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TRANSCENDENCE AND PRAGMATISM:
A STUDY OF SHERPA RELIGION

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Sherpa Buddhism can be divided analytically into three different components: mahayana (represented by the monastic establishment), shamanism (represented by a variety of shaman-curers and diviners) and vajrayana (represented by married, village-based, tantric lamas). Such a division suggests that there are important differences between components within Sherpa religion. Mahayana emphasises transcendental, other-worldly concerns. Shamanism on the other hand deals with pragmatic, this worldly concerns, while vajrayana encompasses both. Now the problem with such a division is that it tends to ignore the overlap and cooperation between components found in the day to day practice of religion. Monks can be very worldly, shamans can become lamas, laymen can become ascetics. Lamas and shamans prescribe each other's rituals and often work alongside each other.

The central concern of this thesis then is to explore both the differences and the relations between components, to understand how and why different doctrines, practices and practitioners coexist and are reproduced over time. I conclude that Sherpa religion is essentially a unified system, that differences are contained within and necessary to the articulation of a cohesive yet everchanging whole. To demonstrate this I focus not so much on outer forms as on inner connections. In particular I identify an underlying relationship of interdependence between transcendental and pragmatic orientations or 'modalities'. Transformations of this relationship are to be found within components as well as between them. Central to the relationship is the mediating influence of vajrayana. This relationship continues to pervade Sherpa religion, despite the increasing alienation of the transcendental from the pragmatic as result of changes this century.
This is not to say that the relationship is an equal one. The monastic establishment is clearly dominant at an ideological level. Yet the interdependence of modalities encourages a basic pragmatism in everyday life. Worldly activity is essential to the material support of the clergy but the reverse is also true - the knowledge that transcendental concerns are being looked after is integral to the continued worldly activity of the laity. Sherpa religion is shown to be at once spiritually satisfying and pragmatically efficacious.
NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

Terms in Sherpa dialect have been italicised throughout the text. Their transliteration follows that of Ortner (1978). This system is neither phonetic nor based on a standard set of conventions but is designed to be readable. A glossary is provided at the conclusion of the text. Terms in Sanskrit, where these are not in common usage, are identified by a preceding 'Skt', and those in Tibetan by a preceding 'Tib'. 
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of the religion of the Sherpas of Solu-Khumbu, Nepal. The Sherpas are followers of the Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Nyingmapa is particularly influenced by the vajrayana tradition, which is characterised by emphasis on the pragmatic concerns of everyday worldly existence as much as on the more transcendental, other-worldly concerns of salvation or rebirth. The ultimate aim of vajrayana is liberation from suffering through a realisation of the interdependence and essential oneness of these concerns.

When encountering Sherpa religion for the first time, however, I was struck in particular by its transcendental aspect. It appeared to deny the reality of day to day existence, to encourage withdrawal from social secular responsibilities, and to concentrate its efforts on the pursuit of salvation. This impression of course was not totally unfounded. The Sherpas support and venerate a monastic establishment which has close links with the 'orthodox' mahayana tradition in Tibet. This tradition has become somewhat rationalised in the sense that pragmatic concerns are increasingly separated from transcendental pursuits. Mahayana espouses the doctrine (well known

(1) It is perhaps more accurate to refer to the vajrayana as a vehicle, or component, or even strand within a general rubric of Buddhism. The term 'tradition' may imply a historically distinct and observable religious order. Vajrayana, mahayana and hinayana have often been distinguished in this way. However the three 'traditions' were all taught by the Buddha and each, I suggest, deals with the same aim of achieving liberation, though at different levels of interpretation according to the needs and abilities of different followers in different contexts. The notion of historically distinct religious orders is difficult to demonstrate in the case of Tibet and even more so in the context of Sherpa religion, as I shall demonstrate. Nevertheless I shall use the term 'tradition' because it is in common usage in the ethnography. When I use the term however I refer not to historically distinct religious orders but rather to components identifiable at the level of analysis but not necessarily observable in every day religious activity.

(2) The mahayana tradition in the Sherpa context of course is no more 'orthodox', in the historical sense, than the vajrayana tradition. I use the term in the sense that its doctrines enjoy the highest status and are perhaps the most institutionalised in much of the Tibetan Buddhist world today. This usage conforms with that in the ethnography. However it should be remembered that Sherpa religion, prior to the introduction of monasticism early this century, was essentially vajrayana.
in the West) that evil, sin and suffering are caused by ignorance of the true nature of reality and the delusions and worldly attachments which this ignorance produces. It encourages participation in ascetic, monastery-led rituals such as Nyurang and a variety of other time-consuming and often expensive merit-making activities in order to expiate sin, increase one's chances of a favourable rebirth, and prepare oneself for the world beyond. The ethnography pays considerable attention to the mahayana tradition and its transcendentally oriented doctrines and practices (see in particular Paul 1970).

Yet the Sherpas are far from detached from the material world. The securing of adequate food and shelter, the establishment of satisfying social relationships, and the maintenance of physical health are as important to the Sherpas as to anyone else. For how can salvation be pursued in the absence of the material requirements for survival? A spiritual life of ascetic withdrawal may be ideal for some, but it does not appear to be considered ideal by all. Is it a true liberation, the vajrayana tradition asks, which denies what, at the level of experience, is very real? Is not the spiritual life, in practice, fraught with hypocrisy, if not actual difficulty? If some are to pursue a spiritual life, others must pursue worldly activity to support them. Furthermore, differences in wealth and status render the spiritual life (and the acquisition of merit) more accessible to the wealthy. While acknowledging, at a theoretical level, the importance of transcendental concerns, the Sherpas, in practice, are essentially pragmatists, actively engaged in manipulating and altering their karmic existence in this world as much as the next. To what extent is this pragmatism catered for within Sherpa religion, and how? Are Buddhist doctrines sufficiently flexible to adapt to the exigencies of daily life, or are they incompatible? How can a religion that advocates renunciation maintain legitimacy in the everyday world?
Upon closer examination of the data, the pragmatic orientation of Sherpa religion became particularly evident. This was something of a revelation for me since, like many analysts still labouring under the influence of Cartesian rationalism, I had assumed a separation of religion from society, and of the transcendental from the pragmatic. The data however indicated a myriad of local deities and supernaturals who are intimately concerned with the day-to-day affairs of worldly existence such as illness, social conflicts and agricultural productivity (see Funke 1969, Frerkes 1982). Many rituals and practitioners are devoted to the propitiation and manipulation of these deities. In fact the pragmatic aspect of Sherpa religion appears to be the most popular (and perhaps the best understood) among the Sherpas themselves.

The Sherpas place considerable importance on the Sang Ngak texts of the Nyingmapa sect. These texts encourage the performance of particularly fierce tantric rituals such as exorcisms. These rituals are clearly designed to promote pragmatic worldly activity and many appear to be even anti-orthodox, though, as I shall show, this notion is somewhat misleading. They are performed not by celibate monks but rather by married, village-based tantric lamas (called banzin) of the vajrayana tradition. Prior to the introduction of monasticism early this century, these lamas were in fact the principal representatives of Buddhism in the Solu-Khumbu.

What I am suggesting here is that exorcism, the vajrayana tradition and the tantric lamas who represent it might be portrayed as somewhat in conflict with the passive, peaceful, transcendental orientations and prescriptions of the monastic establishment. The sexual licence of the banzin lama contrasts with monastic celibacy; sociality and worldly involvement contrasts with monastic asociality and ascetism; tantric rituals manipulating and exorcising demons appear incompatible with orthodox
doctrines which ultimately deny their reality (see Ortner 1978). Furthermore, the status of banzin lamas has suffered recently, relative to that of monastic reincarnate lamas (tulku) and monks. How is this situation to be explained? Are Sherpas perhaps becoming increasingly transcendentally-oriented? How can a religion which espouses a doctrine of karma tolerate the active manipulation of circumstances and fate through ritual?

In addition to lamas, Sherpas also utilise the services of a variety of shamans for divination, curing, and other pragmatic activities. These specialists are historically linked with the shamanic Bön tradition in Tibet. There are important differences between shamans and lamas. In fact, compared with shamans, lamas and their rituals appear transcendental in orientation. Lamas are exclusively males and are recruited from specific lineages, the members of whom may accept or reject their right to the lamaist vocation. They are primarily responsible for regular, village-wide rituals and mortuary rites (which include exorcisms). Their rituals are prescribed in sacred texts and involve the worship of 'high' deities. Shamans, by contrast, may be male or female, may come from any section of society, and are involuntarily 'called' by local deities to their vocation. They deal primarily with the pragmatic worldly concerns of individuals such as divination and curing, through the active manipulation of local supernaturals. They adhere to an oral tradition which enables much ritual innovation. Like lamas, however, they too have declined in status and power in recent years.

To summarise thus far, it is possible to identify, at an analytical level, three different 'traditions' within the general rubric of Sherpa Buddhism. The first is the essentially transcendentally-oriented orthodox mahayana Buddhist tradition. It is represented by the monastic establishment and seeks salvation through separation from worldly concerns. The second
is the essentially pragmatically-oriented shamanic tradition. It is represented by a variety of shaman-curers and diviners who are vitally concerned with such this-worldly problems as illness. The third is the vajrayana or tantric Buddhist tradition. Rather than regarding salvation and worldly existence as irreconcilable opposites, vajrayana regards them as interdependent, interpenetrating and ultimately identical. The power released in the union of such apparent opposites is used by lamas for both transcendental and pragmatic purposes.

Now the identification of a third vajrayana tradition represents something of a modification within the ethnography of Sherpa religion, which tends to distinguish between only two traditions, namely orthodox Buddhism and shamanism (see in particular Paul 1970(1), Ortner 1978). This notion of two distinct traditions derives in part from the pervasiveness of models of dichotomy (e.g. the Great/Little Tradition dichotomy) in the ethnography of Southeast and South Asian communities more generally. As applied to Sherpa religion however it has some significant drawbacks. First, it evades the simple fact that vajrayana was and still is a fundamentally important tradition in its own right. Second, it does not account for the means by which different traditions are mediated. Vajrayana is very important in this regard because it contains within it so many elements of the other two traditions. Third, it fails to account adequately for the anomalies between stated belief and observed behaviour which ethnographers have so often noted. Fourth, it is essentially a static construct and therefore ignores the changes which take place in and between the traditions over time.

The division of Sherpa religion into three traditions then, and the emphasis on the mediating influence of vajrayana helps to overcome some of the drawbacks of models asserting a rigid, static dichotomy. It warns

(1) In Paul's later work (particularly 1982) he gives more attention to the mediating influence of vajrayana. See Chapter 2.
against over-simplistic assumptions concerning the homogeneity and other-worldly function of Sherpa religion and alludes to important cleavages within religion, between the clergy and the laity, and between rich and poor within Sherpa society more generally (see in particular Ortner 1978).

However such a division still does not fully resolve the problems discussed above. In particular, it risks ignoring the important similarities between traditions and the evidence of overlap and cooperation that characterises the actual practice of religion in everyday life (see von Furer-Haimendorf 1964, Samuel 1978b). Intrinsic to the Sherpa view of reality is the notion of the interconnectedness of the universe. This is reflected in orthodox mahayanist doctrines of dependent origination, the emphasis on compassion, and the perceived self-defeating nature of all violence. It is also reflected, however, in tantric practices inculcating experience of the essential unity of opposites, and in shamanic curing rituals seeking to restore relations between individuals, between a community and its environment, and between the natural and supernatural realms. All three traditions share this emphasis on the relations between things.

Lamas and shamans both prescribe and perform each other's rituals. They are often observed to work alongside each other, and even to fill in for the other if the need arises. While lamas implicitly acknowledge the existence of local supernaturals in their rituals, shamans also acknowledge the ultimate supremacy of 'high' orthodox Buddhist deities in their divinations and often give up shamanising later in life in favour of more transcendental pursuits. A lay person may consult a lama to confirm a shamanic 'calling' and then, having become a legitimate shaman, prescribe a tantric exorcism in which the shaman plays an active role. The laity frequently employ the services of a shaman, lama and monk (and more recently, in the case of illness, a Western doctor) simultaneously, if they can afford to do so.
A number of ethnographers have been puzzled by the apparent inconsistency between doctrine and practice arising from this pragmatism. Paul (1979) provides the following example. One day a lama was busy picking up worms from his potato field and setting them free in the adjoining forest. Asked why he was doing this the lama explained that killing in all its forms brings bad karma and is prohibited by Buddhist doctrine. Preservation of life on the other hand is an important means of earning merit. The next day the same lama approached Paul with a request for pesticides to kill the worms, who had returned and were eating his crops. This time the lama explained that the higher path to salvation could not be followed without food to sustain one.

How then, does one reconcile the differences between doctrines, practices and practitioners with the evidence of overlap and cooperation? How, and why, does a religious tradition tolerate and even encourage practices that appear to be in conflict with those of its own clergy? What is the relationship, in the Sherpa religious context, between ideology and experience, between doctrines and rituals, between stated beliefs and observable behaviour?

Part of the problem here of course lies in the difficulties and limitations of cross-cultural analysis itself. The terms 'tradition', 'shamanism', 'orthodox' etc and the differences they imply are, to a certain degree, the creation of analysts. As such they reflect categorisations, demarcations of boundaries, and perceptions of reality that do not necessarily conform with each other, let alone with the conceptions of the Sherpas themselves. The imposition of analytical divisions and classifications appears forced at times in the context of a culture where interpenetrating multiple realities are the norm, where differences are (according to at least one tradition) held to be illusions, and where
the notion of objective truth is a relatively recent import resulting from a process of rationalisation.

There are perhaps four main alternatives in analysing Sherpa religion. The first is to assert a single, undifferentiated religion. In view of the differences between traditions already outlined, this approach can be seen to be misleading. It is not adopted by any of the ethnographers. The second alternative is to assert opposed and conflicting religious traditions. To a certain degree this is the approach taken by Ortner (1970, 1978) but the evidence of cooperation between traditions already outlined suggests that this approach, too, will be misleading. The third alternative, and the most common in the ethnography, is to assert that two or more conceptually distinct traditions articulate within one single religious 'field'. Within this alternative, however, there are a number of possible approaches; distinct, but not necessarily mutually exclusive. The first is that the traditions are opposite but complementary; that differences are manifest within and necessary to the articulation of the whole. To a certain degree this is the approach taken by Paul (1970, 1982). The second is that one tradition is contained within the other, something in the manner of Chinese boxes according to one's particular vantage and focus. The third is that the traditions represent historical layers, superimposed and congealing through time, but not as yet set. The fourth is that two major traditions are mediated by a third or even a fourth tradition. Each of these variations of the third alternative deserve consideration. Perhaps the most appropriate image here is that of a plait in which three separate strands overlap and combine to form a whole which is more than the sum of its parts and which would not remain intact without each of the three strands.

The fourth alternative however, and the one which I arrive at in this thesis, is to focus not so much on traditions as such but rather on more general orientations towards the problem of human
existence. These orientations are reflected within but are not necessarily exclusive to one or another tradition. This alternative has the important advantage of overcoming the arbitrariness of boundaries between traditions and is able to account for the overlap and interpenetration between them in everyday life. Furthermore, it is responsive to the mediating influence of vajrayana, is able to provide an explanation for changes over time, and is readily recognised by the Sherpas themselves.

In this thesis I take note of each of these four alternatives. In particular I explore the evidence for a focus on differences on the one hand, and a focus on relations on the other. I conclude that - while differences certainly exist - an emphasis on them will provide a fairly limited and misleading picture of Sherpa religion as a whole. A focus on relations must complement - if not in fact replace - a focus on differences. In summary, I make, and provide evidence for the following five major propositions:

(i) The orthodox, tantric, and shamanic traditions in Sherpa religion should be analysed not so much as discrete, objective entities but rather as general, interpenetrating orientations or 'modalities', orthodox Buddhism representing transcendental orientations (but incorporating pragmatic concerns); shamanism representing pragmatic concerns (but incorporating transcendental orientations); and tantrism encompassing both. The differences between traditions when analysed in terms of underlying structural relations, are shown to be manifest within and necessary to the articulation of a cohesive yet everchanging whole. Differences must be identified if one is to understand relations; and relations must be identified if one is to understand differences.

(ii) The relationship between transcendental and pragmatic modalities is a dynamic, symbiotic, interdependent and mutually legitimating one.
Transcendental orientations are made possible by virtue of their relation to pragmatic concerns, and vice versa. The pragmatism of the laity is essential to both the moral and material support of the orthodox monastic establishment, yet the reverse is also true: the knowledge that transcendental concerns are being effectively looked after is integral to, and enables the continued worldly activity of the laity. The result is a cultural system which is at once spiritually satisfying and pragmatically efficacious.

(iii) This relationship is reaffirmed by transformations of the relationship at a number of different levels. The interdependence of transcendental and pragmatic elements within a gyepshi exorcism, for example, is shown to be structurally homologous to that between gyepshi and the more pragmatic dzoongup exorcism; between lamaist exorcism as a whole, and shamanic divination; and between religion as a whole and society.

(iv) Although interdependent, the relationship is asymmetrical in that the doctrines of orthodox Buddhism are accorded superior status and have been institutionalised to a greater degree than notions more characteristic of other traditions. However, the pragmatism of the laity ensures that tantric and shamanic activity also remains important in everyday life. Depending on one's vantage, shamanism is not so much opposed to orthodox Buddhism as contained within it, and vice versa.

(v) Central to the relationship is the mediating influence of vajrayana which encompasses both transcendental and pragmatic elements and ultimately demonstrates that the differences between them are not real. This tantric influence appears to be more significant in Sherpa religion than in other Southeast and South Asian communities.

My approach in this thesis is heavily influenced by the structuralist school of anthropology. It is perhaps not surprising that an approach which
emphasises underlying relations and inter-connectedness should so usefully and accurately illuminate Sherpa religion. I have attempted in this thesis, however, to move beyond structuralism per se. To know that a relationship exists is not particularly meaningful unless we also know what is related to what, how, and why.

Nor is it particularly useful if it ignores the realities of inequalities and exploitation, or the effects of contact with other socio-cultural formations and political systems. The relationship between traditions in Sherpa religion is dynamic and everchanging. To 'freeze' this dynamism, to identify relations without also exploring how they change over time, is to convey an incomplete and unrealistic picture of Sherpa religion. Religion is a thing 'done' as much as believed; actions speak louder than words. I am especially concerned, therefore, to explore the relationship between traditions as it is manifest in everyday life; to reconcile structure and action, doctrine and ritual, belief and behaviour.

In the first Chapter I review some of the approaches which ethnographers have developed to deal with the relationship between different traditions in Southeast and South Asian communities. I am particularly critical of those models which assume a dichotomy between traditions, and I note the lack of emphasis on mechanisms of mediation in models generally. With this background I provide a brief ethnographic introduction to the Sherpas in Chapter 2. I draw attention to the evidence of both transcendental and pragmatic modalities and discuss the ways in which ethnographers have analysed this evidence. In Chapter 3 I offer a more detailed description of two important arenas of religious activity, namely tantric exorcism and shamanic divination. Using this material I adopt something of a devil's advocate technique and state the case for a focus on differences as a way of approaching Sherpa religion. I explore alleged differences firstly within
a tradition (between exorcisms), secondly between traditions (between lamaist rituals as a whole and shamanism) and thirdly between religion as a whole and society. In Chapter 4, however, I re-examine this data, point out the limitations of a focus on differences alone, and demonstrate the importance of focusing on relations. In particular I explore how a relationship of interdependence and mutual legitimation between transcendental and pragmatic modalities is reaffirmed by transformations and the all important mediating influence of vajrayana. Finally in Chapter 5 I explore how my analysis may be applied diachronically to illuminate and explain change.
"Men have at once both a sense of the continuity of experience ... and a need to reduce that ineffable continuity to ordered and discrete categories. We both search for dichotomies and seek to escape them".

— Fernandez (quoted by Epstein 1977:250)

If the Buddhists are correct, a predilection for the division of the world into dichotomies such as self/other, subject/object, good/bad, nature/culture — and, I daresay, transcendental/pragmatic — is characteristic of the human condition. It is this sense of difference, of separation between phenomena, this inability to perceive the true nature of reality that causes attachments, negativity, and thus suffering.

Much of Western ethnography, reared within the tradition of Cartesian rationalism, exhibits this inclination towards dichotomisation. (1)

(1) The nineteenth century anthropological tradition established by Tylor and Frazer displays this penchant for dichotomisation. In a famous passage from The Golden Bough (1932) Frazer wrote: "the radical conflict of principle between magic and religion sufficiently explains the relentless hostility with which in history the priest has often pursued the magician. [The priest] professed to be the proper medium, the true intercessor between God and man and no doubt his interests, as well as his feelings were often injured by a rival practitioner, who preached a surer and smoother road to fortune than the rugged and slippery path of divine favour"(1932(1):226)

In the first half of the twentieth century attention shifted more to the relationship between magic and religion and between religion and society, but dependence on the analytical tool of dichotomisation persisted. Durkheim, for example, identified and laid particular emphasis on what he saw as a fundamental division in all religious systems between the 'sacred' and the 'profane'. He wrote: "in all the history of human thought there exists no other example of two categories of things so profoundly differentiated or so radically opposed. The sacred and the profane have always and everywhere been conceived by the human mind as two distinct classes, as two worlds between which there is nothing in common" (in Robertson 1969:42,44). The trouble with Durkheim's analysis of course was that few communities exhibit such a rigid separation in practice. What is held sacred in one context may well be profane in another. In the case of Buddhism it is precisely the delusion of such a separation that vajrayana seeks to demonstrate and thereby overcome. Weber, for his part, drew a sharp distinction between other-worldly monks and this-worldly laymen "... of inferior value: objects, not subjects of religiosity" (in Robertson, 1969:21). Inequalities, suggested Weber, are tolerated as result of
This is particularly evident in the case of the ethnography of religion in Southeast and South Asian communities. A fundamental distinction between an 'orthodox' tradition and a more pragmatic, localised 'folk' tradition is assumed, or asserted, in much of this ethnography (see Spiro, 1967, 1971). The Great Tradition/Little Tradition dichotomy is a further example (see Marriott 1955, Srinivas 1955). However there are a number of problems with this sort of formulation. Many ethnographers have challenged the evidence of separate traditions, and while acknowledging differences, stress that these are part of an integrated whole (see e.g. Tambiah 1970, Dumont 1980). In this chapter I review briefly some of these approaches and the implications they might have for an understanding of Sherpa religion.

1.1 Gods and Buddhism: the problem of levels.

I shall begin this review by discussing what I consider to be the source of much conceptual confusion in the ethnography as to the relationship between different traditions. It is evident from the ethnography that the propitiation and manipulation of gods and super-naturals, for pragmatic worldly purposes, is of great significance in both mahayana and theravadin Buddhist communities in Southeast and South Asia. Yet it has been suggested - by Durkheim among others - that Buddhist doctrine does not allow for a belief in the existence of such gods. This assumption, which I shall demonstrate to be erroneous, has been used to justify the portrayal of two separate religions, that of the Buddha and that of the gods. The idea is that the gods, and the cults associated with them are a later development, a concession a theodicy of suffering which opposes the illusions of this-worldly existence with the liberating power of transcendent, other-worldly truths and orientations. The trouble of course with Weber's interpretation is that the doctrines on which he bases his analysis are not necessarily internalised by Buddhists. Gods are not inimical to canonical Buddhism, and the transcendent and pragmatic overlap and intersect in everyday life to a far greater extent than Weber's analysis allowed.
to the masses disenchanted with the other-worldly emphasis of Buddhism and demanding tangible objects of worship. The two religions, it is argued, coexist only because they are fundamentally opposed.

Now there is little doubt that the gods are subordinate to the Buddha. Throughout the Buddhist world they have the same existential status as humans, i.e., they are locked into the same endless cycle of death and rebirth to which all samsaric phenomena are subject. They are thus approached with some ambivalence by the laity. Yet it is quite erroneous to say that their existence is denied by or is incompatible with Buddhism. In fact techniques for their propitiation are provided in both the mahayana and theravadin canons and Buddha himself is said to have left mantras and spells for this purpose. Because gods are part of the round of existence they are vitally involved in the day to day lives of the laity. They may not be able to guarantee the attainment of nirvana but they are nevertheless important in the accumulation of merit. De Silva (1980) quotes von Glassenapp as saying:

"There is no doubt whatsoever that Buddha and all his adherents believed in the concrete existence of gods, just as do most Buddhists even today. It is an unpardonable mistake for a historian to assume that only later tradition has incorporated them into the teaching in order to pander to the masses". (1980: quoted 180-81).

Part of the reason for the conceptual confusion here derives from an inability on the part of many Western ethnographers - including Durkheim - to understand and accept the fluid, multidimensional view of reality within Buddhism. As Obeyesekere (1968) points out, it is not the worldly existence

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(1) Gombrich (1971) quotes Knox as saying in 1681:
"It is a usual saying and very frequent ... What can God do against it? Nay, I have often heard [the Sinhalese] say, 'Give him no sacrifice but shit in his mouth, what a God is he?' So slight an estimation have they of their idol-gods". (1971: quoted 210).
of gods which Buddhism denies (indeed such illusions are part and parcel of existence) but rather their ultimate reality and separate identity. At the level of absolute reality the gods are illusions, just as all samsaric phenomena are illusions. At the level of phenomenal reality however the gods, and even Buddha, are very 'real'. It is difficult for the Western mind, imbued with rationalist perspectives and paradigms, to accept that another level of reality may coincide with and impinge on the reality which is the focus of one's attention.

Now what is important then is that these two 'levels' of reality are not seen by Buddhists to be rigidly opposed, as an emphasis on finding dichotomies might suggest. They have no independent objective existence of their own and few lay Buddhists would consider the distinction between them at all relevant. Rather they are idealisations of what are perceived and experienced as different dimensions, but what in fact are manifestations of a single dynamic reality. It is the relationship between levels of reality which is important for an understanding of religious activity. (1)

In practice, there are infinite gradations in the existential status of gods and much overlap of function. One god may be more localised and worldly-oriented than another, but the same god may well be more worldly-oriented in one context than it is in another. The same function may be performed by different gods in the same, or different cases. As I have indicated, even the Buddha himself can be treated as a god. Gombrich (1971) notes that "...for the Sinhalese the Buddha is cognitively human but affectively divine" (1971:9). The Sinhalese behave as if Buddha is a god, for pragmatic purposes, even though they know he is not. Any institutionalised hierarchy - or, for that matter, ethnographic classification - of gods,

(1) See my discussion in Chapter 2 of Paul's model (1982) of the transformations of the relationship between the absolute and the conditioned. The notion of a multidimensional reality will be of great importance in Chapter 3 and 4 when I discuss the existential status of demons in Sherpa religion.
super-naturals and their relative existential statuses are, at best, context-specific. Different perspectives of reality are not contradictory but rather represent different interpretations, for different purposes, of the same overall reality. In a word, they are complementary. Conceptual confusions arise, I suggest, when different levels of perceived reality are not recognised or, if recognised, are either held to be contradictory, or are confused. Unfortunately, this has been the experience of many ethnographers studying religion in Southeast and South Asian communities.

De Silva (1980) has commented that:

"It is a mistake to think there are irreconcilable inconsistencies within Buddhism because Buddhism caters to the needs of people on the different stages in their spiritual pilgrimage. Even on the lower levels the higher aims are not lost sight of and no one seeks to reach the summit in one leap. Buddhist ethics is adapted to the needs and capabilities of people and seeks to wean them away gradually, from the lower to the higher. It is a spiral path that leads to the summit."


Even this, I suggest, is a slightly biased interpretation—biased, that is, in favour of the orthodox Buddhist notion of a salvation lying in a transcendental withdrawal from the world. For as I have shown, vajrayana holds that such withdrawal is counterproductive to true liberation. Once the summit has been achieved, this realisation leads one back down the mountain to return to the world. Nevertheless even this interpretation is not necessarily objectively 'correct' for all people in all situations at all times.

The Buddha was renowned for his ability to project his teachings at a number of 'levels' simultaneously. (1) His purpose was to ensure that pragmatic worldly concerns were not arbitrarily devalued at the expense of transcendental teachings, or vice versa, and to ensure that no one particular level of interpretation of his teaching could be isolated from the others.

(1) In Sanskrit this is called upaya kausalya.
as having greater value or being more objectively 'correct'. As I have already noted, the differences between theravada, mahayana and vajrayana reflect, as much as anything, the different (though not necessarily deficient) levels of Buddhist teaching and experience. It is the relationship between these levels, rather than their objective validity, that is important for an understanding of religion in Southeast and South Asia.

1.2 Ethnography of Southeast Asia.

Three main approaches to religion can be identified in the ethnography of Southeast Asian theravadin Buddhist communities: a portrayal of a syncretised, single religious system, (1) a portrayal of two (or more) traditions coexisting within a single 'field' of religion, (2) and a portrayal of two separate and virtually incompatible religions. (3)

The most popular approach appears to be the identification of two or more traditions within a single field but there is a greater diversity of approaches within this framework. The traditions might be seen as structurally opposite but complementary (e.g. Tambiah 1970) or as interpenetrating and contained within the other. They might be seen as representing different layers of history (e.g. Brohm 1963) or as reflecting divergent contemporary interpretations of the role of religion in a context of change (e.g. Terwiel 1976). They might be seen as mediated by a third or fourth tradition (e.g. Kirsch 1977). In terms of their relative influence the traditions might be seen as equal or unequal. An unequal relationship might be seen as fixed, with either the orthodox tradition dominant (e.g. Spiro 1971) or the folk tradition dominant (e.g. Scott 1921) or as changing, according to the context of a particular case or the focus of one's particular analytical vantage and concern. Evidence is provided to support virtually all

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1. See e.g. Hendelson (1960), Trager (1960), Nash (1966), de Young (1955), Ingersoll (1960), Klausner (1964) etc. These are discussed briefly by Terwiel (1976).
these possibilities of approach and the issue therefore I suggest is not so much which approach is objectively 'correct' but rather which approaches are most (and least) useful in light of the concerns of this particular study.

Spiro (1966, 1967, 1971) identifies a fairly rigid separation of traditions in his studies of Burmese religion. Spiro is particularly concerned with the goal-directedness of human behaviour and thus differentiates 'philosophical' Buddhism from 'practical' religion,\(^1\) or what he calls 'nat' religion.\(^2\) He justifies his '2 religions' thesis on a number of grounds. Firstly, he suggests that both the premises and practices of the two religions are incompatible. Attempts to achieve this-worldly goals through the propitiation of nats (spirits) is an implicit denial of karmic law. Further, the drinking, dancing and other behaviour associated with nat propitiation are in direct opposition to both the precepts and ethos of Buddhism. Secondly, the Burmese themselves, according to Spiro, see the two religions as distinct and feel uneasy when presented with evidence of their coexistence.\(^3\) Thirdly, there is a clear separation of practitioners, places of worship, days of worship, and modes of worship. He says that:

"Nat and deva, shaman and monk, nat festival and Buddhist holyday, spirit shrine and pagoda are separate and distinct both in fact and in conception".  


\(^1\) The distinction between 'philosophical' and 'practical' religion was coined by Leach (1968). However Leach is careful to point out that this distinction does not imply a rigid dichotomy between Buddhism and folk religion, or between monks and laymen since both religious traditions embody both philosophical and practical elements and both are utilised by both monks and laymen.

\(^2\) The term 'nat' refers to Burmese spirits and nat religion involves the propitiation and manipulation of these spirits by shamans through possession.

\(^3\) There are many instances in Spiro's analysis where he appears to contradict this. See for example his discussion of lay perceptions of magic (1971:275).
Spiro (1967) presents these differences as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion Dimension</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Nat Cultus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>morality</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>amoral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensuality</td>
<td>ascetic</td>
<td>libertarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason</td>
<td>rational</td>
<td>emotional, nonrational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personality</td>
<td>serene</td>
<td>turbulent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>society</td>
<td>other-worldly</td>
<td>this-worldly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Spiro, devout Burmese Buddhists regard nats as being mere trifles in the eyes of the absolute Buddha. Nevertheless they are discussed in the Pali canon, and their propitiation comprises a significant part of the Burmese ritual calendar. (1) Says Spiro:

"...although from a religious point of view (reality) the nats do not exist, from a secular point of view (appearance) they do" (1967:254).

He quotes an informant as saying:

"as Buddhists we should not propitiate the nats but, out of fear, we must". (1967: quoted p.256).

Now a belief in nats does provide the Burmese with a way of "...obviating the painful consequences of a consistent belief in karma" (1967:256). The Burmese, suggests Spiro, consult the nats "...not in defiance of Buddhism but in default of Buddhism" (1967:271). Yet by isolating problems deriving from attachments and ignorance in a distinct religion, Buddhism itself remains 'pure' and uncontaminated by 'bacchanalian' needs. (2)

He quotes a letter to the editor of the Guardian in 1961:

"we true Theravadins firmly believe that our religion is a perfectly rational one without any touch of the supernatural or mysterious and that ... [nat worship] is an incomprehensible degradation of it". (1967:251).

(1) Spiro (1967) quotes Carstairs and de Young in this regard. Scott (1921) and Eales (1891) even argued a case for the primacy of the nats over Buddhism.

(2) Spiro (1967:272,279). Note that in many places in his analysis Spiro also denies this notion of pure Buddhism (see 1967:269,1971:160,161)....
Buddhism enjoyed primacy over nat religion by virtue of this purity, its higher doctrinal status (arising in part from its literate tradition), the link between it and political power at both local village and state level, and the way in which it was affirmed as being ultimately superior through ritual. Nevertheless the significance of nats at a day to day level ensures that Buddhist primacy does not imply monopoly.

In a more general discussion of the relationship between the 'two religions' Spiro (1971) points out that within orthodox Buddhism there are in fact two soteriological systems - one 'nibbianic' (emphasising asceticism and a notion of liberation from the cycle of rebirth) but the other 'kammatic' (emphasising the more pragmatic accumulation of merit and the lesser goal of achieving a better rebirth). The Burmese laity and a good many monks are, Spiro suggests, not particularly captivated by the idea of an existence-less nirvana, even were such a state achievable, and are content with adherence to a kammatic form of Buddhism which more readily articulates with nat propitiation, shamanic curing and other this-worldly endeavours (see 1971:141).

Spiro's analysis is obviously one of the more lucid and influential ethnographies on Theravadin Buddhist communities. It fails however, I suggest, to adequately explain the anomalies which are perhaps of greatest interest, and which are potentially the most revealing for anthropological analysis. How can a devout Buddhist monk also be a renowned weikza magician and perform esoteric rituals without coming into conflict with the precepts of orthodox Buddhism? How can a layman secure cooperation between a monk and a shaman without provoking conflict between them? How can Buddha be simultaneously nonexistent, yet a deity? Spiro's contention that the

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The apparent inconsistency displayed here and elsewhere perhaps says as much about the complexity of Buddhist religious systems as about efforts to categorise them into distinct traditions.

(1) These terms of course come from the Sanskrit terms 'nirvana' and 'karma'.
Burmese choose to shift from a nibbanic to a kammatic orientation because of the psychological inadequacy of the former seems to be in conflict with his own evidence that both orientations are held simultaneously. Are they not in fact interdependent? Is the distinction between a nibbanic and kammatic orientation really that rigid and significant for the average Burmese?

Perhaps the greatest weakness in Spiro's analysis, as far as this study is concerned, is his downplaying of the significance of the means of mediation between the '2 religions'. Spiro does identify a mediating role in the person of the exorcist but then goes on to emphasise the differences between the exorcist and the shaman (see 1967:244). In fact according to Spiro the exorcist promotes a polarity between orthodox Buddhism and Shamanism, and the dominance of the former over the latter

"for just as the public nat cultus may have served to protect the integrity of Buddhist worship from the incursions of tantric elements, so the exorcist may serve to protect the integrity of the Buddhist monk from the incursions of shamanistic practices". (1967:245).

Now as I have already stated, in many mahayanist communities such as the Sherpas, the exorcist is one of the principal representatives of the tantric tradition. (1) Furthermore, the exorcist has much in common with the shaman. Tantrism itself is not a mere 'corruption' of religion; in fact in a very real sense it was the religion of such communities as the Sherpas prior to the advent of monasticism. It sought not a polarisation between traditions but rather their mediation. At best therefore, Spiro's denial of the mediating influence of the exorcist is limited to the case of Theravadin Buddhist communities.

A perusal of the ethnography of Thai religion however seems to challenge even this proviso. Terwiel (1975) distinguishes 'unsophisticated'

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(1) Much of Spiro's description of Burmese exorcism (e.g. 1967:174-184) is remarkably reminiscent of tantric exorcism among the Sherpas. See Chapter 3.
The animistic Buddhism of the rural population from the more rationalised canonical Buddhism of the urban educated. While the latter group stresses the differences between the two traditions and the superiority of orthodox Buddhism (what Terwiel calls a 'compartmentalised' approach to religion), the majority of Thais living in rural areas regard such differences as irrelevant and take a more 'syncretised' and pragmatic approach to religion. Spiro's assertion then of two separate religions appears, at best, to be the view of the urban educated theravadins.

Kirsch (1977) has provided an important insight into Thai religion by identifying a third component - Brahmanism - which serves as something of a mediator between Buddhism and animism. Some variables are similar to Buddhism, others are more similar to animism, but both are represented within it. Kirsch's model is as follows:

**Fig. 1:2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Brahmanism</th>
<th>Animism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social focus</td>
<td>Whole society</td>
<td>Local/whole society</td>
<td>Local Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal orientation</td>
<td>Other worldly</td>
<td>This worldly</td>
<td>This worldly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World view</td>
<td>Determined-certain</td>
<td>Determined-certain</td>
<td>Capricious-uncertain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritual</td>
<td>Standard-routine</td>
<td>Standard-routine</td>
<td>Individually tailored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialist</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment</td>
<td>Universalistic - achievement</td>
<td>Universalistic - achievement</td>
<td>Particularistic - ascription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Laity</td>
<td>Client</td>
<td>Client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
<td>Intermittent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>Favourable</td>
<td>Favourable</td>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>Organised</td>
<td>Fragmented</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Brahmanism according to Kirsch serves as a mediator between this world and the world beyond. (1) Brahmanism is isomorphic with Buddhism but not coterminous with it. In fact, Kirsch identifies a decline of Brahmanism as Buddhism becomes increasingly rationalised. Kirsch's analysis has much relevance for a study of vajrayana among the Sherpas. It suggests that the differences between theravadin and mahayanist Buddhist communities may not be as great, after all, as Spiro's analyses imply.

Tambiah (1970) identifies not two or three but four ritual complexes in Thai religion at the village level, namely orthodox Buddhism, the sukhwan cult, the cult of the guardian spirits and shamanic cults. (2) These complexes are not mutually exclusive however and display relations of 'opposition, complementarity, linkage and hierarchy', together forming a 'single religious field'. Thai religion is not a 'theology for the dead and dying' but a dynamic and pragmatic religion for the living. As Malinowski argued, religion derives its meaning from not just its internal coherence but also from its practical integration with secular life.

Tambiah is particularly interested in the similarities and overlap or interpenetration of religious roles. (3) The tangible result is that the ordinary Thai villager has a variety of specialists to call upon, none of whom are necessarily in conflict with the others. Says Tambiah:

"if a villager is suffering from a misfortune he may conduct a merit-making ritual for the monks and he may at the same time go to the diviner and on his instructions propitiate a guardian spirit. This does not mean he is confusing Buddhist ritual with the spirit cult; it simply means that the misfortune may be interpreted as a consequence of lack of merit, or as spirit affliction, or as both working in conjunction. From the point of view of the individual actor there are many strings to his religious bow and furthermore the different theories of mystical causation are not mutually exclusive in operation". (1970:286).

(1) This is exemplified in the sukhwan soul-tying ceremony (see Tambiah 1970) which attempts to overcome the natural tendency of the elements of the soul to separate.
(2) Tambiah's analyses reflect a combination of influences including a Durkheimian penchant for organic models and sociological-centredness, Malinowski's functionalism and Cambridge structuralism.
(3) Although in many ways the inverse of the monk, the Thai exorcist for example has Buddhist gurus, recites Buddhist scriptures and observes...
Contrary to Spiro's assertions in the case of Burma then,

"as far as villagers are concerned there are not two traditions but simply one, which is their life ... the idea [of two religions] is an invention of the anthropologist dictated not so much by the reality he studies as by his professional perspective" (1970:369,371).

Tambiah's model of Thai religion attempts to overcome this tendency towards dichotomous categories in the ethnography:

Fig. 1:3

Tambiah's analysis is important insofar as it communicates something of the complexity of the Thai religious system and the futility of applying simplistic models delineating dichotomous religions. His 'kaleidoscopic model' is an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of such models. However it is important to bear in mind that the differences between Tambiah and Spiro may well be reflections of real and important differences in the

Buddhist taboos. Similarly, "it is unthinkable in Thailand that a local brahman can be outside the Buddhist faith, or that his rites and those of the monk can be mutually exclusive" (1970:256).
historical conditions giving rise to Buddhism in Thailand and Burma and in the socioeconomic and political relations influencing the practice of religion in those two countries. Neither Spiro nor Tambiah pays enough attention, I suggest, to such factors. An assertion of a greater concentration of power in an orthodox tradition in Burma vis-à-vis Thailand - or, for that matter, in Lhasa vis-à-vis the Solu-Khumbu - cannot be dealt with therefore simply in terms of alternate analytical models of religious organisation. A comprehensive study requires a full exploration of socioeconomic and political relations, and changes in these relations over time.

1.3 Ethnography of South Asia.

In Sri Lanka the pragmatic aspect of religion(1) is perhaps particularly important because the transcendental ideal of salvation in theravadin terms is "distant, difficult and world-negating" (Ames 1964:32). Merit making on the other hand is encouraged as a more practical, concrete and realistic form of spiritual activity. Gombrich (1971) says that:

"most people, even monks, say that meditation is impracticable ... and they display very little liking for nirvana ... most people, monks included, devote themselves to acts of merit ... the aim is made conformable to doctrine by saying that it all counts towards nirvana in the long run ... if people really want to be sure of merit they do not sit around practicing self-restraint: they go out and do something positive like giving alms which is emotionally more satisfying". (1971:322-23).

The essential pragmatism of the Sinhalese is reflected in their approach to illness and misfortune. Says Ames (1964):

"the successful cure specifies the cause: if medicine cures then sickness was caused by an organic disorder; if magic ritual then spirit possession ... if there is no success with any remedy then it must be due to the inexorable workings of karmaya". (1964:38).

(1) In Sri Lanka three distinct 'folk' traditions have been identified in the ethnography in addition to orthodox canonical theravadan Buddhism. These are cults of the higher divinities (including Hindu deities), rituals associated with planets (sometimes called grahism) and demon cults. See for example Ames (1964).
"at one level Buddhism and the profane 'sciences' ... are complementary: Buddhism is concerned with the law of karmaya and the sciences with other natural laws. At another level they appear to contradict one another because both Buddhism and the sciences aim to remove suffering and misfortune. But the paradox is resolved at yet a third level ... each offers a different kind of release or panacea for a different kind of misfortune.

(1964:39).

'Magical animism' provides temporary relief from worldly anxieties; orthodox Buddhism provides more permanent relief from existential anxieties. Magical-animism and orthodox Buddhism are separate in theory, perhaps, but complementary in function, and fused in everyday practice. Yet despite this pragmatism, orthodox Buddhism remains essentially unchallenged at an ideological level and the expression of veneration for the Buddha precedes all ritual activity.

Like Spiro (1971), Ames (1964) makes a distinction between nibbanic and kammatic Buddhism, the former being more transcendentally-oriented than the latter. But Ames then goes on to identify a similar distinction within each form of Buddhism. Both meditation and giving, for example, can be classified analytically as aspects of an essentially pragmatic kammatic form of Buddhism, while the implementation of vows is more pragmatic than the doctrines of the more transcendental nibbanic form of Buddhism. These distinctions might be expressed as follows:

**Fig. 1:4**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orthodoxy Buddhism: (Transcendental Orientation)</th>
<th>Nibbanic: (T)</th>
<th>Doctrines/Meditation (T)</th>
<th>Hermit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kammatic: (P)</td>
<td>Vows (P)</td>
<td>Monk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magical-Animism: (Pragmatic Orientation)</td>
<td>Exorcism (T)</td>
<td>Shamanic Curing (P)</td>
<td>Devotee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Giving (P)</td>
<td>Householder</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Ames is suggesting here is that the relationship between orthodox Buddhism and magical-animism can be expressed in terms of a relationship between transcendental and pragmatic orientations. This same relationship can be found between the nibbanic and the kammatic (within Orthodox Buddhism) between doctrines and vows (within the nibbanic form of Buddhism) and so on. Note how a bifurcation of monk and householder does not necessarily conform with a dichotomy between other-worldly and this-worldly orientations. Both in fact emphasise pragmatic elements relative to the hermit and the devotee, even though in terms of religious hierarchy the monk is more closely associated with the hermit than the devotee. Note also that the shaman and exorcist (who in some cases might be a monk) form a separate pragmatic category.

Ames' analysis is important because it alludes to the coherence and utility of a notion of a structural relationship between the transcendental and the pragmatic within components of Sinhalese religion as well as between them. Such a notion helps account for apparent anomalies (such as the pragmatism of monks) and demonstrates the overall structural unity of Sinhalese religion. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, a similar model can be applied equally well to Sherpa religion, with similar results.

The ethnography of religion in India has been particularly influenced by models emphasising dichotomy. In 1849 Caldwell described the differences between 'Brahmanism' and 'folk' religions to be so great as to constitute different religions. Later ethnographers explained such differences in terms of a disjunction between so-called 'Great' and 'Little' Traditions.

(2) This dichotomy is attributed to the studies in the early 1950's of differences between urban and folk cultures by the Chicago school of anthropology, led by Redfield. The studies were concerned with the apparent move from the pragmatic, 'magical' religion found in the villages to the more doctrinal, transcendentally-oriented religious conceptions of urban dwellers.
This separation is identified to varying degrees by Marriott (1955) in his discussion of village religion, Cohn (1959) and Kolenda (1964) in their discussions of India's untouchables, Lewis (1958) with his comparison of Rampur and Tepotlán, Gough (1959) with her discussion of high caste status, Opler (1964) with his distinction between universalistic and particularistic rites, Srinivas (1952, 1955) with his concept of Sanskritisation, Singer (1972) with his discussion of modernisation and so on. (1) Dube (1955) writes:

"Clearly Hinduism as it is practiced in the village is not the Hinduism of the classical philosophical systems of India, for it possesses neither the metaphysical heights nor the abstract content of the latter. It is a religion of fasts, feasts and festivals ... spiritualism cannot be said to be the keynote in the life of the community; far from it the religion appears to be a practical one".

(quoted by Lewis 1958:250)

A number of ethnographers, particularly those with a structuralist bent, have been highly critical in recent times of the Great/Little Tradition model. Dumont calls it a 'destructive dichotomy' (1959:57). Campbell (1976) interprets the complexity of the local Rajput pantheon as representing 'different expressions at different dimensions' of the same overall structure, rather than any rigid Great/little Tradition separation. Babb (1975) and Gombrich (1971) emphasised in their studies that the boundaries which Western analysts fix between traditions are in fact far from fixed in actual everyday life. Tambiah (1970) regards the so-called 'Great Tradition' as merely an alternative, perhaps more refined expression of the Little Tradition but not significantly different nor incompatible. Even Srinivas in his later analyses (1966) portrays a far less rigid separation than in his earlier works. Srinivas blames his own original conception of separation on his own high caste background, and consequently his socialisation and

(1) Even those who reject the Great/Little Tradition separation nevertheless make extensive use of other dichotomies, e.g. Berreman (1964) with his discussion of Pahari shamans and Brahmin priests, Babb (1975) with his discussion of the brahmin and the baiga and the connecting and separating power of purity and pollution respectively, Fuller (1979) with his discussion of temple priest roles.
bias towards the superiority of the Brahmanic approach to religion.(1)

The use of the Great/Little tradition dichotomy and the attribution of it to Redfield (1955) is misleading for a number of reasons. Firstly there is a great deal of confusion as to whether it refers to a distinction between literate Sanskritic and nonliterate vernacular traditions, between an allegedly pan-Indian Hinduism and localised village religion, between Brahmin religious virtuosi and the masses, between transcendental doctrines and pragmatic practices, between Brahmanism and shamanism, or even to all of these. As an explanation model it is seriously limited by this lack of precision. Secondly, whatever distinction is implied, ample evidence has been provided which challenges the validity of such a rigid separation (e.g. Dumont 1980, Campbell 1976). Anomalies between theory and practice, differences from one context to another, from place to place, caste to caste, class to class, and the changes that occur over time are perhaps the phenomena most in need of recording and explaining, yet are often neglected by such rigid analytical frameworks. Thirdly, Redfield's original formulation of the distinction has been somewhat abused. It was intended as a tool for explaining a diachronic process, not static formations. Further, the rigidity with which the distinction implies a separation is contrary to Redfield's own wishes. Says Redfield "...it would not have occurred to me to refer to these concepts as polarities" (personal communication, quoted by Singer 1972).

Ironically, Dumont's conception (1980) of the structural unity of the caste system appears to be heavily influenced by the same high caste conceptions that Srinivas has attempted to shed! The result is a somewhat lifeless, idealist analysis dominated by the Brahmanic conception of things which neglects the equally legitimate and important conceptions of the other castes and serves to distract attention away from the very real inequalities and exploitation through power and wealth which this ideology helps to sustain. See Lynch, Berreman, Cohn and others in David (1977), Marriott (1969), Tambiah (1972), Beteille (1969).
Mandelbaum (1966, 1970) has attempted to overcome the rigidity of the Great/Little Tradition dichotomy while simultaneously accounting for the important differences between practitioners, techniques, conceptions and so on which are so clearly observable. He distinguishes not between traditions but between transcendental and pragmatic orientations towards existence. Different orientations may correspond with different traditions, but they may be found within traditions as well. It is the differences in orientations which influence a particular religious system the most, and which therefore must be the focus of ethnographic analysis. Mandelbaum's model has many similarities to that of Ames (1964) already discussed. Both are able to confront - if not fully satisfactorily explain - the anomalies which the Great/Little Tradition dichotomy has so much difficulty in explaining. In his two-volume study of village India, (1) Mandelbaum (1970) writes

"villagers have traditionally distinguished religions, political and economic activities in the sense that there are separate specialists and social patterns for each of these subsystems. Each includes two sets of functions and roles, one for the more local, personal and immediate purposes, the other for more distant, societal and long range purposes ... in religion the duality is between the transcendental and the pragmatic functions ... the two complexes are used in complementary relation, each for its own purposes ... each complex is clearly distinct from the other but neither is kept as an absolutely exclusive category."


(1) According to Mandelbaum (1966) there are four categories of societies: simple societies where there is no differentiation between the transcendental and the pragmatic in religion; tribal societies where there is only partial differentiation; major civilisations where there is full differentiation; and modern rationalised societies where the pragmatic aspects of religion are being denied altogether. Despite significant variations, South Asian society as a whole is characterised he says by a considerable degree of differentiation.
The following is a summary of Mandelbaum's distinctions:

**Fig. 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>PRAGMATIC</th>
<th>TRANSCENDENTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td>Localised deities; deities more apt to be malevolent; transmitted through folklore of vernacular; often impromptu and contingent.</td>
<td>Universal deities; deities more apt to be neutral; transmitted through Sanskritic literature; regular ceremonies and centralised.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>curers/diagnosticians/exorcisors; role achieved; accrued prestige does not flow to kin group; no regular client bonds; not an exemplar but a demonstrator of power; from lower social ranks.</td>
<td>Priests; hereditary basis; from upper caste; clients in stable bound relationship; exemplar of purity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>local exigencies; personal individual benefit; curing of symptoms; proximal causes.</td>
<td>Long term welfare; explaining and maintaining institutions; guarantee successful rites of passage; ultimate causes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The efficacy of the local gods in relieving suffering is in fact assumed by their subservient relationship to an absolute Buddha who explains suffering. The two tasks however "...require different and in some ways opposite solutions" (1966:1183). Mandelbaum quotes Leach (1962) as saying

"The active ecstatic element involves the notion that God comes down to earth while the passive ascetic behaviour implies that man reaches up to heaven ... it is perfectly logical that these two concerns of religious activity - the maintenance of life and the reconciliation with death - should be separated out and emphasised as separate sets of ritual"

(quoted by Mandelbaum 1966:1180-81).

Universal deities are regarded as having great power at a universal dimension. Localised gods however have great power at the local dimension and therefore
tend to be worshipped more often, with more drama, and for more immediate everyday concerns.

Now in many communities in South Asia, local gods are often seen as being merely the local manifestations of universal deities and villagers rarely insist on a separation between them. In practice it is quite possible for a local god to be transformed into a universal deity. Furthermore, as we have seen, the same deity may be pragmatic in one context but transcendental in another. Certainly, incarnations of the same deity have varying degrees of pragmatic relevance and form. Shamans may be possessed by a high Hindu deity, or a local god, or both. A Brahmin may become a shaman or use the shaman's techniques. Astrology and other practices link personal individual experiences directly with the cosmos. The evidence points to a constant overlap and interpenetration in everyday life between the transcendental and the pragmatic aspects of South Asian religion. It is, I suggest, these overlaps which are crucial to understanding South Asian religion. Like so many others, Mandelbaum appears to have ignored the dynamic interplay between levels of reality and has therefore presented a rather static model which emphasises differences rather than relations.

Nevertheless Mandelbaum's distinction is important for illuminating the processes of rationalisation and change occurring in South Asian religions. According to Mandelbaum:

"advocates of reform sternly reject the pragmatic as a legitimate part of religion, and the erosion of pragmatic beliefs and rites is hastened by the rise in empirical effectiveness of medical science". (1966:1186).

As tribal religions move to a greater differentiation, educated and/or upwardly mobile Hindus and Buddhists appear to be moving towards an elimination

(1) See Bharati in Spencer (1971)
(2) See Freed and Freed (1962)
of the pragmatic altogether from the field of religion. Religion as a whole is becoming more purely devotional, more transcendentally-oriented, and more isolated from society which, in conjunction with the state, has assumed responsibility for pragmatic concerns. Shamanic curing is being replaced by Western medicine, the doctrinal and scholastic approach to salvation is emphasised and tantrism, which seeks the union of the transcendental and pragmatic, is considered to be self-contradictory. As I shall show in Chapter 5, this approach to the question of change has much relevance for the Sherpas.

In the ethnography of religion in Nepal the notion of disjunction between traditions appears to be less pervasive. This is perhaps not surprising because there is considerable evidence that distinctions as a whole (e.g. between castes) are far less rigidly applied in Nepal than in India. Burghart (1978) has demonstrated from documentary evidence of the last two centuries that Hindu Nepalese communities are organised around what he calls three 'incongruent yet coexistent and intersecting codes of hierarchy', namely the Brahmanic (essentially organic in form with the brahman as dominant), the ksatriya (represented as a pyramid with the ksatriya or warrior/ruler dominant) and the ascetic (represented as a continuum with the renouncer dominant). Each code is valid from the point of view of that section of the community which it represents, but each code is acceded to by the others according to the context and purpose at hand. Thus the brahmin's superior status is unquestioned only within the parameters of a Brahmanic model. Outside of this, even the ascetic might claim higher status and be bowed down to by a brahmin. Says Burghart:

"by analysing social relations in terms of three hierarchial models instead of one, the unity of the traditional social system becomes not an assumption in analysis but rather an observation to be analysed". (1978:519).

Burghart's analysis is significant in so far as it challenges the assertions of Dumont (1980) and others concerning the primacy of status as it is defined by the Brahmanic varna in Hindu society. It demonstrates the impact of pragmatic social concerns on religion and the overlapping and changing nature of relationships according to context and circumstance. Furthermore it suggests that an assumption of a single fixed perception of reality is likely to be highly misleading in the Nepalese context.

Campbell (1978) develops this kind of approach further in a study of religion in Jumla, Nepal. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, Campbell's approach can be usefully applied to Sherpa religion as well.

Campbell says that religion in Jumla:

"is animated by two different sets of principles and values which are partially complementary and partially antithetical to each other. On the one hand there are the Brahmanic ideals such as hierarchy, purity and merit, which underlie the dharmic modes of Jumla social organisation and Jumla Brahmanism; and on the other side are the ideals of egalitarianism, love and practicality, which underlie the non-dharmic modes of Jumla society as well as oracular religion". (1978:ii).

(1) Other evidence of the flexibility of Nepalese Hindu social organisation (see footnote above) also challenges Dumont's theory. This is particularly damning since Nepal is the only Hindu kingdom in the world and therefore, according to Dumont's own assessments, should be an exemplar of the encompassing hierarchy he says is characteristic of Hindu societies.

(2) This study reaffirms in many ways the complementarity identified between 'shamanic' and 'orthodox' traditions in many communities in Nepal. Pignède (1966) on the Gurungs, Fournier (1978) on the Sunawars, Sagant (1976) on the Limbus, Michl (1974) on the Chantel Magars all portray a complementarity, if not interdependence between traditions (see Chapter 3). Jones (1968) goes one step further and says

"shamanism does not exist ... as a complementary religious rite to Hinduism, nor to Buddhism ... but is part and parcel of these great religions as a whole" (quoted by Peters 1981:66). Peters (1981) concludes that "... the concepts of 'Great Tradition' and 'little Tradition' are not applicable in Nepal (1981:67)."
Campbell presents his model as follows:

**Fig. 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mode variable</th>
<th>Pabai (non-dharmic)</th>
<th>Jyulyal (dharmic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descendants of:</td>
<td>Khas</td>
<td>Highcaste Indian immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>shepherdung</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social organisation</td>
<td>egalitarian</td>
<td>hierarchial/caste</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinship</td>
<td>filiafocal</td>
<td>patrifocal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal relations</td>
<td>love</td>
<td>purity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gods</td>
<td>oracular</td>
<td>Brahmanical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mediators</td>
<td>oracles</td>
<td>Brahmin priests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality</td>
<td>compensation</td>
<td>sin/merit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>pragmatic</td>
<td>soteriological</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Campbell recognises however that this is merely an analytical model; that the reality is far more complex, with much overlap between models. It is the relationship between what is represented in models, as it influences and is influenced by daily life that must be the focus of one's attention. He writes:

"While the [dharmic] constitutes the dominant model to which the [non-dharmic] is (somewhat rebelliously) subordinate, the latter is highly institutionalised in Jumla culture and is as important as the former. Among the implications of this argument are that (1) religion and society (i.e. culture) can contain opposing sets of principles and values which are both considered valid, and (2) Hindu cultures, despite their dominant emphasis on what has been called dharmic values, may acknowledge the validity of opposing values more than has been generally acknowledged".

(1978: (ii)-(iii))

Campbell suggests that Mandelbaum's model of transcendental and pragmatic complexes fits the Jumla material well, but adds that he is more concerned with the overlap and interpenetration of complexes than Mandelbaum appears to be.
"While the pragmatic complex may be defined against and around the
transcendental complex, it remains subordinate to it and is
ultimately defined within its terms of reference. In this sense,
it is not so much a question of two antithetical yet intersecting
systems, as one dominant system within which is contained a
partially antithetical system". (1978:510).

Both high caste Jyulals and Pabais utilise oracular religion and both rebel
against oppression and inequality. Says Campbell:

"The major protest is not against Jumla Brahmanism per se but against
suffering and injustice - which may be indirectly abetted by Jumla
Brahmanism but is not sanctioned by it". (1978:520).

Both Juyals and Pabais

"champion the norm of egalitarianism even as they simultaneously
champion the dharmic norms of inherent hierarchy - which for whatever
historical, psychological or sociological reasons they have placed in
the superior position... it is possible for men to recognise the
validity of both simultaneously and to express both through different
forms of religious expression". (1978:527).

In Jumla society then both homohierarchicus and homoaequalis, both
structure and communitas, both orthodox and folk traditions are represented.
The two articulate and interpenetrate something in the manner of Chinese
boxes where the one is simultaneously separate and contained within the other.
Says Campbell:

"the different levels and aspects ... are part of a single religious
system ... the Great and Little Traditions are in very real senses
only different manifestations of One Tradition and merely express
the same structure on different levels". (1978:501).

How this structure is expressed at different levels however, and how the
differences between the models are actually mediated is not fully revealed
by Campbell's analysis. As I shall demonstrate in Chapter 4, the analysis
of such mechanisms of mediation are essential to an understanding of the
relationship between traditions, at least in the context of Tibetan Buddhist
communities.

The early ethnographies of Tibet often portrayed a culture deeply
divided between Buddhism (or 'lamaism') and the shamanic Bön tradition.
Hoffman (1961) for example writes:

"the internal situation of Tibet may be said to turn on a polar reaction between a luminous dynamic fructifying and historical element on the one hand and a sombre, static and fundamentally unhistorical element - the ancient Tibetan religion - on the other". (1961:14).

Similarly Waddell (1958) refers to a "Lamaism only thinly and imperfectly varnished over with Buddhist symbolism, beneath which the sinister growth of poly-demonist superstition darkly appears" (1958:XL). Sierksma (1966) discusses the disintegration and aggression that he sees resulting from the confrontation between Buddhism and the 'terrifying deities' of the 'primitive' religion. Transcendental Buddhist ideals he says are essentially unattainable, yet the more pragmatic local gods are essentially negative and divisive.

Gorer (1938) wrote of the Tibetan Buddhist Lepchas of Sikkum:

"the discussion of the Lepcha's religion is rendered extremely complicated by the fact that they practice simultaneously, and without any feeling of theoretical discomfort, two (or possibly three) mutually contradictory religions". (1938:181).

According to Stein (1972) the Tibetans do distinguish, at a theoretical level, between an original religion of men (Bön) and a religion of the gods (Buddhism). However the relation between these two components, both historically and in contemporary everyday life, is not the one of incompatibility and conflict that Hoffman, Waddell and others have portrayed.(1)

Stein (1972) goes on to quote an excerpt from the Bon-po-byang-thang:

"basing oneself on the field of the religion of men, the religion of the gods will grow there as fruit". (1972: quoted p.192).

(1) In fact it is difficult to identify distinct historical traditions at all. Shellgrove (1957) has commented that:

"however far we go back in time, we can never discover such a thing as pure Buddhism, for it inevitably shared its philosophical concepts, its moral and ascetic practices with the rest of the religious life of Tibet" (1957:52).

Similarly, in a later work on the Bön tradition, Snellgrove (1967) writes:

"there is probably no such thing as pre-Buddhist Bön for from the start the followers of Bön were anxious to accept and readapt religious teachings and practices of all kinds, whether indigenous or foreign ... the development of Bön and Chos [Buddhism] were parallel processes" (1962:20,21).
There is a complementarity, an element of cooperation and interpenetration that is not adequately accounted for in portrayals of conflict and incompatibility. Zwalf (1981) comments that:

“although Bön and Buddhism have been in conflict, the organisation and beliefs of Bön ... are clear evidence of Buddhist influence and one of the Buddhist sects, that of the Nyingma ... has significant features in common with Bön ... it is legitimate to think of one national Tibetan religion with many aspects”. (1981:37-38)

In a study of the Lepchas of Sikkim, Morris (1938) identifies a distinction between the shamanic Mun officiant and the lama. Nevertheless he goes on to add that:

“while [lamas] have usurped many of the Mun’s functions, at the present time the two work side by side in perfect amity ... there is not the slightest rivalry between them and when a lama is called in to advise, he will often recommend some ceremony for which a Mun is necessary”. (1938:116).

Tucci (1980) has also drawn attention to the unity underlying the diversity in Tibetan religion. He writes:

“the mountain preserves undiminished its sacredness as the ancestral deity. The powers of the underground, the prehistoric cycles of myths, the deities of the atmosphere and the storm are directly experienced in all their feared presence, but on the other hand they appear side by side, with the Buddhas ... thus is confirmed for us in a continually repeating manner the indissoluble coexistence of Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions, which through their combined action produce the religious experience lived by the Tibetans ... the religious expectation of salvation infuses everything with sacredness and so integrates this apparently disunited world into a total picture”. (1980:208).

Samuel (1984) refers to this overlap and interpenetration as the 'gestalt' of religion in Tibet, one that is at once cohesive yet everchanging. A focus on this gestalt, suggests Samuel, will prove the most revealing of possible approaches to Tibetan religion.

As I have already indicated, Tibetan Buddhists are pragmatists. But this pragmatism is in no way restricted to the laity. Miller (1958) in a study of the Tibetan Buddhist clergy stressed its essential pragmatism.
and responsiveness to social demands. Says Miller,

"The monastic institutions' dominant role in Tibetan culture is as much due to its activities in all secular realms as to its ecclesiastical activities". (1958:247).

More recently, Samuel (1982) has drawn attention to the extraordinary political and social influence of lamas in Tibetan Buddhism.(1) Lamas he says:

"developed their autonomous political role because there was a power vacuum ... their claims to act as protectors and mediators with regard to nonhuman and supernatural forces can scarcely be considered separate from their real ability to protect and mediate in relation to human threats to life and security". (1982:221).

Cartier (1975) has made a study of rituals in a Tibetan refugee community in Dhorpatan and among the Tibetan Buddhist Magars of Tarakot in Nepal. This study demonstrates clearly the cooperation and overlap between Bon and orthodox Buddhism in these communities. The population of Dhorpatan is divided equally into adherents of Bon and of the Saskyapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism. Each have their own temples and clergy, yet the same rites are usually performed twice in both temples and are attended by the whole population. Buddha's birthday is celebrated by all alike, as is His Holiness the Dala Lama's birthday. 'Mo' texts used for divination contain both Bon and Buddhist elements and religious paraphernalia and sacra show both Bon and Buddhist influences. Cartier describes an exorcism (Tib: sog-si-sno) in Tarakot which bears a striking resemblance to the descriptions of exorcisms among the Sherpas by von Furer Haimendorf(1964) and Ortner (1978).(2) Bon daggers (Tib: phurba), spirit traps (Tib:mdos ), drums and musical instruments etc. are combined with Buddhist dough efficacies (Tib: gtorma) and texts (Tib:gter-ma) in the performance of the exorcism.

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(1) According to Samuel (1982), magical power in Theravadin communities is more obviously derived from outside the orthodox Buddhist tradition and does not necessarily translate directly into political power as it tends to do in Tibet. The Tibetan term for polity is 'cho-si nyi-dan', literally 'religious sanctity-political authority, two of', reflecting the complex interplay between religion and politics in the Tibetan socio-cultural formation. (2) See Chapter 3.
During the winter months, when the Bön priests and Sakyapa lamas have retreated to lower altitudes, laymen conduct any rites of exorcism that are required.

Cartier also discusses the case of the possession of a shaman by a high orthodox Buddhist deity for the purposes of instruction of the audience in orthodox doctrine. During the seance, shamanic elements such as the invocations to local spirits, possession trance, the use of such shamanic paraphernalia as the headdress and drum etc., are combined with the usual orthodox altar, orthodox teachings and an orthodox tutelary deity as the possessing deity. Cartier concludes from his study that

"Shamans of Tibet have become vehicles of Buddhist philosophy and they are an integral part of this syncretic religion". (1975:140).

Holmberg (1980, 1984) has made a number of similar studies of the Tamangs of Nepal. According to Holmberg the West Tamang have nine religious specialists organised into three interdependent components: the orthodox Buddhist (lama) primarily concerned with death rites, the shamanic (bombo) whose function is to resuscitate the living, and the chthonic (lambu) whose function is to propitiate chthonic divinities and exorcise harmful influences through sacrifices.

"What is striking is not that these loci of religious activity are distinct or even contradictory but rather that Tamang consult all these practitioners without apparent dilemma and they consult each other. Hence these aspects are not conceivable as separate religions". (1980:5).

Similar to the case of Thai Buddhism as described by Tambiah (1970), West Tamang religion says Holmberg

"is characterised by relations of opposition, complementarity, linkage and hierarchy. No aspect of Tamang religion is isolable from the others; each derives its meaning from its position within a superordinate system". (1984:2).
Components are not representative of separate historical periods, nor are they to be distinguished by virtue of their psychosocial functions alone. All practitioners work towards the affirmation of the cosmic order, chant texts, have similar ritual 'routines' and often replace each other at ceremonies. All this is consonant with the picture I shall draw of Sherpa practitioners.

If then it is not possible to identify a fixed separation between traditions within Tibetan Buddhist communities, how are the different practices, functions and conceptions to be analysed? Samuel (1984) has provided a useful model - what he calls a 'relational framework' - for dealing with this problem. Though in no way identical, the approach to Sherpa religion which I develop in Chapter 4 draws inspiration from Samuel's relational framework and its implications for ethnographic analysis.

Samuel distinguishes not between traditions, nor even between transcendental and pragmatic orientations but rather between what he calls 'shamanic' and 'rationalised' modal states. The shamanic modal state is associated with stateless political systems with little division of labour, collective decision-making processes, and the resolution of disputes through mediation (involving the analogical manipulation of multiple realities) rather than through judicial pronouncement. The rationalised modal state on the other hand is associated with institutionalised, political hierarchies, religious involvement in the legitimisation of political order, the management of conflict through prescriptive laws, and a reliance on such 'objective' mechanisms as literacy and currency. The manipulation and transformation of multiple realities is of course less feasible where a rationalised modal state is dominant.
Now it is important to remember that no society will be characterised purely by one modal state or another. The notion of modal states is a heuristic device only; they have no objective reality of their own. The articulation between modal states over time produces what Samuel calls a 'modal current' and it is the particular manifestation of this dynamic interplay at the level of phenomenal reality which distinguishes one religious system from another. In the case of Tibetan Buddhism, the once dominant shamanic modal state is rapidly being overtaken by a rationalised modal state.

Those who are critical of this emphasis on modal states rather than allegedly observable traditions and more 'objective' concrete 'facts' might argue their case on the following grounds: Firstly, they may point to the many exceptions within and overlaps between modal states. Secondly, they may point to the lack of readily identifiable system within modal states. Thirdly they may point to the apparent idealist emphasis in this approach and suggest that it cannot therefore account for or serve to ameliorate the day to day realities of exploitation, inequality and so on at a more materialist level. It is certainly worth asking whether the whole concept of a relational framework is a 'copout', a way of redirecting attention away from the more pressing problem of exploitation and towards more abstract, less contentious issues. Fourthly, it might be argued that the concerns which a relational framework illuminates are not particularly important.

In answer to the first criticism, it must be remembered that the modal states are not intended to be exclusive, static, concrete, entities but rather represent structural positions generating relations, transformations and changes. Elements of one modal state will be found within another and their combination will inevitably change with time and place. Says Samuel:

"the inability to conceptualise this process of transformation adequately is at the heart of modern anthropology's notorious problems in dealing with social change, cultural contact and the like". (1984:1-17).
In answer to the second criticism it is precisely the lack of rigid surface level system within the shamanic modal state that encourages what might be called the 'bricolage' and analogical processes of shamanic activity. Surface forms may vary considerably because underlying deep structures are maintained. In answer to the third and fourth points it must be stressed that a relational framework does not deny more materialist analyses. In fact it makes such analyses more useful by placing them within a context in which their so-called objective validity becomes less important than their relevance to a specific defined problem or situation - problems that are of fundamental and real concern to the layperson. Says Samuel:

"modal state theory is neither 'idealist' nor 'materialist' but encompasses the continual dialectic between 'consciousness' and 'material reality', as of course Marx himself attempted to do". (1984:1-25).

Furthermore, in-depth analyses and understanding of structural forces and relationships offers more scope, I suggest, for altering the underlying causes of inequalities rather than merely rearranging their surface manifestations. Modal states are models of sociocultural phenomena but they are also models for perceived reality. A modal state is an active process - it can and is harnessed for social change.

What then are the implications of these different approaches for an understanding of Sherpa religion? To begin with, it is important to consider the relation between Sherpa religion and the religious systems of other mahayanist and theravadin Buddhist communities. Samuel (1975) has suggested that, compared to Southeast Asia, "...a much higher proportion of the total ritual field in Tibet is carried out under Buddhist auspices" (1975:210). He cites as evidence the fact that a higher proportion of the population in Tibet are monks; that the ideal of the ascetic monk is accompanied in Tibet by the more encompassing ideal of the bodhisattva role; that the emphasis on tantra in Tibetan Buddhism encourages far more involvement in pragmatic
worldly concerns; and that the pantheon in Tibet is relatively more flexible and is able to incorporate bodhisattvas and even tantric lamas. In comparing the Sherpas themselves with theravadin communities, Paul (1979) says that Sherpa religion:

"has embraced and included within itself many practices and functions which in Theravadin societies find expression in extra-Buddhist traditions". (1979:274).

Von Furer-Haimendorf (1955, 1964) argues the same thing in his analysis.

Holmberg (1980) however disagrees with this perspective, arguing that Tibetan and Southeast Asian manifestations of Buddhism are virtually identical. He writes:

"all religions which include a Buddhist component ... are transformations of a common structural relation". (1980:328).

"the routinisation of shamanic possession into scheduled Buddhist incarnation, the tempering of ecstatic revelation into oracular revelation, the movement from a mnemonic and oral recitation to the authority of the text in measured cadence, the shift from a particularised world view to the universalising symbology and ethos of Tibetan Buddhism, and the complex sociopolitical genesis of monastic institutions are all indicative of developments parallel to processes in Theravadin societies". (1980:360).

Ortner (1978) goes even further. She argues that by contrast with the orthodox Buddhist tradition dominant among the Sherpas, theravadin Buddhism is more pragmatic and communally oriented. In Thailand for example there is a closer link, both geographic and otherwise, between the wat and the village; there is a greater flexibility between religious and lay life (monastic vows are not necessarily permanent); merit making is social in orientation (rather than the individualistic nature of prayer wheel spinning, circumambulations and so on), and interaction between clergy and laity on a day to day basis is greater (through for example daily alms giving).

How are we to explain this divergence of opinion between analysts? Is mahayana Buddhism really different from theravadin Buddhism?
If so, how is it different, and why? Do the differences imply that different models are necessary to account for the relationship between traditions in these communities? Obviously there are a number of other important factors influencing religion which I have not discussed in this review of the literature. It is evident for example that the colonial history of Burma, Sri Lanka and India, and all this history implies, has uniquely influenced these communities. The tenacity of dichotomous models in the ethnography of India may be due to the simple fact that caste does engender greater division in these communities. Or, it may be argued that the greater rationalisation of political control and centralisation of power in these communities, relative to the less centralised Tibetan communities such as the Sherpas, may explain the greater separation of traditions. All such factors need to be explored.

What does seem apparent however is that approaches which are based on a rigid and static dichotomisation of traditions are not likely to be able to account adequately for evidence of overlap and cooperation between traditions, for instances of anomalies between belief and behaviour, for mechanisms of mediation between traditions, or for changes in the relations between traditions over time. Furthermore they are not likely to reflect the conceptions of the Sherpas themselves, for whom the notion of dichotomisation is, itself, evidence of an unenlightened view of things.

In the next chapter I shall provide some ethnographic background to the Sherpas and then explore the approaches which different ethnographers have taken to describe and explain Sherpa religion. In particular I shall draw attention to the limitations of constructs emphasising dichotomy and shall argue for the importance of an approach which reflects the richness, the dynamism, and the involvement of Sherpa religion in everyday life.
1.4 Conclusion

Recognising the tendency of ethnographers to divide the cultural world into arbitrary categories, Gombrich (1971) has commented that "academic boundaries are artificial: the realities are the problems. Problems have a way of crossing these boundaries". (1971:13).

Ethnographers themselves however often remain locked inside these boundaries. The need to interpret the complexities of a particular cultural tradition in terms of the concepts, categories and rationalist mode of discourse dominant in Western intellectual endeavour has led ethnographers to create further boundaries where none, in fact, exist. The 'problems' therefore, the apparent inconsistencies and contradictions, remain largely misunderstood and unresolved.

Once we make Cartesian rationality problematic however, and recognise it as a paradigm rather than an objective reality, then the appearance of discontinuity can be more readily understood and managed. The principal objective of ethnographic analysis can move from absolute, objectively 'correct' solutions to what might be called 'ways of seeing'. In a famous passage Saraha wrote:

"When (in winter) still water by the wind is stirred it takes (as ice) the shape and texture of a rock. When the deluded are disturbed by interpretative thoughts, that which is as yet unpatterned turns very hard and solid". (cited by Downs 1980:2).

Founded on the recognition of the problematical and everchanging nature of reality, Buddhism itself tries hard to avoid rigid, static, 'final' interpretations of things. The ultimate objective of Buddhist philosophy is less to provide final resolutions as to explain the relation between a dynamic reality and the static constructions of thought. This objective, I suggest, is one which ethnography itself might well gain from.
CHAPTER 2: THE SHERPAS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTRODUCTION

"High are the mountains
The Buddha lives in them
This is my homeland
More beautiful than heaven".

-Sherpa song.

The Sherpas inhabit a region known as the Solu-Khumbu in the high Himalayas of North East Nepal. (1)

In 1965 the population of the Solu-Khumbu was approximately 30,000, of whom 15,000 were ethnic Sherpas and recent immigrant Tibetan refugees. (2) The Sherpas live for most of the year in villages of up to one hundred households but many also maintain high altitude, summer pasture settlements (yerva) and low altitude, winter agricultural settlements (guna). Every village is comprised of members of a number of different clans. (3) The main villages of the region are Namche, Bazaar, Khumjung, Kunde and Thame in Khumbu, and Junbesi and Phaphlu in Solu in the south.

(1) It should be noted that Sherpa communities are also to be found in the neighbouring Rolwaling Valley, in the Helambu region, in Sikkim and of course in the metropolitan centres of Kathmandu and Darjeeling. In this thesis I focus my attention on the Sherpas of the Solu-Khumbu.

(2) The remainder of the population consisted of other ethnic and Hindu caste groups (in order of size: Chetris, Tamangs, Magars, Kamis, Newars, Gurungs and Raís). See Oppitz (1974).

(3) Oppitz (1974) however identifies some territorial distribution of clans.
Historically the Sherpas combined a transhumant mode of pastoralism (yaks and crossbreeds) with agriculture (principally buckwheat, maize and barley) and profitable trading activities (principally yaks, salt and ritual objects). Today they combine pastoralism and agriculture with highly profitable mountaineering and tourist-related activities. As a result of such successful worldly activity, many Sherpas acquired considerable wealth. Because of the close interaction however between secular and religious endeavours, much of this wealth was devoted to religion. To understand Sherpa society therefore one must understand Sherpa religion, and vice versa. In this brief ethnographic introduction to the Sherpas I demonstrate the importance of the relationship between religion and society and the interdependence of transcendental orientations and pragmatic concerns which this relationship implies.

2.1 History

According to local texts discovered in 1965 by Oppitz (1974), the Sherpas are descendants of four protoclans from Kham in East Tibet. (1)

(1) The term Sherpa is derived from the Tibetan term 'sharpa', literally 'easterner'.
These clans belonged to the Nyingmapa sect of Tibetan Buddhism and emigrated because of religious tensions with their northerly Mongol neighbours sometime in the early sixteenth century.\(^{(1)}\) The Sherpas have remained Nyingmapa despite the ascendancy of the more rationalised Gelugpa sect in central Tibet since the sixteenth century. From the eighteenth century onwards, immigrants (\textit{khambas}) from nearby Ding-ri and elsewhere in Tibet began to enter the Khumbu. Around the same time, ethnic and caste groups from the south and west of Nepal began to settle in the Solu region.\(^{(2)}\)

In the late nineteenth century the Rana Prime Minister of Nepal, Jung Bahadur, seized the Khumbu from Tibet, but was content to leave judicial and political responsibility in the hands of selected Sherpa representatives (gembu and pembu). Given the support and patronage of the Rana regime, these representatives quickly developed enormous power and wealth, much of which was devoted to religion. It was during this period also that the potato was introduced into the Solu-Khumbu. This event assured food supplies, resulted in a rapid increase in population, and generated surplus wealth, much of which was devoted to religion. The combination of these political and economic factors encouraged a rapid growth in religion and early this century monasticism was introduced for the first time into the region.\(^{(3)}\)

The annexation of Tibet by China in 1950 had some important consequences for the Sherpas. It signalled a massive inflow of Tibetan refugees, including many orthodox monks and lamas and this further reinforced the dominance of the orthodox tradition. Trade with Tibet virtually ceased and many Sherpas were forced to seek their livelihood through other means.

\(^{(1)}\) A full account of this migration is found in the texts discovered by Oppitz in 1965. Apparently the clans were quite wealthy and sponsored lavish ceremonies on their migration.\(^{(2)}\) According to Funke (1969) this has resulted in a noticeable difference between the two subregions, the settlers of Solu influenced more by Hinduism and ethnic 'folk' religious systems than the settlers of the Khumbu.\(^{(3)}\) Monasticism was first introduced by Lama Gulu under the influence of the twelfth incarnation of Lama Sanga Dorje of Rongbuk monastery in nearby Tibet. Lama Sanga Dorje is believed to have been born in the Khumbu into the Salaka clan.
Fortuitously, these events coincided with the opening of the Solu-Khumbu to mountaineers following the overthrow of the Rana regime in Kathmandu. The result was the availability of lucrative alternative employment opportunities in the mountaineering and tourism industry.\(^{(1)}\) Young, poor and landless Sherpas in particular benefitted from this opportunity and the result was a redistribution of wealth (and thus status relations). The 'nouveau riche' however had had little involvement with the orthodox establishment in the past (having been limited by their poverty) and were thus not so keen to invest their new found wealth in religion. The result has been a decline in monasticism in the last decade, an increasing tendency to regard the pragmatic aspects of religion as incompatible with its concern for salvation, and therefore an increasing separation of religion from society.

2.2 Social Organisation.

There are today perhaps eighteen,\(^{(2)}\) named,\(^{(3)}\) exogamous patrilineal\(^{(4)}\) clans called ru (literally 'bone')\(^{(5)}\) derived from the four original protoclan. These clans retain the role of defining marriage groups\(^{(6)}\) but serve little other secular function, being overshadowed by the nuclear family and, to a lesser extent the lineage (kalak), fictive kin (thouwou) and mutual aid groups (tsenga tsalt) as the most significant corporate group.

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\(^{(1)}\) This also led however to a decline in pastoralism and agricultural activity and the region today faces serious food shortages. See Khumbu Region Tourism Studies (1981).

\(^{(2)}\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964), Oppitz (1974). There is no agreement however in the ethnography as to how many clans there are. Paul (1982) says there are twenty-one in his area of field work and Ortner (1970) says there are fifteen in hers (ir Solu).

\(^{(3)}\) Clans are named after a locality of origin or a putative ancestor.

\(^{(4)}\) That these clans are patrilineal is interesting since Aziz (1978), Goldstein (1971) and others have recently challenged the long-held assumption of patriliney in Tibetan societies.

\(^{(5)}\) The notion that agnatic descent is passed through bone (while uterine descent is passed through sha (i.e. flesh) suggests an emphasis on patrilineal inheritance and the importance of the white/red, semen/blood oppositions in tantrism (see Paul 1982).

\(^{(6)}\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) notes the existence of 'brother clans' (e.g., Paldorje and Salaka in Khumjung) the members of whom are not permitted to intermarry.
Religious clan get-togethers (nu chetu) and the worship of clan deities (dabla) however are important events. Although apparently declining in recent years(1) they provide an important link between religion and society.

In addition to these clans (which might be said to comprise the 'core' of Sherpa society), there are what Oppitz (1974) calls 'pseudo clans' (including certain longstanding ethnic and caste groups from Nepal) and recent Khamba immigrants not yet incorporated into the clans. Members of this larger group, called Khadeu (literally 'mouth good'), are not subject to intermarriage restrictions or rules of commensality. Outside this group however are the khamendeu (literally 'mouth bad' and including members of polluting service occupations) and yemba (an ex-slave group). Khamendeu/ yemba and Khadeu are not permitted to intermarry.

Now, as Buddhists, Sherpas claim to be above the social distinctions and inequalities of the Hindu caste system and do not fit themselves into it at any level. They claim that seeking after status and power in this world is inimical to the pursuit of salvation (or, at least, a better rebirth). The ideals of equal property inheritance, economic self-sufficiency, and communal decision-making seems to support this claim. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) in particular emphasises the egalitarian cooperative nature of Sherpa society. He introduces his ethnography as follows:

"What I have set out to do is to describe and analyse the type of society in which the Sherpas have developed their spirit of independence, their ability to cooperate smoothly for the common good, their courtesy and gentle manner and their values which are productive of an admirable balance between this-worldly and other-worldly aims". (1964:xix).

This spirit of equality and cooperation, according to a later study (1967) pervades the political system as well. He writes:

"Sherpa society is basically egalitarian and the government of the village community is based on the principle that authority is vested in the totality of its inhabitants". (1967:182).

(1) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) discusses them in his ethnography but Oppitz (1974) and Ortner (1978) note that they have declined in significance in recent years.
Prior to the introduction of the Nepalese state pancayat system in 1955, the Sherpa political structure was indeed highly amorphous, with few apparent formal mechanisms of conflict arbitration, few 'alliances', no socially recognised positions of ultimate political authority and an aversion to intervention in disputes between individuals.\(^{(1)}\) Punishment for moral crimes was prescribed within the laws of the universe and shame was considered punishment enough for social crime.\(^{(2)}\) The only significant link with the central Nepalese government was through the village pembu, or tax collector. Links with the Dalai Lama's regime in Lhasa were virtually non-existent.\(^{(3)}\)

The negotiation of disputes was carried out in the main, by shamans and tantric lamas. It enabled the mediation of conflicting interpretations of a particular situation and an elimination of shame. The metaphysical power of religious practitioners was thus, in practice, closely associated with power at a secular level. Compliance, however, could neither be expected nor demanded. Other positions of secular authority such as naua (controller of village lands) or lara (organiser of village festivals) were rotated, a system designed to deny monopoly of access to power and prestige.

Now, despite this portrayal of egalitarianism and cooperation, there is much evidence of serious tensions and inequalities in Sherpa society. The Sherpa household invariably comprises a nuclear family unit.\(^{(4)}\)

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\(^{(1)}\) See Paul (1977) for a discussion of this.

\(^{(2)}\) It is interesting to note that while it is considered sinful to have sex with a nun, this act carries no social consequences. On the other hand it is not considered sinful to have sex with a khamendau, but this act does carry social consequences (since it challenges important status distinctions).

\(^{(3)}\) The system of balance of power in central Tibet between the aristocracy and the clergy was inherently unstable, as was the institution of reincarnation for succession to the office of Dalai Lama. Only the fifth, seventh and thirteenth Dalai Lamas appear to have maintained effective rule. Samuel (1982) has suggested that societies on the periphery of central Tibetan influence, such as the Sherpas are, by virtue of their lack of centralised political structures, more akin to the Islamic states of Central Asia (e.g. the Swat Pathans of North West Pakistan) than the Buddhist states of Southeast and South Asia.

\(^{(4)}\) Both polyandry and polygyny were practiced, until recently, by the Sherpas.
Within the family, status is more important than biological ties in determining kinship terminology. Upon marriage (or entering a monastery) sons theoretically get an equal share of the family property (and daughters receive a dowry) but in practice this often does not occur. Paul (1970) comments that:

"the Sherpa family seems to be based on the idea that 'we are all brothers and all brothers are equal but some are more equal than others'."


Divorce rates are as high as 30%. (2)

Outside the family, status inequalities are even more evident. This is perhaps most clearly manifest in the division between khadeu and khamendeu. The latter, as we have seen, are subject to taboos of intermarriage with Sherpa clan members, are debarred from drinking from the same cup (which is a significant handicap, given the importance of hospitality among the Sherpas) (3) and are debarred from attaining lama status. The relations between the various groups comprising Sherpa society might be expressed in the following concentric circle model (based on similar models by Oppitz 1974 and even von Furer-Haimendorf 1964).

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in addition to monogamy. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) records nineteen polyandrous unions in his research of two hundred and thirty six marriages. Polyandry of course is designed to quell sibling rivalry over the division of limited property but Paul (1970) notes that such rivalry was common.

(1) See Paul (1982). The disjunction between junior and senior males, and its implication for what Paul calls the 'succession crisis' forms an integral part of his psychoanalytical discussion of Tibetan Buddhism.

(2) Oppitz (1974).

Consciousness of ethnic Sherpa identity vis à vis other groups, appears to be increasing as result of recent immigrations, rising land pressures, changes in trading patterns and economic activity, and the introduction of a formal pancayat political system.

Cooperation is counterbalanced by a strong spirit of individualism in both socioeconomic and religious activities. A Sherpa farmer commented in a recent documentary film:

"in Khumbu we don't meet each other. We have our own fields and our own homes. Ours is a better way. If we live too close together we fight". (from BBC film: The Sherpas of Nepal).

Paul (1970) writes that:

"despite the fiction, the whole of Sherpa society is not a group, and never pretends to act as one ... normal village life can best be seen as a number of individuals not getting in each other's way, rather than as a functioning community". (1970:63).

Ortner (1970, 1978), in particular, emphasises what she regards as the asocial, individualistic nature of Sherpa Buddhism and the inequalities this engenders within Sherpa society. The notion of 'high people' and 'low people' she says is "...a constant theme of social discourse" (1970:38).
Status differences are very important in both secular parties\(^1\) and religious rituals.\(^2\) They are at the base, she suggests, of cleavages between monks and nuns, celibate monks and married lamas, lamas and shamans, clergy and laity, and rich and poor more generally. In theory, the notion of karma supersedes such worldly influences as power and status and is not subject to human interference. In practice however, such influences are of vital importance. The poor, Ortner (1978) says, have:

"little chance of ameliorating their state in the next life for they are caught up in sheer survival and must perforce spend their lives mired in the most negatively-valued material concerns. Further, they are debarred effectively by their poverty from two great sources of merit: donations to religious institutions ... and entering the monastic life".

(1978:112).

Wealth is an important criterion in the Sherpa division of 'high' people from 'low' people.\(^3\) It divides those who can support family members in monasteries from those who cannot.\(^4\) It divides those who are able to afford lavish ceremonies and parties (and thus gain religious merit and social status) from those who cannot. It divides those who can afford to commission healing rites from those who cannot.\(^5\) The poor are seen as representing the demonic aspect of human nature (since it must be greed and envy which has made them poor) and are therefore accorded little respect (or even generosity). The wealthy on the other hand are seen as godly (since wealth comes through generosity and godliness).\(^6\) Wealth and power, as might be expected, reinforce each other.\(^7\)

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\(^1\) In such parties male guests are seated according to rank and females are seated in the middle of the room. The 'joking' which precedes eating serves to express animosities and is an important arena for rearranging statuses.

\(^2\) For example, the role of the low status peahangba in exorcisms. See Chap.3.

\(^3\) This division can also be regional. Fisher, in personal communication to Ortner (quoted 1978) notes that because the tourist industry is centred in Khumbu, Khumbu men are hiring Solu men on a cash basis to work their fields while they themselves are away from home. This aspect of contemporary relations of production has generated a socioeconomic cleavage between the two subregions.

\(^4\) See also Paul (1984b).

\(^5\) The BBC documentary noted that a one day recitation of texts to cure a chronic nosebleed had cost the client a full year's savings.

\(^6\) This view of wealth appears to be encouraged by the fact that wealth is often derived from outside immediate Sherpa society (from trade,.../57
Conflict appears, in practice, to be as much a part of Sherpa daily life as it is in any other community. Ortner (1979) observes that just as the absence of political and economic power structures does not mean that a Sherpa community is egalitarian, so the absence of systematic dispute-settling mechanisms does not mean that a Sherpa community is at all times peaceful and harmonious. While many disputes occur over real material resources, others are often expressions of status rivalry that seize upon some material factor as an excuse for an argument. The Sherpas recognise and lament the fact that envy over wealth differences is rife in the community, and status competition and rivalry chronic. (1978:77).

Often such envy and conflict breaks out into actual violence. Ortner (1975) writes:

"I witnessed several outbursts [of violence] in which the individual (generally after drinking) simply went out of control and began to attack and abuse everyone within reach, ultimately to be dragged away, literally kicking and screaming, by kinsmen and friends". (1975:21).

How then are we to reconcile the assertions of egalitarianism, sociality and cooperation with the evidence of inequality, individualism and conflict? Is there a disjunction perhaps between religious ideals and the exigencies of day to day existence? Or is this disjunction merely in the mind of the analyst? It would seem that Sherpa society is characterised neither by egalitarianism nor inequality, neither cooperation nor conflict, but rather by a combination of the two. An analytical emphasis on one dimension rather than another is not necessarily 'wrong' - it merely represents a particular analyst's vantage, paradigm, focus and set of objectives. Evidence can, as we have seen, be provided for both, and there is little doubt that the impact of historical forces will result in changes in the balance over time. What is important however, for the purposes of this study, is that these dimensions are not mutually exclusive. It is the relationship between them which animates Sherpa society.

(7) Despite the lack of formal political structures, such 'big men' as Pemba Kitar, Nima Teshi and Ang Pemba of Khumjung (see von Furer-Haimendorf 1964) have been able to wield significant power over long periods of time, by virtue of their wealth and status.
Religious ideals are important to the Sherpas because phenomenal existence is held to be pervaded by a sense of dualism and thus suffering. The religious clergy thus enjoys substantial support, both ideological and material. Nevertheless the fact that transcendental concerns are being looked after by the clergy enables continued involvement in the phenomenal world (and thus the activity necessary to the maintenance of the clergy). Religious ideals and social realities, and transcendental orientations and pragmatic concerns are not incompatible but rather are complementary, overlapping and, according to vajrayana, ultimately identical.

2.3 Religion

Historically the mahayana tradition arose as a reaction against the increasing reification of doctrine by the clergy of the day and the increasing alienation of religion from the everyday life of the masses. (1) Mahayana combines ascetic renunciation of the world with the notion of the enlightened bodhisattva's compassionate return to the world (based on the realisation that — due to the interconnectedness of the universe — no individual can attain liberation apart from the liberation of all sentient beings). It combines philosophical contemplation (as contained in the sutras) with ritual practice (as emphasised in the tantras). (2)

The vajrayana tradition in particular (which until this century was dominant in the Solu-Khumbu) stresses the tantras. It regards the notion of salvation espoused in the sutras as overburdened and ossified with doctrine; as having become reified, to the point where salvation is something 'out there' rather than within; as accessible only to those who have withdrawn from the world. In short, salvation has been put beyond the reach of the

(1) See Samuel (1984) for an analysis of the history of Tibetan Buddhism in these terms.

(2) The sutras and tantras are subdivisions of the Buddhist canon. They are not mutually exclusive and contain elements of each within the other. The point is not that the two are incompatible but rather that they articulate with and complement each other. They might be regarded as representing different stages of spiritual activity.
ordinary layperson. The aim of vajrayana then is not a separation but rather a union of transcendental and pragmatic concerns, of internal and external realities, of wisdom (Skt: prajna) and practice (Skt: upaya). It is this union that constitutes ultimate bliss (Skt: yoganaddha; Tib: sku grub, literally 'binding together the opposed poles'). Wordly activities and concerns are seen not as polluting but as potential vehicles for liberation since they highlight the illusory nature of worldly existence (and therefore the inevitability of suffering ensuing from this existence). Furthermore they provide the material conditions (food, shelter etc.) necessary for ongoing spiritual activity. Paul (1982) observes that the trantricist

"overcomes duality through an elaboration of ritual, the symbolism of which is at once elaborately sexual, violent and this-worldly, concerned with images of pollution, death, carnal desires and so forth; and at the same time ethically good, dedicated not towards self-aggrandisement or personal power, but towards the realisation of the absolute". (1982:88).

The Hevajratantra itself, says:

"just as a man who suffers from flatulence is given beans to eat, so that wind may overcome wind in a way of a homeopathic cure, so existence is purified by existence ... by passion the world is bound, by passion, too, it is released". (quoted by Ardussi and Epstein, 1978:355).

One does not have to leave the world to recognise and overcome its illusory nature. One can be in the world without necessarily being of the world. Ultimately, true liberation cannot be achieved separate from the world because any such separation is an illusion and it is precisely such illusions which preclude liberation. The transcendental and the pragmatic, far from being incompatible, are ultimately one and the same thing. Vajrayana is concerned not with 'wisdom which goes beyond', but rather with 'that which goes beyond wisdom'; with life itself.

The terrifying wrathful aspect (takbu) of so many tantric deities is merely the complement to their benign aspect (shiwa). The fear they induce is a manifestation of ignorance of the essential unity of opposites and is
therefore an obstacle to liberation. Fear is confronted head-on, through the active visualisation of such wrathful emanations and through such terrifying tantric rituals as \textit{chad} (involving the offering of one's body for dismemberment and consumption by demons).\(^{(1)}\) In this way, fear is experienced as an illusion.\(^{(2)}\)

Because of the essentially pragmatic approach to liberation of vajrayana, tantric lamas are not required to be celibate, nor to isolate themselves from the community in monasteries. The orthodox trilogy of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha (the 'Three Refuges') is complemented by a more active trilogy of lama (as spiritual preceptor), yidam [Skt.] (as tutelary deity) and kandroma [Skt] (as mystical partner). Pragmatic rituals such as exorcisms (\textit{kurim}) and life-empowerment ceremonies (\textit{tse ong}) are just as important as the funerary rites and other more transcendentally-oriented rituals which lamas are responsible for.\(^{(3)}\)

In addition to the vajrayana Tibetan Buddhism was profoundly influenced by the shamanic Bön tradition. The mythical founder of Bön is called Gshen-rab [Tib], literally 'most excellent of shamans' and the term Bön itself means literally 'way of life'. Bön is not a mere pre-Buddhist shamanic carryover however, as some ethnographers have implied.\(^{(4)}\)

\(^{(1)}\) This ritual (called \textit{gcod} in Tibetan) is discussed by David-Neel (1967), Waddel (1958), Macdonald (1980).
\(^{(2)}\) This is demonstrated in the experience of Milarepa, a popular "mad saint" figure in Tibetan Buddhism. Milarepa turned to Buddhism to overcome sins committed during the course of a shamanic vocation. However, he suffered greatly at the hands of his guru, Marpa. In classic tantric tradition, Marpa demanded that his beloved disciple achieve liberation not through withdrawal but through impurity and harsh oppression so that illusion could be experienced in full.
\(^{(3)}\) Of course, as I shall soon demonstrate, funerary rituals can also be seen as being quite pragmatic and worldly.
\(^{(4)}\) See in particular Waddell (1958), Hoffman (1961).
Rather, it is a fully-functioning, contemporary religious order in Tibet which arose alongside Buddhism with the function of providing the royal court with priests.\(^{1}\) Although different from mahayana and vajrayana in many respects, Bön appears to have complemented and even assisted in the historical growth of Buddhism in Tibet.\(^{2}\)

Although Bön itself appears not to be represented in the Solu-Khumbu as a formal sect, there is little doubt that shamans, who have historical links with Bön,\(^{3}\) have been an important influence. This is attested to in both myths (recounting, for example, battles for supremacy between lamas and shamans) and in texts (e.g. those discovered by Oppitz in 1965 in Solu.). Discussing the shamanic content of twenty-eight of these texts and a variety of thankas (religious paintings), Funke (1969) makes the important point that these could only have been written, and read, by the lamas, thus reaffirming the legitimacy and importance of the shamanic tradition in the past.\(^{4}\) As already indicated, Funke (1969) and his colleagues argue that shamanism is perhaps the greatest influence in contemporary Sherpa religion. He writes that:

"in spite of all the various influences, the basic beliefs of Sherpa religion are drawn from the Bön religion, and can still be clearly distinguished".\(^{1969:289}\).

Other ethnographers (e.g. Paul 1976, Ortner 1978), while downplaying the significance of shamanism and pointing out its decline in recent years, nevertheless supply evidence of ongoing shamanic activity and of the importance of ritual cooperation between shamans and tantric lamas.\(^{5}\)

\(^1\) Stein (1972).
\(^3\) The precise relationship between Bön and Sherpa shamanism is unclear from the ethnography.
\(^4\) Funke (1969) also notes how orthodox interpretations of amulets, mystical diagrams etc. have been replaced in recent years by more shamanic interpretations.
\(^5\) See Chapter 4.
Texts

One of the important distinguishing features between shamanism and the Mahayana and Vajrayana in the Solu-Khumbu is that the latter are firmly grounded in a literate tradition. The Buddhist canon or Kanjur comprises some one hundred volumes plus commentaries (Tanjur). Sherpas believe that these texts are not only sacred but inherently powerful. This belief can be seen in the importance of the etching of mantras onto rocks, the flying of prayer flags, the recitation of texts for aid to the sick and the dead, the dispensing of amulets, talismans, and printed medicines for healing purposes etc. Embodying Buddhahood, the 'word' is the only legitimate source of 'truth'. The monk and lama's monopoly of orthodox texts is thus of great significance in terms of their power and status relative to shamans. It should be noted however that the Bon sect in Tibet has its own canon, containing nine 'vehicles'. The first four of these are very much this-worldly oriented (dealing with astrology, magic, necromancy, spirit possession etc.) while the remainder are more concerned with soteriological matters.\(^{(1)}\)

Pantheon

The supreme deity in the Sherpa pantheon, recognised by monks, lamas and shamans alike, is usually considered to be Ongpame (Skt: Amitabha Buddha, Tib: 'Od-dpag-med, literally 'Boundless Light'). Then there are the tantric deities, consorts and related bodhisattvas (e.g. Avalokitesvara)\(^{(2)}\) followed by protector deities (e.g. Padmasambhava).\(^{(3)}\)

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\(^{(1)}\) See Snellgrove (1967).
\(^{(2)}\) The four principal manifestations of Avalokitesvara are the peaceful Pawa Cherenzi (the Sherpa 'saviour'), the wrathful Sinje Chogyal (the 'Judge of hell'), Tuche Chumbu (the 'Great Compassionate One') and Zhambiyang (the goddess of wisdom, Manjusri). Note that the opposed shiwa and takbu manifestations are contained within the same deity. Avalokitesvara appears as the goddess Kuan Yin in China and as Kannon in Japan. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is believed to be the earthly incarnation of this deity.
\(^{(3)}\) Padmasambhava (known to the Sherpas as Guru kimpoch or 'Precious Teacher') is a particularly important figure in the Sherpa pantheon. He was a renowned tantric magician who was brought from India by the scholar Sankaraksita to exorcise the demons then controlling Tibet. He is believed to have passed through the Solu-Khumbu on his way to Tibet and is invoked on nearly all Sherpa ritual occasions, including Shamanic seances.
Below this are the demons (de, du),(1) the more pragmatically-oriented and more active local deities (e.g., yul lha or mountain deities, such as Kumbeyul-lha), clan deities (daba) and local supernaturals, who are the prime concern of the shamans. These supernaturals comprise a variety of forms and differ in functions from place to place. What is interesting however is that the beliefs and practices associated with them appear to be very similar throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world.(2) Important to the Sherpas are the serpent deities (lu),(3) witches (pem),(4) and a variety of malevolent spirits and hungry ghosts (including nerpa(5) and yitak).

This division however, between transcendentally oriented Buddhist deities and pragmatically-oriented local deities and supernaturals is somewhat arbitrary and does not necessarily represent a layman's view of the pantheon.(6) In practice there is great variation in relationships and relative existential statuses according to the particular ritual context. In fact the fluidity of the pantheon is such that the Sherpas themselves seldom know why a particular deity is invoked in a particular situation.(7) The term for a god (lha) is used to refer to both tantric and local deities.

The Sherpas also hold to a conception of the cosmos called the 'Wheel of Life'.

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(1) There is a great variety of demons - See Chapter 3.
(2) See Snellgrove (1957), Samuel (1978b). Samuel notes that von Furer-Haimendorf's account (1964) of the installation of a lu shrine in Khumjung is very similar to Norbu's account (1974) of the establishment of shrines in East Tibet. Funke (1969) and his colleague Ferekcs (1982) however, stressed the uniqueness of the Sherpa shamanic tradition.
(3) Lu are equivalent to the naga, found throughout Asia and called klu in Tibetan. Among the Sherpas they are considered house spirits as well as water spirits. They are held to be malicious only when neglected or offended and at other times are very important in agriculture, fertility rites etc. Despite their significance at a day to day level, they are neither the focus of a major text nor the recipient of a major ceremony. See Paul (1979, 1982), Funke (1969).
(4) The affliction of being a witch is usually held to be involuntary and the result of worldly circumstances beyond the victim's control. A pem is usually accompanied by a lu. Accusations against pem are seldom made directly.
(5) Nerpa are the spirits of persons who are unable to fully detach themselves from the material world, either because of accidental violent death, inadequate funerary rites, past negative karma, or because of extraordinary attachments as a result of greed. Many illnesses are held to be caused by nerpa seeking to reestablish contact with relatives, to fulfill obligations or demand certain ritual activity. Nerpa are also often accompanied by lu.
Within this framework no state of being is permanent and there is a tendency towards unconscious, 'downwards' movement. Demerit (dikpa) and pollution (tip) occurs easily, but merit (sonam) and purification requires complex ritual. Even gods may be lulled into ignorance and 'fall', thus becoming demons. Obviously, then, they are not beyond the eternal cycle of rebirth, and can be expected to be involved in worldly concerns if they are given sufficient encouragement.

Humans occupy an interesting, intermediate position in the Wheel, being neither fully godly (with the possibility of being lulled) nor fully worldly or demonic. Rather, they are considered to be both, and thus have an unique opportunity to be liberated from the wheel and its cycle of suffering altogether. Because of this anomalous intermediate position the Sherpas refer to themselves as the 'white-black ones'. At the same time, humans are considered to be closer to the spirits than to the gods and may thus easily become nerpa or some other malevolent spirit.

Paul (1976) has made an interesting study of the Sherpa pantheon as manifest in the symbolic configurations of a temple in 'Zhangmu'.

(7) Snellgrove (1957).
(1) See Ortner (1978b).
(2) Snellgrove (1957) has also discussed the psycho-cosmic symbolism of Sherpa temple art and architecture.
He notes that while the bottom floor contains representations of deities in their wrathful aspect, the upper floor contains representations of deities in their benign aspect. Along with the protruding head of Ongpame, this floor also houses the sacred texts. For Paul, this arrangement symbolises a 'triumph of reason over passion', the increasing importance of transcendental concerns, and a reflection of the increasing rationalisation taking place in Sherpa religion. Ortner (1978b) also draws attention to this trend, manifest in the pantheon. She writes:

"although the old pre-Buddhist spirits have no doubt undergone many changes since the introduction of Buddhism, we can clearly see that for the most part, they are more human, more comprehensible, and essentially validate life as it is lived in this world. The Buddhist heavens put a new and virtually unreachable ceiling on human aspirations, creating a great deal of guilt, contradiction, and frustration for those who simply wish to go about leading an ordinary, satisfying life on earth". (Ortner, 1978b: fn. 285).

Rituals

The appearance of a division between transcendental and pragmatically-oriented deities is reinforced when rituals are examined. The absolute Adi-Buddha is the focus of such high orthodox rituals as Dorsem. Bodhisattvas such as Pawa Cherenzi are worshipped in Nyungne. Protector deities and 'lords of the soil' are the focus of the important village festival Durnje. Lower demons and malevolent spirits are exorcised in Kurims. And spirits etc., are dealt with through shamanic curing rituals. Again, however, this is an arbitrary categorisation, that does not reflect the fluidity of actual ritual practice in everyday life.

Perhaps the most transcendentally-oriented of Sherpa rituals is Nyungne, a four day ceremony controlled by the monastic establishment and involving merit-making, sin atonement and avowal of Buddhist faith through a series of ascetic abstentions (celibacy, fasting, silence etc.) Nyungne is also clearly linked however to the development cycle of the domestic group.
Ostensibly it is directed towards an identification (through transformation of the self) with the saviour figure Pawa Cherenzi, who also represents one who has transcended sexuality and thus the attachments of marriage, family, and worldly responsibilities. As such, Nyungne is particularly attractive to the elderly who are seeking re-aggregation into the community as asexual universal parent figures. Ortner's portrayal (1978) of an individualistic, somewhat selfish, nuclear family-based society makes this transformational rite even more important for the elderly, who tend to be forgotten once their children have established their own homes and families. But how and why does an ideological system that appears to devalue marriage and the family maintain itself in a situation where marriage is the norm and the family a source of much satisfaction? The answer appears to be in a dialectical mutually affirming relationship between individual religious asceticism and a nuclear family-based social structure. Ortner (1978) says:

"because the family, and particularly the maternal relationship is the primary context in which nyingje (compassion) is experienced in lay life, the religion winds up symbolically validating family relationships for this reason, however much it may ideologically fulminate against them". (Ortner 1978:57).

A more pragmatically-oriented ritual is Dumje, a very popular, village-wide five day festival conducted by lamas prior to the dispersal of the community to the summer yéraa settlements. The festival includes the performance of a variety of life-affirming rituals oriented towards ensuring successful economic activity. Funke (1969) quotes an informant as saying:

"the Dumje is carried out so as to ask God for rain. We need rain for a good harvest. God is supposed to make us happy by preserving us from sorrow, and by sending rain for the harvest" (quoted by Paul 1979:279).

In his analysis of the festival Paul suggests that it is opposite, but complementary to what he calls the 'life-denying' transcendentally-oriented rites of the monastic establishment. He suggests that the coexistence
of these two ritual complexes:
"crystallises the central paradox of Buddhist systems: that life is
worth living and not worth living". (1979:274-75).

As a festival of fertility, Dumje is necessary, suggests Paul, precisely
because of the monastic rejection of fertility. Alternatively, celibate
monasticism is made necessary by the impermanence (and thus suffering) implicit
in fertility (and thus life itself).

The exorcisms dodsongap and gyepshi (which I shall discuss in detail
in Chapter 3) are performed during the masked dancing (cham) on the second
and third days of the festival. The dance which appears to be the climax
of the event involves a lama who, dressed as a black-hat (Bön) magician,
dispatches an effigy (linga) embodying evil forces within the community.
This dance-drama appears to be a recreation of the assassination of the
anti-Buddhist King Glang-dar-ma in 842 A.D. by the monk Dpal-gyri-rdo-rje,(1)
and symbolically represents the supremacy of orthodox Buddhism over the forces
of evil.

The masked dancing in Dumje is very similar to that of Mani Rimdu,: a drama festival (and popular tourist attraction) controlled by the monastic
establishment (and set in monastery grounds) but nevertheless involving
distinctly shamanic undertones (e.g., the symbolic sacrifice of a yak to
local mountain deities). March (1977) comments that Mani Rimdu:
"is an important assurance to Sherpas that not all their pantheon
has been rationalised into complete unapproachability by the high
monastic tradition ... Mani Rimdu is living expression of continuing
divine involvement in the concerns of daily Sherpa life" (1977:95).

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(1) This monk is said to have achieved this feat by donning the garb of
a black-hat magician and gaining the King's attention with pseudo-
magical antics. He made his get-away by discarding his black garb
and by riding his soot-covered white horse through a river. The
tantric moral of this apparently historical event seems to be that
the judicious use of the black can ultimately lead to the victory
of the white for the 'white-black' ones.
During Mani Rimdu, and virtually every other Sherpa festival, life empowerment (*tse org, Tib: tse dbang*)

1) ceremonies are performed. In this ceremony the officiating lama identifies himself through tantric ritual with an appropriate tantric deity and then transfers the power generated by this union into consecrated pills and liquids which the congregation consumes. As a result of this ceremony the soul or spirit essence (*bla*) is reinforced. This might appear somewhat contrary to orthodox Buddhism which, it is often argued, denies the existence of soul, and which is not particularly concerned with validating worldly existence. Samuel (1975) comments that:

"the lama is of course concerned in these rituals to procure for his followers precisely that worldly happiness which, as they progress along the path, they should regard as deceptive and valueless".

(1975:125).

Now the Western concept of the individual soul may not equate with the term *bla* and may not be represented at all in Sherpa thinking. In fact *bla* seems to connote something more akin to the Hindu concept of (Skt) *atman* which suggests interconnectedness at a cosmic level of reality, rather than a distinct individual soul. As I discuss later, there is considerable confusion in the ethnography as to the Buddhist concept of soul. Buddhism does not deny the existence of soul, just as it does not deny the existence of gods. Rather it denies that the individual soul is some kind of enduring transcendental reality. Thus the reinforcement of *bla* in *tse org* does not necessarily contradict Buddhism. Rather it is a sensible way of pursuing pragmatic concerns in the phenomenal world.

Another important function of lamas is the performance of purification rites. These rites form part of virtually every Sherpa ritual occasion, for pollution arising from the mundane material world entails a significant loss of spiritual power.

1) Tibetan tshe-dbang ceremonies are described by Snellgrove (1975), Waddell (1958), Beyer (1973), Samuel (1975).

2) It should be noted that shamans, who are particularly susceptible to pollution (as a result of their contacts with 'low' deities, illness, evil etc) have no purification rites of their own. They are thus constantly threatened by the loss of their power (*ngak*).
Ortner (1973) analyses purification rites in terms of:

"a triangulation of three fundamental principles in the Sherpa world view: the spiritual, physical, and demonic. Pollution represents an ascendency of the physical and/or demonic; purity an ascendency of spiritual". (1973:53).

She identifies three main types of purification rituals:

(1) *tu* (the cleansing of physicality through the use of consecrated water);
(2) *sang* (the manipulation of demons through food offerings) and
(3) ascetic monasticism (which achieves purification through a radical separation from the sources of pollution).

Ortner represents the relations between these rites as follows:

**Fig. 2:5** Purification rites.

The intention of these rites however:

"is not to create perfect purity but to effect a balance between the forces of purity and pollution consistent with the exigencies of village existence ... the ritual asserts the tenuous balance between spirits, demons, and man". (1973:60).

Exorcisms (*kurkh*) are very popular with the Sherpas and are perhaps the most distinctive feature of Sherpa Buddhism. As I shall show in Chapters 3 and 4, there is a strong relationship of interdependence and complementarity between transcendental and pragmatic elements within exorcisms.

Funerary rites are perhaps the most problematic of all rituals performed by lamas. Although ostensibly concerned with the other-worldly interests of the deceased (i.e., the pursuit of liberation) the rites are perhaps more significant in terms of the this-worldly concerns of the deceased...
(i.e., a more favourable rebirth) and of the living left behind. For death carries with it multiple problems of pollution (for both the deceased's family and the community at large), of susceptibility to evil influences (since demons are attracted to the corpse) and of disruptions to social relationships, as well as less tangible existential and emotional concerns. Although it is said that the recitation of texts etc. will influence the other-worldly destiny of the deceased, many Sherpas are aware of the limitations of the lamas' influence.

Funerary rites, says von Furer-Haimendorf (1964):

"are useful only to those who had previously acquired merit in their earthly life".

(1964:247).

What this means, in practice, is that shamans (who by myth are debarred from funerary rites) are employed as well as lamas and the two work closely together. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) writes:

"there is, in [funerary rites] close cooperation between the spirit-callers and lamas, and the books to be recited as a kurim are often indicated by the spirit caller".

(1964:225).

Offerings are made to both orthodox, tantric, and local deities and supernaturals to secure their assistance for the deceased. A variety of rituals, or at least as many as can be afforded, are performed. Gyowa feasts, held following the funeral, accumulate merit for the deceased but, more importantly, ensure that the deceased will not return to molest the living as nerpa. At gyowas, social obligations are discharged, social relations among the remaining living are restructured, and the deceased is thus freer to move on.

Theories of causation

Part of the reason for the problematic nature of death for most Sherpas might be the apparent contradiction between varying theories of causation, between the notion of karma (ie) and the practices available

(1) There are a variety of myths which deal with the origin of the division of labour between lamas (responsible for the dying) and shamans (responsible for the living). See Chapter 3.
(2) Downs (1980) provides a series of photographs of a Sherpa funeral, demonstrating the close interaction and cooperation between lamas and shaman.
to alter karmic destiny, and between varying conceptions of the soul (bla). (1)

The notion of fate and causation is a complex one in Sherpa culture. At one level, fate is determined by a balancing of merit (payin) and demerit (dikpa) by the wrathful aspect of Pawa Cherenzi (i.e., Sinje Chogyal, bearer of the Wheel of Life and 'judge of hell'). (2) While demerit and sin is a natural unconscious human tendency, both merit and demerit can be accrued through conscious action. At another level, fate is determined by one's accrued karma (ze) from past lives. Then again, some say that karma is accrued through one's present life. (3) At another level, rebirth can, as we have seen, be influenced by human agency through correct (or incorrect) funerary ritual and the recitation of such texts as Bardo Thodol by lamas and monks. Then again, the achievement of liberation or enlightenment within one's lifetime will cancel out all accrued karma. At yet another level there appears to be a distinction between primary cause and secondary cause, the latter involving the notion of supernatural agency in affecting one's fate. The implication here is that causation can be seen in both quantitative and qualitative terms. If this were not complicated enough, Sherpas also maintain a notion of 'accident' and of luck, as evidenced by the popularity of the yangyap ceremony (performed by lamas to share up a household's yang, or luck).

Epstein (1977) has explored the problem of multiple theories of causation in some depth. These theories derive in part from the doctrine of

(1) There is little agreement in the ethnography as to either the nature or number of souls (bla) in the human manifestation. The soul can die, yet is immortal; it can be devoured by demons, stolen by spirits, destroyed by sorcerers, yet will inevitably be reincarnated in some form; it is graded yet unquantifiable; it is more important than intelligence (rigpa) yet the latter is highly esteemed in monastic training. The term bla itself is, as Funke (1969), Samuel (1984) and others have pointed out, regularly confused - conceptually and linguistically - with the term for gods, lha. As I have already indicated, both bla and lha are considered to exist, even though they are not 'real'. The distance between this concept and the Western concept of the soul is obviously a source of ongoing conceptual confusion.

(2) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1967).

(3) Paul (1984b) discusses the difficulty of getting Sherpas to commit themselves on this point.
'Two Truths' (Tib: bden-pa gnyis). This doctrine asserts on the one hand an apparent disjunction between transcendental absolute reality and the reality of day to day phenomenal existence. On the other hand the vajrayana tradition asserts that this notion of disjunction is an illusion and a hindrance to liberation. The point is not that one 'truth' is more or less objectively 'valid' than the other but that both are idealisations of what in fact is a single reality. Human perception and experience however, because it is unenlightened, is a function of the relationship between the two. Different theories of causation will result from different perspectives of reality. Epstein comments that:

"the relationship between theories of causation is not simply a matter of the sociology of knowledge, their historical development of the differentiation of their functions... each of these [theories] symbolises the dialectic that constitutes the 'core' of the Tibetan world view and informs each causal theory". (1977:60).

Roles

The principal roles in the orthodox Buddhist establishment include the monk (tawa), the reincarnate lama (tulku), and the abbot (sometimes a tulku). In addition, there are the tantric married village lamas (bom-din), ascetics (tongden) and lay ritual organisers (lawa) and temple administrators (chorumb). A mature layman can join the monastic community as a lay member (korba). Co-existing with these roles are the shamanic roles, including the lhawa (Tib: lha-pa, literally 'god descending'), pembu (literally 'practitioner of Bön')\(^1\) and mindung (or medium, literally 'to see'). In addition, there is the daloma (literally 'hell-return female') and the male form dalowa, plus a variety of specialist curers, herbalists etc. Again, however, there is not necessarily a consistent division of types or responsibilities, for a lhawa may also perform as a mindung,\(^2\) a tulku might

\(^1\) The term pembu derives from the Tibetan term Bon-po (called bombo by many Tibetan Buddhist groups) and has nothing to do with the tax collector pembu (which is from the Tibetan term dpon-po).
\(^2\) See Paul (1982).
also be regarded as a shaman, a Zhawa might also claim banzin status.

The banzin lamas appear to have enjoyed the most flexibility of all. This is perhaps not surprising, given the interplay of transcendental and pragmatic orientations in their activity. Unlike monks, they can practice tantra without the vinaya or sutra. Unlike shamans they can accept or reject their hereditary-based right to a spiritual vocation. Unlike monks, they can marry and remain in the village. If they wish, lamas can develop their spiritual powers further (enabling officiation at more important rites, and thus fame, and thus increased material reward) by ascetic hermitage retreats (tsam). Some lamas are virtually full-time religious officiants (von Furer-Haimendorf 1964 notes that one Khumjung lama spent fifty-two of ninety-two days performing funerary rites). Others may hardly ever practice (e.g., Ngawang Tundu of Khumjung). Others, still, may be retired shamans, specialising in text copying, thanka painting or some other humble merit-making activity (e.g. Upa Gyaldu of Upa). Lamas are also often retired monks.

The lama's vocation is transmitted through both kin-based (patrilineal) and spiritual descent (Tib: bgyud, obviously derived from the term gyud, i.e., tantra). The lama's power is acquired through the unification of guru and chela and consequent ritual transmissions of mystical power (ong; Tib: dbang).

But the lama is not subject to ecclesiastical authority to the same extent as the monk, and in fact may roam the countryside as a tantric 'mad saint' (Tib: bla-ma smyon-pa). Part ascetic, part comic, part shaman, part preacher, poking ribald and sacrilegious fun at the orthodox establishment, the mad saint serves as living proof for the common man of the possibility of

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(1) See Aziz (1976).
(2) See Paul (1984b).
(3) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964).
(5) The Blue Annals text deals in part with the hereditary basis of the lamaist vocation. Lineages are of great significance in Tibetan Buddhism and the unique combination of kin-based and spiritual forms is an important area for future research. Both, of course, are social phenomena.
gaining enlightenment, and therefore transcending normal rules of behaviour and morality.\(^{(1)}\)

Reincarnate lamas (\textit{tulku}), on the other hand, are much more closely tied to the orthodox establishment.\(^{(2)}\) Being bodhisattvas, they are celibate and transcendentally-oriented, having returned to earth only to assist in the spiritual awakening and liberation of mankind. Furthermore, they are seen to be self-generating,\(^{(3)}\) because of their bodhisattva status, and can be reincarnated into a family from any level of the socioeconomic order. Hence they have directly challenged the \textit{banzin}'s traditional monopoly of access (through heredity) to lamahood status. Finally they are believed to be capable of performing all the functions of both a \textit{banzin} lama and a shaman (though through a very different, controlled form of meditational trance) and have thus rendered their roles somewhat superfluous.

Although monasticism has had a significant rationalising influence on Sherpa culture (i.e., the separation of pragmatic concerns from transcendental concerns) only 3\% or less of the population is under monastic vows.\(^{(4)}\) and this number appears to be decreasing.\(^{(5)}\) Unlike monks in Tibet (where over one third of the male population was in monasteries at the height of the orthodox Buddhist influence),\(^{(6)}\) Sherpa monks must be economically self-sufficient. They do not beg for alms, do not receive support from the monastery, and thus tend to come from wealthier families.\(^{(7)}\) They are prohibited from attending shamanic curing rituals and less orthodox lamaist exorcisms, and their only really significant ritual contact with the secular

\(^{(1)}\) See Ardussi and Epstein (1978).
\(^{(2)}\) There are over twenty \textit{tulkus} in North East Nepal, according to Aziz (1976).
\(^{(3)}\) Paul (1982) sees this as resolving a real problem of succession, i.e., the need for senior males to be replaced by junior males in order to reproduce themselves.
\(^{(4)}\) Ortner (1978).
\(^{(5)}\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1975). A relatively recent upsurge of interest in the role of a nun appears to be an important area for further research but I do not have any data to suggest whether or not this interest is continuing.
\(^{(6)}\) Samuel (1978a).
\(^{(7)}\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964).
world is at funerals, where they recite the bardo thodol. In practice, however, a monk often appears to be more like a layman than a cloistered scholar, often involved in agriculture and other secular economic activities to support himself, (1) often employing the services of shamans (2) and seldom interested in pursuing high scholarly interests. (3) According to Paul (1984a) narcissism rather than religious virtue is the most important factor in the choice of a monastic career—"some monks are great scholars, some are pious hermits, most are rather ordinary people... some are as worldly as can be imagined" (1984a:10). Von Furer-Haimendorf (1974) also notes the close interweaving of transcendental and pragmatic activities in the monastic routine. He writes:

"though the direction of [monks'] endeavours may be 'other-worldly', they enjoy to the full the permitted pleasures their monastic life has to offer". (1964:141).

Summary

In this brief sketch of Sherpa religion I have drawn attention to the interplay between what might be identified as a doctrine-based, transcendental, other-worldly orientation and a more pragmatic, ritual-based, this-worldly orientation. To sum up the data presented here I offer the following adaption of Samuel's model (1978a) of Sherpa religion:

(2) Ortner (1970).
(3) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1975).
Fig. 2:6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Specialist</th>
<th>Deities</th>
<th>Nature of Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRAGMATIC/THIS-WORLDLY</strong></td>
<td>1. Health, prosperity. (i) strengthening life-force</td>
<td>lama, reincarnate</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>specialist (embodying deity) conveys life-force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama, monk</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ii) protection against malevolent spirits</td>
<td>lama, shaman</td>
<td>local/tantric</td>
<td>exorcism curing through possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama/shaman</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>tantra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama/monk/layman</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>local</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama/monk/layman</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>text recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama/shaman</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>mantra recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Control over environment</td>
<td>shaman/lama</td>
<td>local/tantric</td>
<td>control of weather</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Divination</td>
<td>shaman</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>possession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Accumulating merit</td>
<td>monk/lama</td>
<td>tantric/local</td>
<td>circumambulations, mani stones etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Obtaining good rebirth</td>
<td>monk/lama</td>
<td>tantric/local</td>
<td>offerings, text recitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Liberation, enlightenment</td>
<td>reincarnate lama</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>meditation/study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>lama</td>
<td>tantric</td>
<td>tantric practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point has been stressed throughout this discussion however, and by Samuel (1978a, 1984) himself, that any such model can only be a simplified arbitrary representation and cannot fully reflect the dynamic interplay of perceived realities of everyday life. Individual components in a given religious system can and should be analytically identified and described but these components will be used differently in different contexts by different practitioners for different purposes in different historical periods. The challenge is not to create and analyse components as distinct, static and
abstract entities, but to explore their relationship with other components in everyday life; the ways in which one combines with and influences another in different contexts and the means by which they are reproduced over time.

2.4: Review of the ethnography.

In the last chapter I drew attention to the tendency for ethnographers to divide religious systems in Southeast and South Asia into 'orthodox' and 'folk' traditions. I argued that such a division - if it did not generate exploration of the relations and overlap between traditions - was neither valid at the level of everyday behaviour nor even particularly revealing at an analytical level. What was needed, I suggested, was a way of viewing religious systems as a whole, which would account for both differences and interrelationships between traditions and which could be used to analyse and predict change. With the ethnographic introduction to the Sherpas provided in this Chapter we are now in a position to explore the approaches in the Sherpa ethnography. Despite a general recognition of the overlap and interdependence between traditions, a tendency persists, I suggest, to separate components out into dichotomies and to identify contradictions when in fact these are often in the heads of ethnographers themselves.

Funke (1969) and Frerkes (1982), influenced by the diffusionist school of anthropology, have devoted much of their attention to the material culture of the Sherpas and conclude that shamanism is both very different from orthodox Buddhism and a very significant tradition in its own right. Their studies are detailed and demonstrate that the shamanic tradition cannot be passed over as an aberration or as a temporary phenomenon. Funke (1969) writes:

"the institution of the minung [diviner-shaman]... has always stood in marked contrast to the prescriptions of the Tibetan Buddhism. For this reason it is generally concealed from the foreign observer. The minung is a genuine shaman... the Bon Priest of ancient Tibet lives on in him. Shamanism, sacrificial blood cult and even death magic characterise the practices of the minung who, however, also stands in close relationship to the cult of the vegetative powers and of the mountain divinities". (1969:291).
Funke's analysis however has some serious weaknesses. His emphasis on the shamanic aspect of Sherpa religion, (reminiscent of the analyses of Waddell (1958) and Hoffman (1961) on Tibet proper), has led him to neglect, and even to deny, the influence of the monastic establishment. The efforts of orthodox Buddhism to 'missionise' the Sherpas '... have met with little or no success' (1969:289). From this inaccurate premise, Funke goes on to assert that the dominance of the shamanic tradition in Sherpa religion is unique among Tibetan Buddhist communities. Now as Samuel (1978b, 1982, 1984) has said, all Tibetan Buddhists employ shamans, worship local deities and exhibit an essentially pragmatic orientation in their religious behaviour.\(^{1}\)

Says Samuel:

"the basic structure of Tibetan religion persists among the Sherpas in an unchanged form ... if the Sherpas are not really Buddhists, then neither was anyone in Tibet proper". (1978b:108).

The only other ethnographer to provide a description of the shamanic tradition is von Furer-Haimendorf (1955, 1964). Even in his ethnography however (half of which is taken up with religion) only twenty pages or so deal with shamanism and 'the control of invisible forces'. In a preliminary article in 1955 he emphasised the differences between what he called the 'pre-Buddhist' tradition and orthodox Buddhism. Nevertheless he concluded that:

"the material which I collected points clearly to the coexistence and partial integration of two heterogenous ritual systems ... [and] an adjustment of theological views to the realities of religious practice". (1955:49).

Later in 1964 he wrote:

"Sherpa society embraces the laity as well as the many men and women, who choose the religious life, and the one part is incomplete and incomprehensible without the other ... there is no cleavage between the Buddhist doctrine practiced in the monasteries and the religion of the ordinary villager. Both have their roots in Tibetan religious traditions and the worship of local deities, foremost in the religious thought of the untutored layman, is not excluded from the ritual performances of the monasteries. The intellectual levels of the religious practices of monks and laymen are undoubtedly very different but ... there is no trace of any conflict between village religion and the more sophisticated beliefs of learned lamas". (1964:126).

\(^{1}\) Snellgrove (1957) and Paul (1982) have also commented on the degree of correspondence between Sherpa religion and religion in Tibet.
Throughout his ethnography von Furer-Haimendorf stresses the integrated, cooperative and pragmatic nature of Sherpa culture and society. Nevertheless he acknowledges also the profound influence of transcendental religious orientations:

"While harmonious relations with members of his family, kinsmen and fellow villagers are in Sherpa eyes the one main facet of the good life, the gaining of religious merit is the other. In the background of all worldly desires and aspirations which the average Sherpa pursues with zest ... is the deep-seated conviction that ultimate happiness can be gained only by the acquisition of merit and the concentration on other-worldly realities". (1964:288).

In a subsequent discussion of morals, ethics and values in Sherpa society, von Furer-Haimendorf (1967) argues that there is no cleavage between the clergy and the laity in terms of life goals. The differences between them, he suggests:

"seem to lie more in the means employed to attain [the ultimate human goal] than in their conception of it". (1967:181).

Von Furer-Haimendorf's account is perhaps the most detailed descriptive ethnography of the Sherpas available. As Samuel (1978b) has commented, to say that it is theoretically weak is to accuse the author of failing to do what he did not set out to do. Nevertheless it is important to note that apart from assertions of interdependence and cooperation between traditions, von Furer-Haimendorf has provided little insight into the means by which this interdependence is achieved, the precise nature of the relations between traditions, or the way in which such relations may have changed over time. Overburdened with the synchronic, holistic emphasis of British functionalism it fails to account adequately for the real and important differences between traditions and the conflicts and inequalities that have been observed by other ethnographers.

By contrast with von Furer-Haimendorf, Sherry Ortner (1970, 1975, 1978, 1978b) emphasises a division between the clergy and the laity and, by extension, between orthodox Buddhism and shamanism. (1)

(1) I shall discuss Ortner's approach and conclusions in some detail in Chapter 3.
Ortner says that:

"orthodox Buddhism coexists in every Buddhist society with popular cults whose content is not only different from but often actually contradictory to Buddhism". (1975:51).

Lamas and even monks may perform divinations, and shamans may perform exorcisms but shamanic activity is never called choa chaglen (literally religious work). This, Ortner (1970) says, is because shamans are assisted not by high orthodox Buddhist deities or the powerful sacred texts but by local gods and a flexible oral tradition. Furthermore, orthodox Buddhism deals with man's 'higher' nature (i.e., his spiritual aspect) while shamanism caters to his 'lower' nature (i.e., his worldly, demonic aspect). The Wheel of Life and the term 'the white-black ones' attests to this duality, and the prime function of Sherpa religion as a whole is to alleviate the suffering, in all its dimensions, arising from this duality. The differences and asymmetrical relations between orthodox Buddhism and shamanism at an ideological level is justified as a reflection of the disjunction and asymmetrical relations between good and evil, spiritual and material at a pragmatic, social level of existence.

The monastic establishment's view of the social order is that the laity are too interest-based, attached to worldly pursuits and ignorant of spiritual goals and purposes. The laity on the other hand sees the religious order as selfish in its pursuit of salvation (e.g. its stress on asceticism), hypocritical in its behaviour (e.g. the sexual licence and partiality towards alcohol of lamas and monks in everyday life) and as antisocial. This asociality is regarded, says Ortner, as both impractical and somewhat immoral. Orthodox Buddhism desocialises human problems while the laity socialises existential problems. On the one hand pragmatism is discouraged because it might sully the purity and thus efficacy of the clergy's dealings in transcendental concerns; on the other,
transcendentalism is criticised because it challenges pragmatic concerns. Yet although there might be a degree of conflict between these perspectives this does not necessarily imply incompatibility, or preclude cooperation. Ortner (1978) herself comments:

"Where the religion sees the causes [of suffering] as subsocial (in human nature) and the solutions as extrasocial (literally, moving out of society), the lay perspective may be said to retain at least a suspicion that the problem has social roots, and in any case a rather strong conviction that it can and must be overcome by social means. It is thus not a matter of short-term ritual stopgaps handling immediate problems that religion is too lofty and future-oriented to bother with, but rather a matter of ongoing negotiation, as it were, between two visions of the relationship between social and spiritual life". (1978:163).

Ortner's co-fieldworker, Robert Paul (1970, 1976, 1979, 1982) has a rather different view of things. Although also interested in symbols and meanings, Paul's analyses are strongly influence by Spiro's functionalism, and the notion that goals, particularly their psychological basis, are the most important focus for study. Like Ortner, Paul emphasises the orthodox Buddhist tradition rather than shamanism but does not regard them as either incompatible or syncretised. On the one hand Paul (1970) writes:

"monks rarely resorted to commissioning shamans because they were almost never struck down by the types of diseases shamans can cure, namely those caused by witches, ghosts, spirits etc. But, since these very imaginary agents are themselves symbolic of the differences and strains of interpersonal relations in the course of everyday village life, this is in fact a neat metaphorical way of saying that monks, by cutting themselves off from the village, also cut themselves off from the differences, rivalries, petty jealousies and other headaches that go with it". (1970:572)

Identifying a four-fold religious system comprising reincarnate lamas, monks, married village-based lamas and shamans, Paul (1982) comments that:

"far from being a neatly organised and integrated mechanism, [the Sherpa'religion] is the precipitate of complex historical and social processes and reflects as much conflict and opposition as it does complementarity...shamanism and the institution of married lamaism... coexist with only an uneasy truce between them". (1982:83).
On the other hand, Paul (1970) writes:

"there is no real split between 'high religionists' and 'low religionists' as there is in many other Buddhist societies, for low religion is itself in the hands of people who at least are nominally clerics, or pay lip service to the religion, rather than existing in opposition to it". (1970:500).

"common though it be to try to characterise whole religions as being, say, transcendental or immanent, it usually turns out on close investigation that most great religions find enough leeway in their original doctrines and revelations to allow for multifoliate development along a great number of different lines and that the same religion can have within it mystics and ascetics, transcendentalists and immanent divinists, mighty scholars and unschooled religious virtuosi. In the Sherpa case many of these different strains coexist in the same sect, in the same doctrine, and even in the same person". (1970:396).

Paul makes an important analytical distinction between the noumenal (i.e. absolute) level of reality and the phenomenal (i.e. relative, or what he calls the 'conditioned') level of reality in the Sherpa world view.

Nevertheless he comments that the Sherpas:

"are able to conceive of different phenomena as possessing both [noumenal and phenomenal] characteristics in greater or lesser degrees and in different proportions. Thus though while non-substantiality, or noumenality or purity would seem to be absolute qualities, in fact things can be thought of as being more or less pure, noumenal or substantial. Hence the 'phenomenal' world in fact consists of a continuum of things in a hierarchy from purely phenomenal to largely noumenal but still tainted by materiality. This whole continuum may then be opposed to the pure realm of immateriality". (1970:94).

Paul's work is very important to this study because he draws considerable attention to the structural relations between traditions and provides an important perspective on how they might be mediated. He begins by offering the following list of distinctions between what he identifies as the phenomenal and noumenal dimensions of existence, and that which mediates them.
An opposition between the absolute/noumenal (which I shall represent as 'A') and a relative/phenomenal or conditioned state (which I shall represent as 'C') can be shown to contain within it a further opposition between a relatively absolute ('B') and conditioned ('C') within the original conditioned ('C'). That is, the absolute ('A') and the conditioned ('C') are connected and mediated by a state ('B') which is both absolute, relative to 'C', and conditioned, relative to 'A'. This might be expressed as:

\[
\begin{align*}
A \ (\text{Absolute}) & \quad \rightarrow \quad A \\
B \ (\text{Conditioned}) & \quad \rightarrow \quad B \\
\end{align*}
\]

or

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \rightarrow \quad A \\
B & \quad \rightarrow \quad B \\
C & \quad \rightarrow \quad C \\
\end{align*}
\]

This generation of further relative oppositions within the conditioned can be repeated ad infinitum, thus enabling an unlimited reification of the original absolute 'A'.

i.e. ① \[
\begin{align*}
A & \quad \rightarrow \quad A \\
B & \quad \rightarrow \quad B \\
C & \quad \rightarrow \quad C \\
\end{align*}
\]

The Buddha can thus be posited as being inevitably 'above' i.e. more absolute than even the most reified absolute element of any absolute/relative distinction. Yet note that the relationship between the elements 'D' and 'E' i.e. the absolute and relative at level ③ is structurally homologous to the relationship between the elements 'A' and 'C' at the first level. As a result, no element is completely outside the system and
even the most pragmatic conditioned material element is in a relationship with the most reified absolute conceptualisation available i.e. Buddahood. What is complementary at one level may be opposed at another without threatening the cohesiveness of the system. Thus what is sacred at one level may well be profane at another. This notion of structural transformations overcomes the weaknesses of Durkheim's rigid undimensional dichotomisation of the sacred and the profane and other similar dichotomies.

As a template, Paul (1982) begins with an opposition between air (as absolute) and earth (as conditioned). The latter he subdivides into earth and fire. The latter he further subdivides into fire and water. The relationships between air and earth are made possible by the mediatory influence of water and fire such that air gives rise to water which falls on the earth and when burnt returns to air. This is expressed graphically as follows:

**Fig. 2:8**

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\[ \text{AIR} \rightarrow \text{Water} \rightarrow \text{Fire} \rightarrow \text{EARTH} \rightarrow \text{Absolute}\ (\text{Conditioned}) \]
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This model of course makes sound ecological sense. The structural relationships implied here are then shown to be homologous to those at a variety of levels in Sherpa culture and society. Thus the pantheon may be graphically represented as follows:

**Fig. 2:9**

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\[ \text{ONGPAME} \rightarrow \text{Pawa} \rightarrow \text{Cherenzi} \rightarrow \text{Guru} \rightarrow \text{Rumpoche} \rightarrow \text{SRUNGMA} \rightarrow \text{SRUNGMA} \rightarrow \text{Absolute}\ (\text{Conditioned}) \rightarrow \text{ONGPAME} \]
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('lords of the soil')
where srungma are opposed to Ongpame (i.e. Amitabha Buddha) but this opposition is mediated by the opposition within the mediating category i.e. the life-giving orthodox deity Pawa Cherenzi and the tantric superhuman and potentially fiery Guru Rimpoche. Note that Guru Rimpoche occupies the powerful three quarter circle 'action' position.

Using the same basic model Paul analyses the major roles in Sherpa religion. The relationships between these roles are graphically represented by this model:

Fig. 2:10.

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{REINCARNATE LAMA} \quad \text{Absolute} \\
\text{Monk} \quad \text{Conditioned} \\
\text{SHAMAN} \quad \text{Tantrist/} \\
\text{Married lama} \\
\end{array}
\]

where the shaman represents the pragmatic opposite of the reincarnate lama mediated by the two religious figures of the monk and the tantrist/married lama, the latter occupying the powerful three quarter circle 'action' position. Note that just as water and fire are composed of both material and air, and that Pawa Cherenzi and Guru Rimpoche are both transcendental and pragmatic, the monk and the tantrist, according to Paul, contain both shamanic and orthodox elements. Furthermore, the monk represents the orthodox and the tantrist the shamanic. Without this conjoining of elements they could not serve as mediators. Without this mediation the opposition between Ongpame and srungma, the reincarnate lama and shaman, and so on, could not be transformed - the two could not coexist.

Sherpa religion then, according to Paul, is built on structural relations and transformations which make the use of analytical constructs emphasising dichotomy to be misleading, at best. The notion of Buddhahood is, for orthodox philosophers at least, one of higher and more refined conceptualisations of what really cannot, by definition, ever be adequately
conceptualised - the absolute. Structural transformations appear to be analytically useful in demonstrating this. (It should be noted however that such transformations are likely to be just as puzzling for the average Sherpa layperson as they are for the average non-Sherpa ethnographer, and far less important!).

From the above it is obvious that Paul is concerned less with the implications of the differences between traditions at an economic, social or political level as with their implications at a psychological and philosophical level. His preoccupation with psychoanalytical theories at times gets in the way, I suggest, of his otherwise insightful and provocative analyses. His concern to establish a universal in the form of the Oedipal complex and the problem of succession between generations is intellectually stimulating but not particularly revealing in terms of observable everyday behaviour and concerns. Meaning receives much attention. Surprisingly, function receives very little. For this reason the pragmatic aspect of Sherpa religion, and therefore the interplay between religion and the everyday world tend to be neglected.

Geoffrey Samuel (1975, 1978a and b, 1984) has paid special attention to the structural relations which can be identified as underlying Sherpa religion, while simultaneously recognising the essentially pragmatic function of such relations. He writes:

"the Sherpas are neither primarily Buddhist nor primarily animist. All Sherpas are some of both and the emphasis they place on each varies". (1978b:112).

The Sherpas must be Buddhists so as to keep the spirits under control but must simultaneously acknowledge the spirits so as to provide a raison d'être for Buddhism. For orthodox Buddhism relies on an opponent to demonstrate its ultimate supremacy.
Says Samuel:

"Both the beliefs in local gods and malevolent spirits and the lamas and monasteries with their practice of the literate tradition of tantric Buddhism are essential parts of religion in Tibetan societies... It is precisely because the Sherpa believe in spirits... that the lamas and monasteries have such a central place in Sherpa and Tibetan society... A Sherpa could scarcely be an animist without being a Buddhist, because only Buddhism provides the power to keep the spirits under control; and most Sherpas could hardly be Buddhists if they were not also animists, for the same reason... Lamas and laymen may well share the same basic frame of reference, but their roles are different, and it is only when this rather simple point has been explicitly recognised that the complementarity of these roles, and therefore of Buddhism and animism can be discussed". (1978b:111-112).

Put in other words, it is the differences between traditions that engenders their interrelationships. Even the more rationalised, doctrinal and transcendentally-oriented Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism, (dominant politically in central Tibet prior to the annexation by China)

"carries out initiations to strengthen the life-force in laymen, performs monastic dances and other rituals against malevolent spirits, and performs rituals to guide the consciousness of the dead to a happy rebirth... It is hard to see how the Gelugpa could have maintained their lay support if they were not involved with 'folk religion'; because these rituals are essential components of the reciprocity between monasteries and laymen". (1978b:101).

From this view of the Sherpa ethnography it would appear that there is evidence for both assertions of differences between traditions and of overlap and cooperation between traditions. In the next Chapter I employ something of a devil's advocate or 'straw man' technique and argue the case for a focus on differences as a way of understanding Sherpa religion. However I conclude that there are too many problems with this approach, that analytical focus must move from traditions as distinct entities to the structural positions they occupy and the relations and transformations which are thereby generated. This I shall do in Chapter 4.
CHAPTER 3: A FOCUS ON DIFFERENCES

It can be argued, with some justification, that a focus on the differences between traditions and their respective practitioners provides an important insight into Sherpa religion (and, by extension, the Sherpa sociocultural system as a whole). Such a focus warns against simplistic assumptions of unity and reveals significant inequalities between different religious practitioners, between the clergy and the laity, and between rich and poor. In this chapter I explore the evidence, and state the case for an ethnographic focus on these differences as a way of understanding Sherpa religion. It is important to bear in mind however that I consider such a focus to be deficient, particularly if it is not complemented by a focus on interrelationships. My purpose then in this chapter is to articulate the argument rather than to defend it. In the next chapter I reexamine the data in terms of interrelationships and discuss how and why this approach is preferrable.

The most apparent display of differences is of course the disjunction between the transcendentally-oriented monastic establishment and the more pragmatic and village-based shamans. In this chapter however I shall concentrate on two other arenas of religious activity, often neglected in the ethnography, which might also be said to highlight differences. The first is the tantric exorcism of demons. I have chosen this set of rituals because they are a characteristic feature of Sherpa religion. I demonstrate a disjunction between orthodox, transcendentally-oriented exorcisms such as gyepahi, and more pragmatic and often dramatic exorcisms such as dodzongup. The second arena is that of the differences between the lamas who perform these exorcisms and shamans. Following a description of Sherpa shamanism I contrast its emphasis on the social dimension of healing with the more psychological emphasis of tantric exorcisms.

(1) This disjunction has been dealt with by Paul (1970, 1982, 1984a) and Ortner (1970, 1975, 1978).
The first case focuses on differences within a particular tradition. The second case focuses on differences between traditions. Differences can also be found between religion as a whole and society. Both lamaist ritual and shamanic ritual can be shown to legitimate and perpetuate inequalities within the Sherpa sociocultural system more generally.

3.1 Exorcism.

Exorcism rituals are one of the more common and visible features of Sherpa religion. They are concerned with the removal and/or transcendence of evil as it is manifested in physiological and psychological illness, misfortune, social disruption and cosmological disorder. Evil is considered to be a particularly pervasive influence, deriving from an inherent and inevitable tendency towards pullution and negativity within the cosmos. This tendency is graphically expressed in the Wheel of Life and is confirmed in both texts and in daily purification rituals. Exorcisms therefore can only provide a temporary solution and must be repeated over and over again to maintain the appropriate balance between good and evil. Demons are the principal embodiment and source of evil and it is they who are either placated or destroyed in exorcisms.

Exorcisms are very popular with the Sherpas, especially those which emphasise the active and dramatic destruction of demons. Many ethnographers have commented on their persistence despite a decline in the status of other tantric rituals. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) writes that:

"while I lived in Khumjung on many an evening I heard the drumming and shouting that accompanies the driving out of shrinda and later in the night I would often see a procession of torches emerging from a house and moving towards the village border". (1964:254).

Von Furer-Haimendorf's diary of lamas' religious activities demonstrates the frequency of such exorcisms in Sherpa life.

(1) Such events as the Chinese take over in Tibet and such issues as why Sherpas lack the technological sophistication of the West are often explained as being due to an ascendancy of evil in Tibetan Buddhist communities today.
The Sherpas classify exorcisms under the one generic term *kurim*. However there are a great many different kinds of exorcisms in practice. They may be performed regularly or spontaneously. They may involve the whole community or be privately sponsored. They may deal with other-worldly needs and orientations or with purely pragmatic, this-worldly concerns. For the purposes of analysis, the various kinds of exorcisms might be divided into two main categories: (1) those that involve the active symbolic destruction of evil in the form of an effigy (*linga*) or 'scapegoat' (2) (e.g. the *dodsongup* exorcism) and those that involve the more passive propitiation and manipulation of evil through the provision of offerings (3) (e.g. the *gyepah* exorcism). The latter category appears to be more transcendentally-oriented than the former and involves a more solemn, predictable and orthodox ritual routine. The emphasis is primarily psychological, on inducing a state of awareness which renders demons powerless and which affords the means of recognising the illusory nature of suffering, its causes and its effects.

Exorcisms are the special province of tantric lamas, who trace their craft to that great defeater of Tibetan demons, Padmashambhava. However they are also performed by shamans and even by monks. Regular village-based exorcisms such as those held during the *Dumje* festival are conducted by

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(1) There are a number of other classifications of types of exorcisms in the literature (see e.g. Tucci 1966:148, Paul 1979:284) but these all appear to be further subdivisions of these two main categories. The two categories are of course, in practice, not mutually exclusive. They overlap a great deal according to the specific ritual context.

(2) There are many types of scapegoats discussed in the ethnography of Tibetan Buddhism. See Tucci (1966,1980), Sierksma (1966), Snellgrove (1957), Hoffman (1961). The use of thread-cross structures (*mdos*) forms an important part of such exorcisms. In fact Paul (1979) says that Sherpas use the term *mdos* generically to refer to any exorcism. For a discussion of *mdos* in Tibetan Buddhism see Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), Beyer (1973), Cartier (1975).

(3) For a discussion of these rituals see Tucci (1966), Waddell (1958), Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956).
tantric lamas. Monks, as a rule, are prohibited from participating in these. Regular monastery-based exorcisms however such as those contained within the cham dance-dramas in Mani Rimdu are in fact conducted by monks. Spontaneous, privately-held exorcisms are conducted either by tantric lamas, shamans, or both. The important thing to bear in mind is that all lamas call exorcisms choa chaglen i.e. religious work. The rituals are oriented towards the 'high' deities of Buddhism who have transcended the world and its mundane concerns, as much as towards the local deities, demons and spirits. Shamanic exorcism however is never referred to as choa chaglen and deals exclusively with the more localised supernaturals held responsible for illness and misfortune. No matter how similar they may appear to lamaist exorcisms, shamanic rituals are never classified as kurim by the Sherpas. (1)

The conflict between lamas and demons pervades much of Sherpa culture. One popular myth tells of Padmasambhava, the greatest exorcist of them all, overcoming a particularly incalcitrant demon in a cave by pissing on him. (2) Another favourite concerns a monk, who was forced by a demoness to break one of his vows: to either drink a bottle of beer (chang), kill an old goat she had with her, or make love to her. The monk chose to accept the lesser evil and drink the chang, whereupon, in a drunken ecstasy, he killed the goat and made love to the demoness. (3) A variant recounts how the monk was forced to drink two bottles of chang, whereupon he killed the demoness, and made love to the goat!

There are many different kinds of demons in the Sherpa pantheon. For the purposes of analysis, I shall divide these into two main categories: (4)

(1) See Ortner (1978 i footnote p.179).
(2) Ortner (1978b).
(4) Paul (1979) refers also to gyek (Tib:bgegs) and hrendi (Tib: srin-'dre). The latter appear to be what Ortner (1978) and von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) call shrindi, which is a generic term for supernaturals. Again, the point is that these categories are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive.
the de, who appear to be relatively free of orthodox Buddhist influence (and are particularly prominent in the more pragmatic 'scapegoat' exorcisms such as dodzongup)\(^1\) and the du, who appear to be a more recent grouping,\(^2\) with the role of providing a structural opposition to the Buddha in such exorcisms as gyepshi. Demons are very real to the Sherpas for their influence is felt everywhere in daily existence, and of course in death itself. Exorcisms are thus a vitally important part of the lives of Sherpas.

Yet the Sherpas also maintain a notion of the demonic aspect of human personality\(^3\) which treats the reality of demons as somewhat more problematical. In fact tantric Buddhist doctrines state clearly that demons do not exist at all at the level of absolute reality, that they are merely the constructions of the unenlightened mind seeking order through an arbitrary and deluded dichotomisation of good and evil, spiritual and demonic, transcendental and pragmatic and so on. Ultimately, exorcism is a psychological phenomenon, for the victory over demons requires an enlightened mind able to perceive the true nature of reality. Ma-chig-lag, a twelfth century yogini of the Chod (Tib:gcod lineage discusses this aspect of demons. She writes:

"listen my son, I will teach you about the nature of demons: what we call a demon is very very huge and coloured all black. Whoever sees one is truly terrified and trembles from head to foot - but demons don't really exist!\(^4\) The truth of the matter is this: anything whatsoever which obstructs the attainment of liberation is a demon ... the greatest demon of them all is belief in a self as an independent and lasting principle".\(^5\)

(cited in Gesar 3(1) 1975:6).

In sum, demons exist yet are not real. How is this situation to be explained? Why does a religion, which doctrinally denies the reality of demons, tolerate and even encourage the practice of rituals which affirm their existence?

\(^1\) De are particularly attracted to feasting off corpses. The dodzongup exorcism is thus an important rite at funerals. See Ortner (1978).

\(^2\) See Ortner (1978).

\(^3\) See Ortner's discussion (1973) of purification rituals in Chapter 1.

\(^4\) As I shall demonstrate, the point is not that demons do not exist but that they are not real. It is possible that the term 'exist' in this context is a mis-translation of the Tibetan, for the point of the statement is surely that demons are not really real. The mistranslation itself might reflect an inability by the translator to distinguish properly between existence and reality.
How are such doctrines legitimated and reproduced when experience indicates that demons do exist?

Demons might in many ways be regarded as the raison d'etre for Tibetan Buddhism. In the Tibetan view of history it was the influence of demons in Tibet which led to the establishment of the mahayana tradition and the invitation to the Indian tantric exorcist Padmasambhava to come to Tibet and transmit the tantric teachings and powers necessary to keep the demons at bay. Without such teachings and powers the influence of demons would again become overwhelming and the result would be death and decay. Demons must be destroyed if orthodox Buddhism is to maintain its purpose and popular support.

However the very fact that evil is such a pervasive force and that Buddhism is so preoccupied with its removal suggests that no total or permanent victory is possible. Were such victory achieved, the ongoing raison d'etre for Buddhism would be lost, human nature would no longer suffer from dualism, and worldly activity would become superfluous. It is an important paradox that while the ultimate purpose of Buddhism at a doctrinal level is to destroy and transcend the demons, its ongoing existence and more pragmatic purpose does not allow it to do so.\(^1\) It is a dynamic balance between good and evil, enabling the satisfaction of both transcendent and pragmatic concerns, which is sought in practice rather than any final static resolution. Ortner (1978) writes that, according to Buddhist doctrine:

> "everyone should strive to be pure i.e. to diminish the physical and demonic tendencies of the self and to enlarge and render dominant the spiritual tendencies. A state of purity conduces both to better pragmatic functioning in the world and to the pursuit of salvation. But in lay life it is difficult to avoid experiences that exaggerate either the physical or the demonic tendencies. Hence the aim is not so much to eliminate or demolish those aspects of the self but to keep them in an integrated balance".\(^{1978:104}\).

\(^{(1)}\) This view, of course, is essentially that of a Westerner. It is highly unlikely that the Sherpas, particularly the laity, would recognise this, or see it as a paradox.
The more one confronts the demons the more their existence is confirmed. The more their existence is confirmed the more they must be confronted. Ultimately, the reality and non-reality of demons are one and the same thing. However this is a notion far removed from the pragmatic concerns of survival.

How then is the existence of demons dealt with in practice? In the remainder of this discussion I shall describe briefly a number of different exorcism strategies and their implications for an understanding of the sociocultural system as a whole. Every New Year in Tibet a clown-like figure, of low socioeconomic status, was appointed to serve as a scapegoat (Tib: glud) for all the evil that a community felt it had accrued during the course of the previous year. (1) The scapegoat was painted half black and half white, symbolising the unique duality of human nature (i.e. both spiritual and godlike and materialistic and demonic). (2) He was allowed to wonder around, hurling insults at the orthodox Buddhist establishment, and 'feasting and fornicating' at will. Aristocrat laymen (and even some lamas) (3) arranged for middlemen to present him with gifts, thereby taking advantage of the transfer of guilt, evil and inner conflict, which the scapegoat afforded. Finally he was enticed into a game of dice with a monk, which he would inevitably lose. As a result he was cast out into the desert where the demons were believed to reside. The community would then gather together to celebrate this exorcism of evil with a feast, thereby marking the beginning of a new year.

Now why does the orthodox establishment tolerate and even encourage the apparently deviant, anti-orthodox behaviour of the scapegoat prior to his exile? This behaviour it might be argued, articulates and expresses

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(1) For a discussion of this ritual see Sierksma (1966), Tucci (1966), Waddell (1958).
(2) This duality arises from the unique position humanity occupies between the titans and animals in the Wheel of Life and is simultaneously humanity's scourge and opportunity for liberation from the Wheel. See Ortner (1978b).
(3) See Tucci (1980).
in a very tangible way the sinful and materialistic urges which the community as a whole is subject to. It expresses dissatisfaction with the transcendental emphasis on renunciation of the orthodox Buddhist establishment and serves as a safety valve for the cathartic release of rebellious sentiments and pent up frustrations. As the fifth Dalai Lama (who introduced the ritual of the scapegoat) recognised, the ritual provides "...not only a holiday from themselves [i.e. the laity], but also a holiday from Buddhism" (Sierksma 1966:16). In sum, the scapegoat's behaviour might be seen as affirming the materialistic undisciplined 'baser' side of human nature (though only to demonstrate that it must be transcended).

Yet, in so doing, it clearly identifies the opponent which orthodox Buddhism is directed against. In acknowledging sinfulness it transfers responsibility for it onto demons and affirms the need for its expiation. That the scapegoat is defeated by the monk and forced to retreat to the desert alongside the demons demonstrates clearly the evilness of his deviant anti-orthodox behaviour, the painful consequences of such behaviour and the inevitable supremacy of orthodox Buddhism. The successive toleration and expulsion of the scapegoat might be seen to express the inner conflict between pragmatic materialistic urges and transcendental concerns for salvation inherent in a humanity plagued by the suffering of dualism.(1) The conflict is shown to be resolvable only through the liberating power of orthodox Buddhism.

But it is not fully or finally resolved. As we have seen, the destruction of demons is essentially problematical, for their reality itself is problematical. Doctrines which state that demons are illusions

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(1) This Gluckmanesque notion of a 'tension release' function of ritual may or may not be valid in the case of this particular exorcism. As a rule, however, it appears to be secondary to what might be called the performative aspect of ritual (see Kapferer 1983, Tambiah 1970). Oppositions are generated not so much to give vent to pent up emotions but rather to tap into the power believed to lie in normally prohibited activities. The importance of this notion will become clear when examining shamanic rituals.
are not particularly helpful in resolving such everyday problems as
illness. Yet the active physical destruction of demons through ritual does
not necessarily resolve these problems either. Furthermore, the inter-
connectedness of the cosmos and consequent prohibition against violence
suggests that demons can not be destroyed through force - even if they
were real - without negative effects. As long as humanity is caught up
in the seductive web of the illusion of the self-existent nature of
phenomena, evil will inevitably return. Another scapegoat will be created
and offered to the demons and orthodox Buddhism will reaffirm its
indispensability and supremacy on yet another occasion. Discussing the
New Year scapegoat, Sierksma (1966) says that:

"in the deepest levels of their being the Tibetan people never attach
full credence to that strange religion from India, which taught that
the world perceived by the senses is nothing but a fleeting illusion...
the scapegoat may be regarded as the old Adam of the Tibetans,
appearing each year anew to prove that he was not dead yet, and always
having to be eliminated anew". (1966:14). (1)

Exorcisms today usually employ non-human scapegoats. These often
take the form of effigies (linga) made of dough. They have replaced what
might once have been quite bloodthirsty sacrifices. Even today's non-human
scapegoats can appear fairly horrifying. Waddell (1958) for example describes
a life-sized replica of a human, stuffed full of edible blood and internal
organs. The contemporary use of non-human scapegoats would appear to be the
result of the increasing influence of the more passive orthodox
Buddhist tradition. (2) However many exorcisms are still marked by a
considerable degree of violence and activity which appears to conflict with the
orthodox ritual emphasis on passivity.

The lingas are sculpted by the lamas, prior to the ritual. Demons
and other evil influences are attracted by lamas into the linga through

(1) This view of course reflects the author's own Western bias as much as
etnographic reality.
(2) See von Furer-Haimendorf (1964).
various incantations and other ritual procedures. The linga are then usually destroyed with ritual implements such as daggers and arrows, or are burnt, or stoned, or all three (in more orthodox exorcisms they are taken out of the village and left to be consumed by the demons as a form of offering). This is the basic structure of the Tibetan tshogs ritual, known to the Sherpas as tsoa (literally 'gathering') which forms the core of the cham or dance-dramas in such festivals as Dumje and Mani Rindu.

In both festivals there are three such rituals. In Mani Rindu these are called tokam, ticham and ngawa. In Dumje the three linga destroyed are said to be representations of demons described in the tantric Tamdzen-dzi-kangso text. In the first ritual, which occurs on the third day of the festival, the linga is stabbed by a senior lama with a dagger (phurba), thrown into a pit and covered with earth and stones by other lamas who then recite the appropriate texts and, standing on the top of the pit, proclaim victory over the demon. In the second ritual (called jinsak), which occurs on the fifth day of the festival, a triangular platform of earth is moulded. Above this a tripod is erected and a frypan is placed on it. Offerings are burnt in the frypan and slices of the linga are eaten before it is stabbed. Finally it too is burnt. Alcohol is used to accentuate the drama of the event. The third ritual is held on the sixth and final day of the festival along with the exorcisms dodzongup and gyepshi and tonak gosum. A special dough effigy (torma) called Lokpar is used as the linga. Unlike the other linga, this torma is sculpted by a local

(1) This ritual is discussed by Beyer (1973), Samuel (1975).
(2) The precise relationship between tshogs and cham is somewhat unclear from the ethnography.
(3) There is some discrepancy between the accounts of Paul (1979) and von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) as to the timing of these rituals. As von Furer-Haimendorf's account appears to be the fuller I have described the rituals primarily as he describes them.
(4) From the accounts in the ethnography, the relationship between the destruction of the linga described here and the dodzongup, gyepshi and tonak gosum exorcisms is unclear. Both Paul (1979) and Ortner (1978) note that they occur on the last day of Dumje.
lay artist and is made of a special dark buckwheat dough. The lamas invoke the oaths of the protector deities (originally demons who were subdued by Padmasambhava) to expel the forces of evil. The lokpar is then stoned, shot with an arrow and finally set on fire amidst great celebration. With this final symbolic destruction of evil the Dumje reaches its climax and the population is free to move up to the summer pastures.

Von Furer-Haimendorf also discusses the use of a lokpar torma in the tsirim exorcism. In this case the lokpar is a large black torma featuring the heads of a pig, ox and tiger. It is set on an iron tripod, around which is a fence of red wooden spikes. Inside this are a number of multi-coloured thread crosses (mdos) and paper flags. As the tantric Konjok Chindi text is recited, the lamas invoke the demons into the torma and then carry it out into the night and destroy it. The audience then feasts on the edible remains. The lokpar in this ritual appears very similar to that used in the tonak gosum exorcism in Dumje. However, according to von Furer-Haimendorf, this ritual is far more relaxed than the tonak gosum. Lokpars are also used occasionally in private exorcisms.

A variety of other non-human scapegoats are employed in exorcisms. These include strips of wood with the figure of the afflicted person painted on it and even a simple ball of tsampa flour. Tucci (1980) describes how, in the case of the outbreak of an infectious disease in the village, exorcists are called in to carry out their exorcism using a ball of tsampa, into which is mixed various substances like black grain, black sesame seed and so on. Then the village population gathers on a meadow and a great fire is kindled. The exorcists perform a dance ... and recite appropriate magical formulae. Finally they throw the tsampa ball into the fire with great force; flaming up and scattering sparks it whistles away over the heads of the assembled people. Thus the epidemic is overcome". (1980:92)

(1) The lamas recite: "may illness and epidemics go to the enemy, may skin disease and the twenty-five diseases which produce madness go to the enemy, may all sem and all la attack the enemy, may you curse the enemy and smite him with arrows and swords" (quoted by von Furer-Haimendorf 1964:201-2

(2) See Paul (1979) and Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) refers to a clearly very similar torma called Nag-po mgo-gosum. Morris (1938) also describes a Nak-po-gosum ritual among the Lepchas of Sikkim, accompanied by the slaughtering of ....
From this description of different scapegoat exorcisms it would appear that the emphasis is very much on pragmatic ritual and activity for pragmatic worldly purposes. Demons are confronted directly with only indirect assistance from the gods. Certainly the emphasis is on visible and violent means of destruction of demons. The rituals provide tangible evidence that the demons have been overcome, so that life may continue. They also provide an opportunity for great merriment and social interaction. Often this interaction becomes violent. In Dunje there is an important peacemaker figure (chorumba) to maintain order. It is legitimate, I suggest, to see exorcisms as providing an opportunity for the expression of social conflicts and the outlet of worldly frustrations. Paul (1979) in a rather imaginative analysis makes note of the sexual symbolism in the rituals and the concern with fertility, both agricultural and human. During the rituals there is much ribald joking and opportunity for liaison between the sexes.

Stein (1972) analyses the violent stabbing of the linga in terms of an attempt to liberate the power contained within it to enhance the life-power of the audience. The violence is justified as being necessary to the release of the soul of the demon from its material attachments so that it can be reborn in Padmasambhava's heaven. While this is not necessarily an incorrect interpretation, it is unlikely that the average Sherpa would explain the violence in these terms. Scapegoat exorcisms, I suggest, are an essentially pragmatic (and perhaps even anti-orthodox) method of dealing with essentially pragmatic concerns.

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an ox and appropriate sacrificial rituals by the local Mun shaman. The androgynous characteristics of this torma are noted by Morris (1938) and Paul (1979).

(2a) Zwalf (1981).

(1) The importance of this function should not be underestimated.

(2) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) records the case of an outbreak of violence between men from Kunde and Khumjung at a Dunje held in Khumjung.


(4) See Paul (1982).

By contrast, the second category of exorcisms I have identified - those which overcome evil through the placation and mobilisation of demons through offerings - might be seen as more transcendentally-oriented, utilising less violent, more orthodox and more predictable methods. In the *shashur kirup* the participants squeeze lumps of dough which then have offerings pressed into them by lamas. They are then placed on a flat stone which is carried out and placed at a suitable crossroads. Offering rituals (*Kangsur*) are differentiated from other *kurim* in that there is more emphasis on the altar, comprising *tormas* representing Buddhist deities. The deities are invited to take their place in the *tormas* and are treated to much hospitality. There is a greater emphasis in *Kangsur* on purification rituals (*sang*), prostrations (*shawa*) and other forms of worship.

To illustrate the differences between the two categories of exorcisms I shall focus on two rituals in particular, the *dodzonrup* and the *gyepshi*. The differences between these rituals have been dealt with at some length by Ortner (1978) and the following discussion is largely a summary of her argument. The rituals are performed at the conclusion of funerary rites (since demons are attracted by decaying corpses and death is considered a time when the community is particularly vulnerable to demonic attacks). They are also performed on the last day of *Duaja*.

The *dodzonrup* has as its main 'prop' the effigy of a tiger (*tak*), painted black and white. This figure is accompanied by effigies of humans, one of whom rides the tiger (symbolising the dominance of the human realm over the animal realm and, by extension, the spiritual aspect of man's

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(1) Predictability is encouraged by the dependence on texts for ritual sequences, invocations etc.
(2) The crossroads is an auspicious site for any supernatural activity throughout Nepal.
(3) This ritual is also discussed by Waddell (1958).
(4) This ritual is also discussed by Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956), Paul (1979).
personality over the demonic aspect). (1) Often the tiger's tail is erect and its testicles prominent. (2)

Fig. 3:1 (taken from Ortner 1978:94).

Paper flags with the names of illnesses and demons being exorcised are stuck into these effigies. Each person in the audience takes a lump of dough and passes it over their body before placing it next to the tiger. In this way the audience extracts impurities from within themselves and transfers them onto the tiger. The demons are cajoled by the lamas to enter the tiger which is then picked up by clown-like figures (peshangbas) and escorted out of the village to the accompaniment of recitations and clanging of cymbals by lamas. As the procession and accompaniment becomes increasingly frenzied a peshangba grabs the cymbals from the lama and forces the music to reach its climax. The effigies are then violently attacked with daggers by the peshangbas and destroyed, to the great delight and encouragement of the audience. As is usual with Sherpa rituals, a feast concludes the exorcism.

The peshangbas, like the scapegoat of the Tibetan New Year exorcism, are people of low status in the Sherpa social structure, often khamendeu. (3) Ortner (1978) describes them as:

"outlandishly got up with straw wigs, and overturned baskets for hats. Their behinds are stuffed with pillows. Their faces are painted white with black spots and they have huge black fur mustaches stuck on". (1978:115).

(1) See Ortner (1978).
(2) Both Ortner (1978) and Paul (1979) make mention of the sexual overtones of the tiger figure.
(3) See Nebesky-Wojowitz (1956), Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) notes that a peshangba in a Khumjung Dumje was a poor, recently-arrived Tibetan refugee.
They are encouraged by the audience to behave in a bazarre and ribald way. As such they are readily identifiable as anomalous scapegoats and their extraordinary violent destruction of the effigies is thus explained and justified.

*Do dzongups* are often performed at the conclusion of funerary rites since evil forces are believed to be able to enter the community more easily at such times of disequilibrium and separation between the physical and metaphysical world. Ortner (1978) suggests that by 'running the demons out of town', the *do dzongup* enables a restoration and strengthening of the body-spirit connection and enables the reaffirming of social relations and cosmological order. But in so doing it appears to be in conflict with the emphasis of separation of spirit from body that is characteristic of more orthodox exorcisms such as *gyepshi*.

*Gyepshi* is a far more 'peaceful' and solemn exorcism, emphasising not the destruction of demons, but their transcendence. As such it is considered to be 'purer' and more orthodox than *do dzongup*. All Sherpa ceremonies, religious or secular, can be mounted in two modes: *dua* (plain) and *gyewa* (elaborate). While *do dzongup* is an example of a *dua* ritual, *gyepshi* is *gyewa*. It therefore requires a considerable amount of elaborate and expensive paraphernalia and 'props', and is thus only ever commissioned by the wealthy. This fact affirms its orthodox nature, for the wealthy maintain a close relationship with the orthodox establishment to justify their wealth as evidence of godliness and purity. The *gyepshi* is less popular than other exorcisms with the Sherpas at large but its more transcendental emphasis makes it more attractive to the elderly.

The distinguishing feature of *gyepshi* is the altar, set up in the middle of the room and around which the audience congregates. It consists of a symbolic representation of the hand of Buddha, usually sculptured with
sand. In the middle of the hand is a large elaborately decorated dough effigy of the sponsor called lut. Horoscopic data identifying the sponsor is recorded on a piece of paper attached to the lut. In concentric circles around the lut are, in turn, a ring of shrines, a ring of tormas, of butter lamps and of smaller lut. These together form offerings. At the tips of each finger there is an effigy of the demons being exorcised. Each circle of offerings is said to be specific to the taste of the different categories of demons. At the other end of the hand, behind the wrist, is an idol of the Buddha.

Fig. 3:2 (taken from Ortner 1978:97).

While the audience showers the altar with flower petals and grains, the lamas recite appropriate texts and 'renew acquaintances' with the gods. They remind them of their responsibilities to assist with the exorcism of demons and remind the demons of their oaths to Padmasambhava to accept offerings in place of human victims. Finally the demons are presented with the offerings and commanded to leave. A flour 'road' leading to the door is contructed by the lama and the altar is then taken from the house and carried through the village, followed by an orderly procession of
onlookers. Rather than being violently destroyed the lut is quietly removed, and in some instances such as in dumje, is even placed in an auspicious site where it can be worshipped for a period of time.

The most important difference to the do dzongup however is that the Buddha idol (not present at all in do dzongup) is placed at the conclusion of the rite in the middle of the room where the lut originally was. Rather than representing the dominance of the human realm over the animal realm as in do dzongup, this important element of the ritual affirms the victory of orthodox Buddhism and its ultimate transcendence over both the human and demonic realms. Rather than defeating the demons directly, as in do dzongup, the emphasis in gyepshi is on securing the intervention of the Buddhist deities. The demons in gyepshi are not so much external opponents of humanity to be destroyed but rather reflect the demonic tendencies within humanity itself. Their exorcism is achieved by alienating them to such an extent that they are rendered powerless, and ultimately devoid of any reality whatsoever. The baser negative side of humanity is shown to be the result of delusion, and the all-encompassing wisdom and compassion of the Buddha that lies as potential in all of humanity is catalysed and restored to its rightful place. Today, monks are expressly forbidden to participate in do dzongup but they are free to attend gyepshi if they wish.

Now what is significant about these two rituals is that often the gyepshi immediately follows the do dzongup. Where it does not follow the do dzongup this is due only to a lack of funds (thus highlighting the dominance and superiority of the wealthy). Ortner (1978) has noted that the laity and a good number of the lamas do not know why gyepshi follows do dzongup but it would clearly seem to have the purpose of demonstrating an inevitable final dependency on orthodox Buddhism. Just as the scapegoat

(1) Note that the phenomenon of an orthodox exorcism immediately following a shamanic ritual is also observed by Gorer (1938) in the case of the neighbouring Lepcha of Sikkim.
in the Tibetan New Year exorcism, and the dancers in Dumje and Moni Rimdu are encouraged to mock the orthodox establishment and indulge in sinful behaviour, so too might the peshangba in do dzongup be seen to affirm the existence of demons and provide a temporary release for aggressive urges. The peshangbas mock the lamas and eventually take control of the ritual by bringing the music to a climax and destroying the effigies with knives. But then, just as the scapegoat is finally overcome by the monk and exiled to the desert, so too does the gyepshi demonstrate the ultimate transcendental supremacy of orthodox Buddhism.

By tolerating the do dzongup, the orthodox establishment appears to acknowledge the laity's need for a tangible, direct means of dealing with demons in a way it can understand. Orthodox Buddhism is thus made to appear conciliatory. Yet in so doing it also clearly identifies an opponent and sets the stage for its final victory through gyepshi. This victory is achieved not through the exclusion of demons via a strengthening of the body-spirit connection but rather by separating the spirit from the pollution and negativity of the material body, thereby rendering the spirit impervious to demons and their influence at the baser material level.

Ortner (1978) interprets the progression from do dzongup to gyepshi as evidence of a schism between a lay and a religious view of things. She writes:

"the religious view of the proper relationship between spirit, body and demons may be seen as just the inverse of the lay view. The lay view ... involves fear of physical weakening, in turn creating the condition for departure of spirit and hence leaving the self prey to the attacks of demons from without. From the religious view however spirit must be able to disassociate itself (metaphorically) from body ... Insofar as it too closely identifies itself with the body and its fate, it fears destruction because the body is destructible... Where the lay attempt is to strengthen the spirit-body connection and hence keep out the demons... the religious attempt is to weaken the spirit-body connection (as it does in funerals) hence in fact strengthening spirit and creating the condition for 'defeating' the demons by realising their integration with the self...The problem of the body according to the
religious analysis is that it is too integrated with, indeed confused with, the self... the ritual thus entails creating a sense of distance and detachment from the fate of one's body. While the lay view of strong psychic integration stresses a strong body as a condition for keeping a strong hold on spirit, the religious view stresses that a strong spirit is the condition for having a 'strong' body, not in the brute sense, but in the sense of being impervious to demons". (1978:118,119).

This, in theory, is the point of gyepshi. The sponsor ritually offers his/her body in the form of the lut to be 'consumed' by demons, only to demonstrate that these demons are powerless when confronted with the transcendental power of the Buddha, which is to say, ultimately, a healthy and enlightened mind. Healing is thus very much something to be achieved at the psychological dimension, at the level of human nature and through an enlightened awareness of the interconnectedness of the cosmos.

Now such notions are not likely to be accepted by all Sherpas and in fact it could be argued that there is a clear disjunction between clergy and laity on this point. Ortner (1978) recounts how a more learned lama explained to her why the tiger in do dzongup is violently attacked and destroyed, an event which the lama was obviously doctrinally opposed to but tolerated in practice. According to the lama:

"[the laity] are ignorant. In the book it doesn't say to do that but they don't understand. They think the tiger is a demon and they can kill it and it won't come back." (quoted by Ortner 1978:98).

But the lama knows better. Demons cannot be killed by such means and thus they must keep coming back. Hence they must be regularly exorcised. The knowledge that demons are illusions is thus not expected to be shared by all. Ortner (1978) notes that the lay Sherpa exegesis of the do dzongup was far more readily preferred than that of the gyepshi. If all Sherpas knew in a profound sense that demons were illusions then the lamas would lose much of their business because there would be little need for their rituals. Lay ignorance serves the interests of the lamas by legitimising
their involvement in and control over transcendental affairs. Yet such ignorance is no great problem for the laity, for knowledge that was doctrinally sound but contrary to pragmatic experience would serve little purpose. Says Ortner (1978):

"according to the lamas (who are not always consistent on this point), witches, ghosts and the like only plague those with low religious consciousness and Sherpa monks, by their own statements, are not bothered by such illness-causing beings who only operate down in the villages". (1978:164).

In her analysis of Sherpa exorcisms Ortner (1978) is quite critical of the hegemonic dominance which the orthodox establishment derives from the whole phenomenon of demons and exorcisms.

"Buddhist orthodoxy is indeed regularly challenged by 'demons' - by the 'low consciousness' of lay people... and by the [pragmatic] ritual practices that 'socialise' the gods. And the rites really are about the struggle and would-be triumph of Buddhism... The religion must regularly reassert its claims to people's allegiance and dependence, reconquer its 'foes', and reestablish its hegemony". (1978:168-169).

The study of Sherpa exorcism is important for bringing into relief some of the status relationships and material inequalities which are to be found in Sherpa society.(1) While exorcisms may focus on the psychological and cosmological dimensions of healing, its impact on the Sherpa social structure should not be ignored. The social aspect of exorcism is evident from the fact that demons are seen to represent that most insidious manifestation of ignorance and negativity in the world, greed. Demons are considered to have insatiable appetites and are often represented iconographically as having huge stomachs but tiny mouths. The poor, who are also seen as constantly hungry, are equated with demons and as a consequence do not receive charity. (The wealthy on the other hand are seen to be generous and thus equated with the gods).

(1) Kapferer (1983) discusses this issue at some length in the case of Sri Lankan exorcisms. He suggests that class and gender inequalities are, since colonisation, a more important dynamic in exorcisms than the notions of a Great/Little Tradition dichotomy. The Sri Lankan exorcist, while culturally knowledgeable, is to an even greater extent today socially subordinate.
Now as Ortner (1978) observes, greed is conceived by the orthodoxy "to be a psychological problem; the sophisticated religious specialists will say that the greedy demons represent this problem to the unsophisticated lay mind. But the problem is, of course, social as well. For greed is not simply a matter of wanting objects that exist outside a social matrix. With few exceptions the objects of desire are sought by others from oneself, or by oneself from others. Further, greed is considered to be more prevalent among certain categories of people... demons are a sort of catch-all social projective system for any category or group that is threatening or problematic". (1978:101,102, author's emphasis).

At increasing levels of social distance, wealthy Sherpas attempt to exorcise the evil influence implicit in the poor, in non Sherpa villagers, other ethnic groups, the Nepali state and the Chinese. The poor and those of lower status are expected to have few and relatively unsophisticated spiritual aspirations since their state of poverty is assumed to be evidence of impurity and disregard for transcendental concerns in previous lives. They are thus expected to be satisfied with rituals such as do dzongup. Ortner (1978) suggests that the Sherpa laity strongly identify with the peshangbas in do dzongup. The effigies they destroy represent the orthodox establishment and the rich, and their activity is thus a symbolic expression of the inequalities in Sherpa society.

Having expressed their rebellion however the laity are left with inner conflict and thus readily acquiesce to the restoration of hierarchy and orthodox dominance through gyepshi. In this ritual the lut, representing the laity, is replaced by the Buddha idol and the hegemony of the orthodox establishment is restored. Thus "...the combined exorcisms in effect make adequate integration of the self contingent upon reintegration of the social order" (Ortner 1978:125). Psychological healing cannot be achieved in isolation from the social context. The poor, having expressed their position of poverty through do dzongup, remain poor. And the rich, able to afford the commissioning of a gyepshi, reassert their generosity and
thus apparent godliness relative to the poor, for whom godliness is a luxury that cannot be afforded.

As I indicated in Chapter 1, wealthy Sherpas were able to justify their wealth partly by directing it towards the economic and material support of a transcendentally-oriented orthodox establishment. Through fees for services rendered by lamas; through the financial support of children as monks; through donations to gompas; through the acceptance of responsibility for providing the food, drink and materials for tormas necessary to religious life, the laity effectively provided the economic base to the orthodox ideological superstructure. Such contributions of wealth are an important source of merit for Sherpas. But the poor are denied this opportunity. Merit making, the commissioning of private rituals, the adoption of monastic vows and so on all require a good measure of material wealth and are beyond the means of the poor. Not only then does poverty deny the poor a comfortable material and social existence, it also denies them opportunities for spiritual pursuits and thus for improving their material and spiritual lot in subsequent incarnations.

Of course the orthodox establishment is not, in practice, exactly disinterested in wealth or material concerns. Paul (1970) writes that:

"despite their supposed lack of interest in the things of this world, monks and also village lamas are, both empirically and by general Sherpa consent, more rather than less concerned with material possessions and status than are other people". (1970:565).

Paul recounts with obvious delight how his status continually suffered in the eyes of the orthodox establishment because of the cheap brand of his wrist watch!

The maintenance of the polarisation of Sherpa society into rich and poor, and clergy and laity was aided by a number of factors. Firstly, the rich derived much of their wealth from economic activity outside the
immediate orbit of Sherpa society through trading etc. (and more recently trekking) and thus not overtly through the direct exploitation of the poor. Secondly, the opportunities available in exorcisms (and shamanic curing rituals) for expressing frustrations and felt deprivations had a significant defusing and depoliticising effect on conflict. Thirdly, the carefully managed and institutionalised articulation between pragmatic interests and transcendental concerns conveyed a strong sense that one's needs, on balance, were being adequately fulfilled despite inequalities. Perhaps the most influential factor however was the psychological effects of the doctrine of karma and reincarnation. Yet Ortner (1978) contends that:

"[Buddhism's] power as a psychological theory is inextricably related to its social theory: the endurance of spirit as a psychologically comforting notion is linked to a moral system in which some spirits endure (are reincarnated) in better forms (social positions) than others. In order to avail oneself of the orthodox solution to the problem of the fear of death... one must also bow before the justness of unequal distribution of wealth and privilege". (1978:127).

She continues:

"in order to experience the transcendence of fear and bodily destruction one must also experience a relinquishing of presumption of status ... and accede to the reestablishment of the god figure to supremacy". (1978:127).

The implication here of course is that exorcisms constitute a rite of passage. Through the separation of man from the demons achieved in dzongdup the Sherpas are temporarily placed in a liminal status marked by communitas and anti-structure. This state however is short-lived and serves merely to enable reaggregation at a higher level with the Buddha via gyepshi. Structure is returned, and ascetic individualism is encouraged. Reasserting the Buddha's supremacy according to Ortner (1978)

"also represents, as the hegemony of the gods represents, the triumph of the 'big people' and the reestablishment of the social hierarchy. The transcendence of spirit over body, the highness of the 'big people' and the triumph of the gods are all rendered homologous. Divine protection, personal immortality - and social inequality - are all experienced as part of the same package". (1978:127).
3.2 Shamanic Divination

Exorcism, as we have seen, embodies both transcendental and pragmatic orientations and techniques and deals with both transcendental and pragmatic concerns. Shamanic divination by comparison deals more exclusively with the pragmatic this-worldly concerns of everyday existence. Rather than approaching healing at the psychological dimension, shamanism might be said to focus on the social dimension (in association with the physical and cosmological dimensions), and is concerned not with a separation of spirit from body but rather with connection.

The significance of the shamanic tradition has been well documented in studies throughout Nepal and the Tibetan Buddhist world. The ethnography of shamanism among the Sherpas however is noticeably thin and somewhat contradictory by comparison. This is perhaps not surprising since the number and status of shamans in the Solu-Khumbu appears to have declined markedly in recent years. The extent of this decline however has not been adequately documented.

Reinhard (1976) offers the following definition of shamanism:

"a shaman is a person who at his will can enter into a non-ordinary psychic state (in which he either has his soul undertake a journey to the spirit world or he becomes possessed by a spirit) in order to make contact with the spirit world on behalf of members of his community". (1976:16).

I shall use this definition in looking at Sherpa shamanism because it avoids the distracting issue of whether the Sherpa manifestation is of the 'classic' mode (involving the shaman in an ecstatic soul-journey ascent to the world of the gods) or the so-called 'degenerate' mode (involving the

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(2) The exceptions here of course are Funke (1969) and Frerkes (1982).

(3) See in particular Paul (1976).

(4) Ortner has apparently done some work on this subject but it was not available to me.
descent of the gods into a possessed shaman). Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) has classified Sherpa shamanism as 'classic', but more recent ethnographers(1) stress the possession mode.(2)

According to Paul (1982) the three main types of Sherpa shamans are the Dhawa (Tib: Lha pa, literally 'god descending'); the oracle, medium or soothsayer called the mindung (literally 'to see') and the pembu (literally 'practitioner of Bon').(2a) Some differentiation between these types might be made in terms of the relative power of the supernaturals and deities with whom a shaman is dealing in a particular instance. Cases involving particularly wrathful (takbu) deities for example are considered more important (and dangerous to the shaman) than those involving spirits(1)

(2) According to Eliade (1964) the ecstatic mode, found in North and Central Asian shamanic traditions, is the original and pure form of shamanism and the possession mode is a more recent degeneration. The issue as to which mode is more important has been the subject of much debate in the literature. De Heusch (1962), Firth (1964) and others argue that these modes are fundamentally different. Schroder (quoted by N. Allen 1974) argues that possession is more important than soul journey while Eliade (1964) and his students regard soul journeys as more important. Cross cultural studies of the incidence of possession have been undertaken by Peters (1981) and Bourguignon (1973).

Evidence that possession is the dominant mode in Hindu communities can be found in Harper (1963), Dumont (1957), Stanley and Freed (1967) and Opler (1958). In the case of the ethnography of Tibetan Buddhist communities, many accounts suggest the dominance of the classic 'ecstatic' mode, e.g., Watters (1975) on the Kham Magars; Holmberg (1980,1984) and Peters (1981) on the Tamang; Tucci (1980); Snellgrove (1957), Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) on Tibet itself.

In other communities in Nepal (e.g., Bhujis and Dhaubagiris) both 'classic' and 'degenerate' modes of shamanism have been identified (see Hitchcock 1976). In the case of Sherpa shamanism, Paul (1976) suggests that the ecstatic mode was important once, when shamans were 'strong' (this is a common theme throughout Nepal) but that as Sherpa religion became increasingly dominated by a rationalising Buddhist orthodoxy, this mode and its attendant symbolism (such as the winged horse and the rope ladder) were assimilated into tantrism. Hofer (1974a) notes that in other Nepalese communities the ecstatic mode has declined where there has been a perceived loss of shamanic power and status relative to other non-ecstatic religious officiants. A god-descending possession mode is more characteristic he says of a doctrine-based, rationalised, institutionalised religion.

Allen (1974) observes that the ritual ecstatic chants of the neighbouring Thulung Rai detail a journey through the main Sherpa village of Namche Bazaar, and many curing rituals involving soul ..../103.
of people unable to detach themselves from kinship obligations (*nerpa*).
The *lhawa* may be analytically distinguished from the *pembu* insofar as it
appears to be more associated with the Nyingmapa sect while the *pembu* is
known as a Bön sect practitioner. The *lhawa* is different from the *mindung*
in that the latter does not use trance to divine. There is not necessarily,
however, a consistent division of types or responsibilities, for the
ethnographies themselves show that a *lhawa* may also perform as a *mindung*\(^1\)
and so on. As a general rule, both the *lhawa* and *mindung* are recruited
from the lower echelons of Sherpa society.\(^2\)

In addition there are a number of minor shamanic practitioners,
some of whom are female,\(^3\) such as the *daloma* (literally 'hell-returne
female'). The male form is the *dalosa*. Paul (1970) says their unique
ability to undertake soul journeys is highly respected by the lamas. It
has also been suggested that the reincarnate lama\(^4\) (*tulku*), and the tantric
vajramaster\(^5\) may also be regarded as shamanic practitioners, since they
are both capable of performing very similar functions to those of the
*lhawa* and *mindung*. I shall discuss this issue in the next chapter - in
the meantime I shall concentrate my attention on the more common *lhawa*
and, to a lesser extent, the *mindung*.

\(^{(2a)}\) Note that this is the Sherpa word for the Tibetan term 'bon po' and the
Tamang term 'bompo'. Note also that the term *pembu* is used by Von
Furer-Haimendorf (1964) to refer to the village tax collector. These
are two completely different roles.

(1) See Paul (1982).
(2) Ortner (1978). To an increasing extent Sherpas are using non Sherpa
shamans particularly Tamang and Newar shamans. See Paul (1976:141),
Samuel (1978b).
(3) Paul (1976) notes that in his area of fieldwork there were three male
and one female shaman and an active *daloma*. Aziz (1976) notes the
existence of female *pho mo* and *dihakha* in other Sherpa communities. The
'femaleness' of shamanic activity among the Tamangs has been discussed
by Holmberg (1983). See also Kurz Jones (1976) on Limbu shamans,
Michi (1974) on Chantel Magar shamans and Fournier (1976) on Sunawar
shamans. Current unpublished research (1984) by Schicklgruber and
Diemberger in Tashigan, East Nepal also suggests the importance of
female shamanic healers.
Shamans invoke, entertain, propitiate and sometimes fight the local gods (yul tha), clan deities (dabilas) and supernaturals (tu, shringdi etc.) who are held responsible for illness and misfortune at the day to day level. This interaction enables them to serve as diviners of causes of illness, clairvoyants of future events, identifiers of wrong-doers in the community, testers of the moods of the gods, fighters against evil forces, retrievers of lost souls, mouthpieces for conversations with dead relatives and a number of other functions. This gives shamans a wide area of responsibility compared to that of the lamas. Rituals involving divinations (tabyos) are very important to all Tibetan Buddhist communities due to the belief in the interconnectedness of the cosmos, and thus the importance of seeing how events and objects are related to each other.

(5) Stablein (1976). I am unclear as to the precise relationship between the vajramaster and the banzin lama. I presume the former is a more specialised and perhaps more highly trained ritual officiant.

(1) Halifax (1979) in her discussion of shamans worldwide writes that the shaman:
"can be described not only as a specialist in the human soul but also as a generalist whose sacred and social functions can cover an extraordinarily wide range of activities... they are not only spiritual leaders but also judges and politicians, the repositories of the knowledge of the culture's history, both sacred and secular". (1979:7).

(2) The highest oracles in Tibet were called 'masters of religion'. They had many privileges and exercised considerable political as well as spiritual power (for example in the confirmation of a new incarnation of the Dalai Lama). They were often however only short-lived due to the physical strains of their possessions (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, H.R.H. Prince Peter 1978, Lama Govinda 1971). Among Tibetan refugee communities, spirit-mediums (Tib: dpa'bo, literally 'hero') are very active and popular due to their pragmatic emphasis and the dramatic, entertaining nature of their performance, vis à vis those of the lamas. See Cartier (1975) and Epstein (1977) for a discussion of dpa'bo who specialise in curing rabies. The dpa'bo discussed by Berglie (1976) trace their genealogical connections (and source of divining power) to four archetypical dpa'bo, invited to Tibet by Padmasambhava specifically to cure illness. The link between oracles and orthodox Buddhism today however appears tenuous at best. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said: "[oracles] have nothing to do with Buddhism. The oracles are absolutely without importance. They are only small tree-spirits. They do not belong to the three treasures of Buddhism. Relations with them are of no help for our next incarnation". (quoted by H.R.H. Prince Peter 1978:287).
of seeing what effects certain actions might have or have had at particular
times or in particular places. An example of such rituals is the tangtabeu
in which the shaman divines whether offerings, including those made by the
lamas, have been accepted by the gods.\(^1\) Even monks may secretly employ
shamans to determine the auspiciousness of certain alternative courses of
action, although they prefer to do this using their own texts.\(^2\)

Both shamans and lamas divine;\(^3\) lamaist divination however is
called sundak \(\text{cho} \). It is distinguished by the fact that lamas have access
to the gods resident in Devachen (i.e. Ongpame's heaven) while shamans are
restricted to the gods of the six spheres of the Wheel of Life. Furthermore,
lamas do not use any aids apart from texts, whose power is held to be sacred
and thus unchallengeable. Shamans on the other hand are dependent on an
oral tradition\(^4\) and use a variety of aids. For the Zhawa these involve
mainly the drum, grain, thread crosses, arrows and mirrors. The \(\text{mindung} \)
uses more traditional Tibetan techniques such as scapulimancy, rosary,
cards, dice and interpretation of dreams and omens.\(^5\)

Perhaps the main functions of the Zhawa is the diagnosis (\(\text{zhabeu} \))
of illness.\(^6\) and the prescription of the appropriate cure. (The actual
implementation of the cure is usually left either to the lamas or the
patients themselves). Illness is seen as caused in part by the activity
of supernaturals who either feel that they have not been adequately
propitiated, or are attacking through greed, envy and other negative

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\(^1\) See Ortner (1970), Paul (1982).
\(^3\) Layment can also become divining specialists.
\(^4\) A myth recorded by Holmberg (1984) among the neighbouring Tamang
describes how lamas came to monopolise texts. In one of his many battles
of wits with Nara, the king of the shaman bombos (Bon priests)
Padmasambhava falsely claimed to have burnt his texts to prove his
independent power, whereupon Nara promptly burnt his. Padmasambhava then
produced his texts, but Nara, not to be outdone, ate the ashes of his
texts so as to commit them to memory and so demonstrate his power of
memorisation.
\(^5\) See Nebesky-Wojkowitz (1956) for a detailed account of these.
\(^6\) See Chapter 4, Section 7 for a discussion of healing.
tendencies characteristic of supernaturals. Such supernaturals can only be contacted directly through the Zhawa who discusses the problem with the relevant supernatural through possession and negotiates a solution or 'cure'. The cause and the appropriate cure is then relayed to the client once the possession is over.

Myths concerning the battles for supremacy between lamas and shamans are very popular among the Sherpas. One such myth describes how a lama was challenged by a shaman to a race to the top of a nearby mountain. The shaman (who does all his work at night) began to climb at nightfall and was close to the summit at dawn, when he looked down and saw the lama still in bed. Delighted with his apparent victory, he stopped and began to beat his drum in a dance of victory. The drumming, however, awoke the lama, who transported himself on a beam of light direct to the summit, just above the shaman. Variants of this myth are common throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world. Shamanic variants, however, suggest a shamanic victory. To this day sites of mythical battles between shamans and lamas are sacred to the Sherpas.

The same theme of confrontation between lamas and shamans lies at the base of myths dealing with the origins of why shamans are responsible for curing while lamas are primarily responsible for death. In one such myth Padmasambhava went to investigate why souls sent by Nara the shaman (bombo) were not reaching heaven. Finding that Nara's animal sacrifices were the cause, he directed the lamas to take over responsibility for funeral rites. Nara however was not impressed and challenged Padmasambhava to a duel — climbing a nearby mountain. Nara used his drum but Padmasambhava, who had incorporated the ecstatic mode into his repertoire of tantric skills, flew as a bird and reached the summit first. Nara, enraged, sent a swarm

(1) See Paul (1976).
(2) Holmberg (1980) records a similar myth among the Tamang.
(3) See the following discussion of the Sherpa shaman Upa Gyaldzu.
of bees which Padmasambhava as a good Buddhist could not kill. Finally the two reached an agreement that Nara would retain his healing powers (so that he could heal Padmasambhava's stings) but that the lamas would assume responsibility for funerary rites.\(^1\)

There is a Sherpa saying, quoted by Paul (1976), that a lama's wife earns sin while a shaman's wife earns merit. The apparently paradoxical nature of this saying can be explained by the division of labour between the lama and the shaman. The lama's wife hopes that people will die, to provide her husband with income, while the shaman's wife hopes that people will be healed, to provide her husband with income and respect. Of course ultimately everybody dies so the shaman's successes can only be short term and are eventually usurped by the role of the lama in funerary rites.

Sherpa shamans do not acquire their vocation or their power through choice or conventional learning as do lamas. Rather they are called by deities who eventually become their tutelary deities. This calling is a 'gift' and cannot be refused. As with most Nepalese shamans, a curing seance must commence with a chant that serves in part to sever worldly ties and affirm allegiance to tutelary deity lineage ties.\(^2\)

A calling may vary in nature and intensity but it usually involves a significant personal crisis, psychotic disassociative experiences and long periods of illness (unlike the experiences of a lama in training). Family and friends try to prevent this calling only until it becomes clear that it is in fact a deity who is responsible. A calling is often provoked

\(^1\) See Peters (1981). A variant is recorded also by Hoffman (1961).
\(^2\) An example of part of such a chant is the following Tamang chant:
   "I am not a shaman born of the earth but my body was born from my spiritual mother and my mind was born from my guru; descend upon me and increase my nargyel (pride) and noitup (talent); let blaze my serap (intellect) ... o you humans, I am the god/goddess x.... come, with the shaman exchange mouth, come join body, make one flesh... let us make play together, bir".
   (quoted by Hofer 1974b:173-175).
by attendance of funerals of relatives. A deceased shaman may attempt to pass on his/her power and knowledge to a suitable surviving kinsman (similar in some ways to the bayu rite of Hindu Nepalese communities). (1) The hereditary basis of the shamanic calling does not however appear to be as significant as in other communities in Nepal. (2) In practice, it seems that anyone might be called to the vocation.

A prototype example of a shamanic calling (no two cases are the same) might be as follows: (2a) initial sleepwalking and strange dreams, shivers, an experience of possession at a funeral or hallucination at a festival, a retreat to a forest or mountain region (sometimes involving violent experiences of disassociation), return to the community once control has been achieved and power (ong) has been received. Gradually a shaman will develop a reputation through successful curing but at no stage will this become a full-time profession - the ability to maintain an otherwise 'normal' socioeconomic role and life activity seems integral.

(1) In their discussion of induced possession in Central Nepal Brahmin laity, Hofer and Shrestha (1972) discuss how elevation of a bayu (ancestor spirit) to deity status requires the possession of a male consanguineal relative by the bayu. John Gray, in personal communication, reports a case of a bayu seeking elevation which required twenty-one days of shamanic ritual since the bayu was simultaneously a picas (i.e. spirit of a suicider).

(2) Fournier (1976) for example provides the shamanic lineages of two Sunawar shamans, one a male puimbo (Samarbahadur) and the other a female ngiami (Mayadevi). Records of such lineages are unfortunately not provided in the ethnography of the Sherpas.

\[
\text{SAMARBAHADUR} \quad \text{MAYADEVI}
\]

(where ▲ - puimbo ○ - ngiami ▼ - never a puimbo)

\[\ldots/109\]
to the shaman's practice (unlike that of the lamas). What is significant about the calling is that it reflects an aptitude for metaphysical contact. These experiences however must be eventually controlled. No aspiring shaman can expect to practice until such control has been demonstrated.

Paul (1984b) has provided an account of the calling of the shaman Upa Gyaldzu, a lhawa renowned for his aggressive and anti-orthodox rituals. According to Upa, he first received his calling after a severe earthquake had destroyed the monastery at Tengboche where he was studying. Says Upa:

"When the madness first came I danced the whole night but didn't know about it until sunrise the next morning... ban jankri, the forest god, took me three times into the forest and hid me... it was like I was dreaming... the gods taught me many things. They gave me food-moss, quartz, crystal and worms... I was a really good shaman". (quoted by Paul 1984a:26, 33).

Paul records however that Upa gave a number of alternative accounts of his calling. One of these was that he was attacked by two enormous snakes and was saved only by the intervention of two spirits, one black and one white, dressed as men. These spirits led him for seventeen days across mountains to a forest of perpetual light where the gods taught him the art and craft of shamanism. The variety of accounts which Upa gives all contain the same fundamental theme of confrontation with alternative manifestations of reality and the importance of learning to control these realities.

The location, transfer or manufacture of shamanic paraphernalia (chepa) such as the headgear (ringa) and, in particular the drum (damaru)\(^1\) is a very important event in the shaman's training and initiation since future control of the tutelary deity through seance is dependent upon its correct deployment. Lamas also use drums and every gompa has one but the

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\(^2\) Accounts of shamanic callings in other Nepalese communities may be found in Michi (1974:226), Sagant (1975:60-61) and MacDonald (1976).  
\(^1\) The drum is made from a supernatural tree, the location of which must be divined by the novice. The tree is symbolic of the axis that connects the physical and metaphysical world in many Nepalese communities (see e.g. Peters 1981 on Tamang initiation and Watters 1975 on Kham Magar initiation.
shaman beats his from the *back* rather than from the front as lamas do.\(^{(1)}\) Power (*ong*) is believed to be inherent in the drum and other *che pa* and the shaman who attempts to give up shamanising must as a first step divest themselves of their *che pa*.\(^{(2)}\) (Recognition of *che pa* is an important factor in confirming the identity of a child believed to be a reincarnate lama).

A shamanic seance is a particularly dramatic affair.\(^{(3)}\) It is always held at night, usually in the lower room of a private home, and is often attended by a number of onlookers in addition to those who have commissioned the seance. While no two seances are the same, most follow the general pattern of the making of offerings, the inducing of an altered state of consciousness (generally, regarded as possession), dialogue between the possessing tutelary deity and the supernaturals responsible for the problem through the medium of the body of the shaman, and finally the prescription of the "cure". The following is a case study of a seance presented by von Furer-Haimendorf (1964). It deals with a curing rite performed by a Khumjung shaman, A-Tutu, on behalf of von Furer-Haimendorf's cook, Sonam. A-Tutu is a khamba *zhawa* whose mother's father was also a *zhawa*. A-Tutu began having visions of inversions (e.g. flat plains where there should have been mountains, crowds where there should have been no-one) at the age of eighteen. He finally went to a reincarnate lama who helped him identify a tutelary possessing deity and taught him how to work as a *zhawa*.

The rite commissioned by von Furer-Haimendorf was held at night in the ground floor of his house in the village of Khumjung. Before A-Tutu arrived a layperson had been busy making offerings to the local gods and applying some ritual first aid by burning juniper incense (*bsangs*) and some threads of a revered lama's cloak, and waving these around Sonam's head, calling on the supernaturals (*shrindi*) to depart. A-Tutu then arrived and,

\(^{(1)}\) For detailed descriptions of the drum and its symbolism among the Limbus see Sagant (1976) and among the Sunawar see Fournier (1976).

\(^{(2)}\) Ortner (1970).

\(^{(3)}\) For vivid accounts see Peters (1981) and the articles in Hitchcock and Jones (1976).
using a rosary, divined that a spirit (nerpa) was the cause of Sonam's stomach complaint and fever. This nerpa was identified as the spirit of Lakba Gelbu, a previous owner of von Furer-Haimendorf's house, who had died in an avalanche (and whose presence was seen to be confirmed by Sonam's cold skin). A-Tutu's paraphernalia included two large brass cups, seven small zinc cups, a large and a small brass mirror, the ringa headgear and of course the drum. The large mirror was used for 'seeing' the gods and the lu; the small mirror was used for 'seeing' the shrindi and witches (pem). An altar was constructed using the cups filled with offerings, the drum placed next to it, and bsangs (burning juniper) offerings made.

A-Tutu then began chanting, all the while sprinkling rice grains on the mirrors to aid his divinations. As he began to tremble and grunt he put the ringa on and began rapid loud drumming, alternately singing and hissing. When the shaking reached its most violent, the ringa was made to slip down A-Tutu's front, thereby allowing the possessing deity to enter him. The drumming immediately ceased and A-Tutu fell backwards, then was flung violently about the room. Speaking with the voice of Lakba Gelbu, body contorted with the presence of the possessing deity and all the while shaking, he demanded a carpet belonging to him (Lakba) thereby proving his identity again, and then demanded chang (beer) and rakot (whiskey). For a few minutes he answered questions about the spirit world put matter of factly to him by the onlookers. Then he began criticising von Furer-Haimendorf, Sonam, his own widow and sons for not making adequate offerings to him, and instructed them what was to be done. Suddenly he fell backwards and raised his arms signalling that he was departing.

After a break A-Tutu began drumming and chanting in a very different way and became possessed in turn by a female demon, a serpent deity (lu), a monkey, a bull, higher gods, his own tutelary deity and finally Delingkandzi, a Darjeeling goddess who often appears at the end of a seance.
The rite then abruptly ended. A-Tutu packed up his paraphernalia, collected Rs4, offered further bsangs (juniper incense offerings) and then left the remaining audience to enjoy a small feast held for Lakba's spirit. Being merely the mouthpiece for Lakba's spirit, he claimed to remember nothing of his possession.

The shaking of the lhawa while becoming possessed is seen as evidence of the flowing of ong or, more specifically, ngak (the power of divine contact). Ngak is shared by both the shaman and the lama. The shaman however, unlike the lama, does not receive this power from a living guru, but rather directly from the tutelary deity. Paul (1976) comments that:

"ngak is an essential element in any Sherpa religious ceremony and rituals performed by a lama or shaman who has lost his ngak, as may happen through pollution, are no more effective than just singing and dancing, as the Sherpa nicely puts it". (1976:145).

The Sherpa shaman in theory is not bound to undergo any form of training from an earthly master at all since the ngak is sufficient by itself. In practice however, a teacher will be utilised if available. In other Tibetan Buddhist cultures the emphasis on training and initiation appears to be due to the importance of acquiring skills in controlled ecstatic soul journeys, skills considered to be far in advance of simple possession. (1)

It is interesting to ponder in the case of the Sherpas whether these skills deteriorated because of lack of adequate training and initiation opportunities today (as result of the increasing domination of rationalised orthodox Buddhism) or merely because the skills are no longer in demand.

(1) Peter (1981) gives a comprehensive account of the Tamang shaman's initiation. This involves a calling stage followed by guru puja (i.e. identification of one's tutelary deity with the assistance of the guru), controlled possession and healing seances and finally the climactic 'opening of the head' and the symbolic climb to heaven, thus enabling soul journey. Watters (1975) provides a dramatic account of a Kham Magar shaman's 'birthing ceremony', requiring in part the ripping out of a sheep's heart with one's mouth, climbing a sacred pole and sitting atop it for days, sheep's heart still in mouth, while the village feasts below and awaits the demonstration of power resulting from this ecstatic soul journey. The lack of such descriptions in the Sherpa ethnography appears to be further proof of the decline of the ecstatic mode among Sherpas.
While the shamanic vocation is a "calling" rather than a chosen profession, it is interesting to speculate on other possible motivations for accepting this vocation. Paul (1984b) suggests that the violent confrontation and competition with spirits that characterises shamanic activity provides an opportunity to express urges that would otherwise be frowned on, and which are prescribed in the lama's vocation. Upa describes violent confrontations between shamans and *pem nERPAs* (witch spirits):

"They have contests of flying, eating rocks, making rocks soft. Then after a while the shaman pulls into the lead. The *pem narpa* retreats and says 'I'm sorry' and the patient gets better".

(Upa, quoted by Paul 1984b:36).

Shamanic seances are a particularly tangible and dramatic way of demonstrating one's contact with the supernatural world to the rest of the community, and of acquiring a measure of influence over those who may be considered socially superior or are more wealthy.(1) Shamanism also affords the opportunity to perform sorcery (while lamas are prohibited from it). In fact the rivalry between shamans, made necessary by the need to compete for clients, makes them particularly susceptible to engaging in battles of sorcery and counter-sorcery. A further motivation for accepting a shamanic calling, says Paul (1984b), is the sexual licence permitted. Shamans often have many wives (Upa had seven). According to Paul, this demonstrates that the shaman acts out his sexual and Oedipal dilemmas, unlike the more orthodox lamas and monks who, he suggests, repress them.

Now in fact being a shaman has some serious drawbacks relative to the lamaist vocation. The shamanic vocation may once have carried with it a degree of status and power but this appears to have become negligible in recent years, if not in fact a liability.(2) Unlike the lama, whose claims of divine inspiration are taken more seriously, the shaman must carry

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(1) Berreman (1964) proposes such a motivation in the case of Pahari Shamans in North India. In some communities in Nepal the shaman's metaphysical power seems to be directly translated into political power. Among the Chantel Magars (see Michl 1974) and the Sunawars (see Fournier 1976) the shaman appears to have more power than anyone.

(2) Paul (1976).
personal responsibility for and cope with negative reactions to his revelations and prescriptions.\(^{(1)}\) Thus there are often loathe to identify witches and wrongdoers directly and seldom recommend a particular punishment. Paul (1976,1977) discusses the case of a poor, low status woman who 'left her body' for ten days and then returned with the powers of a \textit{daloma}. She promptly started identifying wrongdoers in the community but her accusations became so threatening that the orthodox establishment labelled her a fraud and she lost her following. There is never any compulsion to accept a shaman's revelations or accusations\(^{(2)}\) (unlike those of the lamas). There is never any necessary connection between a shaman and a particular lineage or corporate group and the shaman must therefore attract and maintain his clientele by his reputation alone (unlike the lamas).

Shamanic activity is time-consuming, physically very draining (because of the contortions produced by the presence of the possessing deity and because of the violent confrontations with obstinate spirits or witches)\(^{(3)}\) and is not even particularly economically rewarding.\(^{(4)}\) Furthermore, the shaman must always be on guard against the demonic and supernatural forces attracted by his/her abilities (while the lama is able

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\(^{(1)}\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964), Paul (1977), Ortner (1970). Today however the lama's claims of divine inspirations are being questioned more and more (see Paul, 1976, Von Furer-Haimendorf 1975). In the last Chapter I shall discuss a case which shows that even reincarnate lamas are today discouraged from making accusations and meddling in worldly affairs. \(^{(2)}\) Samuel (1984). \(^{(3)}\) Ortner (1970) discusses the case of a particularly obstinate witch attack which required the blinding of the victim in order to rid him of the witch's influence. \(^{(4)}\) Winkler (1976) quotes a \textit{dhami} (spirit-medium) from West Nepal as saying: "sometimes it is necessary for me to falsely promise to go to a place because I am called to so many places and can only go to the most important... there is no time for me to see that my land is cultivated. A great deal of my own expense is required in this position... I cannot become a Government service holder because of my service to the god. I must be present at important meetings at which other people wear fine clothes... How can I be present at such meetings wearing a torn cap and trousers? Such is the difficulty of a dhami". (quoted by Winkler 1976:258-259).

The same sentiments could well be expressed by the (successful) Sherpa shaman.
to deflect such forces through the use of texts and more indirect confrontation). His involvement with illness, with low level deities, and the sinful nature of the sacrifices and sorcery which he is sometimes required to perform mean that he is constantly in a state of potential pollution (unlike the lama who has much less of this contact and has special self-purification rituals). As a result the shaman is constantly under threat of losing his ngak. On top of all this the pragmatic nature of his concerns (whether sinful or not) denies him opportunity to accumulate merit and so achieve a more positive karmic rebirth in his next life. What is interesting about the shaman's sense of sinfulness of his activity is that he is accepting orthodox Buddhist notions of correct religious behaviour that appear to be in conflict with those prescribed by the spirits with whom he is in contact and the deities whom he must serve. Maintaining these two allegiances simultaneously must be one of the most difficult aspects of the shamanic vocation.

Paul (1984b) suggests that the conflict is finally resolved by the giving up of shamanising and adopting a married lama role in the community as one becomes older and more concerned about future rebirth.(1) Upa Gyalduz, for example, has given up shamanism, apparently because he recognised the sinfulness of his activity. He told Paul:

"When I look around I see all the old shamans are not doing well ... many of them are blind, or poor or even dead. So I swore off. Some made a lot of money shamanising and then other people were envious and killed them or injured them by magic. Too much sin".

(quoted by Paul 1984:32).

Upa now considers himself a married lama. What is interesting about this transition is that Upa explains it by reference to myths expressing the opposition between shamans and lamas. Says Upa:

"once some [shamans] and Buddhist lamas competed. The lama flew to the sky and the [shaman] did the same. They did it twice and it came out the same. The third time the lama did a little better".

(quoted by Paul 1984b:36).

(1) Morris (1938) observes that many shamans among the Lepcha of Sikkim also become lamas later in life.
Upa had used the same myth but in a different variant, with the victor being the shaman, to explain his original shamanic calling. As I have suggested, the conflict between lamas and shamans is a common theme in Sherpa mythology.

Now the shamanic diagnosis of illness has often been equated with Western psychotherapeutic techniques in the literature on shamanism.\(^1\) The psychiatrist Torrey (1972) for example, sees the 'naming process' inherent in shamanic divination as a 'universal component of psychotherapy' since it leads to an immediate reduction in the patient's anxiety. It does not matter what the name is; once an illness has been classified, there are definite prescriptions for dealing with it. Levi-Strauss (1963) has also suggested that shamans, like psychotherapists, provide a 'language' by which the inexpressible can be expressed so that a transformation from chaos to order can take place. This transformation benefits onlookers as much as a patient. A shaman's fame may derive partially from his success but, more importantly, his successes derive from his fame. Kakar (1982) in a discussion of shamanism in India refers to shamanism and psychotherapy as poles of the same continuum. Hitchcock (1976), in the introduction to his volume on shamanism, refers to the link between it and psychotherapy, as do the editors of a special issue of the C.N.S. Journal in 1976 on the anthropology of healing in Nepal. Peters (1981) provides an interesting analysis of Tamang shamanism in psychotherapeutic terms. In the case of Sherpa shamanism Paul (1982, 1984a, 1984b) has emphasised its psychotherapeutic implications.

There is little doubt that such rites as that performed by A-Tutu (discussed above) have a degree of psychotherapeutic benefit. The shaman
is living proof of the ability to overcome apparently psychotic disorders\(^1\) and the opportunity for abreaction and catharsis, in at least some cases, should not be ignored. The visible manifestation of the spirit possessing the shaman must have considerable impact.

Nevertheless there are some problems with emphasising this particular aspect of shamanic therapy. Firstly, the patient, as a rule, is only minimally involved in the rite itself. This is quite understandable since causes are assumed to lie outside of the individual at a more supernatural level. The shaman is the active participant (contrary to the psychotherapist who is the passive listener). Second, the patient is held to be quite 'normal'. As Paul (1976) observes, the whole point of shamanic curing is that the patient knows roughly what to expect and can respond appropriately to cues. It is the influence of external supernatural agents that are the problem, rather than the internal causes identified by orthodox Buddhist rituals. A patient who is deemed 'psychotic' will be referred to the lama for treatment. Third, the same curing rituals will be performed for the very young and even animals (for whom the psychotherapeutic value is somewhat suspect). It is difficult therefore to equate Sherpa shamanism with Western psychotherapy too closely.

A more useful approach, I suggest, is to focus not on the individual but on the group\(^2\) - to view shamanic curing and its efficacy in terms of the extent to which it transforms social relationships and mediates social conflicts that are otherwise inexpressible. That psychological symptoms may have their source in some form of ego collapse resulting from an inability

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\(^1\) The notion that the shaman's calling and curing behaviour reflects an essentially psychotic condition has been raised by Silverman (1967) and Devereux (1956) among others. The point however is of course that a temporary experience, deriving from external contact with the supernatural realm rather than an internal disorder (and which may or may not be called a psychosis) is overcome and controlled. In fact shamanic practice is only legitimate through the demonstration of such control (see also Lewis 1971, Eliade 1964).

\(^2\) Douglas (1970) comments that Turner's emphasis on the social context as a means for explaining the efficacy of shamanic curing is more illuminating than Levi-Strauss' emphasis on the dyadic shaman-client relationship, individual catharsis and abreaction.
to define one's social relationships as normal is acknowledged by Western doctors as well as shamans.

One of the more important proponents of this approach (which has its origins in the Durkheimian tradition) is Lewis (1971), who argues that many illnesses considered supernatural in origin reflect gender and class inequalities. He says that possession of the laity, and women in particular is an 'oblique aggressive strategy' in situations where alternative opportunities for expressing felt deprivation and discontent are lacking. Possession for Lewis is both a source of and means for resolving social discontent.

The ethnographic data from Nepal, while not necessarily affirming Lewis' 'sex war hypothesis', nevertheless provides considerable support for the notion that the social position of women in patriarchal societies forms a significant focus for shamanic activity. Among the Sherpas however possession of the laity occurs very rarely. When it does occur, such as the case of the overseer (chortimba) at ManiRindu discussed by Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964), no-one really pays much attention.


(2) Among the neighbouring Limbus however lay possession is more common, perhaps because they have been subject to greater Hindu influence (see Jones 1976, Sagant 1976). Hofer (1974a) discusses the characteristics of lay possession in Nepalese communities. He demonstrates that the possessed lay person may come from any caste including Brahmins (see Hofer and Shrestha 1972); that they are possessed by both deities and ancestors, and may be men, women or both. Possession usually concerns matters confined within a kin group. It is seen to have connections with evil forces, and requires specialist shamanic help to analyse and deal with it. Communities where lay possession is most common are those which have experienced rationalisation and where access to the supernatural world is sought through other than ascetic means.
Whether or not one accepts Lewis' deprivation theory the data does indicate that shamans treat illnesses, at least in part, by dealing with social relations. (1) Peters (1981) notes how his Tamang shaman-guru Bhirendra frequents such places as tea shops and taverns where gossip about social relations is likely to be picked up. (2) In the case of A-Tutu discussed by Von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) the voicing of Lakba's perception of social events and relations through the lhawa confirmed both the this-world acuity and reality of the offending spirit, as well as offering a potential solution to the illness suffered by Sonam.

Now this emphasis on the social dimension of healing will obviously be of great significance in a society such as the Sherpas which, prior to the introduction of the pancayat system in the 1950's, had developed very few formal institutionalised political structures. As discussed in Chapter 1, the emphasis in the traditional Sherpa social structure was on flexibility and movement of social relationships rather than rigid positions or statuses. Paul (1970) comments that:

"although everyone in Sherpa society is nominally fitted into a kinship based social network, in fact the Sherpas do not visualise their social structure as a set of fixed statuses through which individuals move, but in a more flexible way, as sets of possibilities which may or may not apply in different situations".


The emphasis in community decision-making was less on 'objective truth' as on the negotiation and mediation of multiple interpretations of particular events and cases. (3) Without the mediation offered by shamanism, conflicts remain unexpressed, unresolved or both and anxieties

(1) In a general discussion of shamanism Halifax (1979) writes that: "the shaman's work entails maintaining balance in the human community as well as in the relationships between the community and the gods ... When these various domains of existence are out of balance, it is the shaman's responsibility to restore the lost harmony". (1979:21).

(2) Peter's account (1981) of the curing of Bhirendra's sister Kanchi, (involving a major clash between Bhirendra and his sister's husband) demonstrates clearly the importance of such knowledge for effecting a cure.

and neuroses may result. Ortner (1978) cites the case of a man in Khumbu who stabbed and killed another in a gambling argument. The community, unable to deal with the event, did nothing and the man ultimately ran away to Tibet. That this case was never resolved still bothers many Sherpas today.

The shaman's seance however enabled the expression of conflicts, his vision enabled the identification of causes not totally contained within the community, and his analogical interpretations enabled the reconstruction of reality so that shame and blame could be diverted and compromises could be negotiated.\(^{(1)}\) The auspiciousness of a certain course of action could be determined, as well as whether such an agreement was acceptable to the gods. The shaman, wishing to manipulate the gods, plays host to them and offers his body so that the gods can manifest themselves through him. Ortner (1970) quotes a Zhawa, Karma Renzing, as saying

"...when the gods come it's like having your friends to visit you; you sit and chat, have a nice time, discuss the patient's problem".

(quoted by Ortner, 1970:444).

The shaman's body is thus in a very real sense a contact point and vehicle of connection for a variety of supernatural, natural and social forces. Relations are expressed, given form and allowed to develop through the medium of the shaman's body.

All this of course contrasts markedly with the relative disdain shown by the orthodox Buddhist clergy for mundane worldly concerns, their

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\(^{(1)}\) Samuel (1984), Koepping (1978). In a general discussion of shamanism writes "shamans are more than mere conjurers, tricksters, 'primitive' healers who respond to the needs of the individual or the community. He is ... the mystic par excellence. The shaman has the ability of the artist to show to others that the 'things in themselves' do mean something 'other'... the shaman does not only create his and the community's reality by naming it through language and by closing the gap between the 'harsh reality' of daily troubles through reference to and introduction into the real world of the divine; he also has to 'see' before he can speak... the individual who can heal the alienation of other members of the community has to possess the power of 'seeing' the possibility of a reconciliation between aspiration and reality and has then to make visible for others the oneness of man and cosmos, of culture and nature". (1978:27).
reliance on texts and formalised doctrines for their concepts of 'truth',
and their concern to separate spirit from body, the individual from the
social, the transcendental from the worldly. The shaman is, to use
Peter's (1981) term, the real 'cultural broker'. By restoring relations
between men the shaman simultaneously restores relations between men and
the gods. Says Lewis (1971):

"in the person of the shaman man triumphantly proclaims his supremacy
over elemental power which he has mastered and transformed into a
socially beneficial force ... What the shamanistic seance thus
protests is the dual omnipotence of God and man. It celebrates a
confident and egalitarian view of man's relations with the divine,
and perpetuates that original accord between God and man".

(1971:189,205).

Now, this is not to say that Sherpas do not experience social
conflict, nor that this conflict is always successfully mediated through
shamanism. As I showed in Chapter 1, Ortner (1975,1978) provides much
evidence of conflict. This may, or may not be correlated to the decline
of shamanism in recent years. Nor am I suggesting that the relations
restored by shamans are necessarily equal (nor even functional). Again
Ortner has demonstrated the pervasiveness of relations of hierarchy within
the Sherpa formation. The point I am making is that it is the social
dimension of healing, which shamans are oriented towards more than the
psychological orientation of the lamas.

Shamanism has often been interpreted as a conservative force.
Within the context of a dominating orthodox Buddhist tradition however,
shamanism appears distinctly innovative. Shamans rely on a flexible and
analogical oral tradition rather than texts. They lack any defined intra-
professional organisation or code of ethics, were thus often in competition
with each other to attract clients, and were influenced in their calling
and subsequent practice more by pragmatic experience than transcendental
doctrines. The shaman in fact took advantage of the legitimation of his activity afforded by divine inspiration while possessed to create new characteristics of local deities and supernaturals and eject old ones that did not serve the purpose at hand.

Shamanic curing then was able to be creative, innovative, highly entertaining and oriented towards the performance itself as much as its function. Curing rituals are exciting both visually and otherwise, and audiences will gather all night, sometimes for nights on end, to participate in such seances. In fact, audience participation is central. Regular breaks in the rite occur so that the audience can take a leak, have a cigarette and discuss the progress of the seance with the shaman.

That such innovation and entertainment is for the client's and audience's benefit rather than central to the empirical success of the techniques themselves is perhaps demonstrated by the fact that the shaman cannot perform at all unless he has established control over the possessing deities. Once this control has been achieved there is far less of a struggle with the supernatural realm than the performance might suggest. Rather, the performance is geared towards attracting clients. As Hofer (1974b) observes, the shaman:

"is not only a magician but a poet too - and thus sometimes a swaggerer. He not only heals but also entertains and has in both functions the privilege of enjoying a certain individual freedom from disorder ... his reputation is not only gauged by his success in curing but also by the artistic quality of his performance". (1974b:172). (2)

(1) This is not to say that it is a sham. Accounts of curing seances by Peters (1981) and Stone (1976) detail events which seem to have been beyond the control of the shaman and even threaten his reputation. In addition, the physical effort of possession is real and may cause premature aging or physiological disabilities. (See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1958 on the case of Tibetan oracles).

(2) Kapferer (1983) in his study of Sri Lankan curing rituals has noted the importance of good old-fashioned fun, excitement and entertainment in giving vent to otherwise unmanageable problems. The medium of drama affords considerable freedom to express analogically the relations and tensions between people and to transform these to a level at which they can be more effectively mediated.
With such a portrayal of Sherpa shamanism it might seem that shamans would, by virtue of their creativity and relative lack of institutional controls, be in the forefront of social change. It should be stressed however that the innovative and performative aspect of shamanic curing was carefully controlled. The status of the Sherpa shaman was never high, regardless of his/her metaphysical or political power. Intra-professional competition served to defuse their potential political clout. And their revelations and prescriptions could be, and often were, ignored. Shamans were predominantly recruited from the Khambas, were predominantly utilised by the Khambas and, more recently, have had to compete with a growing influx of low-caste Tamang, Newar and other non-Sherpa shamans for their commissions.

Shamans then have always tended to play a supportive role rather than a dominant one. When new rationalised ideas and institutions began to be introduced into the Sherpa community in the twentieth century, shamans in fact adopted a conservative reactionary stance.\(^1\) In a very real sense shamans, despite their differences with the tantric tradition, served to perpetuate this tradition and to reinforce the hierarchy and inequalities in the Sherpa sociocultural system.

To sum up, a focus on the surface contours of the tantric and shamanic traditions might be seen to reveal important differences between lamas and shamans in terms of their calling, their background, their functions, their techniques, and their general orientations towards everyday worldly existence. These differences are reflections perhaps of a broader division between the clergy and the laity and between the rich and the poor.

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\(^{(1)}\) This conservative response to religious rationalisation has also been noted by Berreman (1964) in the case of Pahari shamans.
According to Paul (1976):

"the distinction between lamaism and shamanism may be described in terms of lamaism's orientation towards death and the next life, while shamanism is concerned with health and success in this one... Lamas are concerned with the boundaries of life, shamans with the power of life itself". (1976:149).

Lamas are concerned with the removal of evil; shamans are concerned more with how to cope with it in everyday life. Lamas talk about an ultimate nirvana and rebirth while shamans talk about a land of the dead. Lamas struggle with the concept of a soul while shamans rely on the concept. Eliade (1964), while recognising the preservation of Bon within Tibetan Buddhism, nevertheless noted that:

"to whatever extent lamaism is a regression in comparison with the great Buddhist metaphysical tradition, it was impossible for it to return to the realistic concept of the 'soul', and this one point suffices to distinguish the various contents of a lamaist technique from those of a shamanic technique". (1964:441).

Lamas are concerned primarily with demons which exist prior to and independent of man, while shamans deal primarily with supernaturals karmically deriving from the weaknesses and negativity endemic within the human realm. The deities which lamas rely on are more orthodox, universal and have transcended the mundane realm, while a shaman's gods are more localised and are still caught up in the affairs of this world. They are sensed and contacted in a very direct way in a shamanic seance, while lamaist rituals reinforce the remoteness of orthodox deities. Although shamans can 'see' their 'low', localised gods, only lamas can 'see' high i.e. orthodox deities.

Lamas are concerned with the psychological and spiritual dimensions of healing, while shamans are concerned more with the social. Lamas are concerned with a separation of the spirit from the body as a means of transcending duality while the shaman attempts to re-establish the
harmonious connection between body and spirit. Lamaist exorcisms rely on a scapegoat to achieve separation while the shaman achieves connection through the medium of his own body. As Lewis (1971) says:

"...what is proclaimed is not merely that God is with us but that he is in us. Shamanism is thus the religion par-excellence of the spirit made flesh". (1971:204).

A lama's work is called *choa chaglen* i.e. religious work; a shaman's work never is. Lamas desocialise human problems while shamans render existential problems social.

Shamans may be male or female; lamas are exclusively male. The lama chooses his vocation by virtue of his genealogical links whereas a shaman's calling does not allow choice. The lama must undergo at least some academic preparation from a living guru, while the shaman receives his training and power direct from a tutelary deity. The lama emphasises textual knowledge and power; the shaman emphasises divination through direct communication with the supernatural realm via an oral tradition. Shamans combine other livelihoods with their shamanic vocation and practice as shamans only on a part-time basis. Lamas on the other hand tend to be occupied fully by their religious responsibilities. Shamans deal with spontaneous requests for assistance from individuals, while lamas provide their services more at regular, community-wide rituals. The lamaist vocation is higher in status than the shamanic, and lamas generally come from a more privileged socioeconomic background than do shamans. There is more compulsion to participate and accept the revelations and results of lamaist exorcisms than those of shamanic curing rituals.

Most shamans depend on an altered state of consciousness of some kind, usually possession, to perform their rituals, while lamas seldom do. Shamans may become involved in sorcery; lamas are prohibited from it.
Shamans have a reputation for sexual extravagance; lamas are required to exhibit sexual restraint (though not necessarily celibacy). Shamanic rituals may involve violent confrontation with supernaturals and this violence results in the accumulation of impurities and negative karma. Orthodox doctrine however prohibits violence and lamas have access to purification rituals which ameliorate the effects of contact with illness.

Lamaist exorcisms, particularly the more orthodox ones, tend to be rather solemn events, while shamanic curing tends to be more dramatic and oriented towards entertainment. Shamanic rituals are thus more popular than orthodox ones. Shamans manipulate and connect multiple realities analogically while lamas have a more rationalised approach to reality as a result of their reliance on a literate tradition. Shamanic rituals are thus more innovative and are involved more with the structuring of structure rather than the lamaist reinforcement of structure.

Lamaist services require a certain amount of wealth, while the shaman charges according to ability to pay, and may not charge at all. A lama's income is relatively secure and his clientele relatively fixed, while the shaman has more fear of losing (as well as opportunity for gaining) a clientele. Lamas do not compete with each other; shamans must

3.3 The trouble with a focus on differences

If we combine the material presented in this study so far, the following analytical classification might be made of the differences between traditions in Sherpa religion.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tradition</th>
<th>ORTHODOX</th>
<th>SHAMANIC</th>
<th>TANTRIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Texts</td>
<td>Literary</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Transcendental, Other-worldly.</td>
<td>Pragmatic, This-worldly.</td>
<td>Both, No separation of worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of pantheon dealt with</td>
<td>High deities, bodhisattvas, demons</td>
<td>Low local deities, supernaturals.</td>
<td>All levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social focus</td>
<td>Whole society.</td>
<td>Local community, individual.</td>
<td>Whole society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td>Merit accumulation, Ascetic rituals and festivals.</td>
<td>Divination, curing, offerings, sacrifices.</td>
<td>Exorcisms, life-empowerment rites, mortuary rites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of rites</td>
<td>passive regular, life-crisis generalised predictable</td>
<td>active spontaneous particularised innovative, individual-tailored.</td>
<td>both both both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphernalia</td>
<td>standard</td>
<td>elaborate</td>
<td>elaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Altered state</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Officiants</td>
<td>monks, reincarnate lamas</td>
<td>shamans, lay specialists</td>
<td>tantric lamas (and reincarnate lamas and shamans)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of officiants</td>
<td>Select lineages, ascription.</td>
<td>Community wide, achievement</td>
<td>both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional organisation</td>
<td>Organised, structured.</td>
<td>Fragmented, communitas</td>
<td>Organised, both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clientele</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>Changing</td>
<td>Fixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client involvement</td>
<td>Minimal</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Some</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Client attitude</td>
<td>Reverence</td>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>Reverence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Now such a classification poses a number of problems for the ethnographer whose concern is to understand and explain how different traditions coexist. For a start, the data suggests that lamas and shamans in particular are also very similar in many respects. Both are involved in the process of healing; both employ cures that coerce and/or satisfy the gods; both employ the idiom of hospitality for their activity; both participate alongside each other in many rituals such as funerary rites; both prescribe each other's services for conditions which are not their particular responsibility or forte, and both will venture into the other's realm if necessary. In fact lamas are believed capable of performing all the functions of a shaman. Shamans may perform exorcisms just as lamas may perform divinations.

Differences must be identified and understood if one is to understand interrelationships. But interrelationships must also be understood if one is to understand differences. Differences do not necessarily imply a contradiction, nor incompatibility. Differences at a theoretical level are often not observed in practice. What is clearly shamanic curing in one context may be regarded as quite orthodox in another. Paul (1984b) notes that shamans and lamas on the whole are not aware of any incompatibility between them. Many shamans are in fact trained by lamas and subordinate themselves to the orthodox establishment. And if Paul's analysis (1976, 1984b) of the evidence of the decline of shamanism is accurate, then it would appear that many shamans actually become lamas in their later life.

The classification of differences presents an essentially static view of Sherpa religion. It does not identify or explain changes that occur over time. In particular, it does not adequately account for the process of rationalisation that has occurred in Sherpa religion this century,
nor the persistence of the shamanic and tantric traditions despite this rationalisation. The articulation between different traditions provides, I suggest, a responsiveness and adaptiveness to complex and changing circumstances which must be appreciated if one is to understand Sherpa religion as it is practiced today.

Another problem with emphasising differences is that they are, to a large degree, the creation of analysts. Different analytical vantages, paradigms or foci produce different classifications and there is little consensus between analysis as to which differences are the most significant. More importantly, an emphasis on differences reflects a division and categorisation of reality, a fixed separation of objective from subjective that does not necessarily correspond to Sherpa conceptions. As Paul (1970) observed:

"the Sherpa world-view is neither static nor straightforward but a constantly developing, dynamic set of often conflicting or completely inconsistent ideas varying not only between individuals but also within single people...individuals can be completely sure of their ideas, or completely unsure of them, at different times". (1970:77,80).

A Sherpa proverb says "...say there is and there is; say there isn't and there isn't" (quoted by Ortner 1978:99). Demons exist but are not real. The Buddha is real but does not exist. Reality appears to be far more problematic and context-specific for a Sherpa than it is for a Western analyst, involving a dynamic interplay between modes of perception and action that are different, yet interpenetrating, interchangeable and perhaps interdependent according to the circumstances and requirements of each particular situation.

An analyst of course cannot simply ignore this difference in approach to reality. Nor can he/she reduce it to a contradiction.
As Paul (1970) argues:

"...there are in fact different levels of thought and different strategies based on different but equally valid religious distillations of experience". (1970:338-39, my emphasis).

Even in 1938 Gorer, who was studying the neighbouring Tibetan Buddhist Lepchas of Sikkim commented that:

"...confusions are more obvious to the analytical European than to the practicing Lepcha". (1938:187).

The analyst must be careful to avoid projecting his/her own confusion and frustration in the face of alternate modes of perception onto the people being studied.

In view of these problems it is critical, I suggest, to explore the relations embodied in the structure of Sherpa religion as well as the observable differences between traditions if one is to understand Sherpa religion as a whole. This is the purpose of the next chapter. A view of the data from this vantage reveals a very different picture from one which focuses on manifest forms. It suggests that the functions of the lamas serves to legitimate the existence and functions of shamans and vice versa. It suggests that without lamaist exorcism, shamanic curing would be unable to satisfy the health needs of the Sherpas and vice versa. It suggests that while appearing to be very different at a theoretical level, shamans and lamas complement each other in function and are often fused (though not confused) in practice.

The portrayal, by Ortner (1978) in particular, of a hegemonic, hierarchial and somewhat selfish orthodox establishment is well argued and represents an important perspective on Sherpa religion, Sherpa society and the relationship between the two. Nevertheless she has not fully explored the relations which underlie the different traditions and has therefore neglected in her analysis the significance of what I hold to be the key
to Sherpa religion, namely the mediation between traditions afforded by tantrism. Consequently she has underestimated, I suggest, the degree of interdependence between traditions and the different orientations towards existence which they represent. The laity's pragmatism is integral to orthodox Buddhist domination at an ideological level, but the reverse is also true - the orthodoxy's transcendentalism and the knowledge that transcendental concerns are being effectively looked after is integral to the continued pragmatic worldly existence of the laity. While the relationship is an unequal one, it is, nevertheless, this relationship which is fundamental to an understanding of Sherpa religious and social life in general.
CHAPTER 4: A FOCUS ON RELATIONS

"All forms are similar and none resembles the others;
And so the chorus points to a secret law
To a holy riddle".
- Goethe (quoted by Paul 1982:304).

To identify a phenomenon it is necessary to identify how it is different from other phenomena; how it is to be distinguished from its context. To understand this phenomenon however it is necessary, I suggest, to explore its affinity with other phenomena, to explore how and why it forms part of a larger whole. It is a simple but often-forgotten knowledge that all things exist only by relation to all other things. An aesthetic, dynamic unity pervades the cosmos and it is the nature of this aesthetic, this 'pattern which connects' which lies at the base of all scientific endeavour. Methodological focus must continue to shift therefore from differences to relations, from rules to anomalies, from classifications to processes. (1)

This shift is the rationale for this chapter and, in many ways, for this thesis as a whole. I begin by reexamining the data provided in the previous chapter on exorcisms and shamanic divination in terms of inter-relations and evidence of overlap and co-operation. Then I propose

(1) This notion of course derives from the advances in science of the last two or three decades, which have seriously challenged the notion of the objective independent existence of phenomena and thus of so-called objective scientific methods and 'facts'. All scientific endeavour has been shown to be couched within and influenced by frameworks or paradigms which are at once subjectively selected and all-encompassing. Contributions to this knowledge have come from a variety of sources ranging from the psychology of perception to theoretical physics to structural linguistics, and, of course, to Buddhist philosophy itself. A vast literature has been generated on the subject, the more popular contributions to which include Capra (1975, 1982), Bateson (1972, 1979), Bohm (1980), Ferguson (1980), Kuhn (1970), Grof (1976), Jung (1951).
an analytical model for viewing such relationships which alludes to the structural integration of the religious system as a whole. Having done this I note that the relations are asymmetrical but that the precise form of asymmetry changes according to context and analytical vantage. I explore what I consider to be the key to the interrelationships within Sherpa religion, namely the mediating influence of tantrism. Finally, I offer a case-study of the traditional Sherpa healing system as a lens for viewing how these interrelationships manifest themselves in a functioning efficacious system.

This exploration will illuminate the aims, if not the achievements of Sherpa religion. It will clarify the apparent inconsistency within ritual practice and between stated belief and observed behaviour. It will help to explain why Sherpas feel no contradiction in employing the services of a shaman, a tantricist, a monk, and more recently a Western doctor simultaneously. It will also help to explain the changes that have occurred in Sherpa religion over time, particularly the process of rationalisation that has occurred this century. With such a foundation, a study of inequality, conflict or other more material concerns in Sherpa society can then be undertaken, I suggest, without having to ignore or conflict with the obviously pervasive influence of religion and its manipulation of multiple interpenetrating realities.

4.1 Interrelationships

In the last chapter I explored the apparent differences between two exorcisms, the apparently anti-orthodox, pragmatic do dzongup and the more orthodox, transcendentally-oriented gyapki. I discussed Ortner's contention (1978) that the coexistence of these two rituals reflects an underlying conflict between clergy and laity in Sherpa society.
Ortner argues that the violence of do dzongup is an expression of the laity's frustration with the seeming indifference of orthodox Buddhism to worldly concerns, the impracticability of its precepts, and its hegemonic control. Do dzongup certainly does appear to conflict with gyepshi, which is more passive, orderly, and affirming of Buddha's ultimate superiority. Upon closer examination however the two rituals can be seen to share many similarities. Both are classified as kurim, both exorcise demons, both are conducted by tantric lamas, both utilise effigies or scapegoats, both must be commissioned as the need arises, both deal with this-worldly concerns. Furthermore the two exorcisms are almost invariably performed together in the same ritual context (e.g., Dumje or the funerary cycle).

When the relations between these two rituals are examined in further detail, a relationship of interdependence and mutual legitimation becomes apparent. The do dzongup suggests the possibility of a victory by man (represented by the human figures riding and leading the tiger in the effigy) over the animal and demonic realms (represented by the tiger) through the use of force (by the peshangbca) and achieves a temporary inversion of the cosmological order where man is dominant. Yet this is by no means complete for both the human and tiger figures have demons attracted to them. In gyepshi man is shown to be subject to the power of the Buddha (the Buddha idol replaces the lut and is made of metal rather than the soft perishable dough and cloth trappings of the lut-effigy). The cosmological order is therefore restored.

The do dzongup exorcism therefore provides a tangible contrast to gyepshi and, in so doing, highlights and affirms the superior power and status of orthodox Buddhism demonstrated in gyepshi. It gives vent to and provides a cathartic release for frustrations and so reduces the
possibility of a serious rebellion against orthodox Buddhism. At the same time orthodox Buddhism is shown to be tolerant and understanding of 'lesser' urges since it does allow the do dzongup to be performed (although not by monks). Yet it remains uncontaminated by these urges because they are isolated in a separate ritual. The transcendental purity of orthodox Buddhism is thus, ironically, reinforced by the distinct and apparently anti-orthodox do dzongup. Using Turner's notion (1969) of structure and communitas it is possible to argue that without the structure of gyepshi, the anti-structure of do dzongup would be too threatening. Yet without the communitas of do dzongup the structure of gyepshi would have less impact, purpose or legitimacy. This interdependence of course conforms with Turner's notions concerning the relationship between structure and communitas. With do dzongup pragmatic needs are satisfied. With gyepshi, transcendental concerns are satisfied. Do dzongup needs gyepshi but gyepshi also needs do dzongup. The differences between them are necessary to their (albeit unequal) relationship, and the relations between them provide meaning and legitimacy to their differences.

Now, as we have seen, do dzongup exorcises demons by symbolically, if not in fact physically destroying them. Such behaviour is a response to and confirms the reality of demons, at least at the level of felt experience. Gyepshi is also a response to the perceived effects of demons but at a more psychological and spiritual level. It overcomes demons by replacing them with the Buddha idol and demonstrating that they are not real. This conforms with the transcendental doctrines and orientations of the Buddhist orthodoxy. Is there not a contradiction here? How can tantric lamas justify the exorcism of demons through ritual when they simultaneously adhere to the belief that these very demons are not real?
As we have seen, orthodox Buddhism distinguishes between an absolute or noumenal reality (accessible only to enlightened Buddhas) and relative phenomenal everyday existence. Because of the limitations of a rationalising, falsely discriminating mind, humanity as a whole is subject to the illusions and thus the evil and consequent suffering of relative existence. At this level, demons are very 'real'. Yet humanity also has the capacity for recognising the illusory nature of existence. At this level, demons are not real. The point is of course that these two approaches to reality are not incompatible but rather complementary, interdependent and interpenetrating. The Buddha's ability to project a variety of levels of meaning simultaneously (Skt: upaya kausalya), the doctrine of dependent origination, the variety of tantras ranging from the esoteric to the very pragmatic, the flexibility allowed in choice of healers, the coexistence of apparently opposed variants of myths and so on all suggest that Buddhism both acknowledges and caters for the existence of multiple interpenetrating realities. None of these are necessarily more valid or more important than another because all are relative and thus illusory by comparison with the absolute. Thus what is relevant at one level of understanding, for one particular set of needs, in one particular set of circumstances and time may not be relevant to and does not necessarily have to conform with another. What appears to be opposed at one level may well be complementary at another; what is sacred in one context may well be profane in another (see Paul's model 1982 of these relationships in Chapter 2). What exists in one dimension may not be real in another.

Thus demons can, at the same time, exist (as do daongup confirms) and yet be not real (as gyepshi confirms). There is not a necessary conflict or incompatibility between these situations. In fact there is a
relationship of interdependence and mutual legitimation between them. The existence of demons provides an important explanation for illness, misfortune and other pragmatic concerns. In addition their existence throws into relief the greed, physicality and evil which is dysfunctional to individual and social existence and which must be transcended. The ability to control demons through exorcism is thus important at both pragmatic and transcendental levels. Without such exorcisms there would be chaos at both a pragmatic level (because the demons would be seen to be able to take control) and at a transcendental level (because liberation would be seen to be far less of a possibility). The laity thus continues to commission exorcisms and in so doing provides both moral and material support to tantric lamas, and ultimately to orthodox Buddhism. If the demons did not exist the lamas would lose much of their business and orthodox Buddhism would lose an important source of legitimation, an important reason for existing, and an important opportunity to demonstrate its superior power and status.

For the laity, of course, the knowledge that demons are not real has little practical significance. If the laity's belief in the existence of demons reflects ignorance on their part, then this ignorance is, in many ways, in the interests of the tantric lamas and orthodox establishment and of the laity themselves, for exorcisms at least provide a semblance of an ability to control the vagaries of this worldly existence. The relationship between the clergy and the laity is one of interdependence and mutual legitimation. As Snellgrove (1975) says:

"other worldly practitioners function as the guides and assistants of those who are immersed in the affairs of this world, while these for their part bestow honour and material goods upon those whom they expect to support them in their higher aspirations". (1975:277).
In sum, everybody's happy. From the doctrinal orthodox Buddhist point of view, demons exist but can be shown, through gyepshi to be not real. From the pragmatic layman's point of view, demons are real but can be made, through de daongup, to not exist. The distinction between existence and reality is hazy and fluid, at best, for the pragmatic layman. The fulfilment of transcendental needs through gyepshi provides the spiritual security enabling one to get on with the business of everyday life. In addition the satisfaction of pragmatic concerns through de daongup provides the material security enabling one to get on with the business of salvation and the reproduction of transcendental doctrines and practices. In the long run of course, because life is finite, because the elderly become less important in the everyday life of a developing domestic group, and because the fear of a negative rebirth begins to weigh heavily, orthodox orientations and practices win out. Thus although the transcendental and pragmatic are interdependent, their relationship is also essentially asymmetrical and orthodox Buddhism does eventually triumph.

A similar relationship can be identified between lamaist ritual as a whole and shamanic divination, as a number of ethnographers have observed. Samuel (1978b) writes:

"both Lhasa and mindung work in close cooperation with village and monastic lamas, and are in a generally subordinate position to the lamas. Lamas and Lhasa may recommend clients to each other, but only lamas can see the higher tantric deities... let alone incarnate them (through the processes of tantric ritual). Lhasa may be trained by lamas ... the reverse would be inconceivable". (1978b:103).

Funke (1969) notes that tantric mantras are often used by shamans to give extra power to their activities (e.g. rain making rituals) while shamanic deities are often propitiated by lamas for the same reason (e.g. the 'Bön' deity Kundu Sangbou). In fact Ortner (1978) observes that:

"...most [shamanic] functions continue to be appropriated by lamas whenever they can manage it". (1978:32).
Ortner (1978) notes the close connections between 'high' tantric deities and local shamanic deities in Sherpa religion. Both exorcisms (kurim) and offering rituals (kangsur) use a similar arrangement of dough effigies (tormas) on their altars, combining tantric with local deities. (These include the mountain gods Dorje Lekpa and Khumbeyullha, Tanghi Lha the god of the high altitude pastures, Tema Chunyi as the representative of the twelve gods originally assisting with the introduction of Buddhism etc.). Ortner writes:

"the high gods of the religion are behind, and assumed by, all rituals directed to lower deities, even though they are not directly addressed in those rituals. It is as if the distinction... allows the high gods to keep their hands clean, and to enter the party only after their underlings have dealt with the messier issues". (1978:131).

Paul (1982) notes many instances of cooperation between lamas and shamans. He cites for example the case:

"in which a certain household hired a married lama to perform a kangsur ceremony of offering to local divinities and then, on a subsequent occasion, hired a shaman to go into a trance and discover by direct communication whether the offerings had been received and whether they were satisfied". (1982:84).

The cooperation between lamas and shamans is evident also in funerary rites. This is perhaps surprising since myths attest to the fact that these rites are traditionally the sole responsibility of the lamas (while healing rites are the responsibility of the shamans - see Chapter 3). In a photographic essay of life in a Solu village, Downs (1980) records the apparent interchangeability of roles of a Sherpa funeral. These photos show the shaman, drum in one hand and human thigh bone trumpet in the other, present at all stages of the rite, often leading the lamas in procession, reading orthodox texts held by a young novice monk, participating in the Bardo recitation and so on.

Many of the more famous tantric practices cited in the literature on Tibetan Buddhism have much in common with shamanic practices.
Gcod for example (called ohod tongup by the Sherpas) has much in common with the shamanic calling. In gcod the tantric adept ritually offers his/her body to the demons to be dismembered and consumed, thus overcoming the physical attachments and dualistic subject-object discrimination of an unenlightened mind controlled by fear and ignorance. One must experience separation to overcome it and recognise that it is ultimately an illusion. This of course is the basis of the shaman's experience in his/her calling, his training by his tutelary deities and his subsequent demonstration to the community that he has healed himself and is therefore capable of healing others.

Wilding (1978) has also commented on the links between the developing and completion stages of anuttarayoga tantra and shamanism. He writes:

"The deity's body then leaps forth suddenly, purified by its immersion in the clear light, and hence is able to work for the benefit of others. There is a curious parallel to this in the shaman who, after his visit to the upper world (the sky being a concrete exemplar of clear light) henceforth possesses a 'consecrated body' and can practice his profession". (1978:39).

Many shamans today appear to be giving up their activities in favour of more passive and transcendentally-oriented merit making as tantric lamas (see Paul 1984b). Yet shamanism does appear to be legitimised by tantrism. It would be difficult to argue that shamans perpetuate their own profession by choice since it is considered unrewarding, of low status and polluting. As well, the illness involved in the calling is feared by most of the community. Thus it would appear that external inducements might be important. The myths of the origins of shamans and their relationships with lamas suggests that this is so. Lamas never entirely vanquished the shamans but rather perpetuated them, albeit in a subordinate position, through a division of labour.

This relationship of interdependence appears to be central to most Tibetan Buddhist communities (see Chapter 1). Schmid (1967) has observed this relationship among the Sherpas of Helambu. According to Schmid, Bon shamans in Helambu are often spiritual advisers to lamas, are highly esteemed, and are neither poor nor illiterate. There is virtually no difference between shamans and lamas in terms of paraphernalia, ritual procedure or place of worship. The only really important difference is in the flexibility with which Bon shamans use the texts relative to the lamas. (Tamang shamans on the other hand, and even lamas, are looked down upon by the Sherpas as being essentially inferior, despite being commissioned just as often. See also Holmberg 1980).

Morris (1938) commented of his experience among the Lepchas of Sikkim:

"I cannot remember attending any ceremony, apart of course from purely religious festivals, at which a lama and Mun [shaman] were not both officiating". (1938:122).

Even in the more rationalised religious environment of Tibet, Eliade (1964) has commented that:

"Lamaism has preserved the Bon shamanic tradition almost in its entirety". (1964:434).

Like the shaman, the reputation and power of lamas does vary according to his ability to mobilise support. As we have already observed in Chapter 1 the very history of Tibetan Buddhism appears to be motivated, at least in part by this interrelationship. (1)

A closer look at the relations mediated by officiants provides further evidence of the significance of the interrelationships underlying

(1) A relationship of interdependence is also of course found between tantrism and orthodox Buddhism, for tantrism, at least from a historical and doctrinal point of view, is perhaps more closely related to orthodox Buddhism than it is to shamanism. In fact it is more accurate to regard vajrayana as pervading throughout Buddhism rather than as a distinct entity. All sects are concerned with the evil influence of demons some of the time. Even the Dalai Lamas of the Gelugpa sect study and practice the tantras. Many cham (dance-dramas) performed by monasteries in Tibet were written by the 5th Dalai Lama (see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1976) and monks play an important (though usually assisting) role in such rituals.
Sherpa religion. The shaman, as we have seen, serves as a connector between man and the supernatural. The monk and reincarnate lama however appear to regard man and the supernatural, combined in samsara, as separate from nirvana. The goal of salvation is therefore achieved not by connection but through a separation of samsara from nirvana. The tantricist on the other hand sees this separation as an illusion and is oriented towards enabling man to achieve liberation through the union of samsara with nirvana. These differences may be summarised as follows:

A closer examination however reveals the links between these relationships. The celibate, orthodox monk proposes a fundamental opposition between samsara and nirvana. The shaman deals with an opposition between man and the supernatural within samsara. And the tantricist says that samsara and nirvana are merely illusory manifestations of the same dynamic process of being. The opposition between man and the supernatural appears to be structurally homologous to and contained within the opposition between samsara and nirvana, which in turn appears to be structurally homologous to and contained within the opposition between the illusion of a separation and the knowledge of the unity of samsara and nirvana. That is,

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{man} : \text{supernatural} & \iff \text{samsara} : \text{nirvana} \\
\text{nirvana} & \iff \text{unity}
\end{align*}
\]

In Paul's terms (1982), the shaman deals with an opposition within the conditioned component of the monk's opposition between the absolute and conditioned, which in turn the tantricist sees as a subdivision of a reality
which necessarily combines both. The relationships then are clearly not incompatible but rather reflect different dimensions of reality relevant to different needs in different circumstances.

4.2 Interpenetration

Paul (1982) and others have analysed the monastic reincarnate lama (*tulku*) role as being the direct opposite of the shaman in terms of worldly orientation, celibacy, cosmology and so on (see Chapter 2). This may well be the case from a theoretical point of view but in practice the division appears to be more arbitrary. In fact Aziz (1976), suggests that the reincarnate lama may be regarded as a shaman in his own right. Aziz bases her assertion on the fact that the reincarnate lama, like the shaman, does not acquire magical or spiritual power through training but rather this power is inherent in the phenomenon of reincarnation itself. Further, the reincarnate lama could be seen to perform a kind of controlled trance while performing divinatory and healing activity (which, incidentally, is seldom recorded in the ethnography). Says Aziz:

"the *tulku* may be understood as a para-shaman, refined in the course of Buddhist history to meet new doctrinal demands". (1976:358).

The reincarnate lama, introduced into the Solu-Khumbu only this century, is to an increasing extent taking over the functions once carried out by shamans and tantric lamas (see Chapter 5) because the reincarnate lama is, himself, a manifestation of the deities which the shaman and tantric lama sought to manipulate. Says Aziz:

"if the incarnation system operating between a deity and a *tulku* (reincarnate lama) can ... be considered spirit possession by 'the descent of the gods to man'... then the reincarnate lama can be seriously considered in the context of this wider definition of shamanism". (1976:344).
Similarly, Stablein (1976) has suggested that the tantric vajramaster (e.g. of the Mahakalatantra curing ritual) can be regarded as a neo-shaman. The cosmic tree of the shaman may be structurally equated with the spine or central channel of tantra. The shaman's power (ong) may be equated with the tantric power sakti. Shamans in their chants recite myths of the tantrist Padmasambhava and remind the demons of their oaths to accept substitutes. Like the integrative role of the shaman, the vajramaster too is a kind of connector (although at a more reified level) wherein duality is seen to be merely an illusion and actual union is sought. Says Stablein:

"[the vajramaster] joins syllables, substances, objects and beings into a ritual system that miniaturizes the totality of his cult... he transubstantiates it and transfers the resultant ambrosia to his community which is dependent on it for health, wealth and wisdom".  


Later he writes:

"Ecstasy in the Buddhist tantric sense, though not associated with magical flight per se that would denote a more dualistic universe of being, is related to the coupling eidetic images of Mahakala and his consort... historically the traditional calling of the classical shaman did not satisfy the vajramaster who had a sophisticated Buddhist canon at his fingertips. He did not reject the possibility of flying into the heavens, but first he had to become Mahakala".  

(1976:370,368).

The shaman paradoxically affirms a prior separation of natural and supernatural realms through his efforts to restore connections. The vajramaster on the other hand denies that the separation is a legitimate one in the first place, and his efforts are therefore directed towards establishing the essential unity of such apparent opposites. Furthermore, the vajramaster incorporates more elements of the orthodox Buddhist tradition than does the shaman. Stablein writes:

"The difference seems to be that the textual world of the vajramaster, despite the emphasis on the oral tradition, has conditioned his eyes to a more intellectually phenomenological station in the evolution of the shamanic complex".  

Nevertheless the shaman and the tantric 'vajramaster' roles are remarkably similar. The vajramaster, like the reincarnate lama, is considered capable of performing at least most of the shaman's rituals, if not in fact all of them.

The interpenetration of roles which Aziz and Stablein identify suggests that a rigid separation of traditions, roles and even practitioners is likely to be fraught with difficulties. Ortner (1970) has commented that it is often impossible to predict when a shaman will be used in preference to a lama or vice versa, for the same ritual task. Furthermore, a shaman will use very different techniques in different performances of the same ritual. And of course one shaman's techniques will be very different from those of another shaman. Even an arbitrary classification of differences such as I have attempted in Fig. 3:3 reveals that the tantric tradition contains within it, almost as a rule, elements of both the shamanic and the orthodox traditions. Tantrism certainly makes the common anthropological dichotomy between monk and shaman much more problematic in the case of Sherpa religion.

The on-ground reality, it seems, is that analytical boundaries, categories, and rules just do not hold. There is a flexibility, a context-specificity, a dynamism and interchangeability in the relationships between practitioners that defies classification into neat separate concrete boxes. This flexibility is of course partly a response to changing circumstances and needs (see Paul 1984b); but it is also synchronic, as Paul (1970) notes in his discussion of his fieldwork experience. It is at least partly due to the coexistence of multiple levels of reality, different but interpenetrating and equally valid. It is also partly due to the need to respond to the varied and varying needs of an essentially pragmatic laity. A layperson will be more transcendentally-oriented in
one context, at one stage of his/her life than at another. And of course
one layperson will be more transcendentally-oriented throughout their life
and experience than another. But in general the laity are less concerned
to see that the differences between practitioners, their traditions, or
levels of reality are maintained and applied consistently and
rigidly, as they are to see that their needs are met, in whatever way is
most appropriate.

4.3 Modalities

In view then of this evidence of interpenetration of roles and
the flexible, multidimensional approach to reality in Sherpa religion, it
would seem that orthodox Buddhism, shamanism and tantrism should be
approached not so much as distinct, static, concrete entities - not as
given anthropological 'facts' or categories from which to pursue analysis -
but rather as representing more general and fluid orientations to or
'modalities' of religious experience and ritual activity, any one of which
might well incorporate elements of more than one tradition within it.

The first modality is that of transcendence, of dealing with
the problems of existence in terms of other-worldly spiritual interpretations,
techniques and solutions. The emphasis is on withdrawal from the social
and material world, on separating the mind from the body and the
transcendental from the pragmatic. Doctrines are given much more importance
by virtue of being contained and reproduced in a sacred and powerful
literate tradition. The aim is to become godlike, to pursue salvation
and the concerns of the after-life rather than the concerns of life itself.
The second modality is that of pragmatism, of dealing with the problems
of existence in any way available which will improve the quality of life
in the everyday world. The emphasis here is on families and fellow
villagers, on crops and animals, on comfort and health. Participation in sociocultural life is highly valued, a harmonious balance is sought between mind and body, between person and person and between the community as a whole and the environment. Action is the key rather than ideals, and the manipulation of gods and circumstances through rituals is stressed.

These modalities are of course essentially ideal types, heuristic devices that have no independent observable reality of their own. They are offered not as an alternative means of classifying differences but as an alternative to classification itself. It is not the separate identity of modalities with which we are concerned therefore but rather with their articulation and interpenetration as it is manifest in and as it influences and is influenced by everyday life. No religious system manifests only one modality. All religious systems manifest a combination of both. It is the specific nature of this combination, at both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, that characterises one religious system from another. (1)

Orthodox Buddhism and particularly its ideology may be said to reflect a modality of transcendence (similar to what Samuel 1984 calls a 'rationalised' modal state) but tantric lamas and even shamans will also manifest elements of this modality in their activities. Shamanism may be said to reflect a modality of pragmatism (similar to what Samuel 1984 calls

(1) Samuel (1984) has a similar (though not identical) concern in proposing what he calls 'modal state theory'. This approach (which identifies a dynamic relationship or 'modal current' between a 'rationalised' and a 'shamanic' modality):
"is used more to demonstrate connections than to define contrasts, and the question of whether a particular social phenomenon is separate from another is in general less critical than the question of how and in what ways the two are interconnected". (1984:31).
A society is not characterised so much by one or the other modality as by the specific nature of the relationship between the two. Describing Tibetan society Samuel (1975) writes that:
"spirit mediums and straying life essences, malevolent spirits and local deities, Buddhist monks and tantric priests are not exclusive to Tibet; it is the specific nature of their interrelationships, the total gestalt that they form in Tibet that does not occur elsewhere". (1975:204).
a 'shamanic' modal state) but tantric lamas and even monks will also manifest elements of this modality in their activities. Tantrism, as Fig. 3:3 suggests, embodies elements of both the transcendental and pragmatic modalities, and ultimately denies the significance of the differences between them, while simultaneously maintaining an identity of its own.

Now remembering that this is an analytical heuristic separation only, the modalities may be summarised as follows:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modality</th>
<th>TRANSCENDENCE</th>
<th>PRAGMATISM</th>
<th>BOTH TRANSCENDENCE AND PRAGMATISM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worldly Orientation</td>
<td>Other-Worldly</td>
<td>This-Worldly</td>
<td>No separation of worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to man's sense of separation from the absolute</td>
<td>Overcome by separating body from spirit, transcending worldly involvement.</td>
<td>Overcome by connecting body and spirit, controlling the supernatural.</td>
<td>Sense of separation is an illusion; union of body and spirit assumed as vehicle for liberation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tradition represented</td>
<td>Orthodox Buddhism</td>
<td>Shamanism</td>
<td>Tantrism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle of reproduction</td>
<td>Sacred texts</td>
<td>Oral tradition</td>
<td>Oral and texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>Doctrine, wisdom (Skt: prajna).</td>
<td>Ritual, means (Skt: upaya)</td>
<td>Interdependence of doctrine and ritual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Individualistic, Soteriological</td>
<td>Integrative, therapeutic, Apotropaic</td>
<td>Mediatory, esoteric, existential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of ritual</td>
<td>Nyungne</td>
<td>Shamanic curing seance</td>
<td>Exorcism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to this framework, a transcendental modality holds that man's sense of duality (i.e., his sense of separation from other individuals, between humanity as a whole and the supernatural realm and

I would suggest however that the identification of transcendence and pragmatism as modalities conforms with Buddhist world view to a greater degree than does Samuel's identification of 'shamanic' and 'rationalised' modal states (which themselves might be seen as essentially Western concepts).
between the phenomenal world and the absolute) is part of the suffering resulting from worldly attachment and pollution. Man must rise above or transcend these attachments and impurities to be saved from suffering. A pragmatic modality on the other hand holds that man's sense of duality must be overcome through activity within the world, for man's very survival depends on such activity. Tantrism takes a rather different view. It is founded on the assumption that duality is an illusion, created by an untamed mind limited in its perception of the whole, and thus forever dividing the world up into subject/object, natural/supernatural and so on. Duality suggests fear, and fear suggests ignorance. Duality may exist but ultimately it is not real. The essential unity and interconnectedness of all phenomena can be recognised not by a reaction against worldly concerns, nor by an attempt to restore connections (which presupposes a separation) but rather by a direct confrontation with the source of illusion, a utilisation of material phenomena as a vehicle for liberation, and an incorporation of both transcendental orientations and pragmatic concerns.

The notion of modalities is particularly useful for explaining anomalies between theory and actual practice. It suggests for example that a lama's activities may be accurately described as transcendental in gyepshi (with some minor pragmatic elements) but essentially pragmatic in do dzongup (with some minor transcendental elements), without this necessarily constituting some kind of a contradiction. (At another time the activities may be reversed. This flexibility applies of course throughout Sherpa religion, although it is perhaps more characteristic of tantric lamas due to their mediatory role). The combination of elements in gyepshi, relative to do dzongup might be labelled 'Tp', where the transcendental modality is dominant and the pragmatic subordinate. The combination of elements in do dzongup on the other hand might be labelled
'tP', where it is the pragmatic modality which is dominant relative to gyepshi. Of course, if gyepshi is analysed relative to an orthodox ascetic ritual such as Nyungne, then it might be labelled 'tP' (and Nyungne as 'Tp') because any exorcism is, in general, more pragmatically-oriented than orthodox rituals emphasising renunciation and other-worldly pursuits.

Using this same approach, it might be possible to label the clergy as a whole as 'Tp', because of their religious activity, relative to a laity which is 'tP', because of their basic pragmatism. (Of course in practice a pious or elderly layman may well be more transcendentally-oriented in a particular context, or even in their whole approach to their existence, than monks, who have a reputation for being quite worldly).

In fact it would seem that a great diversity of doctrines, rituals, practitioners, practices, events and even changes might be usefully and accurately analysed in this way. The emphasis would move, for example, from how exorcism 'A' is different from exorcism 'B' to how the two exorcisms are interrelated.

The effect of this interrelationship and interpenetration between modalities is that the one reaffirms and legitimates the other. This can be seen if we look again at the case of exorcisms. In the do dzongrup it is possible to identify the tiger figure (suggesting the purely animal realm) as representing a pragmatic modality relative to the human figures whose anomalous nature is more transcendental. The effigy as a whole however does consist of a combination of the two. Without the tiger, the animal demonic tendencies of man could not be represented; without the human figures the demonic tendencies would be seen to be beyond control. The existence of one paradoxically legitimates the existence of the other.
That they are not opposed in any absolute sense becomes apparent when we compare the do dzongup with gyepshi. At this level of analytical focus, do dzongup (suggesting the temporary inversion of the cosmological order and the control of demonic influences through tangible violent activity) represents a pragmatic modality relative to the more transcendental modality of gyepshi (suggested by the more passive replacement of a purely human figure effigy with the Buddha idol). That these two exorcisms are not opposed in any absolute sense becomes apparent when we compare exorcisms as a whole with such other orthodox rituals as Nyungne. At this level of analytical focus, exorcisms (which deal with such day to day concerns as illness, misfortune etc.) represent a pragmatic modality relative to the more transcendental Nyungne.

At the same time of course exorcisms appear to represent a transcendental modality relative to the more pragmatic modality reflected by shamanic divination (and suggested by the more spontaneous, innovative basis of shamanic ritual, its dependence on local worldly deities, its utilisation for pragmatic purposes, the tendency for shamans to give up their practices later in life and become lamas so that spiritual concerns can be pursued). As we have already seen, the tantric lamas and shamans cooperate closely and legitimate each other's existence.

In sum, the relationship between transcendental and pragmatic modalities is not a fixed, concrete one but rather one of underlying structure. Its surface manifestations (i.e. both its components and the specific nature of their articulation) will vary according to the circumstances of each case but the relationship of interdependence between them remains fundamental to Sherpa religion. Liberation does not exclude but rather is implicit in worldly existence. Doctrines and beliefs complement rituals and practice. Man's spiritual yearnings can be pursued, safe in the knowledge that his material existence is secure.
Teilhard de Chardin writes:

"Unity, overflowing with life, joined battle through the process of creation with the multiple which, though nonexistent in itself, opposed it as a contrast, and as a challenge."

(quoted by O'Flaherty 1976:370).

4.4 Transformations

If we examine again the relationships between modalities at a variety of levels of analytical focus we note that they appear to be not only structurally homologous, but also to be contained within each other. That is, the relationship between the tiger and human figures in do dzongup is contained within the relationship between do dzongup and gyepshi in exorcism, which in turn is contained within the relationship between exorcism and Nyungne in Sherpa religion, and so on. That is, the relationship between transcendental and pragmatic modalities at any one particular level of the Sherpa cultural system, at any one particular time or any one particular manifestation may be seen as a structural transformation, congruent with other such transformations, of a general principle of relationship.

In the case of the data we are examining in this study, the following structural relationships can be identified.

Tiger : Human :: Do dzongup : Gyepshi ::

Exorcism : Nyungne :: religious activity : Buddhahood

The transformations implied in these relationships might be represented as follows:

Fig. 4:3
where the relationship between the tiger figure and the human figure (circled) is contained within the *do dzongup* exorcism (triangled) and so on. To reinforce the fact that it is the relationship that we are concerned with at this stage rather than that which is related, the following arrangement might also be identified:

Fig. 4:4

According to this arrangement, the relationship between a Buddha idol (representing a transcendental modality) and a human figure (representing a pragmatic modality) is contained within *gyepshi*, which (representing a transcendental modality) articulates with *do dzongup* (representing a pragmatic modality) within exorcism, which in turn articulates with shamanic divination within religion and so on. Note that in this case the human effigy is pragmatic rather than transcendental, that exorcism is transcendental rather than pragmatic, that religion is transcendental relative to society. Again, the point here is not whether exorcism etc. is or is not pragmatic or transcendental but rather the structural relationship it participates in and its transformations.

A number of ethnographers, influenced by structuralism, have demonstrated the importance of looking at relations underlying the differences between traditions in religious systems in Southeast and South Asian communities. (1)

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(1) As I have indicated in Chapter 1, this discussion owes much to the work of Tambiah (1970), Ames (1964), Mandelbaum (1966), Campbell (1976, 1978) and Samuel (1978a and b, 1984) in particular.
Interestingly enough however, the notion of transformations does not appear to have been explored in great detail. One writer who does discuss them is Paul (1982). Like others of a structuralist bent, Paul is intrigued by the possibility that, underlying the diversity and complexity of Sherpa culture, there is a simple unity; what Goethe has called a 'holy riddle'. In his discussion of his fieldwork experience, Paul (1970) writes that:

"one unexpected problem I ran into in trying to collect data on details of explicit religious symbolism was the constant practice of lamas whom I interviewed to assure me that the details were of no importance, that all concrete symbols such as specific conceptions of individual gods etc. were only ways of approaching the Truth". (1970:278).

Over time, Paul came to the conclusion that differences really do not matter to the Sherpas because reality is all-encompassing. The tolerance shown by orthodox Buddhism to variant interpretations, to introduced techniques and to seemingly anti-orthodox behaviour reflects a view of reality in which, relative to the absolute, all is ultimately illusory. Being absolute, the absolute cannot be defined or divided. Yet being absolute, it cannot exclude the definitions and divisions of the unenlightened mind either. In any case, such divisions may aid the development of awareness of the absolute. Thus, both the relative and the absolute are incorporated within Sherpa religion, generating different but equally legitimate interpretations of reality which, upon closer examination, are found to be transformational homologies of each other. Paul (1982) quotes an informant as saying that Buddhism:

"is like an egg. You can fry it, boil it, scramble it or poach it, but it's still the same egg" (quoted by Paul 1982:304).

Kapferer (1983) in a discussion of Sri Lankan exorcism recognises this unity within theravadin Buddhism as well.

(1) See Chapter 2 for an outline of his notion of transformations of the relationships between the absolute and the conditioned.
Kapferer writes that:

"the changeability of gods and demons, that they can occasionally manifest their ontological oppositions, supports the view that deities and demons constitute mulitiple refractions of the possibilities underlying the process of the cosmic unity. . . [their common] power of illusion is a metaphor of the fluidity and process of the system in which deities and demons are composed and which is variously composed in them". (1983:117).

All manifest forms, no matter how illusory, are part of an absolute reality which does not exclude the parts but is always greater than their sum.

Sherpa religion then is a holistic system, both integrated and integrating. A series of relationships of interdependence between transcendental and pragmatic modalities are inter-connected by virtue of their common structural form - each is a transformation of the others. This 'pattern of patterns' serves to link every component of the religious system with every other component in a functional and meaningful way.

As long as this structural unity is maintained, surface level practices and techniques can be changed virtually at will. The shaman can introduce a new healing deity into his rituals, the lama can 'discover' a new text, a new herbalist can discover latent powers, and the layperson can choose between a variety of apparently conflicting healing methods and substances. Even Western medicine can be introduced, alleviating symptoms without seriously challenging the beliefs concerning the causes of such symptoms.

Throughout this study I have cast Ortner as the leading proponent of the 'conflict' hypothesis. However even Ortner recognises the inter-penetration and complementarity underlying the surface manifestations of conflict. Recognising the unifying influence of ritual, Ortner (1978) writes:

"through the symbolic process of the ritual... religion in the most general sense is made to be less selfishly oriented than it, in pure dogmatic form appears to be, while secular life is made to be less sinful, less self-interested and mired in sensuality for its own sake than it, from the religious perspective, appears to be". (1978:154).
According to Ortner, rituals 'lower' religion and 'raise' society. Transcendental orientations are made more relevant to pragmatic concerns, and pragmatic behaviour becomes more involved with transcendental concerns. Something of a 'balance' is achieved, but this is a process, not an end result. The 'balance' remains fragile and temporary at the surface level and must be continually reconstructed and realigned with underlying structures through ritual activity. Ritual can and must manage conflicts and problems but it cannot resolve them permanently for then there would be no further need of ritual.

4.5 Asymmetry of relations.

Ortner's analyses are important for they provide solid evidence that a relationship of interdependence does not necessarily imply a relationship of equality, either at a surface level or a structural level. Relations are not static. Relationships do change over time and it is more than likely that a particular tradition or the modality which it represents will be dominant at one particular historical period. We have already noted the ascendancy of orthodox Buddhism in central Tibet since the seventeenth century. It is even possible that the Sherpa migration was prompted by such changes. Prior to the introduction of monasticism early this century, the tantric lamas appear to have been in command, as reflected in Sherpa myths, texts and division of responsibilities. Tantric dominance did however imply a reconciliation of theory and practice, doctrine and ritual, other worldly orientations and this worldly activities.

Since the introduction of monasticism, the orthodox Buddhist tradition has rapidly gained ascendancy in Sherpa religious and social life. Its dominance today is evident from the following. Firstly, the time, wealth and energy spend on orthodox ritual activity is far greater
than that spent on shamanic activity. As all ethnographies demonstrate, the orthodox ritual calendar is a full one, with regular public or spontaneous privately commissioned rituals occurring nearly every day. The 'case books' of lamas of Khumjung provided by von Furer-Haimendorf (1964) attests to this fact. The amount of time required for the preparation of such rituals as Dumje, Byangbe and Mani Rimdu is considerable, given the elaborate altars and tormas required. The expenditure involved in public feasts and the materials necessary for making up tormas etc. are so large that responsibility for these is rotated among village members over a twelve year period.

Secondly, the first and final resort, even in many cases of simple illness, is to the Buddhas and it is only after this that the supernaturals and deities are invoked. Orthodox practitioners are believed capable of performing any of the functions that shamans are responsible for, and do not do so only because they are considered lowly and polluting. Any sense of the sacred that Sherpas might have is applied to the orthodox rather than shamanic context. Often considerable effort is expended in gaining orthodox legitimacy for activity. Ortner (1978) notes how Sherpa shamans often justify sacrifices to local deities by suggesting that these deities in turn want to give the offerings to the Buddhas.

Thirdly, as I have demonstrated, ritual activity, whether shamanic, tantric or orthodox, ultimately affirms the supremacy of the Buddhas. By alleviating immediate symptoms and identifying proximal causes (i.e. demons, spirits etc.) shamanic healing enables orthodox Buddhism to get on with ultimate causes (i.e. karma, ignorance .). Compared to the low status of shamans, the ambivalence towards their curing power and the suspicion in which they are held, the monks and reincarnate lamas enjoy an institutionalised high status and their rituals are seldom questioned.
Their access to a literate tradition seems partly responsible for this. As Paul (1976) notes:

"Sherpas often say that you cannot trust a shaman because you never know whether what he sees when possessed are really the gods or only his individual imagination or even a fabrication. But a lama chanting from a book cannot possibly make a mistake for the letters themselves contain truth". (1976:140).

Similarly, Epstein (1977) notes:

"the oracle's power is ambiguous, the lamas never". (1977:235).

The Sherpas obviously admire and respect power but they literally worship the monks and reincarnate lamas. The greater their renunciation of power and the greater their ascetic endeavour the more they are venerated. At the same time, reincarnate lamas do also enjoy some political power.

Thus it would appear that orthodox Buddhism is the dominant tradition, at the level of ideology, in Sherpa religion. But the clergy needs to be fed. Orthodox services must be in demand; orthodox rituals must be attended. Religion is something 'done' as much as something believed and ritual plays a more important role in affecting the behaviour of the laity than do doctrines. In fact many doctrines are little understood by the laity - distinctions between existence and reality for example are not necessarily an important part of a layperson's education, and do not need to be, for these concerns are looked after by the clergy. The laity therefore, at the level of behaviour, remains essentially pragmatic. Doctrines such as those of karma, when viewed from the perspective of a pragmatic layman, are not hard and fast rules for living but rather provide a foundation in which pragmatism is both tolerated and even encouraged.

There is a folk song, from the Amdo region in Tibet which expresses well this interplay between transcendence and pragmatism:
"Do not fire the gun, says the lama
The word of the honoured lama, indeed, is true
But full of wild yaks are the rocky, chequered mountains
To shoot not even one of them - that will hardly do”.

(quoted by Sierksma 1966:15).

On the one hand, behaviour is subsumed within ideology and pragmatic concerns appear to be secondary to transcendental concerns. On the other hand ideology is subsumed within behaviour and transcendental concerns, if anything, provide a rationale for behaviour. Obviously both perspectives are valid and both need to be considered in a study of relations in Sherpa religion.

4.6 The mediation of tantrism.

Tantrism, as we have seen, is based squarely on the principle of the interdependence, interpenetration, and ultimately the union of wisdom (Skt: prajna) and method (Skt: upaya). Knowledge has value only insofar as it derives from (and informs) experience, through action. Action without a solid foundation in knowledge has little value. Through their union however contact is made possible with both the dynamic flow of everyday life (existence) and the primordial unconditioned absolute (reality). Guenther (1976) quotes the Vimalakirtinirdesasutra:

"action divorced from appreciative discrimination (prajna) is a fetter; appreciative discrimination divorced from action (upaya) is a fetter. Action endowed with appreciative discrimination is freedom (moksa). Appreciative discrimination endowed with action is freedom. Their unity, like that of the lamp and its light, is spontaneously understood through the instruction of a competent teacher".

(quoted 1976:52).

The union of wisdom and means, of good and evil, noumenal and phenomenal releases a power that enables 'being' - a healing process which itself is enlightenment and liberation from suffering. Yet it also enables, through the person of the tantric lama (and the mad saint), continued compassionate participation in worldly activities. It offers the layperson
an alternative means of liberation to the impractical approach of the orthodox establishment. It does not so much resolve paradoxes, oppositions, differences or conflicts as dissolve them and render them irrelevant. Because existence is a continuing, ever changing phenomena, and because man continues to exist, differences and conflicts must still be managed and effectively dealt with. Yet they no longer need control humanity or bring overwhelming suffering, for their true nature has been revealed.

Tantrism, by containing within it the union of theory and practice, serves to mediate theory and practice, to demonstrate their interdependence, to enable the transformation from one to the other. It could very well be argued then that tantrism IS a theory of practice and makes such an approach possible.

Tantrism thus holds, in many ways, the key to this whole discussion. It is not enough to merely posit that articulation occurs between transcendental and pragmatic modalities without showing how this is achieved. And it is not enough to merely posit that transformations of the relationship between modalities are generated without showing how this is achieved. Just as electricity, generated by the articulation of positive and negative particles, does not flow without a channel which contains both particles (e.g. a wire), so too the energy inherent in the relation between elements of an opposition does not flow unless there exists something which connects (and thus contains) both elements. An opposition must be mediated. Consciousness and action, to be transformed into each other, must be mediated. Doctrine and ritual, the pragmatic and transcendental, shamanism and orthodox Buddhism, to coexist, articulate and produce history, must be mediated. It is tantrism I suggest, in the case of Sherpa religion (and Tibetan mahayana Buddhism in general), which achieves this mediation.
It is tantrism I suggest which induces a more holistic integration and structural unity than is found in theravadin Buddhist communities lacking a tantric tradition.

As I have already indicated many elements of the tantric tradition are almost identical to elements of the shamanic tradition. Tantric lamas perform shamanic rituals and shamans are known to perform tantric rituals (such as exorcisms). Both share an emphasis on ritual as a way of expressing, confronting, transforming and thus managing the paradoxes of existence. At the same time, tantrism is essentially a Buddhist tradition. Few Sherpas would argue otherwise. Tantricists adhere to most orthodox doctrines; orthodox clergy undertake training in tantric practices. Prior to the introduction of monasticism this century and the influx of refugee orthodox reincarnate lamas from Tibet, the tantric lamas were the sole representatives of Buddhism in Solu-Khumbu. Thus it is clear that tantrism embodies elements of both the shamanic and orthodox Buddhist traditions (see Fig. 3:3), and both transcendental and pragmatic modalities (see Fig.4:2). At the same time it has its own distinct identity, for its emphasis is on recognising the essential unity of apparent opposites; of overcoming duality not by transcending it, nor by connecting what appears disconnected, but by demonstrating that it is an illusion.

The tantric ritual gcod, for example, is intended says Tucci (1980):

"to cut off the discursive process at the root and so directly help bring about the insight that in reality nothing exists. Out of this flows liberation from all dichotomies of good or bad and thus from all the fears of life, including the fear of birth and of death, and therefore from all deceptive appearance". (1980:87).

Similarly, the tantric doctrine of voidness, says Sierksma (1966)

"not only philosophically connected the phenomenal world (samsara) and the world of absolute mind (nirvana), making them a dialectical two-in-one in which thought could reconcile matter and mind; it also linked the masses and the intellectuals, feeling with understanding". (1966:42).
Evil and good, suffering and bliss, body and spirit are not discrete static entities but approximations to and alienations from an absolute reality in which there is no division.

All this may sound very intellectual and complicated but the essence of tantrism is its practical simplicity. As Guenther (1976) says,
tantrism:

"doesn't ask man to turn himself into an impossibility but to realise his potentialities". (1976:119).

"for tantrism, reality is the ever present task of man to be". (1976:ix).

Liberation is a process, not a thing. Withdrawal from the world and from life is therefore futile. Epstein (1977) wrote:

"whereas the scholastic approach to transcendence in Buddhism teaches that involvement with the world is polluting, sinful and counter-productive in terms of salvation; in tantric practice phenomena, because they are ultimately devoid of meanings may serve as vehicles for salvation-oriented activities.. mundane activity performed with an awakened mind is thus ipso facto transformed into spiritual activity". (1977:136).

Continued participation in sociocultural life and the expression of a bodhisattva's compassion is necessary because the attainment by an individual of the absolute is a contradiction in terms. All must be enlightened before one can be enlightened just as all suffer because of one's suffering. Tantrism is as much a pragmatic science (as evidenced for example in tantric healing practices) as it is an esoteric doctrine and it is therefore the perfect mediator.

Epstein (1977, 1978) has taken a particular interest in the mediating influence of tantrism. Epstein comments that the concept of the noumenal and the phenomenal - what he calls the 'Two Truths' (Tib: bden-pa gnyis) - has been misunderstood by the scholastic and philosophy-oriented orthodox establishment, resulting in a radical and false separation between
the two. This separation is evident in the apparently competing theories of causation in Tibetan Buddhism (1) (karma vs supernatural intervention), and between what Gombrich (1971) calls the cognitive, life-denying aspects of Buddhism and the affective, life-affirming aspects (see also Paul 1979). The resolution of duality says Epstein is thus a focal issue in Tibetan religious life. Tantrism in particular

"shows us that the duality which binds us is a product of our own unrealised nature and can consequently be overcome". (1978:337).

Epstein (1977) in fact identifies two mediating processes subsumed within tantrism. (Both are reminiscent of what Turner 1969 called processes of anti-structure, or 'communitas'). The first process Epstein calls 'neutralisation', based on the liberating power inherent in the knowledge that distinctions are illusions, and involving the denial of the ontological properties or legitimacy of distinct components of a relation or system. The mad-saint, with his reversal of normal behaviour and use of the mundane to pursue liberation, is a classic example of this process in action. The mad-saint is an exceptionally popular figure. His radically anti-conventional yet undeniably spiritual behaviour suggests that he is beyond judgment, thus beyond karma. He is thus living proof for the ordinary Buddhist lay-person that liberation is in fact possible, and that the duality which gives rise to normal social conventions and notions of morality can be overcome.

Nevertheless the ideal of the mad-saint is as difficult to achieve in practice (given the pragmatic constraints against such behaviour) as ascetic orthodox renunciation. Thus there is a second complementary process of mediation - what Epstein calls 'triadisation' or the emphasising of a distinction to enable the release of the transformational power that lies between components of a relation. Triadisation is manifest in the role of the bodhisattva who is more orthodox than the mad-saint. Both, however, are in the world but not of it. According to Epstein (1977) the

(1) See Chapter 2.
bodhisattva mediates between the lama (as a metonymic summarising symbol) and the shaman (as a metaphoric elaborating symbol). (1) Triadisation transforms oppositions from rigid structures to fluid processes. It does not so much resolve oppositions as dissolve them.

Paul (1982) notes the frequency of triadic structures and their transformations in Tibetan Buddhism. These include the three 'worlds': desire, form, formlessness; the three 'modes of knowing': direct sense, understanding, enlightenment; the three fields of study: vinaya, sutra, tantra; and the three stages of training: instruction, repetition, power. Others are of course the triad of body, speech and mind; the Sangha Dharma and Buddha; the attendants, medicine and the doctor; and so on. The structural dynamics of these triads are capable of generating a potentially infinite number of transformations, which together provide a holistic system in which all paradoxes, problems and apparent inconsistencies can be managed. Paul argues that these triadic transformations are in fact characteristic of Sherpa religion, and thus an approach which emphasises rigid, unidimensional dichotomies is bound to be inadequate.

The power of tantric ritual is believed to be very potent, and the awareness of the interconnectedness of all phenomena, assumed and reinforced by tantrism, is held to be a lasting refuge from the paradoxes and suffering brought on by their separation. In fact once this perspective has been gained it is difficult to see how the illusion of separation can be maintained. The complexity of the cosmos, at both philosophical and material dimensions can be explored in its own right without the constant hindrance of making this exploration rationally 'sound' or 'objectively consistent'.

(1) For a discussion of these terms see also Ortner (1973).
Milarepa, one of the more famous mad-saints recognised this when he wrote:

"that all the wealth revealed
and all the circling three fold worlds contain
Unreal as it is, can yet be seen - and in such splendour -
that is the miracle". (quoted by Sierksma 1966:26).

A focus on relations then, like tantrism, does not deny at an analytical level the existence of differences, dichotomies and oppositions. Rather, having shown these to be surface manifestations of an underlying relationship (and therefore somewhat illusory, changing and context-specific) it can then go on and confront and explore these differences. The result, I suggest, is an understanding which is not afraid to raise questions as it proposes answers.

4.7 The traditional healing system: a case-study.

The study of concepts and practices relating to healing reveals much, I suggest, about the relations and transformations underlying a particular cultural configuration. This is because healing is involved simultaneously with problems of meaning, psychological states and social relationships as well as physical conditions. The close interaction and overlap between healing and religion has long been recognised. Tylor (2) even suggested that religion may have derived from the need to explain illness. Gorer (1938) wrote in the case of the Lepchas of Sikkim that:

"the fear of illness and the ceremonies against it form by far the largest impact of religion on the life of the average Lepcha; a lama is far more a doctor than he is a priest". (1938:208).

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(1) Comaroff (1981) has said that the knowledge and practice of healing "give form to key conceptions and values in all cultures and play upon the identity of physical and social being... the context of affliction is an important locus for both the reinforcement and the reformulation of sociocultural categories". (1981:367).

(2) quoted by Murdoch (1980).
The healer is often identified as standing at the interstice of religion, magic and the social order (where these are identified as distinct at all)\(^{(1)}\).

The mediatory role of the healer has thus been an important focus for anthropological endeavour.\(^{(2)}\) Furthermore, a study of healers and their concepts and functions is very important to the study of social change.\(^{(3)}\)

It is appropriate then that the traditional\(^{(1a)}\) healing system serves as a case-study of the relations which I have identified in Sherpa religion more generally.

The traditional healing system of the Sherpas derives from the Tibetan Buddhist approach to healing. The Tibetan term for dharma is 'chos', which means literally 'to heal'. Kunzang (1973), a Tibetan lama doctor says that the Tibetan medical system:

"is the principal source from which benefits for both the world AND nirvana can be derived". (1973:31).

Healing is at once a transcendental and a pragmatic concern.

The historical link between Buddhism and healing can be seen in the Suvarnaprabhasasutra which relates how the Buddha, in a previous incarnation, studied and practiced medicine as a practical, pragmatic means of expressing compassion.\(^{(4)}\) Gautama Buddha himself is said to have studied medicine while in retreat in the medical forest of Nemyod\(^{(5)}\) and taught the medical text Vimalagotra after his first sermon at Sarnath.\(^{(6)}\)

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\(^{(1)}\) See e.g. Landy: (1974).
\(^{(2)}\) See e.g. Moerman (1979).
\(^{(3)}\) See Chapter 5. Comaroff (1981) writes:

"the context of healing affords privileged insight into the relationship between individual experience and the sociocultural order, a relationship which lies at the heart of social transformation more generally. And the evolution of therapeutic systems themselves cannot be considered adequately without taking account of these more encompassing processes". (1981:369).

\(^{(1a)}\) I use the term 'traditional' to connote the healing system practiced by the Sherpas and excluding Western medicine. No detailed study has, as yet, been made of this system. However its importance is noted in texts, myths and informants' accounts in the ethnography.

\(^{(4)}\) See Birnbaum (1979).
\(^{(5)}\) See Rabgay (1981).
\(^{(6)}\) See Kunzang (1973).
Later he is said to have given talks on the most famous of all Tibetan medical texts, the rGyud-bzhi (literally 'Four Tantras'). (1) Many of the famous early Buddhist figures such as Nagarjuna wrote important medical texts. The Buddhas' medical tradition and much of the Indian ayurvedic system on which it was based was imported into Tibet along with Buddhism in the seventh century. (2) The vajrayana took a particular interest in healing as a practical means of expressing the unity of wisdom and method. Padmasambhava himself wrote the medical text bDud rtsi'i sNyin-po. Bon medical texts such as the gZi-brjid (3) combined shamanic with more orthodox approaches to healing. The result of this interaction between traditions over time was a system of medicine which, as Clifford (1984) says was:

"unique for its blend of spiritual, 'magical', and rational healing practices... there is no other medical tradition in the world that is so coherently developed in terms of a philosophy and metaphysics. (1984:3,5)."

Both Buddhist healing and Buddhist philosophy are based on the principle of the interconnectedness of the universe and both recognise that the source of suffering lies in the illusion of separation and duality.

Central to the Sherpa healing system then is the notion that the body is not an isolated, independent unit. It has multiple links with the metaphysical as well as the physical world. Imbalances or disruptions to any of these links will result in some form of illness. Yeshe Dhonden the Dalai Lama's physician has explained it thus:

"as a body, man is a microcosmic but faithful reflection of the macrocosmic reality in which he is embedded and which preserves and nourishes him every second of his life... health is the proper relationship between the microcosm which is man and the macrocosm which is the universe. Disease is a disruption of this relationship". (Dhonden, quoted by Anderson 1979:95).

Healing therefore is not merely the pragmatic treatment of an isolated symptom, nor is it merely the transcendental pursuit of a state of spiritual

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(2) See Kunzang (1973) for a discussion of this history.
(3) See Snellgrove (1967) for a translation of parts of this text.
purity. Rather it is both. It incorporates a complex science which restores harmonious relations between organs, tissues, bones etc. within the physical body. But it also involves, and in fact depends on the simultaneous restoration of relations between the physical and the metaphysical, or vajra body, as well as between individuals within a community, between the community as a whole and the environment, and ultimately between the whole phenomenal world and the absolute.

In such a situation it might be expected that Western medicine—which deals primarily with symptoms as if they had an independent existence of their own—would have no place. Yet among the Sherpas it is held in high regard both because of its association with high-status Western technology and its demonstrated effectiveness in dealing with certain (though by no means all) physiological symptoms. To a substantial degree it has

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(1) Some texts estimate there are over 100,000 channels between the physical and vajra body (See Burang 1983). The vajra body is less connected with the physical body during sleep or states of trance or altered consciousness and at such times demonic and spirit forces are said to be much more powerful. The delicacy of the relationships and their essentially metaphysical nature means that surgery is potentially very damaging, if not in fact irrelevant. (It is used of course for the alleviation of pain).

(2) This approach to healing might be equated with the so-called systems view of healing. Fabrega (1974) says that: "in a unified or system's view of disease, not only are the manifestations or expressions of what we term disease seen as interconnected and hierarchically organised (i.e. as segments of a whole) but in addition the determinants of disease are also conceptualised holistically. Disease is seen as a natural consequence of man's open relationship with his physical and social environment...disease is not viewed as a discrete and discontinuous state that attaches to an organism in space and time. What obtains instead are systems in articulation - molecular systems within cells, biochemical energy-processing systems at the tissue level, homeostatically geared systems at the organ-physiologic level, biopsychologic and sociopsychologic systems at the level of the self, sociointerpersonal systems at the family and institutional level, etc. All levels of this complex, hierarchically organised system are described as being implicated in the processual stream of life...cause is multifactorial, processes are interconnected, and manifestations are multifaceted...A symptom or a 'sign' of dysfunction then appears to be equally medical whether it occurs at the biochemical level, the psychological level or the social level...the ontology, location, and/or boundedness of disease, in both a spatial and temporal sense, become problematic" (1974:140-41).

(3) The Cartesian basis of Western medicine and the problems associated with it (e.g. iatrogenesis, emphasis on curing and symptoms rather than prevention and causes) have been discussed by Illich(1977), Capra (1982) Tausig (1980).
challenged the traditional healing functions of the shamans and lamas.

It is important to note however that a Western medicine-based health care system has some serious shortcomings, at least in the Sherpa context. Such factors as geographic distance, poverty, and the sheer demand for services means that only a small proportion of the Sherpa population has access to Western health care services. More importantly, it is incapable of dealing with the supernatural causes held to lie at the base of all illness. Even at the level of treating symptoms it is limited by the degree of expertise of personnel, the availability of medicines etc. It would appear then that there is little likelihood of it completely replacing the traditional healing system, at least in the short term.

Now it is possible to identify three main components of the Sherpa traditional healing system, corresponding to those of the religious system, namely the orthodox, the shamanic and the tantric components. A focus on the differences between these connections might reveal a classification something as follows:—

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>ORTHODOX</th>
<th>SHAMANIC</th>
<th>TANTRIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Orientation</td>
<td>Transcendental, Other-worldly</td>
<td>Pragmatic, This-worldly</td>
<td>Both, no separation of worlds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dimension of healing</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Social, Cosmological</td>
<td>Psycho-physical, All dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practitioners</td>
<td>Monks, reincarnate lamas, Tibetan doctors.</td>
<td>Shamans, mediums.</td>
<td>Tantric lamas, vajramasters, lay specialists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of pantheon dealt with</td>
<td>Universal 'high' deities</td>
<td>Localised deities, supernaturals.</td>
<td>Tantric deities, demons, all levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Techniques</td>
<td>Soteriological, merit accumulation, Tibetan medical system.</td>
<td>Divination, Exorcisms, life-offerings, sacrifices, empowerment rites, social mediation (through possession and very rarely, soul journey).</td>
<td>Specialist curing rites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to body-spirit relation</td>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Union, mediation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(4) See Wake (1976). Western medicine has only been introduced into the Solu-Khumbu in the last thirty years or so. Elsewhere in Nepal Western medicine is also popular. See Stone (1976), Blustain (1976), Grewe (1981).

According to this classification, shamanic healing may be said to be essentially pragmatic. Shamans achieve physical healing within the individual through a connection of body and spirit which appear to have become separated as a result of evil influences such as nerpa (such was the case with Sonam). (1) They also achieve social wellbeing through the mediation of disputes and restoration of social relationships. (2) Orthodox Buddhism approaches healing at a more transcendental level. It regards the only permanently effective cure as one which transcends the illusions and suffering of this worldly existence and which therefore separates the spirit from the body. Tantric healing is characterised by a combination of the shamanic and orthodox approaches, while simultaneously maintaining its own independent identity. It is founded on a recognition of the illusion of any body-spirit dichotomy and seeks to release the healing power inherent in the union of apparently opposing forces. I have classified the formal Tibetan medical system into the orthodox component. However, as I shall demonstrate, it is possible to identify a division between somatic, dharmic and tantric elements within the Tibetan medical system as well. (3)

A Sherpa who was experiencing some kind of illness is likely to have first discussed his/her condition with friends, and perhaps be recommended a medicine or minor ritual that could be undertaken privately. If this did not work, or the condition was more serious, a lay specialist might be asked for advice or a prescription. If the condition was more serious again, a shaman of some kind would be sought and/or a tantric lama. If death seems a real possibility some monks, or even a reincarnate lama might be called in to perform the recitations necessary in death rites. The choice of healers however will vary considerably in practice according

(2) See Chapter 3.
to the social status, wealth, education, and religious orientations of
the clients, as well as the reputations of particular healers in particular
contexts. Ortner (1970) discusses the case of the healing of Rinzing
Tenzima by a herbalist called Dawa. The following is Dawa's account:
"Rinzing Tenzima became very sick, though she didn't realise it was
from the poison. She called the lama who read his books; she called
the shaman who went into a trance; she called the Americans who gave
her an injection but all to no avail. Then her husband came to [me]
but [I] said she was too close to death and then the medicine wouldn't
work and then everyone would think my medicine was bad. The husband
begged and pleaded and finally I gave in... after two or three days
she began to look better and finally she threw up some black thing
which immediately disappeared and she recovered. She has been very
fond of me ever since". (quoted by Ortner 1970:169).

The problems I have identified with a focus on differences in Sherpa
religion appear therefore also, in a focus on differences in Sherpa healing.
Shamans are often trained by lamas and lamas may retain shamans as advisors.
lamas and Tibetan doctors use the shaman's techniques and both shamans,
monks and even laymen have access to tantric techniques. The shaman
prescribes rituals performed by monks and lamas, and vice versa, and any
number of different specialists may be utilised in the same context. What
appears shamanic in one context may well be regarded as orthodox in another.
Variations will occur according to the social status of the patient/sponsor,
the relationship between patient and healer, the place, time etc. A shaman
can introduce a new technique or even a new deity, a lama can 'discover'
a new text, a new herbalist can discover latent talents. A classification
of differences between components is not particularly helpful in
illuminating these phenomena.

(1) According to Ortner (1970) the traditional wealthy families tend to
favour the orthodox and tantric components, the poor and low status
khampas tend to employ shamans, and the nouveau riche (who have
acquired their wealth through tourism etc.) are likely to seek out
Western medical aid. However there are no hard and fast rules here.
Shamans, and in particular the lhawa are primarily responsible for illness deriving from nerpa.\(^1\) Symptoms of nerpa-induced illness vary from mild forgetfulness, anxiety or depression to actual physiological illnesses such as fevers, stomach pains or skin diseases. Gods contacted during the shaman's trance will either deal directly with the offending supernaturals or, more commonly, will convey 'cures' to the lhawa. Very often the lhawa will prescribe a lamaist exorcism (kurim) or lamaist medicine (chilap). The latter may take the form of a printed spell folded into a packet according to mystical patterns prescribed in texts.\(^2\) Or it may be some of the extensive materia medica of the Tibetan medical system.\(^3\) Or it might be the tantric pills consecrated by the vajramaster in such healing rites as the Mahakalatantra rite.\(^4\) Alternatively the lhawa may prescribe simple offerings, either public or private to the deities or directly to the spirits. Or he might prescribe simple acts of orthodox merit making (such as circumambulations, constructions of mani stones, the giving of feasts, or prostrations). The lhawas of more recent times are even happy to prescribe Western medicine.\(^5\) It is clearly inaccurate then to regard the healing functions of the shaman as in any way incompatible with those of the lama, or monk, or even for that matter the Western doctor.\(^6\)

\(^{1}\) The interdependence between shamans and spirits is recorded in a number of myths throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world. One such myth relates how the first shaman, just before destroying once and for all the spirits causing illness in his land, was reminded by the spirits that there would be no further work for the shaman to do if they were permanently destroyed. Realising the need for a tangible opponent to justify his activity, the shaman agreed to let the spirits live, but on the condition that they would prey only on unenlightened humans. In this way the shaman's curing services would always be required, and the spirits would be kept happy through offerings. See Watters (1975).

\(^{2}\) Ortner (1970).

\(^{3}\) See for example Kunzang (1973).

\(^{4}\) Stablein (1973).

\(^{5}\) Wake (1976).

\(^{6}\) Shrestha and Lediard (1981) discuss the positive results of an H.M.G.-sponsored project involving the training of shamans in Western medicine. Apparently, however, few projects have been conducted to train Western doctors in traditional medicine.
Orthodox Buddhist medical texts deal not just with the spiritual dimension of healing but in fact with three dimensions simultaneously. The first is the actual curing of symptoms and the result is the Tibetan medical system as we know it. The second dimension deals more with the psychological and spiritual dimensions of healing and thus with the mind-body relationship. This dimension is based on the Four Noble Truths and other classical doctrines of orthodox Buddhism. The third dimension is that where healing is used as a metaphor of and motivation for one's spiritual life, where the three levels of Buddhism are translated into the Buddha as doctor, the Dharma as medicine and the Sangha as attendants.

The three dimensions are of course interdependent and interpenetrating. Enlightenment is a process of healing achieved with the assistance of a healthy body and therefore a balanced mind-body relationship. Dhonden and Ragbay (1980) explain that:

"the root cause of all diseases is ignorance of how the self really exists. This ignorance causes birth into cyclic existence and suffering such as diseases and so forth. The ignorance of how the self exists produces the three poisons, namely desire, hatred and closed-mindedness which in turn disturb the somatic functions of the body and consequently produce [the three humors] wind, bile and phlegm". (1980:4).

Bile is hot, phlegm is cold and heavy, air is dry and light. Bodily activity can be utilised so as to control the production of humors and achieve a harmonious equilibrium (which will differ from individual to individual). Bile thus warms phlegm, phlegm cools bile, and air loosens both.

Fig. 4:6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMPONENTS</th>
<th>Body</th>
<th>Speech</th>
<th>Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>POISONS/ATTACHMENTS</td>
<td>Desire</td>
<td>Anger</td>
<td>Confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HUMORS</td>
<td>Wind</td>
<td>Bile</td>
<td>Phlegm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPENSITIES</td>
<td>Dry, light</td>
<td>Hot</td>
<td>Cold, heavy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MANIFESTATIONS</td>
<td>Semen</td>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>Mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Note that this table only shows components, not relations).
This emphasis on the relationships between different dimensions contrasts markedly with the approach of Western medicine. Yet what is particularly fascinating about this approach to healing is that its transcendental cosmological orientation does not deny it a solid empirical basis. The rGyud bzhi discusses in detail topics ranging from paediatrics to gynaecology, embryology to craniopathy, toxicology to lymphadenopathy and so on as well as those areas perhaps for which it is more famous - dietetics, moxabustion and sphygmology. As many observers have pointed out these sciences can be shown to be not only empirically sound but are beginning to be drawn upon by Western medicine to an increasing degree.

According to the Tibetan medical system there are five main causes of mental illness, namely karma, humoral imbalances, poison, emotions and unseen negative forces or demons. (1) Although demons are outside the limits of Western psychiatry the complex and exacting categorisation of symptoms presumed to derive from their influence provides an illuminating framework for the study of psychopathology. Demons might be seen in the role of the id, trying to obstruct the super-ego's 'higher' promptings. As we have already noted in Chapter 3 there are two major kinds of exorcisms of demons: those which involve their violent destruction and those which involve a nonviolent ransoming or placation with offerings etc. The first kind of exorcism of course is based on the existence of the demons, as experienced in everyday life. The second kind however treats their reality as somewhat more problematical and invokes a compassionate, non-fearful approach to their influence. Ultimately, as we have seen, their reality is denied altogether and they come to be regarded as merely symbolic representations of an untamed and unenlightened mind. A favourite story among Tibetan Buddhists concerns a yogi, whose meditational practices were being

distracted by a snake. The yogi's guru advised him finally to take a stick with him and mark the snake's belly with a cross the next time that it appeared. The yogi, determined to rid himself of the snake's evil influence, used a knife on the snake instead, and was somewhat surprised when he discovered he had cut open his own belly!

Tantric healing encompasses both transcendental and pragmatic orientations and techniques. According to Clifford (1984) tantric healing:

"provides the bridge between the religious medicine of dharma and the rational or scientific medical system ... [tantric processes] are not some religious 'hocus-pocus' by which we delude ourselves and others ... [they] are the skillful manipulation of psychophysical energies by beings who, through the practice of dharma, especially meditation, have refined their introspective mental abilities to such a point that they can perceive the otherwise invisible aspects of manifest being, much in the same way that a microscope is a refined extension of human sight, whose power is vastly enlarged". (1984:65, 71).

In the Mahakalatantra rite discussed by Stablein (1974, 1976, 1978) the vajramaster identifies himself with the deity Mahakala and communicates the healing power so generated by placing two substances (symbolic of the relation between the male, active, means and the female, passive, wisdom) on the foreheads of the devotees. Pills (Tib: ril bu), consecrated and made powerful through the identification process of the vajramaster are then distributed and consumed. However it should be noted that the pills etc. have no healing power of their own. Rather they are the material manifestations or vehicles of the power generated by the vajramaster's

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(1) These include mantra (recitation), yantra (symbolic representations of the macrocosm), mudra (ritual gestures with the hands), puja (prayer), yagna (worship), vrata (ritual), tapas (penance), samskara (purification ceremonies), purascarana (recitations), Dhutta suddhi (purification of the vajra body). A central channel in the body, flanked by two lateral channels (associated with the contrasts of blood and semen, upaya and prajna, red and white, sun and moon etc.) is crosscut by the six cakras. The uniting of the lateral channels in the central channel through yuganaddha (Tib: zung-jug) produces a dynamic flow of energy rising to the head and culminating in bodhicitta, plus other lesser, pragmatic powers such as levitation, astral travel, heat generation and so on. Even if such powers are not produced and healing is not achieved, participation in tantric ritual alone will bring merit. See Stablein (1973).
transformation into the deity. The stress on mudras, meditations and visualisation etc. suggests the importance of the body in tantric healing and alludes to the transformational notion that if the microcosm is identical to the macrocosm then the relations within the body are as significant and as potentially healing as those between the body and the cosmos. One becomes the universe and the universe becomes one. The notion of self is an illusion and yet within the self is all that one needs. The body is a source of suffering and an indispensable vehicle to liberation from suffering.

The notion of these relationships offers an important insight into the notions of reincarnation, karma and so on as well as the prohibition against and futility of taking life. Destruction of the physical will only unbalance relationships with the metaphysical and the results of this imbalance will inevitably be felt not just at the individual level but at the social and cosmic levels as well. Ultimately, Buddhists say, the whole universe groans when a blade of grass is broken.

Within shamanic curing it is possible to identify a relationship of interdependence between modalities of transcendence and pagmatism, manifest for example in the relationship between the more transcendental invocations to orthodox deities preceding the seance, and the more pragmatic possession by local deities and communication with local supernaturals during the seance. Without the support of the orthodox deities, possession would be more dangerous and polluting for the shaman than it already is; without possession by supernaturals the shaman would have no craft. Within orthodox Buddhist approaches to healing the same relationship can be found. Doctrines of dependent origination for example are fundamental to a transcendental approach to healing. Yet these very same doctrines provide the basis for a theory of humoral imbalance which has spawned a highly
pragmatic science of healing incorporating such elements as dietary prescriptions, moxibustion techniques etc. Healing within the material body is dependent on the restoration of relations between it and the metaphysical body but the reverse is also true, and is just as important in the healing process. In fact healing within the individual presupposes and generates healing at social and cosmological levels simultaneously.

Now the same relationship can be identified between components of the traditional healing system as well (and throughout the entire Sherpa sociocultural configuration, as I have already suggested). Shamanic curing might be identified for example as being directed primarily towards the material and social dimensions of healing while orthodox healing is obviously more psychological and spiritual in orientation. Alternatively, Western medicine might be regarded as essentially pragmatic while the traditional healing system incorporates relatively more transcendental elements and approaches. And of course healing as a whole is more pragmatically-oriented than religion, although it is integral to it and vice versa. The point of course is that it is the relationship which is crucial, rather than that which is related (see Section 5 of this Chapter).

With this in mind, a variety of possible arrangements of transformations of the underlying structural relationship might be identified:

![Diagram](image-url)

**Fig. 4:7**
where essentially pragmatic moxibustion techniques articulate with essentially transcendental theories of humoral imbalance within the Tibetan medical system. This system articulates with more transcendental doctrines of dependent origination to form a healing system that is essentially pragmatic relative to the religious system. Alternatively, the following arrangement might be identified:

Fig. 4:8

where pragmatic possession states and transcendental invocations articulate within shamanic curing, and so on. Note that in this case the Tibetan medical system is identified as essentially transcendental, relative to shamanic curing. Alternatively, the following arrangement might be identified:

Fig. 4:9
Note in this case that the traditional healing system is identified as essentially transcendental relative to Western medicine. However, regardless of which elements are related to which, a basic relationship of interdependence between transcendental and pragmatic modalities, and transformations of this relationship, appear throughout the healing system and the Sherpa sociocultural system as a whole.

To sum up, illness might usefully be seen in terms of relational breakdown either at, and/or between the physical, social, psychological, cosmological and spiritual levels. For the individual it often implies some sort of crisis in one's concept of self and of reality, and a sense of separation and inability to manage perceived duality. Healing on the other hand may be seen as relational restoration at and between all levels; the effective management of duality; the taming of the unenlightened minds' relentless subject-object discrimination. Healing power itself may be viewed as relational - as that dynamic which mediates elements of a relation.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter I have re-examined the material presented in previous chapters in terms of a more analytical focus on relations and structural complementarity rather than on differences and conflict. Rituals which might appear opposed at a surface level, such as the exorcisms do dzongup and gyepshi can in fact be shown to be interdependent, complementary and to legitimate each other through their articulation. A similar interrelationship can be identified between lamaist exorcism as a whole and shamanic divination (and between religion and society). Having established a dynamic relationship between components of Sherpa religion I then explored whether these components were really concrete objective entities.
after all. There is much evidence of overlap and interpenetration of components, doctrines, roles etc. in the ethnography.

On the basis of the evidence of interrelationships and interpenetration, I then proposed that it was both more accurate and more useful to analyse Sherpa religion in terms of an articulation between a transcendental, other-worldly modality and a pragmatic, this-worldly modality. Each might represent a variety of practitioners, practices and even ideas in different contexts or at different times. Thus exorcisms might, for example be seen to represent either a transcendental or a pragmatic modality, according to the circumstances of the particular case.

Having identified an underlying structural relationship of interdependence, I then noted that such a relationship does not necessarily imply equality or symmetry. The differences between traditions are real, at a surface level, and orthodox Buddhism was shown to be ideologically dominant. The essential pragmatism of the laity however was also noted. When analysed in terms of the actual behaviour of the laity, orthodox Buddhism might be seen as contained within a pragmatic orientation rather than vice versa. I then discussed the significance of tantrism in Sherpa religion. I suggested that by encompassing and ultimately denying the ontological status and objective significance of differences and oppositions, tantrism serves as a unique mechanism of mediation. It enables the articulation of transcendental and pragmatic modalities at a structural level, and the coexistence of the orthodox Buddhist and shamanic traditions at a surface level. It is perhaps the influence of tantrism in Mahayana Buddhism which distinguishes it from the apparently more rationalised separation of the transcendental and pragmatic in Theravadin Buddhism.

Finally, I explored the traditional healing system of the Sherpas and showed how it manifests the relations and transformations I have identified in the Sherpa religion more generally.
As a result of this underlying structure, the healing system can tolerate much innovation and change in terms of techniques etc. Western medicine itself can be incorporated, offering spectacular treatment of symptoms without being seen to seriously call into question the beliefs concerning the causes of such symptoms. This has in fact been the case through much of Nepal. Where this structure has been seriously weakened however, as has occurred among the Sherpas this century (as a result of a process of rationalisation) then Western medicine may have a destructive influence. This change, and other changes associated with rationalisation, is the subject of the final chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE : CHANGE

"Listen, O Lord of the meeting rivers; things standing shall fall but the moving ever shall stay".

- Basavanna (quoted by David 1977:2).

One of the principal aims of this study has been to draw attention to the dynamic quality of Sherpa religion. This dynamism can be seen in the complex interaction between traditions within the religious system, as well as between the religious system as a whole and its broader sociocultural context. It can also be seen of course at the diachronic level, in the way in which religion influences and is influenced by the processes of history. To ignore this dynamism is to present an artificial view of Sherpa religion. It cannot adequately account for the important changes which Sherpa religion has undergone this century, particularly the rise of an increasingly transcendentally-oriented monastic establishment and the coinciding decline in the status and function of tantric lamas and shamans.

In this final chapter then I fulfil the promise of my analysis by demonstrating how a focus on relations can be applied to explain such changes. I identify a process of rationalisation taking place in Sherpa religion this century in which a combination of factors have created the conditions for an increasing separation of the transcendental from the pragmatic.\(^{(1)}\) The rise of monasticism (and its subsequent decline) is explained in terms of this process, as is the decline in tantrism and shamanism. I note however that the process is by no means complete.

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\(^{(1)}\) My concept of rationalisation is not the Weberian notion of unilinear movement away from habituationtowards a more 'modern' concern with the instrumental 'rationality' of action. Nor does it necessarily involve a move from a conservative to a more innovative orientation, or from an 'irrational' to a more rational approach. Rather, I am concerned with the separation of transcendence from pagmatism. The coexistence of these modalities is less easy to tolerate where rationalisation is occurring and there is a predilection towards dichotomisation as a means of making 'sense' of experience.
The underlying dynamic interdependence of modalities continues to animate Sherpa religion and may well prove to be significant in the context of rapid changes in Sherpa society more generally.

Prior to the twentieth century the monastic Gelugpa sect and the doctrinal, transcendental approach to religion which it represented had made little headway among the Sherpas. Anti-centrist movements such as the Rime movement of the nineteenth century(1) reinforced the notion of interdependence between transcendental and pragmatic concerns. Yet early this century monasticism was introduced into the Solu-Khumbu by the abbot of nearby Rong-buk monastery in Tibet. By the 1930's there were monasteries throughout the region and by the 1960's some 3-4% of the population were monks.

One of the more observable effects of monasticism was to question the legitimacy of the married, village-based tantric lamas. The monastic establishment regarded the lamas' sexuality and sociality to be opposed to transcendental concerns and regarded their worldly activity as a hindrance to the more important task of acquiring merit and developing spiritual consciousness. Paul (1970) comments that:

"with the original idea of the sang ngak practitioner forgotten, the idea that a man can pursue both worldly interests and his own salvation has lost meaning for the Sherpas... being a banzin is not having the best of both worlds but on the contrary is regarded as an almost untenable position because of the very basic contradictions between religion and the pursuit of this worldly affairs. The banzin is an unradical solution to what the Sherpas [today] see as a radical problem, and is hence an anomalous and somewhat absurd role". (1970:583,585).

Today almost noone volunteers to become a banzin lama. Von Furer-Haimendorf (1975) notes that the number of village lamas in Khumjung had dropped from six in 1957 to three in 1971 with no pupils being trained. Even recently-arrived immigrant Tibetan refugee lamas and monks are accorded a higher

(1) See Samuel (1984). The Rime movement according to Samuel was: "a now attempt at a synthesis of academic and shamanic aspects of Tibetan religion which maintained the academic tradition but retained a much more central place for the shamanic vision than the Gelugpa synthesis allowed". (1984:9-35).
status than long-standing Sherpa banzins lamas and are more popularly sought after to perform lamaist rituals. Paul (1984a) contends that:

"today, monasticism is considered to be the most orthodox and appropriate outlet for authentic religious expression". (1984a:5).

Now while banzins have suffered a decline in status and function, shamans have suffered even worse. (1) in Hitchcock's volume (1976) on spirit possession in Nepal, Paul writes:

"Sherpa shamanism is in a severe state of decline... most of the distinctive features of shamanism have been successfully divided up among other competing institutions and what remains is losing favour". (1976:141).

In his area of fieldwork Paul notes that only four shamans were to be found (one of whom was a female), all of whom had given up actual shamanising. At least one was encouraging his sons to become monks. What demand there was for shamans was being met by Newari and Hindu Chetri shamans - "just as Sherpa employ Nepali service castes to sew and smith for them they also bring in outside specialists on many occasions when a shamanistic cure is in order". (1976:141).

The shaman is seen increasingly as an anomalous figure to be distrusted if not in fact feared. The shaman is neither a layman, nor guided by a particular doctrine (as a monk is), nor dependent upon texts for

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inspiration (as a lama is), nor a receptacle of sacred power (as a daloma is), nor able to bestow merit (as a tulku is). Paul comments that:

"it is certainly contrary to the Sherpa view of things to have an ordinary fellow wielding such power". (1976:148).

Further

"everything that a shaman does in Sherpa culture can be accomplished by some other means - there is no situation which requires a shaman and nothing else... given a choice, Sherpa preference is definitely for textual ceremony rather than the shaman". (1976:147).

Paul, as we have seen, is particularly interested in the fact that many shamans appear to be turning to a more orthodox form of Buddhism. He suggests that:

"with the waning of life... wild ecstatic personal shamanism gives way to controlled formal ethical and universal Buddhism". (1976:151).

"like the poet, perhaps the shaman too, in loosing his demons, must also lose his angels... by undergoing his shamanistic illness, pursuing a career as a shaman, ending it in a dramatic ritual sacrifice and devoting himself to religious work, he has been cured of both shamanistic misery and ecstasy, in favour of ordinary disenchantment; - (1984b:43).

Now the introduction of monasticism cannot, of course, be explained purely in terms of dynamics within Tibetan Buddhism. The fact that large scale monasticism has not yet appeared in other Tibetan Buddhist communities in Nepal(1) suggests that there are a number of other factors (economic, social and political) unique to the Sherpa situation which encouraged more involvement in a more rationalised form of Buddhism than had been possible (or was considered desirable) earlier in Sherpa history. Firstly, the introduction of the potato in the nineteenth century led to the generation of surplus wealth which was invested in religious activity and the material

(1) Gorer (1938) noted the absence of monastic influence among the Lepcha of Sikkim. Among the Tamangs of Kathmandu Valley there is only one full-time monk (see Peters 1981). In the entire Tibetan Buddhist community at Tarap in North West Nepal there is again only one full time monk (see Jest 1976). Among the Newars of Kathmandu Valley, Buddhism has flourished without monasticism for at least seven hundred years. (see M. Allen 1973).
support of a dependent monastic community. Secondly, the patronage by the Rana regime of individual Sherpa families also led to the availability of extra wealth for religious purposes. Thirdly, greater contact with the outside world through political contacts with Kathmandu and trading expeditions throughout South Asia made Sherpas familiar with rationalised, 'scientific' and capitalist orientations and systems.

Events in the 1950's even further encouraged the trend towards rationalisation. Firstly the revolution in Kathmandu in 1951 led to a strengthening of ties between the Solu-Khumbu and the Hindu state apparatus. The introduction of the pancayat system in 1955 in particular provided a means for resolving disputes outside the arena of religious activity. Secondly the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1959 led to the absorption of a number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and reincarnate lamas who reinforced the rationalised approach to religion. Thirdly, the commencement of the mountaineering and tourist industry led to the introduction of Western education and medicine, greater contact with the outside world, and a challenge to traditional Sherpa values and status relationships. Older Sherpas complained that the contact young porters had with Western material goods and Western customs and values for lengthy periods of time were resulting in a breakdown of traditional Sherpa culture.

Perhaps more importantly, those who are most involved in the industry are the poor and recent immigrants whose new found wealth has suddenly given them a new power base in Sherpa society. Economic factors are increasingly

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(1) The Hillary Foundation has been particularly important in establishing schools and hospitals in the Solu-Khumbu. By 1971, 43% of school-age children were enrolled in schools. By 1976 there was an eleven bed hospital in Kunde with two New Zealand doctors, the Tokyo High Altitude Research facility at Pheriche, a doctor and nurse at the Himalayan Rescue Association, a doctor at the Everest Hotel at Syangboche, a sixteen bed Government hospital at Phaphlu and a number of other clinics and health posts. Wake (1976) says that the Khumbu has more doctors per capita than virtually any other rural area in Nepal. However, as I shall discuss, these are located along the tourist routes and are thus a source of some discontent among Sherpas in outlying villages.

(2) See Rising Nepal. 21/10/1981.
important as a criterion for social prestige, at the expense of religious factors. Today there is a very clear separation between business and ritual exchanges.\(^1\) The nouveau riche, once excluded by their poverty and low status from orthodox religious activity, have little interest in reinvesting their wealth in the monastic establishment.

A highly significant factor in the decline of shamanism has been the introduction of Western medicine. The ability to cure the physiological symptoms - if not the causes - of illness have ensured that it is in high demand. Furthermore, its link with the highly regarded Western scientific and technological world has ensured that it has high status. Thus while the more transcendental functions of tantric lamas and shamans have been taken over by the monastic establishment, their pragmatic functions are being taken over by Western medicine. That the monastic establishment and Western medicine coexist at all suggests that the process of rationalisation is not yet complete.

Writing in 1975, von Furer-Haimendorf comments that:

"twenty-one years have elapsed since I first visited Khumbu but so great have been the changes that it seems doubtful whether the traditional economic and social order which I then observed could be reconstructed by a study of the Sherpas as they are today". (1975:3).

Recruitment to the monasteries has fallen considerably and criticism of the selfishness and impracticality of the monastic community is heard more and more often. While religious structures remain the only public buildings of any kind, their upkeep has deteriorated and far less money is today spent on the decoration of once-ornate private chapels. Von Furer-Haimendorf notes that from 1964 to 1971 not one single mani stone was commissioned.

\(^1\) Von Furer-Haimendorf (1975).
Von Furer-Haimendorf writes:

"in the 1950's Sherpa country was a most fertile soil for the growth of Buddhist culture and ideology... in 1971 however the scene had changed. The majority of Sherpas were undoubtedly still firm believers in the Buddhist doctrine and there was no sign of the appearance of any rival ideology. But the practical interest in religious institutions and performances had noticeably diminished ...[at Tengboche] the reincarnate lama spoke sadly about the decline of religious fervor and learning. Hardly any of the remaining monks were interested in scholarship and while they were still keen on such ritual performances as the Mani Rimdu, which has become a tourist attraction, they cared little about their deeper content. The outward appearance of the monastery confirmed the waning interest of both monks and laymen."

(1975:102).

In sum, there appears to be considerable evidence that a process of rationalisation, begun many years earlier and giving rise to the advent of monasticism, has today begun to overtake monasticism itself.

Paul (1977) provides an illuminating example of the dynamics of this change in his discussion of the place of 'truth' in Sherpa culture. Given the realities of the clash between the orthodox religion's claim to absolute truth and the legal state's claim to objective truth (and the corresponding clash of conceptions of reality which these claims imply) the only workable solution was, according to Paul, the separation of the church from the state. The pragmatic aspects of Sherpa religion were taken over by the state and the transcendental aspects became the sole province of the orthodox, doctrinally and academically oriented monastic establishment. The experience of a Sherpa tulku, a 'lama Ngawang' demonstrated this arrangement clearly to all.

Lama Ngawang, an abbot of a Sherpa monastery, had used his spiritually inspired powers of divination to determine that two malcontent monks had stolen a particular icon from the gompa. Aware of the powers of the state to usurp such a pronouncement, the monks brought the tulku to a court of law in Kathmandu where he was found guilty of accusation without sufficient objective legal evidence and was subsequently jailed. The tulku
of course had claimed divine sanction for his action and divine power for its truth, and could not understand that such evidence might be inadmissible. Unable to stand by and watch a holy reincarnate lama languish in a Nepalese jail, wealthy Sherpa families who had been instrumental in establishing the gompa in the first place, 'arranged' for the tulku's release but did so with a public statement to the effect that the tulku should in the future pronounce only on religious matters and should not sully orthodox Buddhism with involvement in material worldly affairs. These affairs it was stated were the province of the laity and of the state. While reaffirming their commitment to the tulku's religious preeminence, the families made it clear that the separation of the church from the state and of the pragmatic from the transcendental was a fact of contemporary Sherpa sociocultural and political life and no deviation could be tolerated. Says Paul:

"[Sherpa leaders] insist on a separation of church and state and hurl at religion the charge that, while its truths are really true, they only concern a world other than our own, one in which time and events fade away into a substanceless eternity. The events of this world, on the other hand, though ultimately illusory, nonetheless have a present reality which can be described in terms of time, space and causality; to this world the rules of evidence must be applied. By thus isolating the domain of religion they allay themselves with what they perceive to be the ascendant reality of power, the Nepalese state". (1977:182).

Now there can be little doubt that the impact of rationalisation has been considerable. Ortner's emphasis (1978) on the cleavage between traditions, between clergy and laity, and between rich and poor is obviously influenced to a significant degree by her sensitivity to this change. However it would be quite misleading, I suggest, to infer that the pragmatic aspect of Sherpa religion is now defunct or, if not defunct, incompatible with orthodox Buddhism. The ethnographies, as I have shown in Chapter 4, clearly indicate the ongoing overlap and cooperation between lamas and shamans and monks. Exorcisms are still performed, shamans still divine,
monks still commission lamaist and shamanic rituals and all three can still
be observed working alongside each other (e.g. at funerals). Writing in
1975 von Furer-Haimendorf says that:

"notwithstanding all these cautionary remarks... a separate clear and
distinct Sherpa category corresponding to the shaman still survives".

(1975:144).

Even Ortner (1978) herself acknowledges that shamanism:

"has recognisably survived into the present... as a marginal but

The traditional healing system appears to be assured of an ongoing
role in Sherpa cultural life, at least in the immediate future. I have
already noted that the popularity of Western medicine is qualified to a
degree by its inherent limitations and inability to meet the demands placed
on it. Health services are still few and are concentrated on the trekking
routes frequented by tourists. This is a source of some dissatisfaction
among the Sherpas. (2)

Doctors case loads may be influenced by such factors as geographic proximity, ability to pay fees levied, or the social status
and occupational mobility of patients, rather than by need. Nepalese doctors
are often loath to work in rural areas, considering this to be something of
a slight against their professional status. As a result, few doctors have
a well-developed knowledge of traditional healing systems or even the local
variants of particular conditions. (3)

Western medicine may be administered
haphazardly thus reducing its potential efficacy. Actual medicines or
equipment may be lacking. Time spent waiting for treatment, the cost of
treatment, delays in achieving results from the treatment, recurrences in

(1) Ortner does go on to say:
"however, with the recent invigoration of Sherpa Buddhism and the Sherpa's
first glimpses of Western medicine, [shamanism] seems to have gone
into a rather serious decline and may finally be on its way out"
(1978:32). Recent research by Ortner, as yet unpublished, may well
clarify the contemporary incidence and role of shamanism.

(2) See Wake (1976).

(3) For a discussion of this elsewhere in Nepal see Achard (1983) and
the condition despite temporarily successful treatment (1) and the insensitivity of staff to local status relations (2) are all factors which compare unfavourably with the services offered by the lamas and shamans. As the community is asked to increasingly bear the costs, financial and otherwise, of Western health services, it is possible that they will become less attractive. Certainly they will never be able to provide explanations for the causes of illness in the context of a belief in the existence of gods and supernaturals.

On a more positive note, there is little doubt that the traditional healing system itself has much to offer. Sherpa healers must be adaptable to become healers in the first place (particularly shamans who must undergo the crisis of the calling experience) and could well develop new curing roles and techniques to better serve the needs of a changing world. It is perhaps not too naive to hope for a relationship of interdependence and mutual legitimation between a pragmatically-oriented Western medical system (dealing with physiological symptoms in the individual) and a more transcendently-oriented traditional healing system (dealing with causes and explanations of illness at the psychological, social and spiritual dimensions). Such a relationship has been identified in many communities through the third and fourth worlds. (3) In the context of rapid socio-economic and political change, a reordering of social relationships and a confrontation between alternate interpretations of reality may well arise. In such a situation the socially integrative and therapeutic functions afforded by the lamas and shamans may well be of considerable importance. (4)

(1) The problem of gastroenteritis, resulting in part from polluted drinking water is an example of a recurrent condition despite successful temporary treatment.
(2) For a discussion of this elsewhere in Nepal see Blustain (1976).
(3) See e.g. Simmons (1960) on the case of Mestizo communities in coastal Peru, Reid (1983) on Australian Aboriginal communities, Gould (1960) and Beals (1972) on communities in India.
(4) In the preamble to his study of Tibetan Buddhist history Samuel (1984) suggests that a shamanic modal state is often dominant and relied on in situations of rapid social change.
This is especially the case where recently introduced systems of dispute settlement are seen to be alien and unjust. [1]

To sum up this brief discussion of change, it is possible to identify a process of rationalisation occurring throughout Sherpa culture and society this century. Due partly to external economic and political factors as well as internal ones, this process enabled the rise of monasticism and, more recently, the introduction of Western medical and politico-legal systems. Responsibility for transcendental concerns is increasingly located in the monastic establishment while responsibility for pragmatic concerns is being assumed by Western systems. As a result, tantric lamas and shamans are regarded as somewhat superfluous, representing a somewhat out-dated, less rationalised view of the world. Ironically however this very process of rationalisation has resulted in the decline of monasticism itself in recent years since it lost, to a certain degree, the legitimating effect of a close interaction with the more pragmatic aspects of Sherpa religion. A focus on relations is therefore an important way of explaining both the rise and the decline of monasticism in Sherpa religion this century.

What is important however is that Sherpa religion remains alive and well. The dynamic relationship of interdependence between transcendental and pragmatic modalities may have been weakened, and its surface level manifestations may change, but its underlying cohesive influence remains. The portrayal of total, static separation of traditions, or of one tradition causing another to become defunct reflects on the analytical weaknesses of the observer rather than the realities of what can be observed. Sherpa religion is at once responsive and resilient to the process of rationalisation.

[1] Ortner (1978) observes that:
"most Sherpas mistrust and even fear the courts and are extremely reluctant to make use of them. They do not believe that the courts would give a fair hearing to 'small people'". (1978:27).
This latter quality is illuminated in particular through a focus on relations. Rationalisation is not the only force operating in Sherpa society. Given the tensions implicit in change it is likely, I suggest, that the traditional Sherpa emphasis on the essential oneness of transcendental and pragmatic concerns will continue to complement, if not replace, the trend towards rationalisation.
CONCLUSION

Sherpa religion, and vajrayana in particular, is essentially concerned with the nature and purpose of human existence. According to the vajrayana, the phenomenal material world (of which humanity is a part) exists and is of vital importance. Yet at the same time it is not real. Humanity must - and can - simultaneously pursue both pragmatic, this-worldly concerns and transcendental, other-worldly concerns. From one perspective there are importance differences between these concerns. These are manifest in different religious doctrines and in the different functions and techniques of various religious practitioners. From another perspective however these differences are held to be illusions and therefore unimportant, for the noumenal and the phenomenal world are ultimately one and the same.

Now it is clear from the ethnography that analysts have had a difficult time in coming to grips with this approach to reality, and with the impact it has had on Sherpa thought and behaviour. My own experience - dependent as it is on this ethnography - is no exception. The central problem facing the ethnographer, I suggest, is the pressure to analyse data in terms of preconceived and professionally acceptable paradigms and methodologies. There is a predilection for dichotomy, categorisation and the reduction of complex phenomena to a set of arbitrary and often single-dimensional rules and formulations. The aim of analysis is to achieve final conclusions, to provide objectively 'correct' interpretations rather than alternative 'ways of seeing'.

Such analysis may satisfy the ethnographer but it does not necessarily provide a realistic or comprehensive view of the conceptions and behaviours of those belonging to other cultural systems and
subscribing to other world views. Anthropological concepts, methods, definitions and even translations are not of themselves necessarily 'wrong', but they are clearly problematical and should be treated as such in analysis. Interpretations are only interpretations, boundaries are seldom fixed in everyday life, and time continues to change everything.

The identification by such ethnographers as Ortner (1978), then, of a conflict between orthodox Buddhism and 'folk' religion (manifest, for example, in the do daengup and gyerehi exorcisms) is not necessarily 'wrong'. In fact it provides a useful insight into what can, at one level, be seen as the exploitative and hegemonic influence of the monastic establishment. But this insight is not necessarily 'right' either. As I have demonstrated, the identification of a relationship of interdependence and cooperation is just as valid and useful. The point is that one interpretation does not necessarily exclude others, for Sherpa religion is always more complex than any single interpretation might allow. What is orthodox in one context may well be considered 'folk' in another. What is appropriate for one practitioner in one ritual may not be appropriate for another. From one perspective (e.g. the Wheel of Life), gods and men have different existential statuses but, relative to the absolute, neither gods nor men have any reality at all. There is no fixed line between the transcendental and the pragmatic but rather a recognition that this will vary according to the needs and awareness of the perceiver. Ultimately, an enlightened awareness reveals that there is no differentiation at all, for all such distinctions are illusions.

Now this approach to reality cannot be ignored by analysts, nor can it be dismissed as deficient. A focus on the differences and conflicts between traditions, as identified by an outside observer,
may serve certain purposes but it will tell us little about the overlap, the cooperation, the transformations, the mechanisms of mediation and the changes which take place within and between traditions in everyday life. Furthermore, it will reveal little about the conceptions of the Sherpas themselves. With this in mind I have chosen in this thesis to focus on relations rather than differences. To facilitate this approach I have focused not on traditions as such but on the orientations or modalities towards existence which these traditions, in part, represent.

Underlying and animating Sherpa religion is a dynamic relationship of interdependence and mutual legitimation between an other-worldly, transcendental modality and a this-worldly, pragmatic modality. Transcendental concerns give meaning to worldly pursuits, while worldly pursuits provide the wherewithal to pursue transcendental concerns. Humanity—the 'white-black ones'—is neither wholly transcendental and godlike, nor wholly pragmatic and demonic, but rather both. Herein lies the opportunity for liberation. Action becomes unified with thought, male becomes united with female, samsara and nirvana become one.

The pragmatic aspect of Sherpa religion, which I have tended to emphasise in this thesis, is not then a degeneration, nor a compromise, but rather a practical and effective means of dealing with the exigencies of day to day existence. At the same time it is a direct expression of man's highest and purest religious ideals and aspirations. To recognise this is a fundamental theme of vajrayana, and an ongoing challenge to ethnography. The notion of a contradiction is, at least in this case, a reflection of the shortcomings of rationalist analysis rather than of what is being analysed. In order to see and experience continuity and reciprocity, distinctions are often created where in reality none exist. The distinction between transcendence and pragmatism,
between nirvana and samsara, gods and men or some other heuristic device must be understood in this light. It is through the attainment of an enlightened awareness that the phenomenal world's full potential is realised, a potential which otherwise remains obscured because of the attachments and suffering it more obviously reflects.
GLOSSARY

Adi Buddha - the primal Buddha ground from which all being springs.

Bansin (Tib: ban-bsun) - a married, village based lama.

Bardo - states through which the "soul" passes through between rebirths.

Bla - a type of soul, or spirit-essence.

Bodhisattva - an enlightened being who has returned to the world, through compassion, to help with the enlightenment of all other sentient beings.

Bon - a more shamanic strand of Tibetan Buddhism.

Bsangs - incense (juniper) offerings.

Cakra - wheel; levels of psychic energy within the body.

Cham - masked dance-dramas.

Chang - beer.

Chepa - shamanic paraphernalia.

Chilap - lamaist medicine.

Choa (Tib: chos) - the religion (Tibetan Buddhism).

Choa chaglen - religious work.

Chod (Tib: gcod) - a ritual in which one's body is fed to the demons.

Chorten (Skt: stupa) - reliquary monument.

Chorwaba - village gompa administrator and peacemaker at festivals.

Dabla - clan deity.

Daloma (f)/ Dalowa (m) - a person who has returned from the dead.

Damaru - drum.

De (Tib: hdre) - a class of demons.

Dharma - the doctrine.

Dikpa - sin, demerit.

Dirrnu - female spirits who tempt monks to break their celibacy vows.

Do - the branch of religion dealing with the scholarly study of the sutras.

Do dzongup - an exorcism ritual involving the destruction of effigies.

Dorje - ritual thunderbolt implement.

Du (Tib: bdud) - a class of demons more powerful than de.
Dua - simple.
Dukpa - suffering, misfortune.
Dulwa - the branch of religion dealing with the inculcation of self-discipline.
Dumje - annual fertility and exorcism ritual.
Gelegpa - the 'reformed', yellow-hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism dominant in central Tibet since the 17th Century and led by successive incarnations of the Dalai Lama.
Gelung - a fully-ordained monk.
Gembu - political representative appointed by the Rana regime in Kathmandu.
Gompa - village temple.
Gansa - low altitude, winter agricultural settlement.
Guru Rimpoche - the 'Precious Teacher' i.e. Padmasambhava.
Gyepahi - an exorcism ritual involving the replacement of evil forces by the power of the Buddha.
Gyowa - elaborate.
Gyowa - ritual feast at climax of funeral.
Gyud (Tib: rgyud) - tantra.
Hramayin - titans.
Hrendi - spirits, ghosts.
Kalak - lineage.
Kandroma - a class of female shaman; human goddess.
Kangsur - generic term for offering rituals.
Kanjur - orthodox Buddhist canon.
Karma - universal law of cause and effect.
Khadeu - ritually pure social group (distinguished from the ritually impure khamendeu).
Khomba - immigrants from Tibet.
Khamendeu - ritually impure social group subject to restrictions of marriage and rules of commensality with the ritually pure khadeu.
Khumboyullha - Khumbu mountain deity.
Konjok Chindi - tantric text, literally 'Union of the Precious One'.
Korba - lay member of the monastic community.
Kurim - generic term for exorcism rituals.

Lama (Tib: bla-ma) - general term for religious personage; teacher.

Lawa - organiser of village festival.

Le - karma.

Lha - gods.

Lhabeu - diagnosis of illness.

Lhachetu - religious get-togethers of clans.

Lhama - the more common class of shaman.

Linga - effigy of dough representing demons.

Lokpar - a kind of effigy used in exorcisms.

Lu (Tib: klu) - a class of supernatural beings associated with snakes, water, subterranean regions.

Lut (Tib; glud) - effigy of sponsor of exorcisms.

Mani - mystic syllable often etched onto stones.

Mani rimdu - monastic dance-drama festival.

Mantra - a formula of mystic syllables.

Mindung - a class of shamans specialising in divining.

Nawa - controller of village lands.

Nerpa - ghost or spirit of a dead person.

Ngak (Tib: sngags) - mystical power of divine contact with the supernatural realm.

Nyingma - the old sect of Tibetan Buddhism to which the Sherpas belong.

Nyungne - orthodox ritual for expiation of sin.

Ong (Tib: dbang) - ritual power.

Ongpame (Tib: hod-dpag-med) - Amitabha Buddha, literally 'Buddha of Boundless Light'.

Pawa Cherenzi (Tib: dpa pa spyan-ras-gzigs) - Avalokitesvara bodhisattva.

Payin - merit, virtue.

Pem - witch, malevolent spiritual aspect of an envious woman.

Pembu - village officer/tax collector from the Rana era.

Pembu (Tib: bonpo) - shaman.
Peshangba - a low-status, clown-like figure in exorcism rituals.
Phurba - ritual dagger instrument.
Rigpa - intelligence.
Rimpoche - 'Precious One' appellation accorded to lamas.
Ringa - Five-sided ritual headgear.
Ru - clan.
Sang - purification ritual.
Sang Ngak - subset of Nyingmapa, practicing rituals primarily of the ferocious aspect.
Sangha - the clergy.
Sangye - heaven.
Sem - thought, mind, soul.
Serkim - invocation to the gods.
Sha - flesh.
Shashur kirup - a passive type of exorcism.
Shava - ritual prostration.
Shinje Chogyal - judge of hell.
Shiwa - benign aspect of deity.
Shrindi - generic term for supernaturals.
Sonam - merit.
Srungma - 'lords of the soil'.
Sundak sho - lamaist divination.
Tabyo - divination.
Tek - tiger.
Takbu - ferocious aspect of deity.
Tawa - monk.
Tenjur - commentaries on the Kanjur.
Thanka - religious painting.
Thouwou - fictive kin.
Tip - pollution.
Tongden - ascetic.
Torma - dough effigies serving as representations of and offerings to the gods.

Tsam - ascetic hermitage retreats.

Tse - life.

Tse ong (Tib: tshe-dbang) - life-empowerment ritual.

Tsenga tsali - mutual aid group; exchange group.

Tsoca (Tib: tshogs) - ritual feasting of the gods.

Tu - purifying fluid.

Tulku (Tib: sprul-sku) - reincarnate lama.

Vajrayana - the 'diamond' vehicle of Buddhism, also referred to as tantrism.

Yab Yum - aspect of god in ritual intercourse with consort.

Yang - luck.

Yangyup - ceremony performed to shore up household luck.

Yemba - ex-slave group.

Yersa - high altitude summer pastoral settlement.

Yitak - hungry ghost.

Yidam - tutelary deity.

Yul lha - mountain deity.


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