

9 Hierarchy and Complementarity in Newar Society

IN A NUMBER of important areas of Newar social life notions of complementarity and status parity are accorded almost as much weight as are those of hierarchy and inequality.¹ I here suggest that though the kind of hierarchy that defines relations between the major sub-divisions of Newar society may be described as of the 'pure' caste variety, that is to say, based on clearly articulated notions of inherited ontological differences in human worth, within such sub-divisions hierarchy approximates more closely to that found typically in kin-based societies, that is to say, based on notions of differential seniority, age and achievement. Hierarchy of

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this latter kind, which derives primarily from the world of kinship and descent, differs fundamentally from the 'pure' hierarchy of the caste variety. Whereas the hierarchy of castes may be accurately described as a highly institutionalized form of both ontological and social inequality, the kin-based variety also incorporates notions of social equivalence and common ontology. I demonstrate the presence of such notions in each of the following contexts: intra-caste relations, marriage, the organization of agricultural labour and in eating arrangements. But before turning to the ethnographic data I must first provide a brief outline of the complex historical circumstances that gave rise to the principal social, religious and political institutions within which the two forms of hierarchy and their associated ideologies are today operative.

Historical background

There are today about a quarter of a million Newar residents in a total valley population in excess of half a million. Prior to the Gorkha conquest of the valley in AD 1768 the three neighbouring cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon were the capitals of autonomous Newar kingdoms. Even today the populations of Patan and Bhadgaon are almost entirely Newar.

Newari is an independent language with its own script and a rich literature. It belongs to the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of languages, and as such differs very markedly from Nepali, Hindi and other languages of the Indo-European variety found throughout much of Nepal and India. It seems likely that the earliest stratum of the Newar population may have come from Tibet and then over a long period evolved into its present form through the inter-mingling of immigrant peoples, most especially Indo-European speaking people from various parts of north India.

The exceptional fertility of the valley and its strategic position for trade between India and Tibet led to the early growth of major urban complexes and substantial political units. It also seems likely that Buddhism, which began in the fifth century BC only some 60 miles south of the valley, was well established by the beginning of the Christian era. But from at least as early as the third century AD, a succession of immigrant Hindu dynasties, together with their attendant Brahman priests and impure service castes, have

encapsulated the indigenous farmers, traders and artisans in an ever-increasingly complex and hierarchically structured social system. As elsewhere in India, the inevitable result of such an historical process was the emergence of a caste-type social structure. While the immigrant groups became increasingly Newar in language and culture, the Newars themselves became increasingly Hindu in religion and internally stratified in conformity with caste principles. In short, Newar society is today, and has been for a very long time, organized on a classic Hindu caste basis.²

But whereas in most parts of India a similar historical development, that is to say the incorporation of predominantly tribal and non-Hindu communities into expanding caste-structured Hindu kingdoms, led to the almost complete loss both of tribal values and institutions and indigenous religious beliefs and practices, in Kathmandu valley two important factors, the proximity of the purely Buddhist and non-caste-structured Tibetans, together with the minimal impact of either Islam or British colonialism, prevented any such extreme hierarchical development. Newar Buddhism, though it has undoubtedly suffered a steady decline in popularity through many centuries of Hindu political domination, especially during the past two hundred years of alien and yet again Hindu Gorkha rule, has nevertheless continued to be a major component in the complex religious beliefs and practices of the people. When Mahāyāna Buddhism was at its highest level of development in north India just prior to the Moslem invasions of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the three cities of Kathmandu, Patan and Bhadgaon, in particular Patan, were major Buddhist centres in regular communication with Nalanda and other great monastic universities of north and central India. But whereas the Moslem onslaught in India led to the almost complete disappearance of Buddhism, in Kathmandu valley it instead led to its transformation into the predominantly non-monastic Tantric form of Buddhism still dominant today.

The chief distinguishing feature of the Newar version of Tantric or Vajrayāna Buddhism is the replacement of the usual Buddhist monastic and celibate religious personnel with an hereditary married priesthood. These priests have been accurately described by a

² For a schematic outline of the Patan version of the Newar caste system see Table 4 in Chapter 6, p.166.

number of observers as Buddhist Brahmins. Though they use Buddhist texts and symbols and refer predominantly to Buddhist deities, they are nevertheless like Brahmins in three important respects—they constitute an hereditary and endogamous community whose members regard themselves as superior to all other Newar Buddhists, they have hereditary clients whom they term *jajmāns* and for whom they perform a wide variety of ritual services, mostly of the purificatory kind, and they are the only Newars eligible for initiation into the most prestigious Tantric ritual associations.

The historic importance of Buddhism in Newar society is evident in that even today there are about ten times as many Buddhist priests as there are Brahmins. The classification of the members of other castes as either Buddhist or Hindu has little meaning other than by reference to the kind of priest employed for domestic purificatory rituals. Traditionally, the numerically important Jyāpu agriculturalists are regarded as Buddhist, though today many upwardly mobile Jyāpus employ Newar Brahmin priests. The latter, however, draw the bulk of their clients from the predominantly white-colour Śreṣṭha caste conglomerate.

I have especially stressed the historical survival of the Buddhist religious tradition amongst the Newars, for despite its partial yielding to the politically dominant hierarchical ideas of caste Hinduism, it has nevertheless continued to provide an important institutionalized context for the periodic expression of alternate values and ideas that at particular historical moments may be elevated to the status of a counter ideology. This has increasingly been the case during the past two hundred years of alien Hindu political domination, most especially during the last few decades of the especially repressive Rana regime, that is in the 1930 to 1950 period, more strongly during Nepal's first brief and abortive experiment with democracy during the 1960s, a period when the Newars explicitly associated Buddhist anti-caste sentiments with communist ideology emanating from China and Tibet, and then yet again in the recent revolutionary fervour that led to the end of absolute monarchical rule, the re-introduction of political parties, and the holding of a general election in 1990.

I will now examine the ethnographic evidence for the presence of notions of social equivalence and common ontology.

Caste and marriage

Dumont, utilizing secondary sources, came to the seemingly paradoxical conclusion that though marriage and status among the Newars 'do not on the whole contradict Indian principles [the hierarchical principles of caste-cum-endogamy], but on the contrary can be understood by reference to them' (Dumont 1964:98), neither the Newars themselves as a totality, nor their various named sub-divisions, can be regarded as either castes or sub-castes.

Though Dumont's reasons for such a negative conclusion are obscure, and most probably relate to his difficulty in accommodating political process to a structural model of caste, he was nevertheless much influenced by the supposedly high incidence of both hypergamous and anagamous unions between the members of otherwise endogamous sub-castes. But, as Dumont was quite aware, these same unions could, with only a slight shift in perspective, be described perhaps more accurately as in conformity with a rule of kin-group endogamy. To the extent that this is so then equality may modify the otherwise pervasive influence of hierarchy.

The first and most important point to make in assessing the complex ethnography is that most Newar marriages conform to the orthodox ideal of caste (*jāt*) endogamy. Furthermore, the ideal is strongly reinforced in that those who contract deviant marriages risk loss of caste membership. One might well ask then how it is that so many observers have gained the impression that both hypergamy and anagamy are acceptable and relatively common occurrences. Part of the confusion lies in the variable identification of caste at different levels of segmentation. While there is no difficulty in identifying the maximal named sub-divisions of Newar society as endogamous castes of a classical kind, the picture is both complex and ambiguous at lower levels of segmentation.

Though the named first-order segments of the castes at times themselves exhibit caste-like features, most notably in having names indicative of occupational specialization, they also, and in some instances more importantly, are structured in conformity with principles derived from the domains of kinship and descent. Thus, with only two, though admittedly important, exceptions, the Śreṣṭha and Jyāpu, no rule of endogamy applies at the first-order level of caste segmentation. On the contrary, the members of the various

sub-units of the maximal castes freely interdine and intermarry with one another. But, the limitations of the caste model are equally balanced by the limitations of that based on kinship. Though marriage takes place freely between the sub-units, there is no rule of exogamy.

Of the 2 castes who differ from this pattern in having endogamous sub-divisions, the Śreṣṭha are predominantly Hindu and white-collar in occupation, while the Jyāpu are traditionally Buddhist and farm-labouring in occupation. Though only 2 out of about 26 Newar castes, they nevertheless account for approximately 70 per cent of the total Newar population. Since the various named sub-divisions of the Jyāpu are not, with only one exception (the Bhadgaon Jyāpus), endogamous, I will confine the following discussion to the Śreṣṭha.

The Śreṣṭha, as Nepali (1965:153-61), Rosser (1966) and Quigley (1986:75-85 and 1993:103-13) have quite rightly noted, constitute a striking anomaly in that they are divided into three divisions which neither intermarry nor interdine. The highest, called Chatharīya Śreṣṭha, claim their ancestors were either former Newar kings (Malla and Thaku Juju) or royal functionaries (Joṣī or astrologers, Ācāḥju or Tantric priests, Pradhān or counsellors, Amātya or ministers, Rājbandhārī or palace provisioners, and Munṣi or scribes).

If these eight named segments of the Chatharīya Śreṣṭha community should constitute a formal hierarchy of ideally endogamous units, then the fact that numerous inter-marriages occur between such units might be taken to indicate a high incidence of both hypergamy and anagamy. But such a representation is not in accord with the facts. Indeed, the name Chatharīya literally means 'six clans', a designation clearly pointing to association by virtue of descent and kinship rather than occupation and ritual status. Furthermore, though there is no rule of clan exogamy, the high rate of inter-marriage between the clans must be viewed as a positive outcome of preferred alliances within the larger endogamous unit, rather than of unorthodox hypergamous or anagamous unions between ideally endogamous sub-units. Such sub-units are then, neither in fact nor in ideal, endogamous. Though the members of these eight groups tend to regard one another as either superior or

inferior, the evaluative links are so multiple, various and cross-cutting, that nothing remotely like a status consensus emerges. On the contrary, the Chathariya Śreṣṭha prefer to stress their equivalence and solidarity with one another as a means of asserting their shared superiority over all other Śreṣṭhas. In other words, the Chathariya Śreṣṭha constitute the true unit of caste, and as a strictly endogamous unit it is correct to describe their marriage practices as in striking conformity with orthodox caste rules.

The second-ranking category of Śreṣṭha, the Pāñthariya or 'five-clan' Śreṣṭhas, are likewise divided into a number of named sub-groups. The Pāñthariya differ from the Chathariya mainly in the doubtful status origin of the component sub-groups founding ancestors. Finally, below these two endogamous Śreṣṭha castes there are a considerable number of individuals who also identify themselves as Śreṣṭha, but whose claims are not recognized by either the Chathariya or Pāñthariya Śreṣṭhas.

It is most especially the existence of this third category of self-styled Śreṣṭha that seemingly provides some substance for the depiction of Newar society as seriously departing from the ideal of caste endogamy. As Rosser (1966:92-104) and Quigley (1986:80-1) have described in some detail, this dubious Śreṣṭha category is largely made up of persons or their descendants who were, by birth, members of the Jyāpu agricultural caste, but who succeeded in breaking away from their peers, and in so doing constituting themselves as a separate caste of higher rank. Now, if it were indeed the case that these low-ranking Śreṣṭhas were accepted by the two older and well-established Śreṣṭha communities then one could say that the Newar caste system was unusually lax in maintaining its caste boundaries. Furthermore, since new recruits into the dubious Śreṣṭha category consolidate their status claims mainly by contracting marriages with other like Śreṣṭhas, instead of Jyāpus, then one could talk about hypergamy, and perhaps anagamy too. But if, in fact, as is quite certainly the case today, neither the Chathariya nor Pāñthariya Śreṣṭhas accept these upstarts, above all if they refuse to inter-dine or inter-marry with them, then no breach of the endogamy rule has occurred. Rather, what we are here observing is nothing other than that relatively common caste phenomenon of wealthy and or powerful individuals managing to distance

themselves from their former peers and in so doing, succeed in establishing themselves as a separate and superior endogamous unit. But these self-styled Śreṣṭhas remain indefinitely of inferior status to the long-established Śreṣṭhas, and are indeed commonly referred to by the latter in derogatory terms which clearly recognize their false claims—such as ‘half-Śreṣṭha’ or ‘Thimi Śreṣṭha’, etc.

Thus far, then, my analysis of caste and marriage would seem to indicate that practices that were previously deemed to constitute evidence for unorthodoxy and laxity have been badly misinterpreted. At least as far as the maintenance of caste boundaries go, the Newars are highly orthodox, a feature indeed yet further reinforced by the high incidence of tightly circumscribed local endogamy. This latter feature, again quite rightly stressed by Quigley (1986:83-4) would itself seem to have developed primarily as a means of ensuring conformity to caste principles in an increasingly large scale and socially complex urban population. In order to be sure of the status of one’s affines, marriages were, and still are, mostly confined to the familiar local environs.

But, as I think should be evident from my outline of Śreṣṭha marriage practices, the component sub-groups of a caste together constitute a closed world of what may be described as isogamous marriage alliances, that is to say, a world within which nascent status differentials are constantly annulled by cross-cutting ties of affinity. A necessary and most interesting effect of such an arrangement is to render virtually impossible the emergence of major status differences between such intermarrying groups. Such a development is highly pertinent to any consideration of marriage and its influence on the status of women. A notable feature of caste endogamy operating in conjunction with sub-caste hypergamy is, as is common in much of India, the emergence of a strongly hierarchical status relationship between wife-giving and wife-taking groups, with the husband’s group ranked as superior to the wife’s. Such an arrangement has, as might be expected, disastrous status consequences for women as wives, and in most areas it is accompanied by large, often extortionate, dowries. In recent years in north India such practices have led to the high incidence of the burning of young wives by in-laws dissatisfied with their dowry payments. These features are conspicuously absent among the

Newars where dowries are normally either modest or absent, and where wife-burning is literally unthinkable.

The status of Newar women

The status parity between affines is matched by the high status of Newar women within the family, at least as compared with that found in more orthodox Hindu communities in north India. This is especially so in the more traditional and least Hinduized sections of Newar society—most notably the top-ranking Buddhist castes (Gubhāju, Bare and Urāy), the Jyāpu peasants, and almost all Newars in the many small and somewhat isolated settlements on the peripheries of the valley. Contrariwise, the influence of restrictive puritanical notions is strongest in the major urban centres, especially Kathmandu, and most particularly so among the members of high-ranking Hindu Newar castes (Dyāḥ Brahman and Chathariya Śreṣṭha).

Among the more traditional and Buddhist sectors of Newar society, sons, though perhaps slightly preferred to daughters, especially the first born, are not accorded anything like the exaggerated importance found in most Hindu communities. Girls, indeed, are both highly valued and much honoured in their natal family, and after their symbolic marriage to a god prior to puberty (Allen 1982 and Chapter 8 this volume) they are granted membership of their father's caste and are formally admitted to the worship of his lineage deity. Furthermore, despite the subsequent unambiguous transfer of allegiance to their husband's lineage on marriage wives nevertheless retain important ties with their parents' close kin, especially their father's agnates. All of the available married daughters of a locally anchored agnatic group are required on numerous occasions to fulfil important ritual functions for the lineage. For every feast, ceremony and festival they should be invited and fed with ritually prescribed delicacies. They are also required to fulfil important ritual functions at all major *rites de passage*, especially death, affecting members of the father's family. Because most Newar marriages are contracted between families within easy walking distance, the majority of married daughters spend a considerable amount of their time fulfilling such duties in their parents' home.

It is, however, most especially when a woman experiences major difficulty with her husband or his family that the support of her father's family is of vital import. Whatever the cause of the problem, whether it be the husband's inadequacies or mother-in-law interference, the wife may return to her natal home in the secure expectation that her parents will give her whatever material and emotional support she should need. If the problem should be an interfering or excessively bossy mother-in-law, then the girl will remain with her parents either until the husband finds some solution, perhaps by agreeing to set up a separate household, or she will seek a new husband. Clearly, the expectation of such support from her natal family ensures that the Newar wife is a person of some note and consequence in her husband's family.

Numerous commentators have noted over a long period the unusual rights exercised by Newar women concerning separation, divorce and re-marriage. In the previous chapter I quoted at some length from Hamilton's graphic account, first published as early as 1819, of the ease with which Newar women could terminate unsatisfactory marriages and re-marry without serious loss of status. Kirkpatrick (1811), writing just a few years earlier, was even more extreme noting that: 'It is remarkable enough that the Newar women, like those among the Nairs, may in fact have as many husbands as they please, being at liberty to divorce them continually on the slightest pretences' (Kirkpatrick 1969:187). Though I feel reasonably confident that this statement was, even for as long ago as 1811, somewhat exaggerated, yet today, after more than a century and a half of greatly increased pressures towards conformity to orthodox Hindu sexual morality, most Newar women still retain their traditional rights to elopement, divorce and re-marriage, including the re-marriage of widows. A recent and most excellent study (Pradhan 1981) of the lives of Newar women in Bulu, a small and predominantly agricultural community on the peripheries of the valley, where the many social and ideological transformations that have taken place in Kathmandu and other major urban centres have had relatively little impact, indicate that these earlier descriptions of Newar society may nor have been all that inaccurate. The study was carried out by Bina Pradhan, herself a Newar woman, though of urban and high-caste Hindu background, and hence brought up in a

somewhat more puritanical and restrictive social environment than that prevailing in Bulu. She was very forcibly struck by the independence and freedom exercised by Bulu women in a whole range of contexts, though especially as regards choice of spouse, divorce and remarriage. I can do no better than provide a summary of her findings relevant to these contexts:

1. The average age of women at marriage is 17 and the majority of marriages take place as the choice of or with the consent of both the bride and bridegroom (Pradhan 1981:64)
2. Elopement is the most prevalent form of marriage with many parents encouraging their children, including daughters, to elope and thereby avoid the heavy expenditure incurred by formal marriage (1981:63-4).
3. Women as well as men can marry any number of times without loss of status, and divorce and separation for Jyāpu women, as well as men, is very easy. If a woman wants to end her marriage she simply leaves her husband and returns to her natal home and stays away indefinitely. Eventually the husband usually takes another wife and the departed wife gets married again, either by eloping or by her family arranging another marriage for her. Women may choose to end the marriage at the slightest pretext, and the reasons for doing so are numerous—most commonly it is either dissatisfaction with the mother-in-law's interference or the husband's failure to satisfy either her emotional or material wants. Whatever the reason, there is no loss of status for the woman and she is free to re-marry. I should add here that in striking contrast to the high incidence of joint households among city Newars, in Bulu nuclear households are the norm—mostly as a result of demands from the wife (1981:68-71).
4. 13 per cent of married women are in their second marriage and 4.3 per cent in their fourth marriage (1981:71).
5. There is no stigma in divorce for a man or woman. Women are even encouraged to refrain from having children soon after marriage in order to make it easier for them to leave the husband and find another if the marriage does not suit them. Of the 28 marriages ended by desertion or elopement, 21 were ended on the initiative of the women (1981:71-3).

I found Pradhan's account of particular interest, for the extent and range of freedoms that she here describes for Bulu women, especially those of the numerically preponderant Jyāpu caste, are not only reminiscent of Hamilton's and Kirkpatrick's observations of Newar society not very long after the Gorkha conquest, but are in marked contrast to contemporary urban Newars.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, most urban Newars, especially those of 'pure' caste, perform an elaborate mock-marriage ceremony (*ihī*) for girls prior to puberty (Allen 1982 and Chapter 8 this volume). In *ihī* the girls are symbolically married to a god, who is then regarded as their eternal spouse. Informants explicitly compared this rite to the orthodox Hindu custom of marrying young pre-pubertal girls to mortal husbands from whom they cannot subsequently seek divorce. But in Newar society the girls, having conformed to the puritanical Hindu ideal in their marriage to a god are thereby freed from such restrictions in their conjugal dealings with mortal men. Clearly such a functional view of *ihī* could only be possible in a society in which there was an ideological opposition between, on the one hand, the old values that focus on a high evaluation of women, and on the other, the increasingly popular Hindu view of women as constituting sources of impurity, and hence in need of male protection and control. In support of this interpretation it should be noted that while the ceremony is most popular in those castes in which such an ideological opposition might be expected to be extreme, most notably in the high-ranking Buddhist castes such as Gubhāju, Bare and Urāy, and also the Śreṣṭha, especially the dubious lowest-ranking Śreṣṭhas, and least popular at the two extremes of the Hindu caste hierarchy. Indeed, it would seem that it is only during the last 30 years or so that Newar Brahmans have begun to perform *ihī* for their own daughters—in earlier periods they simply followed orthodox Hindu custom by marrying their daughters to mortal spouses prior to puberty with no possibility of subsequent divorce or re-marriage.

From such a perspective the Newars of Bulu are of special interest for, through their isolation, modern influences are reduced to a minimum. Of the 96 households in the village 81 per cent are Jyāpu 13 per cent Śreṣṭhas and 6 per cent are members of two low-ranking service castes (Pradhan 1981:10-11). It should be stressed that

among Newars the Jyāpus are renowned for their conservative custodianship of Newar traditional culture. Though Kathmandu is only an hour's bus journey away, Bulu residents rarely visit the metropolis. Contrariwise, external governmental and commercial interests have only very marginally penetrated the village, most of it being confined to the Śreṣṭha households. In other words, the ideological opposition described above for sophisticated urban Newars is almost wholly non-existent in Bulu, most especially among the Jyāpus. In striking confirmation of my understanding of *ihī* as an attempted resolution of such an opposition, the ceremony is never performed by the Jyāpus, yet occurs in modified form among the Śreṣṭhas.

Women and pollution

As is now well established in the literature, in orthodox Hindu communities women are regarded as a major source of impurity—they menstruate, give birth to children and are supposedly incapable of adequately controlling their sexual desires. But among the Newars this whole complex of negative values and associated institutions is in large measure replaced by a much more positive set which celebrates rather than denigrates important aspects of femininity and female ontology. For example, Tantric doctrine and practice, both of the Hindu and Buddhist variety, which are of pre-eminent importance in Newar religion, constitute quite explicit inversions of the ascetic and misogynistic values that underpin both Brahmanism and monastic Buddhism. All forms of Tantra are directly predicated on a positive evaluation of female sexuality as a source of ritual, meditative and cognitive power. Though such an ideology in itself by no means automatically confers high status on women (Allen 1982:13-15), it nevertheless has positive rather than negative consequences when other factors are in favour of women. Most notably, important Tantric rites can only be performed by male and female couples, including the great majority of rites performed by priests for their lay clients. Priests, therefore, whether of the Hindu or Buddhist variety, must, in order to carry out their ritual duties, have a female partner, usually, though not necessarily, their wives. But it is not only at the priestly level of society that husband and wife collaborate together in productive

work. The same applies throughout the whole range of traditional occupations—including metal work, temple maintenance, agriculture and various menial tasks.

Newar departure from orthodox Hindu views of women is, however, most apparent in their attitude towards female pollution, especially menstruation. Unlike orthodox non-Newar Hindus in Nepal and north India, who regard all of a woman's periods as highly polluting, Newars, even high-caste Hindu Śreṣṭhas, take a much more casual attitude. In direct parallel to the mock-marriage of girls to a deity, Newars require all girls to participate in a mock-menstruation ceremony prior to their first period. This ceremony (see Chapter 8, this volume and Allen 1982:179-210), which is quite explicitly modelled on the orthodox Hindu treatment of girls at menarche, requires the seclusion of a large group of such girls in a darkened room for 12 days. But instead of the fear and degradation undoubtedly experienced by the Hindu girl who must undergo such an experience alone, the Newar girls look forward to an 11-day long party-like affair of no work and pleasurable indulgences by parents and relatives who shower them with sweet-food delicacies. It is undoubtedly an event that must increase rather than decrease self-esteem. Furthermore, the suspicion that the Newar rite has little or nothing to do with the containment of danger generated by menstruation is strengthened by the discovery that the Newars show little concern with a woman's subsequent menses. The only formal restriction is that she should have a bath before cooking and avoid the proximity of the gods. She is not secluded and she goes about her domestic tasks very much as usual. As might be expected, the Bulu Newars almost wholly disregard menstruation. Pradhan's female informants, when asked if they observed any menstrual pollution period, invariably responded with comments such as the following—'theoretically we should observe it, but who has the time for such frivolities? Who will feed us?' (Pradhan 1981:169).

Women and work

The higher status of Newar women thus far delineated in the context of marriage and ritual status is paralleled by their prominent participation in important economic activities. Furthermore, the nature of their participation is invariably of such a kind that it not

only contributes in a major way to the productive effort, but also confers status and sometimes even power. This is especially true of rice cultivation and the spinning of cloth. Though the Newars, as a mostly urban people, engage in a wide variety of trade, manufacturing, craft, service and administrative activities, the cultivation of rice is still pre-eminent. The valley is highly fertile and with intensive irrigation farmers can produce at least two rice crops a year. Men and women jointly participate in most stages of the cultivation cycle. Because the plough, which is universally operated by men in South Asia, is strictly prohibited, the earth is prepared for planting by the men turning it with digging sticks and the women breaking it with wooden pulverizers. While seed beds are prepared by men and women working together, only men uproot the seedlings and only women replant them in the irrigated fields. The transplanting is a major social occasion, often performed by large parties of female workers moving from field to field. The women not only dominate this prestigious, though back-damaging work, for which they get paid by field owners, but they also organize the midday feast of buffalo meat, flattened rice and rice wine. These feasts are gay and popular occasions, and no doubt they contribute much to the prestige of the senior organizing women. Later on at harvest time the work force is again equally male and female, with the men mostly cutting and the women winnowing.

Another most important feature of the traditional economy was, and still is, in most rural and some urban areas, the spinning and weaving of cloth. Both of these prestigious activities are exclusively women's work. The participation of women in other areas of the economy, such as trade, craftsmanship and metal-working, though generally less than in agriculture and weaving, is nevertheless considerable. It is, indeed, only in the most orthodox Dyāḥ Brahman and Chatharīya Śreṣṭha families that some attempt is made to restrict the work of women to the domestic sphere. The more common pattern is for women to participate directly in important extra-domestic activities and, perhaps as a consequence, to also exercise a high degree of control and decision-making in a whole range of social contexts associated with such activities.

***Bolajyā* work groups**

In this section I will briefly summarize Webster's (1987) most interesting account of a unique form of labour organization known as *bolajyā* found amongst the Jyāpu, the agricultural caste whose members constitute over 40 per cent of the Newar population. As Webster quite rightly observes, in orthodox Hindu communities throughout South Asia agricultural work is typically organized in conformity with the hierarchical principles that underpin the *jajmān* system, that is to say the hereditary provision of labour by the members of low castes in return for rice, patronage and other benefits from the members of dominant land-owning castes. The Jyāpu, however, prefer to organize agricultural labour on the basis of voluntary work parties who collaborate together as a team in carrying out the various tasks and in sharing the financial rewards. In addition to providing labour for each other on a reciprocal basis, the *bolajyā* teams work for wages paid by others who hire them, and then use the money so gained to finance annual feasts and sacrifices. Webster himself explicitly describes *bolajyā* as a form of social organization based on egalitarian ideas. People, he asserts, work together apparently because they want to do so on an equal basis, and the *bolajyā* groups are equal in respect to one another. What hierarchy obtains within the group is, as is true of the *guthi* ritual associations, a reflection of seniority, age and competence, not of differential ritual status defined by reference to ontological criteria.

Commensality and status

In common with other caste-structured communities in South Asia relative status in Newar society is most clearly expressed in the strictness with which rules of commensality, especially in regard to boiled rice, are observed. Though equality may be deemed to be inherent in the very act of commensality, that is to say, in the shared eating of the same food, so too is hierarchy deemed to be inherent in the act of food presentation. Even in the simplest daily and familial context the giving of food is an expression of the donor's recognition of the recipient's superior status, if not permanently, then at least in this particular context. The respect shown by a wife for her husband both in serving him food and in pouring him rice-wine is closely akin to the worship expressed by a devotee in

offering rice, fruit and flowers to a deity. The simple act of giving food is in all contexts thought to please the recipient. If a potential recipient, whether human or divine, is thought liable to act in a harmful or dangerous way, then the surest way to forestall such a possibility is to offer pleasing food. Hunger is generally thought to be a powerful and dangerous force, and a great deal of social and religious action is therefore devoted to the task of ensuring that no one, whether human or divine, is likely to suffer from its terrible pangs. This belief is indeed so strong that most Newars will go to considerable pains to ensure that they never eat without sharing at least a portion with someone else. Thus, before each meal, especially in feasting contexts, each eater will set aside a small portion of each item as an offering to god, an act referred to as *dyah bigu*. Indeed, many older and more traditional Newars will make such an offering before each of the two main daily meals. Though the person concerned may well have some particular god in mind as recipient, the god is in fact unnamed and generally taken to stand for any god or goddess who may happen to see one eating and in so doing become desirous of one's food, and hence through jealousy constitute a potential danger. Nor are gods, or even spirits, the only ones who may cause trouble in this way. To eat alone without sharing some of the food on one's plate is deemed to be a dangerous thing to do, and hence but rarely occurs. It is feared that someone who is hungry may see one eating and as a result of the evil and damaging force (*dveṣa*) so generated within them, may cause one grievous harm—typically in the form of wasting away accompanied by some sort of eating or digestive difficulty. The *dveṣa* of all those most likely to suffer from hunger, such as untouchables, *sadhus* or widows are those most feared and hence most necessary to either avoid or propitiate with offerings.

But commensality, in addition to indicating either the weakness or the absence of hostility between individuals of widely divergent status, may also constitute the chief measure of commonality of status within groups. Just as commensality may be used to define a hierarchical structure of relations between social units, so too may it be used to define internal status parity. Indeed, amongst the Newars, as is generally the case in caste-structured South Asian communities, the act of eating boiled rice together constitutes the

clearest possible assertion of equivalence in human worth. It is for this reason that status disputes between groups commonly focus on commensality as a crucial issue, with the single most effective way for a caste or sub-caste to assert superiority over other like groups taking the form of a refusal to eat boiled rice with the members of such groups. The classic account in the literature dealing with this theme is Rosser's (1964) description of such a dispute between the three top-ranking Newar Buddhist castes, the Gubhāju, Bare and Urāy.³

What I would now like to suggest is that the Newars, though by no means unique in this regard, are perhaps a little unusual in the extent to which they have stressed the principle of commensal equivalence in contexts elsewhere either exclusively or predominantly structured in accordance with principles of social hierarchy. They have done so primarily by means of two devices—on the one hand, by greatly widening the circle of boiled-rice commensality on certain occasions, and on the other by having a similar widening effect on the commensal circle by substituting par-boiled and flattened rice (*baji*) for boiled rice.

Samyak

A particularly good example of the ritual transcendence of the normal bounds of boiled rice commensality is provided in the big Buddhist ceremony called *samyak*. At this ceremony, which is ideally held every twelve years, all of the leading Gubhāju and Bare are fed boiled rice and other cooked food by the members of that caste to which the principal sponsors belong, most commonly wealthy Buddhist merchants, such as Urāy. Indeed, in the case of the Urāy, they not only cook and serve the rice, but sit and eat it together with the Gubhāju and Bare. For most of the participants this act of commensality is quite explicitly couched in terms of equality—'we are all Buddhists, Buddhists do not recognize caste, so on this great Buddhist occasion we eat rice which we have ourselves cooked together with our priests and monks'. However, whilst recognizing the presence of such an egalitarian principle in the attitude of many participants, it must also be granted that an

³ See also Lewis's (1989:52) useful later comments both on the dispute and on Rosser's account.

alternative and, at least in the politico-jural context, more influential interpretation of *samyak* inter-caste commensality is of a ritual inversion, and therefore legitimation, of the hierarchical norm. Rosser's (1966) fascinating account of the long drawn-out status dispute between the three participating Buddhist castes makes it quite clear that though the hierarchical principles that underpin the ritual inversion theory finally won the day in the courts, the anti-caste egalitarian principle was both clearly articulated and strongly supported by many members of the Newar Buddhist community. It should be remembered that the courts were the instruments of a highly orthodox and hierarchically structured Hindu state. From the point of view of the argument that I am here presenting it is sufficient to identify the presence of an egalitarian interpretation, even if it should rate only a secondary status in the Newar scheme of social values.

Food as *prasād*

Whilst boiled rice is deemed to be particularly prone to the threat of pollution, and therefore of also transmitting such pollution from one eater to another, rice that is first briefly par-boiled and then flattened by a pounding process is deemed to be altogether safer. Flattened rice (*baji*) is therefore widely used both in ritual and in feasting contexts where the participants, though at times of different caste, nevertheless wish to assert a common identity. Though most South Asian caste-structured communities have the equivalent of *baji*, I feel quite confident in asserting its exceptional importance amongst the Newars. That this is so is evident not only in the width of the *baji* circle of commensality, for it includes all castes bar the untouchables, but also in the numerous feasts and ritual contexts in which it is the prescribed form of rice.

By far the most important of these contexts is in the popular form of *prasād* known as *samay baji*. *Samay baji*, like the similar though simpler *prasād* known as *khē sagā*, is served to participants shortly after the worship of those Tantric deities that require the sacrifice of an animal. *Khē sagā* (or *pañcamakāra* = 'the five M's' as it is also called in Sanskrit) consists of five 'strong' foods that are normally tabu for orthodox Hindus—the five being cooked meat (*māṅśa* Skt.), fried and dried fish (*matsya* Skt.), parched grain (*mudrā* Skt.),

alcohol (*madya* Skt.) and fried duck egg (*maithuna* Skt.). It is normally eaten by members of the same caste in the context of life-cycle ceremonies. *Samay baji*, which again consists of the five 'strong' foods, though with the addition of *baji*, roast *baji* (*syā baji*), garlic, ginger, black soya beans, white beans, a second kind of fish, plus some part, though not the head, of the animal sacrificed to the deity, has exactly the same *prasād* type function as *khē sagā*, but in the context either of large scale multi-caste life-cycle ceremonies, or of even larger-scale community organized calendrical ceremonies or festivals. In such rituals there is even greater likelihood that this important ritual food will be eaten by members of castes of quite divergent ritual status. Yet again, the ideological emphasis is quite explicitly on the absence of social differentiation between participants. I was, in fact, informed by one learned Buddhist that the Newar word *samay* is a corruption of the Sanskrit word *sameya*, which literally means 'equal' or 'alike'. The full Sanskrit name of the food is *sameya cakra*, or 'the wheel of equals', makes the egalitarian emphasis quite explicit. Those who share such food, whether in the intra-caste form of *khē sagā* or the inter-caste form of *samay baji*, are expected to do so as ritual equals and hence without recognition of worldly social differences, whether of caste, seniority or age.

Feast food (*bhvay* in Newari, *bhoj* in Nepali)

Khē sagā and *samay baji* are, as Tantric forms of *prasād*, highly ritual foods that are only eaten by the principal participants in life-cycle and calendrical rituals. Because of this one might be inclined to dismiss the clear egalitarian emphasis as of relatively little social significance. The same cannot, however, be so easily said of the numerous and more secular feasts that are served at the conclusion of almost every event that is of importance to the Newars. Feasts, that is to say those communal eating occasions known as *bhvay* in Newari and *bhoj* in Nepali, accompany almost all *rites de passage*, and are a likely conclusion to almost all social events, especially those of a regular or cyclical kind, that bring together a significant number of individuals. A great deal of time, energy, organization and expense is devoted by most families to the annual cycle of feasts in which they are involved. In addition to those given and organized

by the participants in life-cycle and calendrical rituals, there are numerous others that are the responsibilities of virtually all enduring Newar social groups of a corporate character, whether they be lineages, *guthis*, cult groups, localities or secular voluntary organizations. Though many such feasts are organized by the members of a single caste there are numerous others that, like *samyak bhvay*, transcend caste boundaries. It is not the latter type of feast, however, that I now wish to further discuss, but rather an ideological distinction that some of my more learned informants made between feasts that, on the one hand, stress ontological, and hence social, identity between participants, and on the other, stress social differentiation.

A common and simple distinction made between feasts concerns the kind of food served. Feasts referred to as *lā bhvay*, literally 'meat feast', include not only meat, but other foods of a 'strong' or 'hot' variety, such as fish, ginger, garlic, alcohol, etc. Such feasts mark the conclusion of events which include the worship of Tantric deities which require blood sacrifice and hence are preceded by *prasād* of the *khē sagā* or *samay baji* variety. By contrast, feasts referred to as *mari bhvay*, literally 'confectionary feast', include only 'pure' or *satwa* (*sattva* Skt.) type foods, and are served to mark the conclusion of events which include the worship of only non-Tantric deities. The appropriate forms of *prasād* at such events are those known as *pañcāmṛta*, consisting of milk, sour milk, clarified butter (*ghyaḥ*), honey and water, or *pañcagavya* (Skt. the 'five products of the cow') consisting of milk, sour milk, butter, urine and dung).

In distinguishing between feasts, especially those of the far more recurrent and elaborate *lā bhvay* variety, a number of informants stressed the relevance of the Sanskrit distinction between things that are *lokattara* (Skt.), that is other-worldly, beyond or outside *samsāra* (Skt.) or noumenal, and things that are *laukika* (Skt.), that is this-worldly, within or pertaining to *samsāra*, or phenomenal. In the context of feasts, at one end of the continuum constituted by these ideal types, one might find the highly charged or 'strong' food eaten at the concluding feast of a secret Tantric rite performed by an exclusive cult group of initiates, whilst at the other end one might find the 'purer' or more *sattvika* (Skt.) food served at the more secular and open variety of feast that typically concludes either a

life-cycle ceremony, or the annual *pūjā* of a locality-based *guthi* association. The food offered in a *lokatarra* type feast is taken as the *prasād* of the Tantric deity worshipped and is not eaten in the large quantities that distinguish the more *laukika* type secular feasts. Instead, the emphasis is on the presentation of a very large number of different varieties of food, each of which should be consumed in tiny portions, indeed often only in a symbolic way by touching a morsel to the lips. A popular food offering of the *lokattara* variety is that known as *thāybhū*, a ceremonial copper or brass plate containing 84 different food items, including rice, sometimes boiled, sometimes flattened, and a variety of both 'pure' sweetmeats and 'strong' foods of the Tantric category. Such food, in addition to containing the six tastes that should be present in all *lokattara* type feasts, represents, in the 84 different tiny portions, a whole pantheon of deities and guardian spirits. Hence, the act of eating such food is an event that is deeply imbued with religious significance—in particular the significance of attaining detachment from the *laukika* or phenomenal world.

The more *lokatarra* or other-worldly the focus of the ritual and hence the type of food served at the feast, then the more the emphasis is on status equality and lack of social differentiation between participants. The act of ritual commensality here symbolizes the common aim of the participants—which in the final analysis is to transcend the limitations of phenomenal existence, including the criteria of social differentiation. By contrast, the more *laukika* or this-worldly the type of ritual and hence also its associated feast, the more the emphasis is on the ritual recognition of social status and social position. Feasts of this latter kind are known as *gaṇacakra bhvay—gaṇa* (Skt.) meaning collectivity or group and *cakra* (Skt.) meaning wheel or circle. In such feasts the occupants of the various functional roles relevant to the preceding ritual, such as priest, client, barber, astrologer, musician, porter, etc., are explicitly recognized, whilst at the same time coming together as a collectivity in a common circle. But what is even more striking in such feasts is the elaborate attention given to seniority in the seating and serving arrangements amongst participants of the same caste. Any large feasting group that is self-perpetuating, that is to say regularly recruits new members, whether by birth, ritual or some

other means, maintains a written register of members that records the exact order of seniority—an order that determines not only seating arrangements at feasts, but also duties and privileges in a whole range of group activities. Just as the oldest male member of a joint family will sit at the seniormost position in the dining area and be both served and eat first, so too will the oldest male member of a Buddhist ritual association (*bāhāḥ*), perhaps with over 2,000 members, sit at the head of the line and be served first at the association's annual feast. Indeed, all of the 2,000 members will be seated in precise order of seniority according to their positions on the membership list.

By far the most important and recurrent of the *laukika* or this-worldly type of feasts are those served to the members of caste-based ritual associations known as *guthi*. Indeed, if there is any one feature of Newar social life that the people themselves regard as of central importance to the maintenance of a uniquely Newar style of life, it is the proliferation of *guthi* associations. With each caste there are a large, though widely varying, number of such associations, each with a formally restricted and usually hereditary membership, a management committee, generally consisting of the eight or ten seniormost male members, an annual income derived from corporately held land under a special tenurial arrangement, and one or a number of precisely specified functions or tasks, usually of a religious kind.

Foremost amongst such associations are those known as *sanāḥ guthi* and *digu dyāḥ guthi*. The *sanāḥ guthi* are funerary associations whose members organize all of the many complex activities precipitated by a death, including corpse preparation, the funeral procession and the actual cremation itself. Within each caste there are a varying number of locality-based *sanāḥ guthi* in which membership is normally based on hereditary transmission from father to son. However, a person moving to a different locality can, provided his caste credentials are accepted as valid, join his caste's local *sanāḥ guthi*. *Digu dyāḥ guthi* are strictly lineage-based associations whose members jointly perform a variety of ceremonies during the course of the year, including a major annual gathering for the worship of the group's founding ancestor followed by a communal feast. Flowing from these two critically important and

universally present *guthi*, there are always a varying number of lesser *guthi* formed for specific ritual purposes, and in which membership is directly dependant on prior *sanāḥ* or *digu dyāḥ guthi* membership. Such secondary *guthis* are formed whenever an individual decides to set aside a piece of land for the specific purpose of financing from the annual harvest yield a particular religious activity—such as the worship of a deity, the periodic repair of a religious building, the support of *saṃnyāsi* or other religious persons, etc. The male descendants in the patriline of such a donor constitute the *guthi* membership and corporately share the responsibility of carrying out the stipulated activity, usually in conjunction with an annual feast attended by all members.

At the annual gathering of each such *guthi*, the eldest male member (*thakāli*), after worshipping the *guthi* deity distributes *prasād* to all members beginning with the next most senior and ending with the most junior. Each recipient of *prasād* must then in turn get up from his seat and bow to all those who are senior to him. The concluding feast, which is of the this-worldly and *gaṇacakra* variety and typically includes meat, alcohol and other 'strong' foods, replicates the seniority form of hierarchy both in seating arrangements and in the order of food distribution.

The contrast that informants made between these two forms of feasts, that is, the other-worldly and this-worldly variety (*lokatarra* and *laukika*) is of considerable ideological importance. Whereas in the *lokattara* or Tantric type feast commensality is, as in *samay baji*, ideally between a 'circle of equals' (*sameya cakra*), that is to say between individuals who regard all forms of social differentiation as a hindrance to the attainment of the highest religious goals. In the *laukika* or more worldly type of feast, as in *gaṇacakra bhvay*, commensality is between socially differentiated and functionally specific categories of individuals. Furthermore, though hierarchy is certainly recognized in the *gaṇacakra* type feast, it is predominantly hierarchy of the kind most commonly found in the domains of kinship and descent, rather than in the context of caste-type social inequality; that is, hierarchy based on notions of relative seniority and age rather than hierarchy based on notions of inherited ontological differences in human worth.

Though my informants accorded considerable ideological importance to the egalitarian theme that they detected in the *lokottara* type feasts, it should be stressed that both other-worldliness and egalitarianism are indeed ideals, and hence as such but rarely attained in social practice. Just as the renouncer is invariably drawn back into the social world through the devotion of his followers, so too is Newar Buddhist egalitarianism greatly constrained by the caste and other forms of social inequality that have become so deeply embedded in the fabric of social life. However, as in my analysis in the previously discussed case of inter-caste commensality in the *samyak* feast, so too has it been my intention to point to the existence of an egalitarian ideology which, though certainly of secondary status, nevertheless exists as some kind of ideological counter to the prevailing high value accorded to hierarchy, both of the caste and the kinship variety.

Conjugal commensality

In common with most South Asian communities, the men of the family eat first, with the women, especially the junior wives, serving the food. Husbands, however, are expected to leave small portions of each food variety, which should then be mixed on the same plate with fresh helpings, to constitute their wives meals. From the orthodox Hindu perspective such a custom would define the husband/wife relationship in unambiguously hierarchical terms—by eating her husband's left-over food *jutho* (Nep.), the wife is thereby placing herself in a polluted and hence inferior position. Whilst some Newars, notably those strongly influenced by Parbatiyā thinking on such matters, would subscribe to such an interpretation, others, most especially high-caste Buddhists, would instead stress the status parity implications of shared food, especially boiled rice. The latter are quick to point out that whilst Hindus simply leave empty but polluted plates for their wives, they, as 'egalitarian' Buddhists, leave food to share with their wives. A number of such informants further supported their interpretation of the custom by relating it to the Newar marriage ritual in which the couple are required to eat simultaneously from the Tantric *thāybhū* food offering. However, in drawing such a parallel they chose, some of them quite deliberately, to overlook what others might justifiably

regard as a crucial difference between the two customs—whereas in the marriage rite the couple eat together, and in so doing mutually eat each other's polluted left-overs, in the daily custom the wife follows her husband and hence it is she alone who is polluted. The predominance of hierarchical rather than egalitarian signifiers in this particular rite is evident in that the daily food left-overs of unmarried adults and children are given either to animals, thrown out of the house, or taken to a refuse pit. Nevertheless, the egalitarian interpretation, no matter how inadequate, contradictory or marginalized it may be, is recognized and accorded some ideological importance by a significant number of Newar Buddhists.

Conclusion

There is, I feel reasonably confident, a high level of consensus amongst South Asian anthropologists that hierarchy is the predominant ideology in the context of inter-caste relations. There is, however, far less consensus concerning both the character and the status of alternate ideologies. Whereas Dumont regarded hierarchy as not just the dominant, but also the all-encompassing ideology, Uberoi and Das contended 'that every human society contains certain structural relations that are hierarchical and asymmetrical and other relations that are marked by equality and reciprocity' (Uberoi and Das 1971:40). In the present paper I have attempted to escape the a-historical limitations of a structural mode of analysis by representing both hierarchy and equality as not parallel and hence mutually supporting structural principles, but rather as competing ideologies. From such a perspective I would expect to find hierarchical and egalitarian ideas directly competing for legitimacy in the same social contexts, not simply as co-existing side by side in discrete areas of social life, as in Uberoi's and Das's structural formulation.

I have indicated that in a number of important areas of Newar social life notions of complementarity and status parity are of at least equal importance to those of hierarchy and inequality. Whilst hierarchy is the dominant principle in defining inter-caste relations, complementarity and equivalence are of relatively greater importance in intra-caste contexts. I have argued that the Newar version of the ubiquitous caste system has developed in a manner

favouring the formation of highly nucleated endogamous local communities bound together by a complex network of predominantly isogamous marital alliances. A necessary consequence of this structural arrangement is the near status parity between affines and hence by extension also between spouses. In other words, in two most important dimensions of Newar social life, the relations that obtain between, on the one hand, the major named sub-divisions of the castes and on the other, between affines and between spouses, are in many contexts influenced by notions of equivalence and complementarity as much as they are by notions of inequality and hierarchy. It is, indeed, precisely the proliferation of ties of consanguinity and affinity within the castes that has in large measure restricted the influence of notions of ritual hierarchy to inter-caste relations. Within the castes kinship is still of pre-eminent importance and hence social relations are predicated on notions of reciprocity, solidarity and seniority.

I would like to stress that though the Newars may be a little unusual in the importance that they attach to kinship-derived notions of complementarity and reciprocity, they are by no means unique. On the contrary, I would argue that even in the most orthodox of caste-structured Hindu communities, one may still expect to find parallel, though no doubt often weaker, manifestations of complementarity and status parity. The same point of view has in fact been put most forcibly by a number of Dumont's critics. In addition to Uberoi and Das, Berreman (1981:27-8), following Bloch in his view of medieval Europe as built upon personal bonds that are simultaneously hierarchical and reciprocal, contended that precisely the same inter-weaving of the two principles occurs in the caste system. Finally, I would point to the very substantial evidence, evidence which has as yet been largely ignored in debates concerning the sociology of India, of explicit ideological formulations centring around the idea of status equivalence. I can do no more here than refer to the recent most interesting monograph published by Khare (1984) on untouchable ideology as found amongst the Chamars of Lucknow. He provides abundant evidence in support of his central contention that the main purpose of Chamar ideology 'is to show to the hierarchical person an equalitarian mirror that the Indian civilization offers' (1984:17). Whilst such a mirror

clearly contains the potential of providing a revolutionary alternative to the Brahman-dominated hierarchy, the power of the state has been such as to inhibit the transformation of potential into actual. In other words, the kind of ideology that I have documented amongst the Newars has but rarely presented itself to those at the bottom of the hierarchy as a viable alternative to institutionalized social inequality. On the contrary, the two ideologies have mostly complemented and reinforced one another.

The history of Newar society is such as to provide some support for the view that I am here presenting. Though overtly structured in conformity with hierarchical principles of the caste variety for more than a thousand years, a period during which political power has also been consistently exercised by orthodox Hindus, Newar society has nevertheless to the present day accorded high value to such kinship derived principles as reciprocity, family and lineage solidarity, status parity in commensal and other contexts, and seniority based on generation and age. Furthermore, despite Hindu political domination, Buddhism has remained an important and influential component of Newar religious life, and in so doing has provided a source of ideas that could always, given the right political conditions, provide an ideological challenge for the hierarchical notions that underpin the Hindu derived and sustained caste system. In more recent times both communism and Western democracy have undoubtedly added yet extra dimensions of support to the development of an internal critique of all forms of hierarchy, whether of the caste or kinship-derived varieties.⁴

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⁴ Subsequent to the publication of the two papers (Allen 1987 and 1993) on which this chapter is based Steven Parish (1996) has published a most interesting book entitled *Hierarchy and its Discontents*, in which he explores a wide variety of contexts in which Newars express values of an egalitarian kind.

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