reigned supreme have now yielded to the plough, and waters that not long since went to feed the deadly swamps are now confined in numerous channels to irrigate the waterless tracts which increasing population brings into cultivation. The history of Kumaon under the British is one that will amply repay the study and assist us in understanding the principles on which western civilisation can be best introduced among our many half-civilised Indian communities" (1973:685).

British rule did, however, undermine and transform, directly and indirectly, whole areas of traditionalism or "national life". Gaborieau has noted, for example that the <u>bharau</u> category of bardic repertoire (cf. Chapter 2), largely made up of stories and songs celebrating the feuds, loves, glories and achievements of the local dynasts, became frozen with the collapse of the dynasties which provided their inspiration (and the mode of employment for many bards). As no new royal names appear in the list of divinities celebrated in the <u>bharau</u>

(Gaborieau, 1977:XL), the "historical" repertory of the bards contain only reference to events which are said to have occurred before the eighteenth century. However, personal observations reveal that these have been largely supplanted (during bharau recited in jūnar ceremonials) with references to current events and to pan-Indian "divinities" such as the sannyāsic reformers, Gandhi and Ramakṛṣṇa, and prominent recent political figures like Nehru and Mrs Gandhi! But in large part, attention is focussed on the ancient heroes, some of whose status as divinities appears to have been embellished rather than reduced by the narrowed range of the repertoire and the lapse of the flesh and blood dynasts.

In other areas of traditional life the British put an authoritative stop to a number of medieval practices including: the sale of children (1815), of wives and widows (1836), and of Rajput household slaves and Dom agricultural slaves. They also abolished human sacrifice in Kālī and Durga temples and instituted jurisdiction for the trial of criminal offences including murder, homicide, robbery and treason - offences remarkable in these times for their apparent rarity (Atkinson, 1973:685). The trial and execution of adulterers by the aggrieved kin unit, a fundamental source of feuding in the territory, was made a punishable offence; and another local system of ritual justice, trial by ordeal with fire, was made illegal. Finally, it is clear that the British regularised the local systems of appointing and creating the succession of priests to Kumaon's temples; in effect they merely formalised and committed to statutes the arrangements and appointments which had been originally established by the Chand and Doti dynasts.

Since British times Kumaon has been divided into districts (Almora, Nainital and Pithoragarh) administered by commissioners responsible to the state government of Uttar Pradesh. The British hill stations

of Almora, Ranikhet and Nainital are centres of state and private education, and as the nucleii of the region's communications and services network have expanded considerably under the post-Independence administration. With the building of new roads for military purposes, bus-routes now traverse almost all of Kumaon's valleys and with these have come a number of commercial ventures: fruit growing, cash cropping of potatoes, de-forestation, and tourism. However, apart from the towns, the tourist centres (Nainital, Kausani, Ranikhet) and military enclaves, much of Kumaon has preserved, outwardly at least, its traditional rural aspect. Male Kumaonis work in the towns and the Plains to support their extended families who remain based in the ancestral villages observing age-old agricultural techniques, forms of worship and social organisation (e.g. the division of labour between men and women).

Some external characteristics have, however, changed, most notably in the appearance of modern western-style dress among younger Kumaoni men (but not among women), and the decline of local artisanship among the Doms and Bhotiyas as a result of competition from cheaper plains imports. Programmes of agricultural modernisation have been underway in Kumaon since the 1950's, and in recent years the Indo German Agricultural Development Authority (I.G.A.D.A.) has been encouraging local farmers to grow new wheat and rice strains, and to purchase new artificial fertilisers and imported varieties of cattle and poultry. With the exception of experimental farms run by particular individuals or government agencies these developments have not as yet permeated into the agricultural regimes of the hill villages. The reasons for this are various: financial (development is expensive and risky); ritual (white soya beans, unlike black soya beans, have no use in ritual; buffaloes are more 'sacred' than cattle); and social (changes undermine

the fragile dependency operative between castes and between men and women). But underlying all of these can be found the resistance to change characteristic of a rural community whose inherited culture and religious ideology is dominated by a drive towards consonance between the different levels of experience and knowledge: the social, the physical and the ideological. Change in a fragile economy with limited resources threatens because it introduces dissonance, the possibility of a dislocation in the interdependency between domains, and those changes which are fully absorbed are those which can be quickly regulated by the principle of cultural consistency.

D. PATTERNS OF SOCIAL ORGANISATION

Social organisation in Kumaon is the subject of Sanwal's study (1976) and I shall not attempt to add to the detailed accounts contained in his work. A few brief details essential to the background of my own work are however set out here.

In general the villages of Kumaon conform to the Hindu pattern in that they consist of caste groups organised along hierarchical lines and engaged in a whole series of mutually supportive ritual and economic activities (cf. Dumont, 1972:57). The word used locally for caste is jāti. By discovering a man's jāti it is possible to locate him within one of the four varna categories (Brahman, Kśatriya, Vaisya and Śudra), to determine his exogamous marital unit (gotra), and in some cases even his home district or village of origin. There exists also the local division into Bith (clean castes) and Dom (unclean castes). The latter do not have jātis but are named after their economic function or, more generally these days, by the appellation 'Rām'.

It is rare for a village to contain more than three distinct jāti (a combination of Brahman, Rajput and Dom). Unicaste villages are also common (mostly Jogi or Rajput; Brahman villages generally required a core of Doms to plough and perform other menial potentially polluting tasks). By far the majority of villages in Kumaon are largely Rajput in composition. All the castes are dependent to some extent on agricultural activities for their living, and the division of traditional tasks appears somewhat secondary to this: a brahmin would not be able to subsist alone by the performance of priestly duties

(purohit gīrī) and the average Dom would (unless he were working for the government in the forests or in construction of roads etc) combine skilled labour with farmwork.

Kumaonis are in general very conservative with regards to caste. Ritual distinctions are generally upheld, especially in the home territory. The usual form of purity and pollution beliefs and practices characteristically upheld among orthodox Hindu communities in other parts of Uttar Pradesh (cf. Dumont, 1972:173-90) are observed in Kumaon. As elsewhere, these distinctions underlie the separation, interdependence and hierarchical ordering operative between and among the Bith Jātis and the Dom and Bhotiya sub-groups.

As regards kinship pattern, the Pahāri system conforms to the North Indian or Indo-Aryan type, which has been well documented by other writers (cf. Dumont, 1966, Berreman,1972). The Bhotiyas of the easternmost valleys, Darma and Byans, used to practice cross cousin marriage, though this is now less common due to Hinduisation and integration within the Pahāri community. Descent among Pahāris is patrilineal and residence is patrilocal; exogamy is the rule for village, clan and family, but endogamy is stipulated with regard to caste, i.e. marriage is always contracted btween equivalent jāti. Polygamy is less common than formerly; secondary marriages are usually contracted without the appropriate vedic ceremony. Among Brahmans, the children of secondary marriages have slightly less status (i.e. ritual status in the performance of priestly duties, and also status in terms of general prestige), than the children of primary marriages. The supposed characteristics of Khasi marriage as listed by Joshi (marriage as a secular transaction, without ceremony or vedic ritual;

divorce by consent and remarriage of divorcees and widows) only have relevance in contemporary Kumaon with regards to secondary marriages (1929:50). A man will rarely take a widow or divorcee as his first wife, and remarriage of widows is uncommon. There is, in any case no 'Khasi' kinship system, as distinct from the brahmanical system, merely an occasional relaxation of formalities (such as in the case of secondary marriages, or where extreme poverty militates against large scale ceremonials). (Cf. also Berreman, 1972:148; 54).

The Pahāri kinship terminology is 'descriptive' in character, though some of the terms vary in accordance with influence by Hindi speakers. Two of the Bhotiya groups (the Darma and Byans) show evidence of 'prescription' in their terminologies, and Allen has analysed the Byansi type as an example of complex symmetry (1975:80-94).

The extended patrilocal family (sanyuki pariwar) is the focal unit of socio-economic organisation in Kumaon. This is defined by a series of mutually supportive obligations and traditions including: attachment to a common property; joint exploitation of economic resources, and the joint worship of ancestral deities. The family usually comprises a group of brothers, their wives, their unmarried daughters and their married sons. Sometimes a common roof and common hearth are shared by the extended patrikin, but it is more usual for the individual natal units to occupy houses adjacent to one another. This leads to the construction of 'house lines', rows of houses straddling village hillsides, which is very common in Kumaon. The relational distance between successive generations of the same family is often expressed in terms of spatial distance. Thus distantly related agnatic groups will occupy separate rows of houses situated either to the front or the back of the original unit, or in another part

of the village altogether. In mixed caste villages, Dom houses are generally located at the lowest part of the village (most villages are built on hillsides) or outside the main village altogether. Doms usually have their own watering places and in Brahman villages their own temples or shrines.

The sexes are rigidly divided in Kumaoni society. There is little evidence of the public familiarity between sexes or the female independence characteristic of parts of Garhwal (Berreman, 1972: 173) Nepal and the Bodic regions. Even among the immigrant Bhotiyas, who formerly conceded considerable equality and freedom of movement to their womenfolk, the prevailing Kumaoni practice of separation and sexual inequality now holds sway. The practice of veiling from 'in-laws' elder to ego (cf. Sharma, 1978) is found among all sections of society, but is most characteristic of the women belonging to the highly orthodox Thul-Jat group. In houses containing more than one room (a typical bazaar dwelling has only one room) specific sections are allocated for use by women (usually the left hand rooms as seen from an orientation facing the house and the ground or lower floor), while other sections are reserved for the men (usually the front and right hand upper floor rooms). When a Pahāri man is receiving guests he will take them to the front room on the second storey: if a woman wishes to participate then she will either sit in the doorway or in the next room.

A rigid separation of the sexes is also apparent in the domains of work, recreation and religious worship. The agricultural workload of the typical Kumaoni community is typically divided into two categories 'man's work' (adim kī kam) and 'woman's work' (orut kī kam). Male tasks, it would seem, are those concerned primarily with the 'preparation

and 'fertilisation' of the land and the animals: men build the terraced fields, dig irrigation ditches, control the flow of water into these ditches, plough and harrow the soil, sow the seeds; arrange for animals to be served and engage in all the necessary transactions involving animals. Conversely, female tasks are those which involve processes of 'nurturing' and 'production'. Women perform all the weeding and harvesting (though the men assist the women in threshing and winnowing: activities which 'separate' seeds); they prepare the grains for storing and for cooking; and they feed and milk those animals kept under the house (in the goṭh). Tasks performed outside the village area can be undertaken by either men or women, such as grazing animals in the forest, collecting wood or forest fodder, or going to the bazaar for supplies. Such activities however are never undertaken by mixed groups, but always by parties of either men or women.

In the domains of recreation and orthodox or routine religious worship a similar segregation persists. Women sing and beat small drums in groups at weddings and birth ceremonies. Male recreationary activities such as singing kirṭan (holy songs), playing games and smoking are prohibited to females. It is common to see groups of men sitting gossiping in the fields or outside the houses, unusual to see women involved in like manner, and unheard of to see men and women sitting together except on special ritual occasions (cf. Chapters 4 and 5).

Women will visit temples in small groups, and if there is a festival or other occasion taking place then they will sit apart from the males present. Similarly men will attend the temple either individually or in all-male groups, unless a pūjā is to be performed

which requires the presence of man and wife. All the cooking done at religious feasts or festivals will be undertaken by men, whereas most home cooking is performed by women. Eating whether at home or at a feast is also segregated. The men will be fed first in strict status order, and women will be fed afterwards.

The functional and classificatory division between the sexes in Kumaon is underpinned by the asymmetrical relationship operative between the divisions. Women are generally considered inferior to men, an attitude commonly found over much of North India (cf. Altekar, 1938). Wives are brought in from the outside and represent a potential threat to family stability, and in consequence are afforded a lowly status hedged in with numerous restrictions and behavioural taboos. Similarly daughters are considered as units of exchange and their inferiority in comparison with their brothers is again demarcated by a number of ritual and behavioural sanctions. Women in general are thought to represent a danger to ritual status; female sexuality and menstruation are considered highly polluting.

However among other North Indian communities it is unusual to come across the extreme forms of female subordination that one finds in Kumaon. The lot of the woman here is comparable to that of the Harijan and she is often treated like a household slave by her menfolk. (cf. Pant, 1935:189-91). Personal observation convinced me that women work harder and for longer hours than the men. And in general they receive very little in the way of compensation; the odd trinket or new skirt and a visit to a Mela. The lot of an unmarried woman is even worse; she brings shame upon her family, and is not entitled to orthodox funeral rites and cremation should she die unmarried. Barren women are considered as sources of ill luck and misfortune. Among the lower

castes such women often become vagrants. Suicide among women, especially newly weds, is extremely common (there were two in my immediate district during the course of my fieldwork, and two other unsuccessful attempts), but unknown among men.

By comparison, even in neighbouring Garhwal where the women also perform the largest share of the agricultural workload, the women retain certain equalities, (such as being able to eat simultaneously with their menfolk) and freedoms (Berreman, 1972:169-75). Similarly, among the Darma and Byans Bhotiyas and among the pastoral Gaddis (of Himāchal Pradesh) women are awarded a measure of respect and equality unknown in Kumaon (Personal communication from Peter Phillimore). In Nepāl and the Punjab it is common to see men and women working together in the fields, with the men performing tasks such as planting and weeding which a Kumaoni male would consider improper.

E. THE AGRICULTURAL CYCLE

There are three basic types of crop cultivation practised in the valleys of Katyür and Borarau. These are known as:

(a) katil, the farming of the dry, stony and steep uplands adjacent to the pine forests.

(b) upraon, the farming of the terraced, non irrigated tracts lying below the katil areas.

(c) talaon, the farming of the terraced irrigated areas at the valley bottoms.

The staple crops of the region are rice which is grown as an autumn crop (kharif), and wheat which is grown as a spring crop (rabi). Both are eaten throughout the year. Rice is generally taken in the morning and wheat (in the form of unleavened breads) is taken in the evening. The stems and chaff of both crops, but particularly rice, are valued as animal fodder.

The first month of the agricultural year is Chait (March-April). During this month the wheat which was sown after the previous year's kharif is harvested along with small quantities of barley and millet. Women cut the stalks of the wheat plants through the middle, bundle the tops and stack them outside the homsteads to dry. After a period of drying they are loosed and placed on rush mats on the khali (threshing floor). Threshing is performed by both men and women; bullocks are led around the platform and the trampling of their feet separates the grains. At the end of threshing the grain is collected in baskets and winnowed (with the help of the spring breeze). Again this is a joint activity. The grain is placed in the sunshine for further drying and browning; then it is prepared for storage. Young women trample a mixture of wood and cow-dung ash into the grain

to fend off decay and attack by insects, and it is packed into boxes or baskets lined with a mixture of red clay and cow dung. When flour is required for household use the grain is freshly ground at one of the village watermills (pancheki).

The above processes continue into Vaiśakh (April-May) until the wheat and barley harvest is complete. Cattle are put out in the fields to graze on the stubble. Then the ground is covered with dry forest pine needles which are fired, thus leaving a thick residue of ash. Wheat is largely a talaon and upraon crop and will not grow well on katil land. The latter is left to fallow during the winter and during the wheat harvesting period will be sewn with coarse grains such as madwa (millet), chana (gram), urut and bhat dal (pulses) Following germination the coarse grain shoots are thinned and weeded either by a comb plough drawn with bullocks or else by groups of women working with their hands. These will be harvested in the autumn after the rice crop.

During Chait and Vaiśakh (April-May) some of the best talaon lands are selected as murseries for rice plants, and are carefully irrigated and manured for this purpose. Some tracts of talaon and upraon lands are selected after ploughing for planting with vegetables and condiments. The most popular vegetables grown are radish (mūlī), carrot (gajar), pumpkin (tumri), melon (petha), cress (halim), lettuce (kāhū), tomato (baigan), beet (chaukandar), onion (pyāj), cabbage (gobi), potato (ālū) and marrow (kaddhū), and finally a root which is poisonous in its raw state, gaderī. After their harvesting in the autumn these vegetables are stacked on rooftops to dry, then stored for use throughout the year. Vegetables are eaten as subjī, a spicy side dish served with rice and dal in the morning, and as the main dish, eaten with roti (flat breads) in the evening.

The most popular condiments are coriander (dhaniya), caraway (jira), cumin (jira), turmeric (kachūr), ginger (ada), green root (saunth), dried root (adrak), chilli (lalmirchī), mustard seeds (rai and sarson) and basil (kalitulsī). These are used to make the spice mixture (masàla) which flavours vegetables, dal and chutneys. Certain condiments, like rai and sarson, and certain vegetables like mūlī and kaddhū have extensive ritual uses. Some 'heating' condiments and vegetables, like garlic and onions, are never used in ritual and not eaten by brahmins.

Fruit is also cultivated on a small scale in the house lines and hillsides. Fruits are not used usually for daily consumption but as gifts to guests, for making chutneys, and as offerings in rituals. The most popular are those with white flesh, such as the sour lime (nībū) the lemon (jamira), the sweet lime (miṭha nībū), orange (kaunla), peach (arū), apricot (chaurī), pear (nak), apple (seo), pomegranate (naspal) almond (badam), walnut (ākrot), fig (pipal) and cherry (padam). The banana fruit (kela) of the plantain tree is widely grown though considered inferior to imported varieties.

The central agricultural activity of the year is undoubtedly the planting of the rice (dhan) crop during Jeth (May - June). Large tracts of talaon and upraon lands are ploughed by the village men or their servants. These are then irrigated by the removal of the stone and mud walls which separate each field from the network of irrigation channels. Once the water has penetrated the surface the men re-plough it and break the clods with a wooden leveller (maya) drawn by bullocks. Well decomposed manure is strewn over the entire area (this has been piled up at the sides of the fields by the women during the fallow winter months). Brown rices (mith and rasiya) are sewn directly into these fields and into the katil fields above the irrigated areas. The

superior white rices (sal, kirmuli and basmati) have been previously nurtured from seeds sewn in well irrigated rice nurseries in the month of Chait. The shoots must now be transplated into the talaon and upraon fields.

Transplantation (ropai) is performed as a ritual (rithi). An auspicious day for transplanting is fixed either by an astrologer or a diviner (pūchar). Two days before the fixed date the men flood the fields. On the fixed day groups of women assemble at the fields and are given a handful of rice to eat by the field owner's wife. The goddess (Devī) is invoked and the earth is offered a tilak (offering of rice seeds mixed with vermillion paste). Similar offerings are made to the gods, then to the foreheads of the women, the men, the ploughing bullocks, the ploughman, plough, drummer (hurkiya) and drum (huruk). Ritual gifts of money termed daksina are offered to the ploughman and the drummer. The ploughman and drummer in effect receive payment for their services, whereas the women who are either relatives or friends of the field owner's wife work on an exchange basis. Payment is in kind and in cooked meals which are given during the ropai period. All those who participate must be in good health, must not be disfigured in any way nor suffer from abdominal pains (in case the rice crop itself 'miscarry' or encounter growing difficulties) and must be in a state of relative purity. Breach of these regulations can, it is believed, harm the rice harvest. The activities of the ropai usually begin at the commencement of daylight and last until early evening, with only a break in the middle of the day. The owner (i.e. the leading member of the land-owning patrilocal unit) does not participate in the ropai acitivites, but remains in the household, observing a routine identical with that of the Kumaoni couvade : he dresses in a

ritual loincloth and remains inactive throughout the day, observing a strict fast on food and drink (except water) until the evening.[1]

Following the application of tilak to the ground and the invocation of Devī, the drummer calls upon the gods for their blessing with the following invocation:

> "O gods, the pearl-like rice of these fields will be offered to you as a cooked offering. O harvest gods of this village be favourable throughout, and grant a shady day without rain for the setting of the plants. Give the transplanter and the leveller this shade in equal measure. Let the ploughman and the bullocks be endowed with equal speed. Give quickness to the hands and let the seedlings suffice for all the fields, O five named god."[2]

This is followed by a general invitation to the gods to attend the ropai celebrations. This recitation describes the ritual on a grand scale, relating how "twenty two pairs of bullocks are engaged in ploughing, six score of women in transplanting and ten score of men in puddling". He prays that the gods will ensure a magnificent crop by remaining present throughout, and requests that the stalks of the plant become precious like "silver" and the husked rice precious like "gold" (Ibid).[3]

In ropai itself the rice shoots are gathered in bundles and planted by the women in lines at intervals of a few inches. The women walk forwards bent to the waist in a line, which sometimes stretches from edge to edge of the narrow Kumaoni fields. They are led by the hurkiya who walks backwards, beating his drum and reciting songs which

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[1] For interpretations, cf. Chapter 5.

[2] Collected by S. D. Pant, 1935:113-4.

[3] Ibid.

celebrate passionate and tragic love (dhoko), most notably the Maḷuṣāhi, a popular local epic depicting unfulfilled tragic love between a Pahāri king and a Bhotiya girl; and various romantic extracts from Hindu epics such as the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa. At the end of each verse the hurkiya's final line is repeated in refrain by the women.

At the end of each day's ropai the hurkiya recites a benediction in which he requests that the field owner, his family and all the participants, including the bullocks, will lead full and active lives.

The hurkiya's function during the ropai (termed hurkiyabole) is of special interest. He clearly acts as a medium between the people and their gods to ensure a plentiful rice supply. It is clear that the ropai is a sacred activity, and that rice itself is considered as a crop more sacred than wheat or the other grains (being linked particularly with the life, love and death cycle of the goddess). The whitest rice with the largest grain is considered to be the most sacred and consequently the most nutritious and purifying. It is a śuddh (pure) food and is related analogically to cow's milk as a vegetable equivalent of the latter. It is eaten in the mornings to confer an auspicious start to the day, and it is eaten in rituals such as the nāmkarān (or name-giving ceremony) which celebrate the beginnings of a new life. Hence the care with which it is itself planted and nurtured.

The hurkiya is often a jāgariyā, an officiant about whom I shall have more to say later. For the performance of his art he dresses in his ritual ~~gear~~ garments, consisting of a long white dhoti and a turban with a long tail leading down his back.

During the monsoon months of Asaṛh, Śravan and Vhadon the only activity performed in the fields while the rice crop is maturing

is the gorai or weeding. The most troublesome weeds are those which exhaust the soil; one of these, pahār is a variety of rice which has gone wild and is indistinguishable from the main rice crop itself. The gorai is performed totally by women who work in the fields from early morning to late evening entirely unprotected from the incessant rain and the ravages of leeches and other insect pests.

The two months which follow the rains, Asoṣ and Kartik (mid September to mid November) are largely devoted to the harvesting of the rice crop. Generally the brown rices grown in the upland katil tracts are harvested first. The millets (madwa and jhangora) and the other course grains such as bhutta and mungari (maizes), paphar (buckwheat), chua and ramdhāna (red and yellow amaranths) are left along with the pulses (bhat or soya, gahat or horse gram, mung and masūr) in the ground until the rice harvest is over.

The processes of harvesting and grain preparation can be set out in a series of stages, as follows:

(1) Dhan katai ('cutting the rice'): Groups of women cut the plants at the base of the stem using their left hands to hold the stalks. Cutting is done with a small sickle (datula) held in their right hands.

(2) Thapura (drying): The plants are piled loosely in heaps in the fields (kanyura) with the ears pointing inwards towards the centre of the heap.

(3) Manai ('threshing'): Mats made of jungle bamboo, termed mosta, are spread between the heaps. The plants are spread on the mats and trodden by foot by the men and children until the seeds fall out. As an additional caution the plants are beaten again by women with forked sticks. This is done in the fields alongside the kanyura.

(4) Batana ('winnowing'): This is performed on the khalí (courtyard) of the homestead. Either small scoop baskets (sūpa), blankets or rush mats are used for this. The grains are tossed into the air, the chaff is blown aside by the breeze, and the clean grains are deposited on a mat below.

(5) Sukhana ('drying'): Mats filled with grain are placed on the house roofs or threshing floor during the day so that the sun will dry the rice kernels. The harvesting process is now complete.

(6) Bhakar dena ('give to storage'): Boxes and baskets lined with a plaster of cow dung and red clay are filled with the dried rice grains and put in storage in the roof sections of the house (either above the room which contains the shrine to the household gods or else in the sleeping quarters of the household head).

(7) Dhan kutai ('dehusking the rice'): When it is required for use the rice is freshly milled in a mortar (ukhal) sunk into the khali. Before use the mortar is cleaned with a mud and cow dung plaster. The grain is heaped in the centre and pounded by one or two women who take turns with the pestle which is made from Sal wood and is between seven and eight feet long, three to four inches wide and tipped with iron. The grains that are scattered in the pounding are pushed back into the mortar by foot or else with the aid of a brush. After pounding the padi is winnowed twice with a supa to separate the husks. Dhan katai is generally performed in the evening in readiness for the early morning meal of the following day.

After the rice grains have been taken to the khalí for drying the stalks of the plants are bundled together, dried in the sun then put in stacks which are supported by a tree fork or central pole.

This straw is known as paral and is the only source of animal fodder during the winter months. The chaff (chila) and the husk (pitha) of the rice heads are also used as animal fodder and are generally given in the form of a soup made with curdwater and leftovers of cooked rice.

During Mangsir and Pūs (December - January) the rice fields are left fallow. The coarse grains and pulses are harvested and some fields are ploughed and sown with winter condiments and vegetables such as fenugreek, spinach and cabbage. Drainage and irrigation ditches leading to and from the fields are repaired and reconstructed by the village men. The major activities of these months however are performed solely by the womenfolk and consist of (a) bringing manure (gobar) mixed with leaves from the homesteads to the fields; and (b) collecting firewood from the high, remote pine and oak forests which tower over the villages.

Livestock in Kumaon have a religious and economic importance equivalent to that of crops. A man's wealth (and that of his wife and family) is judged as much by the number and quality of his domestic cattle as by the amount of land he possesses. The one agricultural activity is in fact dependant on the other. Milk products are required as cooking mediums for the grains and vegetables and as essential food stuffs in themselves; and the waste products of agriculture (the largest part) are essential for sustaining the poor diet of the animals during the long winter months. Furthermore, the fields would be sterile were it not for the fertilising dung of the animals (human excreta as an agent of manure is unknown in Kumaon, and Kumaonis abhor the plains practice of this).

Every household in Kumaon no matter how poor, or how little

land is held, keeps at least one water buffalo. Cows are regarded as inferior to water buffaloes and are only kept if buffaloes cannot be obtained. Cows are however essential for the provision of bullocks which are required for ploughing. Teams of such bullocks are generally shared by the extended family, thus spreading the cost of management and feeding. Male water buffalo are not used for ploughing; their employment would be impractical in the narrow terraced fields of the hills. Most male calves that are born are allowed to die but a few are kept for serving cows and for sacrifice. Goats are kept for trade and sacrifice, and mostly by Doms and Khas-Rajputs.

Regarding the use of animal products; milk is taken as a drink (dūdh) and as a side-dish of curds (dahī). It provides the most auspicious cooking mediums, butter (naunī) and clarified butter (ghī); and it is used to make porridges with rice, wheat and millets. Its use in all these forms extends into ritual offerings and ceremonial feasts, for it is regarded as a pure food (śuddh) which has a purifying, life giving effect on the body. It also is believed to promote fertility, and is thought to be so pure that it cannot be contaminated by the touch of a Dom. Cow and buffalo urine is also an agent of purification and is collected solely for this purpose. Dung is collected for manure and for use in plastering house walls, for covering floors, courtyards and temple platforms; for lining containers and for general cleaning purposes. For all these it is generally mixed with water and red loam to make a soft red plaster which discourages insects and drys quickly. Again, dung, when mixed with red earth is regarded as an agent of ritual purification.

Both cows and buffaloes are kept under the house in a cow shed or goth. At night they are locked in to ensure against theft and

attack by wild animals. During the day they are tethered outside the homestead and fed with straw, oak leaves and foodscraps. During the monsoon period when lush grasses grow on the forest floor they are taken into the jungle and herded by members of the family. After the wheat and rice harvests they are allowed to graze on stubble and on the grasses of the field verges. Occasionally they are taken on to common lands at the edges of the villages for free grazing. Water buffaloes must be bathed every day and for this are taken to a watering place, river, well or tank; a task usually performed by the children.

Herds of goats are generally kept by Dom families who will often eat the meat without first offering it in sacrifice. These are grazed freely in the forest throughout the year with a goatherd always in attendance. Sheep are not kept in the Katyūr or Borarau valleys, not even by resident Bhotiyas, who are forced to buy their wool from other sources in order to make their carpets. Goats and chickens are regarded by many as an economic liability: there occurs constant predation by wildcats, panthers, polecats, jackals, eagles and vultures.

The preference among Kumaonis for water buffalo over cattle is interesting since it contradicts the generally widespread Hindu preference for cattle.[1] In terms of milk yield the output of the water buffalo is twice that of the cow, viz, 4·8 kg. per day on average as opposed to 1·3 kg. per day on average for the cow. The buffalo lives up to five years longer than the cow (its average lifespan is fifteen years). It gives milk for a greater length of time; and it also gives birth only once every two years thus ensuring a longer period of milk production. Buffalo milk also has a higher fat content than cow's milk, hence it makes richer curds and better quality ghī with less

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[1] cf. Freed and Freed 1972, 399-407; Berreman, 1972, 50-52.

wastage. A much larger animal, the buffalo also creates larger quantities of dung.

The buffalo is economically more valuable than the cow. In monetary terms a young buffalo will sell in the locality for over one thousand rupees at current prices whereas a young cow approaching its best milk giving period (after the second delivery) will only realise some five to six hundred rupees.

Cows are mostly kept by the higher castes who require the milk for vedic rituals. Brahmin priests acquire most of their stock as ritual gifts from their clients (jajman); and they generally receive these at the termination of a yagna (fire-sacrifice) or a death ceremony. Bullocks are commonly leased out between families for ploughing purposes. It is generally uncommon in Kumaon to see cows wandering free over the roads and townlands. And this is no doubt due to the fact that they are not reared in large numbers.

The products of the female buffalo are considered superior to those of the cow not only on account of their richness and quantity but because they are thought to have a greater power to purify and promote fertility. Furthermore unlike the cow the buffalo will not eat refuse and human excreta hence its mouth is considered pure (śuddh) and its excreta less liable to contamination (āśuddh). (The cow's mouth is considered impure, even among plains Hindus, though the tail area is considered 'pure').

It was noted earlier that a man's status is measured in accordance with his quota of buffaloes. There is a further dimension to this; for in the terms of Kumaoni classification buffaloes are analogically assimilated with sons, and their milk is metaphorically associated with fertile semen. Thus a 'rich' household is one where

a man's fertility is proven by a wealth of sons coinciding with a wealth of water buffaloes producing large quantities of milk.

The male buffalo is generally left only for servicing cows, or as a sacrifice at religious festivals in offering to the mother goddess and to some local deities. It also replaces the bullock as the primary symbol of animal fertility in Kumaoni religious life, a notion not common to caste Hindus but found among tribal groups (cf. Crooke, 1912:284-5) in other parts of India, including the Bhotiyas (cf. Atkinson, 1973, Vol 3:119) of the Juhar valley.

CHAPTER TWO

OFFICIATION, TRADITION AND RENUNCIATION

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Kumaoni ceremonial complexes of propitiation, possession and sacrifice contain to a large degree a common mythological background, a shared structure of officiation and a shared corpus of ritual traditions and practices. It is the primary purpose of this chapter to explore and discuss the complete field of ideas and practices which are common to these complexes and which link them together within one complex specific to Kumaoni culture.

The ceremonies in question are shown to be constituent parts of a cycle of post-mortuary rites which are contiguous with orthodox Hindu death ceremonials. The mythological background to the complete cycle appears to be made up of bardic representations concerning the lore and worship of the entire local Kumaoni patheon, combined with and possibly related to certain traditions of world renunciation. The system of officiation deployed throughout the complex is seen to consist of a triad of inter-dependent functionaries who, by and large, operate independently from orthodox brahmin priests.

The second half of the chapter is devoted to (a) an interpretation of these traditions and systems of officiation as activities of 'temporary world renunciation' modelled upon the role, social position and activities of the renouncer; and following from this (b) a brief study of the relationship operative between the functionaries of the complex and the institution of Brahmanical priesthood.

A. A KUMAONI RITUAL COMPLEX

1. A CYCLE OF DEATH RITUALS

The main rituals dealt with in the present work are as follows: chal-pūjā/jhar pūjā (rites of propitiation); jāgar and jūnar (rites of possession); and Devī-pūjā/Devī jātrā (rites involving procession and sacrifice). The main officiants involved in the performance of these are the jāgariyā (bard and 'awakener'), the ḍāgariyā (oracle and medium), and the pūchar (diviner and priest). These rituals are complexes of death ceremonies in the sense that (a) they concern the worship by Kumaonis of both collective and individual categories of their ancestral community dead; (b) they have as their model the conventional system of mortuary rites and practices attendant upon the recently deceased; and (c) as in the conventional death ceremony their primary officiants temporarily adopt a symbolic condition of 'ritual death' in order to fulfil their duties.

The ceremonial complexes within which these rituals are represented form stages in a complete cycle of post-mortuary rituals during which certain 'marked' categories of ancestral dead are formally propitiated, liberated, worshipped and (in some cases) annually re-incarnated to receive worship as deific beings. The relationship between this death cycle and the orthodox mortuary complex of rituals designed to initially dispose of the souls of the dead and re-locate them through śraddh propitiations in the Land of the Ancestors is not one of opposition. Rather the Kumaoni death-cycle provides initially a kind of back-up system of mortuary officiation which is set in motion in cases where the 'standard' rites have proved ineffective (see below,

Chapter 3). But ultimately the cycle goes one step further by advancing the status of the re-propitiated deceased from that of ancestor (pitri) to that of deity (devta). As an ancestor, the individual identity of the deceased quickly fades as he or she becomes assimilated within the general category of the 'fathers' (pitri), but as a deity the ancestor either retains his or her identity and name or else merges within a restricted class or type of deific being. As such, the ancestor comes to represent a principle within Kumaoni local mythology: he or she becomes the spiritual force operative behind a specific category of the social or natural worlds (e.g. god of 'justice', god of sheep etc.) or merges with (and sometimes replaces) a force which has been previously identified.

Although this death-cycle is contiguous with the standard mortuary complex both in function and in forms it is essentially separate and is independently performed. But, taking into account the extent of the continuities and the dependence of the post-mortuary sequence on the mortuary complex, it is possible to view the entire range of ceremonies as constituting a unitary matrix of mortuary and post-mortuary rites. Taken together, Kumaoni ceremonies of death, propitiation, possession and sacrifice form a set of complementary institutions designed to structure and give meaning to the passing of human life. Through these ceremonies, the souls of the dead are not simply disposed of like corpses following the moment of death, but are ceremonially re-located within a wider classificatory realm of interdependent created beings which includes both the living and the dead.

The souls of the 'marked' dead are the products of 'bad death', i.e. deaths which are regarded as unnatural or untimely

(ākāl mritu), or are incomplete (kaco) due to either an intentional or accidental incomplete performance of the standard mortuary ritual (cf. Chapter 3). Through a complex sequence of propitiations, possessions and sacrifices these become not only ancestors but demi-gods around whom develop complex mythologies and images of divine and demonic power. Shrines and temples are raised and innumerable expensive blood sacrifices are offered. They are thought to participate in the affairs of men and periodically they take incarnation in the world of men during the possession ceremonies held in their honour. Collectively they form a pantheon of local deities (the Kūmū-devtas) assimilated within the classical Hindu pantheon as aides (gan) and incarnations (avatāri) of Śiva and Śakti, Hinduism's complementary overseers of destruction and re-creation.

The cycle of death rituals which I have delineated thus provide for the deification, and subsequent regular worship, of the newly deceased 'bad dead'. As noted above the latter either become deities with individual personae or they become absorbed within a sub-category of demi-gods (e.g. cattle gods, land gods or river goddesses) who not only intervene in the affairs of men but intercede between men and the greater gods (Sach Devtas). For the newly dead, each of the death rituals leading up to deification and its subsequent celebration serve in the immediate sense as rites of passage or transitions between realms of cosmic and classificatory space. But they also serve, in a slightly different sense, as transition and transformation ceremonies for the men who conduct and control them. Their performance effects crucial transitions within the world of men - transitions between, on the one hand, human sickness and health, poverty and prosperity, infertility and fertility, social order and disorder,

individual mortality and liberation, and on the other hand, between seasonal and agricultural stages such as winter and spring, crop ripening and the harvest.

So it can be seen that "death cycle" rituals, although functionally oriented towards the ordering and control of the ambiguous dead and although dominated by metaphors and ritual symbols of death and impurity are also oriented towards the enhancement of the life process of the living. In Kumaon, they are not simply a ritualised continuation through intangible space of basic life-cycle processes which culminate in death itself, but provide an essential complement and additional dimension to life-cycle rituals. Both the structural and symbolic implications for Kumaoni culture and belief of this basic recognition of the complementarity and constant interplay of life and death processes will become evident in the discussions of the ethnography which follows.

To demonstrate the sequential interconnection of Kumaoni death, propitiation and possession I have abstracted items of information from the ethnography discussed in succeeding chapters and arranged them diagramatically, (Diag. 3). Arrangement is based upon the interpretative notion that the souls of the deceased undertake ritualised journeys between cosmic realms (cf. Chapter 3) and that these journeys are effected and expressed by the actions of men during death-cycle ceremonies. To enhance clarity I have omitted from the diagram any reference to the symbolic modes of passage utilised (both for the 'good' and 'bad' dead). Primarily, the schema illustrates the idea that ceremonies of possession and annual sacrifice (stages 4 and 5) provide a logical and chronological continuation of those

aforegoing rituals which deal with the initial transportation of the soul out of the world of the living (stage 1), through the world of the dead (stage 2) and through the land of the ancestors to the home of the gods (stage 3). The specific significance of each of the cosmographic details listed under each stage will be made apparent in subsequent chapters.

The bardic representations which provide the store of knowledge (gandharvavidya) upon which the ritual complex is founded (see below, section 2) can be distinguished initially from the Sanskritic representations used by brahmins to supply the format and content of conventional life-cycle ceremonies in Kumaon. This distinction is expressed in language (Kumaoni, Khasparjiyā and Hindi rather than Sanskrit), in style (the use of music and dancing) and in officiation (the place of impurity). However the distinction is not absolute, a point to which I will return (pp.196-209). The position of these traditions in Kumaoni society is comparable to that of the "Nameless Tradition" in Tibet, wherein the representations of the equivalent "storytellers" and "singers" (the 'Pre-Bons') are classified as a "Religion of men" as opposed to a "Religion of the gods" (i.e. Lamaism-Buddhism). This religion is transmitted, as in Kumaon, through the medium of songs, stories, tales, sayings, proverbs and riddles, music, dress and dance. And again, as in Kumaon, a large part of this worship is concerned with the incarnation of "gods of the soil", i.e. deified mortals, mortal duties, netherworldly spirits and culture-heroes (cf. Stein, 1972:192-229) rather than the gods of the heavenly regions.

The traditions of the Kumaoni ritual complex are, like their Tibetan counterpart, non-literary. They are perpetuated across generations through oral rather than scriptural means. In fact many of

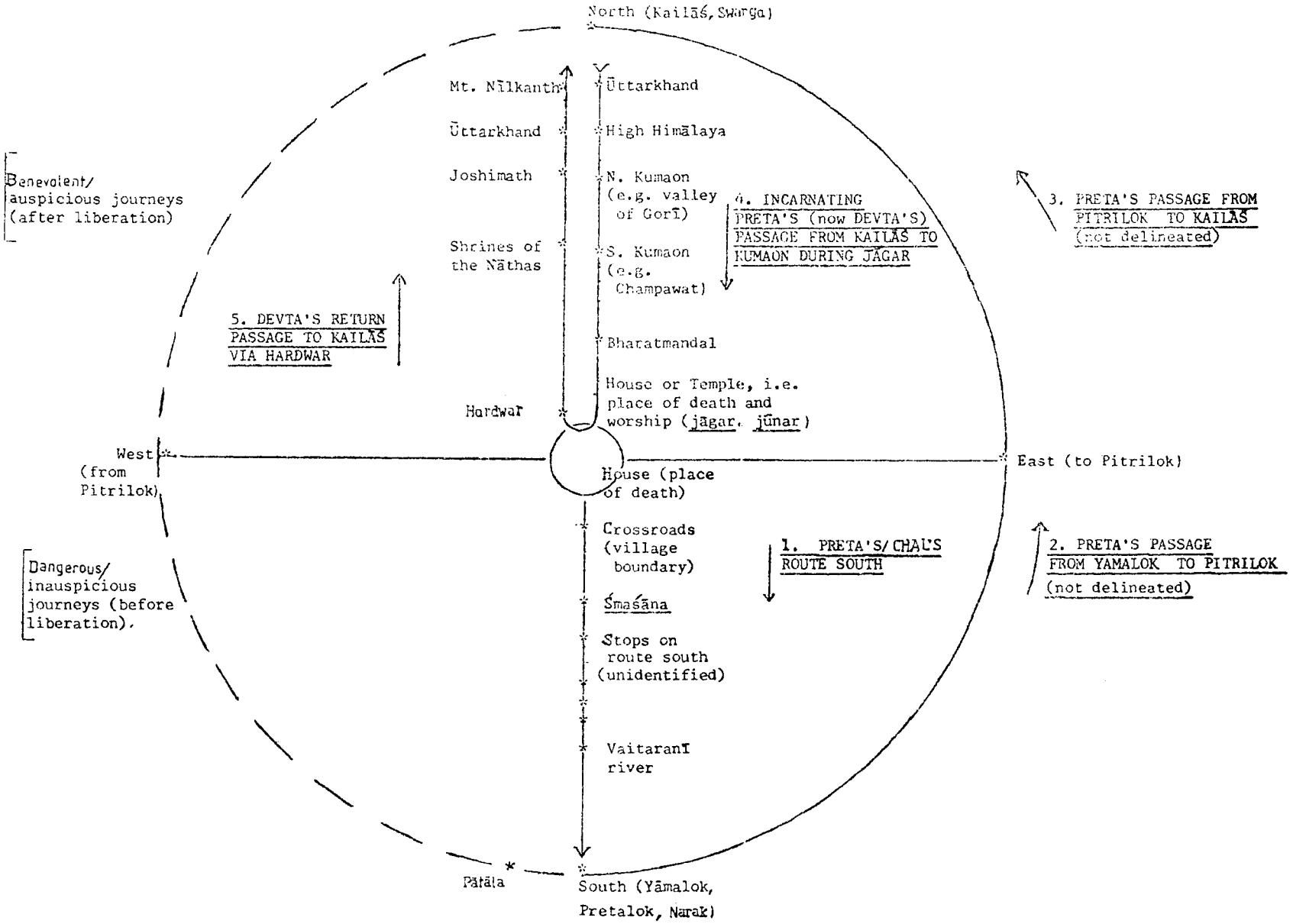


DIAGRAM 3: JOURNEYS OF THE SOUL IN DEATH : AS SPIRIT AND AS DEITY

the referents of these oral traditions also occur within the Hindu scriptural tradition (the Śastras or sacred texts comprising the Purāṇas, the Upaniṣads, the epics - the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, and the Vedas upon which Brahmanic rituals are based). But the mediums of absorption and preservation are non-literary, just as many of the most renowned officiants are non-literate.

These traditions are also non Brahmanical in the limited sense that (a) they do not as a rule require the functional participation of brahmin priests, or purohits (though brahmins are involved), and (b) they are distinct from the traditions of Brahmanical ritual practice and formulae (e.g. the use of the homa, or sacrificial fire, the recitation of vedic mantras and the invocation of vedic gods) which underlie the performance of everyday life-cycle rituals. Although here we are dealing with a complex of death-cycle ritual traditions rather than life-cycle traditions, the distinction between the two is not absolute: just as death follows life, so too the Kumaoni death-cycle complex conforms in a number of ways to certain metaphysical precepts, principles and assumptions also found in life-cycle symbolism. This feature will become apparent during the course of the present work.

2. TRADITIONS OF MAGICO-RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE UNDERLYING THESE RITUALS.

Gandharvavidya and the Kūmū Devtas

Practically all the knowledge available to Kumaonis concerning the mythology and range of practices which underlie the performance of these rituals is contained within the repertoire of songs (rās), stories

(bhag), legends (katha), formulae (jap) and orally transmitted traditions and ritual skills generally associated with Kumaon's bards, the jāgariyās and hurkiyas.

Among jāgariyās, knowledge of these matters, plus a singing voice and a command of drumming techniques confer upon them the ability to create possession. These aspects of their professional tradition are denoted by a classical term, "gandharvavidya"[1] meaning "knowledge of music and dancing". This is a knowledge believed to originate from the mythological Gandharvas, celestial singers, dancers and demi-gods whose status within the Hindu pantheon is in many respects

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[1] "Gandharvavidya" possibly replaces a local term such as jāgarvidya, i.e. "knowledge of jāgar", which cropped up occasionally in conversation with informants. The adoption of "gandharvavidya" and "atharvaveda" possibly reflects a recent Sanskritisation of local terms, but there is no evidence to suggest that the rituals and traditions referred to by these terms have become 'sanskritised" in any fundamental way other than term alone.

comparable to that of the Kūmū Devtas.[1] Some jāgariyās couple the notion of gandharvavidya with another classical term atharvaveda, which they use to denote the corpus of magical formulae and practices

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[1] The similarities which obtain between these two sets of demigods, one local, one classical, extends beyond their common involvement in the "celestial arts". Compare, for example, the information on the gandharvas and their consorts, the apsaras, set out below with the general descriptions of the Kūmū-Devtas set out in the main text (92 - 94).

Walker (1968) notes that the Gandharvas were the singers and chanters of the early texts. They were also the musicians of paradise who dwelt in an aerial city, Vismapana, but served in Svarga, the Heaven of Indra. They were closely associated with rain and fertility, water and the sea. Their parents were heaven and earth and they inhabited the atmosphere between these two spheres. Their haunts are described in the famous Ṛg Vedic hymn of the long haired muni; we are told that the munis who "... once the gods have entered them ... mount the winds..." and tread "the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas and Apsaras" (X.136. Briggs, 1973:210-11).

In the Ṛg Veda a 'Gandharva' appears as the father of Yama, Lord of the Dead, and has a function as guardian of the Soma and a presider over marriages. In the Atharvaveda, an entire hymn is devoted to the praise of the Gandharvas (II.2.1-5). According to this the 'Gandharva' is an asura (demon) whose "station is heaven" who is Lord of Being", "In among the Apsarases was the Gandharva; in the ocean is ... their seat, whence at once they both come and go" (trans. Whitney, 1905:39-40). Their spouses, the Apsarases are also their dancers, and are notoriously "noisy, dusky, dice-loving" and "mind-confusing". In another atharvedic hymn describing the sacrificial offering of a cow (X.9.1-27) the Gandharvas are commanded as the gods of the atmosphere to accompany and safeguard the cow on the road to heaven. In book VIII of the Atharvaveda, the Gandharvas are identified as demons who seek to enter (possess?) women while they are pregnant and thus create a miscarriage or cause harm to the embryo. Thus they are described as "woman seekers" who are "red-mouthed" and "ill-smelling", their feet are reversed and they dance around the dwellings in the evening, making "donkey noises".

Walker (1968) suggests that the etymological root of the term Gandharva is a combination of 'gama' (sexual intercourse) and 'dhara' (maintaining). He also gives the following description of the Gandharvas:

> "They often visit the earth, haunt the air, the mountains, the forests, and have the power to work illusions in the evening twilight and can cause madness. They sometimes engage in combat with mortals. They are skilled in various secrets, like the mysteries of medicine and healing ... They have a strange power over women and are great voluptuaries" (Walker, 1968:371-2).

which lies behind their priestly function. The atharvaveda is conceived not as a text (the Atharvaveda 'proper', the fourth Veda) but as an orally preserved collection of spells and incantations with a divine origin and a condition subject to recurrent innovation through further inspiration from the Kūmū-Devtas . This corpus of ritual matter is believed to have come from Hundes (Tibet i.e. from beyond the mountains), the land of terrifying Huniyas and former source of all magic(būkśarvidya) and sorcery (jadhūtona).[1]

The song and story repertoire of Kumaon's bards represents a diffuse and complex corpus of mythological knowledge concerning the origins and legendary activities of the Kūmū-Devtas. A dualistic classification of the repertoire has been attempted by Garobieau (1977). Two subdivisions are suggested: one comprising firstly religious stories which are sung to induce and direct trances properly called jāgar (xxi) and secondly songs called bhārāt performed to "please the gods" (xv); and one comprising "stories (called bharau) concerning localized and supposedly historical heroes", which are sung for entertainment in houses (ghar) or at fairs (mela) or during agricultural rituals (xv). The

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[1] Popular traditions in Kumaon, even among brahmins, holds that the textual Athavaveda is a relatively recent reconstruction of a greater text which was lost in a battle between Viṣṇu and a demon (also celebrated in the Purāṇas), and small parts of which have been preserved in the traditions of the bards.

division of songs is allied to a division of circumstances into "religious ceremonies on the one hand" and "gatherings for entertainment (or work) on the other" (xvl) which in turn roughly corresponds to a division of bards into two classes: "religious ones who are recruited in a wider range of castes, and entertainers who belong to the lowest castes" (xvll).

Gaborieau's division of the basic bardic repertoire into songs performed for sacred purposes and songs performed for secular purposes does not wholly correspond with my own data collected in Barahmandal and Danpūr, though this classification is possibly more relevant for Kumaon as a whole. I learned instead that all songs performed to the accompaniment of the huruk or hurkiya (hour glass drum), dhol (horizontal drum) and damau (kettle drum) were regarded as religious stories about religious beings (devtas or pitris) whether these were heroes, past kings of Kumaon, malevolent spirits, renouncers, magicians, gods or elemental beings. Equally, these songs could be performed by anyone other than the conventional specialists (e.g. folk singers and beggars) for purposes of entertainment other than invocation or inspiration. Also, some songs such as the epic Malūsahī did not seem to figure at all in wholly religious performances such as jāgar, and the element of entertainment in these songs did by and large seem to outweigh their illuminatory or moral purport. But by far the majority of the beings and heroes depicted in the most widely known and most regularly performed song cycles also had temples (mandīr) or shrines (thān) dedicated to them, and received annual worship from their associated villages.

Two of the events which Gaborieau regards as 'secular', are *in fact* magico-religious gatherings (e.g. the Kot Mela held in honour of Nanda

Devī at Ranchūla Kot in Katyūr cf. pp.175-482) or else "commercial" events held to mark some point in the religious calendar (e.g. Uttārayinī at Bageśwar). These can provide an occasion for an extensive jūnar and sacrifice, involving the performance by bards of songs to induce trance. Often however jāgariyās only participate in bhagnole, during which they contest their professional skills against one another, skills which include not only musical ability but knowledge of religious matters. The other event said by Gaborieau to be an occasion for entertainment in work, the hurkiyabole, is revealed on closer examination as a religious ritual designed to promote crop growth and ensure fertility by magical means (cf. pp68 - 71).

Among the functionaries working in Barahmandal I found that no hurkiya, jāgariyā or dholiwalla would perform even bhaṛau (legends of local heroes) for entertainment alone. Not every performer had the ability or reputation to conduct jāgar, so their professional activities were confined to melas, temple gatherings, bhagnole , life-cycle rituals or hurkiyabole rites. Their repertoire would often however include jāgar (i.e. invocationary songs), which were not performed to induce trance, in addition to bhārāt and bhaṛau. There were no Bādis (mendicant musicians) operating in Barahmandal at the time of study. Another group of musicians which Gaborieau's brief account does not cover, but whose repertoire includes bhaṛau, bharat and jāgar, consists of wandering Nātha renouncers and temple pujaris whose performances have both a religious and a remunerative dimension.

Moving towards classification within the bardic repertoire, I wish at this point to describe briefly the broad groupings and

general features of the deities and heroes depicted in the narrative songs and origin stories. The list includes:

(a) Various categories of Śaktis i.e. Śaivite deities such as Kālīkā Bhairav and the Bhairavas, spirits of the newly dead (pretas), spirits of the 'bad' dead (chal-chidra and bhūta), deities of the 'bad' dead and masters of the śmaśāna (e.g. masān, masanī, Bhairav vir, Kalūva, Kabiś etc). All are attributed with a frightful appearance and are thought to be generally malevolent. They are also the istadevtas (personal deities) of jaḍhūghars (sorcerers) and pūchars (diviners). Narrations tend to concentrate on their origins and illustrative accounts of their malevolent activities.

(b) Vaiṣṇavite deities : Nagraja, Hanuman, Narsingh and innumerable variant forms of Narsingh. The kings of Kumaon: the Katyūri rajas and the Chand rajas. These are generally nirmansi (vegetarian, i.e. they do not accept blood sacrifice) have judiciary functions and are generally benevolent. Narsingh is one of the most popular kūldevtas (lineage deities) in Kumaon and is associated with the founding of the Katyūri dynasty. Narrations tend to focus on their achievements and their appearances (clothing, weaponry, jewellery).

(c) Elemental beings: Airī, Parī, Byāl, Acheri and Gardevī (deities of the middle atmosphere, i.e. hilltop, forests, wind, evening sky, dawn, dusk and water-courses, collectively termed ākāśmantri of sky forms), Gods of the Land (the Bhūmi-devtas) Golū (god

of cattle, a form of Gorīya, see below), Chaumū, Baudhān (gods of water buffaloes) and Nanda Devī (the autumn goddess). These can be both malevolent and benevolent, mansi (meat eating) and nirmansi. The songs depict their origins, their achievements and their deific and demonic powers.

(d) Renouncer - deities: Gorakhnāth (Guru of all the Kūmū-Devtas and Guru of the jāgar, represented in person by the jāgariyā and the fire of the ceremony); the Nine Nāthas (Gorakhnāth and his eight closest followers of descendants); the eighty four Siddhas (yogis), including Gorīya or Golanāth, Gunganāth and Bholanāth, (see below), and Siddhināth (a dangerous but powerful chal renouncer). These are benevolent, usually nirmansi deities, closely associated with Śiva in his renunciatory aspects (Mahāyogi Adināth), and usually attributed the role of mytho-historical originators of the bardic tradition. The songs attest to the magnificence of their renunciatory powers (siddhis) and their general importance within the scheme of things (as cosmic mediators).

(e) Local heroes: Many of these occur within the previous broad subdivisions of the Kūmū-Devta pantheon. Gorīya and Gunganāth for example were princes of the Chand and Dotī (Western Nepāl) dynasties respectively who renounced kingship to become devotees of Gorakhnāth and jogis of the Kānphaṭā (split-eared) Nāth sect. These two deities rival Narsingh in terms of popularity throughout the region. Both serve as popular iṣṭdevtas and kūldevtas; both have numerous shrines dedicated in their honour and both incarnate regularly in jāgar (usually together). Bholanāth is a

popular deity among brahmins and is associated with the Chand dynasty and the Joshi and Tiwari families of Almora. Songs and stories account for their origins, their achievements and their grand appearance (both as rajas and as renouncers).

Others such as Jhairaj, Siddua and Biddua, Harū, Barū and their aides, Śaim, Laṭu, Churmal, Bandhāri etc. are gram-devtas (village gods) who are popularly incarnated in jūnar. These are all meat-eating and demand the sacrifice of buffaloes, goats and chickens - usually killed slowly but with extreme violence. Harū was an ill-fated Chand raja (Hariś Chand) comparable in exploits and origin to Malū (Malūsāhī), a prince of Chaukotiya Giwar who, like Harū, met his death in Tibet after courting a Bhotiya girl[1]. The list of gram devtas also includes deities who act as aides (gaṇ) to the more important local gods, eg, Bhanari, Sikhari, Bhandāri, Dandeka Golu and Kailbakhari. Certain heroes such as Malū do not appear to be incarnated in jāgar, are not offered sacrifice or honoured with temples.

Most of these hero-gods tend to be attached to or associated with one or other of the historic dynasties (Katyūri or Chand) or sub dynasties of Kumaon. A complete list is given by Gaborieau (1977:XXIV-XXXIII) based upon his own information and the stories collected by local scholars (Oakley and Gairola, 1935; Jośi K, 1971). Again, the stories of local heroes account for their origins, their legendary achievements, their more recent incarnations (where relevant) and, in many cases, their manner of worship, the construction of their shrines and their realms of deific jurisdiction.

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1. cf. version translated by Gaborieau (1974).

The incarnating gods (avatārs), personal and family gods (iṣṭadevtas and kūldevtas) are usually attached to specific locations in Kumaon, a village, temple, area of land, mountain or micro-region. In this aspect they form a pantheon of deities which have a status independant of their place in the oral traditions of the bards, although jāgar and sacrifice represent the most common modes used to worship them. The complete range of Kūmū-Devtas are also characterised by jāgariyās as "Kali-Yuga devtas", meaning deities which become incarnate (avatāri hona) during the era of Kali Yuga, the fourth age of the world characterised by degeneration and disillusionment (māyā). They are thus distinguished from the supreme deities (sachavatār) such as Brahma, Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa and Rāmā), and Mahiś (Śiva) who do not incarnate during Kali Yuga. Unlike the latter, the local deities are characteristically impure (asuddh). Most are classed as aides (gan) to the supreme deities and some are regarded as incarnations (avatāri) or forms (rūpa) of the great avatārs (e.g. Narsingh of Viṣṇu). Their original spirit forms have all been created out of the bodies of the great gods and goddesses ; usually in an unnatural way, from the ear, mouth, rectum or armpit, or from an impure bodily substance, e.g. hair, sweat, faeces of menstrual blood. Those formed from the birth blood of Devī are all related to Śiva, he is their maternal uncle (Māmū). Individual deities within a class were often the spirits of the 'bad dead' who had been propiated, had thus achieved salvation (mokṣa) and were 'stationed' in Kailās with Śiva (they were "Kailāśwasi"). The unpropitiated 'bad' dead were known as bhūtangi devtas (lost ghosts or 'past lives'). These were awaiting salvation.

All the Kūmu-Devtas exist in a constant state of motion. They are conceived as either journeying towards Kailās to attain salvation, or as journeying back and forth between Kailās and the world of men,

performing errands or mediating between men and the higher gods. They move within the middle tracts between heaven and earth, the atmosphere (ākās) and the mountains (pahār). They participate in th the spheres, heaven (svarga) and earth (jāgat, bhūme), and are related to the inhabitants of both those spheres, gods and men, but are treated by men as gods in themselves, and are incarnated as 'great gods' (parmeśwār) in jāgar.

The Kūmū-Devtas pay obeisance to their spiritual preceptor, Guru Gorakhnāth, who inhabits the underwold (Pātāla) and whose immortal fire (dhūnī) burns at Hardwar on the Ganges. In general they are associated with matters of creation and sustenance (fertility and fecundity) but could also be held responsible for creating disorder, destruction (through affliction or curse) and even death in the world of men. Their appearance varies with their precise individual functions and with the nature of their former incarnation on earth. Their number is indeterminate as each possesses a wide variety of permutations, related to their varying manifestations in different parts of Kumaon, and the practice of constantly incorporating among them the re-propitiated dead. (cf. Chapter 3).

A Mythology of Renunciation

Another very distinctive feature of the Kumaoni complex of 'death rituals' is the importance accorded to North Indian traditions of renunciation, particularly those associated with the sect of Kānphaṭā Nāth jogis ('split-eared renouncers') and with the activities of their founder, Guru Gorakhnāth.

Gorakhnāth is revered and worshipped by Kumaonis as the guru or spiritual preceptor of all the Kūmū Devtas, all the jāgariyās, dāgariyās and pūchars of the region, and also the groups of pujaris whose task it is to conduct worship in the region's Śiva, Śakti and Bhairav temples. His status is that of both mythological and historical figure-head. In Kumaon, as elsewhere in North India, he is popularly believed to reside in the underworld (pātāla) where he keeps the fire (dhūnī) out of which the world was created[1]. Gorakhnāth is generally regarded as the founder of the Kānphaṭā Nāth sect of jogis (or yogins) whose headquarters are at Hardwar, and as a tantric teacher and reformer who toured North India in an age previous to the Nepāli invasion of Kumaon (Briggs, 1973, Ghurye, 1964:114-140; Eliade, 1958a:301-11).

In the legends of the Nine Nāthas, a group regarded by jāgariyās as the original members of the Nāth sect, the god Śiva is classified as Adināth,one of the nine, and it is from Adināth that the sect is thought to ultimately derive its traditions and manner of worship. A recitation popular in jūnar concerns a conversation between Śiva (Adināth) and Śakti (Pārvati) during which Śiva agrees to confer upon his consort the knowledge of immortality (amṛta). This was overheard

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1. A large dhūnī supposedly containing a portion of the pātāla dhūnī is kept burning in most yogic akhaḍas (monasteries for Nāthas) throughout North India.

by a bird's egg which was nestled in a nearby tree. On discovering the secret of immortality the egg transformed into a bird and flew away. One of the forms of this bird was Matsyendranāth, or 'Lord of the Fish' which suggests that the bird was a kingfisher. (In the North Indian versions, the conversation was overheard by an individual secreted in the womb of a fish).[1] This Matsyendranāth was the second of the nine Nāth [2], and the immediate preceptor, or guru, of Gorakhnāth, the third Nāth.

Gorakhnāth himself is believed to have been created, in alternative versions, from the ear, mouth or anus of the celestial cow Kamdhenū, following an offering of food given by Gautama Ṛsi on behalf of Śiva to Dundh, a childless king, who in turn gave it to the cow. A common variation of this legend found in Nepāl and the Punjab shows Gorakhnāth to have been born from beneath a heap of cow dung (Briggs, 1973:182-3). The etymology of his name echoes the association with the cow and with cow-dung: ghor means either 'ordure' or 'filth'; and a go or gau is 'a cow' (Briggs, 1973:182).

Gorakhnāth is linked not only with the Kānphaṭā sect and the Nine Nāthas but also with a corpus of mythological figures termed the Eighty Four Siddhas. These appear to be either or both his legendary disciples (i.e. yogis who have achieved mahāsiddha or 'magical perfection' and who have come to personify all Gorakhnāth's magical

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1. cf. Briggs, 1973:152.

2. Information given by informants on the names of the Nine Nāthas was inconsistent but among the other six can be considered the following:
Khagnāth (the dhūnī, or 'Lord of Ashes'); Chauranginātth (Lord of the four 'directions'. Boranginātth ('Lord of all the 'colours'), Bhegnāth, Kāpalinātth ('Lord of Skulls') and Āghorinātth ('Lord of filth').
cf. lists given by Briggs, 1973:136-137 and Dasgupta, 1969:207-10). The variation seems infinite.

powers), or else the pantheons of local deities (such as the Kūmū-Devtas) found in the different regions of North India (cf. Briggs, 1973:137-8). In Kumaon each of these Siddhas is attached to a particular dhūnī. The symbolism of the number eighty four is obscure (cf. Dasgupta, 1969;204-6) but it recurs in a variety of metaphysical contexts, i.e. the 'eighty four thousand states of birth, or birth forms', the 'eighty four āsanas or yogic postures' and even in the Kāmāsūtrā as the 'eighty four positions of sexual intercourse'. The symbolism of the number nine (of the Nine Nāthas) can be tied down, in contrast, to more local specificities. In Kumaoni ritual mandalas (mandap, chakkra) there are eight points on the circumference, representing the eight directions, and a point in the centre where the god being worshipped is located, or the demon being exorcised is trapped. These are sometimes represented as the Astbhairavis, or eight Bhairavs, the aides to Śiva, with the ninth being Mahābhairav, or Śiva himself (compare Dasgupta's classical interpretation, Ibid:206). It is common in the ritual traditions associated with the use of these mandalas (e.g. in rites of propitiation and sacrifice) for the Nāthas and the Bhairavas to be assimilated.

Gorakhnāth at least was a historical figure, the author of a number of texts on haṭha-yoga, and a popular reformer, healer and teacher who is believed by scholars to have existed between the tenth and the twelfth centuries A.D. His spiritual preceptor was Matsyendranāth, who has been linked by scholars with the classical Buddhist saint Avalokiteśvara (Eliade, 1958a:308). In fact the theology of the Nāth sect combines elements of Buddhist tantrism with a variety of North Indian sectarian and folk traditions including Hindu tantrism, the Yoga of Patañjali, Śaivism, Śaktism and (according to Eliade a blend of pre-Aryan aboriginal shamanic and animist practices. Nāthism is also thought to be the theological descendant of a sect

termed the Kāpālikas (from 'kāpāla' a skull) whose renunciatory practices included the ingestion of corpse flesh, and who are also the immediate forebears of the contemporary Āghori sect of renouncers, notable for their reputed indulgence in the same practice.

The order of the Kānphaṭā Nāths is so called because initiants are required to split their ears (kān = ear; phaṭā = split) to permit the insertion of large ear-rings (kundal) made of bone, horn or metal. There are many divisions within the order (cf. Briggs, 1973:62-77), but the principle division is into two: the Aughars, who do not wear ear-rings and at initiation adopt the name 'Das' or 'Dasa' (slave, servant) instead of 'Nāth'; and the Kānphaṭā proper.

The order accepts both sexes (females are termed 'Nāthinī') and members of any caste. Three basic lifestyles are permissable; (a) that of the married householder (gṛhastha) who is entrusted with the care of a temple, usually devoted to Śakti or Bhairav; (b) that of the celibate wandering mendicant who frequents the pilgrimage routes of India and who resides temporarily in monastaries (akhaḍa, maṭha) run by an abbot termed a mahant or pīr (terms also applied to the leading gṛhastha pujaris of Bhairav temples); and (c) that of the ascetic who practices haṭhayoga under the supervision of a guru, and lives either in an āśrama or in a remote place such as a cave or jungle.

Gṛhastha Kānphaṭās wear white dhotis and turbans (pagri); celibates wear the same but of an ochre, rather than white, colour. Both types wear a sacred thread (janeo) similar to that worn by the twice-born, but of nine strands. Attached to this are three

items, a horn whistle (singnad) said by Briggs to have a "phallic significance" (1973:12); a ring (representing the yonī of Pārvati), and a rudraksa (Rudra's rosary) bead. Celibates also wear a string of rudraksa beads and carry a begging bowl made either of coconut, in which case it is called a khappar, or of brass, in which case it is called a tomri. During long journeys, their utensils and provisions are kept in a large wallet of red cloth hung from the left shoulder. Also carried by some Nātha jogis, but not by all, are: a staff of knotted wood (timūr); a trident of metal (trisūl); a crutch (acal) used for a support during meditation; a fan of peacock feathers (han mocal) for use in exorcism, an hour-glass shaped drum (dholak), and a pair of fire tongs (chimta).

In habit the Kānphaṭās are renowned as much for their apparent vices (debauchery, the vending of magical charms, sorcery and the exhibition of snakes) as their spiritual virtues. The latter are expressed in the demonstration of siddhis such as healing, exorcism and rainmaking (Briggs, 1973:23). In fact these are all arts established as exemplary by Gorakhnāth. According to legend, he had the ability to control snakes and demons, diagnose and heal sickness, to restore life, to bestow fertility, to bring rain, to conduct sorcery and undertake magical flights across and between heaven, earth and the underworld.

Wandering mendicant Kānphaṭā Nāthas are still a common sight in Kumaon. They travel between temple dharmsalas (rest-houses), gṛhastha mathas (former monastic communities) and akhadas. They are consulted by the populace on matters involving magic, cursing,

divination, healing and exorcism, and are invited to village ceremonies such as jāgar and jūnar where their presence is considered particularly auspicious[1].

Two temples in the Barahmandal region are associated with the Nātha cult. One is devoted to Guru Gorakhnāth himself. There he is worshipped by Kānphaṭās and local people alike as a deity and an incarnation of Śiva. Another is sited at Kama and is devoted to Bhairav. (Briggs also mentions this temple, 1973:81-82). At its head is a pīr who was formerly entitled to a share of the harvest from every village in the region, and was renowned for practising the tantric rite of maithuna (ritual intercourse).

The Kānphaṭā Nāthas collect in large numbers at a variety of pilgrimage centres dotted throughout the Himālayas but in particular at the shrine of Gorakhnāth in Hardwar, and at the Kumbha Mela whenever it is held at either Allahabad or Hardwar (usually every twelve years). At death they are not cremated but buried in the upright, cross-legged position (to represent samādhi). A tomb of stones (samādh) is built over the grave in the fashion of the yonī-linga symbol which is representative of immortality and the fusion of Śiva and Śakti. The graveyard is always at the akhaḍa, thus enabling the dead jogi to live (in samādhi) beside an ever-burning dhūnī, and also permitting living jogis to fulfil

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[1] Mostly I found them unwilling to be interviewed. On the other hand, their gṛhastha counterparts, members of the Nāth land-owning communities who supplied many of Barahmandal's jāgariyās and pujaris, were much more willing to assist me in my enquiries.

an injunction to frequent the śmāsāna, the place of Bhairav and of the liminal dead.

Commentaries on the traditions of the Nātha sect have pointed out the closeness which obtains between those traditions (particularly the traditions of the Aghoris) and those of the ancient sect of the Kāpālikas or "wearers of skulls". (Eliade, 1958a:296-303; Briggs, 1973:224-7; Dasgupta, 1969:206-207). These were Śaivite mendicants who went naked("sky clad") or dressed in ochre robes, wore matted hairs and smeared their bodies with funeral ashes. They frequented the śmaśāna ghats, and travelled alone or in the company of a dog (like the Āghori) or with a female companion (Kāpālinī). They sported the large ear-rings also worn by Śiva in his aspect as Mahāyogi (great yogin), and they carried with them the following items: a drum (damaruka), a staff or trident, a cow horn (gosranga), a bundle of peacock feathers and a bowl made from a skull for begging and swilling liquor.

The Kāpālikas meditated on corpses (their successors, the Āghoris, had a preference for newly dead children, Briggs, 1973:71), sometimes, for nights on end, and are believed to have eaten the flesh (Eliade 1958a:296,301). Animal and human sacrifices were offered to their favourite deities, Mahābhairav, Kālī and the demons of the śmaśāna. These were invited to a feast of "hot blood" oozing from the severed heads of the Kāpālika's victims, and were incarnated with the aid of the sound of the hour glass drum (cf. Ghurye, 1964:123). Flesh was offered as an oblation to a sacrificial fire constructed in the śmaśāna. They also indulged in ritual intercourse

(maithuna) with their female companions, who personified the female goddess. There is a lunar association with the sect, and it is known that during the lunar periods of the winter and spring seasons in North India they used to gather in large numbers and participate in seasonal orgies. (Eliade, 1958a:299-300; Ghurye, 1964:116).

According to Ghurye (1964) the Kāpālikas believed in a salvation which "consists in the individual soul living in the full enjoyment of all objects of sense in the presence and company of Śiva in the embrace of Pārvati, the individual himself having the body of Śiva and being in the embrace of his own beloved in the form of Pārvati" (p.123). Nirvana was thus achieved by a contemplation or the self in the coital position (bhagāsana). This identification of spiritual and sexual ecstasy led, it was believed, to the attainment of mahāsiddhas, or great powers, e.g. magical transportation, the manipulation of reality, the satisfaction of all desires, sorcery, magical healing, exorcism and an ability to cure barrenness in women (Eliade, 1958a:299,297-8; Briggs, 1973:224-227; Ghurye, 1964:114-127). New sect members were initiated, and unlike in the other ancient ascetic schools, these were not expected to have completed the four āśramas (stages in the Hindu life cycle) and did not have to be Brahman by caste.

Excursus : Nāthism and Tantrism

Before leaving consideration of the Nāth sectarian tradition with which the functionaries of Kumaon's death cycle complex claim

kinship and from which contemporary practices are said to originate (i.e. from Gorakhnāth and the Nāthas to Kumaoni Śaivite pujaris and akhaḍas to local hurkiyas and jāgariyās) it will be necessary to give a brief account of Nātha metaphysics and its sectarian and scriptural affiliates (tantric yoga, tantrism and Sanskrit ritual magic).

The ultimate goal of every Nātha is to attain union with the supreme deity, Śiva, a condition termed as either samādhi (release) or maheśvara ("Śivahood"; Dasgupta, 1969:221). The specific yogic path or (sādhana advocated by Nāthism to bring this about is a development within tantrism termed haṭhayoga which was reputedly formulated by Gorakhnāth himself. Among the more immediate experimental and philosophical goals which this system was designed to achieve can be included the following:

(a) The acquisition of occult and supernatural powers (mahāsiddhas) through the preparatory practice of dhyāna (meditation) and the application of jñāna (knowledge).

(b) Control over, and eradication of, disease, death and physical decay. In Nātha mythology this is seen as the conquest of Yama. Lord of Death and Ruler of the Underworld.

(c) The attainment of jīvanmukta, or immortality, a condition which among other things, does not preclude the possibility of combining worldly enjoyment (bhukti) and spiritual freedom (mukti).

(d) The application of a set of guiding spiritual principles termed viśuddha māyā. These are designed to uplift others

from their mortal condition and can lead the adept himself towards the achievement of an even more advanced condition, that of parā-mukti[1].

Hathayoga is a branch of, or type of tantric yoga[2], and like the latter incorporates the major features of the classical eight-fold path of yoga. This is defined in the Yoga-sūtras of Patañjali (cf. Eliade, 1958a:47;100; Pott, 1966:3-6; Feuerstein, 1975:123-134) as a path or system which distinguishes eight steps in the attainment or yogic transcendence (samādhi) individually known as angas (classes or 'members'). The first five steps are concerned with perfecting and purifying the body, the final three with the perfection and purification or 'isolation' of the soul (puruṣa). Briefly, they

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1. This attainment is the active aspect of the Nātha system which most closely resembles the final goal of Buddhism, i.e. Bodhisattvahood, wherein the enlightened yogin is driven by a spirit of 'universal compassion' to uplift the moral and spiritual condition of others (Dasgupta, 1969:220).

2. In Kumaoni culture Gorakhnāth is never represented as the founder of haṭhayoga specifically, nor is generally thought of as a haṭha yogin himself, but as a tantricist and the 'real founder' of the tantric movement in North India. Some informants even argued that the folk tradition of Kumaon which features jāgar and jūnar as religious activities is in essence a branch of Gorakhnāth's yogic tantrism. As for yogic tantrism itself, this was described to me by one informant as a religion of the renouncer (sannyāsin) in contrast to the jāgar/jūnar system which is a religion of the people, a 'tantrism' of the householder (gharbari).

are as follows:

(i) Yama, or 'restraint' (incorporating non violence, truthfulness, non stealing, chastity and greedlessness.

(ii) Niyama or 'self discipline' (incorporating purity, contentment, austerity, self-study and devotion to the supreme being).

(iii) Āsana or meditative posture.

(iv) Prāṇāyāma or 'regulation of breathing'.

(v) Pratyāhāra or 'sense withdrawal'.

(vi) Dhāraṇā or 'concentration'.

(vii) Dhyāna or 'meditation'.

(viii) Samādhi or 'release'.

But over and above this, haṭhayoga, like tantrism, attaches importance to worldly existence and the "total experience of life" (Eliade, 1958a:228). However, unlike tantrism, it seeks to master that "experience" by transmuting the physical body through exercises and purifications into a microcosmos. The complex array of such techniques, as contained within the mystical physiology of haṭhayoga, is designed to advance a greater efficacy in the development of siddhis and the 'conquest of bodily decay and death' than that made possible by tantrism, especially in the early stages of transcendence. The etymology of haṭha comprises 'ha' = sun and 'tha' = moon, and this is a reference to the tantric practice of bringing together the "sun" and the "moon", or female and male principles (see below). In this, as in most other senses, it echoes tantric practices of which I shall now attempt a cursory overview.

Tantrism was originally a syncretistic popular movement which first appeared in the sub-continent during the period 600 to 1200 A.D. and rapidly became a pan-Indian vogue influencing philosophy, religion, ethics and art across the entire spectrum of Hindu civilisation. The word 'tantra' has many connotations, among them 'succession', 'unfolding' and possibly also 'multiplication' (from the root 'tan' to 'spread' or 'multiply'). (cf. Eliade, 1958a:200-206).

The historical origins of tantrism are obscure, but the earliest forms of the discipline are decidedly Buddhist and as Eliade points out, tantrism incorporates a large number of "aboriginal", pre-Aryan elements. Indeed, tantric practices are generally associated with the fringe areas of the sub-continent, especially those open to Buddhist influence or with a strong "tribal" or Dravidian background, such as Assam, Nepāl and the extreme south of India. (Eliade, 1958a:202). One oft-quoted 'source' for tantrism is Tibet, the home of all magic and sorcery in Indian tradition (cf. Bharati, 1965:79). However it is possible to view this as a way of saying that tantrism came not from Tibet specifically but from a location to the north beyond the mountains (i.e. from the gods). This of course tallies with Kumaoni beliefs regarding the 'origins' of their local 'tantric 'traditions. Tibet thus appears to have a status as an ambivalent source for unorthodox ('beyond the pale') traditions in general.

Tantrism became modified over time in a series of Hindu and Buddhist texts, the tantras. Each of these esoteric yogic works

contains four divisions: jñāna - gnosis; yoga - practice; kriyā - ritual; and caryā - ordinary worship and conduct. Doctrinally, tantrism is a modified form of the philosophy of advaitā or 'non - dualism', formulated originally by Śaṇkārachārya the founder of Vedānta (and also revered by Kumaoni informants as a champion of Śaivism and the 'destroyer' of Buddhism in the Himālayan region). The doctrine of advaitā relinquishes a previously held distinction between the universal soul (Brāhman) and the material world (prakṛti).. Tantrism modifies this by adding to it a 'relative duality' whereby the universe is conceived of as being polarised into two opposed but mutually interdependant states termed śiva and śakti. These are identified respectively with the moon and the sun, creation and destruction, liquid and fire, the male or 'passive' principle and the female or 'active' principle (Dasgupta, 1969:235-46). These dualities correspond to the two basic elements of which the body is thought to be composed, rasa (the male semen which is located in the cerebral region, termed 'the moon') and rajas (the female 'semen' belonging to the ovum and located in the 'sun' or navel region). Rasa, the essence of śiva faces downwards; rajas the essence of śakti, faces upwards.

The activity of conjoining the sun to the moon involves a number of yoga practices, the most important of which include (a) the rousing of the śakti (also conceived as a serpent, Kuṇḍalinī) through the control of vital esoteric channels positioned on the left and the right of the body; and (b) the "conservation" of male and female juices following their commingling during the

act of ritual intercourse (maithuna) between the yogin and his partner. This rousing of the active śakti represents, in a sense, a reversal (ulṭa - sādhana) of the normal downward flow of creation which terminates normally in a state of mortality or destruction. Reversing the flow obstructs the normal process of bodily and universal creation and destruction and leads to the yogic experience or samādhi of 'non-duality'.

Tantric and Hatha yoga stress ritual (kriyā) and physical posture (āsana) over meditation (dhyāna) which is the consummate activity in classical yoga. There are two modes of ritual, the 'right hand path' (dakṣiṇa acāra), which emphasises mental 'rituals' such as contemplation and visualisation (usually of the 'iṣṭa-devta'), and the 'left hand path' (vāma-açāra) the essential rite of which is the pañcatattva (five = essences). This consists of the ritual ingestion of madya (wine), māmṣa (meat), matsya (fish) and mudrā (parched grain); and participation in maithuna (sexual intercourse).

Finally, it should be noted that in the tantric and haṭha yoga systems the classical items of Yama and Niyama take on a more involuted subtle connotation than originally prescribed (Dasgupta, 1969:242-3). Supplementary devices utilised within these categories include pūjā (worship of the deity), bhūtti-śuddhi (the purification of the elements), nyasa (ritualistic touching), mudrā (symbolic gesture), mantra (use of 'power-words') and the construction of mandalas (circular 'iconographic schemas')[1].

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1. For more detailed accounts of the basic principles and aims of haṭhayoga and tantric yoga cf. Feuerstein 1975:15-18; 96-101; Dasgupta, 1969:210-255; Eliade, 1958a:200-207; 301-307; Briggs, 1973: 258-283.

The summary of ideas and basic principles which I have attempted here hardly does justice to the complexity and sophistication of the systems involved. The relevance to the Kumaon ritual context of the non-ethnographic details which I have adduced are not immediately apparent, but when compared with aspects of laic tradition (as set out in the section following) a wide range of contiguities can be established. These are of considerable assistance in our attempts to penetrate the logic of Kumaoni ritual forms. For, as we shall see, not only do the lay functionaries of Kumaon claim kinship with the Nātha sect and their traditions, but the institution of renunciation itself provides a model for their ritual roles and modes of officiation.

3. A THREEFOLD COMPLEX OF OFFICIATION

The oral traditions of Kumaon's bards contain not only the origin stories and descriptions of the Kūmū Devtas (including Gorakhnāth and the Nāthas) but they also contain instructions outlining the manner of worship appropriate to each of these deities. These are usually set out in the katha (legends), but additional details are supplemented by the bard or jāgariyā's acquired or inherited knowledge of ritual craft and magic formulae. The jāgariyā is the prominent member of a triad of magico-religious specialists whose primary concern is the incarnation and worship of the Kūmū-Devtas. His colleagues are: the ḍāgariyā in whose body

are incarnated the deities invoked by the jāgariyā; and the pūchar who divines the futures of his clients, diagnoses their illnesses through consultations with incarnated deities, and who officiates at the propitiation of these deities.

Subsidiary to the major post-mortuary rituals which encompass the activities of the jāgariyā, ḍāgariyā and pūchar are a number of lesser performances which can be performed as rites in themselves. Examples of these include pūch (divination), jhar (magical healing), ghāt (cursing), tantarmantar (formulae and ritual for removing cursing) and jadhū (witchcraft or sorcery). These can involve lesser functionaries, such as the jadhūghar (sorceror) or tantarmantarkarniwalli ('curse-remover'), but these roles are usually found combined within the function of jāgariyā, pūchar or ḍāgariyā. Equally, they can even involve officiation by more prestigious ritual specialists such as the mahant (leading pujari of a major Śaiva temple), the pīr (abbot of a jogic akhaḍa or monastery, usually attached to a Bhairav or Nāgraja temple), and sometimes even well-known jogis or saddhus known to be proficient in magic.

It is possible for one person to fulfil aspects of each of the three roles of jāgariyā, ḍāgariyā and pūchar. The roles are separate and clearly defined, being three distinct, but inter-related and occasionally assimilated functions in a distinct complex of rituals. The rituals themselves are unified by the role of the jāgariyā (who is the repositary for the traditions which underlie them), the performance of jāgar which is an essential

component of each ritual, and their overall status as post-mortuary ceremonials. Together, the roles of the jāgariyā, the ḍāgariyā and the pūchar combine to make up a 'threefold complex of officiation' which is dominated by the jāgariyā.

Corresponding functional complexes of the type medium/diviner/non-possessed musician covering a range of rituals comparable to the type outlined for Kumaon, are commonly found throughout the Himālayas and adjacent areas of North India (cf. pp 155-165). But the Kumaoni complex is unique among these in terms of its internal organisation and division of labour. The musician rather than the medium or priest acts as repositary for the major ritual traditions of the complex. In addition, he, (rather than the medium) is wholly responsible for the creation of incarnation, and, of the three functionaries, he commands the greatest status.

The ritual positions of the three functionaries vis a vis one another are hierarchically ordered; an asymmetry obtains between the functions of jāgariyā and ḍāgariyā, between jāgariyā and pūchar, and between ḍāgariyā and pūchar. The relationship of the jāgariyā to the others is one of 'guru' to 'devotee', and of 'devta - maker' to 'devta - receiver'. The relationship of ḍāgariyā to pūchar is less clearcut, as both involve mediumship and are often assimilated. But in strict terms of status, ritual power and a command of ritual skills, the pūchar generally has the edge.

I will now turn to a detailed description of the roles and ritual practices of each of the three functionaries. Following this I wish to introduce some comparative material from the ethnographic

areas which border Kumaon. This will serve to highlight both the regional distinctiveness of certain aspects of the Kumaoni complex, and the fact that, despite this distinctiveness, it occupies a position within customary Hinduism which is directly comparable to that of the sacerdotal complexes found among its Hindu neighbours.

The Jāgariyā

The central character of our drama is the jāgariyā whose primary function is the organisation of jāgar, i.e. seance or more exactly, 'ceremony of awakening' (of spirit forms or bhūtyoni, from jāgaran, awakening, cf 289-298). The jāgariyā as the "one who directs the jāgar" (Gaborieau, 1975b;149: "celui qui dirige le jāgar") is then an 'awakener', an officiant whose prime responsibility is to bring the deities into life during jāgar. Related forms of the term jāgariyā occur in western Nepāl where the equivalent magico-religious functionary is known as a jhãkri and an additional functionary, the dhāmi is known also as a jhãgre (meaning "he who grew a long tuft of hair" ; Gaborieau, 1976:225)[1].

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1. This refers to the long strand of hair which dhāmis generally allow to grow from the tops of their heads. Indeed possession in Kumaon, as in Nepal, is associated with long, loose hair. Male dãgariyās loose their topknots and remove their hats before possession. Female dãgariyās untie their braids and allow their hair to fall loose. Kumaoni informants relate the long hair of possession to the long loose hair of jogis. This association has a classical precedent, in the long haired (kesin) ecstatic (muni) of the Ṛg.Veda (X.136) who is both renouncer and deity (cf.Eliade,1958a:102).

Like the jāgariyā, both the jhākri and the dhāmi[1] officiate at seances, but unlike the former their role incorporates possession. In Kumaon the jāgariyā is rarely possessed; this is a condition normally associated with the ḍāgariyā. During jāgar however the jāgariyā is addressed as 'dharmiya', an appellation which invites comparison with dhāmi, a consideration justified by the knowledge that one Kumaoni community, the Boras of Borarau, formerly referred to their priests as 'dhāmi' (Allen 1969:54-5).[2]

At the time of study there were some fifty jāgariyās operating in the Katyūr area, and over half that number again working in the Borarau valley. Of these, I obtained specific information about the practices of twenty eight, interviewed fifteen, and successfully employed six as regular informants.

During jāgar the jāgariyā sings and chants the origin story and achievements of the particular deities he wishes to incarnate. These arrive and take possession of the bodies of ḍāgariyās, or

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1. Within the Nepāl context there exists some confusion with regard to the exact nature of the distinction between the jhākri and the dhāmi (Macdonald, 1976:334). Sometimes the terms are used interchangeably (Jones, 1976a:11). Possibly this lack of clarity is due to the use of dhāmi as both a title (in some contexts) and as an honorific (in others). Both dhāmi and dharmiya appear to originate from dharma or dhamma (religious duty, truth or tradition), and thus convey a meaning of 'purveyor or protector of traditional religious knowledge'.

2. A less common name for the jāgariyā is ghadiyal or 'devta maker'.

mediums, who dance (nacō), perform ascetic acts (tapas) and address the assembly of devotees. Their movements, coming and going, are controlled at all times by the jāgariyā who with his own drumming and that of his accolytes (hiwari) not only provides a rhythm for their movements, but by altering this rhythm at frequent intervals divides the entire ceremony into specific ritual sequences (set out in chapter 4). The deities or ancestral dead are not simply invoked for their own glorification however. Their incarnation is designed to create or recreate health, welfare and prosperity in the household in question. And the jāgariyā, like the deities he incarnates, is attached through inheritance to that very household. Not only is he bard and post-mortuary officiant, but he is also a type of family priest who performs rituals for sets of clients, who are termed saukar (if male) and seonai (if female).

No matter how humble his social position in everyday life, the jāgariyā is considered during jāgar to be guru, or spiritual master, of both his clients and their deities. As such, his position is very powerful, he decides the tempo and length of the ceremony, directs its various phases, gives orders to his clients and supervises the enactment of all the rituals which are incorporated within jāgar. He tells the deities when they must incarnate, when they must dance, sit, speak and give advice and he tells them when to depart. He also controls the dialogue between the deities and their devotees, frequently interceding to interpret the advice of the deities and proffer suggestions of his own.

Occasionally, the jāgariyā utilises his talents in ritual activities other than jāgar: e.g. at melas (fairs), at bhagnole (song and 'religious knowledge' contests) at hurkiya-bole (rice planting ceremonies, cf. Chapter I) , and in jūnar. Jūnar, the most important of these, is a community event involving an entire village community or combination of village communities, held generally in the spring months of Chait or Vaiśakh, or in the autumn months of Kartik or Pūṣ. It is performed in the precincts of the village temple or local temple of the village gods (gramdevta) and lasts for eleven days or nights. Performed outside, it contrasts with jāgar which is confined to the inside of individual households and has a more limited duration (normally one night, but sometimes spread over three to five days and nights).

A large fire (dhūnī) is built in the centre of the temple courtyard in honour of Guru Gorakhnāth the 'spirit master' of all the Kūmū-Devtas. A jāgar is held each night around this fire; the jāgariyā circles the fire and incarnates all the iṣṭadevtas and bhūmidevtas or the particular village or group of villages. These dance in a circle around the fire at the jāgariyā's instruction. At the request of the deities the jāgariyā can himself become possessed; a deity named Dharm Das Devta, worshipped as the first jāgariyā, incarnates in his body and makes him dance along with the other dāgariyās.

As a preliminary to the possession rituals of jūnar the jāgariya is also called upon to recite selections from the Hindu śastras (holy texts, the Purāṇas, Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata) and

lengthy local folktales such as the Malūsāhī. Often he illustrates these recitations (bhārāt) with demonstrative mimes, moral anecdotes, puns and satirical quips which serve to amuse the large gathering.[1]

Some jāgariyās also adopt the role of pūchar. This involves: (a) divining the future or their clients through the manipulation of rice grains or the interpretation of dreams; (b) diagnosing illness and spirit affliction in people and detecting the effects of cursing (ghat) and sorcery (jadhū) on their animals and property; and (c) performing the ritual of chalpūjā for their clients in order to exorcise and propitiate an afflicting spirit.

As religious specialists (dharmiyas), the advice of jāgariyās is generally sought in any matter concerned with supernatural relations. In a dispute between families or within a family, for example, the jāgariyā is called to adjudicate. This he does by either consulting his own iṣṭdevta or the deities of the parties concerned. When a new temple is to be built the jāgariyā will be called in to suggest a location and organise a jāgar or small-scale jūnar (usually of five nights duration) to inaugurate and bless the new construction. In the selection of

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1. These activities also dominate the bhagnole, or 'song contest), in which two jāgariyās contest their knowledge and experience by engaging in a singing dialogue during which they parry information about the śastras and about the attributes and accomplishments of local deities.

the stone used in the temple to represent the deity to be honoured he plays a vital role, often accompanying his client to the river fork (prayāg) from where the stone will be selected. If a temple is to be transferred from one location to another he will accompany the jātrā, or procession, in which the stone (linga) is carried. Should a client decide to go on a pilgrimage to Hardwar, Badrināth,Joshimath or Kedarnāth he will ask his guru, the family jāgariyā, to accompany him. The jāgariya is also responsible for initiating new ḍāgariyās. This he does during jūnar. Finally, some jāgariyās combine the activity of hurkiyabole (cf P69-71) with their craft, and jāgariyās who are of a Brahman jati often combine most of the above tasks with the performance of purohit gīri (brahmanical priestly duties).

In general the more of the above functions, tasks and accomplishments the jāgariyā combines, the more respect (adar saktar) he receives and the more his social standing and professional credibility is enhanced. This and the combination of age, caste, extensive knowledge of his craft and good musical (singing and drumming) ability together determine his reputation and prestige throughout a wide area. The services of certain jāgariyas tend to be in such demand that they can often be asked by new clients to travel over one hundred kilometres (by bus) to officiate at a ritual. In general though they limit their 'home range' to one or two valleys or one micro-region (set of three to five neighbouring villages).

The drum employed by most jāgariyās is a small double-sided

membrophone shaped like an hour-glass and termed a huruk or hurkiya. This is usually some nine inches in length, five inches in diameter across the drum face and two inches wide in the centre. The case is made from hard red-white wood (now of an unknown type imported from the plains). The skins are made from buffalo or bullock hide which has been beaten into transparency. These overlap the edges of the drum and are connected across its length by strands of crosswoven string. Another loop of string is tied around these strands. When this is pulled the contraction of the cross-strands tightens the skins and increases the drum's timbre. This loop also serves as a shoulder strap. When he is playing the drum the jāgariyā attaches this strap to his left shoulder and by pushing the drum away from his body produces an alternate tightening and loosening of the skin membranes. As the skins are struck with the right hand this effect adds a deep and hollow resonance to the sound created.

In shape the huruk roughly resembles the classical dhyamru, a double sided drum struck with beaded cords and held in one hand only. The dhyamru is commonly found as an iconographic motif in statues and paintings of Śiva and Kālī. The deity is usually depicted holding the dhyamru in a playing position; its purpose appears to be one of calling or invoking spirit attendants or the souls of the dead.

But the shape of the huruk can be related even more closely to the double sided drum (damaruka) carried by the ancient Kāpālikas (or "wearers of skulls", Eliade, 1958a:297), and still

associated with the Āghoris. Oakley (1905) relates the ḍamaruka to the drum used by tantric Buddhist mendicants of Tibet which is made from two human skulls joined at the base. If the connection is valid, both the ḍamaruka and the huruk probably owe their form to this basic funerary representation. All these instruments share a common purpose, viz, the invocation and control of the dead. Also the huruk is the jāgariyās sacred companion (dăgar). The Āghori jogi has two such companions, the ḍamaruka and the hurkiya, a mad or rabid dog which lives like its master at the śmaśāna, where it unearths buried corpses and eats the flesh. Hurkiya also denotes a mad dog in Kumaoni and one is tempted to suggest a metaphorical connection between the activities of such an animal and the baleful sound of the jāgariyā's own hurkiya, or huruk. The descensional or nether-worldy motif suggested by the huruk's shape and name is complemented by the use of an ascensional motif on many huruks as suggested by the attachment of small bells (ghumrelli) of the type normally associated with horses and cows.

In jūnar the huruk is not used. The instrument generally employed is a large barrel-shaped drum, the dhol. This is again, double-sided but is played with sticks (gajo) made from padam (the wood of the cherry tree, which is much revered in Hinduism. In Kumaon the cherry tree blossoms twice a year, and gives petals both red and white in hue). This is hung from a shoulder strap and played from a standing position. The jāgariyā's acolytes (hiwari) sometimes accompany his performance with the

sound of the damai or kettle drum which is played with thick padam sticks. This effects a loud dull sound which complements the sharper timbre of the dhol and the reverb of the huruk. And at jūnars, melas and goddess festivals they use trumpets (urdmukhī) and cow-horns (gosranga) to signal the onset of possession. The most common instrument of accompaniment however is the thālī, or cymbal, which is deployed only while the possessing deities are dancing. The thālī is a thin brass plate placed downwards on the earth and beaten with gajo, producing a sharp, high-pitched sound. It is popular among brahmin jāgariyās who fear pollution from touching the cow-hide skin of the huruk. Among the latter, the thālī is not placed on the earth but on the rim of an earthen pitcher. With his left hand the jāgariyā rolls it around the rim of the pitcher and, striking it with a single gajo held in his right hand, produces a distorted sound similar to (though louder and sharper than) that of the huruk. When the jāgariyā's instruments are not in use they are kept beside his personal thān, or household shrine.

The dress of the jāgariyā is often relatively informal. He wears the conventional hat, coat and pants of the ordinary contemporary Pahāri village man. But on occasions such as a jūnar, an extended five night jāgar, hurkiyabole or bhagnole, he will dress in a white or yellow dhoti, a white shirt and a white turban with a long braid hanging down the back. Unlike his Nepāli counterpart the jhākri (Macdonald, 1975 & Hitchcock, 1967) the dress of the jāgariyā exhibits no symbols of magical ascent (feathers,

or bells) or magical descent (snake bones, e.g. Allen, 1976:132).

Jāgariyās representing all the major caste groups of Kumaon could be found in Barahmandal. In theory jāgariyās of any caste could perform jāgar for patrons belonging to any other caste group. Thus it was common to find untouchable jāgariyās (of the Das drummer-tailor group mostly) attached to both Khas and Thul Jat Brahmān families. However, I never came across any instance of a brahmin jāgariyā performing jāgar for an untouchable family (although it was well known for "greedy" brahmins to perform brahmanical pūjā on behalf of untouchable clients). During the performance of a jāgar involving the participation of both pure and impure castes pollution conventions were generally dropped, but would be resumed immediately the jāgar was over. Thus it was common to see Brahman dāgariyās smoking chillums and hookahs with Dom jāgariyas during a jāgar, and on occasion embracing their caste inferiors, but, on completion of the event, insisting on a strict caste separation (e.g. in separate rooms) while refreshments were passed around. During mixed jāgars such as these, it was equally common to see the Dom jāgariyā and his hiwaris being anointed with tilak and flowers, and worshipped as gurus by their Brahman clients. Within the context of jāgar the high castes actively treat the lower castes as their social and spiritual superiors.

Some brahmin jāgariyās will only perform jāgar in the houses of clients with an equal or superior status. The Tiwarī brahmin jāgariyās of Dobha for example, who claimed that their ancestors

were the official jāgariyās of the Chand rajas, would only perform jāgar for clients of Thul-Jat status. In all-Brahman jāgars purity conventions would be imposed upon the ceremony: no-one outside the immediate family would be permitted to attend and menstruating women would be temporarily banished from the household. These were measures instigated to minimise the risk of polluting the incarnating deities (such as Bholanāth, a 'Brahman' deity popularly worshipped by Brahmans), and thus arousing their anger.[1]

In Barahmandal some of the most popular and well known jāgariyās belong to the Nātha communities. These are somewhat ambiguous in status; as temple caretakers they are affiliated with Śudra groups as a service caste, but as householder-jogis and descendants of Gorakhnāth they are regarded as a group which is both outside and above caste.

As was noted earlier, jāgariyās are generally attached to particular family groups who provide their clientele. Should a particular jāgariyā prove to be ineffectual at his art then there would be little to stop a client looking around for a more renowned or more powerful (śakti) officiant. Alternatively, in a case of sudden illness or disaster in the household then the client might be obliged to forego tradition and consult the jāgariyā

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1. Myself, my assistant and my brahmin landlord were refused admission to a Tiwarī jāgar being held at Kantli on the grounds that our presence might incur pollution of the deity.

living closest to his or her neighbourhood.

The term used to depict the jāgariyās client, saukar, has a number of referents in Kumaoni; it can mean simply a householder or else a man of property (and by extension a moneylender) or (usually when describing a Bhotia) a trader or shepherd (sauk). The root of the word is sauk, meaning 'desire'. If in the context of everyday life the saukar is a 'man of desires', he is also this in jāgar, for the gods are invoked in order to fulfil his 'desires', to offer him succour, protect him from mystical attack, further his agricultural prosperity and provide him with heirs. The derivation of the term for a female client, śeonai is obscure, but it appears to be a variant form of 'śyaini' meaning 'respectable woman'.

There are no initiation procedures incumbent on becoming a jāgariyā. The profession is in most cases simply passed on from father to son. In cases where there are no sons the tradition will be taught to a near relation or jāti fellow. The acolyte acts as his father or teacher's assistant (hiwar) and primarily through the example of the latter picks up the required knowledge of musical rhythms and ritual actions, and bardic repertoire.

It is said that unless the apprentice has a vocation (dharmdhat) for the profession he will not be able to master the incarnation of deities, nor will he be able to command the respect of his father's clients. It would seem that a certain amount of divine inspiration or 'calling' is a necessary pre-requisite to the task of being able to invoke and command the attentions of the deities.

Aptitude in this area is the gift (dān) of the gods. Divine approval can be signified by the appearance of the family deity in the potential jāgariyā's dreams. More usually however, the presence of this approval is given expression in the manifestation by the young jāgariyā of an outstanding talent for singing and drumming.

In addition to his original teacher a youthful or inexperienced jāgariyā could also be attached to a renowned jāgariyā who would function as his guru, spiritual master, adviser and instructor. His personal deity (iṣṭadevta) also acts as his guru, or tutelar divinity. The jāgariyā's actual ability to create possession, to invoke deities, cannot however be acquired solely through instruction. He must also develop his śakti, or personal 'power' through constant devotion (bhakti) to his iṣṭadevta. The greater his bhakti then the greater will be his śakti and the more clients he will attract. In the fulfilment of bhakti certain ritual observances are prescribed:

(a) The jāgariyā has to perform daily darśan and pūjā ('audience' and worship) to his family deities (kuldevta) and iṣṭadevta at the household shrine (marhi). This is done in the early morning before eating. He lights incense and candles at the shrine and applies tilak to the linga and to his drum.

(b) On the day of a performance he is required to bathe and purify his body both in the morning and in the evening. Ideally this should be done in a holy river

(gunga) if there is one at hand. He is allowed to eat only once in the day, generally after sunset.

(c) Regardless of his caste status he must observe certain purity conventions. He must abstain from food cooked by a woman undergoing menses. He must avoid the company of persons whose ritual status is inferior to his own, and he must avoid contact with people who are in a state of sūtak (period of impurity following a birth in the household) or nātak (period of impurity following a death in the household).

Regarding professional merits and rewards, the reasons most often given by jāgariyā informants for practising their art were as follows:

(a) Continuation of the family tradition. This was considered a divine duty (dharmapada).

(b) The acquisition of good prestige and respect within the community (village, hamlet or micro-region).

(c) Financial rewards (which varied with age and status).

(d) The desire to assist people in trouble (dukh) and to sponsor their spiritual and material welfare.

(e) For the purification (śuddha karn) of the soul (prānī) and the attainment of liberation (mokṣa) through participation in traditional forms of worshipping the gods (collectively termed dharmapūjā).

The essentially religious nature of the jāgariyā's profession

is indicated by (d) and (e) above and also by the fact that during jāgar the jāgariyā is addressed by the appellation dharmiya (i.e. 'conveyor or religious truth and knowledge'. Most jāgariyās however do take considerable account of the prestige and financial rewards to be derived from the practice. Money is considered an incentive for the work involved and a necessary compensation for the inconvenience and travel incurred. The amounts given vary with the status and reputation of the jāgariyā and with the financial capacities of the saukar. Payment is often supplemented with gifts of rice and grain. In general terms a local Dom jāgariyā of rudimentary ability would be unlikely to earn more than ten to twenty rupees for a performance lasting one night, whereas a Thul Jat Brahman jāgariya with wealthy clients could demand extortionate amounts (The Tiwaris of Dobha were reputed to charge upwards of one thousand rupees for a five night possession ceremony).

In general though the practice of demanding fixed prices is very unusual. A jāgariyā has to be content with what he was offered. If the amount given is considered unsuitable he cannot complain but he could take offence and decline his services in the future. Payment is generally given as a ritual prestation (daksina), firstly at the very beginning of a jāgar (in the form of a few small coins offered first to the deity) then at the time of departure. The second payment (the larger sum) is conveyed furtively (in a closed fist) from the right hand of the saukar into the folded hands of the jāgariyā. The amount of daksina

given is never a round figure. A quarterly denomination is added at the end to negate the unlucky zero or single last figure. Following completion of a ceremony the jāgariyā is entitled to a share of all the items offered to the deities (rice, grains, fruits, milk products, nuts, cloths, and the right hind leg of any goat sacrificed).

Finally, to round off our description of the profession of the jāgariyā I have set out below a precis of the legend or story which establishes the model for the jāgariyā's role in the person of Dharm Das, the 'first jāgariyā', who is worshipped as a deity during jūnar.

The legend of Dharm Das Devta

Dharm Das was created by Mahādev (Śiva) as the guru of the vir (spirit warriors). He performs the rīthi (rituals) and vidhi-vidhan (systems of worship) of Harū, Barū, Śaim, Dandi, Churia, Mor-Churia, Hukka, Purdar and Dandikholia (names of Kūmū-Devtas).

From his earliest days Dharm Das was a great devotee (bhakt), worshipper (devtaun ko manta tha) and teacher (śikśāt). When the Kūmū Devtas were searching for a Guru, Dharm Das was their first choice. They went to him and offered their services (sewa-tahail), asking him to be their guru and the protector (katīr-raula) of their dharma. At this Dharm Das asked of them "What then shall be my jāti?". They replied "The sons of Brahma are four, Brahman, Kśyatriya, Vaiśya and Śudra. You shall be among the Śudra but we shall honour and follow you as we follow the great devtas". Then Dharm Das said "I will show you a way (rasta) which you will follow. If you leave this path your words (parcha) and your dharma will come to nothing. If you attend to my commands you will be able to change water into stone. You must perform guru bhakti in this way: if anyone is hungry (bhūko) thirsty (pyāso) or helpless then you must fulfil his need (abhilasa) and give food,

water and shelter. Your devotees will be beggars before you; if a man is without child (santan) you must give him a child, if a man is without foodgrain (ann) you must give him foodgrain. If a man is poor you must give him some wealth. These are your duties. This is how you will complete your guru-bhakti. If you honour and believe (manti) in me then you will receive the respect of men. Now you must go to Hari-Hardwar, bathe in the gunga and offer your sewa tahail to Guru Gorakhnāth.

So Harū, Barū, Saim, Dandi, Churia, Morchuria, Hukka, Purdar and Dandikholia all went to Hari-Hardwar. There they visited Guru Gorakhnāth and offered him their sewa. Then the Guru said to them "Now that you have shown your devotion your words of advice (bhol-bachan) will be true. When you have returned home remember to protect the cow, obey the guru and respect your devotees. Dharm Das will be your guru. If someone is troubled (dukhi) you must remember me and offer rice (dhān) and ash (babhūt) to Khagnāth (master of the ash, i.e. the dhūnī). The same ash you must give to the dukhi with words of advice. If your advice is good then you are my true bhakt (devotees).

The legend puts the jāgariyā, Dharm Das, in the position of a prime intercessor, appointed by Śiva and assimilated as guru with the intercessory traditions of Gorakhnāth. In keeping with the netherworldly associations of both Śiva and Goraknāth his status is low, that of a Śudra, but as a devout worshipper and teacher, he, like Śiva and Goraknāth, also has renunciatory status, and his appointed role of intermediary between local gods and men, secures him a high professional status. In the pursuit of his craft, he is actively honoured by both gods and man. His powers are such that the local gods are contracted to carefully follow his advice and respond to his directions and commands.

The ḍãgariyā

The ḍãgariyā is a medium, someone who becomes possessed during jāgar by incarnating deities invoked by the jāgariyā. Comparative and etymological interpretations of the term ḍãgariyā have been profferred by Gaborieau in two separate discussions (1976, 1975b). In the first of these, Gaborieau relates ḍãgariyā to ḍãgri, the name given to a temple priest in Jumla district (Western Nepāl), a word which is also used in Central Nepal to designate a dhāmi (see above) possessed by a vāyū or 'ghost' (Gaboreau, 1976:226). In his second discussion Gaborieau derives ḍãgariyā from ḍaṅgara which is defined in Turner's dictionary as referring to "a thin castrated animal or beast of burden" (1975b:165). He then stresses the association between this category of 'sorry beast' and the passive office of the ḍãgariyā itself, an office which in his opinion seemed to be largely filled by outcastes and social failures ("un homme stupide, paresseux malade, maigre, qui ne travailli pas, qui n'a pas de famille, pas d'enfants"). However, the pejorative connotations of this word in Turner's dictionary do not match with its current usage among the inhabitants of Barahmandal. My informants did not describe the ḍaṅgara as a 'despised animal' but as a hard-working productive beast, usually a 'favourite' ox or buffalo. The designation thus has positive rather than negative attributes, and indeed I found little evidence to support Gaborieau's contention, based on this association, that most ḍãgariyās were looked down

upon as social failures. On the contrary the ḍãgariyās I encountered were entitled to, and mostly received (as a result of their function) considerable honour and respect within their respective communities.

On the other hand I was aware of the fact that a large number of the ḍăgariyās I encountered did have attributes which marked them in local terms, not as outcastes in Gagorieau's sense, but as marginals. Like Gaborieau's ḍãgariyās some were unmarried or childless women, some were marked by diseases which rendered them anomalous (e.g. skin leprosy,polio etc.), others were unmarried, childless men. In these cases the office of ḍăgariyā possessed a certain attractiveness in that it procured for them honour and respect, but it also gave them the opportunity to express the more positive virtues associated with their marginal, anomalous classification, i.e. the possession of magical and divinatory gifts and powers. These no doubt compensated for any lack of conventional fulfulment by giving them additional status.

The institution of the ḍãgariyā however is not based upon individual predilictions for self expression or status achievement. Another variation of the term ḍãgariyā is dāgar, meaning 'companion'. In the context of jāgar the ḍãgariyā is the companion or aide of the jāgariyā, but it is equally possible to view the ḍãgariyā as the 'companion' as well as the 'favoured vehicle' of the god. For it should be noted that the ḍăgariyā is also described as the 'horse' (ghwar) of the god, i.e. both 'companion' and 'vehicle' of the deity.

Anyone can be a ḍāgariyā; man, woman or child of any varna or jati. It is usual to find at least one ḍāgariyā per household in Barahmandal, and that ḍāgariyā regularly incarnates the gods of the patrilineage (kūldevta). Ḍāgariyās can also, however, be attached to households and lineages external to their own. This depends upon the nature and type of gods which the external ḍāgariyā in question habitually incarnates. Each deity possesses specific characteristics or properties (e.g. fury, passivity, vengeance, compassion, justness or fairness) and an area of influence or jurisdiction (e.g. the land, the animals, illness, the house, domestic affairs, fertility, the forest, water, the mountains, fire etc), hence a ḍāgariyā who habitually incarnates a particular deity such as Gorīya, the god of justice and of cattle, will be requested to attend a jāgar in a household where the qualities of that deity are in demand. This external attachment can be either temporary or permanent.

In jāgar the ḍāgariyā becomes possessed (devta āge, lit. 'the god comes'), dances (nacna), and mimes the characteristics and achievements of his particular deity or deities. If he incarnates more than one deity the possessions will occur in series starting with the most powerful (śakti) god and concluding with the least powerful. At the end of each 'dance' he or she listens to the entreaties of the deity's devotees, gives advice and anoints each supplicant (and every member of the household present) with babhūt (cow-dung ash taken from a dhūnī devoted to Gorakhnāth). During possession the ḍāgariyā is addressed as

"Parmeśwāra", or 'supreme god'.

The possessing deity or deities are thought to enter the dãgariyās body in a number of ways; either through the left or right foot, the forehead, the top of the head, the chest or the heart. Some deities are believed to come from 'above', through the roof of the house from their home in Mount Kailās. Others are believed to come from 'below', from the ground, the cremation grounds, or from below the ground, the depths of the forest, or even from the ground itself. Arrival of the deity is signalled by shaking (kampṇā) of the body, leading to an uncontrollable frenzy of writhing, hopping and jumping, described as 'boiling' (joś). Possession by the deity is thought to be the immediate outcome of three things: (a) the invocations and drumming of the jāgariyā: (b) the lighting of a lamp (dīpak) which shows the deity where to come; and (c) a twofold mental activity on the part of the dãgariyā comprising, firstly, meditation (dhyān) on his or her familiar deity, and secondly an active concentration on both the sound of the jāgariyā and the light of the dīpak. During possession the dãgariyā is expected to be unconscious (behoś) of everything except his deity, the jāgariyā's sound and the dīpak. He is not even supposed to be aware of the words (bhol-bachan) spoken through his mouth by the deity.

Dãgariyās possess no ritual paraphernalia as such. For a jāgar or jūnar they are expected to dress, if male, in a white or yellow loincloth (dhoti), white or ochre shirt and turban (pagri),

and, if female, in a red sari or skirt. During the course of a ceremony they will often receive fresh supplies of these, given as offerings to the deity by its devotees, yet retained by the medium. This represents one of the rewards which accrue from the practice. In addition the ḍẽgariyā might also receive small amounts of dakṣiṇa (if attending an event outside his own family circle). This is usually given in the final stages of the ceremony. He or she is also entitled to a share of any goat sacrificed to the incarnating deities towards the end of the ceremony. Usually the head and the right front leg are the parts apportioned to the ḍẽgariyā as the god's share.

As previously noted, prestige can accrue from the regular practice of mediumship. This tends however to be limited in extent to the ḍẽgariyās immediate community, his kin group, jāti or village. As the vehicle of the deity the ḍẽgariyā is afforded considerable respect and his advice is sought on personal and community matters. No one would dare to insult a known ḍẽgariyā in case they might invoke the wrath of the deity (resulting in a hankar or 'curse', the effects of which are believed to be manifest as one or all of a wide range of disasters varying from illness to sterility to crop failure). A certain amount of spiritual and moral purity is said to be derived from the practice. Like the jāgariyā, the ḍẽgariyā is involved in the performance of auspicious religious ceremonies (dharmapūjā) and this is held to further his chances of achieving liberation (mokṣa) or ensuring a higher reincarnation through participation in good works. It

cannot however bring about an elevation in caste status, for this is determined purely by jāti. His caste status is merely annulled during the restricted periods in which he performs his art; for although the devta may be 'pure' his vehicle may, without contradiction, belong to an 'impure' jati.

Regardless of their jati, all ḍāgariyās are required to maintain their bodies in a state of purity so that their familiar deity may not be contaminated.[1] This involves avoidance of the usual polluting activities; eating food cooked by a menstruating woman, avoiding contact with persons undergoing either natak or sūtak (temporary pollution caused by a birth or death in the family), abstention from drink, unlawful intercourse, gambling or any harmful or immoral acts. During the period of a ceremony the ḍāgariyā must fast each day until sunset, bathe twice a day, not indulge in sexual intercourse, and avoid contact with persons of any kind ritually inferior to himself (women and 'untouchables'). The extent of the care taken to preserve a ḍāgariyās purity is evident in one of the regulations attached to the jūnar ceremony. According to this, all the ḍāgariyās of a village who become possessed over the eleven days are confined for the duration of the event to the precincts of the temple.

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1. One ḍāgariyā I encountered regarded his wife's barrenness as a sign from his istadevta that he was more suited for the profession than most others, since his house could never be rendered impure by the blood of birth or menses.

ḍāgariyās are 'chosen' for the task by their family deities. Hence the role is often inherited; being passed from father to son, or mother to daughter or to a near relative of either sex. Generally a new ḍāgariyā will emerge once the former ḍāgariyā of the family has become too old or has died. The 'selection' and initiation of new ḍāgariyās takes place only during jūnars held in the winter months of Mangsīr and Pus.

The new ḍāgariyā is called a 'munda kī dhūnī' ('disciple of the dhūnī) or 'kaco ḍāgariyā' ('raw' or 'imperfect' adept). Generally he or she becomes possessed during the jūnar for the very first time. This can occur in response to being struck by babhūt and rice thrown into the crowd by the other ḍāgariyās or else as a spontaneous response to the music of the jāgariyā. He or she will be immediately challenged by the jāgariyā, who will adopt a display of anger and demand to know the name of the deity who has taken incarnation. Once this has been given the new ḍāgariyā will be warned that if he is a fake (thagi) he will suffer burns during faurikhanna rīthī (ordeal by iron). If the possession persists he or she will be requested to again take incarnation during the next session (jāgar), either during the night or the following morning. At that time he will again be challenged. If the new ḍāgariyā appears resolute then an iron bar with a spade-like head (normally used to stoke the fire) will be placed in the dhūnī until it glows red. One of the older ḍāgariyās takes this from the fire and holds it to the tongue of the novice.

This act is called faurikhanna or 'iron eating'. The poker is then applied to the novice's hands and feet. If there are no signs of burn marks then the incarnation is regarded to be true (sacho); the absence of marks being attributed to the miracle (karamat) of the devta. Two further demonstrations (tapas) of the devta's power (śakti) are sometimes required: (a) the novice has to endure being beaten by the other dãgariyās with red hot tongs (chimta) and chains (janjīr); and (b) he or she is required to jump in and out of the dhūnī, sometimes in the embrace of one of the other dãgariyās.

The following day, during the morning session, the new devta, is asked to take incarnation once again. He is given a symbolic bath (gungasnān) in water and milk and again asked to indicate his identity. This done, the following ritual ingredients (ranabana) are placed before him; bās (bamboo), babil (rough twine - grass used for making rope), dūdh (cow milk), jal (water), dholki (small kettle drum) and thālī (cymbal). Then he is asked "From which side of the family have you come? Are you from the family ancestors (pitar) or have you come from the ancestors of the woman's side (maithu)?" Once this has been ascertained the devta is asked to accept the offerings placed before him. Then he is offered a shrine (thān) and the constant devotion (bhakti) of his devotees (bhakt).

If the deity that has incarnated is new to the village and to the family then he is asked through the dãgariyā how he wishes to be worshipped. He is offered a choice of a series of

jāgars held over periods of either twenty two days (baisi), or three months (tīnmasi) or six months (chemasi). Once he has accepted the offer of a jāgar series to be held in his honour the deity becomes pacified (thamego) and is requested to depart.

The new dāgariyā, whether incarnated by an old or new (neotan) devta, becomes possessed in every jāgar held during the remainder of the jūnar. He is also expected to conform to a series of rules (niyam) of purification valid for either three to six months from the time of the jūnar. These involve worshipping the family gods every day, bathing twice a day, fasting until sunset, abstaining from intercourse, avoiding the company of pregnant women (añbhari) and avoiding all contact with possible sources of pollution (corpses, ritual inferiors etc). In that time he would also be required to somehow demonstrate to his devotees the miraculous power of his familiar deity. And any forecasts or divination given as part of his bhol bachan (words of advice) in jāgar must have been shown to be accurate (or at least not disproved). Failure on any of these counts would cast doubt on the strength of his vocation.

Certain dāgariyās in Barahmandal were renowned for the jogi - like devotion with which they observed the ordinances incumbent upon the early months of the novitiate. All dāgariyās were expected to go on pilgrimage (few did), but one to my knowledge journeyed not only to Hardwar (the shrine of Gorakhnāth) but to Joshimath (the shrine of Narsingh), to Varanāsī and also

to the KhumbhaMela at Allahabad. Another used to practice jogic austerities, yogic meditation and āsanas (learned from a book). Among male ḍāgariyās it was also common to find the habitual smoking of hashish (aṭtar or dum), a trait more commonly associated with the jogi sects (Nāth and Gīrī) and Śaivite temple pujaris in the area, who regard the ingestion of marihuana as a sacramental act devoted to Śiva (Śivbuti).

Ḍāgariyās also practice minor austerities in order to demonstrate their devotion to the familiar spirits. Some of these token acts might include a ritual avoidance of meat, fish, garlic, onion or masūr dal ('heating' foods), and the adoption of a cooking 'pure' diet (e.g. fruit, dahī and milk) much favoured by the deities. Female ḍāgariyās might give up plaiting their hair or using a bone comb (made from buffalo horn). But the most common gesture of devotion found among ḍāgariyās is one of making regular visits to the temple.

Following completion of the initiatory period a five day jāgar is held at the home of the new ḍāgariyā. If a new deity is also to be honoured then the jāgar is performed once the new temple is complete. Animals are sacrificed at the site of the temple; and meat and grains are offered to the deity then eaten by the community in a feast (bandhāri). If the ḍāgariyā and his family are of Brahman jāti then a pūjā is also held at the new thān either in addition to, or in place of, sacrifice (bāli—dān).

The Pūchar

The Pūchar, or diviner, is a more advanced and more specialised type of ḍ̃āgariyā. All the procedures and ordinances attached to the position of ḍ̃āgariyā apply also to the position of pūchar. However, the initiatory period of the latter is generally longer due to the need to develop some types of siddhi (magical power) with which evil spirits can be controlled. Thus the pūchar might fast every day for a minimum period upwards of either three or six months at the end of which he will (following the practice of novice renouncers, cf. Caplan, 1973:174) give a bandhāri (community feast) and a donation (gaudari) to the temple of his familiar deity. The pūchar is usually expected to complete his initiation with a meditation and fast in the cremation ground.

Familiar deities are inherited through the patrilineage, but the pūchar will only incarnate one deity and this invariably belongs to a certain class of spirits who are known to have authority over lesser malevolent or demonic spirits. The most popular pūchar iṣṭadevtas in Barahmandal at the time of recording were Narsingh (an avatār of Viṣṇu, and 'King of men', a warrior god who is half-man and half-lion and is believed to control the hosts of vir or spirit warriors that inhabit the mountains), Bhairav (the leader of the bhūts and an aide to Śiva) and Masān (the most powerful spirit which dwells in the cremation grounds - the home of the most ferocious bhūtas).

The pūchar's duties are communicated to him by his familiar spirit both during the initiatory period and during the enact-

ment of each particular pūjā. This guidance by the spirit guru is known as iśara. In the case of someone who has suddenly fallen ill or become unconscious the pūchar is called in and asked to diagnose whether the person is suffering from the effects of a curse (ghat) or a spirit affliction (kaṭhin ban). The officiant has recourse to three modes of divination each of which involves some measure of consultation with his iṣṭadevta. These are as follows:

(a) In the first type, he silently utters a mantra requesting the iśara of his deity, then proceeds to examine the patient's (dūkhi) body (pulse and eyes) for unusual signs. He queries the patient's family about the latter's behaviour, attempting to discuss whether he or she was prone to bouts of unconsciousness, uncontrolled trembling, listlessness or chaotic discourse.

(b) In the second type of divination he utters the same mantra, sits beside the patient and commences divination. The patient's family place before him a plate containing rice, dīpak, (flour paste lamp), some incense and some offerings of fruit and money. The rice is thrown in the air and a few grains are caught as they fall. The pūchar checks to see whether these are all broken (indicating affliction), all whole (indicating physical illness i.e. not mystically caused) or in a mixed condition (i.e. both broken and whole, indicative of a curse). This is done a number of times to check the accuracy

of the reading. During this type of divination (pūch) some pūchars recite aloud obscure ("secret") mantras, termed "tantarmantar".

(c) In the third type of divination ritual the pūchar utters mantras until he becomes possessed by his istadevta. Then he applies a solution of water and ash (babhūt pānī) to the forehead of the patient. If the patient is unconscious then he becomes temporarily revived (my account is unfortunately second hand). If however he has been acting normally up to this time then he suddenly becomes possessed by the afflicting spirit. The pūchar voicing the words of his istadevta, angrily questions the afflicting spirit, asking for his identity and the reason for the attack. Once the required information is gained, the pūchar assures the spirit that a jāgar will be held in his honour and requests that he ceases to afflict the patient during the intervening period.

In many cases a jāgar is held to decide upon a further course of action and also to honour the afflicting deity. During this both the dāgariyā of the household (or the patient himself) and the pūchar become possessed by their respective deities. The afflicting spirit might be offered 'release' through the performance of a propitiatory rite or 'chalpūjā' (cf. CH.3) which will be held in a place associated with, or appropriate to, the spirit's incarnation or initial manner of death (e.g. forest,

hilltop, riverbank, temple or śmaśāna).

The etymology of the word pūchar (pronounced pūchyar) reflects both the officiant's divinatory and priestly functions. The root 'pūch' means 'an asking' (from the Hindi verb pūchna, 'asking' and the Kumaoni verb pūchyo, 'to ask'). The pūchar after all is someone who is both 'asked' by his clients for advice and who in turn 'asks' his istalevta for advice. There is also a resemblance between the word pūchar and the term pujari, a temple priest. Pujaris also perform pūjās, and as noted previously, the pujaris of Kumaoni temples at one time undertook divinatory tasks and became possessed in order to dispense advice.

There are good grounds for considering that the pūchār once occupied a more prominent position in Kumaoni social life than is the case today. Atkinson (1973:824) conceives of the role of pūchar as analagous to that of the ghantua or astrologer. The latter is generally a brahmin with divinatory functions: he prepares astrological charts for clients; divines the appropriate moment for the commencement of a pūjā or the ropai; and assists in the selection and matching of marriage partners. He might also proffer advice regarding the fulfilment of religious duties, and suggest herbal remedies against attacks of illness.

According to an observation by Sanwal (1976), it is known for the office of pūchar (he uses incorrectly the term "pujari") to be discharged by the "seniormost able-bodied male in the locality lineage" or even by the family purohit. (1976:

83-84). It is more usual however for the position to be associated with the lower castes, perhaps because of the extreme levels of pollution involved. Two particular pūchars operating in the Katyūr Valley at the time of study illustrate this interface between impurity and ritual power. One was a Rajput woman who performed chal-pūjā for high caste Brahman clients in the area (women are forbidden to officiate at any other type of pūjā, on account of menstruation); another was a Dom leper (both untouchable and diseased, a double contamination) known as Korī Pūchar ("Leper Diviner") after his disease and his function. The most popular pūchar in my immediate field area was K. Singh a Dom agriculturalist of (ordinarily odious?) immigrant Chinese lineage.

A distinctive feature about the pūchars working in present day Kumaon is the lack of a marked tie with local temples. Their reputation hinges not upon attachment to a particular shrine but (in addition to their ritual expertise) on the specific god which they incarnate or consult during divination. Invariably there will exist a family shrine or village temple with which the pūchar's familiar spirit is associated, but there is no question of a pūchar stationing himself in a temple and there awaiting the approach of clients as would appear to be the case (among the equivalent categories of diviners) in Nepāl (cf. Gaborieau,1976) and South India (Beck,1969).

In terms of function and magical status the pūchar ranks more closely to the malevolent role of jadhūghar (sorcerer) than

either the jāgariyā or the d̃ā̃gariyā. This can be related to the fact that in chal-pūjā he, more than the others, is required to combat and pacify malign forces which have been generated through sorcery (jaddhū, buksār or ghāt). Some pūchars are thought to perform divination with the aid of materials more usually associated with sorcery and witchcraft e.g. human bones, ashes and hair, menstrual rags, or even the ropes used by suicides to hang themselves. Also the combined role of pūchar and jadhūghar (benevolent and malevolent magicians) is known to occur in Kumaon, but is a rare (and uninvestigated) phenomena. Pūchars however are, on account of their craft, always vulnerable to a charge of sorcery (jaddhū).

Jadhūghars usually have specific avatārs of Masān or Bhairav as their spirit familiars. These deities are normally resident in the śmaśāna (cremation grounds) and this is the spot where the jadhūghar must undergo a three month period of probation and initiation, more arduous and dangerous than that of the pūchar. The jadhūghar becomes initiated into the use of magical powers (siddhi) comparable to those sought by the tantric Ãghoris (cf. Briggs, 1973:174-5). The initiation procedures are remarkable for their pseudo-tantric aspect and the extremity of the contamination entailed.

The exact location selected for initiation (śmaśāna sādhana) within the cremation area is not the spot where bodies are burned (termed the 'devasthāl') but the area of ground where women who have died unmarried or children who have died uninitiated are

buried. The prospective initiant goes to this spot after sunset on śaniwar (Saturday night is devoted to aides of the goddess) and selects the grave of a newly buried child. He applies akśāt-pitya (rice and vermillion) to one of the stones of the tomb - altar (samādh). He then disinters the semi-decomposed body of the child and places it on the ground, chest facing downwards. Loosening his own hair he sits astride the corpse throughout the night. Before sunrise he replaces the corpse and remains by the samādh without food or water until the sunset of the following day. After sunset on the second day he again disinters the corpse and repeats the same procedure, though this time he positions the corpse with its back facing downwards. He places on his person a supply of chenaj[1] so that this also comes into close contact with the corpse. During the second night he is likely to hear ghostly sounds (chal bichal) which he must struggle to ignore.

On the third night the initiant again repeats these procedures but sits this time astride the left hand side of the corpse. At this juncture he is likely to be approached by spirit warriors (śmaśāna vir). To these he offers a bhaint (ritual gift) of chenaj and a portion of raw kitcherī (rice and dal mix). At this the vir will disappear.

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1. The six sacred parched grains: rice (dhāṇ), black soya (bhatt), pulse (dal), barley (jau), yellow oilseed (rana) and brown oilseed (rai).

On the fourth night (mangal or Tuesday, devoted also to Devī) the initiant again repeats these procedures but sits this time on the right hand side of the corpse so that the left hand side faces towards the ground. He is likely to be approached by the raja of the śmaśāna (Bhairav Vir) who has a most gruesome appearance and awesome manner. The initiant must not exhibit fear but should proffer his bhaint which should consist this time of chenaj, bhūj (a white pumpkin), gānjārū (a wild root with a human shape) and a sacrificed goat. If the raja is pleased with these offerings he will say "you are my bhakt" (devotee) and confer upon the novice a series of magical powers. These powers are specifically designed to wreak destruction, they are a 'knowledge of disaster' (naśkividya).

Informants indicated that the above sequence might have to be carried out over a period of four months or years rather than days, but its outcomes are the same, viz, the acquisition of instructions (parcha) for conducting sorcery. By this method the novice obtains control over the vir and masāni who frequent the śmaśāna, they become his familiar spirits (iṣṭdevta).

Intercession and Impurity

Related to the funerary associations or post-mortuary functions of the jāgariyā, the dăgariyā and the pūchar is the measure of ritual pollution generally incumbent upon those who deal with the dead, a category which encompasses not only the corpses of animals and men, but also the souls of the ancestors or 'bad dead', the recently bereaved and the incarnated dead. This is a feature also found in brahmanical intercession. The brahmin priest who conducts funeral rites becomes ritually contaminated in the process. By allowing the odium of his clients' association with death to be transferred into his own body the priest becomes a kind of "cess-pit for the wickedness of the cosmos" (Parry,1980:89). However, his position is ambiguous in that he still retains a ritual eminence (the "Mahā-Brahman") and his ritual power and social prestige, far from being degraded is enhanced. So too, the functionaries of Kumaon's post-mortuary complex are characterised as impure and their activities as polluting, yet they command a wealth of magico-religious power and their position within their home communities and among their clients is one to which considerable respect and deference is afforded.

One interesting corollary of the alliance between impurity and intercession is the fact that it is common for the roles of jāgariyā, dăgariyā and pūchar to be performed by untouchables, persons who are ritually impure by birth and occupational background.

This leads, during ritual performances, to a notable inversion of caste practice wherein ritual functionaries belonging to low castes, instead of being excluded and treated as polluting inferiors by persons of the higher castes, (as is normal) are honoured, deferred to and even embraced by their caste superiors. Paradoxically, as a result of officiation in rituals which would seem on the surface to expose them to even more opprobrium than is their heritage by birth, the untouchable functionaries acquire merit and sacrality.

This inversion of the norm also finds expression in another type of propitiatory ceremony once common in parts of Kumaon and Garhwal, the bhyund, or 'rope sliding' ceremony. This is performed by an officiant termed a Bādi[1] who as a Hurki-Bādi, i.e. a member of the lower mangkhani subdivision of Doms, occupies the lowest possible rung of the community social ladder and whose conventional profession (as a mendicant singer and dancer) is considered to be wholly impure. The bhyund is held in honour of Śiva and Pārvati during times of trouble in order to confer prosperity and fertility upon the population. During it, the Bādi is engaged to slide down a stout rope made from bhabar grass which has been stretched from a cliff top to its base and secured with staves. Prior to sliding, the Bādi is possessed by a god

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1. The meaning of Bādi is unclear. According to Platts (1968) a Bādi in Hindu theology is a "sage", an "expounder of the laws and sacred writing"(p.119). But in general usage a Bādi can also be a "rheumatic"; anything of a baneful or mischievous character" (119) and by extension, a "bad man".

(thought to be Bhairav), is offered the sacrifice of a male goat and is worshipped by brahmins. After sliding, his hair and the rope (and formerly perhaps also his body) are cut into pieces for burial in the fields. Although he entails sterility in himself he is used as an organ to obtain fertility for others (cf. Atkinson, 1973:835, Berreman, 1961:326-342). The lowly Bādi suddenly achieves ritual eminence, he becomes the vessel of a god, and is even worshipped by brahmins. Upon his intercession the life of the community depends.[2]

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2. The classical forebear of the Bādi is the Vrātya, or wandering mendicant and magician of ancient India, whom the Atharvaveda reveals to be the folk precursor of the later renouncer (cf. Feuerstein, 1975:43-48). The Vrātya appears to have originally been an impure ascetic belonging to a roaming band (vrāta), a vagrant and a "member of a fellowship that stood without the brahmanical pale" (Whitney, 1905:769). His fellows wore turbans, dressed in black, carried two ramskins, one white, the other black, a lance and a bow (Eliade, 1958a:103-4). He was a "priest of a non-Vedic fertility cult, which involved ritual dancing and flagellation. He travelled from place to place in a cart" (led by a horse and mule) "with a woman whom he prostituted, and a musician who performed for him at his rites" (Basham, 1971:245-6). The musician, termed a māgadha, was also a "cantor" (Eliade, 1958a:104) who engaged in ritual intercourse during the course of the mahāvrata (solstitial rite) with the prostitute (puṃścali). At a later sequence of the mahāvrata the sacrificer (vrātya) himself conducted rituals and feats (involving breath retention) on a rope swing. Eliade notes that in some later commentaries this swing is called "ship bound for heaven", the sacrificer "bird flying to heaven" and the girls who danced around the sacrificial fire likewise "birds flying to heaven" (Eliade, 1958a:104-5). The mahāvrata was performed, like the bhyund, as a "fecundity" rite (Eliade 1958a:105) and as such "contained a number of elements of archaic fertility magic; railing and obscene dialogues, ritual swaying, intercourse" (Ibid:104).

In the Atharvaveda the vrātya is a type of 'mystic' whom the text enjoins its followers (learned brahmins) to "esteem as better than himself" (XV.10.2). He who receives the vrātya with hospitality acquires unsurpassed merit ("he thereby gains possession of the roads that the gods travel" (XV.trans. Whitney, 1905). His speciality (from my literal readings of an obscure text) seems to have been magical or yogic flight across the world's horizontal hemispheres (the "four quarters") and between its vertical poles, earth (the "fixed quarter" or world of men, animals and plants) and heaven (the "upward quarter"). (cf. also Eliade, 1958a:103-5).

On first impressions, it might be conjectured that the alliance between untouchability and intercession apparent both in the threefold complex and in the role of the Bādi (compare also the role of the hurkiya p. 68-70) makes untouchability a qualification for intercession. This is certainly the view of the early writers on Kumaon society. Atkinson, for example, considered these practitioners and their clients as indulging in an "animism" or "daemonism", "rude" in form and bearing very little relationship with the 'more enlightened' Sanskritic learned traditions of Brahmanism (1973:701-3). However he maintains that these are traditions of the "lower classes" (Ibid, 819-24), i.e. they are non-Aryan' aboriginal practices. As noted earlier, it is the lowest Dom divisions which have traditionally supplied the Bith with music and "entertainment": these include the Das-Dholi-Damai caste of the Khalait category of labourer-artisans, and the Hurki-Bādi section of the Mangkhani (lit. "eaters of leavings") category. The Das-Dholi-Damai group provide music at Bith life-cycle ceremonies and provide a substantial proportion of Kumaon's tailors. They are distinct among the Doms for their rigid adherance to caste endogamy and their close observance of orthodox ordinances of purity and purification (Sanwal,1976:76-77). In addition to 'begging' the Hurki-Bādi traditionally engaged in highly polluting activities such as "rearing pigs and catching birds" and in contrast to the Das-Dholi-Damai are derogated for their "despicable vocations" (Ibid,79)

and their practice of prostituting their womenfolk (Atkinson, 1973:445).

Deferring to Atkinson's interpretation, Kumaon's own anthropologist, R.D. Sanwal, (himself a Brahman) sees the association of propitiatory practices with the Doms as a feature contiguous with their general function as ritual "scapegoats" for the Bith or 'twice-born' castes. Impure by birth, the Doms are employed by the Bith to perform a range of activities which the Bith cannot themselves perform without risk of ritual contamination, e.g. handling dead cows, leatherwork and carrying away sacrificed animals. However they become an obvious choice for intercession with the dead. They become involved in "Propitiating the dregs of the spirit world for the Bith, and submitting themselves as vehicles for spirits considered so low and evil that no Bith would even dream of acting as a vehicle for them" (Sanwal, 1976:65).

This statement contains the dual implication that the propitiation of malevolent spirits is (or was) exclusively a Dom activity and that the traditions which underlie these ceremonial practices are those of the lowest Dom caste groups. Indeed this is a viewpoint shared by many high-caste Kumaonis who having benefited from the "enlightenments" consequent upon western education and the scientism of modernity, derogate such practices as 'primitive' and 'barbaric'. Yet, high-caste families still depend upon low-caste intercessors to perform acts of propitiation,

and many Doms consider the Bith's dependence upon them in this area a matter of pride rather than derogation.

In general, however, the Atkinson/Sanwal perspective, even if supported by (brahmin based ?) folk models, does not accord with contemporary ethnographic evidence. Even Sanwal himself produces evidence which contradicts his interpretation: in his note on the 'pujaris '(i.e. pūchars) who dance to the music of the Dom jāgariyās he remarks that "The function of pujari was generally discharged by the seniormost able-bodied male in the locality lineage. Usually he acted as the medium in divinatory ceremonies which formed an integral part of propitiatory ceremonies. But sometimes .... the office of pujari was given to the lineage purohit or to some other Brahmin" (1976:83-84). My own observations revealed that not only is it quite common for the Bith to act as vehicles for malevolent as well as benevolent deities, but is is equally common for high status Thul-Jat brahmins to take on the roles of jāgariyā and pūchar as their primary occupation. Eight out of the twenty eight officiants working in my field area did not belong to the untouchable castes and one particular group of high-caste brahmins, the Tīwarīs of Dobha near Almora, charged very large fees for propitiatinns. They claimed to have had traditionally provided the Chand Rajas in Almora with their professional services as jāgariyās, dāgariyās and pūchar/jadhūghars.

Comparisons

Kumaon is not unique among the culture-areas and former kingdoms of Northern and Himālayan Hindu India in inheriting vast bardic repertoires and a traditional cult of the dead preserved by a complex of functionaries consisting of musicians, mediums and diviner-priests. But with regard to the internal organisation of its complex of functionaries, Kumaon appears to feature one relatively unique aspect, viz, the 'dominance' of the non-possessed musician-bard over the medium and the diviner-priest. To emphasize this particular cultural specificity I have thought it appropriate to elicit some brief details from the gradually expanding comparative literature on areas neighbouring on Kumaon.

Dealing firstly with the Nepāl Himālayas, Gaborieau (1976), writing about the magico - religious institutions of the caste Hindus occupying the Karnali river basin, considers the complex of functionaries found in that region to be a "simplified" version of that found in Kumaon (p.237). He records that the central officiant in the religious services performed at the shrines of the god Maṣṭá is a "possessed oracle" termed a dhāmi. The role of dhāmi is sometimes undertaken by the priest attached to the shrine, the pujari; and in the sub-district of Jumla the latter is even referred to as a dāgri (Ibid:225-6). There is no separate functionary in the region equivalent to the pūchar, as such: the duties of the latter are undertaken by the dhāmi. Neither is

there to be found an equivalent of the jāgariyā; the chanting functions of the latter are dispensed by the dhāmi himself, who recites the "history of the god" to create trance. The drums which accompany trance are beaten by a group of hereditary musicians of untouchable caste, the Damai. The Damai play a purely subordinate role in ceremonial seances, and apart from their drumming do not participate though in other contexts they do recite religious stories (Gaborieau,1977:XVI).They are even relegated to a position outside the temple area while they are playing. The dhami alone is the "keystone of the shrine" and upon him alone a variety of privileges, prestigious entitlements and ritual ordinances are conferred. (1976:225).

In the regions adjoining the Kālī river i.e. that part of Nepāl which lies closest to Kumaon, a similar situation prevails. Writing about the dhāmis attached to the local temples of this area Winkler (1976) notes that the position of this functionary as an 'oracle' for central village deities is so commanding that it is extended into village organisation wherein he is able to also participate as an adviser, a "peacekeeper" and even a village "leader" (Winkler, 1976:252-7). During seances the dhāmi performs the tasks of medium and diviner. The function of musician is dispensed by the Damai who are, again, subordinate to the dhāmi. Incantations are performed not by the dhāmi however, but by bystanders, the devotees of the deities whom the dhāmi incarnates.

In south western Nepāl there occur small settlements of Raji, a Tibeto - Burmese speaking 'tribal' group, subdivisions of which are also found in the Askot districts of Kumaon. The magico - religious functionaries of the Raji conform less to a Pahāri, and more to a Bodic structure of officiation, in that the functions of medium, diviner and musician are dispensed by a single specialist, in this case termed a gurau.[1] The gurau's position within Raji society is not determined on the strength of his attachment to a single village shrine, which is the case with the dhāmi, but rather on the success of his performance as a professional (albeit part-time) specialist who like the jāgariyā performs "house calls" and has a range of clients (Reinhard, 1976:266, 268-9). The gurau is simultaneously a diviner or oracle(p.273-6) but unlike the Kumaoni pūchar he does not have a sacrificial function; this is dispensed by shrine pujaris (Reinhard, 1976:269). Guraus perform their own incantations, do the drumming themselves and have at hand a repertoire of spells, stories, songs and general ritual knowledge (Ibid: 272-283). Household gods, village gods and evil

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1. On Tibeto-Bodic functionaries, cf. in the same volume: Allen on the Thulung Rai, Jones on the Limbu and Paul on the Sherpa (in Hitchcock and Jones, ed. 1976.) This does not eliminate the possibility of there being more than one class of officiant within the same society or village. The Thulung also have a tribal priest (dewa nokcho) as most of the Pahāri or Hindu Nepāli Societies have brahmin priests (purohits).

spirits are all incarnated by the gurau who is required to have undergone an initiation ceremony comparable to that of the dãgariyã (Ibid: 268-273).

In each of the three Nepãli cases considered above it can be seen that (a) The division of tasks between functionaries is less clearly marked than in Kumaon, and (b) roles themselves are less differentiated - a phenomenon which culminates in the Bodic case, represented here by the Raji, wherein all three functions are dispensed by a single officiant. Furthermore, in the Bodic case there is little room for hierarchy, but in the other two contexts an asymmetrical relationship between officiants does prevail. In form, however, this tends to be the reverse of that found in Kumaon. The dhãmi or medium in each case occupies the more commanding position: furthermore, he either conducts the incantations himself or leaves this task to his devotees, and the "inferior" role of musician is discharged by a wholly subordinate, peripheral group, e.g. the Damai.

Turning now to the corresponding magico - religious institutions of Himãlayan areas lying to the west of Kumaon we find ourselves dogged by a scarcity of appropriately detailed information. Work in progress by Peter Phillimore on the Gaddis of Himãchal Pradesh, however, reveals that the commanding position in the corresponding complex is held by the medium (gũr or chela), who incarnates deities with the aid of drumming and chanting performed respectively, as in the Nepãli group discussed by Winkler, by

subordinate drummer castes and bystanders. (Phillimore,1980. cf. also Macdonald, 1976:334).

Functional complexes more contiguous with the Kumaoni system in terms of structure and role differentiation would be more likely to be found in Garhwal, Kumaon's western regional neighbour and traditionally rival but inter-related kingdom. Indeed, in parts of Garhwal there exist dominant bards termed either jāgari or dholi who play thālī and damaru, or dhol and damau, and create trance in mediums though invocationary songs, rhythms and stories. This, the evidence of local folklorists (cf. Gaborieau, 1977:X1,Xv1), can be reinforced by the knowledge that this cultural contiguity between Kumaon and Garhwal is known to the Kumaoni jāgariyās. Indeed one of the best known jāgariyās in my immediate field area, Sur Das, was a Garhwali by birth and upbringing, and his repertoire of song and rhythm was largely Garhwali in inspiration and style. However, the only detailed anthropological study undertaken in Garhwal which covers these matters, that of Berreman (1963) produces ethnographic interpretations which are inconsistent with the above and seem curiously idiosyncratic within the general field of these Himalayan functional complexes.

According to Berreman, the most commanding officiant in a complex which appears to include bardic musicians and household musicians is the diviner or baki. Berreman defines the baki as a "shaman", though no reference is made to Eliade's definitive

study of the shamanic role (1964) and there is nothing in the role of the baki to suggest a shamanic influence or infra-structure. The role of the baki corresponds in fact almost exactly with that of the Kumaoni pūchar. He diagnoses clients' illnesses, divines with mantras, incarnation and ritual objects, and he advises a course of treatment, (e.g. seance, pilgrimage or exorcism with sacrifice, supervised by the baki himself, cf. Berreman, 1963:89-90).

Among the 'less prominent' practitioners to be found in Berreman's study context are a group of drummer/chanters which he loosely describes as "pujaris". He admits that usage of this term creates confusion with another category of officiants, the temple priests, or 'pujaris'proper (Ibid:417), but he neither considers the possibility that the word pujari can be used as an honorific and is not the usual title for these musician/chanters, nor even that the 'drummer-pujari' and the temple pujari are functionally comparable, and that the terms might be casually interchanged. Elsewhere he adds that these "pujaris" are known by the term for the drum they play (Ibid:91), though no terms are given in the text. One of these drums is an exact replica of the Kumaoni huruk; this can be seen from a photograph of a seance which the author provides (plate 21). Furthermore, these pujaris officiate at large seances which closely resemble the Kumaoni jūnar, and are termed kalrātra (i.e. 'dark nights') but contain a period termed "awakening" (no term given. Ibid:92).

Berreman does not provide a term for medium but stresses that "Anyone may be possessed by a household deity" during a seance, adding that "possession" on these occasions "is expected to result from the activities of the pujaris" (Ibid:87-8). If Berreman's data is complete then the situation in Tehri Garhwal is the inverse of both the Kumaoni and Nepali examples. Not only is the baki the dominant functionary within a complex of inter-related musicians, mediums and diviners (Ibid,133-6) but the bakis as a working group of ritual functionaries form a "powerful elite in their own right" comparable even to that of the brahmins. This, regardless of the fact that they do not even participate in the largest non-brahmanical ceremonies found in the area, viz, household seances, kalrātra, and the mundkile (boundary - protection ceremony). (Ibid:133-6).

Turning now towards the plains of Uttar Pradesh lying to the immediate south of the Kumaon Hills, we encounter a complex of functionaries among the Chamar caste group of untouchables which, on the limited ethnographic evidence available, appears to come closest in structure to the Kumaoni institution. In his general study of the Chamars, Briggs (1920) provides a list of Chamar functionaries and details of their practices, noting the general lack of distinction between the various ritual titles utilised. Thus he remarks that the names denoting sorcerer, wizard, magician, exorcist, soothsayer, with doctor, medicine-man and the like ... all apply to the persons occupied in various

phases of the profession". Briggs defines this "profession" in various ways as "black art", "witchcraft", "exorcism" and suggests that it is basically "anti-religious" (anti-brahminical? anti-christian?) (Briggs, 1920:186-190). The incumbents of this profession are as follows "Ojha (teacher), sayana (cunning, shrewdness, cleverness), gyani (the wise one), neotiya, guni (skillful, dexterous), baiga (an aboriginal devil priest), aghora (one who feeds on dead bodies etc) and bhagat (a devoted man)" (cf. Ibid:186). Of these, it is the neotiya or 'inviter' and the bhagat who invite attention for comparative purposes: the former appears to fulfil the function of musician/chanter and the latter functions in a number of contexts as either or both diviner and medium.

In referring to the neotiya Briggs notes that "wizards" of this type "serve other castes, even the twice born", and adds that it is this class of persons which "is in many respects the most influential and the most dreaded" (Briggs, 1920:187). The neotiya is responsible for the organisation and conduct of seances which are called when illness strikes the households of his clients. During such a seance the neotiya himself prepares and purifies a space (p.187), gives offerings to his familiar spirits, (p.188) beats a damru" with varying rhythms" (p.188), invokes the help of his spirit familiars (bir), and pronounces incantations in the name of Śiva (Mahādeo) and Hanuman (among others) in order to procure "release" (duhai) for the patient whose illness is

thought to be a direct result of the influence of an afflicting spirit. In response to the music and incantations of the neotiya the patient and/or the bhagat become possessed (p.189-190) and dance around the room. The neotiya commands the possession, interrogates the afflicting spirit which has incarnated in the patient, and through the "power of his bir" coerces its departure (p.189-90).

The neotiya is clearly a professional - for his services he receives a fee (p.189-90). But his abilities are, like those of the Kumaoni jāgariyā, ultimately dependent upon the amount of worship he himself affords towards his familiar spirit. This can even involve regular sacrifice of goats to this spirit. These he conducts in his own household.

The services of the second functionary, the diviner of bhagat are also required when trouble or illness strikes a household. He "identifies the spirit of the disease, and explains what must be done and what offerings must be made" (Ibid:180). Divination is achieved with the aid of a wide number of rituals involving manipulation of grain and material objects, possession, and the practice of austerities and ascetic feats(p.180-81).

During possession ceremonies organised by the neotiya, the bhagat plays "cymbals" and dances with an "accomplice", and while in a state of trance voices the desires of the possessing deities (p.189). The "power of the bhagat rests in the control of spirits and godlings, by means of his peculiar bhuts and divinities" (p.190).

Magical powers are obtained in a variety of ways, including tree worship (p.190) and initiation by a master (Ojha).

The bhagat also conducts "disease transference" and animal sacrifice, practices designed to "exorcise" demons and evil spirits, and for which he receives the title of jhar phumk karnewala (lit. 'he who brushes away', but translated by Briggs as "exorcist"(p.187). Thus it can be seen that the ritual duties of the bhagat/jhar phumk karnewala) correspond closely to those of the Kumaoni pūchar.

Briggs (Ibid, 189-93) conceives of the bhagat's traditional functions as being contiguous with those of sorcerors and witches (sayana), and even with jogic ăghoras (i.e. the Ăghoris) renowned among the Chamars for their cannibalism and their yogic powers (Briggs, 1920). In Chamar terms the bhagat would appear to share at least some of the Ăghori's basic attributes e.g. "knowledge of the past and of the future, the ability to read men's thoughts" if not them all (e.g. "the power to fly in the air or to float on the water", Briggs, 1920:190-1).

Brigg's evidence appears to suggest that, as in Kumaon, the tasks performed by the various functionaries involved in the corresponding complex of officiation, are considerably interchangeable, and one person can fulfil more than one function. There is also a suggestion of an asymmetrical relationship operative between the Chamar musician/cantor, the neoyita and the medium/diviner or bhagat. The "skilful" neotiya appears to be the

dominant functionary: he is responsible for commanding spirits while they are possessing the bhagat; he is the most "influential" of all the functionaries and among them he alone attracts clientele from higher castes.

These various regional systems considered, the Kumaoni complex appears to resemble the institution of its southerly untouchable neighbours more closely than it resembles the corresponding institutions of the hills. This despite the clear inter-relatedness of the terms used by the hill groups. Tentatively, it could be suggested that there are historical or structural connections between the plains Chamars and the Doms of Kumaon, inviting the supposition that this particular structure of officiation occurs within a distinctive tradition formerly upheld by untouchable groups and generally associated with the impure occupational functions of these groups. Were this the case, it could also be supposed that the Kumaoni complex owes more to orthodox plains magico-religious traditions, occurring at the regional heart of Hinduism, then it does to any Bodic or Buddhist influenced structure of officiation borrowed from the North or East.

Speculation aside, there is certainly a case for considering the Kumaoni complex to be regionally unique in terms of both the dominant position of the jāgariyā within the complex of officiation, and the eminence accorded to him and his repertoire within the

culture of Kumaon as a whole. Perhaps the answer to this question of uniqueness can be found within Kumaon itself and within one of the traditions of the bards which suggests that formerly they featured eminently as respected servants and priests of the great Kumaoni kings, entrusted with the task of recording, in words and song, their royal masters' achievements and legendary feats in battle. (Gairola, 1935: 20-21, Gaborieau, 1977:XV1).

Kumaonis are in general aware of, and proud of, the distinctiveness and regional specificity of the traditions and repertoires of their bards. Today, as no doubt in former days, the heritage of the jāgariyās is seen as a lynchpin in the popular representation of a Kumaoni cultural identity which sets Kumaon apart from its neighbours to the north, south, east and west. Ethnographically however, the traditions of the jāgariyā have more in common with the traditions of neighbouring regions than they have differences, e.g. a stressed separateness from brahmanism, an association with impurity and an affiliation with some of the principles and practices of renunciation. So, in the second half of this chapter I wish to attempt an interpretation of these basic common features within the context of customary Hinduism as it is lived out and illustrated in the cultural setting provided by the Kumaon Himālaya.

B. DISCUSSION : RENUNCIATION AND PRIESTHOOD

1. THE RENUNCIATORY MODEL

Kumaon's bardic functionaries not only claim historical kinship with Nātha renouncers, but they actively identify with them. Correspondingly, their traditions and activities reflect a sacerdotal and mythological continuity with those of their ascetic mentors and preceptors, and, at a more implicit level, these appear to be permeated by a range of renunciatory principles and suppositions oriented towards lay rather than transcendental ends.

If their claims to a renunciatory foundation have a basis in historical fact, one would expect a complete degeneration of ascetic principles, forms and values to have taken place over time during the process of 'laic-isation'. However, other than the redirection of the ends to which these principles are put, such transformations do not appear to have taken place. Quite the opposite. The very strength of the laic traditions appears to lie in their continued deference to what might be called the 'renunc-iatory model'. Indeed, the symbolic infrastructure of both the rites and the roles of the functionaries encourages the viewpoint that these are activities of "temporary world renunciation". During the fulfilment of their professional responsibilities they temporar-ily adopt the status, manner and appearance of traditional renouncers.

The adoption and use of this renunciatory idiom is partic-ularly apt in the case of death rituals concerned with creating

separation of the deceased from the world of men. But, more than this, it expresses the realisation that where there is renunciation there is also power, sacred magical power, the mastery and exercise of which lies at the heart of every ceremonial venture.

The renouncer holds a unique position in Hindu society. His status as one who is socially above and beyond the world of men, and whose aspirations transcend those of ordinary men, confirm his position of pre-eminence over men. (cf.Dumont, 1970:36-46). It can be argued that the most far reaching transformations in the history of Hinduism have been wrought under the inspirational influence of famous renouncers, figures like Śaṇkāra Achāraya, Buddha, Mahavira Jain and (in North India) Guru Goraknāth. Over time, saṇyāsic values have aggregated and become absorbed as orthodoxy in Indian society, a process evident in the marked influence of Buddhism, bhaktism and tantrism on caste ideology (cf. Dumont, 1970:50).

At the level of village life the renouncer possesses an esteem which transcends that of the brahmin, particularly if the renouncer in question has been able to demonstrate a command of renunciatory virtues and powers. In Kumaon for example, the pujaris of certain prominent Śaiva temples can demand obesience from high caste brahmins even though their caste status (as Gīrīs or Purīs) is Śudra. But this only holds if these renouncers, termed mahants, remain celibate and adhere to the lifestyle, dress and duties expected of such incumbents. As long as these are maintained, the

mahant is regarded as the living embodiment of Śiva and is addressed as 'guru' or 'master'. He is worshipped as a 'man god'. Among the laity, wandering ascetics are also regarded as 'man-gods'. They are treated with deference and provided with worshipful offerings of food, money, clothing and hospitality. If they become renowned for their magical abilities, their yogic powers or ascetic qualities they will in turn receive greater esteem from lay clients and devotees.

Respect and offerings given to renouncers (jogis, yogis, nāthas Babas) confers good fortune and merit (punya) upon the donee. The renouncer's presence whether in a devotees' house, in the dharmsala (rest house) of a village temple or local shrine, or at a life-cycle ritual, automatically bequeaths power and good fortune on his devotees and upon the community he visits or ceremony he attends. His sacredness rubs off; he is viewed as a tangible source of supernatural power.

Underlying the renouncer's historical and social pre-eminence is his traditional role as intercessor. Both man and god, both alive and dead (at initiation the sannyāsi performs his own śraddh or death ceremony ; Ghurye, 1964:93-94), both in the world of men yet detached from it, the renouncer has a foot in both camps and can pass easily between them. In the Śastras, ṛsi-munis like Narada Ṛsi and Agastya Muni act as intermediaries between the gods, between different categories of gods and between men and gods (cf. O'Flaherty, 1973:73-76; 52-55). They have the function of messengers. But as the repositaries of sacred

knowledge and wisdom acquired through meditation and tapas (ascetic feats involving the mastery of fire or the generation of heat) they wield considerable power and influence over the affairs of men and gods. They are often depicted, like the long haired muni of the Ṛg Veda, as being in a state of perpetual motion, travelling through the atmosphere "in the path of sylvan beasts" (cf. Briggs 1973:211). This image of perpetual movement, directly comparable to the placelessness of the wandering jogi, enhances the association of the renouncer with the liminal realms from which sacred power intrudes onto the surface of existence. As a "marginal and wandering ghost" (cf. Parry, 1981:28) moving between men and gods, the living and dead, he is almost a personification of the liminal state. From his advantageous position outside space and time, between points of classification, places and conditions of sacred and profane being, emerges sacred power which is used by men to effect charges in their world.

The functionaries of Kumaon's death-cycle rituals lay claim to the power (śakti) and powers (siddhi) of their yogic preceptors through close identification with these preceptors. Embedded in their roles and ritual activities we find a range of renunciatory themes and motifs oriented ultimately not towards the transcendentalism of the renouncer but towards the less esoteric ends of their worldly clientele. As we shall see, this transposition of ascetic values into laic ritual contexts to further laic ends is greatly facilitated by the ambiguously world-oriented frame-

works of the particular ascetic ideological models in question, Nāthism and Tantrism.

Let us explore the full extent of the identification. As Gaborieau points out, the jāgariyā and his allies see themselves as links in a chain of glorious ascetics stretching originally from Śiva himself and coming eventually down through time to their own laic preceptors, successors to the Nāthas and Siddhas (1975b:161-2). Their collective deities are renouncers like Śiva and Gorakhnāth, their personal deities (iṣṭadevtas) have an ascetic appearance and function like Bhairav or Narsingh, or they are gods who in their earthly lives were initiated as Kānphaṭā Nāth jogis, like Gorīya or Gunganāth. During their ritual performances they adopt the dress, the ritual purifications, forms of address and patronyms of renouncers. But these are only the conscious or more explicit emulations: in the pages which follow I propose to identify a further range of less obvious correlates and contiguities between aspects of the lay and renunciatory traditions.

Contiguous with the untouchability of most of Kumaon's professional functionaries and the impurity of their roles is the Nātha evaluation of polluting agencies and activities as sources of ritual power. Like their laic counterparts, the Nāthas are often regarded as ranking among the Śudras. They take the name ḍasa, or slave, at initiation and they sometimes carry leather

drums. Their renunciatory activities include a reversal of orthodox tenets: transcendence is achieved through maithuna, i.e. ritual coupling, and the ritual ingestion of meat, fish and liquor. They live on śmaśānas and they attempt to secure mahāsiddhas or 'great powers' with which they can divine the future, heal sickness, perform magical feats and transform nature. So too, Kumaon's bards regard themselves as Śudras, the direct professional recipients of a tradition established by a Śudra, Dharm Das the first jāgariyā. They use leather drums; they permit the mingling of sexes, castes and statuses during their rituals. They incarnate or commune with the spirits of the dead; they practice divination and attempt magical healing; and two associated officiants, the pūchar and the jadhūghar, attempt mastery over magic through austerities practiced at a śmaśāna. However, in both the yogic and laic contexts, the contamination incurred by participants engaged in their respective ritual involvements is countered or at least contained by a strict observation of procedures of purification.

Another set of comparable features represented within both domains includes the attempt to conquer disease and decay, and to obtain mastery over the agents of death, and passage through the domains of the underworld. The practice of haṭha-yoga by the Nāthas, a system of rituals designed to impede bodily decay and instil physical health as a way of promoting mental quiescence, can be compared with the diagnostic and prophylactic functions of the rites of jāgar. By focussing on the participant's outer shell,

both systems produce inner transformations, furthering his or her ultimate liberation. Jāgar is also concerned with the promotion of human fertility, of furthering mokṣa through procreation. Equally, it is the tantric mastery of the Nātha which encourages lay apprehensions of him as an agency of human fertility.

The jāgariya and the pūchar in their capacity as funerary priests who officiate in post-mortuary functions designed to propitiate, incarnate and create liberation for the spirits of the dead, are required to master and control those very spirits. The pūchar/jadhūghar, who worship in the śmaśāna, commune with the dead and the objects of death (ashes, bones, sacrificed animals), and in doing so defy the impurity and dangers generated by the dead. Similarly, the Nāthas defy death through ulṭā sādhana and the attainment of immortality (jīvanmukta). They also sport funerary symbols (ashes, bone ear-rings and cow-horns) and they commune with the dead at the śmaśānas. Gorakhnāth himself is attributed with the feat of attaining mastery over the emissaries of Yama. The jāgariyā's dhūnī connects him directly with Gorakhnāth and with the underworld, Pātāla, where Gorakhnāth's eternal dhūnī burns. The dhūnī and, by extension, the underworld are the ritual centres of the jāgariyā's attentions. Deities come through the dhūnī (i.e. they pass through the underworld en route to the world of men); ḍāgariyās dance in the dhūnī, anoint themselves with its ashes, and are tested through its purificatory fires.

The jāgariyā, the ḍāgariyā and the pūchar enact mediatory roles directly comparable to those of the ancient renouncers, the rsi-munis : they intercede between and on behalf of categories of men and gods, and in some respects between men themselves. The jāgariyā, or dominant functionary is "guru" or "holy teacher" to the other functionaries, guru of his clients and guru of the Kūmū Devtas. Despite being a classificatory Śudra, he is entitled to 'guru bhakti' from the Kūmū Devtas, and in matters of moral and religious knowledge he is their teacher (śikśāt). During jāgar he is regarded as the living embodiment of Gorakhnāth, the supreme guru, and is consequently addressed as guru. As a bard he is a repository of the religious knowledge which makes worship of the Kūmū Devtas possible, hence the term dharmiya (protector of truth). The jāgariyā derives his power (śakti) and knowledge (jñana) directly from Śiva (Gaborieau, 1975b:161-3), a matter which implies a special affinity with the renouncer god, a relationship also stressed by the Śaivite Nāthas who seek ultimate union with Śiva.

Like the renouncer, the jāgariyā must have a vocation for his incumbancy, a vocation inspired by a desire for liberation and a desire to serve the needs of others. In the legend of Dharm Das we see the 'first jāgariyā' employed in the first instance to serve the needs of the local deities, and through their co-operation and deference both protect 'their dharm' and secure their succour for the people of Kumaon. During jāgar, the jāgariyā's social contribution takes the direct form of dispensing inspiration,

moral guidance and advice to his clients: thus utilising his specialist knowledge of local and Hindu tradition (cf. Gaborieau, 1975b:163-4).

The ethic of 'social responsibility' attached to the office of jāgariyā is in some respects analagous to the unique Nātha concept of social responsibility apparent in the ideal of parā-mukta, a transcendental condition which involves the exercise of actions benevolent to others[1]. In both cases, the correct fulfilment of the respective vocation can enhance a final state of liberation (mokṣa), or union with Śiva (samādhi) following completion of the life-cycle.

In order to maintain his religious vocation and preserve the 'inspiration' for his art, the practising jāgariyā is required to observe purity prescriptions and daily ritual duties which effectively separate him from the impure world of ordinary men and move him closer to the pure world of the priest or renouncer. At the time of a performance he becomes, like the renouncer, ritually 'dead' to the normal world; he dresses in ritual clothes (turban and loincloth), washes away worldly impurities and practices austerities (fasting and celibacy).

In point of fact, it is only when looked at as activities of 'temporary world renunciation' that these actions make senses at all; for, as noted earlier, many jāgariyās are 'impure' (aśuddh) by birth, and participation in ceremonies such as

1. At another level, the jāgariyā's function as a social 'watchdog' or vate who satirises, moralises and pronounces upon the workings of the social group, is comparable to the renouncer's historical role as a critic and reformer of Indian society and its institutions.

jāgar or jūnar serves only to confirm their untouchability and deepen their impurity rather than the opposite. But for the actual duration of such a ceremony their everyday condition of impurity is temporarily dissolved; they have momentarily passed from the world of men to the world of renouncers where worldly impurity and the dependant status assumptions have little relevance. Outside the ceremony, the whole question of impurity is very ambiguous. Sacrality and purity are clearly not synonymous and the purifications of the funerary or post-mortuary officiant, like those of the mourner, are different from the daily purifications of the brahmin purohit. The former are tainted by death and their purifications cannot remove that taint during the death or death ritual period, yet both possess a certain sacrality, a participation in the affairs of the 'afterlife'. The brahmin on the other hand, and especially the Mahābrahman or orthodox funeral priest, strives through purification to alleviate or exercise any taint with death and other source of pollution. And any contamination which he does absorb poses a direct threat to his sacrality.[1]

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1. The Benares funeral priest sees himself not so much as "the acme of purity as an absorber of sin", as a result of the profession. (Parry, 1980:89). Wholly tainted by death and the accumulated sins of his clients, the brahmin finds himself unable to destroy or 'digest' the consequent impurity. " ... so far from being a paragon or purity, he regards himself as a cess-pit for the wickedness of the cosmos. The consequence of this accumulation of sins is that he faces the prospect of a lingering death from the rotting effects of leprosy or even - in the case of certain particularly 'indigestible' kinds of offering - an immediate demise" (Parry, 1980:89). Such a course could not but have a disastrous effect on his possibilities for salvation.

During jāgar, the jāgariyā's relationship to the ḍāgariyā is analagous to Gorakhnāth's relationship with the Kūmū-Devtas : he is the renunciatory 'guru' while the ḍāgariyā is the renunciatory 'initiate'. True to his position as guru, the peak of a functional triangle consisting of deity, devotee and teacher, his contribution to the creation of a unity between deity and devotee is considerable. He creates and controls the state of trance which is the immediate object of the ceremony, and he acts as spiritual guide to his clients and the congregation of devotees.

Gaborieau has pointed out an analogy between the jāgariyā's methods of creating trance and the practice of image construction and divinity-projection as performed both by yogic gurus and Tibetan tantric gurus (1975b:163-4). The jāgariyā builds up a composite image of the deity during invocation by the use of detailed descriptions (in song) of the incarnating deity's appearance, manner, dress and story of origin. Image construction or 'visualisation' (dhyāna) is a characteristic feature of yogic practice. In tantrism an iconographic form of the physical image of tutelary deity is reproduced in the consciousness of the adept through the mental creation and projection of a number of "minute details, such as the posture, clothes, ornaments, colour, expression and often environment of the respective deity" (Feuerstein, 1975:156-7). The term dhyāna also occurs in the terminology of jāgar: it is used in a chant of the jāgariyā to refer to the deity's 'meditative absorption' with Gorakhnāth in

Pātāla prior to his entrance into jāgar.

In both jāgar and yogic tantrism, dhyāna involves the temporary projection of the divinity by the guru into the body of the adept. In one initiatory practice of the tantric Buddhists, the god Vajrapāṇi is incarnated in the body of the adept under the directions of a tantric guru, an exercise known as "possession by the furious god" (Eliade, 1958a:224). Also, Gaborieau cites the Tibetan ceremonial practice of evoking gods into paintings, statues and masked dancers as an example of "temporary projection" and he compares this directly with the work of the jāgariyā. The "material context" into which the divinity is projected is the medium or ḍāgariyā, the devotee (bhakt) of the god and of the guru of the jāgar.

Following visualisation and projection, the jāgariyā withdraws the image he has constructed in song and dissolves it by enjoining the deity to depart from the jāgar and return to the company of the gods (cf. Gaborieau, 1975b:164). Gaborieau compares the state of rapt concentration entered into by the jāgariyā during these activities to the state of dhyāna itself: he isolates himself from the world around him and becomes absorbed in his performance. His attention focussed upon the dhūnī, he adopts the manner and posture of the renouncer seated beside his sacred fire (pl63). And during his recitations, the jāgariyā, through identification with Gorakhnāth, becomes 'locked-in' to that dhyāna and is thus enabled to summon the deity to the world of men.

There is another dimension to the jāgariyā's "dhyāna", namely, the use of singing, chanting and musical rhythm to transform the consciousness of the assembled devotees and enhance their visualisation of the incarnating deity. This is in addition to the marked alterations in the consciousness of the dāgariyā as manifest in the state of trance. The bard's hypnotic changing and drumming punctured by sudden alterations in tempo and timbre have a dramatic affect on many of the observers present in jāgar : some become possessed by unidentified deities; all are emotionally affected (cf. Gaboreau, 1975(b):156-7 ; Gaborieau's experiences in this regard tally with my own - in every jāgar I attended I was always aware of the very marked effect which the jāgariyā's performance had on my consciousness. I sometimes felt, and was often perturbed by it, that I was being drawn or pulled into something beyond myself).

The functions of the jāgariyā's sounds are analagous to the purposes of the mantras uttered by the tantric yogin. These involve a rhythmic, repetetive enunciation of ritual words, and provides an additional aid to prāṇāyāma activities of breath control. Mantras transform the adepts' consciousness and aid his progress towards emancipation. (Feuerstein, 1975:151-2). Both types of sound are charged with numinous power, that is, they evoke the power they connote : the renouncer's devata and the devta of the jāgar[1].

1. Feuerstein also notes the correlation between prāṇāyāma in early yogic forms and activities of "ritual chanting" (1975:128).

The jāgariyā himself does not enter into a recognised trance state, he does not normally become possessed or absorbed by the deity. Indeed, it is thought that were this to happen, it would interfere with his intermediary role as cantor, musician and vate, and it would endanger the fulfilment of his duties as master of ceremonies. Were the jāgariyā to 'lose control', a dangerous state of chaos would ensue. The only occasion on which the jāgariyā might become entranced is during the closing stages of the winter jūnar when new dãgariyās are initiated, and other jāgariyās are also present and keeping an eye on things. This exceptional deviation from the routine norm possibly corresponds to a yogic practice wherein the guru is himself required to undertake trance or enter into meditation during the initiation of a novice.

The jāgariyā's songs are stories set in sacred time, and just as his audience are emotionally 'moved' by the cadence of his music and the power of his lyrics, so they are also metaphorically moved from mundane into sacred time. The effect could be held to be similar to that created by the Celtic storyteller described by Rees and Rees:

> "Under the spell of the storyteller's art, the range of what is possible in this world is transcended: the world of magic becomes a present reality and the world of every-day is deprived of its uniqueness and universality. The story-teller, like the juggler and the illusionist, by convincingly actualising the impossible, renders the actual world less real. When the spell is over, the hearer 'comes back to earth', but the earth is not quite so solid as it was before, the cadence of its time is less oppressive and its laws have only a relative validity (1961:342).

As a result of the jāgariyā's art, not only the other functionaries present but also the other participants in jāgar metaphorically (and perhaps experientally) enter the liminal, sacred realms of the renouncer. They too 'become' jogis and gods, and during that time their lives are re-charged with sacred dynamic power.

I will now turn to a detailed consideration of renunciatory correspondences in the role of the ḍãgariyā. Gaborieau, in his attempt to demonstrate the conceptual unity between the position of the jāgariyā and the role of the classical renouncer tends to under-emphasise the ḍãgariyā's position in this respect. He conceives of the 'marginality' of the ḍãgariyā as a correlate of certain conditions of "madness" ('folie', baulo) consequent upon a state of social peripherality and paralleled to an extent by the attributes of the gods they incarnate. The legends of many Kūmū Devtas depict the hero as someone who during the course of his or her life loses interest in their worldly responsibilities. The terms used to define the subsequent retreat are udāsī and bairāgī, words also used to denote a religious vocation. In some cases this

initial bout of madness is followed up by a formal retreat into the world of the renouncer, itself another kind or 'degree' of "madness". (Gaborieau, 1975b:165-6). Gaborieau compares this in turn with the interlude of "madness" (baulo) used by informants to define the condition of the medium at the time of possession.

Other than this brief focus on the etymological range of the term baulo, Gaborieau does not attempt to enumerate any further renunciatory motifs in the role of the ḍẽgariyā and his performance during jāgar. However it is possible to take Gaborieau's analyses to a much higher stage. My own material suggests that more detailed correlations between renouncer and medium can be upheld, and these can be seen as superceding any coincidence between the peripheral social status of actual mediums and the "renunciatory" histories of the deities whom they incarnate.

Let us examine, for example, the parallels which obtain between the activities of the ḍẽgariyā and those specified for the yogic renouncer by the classical eightfold path of the yogin (cf. pp 104--111).

Like the yogin practicing 'Yama' (restraint from violence, deceit, theft, sexual indulgence and greed), the ḍẽgariyā must observe a series of ordinances (niyam) stipulating abstinence from harmful or immoral acts such as violence, theft or profiteering. During the period of initiation he must abstain from sexual intercourse, and the advice (pūch) which he gives

as the words of the deity must be true (sacha). Isolation in the temple during jūnar also suggests a temporary detachment from property and worldly matters. Contravention of these jogic ordinances would invite upon the ḍāgariyā the wrath (hankar) of the deity, manifest as a sickness or rash of sores.

The yogic observance of Niyama, or 'self-discipline' connotes a set of five prescriptions (purity, contentment, austerity or 'tapas', self study and devotion) which prepare him for the contemplative life. Equally, the ḍāgariyā must observe purity prescriptions by avoiding sources of contamination and he must also perform regular 'ritual cleaning' of his body through holy bathing. He must also be content with his lot, especially as this has culminated in being chosen by an ancestral deity as a vehicle for incarnation. The 'tapas', 'austerities' or the generation and control of magical heat by the ḍāgariyā, is manifest in fasting, bathing, keeping vigil (jāgaran) by a dhūnī, fire eating, branding and flagellation. In addition, just as the observation of tapas by the yogin allows him to become "clairvoyant" and bring about the "incarnation of gods" (Eliade, 1958a:106), so too the generation of tapas by the ḍāgariyā as in the internal heat (joś) of possession, is associated with incarnation and clairvoyance.

'Self-study' by the ḍāgariyā takes the form of regular attendance at religious ceremonies and occasions (life-cycle rituals, scripture readings of bhagavat, pilgrimages, and

festivals like the Kumbha Mela, temple vigils and devotional singing, or kirtan). Devotion to the Supreme Being is a duty of every Hindu, but the d̃āgariyā must follow a more stringent schedule of devotion. He must visit the temple of his iṣṭadevta, one of many manifestations of Brahman, maintain constant devotion (bhakti) and proffer regular offerings (bhaint). Some d̃āgariyās considered the smoking of hashish (attar, dum) as a sacramental activity, an expression of devotion to Śiva, and an offering (Śivbūtī) of fire lit in his name.

The third purificatory step of the renouncer is the āsana or meditative posture, adopted to assist in the achievement of single mindedness (Feuerstein, 1975:128). No such posture is prescribed for d̃āgariyās, though prior to the onset of possession they generally adopt the common cross-legged posture generally reserved by Kumaonis for eating and participation in rituals. However, the same term āsana crops up as part of the word devāsana used to refer to the devta's seat upon which the d̃āgariyā as required to sit prior to the onset of possession.

The fourth stage of renunciatory practice is Prāṇāyāma or regulation of the 'life force' manifest in breathing. This is achieved by breathing exercises, the ritual rhythmic inhalation, retention and expulsion of breath. This activity may be likened to the adoption of an abnormal breathing rhythm by the d̃āgariyā during possession by the god, and this is one of the

signs by which the presence of the god, the 'life-force' personified, is recognised. Breathing becomes slow and heavy; the normal rapid intake of breath is restricted and a rasping, panting sound is produced which generates a halting, staccato style of word enunciation. Among tantric yogins, some of the physical states induced by the practice of prāṇāyāma bear an approximate similarity to the physical manifestations of possession among ḍāgariyās. For example, during the "first stage" of prāṇāyāma the "yogin's body breaks out into perspiration", during the second stage he trembles; during the third stage he "hops about like a frog"; and in the fourth he rises into the air. (Eliade, 1958a:232).

The fifth stage in the yogin's path to emancipation is termed Pratyāhāra or 'sense withdrawal'. Commentaries on the classical texts appear to suggest that pratyāhāra is both a process achieved by exercises such as ekāgratā (concentration on a single point so that awareness of the external world dissipates) and a mental condition in itself, a type of suspended sensory animation. The condition of pratyāhāra is described in the Mahābhārata as follows "He (the yogin) should not perceive sound with his ear, nor feel touch with his skin. He should not perceive form with his eyes and not taste tastes with his tongue" (XII.194.58,195.5-7). Pott (1965:5) depicts it as a state of "autosuggestion".

Although not to be confused with a condition of 'unconsciousness', the ideal of pratyāhāra can be considered from the point

of view of the phenomenal world as a variety of 'non-consciousness' with regard to the external world. In this respect (and this respect only) a parallel can be drawn between the pratyāhāra of the yogin and the behoś or 'unconsciousness' of the ḍāgariyā. The medium is expected to be aware of nothing during possession, not even the words spoken through his mouth by the devta. To all intents and purposes normal sensory consciousness is temporarily suspended in both the case of the renouncer and the medium. There are clearly worlds of differences between the two conditions but their external signification is the same: the everyday personality of the adept has been (ideally) transformed and absorbed into something else.

The sixth stage is Dhāraṇā or 'concentration'. The senses of the yogin having been suspended by pratyāhāra, his mind is now directed towards an apprehension of a given point such as a part of the body or an image of the deity (iśvāra) whose assistance can be sought. In fact the latter object of focus is unusual (cf.Feuerstein:1975:130) but its presence in the yogic complex (Eliade,1958a:73-6) is interesting because it is analagous to the mental orientation characteristic of the ḍāgariyā immediately prior to the onset of possession. For although the incarnation of the god is thought to be a direct consequence of the jāgariyā's singing and drumming, he is aided in this by the ḍāgariyā who concentrates on the sound, directs his vision towards the dhūnī or dīpak and thinks of the deity he is expected to incarnate. These activities assist in the delineation of the divinity: the

jāgariyā constructs an image with words and music; that image is symbolised by the flames of the fire or lamp; and the total product takes shape in the mind of the ḍāgariyā as an image of the deity . Informants in fact used the same term (dhāraṇā) to depict the concentration of the ḍāgariyā which paves the way for incarnation.

The seventh yogic stage is Dhyāna or 'meditation'. As noted earlier, the term dhyāna is applied to the mental orientation of the jāgariyā during invocation, but it is not used with reference to the ḍāgariyā. However, it is possible to see trance itself as an activity of meditative absorption whereby the ḍāgariyā has placed his mind and body at the mercy of a 'meditating guru' who suspends the ḍāgariyā's normal consciousness and replaces it with the consciousness of a deity. It may be added that in one notable recitation (cf. pp. 306-307) jāgar the incarnating deity is described as being present in the "meditation" of Guru Gorakhnāth and of being present near the dhūnī of Gorakhnāth which burns in Pātāla (cf. also Gaborieau, 1975b:163).

The eighth and final stage of the classical yogic path is termed samādhi ('release'; 'stasis'; 'absorption'; 'ecstasy'. (Eliade's term, 1958a:76) or 'contemplative trance' (Briggs, 1973:268). This is the ultimate goal of the yogin. Ideally, normal human consciousness is transcended and the yogin achieves total identification or unity with the object of his attentions. In terms of yoga philosophy this 'object' is conceived as the

purusa, or 'personal soul' which is one aspect or manifestation of the universal soul (termed as "Śiva" by Śaivite yogins). Outwardly, the yogin subsists in a calm trance; his normal senses are suspended; he appears dead to the world.

The yogin has, through sāmadhi, become "homologized with the gods" (Eliade, 1958a:90). He has reached a divine condition and has become a 'man-god'. Philosophically this 'divine condition' is regarded as a preliminary to a higher, more esoteric condition of liberation, termed "asamprajñāta" samādhi (Eliade, 1958a:90). However, at the level of this preliminary immediate or 'divine' samādhi (termed 'samādhi with support'), the yogin achieves access to a host of supranormal powers (vibhūti or siddhi) such as an occult vision of the past and future, knowledge of the state of men's minds, the power of invisibility and extraordinary physical abilities. Hence "In India a yogin has always been considered a mahāsiddha, a possessor of occult powers, a 'magician'" (Eliade, 1958a:88).

The yogic state of samādhi can be compared in outward form (but not in psychological or philosophical content) to the trance of the dāgariyā. Both conditions are seen as the climax of complex preparatory procedures including 'concentration' and 'meditation'. Both involve the total extinction of normal everyday consciousness, though in the case of the dāgariyā this is temporary. Both can involve identification with a deity (Śiva in the case of the Nātha renouncers) and both can involve the ritualisation and even demonstration of magical powers.

Over and above these general correspondences there occurs a certain symbolic contiguity between the position of the ḍãgariyā undergoing possession and the position of the yogin experiencing samādhi. For the incarnating deity is himself conceived to be in a permanent state of samādhi. This is the condition of liberation associated with residence in Śiva's Kailāś, and is is only through the power which this form of liberation entails that the god is able to demonstrate siddhis, and to effect transformations in the affairs of men. The laic community does not distinguish between the samādhi of the god who resides with Śiva on Kailāś and the samādhi of the renouncer. Many of Kumaon's culture heroes, e.g. Gorīya, Gunganāth, Bholanāth, became deities after becoming renouncers, and their deification forms one aspect of their yogic samādhi. Other local deities who did not undertake the path of the renouncer, are represented in jogic dress during incarnation. The ḍãgariyā representing the god wears a loin cloth and a white or ochre shirt (always ochre if the event is large scale). He is draped with ochre cloths and garlanded with flowers; he wears the tripundra tilak of the Śaivite jogi and he carries a jholi or begging bag which will be filled with offerings to be taken by the god to Hardwar and Kailāś following his despatch (in song) by the jāgariyā. All the Kūmū Devtas recognise Guru Gorakhnāth as their spiritual preceptor and defer to the command and instructions of his chosen representative, the jāgariya. Incarnation itself facilitates passage between Kailāś the place of

samādhi, and Hardwar, the home of the Guru.

To all intents and purposes, the ḍāgariyā is regarded during the time of possession as both god and yogin. His possession is a manifestation of the divine state of samādhi shared by both god and yogin. Although it is clear that the ḍāgariyā himself has no knowledge or experience of the condition of samādhi in any true philosophical sense, through possession he participates in that samādhi, he serves as a vehicle for its expression. The idiom of world renunciation which the ḍāgariyā adopts before and during possession receives its fullest expression at the point of incarnation, when gods and yogins meet men and samādhi becomes a power which is directed at the world.

I wish to turn briefly now to a consideration of renunciatory motifs in the role and professional activities of the third member of Kumaon's trifunctional complex - the pūchar. Of the three functions, the role of pūchar incurs the greatest risk of ritual contamination. Exorcism, 'spiriting' away disease, counteracting or indulging in sorcery and witchcraft, propitiating spirits in charnel grounds and conducting animal sacrifice all lead to defilement. Those pūchars who practice the arts of the jadhūghar, or sorcerer, incur the very worst forms of contamination known to a Hindu e.g. interfering with corpses, seeking mastery over demons and using ritual knowledge to wreak havoc, disorder,

sickness and death.

Such practices are abhorrent to both brahmins and orthodox yogins who seek to maintain their purity or signify their detachment from sinful (pāpi) activities. However, practices corresponding to these of the pūchar can be located in the renunciatory frameworks of two of the left-handed (vāma acāra) sects commonly associated with the Nāthapanth, the Āghoris and their forebears, the Kāpālikas.

During ceremonial performances, the pūchar becomes like a brahmin, both ascetic and ritual priest, and his status among his clients is compared with that of the family brahmin, or orthodox priest. This is somewhat comparable to the position of the ancient Kāpālika who, through initiation, by-passes the āśramas and becomes both ascetic and brahmin (Briggs, 1973:223). Through a complete inversion of orthodoxy and immersion in impure practices, low-caste men can in both cases aspire to high status. The pūchar does not indulge in ritual copulation, but, like the Āghoris and Kāpālikas, he aims to acquire magical powers (siddhis) which can be applied for either or both malevolent and benevolent purposes. He too employs extreme methods including meditating on decomposing corpses, divining and conjuring with the aid of bones and ashes, and propitiating impure deities such as Bhairav and Masān with bloody sacrifice.

In the popular perception, both the pūchar and the Āghori combine paradoxical virtues as agencies of creation (healing fertility and divination) and destruction (sorcery, witchcraft,

blood sacrifice). Both this renouncer and his lay counterpart are regarded with a mixture of awe, fear and respect; the extremes of impurity and ritual power with which each is associated arouses an attitude of combined veneration and disgust.

Although each of the functionaries in our threefold complex actively associate themselves with sources of ritual contamination (a feature which serves to explain the recurrence of untouchables in the complex) none 'embrace' impurity to the extent characteristic of the pūchar. And as with the Kāpālikas immersion in impurity is conceived as a positive advantage in the fulfilment of the traditional functions. This reversal of orthodox tenets, common to an extent among all three functionaries and conjoining them to tantric renunciatory traditions, receives its greatest emphasis in the activities of the pūchar.

In addition to the above, certain general correlations between the ritual traditions of Kumaon and the components of tantrism can be established. There is first of all a certain coincidence of terminology: not just in the use of words like dhyāna, āsana, mandala etc. which are equally common in brahmanical traditions, but in the repeated occurrence of "tantra" or "tantar" as root forms in ritual termonology. For example the word tantra was often used casually by informants to delineate (to me) the nature of their ritual field: rituals involving

sacrifice to Bhairav and Devī were described as "tantrapūjā"; the knowledge of the jāgariyā was sometimes referred to as "tantravidya", and many of the incantations used in jāgar, chalpūjā and pūch were referred to as "tantarmantar".[1]

Secondly, both Hindu tantrism in general and Kumaoni 'tantrism' are conceived by their respective followers as activities suited to the Kali Yuga Era. They are doctrines "addressed to the man of this 'dark age' in which the spirit is deeply veiled under the flesh" (Eliade, 1958a;204). Both assert the primacy of the female principle (the Śakti of the tantras, and the personal power, also termed 'śakti' of Kumaonis functionaries). Both celebrate castlessness. Both embrace impurity, both condone meat eating and animal sacrifice. Both allow for participation by women and untouchables[2]; and both

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1. The root "tantra" is also found in the varying Bodic and Pahari folk traditions of Nepāl (cf. Macdonald, 1976:309,326, 378,380; Stabelein, 1976:361,375; Greenwold, 1974:132).

2. "The tantra is not only open to all five classes (four varna plus the sāmanya or common people), and to women, but supernatural sanctions threaten anyone refusing to initiate an untouchable, a woman can be a guru, and the sacrifice of widows is forbidden. There is even a trace of hostility to the twice born." (Dumont, 1970:53, based on extracts from the Mahā-nirvana tantra).

are to an extent anti-vedic/anti brahmanical (on these aspects of the tantric movement, cf. Eliade, 1958a:202-4; Bharati, 1965:21).[1] And finally, both rely to a very large extent upon sources and backgrounds of a non-literary "unlearned" nature (cf. Eliade, 1958a:302).

In all likelihood, the 'temporary world renunciation' undertaken by Kumaon's functionaries, and the temporary renunciation or 'reversal' of orthodox values manifest as 'tantrism' in customary Hinduism, are one and the same phenomenon. The place of tantrism within the general framework of Hinduism has been described at length by Dumont (1970).

Dumont conceives of tantrism as a historical modification or compromise of the Hinduism of the "restricted formula" - a phrase he uses to refer to the opposition and dialogue between the values of the brahmin ('the man in the world') and the renouncer ('the individual outside the world'). This compromise consists of a rejection in tantrism of the asocial asceticism

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1. One of the popular literary precursors of tantrism is the Atharvareda or fourth Veda. But the historical genuineness of this as an ancient learned text has been disputed by influential scholars (cf. Bharati, 1965:288) as well as village priests of Kumaon. . The text which we have inherited as the Atharvaveda however closely approximates the ritual orientations of yogic magic and tantric folk magic discussed in this section. The hymns are incantations and formulas which deal with the conduct of sacrifice, of exorcism and of sorcery. One class of chants consists of medicinal cures and fertility requests; a second class includes sorcerous spells for causing disease, sterility and social disorder, and for invoking demons and serpents (cf. Stutley, 1977:29-30; Walker, 1968-94).

of the early renouncers while retaining the object of renunciation (liberation) and an incorporation of worldly enjoyments (bhoga). But at the same time it re-evaluates these within a scheme of ultimate transcendence. Dumont also argues that whereas the restricted formula can give no place to popular magic, "tantrism offers a direct hold upon the supernatural" (1970:55). It presents us with a "truly fundamental variant of Hinduism, in which renunciation is replaced by reversal" (Ibid). It is thus a 'religion of the world' which in a sense procures the possibility of salvation for the man in the world through providing a temporary 'renunciation' of worldly values and orthodox casteism.

In Kumaoni village life, tantrism is manifest as an activity of reversal which retains many of the characteristics of world renunciation within the world which both signifies and preserves a direct continuity between the ideals and traditions of the renouncer and the religious aspirations and worldly needs of the layman.

2 POSSESSION AND PRIESTHOOD

Brahmanism and the Threefold Complex

The roles, rituals and traditions of Kumaon's threefold complex of functionaries are essentially non-brahmanical in a number of distinct ways: (a) the transmission of knowledge by oral not literary means; (b) the use of impure officiants and impure practices; (c) a deference to the ideals and magical formulae of tantric renouncers.

These distinctions underlie a fundamental difference between the ceremonial orientations of brahmanical and non-brahmanical functionaries. The professional duties of the village brahmin priest (purohit) are mostly limited to calendrical and life-cycle events. The purohit officiates at temple festivals honouring orthodox forms of the major Hindu deities (Śiva, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, Devī), sometimes in conjunction with a pujari (either a brahmin or a member of the 'veda-oriented' Dasnāmi sect[1]).

1. As a rule the list of 'pro-brahmanical' or śuddha pujaris would include those attached to Vaiṣnavite temples, to Śaivite temples where Bhairav is not honoured, and to the temples of other non-meat eating (nirmansi) deities. These pujaris are either brahmins or else belong to the Dasnāmi order, founded (it is thought) by Śaṇkara Achārayā in the ninth century, and pro-vedic, vegetarian and endogamous in practice. The list of groups in the order includes the following : Gīrī, Pūrī, Bharatī, Ban, Aranya, Parvāta, Sagara, Saraśwot, Thirṭha and Āśram. Although Śaivite, their order is distinct from tantric sects such as the Kāṇphatās.

And he is engaged to officiate at name giving ceremonies, marriages, initiations, funerals and the annual śraddh rites which are held in honour of the household ancestors. (cf. Stevenson, 1971). In addition to the pujari, the brahmin often works in conjunction with the jyotiś, or astrologer, who prepares birth and marriage charts for the priest's clients. The professional duties of the jāgariyā, the d̃āgariyā and the pūchar are in contrast linked to death-cycle rather than life-cycle ceremonial convention. Their ruling deities are unorthodox, and their mode of worship is not connected to the orthodox brahmanical calendar but is linked both to the seasonal cycle and the varying needs of their clients.

A model for this division of labour has been provided by Allen's (1976) account of the regulation of worship among the Thulung Rai of Eastern Nepāl. Among this Bodic people we find two major village ritual specialists: on the one hand a priest "who deals with the orderly supernatural" (i.e. the properly integrated ancestors) and on the other hand, a priest who, through officiation at seances, deals with "the forces of disorder that affect village households"(p.124). Similarly, in Kumaon the brahmanical triad deal with the "orderly supernatural" (conventional deities like Śiva, Rāma and Ganeś, and Vedic deities like Sūrya and Indra) and the "properly integrated ancestors" (as worshipped in śraddh). The officiants must be pure (śuddh). calm (sattvic) and vegetarian (nirmansi) like their deities. The

non-brahmanical triad deal with the forces of domestic disorder (the bad dead and demons, affliction, illness and infertility) and with the unruly, liminal or intermediate supernatural (unorthodox deities, Kūmū-Devtas: deified kings, warriors and renouncers, and elemental beings) They too are identified with their deities, and are characterised as 'meat-eating' (mansi), 'impure' (āśuddh) and 'frenzied' 'angry' or 'earthly' (tamasic). The brahmanical functionaries form a sacerdotal elite regulated by birth (the 'twice born'), endogamy and pollution taboos. Their ritual opposites do not form any elite - their membership cuts right across caste lines - but there is a predominance of Dom functionaries, a phenomena linked to the inherant (advantageous) ritual impurity of the latter.

This apparent division of village ritual life into two distinct camps can be compared with Dumont's abstract division of customary Hinduism into two broad categories, the religion of the brahmin and the religion of the renouncer. The religion of brahmanism and casteism is represented at the village level by the traditions of the orthodox purohit, and the religion of the renouncer is represented by the activities of 'temporary world renunciation' found among the non-brahmanical triad. Paradoxically however it is the maintenance of a principle of originally ascetic orthodoxy, namely purity, which secures the

ritual status of the purohit in village life[1]; and it is the very reversal of this orthodox ascetic puritanism, i.e. the negation of pollution taboos and the deployment of impure practices which defines the ritual power of the village's own 'renouncers'.

Possession and Priesthood

The jāgariyā, the dā̃gariyā and the pūchar are all specialists involved in the art of creating possession. This concern links them with a sacerdotal structure common to village India termed the "cult of possession" which is usually observed as distinct from scriptural brahmanical tradition. Early anthropological writings on the subject of village possession cults tend, however, to over-emphasize their apparent deviation

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1. Dumont (1970) sees "sacerdotal purity" as "the essential future of Brahmanic pre-eminence". Yet the brahmin and the renouncer traditionally "share in a common ideal of independence from the material and social order" (Parry, 1980:89). The purity of the brahmin is measured as much (if not more) by an observation of ascetic values (cf.Heesterman, 1964:29) as the observation of caste endogamy and pollution taboos. Heesterman (1964) argues that "the ideal brahmin is the renouncer"(p.29), and that the real "pre-eminence of the brahmin is not based on his priesthood but on his being the exponent of the values of renunciation"(p.-31).

from brahmanic orthodoxy. The difference is seen in absolute terms, and possession is contrasted with brahmanism as a religion of "demonolatry" set against a sophisticated, learned Sanskritic tradition. (Dumont and Pocock, 1959:56-7).

In the available literature on Kumaon this viewpoint is encountered in Atkinson's early chronicles of Kumaoni religious life (1973). Possession is seen as a focal element in a Dravidian or "aboriginal" "daemonism" or "animism", a form of religious belief which essentially predates in origin the 'more advanced' persuasions of Brahmanism and Buddhism(p.703). He notes that the deities of this animistic ideology "may be free to wander everywhere and be incapable of being represented by idols, or they may be held to reside in some object or body whether living or lifeless, and this object then becomes a fetish endowed with power to protect or can be induced to abstain from injuring the worshipper" (1973:702). The cult attached to possession, he argues, is a "worship of fear"(p.839). Its officiants, the 'Jāgariyā' and the 'Ghantuwa' are men of of low caste and "bad character"(p.824). Incantations are performed "to cause sprites and ghosts to enter or to leave the person of any one and so induce that person to give money to the performer" (1973,Vol.3:229). The basic characteristics of the cult, which include "cautery", "frenzy", "mummery", magic and sacrifice, are mere "superstitions" (815).

Atkinson thus opposes the 'daemonism' of the possession cult

to the orthodox practices of the priesthood. The "recognised priests" of the cult are always Doms "who preserve to the present day the pure daemonism of the aborigines..." (Ibid,279). They are distinct from the priests of the "orthodox deities" who are described as "descendants of those born in the plains" (Ibid). Between the two extremes are the "priests" of the Khasiya Rajputs, who "temper" the practices of the Doms through "the worship of the village deities, the named and localised divine entities" (Ibid).

Atkinson clearly conceives of the division between the "animism" of the "peasantry" and the sacerdotal religion of the brahmins as being absolute, and, as noted earlier (p.152) he ties this up with a division in Kumaoni society itself, a division between ancient and modern, 'aboriginal' and 'aryan'. However, elsewhere (p.758,764), he acknowledges the presence within the aboriginal tradition of ritual elements taken from the advanced and more recent traditions of the Hindu and Buddhist Tantras. But he qualifies this deference to, and absorption of, literary traditions by regarding the latter as forms of "degraded brahmanism" equally tainted by "ferocity, lust and mummery" (Ibid).

I have already pointed out that Atkinson's absolute division between possession and orthodox forms of worship does not tally with available ethnographic evidence (p.153-4), and notions such as 'demonolatary' cannot be considered to have an analytical status of any real worth, imbued as they are with

a curious mixture of colonial sentiment, Christian prejudice and pro-brahmin or pro-literary bias.

However, the historistic orientation of Atkinson's assessment of the division between possession and priesthood (i.e. one is 'aboriginal' or Dravidian, the other is Aryan and 'more recent'), is still reflected in more recent works on the subject. Berreman (1963) for example, writing in the tradition of Srinivas (1960) and Marriot (1955) conceives of the possession cult of his Garhwali villagers as identical with a sub-division of Hinduism known as the "little tradition". In line with this it is classified as a form of local religion which defers to deities belonging to a category of 'non-Sanskritic' gods (1963:96-103), and its ritual forms (which include magic, witchcraft, divination, magic, exorcism and animal sacrifice) are similarly 'non-Sanskritic' in character. Its officiants can belong to any caste, but are generally derived from the lower strata (Ibid:88-95).

Berreman contrasts this with the religion of the brahmin priests, or purohits, who worship the "gods of the great tradition", and utilise post vedic, Sanskritic ritual formulations in their ceremonies (Ibid:137-42). He does however recognise the existence of an intermediate category of religion termed 'regional Hinduism' which incorporates elements of both 'great' and 'little traditions'. But he views this as essentially a "deviation" (p. 138) from the "orthodox" Hinduism of the great tradition and

the "plains"(p138-9).

Berreman notes the marked element of continuity existing between "non-Sanskritic" and "Sanskritic" traditions, and sees this as suggestive of a one-way historical process by which the former has succeeded in emulating the latter (1963:105:139). Essentially, the distinction between the two traditions is absolute, and one is seen to be in the process of replacing the other (Ibid:139).

Other writers, such as Dumont and Pocock (1959), and Staal(1963), have argued against the simplicity of the absolutist position on the nature of the possession cult as set out above. Dumont & Pocock put forward a carefully argued defence of the essentially Hindu non-extraneous nature of the cult of possession(p.55-74, see below). This is set within their familiar overview of Hinduism as being easier to define as a set of relations on the non-literate rather than literate level (countermanding the pro-literate bias of the Sanskritisation theorists), and their anti-historistic conviction that Sanskritisation "does not consist in the imposition of a different system upon an old one, but in the acceptance of a more distinguished or prestigious way of saying the same things" (Ibid 45). In an article which complements Dumont and Pocock's(1959), Staal (1963) demonstrates that the phenomon of 'possession' has, in fact, a widespread occurrence in the Sanskrit literature, and can in no conceivable sense be considered as a tradition separate from, say, "the

mystical intoxication of the Vedic poets, who have been inspired by the gods" (p.267), or from the ecstasies of the Soma drinking ṛṣi munis. According to Staal, possession can even be related to the yogic condition of samādhi, to which it bears a basic resemblance[1].

In the accounts given by Atkinson and Berreman, a radical division between possession and priesthood is stressed at the expense of any combined purpose which they might fulfil. Dumont & Pocock's argument differs in that the two functions are seen not as aspects of the religious systems of rival groups with different metaphysical and historical affiliations but as complementary. institutions. They indicate that "in those instances which are most clear-cut two religious functions balance each other: while the priest presents to the gods the offerings of men, the gods descend on one man, become incarnate in him and using him as their oracle, inform and direct other men" (1970:38)[2].

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1. "Throughout the great tradition, there are references to the final state of emancipation or samādhi. This concept may denote a reality which is, from a philosophical point of view, quite different from the possession of a shaman by a local spirit, but from an anthropological point of view these phenomena are all related" (Staal, 1963:268).

2. Dumont's "oracle" is, in South India, an individual who in addition to combining possession and the control of spirits with magic sometimes combines the functions of priest and oracle (1959:59). The comparable institution in Kumaon is not that of the ḍāgariyā alone, the equivalent mouthpiece of the god, but the entire complex of jāgariyā, ḍāgariyā and pūchar.

Furthermore, they argue that this basic complementarity is one of three closely interrelated complementarities which he considers to be fundamental to Hinduism[1].

From the perspective of complementarity, possession and priesthood can be understood not as two different types of historically extant religious phenomenon but as synchronically co-existant inter-linked functions, each of which fulfils a specific role in the religious life of the Hindu community. The overall effect is a balanced division of ritual labours, directly comparable to the division of ritual tasks between the two priests of the Thulung Rai. The principle of complementarity also makes comprehensible the occasional practice of one officiant combining both oracular and priestly functions. The distinction between the two functions is not then absolute, but relative.

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1. The others are (a) the hierarchical opposition of the pure and the impure which underlies both the caste system (Dumont 1972) and the organisation of the Hindu pantheon (Dumont 1970:28 and 38); (b) the complementarity in village cults between the functions of the god and the goddess (Dumont, 1970:28 and 38).

In the Kumaon case, this perspective enables us to see that the distinction between brahmanical and non-brahmanical functionaries underlies, or is an aspect of, their respective responsibility in catering to separate sides of the religious equation. The brahmin deals with life-cycle rites, the progress through life of the living, a process dependent upon the regular worship of the orthodox pantheon and the properly integrated ancestors. The non-brahmanical functionary deals with death-cycle rites, the progress through death of certain categories of dead, and the healing and salvation of men through the propitiation and deification of the dead. Each functionary is attached to a specific area of social life (and death), and their co-existence in a set context of ritual endeavour speaks not for their antagonism but for their innate complementarity. Found together in a specific context they contribute towards, and perhaps even represent, the totality of functional organisation in that context.

These contentions can be supported by an examination of exegeses provided by Kumaoni informants. One man put forward the notion that the traditions of the jāgariyā and the traditions of the brahmin were contrasting but not exclusive varieties of "dharma" (religious truth or tradition). A pūchar of the Kātyūr valley, Khim Singh, pointed out that "each village and each family has its purohit and its pūchar. It is a matter of need and faith (viswās) whether one goes to one or the other". This

also serves to illustrate a certain overlap in function. In some situations either a purohit or an oracular functionary could be consulted. A Brahman woman informant pointed out to me that both "The purohit and jāgariyā are our gurus, the rituals (rīthī) of each are good. If someone is ill we must try both a tantric (i.e. oracular) and a vedic (i.e. brahmanical) cure". Yet the same informant added that despite this, "the pūjā of jāgariyā is often better, it is much quicker (asarhjaldi)".

The occurrence of an overlap in the distribution of functions between the purohit and the oracular functionary receives more complex expression in the phenomena of a combined purohit/jāgariyā or pūchar. This is a common occurrence in Barahmandal, yet it seemed to occasion no crisis of conscience among such officiants that I was able to interview. Informants saw no contradiction in this, and, as they explained, it added considerably to their range of clientele and their income.

It might be thought that such purohits, by involving themselves in potentially polluting ceremonials, would endanger their condition of purity (which is inherited but must be maintained through observance of purity conventions) upon which their professional reputation depended. But it should be remembered that the element of 'temporary renunciation' and reversal involved in ceremonies of possession and divination, essentially countermanded any contamination acquired through contact with untouchables and with the meat of sacrificed animals. A brahmin could without fear of sanction from either his caste-fellows or his

clients (jajman), be involved in rituals where all the active participants temporarily adopted the status of renouncers, and where caste status was temporarily waived in the presence of deities, whose sacrality transcended the restricted notions of purity.

The adoption by the Kumaoni purohit of oracular functions extends (I discovered) to the point where the course of an oracular ceremony could be transformed through the incorporation of brahmanical practices. During fieldwork in Barahmandal I observed that prior to the animal sacrifices conducted at some Devīpūjās and jūnars, a combined purohit/oracle was engaged to perform an additional pūjā at the temple of the deity being worshipped, and this pūjā involved the recitation of vedic mantras and the enactment of brahmanical ritual techniques. Also, at several of the large scale jūnars which took place in the Barahmandal area in the winter months, the function of animal sacrifice was replaced by a brahmanical homa, or fire sacrifice. This was performed jointly by groups of d̃āgariyās and groups of their family purohits. Together they offered oblations to the brahmanical fire in honour of impure, non-brahmanical deities.

From a diachronic perspective it is possible to view the amalgamation of brahmanical and non-brahmanical features as the end-product of a lengthy process of absorption within the brahmanical tradition of exterior elements which constitute a 'threat' to brahmanical ritual supremacy. This is indeed a time honoured tradition in Hinduism (cf. Dumont, 1970:55). For

evidence of this one need only look at the variety of tantric elements, such as mandalas and mūdras, which have been incorporated into temple ritual and household worship. But borrowing between brahmanical and non-brahmanical traditions can occur in the opposite direction, and many of the rituals of Kumaon which are discussed at various points in the present work are replete with conventionally 'brahmanical' symbols and formulations, such as the ritual purifications of the participants and place of a ceremony, and the use of arati (oblations of fire). To talk in terms of 'borrowings' and 'influences', 'Sanskritizations' and 'Tantricizations' is however to enter into realms of analysis which extend well beyond the present, modestly ethnographic exercise. It is well to recognise, however, that such processes have, or appear to have, taken place. (cf. Staal, 1963:265-7).

CHAPTER THREE

DEATH AND PROPITIATION

"Dying is a monumental affair. It is more than kicking your legs and becoming stiff".

DON JUAN
(in Castaneda, 1970:170).

A. INTRODUCTION

My primary concern in this chapter is to give an account of the major institutional form of a complex of rituals performed to propitiate certain categories of 'marked' dead ancestors. It will be seen that the ultimate purpose of these rituals is to effect the deification of such ancestors and thus pave the way for their subsequent worship in domestic, communal and seasonal possession ceremonies.

Ceremonies of propitiation can thus be viewed as providing the middle sequence in the complete cycle of death rituals set out in diag. 3. As post-mortuary functions they are directly contiguous with mortuary rites which deal with the initial transportation of the soul out of the world of the living. They provide a "back-up" system designed to fulfil the aims of the mortuary rites in cases where transportation has not been successfully achieved. But propitiatory ceremonies have a character and purpose of their own which extends well beyond this function as secondary mortuary rituals; for their design incorporates not simply an orientation towards the creation of ancestor-hood for the dead, but also provides for their deification, for the creation of a further, more transcendent class of ancestor. The spirits of the deceased appeased and worshipped in propitiatory rites cement a linear connexion between men and gods by becoming absorbed within the local pantheon (the Kūmū Devtas) and retaining a permanent function as intermediaries between men and the greater gods (sachavatārs)

The form of the propitiatory rituals to be described is unorthodox (as outlined in the previous chapter), the underlying structures of officiation and background of traditions are not Brahmanical and Sanskritic but bardic and non-literary. However, the conventional mortuary rite which is basically orthodox in structure (whether performed by Brahmans, Rajputs or Doms) provides in some senses a model for unorthodox propitiation. Since a number of motifs and elements are shared by both systems, it would then be a mistake to view them in separation. Hence I have prefaced my account of the propitiation complex with a description of the conventional mortuary ceremony. Force of circumstance in the field prevailed against the collection of extensive reliable information on the orthodox death ceremony so I have decided in this instance to borrow details from Atkinson's thorough account (1973: 917-934), supplementing this in places with my own observations where these are additional to Atkinson's evidence.

The ceremony which Atkinson describes is the idealised classical form of the ritual, as performed by brahmins in accordance with instructions laid down in the śastras and set out in locally available ritual manuals. For the sake of simplicity I have omitted all the shortcuts, deviations and irregularities commonly sustained in the ritual performance of these rites. The form set out is that generally followed by the twice-born castes of Kumaon. Dom mortuary rituals follow the same format but there are no Sanskritic texts or mantras utilised and officiation is conducted not by a brahmin but either by the local barber or the Dom purohit who usually officiates at Dom name-giving, initiation and marriage functions. The jogi castes also follow the same format. They in fact use brahmin intercessors although their dead are never cremated but buried.

Descriptions of the orthodox mortuary ceremony and the complex of propitiation rites is followed in each case by a discussion which centres on the deployment of forms of ritualised journeying as the major symbolic medium used to signify and effect transformations in the status of the dead soul. In the consideration of both sets of data my primary intention is to show how this symbolic medium is realised: basic journey motifs are elicited and data is organised in terms of these motifs.

The distinctiveness of the ritual journey as a "useful ethnographic category" has been stressed by Allen (1974) in a general paper dealing with the underlying symbolism of selected magico-religious ceremonies (mostly mortuary rites) of the Indian and Nepāl Himālaya. Allen's contribution in effect represents a reformulation of the concept of the ritual journey which was first isolated by Eliade(1964) as a fundamental feature of shamanism. Shamanic journeys are now seen in a new light, not as the definitive form of the journey but as merely one expression or one variety of a wider symbolic category. Taking this development into account, one of the purposes of the analyses set out below is to utilise this category in the analysis of Kumaoni mortuary and propitiatory rites in order to demonstrate how it is expressed in the context of the Kumaon Himālaya. But in doing so I am also attempting to counter the prevailing tendency within the ethnographic literature (Allen, 1974:19; Eliade, 1964:378; Jones,1968: 333, Crooke, 1914: 143) to view variant forms of the ritual journey as phenomena which receive little attention among the cultures of the Indo-European peoples (i.e. non Bodic, non Dravidian) of North India.

These are however not the only reasons for taking in tow the idea of the ritual journey. The concept of the journey underlies the entire sequence of post-mortuary rites with which we are concerned, though the forms taken (e.g. journeys of transportation, of possession

and of procession) vary with each ceremonial complex. In addition, the leitmotif of journeying, or the symbolic movement suggested therein, appears to be one of the fundamental symbolic means by which these aspects of Kumaoni religious tradition are linked up to Pan-Hindu traditions of renunciation and pilgrimage. Discussion of these matters is deferred until Chapter 6. For the present however it is only necessary to note that the entire death-cycle complex as schematically represented in diag.3 can be seen not only as a cycle of rituals containing sequences of journeying but as a complete ritual journey in itself. Following death, the soul undertakes a number of smaller journeys which at various stages effect transformations in its status until the journey's end - complete liberation - is reached.

Before turning to the data on death and propitiation we must decide exactly what is meant by 'the ritual journey' and show how the idea of the journey fits in to the general framework of Kumaoni conceptual life.

Wary of constructing too all-embracing a category, Allen does not attempt to formulate a precise definition of what he means by the 'ritual journey'. For my present purposes, however, some definitional guideline seems necessary: so for heuristic reasons I will regard the ritual journey as being 'some form or forms of symbolic passage through cosmic and/or geographic space towards a particular destination as undertaken by some agent or functionary, whether human, animal or supernatural, and acting on its own behalf or on the behalf of others.'

If we take as axiomatic to the phenomenon of the journey the occurrence of a putative transportation of a soul, spirit or god, between the worlds, then it is clear that any such journey must reflect some symbolic indication of both ascent and descent. The journey may

be 'horizontal' in that a terrestrial downward course (e.g. to the south or to a place 'below') and upward course (e.g. to the north, or to a place 'above') along geographical lines might be suggested. But the journey may be 'vertical' in that transcendence of the worldly dimension to both the underworld and the overworld is suggested.

I would maintain, however that within the oral and ritual traditions of Kumaon no significant distinction is made between horizontal and vertical dimensions: the two merge and are conceptually indivisible. This attitude can be found reflected in collective representations of Kumaon's two most significant physical frontiers, the mountains and the plains, which lie respectively to the north and south of the area.

The mountains (Himāchal, Uttarkhand) lie in the north and north east. They are heaven (swarga), the domain of holy men (ṛṣi-munis), gods and demigods. Like Mount Kailāś itself they lie upon the earth's surface yet are beyond, or are higher than the earth itself. All journeys to the north are journeys to heaven; houses and temples are placed with their backs to the north and north east so that when the visitor enters he is oriented towards heaven.[1] In general also, marriage partners are sought from the north, and the bhārat usually enters a village from a south path.

By the same principle the south is negatively conceived. It is the route to Yamalok , the Land of the Dead. Kumaonis think of themselves as a people independent of, and relatively isolated from, their southerly plains neighbours, and until recently the latter were considered as inferiors. At one time the plains were thought of as a dangerous land of malarial diseases and intemperate weather conditions,

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[1] However, temples to kaco (i.e. 'raw', 'unfulfilled') spirits are usually oriented with their backs towards the south or south west.

inhabited largely by bandits (dacūs) and daityas (demons - muslims, Moghuls and southerners in general). Even today journeys to the south are thought of as being ritually inauspicious; they should be timed for certain auspicious dates and days; and even then should be approached with caution.

Most major rivers in Kumaon flow eventually towards the south to join with the Ganga complex of watercourses, and the most auspicious cremation ghats in the region (e.g. Bageśwār) occur where rivers converge in a southerly flow. All water-courses in the area are viewed ambiguously - they have both positive and negative attributes: corpses, defecal matter and intangible bodily impurities are discharged through the medium of running water, and rivers are viewed as a source of great danger - the habitations of malignant spirits (gharbhūtas, ghardevīs). Equally, river water, through its womb-like power to create and sustain life (ghar = river and womb) is positively conceived and is honoured as an aspect of Devī, the Great Goddess. A further juxtaposition of positive and negative qualities within the given attirubutes of rivers can be found within the directional dimension.[1] For Kumaonis, as for most North Indians, the river Ganga becomes doubly auspicious when its south easterly flow becomes a northerly flow, such as at Varanasi, or at Allahabad where the Ganga flowing north east meets the Yamuna, the southwards flowing death river named Yama's sister. This is the site of the Kumbha Mela which is of particular significance to both house-holders and renouncers (especially those of impure sects such as the Kānphaṭā Nāth jogis), as we shall see later. A smaller more localised

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[1] Another set of opposites should be mentioned here: that of male and female, metaphorically linked to North and South respectively. Although designated 'female', rivers have a 'male' northerly source, e.g. Ganga herself rises from the matted locks of Śiva residing in Kailāś.

version of the Kumbha Mela is also held at Hardwar, home of the Kānphaṭās, and a northernmost junction of the Ganges where the mountains meet the plains.

The cardinal directions North and South also transform, at another symbolic level, into the vertical dimensions of up and down, above and below. This is of course consistent with geophysical precedence (the mountains are above as the plains are below) but its expression lies in the human domain. Heroes, kings, saints and renouncers, like temples and gods, are associated with the higher reaches of the mountains - with the above - while villains, untouchables, witches and demons, like pits and the lower animals, are associated with the lower regions - with the below. Malla ('great' or 'above') is a term used commonly to refer to upward regions, northerly tracts of land and great kings and heroes (e.g. the Malla rajas of Nepāl, who were at one time landlords of Kumaon), while its opposite, tālla ('lowly' or 'below') refers to lower regions, areas lying south, deep lakes (tāl), bowls (tāli) and to the home of the deities and denizens of the lower world (Pā-tāla).

This metaphorical cross-cutting of geo-physical, metaphysical and organic domains represents another area of analytical interest altogether, one which has been effectively dealt with elsewhere (cf. for example Beck, 1976; Allen, 1978). My purpose here has been merely to emphasise the incidence of a definitive fusion of the vertical and horizontal dimensions of symbolic space. This achieved, I now feel in a safe position to elicit, from the data on death and propitiation, journey motifs which can be said to encompass either or both of these dimensions in any one instance.

B. GOOD DEATH AND THE FATE OF THE SOUL

1. THE ORTHODOX DEATH CEREMONY

Kumaonis of all castes believe that in the normal course of events following a person's death, the soul departs from the body and sets out on a journey to the Land of the Dead (Yamalok), the kingdom of Yama. The movement of the soul across space does not derive, however, from any momentum intrinsic to its nature but is a direct result of the rituals performed on its behalf by the bereaved kin unit.

Ideally, these rituals should be commenced before death has actually occurred. The moribund is required to meditate upon the Supreme Being and to confer ten gifts (dasdān) upon the intercessor for the removal of the sins (pāp) incurred during life. These gifts include a cow (kapilā dān) which is dedicated to Rudra, and also land, gold, clarified butter, clothing, grain, molasses, silver and salt. The cow (or more usually an object representing a cow) is made to circumambulate the body of the dying person.

A second cow is selected for the final ritual performed before death. This is worshipped and given to the intercessor as a dedication to help the spirit of the deceased secure passage across the Vaitaranī river which marks the boundary of Yamalok. This gift, termed the Vaitaranī dān is accompanied by the following mantra:

> "Approaching the awful entrance to the
> realms of Yama and the dreadful Vaitaranī,
> I desire to give this black cow to thee,
> O Vaitaranī, of my own free will so that
> I may cross thy flood flowing with
> corruption and blood, I give this black cow"
>
> (Atkinson, 1973:920).

Following this, the names of Viṣṇu are recited, and sacred verses might be uttered. The moribund's feet and hands are purified with holy water (gunga-pāni), his forehead is anointed with vermillion and garlands of tulsi (basil flowers, sacred to Viṣṇu) are draped over his head. The ground is plastered with cow-dung in the manner of an altar and the dying person is laid down with his or her head oriented towards the north-east. Finally, mantras are recited in honour of Viṣṇu.

After death has taken place, the corpse is washed with earth and water and anointed with clarified butter (ghī) during the recitation of the following mantra:

> "May the places of pilgrimage, Gya and the rest, the holy summits of mountains, the sacred tract of Kurukshetra, the holy rivers Ganges, Jumna, Sarasvati, Kosi, Chandrabhāga which removeth the stains of all sins, the Nandabhādra the river of Benares, the Gandak and Sarju as well as the Bhairava and Varāha places of pilgrimage and the Pindar river, as many places of pilgrimage as there are in the world as well as the four oceans enter into this matter used for the ablution of this body for its purification" (ibid:920).

The corpse is garlanded and clothed in yellow. Ghī is applied to the seven orifices of the face and it is then draped in white and red cloths and carried on a bier (doli) to the cremation area (śmaśāna). Once there it is laid with the head facing upwards and towards the east while the closest male relatives are shaved by the barber.

Of central importance to the rituals of the funerary period is the manipulation of piṇḍas or 'bodies'. There are two basic types of piṇḍa: (a) those made from balls of barley flour and water; and (b) those made with balls of cooked rice mixed with gūr (raw sugar), milk, honey, tīl oil, tulsi (basil) and holy water. Piṇḍas of the first type have already been offered to prevent the spirit of the deceased remaining in the area to cause affliction. These are thrown to the

ground between sprinklings of water at the following points: the place of death, the door of the house, the boundary of the village and at the pyre. It is thought that the spirit (ātma) of the deceased has already partially separated from the body and is believed to adopt the vehicular form of a bird (hanṣa) which follows the funerary procession from the house down to the cremation ground.[1]

Firewood, including some sandal, is placed over the corpse which is then laid on the pyre with the head pointing south. The celebrant (usually the son or nearest male relative) lights the fire and recites the following:

> "Om mayest thou arrive at the blissful abodes, thou with thy deeds whether done ill purposely or unwittingly have become an inhabitant of another world thy body encompassed with its load of desire, weighted with its deeds of right and wrong has been completely resolved into its five elements" (ibid:921).

The physical essences of the body, the soul of the deceased and the spirit of the fire are worshipped while sacrificed items are thrown into the flames and the pyre circumambulated by the celebrant. The rest of the bereaved cry out "with a loud voice so as to attract the notice of the dwellers in paradise" (ibid:922). During cremation it is thought that the body (piṇḍa) or earthly vessel of the transient soul is consumed by the Bhairav vir or aides (gaṇ) to Bhairav, Lord of the śmaśāna, who incarnate in the flames of the pyre. The corpse is transformed into ether, and thus enters the company of the denizens of the lower atmosphere (ākāś). Rice and sandalwood are offered to these and also to the spirits of the śmaśāna such as the Masānī and the Bhūt-Vetala. Following cremation, the pieces of the body which remain are gathered

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[1] Identified by one informant as a kingfisher. This is common to the watercourses of Kumaon, and is noted for its fiery colouring.

together and placed in the river which is thought like all the rivers of Kumaon to link up with one or other tributaries of the Ganges. The pyre is cleared away and the area plastered with mud and cow-dung. A knot of kuśa grass is made to represent the spirit of the deceased, or preta, and to this the celebrant offers a piṇḍa and a libation of water. Lamps are lit on behalf of the preta and placed alongside offerings of water and sesamum at either a temple, under a pipal tree or at the cremation area.

The next day the celebrant returns to the ghat and choosing a spot to perform the obsequial ceremonies (kiriya-karm) which last for the next ten days, smears it with mud and cow-dung. On the northern side he builds a fire-place (chūla) and on the southern side an altar (bedi) coated with white clay and cow-dung. To "allay the extremes of heat and thirst which the spirit must undergo ..." (ibid:923) the celebrant faces the south and proffers offerings of sesamum, water, kuśa grass and barley. Rice piṇḍas are also offered with "the object that the spirit should obtain liberation and reach the abodes of the blessed..." (ibid:923). The dedication of these piṇḍas contributes towards the formation of a new physical body for the preta which is complete with senses and a need for sustenance. One rice piṇḍa is offered on the first day after death, two are offered on the second day, three on the third day and so on until a total of fifty five is reached by the tenth day. The gradual build up of the new body's constituent parts (head, arms, legs, genitalia, semen, etc.) is closely linked to the preta's initiatory passage through a series of metaphysical hells.[1] This is a ten month process reduced ceremonially to a ten day sequence by the

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[1] Identified by Atkinson as Raurava, Yonipunsaka, Maharaurava, Tāmisra, Andhatāmisra, Sambhrama, Asmedhya Krimi pūrna, Purisha bhakshana, Svamānsa bhakshana, Kumbhīpāka. (ibid:925).

manipulation of pindas. The preta's new body is not a reincarnation of any kind but a metaphysical form with physical needs which lies midway between its previous human form and the totally spiritual form of the ancestor (pitri). In this condition the preta can undergo the intensive purification or initiation necessary to achieve ancestral status.

The procedure of offering pindas is the same for each day. The celebrant stands to the left of the fire-place, places kuśa grasses on the altar as a seat (āsan) for the preta, pours water over the kuśa and offers the pinda whilst dropping on his left knee. Further offerings of water, sandal, rice, essence, flowers and lamps follow. A sacrificial vessel (karm-pātra) which has previously been filled with water, sesamum and perfumes, is turned upside down. The celebrant rinses his mouth and all the ceremonial materials are thrown into the river with the following mantra:

> "Thou hast been burned in the fire of the pyre and hast become separate from thy brethren, bathe in this water and drink this milk thou that dwellest in the ether without stay or support, troubled by storms and malignant spirits, bathe and drink here and having done so be happy."
>
> (ibid:924)

A pierced earthen vessel (karuwa) containing kuśa, sesamum, barley and milk is suspended from a tree or stake to the south of the fire-place, and the contents allowed to drip through to the ground. The celebrant bathes, dons clean clothes and returning home places a portion of food and water for the preta either at the crossroads or the village boundary.

During the liminal period preceding the completion of the preta's initial passage out of the world of men (i.e. from the moment of cremation) the kin of the deceased exist in a condition of extreme impurity.

The degree of contamination attached to each mourner varies with his or her kinship proximity to the person of the deceased. In general, the bereaved become subject to a number of prohibitions which emphasise and render effective a symbolic separation from the rest of the community. Hence they are required to fast until the thirteenth and final day of the funerary period: only one meal per day is permitted, and this must be taken after sunset. Funeral dress must be worn: white for men and dark colours for women. Work, sexual intercourse, and mingling with persons outside the kin group are all forbidden. Visits to the temple are not permitted until the ninth day after the death and the family gods (kūldevta) cannot be worshipped until the eleventh day.

Rites of purification marking a state of re-entry into the living community commence on the ninth day with a ritual bath (gungasnān) and a visit to the local Śiva temple. On the tenth day the family males most closely related to the deceased bathe in the river beside the place of ceremony and have their faces shaved. The house of the deceased is cleaned and replastered. The old hearth is destroyed and a new one constructed in its place. The clothes of the deceased are destroyed or washed in cow's urine, and all the household vessels (gaghar) are cleaned out.

The extent of pollution incumbent upon the bereaved has been decreasing gradually since the day after the death, but now it is considerably lessened and it will diminish further during the three day śraddh period following. Commencement of śraddh marks a further stage in the attempt to effect the total separation of the preta from its former body, home and living kin.

Before looking at the śraddh it should be noted that the rituals performed at the ghat on the tenth day also include a sequence of water offerings (tarpan) proferred to the inhabitants of the entire

cosmos as they are arranged in the following manner:

(a) The ancestors of the deceased who inhabit Pitrilok.

(b) The deceased of the entire earth, i.e. all ancestors.

(c) All the rṣi-munis, liberated renouncers and enlightened heroes.

(d) The gods and spirits of the northern or upwards hemispheres (loka).[1]

(e) The deities, spirits and demons of the southern or downward (from earth) hemispheres.[2]

Ablutions are given in turn to each of these categories, then to all the creations of the fourteen lokas together, including Brahma himself. Finally, water is also offered for the salvation of the childless, or aputrī, residents of Put, the first (of seven) divisions of Narak or hell (the third division of the cosmos placed below Pātāla). In each case this is performed by the celebrant who, under the instruction of the intercessor, pours water over the ghat altar.

On the morning of the eleventh day images of Lakṣmī and Narayan (Viṣnu) are installed on the bed of the deceased and offered

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[1] These were named, though not all explained, by an informant as follows in order of ascent from earth, the loka of men: Bua (the earth itself); Buaha or Buva (the atmosphere, sun, moon and home of pitris); Sva (this stretches upwards from the sun and includes the homes of Śiva, Viṣnu and Brahma); Mahua, Janua and Tapua (none of these were explained), and Sātyam (the place of the almighty Brahman).

[2] Named as above but in order of descent from earth these are: Ātal (the place of the flesh-eating demons or yakṣas); Vetal (the place of the blood sucking vetala bhūtas); Sūthal, Talatal, Risatal (place of the pretas), Pātāl (place of Gorakhnāth, his dhūnī and the Nāgas).

Mahua, Janua and Tapua possibly correspond to the Mahar-lokar, Janar-loka and Tapo-loka of the classical literature. Walker (1968:253-4) identifies these respectively as: the abode of certain prajāpatis, the abode of certain of Brahma's sons, and the abode of Viraj. From the same source, Sūthal and Talatal are identified respectively as "Sutala ruled by Bali", and "Gabhastala the kingdom of the rākśasas" (253-4).

rice, water, sandal, flowers, incense, clothes and lamps. There follows a meditation (dhyāna) on Viṣṇu succeeded by the presentation of gifts to the purohit or other intercessor. Water vessels, food and lights sufficient (metaphorically) to last one year are dedicated "for the benefit of the spirit of the deceased" (ibid:927) then given away along with a cow. The dedication of the latter is accompanied by a request: "O Kapila worshipped of all the four castes best, containing all places of pilgrimages and deities alleviate my trouble" (ibid:927)

Next follows the release of a scape bullock. A homa is lit in honour of the guardians of the universe. Clarified butter, curdled milk, rice, barley and pulses are sacrificed through the fire to ancient Vedic deities such as Rudra and Agni. Bells are tied to the neck and feet of the bullock, and "it is told that it is to be let go in order to save the spirit of the deceased from the torments of hell" (ibid:927). Subsequently, the animal is addressed as the "four footed representation of the Supreme". Its tail is held in the celebrant's hand along with kuśa, sesamum and barley, and water is poured as an oblation given on behalf of all or any unpropitiated ancestors (i.e. those whose cremations or śraddh were not properly performed). Finally, it is branded with a chakkra (sign of Viṣṇu) in the left flank and a triśūl (sign of Śiva) on the right flank, then despatched from the household to be adopted by the lower castes.

This paves the way for the performance of the first śraddh in honour of the deceased. This, the ekadasaha-śrāddh,[1] should in theory be followed by śraddh performed on the same lunar date of every month until the twelve month cycle is complete. However, this is rarely observed and is generally substituted by a complete thirteen day cycle (parvan) of pinda offerings which take place during the pitripaks (dark lunar fortnight of Asoṣ devoted to the ancestors) every year.

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[1] The ekadasa śraddh is performed as if it were the ekodiśta-śraddh or anniver-

The ekadasaha is held at the cremation ground whereas the anniversary ekodiśta and the parvan take place in the kitchen (goṭh) of the ancestral household. The purpose of each śraddh is explicit - to secure the salvation of the deceased by altering his status from that of preta to that of pitri (ancestor).

During the rites, the preta having finished its course and reached the boundary of the "blessed abodes" (ibid:928) is invited to be present and given a seat on a sacrificial altar. Gifts of piṇḍas, sandal, rice, flowers, lamps, sweets, threads, kuśa, sesamum and water are presented to the preta which is represented by five kuśa brahmins. The "symbolised Brahman" or kuśas are requested to allow the preta to receive these gifts, then water is poured at the feet of the real brahmin.

On the twelfth day the ritual known as sapindi takes place. This involves the construction of three altars at the ghat: (a) a square altar in the north called the Visvadeva-bedi which is dedicated to the gods; (b) a triangular altar in the south named as the Preta-bedi, or "preta's altar"; and (c) a circular altar in the east called the Pitamahadi-bedi which is dedicated to the ancestors, or 'sacred fathers'. The celebrant places two kuśa Brahmans at the northern altar and while sprinkling barley over them invites them to participate in the sapiṇḍi. Similarly, he approaches the southern altar and, laying bundles of kuśa to represent the deceased, he invites the preta to attend. He purifies himself before approaching the eastern altar then lays down blades of kuśa grasses to represent the ancestors of the deceased for three generations in the male line.

Water is sprinkled over all the kuśa blades and bundles, and the following offerings are placed at each altar: sandal, rice, flowers, incense, lights, clothing, betel and a stone upon which piṇḍas will be

made. Four piṇḍas are made on a separate stone, and a portion of rice and honey is thrown to the ground as the bikara-dān. Three piṇḍas are then placed on the eastern altar and dedicated respectively to the deceased's father, grandfather and great grandfather. The fourth is "dedicated to the spirit of the deceased that he may cease to be a disembodied spirit and become enrolled amongst the ancestors" (ibid:930-1). This piṇḍa is then divided with a golden skewer into three parts, each of which is attached to the piṇḍas of the ancestors. The spirit of the deceased now becomes a pitri and replaces his great-grandfather in the ancestral line. Water, rice, sesamum, kuśa and milk are poured over the piṇḍas and the altar is circumambulated. The celebrant prays to the ancestors for family prosperity and fertility, and replaces the piṇḍa of the father on the altar with sandal drawings of sacred implements (e.g. a conch and discus) upon which rice and dīpak are laid. After this, the piṇḍa is restored. A kuśa stalk is taken from the northern altar and thrown towards the heavens with the mantra: "Praise to the ancestors in paradise" (ibid:931). The water of three hundred and sixty vessels is poured over a pipal tree in the name of Viṣṇu. The tree, "whose root is like Brahma, trunk like Viṣṇu and top like Śiva" (ibid:932) is tied round with thread three times and circumambulated. The piṇḍas and other materials of the sapiṇḍi are then fed to crows in a rite termed the kawa-dān.

On the thirteenth day a community feast (bandhāri) is held by the bereaved. The intercessors and foremost members of the community are invited. Some of the food cooked is offered to the gods as a burnt offering and portions of water and rice are thrown to the ground as offerings to the spirits and to the creatures of the below (e.g. Doms, lepers, the deceased, crows and ants). Following completion of the feast, the leftovers of the leaf plates are fed to crows.

2. JOURNEY OF THE SOUL

From the information set out above it is possible to select a number of areas wherein some form of journeying involving ritualised movement or projected soul transportation is explicitly represented. A number of journeys are in fact undertaken; each of these involves either or both a suggested movement through space and a brief passage from one condition or status to another. But taking these passages and aspects of processing together it is possible to view the entire fate of the soul following death as constituting one single symbolic journey.

This journey is ritualised in the sense that its crucial moments, the arrival of the soul at particular destinations and the act of transportation itself are symbolically enacted by a number of intercessors who mediate between the soul and the agents and places of its destiny. This group of intermediaries includes the family priest (purohit), the barber, the temple priest (pujari) who presents the offerings of the bereaved to the gods, and the celebrant himself (usually the son of the deceased). It is also possible to view the family of the deceased as having intercessory functions and a liminal intermediate status - they play an active part in the death rituals and they exist throughout in an ambiguous position mid-way between the living and the dead.

There appear to be three basic stages in the primary symbolic journey of the dead soul. I shall now attempt to deal with each of these in turn. A fourth and further stages (cf. diag. 3) can also be elicited, but these do not feature within the orthodox funerary rituals dealt with in this section.

Stage One : From the House to the Cremation Ground

This includes the ceremonial transportation of the deceased's body from the place of death to the place of cremation. The dedication of the two cows (kapila-dān and Vaitaranī-dān) in fact takes place before this - at the time of dying. It is difficult to assimilate the place of the first animal within a general scheme of transportation motifs, whereas the vehicular status of the second is easier to assert: its dedication to the river serves to ensure the safe passage of the soul to Yamalok. It is possible however to view the first cow as a vehicle for the sins of the moribund. These are transferred on to the cow and either absorbed or annulled by the brahmin who is the ultimate recipient of the animal[1]. The cow is also a model of the universe; by circumambulating it in the company of an auspicious intercessor, the moribund is in one sense charting the course of his approaching journey. Of the two other vehicles deployed in the disposal of the dead, it may be noted that the first (the wooden bier decked with red and white cloths and yellow flowers) caters for the transportation of the body, while the second (the hansa) functions as an agent for the transportation of the soul.

Intimations of an assimilation between the body of the deceased and the macrocosmos are contained in the mantra which invokes the auspicious rivers and oceans of the world into the waters of purification used to prepare the corpse for the fire. Before the introduction of water and fire which inaugurate the cosmic journey of the soul by securing its separation from the body, the deceased must traverse a brief physical route. This is marked by various symbolic boundaries (house, village and crossroads) frequented by a number of spirits to whom the

[1] It is commonly acknowledged in Kumaon that (in theory) only lesser brahmins will conduct obsequial ceremonies. Not only is death itself polluting, but the intercessor is forced to confront and even absorb the sins of the bereaved.

pindas are also offered. Water is sprinkled both before and after the pindas are thrown to the ground in order to smooth their passage between physical and metaphysical space.

The projected destinations of the soul, both immediate and eventual, are signified by the orientations of the body at crucial points in the procession to the śmaśāna. The head is pointed towards the east, the direction of Pitriloka, while the bereaved signify their links with their ancestors by temporarily renouncing worldly status through the removal of body hair and immersion in water. But before it can go east, the preta must first go south, so this is the direction in which the deceased is oriented while on the pyre.

The separation of the bereaved from the rest of the community at the time of death is linked to the separation between the world of the living and the world of the dead, which is meted by the death itself. The mourners themselves undertake a form of ritual death: they become identified with the corpse, and enter a liminal dangerous condition. At another level their separation can be linked also with their intercessory status: functionaries in life-crisis rituals are generally required to have attained an element of 'separateness' - a state usually achieved through initiation into priestly practices.

En route to the cremation ground the soul undergoes a crucial change in status - from a 'worldly' state to a 'non-worldly' state. Through the characteristic activity of the bird (entering the water to catch fish) the soul is redirected into the major medium of transportation, viz. riverwater, which has an ultimate downwards and southwards orientation. Following cremation, the unburnt remnants of the soul's former vehicle (the body) are also placed in the river. This could be interpreted as either a way of securing the transportation of its earthly vehicle as well (now transformed by fire into a metaphysical condition), or else as an attempt to doubly ensure the immersion of the body's essential

matter - thus avoiding any possible displacement of the soul substance.

In any case the necessary initial separation of soul and body is finalised by the fire. As the agent of transformation it is honoured and dedicated with sesamum and mantras, and as the medium of passage linking the worlds it is circumambulated by the celebrants. By calling on the ancestors through the fire the bereaved also create a direct link between the worlds. The symbolic corridor thus constructed is given motion and direction through the action of water; the preta's journey is sustained through the offering of pindas and the route itself illuminated by lamps placed beside all the cosmic axes available (the tree, the temple and the ghat altar). Separation completed, the celebrants now focus their ritual attentions upon the preta's journey to Yamalok. The physical body itself has been consumed by lesser metaphysical entities as sacrificial matter, part of the balidān to the śmaśāna vir. It may be noted however that these vir are not merely inauspicious spirits but, as aides (gaṇ) to Bhairav, possess a function as gatekeepers and boundary guards - they must be propitiated if access across the worlds is to be secured.

Stage Two : From the Śmaśāna to Yamalok

The preta's journey southwards and downwards is facilitated by passage through riverwater. The soul follows the course of the local naula, leading eventually into one of the gunga of Kumaon (e.g. the Sarjū or Kośi) and from thence into the Ganges. The entrance to Yamalok is marked by the Vaitaranī river to which a cow has already been offered in order to secure passage. This metaphysical river,

flowing with "corruption and blood" corresponds to an actual river which flows through south eastern Assam (i.e. towards the south east). It must be presumed however that the routed environs of the journeying soul do not consist simply of a physical substance (water) but of an intermediate fluid metaphysical space which eventually merges with the region of the dead. This space has been identified as consisting of a series of hells which purify the preta and thus gradually allow the formation of the new body vehicle considered essential for passage into Pitrilok.

According to Atkinson, the offering of piṇḍas by the bereaved enables the preta to cross each hell encountered (ibid:924). Its new body is formed as a result of these offerings, which sustain it on its passage through the ether "troubled by storms and malignant spirits". Water is given to assist in the transportation of offerings as well as to smooth the passage of the preta. The water offerings of the tenth day represent another ritualised circumscription of the cosmos within which the preta has now become completely assimilated following the destruction or purification of all the materials associated with its former physical body. However, no special directional symbolism appears to be contained within the scheme of water offerings: no route is being charted and there does not appear to be any specific logic attached to the arrangement of the worlds and their inhabitants thus honoured. But a downward passage is suggested by the suspension of water offerings from the tree, or cosmic axis. This passage is illuminated by the dough lamp placed beside the tree: it is dedicated "to enlightening the manes now in darkness so as to alleviate its sufferings" (ibid:923). The tree itself is a temple and a model of the cosmos (the leaves and branches are like Śiva, the trunk is like Viṣṇu and the roots are like Brahma. It penetrates the three worlds

(trilok), heaven (the top), earth (the trunk) and the nether regions (the base and the roots), and serves as an agent of medium passage between them. The circumambulation of the tree furthers the propitious union of the preta with the cosmos and the progress of its passage.

The cycle of ten units of time (days or months) which comprises the period of journeying by the preta is equivalent to the period of mourning and intense pollution undertaken by the bereaved. It is perhaps possible to see a correspondence between changes in the transcendental progress of the soul and the transformations which occur within the ritual status of the deceased's kin. As the preta increases its cosmological distance from the kin unit and the family home so the impurity incumbent upon the bereaved lessens in intensity and they gradually become reintegrated into community life. Their impurities, like the corpse and the preta itself, become transported towards the south through the action of the river, and they move away from the world of the dead back into the world of the living. The ceremonies of the ninth and tenth days which finalise the separation of the preta also pave the way for the regeneration of the living. The visit to the temple re-establishes their former relationship to the gods vis-à-vis the world of the living and also inaugurates the processes of the śraddh ceremonials which convey the preta to its final destination.

Stage Three : From Yamalok to Pitrilok.

This - the third stage in the preta's cosmic journey - is primarily effected by the rituals of the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth days. Through the performance of śraddh, the bereaved attempt to

revalorise the status of the preta by including it among the class of pitri - the ancestors or sainted dead who inhabit Pitrilok. In effect the preta is moved out of a category of potentially malevolent beings and re-located within a category of potentially benevolent beings. The soul of the deceased becomes more like a god and less like a lower spirit. The transformation from preta to pitri can thus be viewed as a rite de passage, but this is closely allied to the prevailing metaphor of a ritualised movement - the passage from Yamalok to Pitrilok, from one region of metaphysical space to another.

The worship of Lakṣmī, goddess of prosperity, and Narayan (Viṣnu in his aspect as Lord of all Men), images of which are placed upon the bed of the deceased, has a double function, viz. procuring well being for the bereaved and ensuring the admission of the manes into paradise (cf. ibid:926). These are deities of auspiciousness and regeneration; their introduction into a context hitherto riddled with impurity heralds both the near completion of the preta's journey and the termination of the pollution incumbent upon the bereaved on account of the preta's liminal condition. The meditation upon Viṣnu whose medium is water (the sea, the lotus and the sea-conch), would appear to be connected with the deployment of water as the symbolic agent of transportation: possibly this represents a type of thanksgiving, since Viṣnu does not generally function in any sense as a gate-keeper or guardian of cosmic space. After Viṣnu, the cow is again worshipped - this time it is deployed as an agent for alleviating the suffering of the still-liminal preta. The provision of water and lights for each day of the coming year links up with the notion that the preta still has a year of actual journeying to complete.

The scape-bullock has a distinctive "journeyistic" character: it is offered upwards towards the great gods who have been invoked in

the flames of the pradhan - homa, but then it is sent downwards to give succour to the suffering preta and to all the unfulfilled pretas of the family line. Its function in the latter respect would appear to be one of either taking their burdens upon itself or else acting as a vehicle to secure their transportation to and beyond the South.

By now the preta has completed its southwards passage and it awaits entrance to Pitrilok. This is finalised by the ekadasaha śraddh which is conducted as if it were the ekodiśta sraddh - the rite held to celebrate the passing of the preta's twelve month journey. During this the preta is ceremonially aligned with a metaphysical intercessor - the "symbolised Brahman" (ibid:929). This alignment itself suggests a transition from a place and position which are impure and low to a place and position which are pure and high. The water and gifts proffered to the Brahman can be considered as prestations given 'upwards' in return for intercession.

The final transition from preta to pitri takes place during the sapindi section of the śraddh which is performed on the twelfth day (corresponding to the twelfth month of passage). The northern, southern and eastern altars which represent respectively the worlds of the gods, the dead and the ancestors, are spatial domains between which the preta is symbolically transported. The celebrant secures the intercession and blessing of the gods through first worshipping the kuśa Brahmans of the northern altar. The kuśas of the preta which lie on the eastern altar are worshipped separately, then worshipped together as a unit. This is followed by the sectioning of the preta's pinda and the subsequent alignment of its parts with the pindas of the ancestral line. And this act itself secures the movement of the spirit from below (the south, downstream on the ghat, Yamalok) to above (the north east, upstream on the ghat Pitrilok).

The circumambulation of the eastern altar is, like the circumambulation of the pipal tree which marks the conclusion of the ceremony, a further attempt by the celebrant (acting on behalf of the deceased) to circumscribe the cosmic axis which facilitates vertical passage. This act can be construed as either an endeavour aimed at actually effecting the movement of the preta or else as a way of representing the completion of passage ... the circumambulatory act can be viewed as symbolising completion in itself i.e. the completed delineation of a circular route and the termination of a cycle of human endeavour.

The final act of the funerary observances, the community feast, is a celebration of the regeneration of the deceased ancestor, but it is also a way of providing for the regeneration of the community of the living. Participation in a community event for the first time since the occurrence of the death signifies the re-admission of the bereaved into the community of the living following their enforced period of separation.[1] But relations with the rest of the cosmos are also re-valorised, for the gods and the spirits of the lower worlds are also included among the list of 'guests'. Participants are fed in the conventional order of descending status, first the gods, then the community of the living, then the polluted living (lepers, ants, etc.), the spirits and pretas, and finally the crows or envoys of Yama who will carry the death god's portion to Yamalok. The journey of the preta completed, order within the cosmos is once again established.

The bereaved always assume a 'normal' or ideal course and conclusion to the preta's journey but the possibility of this not being achieved in actuality is generally recognised. It is possible for the

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[1] On this point, cf. Hertz, 1960:71-72.

soul to remain in an unfulfilled (kaco) transient condition and return to harass the living as a chal or bhūt (cf. next section). It can even be so weighed down with sin (pāp) that it is consigned to Yama to undergo further purifications at the hands of the tormentors who inhabit the seven hells of Narak which lie beneath Pātāla.

Orthodox brahmins in Kumaon believe, in common with their fellows elsewhere, that the soul can also be forced to undergo saṃsāra i.e. passage through the cycle of rebirths from the lowest form of life and up to the highest, culminating eventually in release. There exists here a contradiction between the notion of rebirth and the purport of the orthodox mortuary ceremony, but when questioned on this matter, brahmin informants emphasised the ideal, 'as if' status of the śraddh. The ceremony is intended to secure the transportation of the soul and its ultimate salvation (mokṣa) but no-one can be sure of its exact success when measured against the power of fate, the necessity for retribution for evil deeds performed during life, and the possibility of an unforeseen error in the performance of the funerary rituals. There exist also attendant motives for the performance of śraddh: these arise out of notions of transportation but are separate from the act of transportation itself. Failure to hold these ceremonials, for example, can put the honour of the family and the community at stake - the dead and the ancestors must be respected and given honour. The favour of the dead must also be secured - they can intercede with the gods on behalf of the living. There are also elements of family prestige and personal pride attached to the notion of an ancestor successfully attaining salvation. Harassment of the living by an unpropitiated ancestor is regarded with shame and fear, it is defiling and inauspicious.

Interconnected with some of these beliefs is the view that should an ancestor fail to secure the status of pitri and remain unpropitiated

in the conventional manner, then he can attain an alternative, arguably even higher, status as a Kailāśwasi, or resident of Kailās, the mountain paradise of Śiva. Re-propitiation by alternative techniques such as those set out in the following section assure him of classification and worship not simply as a pitri but also as a deity, a member of the local pantheon(the Kūmū Devtas). In these circumstances the ancestor in question having been 'marked' for special attention as a result of the type of death involved and the power which he might display as an unfulfilled spirit retains an individual character and identity unique among the pitri.

There is again a contradiction evident here between the notion of deification and the orthodox theory of reincarnation. However, informants reconciled the practice by pointing out its Śaivite character and linking it to the unorthodox traditions of the tantrikas. For tantric yogins, true release is thought of as samādhi (i.e. 'non differentiation') rather than mokṣa, and this is defined by the Nāthas as a union with Śiva in a condition of immortality (jīvanmukta). Furthermore, this is an achievement denied to the layman; it can only be gained by following the yogic path. However, it is also possible for a re-propitiated spirit to attain samādhi and in a sense enter into the class of the renouncers. In the discussion set out in the final section of this chapter we will see how the propitiation ceremony makes this possible.

C. BAD DEATH AND PROPITIATION

1. SPIRIT AND CEREMONY

Bad Death and Liminality

Propitiatory ceremonies in Kumaon, termed chalpūjā, represent a ritual idiom of particular interest for the elicitation of journey motifs. Like the śraddh, these are conducted in order to secure the safe passage of souls between the worlds. The souls which are thus transported belong however to a different category than the souls for which śraddh is conducted. These are the souls of the 'bad dead' and are known not as preta but as chal, bhūta or phūnk.[1]

Chal is the most common usage. This word, which can also be used to designate a 'fright' or 'frightener', can be linked etymologically to 'chhail', a shade or shadow, and also to chhal, a departure (from chhalo, to go). All three referents aptly suggest essential aspects of the chal as it is conceived by informants. Firstly, it is essentially malevolent, it possesses people at random and can exhibit a frightening mode of appearance and behaviour. Secondly, it is indeed thought of as a 'shade', a disembodied, invisible life-force. Thirdly, it is believed to exist in a liminal twilight world, intermediate

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[1] These are the generic names for these spirits. Within the general class of chal there are a wide range of sub classes and categories, each associated with a particular malevolent or benevolent function, a particular deity (e.g. Śiva, Kālī, Bhairav or Narsingh), and a particular manner of origin. For some of the basic categories and the names of individual chals worshipped as deities after propitiation cf P. 91-96. For comparable lists in other parts of North India, Briggs, 1953:458-89; 490-503; and 1920:128-157.

between the earth and the sky, i.e. the atmosphere or ether (ākāś). Its feet cannot touch the ground, and it is motivated by one thing, a desire to complete its journey to the land of the dead and achieve eventual release (mukti). Like the wind, it is in a state of flux and seeks only departure. Indeed, one type of chal, the byāl or byāli (the female form) is represented as a spirit of the wind (bāyū) which ceaselessly eddies through the forests and across the hilltops at certain times of the year.[1] The fleeting transient terms bhūta and bhūtinī, from the Sanskrit root bhu, 'to become'. The bhūt is in a raw (kaco) state, it is a 'becoming' rather than a 'being'.

There are three types of 'bad death' i.e. 'untimely death' (ākāl mritu) which produce a chal: (a) unnatural or violent death on account of murder, suicide, curse, sorcery, accident or from the attack of a wild animal; (b) death before initiation, i.e. in the case of unmarried women, un-named babies or stillbirths; or in the case of death while outcaste, the unfortunate condition of lepers and madmen; and (c) incomplete death as a result of incomplete observance of funeral rites, i.e. error or laxity on the part of the relatives of the deceased during obsequial ceremonies and/or the anniversary śraddh. This third category also includes those persons who died apūtrī, i.e. 'without child', and thus without the male heir necessary to officiate at the funeral.

Victims of the first category have not been allowed to fulfil their natural life span i.e. their journey (jātrā) towards death (mritu). Victims of the second category are those unfortunates who either never quite made it onto the path of life, remaining uninitiated and therefore

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[1] In parts of Western and Central Nepāl the equivalent class of spirits are in fact known as bayu (cf. Gaborieau, 1975b:67-90).

'unborn', or those to whom society denied the right to a complete life and were placed beyond the pale into a meagre existence wandering the tracks. Victims of the third category have not been allowed to complete their journey through death; they are forced to remain in an immature (kaco) condition until their obsequial rites have been completed.

The 'bad dead' are also those whose bodies are not regarded as fit or appropriate objects for sacrifice to the gods and ancestors on the cremation pyre (cf. Das, 1976:254-7; Parry, 1981:29-30) which facilitates transportation to the land of the ancestors. Alternatively, transportation is ineffective because their bodies have not been successfully sacrificed through the medium of fire. Paradoxically, their condition is comparable to the renouncer whose 'death and sacrifice in life' obviates the necessity for cremation and in any case generates so much heat internally through austerities (tapas) that a second fire would be wholly redundant (Das, 1976:255). Like the uninitiated dead or the untimely dead, the renouncer's body is not burned but buried. The state which appears to be common to both the renouncer and the 'bad dead' is one of 'marked' liminality. Marked, because liminality is a feature both of their lives and their deaths. The renouncer's transcendence allows him to be both dead in life and alive in death. His marginality persists and his liminality is stressed. In the case of the 'bad dead' the incompleteness of their lifecycles places them in a marginal situation which is perpetuated through their deaths: burial does not effect transportation, it fixes them on to the margins of the world of men. They are still available to wreak havoc in the world and their bodies and burial places become, like the samādhs of ascetics, sites and sources of power and danger. If the properly propitiated preta, or disembodied ghost engaged in transportation, is seen as a

source of disruption on account of its temporary marginality, the chal or spirit of the 'bad dead' is seen as a source of danger which is twice as disruptive in terms of intensity and time scale. This bringing together of the cases of the renouncer and the chal is not however an artificial rapprochement but one based upon the folk idiom, for, as noted earlier, the spirits of the incarnated dead are usually represented in renunciatory guise.

Affliction, Divination and Propitiation.

Rites of propitiation for the chal generally take the form of a small-scale ceremony termed a chal-pūjā performed on behalf of a family (swar-baradri) or household (gharki) by the lineage (kūla) or village (gaon) pūchar. The immediate purpose of the ceremony is to appease and exorcise a chal which has taken possession of a family member in order to seek release (mukti). There are preferred, auspicious periods for its performance, during which its remedial effect can be maximised. Thus it will not be held during the dark fortnight (pitri paks) of Asoṣ devoted exclusively to the annual śraddh of the properly propitiated lineage ancestors. Neither will it take place during the month of Magh, which covers the period of the winter solstice(uttārāyan), and which is favoured by brahmins for 'vedic' rituals. The pūchar will endeavour to arrange it for the lunar half of any other month, but particularly the months of Spring, (Phagun, Chait and Vaiśakh) or Autumn (Asoṣ and Kartik). The most auspicious time is the night of the fourteenth day (Chatturdasi) of the lunar parts of these months, as this is particularly sacred to the bhūtangi

(ghostly form) aides (gan) of Śiva.

The months of Spring and the months following the monsoon are all transitional periods in the agricultural calender during which chals are thought to be particularly active and desirous of the attentions of men. According to one informant, chals are 'attracted by ripening nature.' They are drawn towards the growth and fertility which accompanies the dual processes of planting and harvesting occurring at both these times of the year.[1] These are also the beginning and ends of the wheat and rice half-year cycles in Kumaon and are therefore crucial boundary points in the agricultural year. Similarly, Chatturdasi is a boundary point between the active and inactive halves of the lunar month.[2]

The general association between chals and marginalia is not however limited to the boundaries of the year. They are also thought to be active at the boundaries and marginal areas of most types of physical, social and classificatory circumstances, e.g. during the human life cycle at times of birth, puberty, marriage and death; on the boundary points of the day (dawn, dusk, midday and midnight); and at the beginnings and ends of journeys.[3] Needless to say, the most appropriate

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[1] In the Spring months the winter wheat is harvested and the padi nurseries are sown. In early autumn the winter wheat is sown and the rice crop is harvested.

[2] The dark half of the month is devoted to the sainted ancestors (pitri), as these are thought to incarnate on earth during this time, thus leaving their abode, the moon, bereft of light. Chal's on the other hand incarnate during the bright half of the month, the days of which are sacred to the deities and the nights to their malevolent counterparts, the demons (daityas).

[3] Briggs (1973) gives comparable associations for other parts of North India (374-5). The general association between boundaries and spirit agencies is a recognised feature of Indo-European societies. For those which pertained in Celtic society cf. Rees and Rees, (1961: 89-94); and which persist in post-Celtic English traditional society cf. Quayle and Hockey (1981a and 1981b).

places to propitiate chals are at liminal places such as a bridge, a hilltop or a śmaśāna ghat, and at the liminal times provided by dawn and dusk. In addition, the notion that they are attracted by 'ripening nature' makes sense of their recognised preference for afflicting the young of the community, adolescent boys and unmarried girls, particularly during the boundary periods of puberty or female menses.[1]

Once a chal has incarnated, its chosen vehicle (ghwar) or victim to its affliction (kathin ban) and demands for attention, begins to suffer from anxiety (bayi), trembling (kampnam), unconsciousness (behoś) and fits (bekābū). Another common symptom is paleness in the face, a feature indicative of the victim's 'blood being turned into water'. Indeed it is inversions of normality like these which signify the predations of a chal.[2] Set out below is a precis of how one informant described the affliction of his ten year old son:

> 'During Asoṣ my son started to behave in an unusual way : he would fall to the floor and roll backwards and forwards, the whole time staring ahead of him. When we asked him what was happening he would say nothing, but when we asked him what he saw he would say "I see something in coloured clothes and behind it there are horrible things". At other times he would tremble and talk nonsense, occasionally demanding things, offerings and the like. The time varied: sometimes he would behave like this for minutes or even hours, and it would recur often in the week. So we held a jāgar and during pūch found out that he had once fallen into the river and hurt his head. He

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[1] Other favoured targets are married women without children and the family's milking cows. In the latter case affliction is suspected if the milk dries up or the cow fails to give birth.

[2] The chal always takes possession of someone's body. Its afflictions however are not always manifest as body troubles but often as outbreaks of social chaos, e.g. disputes, poor harvests, financial problems, etc.

had been afflicted by a ghar bhūt which demanded mukti (release). Affliction ceased when babhūt was applied. In the jāgar we gave a promise (vita) to give a chalpūjā and balidān (sacrifice).'

However it is relatively unusual for the family of the victim to immediately incur the expense of a jāgar in order to determine whether affliction has occurred. Diagnosis of the trouble and, if affliction is suspected, identification of the chal in question is usually undertaken on the spot by the pūchar. He performs divination by one or more of a number of conventional techniques (cf.p142-3), the most usual involving only the application of babhūt-pāni (cow dung ashes and water) to the patient's forehead. This has the effect of either controlling (temporarily) the affliction, or else bringing on its sudden return. Either way, the influence of a chal is detected, unless other factors such as a negative behavioural response or the incidence of a physical or mental illness is indicated as the root cause of the trouble. The pūchar will then consult his own personal deity (istadevta) through possession or meditation for further information and for advice. Inevitably, a chalpūja will be suggested as the most effective way of propitiating the spirit, and an appropriate time and place will be suggested for the performance of this

There are four parts to the chalpūja ceremonial complex:

(i) A performance of jāgar, the 'awakening ceremony' on an auspicious night.

(ii) A procession of the doli of the goddess on the following morning.

(iii) A performance of jharpūjā, or 'ceremony of transference' that evening.

(iv) The chalpūjā or propitiation proper, usually later that night.

To illustrate the workings of the chalpūjā and all of its sequences, each of which can be performed as complete ceremonies independent of the entire complex, I have set out below a brief description of its institutional forms. The general picture can be filled out by detailed reference to one of the particular chalpūjā performances I was able to observe. This took place over a period of one day and two nights, the twelfth and thirteenth of Vhadon (August-September), in the village area of Bhageri in the Katyūr valley. The officiating pūchar was a Dom of chinese extract[1] who had a reputation for paying close attention to every last detail of ritual convention, and who was generally acknowledged to have a high success rate. The jāgariyā was a Dom attached as 'guru' to all the families of Bhageri, a predominantly Rajput collection of hamlets and isolated homesteads. The patient (dūkhi) was the seventeen year old unmarried daughter of a well to do Rajput farmer and ex-army sergeant of Bhageri. The major parts of the chalpūjā were held in and around the girl's family homestead. The pūchar had been called in to diagnose the girl's apparent lassitude and proneness to periodic bouts of unconsciousness. During pūch it transpired that the girl was suffering from the afflictions of a masān, or spirit of the cremation grounds (śmaśāna), and a jāgar was called for the night of the twelfth in order to bring the masān under control.

The jāgar

During the jāgar sequence of rituals, the jāgariyā, or 'awakener', directs an incarnation of the afflicting chal in the

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[1] His family were descended from a group of chinese tea workers that had migrated to Katyūr during the last century in order to work on the tea-gardens briefly established by an Englishman at Kausani. His reputation as a pūchar was unmatched in the villages of the area, but he also had a reputation as a drinker, a habit which would bring shame to a brahmin, but seemed somehow fitting to a 'tantric' officiant invested with the power to 'down spirits'

body of the dūkhi and also an incarnation of the pūchar's iṣṭadevta in the body of the pūchar. The deities engage in a dialogue through their respective mediums with each other and with the assembled company: the desires of the chal are ascertained; and usually the family of the dūkhi agree to offer the chal worship (pūjā) and sacrifice (bali) on two occasions - once on the night following and once more in a year's time. The type of sacrifice requested conform to the chal's class and nature. He might be 'meat-eating' (mansi) in which case offerings of meat and blood are acceptable, or 'meat-avoiding' (nirmansi) in which case milk and bread (roti) are acceptable. The place of worship and sacrifice is determined by the chal's class, by the place of affliction, or by the location of the death of the chal's former body (piṇḍa), if known. Thus a chal of the śmaśāna, termed a masān, is given pūjā at the nearest ghat. A forest chal (junglī bhūt airī rūp) is worshipped in the forest. A river chal (ghardevi) is worshipped by a river, on a bridge or bank. And a mountain or an elemental chal (e.g. varāri, or byāli) is worshipped on a hilltop, and so on.

The jāgar at Bhāgeri commenced at twilight on the twelfth day of Vhadon. The usual purifications and preparations (cf. p 299) were performed, and the event took place in the upper left-hand front room of the saukar's two-storey house. Attendance was limited to immediate family members (women in the adjoining back room), a neighbour and the officiants: the pūchar, the jāgariyā and his hiwari.

Following a general invocation to the gods (nyutan rās), the jāgariyā performed the song (rās) of Bhairav in an attempt to incarnate Bhairav in the body of the pūchar. Bhairav was the deity who habitually possessed this particular officiant, being attached as kūldevta to the latter's lineage. The song of Bhairav in this instance depicted the god as having been born from the congested hairs (jatta) of Śiva, and as residing with Mātā-Agni (fire-mother - the cremation fire) in Kalpavṛksa (i.e. at the base of the śmaśāna deodar tree) where they live on the flesh of corpses. To be included among his various attributes were: a grey black appearance with hair down to his feet, and in his hand a double flute (joramureli) made from a human shin bone; a diet of kitcherī eaten from a skull bowl, and accompanied by a dog. Following this description, the jāgariyā praised Bhairav's legendary achievements and invited him to enter the jāgar to offer succour to his troubled devotees. As the climax of the rās built up the deity took possession of the pūchar and thus successfully entered the jāgar.

After the initial frenzy of possession and dancing was over, the god was consulted about the problems of the afflicted girl, the source of the affliction and the methods necessary for introducing a cure. The deity then asked the jāgariyā to create possession in the patient. A brief climax of drumming followed and the girl became violently possessed, screaming and hugging the floor. Upon questioning, the spirit confirmed its identity as a masān, expressed its desire for release and demanded to be honoured with praises sung in its honour. The jāgariyā in response performed the rās appropriate to a masān. This largely consisted of a description of the origin and appearance of the masān, as the following extract (arranged in prose form) illustrates:

A piece of bone and attached flesh once remained from a corpse that had been carelessly cremated. When the mourners departed for home the bone remained on the riverbank where it was lifted up by a bird. Once in the sky it fell from the bird's claws and landed in the hollow trunk of a rhododendron (buruś-bot) tree. When the Spring came and leaves appeared in the tree the bone developed a female life (janani-prāni) and grew up as Matamāsani, the mother of the māsanis. It left the tree for the bank of death (marghat) and there made its abode. It offered arawan (remembrance) to the gods and gave birth to a son. From this son the lineage of masān blossomed and many forms of masān were created: bhūt-masāna, masāni, Kabiś, bhūtinī etc. All had the form of chal and all live in the waters of the marghat or śmaśāna. Their colours are black, their appearance is hideous. The masān has the cry of a wild animal and the dress of a jogi. He afflicts people without warning.

During the performance of this rās the possessed girl danced around the room miming some of the events and attributes set out in the song. There followed another sequence of pūch and dialogue during which Bhairav (the pūchar) and the masān (the dūkhi) engaged in a duel, the former as Lord of the Śmaśāna and patron of the bhūt-masāna, intent upon demonstrating his social superiority and greater spiritual force (śakti) over the masān, his sister's son. The mock-fight between the two dãgariyās concluded with the pūchar pulling the girl around the room by the hair and shouting 'hath', 'hath' (get out, get out). Through the medium of Bhairav, the company further ascertained that the masān would vow to depart for once and for all from the body of the girl, upon receipt of the following pūjā items: a young white goat, a white chicken, cooked and raw kitcheri, and an offering of the six sacred grains (chenaj[1]). The place of sacrifice was identified as the śmaśāna of Bhageri (situated in a ravine lying some two kilometres north east of the household), and the time of sacrifice and worship (chalpūjā) confirmed for the following night. The jāgariyā confirmed that the māsan would receive the worship and offerings requested, and promised that it would also receive a further pūjā in a year's time following completion of its passage from the world of men. Its release guaranteed, it was directed to depart from the body of the afflicted

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[1] see above, p.147

girl and attempt no longer to frequent the earth looking for food and succour.

Following pūch, the two ḍẽgariyās danced one final time; Bhairav again cast out the masān; and as the music and dancing came to a close the masān departed from the jāgar, quickly followed by Bhairav who was given offerings of flower-heads, silver coins, fruits and rice. The girl, now no longer possessed, was told that her body would be purified. The jāgar was brought to a close; the first part of the chalpūjā was complete.

Within the overall structure of the chalpūjā complex, jāgar functions as a platform for establishing and regulating sacrificial contracts. Through the intervention of the Guru, embodied here in the function of the jāgariyā, diagnoses are made and prophylaxis formulated to alleviate the suffering and insecurity which accompanies the intrusion of a chaotic disorderly force into the physical and social order of the human community. That which escapes comprehension and classification is understood and put in its correct place. The form (yonī) of the spirit is 'awakened' and it is offered propitiation and (eventual) re-location within the cosmos in return for a guarantee of future non-intervention.

Following the completion of the jāgar, the pūchar immediately commences preparations for the second set of chalpūjā ceremonials scheduled for the following morning. He constructs a doli, or bier, from the branches and leaves of a banana tree. The bier is shaped like a small temple, or tabernacle, and is draped with a yellow cloth which has been brought into contact with the dūkhi. It is used to worship not the chal but Devī in her aspect as "mother of the earth" (jagatmātā). Propitiating the goddess, the mother of all things, men, gods and spirits, at the beginning of a day devoted to chalpūjā signifies an auspicious start to the day's events.

Devī Kī Doli

Before dawn on the day of chalpūjā, the pūchar, the dūkhi and the dūkhi's family all take purificatory baths. The dūkhi is then given an audience (darśan) of the doli. The doli is carried out of the house by the pūchar and placed on an adjacent hillside facing the mountains situated to the north.

> At the ceremony held in Bhageri the doli constructed was small in size, some three feet in width, three feet in breadth and less than two and a half feet in height. Over the yellow cover was placed a red cloth, and the upper brances of the construction were draped with feminine ornaments, e.g. bangles (churi), a mirror (arsi), a ribbon (phunde), rings (mundela), a glass necklace (chario), coloured powder (sindūr) and some yellow and white flowers (phūl).
>
> The doli was placed on a hillside above the dūkhi's household, adjacent to the shrine of the family's kūldevta and with a clear view of the mountains. A minimum of procession was involved, and the doli was transported quickly to its place of rest in a manner reminiscent of the rushed delivery of a funeral bier from house to cremation ground. It was fixed in its spot at the precise moment before (in the words of the pūchar) "the first red rays of the sun have struck the earth and the animals are taken out to graze." As the sun rose and began to shed its light on the snowy peaks of Mount Triśūl and Nanda Devī (the two most prominent mountains visible from the Kumaon area, devoted respectively to Śiva and Devī), the pūchar lit a dough lamp (dīpak) with four wicks and placed it inside the open shrine (thālmandal) formed by the covered doli. He followed this with a number of offerings: apple (seb), walnuts (akrot), limes (nībū), a cucumber (kūkri), cooked wheat (halva), rice (dhan), milk (dūdh) in a leaf, dahi (on a leaf) and puffed corn (khaja). The doli and its contents were then purified with offerings of fire (arti) and cow's urine. The construction was then abandoned and the pūchar returned to the house pausing en route at the temple of the household deity to profer offerings and a brief prayer (pāt) for the success of the chalpūjā.

The goddess of the earth to which the doli is dedicated is also consort of Śiva, Lord of the Bhūtas (Bhūteśvara) or spirits. The ritual of the doli is regarded as a partial re-enactment of the myth describing Devī's marriage to Śiva in which all the chal rūpi (spirit forms) of Uttarkhand were invited to participate in Śiva's wedding in the high Himālayas and formed a large part of his retinue. In return the spirits of the area were offered salvation in Kali Yuga. The suggestion of the ritual is clear. When the Devikīdoli is carried from the home of the dūkhi and given the darśan of the mountains, the afflicting (chidra) chal is transported 'in tow' out of the house and shown the direction of his salvation. It is also thought particularly auspicious if the doli, its retainer (gaṇ) and the mountains are bathed simultaneously in the red light of the rising sun at the time of presentation. The sun's rays and the colour red (lāli) have regenerative, life-giving properties. Motifs of purification and regeneration are contained in the suggestion of exposing the afflicting spirit to the fiery red light of the sun at this liminal point between night and day (when chals are thought to be at their most active), and in the suggested combination of Devī and Śiva, goddess of the earth and Lord of the sky.

The Jharpūjā.

During this sequence of rituals the afflicting spirit is formally transferred from the body of the dūkhi into the objects of sacrifice. The act of transference is known as jhar (from jhara = a brushing away or clearing out). and the attendant incantations are termed 'jhar-mantras'. If the chal in question belongs to the class of ākāśmantri or 'sky dwelling' spirits then the jharpūjā will be held

in the morning directly after the darśan of the dholi. If the spirit is a ghar-bhūt or masāni then jharpūjā will be held at dusk on the same day.

Jhar takes place in the house of the afflicted person. He or she is required to have fasted for the entire day, and must have bathed his or her body with water and cow's urine before jhar. During the rites which follow, he or she is referred to as the 'jharanta piṇḍ' i.e. the body over which jhar is being performed.

> In the chalpūjā at Bhageri the jhar was held in the same room as the jāgar of the previous night. Assembled within an area of circular space in the centre of the room were: the pūchar with his back to the window; the dūkhi sitting opposite the pūchar ; the items of sacrifice (a white goat and white chicken) placed to the dūkhi's left; a branch of nim leaves placed to the dūkhi's right; and in the centre of the circle amidst a collection of ritual paraphernalia, a brass tray (thāl) containing a small circular dough statue (dikara) representing the afflicting masān. Other participants included three Dom helpers assembled on the perimeter tending the animals and holding ritual objects. Observers and family members were all situated in an adjoining room. Except for the dūkhi no women were present.
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> The pūchar was dressed in a white shirt and a loincloth tied up around his waist (the practice of sacrifical priests). The girl's head was covered in a white cloth worn like a shawl, which obscured her face and conferred upon her a submissive aspect. The dikara of the chal, made from barley paste, was coloured black from charcoal powder mixed with nut oil (tīl), a mixture termed bhūt-tilak. Its eyes were made from black soya beans and its mouth was marked by a small white coin. The effigy stood less than four inches in height and its diameter measured less than two inches at the base. Around the dikara in the centre of the thāl were placed a pile of coins, some flour petals, fruits, sweets, incense, a dish of hot coals, a dīpak with four lit wicks, some fruit and chillis. To the side of the thāl were placed loṭas of water, cow's urine and milk.

The rituals commenced with the purification of all the participants, ritual objects and items of sacrifice. During this the pūchar chanted aloud a variation of the following general recitation for casting out demons (Daitya Sanghar Mantra):

Daitya Sanghar Mantra

All hail to Ganeś; to Ved Bhūmi; to Narsingh; to Parasarām; to Rām, Rāme, Mahārām; Karunamāyi; to Kriṣṇa Mahedharmiya.

All hail to Viṣṇu seated on the head of Seśnag in the midst of the great ocean; to Brahma who was born from the lotus navel [of Lord Viṣṇu] and from the dirt of whose ear were born the daityas, Madhu and Ketyap; to Brahma who went into meditation for a thousand years, and who waking from his meditation fought the daityas for a thousand years to win back the bhog of the gods. Yet the gods still ran to and fro, and sought the help of Mātā Judhdāyi; the mother opened her mouth till her upper teeth touched the sky and her lower teeth touched the underworld. Out of her heart came Kālikā. Mātā Kālikā stooped to the ground and spread her arms like a net until she had assembled a swarm of bees (dhuma murdal) to destroy the daityas. Then she called out to Viṣṇu the master of men and said

"Let us go all over the earth in search of daityas, Vir Vetal, chandamanda/virj."

All hail to Girī, raja of the mountains who offered to assist. All hail to the mother who opened her mouth till her teeth touched both the sky and the earth.

A storm of hailstones fell from the sky. Cījū and Bījū brought forward their bellows. They poured in iron for melting; they poured in melted iron for beating. They made a long binda. First Mātā fixed this on the earth. Then the arrow of Arjuna was fixed on the earth, as was the sārī of Kuntī, the ball of Narankar, the needle of Dabhi, the canopy of Indra, the kundal (ear-ring) of Aditya. With the aid of the binda of Kali, the sari of Kunti, the ball of Narankar, the canopy of Indra, the needle of Dabhi, the ear-ring of Aditya, the affliction was removed from the earth.

So also I remove this affliction with the ukhel mantra. I drown it in the flowing water with the pānī mantra, I put it into stone with the dhunga mantra.

O affliction, go into the six grains, go into the seven shining stones, go into the eight seeds, go into the pool of water, go into the ring of yellow powder, go into the beautiful chicken, go into the four fiery flames, go into the talīyā roti.

Go back from wherever you came. Go to whoever guided you here. Enter the body of whoever first incarnated you. You have lost your seat in the jharanta piṇḍ. The seats of Vir-Bhairav, Vir Narsingh, and Mātā Kālikā are now in this jharanta piṇḍ. You must go. Leave this hunting ground, I call out to you.

The following rituals were then performed: the pūchar took a roll of yellow cloth from a white bag then after pressing it to his own forehead, circled it in a wide arc and in an anti-clockwise direction seven times over the heads of the dūkhi, the dikara and the sacrifical animals. Placing this beside the thāl containing the dikara, he then took up the bundle of five nim[1] branches and performed the same circular action. During this, the sacrificial animals are fed with green leaves and parched grains.

Following the delineation of these invisible circles, the pūchar then placed the palm of his right hand on the girl's forehead and slowly drew it away a number (seven?) of times as if drawing something out of her body. This completed a tilak (frontal mark of religious initiation) of akśāt-pitya (white rice in a vermillion paste) was applied to the foreheads of the dūkhi, the goat and the chicken. Rice grains and vermillion powder were sprinkled over the animals' backs. The girl then released her veil and proceeded to wind it several times around her head, covering her neck and her hair, but leaving her forehead and face exposed.

In the next sequence the pūchar detached a small bundle of caustic nim leaves and dipping them in a brass vessel (loṭa)of cow's urine, sprinkled the liquid over the ritual arena, paying particular attention to the thāl containing the dikara, the covered head of the girl and the heads and bodies of the two animals. Purification with liquid was succeeded by purification with fire: the thāl containing the dikara and dīpak was circled anticlockwise three times over the girl's head, then rested briefly on her head before being placed on the floor beneath her. Arati (offering of fire) was performed with a dish of hot coals (dagar) and incense (dūb) waved over the girl's head, in the spaces around her body, and over the dikara and animals.

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[1] According to Briggs (1953) the nim (Acadirachta Indica) is important in the folk magic of North India "because of the medicinal properties of its leaves and fruit. Besides they have magical values" (503). This extends to funerary use: "When the funeral party returns to the deceased's home, after the disposal of the body, they chew nim leaves as part of their ceremony, for protection against the ghost of the dead" (Ibid).

The second part of the Daitya Sanghar Mantra, the jharmantra, was then incanted in the name of the afflicting spirit. A complete version of this is set out below:

Jharmantra

Go go brother masāna,
go into the six grains.
Go go brother masāna,
go into the seven quarters.
Go go brother masāna,
into the mandala of twenty-two colours.
Go go brother masāna,
into the small statue.
Go go brother masāna,
go into the beautiful chicken.
Go go brother masāna,
go into the coloured corn.
Go go brother masāna,
go into the seasonal fruits.
Go go brother masāna,
go your separate ways.
Go go brother masāna,
go into three separate ways.
Go go brother masāna,
go into four separate ways.
Go go brother masāna,
go where there are no ways.
Go go brother masāna,
go where there is one way.
Go go brother masāna,
go back to where you first came..
Go go brother masāna,
go to Rudra who is in the mountains.
Go go brother masāna,
go and live in the peaks of Triśuli.
Go go brother masāna,
go and live with the queen of Pātāla.
Go go brother masāna,
go and live in the Burusi Pātāla.
Go go brother masāna,
go to the home of the ganda goru.
Go go brother masāna,
go to the home of the thigela buffaloes.
Go go brother masāna,
go to the home of the barking dogs.
Go go brother masāna,
go to the direction of the howling jackals.
Now brother masāna,
your seat has been taken from this jharanta piṇḍ.
Now brother masāna,
the seat of father Dussehratha has gone into this jharanta piṇḍ.
Now O brother masāna,
the seat of raja Rām has been placed.
Now O brother masāna,
the seat of warrior Hanuman has been placed

O brother masāna by the grace of Satī Sita and Jati Lakśman go for ever from this jharanta pind.

These mantras have been offered with flowers in the name of vacha Iśwāra. 67

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The rituals of the jharpūjā were then brought to a close. The pūchar took a fold from the white scarf draped around the girl's head and used it to wipe all traces of the tilak from her forehead. The tilaks on the heads of the animals and the dikara were however left untouched. The girl was then re-anointed with a streak of babhūt-pāni, following which she got up from her place and retired from the room. The animals and the dikara were again purified with cow's-urine and arati performed over their heads and the entire circle of ritual space.

The pūchar and his helpers prepared to go down to the cremation ghat to commence the final sequence of rituals in the propitiation of the chalpūjā proper. The helpers collected together the ritual paraphernalia, the nim branches and the items of sacrifice, and proceeded out of the house. The pūchar then led his assistants, the ethnographers and a family representative in a procession (jātrā) down to the cremation ghat. The thāl containing the dikara and the dīpak was carried at the very front, the wicks of the dīpak being used to guide the spirit's way to its place of rest. Due to a sutak (birth in the cognatic unit) none of the dūkhi's family were allowed to attend the final rites. The chosen representative was a neighbouring Dom farmer who had a long-established attachment to the family, and who possessed the respect of the neighbourhood on account of his literacy and his occasional function as family priest (purohit) to the Dom families in the area. Throughout the chalpūjā, the dūkhi remained in the house well out of sight, and as the party moved hurriedly out of sight an iron nail was driven into the frame of the main door at the front of the house (a rite known as Kīlgarna,'driving the nail').

This concludes our illustration of the jharpūjā sequence of propitiation rituals. The afflicting spirit is now assumed to have left the body of its chosen vehicle and been temporarily housed in the form of an effigy which becomes the object of the worship and sacrifice that follow. The effigy is ringed by fire and purificatory objects, cow's urine, chillis, rice, etc., bearing testimony to its status as a source of extreme danger but at the same time possessing a degree of holiness. It is in fact a corpse; its base (the thāl) is a bier and its procession is a funeral party heading for the place of death where the last rites are executed.

Indeed, the ambiguous condition of the chal at this juncture of the ceremony, dead or corpse-like in form but alive in 'spirit', dangerous yet powerful, sacred and pure, compares well with the status of the Hindu corpse between the moment of death and the moment of cremation. Although the vital breath has departed from the deceased, the body is not regarded as a source of pollution until the spirit (prāni, ātma, preta) has finally departed. This does not normally happen until cremation is under way. During this liminal period, when the deceased is caught between two worlds, his or her body becomes a receptacle for liminal cosmic forces. It is circumambulated and worshipped, like a fire, tree or temple and it is venerated as an aspect of Śiva (saiv = a corpse: cf. Das, 1976:253; Parry, 1981:31). In the case of the masān dikara of the chalpūjā at Bhageri, the incarnated spirit is worshipped as an aide and avatār of Bhairav, Śiva's dark aspect and it is venerated accordingly with appropriate pūjā and sacrifice.

The Chalpūjā

This concluding sequence of rituals is designed to effect the final exorcism of the afflicting chal from both its former vehicle and from the world of men. To illustrate this I have set out below a detailed description of the chalpūjā rite as performed at the Bhageri cremation ghat on the thirteenth night of Vhadon.

> The walk to the ravine (gadera) which housed the Bhageri śmaśāna ghat was hurried but the descent to the base was slow and deliberate - a precaution incurred by the steepness of the incline and the treacherous slippiness of the path still wet from monsoon rains. At the base of the ravine flowed a turbulent river. The company halted at a grassy embankment bounded to the north by sheer rocks and to the south by a waterfall and a shallow river pool. The river itself, a tributary of the Gomatī/Garuḍ river complex which flowed ultimately through Bageśwār towards the south east, tumbled at this particular bend in its course towards the south east.
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> Two cooking fires were lit between the rocks and the river pool, a site normally utilised for the cremation of dead bodies. The pūchar's assistants proceeded to prepare wheat cakes (purīs) and kitcherī from flour, rice and dal previously purified during the jharpūjā. The pūchar selected a circular area of ground some eight feet in diameter lying above the cooking fires (to the north) and cleared it of loose soil and debris. Purifications followed: the pūchar and his assistants washed their hands and feet in the river pool. Then the pūchar returned to the centre of the platform and cast handfuls of rice towards each of the four directions, uttering (inaudible) mantras with each cast.
>
> Taking four flat stones and one small stone from the river bed he constructed a dolmen on the exposed circle of ground. The construction measured approximately eight inches in height and one foot in width. In the centre of the dolmen opening he placed the small stone, and on top of this a yellow flower. Akśāt pitya was applied to the front of the stone and the whole

construction dedicated as a thālmandal to Bhairav, with the single stone represented as a lingam. A nim branch was bent across the front of the shrine, and to this was tied a small bag of red cloth. A yellow cloth was draped over the back of the dolssen and attached to the arch. Two more nim branches were positioned in the ground on either side of the shrine and a bundle of nim leaves draped over the front. The cloth, the jholi and the nim branches were placed there to represent Bhairav's jogic dress, his begging bag and his wooden staves.

To the right of this first construction (i.e. towards the rocks) the pūchar built a second shrine, this time in honour of Devī, consort of Śiva and mother/paternal aunt to Bhairav. No stones were used in this. Instead a nim branch, stripped of its leaves was bent over to form an arch. Across this was tied another branch hung with a piece of red cloth to form a triangle of sticks. Over this was draped a yellow cloth to form a cone-shaped tabernacle with an opening at the front. In the opening were placed a bundle of nim leaves, a folded blue cloth and a bundle of red and blue rags of a size suggestive of the menstrual cloths used by Kumaoni women.

Both shrines, oriented towards the direction of river-flow (the south east), were then decorated with a selection of ritual offerings: flower heads, pieces of dried coconut, incense, banana leaves holding akśāt-pitya, chillis and dīpak lamps. The shrines having been dedicated and decorated, the pūchar turned his attentions to an area of ground lying immediately in front of the shrine to Devī. Here he drew out a mandala. The outer lines were marked with (white) rice flour, the inner, intersecting lines with (red) vermillion powder. (cf. diag.3).

The mandala was (later) explained as a cakkra, a wheel and circular enclosure within which the masān represented by the lit dīpak was re-located and trapped. The eight points on the circumference of the cakkra were the eight directions and intermediate directions. At each point was stationed one of the Āstbhairav vir or eight guardians of the universe. These were there to guard the inner reaches of the cakkra (a world symbol) and to prevent the intraneous and extraneous flow of hostile forces.

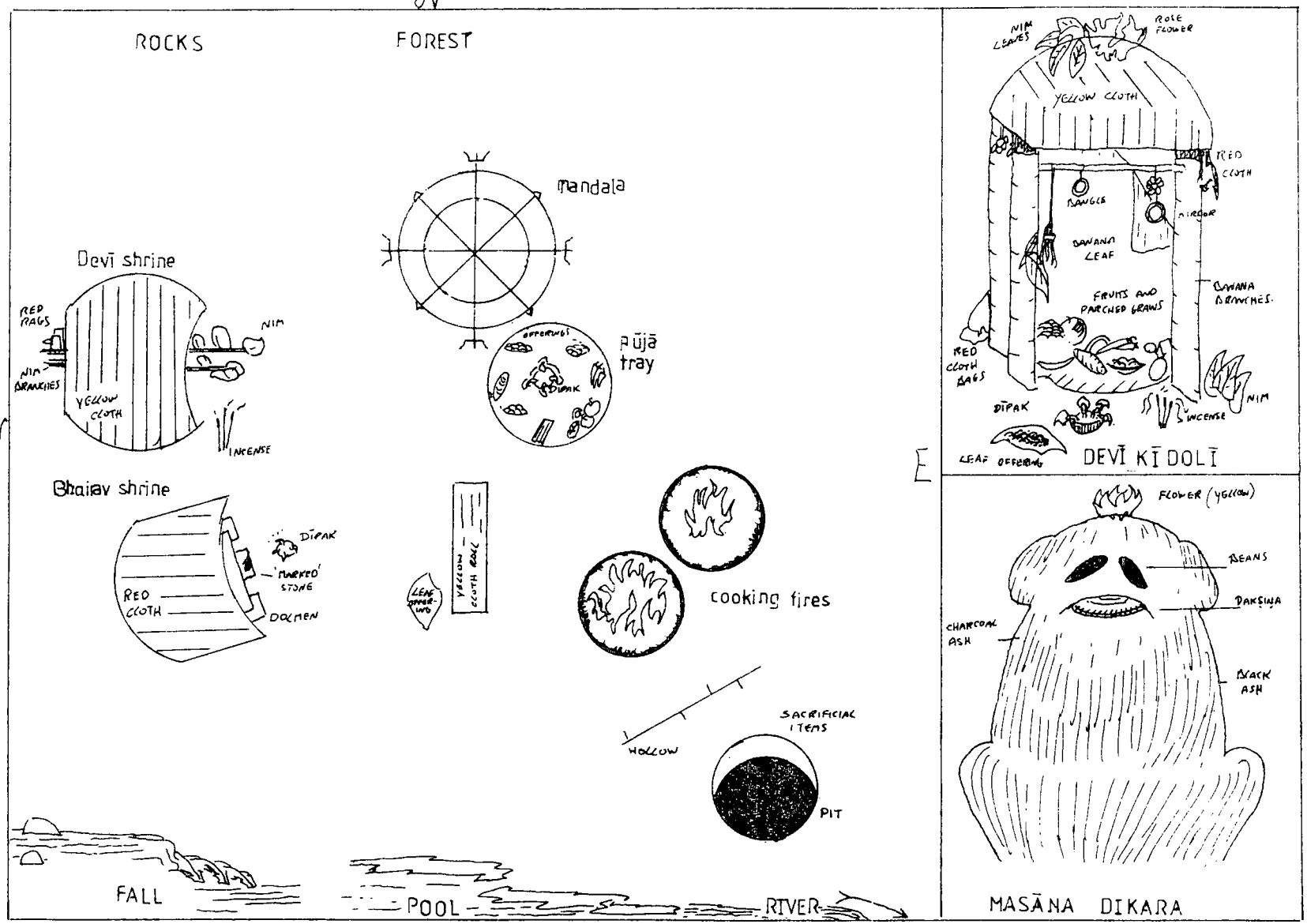


DIAGRAM 4 THE CHALPŪJĀ

In the centre-most point of the mandala the pūchar placed a cooked purī and on top of this a dīpak with four lit wicks. Around the purī were laid red chillis, yellow flower heads and a silver coin. In the outer sections of the mandala were laid two red apples draped with flowers, one green lime, one piece of sandalwood marked with a Śaivite tilak (the tripundra = three parallel lines), one red bangle, one or more red chillis, some scraps of red cloth, a pile of cooked rice, a pile of turmeric powder (haldi), a bundle of one-rupee notes and a whole coconut. Four more cooked puris were later offered to the mandala, while four more were offered to the Bhairav linga.

The pūchar then offered worship to Bhairav and Devī. The rectilinear yellow cloth, the white scarf formerly worn by the girl, a banana leaf containing akśāt-pitya, and the thāl containing the dikara were all positioned around the mandala. Then, the pūchar scattered rice grains over all the shrines and paraphernalia thus assembled. Turning his body clockwise he sprinkled cow's urine towards the rocks (the north), towards the river (the south), towards the direction of the river source (north west) and in the direction of its flow (south east). Facing the shrines and mandala, he applied akśāt-pitya to the Bhairav linga, the masān dikara, each item of offering, and finally to his own forehead. The Bhairav, Devī, the masān and the pūchar himself were thus brought together in a ritual communion.

The deities were then offered arati. The pūchar circled a dish of charcoals and incense over the shrines and surrounding area. Standing to the left he folded his hands in a gesture of salutation (pranām) and bowed in each of the four directions, separating his hands during each bow to touch his forehead, ears and chest before again bringing them together. Following completion of arati, the pūchar scattered coloured rags over the sacred area.

The ceremonies at the Devī and Bhairav shrines were now complete. The pūchar moved away from the shrines to a spot lying in a hollow between the cooking fires and the river pool, (i.e. towards the south-east). Here he supervised the digging of a small pit (kud or pāt) some fourteen inches deep and six inches in diameter. The location chosen was partially obscured from the shrines and fires: though set apart it established a

kind of ritual triangle encompassing the three areas of activity.

Around the pit the pūchar placed the following items: (a) a banana leaf containing cooked halva (processed wheat, jaggerī and ghī); (b) a banana-leaf plate containing chenaj; (c) the girl's white scarf containing black dal; (d) two cooked puris; (e) a thawa (iron plate) of cooked kitcherī; (f) a plate of raw kitcherī; (g) the thāl containing the dikara; (h) three puris cooked on one side and marked with vermillion crosses; (i) a tiny pile of white sweets and dry vermillion powder, and (j) a round stone containing a pile of wet rice.

The pūchar purified the area as before, with scatterings of rice and cow's urine in the four directions. He then held the thāl containing the dikara and its dīpak over the pit for a few brief seconds. Then the following items were dropped in turn into the pit: a pile of chenaj; white sweets; flowers; rice and vermillion powder; turmeric; raw kitcherī; cooked kitcherī and the crossed half cooked puris (cross turned downwards). These were followed by the dīpak with its four wicks still lit, and as he murmered a mantra invoking Guru Goraknāth, the pūchar followed this with the dikara of the masān, its head pointing upwards.

The sacrificial animals were brought over to the pit, then purified with cow's urine and akśāt-pitya. The chicken was decapitated over the pit with a kũkri (Nepāli scimitar-knife, used only for sacrifice or warfare) and its life-blood pumped into the hole over the head of the dikara. The chicken's head was then laid on one side and a leg dropped in to the pit. The white goat met a similar fate. Its head and right foreleg were also placed beside the pit, and the body dragged away. Following the infusion of life-blood the pūchar clamped a flat round stone over the pit entrance. The dikara thus interred, the afflicting chal was considered buried, bounded (band kardiye) by a tombstone (samādh dhun).

The pūchar walked over to the river and washed his feet. He returned to the pit, picked up the heads of the goat and the chicken and took them to the river to be washed. Meanwhile his helpers burned off the goats bodily hair by turning the carcass over one of the cooking fires. They then gutted and dissected both animal and bird with the kũkri. The intestines and entrails

were taken to the water for emptying and washing. All the edible parts, except the heads and legs, were taken for cooking (in oil then water) in the same vessels used to prepare the puris and kitcherī. The pūchar then came out of his imposed social isolation to supervise the preparation of the meat. Cooking took place in three stages: first the outer carcass of the chicken, second the entrails of both animals, and third the outer carcass of the goat. The hearts and livers of both animals were placed briefly beside the pit then deposited as offerings at the shrine to Devi. These, the heads and legs, were later taken away by the pūchar, as prasādi, the food of the gods.

The feast, of semi-raw meat, kitcherī, puris and halva then took place. The pūchar ate first, separate from the others and with his back to the cooking fires. After the entire company had eaten they walked to the river, led by the pūchar, and washed their eating utensils, their hands and mouths (the pūchar also washed his feet).[1]

The pūchar returned to the pit. Standing towards the north he placed cooked meats over the tombstone, then the remaining cooked and raw grains. Gathering up a handful of raw kitcheri, he held this to his mouth and uttered an inaudible prayer (tantarmantra). He lit a bundle of incense sticks, circulated it over the pit seven times and placed the individual sticks into the ground to form a circle around the pit. Cow's urine was poured over the top of the tombstone, soil was thrown over this and two more (larger) stones clamped on top. The hole was now doubly sealed. Riverwater was poured over the pile and arati performed. The enclosed pit and pile of stones were now fully dedicated as the samādh (tomb) of the chal.

The pūchar turned towards the river and threw handfuls of rice in the general direction of riverflow. He repeated this three times, and in doing so uttered a mantra, part of which I was able to later obtain and have set out below:

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[1] It is common in chalpūjā for the items of sacrifice to be buried after slaughter and not eaten. The eating of such meat, and on a cremation ghat is considered by some to be highly polluting and dangerous.

"If again you trouble this jharanta pind you will suffer from the wrath (hankar) of Guru Gorakhnāth. I have given you your rightful share (sewa). You are bound in contract (kasam) to me. I have offered you a puja according to my bhakt (devotion) of tīmasi-chemasi (three months-six months)".

The masān was now considered to have departed. Any remaining pūjā ingredients were roughly scattered around the area. The tomb was left in place (though in some chalpūjā's any stones used are systematically smashed). The shrines to Devī and Bhairav were allowed to disintegrate: the cloths, twigs and stones cannot be used again. A further bundle of small rags were scattered over the entire area. The pūjā over, the pūchar collected his prasād in a sack and his helpers collected the utensils. As the company dispersed, the pūchar who had been completely aloof and severe during the course of the entire ritual (an unusual phenomenon in a Hindu ritual!) , came over to me and grinning broadly said "aisa ho hota ho" (this is how it is done).

The company departed from the śmaśāna. The cooking utensils were not expected to be returned to the household until an intervening period of three days had lapsed, and the pūchar, who had received a generous dakṣiṇa (ritual payment) prior to leaving for the śmaśāna, would not be expected to return to the house (except on other business or on the occasion of a relapse) until one year had passed.

This completes my illustration of the chalpūjā ritual and ceremony. The example selected, although standards conventional to the traditional form were closely adhered to, was particular to the propitiation of a masān - one of the most common and most feared afflicting spirits in Barahmandal. Within the overall form of the chalpūjā, endless variations and deviations are both possible and acceptable. A pūchar's performance has to be ritually convincing as well as efficacious, and a 'brahmanical' meticulousness is much valued, even

if this might incorporate a range of idiosyncracies.

It is often the case that during the jāgar of the chalpūjā the chal will demand that in addition to items given in sacrifice a small temple (mandīr) or shrine (thān) must be constructed in its honour. This will be built (from slabs of stone) before one year has lapsed, and it will be dedicated around the time of the first anniversary of the chalpūjā. Dedication is marked by a jāgar (either of five or eleven nights) which incorporates repeated incarnations of the chal in question (who now adopts the role of a family deity or 'iṣṭadevta' and whose advice and direction is sought by worshippers), the sacrifice of animals, and the performance of an orthodox pūjā-pāt by the family priest.[1]

The type of temple or shrine constructed is usually less than shoulder height, square in shape with a pointed roof (kalasa), and erected with the doorway facing north east (i.e. towards Kailāś - but the exact reverse of the normal orientation which places the back of the temple towards the north-east or north). The inner chamber and outer platform are decorated with small triśūls, dīpak bowls and stone lingas representing the chal and its associates.

In Northern Kumaon generally, temples built for chals are found situated either at village boundaries or upon the tops of hills (above the spot where the chal first incarnated). In many cases such temples have fallen quickly into disuse following the successful

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[1] This is of course a very expensive business, so the dedication often consists of a token one-day jāgar with sacrifice.

propitiation of the spirit.[1] In some cases the temple becomes a popular place of worship which receives regular attention and is even allotted a pujari, or temple caretaker. This happens when the chal itself acquires a reputation for assisting men with their problems and as a result achieves prominance in the local pantheon (a list of examples would include Kalwa, Airī, Chaumū, Harū and Nanda Devī).

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[1] Abandoned shrines in lonely hilltops are a familiar sight in the northern forests. The hilltop site of one such shrine dedicated to chal, Airī, located near to Kausani and in full view of the high Himālayas, had been taken over by the Indian army as a suitable spot upon which to erect a large wireless aerial. The similarity between the word 'aerial' (the Indian army, and the locals use the English word) and the name of the chal was not unnoticed by locals, as was the perhaps more accidental, metaphorical coincidence of the 'communicative' functions of the wireless aerial and the temple.

2. THE JOURNEYS OF THE CHAL

Introduction : Death and the Spirit

The chalpūjā is a ceremony of expulsion or exorcism; its purpose is the transportation of an 'unfulfilled' or 'unhappy' soul from the world of the living, where its presence is inauspicious and harmful, to the world of the dead where it can do no harm. Indeed, its ultimate salvation (mukti) is a force for good. It can protect the interests of its devotees (bhaktas) and intercede with the higher gods (sachavatārs) on their behalf.

Since the chalpūjā is performed for the 'bad dead', i.e. those whose deaths were untimely or whose initial mortuary rites were incomplete for one reason or another, it must be considered in the first instance as a form of revised or secondary funeral rite.[1] Indeed a wide range of elements and motifs of the orthodox kiriya karm and śraddh are contained within it; a long list would include the following:

(a) The use of yellow cloths throughout each ritual sequence, e.g. to cover ritual items, 'dress' deities, and to attract and clothe the spirit extracted from the body of the dūkhi. In the orthodox mortuary rite a yellow cloth is used as the shroud for the corpse. Yellow is the 'colour of liminality' - Śaivite and Nātha renouncers wear yellow or yellow ochre; and yellow is the colour of sandalwood

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[1] Aspects of the chal pūjā recall the putla vidhan ritual performed in Varanasi. In cases where the corpse of the 'bad dead' are not cremated or buried but immersed in the Ganges, the souls of the deceased are incarnated after some time into effigies which are then cremated. (Parry, 1981:31).

and turmeric, substances used to mark boundaries in both Kiriya Karm and chalpūjā (e.g. sandalwood in the pyre; sandal-paste tripundra markings; turmeric in the orifices of the corpse; turmeric in the offerings to the chal).

(b) The procession of the bier, in the Devi Kī Doli sequence. As noted earlier, this corresponds closely to the procession of the corpse.

(c) The purifications and ritualised separations of all persons and things connected with the chalpūjā: patient; officiants; relatives; spirit and ritual paraphernalia. Again paralells for all these can be found in the orthodox mortuary rite, e.g. the bathing and fasting of the mourners, and the purification of objects and ritual spaces (cf. Das, 1976:257).

(d) The use of vehicles and cosmic axes (e.g. the goat, the chicken, the nim branches, the thālmandals, the mandala etc.) to facilitate the transportation of the chal. Correspondences in the orthodox ritual can be traced in the use of pipal trees, fire-altars, temples, cows, brahmins and bullocks.

(e) The destruction of animals identified with the chal at the cremation ground: as an act of sacrifice this can be compared with the sacrifice of the corpse on the funeral pyre.

(f) The inclusion of an anniversary ritual marking the completion of the chal's journey through death. This can be compared with the anniversary śraddh, the ekodiśta, which marks the transformation of the preta's status from that of liminal spirit to that of ancestor.

The chalpūjā however not only makes up for any deficit in the primary mortuary ritual with which it is contiguous, it takes the whole process one stage further by converting the death of the spirit into a force of life. As noted before the propitiated chal becomes not simply an ancestor, but a deity, a constant source of power to be tapped by its descendants and devotees.

It might be reasonably asked why the spirit of a person whose death is generally regarded as lowly and defiling should come to be 'marked off' for special attention. Why should the 'bad dead' become deities, and like extra-ordinary individuals such as kings and renouncers, join in the devoted ranks of the celestial sacred? The answer would appear to lie within two interconnecting domains of ritual symbolism: firstly, in the largely tantric character of the traditions which underlie these beliefs and practices. It is precisely because the 'bad dead' are so low and defiling that they become, through the process of tantric inversion, set up as appropriate subjects for elevation and regarded as suitable reservoirs for the storage of magical power. Secondly, the extreme marginality of these spirits, the liminal 'boundless' quality of their state of existence, marks them off as extremely uncertain and dangerous and therefore awesome and powerful. One of the fundamental intentions of the chalpūjā is to place boundaries around the chaotic capricious chal, to control the power to do good and harm which emanates from its dangerous nature, and to transform that power into a controlled magical force which can be used to enhance rather than endanger the well being of the human community.

Transportation and Journeying.

The chalpūjā is classified locally as a tantrapūjā, a tantric rite, independent from brahmanical ritual yet complementing the latter. It has its own priests, usually either untouchable by caste, or defiling in some other way (e.g. by sex or disease), who are often employed by high caste families. It is Śaivite in character; it contains deference to Gorakhnāth, the mythological guru of medieval tantrism in North India. It involves blood sacrifice and the ingestion of food at a cremation ground. And, in the vein of most tantric ceremonials, it offers a shortcut to sacrality. Unlike brahmanical rituals, it is performed quickly to ensure a speedy result - in this case an immediate transportation of the afflicting spirit. However, as a result of propitiation in chalpūjā, the chal, like the preta propitiated by the orthodox mortuary rite, undertakes a ritual journey or series of ritual journeys. As in the discussion of the orthodox rite (pp.229-39)this is the aspect I wish to now focus on. The ritual forms and motifs involved may be 'tantric' rather than 'vedic' and the destination of the complete journey might be conceptualised differently, but the basic patterns of the symbolic processes involved are essentially similar. As in the case of the preta, the journeys of the chal do not result from any activity or momentum on its own part, but through the ritual actions and formulations of selected intercessors operating on its behalf and on behalf of the human community with which it is (or has become) associated.

The chal's journey out of the world of men towards the place of liberation commences with a sequence of ritualised movement - its magical transference from the chosen vehicle (the dūkhi) to the medium of its earthly destruction (the dikara). This is effected during the

jharpūjā, or ritual of 'removal'. Ritual offerings of cows urine (purificatory), fire (purgative), cloth (cleansing) and nim leaves (caustic) are circulated anticlockwise over the victim's head in circling sweeping gestures which are extended to include the statue and items of sacrifice. The chal, already enticed by the promise of sacrifical food, is expelled from the body of the dūkhi and relocated within the destructable form of the dikara. It is then encircled by fire (dīpak, chillis, vermillion and ash on the thāl) and carried quickly out of the house towards the cremation ground - trapped by fire and the ring of the thāl it can no longer move of its own accord. The directions in which the chal is to be oriented, the realms to be traversed en route and the place of its ultimate destination, are elucidated within the mantra recited during the jharpūjā which we shall now consider.

The Daitya Sanghar Mantra (prayer for casting out demons) commences with salutations (nāmascār) to Ganeś, to the Land of the Vedas, to the goddess and to various incarnations of Viṣṇu (1-2). The origins of the cosmos, the birth of the gods and demons, and the struggle between them are in turn depicted (3-8). The ferocious Devī (Kālīkā) is born out of the principle of destruction (Mata Judhdāyī) which spans the three worlds. She takes the shape of a swarm of bees and with the help of Viṣṇu and the god-king of the mountains sets out to scourge the demons from the face of the earth (8-19). The gods assemble their weapons constructed from water and fire (20-25). Devī fixes these to the earth and thus purges it from the affliction (chidra) of demons, blood sucking warriors (vir vetal) and hideous spectres (chandmanda vir) (25-28). The struggle between the gods and the demons for mastery of the earth is metaphorically linked in the text with the

struggle for mastery over the condition of the dūkhi. The exorcism of the mythological demons from the face of the earth is likened to the expulsion of the chal from the body of the dūkhi. Macrocosmos and microcosmos are brought together in the words and the sound of the jharmantra to effect the state of regeneration which is the desired outcome of all forms of ritualised movement.

The particular task of the pūchar is assimilated with the grand achievement of Devī. With his rituals of transference (ukhel), which incorporate violence (in sacrifice) and with his mantra of transportation, he, like Devī, achieves the expulsion of evil. He purifies the chal with water, transfers it into a stone (lines 29-31), and directs it into the pūjā offerings which are to be buried in the ground (32-35). It is commanded to re-enter its former body and thus allow the 'seat' (āsan) of the dūkhi to be occupied by powerful auspicious deities (36-40).

In the incantation which takes up the second part of the Daitya Sanghar Mantra, the jharmantra (lines 41-67), the chal is directed to enter the objects and mediums of sacrifice - all of which are to be consumed, buried or destroyed (the grains, quarters, mandala, statue, chicken, corn and fruits). By urging it to go in "three separate ways", "four separate ways", "where there are no ways", and "where there is one way" (49-52), the pūchar is urging in sequence its transportation across the three worlds, the four corners of the earth, the emptiness of cosmic space and the place of liberation. The "way" (batta) is the route or path to be followed. Some of the chal's destinations are referred to by celestial and infernal place names or by their respective inhabitants. Hence it is ordered again to rejoin its former body ("where you first came") then urged to venture northwards and upwards into the celestial mountaineous tracts visible from Kumaon

(Mt. Triśūli and the home of Rudra-Śiva: 54-55). And finally it is urged to go and inhabit the lower underworld, to live with the queen and the snakes of Pātāla where also dwell the creatures of doom (bell-laden cows, and buffaloes with malformed horns) and eaters of corpses (dogs and jackals) (56-61). Following the chal's relocation, its former seat (the body of the dūkhi) is made into a seat for auspicious warriors (the heroes of the Rāmāyaṇa notable for their heroic journeys and their conquest of the demon king: 62-66). In the manner of all auspicious arrivals, their incarnation is marked with gifts of flowers (67).

Within the rituals of chalpūjā the route to one of the chal's ultimate destinations - either the underworld or the realm of the dead (it is not clear which) - is suggested by the use of downward movements and gestures (the path of the śmaśāna, offering of sacrificial items into the pit, etc.) and the recurrent deployment of ritual positions with a southwards orientation (e.g. during the final cast of grains in the direction of river flow). The place of worship itself - the śmaśāna - is located in a steep ravine well below the houseline and this suggests a route downwards, just as the orientation of the river suggests a route south.

Burial of the dikara and the objects of sacrifice can be seen as a means of effecting a passage beneath the earth or downwards from the earth - the ultimate destination being Pātāla, as specified in the mantra. The choice of burial as an appropriate way of disposing of the chal's symbolic body can be shown to be related to the common preference throughout the western Himālaya for burying rather than cremating or immersing certain, usually ambiguous, categories of dead,

e.g. the unclean or incomplete dead (suicides, lepers and uninitiated babies) and the 'liberated' dead (jogis) (cf. Atkinson, 1973:933; Briggs, 1973:39). The burial of one class of the latter, the Kānphaṭā Nāth Jogis, who at the time of their initiation perform their own śraddh and are thus in a sense 'already dead', is the acknowledged way of securing their union with Guru Gorakhnāth at his abode in Pātāla. So also the burial of the chal, a doubly anomalous form which straddles the categories of both the 'unclean dead' and the 'sacred dead' (it is both a victim of bad death and a sacred form) can be seen as a way of directly affecting its transportation to the netherworld.

The impure (aśuddh) condition of the chal is an extension of its status as a type of unnatural (ākāl) death, and it is also a characteristic which it shares in general with cow's corpses, certain parts of the human body, bodily wastes, menstruating women and Doms. Significantly, it is best worshipped by Doms (or, as is sometimes the case, by women) the lowest status group in Kumaoni society (i.e. the most polluted section of society) and the group responsible for disposing biological impurities and the things of death. It is the function of Doms to carry away dead kine such as the dead cows of the villages and buffaloes sacrificed in goddess worship. Doms will also accept and utilise the clothes of the recently deceased and the scape-bullock of the śraddh.[1]

Indeed from an orthodox viewpoint, the act of giving something to a Dom can be equated with the act of offering a gift to Yama or of

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[1] Sanwal (1976) lists the major polluting functions of the Dom and includes among them the following: Acting as scapegoats to 'catch' whatever pollution might be floating around"; and "Propitiating the dregs of the spirit world" for the Bith, or clean castes, and submitting themselves as vehicles for spirits considered low and evil. (65-66).

transferring an offering (such as the scape-bullock) to the land of the dead. During the chalpūjā offerings given to the pūchar are in fact offerings given to the chal to further its transportation. The Dom pūchar is expected to feast on the chal's sacrificial foodstuffs at the site of sacrifice and prior to the complete closure of the pit. Needless to say, eating within the general precincts of the śmaśāna is taboo for the clean castes. Pūchars of the higher jātis (such as those of the Nāth householders) will not consume any part of the meat killed for a chal - the animals sacrificed are instead buried.

In one sense it could then be said that the Dom pūchar's body provides a vehicle for transportation in itself - the direction which is 'embodied' is downwards, possibly southwards. The pūchar is identified with the chal itself, he absorbs the latter's impurities and inauspiciousness and takes away its power to do harm and pollute others.[1] The ideal representation of the Dom as having a dark, lowly aspect - the physical expression of his classificatory impurity - underlies his selection as an appropriate vehicle for the evil spirit: the chal also has a dark aspect (black ash on the dikara), its power can be either kindled or muted through contact with dark ash (babhūt) or through the sound of the huruk.[2] Equally, the chal's environs are without exception places of darkness (the deep forest, ravines and water courses), and it should be worshipped under the darkness of night

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[1] Heesterman (1964:3) points out that in the Vedic srauta ritual a similar function is performed by the brahmin priest: "The function of the brahmin officiant is to take over the death impurity of the patron by eating from the offerings and by accepting the dakṣiṇas".

[2] cf. p.120-1. The drum used in jāgar. Its shape is probably modelled upon the skull drum of the type used by Āghoris and Buddhist tantrikas. This descensional aspect can also be coupled with the use of bullock hide for skins - an additional source of extreme pollution.

rather than during the day. Like the Dom, the chal embodies an element of inauspicious 'death'. Its afflictions are not simply polluting but represent a contamination which is destructive to life. Finally, just as the chal can only be worshipped through impure intercessors, so it can only be mastered by deities with an impure and 'deadly' aspect, such as Kālīkā, Bhairav and Narsingh - the gods of Kali Yuga. And once it itself is destroyed, its tainted ritual paraphernalia must also be destroyed, either through burial or immersion in the river or merely through abandonment at the ghat.

The destruction and abandonment of offerings in similar manner provides the means of effecting the passage of these offerings as accompaniments for the chal to sustain it on its journey. The water of the naula sooner or later carries them away while in flood from the place of sacrifice and towards the south. The route below the earth is lit by the flames of the dīpak which is interred before the dikara and the objects of sacrifice. The symbolic connexion between the dīpak and Pātāla is apparent from information provided by pūchars and jāgariyās who maintain that the dīpak represents the dhūnī of Gorakhnāth which burns eternally in Pātāla.

So far the journey of the chal appears almost exclusively to be one of descent. However, Pātāla is not the ultimate destination of the spirit. Informants maintain that true salvation occurs not in Pātāla with Gorakhnāth, but on Mount Kailāś with Śiva where also reside all the other liberated chals and bhūtas of Kali-Yuga. Let us turn then to a search of the rituals for motifs which might suggest a route or journey to the overworld.

Of these, perhaps the most explicit is that provided by the presentation of the doli to the mountains. The chal, in attendance upon the Devī of the doli, is regenerated by sunlight shining from the east - the direction of the ancestors, and it is oriented towards Kailāś just as Devī herself must have taken route for Kailāś following her marriage to Śiva.

Some of the materials and foodstuffs used in sacrifice suggest an orientation of ascendance. The fire used to cook the food, the tabernacles to Bhairav and Devī (constructed from the branches and leaves) and the ghat mandala are all cosmic axes which provide a vertical link between the three worlds, and through their transforming function effect the passage of offerings between the worlds. The six parched grains (chenaj) correspond in number to the quota of heavens (excluding the first of the seven 'heavenly' levels - earth itself) the chal must pass through in order to reach the place of ultimate salvation (cf.p.225). One type of grain represents one offering to each place or ascensional stopping point.

Also to be considered are the possible functions of the animals sacrificed, the goat and bird, as vehicular agencies for the chal's final ascent. The blood of these animals is first offered 'downwards' at the ghat, but their meat is then cooked and offered at the tabernacles of the higher deities which suggests a final upward orientation. In general also, the goat and the bird possess ascensional qualities in themselves: unlike certain sacrificial animals (the pig, lizard and buffalo which are given in propitiation to denizens of the underworld, e.g. Mahiś) they are commonly included among the offerings given in pūjā to higher avatārs (e.g. Hanuman and Narsingh).

In northern India generally the goat is regarded as a sacred animal (Crooke, 1926:363). Its ingestion following sacrifice is both

purifying and merit giving (punya dān). In Vedic India the animal was considered "heaven bound" (svar-ga) (Knipe, 1975:15) like the sacrificer himself. The Atharvaveda states that "Since the goat has been born from the heat of Agni, it saw (its) generator in the beginning; by it the gods in the beginning attained ... godhead; by ... it the sacrificial ones (medhya) ascended the ascents (roha)" (1v.14.1). The goat is both medium and vehicle of ascent. By the goat "may we (the sacrificer) go to the world of the well done, ascending the heaven (svar) , unto the highest firmament (naka)". "Once anointed with milk and ghee it becomes a "heavenly eagle" (1v.14.6). Once cooked (and ingested?) the slaughter of a goat becomes doubly auspicious, the ascent of the sacrificer himself is assured (1x.5.5).

The vehicular significance of the goat in Kumaon in particular is suggested by its widespread usage in temple sacrifice, involving the worship of either Bhairav or Devī. Of interest also is its deployment as a type of scape-animal in the Jāt-Yātrā, an occasional ceremony formerly conducted by the royal families of Kumaon and Garwhal in honour of Nanda Devī, goddess of the mountain. This is a processional journey involving the transportation of a four horned lamb believed to be an incarnation of Devī from the palace of the raja of Tehri Garhwal to Nanda Kot in the high Himālaya. Once the group of pilgrims following the lamb has reached the foot of the mountain, offerings are placed on the animal's back and it is despatched up the mountain towards the celestial regions.

The chicken can equally be viewed as an agent of ascent - a vehicle facilitating the skywards passage of the chal. There are few references to the sacrificial use of birds in the classical literature on exorcism and divination apart from the deployment of white doves and black crows as messengers of Yama (Atharvaveda, vi:27-29; vii:64) and

equally little mention at all of the use of domestic birds. Kumaon informants however included chickens within a general class of auspicious birds which contains eagles, white vultures, parrots and multi-coloured birds. These can all also function as repositaries for the souls of the deceased, and one bird from the group, the garuḍa or eagle, is commonly portrayed in Hindu mythology as an emissary and vehicle of the greater gods.

The funerary and sacrificial bird or animal (of which the scapegoat is merely one type) is linked to the space in between the world of the human living and the world of the human dead - both the beginning and the end of human death. The death or expulsion of the animal has a regenerative function (Frazer, 1963:753-4). Natural and social life becomes renewed and strengthened through the ceremonial death of the mediatory animal (the dūkhi is revived and the community is cleansed of a polluting influence), but this also bears powerfully upon the spiritual regeneration of the chal. The slaughter of the animal and the ingestion of its meat fits neatly into a general schema of expiation and communion characteristic of traditional Kumaoni ritual (as in goddess worship) and oriented, as in most sacrificial complexes (cf. Hubert and Mauss, 1964:94, 63-4) towards the regeneration of the individual through the regeneration of the god.

The successful completion of the chal's journey, its fulfilment in liberation, is represented by the construction of a temple in its honour after the journeying period of twelve months has lapsed. The temple or thān, built in the style of Śiva temples and containing artifacts which identify the chal with Siva (e.g. the triśūl and linga), is a tomb (samādh) raised to the status of a place of worship and, as befits a spirit which has ascended to Kailāś, this is located on the peak of hill or suitable place of ascent (a custom usually reserved

for goddess temples). Its journey through death and its regeneration complete, the chal can now undertake recurrent trips between earth and sky as a deity incarnate and as an agent assisting in the regeneration of men.

Cessation and Control: Circles and Boundaries.

There is one further symbolic aspect of the ritual transportation of the chal beyond the world of men. This concerns the manner in which the chal is brought under control in order to make its transportation possible. The chal is not only guided, it is pushed; and this pushing effect is achieved through the delineation by the pūchar of a series of visible and invisible barriers or 'world boundaries' which make it difficult, if not impossible, for the spirit to regress on its sacred journey out of the world.

The boundaries which the pūchar constructs are predominantly circular rather than linear in form. The chal is entrapped and contained within circles of sacred space which make even a sideways movement back into profane space impossible. As the rituals of the chalpūjā proceed, a linear arrangement of these 'bounded' circles is established and the chal is transferred from one to the other until the last circle is reached. During the course of the ceremony, each of these circles becomes smaller than the last: the boundaries of sacred space become successively contracted until there is no space remaining, only a fixed boundary between the world of men and the world of gods. The chal's sphere of influence diminishes eventually into nothing at all.

This use of boundaries to effect control is significant in an additional way: for the most characteristic feature of the chal is its essential 'boundlessness', its extreme liminality. The chal is a boundary crosser, an ambiguous tabood force, it frequents the spaces between the worlds of the living and the dead, between the earth and the sky, the seasons of the year, day and night, and between culture and nature (the home and the wild). More marginal than the preta (the disembodied ghost of the 'good dead'), it moves freely across all the known boundaries, wreaking havoc and impurity, inciting fear and revulsion.

Confronted with this dangerous chaotic power, the Kumaoni reaction is to cut into its marginality, to erect clearly defined boundaries around the chal which impose order upon its disorder. These boundaries interrupt the fluidity of the liminal space within which the chal moves and exerts its influence. Placed in an area of circular space which gradually contracts towards nothing the chal is forced to transcend its liminal twilight world positioned on the borders of human society.

Let us briefly examine the individual components of the linear arrangement of circles used to create the chal's transcendence. There appear to be five primary circles in total: the first is constructed during jāgar by the ritualised communion of deity, spirit, intercessors and devotees. The participants enter a sacred arena of exchanges and demonstrations of 'familiarity' separate from the outside world. The second circle is delineated by the ritual dedication of sacred space in jharpūjā: the pūchar constructs an invisible sacred ring, smaller and more exclusive than the first, which includes only the chal, its chosen vehicle, the pūchar and the intended agents of intercession and transportation. A strict boundary is delineated which

excludes all others - the chal's arena of movement and sphere of influence becomes contracted, more controlled and limited. Within this larger arena are contained a number of smaller rings - a series of constituent circles, microcosms of the larger whole - which echo and stress the purpose and message of containment:- the list includes: the circular area of sacred space; and the dikara, a circular repositary for the afflicting spirit.

During the jharpūjā the social space of the chal becomes constricted even further: it is magically transferred from a larger circle to a smaller one. Through the delineation of invisible circles in the space around and between the dūkhi and the objects of transportation its sphere of influence is reduced to the thāl and attendant offerings. The lines are drawn in circumambulatory motions with fire (arati) and water (cow's urine); and as the ritual progresses their radii become reduced until at the end of the jharpūjā the dūkhi becomes excluded. She is anointed with moist ashes (babhūt-pāni = fire-ash and water) and she is given her own circle - a return to wholeness suggested by the winding of the veil around her head.

The fourth circle is delineated by the mandala or cakkra drawn out at the śmaśāna ghat. This is incorporated within a larger circle of transcendent space created by the pūchar's ritual arena consisting of consecrated ground (delineated and purified by lustrations of cow's urine and casts of akśāt to the four directions), in which circular thālmandals representing Devī and Bhairav are established. Within this arena, set beyond the pale of the human world and set within a place of death and transcendence (the śmaśāna), the chal is fixed. Embodied in the dīpak, the chal is flanked by the Āstbhairav and placed on the cosmic axis - the centre-most point of the mandala. It is surrounded by offerings - sustenance for its journey - mostly circular or spherical in form (apple, lime, coins, flower heads, nim leaves) and

further purified (or circumscribed) with fire and water.

The fifth circle is the pit. The smallest circle of all, this is ringed with incense and circumscribed with fire, water and casts of akśāt. During sacrifice, the pit is the world-centre, a cylindrical hollow in the earth's surface through which the cosmic axis passes. Within the pit are placed the agents and substances of transportation: the dīpak; fruits; circular dishes of raw and cooked food; the life blood of the goat and chicken, pumped from their severed (round) necks. The pit is then closed: the chal's circle is broken, and it is placed beyond the natural and social worlds. A final boundary has been established; the chal's sphere of influence is reduced to a fine point (the pit) and then extinguished altogether.

It is useful to think of this elaboration of diminishing sacred circles as a process of 'centre-ing' which is directly comparable to that undertaken by the tantric yogin in his use of ritual mandalas as aids to transcendence. Mandalas (the word means 'circle') are iconographic maps of cosmic and deific space, drawn out on a physical medium (a mat, wall hanging, carpet, temple, altar or area of ground) to assist in the tantricist's visualisation and ultimate cosmicisation. They are used as receptacles for the gods, both those already established and those in the making (Eliade,1958a:218-227; Pott, 1966: 71-2; Tucci, 1969:37-9). Mandalas are particularly fundamental to tantric Buddhism. Here the primary form of the mandala consists of "an outer enclosure and one or more concentric circles which in their turn, enclose the figure of a square cut by transversal lines. These start from the centre and reach to the four corners so that the surface is divided up into four triangles. In the centre and in the middle of each triangle five circles contain emblems or figures of divinities" (Tucci, 1969:39). Usually the outermost enclosure is represented as

a circle symbolising a mountain of fire - a flaming barrier which the initiate must cross in order to purify his consciousness for the transcendence which awaits at the centre. In tantric Hinduism, the most celebrated mandala is the śrī-yantra or śrī cakkra which posits the outer enclosure as an open or incomplete square encompassing a closed inner circle, rings of lotus petals and an axis point or bindu in the centre (cf. Feuerstein, 1975:154).[1]

The progress of the chal through a series of concentric symbolic circles, one of which is explicitly represented as a mandala or cakkra, and which are delineated in space with rings of water and fire, can be compared with the path of the yogin entering the mandala. Both undertake a "march towards the centre"(Eliade, 1958a:227) culminating in a transcendental state of non differentiation. Located on the point of the world axis, the chal and the yogin both enter a state of samādhi and move freely in journeys of ascent and/or descent between the world.

Use of this analogy (though it is possibly less of an analogy and more of an implicit identification between chal and renouncer) helps us to make sense of some of the more obscure referents contained in the first part of the Daitya Sanghar Mantra (p.255). The weapons of the gods used to destroy the demons can be seen as collectively forming a series of powerful circles and fine points, used (like the mandala and the circles which trap the chal and centre the yogin) to isolate, contain and destroy the influence of the demons upon the world of men. With the circles of Narankar (a ball), Indra (his encompassing canopy),

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[1] As with other yantras or 'vessels' used to aid visualisation, the śrī yantra is "erected either from the innermost point, called bindu, outwards - in accordance with the process of macrocosmic evolution - or from the outermost circumference towards the centre - in alignment with the microcosmic process of meditative involution" (Feuerstein, 1975:154).

Aditya (an ear-ring), and Kunti (her enfolding, encircling sari), and with the bindus of Kālī (her lance - the binda), Dabhi (a needle) and Arjuna (his arrow), all made with fire and water by the blacksmiths of the gods (Cijū and Bijū), "the affliction was removed from the earth" (lines 20-28).[1]

These considerations also lead us back into the notion of a diminution and eventual destruction of the boundaries which are temporarily established to isolate, contain and in a sense 'skewer' the chal. Through the manipulation of a series of diminishing circular boundaries which drive the chal towards the 'centre', its 'boundless' qualities are contained, its marginality arrested and its liminality extinguished. But the 'lives' of these temporary boundaries have also come to an end: the objects, agents and equipment used to create or mark these invisible lines are now systematically destroyed through abandonment, violence or through re-purification. The pūchar washes his feet, the lowest and last part of his body to be contaminated by the chal (the last rites are performed standing); he scatters or abandons kaco paraphernalia; the items of sacrifice are ingested and thus given a new re-creative form in the bodies of the chal's (new devta's) worshippers; or they are buried to avoid possible contamination; and the pūchar may even smash the stones used in

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[1] If in orthodox Hinduism the predominant and most powerful geometric configuration is the square (cf. Beck, 1976:240), in the 'unorthodox' rituals of Kumaon it is a circle. However, circles like the mandala used in chalpūjā are not solely confined to the domain of death and post-mortuary rituals (they also occur in the dhūnī enclosure of jūnar and the cakkras used for animal sacrifice in Devī-pūjā); they are also represented in domestic rice flour designs which are drawn out on the floor of the house on auspicious occasions; and form the predominant architectural motif in the design of Kumaoni Śaivite temples (which usually comprise a circular sanctuary encompassed by a round, rather than square, wall enclosure).

propitiation. This de-consecration and destruction makes it difficult for the chal to return as an afflicting spirit to the world: for the boundaries used to identify and contain it no longer have any material substance: there exist no margins to which the chal can attach itself, no boundaries to move across. The chal is given no option but to journey on through its death. It is re-integrated within an ordered cosmos as an ancestor-deity, and human society is once again ordered and made whole.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INCARNATION OF THE DEAD

"We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them."

Eliot. Four Quartets.

A. RITES OF POSSESSION

1. INTRODUCTION : JĀGAR AND JŪNAR

Kumaoni ancestor-deities become briefly incarnate in the world of men during the possession ceremonies of jāgar and jūnar. Jāgar is an occasional ceremony performed in individual households both in its own right and as an integral component in most of the other ceremonies of the post-mortuary complex. Jūnar, which incorporates lengthy sessions of jāgar, is a much larger, grander function: an entire village community or combination of village communities is involved; usually, it takes place not in a household but in a local temple of the village gods

The difference between jāgar and jūnar is one of scale rather than function. Both are conducted to alleviate or deal with misfortune by honouring or seeking the succour of the gods, though jūnar is by and large concerned with the worship and consultation of village gods and area gods (bhūmidevta) while jāgar is more concerned with the worship and consultation of personal gods (iṣṭadevta) and lineage gods (kūldevta). The schema of the possession rituals involved in jūnar replicates that found in jāgar and since the latter is locally considered to be the primary form of the possession event, I shall mostly concentrate on jāgar.

As a ceremonial institution, jāgar is a post-mortuary ritual, part of a cyclical complex of ceremonies performed to deal with the propitiation and worship of the dead. The occasion for its performance

is not, like the annual śraddh ceremonials, scheduled calendrically, but in accordance with the needs of the community. Hence it can be held at any time of the month (both inside or outside the lunar fortnight) or year. Every jāgar is performed either to honour liberated ancestor deities or to mark the achievement of liberation of an ancestor, or simply to set the wheels of liberation in motion. The 'awakening of the spirit form' (bhūt yoni) in jāgar is a microcosmic celebration of the ancestor's macrocosmic 'awakening' beyond the world of men. But jāgar also has a thanksgiving role and prophylactic function, and its performance is believed to actively promote fertility in men, women, domestic animals and fields. The need for a performance, apart from one scheduled to follow a propitiation, is usually determined by the appearance of an imbalance in the social order which the community feels obliged to rectify. This usually takes the form of domestic disputes, sickness, infertility, misfortune, financial difficulty, low crop or milk yields. If the ancestors or spirits are honoured or appeased by a jāgar then it is thought that the balance in the social order will become restored.

Jāgar is both nocturnal and diurnal, though there is a preference for nocturnal jāgars, especially where exorcism is involved. But jāgar schedules must remain flexible. Requests for intercession on the part of the jāgariyā, who alone can conduct jāgar, can come at any time. A nocturnal jāgar will last from twilight to midnight (approx.). If the rituals are to be repeated over a period of days and nights then two sessions will be held, one at twilight and the other at dawn or else at midday on the following day. Jāgar is generally held inside the house, but if diurnal sessions are involved then a combination of inside and outside locations is usual. In the latter case, the rituals take place in the square courtyard, or khali, of the house.

When a householder decides to organise a jāgar he sends a message to his family jāgariyā who, unless the situation demands an immediate performance, selects a convenient occasion for the ritual. On the appointed day, the jāgariyā turns up before dusk at the household concerned, bringing with him one or two assistants (hiwari) and his instruments. He is provided with water to wash with, offered a meal and invited to join the householder for a share of tambagu (unrefined tobacco), which is smoked in a water pipe (hūkka) or stone chillum. This is usually done while the company sit around an open fire (dhūnī) which has been lit outside specially for the occasion. Coals and ashes from this fire are used in the rituals which follow. Heat from the flames is employed by the jāgariyā to stretch the leather skins of his drum and thus increase its resonance.

Prior to the commencement of jāgar, and once darkness has fallen, the jāgariyā and his assistants will be offered a meal, their first of the day.

Inside jāgars are performed in the upper-floor front room of a house, which is the room above the one where the cattle are kept (goṭh). This room, which is usually reserved for males and guests, is the one which contains the door and is located on the right hand side of the house (from a perspective facing out from the inside).

Unlike Gaborieau (1975b:149) I was never able to pinpoint a northern or eastern orientation in the seating arrangements of participants and was assured by informants that there were no such prescriptions in the matter. However, it is prescribed for the jāgariyā to always sit in a position facing the seat (āsan) of the dāgariyá or 'medium'. The hiwari sit on the jāgariyā's left. Other participants

occupy positions where space allows, but the women of the household always sit apart, either in the left hand room or in the doorway.

The number of participants and observers present in any jāgar varies with context and with the size of the family involved. Generally only close kin and house neighbours attend but anyone who wishes to come cannot as a rule be turned away. No raised seats are permitted in a room during jāgar, so everyone who does attend is obliged to sit on the floor.

The active participants in jāgar have ritual names as follows: (a) saukar - the householder and client of the jāgariyā; (b) śeonai - his wife; (c) the jāgariyā; and (d) parmeśvāra - the god and the ḍāgariyā. The terms saukar and śeonai can be extended to address anyone who speaks to the deity. To briefly recap on the functions of the central officiant, the jāgariyā or 'awakener', let us note that his primary task is to create the incarnation (avatāri karn) of the devta in the body of the deities' chosen vehicle (ḍāgariyā) or horse (ghwar). The latter is generally a member of the household within which the jāgar is being held. This the jāgariyā achieves through a combination of drumming and singing for which he draws upon his vast repertoire of recitations (rās, bhag, katha), local lore and bardic knowledge (gandharvidya).

He is acknowledged by his clients (saukari) as a dharmiya, i.e. a purveyor of religious knowledge, a guru,or master of the family deities, and a tantrika, or someone who deals with matters which are spiritually powerful yet are defiling (achūt, āghor).

In addition to the instruments of the jāgariyā, the basic paraphernalia of the jāgar ceremony includes the following:

(i) The thān or devasthāl: This is a permanent raised platform of mud and stones, square in shape, and covered with a plaster mix of cow dung and red earth. This serves as a shrine, altar or 'breast-place' (thān) of the deity of the lineage and the household, termed as 'kūlankāre devta or kūldevta. If this shrine does not happen to be in the same room in which jāgar is held, then it will be symbolised by a piece of square red cloth. The edges of the thān are decorated with rice paint designs (aipon) following circular lotus and mandala patterns. The red cloth will be merely scattered with rice grains.

Various stones propped up against the wall at the back of the shrine represent the kūlankāre devta and his aides (gan). A conch and a bell, sticks of incense and a ghee lamp (dīpak) with four cotton wicks are placed towards the front of the thān.

Before a jāgar, the thān will be newly decorated. A fresh layer of plaster and an aipon design are applied to the platform; tilak (vermillion paste and rice grains) is applied to the head of each of the stones (linga); and the entire platform is strewn with flower petals (preferably of rose or cherry when in season. Bowls of cow urine and milk are placed at the front.

(ii) The thāl: This is a circular bronze plate placed either at the edge of the thān or else at the front of the āsan, or 'devta's seat', where the d̃āgariyā sits. The thāl contains (a) offerings (bhaint) of fruit, parched grains, nuts and flowers; (b) a large pile of uncooked rice (chawo or dhān); (c) a mound of fire-ash; (d) a paste of tilak; (e) an iron dish containing hot coals (dagar); and a pile of coins (paise) of a small denomination. Sweets made from milk and sugar and pieces of coconut might be also placed on the thāl. In a large jāgar a number of thāls are used and flower petals or garlands will be kept separately in a wicker basket.

(iii) The āsan or devāsan: This is regarded as the seat of the devtas during jāgar. It comprises simply a black blanket or red cloth placed on the floor beside the thān. Before a jāgar, offerings of rice and flower petals are thrown onto the cloth. Prior to possession, and at intervals during dancing, the d̃āgariyā will sit here.

Before examining in detail the rituals of jāgar let us turn our attentions to the arrangements and pattern of rituals involved in its complementary ceremony, jūnar.

Jūnar is essentially a grander jāgar, larger in scale and scope, but similar in form. In Barahmandal it is performed regularly every year in some villages and once every few years in others. The favoured time for its performance is in the full moon fortnight of the spring months Chait/Vaiśakh or in the winter months of Mangsīr or Pūṣ. Its functional position in Kumaon's ritual calender is as a winter/spring or autumn/winter fecundity ceremony marking on one hand either the beginning of the rice cycle and end of the wheat cycle, or on the other hand the beginning of the wheat cycle and the end of the rice cycle. It is generally held in the courtyard (khali) of the village shrine (thān) or temple (mandīr) devoted to the protector god (bhūmiya) of the village and its lands. And it attracts large gatherings from neighbouring villages, usually those which share the same bhūmi-devta.

The temple is cleaned and decorated for the occasion. Large flags, one white and one red,[1] are erected to advertise the fact that a dhammapūjā (auspicious ceremony) is taking place. A large cakkra (wheel), up to ten feet in circumference, is drawn on the ground in the centre of the khali. A dhūnī is built over the midpoint of this cakkra, the circumference of which is inlaid with a ring of plaster (red earth and cow dung). This ring can vary in depth from a few inches to a foot. White lotus-leaf patterns are printed with aipon onto the ring, thus completing a mandap (mandala), white and red in colour, with a fire in the centre. The fire itself is lit on the first day and must be kept burning for the entire eleven days of the ceremony.

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[1] Usually decorated with one or two Śaivite motifs, e.g. the trident (triśūl) or snake (nāg).

During the day it is allowed to smoulder but at night it is banked up with wood to make a large blaze.

At a distance of approximately two feet from the edge of the cakkra eight dīpak are placed in alignment with the four directions and the four intermediate directions. These signify the presence of the Astbhairav (the eight forms of Bhairav, Lord of the Bhūtas) who are the protector deities of the universe (sriṣthi). Between the dīpaks are placed flower heads. The area between the edge of the cakkra and the circle of lights is the place in which the deities dance during jūnar. Each day of the ceremony this area is blessed and purified with a sprinkling of cow's urine and a performance of arati.

The intercessors in jūnar are the same as those in jāgar. But more than one jāgariyā can be engaged (I was told of jūnars where as many as sixteen jāgariyās were employed) and as many ḍāgariyās will participate as there are deities who wish to be incarnated. The jāgariyā, or jāgariyās, do not use the huruk, but the dhol , a very large two-sided barrel drum which is beaten with sticks. Other instruments e.g. smaller drums or trumpets, might also be employed on occasion.

The dhūnī is consecrated on the morning of the first day of the jūnar and at midday on each of the eleven days alloted to the ceremony. The pujari or ḍāgariyā attached to the shrine of the bhūmi-devta conducts a brief pūjā in honour of Khagnāth('master of the ash') the deity resident in the dhūnī. This involves simply a performance of arati during which the pujari carrying an iron dish containing hot coals and burning incense leads a circumambulatory procession of officiants round the fire. Cow's urine is sprinkled over the flames and a brief mantra is uttered requesting the fire's assistance in securing a successful outcome to the jūnar. As the number of ḍāgariyās involved increases during the eleven days each ḍāgariyā joins in the performance of arati. At one point during the repeated circumambulations of the

dhūnī mandala the ḍāgariyās assembled sit in a circle around the fire and throw flower petals at the flames. Each anoints the other with tilak and babhūt taken from a thāl which is passed around.

The jāgar sessions of the jūnar commence each evening after dusk (dhūdhalo) and continue until early morning (two to four a.m.). To signal the commencement of celebrations, participants blow conches and ring bells while the jāgariyā and his assistants beat a rapid tempo on their instruments. The jāgariyā, the village headman or most respected lineage head, and the ḍāgariyā of the bhūmi-devta approach the fire. They take up pinches of ash from the edge of the blaze and apply it (nyās) to their chests, ears and foreheads, a rite termed bhasma dena or 'anointment with ash'.

Then as the jāgariyā beats a slow rhythm on the dhol the three circumambulate the dhūnī in a clockwise direction a total of three times. At four points during each circumambulation the officiants stop and slowly repeat the application of ash with the right hand while holding the left hand against the heart. After the final circumambulation the three come to a halt facing the door of the temple, and slowly genuflecting, again repeat the application of bhasma. There now follows the recitation of stories (katha) by the jāgariyā taken from local lore, the śastras (e.g. the Purāṇas) and from the epics (Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata). For effect the jāgariyā amends these with improvisations, local anecdotes, humourous twists and even dialogues with observers.

The next stage involves the recitation of the nyutan and the invocation of deities followed by their incarnation. The only devta pukar recited is that of the bhūmi-devta. All other deities incarnate without a direct invitation. But as soon as they are identified, either by the characteristic way in which they behave (apparent in the mimes deployed by the ḍāgariyās) or else by direct inquisition, then the

appropriate devta-āge ('the god comes') rās is recited. All the ḍẽgariyās possessed dance in procession around the fire keeping within the outer mandap ring drawn around its circumference.

Occasionally one of the ḍẽgariyās will jump in and out of the fire itself. It is believed that the deities do this as a demonstration of the power (śakti) they have acquired through austerities (tapas) and as a means of demonstrating the validity of their incarnation. But this is also considered to be a show of divine anger (extreme heat) occasioned by some impurity (aśuddhi) on the part of one of the participants.

There are six basic types of deity that dance in jūnar. These are (a) the bhūmi-devta and his aides (gaṇ) who protect the village boundaries and care for its lands; (b) the kūlankāre devtas, or lineage deities, who also dance in jāgar; (c) the iṣṭdevtas, or personal deities, who guard the interests of individuals; and (d) the ākāśmantri or elementals, who inhabit the forests, rivers and hilltops; (e) the bhūtas and masānis, who are malevolent spirits seeking salvation; and (f) the mahā-avatārs, or 'greater' Hindu deities, such as Kālī, Bhairav and Hanuman.

Towards the final stages of a jūnar, it is generally expected that the jāgariyā himself will become possessed by Dharm Das Devta. This is done at the request of the deities themselves who, in the words of one informant "wish to dance (nacna) with their guru. Incarnation follows after a handful of ash is taken from the fire by one of the ḍẽgariyās and thrown over the jāgariyā. Possession itself follows the usual pattern and the jāgariyā continues to play his drum, but he does not sing.

One of the central features of jūnar is the appearance and initiation of new ḍẽgariyās. For details of this see (p.137-9). Remaining characteristics include balidān (animal sacrifice) and bandhāri (a community feast). Bandhāri follows the pattern generally found in brahmanical ceremonies. After all the rituals of jūnar are

complete (i.e. on the afternoon of the eleventh day), representative members from every family in the village, guests and officiants are fed with meat, grains, pulses and vegetables cooked with pūris and prepared over fires lit within the temple precincts. An attempt is made to provide foodstuffs of all the types harvested by the village throughout the year. The feast itself takes place within the temple area. The ḍ̃agariyās and other officiants are fed first, followed by the important men of the village and any guests present. Women and caste inferiors (even if officiants) eat separately.

Whereas jāgar is essentially a family function, jūnar is a community event, performed by and for the benefit of the entire community. One informant compared jūnar to the brahmanical yāgna - a large scale, community ceremony having a duration of eleven days and involving a number of officiating brahmins. The same source compared jāgar to the brahmanical āgnihotra which is a small-scale domestic ritual performed inside the house.

Community problems are aired during jūnar and in the rituals the cooperative ethic of the village community is celebrated. In one ritual, known as kīlaun, the ḍ̃agariyā of the bhūmi-devta walks to the boundaries of the village and in four selected spots throws handfuls of rice into the air. This act serves incidentally to define the boundaries of the village, but is intended primarily as a means of keeping out evil forces, both physical and metaphysical.

2. THE RITUALS OF JĀGAR (JĀGAR KĪ RĪTHĪ)

Gaborieau has provided a description of a jāgar which he observed during a visit to the town of Almora (1975b). So rather than risk a repetition of empirical particulars, I propose instead to outline the ideal-typical forms and divisions of the ceremony. This will be achieved using the ritual categories supplied by informants. Descriptions will be illustrated with reference to details, recitations and dialogues taken from two of the wide variety of jāgar performances which I was able to observe in Barahmandal and Danpūr between 1977 and 1978. From the first of these selected performances, a jāgar held in honour of the lineage deity as a bi-annual event in a Rajput household, I have extracted a series of recitations. These represent the most complete and clearest song-cycles in my collection. Translation from a tape recording was achieved with the assistance of the jāgariyā in question, Kumwar Singh, who kindly cooperated in the transcription of the words.

From the second jāgar, organised by the head of a Brahmān household in order to obtain divine intervention in a family dispute, I have taken the essential elements of a dialogue between the deity and his devotees. This has been chosen because of its relative brevity and because it is fairly representative of the types of open-ended social interchanges found in jāgar ceremonies. The jāgariyā in question Dhūlī Das was, although low caste, widely respected throughout Barahmandal, for the extent of his religious knowledge (dharma vidya).

The course of the jāgar can be divided into a series of events as follows:-

(a) Śuddh- Karn (Purification)

This involves the ritual purification, anointment and consecration of place, participants and paraphernalia. On the day that jāgar as been scheduled to take place the room in which it is to be held is given a fresh plaster of mud mixed with dung, and all the contents of the room are cleared away. Immediately prior to the commencement of jāgar itself, the room, the thān and the āsan are sprinkled with cow's urine. Once the participants have entered, the śeonai walks around the room sprinkling urine over their heads and towards the four corners of the room itself. She then performs arati with an iron dish containing hot coals and sticks of incense. Moving around the room she circles this in a clockwise direction over all the participants and paraphernalia, paying particular attention to the area where the āsan has been placed and where the ḍăgariyā is sitting.

The ḍăgariyā or ḍãgariyās anoint themselves with ashes from the fire outside. A small portion (chukti) is taken from the edge of the fire, held between the forefingers of the right hand and placed first on the chest, then behind the ears and finally at the top of the head. Once inside, the ḍãgariyā or ḍăgariyās take off their hats and either remain bare-headed or else don clean white turbans (pagri) The saukar walks around the room applying tilak to the foreheads of all the males present, then to the jāgariyā's drum and the hiwari's thālī. Women and caste inferiors present are given tilak on a thāl or on a leaf so that they can apply it themselves to their foreheads.

(b) Nyutan (Invocation)

During this the jāgariyā extends a general invitation in song to Gorakhnāth, the guru of the fire and of all the Kali Yuga deities, and to the general assembly of deities inhabiting the lower worlds, to witness, bless and be present at the jāgar. If the event is to be successful, and incarnation is to be achieved, then their intercession with the deities whose incarnation is sought, must be secured.

Preliminary to the recitation, conches are blown, bells are rung and the jāgariyā beats a loud fast drum roll intended to 'awaken' the gods and spirits of the lower worlds and to heed the call of their guru, the jāgariyā. Gradually the drum roll is transformed into a slower, more punctuated muted beat which provides the accompaniment for the recitation, termed the Nyutan Rās. The version given below is taken from the jāgar of Kumwar Singh mentioned earlier:

(R.I)*

NYUTAN RĀS

O noble Guru Gorakhnāth, Guru Chaurangināth, 1
Guru Bhaurangināth, Guru Kekhaghāri,
Guru Bhegadhāri, Guru Jarnāli (Jalāndha) Nath,
Sāt Guru, we take your name *[invoke]* you

O Harū Barū, Śaim, Sagal, Palbhandāri, 5
brother Latuva; Haridwari Jogis, thirty six
Rothana, thirty two Paironi, Lakura the warrior of
Kalighat, Phūl Fakīr; brave Hanuman, the same Hanuman
who built a bridge across into Lanka and set Lanka
on fire, you who are known as heroic Hanuman, *[we*
invoke you*]* 10

[We invoke] the Nāgīnī of the underworld (Pātāla),
Moon (light) of the Sky, Goddess of the Mountain streams,
Goddess of the Mountain
O Mother who went as Nāgīnī to Pātāla, who
went to the sky as moonlight, who went to the 15
mountains as Vharari *[Devī]*, who entered the
rivers as Gardevī, who became invisible amidst the
mountains. *[You are]* the lost Goddess who went to
the underworld, *[and while]* of the underworld became the

* I.e. recitation one.

spirit of the soil (Bhūmiśwāri). Lost Goddess [you] appeared at Ranchūlihāt (temple at Kot) and became known as Ranchūlihāt Mata. On entering Kaihari Kot you were given the commands [of your devotees]. You were offered lowly (dholi) curds [as abhiśek] in Nāgarkot (below Kot temple). Lost Goddess, you became the Dark Goddess and also the Shining Goddess. In Almora you are known as Almorihāṭ Mātā; In Nainital you are known as Nandadevī; when you went to Punyagīrī you became known as Punyagīrī Mātā; when you went to Dunagīrī you became known as Dunagīrī Mata; at Kot Kalyani you are Punyātmī (meritorious one) - she who makes mountain processions (dholo) go to the lowlands and [lets] the holy processions of the lowlands reach the mountains.

O mother such are the names we give you: Mātā Chakkrawali (disc-holder) Kapparwali (holder of the blood stained Kāmandal); your hands clap aloud; Brahmakībetī (daughter of Brahma), Sister of Indra; Mahākālī (ferocious Goddess). In one hand [you bear] a disc, in another a water vessel, in another a triśūl; a sword in your mouth. You come with a host of fifty two warriors (vir), sixteen Kaluva (śmaśāna spirits), nine hundred Narsingh Vir, and seventy eight Bhairavis. You are the guardian of their ferocity. Your land of mountain is prosperous. The lamp lit in your name stays alight. [your shadow] casts darkness and can dispel darkness.

Briefly, the rās remembers and sings the praises of (and to) the following deities, avatārs and classes of deity: Gorakhnāth and his major disciples or 'avatārs' (lines 1-3); the Kūmū-Devtas (5-8); all the renouncers of Hardwar, their thirty six ritual items and their thirty two aides (6-8); to a prominent local śmaśāna warrior (Lakura Vir); to Lord Hanuman and to the garlanded ascetics (8-10). To the Goddess as she-serpent of the netherworld, and goddess of the upper worlds (11-13); to Devī in her netherworldly and overworldly aspects (14-20); to all the local forms of the goddess as she moves throughout Kumaon through the year and becomes worshipped in specific places for specific attributes (20-33); in particular to her form as the autumn goddess Nanda known throughout the region by so many names (Ibid). To her ferocious aspect as Durga, and Kālī, sister to the

gods, daughter of creation and holder of fierce weapons (34-40); to her ferocious aides, multiple aspects of Kalu, Narsingh and Bhairav (40-43); to her meritorious aspect as the deity who moves in holy processions among the people(31-33). Her devotees who prosper with her help have lit a signal lamp to attract her attention and secure her maternal protection and assistance (43-45).

Following completion of the Nyutan Ras there is a brief pause before the jāgariyā proceeds with the next recitation, the Devta Lagao.

(c) Devta Lagao(Calling the Deity with Praises)

The cadence adopted for this song is considerably slower; the verses are pronounced without accompaniment, but the gaps between each verse are punctuated with brief rapid drum rolls. The specific purpose of this recitation is to capture the attention of the deity to be incarnated by singing his praises.

For the sake of consistency I wish here to include the version of Devta Lagao as performed in the jāgar of Kumwar Singh in honour of Goriya, the Kumaoni cattle god and Lord of Justice. However, Kumwar Singh's version is thin in detail and leaves large gaps in the well known story of Gorīya (Gorīya Katha). So I have decided to preface this with a complete rendition given to me in summarical prose form by Dhūli Das, Dom jāgariyā of the Das (drummer-tailor) sub caste to whom I referred earlier. Because of its length, the Gorīya Katha is more usually performed as a Devta Lagao to Gorīya in jūnar, so its

inclusion also assists us in building up our picture of jūnar.

The god-king Gorīya is one of the most popular household deities in Barahmandal and the local deity about which the greatest information is known. Atkinson's early chronicle includes a version of the Gorīya legend (1973:821-3); and Gaborieau's (1975a) paper summarises a rās given in honour of Gorīya during a jāgar held in Almora town(p.152-3).

It is useful to think of the complete Goriya song-cycle with all its versions as providing a reservoir of background information from which briefer versions are extracted, the elements being chosen by the jāgariyā concerned in order to fulfil specific functions (e.g. exorcism, healing, fertility, general interecession, adjudication). Particular parts of the complete legend are commonly selected to highlight the aspects of the deity which the jāgariyā wishes to draw upon and emphasise during particular performances. For our purposes, the Gorīya Katha set out below is useful because it specifically recounts the travels and exploits of the boy Gorīya prior to his becoming King of Kālī - Kumaon. It thus complements and underlies the brief descriptions or intimations of his later life, renunciation and deification, set out in the Devta Lagao, the Devta Āge and Devta Naco given in the pages following.

(R.2)

Gorīya Katha

In Champawat reigned Raja Halrai. Raja Halrai was prosperous in every way but he was without child [despite having] seven wives. For his eighth wife he chose Queen Kālīkā who lived with her sisters who were among the thirty three million devtas. Because he wanted a child he made this alliance with Kālīkā. Her marriage (śādi) to Raja Halrai took place on [Mt.] Nīlkanth. After the wedding she went to Champawat. While the seven wives remained as light as flowers, Rani Kālīkā became heavier than any flower. In seven months a son was born to Kālīkā. The seven wives took the helpless child and, covering Kālīkā's face, threw it through a hole into the cowshed [below] There the child drank the milk of a barren cow. After three days the seven wives placed a sila and lodha (grinding stones)

by Kālīkā's side and informed Raja Halrai that Kālīkā had given birth to sila and lodha. After three days when Kālīkā went to bathe in the Ganges she carried in her arms (hands) the sila and lodha and put them in a pot. After binding a cloth over the mouth of the pot she placed in in the water and said "You have been born to me and when I find the need I will send for you." After the third day the child came out of the barn and played outside. When the seven wives saw him playing thus, they threw him into a bush of bhangwai (cannibis) hoping that a tiger would devour him.

After five days Kālīkā who had been queen for seven months went to the gungā for a bath. [As she did so] the child came out of the bhangwai clump and played in the courtyard. The seven wives caught hold of the child and buried him beneath a heap of cow dung. After seven days the child once more escaped [as] Rani Kālīkā again went for a bath in the gunga. The seven wives threw the boy into the salt-store but he escaped from there into the grain store. On the eighth day when the seven wives went to see the boy they found him in the granary and said, "This child will never die but he will kill us."

The seven wives sent for the blacksmith and asked him to make an iron cage in return for wealth and riches. The blacksmith made an iron cage and brought it [to them]. They rewarded him with dakṣiṇa and sent him away. They caught the boy, locked him in the iron cage and buried it deeply into the ground. However the hans-prāni (soul in the form of a bird) of the boy broke free and [flying upwards] began to wander in the three [heavenly] worlds, Brahmalok, Viṣṇulok and Śivalok. Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva caused rain to pour down heavily with drops as thick as an elephants trunk. The whole place became submerged in the River Kālī. The child and the iron cage drifted [upstream] from the Kālī and entered the River Gorī.

A fisherman, Devaran, lived with his wife by the Gorīganga. Devaranī (his wife) said to Devaran "The river is in spate so go and catch a big haul of fish". So Devaran the fisherman went [out] with his net of iron chains (lohasurī). In the black and white water an iron cage was caught in the chains of the iron net. Devaran broke the seven locks of the cage with a stone and opened it to find a child. "Who could not want so beautiful a child? Who could have cast him away into the waters?" Devaran, who was without child, took the child to Devaranigarh (i.e. home), and fetching the milk of a barren cow gave it to the child, and the child drank the milk. Because he had been carried from the Kālī to the Gorī and washed up by the Gorī, at his naming ceremony he was called Gorīya after the river Gorī.

The child Gorīya went to a carpenter's house and said to him "Make me a wooden horse with iron saddle stirrups and whip." The carpenter said "For a boy born from the womb of the river (gharbhagī) like you, I will not make a wooden horse." The boy was roused to anger and the carpenter went

blind. Although it was day, to him it seemed like night. The carpenter's wife said "Come and eat." The carpenter said, "For me all is darkness. I cannot see." The carpenter's wife said, "Did you speak (in anger) to anybody?" He answered, "A boy came and asked me to make him a wooden horse. I told him ' here we have a castaway boy trying to become the rider of a wooden horse'". "The boy seems to have punished you" his wife said, "I will offer a rupee and a quarter in his name." Taking a golden cup she went to the banks of the Gorîganga and filling the cup with water she came back to her husband. *[Together]* with the gift of the rupee and a quarter, she poured out the water *[as an]* offering to him (i.e. Goriya) who bore the water's name. The carpenter regained his sight and said, "Child, a wooden horse will be made for you." As the offering of water was being made he regained his sight. The horse was soon ready. He made mud balls and a wooden catapult. The carpenter took these and the wooden horse and went to Devaranigarh and gave them to Gorîya. The boy paid the carpenter the money due for the horse. The carpenter returned home.

The boy taught the horse to obey orders and from Devaranigarh set off with his horse for Champawatigarh . *[There]* the seven wives and the eighth *[wife]* Mother Kālīkā had gone to the naula (canal, stream) to fetch water in copper pots. Pots were filled with water standing ready and the boy made his wooden horse drink the water. Seeing this the seven wives spoke to each other and said *[aloud]* "You king of fools! How can a wooden horse ever drink water?" The boy replied to the seven queens saying "Can a human being ever give birth to a sila and lodha?" The boy gave a battle cry, and in the burial grounds (śmaśāna) the lodha became Loria *[Vir]*, the sila became Kalūva *[Vir]*, the blood *[of Mata Kālīkā]* turned to Bhairav and the water to Kabadi. These four brothers of the boy Gorîya appeared and Goriya called them to the bank of the naula. With the wooden catapult and the mud balls Goriya broke the nose-rings of the seven sisters and smashed their copper pots. He left Mata Kālīkā unharmed.

Complaints about the boy's actions reached the ears of Raja Halrai. In Champawat, Raja Halrai sent *[out]* his ministers with orders that the boy be captured and brought before the king to be split in two or crushed in the oil press. At the naula the ministers began to question the boy, saying "We are to arrest you and take you before Raja Halrai because you have broken the pots of the seven wives and have broken the precious stones on their nose rings." The boy asked the ministers, "Will your king punish me after questioning me or will he kill me before questioning?" The ministers answered that it would be after questioning that he would be killed. The boy rode on the wooden horse and with the seven wives and Mother Kālīkā set off for Champawat.

On reaching the city the king asked the boy why he had destroyed the nose-rings of the seven sisters but had let the eighth queen go unharmed. The boy replied that he had never drunk the ten streams of the milk from his mother's breast, had never before seen his father's palace and had never sat on his father's lap. The seven wives had caused him great

anguish. That was the reason why in Naulipāṭ he broke their nose-rings and destroyed their copper water pots. The eighth queen was his mother Kālīkā and he had therefore left her alone. Now Gorīya asked his mother to sit on the third storey of the palace saying, "Look, I am your son. Give me the ten streams of milk from your breast." The boy stood in the courtyard. The mother's milk streamed through closed doors and sprang into the mouth of the boy. The boy drank the milk. The seven wives were killed by being plunged in hot oil. Raja Halrai handed the royal throne to his son Gorīya. The boy Gorīya became the ruler of Champawat, Gorīya who was the blessing (vardhani) of the devtas. Gorīya ruled peacefully. There was no fear of thieves or terror of enemies. The straying ones were shown the right path. The thirsty were given water. The crossroads (chaukhān)of four roads was dedicated in honour of the thirty three million devtas. Calling *[invoking]* the names of the five-named devtas, Brahma, Viṣṇu, Mahiś, Hariś Chand (Harū) and Nara Vir (Narsingh), Gorīya danced in ecstasy at the crossroads. From then onwards, the Chaukhān was called Chaukhān Gorīya. Chaukhāni Gorīya always dances outside by the dhūnī, while inside *[the house]* the dancer is called dhulai Gorīya (Gorīya of the hearth).

Discussion of the details and general significance of the Gorīya Katha can be deferred until Section B. Let us now look at Kumwar Singh's Devta Lagao. It should also be noted that the Devta Lagao and the Devta Pukar which follows it are generally thought of as one single cycle of verses entitled Gorīya Kī Bhag, the song of Gorīya, and are sometimes performed in series without a break.

(R.3) DEVTA LAGAO

"O gorīya, Balagorīya (boy Gorīya) we first invoke you. Chalrai was your grandfather, your father Halrai. Gorīya of the Rayi dynasty, Raja of Champawati, we invoke you. You ascend with the darkness and you descend in the light (gorī) and hence the name Gorīya *[bright one]*. In the house of Devaran you displayed your miraculous powers. You drank the milk of a bull. You rode on a wooden horse from Dolikot to Dolidhūnaghar.

O Sāt Guru, we invoke you. You are the son of Mātā Kālikā. You were born in Kumbharāsī. You who are eight-shouldered *[i.e. eight-armed]* and were born eight months after conception. Chaukhāni Gorīya (god of the crossroads and the four directions), Dwalbandi Gorīya (guarder of the gates of the kingdom), King of Kumaon, King of the people of Kumaon, Gorīya, master of the River.

O Guru, your name is the first to be raised, you
are there (i.e. present) in the three worlds *[*earth,
heaven and the underworld*]*, in the nau kundi manam
(nine corners of the world), in all the mountains, in
the peaks, in the Gabalas mountains, in the lofty
Himālaya, in the deep underworld, in the wastelands
of Kailāś, near the fire, near the water.

In Hari Haridwar *[*you are*]* present in the akhaḍa
(collectivity) of the jogis; among the Śiv Sannyāsi (Śaivite
jogis), the Ram Vairāgi (Vaiṣṇavite jogis), the Barapant
jogis (twelve classes of Nāthas), among the Kānphaṭās
of Kānphaṭānāth. You are in the company of *[*all*]* the
jogis and mendicants of the Guru's abode, close to
the Guru *[*Gorakhnāth*]*. You are *[*one with*]* the
knowledge (gyān) of the Guru and in the meditation (dhyān)
of the Guru, with Chaurangi Nāth, Guru Bhaurangi Nāth,
with the threefold Guru Trilokīnāth (Lord of the Three
Worlds). *[*You are with*]* the knowledge of the Guru and
in the meditation of the Guru. Without the Guru there
is no knowledge. Without the Guru there is no meditation.
You shine *[*with the light of*]* the precious dhūnī of the
Guru. Iśvār (Great God) go close to the Guru. Go to
the nine thousand rivers of Dotigarh (Nepāl); Go in the
doli (processional cart) *[*draped*]* with fourteen flower garlands.
*[*From there come in procession with Gunganāth, prince
of Dotigarh, and in the company of his wife Bamani and
his son Ratan*]*

After incantation of this there is usually a brief pause during which the jāgariyā exchanges cigarettes and converses freely with the other participants.

(d) Devta Pukar (Calling the Deity)

The Devta Pukar is a direct invocation to the god in question to incarnate in the jāgar. In the words of the song the jāgariyā attempts to secure a successful incarnation by circumscribing in song the route the deity must follow to the jāgar. We shall return to a discussion of this point in Section B. The Devta Pukar is generally sung in either of two ways, either as a chant similar to the Devta Lagao, or more usually as an unaccompanied melodic song each line of which is

echoed in refrain by the jāgariyā's hiwari. The initial passage, which announces the intentions of the incantation is performed in the manner of the Devta Lagao.

(R. 3 contd.) DEVTA PUKAR

[Goriya] is your name. The body is mortal (and will crawl with maggots) but the words are immortal (the gods enter them). The lamp lit for you is still burning. The mud lamp burns. We invite you to come and receive worship, you can go back after the pūjā *[to the]* thirty three million devtas. We invoke the five-named devtas and Raja Indra in your name, and we call you to come.

Grant us success, Mahādevjū (Śiva), Great God of Creation, Narāyan (supreme lord) of men (naron) who is seated amidst the devtas.

O Raja Indra (King of Heaven) let us succeed.

O Gramwāsī Dev (Village Gods) grant us success

O powerful (siddhī) Ganeśjī give us success

O Narāyan of Mohīnī grant us success

O Bhūmi Ka Bhairav (Lord of the Soil) grant us success

Gathering is an assembly in your lands.

Bhūmi Ka Bhūmiyal (Lord of the world) grant it success

We bow our heads so that you are merciful with us when the crown of the Lord is placed on your head.

Let the lamp lit in your name burn. The words of Kapasūrī and the oil of the earthen lamp shine.

We have called you by all your names.

We have lit dīpak (the lamp) in Hari-Haridwar.

We have lit dīpak in Kankhal.

We have lit dīpak in the akhaḍas of the Śiv Sannyāsi and the Rām Vairāgi *[jogis]*

We have lit dīpak in the names of the Śiv Sannyāsi and the Rām Vairāgi.

We have lit dīpak beyond the seven seas.

We have lit dīpak at the seventy eight streams of the Gunga (i.e. holy rivers).

We have lit a light (jyoti) for you in the kingdom of Ayodhya

We have lit a light in Dwārākā

We have lit a light for you in Tapovan and Madhuvan

We have lit your light in all the Mathas

We have lit your light in the holy dhami

We have lit your light in the four directions

We have lit your light amidst [for] the nine Nāth.

We have lit your light [for] the eighty-four āsana.

We have lit your light in Joshimath.

We have lit your light in Govarimath

We have lit your light amidst the [shrines of the] nineteen Narsingh Devtas.

We have lit your light at Godika Bhairav

We have lit your light in the Kailāś of Śiva

We have offered welcome to [your] māmū Mahādev.

We have offered welcome to the nineteen Narsinghs.

We have lit [your] lamp in Champawatigarh.

O son of Kālī we welcome you.

We have lit your light in the kingdom of Dhotigarh

We invite all the strong men of Dhotigarh.

We have lit lights (dīpak lamps) in Brahmalok and Visnulok.

In the three worlds and the nine corners of the world.

We have lit a light for you in the house of man [your devotee]

(the man who worships with jāgar)

In your name, Golū (Gorīya) we have purified this house.

O Gunganāth, six lamps burn in your name. Bless us with your presence.

O respected Guru we invite you to come.

Our invocation brings you and after worship you will depart.

All are awakening (jāgani) in your name

Near Kanha-Suri the garden is filled with the sound of the Thālī and the strain of sister Hurki played in your honour.

The light is lit in your name.

The gathering [of devotees] is assembled in your name.

People have gathered from everywhere, mountains and cities, filling an assembly of twelve lines.

A gathering of five cities has assembled. The young and the old are all sitting.

In your name we have kept cow's-urine for a purification [as holy] as that of Ṛṣi Gautama (Buddha).

Several gods await your arrival.

People are talking of lighting lamps.

The five-named gods have dīpak lit for them.

A dīpak has been lit for the thirty three crore devtas.

The seven-mouthed conch is blown.

The cow-shaped bell is tolled.

The song of the urdmukhi (trumpet) of the twelve orders of Nāthas can be heard.

The sound of the lord can be heard in all the three worlds

A dīpak is lit for the nāgas of Pātāl-lok.

The dīpaks of Padmināg, Viṣṇunāg and Seśnāg (Serpent Lords of the underworld, of Viṣṇu and of the sea) have been lit and are burning.

The assembly gathered in the names of the devtas is waiting.

The assembly held in your name awaits you.

Just as in the family of cows, the assembly awaits Kamadhenū (the celestial cow).

[The assembly is] like an assembly of swans among the birds and beasts.

It is like an assembly of Kakhair (trees) among the trees.

It is like the assembly of lions among the animals.

It is like the assembly of bees among the flowers.

Explanation of the referents and names chanted in the Devta Pukar is deferred until Section B. The recitation is followed by a lengthy pause during which cow's urine is sprinkled around the room and over the head of the ḍẵgariyā.

(e) Devta Āge/Devta Naco

This is the point at which the deities or deity arrives and commences to dance under the direction of the jāgariyā. The two recitations which create and accompany these events are performed at a sharp, rhythmic pace characterised by a rapid build-up of sound. At the point of climax, when the god or gods enter the jāgar, the sound of the drum is joined by the beating of the thālī which appears to be particularly associated with the activity of dancing. The division of the two recitations, Devta Āge and Devta Naco, occurs at the point where the deity enters the jāgar and proceeds to dance.

(R.4) DEVTA ĀGE (The God Comes)

The lamp lit in your honour is still alight. In Satyuga *[men]* could enter Śivlok by hearing the story of Śiva Avatār. In Tretayuga*[the demon]* Lanka was destroyed by Rām Avatār, in Dwaparayuga *[the demon]* Kunsa was destroyed by Kṛṣṇa Avatār, and in Dwaparayuga you hear about the Pāṇḍava Avatārs: after hearing of the story of the Pāṇḍava Avatārs *[you too]* can reach the land of the Pāṇḍus. *[So too you]* can enter Brahmalok by hearing the story of Brahma. After hearing about the Avatār*[s]* of Viṣṇu *[you can]* gain entrance into Viṣṇulok. Listen to the accounts of the devtas, the stories of the twenty four avatārs.

The dīpak is lit in the name of Śivkailāśa. Māmū Mahāhadev is requested to call an assembly of Mahādev's twelve families; *[these]* are gathered and await on Nīlkanth. In the assembly are the thirty three million devtas, Raja Indra, the fifty million subjects of the Yadhu dynasty (i.e. kingly warriors or Kṣettris), the families of the Pāṇḍavas

and the Gauravas. The kings of the Kṣettri (Ksatriya) dynasties await. In the assembly the God of Mrytulok (Lord of the Dead) also awaits.

(R.4 contd.) DEVTA NACO (The God Dances)

The seven-mouthed conch is resounding *[to]* the arrival of Māmū *[Mahādev]*, the arrival of Raja Indra, the arrival of the five-named Gods. *[But]* Kailāśi Bhanjiya Gorīya (nephew - sisters son of Śiva) has not come. Of this, Māmū Mahādev says "without the entry of Goriya the assembly will remain un-adorned (i.e. incomplete). Accordingly, Māmū Mahādev sends Gorīya an invitation to come. He sends the invitation on paper borne by a pair of bees. The invitation sent out reads this "Come within one and a half hours to my Nīlkanth, for without *[you]* Goriya the assembly is incomplete." The bees journeyed to Champawat--igarh (Champawat fort). In Champawatigarh, they flew to Gorīya's lake and entered a garden of flowers near the water; the bees of Māmū *[Mahādev]* played amidst the flowers. Then the bees flew to Gorīya and sat on his throne (singhāsan). Gorīya looked and saw the bees of Māmū were there. The bees gave Gorīya the message.

Gorīya read it and said, "Mother Kālīkā make ready my garments. Put out my weapons, my gleaming sword and the catapult of leather. Let them be ready. In the stables, let my wooden horse be harnessed." *[He was provided]* with his horse and men in armour and his sword which can turn hard nuts to powder. "Let my silver turban be brought." Wearing it, and mounting the wooden horse, Gorīya was ready to leave.

He *[journeyed]* towards the assembly of Māmū *[Mahādev]* at Nīlkanth to adorn the assembly with his presence. The wooden horse travelled towards Nīlkanth. You jumped over Māmū's Chaukhāna (boundaries, crossroads) and thus became known as Chaukhāna Gorīya. *[From there]* the wooden horse journeyed to Nīla Chaurighat *[and]* dipped in the waters of the Chauri. *[Like]* a chariot of the sky, a chariot in the clouds, in the flow of the breeze, the wooden horse journeyed to Ghoriketh (head of the river Gorī ?). In Goriketh, he threw down one hundred maund of hard nuts. The one hundred maund of rithi nuts were crushed to powder. Mounting his horse he went from there to Haridwar for the Kumbha Mela. Once there, he folded his hands in devotion to the *[junction of the]* sixteen thousand holy rivers and the eight hundred holy places.

Then he bathed in the Jumna, Ganga and Dauli-Bhagirathi rivers. He purified his body. He applied sacred ash to his forehead. He made offerings and threw akśāt (rice). He saluted Harjūkīpaidi (cremation ghat known as the feet of Viṣṇu). Then riding his wooden horse he journeyed to the shrine of the Guru. In the Guru Gurudwar he demonstrated his devotion to the master, Gorakhnāth, to the nine Gurus (Nāths). He bathed the god and offered jasmine petals. *[He cried]* "victory to the lord adorned with jasmins, victory to the sayings of the lord, and he bowed down. Then he lit a ḍhūnī for Guru Gorakhnāth. He performed arati (fire-worship) to Gorakhnāth and waved *[the flame]* long. Then the Guru offered him a clean seat. Then Gorīya sat on the seat (āsan = seat, divine place). Then the Guru offered him offerings of flowers and the pearls of rice. The Guru imparted his knowledge (vidya) *[to Gorīya]*. *[Goriya]* offered the pearls of rice to the Nine Nāthas and fourteen Siddhas, to the nine *[jogic]* arteries and the seventy two parts of the *[jogic]* body. Then he shouted out *[the names]* of Māmū Mahādev in a loud voice, as Śiva was the maternal uncle of God Gorīya.

Right through the above recitation the pace of the jāgariyā's drumming and chanting begins to increase until a furious climax is reached. The jāgariyā lifts himself off his haunches, turns his body and drum towards the ḍ̃āgariyā and drumming furiously commences to scream out the words of his invocation at the very top of his voice. He continues in this manner until the ḍ̃āgariyā becomes possessed by the god. In the Goriya recitation above this is brought on to coincide with those sequences in the rās which involve communication between heaven and earth. In Kumwar Singh's jāgarfor example, the ḍ̃āgariyā becomes possessed for the first time at the moment when the bees arrive in Champawat in search of Gorīya.

The phrase used to indicate the onset of possession, devta āge' (the god comes) is used interchangably with the phrase 'devta siwāri' (the god rides). 'Comes' refers both to the god's entrance into the jāgar and his entrance into the body of the ḍ̃āgariyā. 'Rides' is a

reference to the vehicular or mediumistic function of the ḍãgariyā; he is a 'horse' to his god.

At the moment of incarnation of the possessing deity (i.e. during 'Devta Āge') the ḍãgariyā begins to tremble (kampna), jump (kudna), and dance (nacna). It is said that the god dances (nacna) within the body of the ḍãgariyā. The latter's trembling, his cries, his frenzied manner (described as joś = boiling) and chaotic movements are the outward manifestation of the deity's earthly presence - the expression of his power (śakti) and magical heat (tapas).

The physical manifestations of possession vary little from one jāgar to another, and the extremity of the frenzy involved rarely seems affected even by the sex, age or physical condition of the person possessed. Many of the gestures and types of movement deployed appear highly stylised and conform within a range of movements immediately recognisable as 'possession' to all observers.

At one moment the ḍãgariyā is sitting in a position of rigid passivity, at the next he proceeds to tremble violently then enters into convulsive spasms comparable to an epileptic attack. His eyes roll, the pupils become fixed, he screams or grunts and his breathing becomes hoarse, laboured and protracted. His lips shudder and his hair flies loose. From a cross-legged pose he moves into a kneeling position and, with his arms held stiffly at his sides against the floor, he drops his head back and slumps forward. The trembling and spasms which accompany this cause his body to move across the floor. No voluntary effort is evident. Sometimes the ḍāgariyā will also flail his arms up and down as if drawing something from the ground or holding something hanging from the sky.

The phrase devta naco signifies not only the belief that the god 'dances' in the body of the ḍãgariyā but also that the god actually dances in jāgar in reciprocation for the music being played in his honour. Dancing, like 'coming' is very stylised and generally consists of the following sequence of movements:

(i) The ḍãgariyā hops backwards and forwards across the room, periodically completing a full circumambulation. The arms are held either above the head or else the palms are clasped to the forehead so that the elbows protrude outwards

(ii) The ḍãgariyā proceeds to revolve his body, occasionally dipping to the left and to the right. The arms are either held outspread in alignment with the shoulders or held stiffly against the sides.

(iii) The ḍãgariyā continues to revolve his body and at the same time circumambulates the room, periodically dipping and raising his head.

These motions are mimes illustrating the various journeys undertaken by the god as described in the verses of Devta Naco which the jāgariyā uses to accompany the ḍãgariyā's dance. Other gestures include a rapid pacing backwards and forwards across the room to indicate horse riding, and a flailing of arms to indicate fighting, firing arrows or weilding a sword. These particular gestures are particular to the heroic achievements of Gorīya prior to his renunciation as a follower of Gorakhnāth.

Other deities display different achievements and characteristics. The ferociousness of deities such as Kālī or Kalūva Vir is depicted by

rapid frenzied dancing. In the case of Kālī, the ḍāgariyā, who is usually female, allows her hair to fly loose, distends her tongue and rolls her eyes. In the course of the jāgar, the Kālī ḍāgariyā will be given a knife, which she places between her teeth, and a red cloth, which she drapes over her head. These are symbols associated with the goddess, and their inclusion in the ceremony provokes immediate recognition of the deity by all the observers. The manner in which some of the incarnated Kūmū Devtas originally met their death might also be illustrated with mimes. A gesture of throttling indicates death by hanging, a falling movement indicates death by falling from a cliff, and a chaotic flailing of the arms indicates death by drowning. Conversion of a deity to the jogic path either during his earthly life (in the case of Gorìya or Gunganāth) or after the attainment of samādhi (following propitiation and a cosmic journey to the home of Gorakhnāth) is represented by the gift of ochre, red or white cloths and turbans. The deity might also demonstrate his ascetic powers (śakti), austerities (tapas) and renunciatory devotion (bhakt) to his gurus, Gorakhnāth and the jāgariyā, by dancing in and out of the fire (dhūnī) or, if there is no dhūnī, by swallowing lit cotton wicks from the dīpak.

The route of entry into the jāgar and the dance posture adopted varies with the type of deity involved. Inauspicious or 'ghostly-form' (bhūtangi) deities enter from the left hand side of the jāgariyā and proceed to dance anti-sunwise around the circular space provided. The posture adopted is lowly, that of a crouch, and this is maintained throughout the jāgar. Deities of the ākāśmantri or 'sky-dwelling' category (e.g. elemental spirits and sometimes even sachavatārs, i.e. 'true incarnations', such as Narsingh and Hanuman) enter the jāgar from the right, dance in a clockwise direction and generally adopt an upright

dancing position during the event (this is more marked towards the end, when departure is imminent).

The naco sequence proper can continue for upwards of an hour, interrupted by intermittent breaks during which the ḍ̃āgariyā rests against the wall or on the floor. Dancing is always accompanied by the sound of the thālī. Brief bouts of naco are resumed during the rituals which follow.

Conversation with ḍ̃āgariyās about their impressions of the possession experience encouraged me to see a symmetry between the class of deity incarnated and the character of their experiences. Thus, those ḍ̃āgariyās who habitually incarnated deities 'of the above' (e.g. ākāśmantri devtas) talked of either seeing their gods descend from the sky or claimed to experience sensations of uplift or union with the sky. Those ḍ̃āgariyā informants who regularly incarnated deities of 'the below' (e.g. bhūtangi devta) tended on the other hand to stress an experience of loss of consciousness, a darkness and a feeling of oppression.[1]

In general, however, experiences of personal ascent or descent on the part of the ḍ̃āgariyā were not given much stress by informants. Possession in any case was considered to be a 'god-given' state, not something to be striven after by individuals seeking ecstacy or elevation.

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[1] One 'flying' ḍ̃āgariyā, a brahmin who practiced yoga, talked of seeing a great light and hearing a voice from the sky. Another brahmin who incarnated a renouncer-deity, said that he could see the latter descend through the roof of his house. Possession for these informants was considered to be an uplifting experience - each of their bodies became "light as a flower". It seemed more common for Dom (i.e. untouchable) ḍ̃āgariyās to habitually incarnate bhūtangi deities. Brahmans would only incarnate the latter during cases of affliction and there would be an element of shame, impurity and loss of status involved.

The role of ḍãgariyā thus appears essentially passive rather than active, mediumistic rather than shamanistic. This, of course, ties in with the ḍãgariyā's explicitly vehicular attributes (as a 'horse') and with the fact that incarnation is the sole creation of another officiant, the jāgariyā, who in effect controls the body of the ḍãgariyā. The ḍãgariyā's everyday social identity is dissolved as he 'becomes' the god. No interest is directed towards any personal experience he might be undergoing during possession, and no interest is shown in the location of his soul (ātma - which according to one jāgariyā has been exchanged with the soul, or parmātma, of the deity). Interest is directed solely towards the activities of the supreme soul (parmātma) and the spiritual advice (bhol bachan) transmitted via the mouth of the ḍãgariyā.

This temporary dissolution of the ḍãgariyā's human identity also receives formal recognition in the ritual assumption by the officiant of a condition of symbolic death for the duration of the rite. During jāgar the ḍãgariyā is considered to be a renouncer, i.e. he becomes set apart from the living, 'dead' to the world. Hence before jāgar he fasts, bathes in holy water, and in some cases adopts beforehand the dress of the renouncer (vest and loincloth of yellow-ochre or white) and paints the Śaivite jogi's tripund on his forehead with sandalwood paste (chandan).

The symbolic death and renunciatory ordeals of the ḍãgariyā are given more detailed expression in the initiation of new ḍãgariyās during the winter (jūnar). Initiants are separated from the rest of the community for the entire eleven days of the event; they are confined within the precincts of the village temple and are required to bathe

and fast until sunset on each day. During the evening rituals they will dance through the fire of Gorakhnāth (the dhūnī), press their tongues against heated irons (termed faurikhana, or 'iron eating'), and even be beaten with heated chains. To the theme of renunciatory death is added a theme of ascetic or shamanic extinction through dismemberment.[1]

(t) Babhut Dena (Anointment)

There are two moments of ritual climax in jāgar. The first of these is the onset of possession, the second is the exchange of sacred ash (babhūt) between participants. This sequence commences with the anointment of akśāt pitya (vermillion paste mixed with uncooked rice grains) to the foreheads of the leading actors. This is done in the first instance by the dãgariyās, who apply it to their own foreheads, then to those of the jāgariyā, his assistants, and to the saukar and the śeonai (regardless of caste differences). It is also applied to the membrane of the jāgariyā's drum and to the edge of the thālī. The application of akśāt-pitya to the foreheads of participants is a practice common to all Kumaoni rituals, orthodox or unorthodox, domestic or public. It is commonly acknowledged as a gesture of initiation and opening; and the fusion of red (female) paste and white (male) rice which the act creates no doubt underlies its designation as a charm for conferring health and fertility on the donee.

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[1] According to Van Gennep (1977) "striking is ... the equivalent of cutting and breaking". As such it can serve as a "physical rite of separation from the previous world"(p.175).

The ḍãgariyās then place grains of rice and flower petals on the heads of the leading participants and throw handfuls of rice towards the four corners of the room. In turn they are offered water in loṭis which they drink and pour over their heads. Giving water to a ḍãgariyā to drink is seen as a libation to the incarnating deity and a means of tempering the dangerous excesses of heat which his tapas generate by promoting internal 'cooling'. Pouring water over a ḍãgariyā's head represents the act of giving the deity a purificatory bath (gungaṣṇāṇ) comparable to that normally given to temple statues.

The ḍãgariyās then demonstrate further jogic austerities by swallowing handfulls of raw kitcherī (rice and black lentils) and lit wicks taken from the devta's dīpak. Communion with the jāgariyā and saukar is signified by the passing round of a hukka of tambagū (rough tobacco), or a chillum of aṭṭar (hashish). The offer of 'a smoke' is also a Kumaoni convention of hospitality to visitors and a customary gesture associated with both the commencement and completion of a business transaction.

The anointment with babhūt now takes place. Babhūt is the ash of cow-dung (gobar) which has been burned in the dhūnī (outside) prior to the commencement of jāgar. This is mixed with water and placed on the thāl. The ḍãgariyās pick up the mixture (babhūt-pāni) and apply it to one anothers forehead . After application, the donor holds it in place with the palm of his right hand for a few minutes while placing his left hand, palm inwards, at the back of the recipients head.

The ḍãgariyās then apply babhūt-pani to the foreheads of the leading participants, the jāgariyā, the saukar and the śeonai; to the drum and the thālī; to the linga on the thān; and then to every individual present in the ceremony. In emphasis of the state of communion between deity and devotee the ḍãgariyā embraces each recipient and moves

his hands up and down the latter's back. The gestures utilised bear a certain similarity to the 'laying on of hands' characteristic of western spiritualists and faith healers. The recipient genuflects before the deity with his hands held together uttering "Parmeśwāra" (supreme god), and backs away after anointment without turning his back to the dãgariyā. Young women who come before the dãgariyā to receive babhūt will often take a sample away in the folds of their skirt (this signifies magical conferral of a child, and is intended to promote immediate fertility). Rice grains, and offerings of fruit, nuts and flower petals, are also taken from the thāl in such cases and given by the dãgariyā to the intended mother.

The entire sequence of babhūt dena ('giving babhūt')can last between fifteen minutes and a couple of hours, depending upon the numbers attending the jāgar. Often there is no clear demarcation between 'babhūt dena' and the other rituals of jāgar, and the sequence is often repeated many times during the ceremony.

Babhūt is regarded by Kumaonis as a charm and talisman believed to promote fertility and health, and protect the recipient from physical, social and magical misfortune. Its mode of efficacy is, however, distinguished from that of akśāt-pitya: its application signifies communion with the dead and with Gorakhnāth. It can be considered as a laic equivalent of the sacred ash (vibhūti) with which Śaivite renouncers smear their bodies to symbolise the renunciatory condition (social death) and communion with Śiva.

(g) Pūch

During pūch, the deity speaks to his devotees through his chosen mouthpiece and offers them advice and succour. He is questioned (pūchna = an asking) and he gives advice based upon divination techniques (pūch karna) aimed at discovering the pattern of the future. These generally involve merely the examination of rice grains thrown by the ḍāgariyā into the air. The condition and configuration of these grains will indicate, for example, whether a supplicant will in the future return to health, receive the gift of a child or experience a change in fortune.

By way of illustrating the events of pūch I have set out below a dialogue taken from a jāgar of Dhūlī Das held in a Thul-Jat Brahman household of Malla Katyūr during the month of Jeth. Rās were performed to incarnate the Kūldevtas, Kālī and Narsingh in the body of the family ḍāgariyā, the second eldest son of the household. Jāgar was held annually in this particular household but this particular performance had three main objectives: to settle the constant disputes currently occurring within the women of the family; to discover the cause of ill health afflicting the ḍāgariyā and promote his recovery; and to discover an explanation for the apparent infertility of the youngest son's wife. As we join the jāgar, the ḍāgariyā has failed to become possessed on two occasions, despite repeated consecrations and purifications with fire and water. He subsequently vacates the devāsan and a relative from the extended family is brought in to act as ḍāgariyā and receive the incarnation of Narsingh. The second eldest son then takes over the role of saukar, while his mother acts as śeonai. Dialogue commences with the successful arrival of the god Narsingh in the body of the 'outside ḍāgariyā'.

Narsingh : For what am I wanted? Why have I been awakened?

Saukar : I am away from home to earn our livelihood. But I am suffering pain and stiffness in my legs and my work is poor. At home our agriculture is poor. Why is this? Has somebody cursed me, or is it due to my fate (karma)? Is it due to your displeasure? You must know that because I am away from home I cannot always pay my proper respects to you our household god (kūldevta).

Narsingh : (examining a handful of rice) Śeonai has cursed you and has wept over your injustices to her. This is why you have suffered.

Saukar : O Parmeśvāra, why does śeonai weep in my absence and why does she curse me? Why does she not weep in front of me? When I give her things why does she not say she distrusts me?

Saukar's wife : (Intervening, but words are inaudible).

Narsingh : You suffer but śeonai also suffers. She does not speak with her heart but with her mouth, for when śeonai is with saukar she will say "My son you are everything to me".

Śeonai : (intervening, but most of her speech is inaudible) He is still my dear son, Parmeśvāra.

Saukar : (To the devta) I am your faithful devotee. Away from home, wherever I go, in mountains, valleys and woods, I always remember you. Here at home I again remember you, I have fasted in your name, attended your court and bathed your image.

Narsingh : The mistake is not yours, it is śeonai's

Saukar : Allright Parmeśvāra.

Narsingh : I always look to the root to find the source of the disease, if I look only at the top I will see nothing.

Śeonai : (Crying and prostrating herself on the floor in front of the devta with her hands joined and outstretched.)
You are my family god, you are also the god of my blood relations, you are the one who protects my sons from suffering.

Narsing : Did you not weep, did you not complain that you got nothing from your sons, not even from saukar? What is this?

Śeonai : They are still my sons. But their wives have separated me from them, and they have never given me anything.

Narsingh : (Throws fistfuls of dry rice repeatedly and forcefully at her forehead, screaming.) I rebuke you! I rebuke you! The source of suffering lies in the root and not in the top.

Śeonai : Devta, let my sons live long and let their flower garden always prosper. Forgive me my wrongs.

At this point the śeonai and her husband (a meek and very worn old man) both prostrate themselves on the floor in front of the devta and beg his forgiveness and blessing. An extraordinary commotion ensues, many of the participants start arguing with one another and much of the main dialogue becomes inaudible. The jāgariyā then interrupts

Dharmiya : The devta will forgive everything. Man is bound to commit mistakes and it is the duty of the devtas to absolve them.

Saukar : (To his mother, and referring to a dispute taking place between his mother and his wife)
It is the duty of your two sons who live at home to give to you. Why should my wife alone give to you?

Śeonai : Yes, now in front of the devta we (i.e. herself and her daughter-in-law) should forgive each other for our past behaviour.

Commotion again ensues. The śeonai and the saukar's wife quarrelling bitterly with one another.

Saukar's wife : (To śeonai) I will no longer live on this floor. From tomorrow I will go to the goṭh (cowshed) and live down there.

Saukar : (Angrily) Do not talk of leaving this floor. We should not fight in the presence of the devta.

Saukar's father : (Admonishes the women) You should not continue to find fault with one another. We should heed and follow the words of the devta.

Śeonai : (Crying bitterly) Parmeśvāra, I have raised my sons with great difficulty. You must now be their protector, always help them and save them from hardship.

Dharmiya : (To devta) Parmeśvāra, be pleased with your devotees, reassure them by blessing them. Do not be upset by their faults, it is the weakness of men to do wrong things.

The mother and daughter in law proceed to quarrel openly about a number of domestic issues e.g. the divisions of land between the sons, and the division of the house and the livestock. At one point the saukar's wife threatens to leave the house altogether. The Saukar eventually intervenes:

Saukar : Enough, Enough.

Saukar's father : Parmeśvāra, help us to stop these quarrels, show us how to live happily in the future

Śeonai : (crying) Parmeśvāra, please help me and help my three sons!

The devta starts shouting at the two women, commanding them to cease quarrelling and to live peacefully in the future. He again throws fistfuls of rice with great force at their foreheads (everyone ducks).

Dharmiya : Parmeśvāra, please be calm, forgive these people, take away their sufferings and do justice for them.

Narsingh : (To saukar) You will undergo no more suffering inside the next year. After one year you must again worship me with jāgar;
(To śeonai) You should not do or say anything which may prove to be a curse.

Śeonai : Since my other son (a miller, betel and alcohol salesman in Hatchīna bazaar nearby) and his family are not attending this function please bless them in their absence.

Dharmiya : The devta looks after the interests of the entire family. But since they have not attended this jāgar they must attend in one year's time. The devta has shown his mercy, and blessed everyone. You should all now be content and feud no more.

The jāgariyā requests the youngest son's wife to go before the devta. The devta then applies babhūt to her forehead and blesses her for a child. One by one, the rest of the household kneel in front of the devta with their hands folded and receive blessings and babhūt. While this is going on the women again start to quarrel but other participants intervene, pointing out that everything

has already been raised in the presence of the devta and that he has given his judgement. They point out that he has given them an assurance of good fortune for one year and that all will benefit from this invitation of jāgar to the god. After one year, they add, he will again be invited and worshipped.

Narsingh : (To the youngest and third son) Your wife will miscarry no more and your marriage will be fruitful.

Dharmiya : Parmeśvāra, you have given a year's promise, rid them of suffering and make them happy.

Narsingh : I do not act alone. I accept what you suggest. You are my guru. I move only along the paths which you suggest.

Dharmiya : You are my devta and you have been incarnated by my effort. Be kind to your devotees. Do not take their mistakes seriously. They regard you with honour O Parmeśvāra. Where the water pitcher is kept so the floor will always be wet and muddy, so where there are men there will always be quarrelling, abuse and cursing. We regularly invite you to apologise for the mess we make. O my Parmeśvāra fulfill the desires of your devotees. It is of no use to talk of your kindnesses, for you are a devta and a few words are sufficient. We will again worship you after one year, do not harm those who fail to attend your jāgar.

This concludes the pūch sequence of rituals and events. Following pūch the jāgariyā again invites the devta to dance and accompanies his movements with selections from the Devta Lagao or Devta Katha.

(h) Guru Bhakti

This sequence generally takes place immediately before the final departure of the god from the ceremony. In guru bhakti the incarnated deity honours Guru Gorakhnāth and his representative in jāgar, the jāgariya. Some of the rituals characteristic of 'babhūt dena' are repeated: Tilak and babhūt are applied to the jāgariyā's forehead

and rice, dīpak, incense, and flower petals are offered to the thān. At one point it is usual for the ḍāgariyā to place himself before the iron dish of hot coals and repeatedly draw his hands backwards and forwards from the dish to his body - a ritual gesture termed 'dhūnī kī tahail' - representing the deity drawing power from the heat of Gorakhnāth's dhūnī.

Each deity that incarnates in jāgar is expected to visit the shrine of Gorakhnāth at Hardwar en route back to Kailāś, the place of residence for the Kūmū Devtas. For this further display of devotion to the guru they are given garlands of flowers, red or yellow cloths and wallets of the type (bhaint jholi) normally carried by sadhus. With these the ḍāgariyās circumambulate the room. Devotees fill the bags with gifts of money, rice, grain, flour, fruit, nuts and flower petals as they pass. Gifts of food are intended to sustain the deity throughout his return journey to Hardwar and from there to Kailāś. At Hardwar the deity will present some of these offerings to Gorakhnāth, perform various services to the guru (guru kī sewa) and seek his audience (guru darśana) at the shrine

(i) Chal Dena (Giving Departure)

The ceremony of jāgar is now in its final stage. The jāgariyā performs the Chal Dena Rās or 'departure song' requesting the deity to return to the company of Śiva via the shrine of Gorakhnāth at Hardwar. This is usually very brief. The example below is again taken from the jāgar of Kumwar Singh:

(R.5) CHAL DENA RĀS

O Gorīya, Raja of Kumaonihāṭ, Raja of the people of Kumaon. When you arrived you jumped over the Māmū Chaukhāna [in Nīlkanṭh] and on leaving you [again] jump over the Māmū Chaukhāna. The moon of the night, and the sun of the day, the nine lakh stars, the twelve lakh animals and plants are offered greeting [by you] and worshipped. At the time of departure, the air of the day, the masāni of the river, the spirits of the mountains, the wind of the day, the air (winds) of the four directions stand still. The four directions stand in awe of you.

As the Chal Dena is recited, the ḍāgariyā throws handfuls of rice around the room and over his shoulders. This is to signify the extent of the area over which the deity gives his protection (i.e. the four corners of the household and, by metaphoric extension the four corners of the world). As the recitation comes to a close the jāgariyā and the hiwari beat their instruments rapidly to accompany his exit from the household.

The deity departed, the ḍāgariyā falls to the floor and lies prostrate with his legs crossed. The bout of trembling (kampno) which accompanies the final dance gradually desists, and he remains in this position until a child is sent to touch his feet. At this, he sits up, uncrosses his legs and retires to his place as if nothing whatsoever had taken place. The jāgar has now come to an end. The company are given refreshments and begin to disband.[1] [2]

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[1] It is perhaps worth mentioning here the conclusion and outcome of the jāgar performed by Dhūlī Das from which the pūch dialogue was taken. In the general conversation which followed the jāgar, all concerned expressed contentment with the results of the ceremony. The devta, it was agreed, had brought to the surface and resolved a number of familial problems and differences. The jāgariyā also expressed contentment with the success of his final invocation after two earlier attempts had failed.

Three days later I encountered a member of the family in the bazaar at Hatchīna and questioned him about the effect, if any of the jāgar on family affairs during the interim period. He informed me that the household was very quiet, the women had ceased quarrelling and that he himself had been offered a respectable, well paid job in a nearby town.

I saw this man (the youngest son) again some three months later and asked him the same question. In reply he indicated that the household was still quiet, his job was going well and that his wife

[1] (contd.)
was pregnant. He added his belief that this was due solely to the good fortune bestowed by holding jāgar and to the protective power of his family god.

[2] If the jāgar has been extended over a period of days and the final session has taken place in the daytime, then animals (goats and chickens) might be sacrificed at the temple of the deity in question and the meat fed to the household as part of a small-scale communal feast (bandhāri). This is more usually confined to exceptionally lavish jāgars and to jūnars.

B. DISCUSSION : JOURNEYING AND EXCHANGE

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Within the cyclical schema of death and post-mortuary rituals set out in Chapter two (pp. 81-86), possession ceremonies, or rituals which involve the worship of the liberated dead, can be seen as providing a logical continuation of those aforegoing rituals which deal with the initial transportation of the soul out of the world of the living. Jāgar and jūnar form the apex of the death cycle complex. In a sense they round off the cycle by bringing the dead back into the world of the living to act as agents charged with the task of looking after the physical and metaphysical welfare of the living. Paradoxically, their death and liberation confers upon them a creative, life-giving power which becomes channelled into the world through the 'transcosmic' platform provided by possession ceremonies.

Jāgar and jūnar are ceremonies set apart in sacred time. Acts of purification and separation, the use of circular enclosures (rooms, temple enclosures, fire altars, mandalas), consecrations and dedications set up barriers in horizontal space which effectively seal these ritual dramas off from the profane world. The attentions of the initiated group become focussed on the human and material cosmic 'axes' which provide a vertical, transcendental link with the sacred realms of the gods, spirits and ancestors. In so doing they in a sense themselves enter the reaches of transcendental time. It is common in jāgar and jūnar for some of the participants to become accidentally entranced at

the climax of the jāgariyā's invocations. They display all the symptoms and behaviour of possession, although no particular god is thought to have taken incarnation. Ideally, all participants are moved and uplifted by the stories and musical rhythms of the jāgariyā, the prime intermediary. For the duration of the ceremonies the laws of the absolute world become temporarily suspended, the cadence of its time altered and stilled.

It is useful to think of the possession ceremony as a bridge or platform which straddles and connects the worlds. This bridge joins the living to the dead, men to their gods and the present to the past (glorious heroes) and the future (divination, healing and renewal). The dhūnī of Goraknāth is metaphorically linked to the netherworldly realms of Pātāla; but the flames burn upwards, and through these the guru's influence extends into the realms of the heavens above. The bridge permits movement, supernatural influences intrude through into the surface of existence, gods enter into the bodies of men and men become gods. The bridge makes possible a play of powers and dangers: ambiguous creatures are awakened, demi-gods and semi-humans, malevolent misformed spirits - the half dead - can enter the jāgar at any point. Social normality becomes inverted, untouchables are worshipped as gurus and gods and embraced by their caste superiors. Attempts are made to juggle with social reality, to re-shape and reform the pattern of events and relations, to seal fissures and heal bodies. Emotions are aroused, basic differences and smouldering tensions are revealed. That which is normally hidden away or covered over for the sake of continuity and routine comes to the fore.

One of the most fundamental idioms of mediation represented within jāgar and jūnar is that of renunciation. The renouncer occupies a wholly ambiguous position in Hindu society: he is physically alive but socially dead, he has an authoritative voice in society yet he

transcends society; he is both man and god; he is committed to an escape from procreation and rebirth in the world, yet his austerities are creative; tapas produces heat, the source of life from which Viṣṇu is said to have engendered the cosmos. The gods of jāgar adopt the guise of renouncers, they are depicted as renouncers in former lives and are the initiates and devotees of Gorakhnāth. The songs and stories with which they are incarnated have, as we have seen in Chapter two, a renunciatory cast. The jāgariyā is a renunciatory guru, the living embodiment of Gorakhnāth. For the duration of jāgar the ḍāgariyās become world renouncers, their roles and patterns of behaviour are explicitly likened to those generally associated with renouncers. The temporary totality of this identification gives added power to their vehicular functions.

Renunciation provides an almost ideal model of intercession between opposed realms of living and dead, gods and men, past and present. Renouncers not only straddle these categories they transcend them, and in doing so provide a direct link with the formative yet transcendental power which Hindus believe to lie at the very heart of existence. In themselves and their actions is embodied a microcosm of the power, a source of life which ordinary Kumaonis seek to tap for their physical well being and advantage.

I would suggest that the immense regenerative power which jāgar is clearly believed to contain is, in the first instance, generated by the fusion of macrocosmos and microcosmos, man and god, living and dead, which jāgar and jūnar are designed to make possible. There are two crucial aspects of this fusion or bringing together of interdependent opposites which I wish to focus on in the pages which follow. The first of these returns us to our earlier discussion of the ritual journey (pp.211-17). For, just as it is the journey mode

which is used to symbolise and effect the safe passage of the dead into the lands of the gods and ancestors, so it is also the primary mode chosen to bring together the liberated dead and the living in a state of fertile communion. I intend therefore to elicit from the rituals and recitations of jāgar all those journey motifs which underlie and lead up to the consummate union of the ceremony.

The second aspect which I wish to discuss follows directly from the first. The journeys which are undertaken to, from and within the jāgar ceremony all culminate in a series of transactions and exchanges between and among gods and men. Some of these exchanges signify the fusion of opposites which has taken place. Others merely serve to cement and 'give substance' to the interdependence which the event permits. Others again are ritual gestures designed to further the communion realised in the event and capitalise on the mutuality of the interdependence involved by signifying that, as a direct consequence of the event being held, a process of renewal has been initiated, a vital regeneration has already been achieved.

2. JOURNEY MOTIFS IN POSSESSION

To illustrate the use of the journey mode in jāgar I have chosen to concentrate primarily on the symbolism contained within the particular recitations set out in Section A. These are typical of the recitations commonly adopted by the jāgariyā to create the 'awakening' of the deity (in this case Gorīya) and to guide him to and from the meeting place of gods and men which jāgar provides. Following this, I will show how the patterns of journeying which the jāgariyā creates are relayed through the system of rituals contained within the event.

The story of Gorīya forms part of a complex of Kumaoni oral traditions which depict the lives and deaths of a number of heroes belonging to one or other of the region's past regal dynasties. The list includes Nanda Devī, daughter of a Chand raja[1]; Malusāhī, raja of Chaukotiya-Giwār (a sub-dynasty of central Kumaon); Bholanāth, an official of the new Chand dynasty based at Almora; the last Katyūri rajas[2]; and Gunganāth - a prince of Dhotīgarh (Nepāl).[3] The legends

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[1] The Chand dynasty are thought to have ruled Kālī-Kumaon (i.e. south eastern Kumaon, bordering on Nepāl and the plains) between the 10th century A.D. and the fourteenth century A.D. A period of eclipse followed by a restoration led to the Chands dominating the whole of Kumaon from the 16th century until the arrival of the British (cf. pp. 52-53).

[2] The Katyūris are thought to have ruled western Kumaon from their base at Bajināth between the seventh and tenth centuries A.D. (Ibid.)

[3] It should be noted that the concept of 'journeying kings' is a tradition well attested in ancient India (Eliade, 1964:408-9). Also the early kings of Kumaon were regarded by their subjects as divinities (Atkinson, 1973:516-7, 511-12, 478-81, 516-8) whilst they were still alive - another feature common to most of India (Frazer, 1963:131; Hocart, 1973: 66-67 & 1970:99).

attendant upon each largely consist of the various journeys undertaken by the hero concerned, usually from one part of Kumaon and its environs to another. Apart from journey motifs, certain symbolic features are found to recur in each legend, e.g. (a) renunciation of duties, sometimes construed as joining the Nāth sect of renouncers; (b) physical or ritual death; (c) 're-incarnation' in a spirit form; (d) the attainment of salvation (mukti or samādhi); and (e) the provision of fertility for the lands and people of Kumaon. The overall impression of each story is that the idiom of the journey (jātrā) provides a useful and interesting schema within which these various themes can be linked together.

As noted earlier, the songs of Gorīya contain a chronology of the god's life and death, the sequence of which can be pieced together from the information provided. The Gorīya Katha, which gives the course of his heroic life up to the point at which he becomes reinstated in his father's royal household, shows that this is made up of two dramatic journeys across space preceded by a series of initiatory ordeals culminating in a brief ecstatic flight into the heavens. At the hands of the seven queens Gorīya undergoes a sequence of privations each involving some mode of seclusion or 'temporary death'. He is (a) denied the life-giving milk of his mother and is buried below the floor of his birth chamber (Recitation two, lines 10-11); (b) thrown into the wilderness below his father's fort to be savaged by wild animals (lines 21 - 23); (c) buried beneath a heap of cow dung (lines 27-28); (d) buried in a salt cellar (lines 30-31); and (e) locked in an iron cage and buried beneath the ground (lines 38-40).

These initiatory ordeals fall within the symbolic patterns characteristic of the initiation rituals of the North Asian shaman in that they involve seclusion (rejection, burial, confinement and abandonment

in the wilderness), privation and cruelty (enforced starvation and deprivation), and the threat of dismemberment (at the hands of wild animals) (Cf. Eliade, 1958(b):90-93). As with shamanic ordeals, each of these sequences of temporary death culminates eventually in a state of "resurrection to a new mode of being" (Ibid, p.91). Demonstrating a magical ability to overcome each of the obstacles placed in his way by his "masters of initiation" (the barren queens), Gorîya manages to offset starvation, escape confinement and obtain the alliance of a magical animal (the milking cow), thus conquering death and its agents at every turn. His final ritual death and ordeal of descent paves the way for an ecstatic journey of the shamanic type during which his soul takes the form of a bird and soars into the high heavens to seek the succour and intervention of the great gods (lines 40-47). Revival is achieved through the magical transportation of his body up the Kālī (i.e against the flow of the current) and into the Gorî (lines 46-47), and rebirth is obtained from the riverwater at the hands of a fisherman (lines 50-57). Gorîya's new mode of being is sustained by milk which again is magically provided by a barren cow; and he is given a new name taken from the same river which served as the agent of passage between his former condition and his new regenerated state of being (lines 59-61).

Gorîya's ordeals are not ritualised journeys though they do contain motifs of descensional movement - his seclusions (buried in a cowshed, a storeroom; under a dung heap and at depth below the ground) have a downwards orientation. The ordeal of the salt cellar, the emergence from the dungheap and the provision of renewal through cow's milk also suggest a link-up with the mythology of the Nāth jogins (a factor made more explicit in the second recitation) who have a netherworldly or descensional aspect. At death, the Nāth is buried below the earth and encased in salt to preserve his body while he enters

samādhi, i.e. immortal union with Śiva through the medium of Guru Gorakhnāth. Gorakhnāth, who according to one legend was himself born out of a cow-dungheap, is the master of Pātāla (the Netherworld) and the Lord of cows (cf. Briggs, 1973:181-3). Descensional motifs with shamanic associations are also found in the deployment of a blacksmith as an agent of torment and in the recurrence of the sacred number seven (seven months, seven queens and seven locks). In shamanic mythologies the blacksmith is often featured as a master of shamanic initiation, redoubtable for his mastery over fire, his power over metals and his demonic netherworldly associations (Eliade, 1964:470-474). The seven queens and seven locks, like the seven months of pregnancy which culminate in Gorīya's birth, are stages in the initiatory passage which culminates in Gorīya's resurrected state of king as a magical hero endowed with quasi-shamanic powers. They perhaps correspond in number to the seven divisions or layers of Pātāla which the Nāth initiate must bypass in order to reach the dhūnī of Gorakhnāth.

In each of the motifs listed it may be seen that every movement of descent precedes and eventually culminates in some movement of ascent. This remains unstressed however until the point of Goriya's final ordeal at the hands of his tormentors. Here his furthest descent into the earth is quickly succeeded by the vertical ascent of his ecstatic flight into the heavens where he secures the aid of celestial allies (Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva) in the resurrection of his earthly form. The vehicular aspect taken by Gorīya's soul for this journey - a bird, is psychopompic in character. As Eliade has indicated, "Birds are psychopomps. Becoming a bird oneself or being accompanied by a bird indicates the capacity, while still alive, to undertake the ecstatic journey to the sky and beyond" (1964:98).

The celestial downpour which results from Gorlya's flight also creates the conditions for his first magical journey across Kumaon. He is transported up the Kāli and into the Gori. This is a journey of ascent; he moves from south to north and is carried upriver, i.e. against the normal flow of the current. After a period the boy Gorlya undertakes his second magical journey across Kumaon. Utilising the sorcerous powers acquired during his 'shamanic' rebirth (lines 66-87) he gathers together a vehicle (a wooden horse with an iron saddle) and a set of magical weapons (lines, ibid) and travels southwards to the fort of his royal father (lines 87-88). This is a journey of descent, he goes from the source of the river Gori to the banks of the Kāli at Champawat. The type of vehicle involved, a hobby horse, is typically shamanic and 'descensional' in orientation. According to Eliade, the horse or hobby horse "enables the shaman to fly through the air to reach the heavens ... it ... is a mythical image of death and hence is incorporated into the ideologies and techniques of ecstasy ... Psychopomp and funerary animal, the horse (facilitates) trance, the ecstatic flight of the soul to forbidden regions. The symbolic 'ride' express(es) leaving the body, the shaman's 'mystical death' ..." (1964:467-70).

Within the Gorlya legend the horse also provides the idiom for the conundrum (lines 91-96) which brings about a confrontation with the barren queens. This in turn leads to their ritual conquest (the destruction of their marital symbols, the noserings and waterpots) and their subsequent violent deaths. In his struggle against the queens, Gorlya is assisted by spirit familiars, e.g. Loria Vir and Bhairav, who are in essence metonymic and metaphoric extensions of Gorlya himself - the issue of Gorlya's 'abortive' first birth.

Gorlya's descensional journey across Kumaon concludes with his crossing of the boundary of his father's fortress (lines 115-119)and

(under the threat of dismemberment) in a further demonstration of the force of his magical powers. The mode by which his reincorporation into the royal household is achieved is regenerative in character - he receives milk from the breasts of his mother who is positioned 'above' on the third story of the fortress (lines 126-131). Goriya's geographical passage completed, his social passage is now secured and he ascends to the throne of his father, bringing with him celestial insight and compassion (lines 134-135)and establishing a permanent mode of communication and passage between heaven and earth (lines 136-141).

The first recitation breaks off at this juncture in Gorīya's story. For the continuation of this and a description of his further journeys which depict him not as a hero but as a renouncer and as a deity, I will turn to the second set of recitations. The first of these, the Devta Lagao, opens with a brief summary of the Goriya Katha up to the point where he acquires the kingship of Kumaon (lines 1-8) which provides in effect the climax and essential outcome of his earthly or mortal journeys. The text of the Devta Lagao and the the recitation following (the Devta Pukar) then go on however to reveal the outcomes of the journeys which he made after this: i.e. Gorīya becomes (a) an initiate of the Kānphaṭā Nāth jogis, joins their akhaḍa at Hardwar and enters into the meditational conditions espoused by their founder Gorakhnāth (lines 24-38); and (b) he joins the company of the gods and becomes a deity of the three worlds (lines 16-22).
The remainder of the text depicts Gorīya's journey across cosmic space into the place of jāgar. I shall return to this at the appropriate point, but for the moment I wish to discuss his initial renunciatory anddeific journeys in closer detail. Fuller accounts of these are contained in the Devta Āge and Devta Naco texts (lines 1-82).

In lines 12-14 of the Devta Āge we are told that during Gorīya's

reign as Raja of Kumaon Śiva called a meeting on Mount Nīlkanth of all the gods, all the legendary heroes and all the deities of the world. In lines 24-27 of the Devta Naco it transpires that Gorīya's absence from the assembly has been noted, and it is decided to send for him. The invitation is conveyed by two spirit messengers taking the form of bees. These descend to the royal fort of Champawat and create a fertile, regenerative union of heaven and earth by attending on the flowers which grow in that place (lines 31-34). Thus summoned, Gorīya dons his ritual garments, takes up his magical weapons, and sets out on his wooden horse or "sky chariot" to Śiva's mountain haven. Here the horse figures clearly as a direct agent of mystical ascent, a magical vehicle designed to provide for Gorīya's ritual transportation between the worlds. Following his visit to the assembly of the gods, Gorīya returns to the valleys of Kumaon and proceeds to travel in a southerly direction across the territory, demonstrating feats of magical prowess along the way (lines 50-56). Now serving as a vehicle for magical descent, Gorīya's wooden horse carries him beneath the mountains to Hardwar (lines 56-57).

The town of Hardwar itself embodies a number of features of a descensional, netherworldly character. Located below the foothills of the Himālaya it is an auspicious site for cremation, and for burial (i.e. of renouncers) - it functions as the Kashi of the western provinces. The most auspicious cremation ghat is known as Harjūkipaidi or 'the feet of Viṣṇu'. It is also the home of a variety of renunciatory sects whose members have embarked on a course of symbolic death in order to pursue salvation. Prominent among these is the tantric Kānphaṭā Nāth sect who regard Hardwar as the headquarters of their various divisions and as a place sacred to Gorakhnāth, master of Pātāla. One of the most important shrines found there is a subterranean passage dedicated

to Gorakhnāth (cf. also Briggs, 1973:82). This could perhaps be said to be representative of a descensional corridor to Pātāla and is perhaps regarded as such, just as the jogic fires (dhūnīs) of all the Nāth monasteries (akhaḍas) in Hardwar are representative of the primordial dhūnī which burns eternally in Pātāla. Hardwar is also the site of Kumbha Mela ('water-pot festival') celebrations when pilgrims attempt to bathe in the southerly flowing waters of the Ganges at the time of Kumbharasi. Immersion in the sacred waters during this auspicious but rare astrological configuration guarantees the ultimate salvation of the pilgrim. The siting of this event at Hardwar also contains the suggestion that the town serves as a cosmic axis facilitating passage between the regions of the above (the mountains, the sources of the Ganges, i.e. the rivers Jumna, Bhagirathi and Alaknanda, and by extension the heavenly paradises of Śiva) and the regions of the below (the plains, the lower courses of the Ganges, the place of Yama, and the Pātāla of Gorakhnāth).

On arrival at Hardwar Gorīya pays homage to the holy rivers which, rising here, proceed to traverse the world offering purification and passage to all men (lines 58-60). He bathes in the waters which flow at the intersection of the sacred rivers, and paying homage to the ghat which occurs there, descends even further on his magical horse to the place of Gorakhnāth, and pays homage to the Guru himself (lines 61-68). His descensional journey complete, Gorīya enters the service of Gorakhnāth. He lights the fires of the Kānphaṭā Nāth jogin and accepts the initiatory bestowal of ritual gifts (meditational seat, rice and flowers), from the Guru. Now raised up by the conferral of the Guru's knowledge, Gorīya commences yet another ritualised journey, that of the transcendental but internalised path of the jogin (cf. Allen, 1974:17) which is designed to culminate in complete liberation (samādhi) (lines 73-80).

As a first step he offers worship to his sect fellows, guides and predecessors, the Nāthas and the Siddhas; he recites the name of the great god with whom he seeks communion; and he profers offerings of rice (a symbol of regeneration), to the sacred places and bloodstreams of his body which he must 'pass through' in order to achieve complete transportation from the world of men. In effect, however, Gorīya has become separated from the society over which he formerly exercised regal domination, and on the anniversary of his first birth (Kumbharasi, cf. Devta Lagao, line 10), enters into a state of rebirth as a renouncer and demi-god.

His achievements and status thus having been clarified, we are in a position for the very first time to see the meaning of the fourth verse of the Devta Lagao and the first verse of the Devta Pukar. The fourth verse (lines 24-43) stresses Gorīya's position as a renouncer in Hardwar, a member of a Kānphaṭā Nāth monastery mixing with jogis of various sects, and a devoted Siddha or follower of Gorakhnāth, who through his devotion, his acquired knowledge and his meditations, has become one with Gorakhnāth. His assimilation with the great tantric saint, together with the cosmogeographic achievements which preceded his final initiation, also confer upon him a macrocosmic stature. So, in the first verse of the Devta Pukar we discover that he is included among the general class of deities and is to be honoured as such (lines 44-51); and we are told that (like his preceptors, Gorakhnāth and Śiva) he is simultaneously present in the three worlds (trilok) and all the parts thereof (lines 16-23).

The range of shamanic motifs contained within the accounts of Gorīya's ordeals, exploits and journeys are echoed within the mythology of Gorakhnāth and his followers, which, as Eliade has noted (1958(b):105; 1964:163-4) is characterised by the constant repetition of shamanic themes. Gorīya's preceptor Gorakhnāth and the latter's

devotees, the Kānphaṭa Nāth jogis, are reknowned for their ability to undertake vast cosmic journeys. (cf. Eliade, 1958(a):312, 313, 316, 317). According to one legend, Gorakhnāth journeyed in a psychopompic capacity to do battle with Yama, Lord of the Dead (Ibid,p.313). And in the tradition of their master, Nāth jogis are supposed to be able to fly through the air (Ibid,p.312) and descend to earth to recover lost souls (Ibid,p.317). They are also credited with the ability to overcome death itself through the attainment of jivanmukta ("liberation in life", i.e. immortality).

The basis for burial as the funerary practice of the Nāths is provided by a precedent established by Gorakhnāth during one particular mythological journey of descent (cf. Briggs, 1973:39). Finally, most of the ordeals undergone by the legendary Nāths in order to obtain magical power and transcendence, and many of the powers thus obtained, replicate in form and function those undergone by shamans, and closely parallel those found within the dedications to Gorīya. Thus we find the Nāths undergoing symbolic dismemberment and death, achieving resurrection and searching for immortality, demonstrating mastery over fire, water, iron and wild animals, retrieving lost souls,

grappling with demons and restoring life (cf. Eliade, 1958(a):306-7; 311-318; Dasgupta, 1969:387-398).[1]

Having examined Gorîya's legendary journeys let us now explore his passage en route to and from the ceremony of jāgar itself. The particular paths which the god and his aides follow during transit can be elicited from the main body of the Devta Pukar text and from the concluding Chal Dena text. The deity's travelling aspect is represented in the behaviour and postures which he adopts during incarnation. This will be considered later.

Before examining the details of the texts it sould be noted that in local tradition Gorîya is classified as a 'Kailāśwasi' or resident of Kailāś, the paradise of Śiva his maternal uncle. Mount

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[1] In addition to the shamanic infrastructure of their respective mythologies there exist other associations which underlie the relationship between Gorîya and Gorakhnāth. Both are associated with cattle. The root 'Gor', found in the names of each, can be etymologically linked with the word gor, meaning 'cow-dung'. Gorîya, saved and sustained by cows during his early life and at one point resurrected from beneath a heap of cow-dung, has become in turn the Kumaoni protector-god of cattle. By legend Gorakhnāth was born the 'son' of Śiva, either from ashes of the latter which were cast upon a dung-hill, or else from the ear or anus of a cow (Walker, 1968:402-3; Dasgupta, 1969:389; Briggs, 1973:182-3). There are also certain resemblances between the story of Gorîya and the story of Gopicandra, one of Gorakhnāth's most famous disciples. Gopicandra was also the son of a great ruling king, his mother was a goddess-figure, as powerful and as immortal as Kālî, and in order to achieve immortality, he became a renouncer and follower of Gorakhnāth at an early age (Dasgupta, 1969:378-381). Throughout northern India, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Himāchal Pradesh and Nepāl, the name of Gorakhnāth is linked with that of Gopiçandra. The affinities which exist between the legend of Gopiçandra and that of Gorîya, added to the duplication of Gorakhnāth's role in each case, would seem to suggest that 'Gopiçandra' and 'Gorîya Chand' are variations of the same mythological figure.

Kailāś, both as a celestial region and an actual geographical place, is located in a section of the high Himālaya which lies to the north east of Kumaon. This is the position and direction from which the deity is expected to come to jāgar, and it is to Kailāś that he is thought to return upon completion of the ceremony.

All the recitations of jāgar are designed to attract, honour and please the deity, but the text of the Devta Pukar has a specific performative function: viz, to guide the deity's passage between the worlds to the place of jāgar by demarcating an auspicious route for him to follow. This route is marked by a corridor of fiery lamps which are metaphorically lit and positioned at specific places on the surface of the earth and on each of the various layers of the three worlds.

The lamps (dīpak) referred to in the text are the same as those deployed in Kumaoni mortuary rites for the good and bad dead (cf. Chapter 3, Sections B and C), and also the same as those used to propitiate or exorcise demons and to light the passage of the ancestors to earth during the Diwali festival. Each lamp is made from flour paste and sports four cotton wicks each of which stands for one of the four cardinal directions. The dīpak is metaphorically linked with the deities which incarnate in jāgar (in that they too are resources of power, warmth and vision), and it is metaphorically linked with the dhūnī of Gorakhnāth out of which the world itself was created. As with the dhūnī lit during jūnar, all attention is directed towards the dīpak during the invocations of jāgar, for it is through this that the deity is thought to materialise.

Turning directly to the text, we may note that the dīpak of Gorīya has been lit and his presence has been requested (lines 44-51). He is offered the worship (pūjā) due to the great gods, some of whom are even requested to intercede on the behalf of men to secure his

incarnation (lines 52-56). He is hailed as the protector deity of the Kumaonis - the god of their lands (Bhūmi-ka-Bhairav) and he is told that a dīpak has been lit in his honour (lines 57-61). Then a path for his transportation to the place of jāgar is laid out by the metaphorical lighting of lamps in the following spatial sequence:

a) The places of the Nātha jogis in the west where Gorīya commenced his renunciatory path (i.e. Hardwar, Kankhal, the jogic monasteries, lines 63-66).

b) Across the face of the earth, beyond the seven seas, and across the face of India: at the holy rivers (lines 67-68).

c) At the western shrines of Ayodhaya and Dwārāka, respective centres for Vaiṣṇavite and Śaivite renouncers (lines 69-70).

d) At the shrines of the ṛṣis situated in the north west and south west(?)[1] respectively (line 71).

e) At all the Maṭha ('monastic' centres) of India, as used by all the different types and classes of renouncers (line 72).

f) At the four renunciatory centres (dhami) established by Śaṅkārachārya at the four corners of India (Badrināth in the north, Dwāraka in the west, Śṛngeri in the south and Puri in the east; for the renunciatory associations of each cf. Ghurye, 1964:82-89). (line 73).

g) In honour of, or at the places of, the nine Nāthas (eight of the legendary nine Nāthas are, like the eight Bhairavas (cf. Pott, 1966: 82-83) associated with the eight directions, and the ninth - Gorakhnāth himself - with the centre (cf. Eliade, 1958a:304). (line 75).

h) For the transcendental jogic seats (āsana) of the eighty-four Siddhas (legendary 'powerful' Nāthas). (line 76).

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[1] None of my informants seemed to quite know which part of the 'south' the mythological city of Madhuvan lay in.

i) At the mountain shrine of Joshimath, a monastic centre lying below Badrināth, associated with Viṣṇu and with the Atharvaveda (Ghurye, 1964:87, 88). (line 77).

j) At Govarimath (or Govardhan i.e. Puri), the Vaiṣṇavite dhami 'home' of the Ṛg Veda, placed on the edge of the ocean facing east. (line 78).

k) At Godikā Bhairav, a shrine dedicated to Śiva's netherworldly aide (location unknown). (line 80).

l) At Kailāś, the mountain paradise of Śiva. As well as being the place of ultimate salvation, Kailāś is an actual pilgrimage centre situated in Tibet and is accessible through the Bhotia passes which lie to the north east of Almora. (line 81).

m) At the fort of Champawat, Goriya's kingly home and capital of the early Chand dynasty (situated towards the south east, in Kali-Kumaon). (line 84).

At this point there occurs a pause in the litany while the jāgariyā invites another bhūmi deity, Narsingh (another renouncer-king, half-man, half-lion and a Kali Yuga avatār of Viṣṇu) (line 83). Invitations are also extended to Śiva, Gorīya's maternal uncle, and to the men of Dhotigarḥ (western Nepāl) (lines 82 and 87). The dīpak lit in Dhotigarḥ itself (line 86) possibly reflects the fact that Gorīya's influence extends into this area through his association with his aide (gaṇ) Gunganāth, yet another renouncer-king whose travels (on a horse with bells) through the area to Hardwar are also celebrated in the songs of the jāgariyā. (Gunganāth is usually incarnated in jāgar along with Gorīya).

Lamps have now been lit throughout the three worlds and at each of the nine parts of the world (lines 88-89). Attention is now drawn to the dīpak of the jāgar which is lit in the house of the devotees - the place of jāgar. This dīpak is dedicated to both the incarnating

gods, Gorīya and Gunganāth. The jāgariyā sets the scene inside the house, describing and introducing the host (Goriya's devotee and the jāgariyā's client, lines 90 - 91), the course of the ceremony (line 95), the vigil of the participants (96), the instruments (cymbal and drum) of invocation (97), and the assembly of participants aligned (metaphorically) in columns (99-101).

Gorīya's arrival at the gaukar's house is now imminent. A fanfare of conch, bells and trumpet is sounded (107-109). His presence can now be felt throughout (or 'through') the three worlds (110). Homage is being paid by the inhabitants of the mortal world (the assembly of people, line(113) to the inhabitants of the overworld (113) i.e. all the deities including King Indra, Gorīya's celestial counterpart, and to the inhabitants of the underworld (the Nāgas of Pātāla, lines (111-112). The successful completion of Gorīya's journey - his earthly incarnation - creates in a sense a fusion of the three worlds, a coming together of macrocosmos and microcosmos. The consequent total assembly is deemed to rival those of the created world, and it can be linked in majesty to the most glorious assemblies of the bird, animal and vegetable kingdoms (lines, 115-119).

The route illuminated by the lighting of lamps across the earth and between the worlds terminates at the place of jāgar. But what are we to make of the particular sequence of locations upon which the jāgariyā chooses to align the passage of his god? Before going on to answer this it must be noted that some of the places listed do not fit within any idealised pattern of directional movement which may be extricated from the text, at least if one adheres strictly to the order established in the lines of the text. However, ritual utterances like ritual actions make their mark by redundancy, i.e. a

repetition of ideas, rather than a structuring of themes in a logical sequence. The officiant possesses a poetic license and his preference for placing one line before another is permissably individualistic - a matter of personal style. The scheme of ideas which can be elicited is by nature a tendency, not a precise formula. So in the context of the present discussion we must be conscious of the fact that in our analysis of Gorīya's route to jāgar we are delineating a roughly ascribed series of directional tendencies not a fixed cosmogeographic pattern. In the event however it may be noted that the overall form which can be extricated closely conforms to the pattern established in the texts and rituals previously considered.

In the construction of the 'corridor' of lamps, Gorīya's devotees first retrace the paths that the deity will have followed during the renunciatory stage of his earthly career. The first set of lamps are lit in Hardwar, the place of renunciation. After this, lamps are lit across the world and at the holy rivers of India, for the renouncer must endeavour to move constantly across the face of the earth and rest only at the holy places. Some of these are named: the western and northern temples, the great Maṭhas and the four dhami, Joshimatha and Godika Bhairav. The litany includes the nine directions and parts of the world and even the transcendental reaches of the Nātha Siddhas.

From the place of renunciation, situated to the west of Kumaon, Gorīya moves further south-west to Dwārāka then north-east to the shrines of the ṛsis, then (in a presumably clockwise direction[1]) around

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[1] The Literature relating the practices of renouncers with regard to the dhami does not contain any prescription for journeying between the dhami in any clockwise or anticlockwise direction. Given however that such a circuit does constitute an essential part of the circumambulation of the Bhāratmandal, and that in both the vedic and tantric classical literature (Śaṅkārachārya was a vedic purist) circumambulation is invariably clockwise or 'sunwise' (cf. Bharati, 1965:93-97), it seems reasonable to assume that this is the path generally followed.

the four corners of India, coming back north to Joshimatha, turning east to Govardhan, north to Kailāś and finally back to centre (Champawat, focal point of the Chand dynasty) before entering the place of jāgar itself. The route thus roughly ascribed follows the classical pattern of the departed ancestor in that an initially inauspicious direction (west, south west) symbolic of the netherworld, is succeeded by more auspicious directions (north and east) symbolic of the realms of the devtas and the pitris, which in turn culminates in the most auspicious direction of all (north east) symbolic of the place of salvation.[1]

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[1] East and North are the most auspicious cardinal directions. They are associated with the 'right' and with the rites to the gods. During domestic rituals, for example, east and north "are the directions towards which movement takes place ... (Das, 1977a:107). The south is the most inauspicious direction, being associated with death, demons and serpents (Ibid, 107-8)
According to the same author, west is the direction of the ancestors (they enter the world of the living from the west during propitiation) and is not considered lowly or inauspicious. It is however associated with the left, with fertility, femininity and worldly rather than metaphysical well-being. (Ibid, 107). The west is also interchangeable with the south where "malign influences are uppermost..." (Beck,1976:219) and evil influences can emanate from the west (Ibid, 215). This ambivalence can perhaps be related to the notion that "east-west serves as the axis of cosmic force" (Ibid, 216), hence ancestors, ritual objects and participants are oriented away from the west, and towards the east (Das, 1977a:105-108).
That Gorīya moves first towards the south west is consistent with Kānphaṭā Nāth tradition whereby one of their most important pilgrimage centres is the temple of the goddess Hinglaj on the Makran coast of Baluchistan. A visit to this temple itself involves a circumambulatory passage: "Every Nāthapanthi has a passionate desire , which he generally succeeds in achieving, to circumambulate the Narmada at least once, and there are many who do it twice and thus conform to the Hindu norm of religious behaviour. The ascetic who wants to do this starts from the mouth of the Narmada at Broach and proceeding either along right or the left bank to its source at Amarkantak returns from the other side to Broach." (Ghurye, 1964:136).

Gorīya's journey from Kailāś is a temporary movement of descent into the world of men which is later retraced as the deity returns to Kailāś following his propitiation. It should be noted that in circumambulating India, attending all the Matha and dhami, and moving between all the cardinal directions, Gorīya is following the pilgrimage circuit known as Bhāratmandal. He thus achieves the ideal physical journey of the renouncer across horizontal or 'earthly' space and this serves as a prelude and initiation into his vertical transportation between the worlds as an incarnate deity.

Having considered the directional symbolism of Gorīya's passage towards the jāgar I wish to turn now to the range of movements contained within the ceremony and also note the way in which Goriya's departure is represented in mime and song.

From the account given of the ritual (pp.299-329) it seems fairly clear that all the journeying involved is undertaken not by men but by the incarnating deity or deities. Also it is the movements of the god, his coming or going, which provide the focal point of the ceremony, not the movement of men. A metaphorical movement of men is however suggested in the symbolic placement of lit dīpak across India and between the worlds by the gods' devotees in order to guide his passage to the jāgar. And we must be aware of the fact that the movement of the god provides a means of creating the conditions for a movement of men. In the Devta Āge , recited to announce the coming of the deity, Gorīya's celestial journey to the assembly of the gods is assimilated by the jāgariyā within an ancient tradition of grand ritual journeys including Rāmā's epic passage south to Lanka, Kṛṣṇa's conquest of the demon Kunsa, and the Pāṇḍāvas journey through the hills to heaven (lines 1-11). Just as the great kingly heroes

of the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa were able to traverse cosmic space during former ages (lines 3-7), so also the men of Kali Yuga (i.e. the devotees of jāgar) can enter heaven by listening to the stories of their gods (lines 8-11). The transportation of the gods in worship and song serves as a prelude to the metaphysical transportation of men across the worlds and into heaven.

The text also contains the implication that as the gods are moved or move, so also men undertake movement. By accompanying the incarnation of the deity with a description of his journey to the assembly of the gods (Devta Āge: lines 12-20; Devta Naco: lines 38-50) the jāgariyā is in effect posing a metaphorical correspondence between the assembly of gods and heroes on Nīlkanth and the majestic assembly of men in jāgar. This procedure does more than connect the mundane present with the glorious mythological past, it establishes a symbolic, intentionally regenerative, fusion of macrocosmos and microcosmos. Men become gods, the place of jāgar becomes the mountain of Śiva, the boundaries of the house (or the kingdom) become the boundaries of Nīlkanth, and (as will be seen) the circle of space established by the witnesses of jāgar becomes the axis mundi encompassing the subcontinent and the three worlds. Within the region of transcendental space and time thus provided heroic deeds are enacted, ascetic feats are displayed, holy journeys are undertaken and the conditions for regeneration (healing, fertility, prosperity, spiritual enhancement) are established.

Gorīya then incarnates in jāgar through the medium of his chosen vehicle, significantly regarded as a horse (ghwar) - a beast of travel and transport. God and medium are fused in a state of constant and rapid physical movement. The d̆āgariyās 'body' trembles, writhes and falls to the ground. Even his voice shakes. His status

is also that of a renouncer; he wears the garb of the renouncer - someone who having abandoned a position of classificatory status in caste society, takes on a condition of permanent geographical and cosmic movement. A vehicle of divinity, the dãgariyā moves around the sacred space provided in a circumambulatory dance which metaphorically encompasses: transportation to the heavens of the gods (Devta Naco: lines 46-50); a series of journeys across the face of the earth (lines 50-56) and a magical descent to the place of Gorakhnāth (lines 56-66). He represents transportation across space by rushing movements and a swirling motion. Forces which oppose his progress are subjugated by the use of weapons - demonstrated by a flailing of arms. The achievement of renunciatory powers (siddhi) and magical heat (tapas) during the god's journey between the worlds is represented by display of ascetic feats and a communion with fire (swallowing flame, or in the case of a jūnar, jumping in the dhūnī): aspects of symbolic behaviour which contain both shamanic and jogic themes. Finally, deference and devotion to Gorakhnāth is represented by the transfer of offerings to the jāgariyā who as Guru of the jāgar and the incarnating deities encompasses the spirit and presence of Gorakhnāth.

Entering the jāgar Gorīya is regarded as a guest, an auspicious and benevolent visitor. As Ostor (1971:171) writing about seasonal pūjās in Bengal has remarked "guests are like gods and the gods are guests among men ... Deities are part of the world as men know it, but when the special festival of a deity is celebrated the god is regarded as a traveller from a distant land visiting his followers, devotees and subjects." But in an additional sense the deity is also a passing pilgrim entitled to the offerings and honour due to a visiting renouncer. He is greeted with salutations, with offerings of food, silver coins, fire, water and flower petals. In turn he anoints his

hosts with babhūt-pāni the tilak of Śaivite renouncers which is believed to confer immortality (i.e. purify, preserve and prolong the life of the body); he embraces them in turn (thus signifying the communion of men and gods), profers advice on their problems and predicts the probable outcomes of these and confers general blessings intended to secure his devotees' health, fertility and prosperity. The god thus moves through their house, their bodies and their lives, bringing other kinds of movement, regeneration and change.

At the time of departure Gorīya is given the offerings due to an honoured visitor, e.g. flower garlands, sweets, holy ash, fruit and rice. But in addition he is also proferred the dress of a renouncer (yellow or ochre cloth) and a (roughly made) begging bag (jholi) is filled with offerings to sustain him en route to the next destination. The list of offerings includes water and light since these are required to assist his passage through the netherly region occupied by Gorakhnāth. In transit across the worlds he must pay his respects to his guru as well as to the created world (Chal Dena, lines 4-10) the firmament, moon, sun and stars (Ibid, lines 4-6). His gesture of obesience to the inhabitants of the upper and lower cosmic regions will be returned by the creatures and elementals of the liminal middle region (ākāś), the "air of the day", the four winds and the spirits of the river and mountains (Ibid, lines 6-10). Finally, just as Gorīya's descent into jāgar involved a crossing of the mountain boundary which separated the world of gods from the world of men the god must again recross that boundary and re-enter the glorious company of the gods (Ibid, 1-4).

3. GODS AND MEN : DEPENDANCE AND INTERDEPENDANCE

The rituals of jāgar feature not only a movement of gods into and through the lives of men but also a general movement of goods and services between gods and men. In our earlier discussion of the jāgar of chalpūjā (p 246-50) it was noted that the event provided a platform within which men, spirits and gods could meet, formulate crucial contracts and engage in transactions between and among one another. In the jāgar sessions of the seasonal jūnar these transactions assume the status of an annual 'potlatch' upon which the life of both the community and its pantheon is thought to depend. In the jāgar event proper, a similar state of inter-dependancy prevails. Just as it is the duty of the household gods, the kūldevtas and iṣṭdevtas, to look after the affairs of the lineage and the family, to bless their crops and animals and ensure the continuity of the group, so it is also the duty of men to honour their ancestral deities by periodically extending to them an invitation to incarnate in the world of men, to dance in jāgar and receive gifts (dān).

These displays of obligation and exchange cement and signify the interdependance which obtains between the living and the dead, and maintain the precarious balance between the worlds upon which continuity and order in turn depend. The play of jāgar may be directed towards specific goals for the benefit of specific individuals through the intercession of individual deities but its ultimate referents are the human and supernatural units which form the lineage or household in its abstract entirety. The whole is however subject to attacks from within and without: disputes threaten the unity of the family which is so

necessary in Kumaon for economic well-being; illness weakens the cooperative endeavour, and like infertility, poses a threat to continuity. Poor agricultural yields or illness among animals endanger the survival of the group; and disturbances created by curses, sorcery and the afflictions of the unfulfilled dead threaten the group on all fronts by introducing spiritual disequilibrium and classificatory uncertainty. But the occasion of a supernatural attack reflects ultimately upon the group itself: a weakness has emerged and the precarious balance which obtains between the natural and the supernatural has been upset. To deal with the imbalance and prevent the onset of chaos the gods must be honoured and offered worship; the unfulfilled dead must be offered liberation and an open dialogue must be maintained.

These beliefs taken into consideration, it is hardly surprising to discover that the dialogues of jāgar recurrently stress the themes of internal group solidarity and the importance of honouring the group's traditional deities. The two realms are not only contiguous - one shades off into the other - but co-terminus, identification is absolute. Hence the fact that in jāgar men and gods become unified and indulge in discourses remarkable for their familiarity: it is acceptable to joke with, argue against, make demands on, lecture and even abuse the incarnating deities. The celebration and affirmation of group bonds and loyalty to family deities is the solution proposed in the sample pūch provided (pp. 322-6). We saw that the household concerned was undergoing stress due to dissent, illness, infertility and poor agricultural yields. The lineage deity was incarnated. The saukar insisted that even while absent from home he had paid the correct dues appropriate to the god, and was unable to see where the weakness had crept in. He pleaded for the deity's diagnosis and requested a remedy. The deity then 'exposed' the workings of a 'curse' generated from the heart or

'root' of the family, and having isolated the problem, urged as a solution that the members of the household cooperate more closely with one another for the mutal good. At the end of the jāgar the jāgariyā pointed out the basic weakness of men, and reiterated the need for regular worship. Some time later it appeared that a general regeneration had been effected to the satisfaction of the members of the household: family affairs were in good order and fertility had been restored. This was attribured to the benign influence and advice (bhol bachan) of the deity incarnated by the jāgariyā and to the spiritual merits (punya) which had accrued from the act of holding a performance of jāgar.

If it is clear that men conduct and attend jāgars in order to acquire or restore health, prosperity, stability, security and fertility, it is less immediately obvious what the gods stand to gain by incarnating regularly in the world of men. The initial incarnation held upon the anniversary of a propitiation confirms and celebrates the achievement of liberation, and thus clearly forms a crucial part of the death and post-mortuary cycle. But what of subsequent incarnations? The answer would appear to lie within the totality of their anthropomorphisation. As deities of Kali Yuga, the fourth age of the world characterised by decay, ignorance and degeneration, they are fully expected to behave like men; and are subsequently greedy, capricious and hungry for respect and power. Being attached by their dharm to the affairs of the world they have a vested interest in the welfare of men, and it is through the attentions of men that they acquire and maintain prestige and position within the Kumaoni pantheon. It is for this that they ultimately depend upon men. Failure to respond to the supplications of men not only puts at risk their position within the hierarchical pantheon, but may even undermine the spiritual foundations of their very 'existence', their dharm. Hence, in the

myth of Dharm Das Devta cited earlier (p429-30), the essential objective of the Kūmū Devtas' desire to forge a contract of services with the first jāgariya, Dharm Das, is to provide themselves with a source through which they can demonstrate their devotion (bhakti) to the all powerful Guru.

One interesting anthropomorphised attenuation of the deific condition is apparent in the belief that, in seeking elevation within the pantheon, the gods vie with one another for the respect (adar satkar), belief (manti) and devotion (bhakti) of men. In one jāgar katha describing the origin of the village Ratkola in Borarau, the deities Gorīya and Narsingh are depicted as engaging in battle against one another for supremacy of the village and the greatest share of the villagers' devotion. The battle is won by Narsingh who, as an avatār of Viṣṇu, is able to successfully demonstrate superior status and magical power over his opponent, who is only a local king. In the battle many of Gorīya's helpers, the warrior vir, are killed. In the agreement reached following the conclusion of the battle, Narsingh demands that the central shrine in the village be dedicated in his honour and that the first offerings of any pūjā performed in the settlement be proferred to him alone. Gorīya is forced to concede these priviliges and requests only that a shrine might be built in his own honour on the edge of the settlement.

The story serves to illustrate one of the more localised organisational principles of the pantheon, viz, a hierarchical ordering of deities in terms of locational identification: Narsingh is in the centre as Gorīya is on the perimeter. In general, however, divisions within the pantheon operate, like the caste ranking of untouchables, on a functional basis. Each deity in Kumaon is allotted sovereignity over a particular area, class of person, animal or function. Hence

there exists a bell deity (Ghantakarn), a cattle deity (Chaumū, , sometimes Gorīya) a milk deity (Saim), a river goddess (Gardevī), a leader of the ghosts (Bhairav), a deity of the cremation ground (Masān), a god of the kingdom (Gorīya), an Autumn goddess (Nanda), a god of buffalo keepers(Jhairāj), a god of open spaces (Airī), a goddess of the woods (Parī) and a jogi-god (Siddhināth). Each deity heads a class of minor deities, their aides (gan), and warriors (vir) each of which is imaged in the likeness of the primary god but with minor deviations: Hence among the Narsingh vir, we find a lame Narsingh (Laṭu Narsingh), a leper Narsingh (Korī Narsingh), a compassionate Narsingh (Budhi Narsingh) and so on. Within their class and within the overall pantheon each deity is hierarchically ordered and some are considered more powerful and more auspicious in some respects than in others. Each is entitled to the honorifics, attentions and offerings appropriate to his position and status.

Intermediate between yet transcendant over the opposed but interdependant classes of men (nar) and gods (devtas) is the Guru, Gorakhnāth. He is represented in jāgar by the jāgariya who, as Gaborieau has observed (1975b:168-9) both regulates the exchanges which pass between deities and devotees, and is entitled to receive offerings on behalf of the supreme Guru. The network of dependancy and inter-dependancy thus incorporates a third category, the transcendent renouncer, an overseer intermediate between, yet positioned above, the dual categories of men and gods.

Assembly and Exchange

The processional pattern of the exchange dimension of jāgar conforms closely to the classical model formulated by Mauss (1970). Exchange is actualised following the completion of three preliminary ritual stages: (a) The sending out of an invitation or invitations to exchange; (b) a journey by one or both parties to the place of exchange; and (c) the ceremonial meeting of the parties involved.

Invitations to men are dispensed through word of mouth, and invitations to gods are dispensed through the invocations of the jāgariyā. Thus in the Nyutan Rās set out above (p.300) the jāgariyā extends a formal invitation to the Guru, the Kūmū Devtas, Hanuman the faithful warrior, all the renouncers and to the mother goddess, to witness the jāgar, bless and protect its participants (lines 1-13). The specific deity, deities or class of deity with whom it is intended to pursue transactions is called to attention in the Devta Lagao incantation (p.306-7 lines, 1-22) and then invited to attend jāgar with the Devta Pukar incantation (p.308-10, lines 44-51). Possibly the inclusion of the entire pantheon within the sequence of invocations is an obligatory gesture included so as not to offend any powerful deific body. It is clear that though they do not all incarnate in jāgar, they are expected to attend in the form of 'invisible' witnesses (cf. Gaborieau, 1975b:148-149; 162). This procedure confirms the basic axioms of exchange that "To fail to invite ... is a refusal ... of intercourse" (Mauss, 1970:11) and that "neglect has fateful results (ibid:38). When honouring one god, to fail to honour all the gods represents in fact an invitation to disaster (naśki). The event has thus a macrocosmic stature and the community of men must be equally represented. A common feature of jāgar dialogues is for either the jāgariyā or the incarnated deity to admonish

the family for failing to arrange a complete attendance of family members. At the end of the pūch sequence described above (p.326), the jāgariyā explicitly requests the deity not to "harm those who fail to attend your jāgar".

I have already discussed at length the journeying undertaken by participants to the place of exchange (pp.334 -51). In jāgar proper this is not ritualised for men, but the gods attending the event are expected to traverse specific routes which, as we have seen, transect the three worlds (trilok), earth, heaven and the underworld, and the horizontal face of the sub-continent. Those deities whose mythological backgrounds celebrate in particular an attribute of cosmic movement (Gorakhnāth, Devi, the Kūmū Devtas, Hanuman and the Hardwari jogis) are invited to make the initial journeys to the jāgar (p. 300). Through the movement of their deities, the men of jāgar also undertake a form of metaphorical journeying, which as noted earlier (p.352) serves as a prelude to the ultimate transportation of their souls in death across cosmic space to the place of liberation.

The third preliminary stage of jāgar is the ceremonial meeting of the parties involved. This occurs at the place of jāgar, the saukar's house, courtyard (khali), temple arena (mandīr khali) or village shrine (gramwasi thān). As noted earlier, the meeting place is metaphorically assimilated during the incantations of the jāgariyā with the meeting place of the gods; the boundaries of the house or the region in which it is located become the boundaries of Nīlkanth and the circle of space established by the witnesses of jāgar becomes the axis mundi which penetrates and encompasses the sub-continent and the three worlds (p.352). The jāgar takes place in sacred time and space. Gods enter the hearts (hirdayi) of men, men become gods, macrocosmos meets microcosmos. A metaphorical correspondence is posed between the assembly of gods and

heroes on Nīlkanth and the majestic assembly of men in jāgar (p. 310). The subsequent assembly is like no other (Devta Pukar, lines 116-119).

The initial meeting of men and gods is controlled by one intermediary (the jāgariya) and occurs within the body of another, the dāgariyā. In the jāgar of Gorīya it is prefaced with a seminal coming together of heaven and earth in the attendance of deific messengers (the bees sent by Śiva) upon the flowers of Champawat. As Gorīya crosses the boundaries of Nīlkanth on his sky chariot, in the words of the jāgariyā so he also crosses the boundaries of jāgar. The spirits of men (admi kī ātma) fuse or meet with (milna) the spirit of the god (parmātma). The dāgariyā temporarily adopts the condition of the god and becomes 'dead' to the world, while the deity, trembling and shaking, is ecstatically reborn.

The sequence of exchanges follows immediately upon the meeting of men and gods. The items and services exchanged have specific functions and significations, but as in the classical Hindu theory of the gift (dānadharma) these are subordinate to the overall signification of gifts as being in themselves extensions of the donor. Exchanges serve not only to underline the mutuality of the dependancy operative between gods and men but to mediate their opposition and create temporary communion.

The first prestations are the bodies of the mediums, given over to the gods for use as vehicles in return for spiritual merit. Another equally abstract set of prestations are provided by the musical sounds, rhythms, verse, litanies and praises of the jāgariyā. These are generally classed as bhag (song or share), and are proferred in return for naco (dance) and bhol-bachan (advice and blessings) from the deity. Just as the rās of jāgar pleases and pacifies the gods, so too the men of jāgar can obtain excitement and inspiration from the

gods; they celebrate with dance and they learn from their ancestral divinities

Material prestations given in jāgar by men in return for the more indirect favours of the gods are termed rana-bana. This category incompasses dedicated items, foodstuffs and unctions. Items which are dedicated in the name of gods rather than actually handed over exhibit mostly an invocationary or vehicular function - so they are mediators, material extensions of both gods and men designed to further communion: the list includes the thān, the linga, the thāl, the āsan, the dīpak , items of clothing, the conch and bell. These are receptacles, seats or accompaniments which draw in, hold or enfold sacrality.

The flowers, silver coins and bronze implements exchanged or dedicated in jāgar can be regarded along with the various foodstuffs (bhog) offered and passed between gods and men as basic symbols of wealth, fecundity and fruition. Yellow and white are the colours of wealth, linked to silver and gold, moon and sun. The fruits, grains, nuts and flower heads as the end products of agricultural activity (i.e. seeds and seed vessels) serve equally as symbolic indicators of the well-being, issue and fruition which it is hoped will pass between gods and men. As Gaborieau has noted (1975b:167-8) the flow of exchanges follows a circular pattern: items are passed from men through the intermediaries to the gods then returned via these intermediaries back to men. A portion is retained by the intermediaries as the due of the gods, the remainder is returned to men as gifts from the gods (prasād) During the process the items exchanged are sanctified i.e. filled with sacred life-giving power. Men, who are responsible for initiating the exchange thus obtain direct reciprocation for their offerings in the form of power and merit (punya). But there is also an element of indirect reciprocation involved. The foodstuffs offered, especially those given during the

jāgar of the annual jūnar, are gifts in kind - metaphorical indicators of the things which men seek in bountiful supply from the gods, good harvests, fruition and fertility - and these are 'returned with interest' over time. During pūch the deity or deities incarnated make explicit their reciprocal obligations by making formal promises (krar) of increase, repair and enrichment to their devotees for the times ahead. The chain of reciprocations involves total obligation. Men have to acknowledge favours and endowments with further offerings and devotions: failure to do so would be to invite disaster (naśki) and the wrath (hankar) of the gods.[1] Equally, if the gods fail to bequeath protection and favours upon their devotees they risk losing their respect and prestige; their position within the pantheon and their power over men would diminish; and their temples and shrines fall rapidly into disrepair.

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[1] Mauss (1970) in his essay on exchange, has observed the fundamental and critical nature of transactions between men and gods. Hence:

> "Among the first groups of being with whom men must have made contracts were the spirits of the dead and the gods. They in fact are the real owners of the world's wealth. With them it was particularly necessary to exchange and particularly dangerous not to ..."
> (Mauss, 1970:13)

He adds that exchanges between men and groups of men during the shamanic and sacrificial rituals of many societies are natural evolutions away from this primary form of exchange.

Communion and Regeneration

The circulation of prestations at various junctures of the jāgar ceremony is interspersed with two specific types of symbolic gesture which set the seal on the communion between gods and men established by possession and exchange. These are: (a) the initiation and anointment of participants with unctions which confer renewal upon the recipient; and (b) their purification and sacrificial anointment with fire, an act which again confers rebirth and renewal. The two gestures interconnect: their function is identical, and the supreme unction of the first type is created out of fire.

The anointment of participants and paraphernalia with akśāt-pitya, a tilak or frontal mark, at the commencement of jāgar and at the beginning of the babhūt-dena sequence is, in common with its usage during brahmanical life-cycle rituals , a gesture of sacred initiation - a way of suggesting separation and communion with a sacred elite. But akśāt-pitya is commonly acknowledged as a fertility motif, a way of signifying fecundity conferred and shared. The composition of the unction underlies this signification: akśāt, or uncooked wet rice, is used in Hindu rituals to represent male semen, milk or water and the male principle (cf. Carstairs, 1957:84; Spratt, 1966:157); pitya or vermillion paste represents blood, fire and the female principle (Beck, 1969:563). Their ritual pairing, wet rice placed in the centre of a clitoric streak of red paste, represents the coming together of the male and female - a suggestion of procreatory consummation, like the pouring of water, milk and seeds over a yoni-lingam. The fusion of white and red substances, agencies of cooling and heating respectively, also indicates the attainment of balance, a state of harmony and communion. The repetition of the anointment sequence during the jāgar

can be seen as a way of intensifying the communion achieved, of furthering movement towards the centre.

The second unction used to anoint participants is babhūt-pāni, a Śaivite composition of cow-dung ash and water, which is generally conferred by deities and temporary renouncers and is strictly associated with the category of the liberated dead, i.e. ancestor-gods and renouncers. The internal symbolism of babhūt-pāni is more convoluted than that of akśāt-pitya - its underlying form is the exact inverse of the latter, though its functional intentions are similar. However, before discussing these, it will be necessary to examine the symbolic usage of fire in jāgar, for babhūt is first and foremost a product of sacred fire.

Fire and heat are represented in jāgar and jūnar in a number of ways: in the dhūnī devoted to Gorakhnāth around which the deities of jūnar dance; the dīpak or signal lamp dedicated to the deity and used to guide his passage to and from jāgar; the dish of fire used in arati; the dūb-batti and agerbāti sticks burned to purify participants; tobacco and hashish smoke shared and ingested by men, gods and intercessors; iron implements or fauri which are heated in jūnar to initiate new d̃āgariyās into the intercessory roles involved in jāgar; and in the preparation of babhūt.

The symbolic functions of fire in jāgar and jūnar are multiple. Fire is a prestation, an offering to the gods, as in the dedication of the dhūnī, dīpak, incense, smoke and the ritual of arati. It provides a cosmic axis, a vertical corridor connecting the three worlds and facilitating the passage of deities, demons and (metaphorically) men across cosmic space. Fire purifies, as in the testing of novice d̃āgariyās and the destruction of polluting influences which impinge upon jāgar participants. Fire kindles and focuses sacred energies: incarnating

deities,attracted by fire and light, identify with its temperament; they embrace and ingest the flames in a demonstration of tapas, for they too are 'heated' (joś) from the energy of their own tapas.

In Hinduism generally, fire (and particularly its embodiment in dough-lamps and jogic dhūnīs) is closely associated with Gorakhnāth from whose underworld dhūnī the world itself is supposed to have been created (Briggs, 1973:199). Even orthodox brahmins hold that the original source of earth is water and the original source of water is fire (Stevenson, 1971:226). And in the Upaniṣads fire is regarded as a "bridge to the supreme Brahman", a source of salvation if utilised in ritual (Eliade, 1958a:118).

The god of fire in Vedic India and orthodox brahmanism is Agni, and its designation would thus appear to be male. But the Hindi for fire, Ag, is feminine in gender, and in Kumaon fire is referred to as "Agnimata", i.e. 'mother fire', which would appear to indicate the priority of the female designation. In tantrism, fire is an embodiment of the female principle: it is used as a receptacle for offerings and for the gods. Every mandala is bordered with a ring of fire which the initiant must cross, or within which an incarnation of the deity is held (Eliade, 1958a:220). So also in jūnar, the fire is a mandala which attracts and holds the incarnated deities. In yogic ritual, fire is identified with the female sexual organ (Eliade, 1958a: 253, 255), and associated with menstrual blood (rajas) and the sun.

Two of the major Pan-Hindu festivals observed in Kumaon, Holī (held in Phagūn) and Diwalī (held in Kartik), also involve the use of fire in worship. Significantly, both are fertility festivals held, like jūnar, during the active lunar phases of the month. In Holī, fire is venerated, fire walking is practised and sexual licence is permitted (Crooke, 1926:342-4). In Diwalī dough-lamps are lit and arrayed

throughout the household to attract visitation by the "souls of the sainted dead" (Ibid:p.345). These lamps burn out evil and frighten from the household the snakes and demons thought to be particularly active at these turning points of the seasons.[1]

Fire is heat, and in Hinduism heat is "In essence ... associated with life and fertility" (Beck, 1969:553). But heat in excess is dangerous so it has to be balanced with cold, just as male is juxtaposed with female, and red substances (heating) are in ritual designs (mandalas, altars and temple decoration) balanced with white substances. In jāgar and jūnar the heat of fire is balanced by the cooling application of water. Arati is always accompanied by sprinklings of cow's-urine or by libations of gunga-pāni, both types of 'pure water'. The newly incarnated deity is in a 'heated' state which is potentially dangerous to his 'cooler' devotees so he is 'cooled' with libations of water. Similarly, when the flames of the dhūnī become too fierce, water is thrown over them to cool their fervour and equalise an imbalance. The heat of the smoke from burning tobacco or hashish shared between deity and devotees is countered by the use of an intervening watery barrier, the smoke passes through a bowl of water or watery rag to the mouthpiece. But the most significant combination of fire and water which occurs in jāgar is found in the composition of babhūt. This grey-black substance is formed from the ashes of cow-dung balls of which are burned in the sacred fire and mixed into a paste with gunga-pāni.

Like akśāt-pitya, with which it is often used in conjunction, babhūt embodies a combination of opposites, and the resultant combination, a form of total communion, confers renewal. The rituals of jāgar contain a number of such combinations of man and god, i.e. during possession, during smoking, during embracing (angbhaint), and during the communal meal which sometimes follows. Deity and devotee are also combined in

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[1] For some of the general Indo-European symbolic uses of fire and bonfires cf. Quayle and Hockey (1981a and 1981b).

the act of sacrifice which is sometimes used to conclude a jāgar session or jūnar festival. But the particular play of opposites represented in the substance and application of babhūt confers upon it a ritual power which not only brings to a grand climax all the activities of jāgar but renders them symbolically efficaceous. Anointment with babhūt during the embrace of deity and devotee is believed to confer life and issue, purity and protection against misfortune or affliction. Even after such an embrace, the substance retains its ritual power, and is believed to confer upon the recipient health, stability and fertility. Its use assists in the attainment of mokṣa, both for men, and for unfulfilled spirits seeking departure.

Before discussing in detail the composition of babhūt, its symbolic referents and the precise logic of its regenerative function let us briefly consider the use of sacred ashes in Hinduism generally. Śaivite jogis all over India smear their bodies with fire-ash as a means of generating body heat, as a protection against evil spirits and as a way of signifying world renunciation or worldly 'death'. Kānphaṭā Nāth jogis use ashes to draw cosmic symbols on their bodies to indicate world transcendence, e.g. the Śaivite half-moon motif, or the tripundra (three worlds) motif on their arms and foreheads respectively. Śiva himself is depicted in myth as having coated his body in ashes taken from the cremation ghat. Ashes, as the issue of fire and the residue of burnt offerings, convey notions of liminality (death in life = the renouncer) and immortality (life in death = the soul after cremation). Ashes are all that remain of the body after cremation; and one way of providing for the salvation of the soul is to immerse these ashes in a sacred river - hence the positioning of cremation ghats beside holy rivers.

Once ritually combined with water, ashes absorb and represent the qualities or essential principles of creation and destruction, and testify to their mutuality. Resuscitation from ashes, and rejuvination through their burning and subsequent immersion are recurrent motifs in the classical tradition. Thus, according to O'Flaherty:

> "One Brāhmaṇa states that ashes which are thrown into water reproduce from the water what there was in them of Agni's nature, and a dead man is reborn out of the fire, which only consumes his body, just as he is born from his parents" (O'Flaherty, 1973:161).

Ashes are identified with the seed of Śiva which contains both male and female, creative and destructive properties. This phoenix symbolism can be found to underlie the following mythological identification:

> "Śiva said, 'I am Agni and (Devī) is Soma. The ashes are my seed and I bear my seed on my body. I am Agni the maker of Soma and I am Soma who takes refuge in Agni. When the Universe is burnt by my fire and reduced to ashes, I establish my seed in ashes and sprinkle all creatures" (Extract from Brahmāṇḍa, cited ibid:161)

Just as the world itself was created from ashes taken by Viṣṇu from Gorakhnāth's sacred dhūnī in Pātāla, so, the Universe is, as in the above extract, periodically destroyed by fire and reborn out of ashes. This metaphorical link between ashes and the stuff of the universe is also highlighted in brahmanical ritual. During the sandhyā, or 'morning ritual', ashes taken from a fire offered to Durga are washed three times and re-offered to Śiva. The brahmin mixes these ashes (bhasma) with water, holds them in his left hand covers them with his right hand and utters the following mantra:

> "Fire is equivalent to ashes, wind is equivalent to ashes, water is equivalent to ashes, sky is equivalent to ashes, everything, mind, eyes and other senses is equivalent to ashes. With these ashes I mix water which represents light, essence,

> nectar, Brahmā, the earth, the intervening space between earth and the sky and OM"
> (Stevenson, 1971:217).

Ashes and water once mixed, combine and fuse the qualities of fire and water, death and rebirth, the male principle and the female principle. The fusion or conjunction of these opposites through the medium of ashes used in anointment is an embodiment of the creative principle. The process of fusion, the synthesis of opposites, may be compared with the tantric ritual of maithuna, ritual intercourse performed to generate cosmic conciousness (cf. pp.108-111). During maithuna the tantric yogin seeks to unify the "sun" and "moon" which are microcosmically located within the transcendental body at the base of the spine and the cerebrum respectively. The "moon" is identified with Śiva, Soma, water, semen (rasa or sukra) and the sky. The "sun" is identified with Śakti, Agni, fire, menstrual blood and amniotic fluids (mahā-rajas), and the fire of the underworld (kalagni) (Dasgupta, 1969:237; Eliade, 1958a:239). As jogin and joginī come together, water and fire, sun and moon, white semen and red female fluids are commingled and fused in an act of physical and metaphysical regeneration which confers an experience of non-duality (advaya or samarasa). Significantly, the rite of maithuna concludes with the anointment of the participants' bodies with ashes. These are mixed with the spilt residue of coitus, rasa and rajas; and are believed to confer upon the pair the power of "magical sight" (Briggs, 1973:334).

The place of babhūt within the overall scheme of jāgar can be directly compared with the use of ashes by the tantric renouncers. Neither fire nor water are evident in the material composition of babhūt yet it is a metamorphosis of both. It is sacred matter (cow-dung) processed by netherworldly fire (dhūnī) and made into a solution with holy water. It participates within and combines both sets of universal

polarities , the male principle (water, cooling, purifying) and the female principle (fire, heating, life-giving) and like the rasa/raja fluids of the 'consummated' tantricist it is an issue of their combination and has been transformed by the processes involved. As ba-bhūt ("for spirits") it is used to liberate spirits seeking mokṣa, thus providing them with a metaphysical regeneration comparable to that of the tantricist. But it is in turn conferred by gods and spirits upon their devotees in order to assist in the attainment of the devotees' salvation - a condition which is ultimately dependent upon the well-being and regeneration of the latter in the world. Anointment with babhūt not only enhances progress through the death cycle but aids in the achievement of preliminary life-cycle goals: survival, familial well-being, fertility and procreation.

If akśāt-pitya is an unction conferred by the living to celebrate a life-enhancing initiation into sacred time and space (the jāgar or pūjā), babhūt-pāni is an unction conferred by the dead upon the living to celebrate or mark a life-enhancing communion with the dead. Babhūt is akśāt-pitya at a higher level of transformation. The complete regeneration which anointment with the substance is believed to promote does not merely arise out of a combination of substantive polarities (male and female, fire and water) but in addition arises out of the communion of men and gods, heaven and earth, life and death, which jāgar permits.

The supreme goal of the Nātha yogin is the unification of the "sun" and the "moon" (ha and tha) , an achievement which induces samādhi, a blissful "return to a primordial state of nondifferentiation" (Eliade, 1958a:270). This unification is considered to be a combination of "the two elements underlying physical existence, - viz., the descent of creation and preservation and the element of change and destruction" (Dasgupta,

1969:236). These are precisely the combinations which are sought during the activities of jāgar, in possession and anointment; but the immediate orientations of jāgar are philosophically rather different. Whereas the 'true' jogin seeks to reverse the cyclical process of creation and destruction (a process termed ulṭā sadhana) by transcending it altogether, the devotee of jāgar, although temporarily adopting the status of the jogin, wishes to maintain and further his own command of these basic processes. Here again we see embodied within a local ritual context the basic Hindu recognition of the creative power of asceticism, and the subsequent transmutation into a laic context of ascetic values, processes and symbols oriented towards both other-worldly and this-worldly ends.

As institutions in Kumaoni society, jāgar and jūnar are primarily oriented towards the provision of both individual (both gods and men) and community regeneration. Their purpose is to 'create' new life and to revitalise existing forms of life; to restore a sense of community, to raise morale, restore psychological and physiological imbalances, heal internal divisions and individual sickness, and provide for spiritual redemption. As ritual institutions their generalised function confirms Hocarts' view of ritual forms as providing for the promotion of 'life' and its periodic magical renewal (1973:52[1]) The people of Kumaon with their deference towards the sacrality and power of the 'truly' dead and the symbolic dead (the renouncer) recognise the basic interdependence of life and death, a fundamental relationship between the living and the dead, and in their rituals deploy this

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[1] For a more recent presentation of basically the same argument, cf. Burridge, 1969:13. In the millenarian cults of Melanasia, possession ceremonies and oracular rituals are construed as providing (in intention) towards the regeneration of life, self and society.

interdependence as a force to be used for the promotion of life. Jāgar and jūnar are designed to create life out of death. The expressive forms utilised can be viewed in this light as representing a solution between world renunciation (with its paradoxically creative potential) and world regeneration, a combination of principles catering for both natural life (life in the world) and supernatural life (death in the world). Furthermore, this is a specifically Hindu (i.e. not 'local' or 'deviant') solution; it can be usefully compared with the role of Śiva in mythological thought as an attempt to reconcile the basic contradiction between the orientation of the ascetic and that of the householder (O'Flaherty, 1973:4-11, 251-4); and it can be compared with the role of popular tantrism in Hinduism as a way of reconciling the achievement of worldly goals with the attainment of an ascetic spirituality (Dumont, 1970:55).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DEATH OF THE AUTUMN GODDESS

A. INTRODUCTION : THE DEVĪ-PŪJĀ AND ITS MYTHOLOGY

In this chapter I propose to turn my attentions towards a Kumaoni festival which annually re-enacts and dramatically celebrates the mythological death, propitiation and projected liberation of the region's most popular and reputedly most powerful, ancestral deity, Nanda Devī, the Autumn Goddess. The festival encompasses elements of all the major ritual idioms found in the post-mortuary complex: death, exorcism, possession, propitiation and sacrifice. But it does not participate directly within the death-cycle ritual complex proper in the sense that it does not function as an institution facilitating the passage between the worlds of a potentially ongoing stream of domestic or community spirits. The object of worship is wholly fixed. However, like jūnar it is a seasonal sacrificial ceremony which celebrates the interdependence of the living and the deified dead, and like chal-pūjā it is concerned with the propitiation and attempt to liberate an unfulfilled spirit, viz, Nanda in her aspect as the bhūtkāyī (ghostly form) 'queen' of Kumaon. The event is however not simply a ritual commemoration of a mythological propitiation thought to have taken place in a former era, for Nanda is not just a historical figure but a personification of the Autumn Goddess whose annual death and propitiation is considered a vital component and inaugural element of the approaching rice harvest season.

The pūjā to Nanda, which both marks and 'creates' the year's major agrarian seasonal transition - the passage between the monsoon season and the autumnal harvest season - is a mortuary and post-mortuary

ritual metaphorically transposed onto a calendrical or seasonal level. What is really being celebrated is the passage of the monsoon and the maturation and death of the rice crop leading to community renewal and the promise of a new life through the fruits of the harvest. As such, the event corresponds closely to the Indo-European model of the harvest festival which features the violent death and renewal of the spirit of vegetation at this critical time of the year (cf. Frazer, 1963:360-387). Specific parallels can be elicited with fundamental forms of the Indo-European complex, not the least of these being the overall theme of regeneration through death, a motif which as we have seen also underlies the entire spectrum of Kumaoni mortuary and post-mortuary rites previously considered. A discussion of this is set out in Section C. For present purposes however it is sufficient to consider the festival as a mortuary and post-mortuary ritual with seasonal overtones.

Although dedicated specifically to Nanda Devī, the autumnal Devī-pūjā in Kumaon coincides with, and amalgamates elements of the Durga-pūjā which is observed throughout North India during the naurātri or nine new-moon nights of Asoṣ (September-October). Indeed, some of the more 'orthodox' participants in the festival prefer to see the worship of Nanda Devī as secondary to the worship of Devī (the goddess par excellence) in her aspect as Durga. In any case it is impossible to effect a separation of the two traditions, especially since the existence of a dichotomy within the pantheon of the rite reflects a fundamental dichotomy in its sacerdotal organisation, that between 'brahminical' and non'brahminical' functionaries. These distinct groups of officiants share the organisation of the event, the performance of the rituals and (not without a certain degree of acrimony) the income and offerings which accrue. However, as a pūjā to Nanda Devī, the 'local' form of

Durga, the ritual idioms of the event fall predominantly within the unorthodox tradition and its mythological foundations are primarily 'bardic' rather than 'śastric'. The major ritual schedule of the festival consists of: a series of possession sequences which give birth to, or 'incarnate' the goddess; two well-defined processions (jātrā) one of which incorporates the ritual immersion of a temporary (kaço) statue (dikara) representing Nanda; and at its focal point, a sequence of sacrifices. But unlike the other ceremonies considered previously, features of invocation and possession are subordinated within a larger schema of sacrifice and propitiation.

There are three major locations for the Nanda Devī pūjā in Kumaon: (a) Ranchūla Kot set in the heart of the fertile Katyūr valley, former home of the Katyūr Rajas, and positioned near the bazaar village of Dungholi which lies approximately ten kilometres by road from Bajināth, the former seat of the Katyūr dynasty; (b) Nainital, a former British hill station in southern Kumaon built around a like named after the goddess ('Naini-tāl'; and (c) Almora town, the administrative centre of Almora district, and former seat of the Chand dynasty which created and formerly ruled over the kingdom of Kumaon. Since the festival is held simultaneously in each location I was only able to observe one performance, that held at Kot, which lay within my chosen field area. I was able however to collect fragments of incidental details regarding the other two which bear upon my discussion of the Kot rituals.

The Mela is the largest event in the ritual calendar of Barahmandal and Danpūr and it attracts large crowds of pilgrims and devotees from a wide variety of districts including Katyūr, Borarau, Kairarau, Chaukotiya and some of the outlying districts of Garhwal which adjoin the Katyūr valley. It is held every year at Ranchūla (lit 'queens

hearthfire' or 'queens vulva') Kot (fortress) Mandīr (temple). Three fixed days are devoted to the rituals: the sixth, seventh and eighth days of the new moon period, or bright half (śukla pakṣ) of Asoṣ. The final day, on which the major sacrifices take place, is traditionally the anniversary of the mythological marriage between Śiva-Mahādev, the master of the 'three worlds' (Trilokināth) in his incarnation as Bhūteśvāra (Lord of the Ghosts), and the goddess Pārvati, daughter of the mountains (Atkinson, 1973c:792).

The dominant caste groups of five particular villages are responsible for the running of the festival and the provision of officiants. The village of Āṇn provides officiating UPādhayi brahmins; a family of Tiwari Brahmans living near the Bajināth temple supplies the temple caretakers; the communi ty of Mela Dāgari provides the pūjā ḍāgariyās, a group of Bhandāri Rajputs; the Parihar Rajputs of Mowai provide substitute ḍāgariyās; and the Doms of Gheti village supply the jāgariyā, his hiwari and the temple drummers and horn-blowers. The various ritual tasks and responsibilities of the festival were originally allotted to these villages by one of the early Chand rajas. In theory, each group of representatives is entitled to a share in the proceeds from the event.

The Devī-pūjā ceremonials also provide the occasion for a fair or 'mela'. This is in fact an essential aspect of the event and some of the themes suggested by the rituals in the temple arena are in actuality played out in the activities of the fair which runs concurrently outside the temple enclosure. The general atmosphere of the mela (lit. 'chaos', 'confusion') is characterised by a degree of sexual licence, revelry, feasting, dancing, gambling and a free and easy mixing of castes and sexes.

These are all activities which are either forbidden or rigidly controlled during the rest of the year (cf. Chapter One, pp.61 - 5). Trading and refreshment stalls are set up by local shopkeepers and migrant Bhotiya traders, and these line the uphill route to the temple. Of the goods sold there is a predominance of wooden implements to be used for the preparation and storage of milk products (churns, pots and bowls, for milk, butter and curds); a vast selection of milk sweets and a range of feminine trinkets of the type popular among the women of Kumaon (bangles, bracelets, mirrors, etc.).

The mela is usually well attended by Saddhus and Saddhinīs (joginīs) some of whom set up small shrines on the path leading up to the temple and there receive offerings (bhaint, dakṣiṇa) from pilgrims in return for tilak, blessings and flower-petal prasād. Also stationed beside the path are a number of beggars and blind musicians.

The temple is situated on a hilltop placed in the very centre of Katyūr's bowl-shaped valley, and overhangs an intersection of two rivers, the Garud and the Gomati. It also commands an extensive view of the Himālayan peaks including, in particular, Mount Nanda Devī, with which the goddess is associated.

The temple building itself is a relatively recent re-construction and is, consequently lower in height than is common with the Śaivite/Śakti temples of Kumaon. It is rectilinear in shape and is surmounted by a triangular edifice topped by a brass spire. Together with the circular wall which encloses the entire temple/hilltop area, the temple constitutes a mandala, with the form being that of a triangle within a rectangle enfolded by a square (the temple arena) and a circle on the perimeter (the wall). Beneath the spire (Kalasa), which forms the bindu

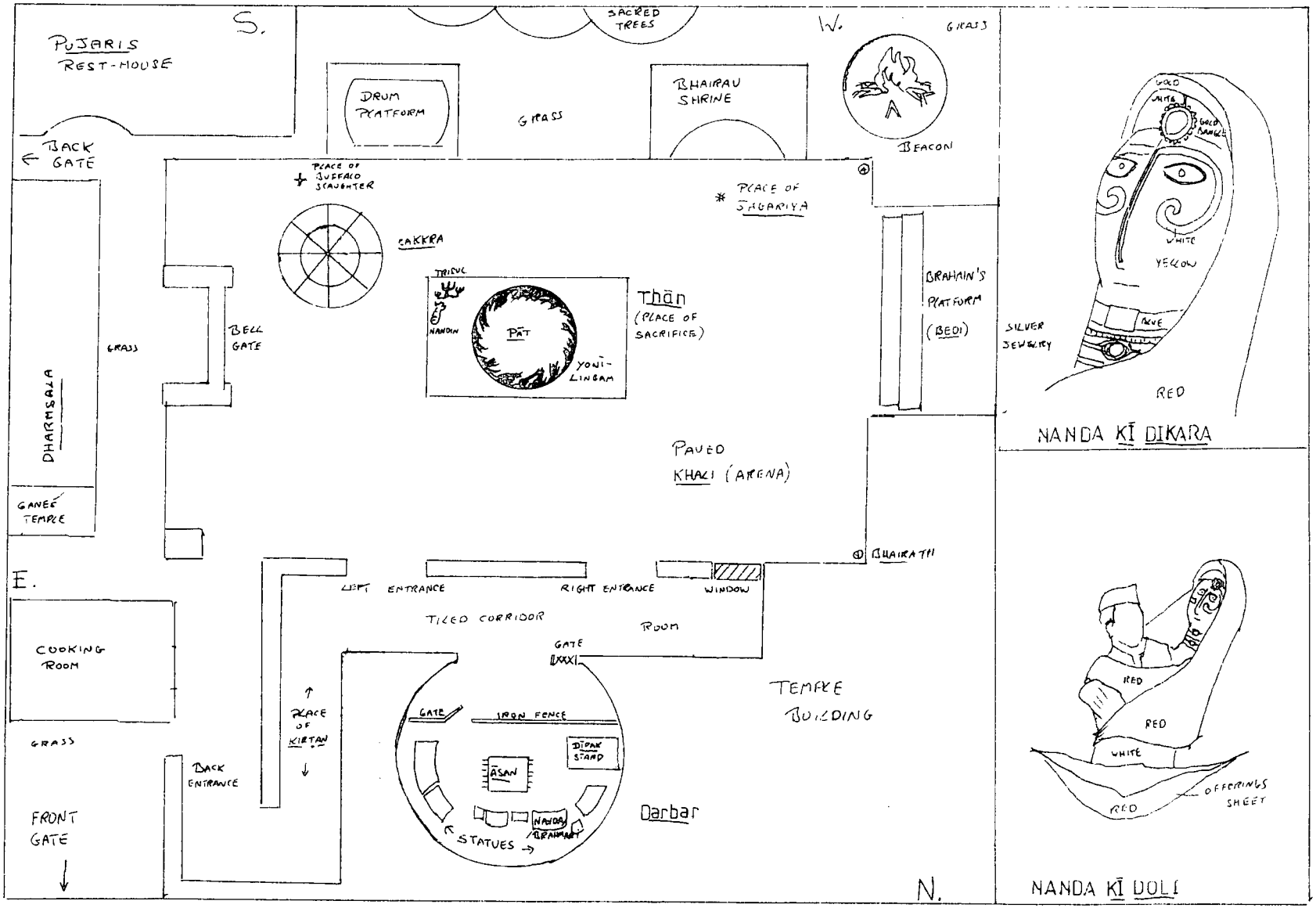


DIAGRAM 5 THE KOT MANDĪR & NANDA DEVĪ

or mid-point of the triangle (not the mandala) is placed a stone lion (bhag), the vehicle (vahana) of the goddess. All the temple buildings are white but the bases, eaves, ledges and doors are plastered with red clay (mixed with dung) inlaid with vertical strips of white rice-flour paint (aipon).

There are three parts to the temple building itself. The largest part is the central chamber which provides the throne room of the deity. This faces directly south west (the region of the dead and site of Yama's kingdom) and opens out onto a rectilinear arena (khali) paved with stone slabs. Smaller rooms adjoin the chamber on either side. Two main doors provide access to the darbar, but these are positioned to the left and the right of the main chamber. They open into a frontal corridor which separates the throne room from the outer wall. To the right of the right-hand door (facing south) is a low window which serves as an occasional ritual platform but is usually kept closed. At the left hand side of the temple a doorway facing east also provides access to the darbar corridor (cf. diagram 5.). A smaller room, meant for cooking, is located on the eastern side of the temple construction. Around the khali are located a number of smaller buildings; two dharmsalas; two platforms, one for the recitation of texts, the other for the playing of drums and horns; and two small, slightly neglected shrines, one to Ganeś, the other to Bhairav. The openings of each of these face the doors of the goddess's shrine.

At one side of the khali is placed a wooden post from which hangs an assortment of bells of various sizes. These represent the gifts of individual devotees, and are tolled at the time of pūjā or darśan (visitation, audience). The area between the perimeter of the

arena and the circular wall is grassed and decked with groups of padam (cherry) and pipal (fig) trees. The opposite (right hand side) of the khali contains two masts (bhairath) placed at either corner. One supports a platform upon which a beacon will be let during the rituals of the seventh night; the other is a chir (Shorea Robusta) tree sheared of all branches except a rough trident (triśūl) of three branches replete with pine needles allowed to remain on top. Below the branches of this bhairath is hung a small red triangular flag decorated with a thin border of white triangles and a white triśūl insignia in the centre.

The surrounding wall itself has two gates; the largest (main) gate faces north east (the direction of the gods and the site of Mount Kailāś, the heaven of Śiva and his consort); the smaller gate faces south east. Large bells are suspended from each gate. The smaller gate leads to a small tank which supplies water for the temple. The larger gate, resplendant with sweeping columnades suggestive of the opened sides of a vulva, opens out onto a row of steps which lead down the hill towards Dungholi. Half-way down this hill are located a group of temples devoted to Nāgnāth (master of the snakes), and beyond this again can be found an ancient temple site bearing some statues of unknown origin and date. At the base of the hill lies a water tank from which runs a rivulet fed by two channels of water which issue from inside the hillside.

The two spouts from which the water pours are shaped in the form of lions' heads. The outlets are sheltered by a stone platform supported by two columns. The effect created is that of a womb-like cave from which a rivulet known as the Nandakī-Naula ('stream of Nanda')

issues forth. The motif is consistent with the cave temples common to the Kumaon Himālaya and usually devoted to either the goddess or Gorakhnāth.

The darbar is tiled with green and white marble, and divided into two parts by an iron-worked barrier. Behind this lies a raised platform (bedi) which contains the statues and cult implements. The walls around the statues are adorned with pictures of the goddess, yak brushes (cauri), peacock fans and items of ritual use (a clock, lotas, bowls, boxes of incense etc.). Above the statues hangs a heavy curtain with a red floral design.

The statues on the platform are pre-moghul in origin (some of the features have been violently defaced by muslim soldiers who made sorties into the hills). They have been blackened with age, incense smoke and oblations of dahī and ghī. Represented within the group of statues are a number of aides (gaṇ) to the goddess and a procession of bhuts, apsarases and gandharvas. To their right is situated a stand of triśūls, dīpak and agarbāti holders, and to their left the āsan of the pujari, made from a square of red and black carpeting. The implements for the daily pūjā (bell, conch, loṭa and tali) are placed directly underneath the statue of the goddess itself. This sits in the very centre of the row of statues (murti) and is twice the size of all the others. It is adorned with a red cloth and golden and silver coloured jewelry, so that only the face, that of a stern middle-aged woman, is visible. Flowers adorn the statue of the goddess (these are replaced daily).

Outside the central chamber, in the centre of the khali stands the thān or sacrificial altar. This is a rectilinear pit

(kud or pāt) containing a rounded, slightly convex stone. The construction suggests an inverted śiva-śakti, or yoni-lingam image. The female principle is represented by the hollow pit itself, the male by the central stone and presence of two Śaivite emblems, a metal statue of Nandin (Śiva's bull) and a group of iron tridents (triśūli) which overhang the south east corner of the pit. The pit forms the bindu or mid point of the mandala motif from which the entire temple complex is fashioned. The pit predates the current temple buildings in origin, and forms the original site of a much more ancient Ranchūla Kot temple. Formerly, this was also a site of human sacrifice: male victims were consecrated to the goddess and sacrificed over this stone (Atkinson, 1973:866).

Apart from Nanda, the statue of the goddess is believed to house one other distinct incarnation (avatār) of Durga, namely Brahmarī, a popular brahmanical deity. Brahmarī is not worshipped at this time of year, but in the Spring month of Chait, and her function in Chait as a deity who purges the death of the winter months and brings life and fertility into crop sowing and planting, reveals her identity as a Spring Goddess whose role conforms closely to the Indo-European model (cf. Frazer, 1963:517-553). This dichotomy between Spring and Autumn Goddesses is also found in Bengal, where the forms worshipped are Basantī Devī and Durga Devi respectively (Ostor, 1971:113).

The statue itself appeared to me to be almost identical in style, shape and facial expression to the statue of the goddess Uma, a Rudra form of the Śakti (Atkinson, 1973:790), housed in the temple at Karnprāyāg, situated en route between Kumaon and Badrināth at the junction of the Pindar and the Alaknanda. This temple was rebuilt by Śaṇkāra

Achārya and the style of the statue conforms to the classical predilictions of the latter. The almost identical statue of Nanda was originally housed in the village temple of Mela Dăgari the nearest village to Kot, and ownership is claimed by the Bhandāri Rajputs of that settlement. It was re-located in the Kot temple at some point in the dim and distant past, following the reconstruction of the temple .[1] At the time an agreement was made between the Tīwari Brahmins allotted caretakership of the temple and the Bhandāris over income accruing from offerings made to the temple and the statue.

But in fact the proceeds of the autumn mela and the offerings given to this statue provide the focus of a long standing dispute between the Tīwaris[2] and the Bhandāris.[3] The terms of the agreement apparently

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[1] Atkinson lists a land-grant to this temple which dates from before 1700 A.D. (1973:572).

[2] According to Atkinson (1973), the Tīwaris "claim descent from Śrī Chand, a Gujräthi Brahman who came to Champāwat some four or five hundred years ago and emigrated thence to Khagmara on the Almora hill, where his descendants were found when the Chands removed to Almora in 1563 A.D. These Tīwaris belong to the Gautama gotra ... and are called Agnihotri Brahmans." They marry with other Asal groups such as the Joshi, Pant, Pānde, Lohāni, Bhatt, Kanyāl, Upareti, Upādhya and Thaplyāl divisions... "Their principal occupation is agriculture and they are also found as priests and teachers ... They are chiefly Sāktas or Śaivas and Vaishnavas, and some worship the one God and do not bow to idols". (Vol. III, p. 424-5).

[3] Regarding the Bhandāris, Atkinson points out, that this group is connected with a Khasi group termed the Chauhāns of which "a curious tradition exists" that they and others "fought with and put down the Buddhists, and that it was the descendants of the purohits of these anti-Buddhist tribes who preached the efficacy of pilgrimages to Badrinath and Kedārnāth" (Ibid:438). The Bhandāris also state that "their ancestor was attached to Som Chand's establishment in Kāli Kumaon as house-steward and hence the name"(a bhandāri is a store-keeper). A well near Almora is named after them 'bhandāri-naula'. "Another story is that they came from Nepāl where also this caste name is known and this is the more probable, as in early times Kāli-Kumaon belonged to Doti". They will "intermarry with all kinds of Rajputs". They worship Śiva, the Sāktis, Saim, Haru, Goril, Kalsain, Nāgimal, Chhurmal, &c., and believe in their power to possess men and even animals. Agriculture and in a few cases service are the occupations of the Bhandāris of the present day" (Vol. III, p.438).

stipulated that the revenue of the statue which accrues at the Mela should go to the Rajputs, whereas the revenue for the temple during the rest of the year should go to the Brahmans. The Tiwaris, however, disagree that the money for the mela should go to Mela Dãgari, and claim it is their own rightful due. Their consequent retention of the funds over the last few years has aroused the enmity of the Rajputs; although, it would seem there is no question of the latter relinquishing their traditional duty of providing 'mela ḍãgariyãs'.

Whereas the goddess Nanda, whose 'priests' are the Khasi Bhandaris, is a meat-eating (mansi) and impure (aśuddh) incarnation of the Kali-Yuga era, Brahmarī is an auspicious, vegetarian (nirmansi) deity of a former era. In the Chait festival her worship is organised and officiated by the Thul-Jat Tiwari brahmins and involves no blood sacrifice. This involves only a ten day recitation of Purāṇic stories concerning the achievements of Devī, the Devī-Bhagavat. The brahmin seats himself on a platform (bedi) built to the right of the temple (cf. diagram) and reads extracts from Sanskrit texts to the crowd seated on the temple arena and inner enclosure. He explains the texts in the local dialect and interprets its meanings and moral implications. At the end of the ten days a general yagna to the gods is performed, while a mela goes on outside the temple perimeter. The legend of Brahmarī is one of the many stories of Devī told during the Devī-Bhagavat. According to this the Katyūr valley, which was once filled by a great lake, was the site of a consummate battle between the devtas and asuras (demons), rivals for the supremacy of Uttarkhand, the sacred mountain kingdom. In order to overthrow the demons the gods combined together to create Devī out of the waters of the lake in the form of a swarm of

bees. She subsequently chased the demons, and forced them with the stinging power of the bees (bhauran) to immerse themselves in the waters of the lake, in which they were quickly drowned.

The story (kahaini) of Nanda is not recorded in the sacred Pan-Hindu literature but in the oral traditions of Kumaon's bards. As Nanda is the most popular bhūmi devta in Kumaon, her origin and achievements are known to almost everybody and are widely re-told in story form, in the form of lengthy sung devotions (āṭhon) performed yearly at Devī temples in the villages of the region, and in jāgar and jūnar recitations. In addition, her story is recited during a traditional dance termed a johra (performed as part of the rituals of the Kot Mela) which features a dialogue between the Devī (enacted by local women) and the buffalo-demon Mahiś (enacted by local men) prior to the sacrifice of the latter. The following details of Nanda's origin story and achievements have been taken from the rās to Nanda which is performed by the jāgariyā at the Mela to effect incarnation:

Nanda was the daughter of Raja Uday Chand and was married to the raja of Tehri Garhwal. Apparently she was unhappy in her marital home in Tehri and ran away, going first to Kasipur, then to Nainital and finally to her home in Almora. When her father asked her why she was unhappy in Tehri and why she had come back home she said "They speak Garwhali and I cannot understand them". The raja then asked the advice of his wife. The rani suggested that they engage a purohit (family priest) to accompany Nanda back to Tehri and there help her with the language. A Pande of the Ballabh dynasty was

appointed and he, along with a diwan (administrator) returned to Tehri with Nanda. Again she ran away and returned to Almora. This time the raja of Tehri himself travelled to Almora and met with the raja of Kumaon who again asked Nanda why she had run away. This time Nanda replied "I cannot bring fodder and firewood from the jungle and tie knots in rope like the women of Tehri. I am from a wealthy Almora family yet you have married me into a country of sheep (bheri). So the king gave her a deaf and dumb (laṭo) herdsman to graze the sheep and collect the firewood, and sent Nanda back to Tehri.

However, Nanda again ran away, stopping off at Kasipur and Nainital as before. Her father became ashamed of her and angrily sent her back to Tehri. This time Nanda took a dagger (churmal) back to Tehri with her, and wearying again of her marital home ran away to Gaghar, and there stabbed herself. She died and her soul became a bhūtkāyī (haunting spirit) in both her maiṭ (parental home) and her saurās (marital home). Great trouble befell the Chand family and the kingdom of Kumaon. One of the sons died and the rani became seriously ill.

The raja consulted his puchars and astrologers (jyotiś) who told him that his misfortunes were due to the wrath of Nanda. They advised him to worship Nanda as an incarnation of Devī, to hold performances of āṭhon (eight day recitation of liturgies honouring the deity), and to build her a temple. Then the people of Kumaon made a statue (dikara) of Nanda from a banana tree and dressed it in many-coloured clothes. On the seventh day of Asoṣ the Raja offered Nanda's gold and silver ornaments to the dikara: these were placed on the statue on the eighth day and afterwards given to the Bora community

of Deonai for safekeeping. On the same day the dikara was worshipped with sacrifice and then immersed in the naula below the Kot temple.

Following the death of his maiden wife the raja of Tehri Garwhal had a dream in which he was visited by Nanda. In the dream she said to him "A lamb with four horns will be born from time to time in your kingdom. This must be given to me after a lengthy jātrā. If you fail to offer me my male horned lamb and perform a jātrá then your dynasty will always be troubled.

When the first such lamb was born the Tehri raja collected the ingredients for a Jāt (clean caste) pūjā from every village in his kingdom: flowers, rice, ghī, incense, dough lamps and flour. Then a large procession set out for Mount Triśūli led by the lamb. Whatever offerings were collected on the way were placed on its back or carried behind. Upon reaching Triśūli the lamb was set free to traverse the mountain, and the goddess Nanda was given worship (pūjā)

The first pūjā described in the story provides a basic model for some of the ritual activities which take place during the Kot festival. The second pūjā described, that undertaken by Nanda's husband, the raja of Tehri, depicts the bare skeleton of a complementary festival held in honour of Nanda, the Jāt Yātrā or 'pilgrimage of castes . This takes place once every twelve years (approx.). A brief description of this provides an essential supplement to our consideration of the Kot festival. The Jāt Yātrā involves a vast procession of Garhwalis and Kumaonis who journey from Nanda's earthly home (in Tehri) to the mountains lying beneath her heavenly home, Mt. Nanda Devī. For a description of the event I have relied upon the account of a brahmin informant who attended the last Yatra (1969) supplemented

with some brief noted provided by Atkinson (1973:792-3). It should be noted that the "lamb" which incarnates the goddess and is believed to lead the procession is in fact a ram, an animal sometimes found on classical iconographic depictions as an accompaniment to the goddess.

The Yātrā is organised by the jural descendants of the raja of Tehri (i.e. local government officials) and officiated by the former kings family purohits (brahmins from Nauti) and the pujaris of the district's goddess temples. The brahmins perform orthodox pūjās and recite Sanskritic mantras throughout the Yatra. The pujaris provide ḍãgariyās who become possessed by Nanda and her chief aides, Laṭu and Churmal,[1] at various junctions in the pilgrimage. Processionists, it would seem, are restricted to those belonging to the twice-born caste groups. Women are only permitted to go as far as Baiduni-Kundh at the foot of Triśūl. Saddhinis are however allowed to go further, as far as a place termed Kelwa Banaig. The Yātrā attracts thousands of pilgrims, many of whom do not go the entire way. Merit (punya) accrues simply from attendance at such an event, no matter how limited. The atmosphere of the pilgrimage is characterised by cooperation and conviviality: food is shared and the great hardships of the latter part of the journey are endured together. At halting places along the way the devotees assemble to sing folk songs and honour the goddess.

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[1] Laṭu represents the deaf and dumb herdsman of the myth, and Churmal the dagger with which she killed herself. As aides (gaṇ) to the goddess they function respectively as Nanda's standard bearer and weapons carrier.

The route taken is as follows: The Yātrā commences from the site of the Tehri raja's palace and leads steadily uphill towards the North East, passing through the Garhwal towns of Srinigar, Karnprāyāg, Chanpur, Nauti, Tehrali, Dewal, Mundoli and Wan. From Wan it proceeds through a number of desolate regions including Ranakhdar, Gairuli, Badani, Patarnachaon, Kelwa Banaig, Hansyathor, Balparamkasūrela, Chirangukal and the steep sided gully of Jhwargari. This is a region of continuous ascent (Ūkal) which eventually leads to a region of continuous descent (Tārā Hūlar) culminating in a rocky area known as Silāśamūdra (ocean of stones). From there the procession leads through ice and snow to Gitaphan which marks the approach to the mountain under-lying Triśūli known as Rūpkundh. There are two peaks on this mountain, Chotahumkundh and Burahūmkundh. Below the latter are situated two large 'shining stones' (black rocks glistening with mica) which are worshipped as statues of Nanda. Rūpkundh is then circumambulated in a clockwise fashion (pradakṣiṇa) and the processionists return by a different path to Wan from where the procession finally disperses.

En route through Tehri and Garhwal the procession is joined by fifteen dolis bearing small gold statues of Nanda taken from the various goddess temples in the region. These statues are graced with coloured clothes, jewelled ornaments and offerings, and are carried in palanquins with red canopies supported by four men. Each doli is preceded by musicians, conch blowers, bell tollers and standard bearers carrying red and white flags.

Halting places along the route are decided by the whims of the four horned ram. At each of these, nirmansi pūjās and mantras

from the Durga Saptasathi are performed by the Nauti brahmins, while tantrapūjās involving possession and the sacrifice of buffaloes and goats are performed by the temple pujaris. These animals are provided by the villages along the route, many of which receive as prasādi the meat of goats slaughtered. Sacrifice takes place just before dawn breaks when a vigil and fast is broken.

The final ceremony at Burahumkundh involves a final sequence of possession and circumambulation of the stones, and a yagna or 'fire sacrifice', performed respectively by the pujaris and purohits. Each processionist places an offering of ghī upon the stones; and milk is offered to the goddess then shared around the company as prasādi.

Finally, the ram's forehead is marked with tilak. A red cloth containing rations of rice and flour is tied across its back. It is blessed with oblations of water (tarpan) and pushed up the mountain in the direction of Triśūl (i.e. towards the north east). It is forbidden to observe the fate of the animal so no-one watches the path which it takes. One informant (a brahmin) maintained that the animal was thus abandoned. Another informant argued that the ram usually ascended the mountain, then promptly returned without its head. This suggestion of sacrifice matches with Atkinson's information which stipulates that "When unloosed upon the mountain, the sacred 'goat' suddenly disappears and as suddenly returns without its head and thus furnishes consecrated food for the party" (1973:793). Successful completion of this part of the Yātrā is thought to confer bountiful harvests and milk-yields upon the lands of Garhwal and Kumaon during the eleven year cycle following.

Both in the sacrifices at Kot and the sacrifices which take place during the Jāt Yātrā, Nanda is offered not only goats (the usual sacrificial animal in Kumaon) but the blood and flesh of buffaloes. This is in fact the conventional due of Durga, the goddess also known Mahiśmardini, or 'slayer of the buffalo demon Mahiś'. But the buffalo has a parallel place within the mythology of Nanda, a factor which underlies or gives a 'local root' to the appearance of the Durga motif in the ceremonial symbolism of Kot. An alternative version of the Nanda story set out above depicts Nanda not as the victim of suicide but as the victim of an equally violent and 'unnatural' death at the hands of a buffalo-demon (jatiya-daitya). Apparently, the marriage bhārat (procession) of Nanda and her royal bridegroom was returning from the wedding (śādi) in Almora to the bridegroom's home when a decision was made to halt along the route for refreshment. Nanda feeling thirsty, climbed down from her palanquin and went to a nearby tank to fetch a drink of water. However, when she got to the tank a furious rutting buffalo (markoli jatiya) tried to attack her. She ran from there for shelter and hid amongst a grove of banana trees. But she was unable to hide successfully; the buffalo followed and killed her. Her death being untimely (ākāl) and violent, her spirit remained unfulfilled. To propitiate it, her father's family built a temple in Almora and dedicated it in her name.

Another story which gives an account of a violent encounter between the goddess and a buffalo is set out in the song-sequence of the johra which is recited just before the climax of the Kot rituals. The conclusion of this story is the reverse of the previous one in that it is not Nanda which dies but the buffalo. No statement is

made about how the goddess herself met her death - this is left open.

The story begins by revealing that Devi had raised the buffalo from childhood. However, on growing up it became ferocious (heated) and started to charge her. This became so bad that one day she was forced to flee to Bajināth where there was a large milk pond. She offered milk to the buffalo to drink but it would not be pacified and continued to charge her. From Bajināth she ran to the Maskana Gadera (ravine at Maskana) to take shelter from the buffalo in a cave. However, she was quickly discovered and she was forced to flee to Gheti.

At Gheti she asked the people of the village to protect her. But they would not listen to her requests, so she cursed them saying, "From this day on you will always suffer from goitre disease". Then she ran to the hill above Gheti, to a place called Dandhar, and there requested the pine trees to shelter her. But they refused so she cursed them, saying, "From this day on you will all grow twisted". To this day, it is said that the trees at Gheti still grow twisted. From there she ran to Gwaldam and took shelter on a large boulder. The buffalo then charged the boulder and knocked a large piece out of the stone; this can still be seen today. From Gwaldam she ran to Purna where she took shelter in a wheatfield. However, because of the wind in that place all the wheat was lying on one side and offered no shelter. So Devī cursed the area, saying, "From this day on, no wheat will grow in this place". To this day, it is said that still no wheat will grow in this place. From there she ran to Luasam. The buffalo followed her, and after some time they engaged in a battle during which the buffalo was killed.

The goddess's mythological role as Mahiśmardini in this local legend points to the close association which obtains between the Nanda

cycle of legends and the classical story of Durga. Durga is the prototypical Mahiśmardini and is uniformly characterised as ferocious in aspect: like Kālī, she wears skulls, carried weapons and has a bloody mouth from the slaughter of the demon. She is associated with the moon and the cow, with wine and with a lion vehicle; and she is identified as the 'sister' of Yama, god of death. Her apparel is yellow like that of a Saddhinī and she is followed about by a train of spirit Joginis who incur disease and blight crops if the goddess is not properly propitiated with the appropriate sacrifice (cf. Atkinson, 1973:794-5).

In the Mahiś legend, Durga had been created by the gods to rid the world of the blight caused by the demon king Mahiś. She entered a hermitage to practice tapas that might "satisfy Śiva", knowing that Mahiś would be attracted. Her retreat became a permanently blossoming paradise where creatures sought refuge from the oppressions of the demon king and his armies. On learning of the power and beauty of the goddess, Mahiś became tortured with desire and entered the hermitage to seduce her. However, the goddess taunted him by referring to his womanish nature. Mahiś became insulted and a fierce fight ensued. During the battle the two antagonists assumed the forms of rival animals such as the lion and the elephant and fought until the earth shook. A climax was eventually reached after the goddess had consumed large quantities of celestial wine;[1] the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa gives the following account of this:

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[1] O'Flaherty notes that "The goddess becomes intoxicated by drinking celestial wine during her orgiastic rampages, but the essence of this wine is the blood of victims sacrificed to her" (1975:249).

> "Then she spoke to him, her syllables confused with passion as they tumbled from her mouth which was loosened by intoxication. The Goddess said, 'Roar and roar for a moment, you fool, while I drink this honeyed wine. The gods will soon roar when I have slain you here'. Then she leaped up and mounted that great demon and kicked him in the neck with her foot and pierced him with her trident".
> (trans. O'Flaherty, 1975:248-9).[1]

Following this, the spirit of the demon emerged from the mouth of the buffalo and was promptly beheaded by the goddess. The outcome of the battle was a victory for the gods and a signal for the return of fecundity and fruition.[2]

We have seen that both local forms of the goddess Nanda and Brahmarī are associated in legend with water: Nanda's visit to a water-tank to assuage her thirst leads to her death; and the pool at Bajināth provides a scene in her duel with the buffalo; Brahmarī is born out of water and she saves the world by 'immersing' demons in the same water. There is also an association with vegetation: the banana grove where Nanda met her death; the trees and wheat cursed by Devī in her battle with the buffalo; and the re-appearance of vegetation upon the earth

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[1] The myth of the prelude to the battle is contained in the Skanda Purāṇa; that of the battle itself is taken from the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa.

[2] The story of Devī (both Nanda and Durga) and the buffalo (or buffaloes) present a number of striking parallels with the Indo-European myth of Mithra and the Bull. In the origin myth of the Roman Mithraic cult, Mithra mounts the grazing bull, drags it backwards over a road strewn with obstacles (a 'painful journey' or transitus) and into a cave. However the bull escapes. The sun then commands Mithra through a messenger raven to slay the fugitive. Submitting unwillingly to the decree of Heaven, Mithra overtakes the Bull and, seizing it by the nostrils, plunges a hunting knife into its flank. The plants, herbs and grapes which cover the earth with their verdure spring from the body of the Bull. Through the sacrifice of the Bull the tauroctonous hero becomes creator of all the beneficient beings; and from the death which he has caused, a new life emerges more rich and more fecund than the old. (Cumont, 1956:135-7).

following the victory of Durga over Mahiś. Both sets of associations are resurrected in the rituals performed at Kot, and provide key features of the ceremonial complex. A feature which does not emerge during the rituals but which is crucial to the mythology of Nanda is the association with the mountain or mountains. In the classical versions of the Durga legend, the site of Devī's austerities and the battle with Mahiś is represented as a sacred mountain (O'Flaherty, 1975:244). According to Atkinson, Nanda Devi is "one with Pārvati [the "mountaineer"], the daughter of Himāchal, and has many temples devoted to her exclusive worship" (792). After her is named the lofty peak Nanda Devī, the neighbouring peak, Nanda Kot, and the river Nandakinī which flows from the three-peaked Triśūli mountain. Triśūli is the companion peak to Nanda Devī, and is devoted to Śiva.

Garhwali mountain villages which have temples devoted to Nanda send worshippers every year with a doli of Nanda in a procession to the foot of Triśūli where worship is conducted in her honour (Atkinson, 1973: 792). At Martoli in the Juhar valley, the Bhotiyas of all the four border valleys of North Kumaon assemble annually in Asoṣ for a fair held in Nanda's honour as Guardian Goddess, daughter of the mountains and consort of Śiva. Revelry is accompanied by a mass sacrifice: ten buffaloes and over three hundred sheep (Pant, 1935:225-6). The site of the Jāt Yātrā pūjā is a mountain, and Nanda is depicted in all the legends as someone whose life and death takes place within a Himālayan environment. In a sense the goddess Nanda is the mountains (pahār), their vital force i.e. the seasonal spirit responsible for the annual cycle of changes which take place in the Kumaoni hillman's environment. In honouring Nanda as the most prestigious of the three most common Bhūmiya

Devtas (gods of place or of the earth and its products)[1] and by always offering her the first portion of every harvest or yield of milk, the people of Kumaon are in one way confirming and paying tribute to the very spirit or vital principal of their mountain existence.

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[1] Devī is regarded as the mother (or sometimes father's sister) of both Gorīya and Narsingh, the two other most popular Bhūmiya Devtas in Barahmandal/Danpūr.

B. THE RITUALS AT KOT

1. INCARNATION (AVATĀRI ĀGE)

The actual pūjā to Nanda commences at twilight on the sixth day of Asoṣ with a nyutan rās recited by a Dom jāgariyā from Gheti. The jāgariyā does not play a drum but a pair of finger cymbals, and during incantation he is accompanied by three other Gheti Doms. He and his helpers stand to the right of the left hand temple door, faces turned towards the opening. The recitation is performed in a low tone and is very brief in duration.

Three ḍẵgariyās stand inside the temple in an enclosed area situated to the right of the statue. Each is dressed in a long loin-cloth (dhoti) and vest (the dress of renouncers and purohits) combined with a headscarf tied tightly across the head to represent a female head covering. The manner of dress and the colours chosen serve to indicate both the renunciatory status of the officiant, and the feminine nature and associations of the personified deities. Thus the Nanda ḍẵgariyā wears the colours of the goddess: a red vest, a white dhoti and a yellow-ochre head scarf, but also a broad yellow-ochre sash draped from the left shoulder to hang under the right arm. The others, ḍẵgariyās for Nanda's aides, Laṭu and Churmal, are also clothed in white dhotis and yellow-ochre head scarves, but Laṭu's vest is white whereas Churmal's vest (kapri) is golden yellow. Their vests differentiate them from the goddess and emphasise their renunciatory aspect. Garlands of yellow

and white flowers are hung from their necks; Nanda's garland also contains a red flower, placed at the base (flower garlands are normally presented to renouncers and to guests who having 'arrived' have completed a journey). To complete the renunciatory motif, each ḍāgariyā displays Śaivite tripundra ('three lines' or 'three worlds') and crescent moon (chandra) marks painted with chandan (sandalwood paste) and rice flour onto their foreheads, necks and arms. Akśāt pitya has been smeared across their foreheads, and flower heads have been fixed under their scarves and behind their ears.

The unique blend of transvestism and renunciatory symbolism apparent in the dress of the ḍāgariyās is a gesture of both identification and separation: the visual effect created is directly comparable to the appearance of the Saddhinīs - devotees of Durga-Śakti - who attend the goddess pūjā in their numbers. These wear either red or yellow-ochre saris with their hair completely covered, and chandan tripundra marks on their foreheads.

At the climax point in the jāgariyā's invocation rās , the temple dhol and trumpet-bassoon are sounded from across the khali (courtyard). This signals the onset of possession. The jāgariyā and his aides proceed to circumambulate the sacrificial pit in a clock-wise manner (pradakṣiṇa). They are followed by three men who emerge from the temple blowing brass horns (thakkū) The cone of each horn is pointed towards the centre of the pit. After the horn-blowers have rounded the stone the three ḍāgariyās emerge from the temple and circle the stone in like manner. After one round all re-enter the temple. The pūjā has officially commenced.

A group of men, mostly Brahman but with some Rajputs, from

nearby villages now assemble inside the ḍāgariyās' enclosure to sing kirtan[1] in honour of Devī and Śiva. This is a noisy gregarious celebration. The recitations are accompanied by a harmonium and set of tablas. The darbar or inner enclosure where the statue is placed is filled by this time with Brahman women seated on the floor. During all this a stream of devotees enter the darbar to receive the darśan of the goddess, and exit by the right hand door. The Tiwari pujari, who is stationed on a square seat (āsan) beside the statue receives offerings of sweets, flowers, incense and money and gives in return a tilak of vermillion paste and small gifts of flower petals and sweets as the prasād of the goddess. The incense is lit before the statue and the flower petals scattered over all the icons.

Following the descent of darkness the jāgariyā and his group move to the left hand offside corner of the khali where they sit in a tight circle. Around them sit groups of 'low-caste' Rajput and Dom women who join the jāgariyā in a performance of āṭhon, or 'songs praising the achievements of Devī'. The intonation adopted is soft and melodic in contrast with the rowdy recitations of the kirtan singers inside the temple. Both the women inside and outside the temple remain in their positions overnight until dawn breaks moving only to offer dīpak and agarbāti to the statue at intervals. This and the recitation of āṭhon are regarded as vigils (jāgaran).

At mid-morning on the following day, the eve of nandāstami, various officiants and 'officials' assemble at the side door of the temple in preparation for the days rituals. Inside the temple the

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[1] Standard recitations of the deity's names and many forms.

pujari performs the morning arati to Devī. The statue is bathed with water; chandan, tilak and rice are applied to its head; agarbāti and dīpak are lit at its feet. A dish of charcoals and incense is circled three times over its head in a clockwise direction; mantras are recited, bells rung and conches blown. The pujari applies a streak of tilak to his own head then to the foreheads of each devotee who enters the darbar to seek the darśan of the goddess.

By this point in the day local purohits intent on providing service for their jajmans are beginning to take up position on the bedi situated to the right of the temple buildings. The first to do so is the resident purohit from the Śiva temple at Bageśwār, site of the most auspicious cremation ghat in the region and the place where the Sarjū river meets its tributary coming from the Pindari glacier. He is a Mahābrahman or funeral priest, and alone of all the purohits in attendance at the mela comes at the invitation of the temple committee who organise the pūjā. He is clothed entirely in white, with a white turban (pagri) and for the next two days he remains seated on a prayer mat reciting an unending stream of mantras from a book of selections taken from the Yajur and Atharva Vedas.

Nine bouts of possession are scheduled to take place during the mela. The pattern for each bout is roughly similar though the number of times the sacrificial stone is circumambulated is increased by one each time. Having taken incarnation at Kot through the body of the d̃agariyā who in his turn has received the goddess via the medium of the temple roof and the statue, the goddess remains present in the statue for the duration of the pūjā. But during possession she re-enters the body of the d̃agariyā and in doing so temporarily vacates the statue.

When she is transferred between the ḍãgariyā and the temporary statue (dikara) which is constructed at a later point, only the Brahmarī aspect of Devī remains inside the statue. During sacrificial sequences the statue, as the representation of Brahmarī, a nirmansi, śuddha deity, is covered with a red cloth.

During possession Nanda is held aloft by two men. She sits on the shoulders of one, while the other supports her from behind. These are sturdy men, meant to represent the lion which provides the goddess's vehicle. Between her teeth is placed a large (twelve inch) knife, intended to represent the goddess in her violent ferocious aspect. While possessed, the ḍãgariyā trembles (kamno) and writhes, turning constantly from side to side, his body and head turning in opposite directions. He always faces upwards, and either waves his hands and arms freely in the air or locks them behind his head so that the elbows protrude at angles out from his body.

Nanda is always preceded by her aides (gaṇ), Churmal her weapons carrier and Laṭu her standard bearer. Laṭu emerges from the temple first. He dances backwards holding aloft a brown yak-tail brush. This he flails from side to side with his right hand. His dance movement consists of a hopping motion in which one foot is kept permanently off the ground. Churmal dances between Laṭu and Nanda. He also faces the goddess and hops backwards. In his arms he holds a sword which he carries raised above his head, moving it from side to side while turning his head in the opposite direction. Both Churmal and Laṭu tremble and writhe with the ecstatic rebirth of incarnation. The officiants who carry the thakku before the deities are not dressed in any formal or ritual manner. The horns themselves, which are believed

to date from the early days of the Chand dynasty, are made from pure copper and emit a coarse single note which resembles in sound the bellow of a bull or buffalo.

Certain minor variations are incorporated within each possession sequence. These generally have to do with the formal and spontaneous offering of gifts by the deity to the devotees assembled, or else with the acceptance by the deity of animals which individual devotees wish to sacrifice in her honour. All the variations will be adumbrated at the appropriate points in the description which follows.

2. THE PROCESSION OF THE TREE (BOT KĪ JĀTRĀ)

The second possession sequence takes place at ten-o-clock in the morning of the second day, the seventh day of Asoṣ. The circumambulations are led by the jāgariyā and his hiwaris followed by two flag bearers carrying folded red and white flags (Bhairaths). These hang from flag poles some twelve to sixteen feet in height, and serve as a more elaborate representation of the flags used in Jumaoni marriages (śādi) to signify and announce the union of male (white) and female (red) embodiments of the god and the goddess. The flags are both triangular and bear the following symbols, listed in descending order from the top of the cloth downwards:

> On the red flag: (a) a white 'om' sign representing the presence of the divinity; (b) a white trident, representative of Śiva's triśūl - both weapon and mountain; (c) a white cakkra or world symbol, inlaid with blue and green and with a red nucleus; (d) a bird (parrot) with wings outspread flying upwards, symbol of puruṣa the male principle, messenger of the gods and stealer

of amṛta, the classical ambrosia of immortality; a figure of Hanuman, the 'flying' monkey-god, dressed in a red and white loincloth, red sash, ochre garland and white hat; his skin is blue; in his left hand he weilds a burning torch (used in mythology to destroy the bridge to Lanka); in his right a green and white triangle of earth; (f) a blue horseman with a black hat (Bhairav?) seated on a rearing white horse and weilding a white sword; (g) Kamdhenū, the celestial cow and giver of 'milk/love', in blue and white; (h) a leopard with a long scorpion-like tail - a yellow cat (bhag not differentiated from the tiger) vehicle of goddesses, vulva of Śakti, seat of Śiva, consort of demons and familiar of sorcerors (Crooke, 1926:354-8); (i) a white kũkri, Kumaoni instrument of sacrifice and Nepāli instrument of death; (j) a fish, emblem of Matsyendranāth, guru of Gorakhnāth, another repository of amṛta, and inhabitant of the netherworld; it is blue in colour and segmented into three by two white lines; (k) a yellow snake (nāg) inhabitant of Pātāla and companion of Śiva.

On the white flag: The white flag sports the same symbols as the red except for the cakkra which is replaced by a solar motif - a red sun with a blue centre. Some of the colours on the other motifs are inverted - where this does not contradict the mythological idiom (e.g. the "blueness" of Hanuman). The 'om' sign, the kũkri, and the triśūl are red, the parrot is blue and red; the cow and the fish are blue; the horseman remains blue, but his steed is red.

As before, the ḍãgariyās incarnating Nanda, Churmal and Laṭu emerge from the left-hand door of the temple behind the thakku-bearers and circumambulate the pit in a clockwise fashion. But at the end of two such rounds they do not re-enter the temple but assemble in a line at the edge of the temple arena. At the head of the ḍãgariyās are positioned the flag-bearers, the thakku bearers, two kettle drummers and a trumpeter. The line then marches out of the back gate of the temple

and heads at a brisk pace towards the village of Mowai, some five miles downhill and across the valley. Other processionists, officials and devotees, follow quickly behind. En route to Mowai large crowds of villagers - all male (as in the marriage bhārat) - join its ranks. The Nanda d̃agariyā is not carried aloft, but walks, and possession is not in evidence.

The procession (jātrā) is an occasion for high spirits. In addition to the sounds of the various instruments the participants shout salutations to 'Mātādevī', 'Brahmarī', 'Kālīkā' and 'Nanda Devī' as they march. The projected destination is a banana grove situated just outside the village of Mowai. A large crowd has already assembled at the banana grove as the processionists arrive. An inhabitant of Mowai - showing all the symptoms of possession - has been offering arati and the five sacred substances (pancamṛta: honey, milk, ghī, dahī and water) to a banana tree[1] which has been pre-selected to receive an incarnation of the goddess. Upon reaching the tree the three d̃agariyās again become possessed. Nanda is lifted into the air and given a sword which she gesticulates wildly in front of the tree. She is given brass vessels (loṭas) of cow's urine and pancamṛta, the contents of which are thrown at the trunk and poured over her head. She is proferred a container of rice, and taking handfuls of the dry grain throws these violently over the trunk and leaves. As she does so, two other officiants move behind the tree, and using the same sword which Nanda had previously brandished before it, sever the tree at the base. It falls uphill towards Nanda, is caught and carried over her head by the crowd and taken to a courtyard above the grove where it is draped with yellow, then red, cloths. All the three deities are now in a peak of

1. The plantain : Musa Paradisiaca

possession frenzy; and as Nanda dances feverishly on the shoulders of her vahana weilding a knife in her mouth, Laṭu and Churmal dance and shake around the new vehicle of the divinity.

The tree is now carried at the head of the procession which winds its way back uphill towards Kot. People lining parts of the route throw rice and flowers at the tree-trunk as it is carried past. After a hurried march along the same route the company arrives back at the temple. On re-entry into the khali, the temple drum and trumpets are sounded and for the third jāgar the ḍãgariyās become re-possessed. The tree is placed against the doorway in rough alignment with the temple spire (kalasa), and the two flags are placed (white over red) onto the roof of the temple, again, in rough alignment with the spire. The Nanda ḍãgariyā offers arati and pancamṛta to the tree and pours libations of water over his own head to 'cool' his frenzy.

The ḍãgariyās re-enter the temple. The tree is carried into the inner chamber and there presented to the statue. It will remain inside the darbar until the following day when it will be cut into pieces and a section of the trunk dressed with the clothes and ornaments of rani (queen) Nanda for the final jātrā to the river.

The courtyard now fills with brahmins from the villages around the temples. These are purohits who have been engaged by their jajmans to perform pūjā to Devī so that she will promote their interests and that of their families. The brahmins seat themselves on the khali facing the temple and offer prayers (pāt) in honour of Devī.

3. DANCE AND SACRIFICE (JOHRA AUR BALIDĀN

The fourth, fifth and sixth possession sequences of the mela are performed during the evening, at twilight, at eight o'clock and at eleven o'clock respectively. By evening a long queue of devotees waiting to gain access to the darbar has built up within the arena. Inside the darbar the pujari is busily dispensing prasādi and tilak and receiving offerings. The khali is packed to the walls by a dense crowd of women and young girls seated on the stone slabs. Male observers appear almost excluded from the khali and stand at the perimeter of the arena. This division of the sexes within the temple area is rigidly enforced by a number of 'officials' wielding sticks. In contrast, outside the temple where the mela has been gathering momentum throughout the day, the sexes are mingling freely.

After the fifth round of possession, shortly before midnight mela officials create a corridor of space six feet deep in a circle around (but not apart from) the sacrificial altar (thān) established in the centre of the khali. This space is created for a mime-dance and recitation called a johra. This is performed by Rajput villagers in honour of Devī. A group of fifteen men and a group of fifteen women face one another on opposite sides of the arena. Each side joins hands and forms a half circle. Then each moves in a clockwise direction around the central altar, the entire time managing to keep a set distance apart from the other. As they move they carry on a dialogue depicting Devī's battle with the buffalo. The men personify the buffalo while the women personify Devī, their dialogues illustrating the original exchange of words and threats between the divine combatants. Each refrain of the johra lasts for about five minutes and is immediately

followed by the refrain of the opposite group. The pace of the recitation is equally slow and melancholic on both sides, but the vocal delivery of the men is very loud while the delivery of the women is soft, almost a whisper. The men keep their heads raised throughout the performance, whereas the women only raise their heads to emit their refrain.

The women join hands by interlocking their fingers with the palms held facing in towards the body. The men do the exact opposite: the fingers are interlocked in such a way that the palms are held facing outwards away from the body. The movements followed by each dancer's feet and body conform to a rhythmic sequence set out as follows: (a) The left foot moves over across the right foot. (b) The hands and arms are brought forward, and as they are pushed out in front of the body the feet are brought into a parallel position. (c) The right foot is brought forward and to the side. The weight of the body is shifted on to the right foot and the hands and arms are brought back behind the body. (d) The left foot is brought closer to the right foot and placed behind it. The weight of the body is shifted over to the left. (e) The right foot is again brought forward. This is also the point during the womens' circumambulation in which they lower their heads. (f) The feet are brought forward into a position parallel to one another; and hands and arms are brought forward to the side of the body.

These sequences are repeated throughout circumambulation. The motion involved is slow and deliberate. Whatever movement is employed by one group at any particular moment, the other group can be seen doing the exact opposite: when the men push their hands and arms outwards towards the women, the women will pull their arms back behind their bodies

and so on. The overall effect is a dance and song rhythm which appears divided into two parts, each part of which provides the perfect complement to the other part.

One of the most striking aspects of the johra is its solemnity. The praises of the goddess are recited with an attitude of marked reverence. This, and the sleepless vigil of the mela participants no doubt enhances considerably the intense emotional atmosphere conventionally characteristic of this juncture of the festival. The mela proceedings outside the temple enclosure have temporarily lulled, and although everyone appears calmed by the swaying cadence of the delicate johra dialogues, there is a powerful undercurrent of crowd anticipation as the first Nandāstami incarnation of the deity is awaited. The johra itself serves as the seventh invocation and around 2.00 a.m., the clanging of temple bells and the bellow of the gosranga (temple horn) announce the exit of Nanda from the door of the darbar. The possessions are very frenzied and as the deities circumambulate the sacrificial thān a total of seven times their faces are lit up by firelight glowing from a dhūni placed on the bhairath at the far right-hand corner of the khali.

The next stage in the mela proceedings is the sacrifice (balidān) to the goddess, a sequence which includes a ritualised representation of Devi's conquest over the buffalo. She is entitled to eight items of sacrifice (āstbali). These are: (a) a male buffalo under two and a half years in age; (b) four immature male goats; (c) a coconut complete with skin (nariyal); (d) a large sweet cucumber or marrow (bhūj) and (e) a stringy wild root with a human form (gānjārū).

Each goat counts as one separate item.

Sacrifice is scheduled for dawn on Nandāstami. Shortly before dawn a messenger arrives from another village in Katyūr named Bednibūgyāl bearing a gift of prasādi for the goddess. This has been taken from a pūjā held in honour of the Devī of Krora whose origin is Nandakeśwār (beneath Mt. Nanda Devī). Legend has it that the Krora Devī was Nanda's sister. The gift represents a wedding present from one divine sister to another, given as a blessing immediately prior to the wedding ties.

There are two sacrificial officiants: one who conducts the animal sacrifice and is thus ritually impure (āśuddh), and one who conducts the sacrifice of the three vegetables but retains his purity (śuddh). The former function is dispensed by a Rajput from Mela Dãgari, the latter by an Upadhāyi brahmin who is purohit to the Bhandāris. Both have bathed and fasted prior to the performance of their function, and both wear loincloths (dhotis), though that of the Rajput is tied up around the waist.

The eighth and most frenzied possession sequence takes place just before dawn. After the deities have circumambulated the sacrificial altar a total of eight times they are presented with all the items of sacrifice excluding the buffalo. Nanda receives each article by the temple door, holding each in turn aloft (including the goats) before returning them to the sacrificial assistants. Following presentation, Nanda, Laṭu and Churmal re-enter the temple.

The Upādhayi brahmin takes up position in the extreme left-hand corner of the khali. Facing away from the temple door (i.e. towards the south) he lifts a stone flag from the ground and places it to one side. With rice-flour, sandalwood (or turmeric) and vermillion powder

he draws a cakkra-mandala onto the bare earth. The eight inner sections of the mandala are then filled in with different coloured powders : white, red, yellow, green and black.

Another man brings up the buffalo and leads it once around the cakkra-mandala. The brahmin applies akśāt-pitya to the forehead of the pradhān (headman) of Mela Dãgari, and gives the same to another assistant for it to be applied to the forehead of the buffalo (the brahmin cannot touch the animal as it is the incarnation of the demon). Bystanders throw handfuls of rice and dal mixed with water at the back of the animal. The brahmin recites a bhogmantra ('offering mantra') from the Devi Mahātmya text. The other sacrificer approaches; the buffalo is untethered. The sacrificer raises his kũkri (scimitar-knife) with both hands above his head and with one blow decapitates the beast. The body falls to the right (it is considered inauspicious for it to fall to the left, so the sacrificer always stands on the left side and tilts the blade upwards as he strikes). As the animal is still quivering devotees rush up to wipe their feet in the warm blood (it is believed to have life-giving, curative powers).

The body and head of the animal are dragged away by either Doms or Rajputs from the khali and taken out of the temple enclosure. The remains are either buried or deposited on the hillside below the temple area where they will be quickly consummed by dogs, jackals and vultures. In former times the meat was eaten by Doms, but I was assured that no Dom would nowadays risk such a contamination and that this practice had long been discontinued.

The four goats are put aside to be sacrificed later in the day. But as dawn begins to break each of the three vegetables are impaled on four sticks (representative of arms and legs) and placed on

the earth to the left of the mandala. The brahmin purifies them with water and applies tilak to each. A helper halves each one with a kũkri (I was unable to discern whether this was the same kũkri as used in the buffalo sacrifice). The 'cut down' dismembered vegetables are then taken inside the temple where they are placed before the statue, prior to offering at the sacrificial stone in the khali. Being non-polluting there is no danger that they will offend the goddess Brahmarī. The dead buffalo on the other hand is considered so polluting that its life-blood will not even be fed to the thān in the centre of the court-yard.

By this time dawn has broken. The sacrificers and their assistants disperse. The courtyard now fills with brahmins who lift flags from the khali floor, light small sacrificial fires (homa), perform agnihotra and recite Durga pāt and Devī-mantras in honour of the goddess. Without exception they face north-east and place their homas before them. Any jajmans present come before their purohits, offer dakṣina and in return receive anointment with tilak.

The final incarnation of Nanda and her aides takes place after midday on Nandāstami. Excitement is again at a pitch and the temple is packed with onlookers, women inside the khali, men outside. The dãgariyās and the horn players circumambulate the thān a total of nine times. Women in the audience bow their heads and fold their hands in front of their faces uttering "Parmeśwāra" as the trio passes. Some onlookers throw rice and flowers at their feet. Occasionally, one or more members of the audience become possessed: they quiver violently and fall to the ground. This is however not regarded as 'true possession' (sach-avatāri) but as chakkrajana ('excitability'). For incidents of

this kind rice and dal which have been kept at the feet of the statue inside the temple are thrown at these people to 'cool' them.

During the ninth possession sequence the Churmal ḍãgariyā does not carry a sword but a small wooden seat. He holds this up to the Nanda ḍãgariyā who strikes it repeatedly with Churmal's sword. One informant explained that this signified an obscure incident in the life of Nanda - an abortion, birth or miscarriage.

During the final and ninth circumambulation of the khali, Nanda is handed a basket overflowing with slightly under-ripe green lime-fruits (nībū). With her free hand she throws these high into the air to be caught by scrambling devotees. Following this, arati is performed over the door of the temple and the heads of the crowd. The goddess incarnate pours a lota of water over her own head. Four white goats decked with garlands are presented for her acceptance. She lifts these over her head, thus signifying approval. Tilak is applied to their foreheads and they are consecrated with a sprinkling of water. Then the temple is re-entered for the last time. The goddess and her aides will not take incarnation until a full year is passed.

After this the temple pujari emerges from the far side door of the temple and, seating himself in the doorway, he purifies a number of black and white sacrificial goats which are brought before him. These are the offerings of individual devotees and families. Like the four white goats they are garlanded and small red and white bags (jholis) filled with parched rice and other offerings are tied to their horns. Both rice and goats are regarded as means of nourishment to the goddess during her return journey to Kailāś. All the goats offered thus will be sacrificed after the final incarnation of the diety. The

four goats blessed directly by the ḍãgariyā are decapitated inside the temple. A red cloth is placed over the face of the murti, to protect Brahmarī from pollution. Following slaughter, the bodies of the animals are dissected and distributed in the following manner. The heads and right forelegs (the most auspicious parts) are given to the ḍãgariyās; the abdomen, intestines and left legs are given to the Dom musicians and the jāgariyā. The rest of the meat is distributed among the mela officiants and the leading inhabitants of Mela Dãgari. This is regarded as the prasadi or 'gift' of the goddess. The ḍãgariyās and their kinsmen later hold a small bandhāri at the back of the temple. The first portions of good (rice and seasonal vegetables) cooked for this feast are given in offering to the temple. These are placed on banana leaves and presented at the feet of the statue.

The goats which have been blessed by the pujari (ten in total) are sacrificed and distributed in the following manner: they are led one by one into the centre of the courtyard and divested of their flower-garlands. Then they are untethered and quickly decapitated by a sacrificer wielding a kũkri. Their trunks are held over the sacrificial stone while still writhing and the life-blood pumped over the stone. Their heads and necks are gathered together and placed into sacks by the pujari for later distribution among the mela committee. The left legs and all four hooves are collected separately to be given to the temple drumbeaters. The remainder of each carcase is retained by the original owner who takes it back to his village for consumption in a bandhāri.

The mass slaughter of goats is completed by mid-afternoon. The thān and adjacent areas of the khali are awash with blood and flesh. As a final sacrificial gesture, a thāl of cooked rice and dal is poured onto the stone.

4. PROCESSION AND DEPARTURE (DOLKĪ JĀTRĀ - VIDAYĪ)

The crowds of onlookers now leave the temple enclosure and begin to line the route leading from the temple to the place of immersion. The goddess, having been honoured and entertained with offerings will now be carried in the form of a temporary statue (dikara) in a doli (palanquin) to the naula (rivulet) which lies in a north easterly direction beneath the hill of Kot. Here the statue will be immersed and abandoned. This is intended to signify the first phase of the return journey to her place of origin.

The dikara is made up from carvings taken from the trunk of the banana tree. The basic structure is provided by a three foot section to which a strip of cane is fixed and bent outwards to represent the nose. Over half the structure is thus devoted to a representation of Nanda's face. Two bananas are placed on either side of the face to provide her cheeks, and two halves of green lime are placed in the middle of the trunk to make up her breasts. The whole section is draped with a yellow cloth fixed tightly into place with a series of cane strips. Eyes are sewn on to the yellow cloth with white and black cotton. Curved lines are painted around the eyes with white rice-flour paint. These adjoin at the forehead and terminate in loops at the cheeks. The motif suggested is that of the 'tree of life' normally painted on the face of a Kumaoni bridegroom during a marriage ceremony (śādi). A second cloth this time white in colour, is tied around the top of the head; a third, gold-coloured, cloth is placed on top of this, and the whole affair is covered once again with a red cloth representing Nanda's wedding veil (cf. diagram 5).

The statue is draped with ornaments said to have once belonged to the deity in her incarnation as Nanda, rani of Tehri. These, like the items of clothing, are conventional items of the female Kumaoni wedding dress. A gold bangle is hung from the forehead and a silver jewelled bracelet, two thin silver necklaces and a neckband of blue velvet inlaid with gold and silver plates are draped around the neck area.

A wooden palanquin is not used. Instead Nanda is carried by a Rajput from Mela Dăgari. The statue is fastened onto the left arm of this human doli with a large red cloth which is tightly draped like a sling around his shoulders and fastened with a silver jewelled broach. The effect conveyed is of a great intimacy (rather than deferential separation) between female divinity and male devotee. The 'doli' is dressed completely in white (loincloth, topi and shirt) and bears a single tilak of vermillion on his forehead. Nanda is led down in solemn procession out the south gate of the temple. The procession is fronted by the jāgariyā and his hiwari who continue to recite the athon of the Devi in a low murmur. Alongside these the red and white flags are carried and the drummers, trumpeters and thakkuwalis march. Four men walk in front of the 'doli' carrying a large rectilinear white and red sheet which is opened out to receive further offerings from devotees. The remaining trunk and branches of the plantain tree which was cut down in Mowai is carried immediately behind the 'doli.'

The solemn pace of the procession (jātrā) is periodically interrupted so that the face of the statue can be exhibited to all sections of the crowd. As Nanda passes, devotees bow, fold their hands before their faces, murmur "bhagwan" or "parmeśwāra" and throw offerings of rice, money, sweets, fruit, nuts and flowers on to the sheet. These

offerings will eventually be taken back to Mela Dãgarī for distribution to the ḍãgariyās and other officiants, and for use in a village bandhāri.

The procession eventually passes beyond the crowds and reaches a point at the base of the hill where four paths intersect. Here the dikara is divested of its ornaments, and the sheet full of offerings is borne away. Nanda's ornaments are returned to the temple for storage until the following year. The crowd disperses at this point and the drummers, jāgariyā and flag bearers all return to the temple. Only five Bhandāri rajputs (including the 'doli') remain to carry Nanda's 'remains' to the naula at the base of the hill for immersion.

At the water tank the statue is undressed and dismembered. The bananas and limes are broken up and distributed among the Rajputs (and the ethnographer) as prasādi. The cane strips are methodically broken into little pieces and thrown into the naula. The trunk is placed diagonally under the two water outlets.[1] The 'doli' recites a brief mantra over the trunk, casts rice on the top, places flower heads on the top where the water pours over it, and distributes a prasādi of sweets and flowers to everyone present. The clothes will later be returned to the temple.

Immersion is now assumed: the dikara has been placed under running water. It is considered auspicious if rain starts to fall at the time of immersion: water will build up in the naula and the statue will eventually be carried down the naula and into the Sarjū which flows through Katyūr, to Bageśwār cremation ghat and the temple of Śiva, and eventually into the Kālī river and the Ganges. The ultimate route of the statue is then south east (the Sarjū), turning south (the Kālī), east (the Sarda-Gunga) and north east (the Ganges). The occurrence of

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[1] According to one legend, milk used to flow from one of the outlets and water from the other. But one day a ṛṣi-muni came along and used the milk to cook rice pudding (sira). The pollution which resulted led to the milk flow being transformed into a water flow.

rainfall at this time indicates that the goddess is pleased with the offerings and the attentions of her devotees. In addition, rainfall at this juncture in the agricultural cycle is deemed to be essential for the swelling of the grains on the heads of rice plants. The combination of hot, dry autumn sunshine and frequent heavy showers throughout Asoṣ produces the best quality yields of rice.

In the Nanda pūjā which I observed in 1977, I was constantly reminded by participants of the connexion between the mela and autumnal rainfall. On the second day of the festival dark rain clouds had gathered over the Katyūr valley, and the temple was subjected to violent, prolonged gusts of wind of the type which usually precedes heavy rainfall in the Himālayas; however, it did not rain and I was assured (to my disbelief) that it would not rain until the time of the immersion on the following day. This prediction remained true. Almost uncannily, as soon as the dikara was immersed, dark clouds began to gather in the valleys surrounding the Katyūr basin and a full rainbow (indradanūś = Indra's regal canopy) filled the sky. The Bhandāri's, with whom I walked back uphill to the temple, pointed this out as an auspicious sign for the coming rice harvest. As we left the temple and returned home, the light drops of the first rainfall turned into a heavy local downpour which started to fill the fields and rivers of Katyūr.

C. DEVOTION AND DEATH

In the autumnal worship of the goddess the people of Kumaon enact a basic Hindu principle of existence, namely the recognition of a fundamental correspondence or, in Frazer's terms, a secret sympathy between the social order, the natural order and the cosmic order. The pūjā establishes and maintains vital linkages between the human life and death cycle, the seasonal-agricultural cycle, and the cyclical movements of the earth goddess through the year. Movements within one domain are closely paralleled with movements in the other; and as it is the vital female principle or prakṛti which underlies them all, this is the aspect which receives ritualisation. The goddess is not only an ancestral deity, a personification of prakṛti, she is also the power (śakti) behind the seasons, behind the growth and decay of vegetation (including the rice crop) and behind the destructive and reproductive activities of men and women.

In the pages which follow I wish to explore the singular and diverse ways in which this power is represented in the rituals of the Kot Mela, and attempt to trace the specific symbolic modes through which this power is both metaphorically and instrumentally brought to bear upon a fundamental aspect of Kumaoni existence, namely the success of the annual rice harvest. As we shall discover, the rice crop is perceived in Kumaon as a metaphorical extension of the Goddess (Devī) and its cultivation cycle participates wholly within the cosmology of prakṛti. Its life and death is also the life and death of the goddess,

and its autumnal maturation and violent separation from the earth is analogically linked with the goddess's own ritualised departure and passage.

Examination of the meanings of the Kot rituals is prefaced with two brief discussions: (a) a consideration of the sacerdotal composition of the event, as aspects of this bear not only upon the running of the mela but upon formal principles established in earlier chapters; and (b) an examination of the goddess's movements throughout the months preceding the mela, and their relationship to the rice cycle.

1. PARTICIPANTS : DUAL ORGANISATION AT KOT

As Ostor (1971) has noted, the complex ritual acts and honorifics of cults and festivals express not only the relationship between men and gods, but also the relationships which obtain among the gods and among groups of men. (p.4). The particular organisational schema apparent at the Kot Mela as obtaining within these classes can be reduced to its most basic component, the complementary opposition. Between these classes, or different social levels, certain categories interact with each other as homologies, a feature related again to the basic correspondence which Hinduism establishes between different levels of existence. Let us now examine these sets of oppositions and the extent of their inter-relationship.

King and Queen: Not only does the Kot temple owe its physical existence to the devotional aspirations of the Chand dynasts, but its ritual conventions and associated mythology owe their origins to an outstanding event in the Chand's dynastic mytho-history, the suicide or violent death of one king's newly married daughter, Nanda. The King himself, both as

repository of the Chand dynasty and bridegroom of Nanda (the ambiguous synthesis of these two roles is purposefully multiplex, like that of mother and daughter Goddess, Queen and Princess) does not feature prominently in the rituals of the mela, but his assumed relationship with the queen is fundamental to the pattern of the rite, as can be seen below. The original propitiation of the chal was performed by the king as father and as husband, and his role in the ritual was that of an administrator rather than object of worship. In this aspect he is represented at Kot by his administrative successors, local government officials who attend the ceremony and watch over the parturition of the goddess and over the symbols of her regal identification (the jewels). At Almora, historic seat of the Chand dynasty, the king's direct descendant participates in the Nanda pūjā as sacrificer, he strikes the first blow at the buffalo's head (Atkinson, 1973:851) and as processionist, he follows the goddess in a doli down to the wasteground where she is finally abandoned.

In former times, the king (Raja) and queen (Rani) were personally worshipped by their subjects as divinities, as Deva and Devī (cf. Atkinson, 1973:517-9; 511-3; 831), or primary manifestations of the male (puruṣa) and female (prakṛti) principles. Even today, the most popular divinities in the region, Gorīya, Gunganāth, Bholanāth, Hariś Chand (Harū) and Nanda, were once its former rulers. And as Gaborieau's work (1974, 1977) demonstrates, the corpus of legends and love stories which provide the major part of the regions folklore and folksong heritage largely concern the activities of the Chand dynasts, particularly the relationships between the opposite sexes, kings and queens, consorts and lovers. Their inter-relations have traditionally

provided a model, moral and structural, for the inter-relations of their subjects.

Traditionally, the royal dynasts were collectively regarded as intermediaries between men and the higher gods. On one plane their intercessory roles were compatible with those of the renouncers whom they are conflated and interchanged in legend (e.g. Gorīya, Gunganāth, Malusāhi, Bholanāth, Harū etc). As a symbolic unit, the divine pair of King and Queen retain this intercessory function in the rituals of the Kot and Almora pūjās. But of greater importance is the conjugal nature of the relationship between the divine pair, for this is an expression of the state of play between puruṣa and prakṛti. In myth, the initial Nanda pūjā exorcised the ghost of an afflicting queen and thus asserted a balance which had been tipped over by her untimely death. The assault on the queen threatened the reproduction of the dynasty through its children, so by the inversions of the chal-pūjā the dead queen is made into a force for general reproduction, and is in this sense re-united with the king, with puruṣa. As in the Bengal Durga Pūjā (Ostor 1971) and as we we shall see below in the discussion of the Kot pūjā, the king and queen are brought together and worshipped as a formative unity, a cosmic and classificatory balance which expresses and maintains the conditions of continuity, of reproduction and regeneration.

Male and female: Underlying the duality of the king and queen is the complementary opposition of the male and the female. This basic principle of classification regulates both the relationships between the deities and between the devotees who participate in the Kot Mela. In other parts of North India it underlies calendrical divisions and the structure

of seasonal festivals (e.g. Ostor, 1971:425-33). It is found within tantrism and the archaic gnostic system of Saṃkhya, both of which stress the metaphysical opposition of male and female conditions, viz, Śiva and Sakti, puruṣa (spirit) and prakṛti (matter), (Eliade, 1958a:14-41). In Kumaon it provides the basic organisational pattern of village life and the agricultural division of labour; and is more fundamental and (these days) much more rigid than the framework provided by caste. Men and women are everywhere interdependent but the order of this is governed by a strict regime of separation, manifest for example in the idea of mens' work and womens' work, mens' society and womens' society, mens' space and womens' space. (cf. Chapter I, pp.63 -65). This acute separation and interdependence is also represented at the rituals of Kot. During the circumambulations of the goddess the inner courtyard is filled with women and girls while men keep to the outer perimeter. During the first night of the mela women keep vigil inside the darbar of the temple while the men sing in groups outside. In the johra rituals men and women dance together but are placed in physical opposition to one another. The women identify with the goddess, after whose qualities they are invariably named,[1] just as the men identify with the opposing male deities, e.g. Nanda's consort to whom she is married on Nandāstami, and the demon buffalo with whom she (simultaneously ?) engages in battle/intercourse to restore the balance of the universe. These juxtapositions of male and female are however merely static organisational preludes to the dynamic combination of male and female deities, symbols and elements which, as we shall see below, forms the underlying symbolic pattern of the mela, and by extension permeates the overt formal separations of men and women characteristic of Kumaoni society during the remainder of the agricultural year.

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[1] E.g. common female names would include reference to specific aspects of incarnations of Śakti, e.g. Bhagvatī Devī, Pārvati Devī or Chandra Devī.

Renouncers and Laity: Two types of renouncers attend the Kot Mela:

(a) World renouncers: these are mostly Śaivite Nāthas, saddhus and saddhīnis who as devotees of the Śakta principle and the Durga form of the goddess, come from the dharmsalas and akhaḍas of the region in large numbers. The saddhus line the route to the temple, bestowing blessings on pilgrims and receiving alms in return, the saddhīnis remain within the temple enclosure interacting with the other women in attendance.

(b) Temporary renouncers: these are the official mediators of the mela, the jāgariyā, the ḍāgariyās and the temple pujari. Their affinity with the Nāthas is explicit in a number of ways. The pujari's right-hand man throughout the mela is a Nātha jogin. The ḍāgariyās are dressed as (female ?) renouncers and for the duration of the event, live the life of the renouncer: they bathe daily, fast, worship constantly within the temple, remain separate from the polluting influences of the laity, and attempt to incarnate the goddess within their bodies. The jāgariyā, like the pīr who inaugerate the celebrations of the related Devī-Pātān festival in Nepāl (Briggs, 1973:90-97) is the embodiment and representative of Gorakhnāth, guru of the Kūmū-Devtas (including Nanda). Also it is the jāgariyā's enunciation of Gorakhnāth's position and powers during invocation which attracts his attention and his mediation in the matter of creating an incarnation of the goddess among his and her disciples.

Renouncer and laity come together in the representations of the temporary world renouncer, though they are in general symbolically distinct as the living to the 'dead', man-in-the-world to man-out-of the world (cf. Dumont, 1970:42-50). Their combined presence at the mela

is however an aspect of the creative interdependence characteristic of their relationship in general (cf. Chapter 2). Although ideally, the ultimate orientation of the renouncer is one of world transcendence he attends the Śakti-pūjā of the Mela in order to re-charge his spirituality with the magical creative power (śakti) that both sustains him on his travels and directs and controls his acquisition of the supernatural faculties which benefits the sādhana of the (less ambitious) saddhu and which also furthers the samādhi of the 'true' yogin. The laity benefit by the presence of renouncers at the Mela: they are the embodiment of the creative power which the pūjā is performed to incarnate and control; their blessing and touch confers healing and fertility; their advice benefits the lives of their lay devotees. Finally as a 'tantric' festival, the Kot mela brings together both the notions of world-renunciation and world-regeneration, for as we shall see below, the rituals not only feature an interplay of tantric opposites, the male and the female, but also a dynamic interplay of the forces of life (the domain of the laity) and the forces of death (the domain of the tantric renouncer).

Tantrikas and Brahmins: Just as there are two manifestations of Devī incarnate in the stone statue (murti) of the Kot temple, Nanda and Brahmarī, whose vital 'presence' is felt at different times of the year, there exist two different types of priests active at Kot, namely brahmanical and non-brahmanical functionaries. The complementary opposition between these two classes of functionaries as the representatives of distinct traditions within Kumaoni religious life has already been discussed (Chapter 2), but in the sacerdotal organisation of Kot we are able to see how this complementation is worked out at the empirical level.

In the Durga-pūjā held in Chait, the non-brahmanical functionaries are not in evidence: and except for Dom temple drummers and visiting Nātha yogins who by their very presence represent the traditions of Gorakhnāth, their ritual specialisms are not required. Since, in Chait the goddess is being brought to life from the death into which she entered the previous autumn, there is little need for the official agents of propitiation, death and sacrifice. The pūjā to Brahmarī is performed gently, like the coming of spring rains and the bees into the flowers, with libations of water, pure (śuddha) mantras and pure offerings of milk, fruit, grains and ghī. Brahmarī's mythological battle with the asuras was bloodless so she is offered no blood in sacrifice.

The non-brahmanical officiants however come into their own during the Durga-Pūjā: the primacy of their ritual position during the Kot Mela is a reflection of the overall schema of the event as a dramatisation of the goddess's death, propitiation and liberation. As post-mortuary functionaries within the wider society (cf. Chapter 2), the jāgariyā and the dāgariyā are appropriately equipped for the task; and as members of the lower castes (Doms and Khas Bhandāri Rajputs) ancestrally allied to the soil through an agricultural or menial way of life they possess a greater affinity with the earth and vegetation goddess than their Thul-Jat Brahman counterparts. Like their bhūtkāyī goddess their status in brahmanical terms is low; just as she is meat eating and polluting so they too are non-vegetarian and incline towards aśuddh forms of worshipping.

The symmetry of the opposition between the two sets of functionaries, their respective deities and the division of the agricultural

year is however offset by the presence of brahmanical functionaries at the Durga-Pūjā. Their addition is undoubtedly a reflection of the critical nature of the festival - it brings together an entire microcosm of Kumaoni society and provides a symbolic platform during which they act out the interdependence of their relationships within the wider society. Elsewhere in India, the Durga-Pūjā provides one of the few Śakta impure ritual performances within which Brahmans will regularly participate (cf. Dumont, 1970:39). Over and above this institutional involvement in the pūjā, there are economic and historical considerations underlying the presence of brahmanical functionaries at Kot. It is perhaps an accident of history that the temple is controlled by Brahmans rather than Khasiyas and that the office of pujari - normally a reserve of Khasiyas or gṛhastha jogis - is discharged by an orthodox Thul-Jat purohit. Equally the vagaries of the goddess statue's history leave the matter of its custodianship and income-rights open to dispute among interested parties. But there is undoubtedly a sense in which an opposition at the ideological and theological level has become conflict at the level of behaviour - even to the point of a disputation among certain (Brahman) quarters about exactly who is being worshipped - Nanda, Brahmarī or Durga, and about the appropriateness or lack of appropriateness of worship with possession, non-textbook rituals and blood sacrifice. Although no-one disputes the principle of complementation - that some ritual tasks are the privilige and responsibility of one group rather than another - the ritual distinctions operative within the context of the ceremony can only but serve to reinforce a division of opinion between the two parties.

Let us briefly examine how the ritual division of labour extant at Kot works out in practice. In keeping with their categorisation

as pure and impure specialists both sets of officiants, 'tantrikas' (impure) and brahmins (pure) exercise a mutual separation, or avoidance, from one another during the rituals of the Mela. Between incarnations the Bhandāri ḍāgariyās confine themselves to the room lying to the left of the darbar whereas the Tiwari pujari occupies the darbar itself. This separation finds expression even in a lateral dichotomy: during rituals the ḍāgariyās enter and emerge from the left hand door, the pujari enters and emerges from the right hand door. Similarly, the Dom musicians are stationed in a building which faces the room lying to the left of the darbar, whereas the 'official' purohits at the Mela congregate in a building lying adjacent to the room situated towards the right of the darbar.

It should also be noted that only one group of functionaries utilises the courtyard at any one time: thus village purohits only perform pūjā-pāt (worship and prayer) over their homas during the intervals between the possession - dances of the ḍāgariyās. Doms, of course are only allowed to offer worship to the goddess from the khali: they cannot enter the temple. Hence, on the first night, āṭhon is performed (by Doms) in the courtyard rather than inside the temple, while inside the temple itself a brahmanical kirtan is held.

The dichotomy between vegetarian and meat-eating, superior caste functionaries and inferior caste functionaries, is thus paralleled by a corresponding division in the spatial domain between 'right hand side' and 'left hand side', and also between 'inside the temple' and 'outside the temple'. Needless to say, the left hand side, the 'outside', the inferior and the 'meat eating' are symbolic domains characterised by impurity. However, it must be remembered that this is the domain

which is stressed during goddess worship. The activities of the 'inferior', more polluted set of functionaries are accorded greater prominence within the ritual complex of the mela. The contributions of orthodox brahmins and pujaris are wholly subordinate. Like chal-pūjā jāgar and junar, the Devī-pūjā at Kot is in this respect (and in others, see below) a ritual of reversal, i.e. that which is considered inauspicious becomes temporarily powerful and auspicious.

Separation is in the Hindu context, an aspect of interdependence (Dumont, 1970:39-40),and the complementation of functions is apparent even in the sensitive area of blood sacrifice: before the buffalo is slaughtered by a Bhandāri Rajput, a bhogmantra is recited by an Upādhaya brahmin. The latter is a living representative of a slightly ambiguous brahminical gotra[1] which traditionally provided purohits to the village of Mela Dăgari and to the rajas of the Chand dynasty. His participation is determined both by his professional responsibility to his inherited clients (jajman), and by his role as representative of the original priest (his ancestor) who accompanied Nanda on her journey back to Tehri. For a brief period during the rituals he takes the part of an intermediary between the goddess and the demon: thus he anoints the goddess's representative (the pradhān of Mela Dăgari) and the buffalo, and he maps out the place where they will meet (the chakkra). In this regard his position and his function is equivalent to, and interdependent with, that

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[1] The Upādhyas belong to the Bhāradvāj gotra and are linked ancestrally with the Kāndpāls and Lohānis, two other prominent Brahman clans in Borarau patti. Asal in status, they marry with Tīwaris, Joshis, Pants, Pandes and Bhatts. Their legendary hero is Srī Ballabh of Kanauj, diwan to the Chand dynasty at Almora and founder of the village Kantli. The Upādhyas, in common with the Lohānis and Kāndpāls, are (according to Atkinson) chiefly engaged in "agriculture, service and priestly functions and are for the most part, like the other hill Brahmans, Sāktas" (1973 ,Vol. III: 425-6).

of the jāgariyā and the sacrificer. It should be noted that within the context of the sacrificial act the role played by the Upādhaya brahmin is, like that of his fellow, the Tiwari, peripheral to the domain of impurity. He does not dance but merely recites mantras ; he does not sacrifice animals but consecrates them for sacrifice; he does not offer blood to the goddess but he will pour raw vegetables and cooked grains onto her sacrificial hearth. In contradistinction to the highly polluting roles of the non-brahmanical officiants, his own role is essentially a pure one: he deals in purification; he introduces purity to create a balance with impurity. As always (Dumont, 1970:38), the complementarity of the pure and the impure is pervasive: even within a ritual steeped in impurity such as blood sacrifice, the element of purity is allotted a place.[1]

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[1] Dumont has commented on the inconsistency within brahmanism which allows the brahmin to participate in a blood sacrifice: "Although the Brahmanic treatises know of impurity they naturally have nothing to do with "impure gods". Theirs is a vegetarian world where meat-eating is a sign of impurity and inferiority and therefore has no place in the divine attributes. The 'carnivorous' trait then is absent from the theory, but we cannot say that it is not found in practice: the goddess in fact demands blood sacrifice and is nevertheless supreme in her domain" (1970:39). Dumont's difficulty in comprehending this inconsistency (Ibid:39) perhaps stems from too literal an interpretation of the brahmanical creed. Blood sacrifice is not the only ritual context wherein the purohit exposes himself to contamination while acting on his clients behalf: one thinks for example of the pollution likely to be incurred from officiating at funeral ceremonies and naming ceremonies where contact with agencies of extreme pollution are unavoidable (i.e. the corpse and the mother tainted with the blood of birth). It cannot be forgotten that one of the more arcane functions of the family brahmin is to absorb the pollution or sin (pap) of his client in order to bring about the ritual rebirth of the latter (Heesterman 1964:4). In contemporary Kumaon this is a 'privilege' for which the jajman pays through the nose. To my knowledge however, certain well known brahmins with a reputation for keen orthodoxy declined to officiate at their client's child-naming and funerary ceremonies because of the element of impurity involved. In similar vein, many more brahmins would not officiate at, or even attend, an animal sacrifice. More cynical (non-brahmanical) informants pointed out to me that, if the rewards were sufficient, the ritual services of most brahmins could be obtained, regardless of the opprobrium involved.

The complementary opposition of pure and impure activities as performed by distinct functionaries within a single ritual context also underlies the process of the Jāt Yātrā. Here again this takes the form of a division between tamasic, or 'violent' celebrations involving possession and sacrifice, and sattvic or 'peaceful' celebrations involving simply the recitation of sacred texts (pūjā-pāt) and the construction of homas. These are performed respectively by pujaris (of unknown jāti, but most likely to be either brahmins or Nāth jogis. cf Atkinson, 1973:813) and the purohits of the Raja of Tehri.

Complementation in the Jāt Yātrā is stressed by the fact that both types of ceremonial appear to be undertaken at the same chosen places and within the same allotted rest periods (both 'determined' by the goddess who has incarnated within the ram). Separation is apparent in the fact that the tamasic contributions of the pujaris take place at night, while the agnihotras of the purohits are confined to the day. Interdependence is carried right up to the conclusion of the Yātrā itself. Propitiation of the goddess proceeds from the combination of both forms of worship performed simultaneously at the stones lying below the mountain. However, as regards the most defiling act of all, the sacrifice of the goddess through the slaughter of her vehicle, neither section has the pre-eminent role: this is achieved by a neutral force, the mountain itself.

The Durga pūjā is the only Kumaoni festival which requires the participation of all the major sections and sub-sections of the regional community. It is undoubtedly a testament to the critical importance of the rice crop to the economy of the area that the ceremonial inauguration of the rice harvest brings together for this brief period every year all the disparate components of Kumaoni society.

On close examination, the organisational framework of the festival reveals a dense network of symbolic interdependences operative between and among every representative section of the community. The social organisation of the Kot Mela can be seen as containing a microcosm of community relations *in toto*. In their celebration of the passage between life and death of their foremost *Bhūmiya Devta* (deity of the soil and village lands), the celebrants and participants reveal their 'Kumaoniness': they display in minature the organisational principles which underlie both the form of their inherited traditions and conventions and the cultural framework which patterns their everyday lives.

In relations which obtain at the Mela between goddess and god, queen and king, female and male, we see a reflection of the Kumaoni people's fundamental ascribed relations with one another as men and women. In the relationships extant between renouncer and laity we get an impression of the initial interdependence fundamental to Hindu society and history (Dumont: 1970), between the transcendent and the mundane. Finally, the relationships operative between '*tantrika*' and *brahmin* reflect a primary principle in Kumaoni ritual tradition, namely, the complementary opposition of impure and pure functionaries, priests respectively of the dead and the living.

Furthermore, in keeping with the Hindu 'law' of correspondences (Beck 1976) we find the categories and their definitive relations superimposed continually upon one another. On the one hand, Śakti or *prakṛti*, the goddess, the Queen, the female principle, the Śaivite renouncer or Śakta, and the laic *tantrika* are assimilated and made consonant with one another; and these are then juxtaposed individually and unitarily against

their respective complementary opposites i.e. Śiva, puruṣa, the god, the King, the male principle, the worldly laity and the brahmin priest. In addition we shall see later that the ritual juxtaposition of some of these categories in terms of another basic principle of Hinduism, viz., the dynamic conjunction of opposites (Eliade, 1958a:267-273) provides the basic schedule of the festivities and ceremonial activities of the Kot Mela.

2. PRELUDE: (DEVĪ'S LIFE-CYCLE) GERMINATION AND INCARNATION

As noted earlier, the pūjā at Kot celebrates and dramatically reconstructs the goddess's passing out of the world of men; the rituals represent in toto her death, propitiation and liberation. By the time of the Kot Mela, she is pictured as being at the height of her maturity and glory: she is ornamented, decorated and dressed in her wedding clothes; her aspect and appearance is awesome and powerful. Her condition in fact approximates that of the Katyūr rice crop which with the return of the sun after the heavy monsoon rains is turning from ripe green to mature brown. Indeed, the timing and the mortuary orientation of the mela would seem to suggest an association between the fate of the goddess and the impending fate of the rice crop. This supposition can be supported by the knowledge that the people of Barahmandal and Danpūr explicitly honour the goddess at this time and in the ways described in order to (a) promote the complete maturation of the crop; and (b) secure a bountiful harvest.

But before examining the symbolic processes utilised in the pūjā to effect these aims we must first attempt a reconstruction of the

earlier stages in the goddess's career as it is represented during the preceding months of the agricultural calendar. In doing so, it will quickly become apparent that the analogical association suggested above between the fate of the goddess and that of the rice crop goes deeper than a mere analogy: what will become obvious is the occurrence of a complete identification between the life-cycle of the goddess, her movements within the year, and the life-cycle of the rice crop, its development during the year.

Nanda's seasonal counterpart is Brahmarī who is worshipped six months previously during the bright half (śuklapakṣ) of Chait (March-April) when the rice seeds are first sewn into irrigated nurseries. Unlike Nanda, Brahmarī is newly-born at the time of worship. The Bhagavat at Kot represents her as being freshly created by the gods out of the amniotic waters of Katyūr, as dispelling an era of barren-ness (the winter of the daityas) purifying the earth, and taking on a life-giving or fertilising form (a swarm of bees, agents of pollination in the world of vegetation). Her function within the seasonal and agricultural cycle is fairly clear: she is born into the world to release men from the ravages of winter; she brings with her the return of vegetation and is accompanied by the spring rains necessary to activate the rice crop. Brahmarī is, like the Persephone of the Greek Myth (cf. Frazer, 1963:517-525) the goddess of Spring, the 'spirit' of vegetation, who activates the seeds of the new grain. At the Brahmarī pūjā the goddess is offered water and the parched grains (seeds) of the previous year's harvest in sacrifice. Significantly, she returns some of these raw and cooked grains to her worshippers as prasād. To celebrate her return, the temple is re-plastered and decorated, and the temple arena is decked out with brightly coloured ticker flags and with the new green

leaves of the plantain tree. The sacred cherry and fig trees which adorn the enclosure are resplendent at this time with white and pink flowers: the vegetation comes to life with the arrival of the goddess. In keeping with the auspiciousness of her Spring rebirth, Devī's pūjā is peaceful (sattvic), pure (śuddha) and non-violent (ahiṃsā).

During the six months which follow, up until her re-incarnation as Nanda in Vhadon-Aṣc̣s (August-September), the deific forms which the goddess takes are not clear, but we know her primarily as Devī existing in association with her consort Śiva. The months up until Vhadon (mid-August) are sacred to the pair, Śiva and Śakti, particularly in their united form as yoni/linga - the metonymical representation of their conjoined organs of generation. Śiva and Śakti temples throughout Kumaon are visited, ceremonially re-dedicated, freshly plastered and decorated. Water-pots are placed over the yoni-lingams in the Śiva temples, so that the water drips down the lingam into the yoni and out into the earth outside the temple. This constant libation of holy water both creates and marks the active union of the goddess and god, female and male principle, which moistens and fertilises the earth. The dripping water is a metaphorical representation of the spring/summer rains and hot sunshine which fall from the heavens to activate the cold, dry earth.

In the ropai activities of Jeth (May-June) when the rice sown in Chait is transplanted into the fields (cf. pp.68 -71) the major agricultural role is performed by women, the embodiments of Śakti. Since the earth is about to receive the first shoots and new seeds (on unirrigated lands) it is blessed and purified by an intercessor (the hurkiya) and since nurturing is performed by women, Devī's metaphoric representatives,

their own wombs must be pure and free of disease or obstruction (p.69).[1] With considerable ceremony, and the recitation of popular love-songs in male (hurkiya) and female duet format, the goddess of the earth is invoked to receive her children (the village gods or Kūmū-Devtas) into the rice plants. The goddess is clearly being prepared for conception.

During Asarḥ (June-July) the goddess is thought (in Kumaon, as elsewhere in India) to menstruate (Crooke, 1926:49; Bharati, 1965: 260); the earth is hot from the heat of summer and before any new growth can take place, it must receive cooling libations of monsoon rain. In recognition of the goddess's potent impurity at this juncture of the year, certain days are set aside for the worship of Bhairav and Nagraja, her netherworldly associates born out of her menstrual flow (Atkinson, 1973:849).

By the last day of Asarḥ (mid July), when the heavy rains have settled in and the rice crop is in a state of rapid growth, the goddess is represented as having both conceived and successfully given birth to the year's rice crop. She is again depicted as existing in an ongoing regenerative union with Śiva. The young women of the village fashion images of Śiva and Devī with clay and couple them in a mock wedding in simulation of their mythological unification. The wedding place is a basket of earth containing new sprouts of the seasonal sacred grains (padi; barley, maize, pulse, wheat and mustard) sown there some

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[1] Among the Garo, at the time of rice transplantation, men fertilise the earth by sowing, and wield yak whisks over the earth to coax the goddess Rohimi "to make and bear abundant crops; (Crooke, 1926:50). Crooke adds that "women are not allowed to plough or sow, but they may transplant the rice seedlings after they have been grown by the men, because it is their business to tend them as they do their own babies, a good example of sympathetic magic" (Ibid.)

eight days previously by the family head, dedicated to the goddess by a brief daily Durga-pūjā recitation, and positioned beside the shrine of the household gods. The two deities are offered fresh fruits and water, and worshipped as a unified form (Har-Kali) by the mistress of the household accompanied by the family priest. The latter chants the following mantra indicating that the union has already borne fruit: "O Harkali, I bow unto thee; thou art begotten of Har's name and loved by Har. Thou remainest ever amidst the green paddy fields and takest away the suffings of those who bow before thee." (Pant, 1935: 233).

The following day, the first of Śravan (July 16th) is a festival, Haryela, which marks both an active phase of the sun (Harela saukrant - the passage from one constellation to another) and the arrival of the rains.[1] The females of every family anoint the family males with akśāt pitya, and place cuttings of the green shoots known as Harkali upon their heads. The imagery of the ritual marks, the complementation of male and female principles: cultivation and transplantation is a joint act performed by male and female, god and goddess, above (man, water, the head) and below (women, earth and the circular low basket). But there is also an element of violence in the cutting of the shoots, and the festivities of the day take the character in some areas of violent contests and blood sacrifices to Devī (Atkinson, 1973:870-1). This suggests parturition, a rebirth of the plants in

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[1] Crooke (1926:31) has noted the similarity of the Haryela ritual to the gardens sown in honour of the Greek deity Adonis. In honour of Adonis, a deity of vegetation, baskets or pots were filled with earth and sewn with wheat, barley, lettuces, fennel and flowers. Women tended them for eight days after which they were carried out with the images of the dead Adonis and flung into the sea or springs (Frazer, 1963:449-457). Frazer regards this as an imitative charm to promote the growth or revival of vegetation (Ibid. 450).

interdependence with the goddess, which is assisted by the commanding mantra of the priestly intercessor. The rice and coarse grains, sprouting independently in the field but still reliant on the fusion of the earth goddess and her heavenly consort, the source of sacred water (rainfall and the gunga) are the goddess's children, incarnations of her own body.

During Śravan and Vhadon (July to mid September) the shoots are carefully nurtured and tended to maturity with constant weeding. This is performed by the village women (embodiments of the goddess) in the company of their younger children and babies (metaphorically assimilated with the growing rice plants). This is an active time for demons, evil spirits and nāgas (deities of the netherworlds) who like the insect pests, growths and snakes common in this dank, humid period, are thought to populate the fields and houses causing sickness and disease. Śiva is worshipped during the dark half of Vhadon in honour of his netherworldly aspect as Lord of the Nāgas; and on the morning of the fifth day (Nāg-panchami) the snakes are propitiated with offerings (Atkinson, 1973:851).

By the second half of Vhadon (early September) a critical juncture is reached in the rice cycle. Rainfall has become sporadic and the warm sun has returned; the plants have ripened but not yet turned in colour. The fate of the rice crop is uncertain and could go either way: what is required to both turn the crop, in a sense induce the demise of the plants, yet flesh out the kernels thus rendering them fertile, is a balance of additional periodic rain and warm sunshine. The liminal precariousness of this period is conveyed with religious metaphor: Śiva is still abroad with the snakes and demons; and the buffalo demon Mahiś, or Bhainsasura is running amok in the fields,

bringing excess water and trampling on the goddess's children (Crooke, 1926:336). Yet another parturition approaches: the goddess's children must inevitably die (the rice plants must turn and be cut down) as must the goddess herself (the growth in the earth must temporarily come to a halt), in order to again give birth (to the fertilised ears of rice) before entering the sleep of death and (in the goddess's case) returning into the quiescent earth. Both goddess and rice crop are approaching the end of their life cycle, yet before this can be reached one final thrust of fertilisation must take place. It is this, I suggest, which forms the dynamic symbolic crux of the final pūjā s performed to the goddess at this time of year. For it is during this interface between monsoon and harvest, a realm of liminality wedged between two crucial phases in the rice cycle, ripening and maturation, that the Nanda festival takes place.

The close inter-relationship between the activities of the goddess up to this point in the seasonal calendar, and the life-cycle of the rice crop would appear to suggest a close identification between the goddess's final form, Nanda, and the almost fully ripened form of the rice crop. Nanda, the 'beautiful' goddess, daughter and ill fated queen of the Chand dynasty is none other than the spirit of the rice crop, daughter and regenerated form of the earth goddess (Brahmarī, Durga), inevitably doomed like the rice crop itself to an untimely death in the prime of life.

Thus far, the model of Nanda's birth and life-cycle reconstructed above closely conforms in its essential elements to Frazer's interpretative map of the European Corn-Spirit cycle. Using one of Frazer's major illustrative pieces, the Greek myth of Demeter and Persephone, the Corn Mother and the Corn Maiden, a series of parallels

can be set out, as follows. The mother goddess resident in the earth (Demeter, Durga) is active for six months of the year (Spring and Summer) but dormant for the rest. The seeds of the new crop, her issue of the previous year, are sown in her absence. In Spring they become fertile with the rebirth of the old goddess in the form of a new, maiden crop or new goddess (Persephone, Brahmarī, Nanda in Juhar). Thank-offerings of first fruits are proferred to the old goddess and her new form (offerings at the Green Festival of Eleusis, and the spring nauratri of Kot). There is a marriage of either or both the Sky God or the God of the Netherworld (Zeus or Pluto in the Greek Myth; Śiva or Mahiś in the ambiguous Hindu myth) to the Earth Goddess, which is also a conjunction of water/sun[1] and earth (Spring rain and sunshine in both contexts). Games involving competitions and violence are performed at crucial stages in the cycle (the Eleusian games, the Green Festival in Greece; Haryela and Mela in Kumaon). The maiden goddess (Persephone, Nanda) grows or remains in bloom throughout the Spring and reaches her peak shortly after mid-summer and as autumn unfolds, her death and that of the crop with which she is identified, draws near.

As we shall see, the parallels and correspondences do not stop there, but continue into the goddess's death-cycle, to which we shall now turn our attention.

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[1] For Śiva's association with the sun in folk Hinduism cf. Crooke, 1926: 30.

3. PERFORMANCE : (DEVĪ'S DEATH-CYCLE) CONSUMMATION, PROPITIATION AND LIBERATION.

The rituals of Kot divide into two sequences dealing respectively with (a) Devī's marriage, coupling and death; and (b) her departure and liberation through immersion. These divisions correspond to the 'heating' and 'cooling' sequences of ritual patterning prevalent elsewhere in India (cf. Beck, 1969). Alternation occurs at the point of sacrifice on the dawn of Nandāstami, for as we shall see this is a dual-edged performance which marks both the climax of the goddess's creative impulse and the restoration of the cosmic equilibrium which her reproductive activities have dislocated. The sacrificial bridge between the two divisions also roughly marks, and is intended to effect, passage between the monsoon and harvest seasons, the Rains (Varśa) and the Autumn (Śardī). The rapid growth characteristic of the monsoon period de-accelerates and will soon scale down to nothing to be superseded by the decay and quiescence of the autumn.

The Marriage of the Goddess.

The sacred marriage of the goddess is represented at Kot by suggestion rather than explicit reference. The evidence would appear however to indicate that a reconstruction is valid. The absence of wholly overt marital symbolism perhaps indicates a watering down of details over time for the sake of simplicity. Also, as Hocart has observed "It is in the myths that creation by sacred marriage is best preserved; for in practice it seems to have been generally toned down to a symbol" (1970:65). The myths of the Nanda Melas are fairly specific

in this regard. In the Almora myth, Queen Nanda, bride of the Raja of Tehri, meets her death within hours or days of her marriage ceremony, and possibly even before the rite has been consummated. In the version popular at Kot, Nanda's unhappy marriage is represented as the primary motive for her death. Also, the day upon which the Kot Mela is concluded is Nandāstami, a day traditionally regarded as the anniversary of Devī's marriage to Śiva.

According to the Kumaoni interpretation of this cosmic marriage, Śiva in his aspect as Bhuteśvāra (Lord of the Bhūtas) journeyed with a courtege (bhārat) of fearful bhūtas and masānis from a place beneath the mountains[1] to the mountain home of Himāchal, and there, despite some opposition from the mountain king, succeeded in taking the hand of his daughter, Pārvatī Devī. Following the ceremony, Śiva and his bride descended to the foothills of Kumaon and there despatched the procession of bhūtas and masānis, ordering them to return to their various places of origin and offering them, in return for their services in the bhārat, promises of sacrifice and salvation in Kali Yuga. Śiva and Pārvatī then set out towards the north east to the heavenly paradise of Mount Kailāś.

A number of symbolic conventions generally associated with orthodox Kumaoni marriage ceremonies become manifest at a number of points in the mela. The all-male processions of singers, drummers, dancers

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[1] Identified as the Katyūr valley itself, then the home of bhūtas and demons who inhabited the water courses, wild forests and rocky ravines of the area. The bhārat is said to have passed through Bajināth, site of an ancient temple to Pārvatī/Bhagvatī which still houses a magnificent statue of the goddess surrounded by a courtege of bhūtas. Part of this surround also depicts various stages in the marriage ceremony. The temple was one of a series in the area which were built by the Katyūri rajas.

(the dãgariyās) and lineage heads, preceded by white and red flags, which characterise the Bot kī Jatra and the Dolkī Jatra closely resemble the format of the Kumaoni marriage bhārat. This is the all-male marriage party which sets out from the house of the bridegroom towards the house of the bride, the place of marriage. Behind the red and white trangular flags used to indicate the occasion of a marriage, and to emulate the original pomp and glory of Śiva's bhārat, march Dom singers, drummers and dancers, some of whom dress up in female costume and wear long braided hair. These will often be the same officiants who control spirits during jāgar and their function in the bhārat is analogous. They both embody and appease the spirits of ill-luck which frequent the liminal realms and waysides along and through which the bhārat must pass. Like the Bot Kī Jatra at Kot, the marriage procession is characterised by an atmosphere of excitement and gaity, and the processionists sing and shout in high spirits as they journey.[1]

Other marital symbols deployed during the course of the mela rituals include the use of a doli as palanquin of the goddess, an honour only afforded to the female at the time of marriage, or for the goddess en route to her consort. Furthermore, the dikara of the deity is dressed in marital clothes and colours, it is adorned with marital jewelry and its face is decorated with the sacred tree motif as for a marriage ritual. The use of the bridegroom's rather than bride's facial motif perhaps suggests that by the time of the statue's appearance the union has already

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[1] For descriptions of the marriage rituals observed in Kumaon, see Atkinson (1973:906-912). Other detailed accounts of the Hindu ceremony in North India can be found in Stevenson (1971:58-111) and Gupta (1974:54-103).

taken place (i.e. in the early hours of Nandāstami) - the male principle being here represented by the goddess's Rajput 'vehicle' to whom she is intimately bound. At Almora, two statues are involved. One represents Nanda, the other her royal bridegroom. These are placed together in a marriage cart, or palanquin, and the procession which accompanies the cart is known as a bhārat and includes drummers, conch-blowers and a special doli representing her father's dynasty.

Ritual representations of marriage are contained in the gift of prasādi conveyed from Bednibūgyal to Kot during the early hours of Nandāstami before the dawn sacrifice takes place. This is regarded as a preliminary wedding present, or blessing upon the marriage, from an older sister, Devī of Krora, to a younger sister, Nanda. At the Almora mela , immediately before the dawn sacrifice of the buffalo, one of the descendants of the Chand dynasty takes the part of Nanda's royal father and performs kanyadan, or the 'gift of a daughter', one of the crucial ceremonial acts of the Hindu marriage rite. In the wedding ceremony, this prefaces the joint cicumambulation of the fire-altar (the 'seven steps') by bride and bridegroom, and their ceremonial union as man and wife (cf. Atkinson, 1973:909). The kanyadan of Nanda at Almora is followed by the presentation of a buffalo by the Chand representative, and he has the privilege of the first blow. This corresponds to another marriage custom, viz, the presentation, offering and (symbolic) slaughtering of a dough bull-calf at the time of ceremonial exchanges between the two parties to the marriage (Atkinson, 1973:908).

Weddings in Kumaon are conventionally colourful occasions. In addition to the processionists and celebrants, the place of marriage is brightly decorated. The house is newly plastered, ornamented with greenery (usually freshly cut plantain leaves) and with ticker flags.

The auspicious colours of white (purity) and red (life-blood) and green (fertility) predominate.[1] A similar colour schema is deployed

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[1] For a discussion of the semantic usages of these colours in Hinduism see Beck, 1969:533-572. Beck notes that white can represent both advanced purity and extreme 'rawness'. Red is ambivalent, being linked both with the blood of life and the blood of violent death. White and red combined have an auspicious life giving connotation. Yellow and green are inferior colours to white and red, but can be considered as intermediate between the two. Green is the colour of vegetal matter, and is thus associated with vegetable abundance, fertility and high milk yields. Green is also associated with rainfall: green substances are pure but are immature: green grains and vegetables are foodstuffs which are not completely 'raw', but they still have to be cooked, either by the heat of the sun or the heat of a fire. Yellow is a more auspicious colour than green though it is closely related to the latter (Beck, 1969:558). Sometimes yellow is used in place of white (e.g. in the brahmin's dhoti), while in its darker hues (ochre and yellow-orange) it suggests a closer association with red. Thus saddhus and sannyāsis commonly wear ochre robes; and the substances turmeric and sandalwood, which are yellow-ochre in colour, have auspicious properties of both heating and cooling.
Yellow also suggests maturity, ripened grain, ghī (milk transformed by a 'heating' activity, that of churning) and the colour of the mid-day sun. Yellow and red is a particularly auspicious combination. Black, the polar opposite of white, expresses extreme impurity and advanced metamorphosis, e.g. defecal matter, decayed flesh. It is the colour of death and demons and has a polluting significance. Black and red are combined to signify something highly inauspicious, like witchcraft or battles with demons.

Another discussion of Hindu colour symbolism, relating to the classical period is contained in Turner (1970:84-85). Of interest is Turner's observation that the fundamental colour triad of white, red and black, used extensively in ritual and myth, corresponds to the tripartite division of the world into water, fire and earth; and also the the three natures (gunas) consisting of sattva (being) which is white, rajas (energy) which is red and tamas (darkness) which is black.

at Kot, and it is worth devoting some detailed attention to this. Of particular interest is the way in which red and white colours, associated respectively with the female and male principles (Beck, 1969:565), are represented as being aligned with, or conjoined to one another. This arrangement provides a graphic means of conveying to the participants and observers of a sacred marriage the idea of a union and communion between the polarities of male (white) and female (red)

Red and white are represented in alignment on the ticker flags draped from the temple eaves, and in the colour of the tiny bands (talis) wrapped around the 'invocationary thakkus',[1] Set against the white walls of the temple interior and the white clothes of the pujari are the red curtains and canopies hung over and above the statue of the goddess. The Nanda d̆ăgariyā alone wears red; her priests, the jāgariyā, pujari, purohits and sacrificer all wear white. Red predominates in the clothes of the women who attend the mela (it is usually mixed with green, yellow and blue: the traditional colours of the hill Khasiyas), while the clothes of the men are predominantly white or off-white. The flower heads thrown at the deity's feet as she is taken in procession or else given to the temple are predominantly yellow (the colour of Durga and of renouncers) but are mixed with red and white flowers. And the horns of the sacrificial goats are adorned with red and white cloth bags (jholi) similar to the potalis offered as food for spirits in the marriage ceremony.

Finally, to complete our consideration of the use of marital symbols and colours at the Kot Mela, let us examine the basic motifs involved in the deployment of trees and flagpoles. These are representations of the cosmic tree, or tree of life, used in weddings and temple

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[1] Talis are usually worn during the Kumaoni marriage ceremony by the bride and groom.

rituals as cosmic axes facilitating the flow of power, influence and gifts between heaven, earth and the underworld. As such they are generally placed beside or around temple buildings as extensions of the axis formed by the temple. Often, a sacred tree will function as a temple in itself. What is of interest in the Kot ceremony is the way in which an additional notion of cosmic union, namely the 'horizontal' conjunction of male and female, is superimposed upon the idea of a 'vertical' union of the worlds. The polarities of above and below and their combination are overlain with the combined polarities of male and female. Consideration of this particular symbolic configuration introduces us to the fundamental concept of a conjugal hierogamy, a marriage between earth and sky, female and male, represented in the Kot rituals.[1]

In addition to the pipal and padam[2] trees and fixed bhairaths

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[1] As an axis which also conjoins male and female principles, the Kot temple displays not only the familiar linga/yoni, triśūl/chakkra motifs suggestive of the above/below, male/female oppositions, but it also features the colour composition white above red (i.e. overworld over underworld, male above female). This is apparent in its exterior decoration: white plaster and paint on the upper parts, and red plaster on the lower parts (i.e. nearest the ground). Marginal parts of the building, thresholds, window frames, roof eaves, altar-stones, are coloured red but this is overlain by lines of white rice paint (aipon) reminiscent of the akśāt-pitya, white on red, semen on blood, fertility motif.

[2] The pipal (ficus religiosa), or fig tree, is revered for its white sap which resembles milk. It symbolises the sky; the gods use it as a means of descending to earth; and it often provides a home for snakes, thus completing an image of the axis mundi which connects the sky, the earth and the underworld (the trilok, or 'three worlds'). In other areas of North India, it is associated with the moon, the sun, with puberty and fertility (Crooke, 1926:407-11). It is worshipped at initiation, marriage, house foundation and death. The soul (preta) of a person who is recently deceased is believed to sometimes frequent the higher branches of the pipal tree.

The padam (Nelumbo nucifera) or cherry tree is associated with both white and red: trees yielding either red or white blossoms are often situated together in Kumaon. The padam also has the curious habit of blossoming twice a year: once in Spring and once in October after the rains. This, and the fact that it can be either red or white determine its choice as a symbol of purity and fertility. Its wood is widely used in rituals (cf. Pipal) and shrines to Devī are often located under trees found or placed in isolated spots. Padam trees in Kumaon are often also sited beside springs or wells, and offerings are made to them

already stationed within the temple enclosure at Kot, the ceremonials of the Devī-pūjā involve the use of several 'mobile' trees, the plantain trunk which houses the goddess and the bhairaths used to convey the red and white flags in the goddess's marriage processions. In Kumaoni marriages generally 'sacred tree' motifs are represented in tree-emblem decorations on the walls of the bride's house and in the use of bamboo poles draped with green leaves to construct the entrance gate of the ceremonial enclosure. The presence of the tree, whether actual or represented, is believed to confer luck upon the bridal pair. In Rajasthān tree motifs are woven into the dress of the bride and painted with henna upon her hands and face. The marriages of several Hindu groups in Gujerāt incorporate a custom of worshipping a "bamboo" (plantain ?) tree, severing it to form a pole which is shaped to represent the goddess and then immersing it in water.[1]

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[1] The "marriage pole" used by the Bharvāds of Gujerāt is termed a "Mānikstambha", or 'ruby pillar', because it gleams with blood. The tree is decorated and anointed with either the blood of the "chief man" or of a black sheep, "the object being stated to be appease the Māmo, or 'maternal uncle', a name euphemistically applied to the malignant spirit which abides in this tree..." (Māmo = Śiva). "When the tree is felled the man who cuts it becomes possessed by the spirit, makes one or two cuts with his axe at a branch, and runs away without looking back, after which others complete the work. The top of the pole is carved to represent Bhawāni, the Mother Goddess, and the images of other gods are carved on the stem. After the marriage rite is over the pole is thrown into a stream ... where it is allowed to decay" (Crooke, 1926:404-5).

After the wedding of the Nāgara brahmins, the entire marriage booth, with the exception of the 'ruby pillar', is pulled down. The pillar is "left standing in the compound until the rain falls on it at the beginning of the monsoon; it is then taken into the house, to wait until the river shall be in flood. As soon as the water is considered high enough, it is taken out of the house and flung away into the stream" (Stevenson, 1971:101).

The processional bhairaths as 'mobile' sacred trees have a form and function analogous to that of the padam and pipal trees. Indeed the latter are in a sense the 'original' flagpoles, being often adorned with red and white rags, placed there by individual worshippers as talismans or wish-offerings. Hence in enclosures of Śaivite and Śakti temples bhairaths sporting red or white flags with Śaivite emblems are fixed or placed in alignment with the sacred trees growing in the enclosures. An old custom of jāgar was to place a branch of a padam tree as a flagpole on the rooftop of the house prior to the commencement of worship.[1] Like the celestial tree the flagpole served as a cosmic axis or pillar facilitating the ascent and descent of the incarnating deities.[2]

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[1] This would usually be done in response to a dream by a prominent member of the community in which he sees an image of a vulture circle a padam tree three times.

[2] Nowadays, thick bhairaths are placed in the centre of the khali during jūnar festivities to permit deities such as Hanuman and Jhairaj to visibly ascend and descend (in the bodies of ḍāgariyās) bearing the offerings of worshippers. The ḍāgariyā of Hanuman, as a monkey god or 'flying' god, climbs the flagpole in representation of the characteristics of the deity. Jhairaj is the spirit of a murdered buffalo grazier. His ascension of the bhairath during jūnar is notable for its juxtaposition of three sets of symbolic colours, viz, white, red and black. On becoming possessed, the ḍāgariyā is offered a drink of the first milk of a newly lactating animal (white); then the fresh blood of a sacrificed buffalo (black and red). Following this he lifts a male goat in his arms, runs three times around the sacred fire (dhūnī), biting the animals neck and attempting to eat the meat. He ascends the bhairath bearing the red flag, continually sucking the blood of the goat, and applies some of its blood to the top of the post.

It is in the flagpoles rather than the temple trees of the Kot Mela that the superimposition of 'vertical' and 'horizontal' polarities noted earlier is best represented. The symbols displayed on the actual flags draped the length of these poles convey the dual notion of a union between male and female (as in marriage) and a mystical union of the worlds. The red (female) flag is fringed with white (male) embroidered triangles , and the white (male) flag is fringed with red (female) triangles. The red flag is topped with a small piece of white cloth and the white flag is topped with a small piece of red cloth. The flags themselves are triangular in shape, a Śaivite configuration (used extensively within tantric mandalas) and extension of the Śaivite trident (itself a representation of the cosmic tree, cf. Bosch, 1960:162-4). The central symbol within each flag is a cakkra motif, the sun on the white flag and the earth-mandala on the red flag: these are juxtaposed with the flagpole itself as pillar to base, triśūl to cakkra, linga to yoni (another variant of the tree motif, Bosch, 1960:164-6); and again suggest a dual representation of horizontal (male and female) and vertical (heaven and earth) principles. The arrangement of the other symbols on each of the two flags reinforces this interpretation. Symbols of the 'above' or of ascension are placed at the very top of the flags (e.g. the 'om' sign; triśūls; the bird or puruṣa flying upwards; Hanuman, the 'flying' god; the celestial horse and rider; and the celestial cow). Symbols of the 'below' or of descension are placed towards the broad base of the flags (e.g. the tiger or leopard, vehicle of the goddess; the sacrificial sword; the underwater fish; and the netherworldly snake).

Both in their deployment within the mela and in marriage bhārats the symbolism of the bhairaths effectively conveys the idea of a mystical

marital hierogamy, a union of male and female, above and below, earth and sky. Within the marriage ceremony, the idea of the hierogamy is also expressed in the verbal conventions of the rite. Prior to the seven circumambulations of the fire the bridegroom says "I am the sky you are the earth. We shall both wear the yoke of life together. Let us have many sons" (Stevenson, 1971:87). (cf. also Eliade, 1958a: 254-5). In the Kot Mela no such verbal dialogue occurs or is enacted. But additional representations of the hierogamy can be traced in the ritual manipulation of the plantain tree during the course of the ceremonies.

The banana or plantain tree in the grove at Mowai provides Nanda with an axis situated mid-way between earth and sky through which she can incarnate within the world of men. The grove also represents one of the legendary rites of her death, the place of her duel with the demon (and therefore netherworldly or 'descensional') buffalo and is, significantly, in a lowly position (beneath the temple, and beneath Mowai village). She is believed to take incarnation within the tree from the earth itself - there is no question of transference from the d̃āgariyā as both tree and medium 'shake' simultaneously. The tree is cut so that it falls upwards, then held above on a 'palanquin' of men's shoulders, and is carried upwards to the temple or place of ceremony. Dressed in the yellow and red clothes of the goddess, it is taken in bridal procession to the site of marriage. Marital preparations will be completed in the temple: at Almora the tree is divided into two sections, one representing the bride, the other the bridegroom, but both are considered as polar aspects of the goddess; at Kot no division is made and the place of the bridegroom is taken by

an officiant.[1]

The choice of the plantain as the vehicle of the goddess, over and above its association with her in myth, is possibly related to its botanical characteristics as a plant which, like the pipal and padam, conjoins a set of sacred colours, i.e. red, white, yellow and green. Its bark is yellow (the colour of the goddess), its leaves are green (and as a tropical plant it bears green leaves until the death of the entire plant), it produces a downwards-pointing red blossom (below, female), and its sap is milky white (above, male). This combination of physical characteristics suggestive of male and female principles, in addition to its role as an axis, renders it eminently suitable as a marriage pole. Indeed this interpretation is supported by the stated view of one informant who pointed to the tree's unique combination of sacred colours. The fruit it bears (white in yellow) is a fundamental constituent of all pūjās (as in marriage and the prasād distributed in the Kot rituals), and the leaves are knitted together into circular mats for use as plates in feeding wedding guests and pūjā participants.

Used as a marriage pole, both in the wedding ceremony and the mela, the plantain or banana tree is above and below, male and female

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[1] The total unification or resultant undifferentiation between bride and bridegroom is of course the primary objective of the Hindu marital rite. During the feast which concludes the ceremony the bride and groom share a common meal for the very first and last time in their lives. Whilst offering food to his bride the bridegroom says :"I give you this morsel and unite my life with yours," then "I unite my bones with your bones," then "I unite my flesh with your flesh"; and again "I unite my skin with your skin" (Stevenson, 1971:93). Stevenson observes that "So closely does this symbolised feast unite them, that the wife is considered to be the half of her husband's body." She concludes her description with a comment on the similarity of this custom to the Common Meal of the Christian Holy Communion (Ibid.)

juxtaposed and combined.[1] It is both red and white, its trunk is śiva-śakti, a phallus within a series of rings issuing white sap. It is a 'female within a male' just as the goddess in her other vehicle (the ḍāgariyā) is also a female within a male. At another level the tree is metaphorically related to the rice plant, the goddess's ultimate seasonal medium, which like the plantain is cut at the base in order to confer fertility and life. This motif, the violent 'death' of the tree spirit, is also in one way a domestication of the goddess, hitherto incarnate in the wild, but now brought under the control of her devotees. If the tree is truly a ceremonial image and extension of the semi-mature rice stalk then it cannot be allowed to grow wild, shed its seeds and die a natural death (plantain trees are in fact short-lived); it must be cultivated in its prime and its hidden fruit, sap and seeds made the property of men. Similarly the bhūtkāyī goddess is captured, transported to a fixed place and hidden in the very heart of the community, the womb-room (darbar) and dynastic hearth (ranchūla) of the realm. Once there it will wait to be formally 'wedded' (i.e. matured with further ceremony), adorned with new clothes (fully ripened) and subjected to further cutting and dissection (harvested).

On introduction to the temple enclosure and the purificatory bath with fire and water, the tree goddess is aligned with the spire of the temple (the bindu, or male epicentre of the mandala formed by the temple building) and stationed beside the now-conjoined red and white bhairaths. Introduced, as it were, to her conjugal fate she is secreted like a young veiled bride in the inner room of the temple. She is worshipped, visited and offered tributes by streams of "guests" anxious to give and receive merit on the eve of Nandāstami, her official

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[1] cf. below p.448 on the symbolism of the marriage pole in Gujerāt.

wedding day.

Outside in the courtyard men and women keep separate vigils as on the occasion of a wedding, while on the outer perimeters, outside the temple/wedding enclosure general festivities take place. These are characterised by a mingling of sexes and a general loosening of the constraints which divide caste from caste and men from women. The inversion of the normal pattern is both a reflection of the ambiguity and liminality of the transition between seasons and a representation of the priority of the fertilising reproductive impulse at this critical juncture within the agricultural cycle.

The Coupling of the Divine Pair.

From this point of the proceedings onwards, the ceremonial marriage of the god and goddess at Almora and Kot shades somewhat obscurely into their ritual congress, an act which again itself merges obscurely into (or is identical with) their ritual death. Indeeed this unique conflation of the three most fundamental 'life-cycle' processes, marriage, reproductive intercourse and death, their continual metaphoric inter-linkage throughout the entire complex of rituals and associated myths, appears to be a basic principle of the autumn Devī-Pūjā. The moment of marriage (śādi) and union (milna) at the Kot and Almora festivals is also the moment of sexual union and the moment of death. If the analogy with the marriage ceremony proper is valid, this can be pinpointed to take place concurrently with the sacrifice of the buffalo just before dawn, leading us to the supposition that the buffalo himself embodies the male principle and that his violent orgiastic death is also the point

of sexual union between god and goddess.[1.2]

During the Kumaoni wedding ceremony at the time of kanyadān and circumambulation of the fire-altar the mood of the festivities conducted outside the ritual enclosure transforms from gaity to sadness. The bride's ties with her own family have been broken and she has now joined the household of the groom. The party of village women hitherto involved in singing lewd songs satirising the bridegroom and illustrating sexual intercourse now change their repertoire to a series of laments mourning the departure of their kinswoman. The mela parallel is the johra performance conducted in the early hours of Nandāstami prior to the sacrifice of the buffalo. As in the wedding, the recitations of the johra team are lamentations of the approaching departure of a loved one (the goddess) via (in the myth) her climactic battle with the buffalo. The cadence is slow, the singers appear sad, and an atmosphere of intense emotion is generated among celebrants and observers.

In their dance, the johra teams play out the confrontation between the Nanda and the buffalo, a confrontation which both in myth

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[1] The temple to Nanda Devī at Almora, where the buffalo is annually sacrificed, is decorated with images of male and female deities coupling.

[2] Jonathan Parry reminds me that "the connection between death and sexuality is a theme which is constantly reiterated in both textual and popular traditions. In myth, for example, death enters the world as a result of sexual increase (O'Flaherty 1976*:28, 212) and childbirth is given to women as a consequence of the god Indra's brahmanicide; in folk dream-analysis a naked woman or a bride is a presentiment of impending death; and in ethno-medicine the loss of semen results in disease, old age and death, while its retention confers vitality and even immortality (cf. Briggs 1938:324; Carstairs, 1957). If death is propagation, it is equally clear that propagation is death" (extract from an unpublished paper in preparation - with the kind permission of the author).

* 1975 : 37-43 ; 65-70 ?

and dance appears to be a sexual encounter as much as a battle. In the johra recitation, the buffalo is rutting and its 'charges' are sexual advances (in the Durga myth the demon also seeks copulation). As the dancers delineate in song the course of the battle between the goddess and the demon, they also mime the processes of advancing and retreating which the battle entailed. The pulling and pushing of their gestures reflects the respective postures of the two combatants but it also suggests a copulatory rhythm. The men who issue the dialogues of the demon adopt a head and hand posture which is outward-pointing, convex, dominant and aggressive; the women adopt a bodily posture which is inward-pointing, concave, submissive and receptive. Similarly, the voices of the men, like the bellowing of the buffalo, are raucous and ebullient, those of the women are gentle and enticing.

The element of sexual play between male (the buffalo) and female (the goddess) implicit in the johra underlies the notion of complementation, the ambiguously harmonious yet disharmonious interdependence of the two sides, the conjunction of which like that of śiva-śakti, the linga and the yoni, leads to the renewal of life.

The circumambulation of the khali undertaken by the johra team is to an extent reminiscent of the circumambulation of the fire-altar during marriage, but is primarily a signification of the circular route, or cakkra, followed by the mythical battle. This cakkra, which is also drawn out as a mandala at the place of sacrifice, also represents the world, for the confrontation between Devī and the buffalo is a 'world-battle' in which the fate of the world is at stake.

We have now arrived at the point of sacrifice, the slaughter of the demon buffalo, which is also the point of aggressive/amorous

confrontation of goddess and demon, the moment of 'marriage' and congress between the divine pair. The orgiastic destructiveness of the act marks not only the death of the demon and the release of new life which the event permits, but it also heralds the approaching death of the goddess herself. Just as the issue of the earth (the rice crop) and the demon are to be violently 'sacrificed' in the coming harvest, so too the spirit of the earth (i.e. the mother goddess) which impels growth and renders it fertile, will enter into a period of quiescence, a seasonal death. The confrontation between goddess and demon, deities of earth and the underworld, is a coupling like those represented at earlier stages in the life-cycle of the goddess/rice crop (cf. pp.434;441) which marks, and is believed to induce fertilisation. The objects of fertilisation in this instance being not the old seeds of the previous year, nor the young rice shoots of early summer, but the fruit of the harvest, the rice kernels due to be shed in the weeks ahead.

The myths and rituals of the mela replicate the Mahiśmardini icon popularly displayed in picture-form throughout Kumaon and Nepāl; the event represents the outcome of the legendary confrontation as a victory for the goddess: a conquest of the fiery female over the cthonic male. As in the Hindu marriage (cf. Stevenson, 1971: 88), yet converse to normal convention, the primacy of the female is asserted over the male.[1] The outcome of the battle is the opposite of the pattern of

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[1] The image of Śakti over Śiva, female over male, matter over spirit, is wholly tantric. When she weilds a knife in her mouth and waves a sword, Durga or Nanda, takes on (as one informant pointed out) the aspect of Kālī, the dark goddess of time and mother of destruction. Appropriate iconic depictions of Kālī seated in active sexual intercourse upon the corpse form of Śiva, embodiment of the male principle, are displayed in Rawson (1973, plates 17 and 18).

dominance suggested in the chase depicted in johra. The goddess is depicted as fleeing from place to place seeking succour in covered, closed places, and diverting the aggressive/amorous attentions of the buffalo elsewhere. Eventually however the deity is forced to abandon the role of the submissive, meek, pursued woman and to confront the demon on its own terms in an act of supreme violence. The blood which flows from the conquered demon is however life-giving (p.412) rather than death-dealing, an aspect which possibly suggests an image of blood emanating from the goddess herself: the battle has in fact breached her maidenhead, she is united with the cthonic male, and from the union life emerges. In order to substantiate this implication let us examine in greater detail the exact identity of the cthonic god who is sacrificed.

In general Hindu mythology Mahiś, the buffalo of the Durga legend, is not only king of the netherworldly demons but is also the "goddess's husband" (Spratt, 1966:247; Crooke, 1926:95). It is none other than Śiva (Berreman, 1963:102) in his dark destructive and netherworldly aspect. In the Purāṇic account of Devī's battle with the buffalo, the goddess performs tapas to incite the attentions of Śiva, but receives instead the amorous advances of Mahiś, the embodiment of Śiva's destructive powers (as an independent deity, Mahiś receives his world-shattering powers as a boon from Śiva. (cf. O'Flaherty, 1975:238-49). Elsewhere the buffalo is the vehicle of Yama, Lord of Death and brother to Durga (Atkinson, 1973:794). As an ox or bull it is identical with the "spirit of fertility" (Crooke, 1912:285), and is the dark counterpart of Śiva's favoured mount Nandin, the white bull, which is also an agent of fertility. The cosmographic ox is celebrated in the Atharvaveda as having "King Soma (for) his brain, the sky his upper jaw, the earth his lower jaw" (IX.7.2); and as having "anger (for) his

kidneys, fury his testacles, progeny his virile member" (IX.7.13).

Throughout the Himālayas, the male Buffalo is classed as an aggressive and potentially destructive animal which, unless carefully contained, takes on the character of a dark and evil spirit, denizen of deep pools, lakes and tanks - its original place of habitation.[1] The sexually aroused or "charging" buffalo (markoli jatiya) once freed from its tether is greatly feared. Buffaloes are only kept in the hills for their reproductive abilities; unlike in the plains these huge animals are not suited to the terrain and the narrow fields so they cannot be used as working animals. Animals kept for stud are generally underfed and badly treated. And the majority of male buffaloes born are allowed to die at birth. Female buffaloes are in contrast a highly valued source of milk products and in Kumaoni estimation confer greater status, wealth and sanctity upon the owner than the sacred cow.

This variety of negative connotations and associations underlie the widespread use of the male buffalo in the Himālayas as a sacrificial animal and scapegoat. In Himāchal Pradesh a male buffalo is sacrificed in the river Ravi during times of floods (Crooke, 1926:61). As the "embodiment of death" (ibid:60), its own death is a conquest of life over death. It functions as a scape-animal for the release and expiation of sins (pap) manifest as disease and calamity. In some places it is slaughtered slowly, by hacking, bleeding and dismemberment (Berreman, 1972:378-9), usually after a long chase. Its flesh is never eaten,

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[1] Crooke points out that the buffalo "possesses inherent 'sanctity', probably because it has been only in comparatively recent times domesticated from the wild herds of the forest, the boldest and most savage of the Indian bovidae" (1912:284-5). Its adoption as the vehicle of Yama can be related to its black colour and its habitation of water (standing water, lakes, deep pools and tanks, the homes of fishes and snakes, represent the south, the world below, Pātāla, the underworld).

hence it is often buried (Crooke, 1926:106) or abandoned in a lowly place. Its blood however has curative values, the blood of its death confers life (cf. Crooke, 1926:290).

At Kot, as elsewhere in India, the buffalo is a substitute for a human victim (Crooke, 1926:109) usually male (as among the Khonds, Eliade, 1958a:306). In the annual sacrifices performed for the goddess by the tantric sub-cults of the Āghoris and Kānphaṭās at the Durga-Kamakhya temple in Assam[1] the male human victims were identified as incarnations of Śiva. Eliade identifies these ceremonial activities as indicative of the "coalescence between Śaktism and the archaic ideology of fecundity in which sexuality and violent death coexist" (1958a:306).

Returning to the Kot rituals, the dawn sacrifice of the demon buffalo completes the marriage of god and goddess. Prior to its slaughter, Nanda is exhibited as incarnating in a highly excited state. The possession sequence is the most frenzied and orgiastic of all. She circumambulates the sacrificial altar a total of eight times; the number is determined by the date, the eighth of Asoṣ, Nandāstami, her wedding day. During her round the invocationary thakkus are sounded into the linga within the sacrificial pit, thus effectively calling up the buffalo demon. Following Nanda's heated re-entrance into the temple, the buffalo is anointed with tilak (red/blood/female); rice (white/semen/male) is cast over its back and it is led around the cakkra, the place of battle and the marital altar. On becoming anointed by the brahmin intercessor, the sacrificer and the pradhān of Mela Dāgari (representing the bride) engage in symbolic communion with the demon. Facing south,

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[1] This is the legendary site of the goddess's vulva which fell to the earth, as one of the pithas or 'seats' resulting from the dismemberment of her body by Viṣnu and the gods (cf. Bharati, 1965:87-8). Notably, the Kot temple is founded on a site named after the vulva of the goddess as queen.

the direction of Yama, the animal is dispatched with a swift blow by the kinsman of the goddess towards the south and below the world of men. After slaughter its body is also cast towards the south, below the Kot temple.

The number eight recurs in the set of offerings sacrificed to the goddess. Like the first offering (the buffalo) the other seven are metaphoric representations of the virile male (animal and human). The gānjārū has a human shape and white flesh, the coconut and pumpkin also have white flesh and can be identified with the human head (cf. Crooke, 1926:410; Ostor, 1971:178-9). All three are extensions of the human male, vessels of life-giving reproductive fluid (Crooke, ibid). Their dismemberment releases white flesh and fluid complementing the red flesh and fluid of the sacrificial animals. The remaining four items of sacrifice, the dedicated male goats, are later sacrificed directly over the altar stone; their blood and flesh mingling with the white flesh of the dismembered vegetables.

The slaughter of the buffalo and the other sacrificial 'animals' is suggestive of an orgiastic climax: sexual congress between goddess and demon, the violent fusion of the male and the female in which the female is the active partner. The act is a final climactic manifestation of the juxtapositioning of the male and the female, a ritualised conjugation of opposites involving the release of female matter (the red blood of the demon let loose through fiery, female violence) followed by the dispersal of male matter (white fluid and seeds spilled by a 'white' priest, the brahmin). The blood of the demon becomes, through metonymical extension, the menstrual blood of the goddess, which is both

death and life[1]; and the flesh of the vegetables becomes, by the same conceptual process, the semen, or bindu of the god. The total sacrificial residuum, like the kulamṛta of the tantrikas[2], is the issue of the conjunction of Śiva and Śakti. It is a combination which gives life. The demon's blood (or goats' blood) is in fact the blood of the goddess, menstrual blood or birth blood, released at this time of year (another period of the goddess's 'heat', cf. Bharati, 1965:260[3]) to mingle with the autumn rains which will promote the maturation of the rice crop.

The simultaneous marital and sexual conjunction of goddess and god, earth queen and demon king, female and male, above and below, as signified within the sacred enclosure, is paralleled outside the enclosure by the general license indulged in by festival participants. At this point of seasonal transition, activities of 'reproduction'

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[1] "Blood is a substance which is essential to all life processes, but at the same time the spilling of blood is connected with death. Thus in many cultures the colour red has been found appropriate as a symbol of the warrior or of the rule of kings. At the same time, however, blood appears during menstruation and at birth. Because of the close ties with reproduction, blood and its expression in the colour red have come to symbolise sexuality, fertility and also femininity" (Beck, 1969:563).

[2] The kulamṛta is "the cosmic residuum caused by Śiva's and Śakti's eternal copulation", or alternatively is the nectar "produced by the churning of the milk ocean", of which Śakti herself was the main product. (Bharati, 1965:259).

[3] Bharati notes the following: "Other tantrics whom I met (while on pilgrimage) seem to indicate that the kula-nectar is the liquid which emerges from the contact of Śiva and Śakti. Among Assamese tantrics worshipping at Kamarūpa (one of the great 'seats') the Kulamṛta is identified with the rajas (menstrual fluid) of the goddess - the great kula convention in that area takes place at the time of the goddess's rtu (menses) which is set for August September" (Ibid:260).

rather than purification have pride of place.[1] The tamasic or violent and polluting character of the rites give it a tantric character and nomenclature ("tantrapūjā") though the orientations of the ceremony are more towards a regeneration of the physical world, the earth and the world of men, rather than a purely spiritual regeneration. This said, however, the mela rituals take the overall form of a play on the interdependance of the material and the metaphysical, the physical and the spiritual; and manipulations enacted within one domain are equivalent to manipulations acted out within the other. The marriage and coupling of the god and goddess, male and female, marks and metaphorically reproduces the climax of the growing season. Their consummation and simultaneous death signals the coming of the quiescence and decay characteristic of the harvest season. The evils, diseases and excessive virility of the rains, are transferred onto, and embodied within, the condemned buffalo demon. The scapegoat is cast out of the world of men and sent back to the place below the earth (or in the waters) from which it emerged.[2]

The evidence does not appear to directly confirm our intimation of a direct identification between Buffalo and rice crop. But Mahiś, master of the lower world, is believed to inhabit the rice fields as the rice is turning to ear (cf. Crooke, 1926:336) and as the

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[1] Keen Freudians might be tempted to elicit sexual or 'reproductive' symbolism in the range of goods sold at the mela. Objects symbolising feminity, e.g. yoni forms such as rings, bangles, bracelets, waterpots, churning bowls and dahi pots, are sold alongside artifacts which symbolise masculine potency e.g. milk sweets and curds. (cf. Spratt, 1966:164-5, 194, 197, 235). This alignment of male and female objects can be considered as another dimension of the red-white symbolic complex considered above.

[2] cf. Frazer's (1963) discussion of the expulsion of the scapegoat as both a representation of the death of the spirit of vegetation and a way of marking transition between the seasons (753-4).

rice disappears so too does Mahiś. Also, the animal's association with the lower parts of the goddess's body as the medium through which her 'feminine' blood-letting creates fertility and new life (cf. the Mahiśmardini icon) would suggest that the buffalo is a metonymical extension of the goddess and rice crop which is sacrificed as a substitute for the inviolable goddess. In this case his death by beheading could be construed as a ritual action comparable to the severance of the banana tree - a gesture indicating the first violent blow of the harvest.

This interpretation would also make the buffalo sacrifice consistent with Indo-European harvest customs wherein the corn spirit is in some places identified as a divine animal, such as an ox or bull, which is slaughtered towards the close of reaping (Frazer, 1963:600-3). An associated motif, the correspondence between the mode of sacrifice and the violent 'death' of the rice crop (through reaping, flailing and threshing) is also found in the Kumaon Himālaya. Among the Bhotiyas of the Juhar valley and in some of the Pahāri villages the sacrificial buffalo is not simply beheaded like at Kot but chased around a harvest field and flailed, hacked, beaten with sticks and pelted with stones until it meets its moment of death (cf. Atkinson, 1973:851-2).

An even clearer exposition of this sequence and the metaphorical associations involved can be extracted from Berreman's description of the mundkile rite performed in the neighbouring province of Garhwal. Not only does this ceremony compare closely with the processes of the Kot Mela but it also encapsulates essential parts of the wider symbolic schema (Devī's life and death cycle) of which the rituals at Kot provide only the dramatic end. The mundkile takes place towards the end of

the harvest season in Garhwal and is performed in honour of Durga Devī in association with the leading ancestral deities of the area, the royal Pāṇḍavas (heroes of the Mahābhārata) and their consorts (both as queens and as goddesses). For the eight days leading up to the climax of the ceremony when the buffalo is sacrificed, a harela rite, termed hariali in Garhwal, is performed. Barley shoots are grown inside a shrine and daily worship is offered to the goddess. During the final nights the goddess and the Pāṇḍavas come in possession; and on the climactic final day the rice shoots are cut down and placed up on the doors of the houses. The cutting of the shoots, representative of the animal crop, is followed by the first sacrifice - a goat is beheaded in the same place as the barley is cut. A coconut and more goats meet the same fate and a male water-buffalo is led out into the harvest field and there cut, flailed, hacked to death and cast below. The fate of the sacrificial animals is clearly equivalent to that of the barley shoots and to the annual crop at the hands of the reaper and thresher (Berreman, 1963: 383-5).

At Kot, the consummate union of god and goddess, above and below, has ended in severance: the mutual death of the divine pair leads to their departure from the world of men. Also the goddess and the heavy earth are no longer in heat, the seeds of the union - the rice crop and next year's seeds - have been safely delivered, and cooling will quickly follow the excesses of reproduction and parturition. In the meantime, the uncertainty of labour has been assuaged, the darkness of the demon and the night has passed away, and the first dawn of the autumn season lights up the place of liberation.

Last Rites : Heating and Cooling

All the rituals leading up to and including the sacrifice of the buffalo are tamasic and tapasic i.e. intensely polluting and heating. The reproductive powers of the goddess, and the rapid growth of vegetation during the rainy season are celebrated with ceremonies which involve a build up of ritual heat. We can see all this represented in the following ways (a) the conjunction of white (syeto) and red (lāl) symbols preceding the violent coupling of god and goddess; (b) the possession frenzies (termed jos or 'boiling') which build up in excitement and momentum as the festival progresses; (c) the cutting of the tree and capture of the goddess; and (d) the violence of sacrifice. The extremity of the pollution which these ceremonies introduce can be seen in the (conventionally explicit) separation procedures from the other officiants, and also in the disposal of the buffalo's corpse.

We now enter a different cycle of ritual activity, a phase of 'cooling', during which the pollution of original birth (incarnation), sacrifice and sexual intercourse is ceremonially cleansed away. Hence the rites following the sacrifice of the buffalo become gradually less 'heating' and in successive phases are slowly cooled until the point of immersion. This signifies that cooling is complete and that a metaphysical balance has been restored. These later rites are characterised by the cessation of incarnation, the introduction of softer colours, of a milder festival atmosphere and the introduction of water rather than blood or fire as the primary medium of transformation.

The alternations of heating and cooling, corresponding to passive and active phases of the seasonal and agricultural cycle, represent a fundamental process in Hindu ritual generally. This has been made clear by Beck (1969) in her discussion of the consonance

between colour cooling and concepts of ritual temperature: "In ritual, as in mythology, heat must be encompassed or surrounded by cooling things." (553). In South India, as in Kumaon, red substances are used to symbolise 'heated' status and white substances 'cooled ones. In keeping with these larger notions the red used in South Indian ritual normally occurs against a background of white (Ibid:553). In temple divination, for example, red and white flowers are thrown in specific numbered sequences. Predictions are calculated from the combinations which result (e.g. white-red-white etc). The notion of 'red' being represented within a surround of 'white' is also apparent in ceremonies of transition: red is used to symbolise the transitory idiom, white the condition of the subject before and after transition.

Red is used to act as a boundary or intermediate stage between lower and higher forms of 'coolness', 'whiteness' and purity: fire is the most obvious example of a red medium which transforms white inferior substances (e.g. rice or corpse flesh) into white superior substances (e.g. cooked rice or ashes). Another example is provided by blood, which combines qualities of heat and redness. Blood sacrifice, Beck argues, marks a boundary between raw and cooked, impure and pure conditions.[1,2]

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[1] During fieldwork I often encountered behaviour and beliefs which illustrated this principle. 'Cooling' foods such as dahi were, for example, considered to be totally inappropriate in the daily diet during the 'cold' winter months. Similarly, local Brahmans used to explain their heavy indulgence in smoking as a measure designed to counteract the 'cold' of their environment (i.e. during the morning, evening or during a downpour.). On the other hand, women, who were regarded as being naturally 'heated' (through menstruation and passion) were not permitted to smoke until either widowhood or the menopause had been reached.

[2] Turner's (1974) exegesis of the Ndembu Isoma rite shows a married couple moving repeatedly in a cool-hot-cool sequence in order to reach a fertile regenerated state. Among the material symbols manipulated during this restorative function are (red) fire and (white) water, hot and cold medicines, and red and white chickens (15-36).

The dialectic schema white-red-white can also be elicited from the Kot rituals. The purity of the rains and the normal pattern of brahmanical intercession at the temple (i.e. of the pujari) embodied in white substances (offerings of milk, sweets and rice), is interrupted by a sequence of post-monsoon rituals involving the release of red sacrificial blood, the heated incarnation of the fiery (red) goddess and the heating (red) activity of cosmic reproduction. But we now witness the third phase of the dialectic, a stage in which a more transcendent 'whiteness' predominates. This is symbolised in the immersion of the statue in the pure white water (formerly milk) of the sacred naula, the consequent 'cooling' of the goddess and the 'cooling' of the earth by the autumn rains. The white water of the naula acts like the akśāt of akśāt-pitya, like the waters cast into the homa, and like semen mingled with blood or male introduced into female, to contain and balance the (red) heat of sacrifice.[1] Just as the synthesis of opposites

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[1] The motif of a white symbol located within or placed above a red symbol is central to the iconographic representations of tantrism such as that of the śiva-śakti image which features a white lingam placed within a red or multi-coloured yoni, and that of the Śrī yantra design which Rawson (1973) describes as "the most important of all the Tantrik yantras" (pl.1). Within tantric cosmology and ritual praxis the (white) seed is itself thought to generate the (red) yoni: "The seed may be symbolised in the Shri yantra by a central dot, the original point of energy which has 'location but no magnitude' usually depicted as white; it makes its fundamental originating movement in the shape of a female downward pointing triangle, which is red. From the original couple, the white and the red, evolves a series of interwoven triangles, four male (upward pointing) and four more female (downward pointing). Their inter-penetration produces circuits of lesser triangles, which represent the sub-dividing of the original creative energies into more definite forces" (Rawson, 1973:14).

The Śrī yantra like the sex act is seen as an expression of the act of 'continuous creation', testifying to the inseparability of the male and the female. As Rawson notes, "The existence of the world is thought of as a continuous giving birth by the yoni (vulva) of the female principle resulting from a continuous infusion of the seed of the male, in sexual delight" (Ibid:14). Furthermore, "Tantra supposes also that the seed itself generates the yoni" (Ibid). The constancy of white, here the white seed which provides the essence of the male principle, is indicated by the fact that there would be neither "world nor yoni without the seed, which gives to the whole system its possibility of existence, its being, which is always implicit, but can never be an object of perception" (Ibid). Rawson here indicates the transcendent referents of the colour white: the 'white' of the seed is ultimately the

in the dialectical schema represents a state of balance between those opposites, so also the conjunction of male and female (white and red) polarities creates a new balance in the cosmos. However, this particular synthesis or new balance is also creative: it contains the germ of a new life - the matured grains of the coming harvest.

Just after the dawn of Nandāstami we enter this vital third 'cooling' and purifying phase of the Kot rituals. Firstly, the (red and black) pollution of death and sexual consummation still has to be dealt with. Both in ritual and myth the goddess Nanda is characterised at this stage in the proceedings (i.e. following her death and/or the death of the buffalo) as existing in a state of total liminality, she is an immature (kaço) unfulfilled spirit, a chal, and requires propitiation through the revised mortuary rites discussed earlier (Chapter 3, section C). Her ambiguous presence in the world is dangerous and unless she is given a 'safe' passage out of the world, an imbalance remains, and the abundance of heat created by the death and congress of herself and her demon lover will spill over and cause havoc. Although her death and violation at the hands of Mahiś has been avenged by the slaughter and southwards departure of the buffalo, she herself must be controlled, purified and cooled.

The first stage of the goddess's transformation is celebrated in the rituals at Kot by the lighting of sacrificial fires by brahmins on the khali of the temple during the early hours of Nandāstami. A correspondence with the sun is suggested by the time of their kindling i.e. just as the rising sun becomes visible on the horizon beyond the temple. Like the sunlight on the rice crop, the effect of the fires is transformative and purificatory: they are yagnas, auspicious

sacrificial fires which remove sin and purge pollution (engendered in this case by the death of the buffalo).[1] The direction in which the intercessors face (north east) suggest that the function of the fires is to promote the spiritual redemption of the goddess, and through her redemption that of her devotees. As cosmic axes these assist in the promoting of her passage from the earth, and as agents of transformation they both mark and permit access across the boundary which divides the seasons.[2]

In addition, the presence at the mela of a funerary priest, the Bageśwār Mahābrahman, and the primacy of this position among the assembly of purohits, would seem to suggest that the yagnas lit in the courtyard are comparable in function to that of the funeral pyre. As a number of commentators have pointed out, the funeral pyre is a sacrificial fire, a yagna, in which the deceased is immolated as an item of sacrifice to both feed the gods and transform the preta into a pitri (Knipe, 1975:1; Das, 1976:253-4; Parry, 1981:30-31). The goddess falls within the category of the "unnatural dead" and as such is not entitled to cremation by fire: this would explain why the deed is not ritualised at Kot (the dikara is not committed to the flames). But there is little doubt that the fires do celebrate the imminent departure of the goddess: any reading of texts or mantras in honour of the goddess (i.e. Devī Bhagvat as at Kot in the Spring) involves an invocation of Devī at the commencement of the rite and a celebration of her glorious departure on the final day with a large scale yagna followed by a feast. Also, it should be remembered that in mythology the original consort of Śiva met her death in the flames of her father's yagna and thus became the first 'victim' of fire sacrifice and exemplar of the

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[1] The homa is 'heating' but it is also purifying; a 'cooling' substance (water) is included among the items offered to the flames.

[2] For a discussion of this use of fire symbolism cf. Quayle and Hockey 1981a and 1981b.

sati istri or 'true wife' tradition in which the wife mounts the husband's funeral pyre.

The lighting of the homas on the khali floor is followed by two other 'heating' processes, firstly the final frenzy of possession, and secondly the slaughter of the male goats on the thān in the centre of the khali. Nanda's final incarnation prior to her departure is carefully synchronised with the movement of the sun in the heavens, and takes place at midday when its heat is at its most intense. Her circumambulations of the khali take the form of a procession; the flags are carried round one last time and the pradhān of Mela Dāgari, representative of her father's dynasty and taking the part of chief mourner, closely follows the goddess as she is carried round. The total of nine circumambulations (pradakṣina) undertaken at this juncture correspond to the nine forms of Durga and to the nine nights (nauratri) of the period sacred to the goddess. Possibly there is also a correlation with the iconography of the sacrifical cakkra (i.e. the eight Bhairavis or guardians of the directions located at the perimeter, plus Devī herself who is seated in the centre). The 'heat' generated by the goddess's final incarnation is so intense that onlookers even become possessed: a phenomenon perhaps related to the extent of these individuals personal identification with the deity (i.e. their bhakt).

During pradakṣina Nanda repeatedly strikes a wooden seat with Churmal's sword. This is a takhat or ceremonial platform, and like the goddess's tiger (bhag) or lion vehicle is a metonymical extension of her vulva. The striking action, as one informant noted, is a gesture of parturition and by association a tearing of the earth, the lower world and 'seat' of Devī's kingdom. Rather than an abortion or miscarriage, however, this is a tearing which gives forth fruit,

which generates and regenerates life, as in the harvest to follow. It may be noted in support of this interpretation, that the goddess's devotees threw rice and flowers - symbols of fruition - at her feet while she circles the khali. Furthermore, Nanda's final act prior to the dedication of the sacrificial goats, is to disperse a basketful of limes around the courtyard. These green and white fruits of the earth are eagerly caught by onlookers and taken away as fertility talismans.

We now come to the sacrifice of the male goats (bakri). Their slaughter is heating but not polluting, as can be witnessed by the fact that (a) they are dedicated by a pure intercessor (the brahmin pujari) from inside the temple itself; and (b) their blood is fed to the thān and their flesh is distributed among the mela officiants and leading celebrants (including brahmins). Unlike the sacrificial buffalo, the sacrificed goat is not polluting. It is not a scape-animal, or funerary animal metonymically linked to Death itself whose destruction represents the death of evil and the passing of a year or season, but a vehicle (vahana) of liberation, and of ascent (cf. pp.277-278; Knipe, 1975:15; Atharvaveda, IV.14.1, IV.14.6, IX.5.5). As symbols of lust (O'Flaherty, 1973:128-9; also see Bharati, 1965:86-9) both the goat and ram embody the goddess's lusty, earthly lowly aspect, opposed to the heavenly, phallic, transcendent spirituality of the male god, her consort Śiva. In the Jāt Yātrā the goddess incarnates in a horned 'ram' or 'goat' (Atkinson, 1973:793) which travels in procession up into the celestial reaches of the mountains beyond Triśūl to meet her consort.

At Kot the funerary buffalo is dispatched to the underworld (pātāla) whereas the goats as 'heavenly eagles' are destined to reach the overworld (swarga) . They will accompany the goddess on her

journey of liberation from the place of death, providing both food and vehicular transport for the goddess on her journey from the khali at Kot to her eventual mountain destination. Hence they are adorned with 'ascensional' offerings (flower-garlands and potalis) and provided with food for the journey. The slaughter of the goats, like that of the buffalo is a "disjunctive sacrifice" (Beattie, 1980:44) in the sense that their death marks a separation between the worshippers and the object of worship. The buffalo is sent below, towards the south; and the goats are sent above, towards the north. Contra Leach (1976:83) neither sacrifice is primarily a gift or tribute (though possibly there is an additional element of revenge in the immolation of the buffalo) in the strict sense: their function appears to be largely vehicular; as in the propitiation of the chal (Chapter 3), a journey of descent is followed by a journey of ascent. The goddess must first enter the bowels of the earth before she can rise to the sky, just as winter must precede spring. The buffalo, as demon and funerary animal, is linked with the goddess's death and 'burial', the goats are linked with her liberation, i.e. her eventual passage into the sky (or as in the Persephone myth, her re-emergence in the overworld in Spring).

The bandhāri of the Kot Mela, i.e. the post-sacrificial feast usually held to celebrate the effected liberation of the ancestor (cf. Chapter 3, pp. 236), is consistent with the disjunctive nature of the Kot immolations in that little stress is placed on the notion of communion with the deity. The feast as such is remarkable for its lack of commensality and communality (celebrants eat separately, at home in their villages that evening); and the dãgariyās, the goddess's earthly vehicle and her aides, alone partake of food at this juncture. But neither is the bandhāri (or bandhāris) a "festal addition"

(Fortes, 1980:ix). The feast has to do with transformation and transport. The goddess is fed with cooked (i.e. fully mature and transformed) foods prior to her complete departure. These are given both to the thān and to the medium, and are designed to further or give substance to her complete maturation as a pako devta. The later absorption of the pure goat flesh by the mela celebrants confer upon the latter a participation within the goddess's holy journey or jātrā (in the Jāt Yātrā they will accompany her personally). The ingestion by individuals of such prasādi confers merit (punya) which furthers their own attainment of moksa. Through the regeneration of the deity, comes the regeneration of the devotee (cf. Hubert and Mauss, 1964:94, 63-4).

We have now reached the final stages in the maturation of the goddess, and by extension the rice crop. Complete maturation is effected in the two conclusive ritual processes of the Kot Mela, Nanda's funerary procession and her ceremonial immersion. Through these performances the goddess is transformed from a kaco chal, or 'raw spirit' to a pako devta or 'mature deity'. Just as the rice is ripened by an alternating rhythm of balanced heating (from the sun) and cooling (from the rains), the goddess having been heated (with fire, blood and possession) must now be cooled. Her instability, impurity, mutability and mortality must be converted into stability, purity, immutability and immortality.

The state in which Nanda re-appears from the temple after sacrifice, i.e. decked in wedding finery, resplendent with red and yellow clothes, silver and gold jewelry, reflects her state of consummation (unification with her consort, represented here by the doli, at Almora by another statue) and maturation. She has been initiated and perfected

by marriage and the sacramental offering of intercourse (cf. Eliade, 1958a:254-267), and her transport from the place of marriage to the home of her consort is under way. But in accordance with the Kot myth, Nanda's wedding is also her funeral, and once consummated (a death in itself , cf. Briggs, 1973:324, Dasgupta, 1969:244-46) Nanda is in a state of death; she is either dying or is already dead. Like the corpse of the newly deceased, she is carried on a doli or bier to the place of transformation where her spirit is given passage from the world of men. The route followed is identical to that of the mortuary procession: she is carried out the back gate of her earthly home and is thus oriented towards the south. Then she is re-directed towards the north-east, the direction of salvation, but is carried down towards the śmaśāna (i.e. at Bageśwār). Her condition is sacred like that of a corpse prior to cremation or burial (cf. Das, 1976:253; Parry, 1981:31), and she is proferred further offerings (rice, grains, flower-heads, silver etc) for her long journey. The mela participants and observers are mournful, the festivities have ceased, and the mood of her transportation is solemn and melancholic.

In the manner of a chal being propitiated, Nanda's dikara within which her spirit is confined, is broken up at two of the liminal places generally regarded as the habitations of lesser spirits and unfulfilled souls: at the crossroads beneath the temple the statue is divested of its ornaments; and at the ravine of the naula the shrouds are removed and the body dismembered. After a hasty worship Nanda is placed under the flowing waters of the naula and is dispatched into the world below and beyond. She will not re-emerge until the following spring. Autumn (śarāl) and the harvest season has commenced.

Yet although this is a period of activity, it is also a period of mourning. The goddess's departure from the earth is signalled by the closure of her temple for the remainder of Asoṣ; and in addition to this, the dark fortnight following is devoted to the worship (with tarpana, i.e. libations of flowing water) of the dead ancestors. This is the pitripakṣ, known as Parwan, the only two weeks of the calendrical year given over solely to the mourning and worship of the deceased dead of the community.

The goddess's last rites are those of a female chal, the spirit of an untimely or unfulfilled death. The normal procedure in the event of a Kumaoni woman dying by suicide,[1] before marriage, without child, during childbirth or during menstruation, is to anoint the body and either bury it in the śmaśana or (more usually) to cast it into running water (see Crooke, 1926:197; Parry, 1981:17). The manner of her death makes her unfit as an item of sacrifice to be committed to the funeral pyre (Das, 1976:255). But in Kumaon it is acknowledged that the alternative arrangements available for the disposal of the corpse do not guarantee the liberation of the spirit (preta). As often as not it returns as a chal to plague the household within which it met its death. Kumaonis have a great fear of the chal of a

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[1] For a general discussion of symbolism in the suicide act, which contains reference to the suicides of Kumaoni women, cf. Hockey (1981).

suicide, like Nanda, who died whilst attached to her marital home, usually as a result of unhappiness in the early stages of residence within the new household. Any sickness or fatality in the domestic realm (family members, fields and animals) which may occur within a period of six months to a year is immediately attributed to the malevolence of the new spirit; and the pūchar and jāgariyā are called in to diagnose and propitiate.[1]

The temporariness or provisional nature of immersion, as a way of disposing of the body and of transforming the spirit of a female suicide, concurs in the rituals of Kot with the seasonal nature of the goddess i.e. the temporary nature of her death. Nanda, like the growth in Spring and Summer, comes to life again every year, and must be annually propitiated. The undressing of her statue at the crossroads and the dismemberment of her limbs at the naula mark only the death of her current incarnation: there is little doubt that she will take birth again in the following year. The immersion which follows only conveys away and purifies the corpse of this year's incarnation tainted with the pollution of reproduction and the blood of birth. The 'cooling' action and purificatory 'whiteness' of this conclusive stage in the Kot rituals, relates also to the 'cooling' of the rice crop in the quiescence of autumn and to the 'whitening' of the grain heads. The immersion of Nanda is like the purification or holy bath (gungasnan of the Kumaoni woman following childbirth: for

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[1] Following the suicide of a young married woman within my fieldwork area in 1977, her husband's family were so perturbed by the possibility of affliction (while alive she had threatened this as a form of revenge on her husband's kin with whom she had difficult relations) that convention was flaunted, and her body was cremated. However, only one pole was used (instead of two) for the doli built to carry her body from the place of death. Shortly afterwards, a jāgar was held in the household of the husband.

not only is the issue itself (the rice heads or children) purified and formally brought into the world, but the goddess like the woman herself becomes fully matured in the eyes of the community.[1] Nanda's new maturity leads eventually to a re-union, as a 'liberated' chal with her consort and the rest of the gods.

Nanda's immersion can be considered at one level as a return into the earth. At Almora, the place of disposal is termed Pātāl Devī, i.e. 'underworld goddess'. As a local deity, Nanda is embraced by the mother, Devī in all her manifestations. Just as the immersion of ashes at death into the "waters of salvation" signifies a return to the amniotic fluid, to the womb of the mother (Spratt, 1966:194,235); Nanda re-enters her mother, goddess is absorbed within Goddess.

One aspect of the general association between running water and the Goddess is the function of the former as a mode of passage. This has been noted by Ostor (1971):

> "The Goddess dwells in water. It is through water that divinities reach or leave the earth" ... "The Ganges, the sacred river itself, is a manifestation of the Goddess. All images of the Goddess are immersed in the water after the periodic festivals are over. Water is regarded as the channel through which the gods reach their abodes in the Himālayas. Water itself is identical to a dwelling of the Goddess" (355)

Running water, in the case of the Nandakīnaula, is used to convey Nanda's corpse from the place of birth and death. Just as bathing in the gunga washes away sins and confers salvation by carrying away impurity, so also the immersion of Nanda's kaco prāni in the waters of a gunga

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[1] Ultimate purification of the new mother is also realised during immersion. This washes away (red) impurities and finalises the (white) maturation of the person who is bathed. Following childbirth and this subsequent purification, the new mother is given a revised status in the community and a number of personal privileges (including the right to a cremation, rather than a kaco burial, upon her death).

cleanses and cools the earth by carrying away her vehicle (the dikara) and promoting her post mortuary liberation (through passage into the Ganges itself). Following from this latter observation, the placing of the statue under a stream of flowing or pouring water may be likened to the offering of winter ablutions to the deceased ancestors (cf. p. 224 - 226) in the annual śraddh ceremonials (Par..an) which take place in the dark fortnight following the Nanda pūjā.

Nanda's departure is not only a death but also a new life. Nanda becomes water[1]; and the water at Kot flowing out of and down along the ground is metonymically linked to the water which falls from the sky. The immersion of the dikara is expected to coincide with the first rains of the autumn season considered so essential to the final maturation of the rice crop.[2,3] The motif involved is also metaphoric

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[1] In classical Hinduism the source of all water is the sky, which is contiguous with the sea. The river Ganges, into which all the rivers of Kumaon ultimately flow, is believed to rise from the matted locks of Śiva (i.e. from the sky which surrounds the mountains). Water is also the home of Seśnag, the primordial serpent who floats in the sea supporting Viṣnu. Many of Hinduism's magico-religious heroes, including Devī herself, were created out of water, usually sea or lake water (Eliade, 1958a:350). Also in addition to the divine mother, water, the water of rivers, lakes, streams, wells and tanks, houses a host of malevolent spirits (gardevī or garbhūtas in Kumaon), demons and spirits of the underworld (nāgas, nāginīs etc.).

[2] The swelling of the rice kernel through the absorption of an additional amount of water at the time of ripening (by sunlight) is essential to its quality and purity. The production of rice or padi, the grain which most closely approximates to cow's milk, is dependant upon a careful balance of the forces of water and fire (i.e. rain and sun), idioms of 'cooling' and 'heating'. Rice itself has cooling and heating properties and, is eaten, unlike other grains, every morning of the year, regardless of season. (Rice mixed with milk, a dish known as kīra, is particularly auspicious and is thought to have great health and fertility-giving properties.

[3] This link between the coming of life-giving rain and the immersion of a tree idol, is also apparent in a ceremony of Uttar Pradesh reported by Crooke. During this, boys and girls go into the jungle "during" the rainy season, cut down a branch of the Karam tree and set it up in the village. Then, "The people drink and dance round it all night, wine is poured on it, rice and sweetmeats are offered to it, and a chicken is killed and its blood smeared on the leaves. Next morning the branch is taken to the nearest stream, with singing, beating of drums, and dancing by the young folk, and it is flung into the water with the recital of a ritual

in principle: water poured below is like water poured from above (i.e. the sky). But the ritual is not simply an analogical act underlying the act of immersing the goddess; there is a belief that it creates and celebrates one further final union between earth and sky, below and above, god and goddess. The mode of union is the statue itself: this is placed up-ended under the water tank, like a linga placed within a yoni; and the water is allowed to pour down the statue trunk before hitting the earth. In the flood which follows the rain the statue will be carried away, but for the moment it provides an axis connecting heaven and earth and creating a fusion between them. The statue, once dismembered, is again the trunk of a sacred tree, an item of vegetation which once watered grows and bears the fruits and seeds which sustain life.[3] Its intercessory function is thus directly comparable to that of the brahmin or jogi who at one time in Kumaon was submerged in a tank of water and required to chant the name of Indra (King of Heaven and god of rain) in order to promote much needed rainfall(Crooke, 1926:77).

Although ultimately a medium, water is also the issue of intercession and union which these last rites create and celebrate. In Hinduism generally water is regarded as "the prime source of fertility" (Crooke, 1926:54), and as such is associated in myth and ritual with rice and milk, alternative agencies of purity and life (cf. also Bhattacharya

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[1] Ostor (1971) notes that the "unhusked, harvested rice is the most sacred member of the plant world. It is the basis of life, the central part of any meal ... it is sacred, especially when cooked. Men have to bathe before eating cooked rice, they can eat after offering a portion to the gods. Rice is essential to pūjās and all life-cycle rituals. It is the Goddess Lakśmi, the Goddess of wealth (dhan is rice, dān is giving, and dhon is wealth)" (195-6).

1975:9)[1]. And it also provides the fluidic component of impure life-giving substances blood and semen. As natural symbols these substances are not only metaphorically interlinked, but they are also interchangeable for ritual purposes.[2]

Nanda's ritual journeys across the earth and through running water ultimately preface her union with heaven and her ascent to the sky. As daughter of the Kumaoni raja she retires to the paradise of Indra, King of kings and gods; as daughter of the mountain, she returns to her father in the ascensional journey of the Jāt Yātrā; and as consort of Śiva she retires after her initially descensional passage into and southwards across the earth to Mount Nanda Devī and to the paradise of Kailāś itself. The following year she re-appears in a different form as Brahmarī, the spirit of Spring, and as in the legend of Brahmarī

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[1] The largest river in Barahmandal, the Kośi (also a tributary of the Ganges), was a 'milk river' in a former era until, according to one legend, it was turned by a ṛṣi-muni into a river of water. As intercessors, holy men in general are credited with power over water. Gorakhnāth, for example was a reputed 'rainmaker' (...). Nātha akhadas are built beside water, preferably at the junction of two rivers, as at Hardwar and Allahabad where the Kumbha Melas are held. The water of such places is held to be particularly auspicious; it not only confers fertility and vanquishes barreness, but is believed to secure salvation for bathers. (cf. also Crooke, 1926:54-57).

[2] In the brahmanical sacrifice, the waters sprinkled over the object of sacrifice are construed as seeds being placed in a womb (Eliade, 1958a:110).

As noted earlier (p.62-3), in Kumaon, the agricultural deployment of water resources is an exclusively male activity. Like the sowing of seeds and the furrowing of the soil it is an action of 'fertility' or creation. Water, seeds and the 'man' are metaphorically linked as agents of fertility. Their action is, however, predominantly passive, for it is the female earth which absorbs the water and the seeds, and it is the women of Kumaon who nurture the seeds into active fruition.

takes birth at the hands of the gods through the medium of water. In the meantime, the ablutions which fall from above create fertility below; the union of god and goddess creates life from death; and as the rainwater and sunlight mingle over the Kot temple and the Katyūr valley, the ears of the rice plant begin to swell, thus guaranteeing the life and redemption of the human community.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUDING REMARKS :

JOURNEYING, DEATH AND MOVEMENT

"The detail of the pattern is movement"

Eliot. Four Quartets.

Discovering an appropriate point of exit from a discussion which, true to the cyclical nature of the subject matter culminates in a description of the seasonal death upon which the annual life of the Kumaoni community depends, is no easy task. So I propose to round off the cycle of description and interpretation, not with a tabulation of the themes, motifs and sets of relations unearthed throughout the work, but with a further delineation of the extent and purpose of the association operative between our three most recurrent themes and constructs, the journey, Kumaoni death and Hindu renunciation. Before doing so, however, it will first be necessary to consider further the status of the concept of the ritual journey in North Indian Hindu society. After this I shall attempt, in the light of the data that I have adduced, to refine further its function as an analytical and classificatory device by showing how it is consonant with a more abstract concept, altogether, that of movement.

Processes of symbolic movement are seen as fundamental to a wide range of ritual and ceremonial contexts e.g. rites of passage, death ritual, circumambulation, renunciation, pilgrimage, procession and sacrifice. Movement, as represented in ritual cycles and cycles of time, provides metaphoric linkage and continuity between opposed processes of worldly degeneration (decay, death and renunciation) and worldly regeneration (renewal, rebirth and liberation). Movement is also viewed as providing the very essence of liminality: liminal time, liminal space and liminal beings are all associated with symbolic movement - these are times, areas and agencies of transformation, flux and change. The transformations wrought from liminality reflect the power of movement; and the creative power which emerges both from liminality

and from the realms of death and the dead, is seen as a dimension and outcome of processes of movement. Through movement is realised new life, a wellspring for further movement.

The Shamanic Journey, Possession and Hindu Death

As Allen (1974) has demonstrated, the concept of the ritual journey has an ethnographic validity which is independant of the notion of shamanism (p.6). By eliciting journey motifs from a wide range of rituals found in different Himālayan cultural contexts, he has demonstrated that it is possible to "place the shaman's undertaking in a broader perspective" (ibid). This is essentially the paradigm that I have followed in the presentation and interpretation of large parts of the Kumaoni material. However at this point in the discussion I would like to refer back to the specifically shamanic model of the ritual journey in order to highlight the closeness of the relationship which does seem to pertain between this model and the type of journeying uncovered in Kumaoni possession ceremonies (cf. Chapter 4). This will allow me to address some of the problems which have arisen in the ethnographic literature concerning the place of the journey in 'Indo-Aryan' South Asian society.

According to Eliade (1964) the distinguishing feature of the shamanic ritual journey is its "ecstatic" quality. The shaman's journey consists of a "trance during which his soul is believed to leave his body and ascend to the sky or descend to the underworld" (p.5). Eliade construes the psychological state of "ecstasy" which constitutes this trance as the shaman's "concrete experience of ritual death; in other words, of transcending the profane human condition" (ibid:95). And

this notion of symbolic death, which Eliade considers to be primary to the shamanic complex, is echoed within the symbolism of shamanic initiation: to obtain mastery of the ecstatic journey the novice must participate in a sequence of ordeals which feature his symbolic dismemberment, death and resurrection. Furthermore, successful mastery of the journey mode leads to the acquisition of magical powers which involve constant 'dealings' or confrontations with death, e.g. control over fire, the psychopompic recovery of lost souls, the assumption of dangerous animal forms, battles with the denizens of the Land of the Dead, and the promotion of magical healing (to prevent death).

The ecstasy or 'ritual death' of the North Asian shaman is brought about by the use of ordeal, the performance of music and dancing, the ingestion of narcotics, and the invocation of 'possessing' spirits. As such, these "archaic techniques of ecstasy" often resemble in form (and in content) techniques used in South Asian Hindu societies to bring about trance states recognised purely and simply as 'spirit possession'. This common feature alone would almost suffice to justify attempts to locate further symbolic parallels between shamanic phenomena and spirit possession, such as may be provided by journey motifs or death symbolism. Eliade however insists on a

rigid distinction between the two types of activity.[1] He maintains that spirit possession involves no type of soul journey which could in any way be compared with the shamanic flight. The state of possession is the expression of active divinities taking incarnation in the physical world via semi-passive chosen mediums. The spirits who possess shamans on the other hand are little more than ancillary aides to the shamanic vocation - they function as 'sub-ordinate' vehicles or 'helpers', instruments in his magical passage between the worlds. Possession, Eliade argues, is not essential to shamanism. In shamanic ideologies where it does figure prominently its presence can be explained as a symptom of historical degeneration: the result of antecedant innovations producing transformations of the primary archaic shamanic form (1964:499-500; 506-7). By the same historistic principle, the appearance of an ideology of possession within an ethnographic context can not be seen as indicative of the presence or former presence of any shamanic substratum of ideas. These considerations arise out of an examination of the Hindu context where although ideologies of possession

[1] The usefulness and validity of Eliade's distinction between the ecstatic journey and activities of spirit possession has been disputed by a number of ethnographers seeking to apply the concept of shamanism within wider cultural contexts. Lewis (1971) and Reinhard (1976) for example both attempt to broaden the shamanic - ecstatic category by including within it trance states such as those of spirit affliction and possession. The shamanic functionary is then, in their view, someone who not only goes on soul journeys but also becomes possessed by spirits (cf. Reinhard, 1976:16). In response to this proposed amendment it could be said that the utilisation of Eliade's category as a catch-all term for a range of diverse ethnographic phenomena (from affliction to possession and sorcery) only serves to obfuscate its original classificatory value. Reinhard's shamanic officiant is at best only a vague type of 'shaman - medium'. Even given the plausibility of a historical or structural coalescence of the shamanic and mediumistic roles in any chosen context, it seems a redundant and unnecessary step to attempt to categorise every type of medium as a shaman and every case of spirit possession as an example of shamanic ecstasy. It is clear that the tendancy within the early literature to classify the facts into categories of shamanic and non-shamanic was initially a useful endeavour (Allen, 1974:6), and the all-inclusive modifications suggested by these more recent authors do not represent any kind of significant advance in the clarification of our concepts, nor do they assist us in the search for shamanic parallels in South Asian society.

are widespread, shamanism and its basic component, the ritual journey, are thought by Eliade to have little place or significance. He suggests that if the ritual journey ever occurred within the magico-religious life of the Indo European peoples, such as the 'Indo-Aryans' (Ibid: 378-9) then it has been made historically subserviant to other organising belief structures such as the tripartite conception of religion and society said to be characteristic of the Proto-Indo European language group (as revealed in the work of Dumezil, cf. Littleton, 1973:1-19). And certain other structures of possession and ecstasy which are found in traditional Indo-European societies such as those connected with agricultural mysticism, the magic of warriors and the worship of mother goddesses are (despite their quota of 'journeyistic' referents) in Eliade's view, "in no way shamanic"(Ibid:379).

Fundamental to Eliade's distinction between spirit possession and the shamanic journey is the rather crude distinction made by early ethnologists between the religious traditions of 'Indo-Aryan' and non-Indo-Aryan societies of South Asia (the latter includes the northern Bodic groups, the hill tribes of central and southern India, and the southern Dravidian speakers). This idea also underlies Jones's (1968) paper on South Asian shamanism. Explicitly adopting an "Eliaden" perspective this writer contends that soul journeys are devoid of any significant status within contemporary Hindu caste society (p. 333). Focussing on eschatological beliefs, Jones selects ethnographic evidence from a number of Hindu groups to support his hypothesis that beliefs in the shamanic soul journey are incompatible with the orthodox Hindu ideology of transmigration involving notions of karma and the belief in cycles of rebirth (Ibid:347). Also, he maintains, the very fact that Hindu groups do not exhibit any traditions of the journey is

intimately related to the lack of a clear view among these groups of an underworld to which the souls of the dead descend, and an overworld wherein resides some form of ascendant Supreme Being.

Jones does however recognise that in certain ethnographic contexts, such as those of "tribal India", the two ideologies can be found to occur together. Where this is the case he argues that the latter has, through Sanskritisation, come to replace the former (Ibid:342). In Hindu caste society 'proper' he notes (using material selected from Berreman's description of the Paharis of western U.P.:1972:87-88) that in the ceremonial performances which come closest in symbolism and function to shamanic rites (e.g. rites of possession and divination) motifs of ascent to heaven and descent to hell are generally found to be absent (Ibid:342-7). Where shamanic features are found among South Asian groups (e.g. among the Sherpas and Nayars) their incidence can be viewed as a survival of archaic shamanic activities which have, it is held, become transformed within the 'higher' religions (Hinduism and Buddhism). Ultimately, the co-existence of beliefs in heaven and hell and the cycle of rebirths which is found among such groups is seen by Jones as a kind of ideational "confusion" corresponding experientially to a "confusion" in the ecstatic trance of the 'shaman' (Ibid:346). The officiant may indeed descend to the world of the dead during dreams and he may ascend to heaven through the medium of hobby horses, ladders and cosmic trees but the ecstatic experience itself becomes "diffuse and

often results in possession" (p.346-7).[1]

Setting aside the historicism of Eliade and Jones it is possible to see shamanism and spirit possession as occurring within a unitary complex of ideas wherein various related types of symbolic journey obtain: shamanism provides one type or variation and spirit possession another. After all, the very logic of spirit possession necessitates some kind of journey between the worlds involving movements of both ascent and descent. Such a journey would be undertaken by a god or a spirit rather than an officiant, but it is worth noting in this connexion that many of the psychopompic and transcendental journeys outlined in the shamanic literature depict not only the metaphysical flights of ordinary mortals but also those of mythical culture heroes,

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[1]Jones excludes the possibility of viewing the shamanic journey as being in any way related to, or actively complementing, a transmigratory ideology. Yet Hinduism does include an eschatalogical framework which includes references to a structure of three worlds (trilok) consisting of heaven, earth and an underworld (cf. Walker, 1968: 233-4). Each world is further subdivided into layers some of which contain souls thought to be undergoing purificatory phases intermediate between the stages of transmigratory existence (cf. Chapter 3, Section B). Such souls can be said then to be undertaking journeys between the worlds. And transmigration itself can be looked upon as a specific (if complex) type of 'ecstatic' ritual journey culminating in the bliss of release from all stages of existence. The soul is made to incarnate repeatedly through the cycle of rebirths and is forced to adopt a range of different vehicles in the process. Notions of the underworld proper (Narak or Pātāl) play no part within orthodox reincarnation ideology (despite their place in the soul journeys demarcated during orthodox obsequial rites, cf. Ibid) but it is possible to see a series of metaphorical hells occurring within the cycle of lives. Each life is considered as an ordeal (compared with release) and each has purificatory and initiatory functions in that it allows the incumbent the chance to reduce his karma and to prepare for a higher life.

Jones's division of the Indian sub-continent into 'tribal' and Buddhist/Hindu societies is very unsatisfactory. Dumont & Pocock (1959) have succinctly demonstrated that it is often very difficult to satisfactorily distinguish between those groups which are Hindu and those which are not, especially when the so called tribal groups defer to caste values and worship Hindu gods, as is so often the case (40-41). This considered, can one really effect a separation between Hindu convention and a historically distant 'aboriginal' substratum of ideas?

gods and deified men (cf. Eliade, 1964:213-4, 250-1, 419+). It would seem that even incarnating gods themselves can have shamanic attributes. And indeed this is a phenomenon which we encountered in the consideration of the ethnographic material on Gorîya, the Kumaoni God-King. Here there occurs no separation of possessed officiant and deity:- at the onset of incarnation the man becomes consubstantial with the god whose past and present journeys he not only enacts but also undertakes. And as we saw, the character of many of these journeys is strikingly shamanic. Furthermore, the ability to undertake ascens-ional and descensional journeys is an attribute which was noticed to be common to all the incarnating deities worshipped in this particular South Asian context. Indeed the journeying 'mode' itself appears to serve as an essential, even defining, aspect of their divinity. And this notion has precedent in ancient India where, according to tradition, magical flight (as undertaken by ṛṣis, munis, magicians, gandharvas, apsarases, elevated warrior heroes and kings: consider Eliade, 1964:405-8) provided a leitmotif of deification - an aspect of divine office.

Equally, the Kumaoni material shows that we do not have to look to ancient India to discover key shamanic motifs such as the use of hobby horses and cosmic trees in an essentially 'Indo-Aryan' complex of ideas: they can still be found in the ethnographic present. Furthermore, even within a historistic theory of 'survivals', the aboriginality or 'primordiality' of these motifs would be difficult to attest over other key elements in the system (e.g. the worship of kings or combat with demons).

We know that a close relationship exists between the ecstatic journey of the shaman and experiences of symbolic death, and the Kumaoni

ethnography testifies to the frequency with which journey motifs can occur within a Hindu mortuary complex. So I wish now to return to the particular system of ideas which through the deployment of a wide range of funereal images and idioms, cross cuts and links shamanism with Hindu death. This is of course the tradition of the Nātha jogins and their related sects, the Āghoris and the Kāpālikas. Foremost among the funerary idioms of the Nāthas are their practices of locating their monasteries in śmaśānas and burying their dead in tombs (samādh) sited within the precincts of these monasteries. In Kumaon the tombs of Nātha abbots (pīrs) and their descendants are even located within the grounds of the Śaivite temples which the Nāthas serve as pujaris. Like all Śaivite renouncers the Nāthas smear their foreheads and hair with ashes and at the time of initiation adopt a position of classificatory death by performing their own mortuary rites (śraddh) (Briggs, 1973:29; Ghurye, 1964:93-94). Equally, the eventual liberation (jīvanmukta) of the proficiant Nātha jogin is seen as a conquest over death (i.e. immortality) and the legends of Gorakhnāth and his earlier followers recount endless battles and confrontations with Yama and his emissaries (Eliade, 1958a:313-8). As a sect the Nāthas are closely related to the Āghoris who worship death-dealing gods such as Kālī and Bhairav: they are closely associated with human sacrifice (Eliade, 1958a:305); they live on cremation grounds accompanied by dogs, and they are reputed to indulge in the epicurean delight of eating corpse flesh (Ibid:296-7; Ghurye, 1964:136).

The Gorakhnāthas and Āghoris are regarded in the literature as historical transformations of the archaic order of Kāpālikas or "wearers of skulls" (Eliade, 1958a:297, Ghurye, 1964:128). These were early tantrics who worshipped Bhairav, ate human flesh and copulated

with prostitutes during tantric ritual orgies (Eliade, 1958a:296-300; Ghurye, 1964:116-128).

The Kāpālikas and their successors, the Gorakhnāthas and Āghoris, are all "masters of death" and of the dead, hence the prominence of funerary motifs and demonstration of magical powers superior to those of spirits and demons. Their initiations contain shamanic elements including symbolic dismemberment (e.g. head shaving, ear cutting, destruction of worldly clothes, cf. Briggs, 1973:27-34), and ritual death (see above). After initiation they, like the shaman, undertake recurrent ritualised journeys (pilgrimage, and movement from one akhaḍa or dharmsala to another) and seek ritual resurrection (transcendence and samādhi, seen as entering the company or abode of Śiva). Also, unlike the conventionally abstemious orthodox sannyāsin, these ascetics are given to worldly ways (consider, Ghurye, 1964:125-6) and like the shaman, practice a number of exoteric arts, such as healing and divination, on behalf of the laity (cf. Briggs, 1973:49, 55, 127-8)[1].

Eliade himself has attested to the close counterpart of these motifs of funerary transcendence, symbolic death and resurrection and worldly regeneration in the oral literature of the North and Central Asian shamans (1958a:320-1; 1958b:105), and has pointed to the strikingly shamanic style of, in particular, the "myths, rites and folklore of the tantric Siddhas" (1958a:313-8; 1958b:ibid). Also, in the example of the Gorlya legendary cycle outlined above (Chapter 4) which is part of Kumaoni Nātha tradition, I alluded to the particularly shamanic character of the Kumaoni god-king's ordeals: his repeated experiences of deprivation and 'death' culminating in resurrection and ascensional and descensional journeys (among which I have included his re-incarnation in the world of men during possession ceremonies).

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[1] J. P. Parry informs me that in contemporary Varanāsī some Āghori saddhus have opened themselves to the persuasions of 'guruhood' and attract clienteles of lay devotees.

These things taken into account, Eliade's separation of shamanism and spirit possession as magico-religious ideologies which are both historically and culturally distinct (i.e. 'aboriginal' vs Hindu; non Indo-Aryan vs Indo-Aryan) does seem somewhat rigid and absolute. From a purely structural perspective, a considerable amount of dialectical interplay appears to have taken place between shamanism and Hindu mortuary ideology (which includes possession). And the relative abundance of correspondences and complementary themes does seem to suggest, rather than preclude, the possibility of uncovering through further research a common underlying pattern, structure or substratum of shared ideas.

Within such a search must also be included an exploration of correspondences obtaining between the yogic condition of samādhi, shamanic ecstasy and the state of possession. Characteristically, Eliade has strictly differentiated these phenomena from one another. The achievement of the yogi is opposed to that of the shaman as "enstasy" to "ecstasy" (cf. 1958a:339), and possession is opposed to samādhi as an aspect of popular magical ideology (cf. ibid:319-20) which is in no way comparable in subtlety and sophistication to the state of samādhi. Yet in fact some of the material which he includes in his thesis on Yoga (1958a) does point towards the occurrence of common motifs within these fields. Firstly, setting aside any qualitative differences between the mental states of these officiants, it seems clear that the shaman seeking 'ecstasy', the medium experiencing possession-trance and the yogin pursuing samādhi all undertake or enact some form of ritualised symbolic journey (cf. also Allen, 1974:17). Secondly, the synthesis of yogic and shamanic ideologies contained in the mythology of the Nātha cult would seem to suggest (their historical relationship apart) an essential functional and symbolic compatability between these two

doctrines which over-rides their philosophical and supposed cultural differences.[1] Thirdly, with particular regard to the relationship between possession and ascetic transcendence, it may be noted that one of the fundamental stages in the sadhana of the tantric Buddhist initiate (which is designed to culminate in release) is the incarnation of the god Vajrapāṇi in the body of the ascetic. This ritual exercise is achieved under the direction of a guru and is known as "possession by the furious god" (Eliade, 1958a:224). In Hindu tantrism, similar effects result from the performance of the hatha-yoga rite, prāṇāyāma: the practising yogin proceeds to tremble, jump, hop and dance (ibid:232-3) - a sequence of behaviour which closely resembles the archetypal physical manifestations of possession.

Possession and trembling are acknowledged, in any case, as a part of India's classical literary and renunciatory traditions (Staal, 1963:267). The term vipra which means literally "the quivering one" (from the root vip "trembling, quivering") is used recurrently in the sacred literature to denote the physical manifestations of divine ecstasy whether this is applied to gods or to renunciatory figures, seers and the like who are "possessed by inspiring gods" (ibid). As noted earlier in the discussion of the Kumaoni material, the 'ecstasy' of the medium (i.e. his possession and trembling) is in effect manifest 'divinity' of the god. Equally, his elevations and physical 'movements' can be symbolically related, through the trembling which is divinity, with the

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[1] Note also the close parallels which obtain between shamanic ascensional imagery and the following description of Ramakṛṣṇa's samādhi, given by Staal:

"There are five kinds of samādhi. First he feels the Mahavayu (the great nerve current whose rising is felt in the spinal column) rise like an ant crawling up. Second he feels It rise like a fish swimming in the water. Third, he feels It rise like a snake wriggling along. Fourth, he feels It rise like a bird flying - flying from one branch to another. Fifth, he feels It rise like a monkey making a big jump: the Mahavayu reaches the head with one big jump, as it were and samādhi follows" (in Staal, 1963:268).

transcendental activities of his classical renunciatory precursor. Finally, referring to samādhi, the final state of emancipation, Staal points out that this concept "may denote a reality which is from a philosophical point of view, quite different from the possession of a shaman by a local spirit, but from an anthropological view these phenomena are all related" (1963:268).

THE JOURNEY AS MOVEMENT

One would not wish to equate ritual journeys with rites of passage or subsume one of these categories within the other in any general abstract sense (cf. Allen, 1974:18). However, it can be said that journeys through cosmic or geographical space and ritualised passage(s) through social or classificatory space are all expressions of different types of symbolic or metaphorical movement. Movement, as it were, provides the link between journey and passage. In the case of the orthodox death rituals considered in Chapter 3, Section B, the preta 'moves' simultaneously across geo-cosmic space and from one category to another - between preta and pitri (cf. also Kaushik, 1976: 282)[1]. Similarly, the renouncer, positioned between the status of a man and the status of a god[2], 'moves' during the course of his life

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[1] Van Gennep has observed that in many cultures the 'journey to the other world' by the souls of the dead and the entrance to that world tends in general to "comprise a series of rites of passage whose details depend upon the distance and topography of that world" (1977:153).

[2] Parry's informants in Kashi described the renouncer as a preta, or "marginal and wandering ghost" (1981:28): neither man nor god, neither living or dead.

between these two categories and at the same time 'moves' across both cosmic and geographic space[1]:- hence the classical position of renouncers as mediators between men and gods, emissaries who move between the worlds (e.g. the ṛṣi-munis of the śastras).

Movement is crucial to Hindu pilgrimage. The method of movement adopted can have a spiritually enhancing effect (cf. Bharati, 1965:95-97) and the conventional, sometimes prescribed, routes which pilgrims move along serve to link the centre with a number of preparatory satellite sub-centres. Routes, like initiatory paths, provide patterns of movement.[2] And these are usually circular, so that the pilgrim having 'ascended' to the holy spot does not have to annul the benefits acquired so far by then reversing his original orientation and 'descending' along the same path. Once there of course the pilgrim is expected to circumambulate the shrine - usually at the end of any rituals or

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[1] i.e. his hypostasised internal and external pilgrimages (Bharati, 1965: 92).

[2] Turner (1975) has argued that rituals of pilgrimage in complex salvation religions (such as Hinduism) can be usefully thought of as the "post tribal" equivalents of the protracted seclusion periods (or the liminal phase) of the initiation rites observed in tribal and archaic religions(p.107-114). In addition to the theme of liminality both types of ritual context are replete with metaphors of death and rebirth, renunciation and renewal, and both lay stress on an experience of communion with the dead or shades of the dead. However, Turner sees the limen of pilgrimage as being characteristically, motion, the movement of travel, while he sees the limen of initiation as essentially stasis, the seclusion of novices in a fixed, sacred space. The former liminalises time, the latter space(p.117). But even if we concede a difference in emphasis between the two contexts, this division of time and space seems somewhat arbitrary. Clearly both liminalise time and space - indeed a reversal of the emphasis may be more accurate - the pilgrim moves across liminal unfixed space, and the initiate, although physically static, metaphysically moves between chronological points in the life-cycle. The essence of liminality is flux, change, motion and transformation within the realms of both time and space.

supplications observed. Pilgrimage centres, whether focussed on a temple, shrine, tree, cave, mountain, hill or town, are cosmic axes. By moving around the centre the pilgrim is simultaneously moving up and down it - circumambulation (pradakṣiṇa or parikrama) is both horizontal and vertical. Movement across and around the cosmic axis both symbolises and creates the journey-like conditions necessary for the pilgrim to achieve his eventual salvation.[1]

In the Kumaon material the idea of movement is fundamental to the ritualised journey of the preta, the exorcism of the chal or bhūt, and the transportation of the deified ancestors and gods to and from jāgar. Movement is contained within the rite of passage which constitutes the initiation of officiants such as the d̃āgariyās and pūchars who as types of intercessors move between the living and the dead. Similarly, the North Asian shaman moves between the world of men and the worlds of celestial and infernal deities: a successful

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[1] Although circumambulation (pradakṣiṇa i.e. 'walking clockwise' or with the right side inwards, cf. Crooke, 1926:33) is known in vedic tradition and ritual (e.g. the sevenfold pradakṣiṇa of the sun), tantric tradition contains more elaborate instructions about the processes involved (Bharati, 1965:93-4). It even seems possible that the tantric masters regarded "activities like pilgrimage and circumambulation to be as nuclear to the process (of transcendence) as, say, deep meditation" (ibid:97).

Horizontal and vertical movement around the cosmic axis is well illustrated in Bharati's description of the circumambulation of lake Mansārowār and Mount Kailāś in Tibet by Hindu pilgrims seeking to acquire spiritual merit (punya) (ibid:96-97). Along similar lines, Parry's work on Kashi testifies to the transcendental identity of the town for its residents and visitors. Like Kailas it serves as a cosmic axis providing access for pilgrims (specifically those who die there) to an immediate and unconditional liberation. The panch kroshi pilgrimage route around the town "marks the boundaries of sacred space and of the area within which all who die are granted 'liberty' by Śiva" (1981:4, 5, 6). The pilgrim not only moves around the city but around the cosmos (ibid:6), and should he 'move' between life and death during circumambulation his total transcendence is guaranteed. As Parry observes:

> "... Kashi provides the worshipper with a hot line to the transcendental world. Transmission conditions between the sacred and profane worlds are - as it were - optimal; and the place itself is a kind of transitional zone between the two" (1981:9).

transcendental movement is a pre-requisite to the shamanic office itself. The shamanic journey embodies a 'circle' of movement in that the shaman always returns to the point of departure. Equally, Kumaoni rituals of possession, death and propitiation all involve the circumambulation of cosmic axes, a coming and going of desirable and undesirable spirit forms, and the movement of ritual objects and subjects backwards and forwards across transcendental space. In jāgar and jūnar constant movement in the form of trembling and dancing is the sign of divinity. The dances of the incarnating deities, like the dance of Śiva on Kailāś before the assembly of the gods (cf. Coomeraswamy, 1958:67-68), conjoins macrocosmos and microcosmos, and the forces of life and death. In jūnar they even move around a mandala, or cakkra, a revolving wheel, symbolic of both the world and the universe. Their trembling is a movement of rebirth, their dance is a movement of ecstatic transcendence, the dance of death.

One further type of movement which more explicitly incorporates the notion of journeying movement is that contained in ceremonial processions. In the Kumaoni examples (e.g. Devi Kī Doli, Devī Jātrā, Bot Kī Doli, Jāt Yātrā) these are often modelled upon the image of the marriage procession (bhārat) with its connotations of social movement (passage, transition and exchange) and the union of sexual opposites through rhythmic movement. Again, these also contain motifs of horizontal and vertical movement. And they are regenerative in purpose: they promote reproduction, healing and agricultural fertility.

Related forms of ceremonial procession are found in other parts of North India e.g. in the transportation of goddess statues at the dedication of new goddess temples (Devī-Jātrā); the ritual processes of the Durga Pūjā in Bengal (cf. Ostor, 1971:112-289); the

annual processions of palanquins in the Himāchal Pradesh townlands of Kulu and Mandi during Dusṣehra and Śivrātrī respectively; the parading of the car (ratha-jātrā) of Jagannātha at Puri (Macdonald, 1975:27-49) and the annual celebrations in honour of Matsyendranāth near Kathmandu (Briggs, 1973:114-9)[1]. Of these various ceremonies the symbolism of movement contained within one, the parading of Jagannātha at Puri, seems particularly pertinent to the present discussion. Mus (cited by Macdonald, 1975:35-36) writes that the car ceremony is -

> "not an arbitrary journey: it is the ritual pradakṣiṇa, developing according to a fixed order within the framework of the cardinal points. The car is led successively to the different points of the compass. This magical tour encompasses the whole of cosmic space, circumscribed magically by the procession, and it englobes also the whole of time, whose cycle it imitates. In passing by the cardinal points, this moving palace of the world passes through the seasons and at the same time the eras of Time that they foreshadow."

As Macdonald notes "The fixed temple... does not rest on the ground itself but on a diagram of the cardinal points" (ibid:35). Hence according to Mus -

> "when one circles to the right around a monument one takes it with one during the stretch that one travels, and the pradakṣiṇa is thus a tour of the world accomplished on the spot because the layout of the building brings into play the complete spatio-temporal system of the cardinal points. In magical values, there is little difference between this architectural microcosm, fixed in space and mobile in time, and the structural world on wheels which one takes with one throughout the length

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[1] With regard to the status of this particular type of symbolic journeying in North Indian society, the ethnographic literature tends to follow Crooke's line that these are more common in South rather than North India (cf. references above to Eliade and Allen). However, Macdonald (1975) provides examples which indicate ceremonial processions are equally important in North India. He adds "That Crooke considers these rites to be more frequent in the South than in the North is perhaps due to the fact that they have been more frequently observed in the South than in the North" (ibid:34).

> and the duration of the procession." ... "... the procession of Juggernaut carries its temple with it. The procession around the Barabudur encounters successive replicas of it which await it. In both cases, from one moment to the next, it is the same world and it is not the same: it is the same at different dates in the ritual period, symbol of the cosmic period." (ibid:35-36).

Here in one ritual we encounter a complete universe of metaphoric movement: circumambulation of the physical world and the cosmic axis is also a movement through the seasons and the complete span of Time. And it is recognised that the things which are moved around and the very things which these in turn move around are all engaged in a constant process of cyclical movement. Within the wheels which move are other moving wheels.

Motifs of movement within movement can also be traced in the paradoxical combination of symbols and symbolic processes representative of birth in rituals of death. Hence the burial posture of the Śaivite renouncer, upright and crosslegged is, like that of the Tibetan Buddhist (cf. Evans-Wentz, 1960:19-27) purposefully embryonic. Movement into death is also movement into a new body and new birth. In the reincarnation ideologies of classical Brahmanism and Buddhism, death is but a prelude and process of rebirth; and the mutuality of end and beginning is depicted as taking the form of endless cycles of movement across time and space. These cycles of movement correspond also to the cyclical movement of cosmic time in Hindu cosmogony. According to this the cosmos passes through cycles within cycles for all eternity. At the apex of each cycle, secondary cycle, sub-cycle and era there occurs a cosmic dissolution (mahapralay) within which

are contained the seeds of a new cycle of creation.[1] Movements of death and rebirth, their conjunction and their alternation, are celebrated in the life-giving fire sacrifice (Heesterman, 1964:2; Eliade, 1958a:109-10) and the death-dealing sacrifice of cremation (Knipe, 1975:1). In the Kumaoni autumn goddess festival, microcosmic social movements (dance and procession) are ritually homologized with macrocosmic movements (the incarnation, death and parturition of the seasonal goddess), and through the medium of multivocal symbols the whole is directed towards the representation and creation of crucial life-giving movements (maturation) in the organic domain of the rice-cycle.

MOVEMENT, DEATH AND POWER

Ultimately, we should concern ourselves with the way in which the various types of ritualised or symbolic movement are implicitly used as abstract foci for a play upon power. For it can be seen that all these forms of movement relate to the acquisition, control and deployment of power, i.e. creative regenerative power; and to the winning of life from death or (in the case of the renouncer) freedom from rebirth, that the acquisition of sacred 'power' facilitates. Let us then conclude by briefly considering the relationship between movement and the creative power associated with death.

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[1] The basic cycle is the kalpa, or 'day of Brahma', lasting 4,320 million years. Within each kalpa are fourteen manvantaras, the secondary cycles, each of which lasts some 306,720,000 years. The manvantara is divided into seventy one Mahāyugas, or sub cycles, and each of these contains the four yugas or eras, Sat Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvāpara Yuga, and the present era Kali Yuga. (Basham, 1971:323).

In the discussion of Kumaoni and Hindu death it was observed that a close relationship obtains between concepts of death and images of movement. Death is not seen, as in contemporary western society, as a point of termination which marks the cessation of living movement, but as a necessary prerequisite for 'true' movement, i.e. transcendence.[1] This motif is particularly evident within the ideology of the renouncer whose initiation into transcendental movement is marked by his symbolic death. Formerly this involved for certain samnyāsin the experience of physical death through ritual suicide (Olivelle, 1978:20-23). In the orthodox literature on world renunciation (samnyāsa) we find suicide represented as the concluding act of the initiatory rite of renunciation (cf. Ibid). One of the major methods enjoined was the "Great Journey" (Mahaprāsthāna). According to Olivelle this "consisted of walking in a northerly or northeasterly direction towards the Himālayan mountains without eating or drinking until one fell dead." (Ibid:20). Even the recommended mode of dying involved unceasing movement, a merger of physical death, ritual journeying, cosmic passage and transcendence. The power of ritual movement in this example is the continuity and transformation which it effects between life and death, existence and transcendence.

In laic death rituals considered in earlier chapters, those functionaries whose task it is to effect the transcendental movement of the spirit, soul or god, must themselves adopt a condition of

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[1] In Hindu religious thought, death is seen as a transcendence of this world, to a more fundamental level of existence - that of being. What is seen as order and reality, is in effect a world of appearances (phenomena) which masks the ultimate reality of being. The world that the individual perceives as real is really an 'illusion' (maya) and is temporal and chaotic in its very nature." "... death is the event that projects man out of his dream state into a state of awakening, whereby the perception of the ultimate reality is possible..." (Kaushik, 1976:266).

symbolic death. They too must separate themselves from the world of the living. The renunciatory or creative power obtained by this gesture enables the functionary to effect simultaneous social and metaphysical movements. In the case of the chalpūjā rite, the priest brings to an end the transcendental immobility or directionless restless movements of the unhappy spirit hovering around the world of men by re-directing it in cosmic space. He sends it out on a ritual journey. Once this movement is initiated regeneration ensues on a number of fronts simultaneously: the spirit is re-located in cosmic and classificatory space; the spiritual self of the worshipper is transformed; and the social order is re-invigorated - not least of all by the possibility of the re-propitiated ancestor returning at intervals to keep a protective eye on matters.

Similarly, by adopting at some point in his life a condition of temporary death, the ordinary layman or householder can influence the pattern of his own soul's movement after death. Hence he becomes a pilgrim or renouncer or compromises by taking on the duties of an intercessor. These are all ways of acquiring merit and sacred power (śakti) which further movement towards a condition of salvation - the true goal of all forms of ritualised journeying.

This triadic schema of symbolic death, movement and regeneration corresponds to Van Gennep's model of rites of passage wherein rituals of separation, transition and reincorporation engender in the incumbent successive positions and states of temporary social death, transitory reality and a revived social re-absorption or rebirth (cf. Van Gennep, 1977). And just as we conceive of movement as the dynamic and most powerful factor within the ritual journey, so also Van Gennep regards the median phase of his processual structure - rites of transition and

conditions of liminality - as the focal point and most puissant stage of most rites de passage. Hence in the formulation of his model he proposes to "call the rites of separation from a previous world, preliminal rites, those executed during the transitional stage liminal (or threshold) rites, and the ceremonies of incorporation into the new world post-liminal rites" (1977:21). Turner (1977) in a paper devoted to the refinement of Van Gennep's model also accords greatest emphasis to the liminal phase of the rite of passage. In this he sees "the direct expression of the higher level of transcendant, transformational principles which form the ground and mechanism of the social transition in question" (1977:68).

Liminality, as the aspect of transition wherein transformative power is both generated and articulated, also features prominently within most of the types of ritual or symbolic movement explored in this work. All the post-mortuary rituals described commence mostly within classificatory liminal time: at twilight (dūdhalo) or dawn, on the margins of seasonal time or in the betwixt-and-between months of the agricultural calendar. Sometimes they occur within liminal spaces, e.g. the śmaśāna, a banana grove surrounded by cultivated fields, a hilltop temple set in the centre of an agricultural plain, a temple at the meeting of two rivers: their focal point is always a cosmic axis, an 'apex' of liminality which conjoins and straddles the worlds. The ambiguity of these times and places confers upon them an association with a power or powers which appear mostly dormant during normal time and within classified 'immobile' space.

Many of the classes of being which we encounter in Hinduism and in the Kumaoni ethnography possess essentially liminal 'betwixt and between' characters and attributes. The pilgrim, for example, "is

marginal to profane existence in the same way as the initiant during the liminal phase of an initiation" (Parry, 1981:28) - an assessment which can be extended to many types of ritual functionaries and processionists in general. Liminality is also an attribute of the preta (cf. also Kaushik, 1976:286; Das, 1977a:120), the mourner (Chapter 3, Section B; Das, 1977a:126), the chal and bhūt (Ibid., Section C). The travelling deity (Chapter 4) is also liminal; he moves between the worlds. And the renouncer as a "marginal and wandering ghost" moving between men and gods, the living and the dead, is almost a personification of the liminal state. The movement which each of these embodies is by definition the basis of their liminality. Caught between places, points of classification, conditions of profane and sacred being, they exist in a state of continual movement: they have no point of stasis and no classification other than transition itself. This is not to say that they do not respond to structure or embody "antistructure"[1] for their movement often in fact follows a prescribed set of spatial and conceptual orientations, as we have seen. But from their advantageous position outside space and time emerges sacred power, and their liminality confers regeneration and will eventually culminate in a temporary dulling (if not complete cessation[2]) of movement - an end to the passage or journey or part thereof. The power which emerges is itself regenerative: the pilgrim, processionist and functionary attempt to manipulate that power to

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[1] Contra some of the implications of Turner's well known thesis (1974), the realms of the marginal and the liminal are usually very carefully and concisely structured (cf. Quayle, 1976:124-6). I see that another Turner (1977) has, more recently, advanced a similar point(p.70.n.).

[2] Particularly in the case of the renouncer who attains the higher reaches of samādhi and is considered to have achieved total cosmic re-absorption and complete release from the cycle of births and rebirths.

achieve self and social regeneration: healing, social renewal, seasonal and organic renewal, and salvation of self. Similarly, the deity and the ghost wield their divine or demonic power to transform the world, to enhance the processes of physical well-being (the health, fertility or welfare of men) or to further the physical degeneration which leads towards death. So also, the tantric renouncer manipulates power (śakti) and powers (siddhi) to create simultaneous transformations within his body and within the cosmos, until liberation and cosmic re-absorption is achieved.

In all the examples we have considered, symbolic movement appears as an aspect and predicate of change[1], and its ritualisation creates the conditions which make change possible. Movement engenders movement: the pilgrim having completed his ambiance achieves merit which furthers his salvation; the shaman and the jāgariyā acting directly on behalf of the social body create, in the eyes of their respective clients, the conditions necessary for health and social renewal.[2] Through movement, the initiand achieves a new status in society, the renouncer furthers his transformation of self, the pitri and the propitiated chal become incorporated in the world of the ancestors; the autumn goddess enters the death which paves the way for new life; and the incarnating deity reinforces and maintains his elevated position as Lord of Men and their agent in paradise.

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[1] For this idea and for the particular usage of the concept of movement which I have endeavoured to follow in this work I am indebted to an exploratory essay by J. Hockey (cf. Quayle & Hockey , 1981b).

[2] With regard to the performance of jāgar, let us also note that just as the jāgariyā's audience are (visibly) 'moved' by the cadence of his music, the power of his lyrics and the dramatics of the dāgariyā acting under his direction, so they are also metaphorically 'moved' from mundane into sacred time.

In a cultural context such as the Kumaon Himālaya where brahmanism and vedic ritual have not historically held the magico-religious prominence which is generally attested for Hindu India[1], it could be inferred from the ideas suggested above that the conceived balance and periodic renewal of the physical universe depends less upon the power obtained through performance of orthodox sacrifice as upon the transformative power realised through symbolic movement: ritualised journeying, processes of cosmic ascent and descent, circumambulation, procession and pilgrimage. However, one can also see these or similar processes in operation within the phenomenology of vedic sacrifice. For, contra Allen (1974), 'Aryan' sacrifice involves not only ascensional movement ("the upward journey of the burnt offering". p. 19) but also corresponding movements of descent, viz the descent of the vedic gods upon the fire altar, and the descent of "gifts from heaven" (Eliade, 1958a:109) such as life, fertility and regeneration. In Vedic and brahmanic India, as in Celtic Ireland and Ancient Greece, the fire altar is an axis mundi (Rees & Rees, 1961:159). It connects the worlds and unites the universe vertically as well as horizontally, and it acts as a corridor permitting the transformation and transportation of powerful substances and agencies between heaven, earth and the netherworld: Agni, the 'navel of the earth', both conveys men's offerings to the gods and conveys their dead to the underworld (Hocart, 1970:18).

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[1] Atkinson points out that "Although the constant communication with the plains through the pilgrims to the great shrines had a marked influence on the religion of the inhabitants of this portion of the Himālaya, still the belief in demons and sprites, malignant and beneficient, has almost a firm hold on the great mass of the people as ever it had ..." (1973:815). And elsewhere, "...the great mass of the people of these hills are worshippers of unorthodox [i.e. non brahmanical, non vedic] forms whose wrath is deprecated by offerings of male kids and young buffaloes" (ibid:839).

In the ethnographic and classical commentaries the wholly powerful cosmogonic function of sacrifice is given repeated emphasis (Eliade, 1958a:109-10; Heesterman, 1964:2; Parry, 1981:31); it re-constructs Prajāpati, re-creates the cosmos and regenerates the world of men. And we are told that sacrifices are offered by men to secure passage to heaven after death and thus obtain the quality of a god (Eliade, 1958a:110; 1964:403). But, as with the ritual complexes described in the preceding pages, we should be aware that the manifold power of the fire sacrifice as a fount of regeneration and transcendence[1] derives not only from its prestational dimension (the balance created between gods and men through an equivalence of exchanges) but from the movement of subjects and objects which the fire facilitates. Indeed, symbolic movement and access to regenerative power appear to be fairly synonomous. The movement of the flames, the ascensional or descensional orientations of the celebrants and participants (men and gods) and the circumambulation of the fire-axis all serve as vehicles of power, as symbolic modes for the cosmic movement of men, spirits and gods, and their gifts, and thereby make available the sought-for conditions of regeneration and renewal. There is power in movement: not only does movement regenerate, but movement is also regeneration.

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[1] "Sacrifice is the principle of the life and soul of all the gods and all beings. In the beginning, the gods were mortal; they became divine and immortal through sacrifice; they live by gifts from the earth, as men live by gifts from heaven" (Quotations from the Brāhmaṇas and the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, cited by Eliade, 1958a: 109).

APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE

MAJOR TEXTS

R.1 Nyutan Rās

O Sāt Guru Gorakhnāth, Guru Chaurangināth
Guru Bhauranginath, Guru Kekhaghāri,
Guru Bhegadhāri, Guru Jarnāli (Jalāndha) Nāth
Sāt Guru, tumhare nām.

O Harū Barū, Śaim, Sagal, Palbhandāri,
bhayi Latuva, Haridwari Jogi, chhattis Rothana,
Paironi, Kalighaṭ ko Lakura vir, Phūl Fakīr,
Hanumantha vir, jo Hanumantha me Lanka me
tār lagayo, Lanka me āg lagayo. Hanumantha vir nām payo.

Pātāla ki Nāginī, āsmān ki Chandi, Gaḍon ki Gaḍadevī,
aur Danda Ke Bharadi.

Jo Maiyā Pātāla gayi Nāginī, Āsman gayi Chāndinī ban gayi, Danda me gayi, Bharani ban gayi. Gāḍ gayi Gaḍh Devī ban gayi, pārvat gayi. Gupta ban gayi koyi Devī, Pātāl gayi, Pātāl kī, Bhūmiśwāri nām páyo. Koyi Devī Ranchūlihāt me gayi, Ranchūlihāt Kī Mātā nam payo. Kaihari Kot me upagawān (āgya) liyo, Nāgarkot me dahī dholi pāyo. Koyi Devi unyār (undhakari) hogayi Koyi, Ujyani ho gayi. Almorihāṭ me Almorihāṭ Ke Mātā nām pāyo, Nainital me Nandadevī nām payo. Punyagīrī me, Punyagīrī Mātā ban gayī. Kot Kalyanī me Punyātmī ban gayi. Jo māiyā ne pahār ko dholo deś me chalayo aur deś ka dholo pahār chalayo.

Mātā tumhārī nām diya hai. Mātā Chakkrawali, Kapparwali dhono hāth se baja dhe thālī. Brahmakībetī, Indra Kī Śati, Mahākālī, ek hāth me chakkra, ek hāth me kappar, kamp me katar, hāth me triśūl, maida sangh me chalanī, bawan se vir, solah se Kaluva, nau sau Narsingh Vir, āt Santhā Bhairav, uśkī dhīr raksā pāth. Tumharī gadī nagari saphal hai. Tumhārī nām Ka dīpak jag raho chāyā Karayā ya chāyā gaya.

R.3 Devta Lagao

Gorīya, Balagorīya, pahali nām tumhārī lūn Chalrai dhudu ka nām, Halrai Gorīya Rayi (Rayi vamśi) Garḥ Champawati ka malik, tumhāre nām lūn. Gorīya Kālī me bagaye Gorī me uthāre, Gorīya nām pāyo. Bhanā Devaran ka ghar me sakala siddhi bail-ghai ka dūdh kayo. Dolikot se Dolidhūnaghar ko kaḍ ka gôḍā Chalāyo.

O Sātguru, tumhārī nām tun. Mātā Kālīkā ka kuwar hai. Kumbharasi nām pāyà Gorīya. Ūt bhuji āṭmāsī Gorīya. Chaukhāni Gorīya, Dwalbandi Gorīya, Kumaonihāṭ ka raja, Kumaon dwakt ka raja, Gorīya Gunga Nāth.

Guruhī pahale nām tumhārī hai. Jo hai tīn tala dharti, nau kundi manam, me pahār, maniron gīrī Gabalas, jo hai ūncha Himālaya, gaili Pātāla, nirjani Kailāś, dhūnā ka pās, pāni ka vilas.

Ja cha Hari Haridwar jogin ka akhaḍa, Śiv Sannyāsi, Rām Vairāgi, Barapant ka jogi, Kānphaṭā me Kānphaṭānāth ke sangh me jogi jakathi ke sangh, Guru raj ghoda me, Guru ke pās me. Guru ke gyān, Guru ke dhyān me Char-Guru, Chaurangi Nāth, Guru Bhaurangi Nāth, tīn Guru Trilokī Nāth. Guru ka gyān, cha Guru ka dhyān. Cha vagair Guru ke gyān nahi. Vagair Guru ke dhyān nahi. Guru ki naulāk ki dhūnī jā gī. Iśvār Guru ke pās me jā cha nau lakhu a Dhotī Dôtīgarḥ me, Chaudah mali doli me jā cha hāthī ka haval.

[Invocation to Gunganāth, Bamani and Ratan adjoins, omitted here]

Devta Pukar

Tumhāro nām cho. Kamyo pind (nakabhari) me sancho sāpath (Devata ka praveś) Tumhāro nām ko dīpak jag rayo. Kapś ka vathi jal rau nyotho hakaro padrayo nyothi bulayi, pūjī badjayo, the tīs koti devata. Punya nām devata, raja Indra tumāro nām chau, nyotho hamaro chau.

Saphul ho jaya, Sriśti Mahādevjū, Naron ka Narāyan Devata on ka āstaua.

O Raja Indra, saphul ho jā.

O Gramwāsī Dev, saphul ho jā.

O siddhi ka Ganeśjī, saphul ho jaye.

O Mohīnī ka Narāyan, saphul ho jaye.

O Bhūmi ka Bhairav, saphul ho jaye

Teri bhūme me jo sabha bait hai.

Bhūmi ka Bhūmiyāl saphul ho jaye

Sir kā chai (dayā karane vāle) mathe ka mukut Bhagovan tumhāro nāmon ko dīpak jal dho. Kapasuri ka bātho sanyothi tīl ka dīpak jag dho.

Diyo sārī hai tumaro nām.

Dīpak jagonū hai Hari Haridwar me.

Dīpak jagonū Kankhal me.

Śiva ka Sannyāsi Rāmā ka Vairāgi akhaḍa me dīpak jagonū.

Śiva nam Sannyāsi, Rām nām Vairāgi dīpak jagonū

Sāt samundhar dīpak jagonū.

Dīpak jagonū aṭhattar tari Gunga.

Theri jyoti jagonū Ayodhya raj me.

Theri jyoti jagonū Dwārākā me.

Theri jyoti jagonū Tapovan aur Madhuvan me.

Thumar jyoti jagonu maṭhon maṭha me

Thumar jyoti jagonū dharmo dham me

Theri jyoti jagonū charo dvār me

Theri jyoti jagonū nām Nāthon me.

Theri jyoti jagonu chaurasi āsano me

Theri jyoti jagonū Jośimath me.

Theri jyoti jagenū Govarimaṭh me.

Theri jyoti jagenū nauthi Narsingha me.

Theri jyoti jagenū Godika Bhairav me.

Theri jyoti jagenū Śiv ki Kailāś me.

Adeś lagenū māmū Mahādev me.

Adeś lagenū Nauthi Narsingha me.

Jyoti jagenu garh Champawati me

Kālī ko kuvar nyothi ke bulalo

Theri jyoti jagenū Dhotigarḥ raj me

Dhotī ka daotaran (balvan puruṣ) nyothi bula lai.

Jyoti jagenū Brahmalok, Viṣṇulok me.

Tin tala dharti, nau kunda manam me.

Jyoti jagonū nar ka ghar me

(Jāgar karne vale ka)

Tumaro nāmon ko kiṭa pota kśapo Golū.

O Gunganāth tumharo namo ko gal ro chai dīpak suphal ho jāye tum ghare me.

Tum in āye ro Guruhi ka nyoti.

Nyoti ke bulonu pūjī ke padolo

Tumārī nām ki jāgani hai; rai Kanha Suri hālī bhag rai bhar vijasyar aur byali Hurki tumār nāma ki baj rai.

Tumārī nām kī jyoti jai dhi.

Tumari nām kī sabha bait rahā hai

Sabha me bait rayi rukhada gīrī purī bharathī bharahe har ki sabha bait hai.

Panch purī sabha bait hai. Kanche manche (chote bālak) dāl bāl baithai. Ghutane tek ka sabha bait hai.

Tumhārā nām ko kavil gay ka gaunth -

Gautam muni ṛṣi gant chiḍaklā

Devata log koyi jab śo me bait hai

Diya dīpak kī bāt ho rahi hai.

Pancha nām devata ka dīpak jala hai.

Thetīs koti devata ka dīpak jala hai

Sāt mukhi śank gaya rupi ghant.

Bāraha pant jogiyon ka urdmukhi Nāth baj dho.

Nāthon ka bol tīn lok me sunayī dhe raha hai.

Pātāl-lok ke nāgon ka jaga hai dīpak

Padmināg, Viṣṇunāg, Seśnāg ka dīpak jal raha hai.

Devaton ke nām kī sabha baiti hai.

Tumhāre nām kī sabha baiti hai

Jaisi gokul me bait rahi hai Kamadhenū kī sabha.

Paśu pakśi me haṃson kī sabha

Vrikśonme Kakhair kī sabha baiti hai

Janvaron me simha kī sabha, phūlon me bhauran kī sabha baiti hai.

R.4 Devta Āge

Tumhārī nām kī jyoti jag rahi hai Devataon Satyuga me Śiva Avatār sunkar Śivalok pā voge. Tretayuga me Rām Avatār Lanka ko naśt kardiye. Dwaparayuga me Kṛṣṇa Avatār me Kunsa ko naśt kiya. Dwaparayuga me Pāṇḍavi Avatār batala the hai, Pāṇḍavi Avatār sunkar Pāṇḍulok pavoge. Brahma Avatār sunkar, Brahmalok pavoge. Viṣṇu Avatār sunkar Viṣṇulok pavoge. Devaton tumhe sunayenge pure chaubis avatār. Devaton ke chauraśi āsan lagathe hai.

Dīpak jalathe hai. Śiva ki Kailāśa ke nām pur. He Māmū Mahādev kī vinathi karthe hai. Māmū ke barah ghar kī sabha baite hai. Nīlkanth me sabha me baiti hai thetīs karoḍ Devta. Raja Indra, Yadhuvansi kī pachpan karoḍ log baite hai, Pāṇḍava aur Gaurava vansi bhi baite hai. Pura Kśettrī vansiya raja bhi baite hai. Sabha me Mrytulok ke bhi Devta baite hai

Devta Naco

Satmukhi śank baj rahi hai. Māmū ka agavām, Raja Indra ki agavani, panchanām devaton kī agavani. Kailāśi Bhanjīya Gorīya sabha me nahi āye tho. Māmū Mahādev kaha rahe hai bagire Gorīya ke divāri sava śobhit nahi hoti. Isliye Māmū Mahādev ne Gorīya keliye nimanthran ka kāgaj beja. Dho joḍe Māmū ke Bhauran aur kāgaj kī pudiyā - bheji nimantrana ye likata: ["]Āy gaḍi ke bech me meri Nīlkantho me āna,vagire Gorīya ke sabha nahī chalti["] . Bhauran chale gaye garh Champawati me. Garḥ

Champawati me Gorīya ke pāni ka tāl, jain phūl kī bhel me Māmū ke Bhauran pahale tho phūlon me kel lag gaye. Phir Bhauran chale Gorīya ke singhāsan pur chal gaye. Singhāsan me Gorīya dekhathe hai Māmū ke ā-gaye. Bhauran ne kāgaj Gorīya ko de dhī.

Gorīya usko padathe hai ["] Mātā Kālīkā mero merane pitār nikalo nerane haṭiyār. Thikiti talwār mams ka muskura bhikkwe kī gulel ṭaiar kar dho. Ghoṭisal me kaḍ ke ghoḍa ṭaiar banā dho.["] Ghoḍi sain sahit merān pitār me talwar bānā rathi kī phita, puthaluja parau dūdhi ka jahal pahane lage, kaḍ ke ghoḍe me sawar ho kar ravānahā hogaye.

Tho pahunch gaye Māmū kī Nīlkanthon ke sabha me. Sabha sajne lag-gaye. Kāḍ ka ghoḍā Nīlkantho ve chadne laga. Māmū Ka Chaukhāna kudi, Chaukhāni Gorīya nām pāyō. Kād ka ghoḍa Nīla Chaurighat me chale. Kaḍ ka ghoḍā dhuba Chauri me chale. Byathi ke ratha me, badalon ke ratha me. Hawāyī ke ratha me. Kaḍ ka ghoḍa Goriketh me chale. Goriketh me sau maund rithi phenk diya; vaha se kaḍ kā ghoḍa chal Haridwar ko Kumbha ke Mela me; sau maund rithi ka pidiya bana diya. Vaha jakur ek hazar che sau gunga, at sau therthon ka hatha jode.

Tab Jumne, Ganga, Daulibhagirathi me snaṇ liya. Piṇḍ śuddhi banāyā. Anga puch lagāya. Pideyi aur akśāt bhi lagāya. Harjūkīpaidi ko pranam kiya . Tab kaḍ ka ghoḍa chala gayā Guru Gurudwār me. Guru Gurudwār me Guru kī bhakti bhatāne lage Gorakhnāth ko Guru navāye. Chameli ādhi puśpa chadāye. Chameli jai śobhan faria, jai Guru ka ucharun aur pranām kiya Tab Guru Gorakhnāth kī dhūnī jalāyi. Dhūnī kī bhakti kī arati banāyī aur Gorunām kī arti phirāyī. Tab Guru ne śobhan āsan saunpi. Tab āsan me Gorīya bait jāthe hai. Tab Guru ne unkho lilāth ke mothiyon kī dhān saunpī phulvādī ke phūl saunpi. Guru vidyā saunpi. Nau Nath Chaurasi Siddhon (ne) lilath ki mothiyon ko chada (ne) lage. Nau Nadi behattar koda me lilath ke mothi rakhane lage. Tab Māmū Mahādev ko nām mārane loge, kyōki Śiva Gorīya Devta ke mange hai.

Chal Dena

O Goriya, Kumaonihāṭ ka raja, Kumaon chak kā raja. Auni paud (atha samay me) Māmū kī Chaukhāna kudhi aur jānī paud me Māmū kī Chaukhāni kudhī. Aur rāt kī chaudamā aur din kī sūraj, nau lakh taron, barah lakh vanaspathi ko judhar (purnāma) lagāye aur jāne vakth me; dhāde kīah aur dhinon kī byāl aur gaḍ kī masāni aur dhaudon ki Varārī, aur dhino kī ang (dhire) ke byāl, Char konā thami gaye, Char konā dhankani.

R.2 Gorîya Katha

Raja Halrai the Champawan me. Raja Halrai sabi chîson me sampanna the. Lekin unke koyi santân nahi the. Halrai unke pâs Sat Satiya the. Atve strî se jab unhone vivah kiya thetîs karoḍ devaton kî baina sat vas Rani Kâlîkâ kahalaṭhi thi. Santân karṇ Kâlîkâ kî unse sambandh raktha hai. Unki śadi Raji Halrai se Nîlkanth me huwa. Vivah paṛiyat Champawan chali gayi. Sat Satiya phûl ki tharah halki ho jayi aur Rani Kâlîkâ phûl se bi bari ho gayi. Sant mâs me Kâlîkâ se bâlak paida hûwa. Sato Satiyon ne palkar ka bâlak ko ganthala me dal-dhiya, aur Kâlîkâ ka muhu duk dhiye. Bâlak ne kavila gai ka dûdh kud me piya. Tîno din bâd Sato Satiya ne Kâlîkâ ke dhagal pâs sila lodha rukliya aur Raja Halrai ko suchit kiya ki Kâlîkâ se sila lodha paida hûwa. Kâlîkâ tîsre din bâd jab gunga snaṇ ko gayi tho sila lodha ko hath le gayi. Usne sila lodha ek hadiya raka-kar aur kapre se hadiya ka mûk bandkar nadi me chod diya aur kaha tum mujese paida huye ho aur jab muje jarurat padegi to mai tumhe bhula lunga. Tîsre din bâd bâlak gośâla se bahar nikal kar kelana laga. Sato Satiyo ne jab usko is prakar kelane laga to unhone usko bhangwai bhud me phenk diya thaki śer usko khe-gaye.

Panchare din bâd sat mâs kî Rani Kâlîkâ snaṇ ko gayi bâlak bhangwai bhud se nikal khar ângan me kelane laga. Sato Satiyon ne pakada bâlak ko gobar ke dhare ke andhar dharba diya. Satve din bâd bâlak phir waha se nikhal gaya. Rani Kâlîkâ satve din bhi Ganga snaṇ ko gayi. Satve din bâd Satho Sathiya ne bâlak ko luna ke dher me dhala tho waha se bhevon ka bandâr me paddai gaya. Âtve din Satho Sathiyon bâlak ko dhekane gaye tho khân ke kathe me dekha tho ve kahane lage kî ye bâlak tho nahi martha magar ub humko hi marega.

Satho Sathiyone kailihar ko bulâya aur unse kaha kî thum ek lohe ka pinjada banavo aur thumhe dhan daulat dhengei. Kailohar lohe ka pinjada banakar heyiya kai lohar ko khûb dân dakṣiṇa dhekar vidha kardhiya. Bâlak ko pakaḍ kar lohe ke pinjade me band karke jamin me dhaba dhiya. Bâlak ka hanṣ-prâṇi tîn lok me vitharana karne laga - Brahmalok, Viṣṇulok thetha Śivalok. Brahma, Viṣṇu thata Śiva me hâthi ke sûnt kî tarah varśa ka dhî Bhumaid lisdkan Kâlî nadi me chali gayi. Bâlak lohe ke pinjade samet Kâlî se baha kar Gorîgunga me chala.

Bhana Devarân (dhono strî puruṣ) Devaranî ne Devaran se keha ghel âgayi macchali bhara kair lawo. Loha-suri tâl lekar Bhana Devaran gaye jâl par macchali nahi lagi. Kâlî Gorî dhen par lohe kî pinjade loha-suri jhel pur phans gaya. Bhana Devaran ne lohe kî punari ka sath thale patthar se thode aur kol kar dekha tho bâlak! Kisko nahi châhiye ye sundar bâlak? Kisne isko nadi me phenk diya? Âputri Bhane Devaran bâlak Devaranigarh me legaya vaha bail-gây ko dûdh nikhal âya aur bâlak ne uske dûdh piya. Kâlî me bahane ke bad, Gorî me utara. Chal nâmkarân sab ho gaya, Gorî Nade se Gorîya nâm pâyâ.

Tab Gorīya bālak badiya ke ghar me gaya aur unse kaha kī mere liye ek khād ka goḍa banā de, lohe ki phunaiton chabuk badayi ne kaha kī tum ghaḍbaghi bālak ke liya kad ka goḍi nahi baratha. Bālak ko krod āgāya aur badayī ke netṛ band ko gayi aur din ke hote huye bi uske liye rāt ko gayi. Badayi kī patnī ne kahi khana ka lo. Badayi me kaha ki mereliye undhera ho gaya mere ānke bandh ho-gayi. Badayi kī patnī ne kehi kī kabī tumne kuch kahi. Usne jawab diya ki, ek bālak āya tha aur usne mujse kaha tha kī ek khad ka goḍa bana. Maine unse, kaha diya gharbaghi bālak khad ka goḍa-walla bana hai. Badayi ne kaha kī bālak tāng dāy hogaya bālak ke nām me sava rūpīyā ko panadhar dheti hu. Badayi ne sowan ka loṭa pakade aur Gorīganga ke kihane me chale aur loṭa pāni se bhara aur thab āgayi apne pathi ka pās. Sava ek rūpīyā bhaint, dhari tatha bālak ke nām ka pāni ke pandhar diya. Badayi ke netṛ kūl gaye tho, bālak there liye khad ka goḍa banāye ja-yega Pan ke pandhar dethe hi netṛ kūl gaye. Badayi turant khad ka goḍa bana diya. Matkośi (mitti ke goliya) banayi bhikko kī gulel banayi. Badayi khad ka goḍa lekar Devanigarh gaye aur Gorīya ko kād ka goḍa laut diya. Aur bālak ne goḍe kī kiman badayi ko de diye. Badayi laut kar ghar āgaye. Bālak ne khad ke goḍe ko kadam sikhayi aur Devanigarh se goḍa Champawatigarh ke liye ravana hūwa.

Sat Saut, ātvi Mātā Kālīkā naula ke pās tamre ke gāgar pāni se bhar kar sagi rakhi hai. Bālak ne kād ke goḍa ko pāni pilaya. To Sat Saut āpas me bāt kar rahi hai ki bekūf raja kahi kad ka goḍa pāni pithe dekha. Bālak me uttar diya Sato Sautiyon ko kī kahi manūśye se sila lodha paida hota dekha? Bālak hom kardiya śamśān me lodha se Loria, Sila se Kalūva [Vir], raktha ka Bhairav, jal se Kabadi. Bālak Gorīya ke ye char anya bhayi upaji. Usne inko naula ke pās bula diya. Matkośi bikkuwa ke gulel, Sat Sathiyo ke natte ko vadhe diya aur gagar naśta kar-diya. Mātā Kālīkā ko chod diye.

Śikayath chal gayi būde raja Halrai ke pās; garḥ Champawati me Raja Halrai ne apne diwan bhejkar ādeś diye ki bālak ko pakaḍ kar lawo, aur usko adhi se chir denge ya kondhū me pache denge. Nauli pād me diwan bālak se pūchne laga aur kaha kī Raja Halrai ne tumhe pakaḍ kar unke pās lejane kyōki Sat Satiye ke gāgar naś kar-diye aur natthopūnar vade diye. Bālak diwano se kaha roha hai kī tumhāra raja pūch kar ya vagair pūch kar māregā? Diwan ne uttar diya ki pūch kar māregā. Bālak kar ka goḍe me sawār lokar diwano Sat Sautiya wa Mātā Kālīkā sāt chale garḥ Champawati ko.

Waha pahunchte raja ne bālak se pūcha kyo tumne Sat Satiyon ke naṭpunār vade diya. Ātvi rani ko kyo chod diya bālak ne jawab diye ki dasdhari dūdh nahi piya aur nahi dekha pita ka mahal aur nahi baita pita ke godh. In Sat Sautiyon ne nuye bahut dukh diye. Maine Naulipāt me isliye Sato ke naṭo ke punar chede aur unke gāgar naśta kiye. Ātve Mātā Kālīkā the isliye usko chod diya. Ab Gorīya ma se kahane laga kī thu tīsri mansil me baiti jā. Dekh me teri ladakā aur mujko de de dasdhari dūdh. Bālak angana kadā ho gaya. Mā ka dūdh nikhel kar band darvazo se ched karthe huye bālak ke muha me padame lagā.

Bālak dūdh pine laga. Sat Satiya tel ke yahani me bhūn kar mardi. Raja Halrai ne raj-gaddi bālak Gorīya ko saunp diya. Raj-gaddi ka malik garḥ Champawati me Bāla Gorīya thetis karoḍ devaton ka vardhani bālak Gorīya niśyant ho kar rahare lagā. Ab chor ka dhar nahi vairi ka bhai nahi. Bhule huye ko rasta batalata hai. Pyasi ko pāni detha. Tab thetīs karoḍ devaton ne chaukhān [char raste] banāyā. Tab panche nām (Brahma, Viṣnu, Mahiś, Hariś Chandra, Nara Vir) devata von ne bulayā. Bāla Gorīya chaukhān kudhane ho thū thab se Chaukhāni nām payā. Chaukhāni Gorīya hameśa vahā dhūnī me naca hai, andher ka dhulai ka Gorīya kehalatha hai.

Daitya Sanghar Mantra

Śrī Ganeś nāma; Śrī Ved Bhūmi; Narsingh; Parasarāme, Rāme, Mahārāme, Karunamāyī; Kriṣṇa Mahedharmiya, harlok chhayā.

Jahā se jal madhe Viṣṇu Seśnāg me kino; Brahme nabhi ke kamal se chīno śraman kamal so do daitya gare, Madhu aur Ketyap parlamb bare; Dekhi ke Brahma hi midurāna, tab jog māyā ka dhyān āno. Chūti jag māyā, mahraj jage. Yudh ka manch, saharastra varś lage, jahā devta bhog lagayen, tahan daitya dhaven. Bhaje devta taki bhai śuk kavilisan Mātā Judhdāyī: kaho pramod ke toś jiyo dūt chali jayī, tumal leno Mātā, raja ne āthāyo tab Mātā ek dar swarg, ek dur Pātāl me lage. Hriday ne mali Kālīkā upāyī. Uthi Mātā Kālīkā kop ki kalāyī, jal jaisi failāyī, ghari do ek me dhuma murdal niksi vaithi dhuma murdal se tab kali sanghare. Koyi ghan Viṣṇu narpāti se pukāre, sunat hi narpatī,

"Aośan āyo chalo chandamanda daityo, Vir Vetalo chalo, jane khand-khand kino".

Girī, raja se paye pahār kī. Tab Mātā ek dār swarg, ek dār Pātāl me lage swarg se aulo barsaye, Cijū, Bijū kī asno chale aye; Chand prachand khāl jotayī; kacha loha galon lagayo; pako loha pitam lagayo. Tab Mātā pahli dharti binda ga. Tab Arjuna ko bun gadho, Kunti kī sari gadhi, Narankār ka golā gadho, Dabhi ka suā gadho, Indra ka chatra gadho, Aditya ka kundal gadho, ab yo vyatha paili dharti ka binda Kālī ka me ukhelo, Kunti kī sari, Narankar ka gola se ukhelo, Dabhi ka ma se ukhelo, Indra ka chatra se ukhelo, Aditya ka kundal se ukhelo.

Ukhel mantra, ukhelī halo, pāni mantra bahayi halo, dhunga mantra nikasi halo.

Ab jā re vyatha chayī naj me hai ja, sato dansi me hai ja, ātho banola me hai ja, pāni kī dūdia me hai ja, haldi kī mundiya me hai ja, śobhakar margi me hai ja, chaumukhi diya me hai ja, ek talīya roti me hai ja.

Jo diśa se āiya cho. To dīśa me jā, jai ko legāyā cho, jai ko pathaīyā cho, taika piṇḍ me hi ja. Ye ghari pahār se is jharanta piṇḍ se teri chaukī uthayi halo. Is jharanta piṇḍ me Vir-Bhairav teri chaukī vaithāyī halo, Vir-Narsingh teri chaukī vaithāyī halo. Mātā Kālīkā teri chaukī vaithāyī halo. Ao. Bhanjo ka pāhna jaye.

Jharmantra

Jā jā dājū masāna,
che naj me hai jā.
Já já dājū masāna,
sato dansi me hai jā.
Jā jā dājū masāna
baīs rangka mandala me hai ja.
Jā jā dājū masāna
sawaser ka dikar me hai jā
Já já dājū masāna
śobhakar murgi me hai jā
Jā jā dājū masāna,
khajo khok me hai jā.
Jā jā dājū masāna,
ritu ka phal me hai jā
Jā jā dājū masāna,
ek paun ka do puan men hai jā
Já já dājū masāna,
tibatta me hai jā
Jā jā dājū masāna,
chaubatta me hai jā
Já já dājū masāna,
ābatta me hai jā
Jā jā dājū masāna,
ek batta me hai jā
Jā já dājū masāna,
Rudra Himālaya wasi me hai jā
Já já dājū masāna,
Triśūli kando wasū hai jā
Jā jā dājū masāna,
Raniya Pātāla wasū me hai jā
Já já dājū masāna,
Burusi Pātāla wasū me hai ja.
Já já dājū masāna,
jo diśa ganda gorū roni leja
Já já dājū masāna,
jo diśa thigela bhainṣ roni leja
Já já dājū masāna,
jo diśa kūtha bhokui leja.
Já já dājū masāna,
jo diśa gidar bhukni lega.
Ab dājū masāna,
is jharanta piṇḍ se teri chaukī uthayī halo.
Ab dājū masāna,
is jharanta piṇḍ me pita Dussehratha tumhārī chaukī vaithyī halo.
Ab dājū masāna,
is jharanta piṇḍ me raja Rām tumhārī chauki vaithyi halo.
Ab dājū masāna,
is jharanta piṇḍ me vir Hanuman tumhārī chaukī vaithyī halo.

O dājū masāna, Sati to Sitāki duhai, Jati ko Lakśman duhai, tum is jharanta piṇḍ ko hamesa keliye chhor do.

Ye mantra phūl nāmo vacha Iśwāra.

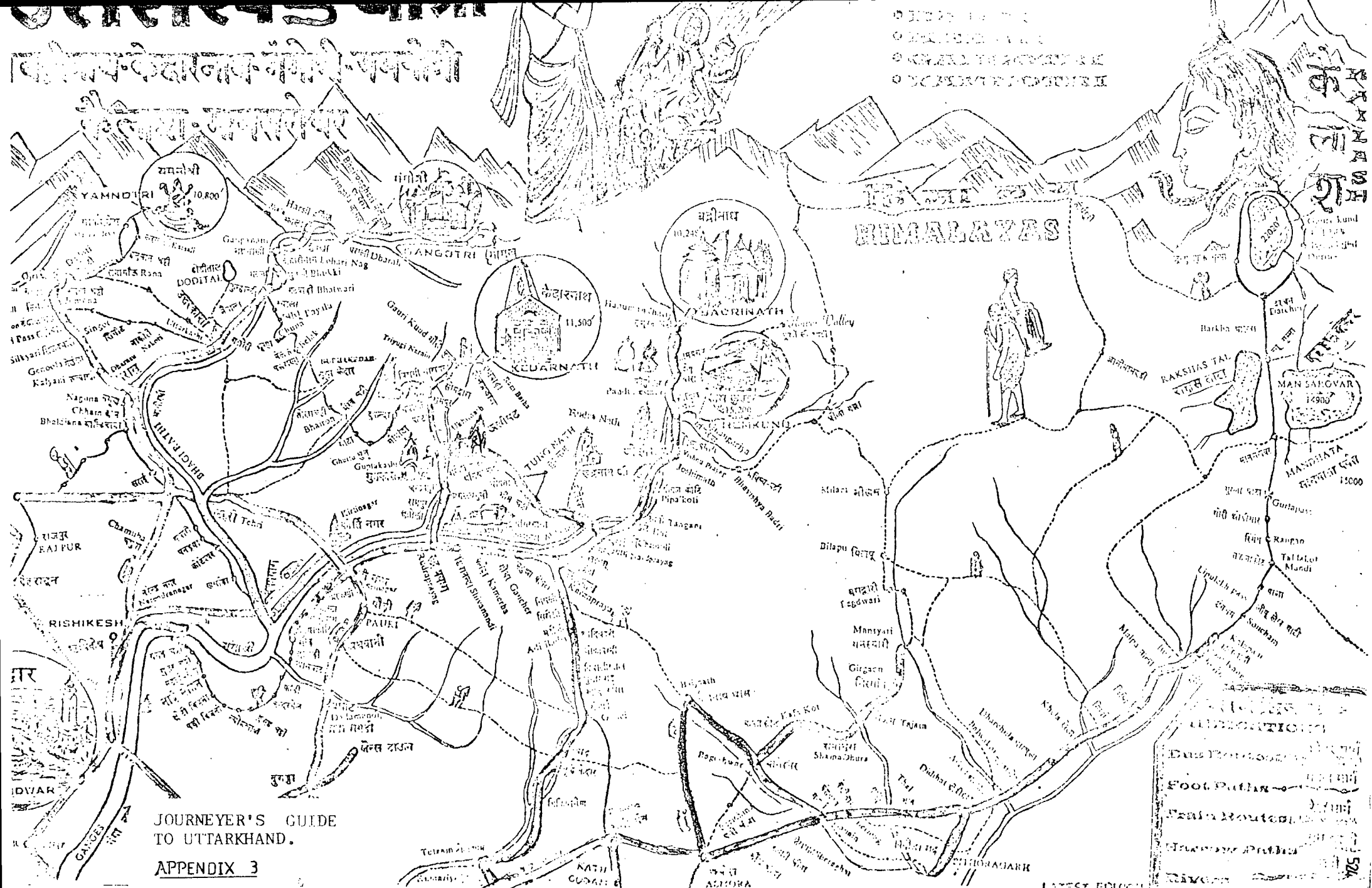
APPENDIX TWO

THE KUMAONI CALENDAR

The Twelve Lunar Months	English Equivalent
Chait	March 14th - April 12th
Vaiśakh	April 13th - May 13th
Jeth	May 14th - June 14th
Asarḥ	June 15th - July 16th
Śravan	July 16th - August 16th
Vhadon	August 17th - September 16th
Asoṣ	September 17th - October 16th
Kartik	October 17th - November 15th
Mangsīr	November 16th - December 15th
Pūṣ	December 16th - January 13th
Magh	January 14th - February 11th
Phagūn	February 12th - March 13th

The Seasons

Rūri	(Spring Summer)	March - June
Chaumas	(The Rainy Season)	June - September
Śardī	(Autumn)	September - October
Hyun	(The Cool Season)	September - March


HIMALAYAS
HIMALAYAS
YAMNOTRI
10,800'
GANGOTRI
KEDARNATH
11,500'
BADRINATH
10,248'
DODITAL
TUNGNATH
CHOPTA
GUPTAKASHI
RISHIKESH
RAIPUR
PAURI
DEVPRAYAG
RUDRAPRAYAG
KARNPRAYAG
JOSHIMATH
PIPALKOTI
TANGANI
BADRINATH
MANA
MUNSIARI
MILAM
DHARCHULA
GUNJI
KUTI
NABI
RAKSHAS TAL
MAN SAROVAR
14900
MANDHATA
15000
TARCHEN
DARCHEN
BARKHA
GURLA MANDHATA
Gauri Kund
Trijugi Narain
Kalyani
Naguna
Chhan
Bhaironghati
Ghuttu
Guptakashi
Kirtinagar
Chamba
Kandolanagar
Tehri
Kedarnagar
Rudraprayag
Shri Nagar
Srinagar
Kamleshwar
Gauchar
Ranikhet
Almora
Kausani
Pithoragarh
Dharchula
Tawaghat
Lipulekh Pass
Sirkha
Gunji
Rongpo
Taklakot
Mandi
Sirkha
Nabi
Kuti
Milam
Dilapu
Tagadgwari
Mantyuri
Girgaon
Pagu-thang
Shama-Dhura
Dabba
Thal
Tejam
Khela
Malpa
Sirkha
Sorchan
Ashkot
Jauljibi
Baluakot
Bageshwar
Kapkot
Tejam
Dharchula

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