

# The Rodighar and its Role in Gurung Society

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Rodighar, an institution found among the Gurungs of Nepal, <sup>1</sup> has been described briefly by other researchers such as Bista, <sup>1</sup> Macfarlane, <sup>2</sup> and Pignède <sup>3</sup>. Institutions similar in name and concept exist among the Magars, another Nepalese group (Hitchcock) <sup>4</sup>. On one level, the rodighar (ghar N- house, from rot II G- ro- friends? or sleeping place, tii- house) can be described as a nightly social gathering place, a semi-permanent dormitory where young girls and boys of the village congregate to sing, talk and joke.

In some areas, the rodighar seems to be dying out. Indeed, many Gurung villages no longer have fixed rodi houses as such, although they did in the recent past. Some authors have suggested that this is due to the influence of the surrounding Hindu society and its values (Pignède, Macfarlane) <sup>5</sup>. In the eyes of outsiders, a society that allows its boys and girls to gather and interact freely is considered to be lax and immoral. Thus, social disapproval, coming initially from outside the community, which in turn, affects the thinking of the members of the community itself, is cited as a factor responsible for the ongoing disappearance of the rodighar.

There is a tendency, however, to view the rodighar as a single-purpose institution, emphasizing only one of its aspects, that of a social 'night-club', which functions in a society where other, more sophisticated forms of entertainment are lacking. This view ignores the more important aspects of the rodi house. The aim of this paper is to supplement this view, in brief, to describe more fully the actual organization and activities of the rodi house, outlining the integral part it plays in the economic, social and ritual organization of the village. The description is confined to one area of Nepal (Lamjung district), where the rodighar exists in an apparently flourishing state, and is based on data collected primarily in one village <sup>6</sup>. Reasons will be suggested as to why the rodi might be disappearing from Gurung society. Outside social disapproval, although relevant, may be only one accounting factor.

There are many similarities between the Gurung rodighar, and institutions found, for example among the Muria Gonds of Central India <sup>7</sup> and the Nagas of Assam <sup>8</sup>. In these societies, as other researchers have noted, the young peoples' dormitories play a significant part in regulating a good deal of village social activity. They function as socializers of the younger members of society, and they are centers from which many economic and religious activities are organized and carried out. But unlike the Gurung rodi, in the Indian examples, sexual activity between boys

and girls is allowed and often encouraged. It is seen as a means of preparing for marriage, or in some cases, as a selection process for finding suitable marriage partners. This part of village dormitory life, is, no doubt, what attracts the most attention on the part of casual observers, blotting out interest in any of its more important activities. Unfortunately, the stress on the sexual aspect, results in a distortion of the situation, while the real significance of these types of institutions for the societies in which they're found is only vaguely perceived.

In the Gurung rodi, if sexual activity takes place, it is certainly not a frequent occurrence, and in any case, is carried out as secretly as possible. Preparation for marriage, in this sense, is not seen as a crucial issue. It could also be suggested that the rodi house serves the basic function of letting young people get to know each other, making it easier to eventually pick husbands or wives. But this is not exactly accurate. A large percentage of marriages are contracted with people outside the village and are arranged by parents and relatives. Most of the social interaction that takes place between rodi boys and girls, however, involves people of the same village. Only occasionally (at marriages, ceremonial occasions or visiting) do young people have the opportunity to visit other villages, when they can socialize with other boys and girls, gathering in their rodi houses. Perhaps the marriages that take place between people from the same village who have known each other all their lives are more durable than many parent-arranged inter-village marriages, where a couple finds itself incompatible only after getting to know each other. But, in general, the rodi house's role in facilitating marriage arrangements is not its only one, nor is it of primary importance. More significant, are the functions it fulfills in other spheres of village life.

#### Organization of the Rodighar

Every rodi house goes through a kind of life-cycle, from its first inception, through maturity, until its gradual, but final dissolution. Because, different age groupings, as well as friendship networks form the basis of rodi-group association, there are usually a few separate rodies within a village, and in larger villages, one might find as many as ten or twelve different rodi houses. It is important to note that membership is not restricted in terms of economic or social status; all rodies include both 16-jat and 4-jat people, <sup>10</sup> from rich and poor Gurung families. In general, the rodi houses tend to be located in 4-jat homes, although in at least one nearby village, they are beginning to form in 16-jat houses as well.

From about the age of 8 or 9, a core-group of about 10-15 little girls form, usually those who have played together since early childhood. They meet informally, after eating the evening meal, at one of their members' houses, often but not always

sleeping there. By the age of 10 or 11, attendance and sleeping arrangements have become more permanent, and at this time, boys of approximately the same age begin to come regularly every evening, to sit and joke with the girls, going home to sleep in their own homes. They usually play drums, sing and practice thetar (dances set to Nepali folk-songs), instructed by a few older boys and girls. These dances will later be performed publicly.

Within a year or two of this more regular organization, a public ceremony, called rotII dareba (dareba G- to fix, to make certain) is held. This ceremony is an affirmation of the rodi house as a socially recognized entity. The headmen of the village choose an auspicious day for the ceremony. A special ritual dance is performed and all the girls of the rodi house receive aashik (N- a blessing) from the dancers. In return, the girls have to supply beer, wine and other refreshments to the dancers and village headmen, as well as a contribution of money (Rs. 10-15) which goes into the village fund. One of the headmen usually makes a short speech to the girls, telling them in effect, to 'live together, train for your life's work together, and prepare for your later marriage'.

The middle-range aged rodi houses (girls from about 16-23) are organized along the same lines as these younger 'junior' rodies. Men and boys, anywhere from ages 16 to 35 and often older, attend. Arriving in the evening (usually after most of the girls have assembled), in small groups or individually, they sing and joke with the girls; and it is sometimes quite late before the boys all leave to sleep. Even when agricultural work is at its most arduous, boys and girls in the rodi frequently stay up half the night, talking and singing. Although they may get very little sleep, they are always up early and go out to perform a full days work. This pattern is somewhat harder on the girls, who tend to stay in the rodi every night, rather than sleeping at home, but most people learn to adjust to sleeping through what are often crowded and noisy conditions. In general, nightly attendance at the rodi is fairly regular. Only during the monsoon, when people are sometimes working far away from the village and are gone for days and weeks at a time, does attendance drop off.

The older rodi groups (girls from the ages of 23-30) have gone through the first two stages. The format for a typical rodi evening is similar, however. By this time, many of the girls have gotten married and their numbers and attendance tend to be reduced. This reduction goes on until there are too few members to form a feasible group and the rodi dissolves gradually. Some of the married members have moved to their husband's village, some have gone out of the country with husbands who are soldiers, serving in the British or Indian armies. Many married women continue to attend rodi, if they are still living in their own villages, for at least a few years after their marriage. Actually,

women seem to put off moving to their husband's village for a long time, since it involves a break with their life-long friends, and means living with unfamiliar people in a new environment. Although they may make short visits to their husband's village every so often, extending their length of stay each time, many women may bear one or two children before moving permanently. This is especially true in the case of women whose husbands are serving long terms in the Gurkha regiments of the Indian or British armies. They often prefer not to stay with their in-laws until their husbands have come back to the village permanently. Men, too, still continue to go to rodi, even after getting married, although they might attend less frequently.

The mother, (or other senior female relative if the mother is absent or dead) of the girl in whose house the rodi is organized, is called rodi ama (N) or rotshyoama (G), the father, rotshyo aab (G). The rodi ama is frequently more of a public figure since she often sleeps in the rodi house and may be more involved with seeing that proper equipment is supplied (sleeping mats, enough kerosene, food for periodic celebrations). The power the rodi ama wields in regulating behavior in the rodi depends on the individual personality. Some are very influential, others don't interfere very much at all.

The members of the rodi house have a special system of names for each other. The head of the rodi (the girl in whose house it is) is referred to as rotIIr be (G - literally, of the rodi house,) by her girlfriends. All the other girls have names corresponding to where their houses are located in the village. Another system of address is used among the boys and girls of rodi age. Although the rotIIr be is responsible for certain matters, she does not always act as the main organizer for the various activities of the group. In practise, the rodi functions as usual when she is away from the village for any length of time.

In addition to the number of girls' rodi in any one village, there are boys' rodis as well, which are similarly based on age and friendship groupings. But unlike the girls' rodis, the boys' houses do not involve permanent sleeping arrangements or gathering places for its members. Furthermore, membership in a group is overlapping and fluid; that is, a boy can be a member of several groups at one time. Girls can never do this; they are loyal to their own rodi. When the boys do function as a unit, it is only on occasions, to carry out certain activities a few times during the year. During a marriage ceremony, for example, a group of boys may help to carry the bride and accompany her friends to her husband's village. At times during leisure periods, a boys' rodi may go to visit rodi girls in a nearby village. Boys may also decide to participate with rodi girls of their own age in an elaborate exchange party, lasting for days. In addition, during certain important ritual festivals during the year, in which a girls'

rodi plays an important part, a boys' group will be called upon by the girls for help in running things. Often, different boys' groups compete with each other for the privilege of helping the girls and participating directly in the festival. In general, many of the activities of village boys and girls are characterized by cooperation and interaction via membership in their rodi houses. These activities will now be described in more detail.

### Functions and Activities of the Rodi

Much of the agricultural work in a Gurung village is done on a cooperative basis. The system of huri (N) or nOgar (G) has been described in more detail in other works on the Gurungs (Pignède, Macfarlane) 11. Briefly, it is a system, wherein a group of individuals works on each others' land on a rotation basis. The work is made more enjoyable and goes faster in the presence of a group of friends, who often sing and joke while working. Nogars are organized for practically every type of agricultural activity; in January-February for carrying firewood; in March, through May for carrying fertilizer and preparing fields for the next planting; in June, for planting rice, in August and September, for weeding paddy. The age limit for joining a nOgar is not fixed; however younger people of rodi age tend to be the main participants. While both young and old are sometimes in the same nOgar group, most groups are composed of individuals of roughly the same age.

For many of the nOgars, the core group consists of girls belonging to the same rodi. In one rodi house, there are usually too many girls (considering the need for male labor) to form an efficiently sized group, so they may split into two or three groups. The male membership varies more from season to season. At certain times during the year, there may be intense competition and rivalry among the different girls' groups for recruiting boys to their nOgar. At such times, a day or two before the nOgar is scheduled to begin, girls rush around trying to recruit boys (who are popular or considered to be good workers), taking their woven rain hats and mattocks as tokens of the boys' promise to join their work party. Sometimes there are hard feelings (which are short-lived) between girls' groups if a boy goes off with their rivals.

There are many other types of mutual labor exchange which are utilized in the village. Another system, lhoba (G- to help), involves a group of individuals who offer their services to a person without payment. Lhoba is used at certain times, for example in harvesting rice or carrying firewood. It is often done among rodi girls, when, for instance, all the members of the rodi, working as a unit, offer their services to the rotlIr be. This can be interpreted as a kind of payment, in return for the extra expense or responsibility that she and her family incur as hosts of the rodi

house. There is a lot of stress in the society, on the ethic of 'paying back services'. In accordance with this value, the girls of one rodi may, in addition offer to labor to a boy or to boys who, throughout the year, have presented the girls with gifts, or who have helped them in one way or another.

At other times, when cooperative labor groups are not being utilized, attempts to work with friends are made, whenever possible. The thought is often expressed, that, to go to one's fields alone or only with workers is tedious and depressing, as opposed to working with friends. In the monsoon, when work in the lower fields involves working and sleeping away from the village, friends try to at least stay together at night in temporary huts. The desire to spend a lot of time with groups of friends is strong, especially among girls of the same rodi house.

In connection with other activities of the village, the various rodi groups fulfill additional important functions. The period, roughly between February through late July is designated as the summer season (Barkha rita N; Turgu G), and is the special time for performing ghAAnto (a traditional ritual dance, found only among Gurungs, but whose story, confusingly, is Hindu in theme). A portion of the dance, however, can be performed at any time of the year-on village holidays, days of leisure, at marriages, and often when a returned soldier or outside visitor comes to the village. The dance is traditionally performed by two 16-jat girls. Within each rodi group at least two girls are trained in the dance (usually by male gurus or teachers), and therefore, theoretically any rodi group (except those younger ones who have not yet mastered the dance) can decide to perform ghAAnto. Often, they will choose to invite a number of soldiers on leave, or outside visitors to see the performance. Aashik (a blessing) is given to the invited guests, at which point, the guests are expected to contribute some money, sometimes a considerable sum. A few rupees go to the dancers, another share to the ghAAnto gurume (men who sing the verses of the song), the rest of the money goes to the rodi fund. Part of the money in the fund is used to cover the expenses of the evening (refreshments etc.), but later, the accumulated money, after many such performances may go into hosting a feast. A buffalo or goat is cut and the meat is distributed to relatives, friends and to people who have helped the girls throughout the year.

On occasion, the village headmen decide to host a ghAAnto performance, with the assistance of a rodi group, similarly inviting guests who contribute money. The dancers and gurume get their small share, while the rest of the money goes into the village fund, later to be used in holding a public feast.

One of the biggest village festivals of the year occurs in mid-May on Baisakh Purne. At this time, a special section of the ghAAnto dance is performed for three days in a row. This festival is very time-consuming and costly and involves butchering many animals, feasting, and distributing meat and other food to the village as a whole. Outside musicians have to be brought in and there are many types of entertainment going on at one time, with the ghAAnto ritual the center of attention. One rodi group is officially designated as the daata (N-donors), that is, they are given the responsibility, not only for dancing, but for carrying out the major tasks or organizing when and how the dance is going to be performed. They have to make sure all the necessary equipment is supplied (like costumes, ornaments and props). They supply food and wine to all the participants and consult with other groups who are helping them run the dance. In this, they seek the help of one group of boys who will be responsible for feeding and housing the outside musicians (damai). The girls also consult with the village headmen, who in part, oversee the collection and distribution of food and money, as well as with the gurus about matters pertaining to the performance itself. During this time, attendance is compulsory for every member of the rodi. Absence incurs a fine.

Usually a rodi group will hold the official responsibility for presenting the ghAAnto for three years in a row. (In any case, they must hold it for an odd number of years) It is among the middle-range aged rodi groups (those girls from 16-23 approximately) that the choice of a new daataa is made by the village headmen and young boys, when the last group has finished up its term. Sometimes, there is competition between rodi houses, as when there are two same-aged groups in line. If so, a compromise must be made. The headmen and young boys are theoretically responsible for this decision but the girls often exert pressure in their own way. In one case, when there was a dispute over their group having to give up their daataa-ship when three years were over, the girls prevailed over the headmen's decisions and kept the ghAAnto for another two years before they finally gave it over to the next group. The issue of the ghAAnto is often a source of contention between rival rodi groups and at times creates a lot of conflict in the village as a whole.

Much of the expense of performing ghAAnto, such as feasting, has to be borne by the rodi group in charge, although, in part, some of the expenses are carried by the boys' group who are co-operating with them. These expenses are met with money from their ghAAnto fund, raised by getting contributions from family, friends and invited guests (those who are expected to contribute after receiving aashik from the dancers). The money which is left over after the expenses of running the ghAAnto and the rodi house stays in the general rodi fund, and after finishing up their responsibility as daataa, it is traditional for the group to take a trip to

such places as Pokhara or Dudhpokhari. This type of trip is an important opportunity for the girls, who would otherwise rarely get the chance to go even though Pokhara can be reached in a day.

After a rodi group finishes out its official term it still plays a role in the ghAanto festival of Baisakh Purne. The former daataa become guru shyome (G- female teachers). The make-up of the dancers is elaborate and time-consuming and must be re-applied each morning of the festival. If it is not carried out perfectly, it is believed that great harm may befall the village and the dancers themselves. Only this senior group, the guru shyome because of their experience, are entrusted with the job.

There is a similar organization set up for the winter season (hiuda ritu N, Maargu G). Another dance, Krishna Chalitra performed by four young men is put on especially at Dasain, at funerals, weddings and at purbutE, a ceremony held for the eldest male child of a family. As in ghAanto, the dancers give aashik to invited guests who contribute money (daan N- a gift). Contributions are also obtained from spectators as well as from the family hosting the marriage or purbutE. A senior girls' rodi group is responsible for making up the dancers, who wear elaborate costumes, supplying all the clothes and ornaments each time the dance is performed. This girls' group is similarly called dattaa. The money collected on these occasions is given to the village fund and later used to finance one or more feasts, for the village as a whole. Although it is traditional for the daataa girls to get a double share of meat at this feast, it was customary for them to run up and steal as much meat as they could during its distribution, claiming it to be their rightful share for all the work they had done. This practice was recently discontinued because the girls were stealing too much meat, but they still receive an extra share.

### Thetar

Thetar, performances of Nepali songs, and dances and sometimes comedy routines, has been an ongoing phenomenon for about the last twenty years and is becoming increasingly popular. It can be put on at any time of the year. A particular girls' rodi may organize a group of their own, but occasionally a couple of rodies join together to organize a thetar party. As the girls can not run everything by themselves, they need the help of a group of boys to teach the songs and dances (learned in most cases from the radio), to help set up the stage and get equipment and to play drums and sing. Girls and boys work together, deciding on what songs are to be performed, and who to invite as special guests (those who are expected to contribute money). One of the big thetar groups consists of both young and older (middle range) members from several different rodi houses. The money collected from their performances is given over to the Adult (night) School fund of the village. A second thetar party consists of one single junior rodi

house, although they assisted by one of the older rodi groups in learning the dances and putting on the shows. The individual dancers receive personal contributions from spectators but most of the money collected goes to their own fund, which is used to buy instruments, to cover expenses, and when there is enough money, to hold a feast.

Many informants have asserted, that village ceremonies have become less elaborate in recent years. It can therefore be expected that the roles of all participants, including the rodi houses, have diminished. One reason for the decreased intensity with which these ceremonies are carried out is that they incur a lot of expenses and consumption of material goods and that this is becoming increasingly harder to bear. Because of this, other rodi customs, such as those involving costly exchanges and feasting obligations between boys and girls of rodi age, are beginning to come under attack by the village headmen. According to some older informants, who were attending rodi forty to sixty years ago, in their youth, there used to be a more constant reciprocal stream of gifts and feasts exchanged between boys' and girls' rodi groups. One such elaborate system, sIIIU tshOnab (G sIIIU-presents, tshOnab- to go to put in) is still practised. It works as follows: a group of boys will first present a girls' rodi with gifts-drums and an enormous load of food (one or two pathis of specially prepared rice for each rodi girl and the rodi ama). The boys come to stay in the girls' rodi house for two or three days at a time, the girls cutting a goat, buffalo, preparing the food and feasting the boys. This part of the system symbolizes the opening of the relationship between a group of boys and girls of roughly the same age. Later, theoretically five to ten years after, when the girls' rodi is more or less on the point of dissolving, the girls go to the boys' house with a return payment, called sIIIU phonab (G, phonab to go to pay back). The girls bring a load of breads for each boy (about 100 pieces in each load), with an extra load for their rodi ama, plus plenty of wine and beer. The preparation of these things is expensive and involves the participation of all the girls working full time for about two days straight. After delivering their load of presents, the girls have to stay in turn, in the boys' house, being feasted with as much delicious food as the boys can force them to accept. Both boys and girls distribute part of their shares of presents to relatives and neighbors. When the girls go to pay back the boys after a number of years, this signifies, the end of their relationship, a 'divorce of their love' for each other. The system, theoretically involves one presentation from the boys' side with one return payment from the girls. In practise, it is a bit more complicated. A girls' group may decide to return sIIIU, after a year or two. At that point, the boys can renew the cycle all over again by immediately presenting the girls with more gifts, which puts the girls again in the position of having to pay back. This frequently occurs. Moreover, a girls' group may be involved in

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doing sIIIU with two, three or four boys ' groups at a time. The boys are free to engage in this not only with the different girls's rodis of their own village, but they go outside as a group, to participate with girls ' groups in other villages as well.

When raising materials for these big feasts, a division of services takes place within the rodi house itself. 16-jat girls are only expected to raise half as much of the necessary goods (ghiu, flour, rice etc) as 4-jat girls. On the other hand, the 16-jat girls do most of the cleaning up and other types of work involved in putting on the feast such as collecting materials and cooking. This works similarly in the boys's rodis. As a group, 16-jat tend to be slightly less better off economically than 4-jat, and although some of the 16-jat people who are contributing half of what a 4-jat person contributes, are not necessarily poorer than their 4-jat counterparts, these social distinctions are still made and adhered to.

During these feasting parties, a great deal of importance is placed on reciprocity and 'paying back well'. Members who are absent when it is their rodi's turn to pay back, must provide a substitute, - someone from their family to contribute materials and help in the preparations. The different girls' rodis vie with one another in presenting the boys with as much food as possible. Boys, too, set themselves up to see how well and expensively they can feast the girls.

Interestingly enough, a few older informants have reported that this system seems to be disappearing. It is true that the headmen of the village have tried to put a stop to it and when this complete measure failed, they threatened the rodi girls and boys, that if they didn't at least cut down the amount of food and time spent in feasting and partying with one another, in the future, they would have to pay a fine to the village. In general, the mood of the young people is one of resistance. A common attitude is that the headmen of the village had kept the system up until now, and had enjoyed it when they were young, and they (the younger people) want to keep it going 12.

Other organized attempts have been made in the past to abolish not only sIIIU tshOnab, but the rodi and ghAAnto as well. In 1951, a committee was formed under the supervision of the headmen of Ghanpokhara- a nearby village. People from several surrounding villages came to attend a meeting where a constitution was drawn up. The aim of the constitution was to bring about reforms in these traditional systems. The feeling of the group was that rodi, ghAAnto, etc, were not conducive to progress and should be abolished. Young people, instead of attending school or paying attention to other serious matters, were spending their time in the rodi house and wasting money and resources in feasts and celebrations, rather than investing them into more profitable channels. At this time, they also made it compulsory for all children to attend

school and for adults to attend night school. The group met in the center of the village. All the instruments of the rodi house were collected and smashed publicly as a declaration of change. The new rules were followed for about two years, after which people began to resume traditional systems. Some changes were brought about; schools began to run smoothly and perhaps the old rodi-ghAAnto system suffered a slight decline in intensity and importance, but in general, in several other villages where the influence of these events was felt during this time, it has apparently had no lasting effect.

There are other numerous examples of mutual exchange between boys and girls of rodi age, some of which may have occurred more intensely in the past, although this is difficult to ascertain exactly. Boys used to weave very fine rain-shields (khU G, shyaku N), make elaborate bamboo combs and cigarette-holders to give to favorite girl-friends, the girls wove rengas (G- a finely woven piece of material worn draped over the shoulders) and produced other hand-made items, as presents for boys. Girls traditionally would (and still do) invite boys over to their rodi to eat shyokai (G shyo- to raise, kai- grain or rice), an elaborately prepared meal, on days of leisure or after finishing a work-party together. The boys, in turn would invite the girls. These patterns of reciprocity continue to be enacted in present situation. For example, when a fair is being held nearby, boys and girls attend together, buying each other tea, cigarettes and food, in what can almost be termed a contest of reciprocity. Gifts continue to be exchanged among young people (nowadays things like bazaar-bought combs, necklaces, lighters or more expensive items brought back by soldiers on leave are popular gifts), the girls giving hand-embroidered pillowcases, hand-kerchiefs, etc., to boys they especially like.

Although these patterns of reciprocal gift-exchange continue, given the direction Gurung society seems to be following, it might be fair to predict that many of these traditions, if they don't disappear altogether, will be undergoing change at an increasing rate. Changes have been occurring over time, but they seem to have been gradual, whereas from now on, the rate and intensity will probably accelerate. These ongoing and future changes can be seen as a reflection of a shift in the economic base of Gurung society. First of all, there are not as many available resources as there were in the past. While population has increased, the size of land-holding per family has become smaller. The herds of sheep, goat and buffalo (on which the Gurungs used to be more exclusively dependent for their livelihood) have undergone large reductions over the years. According to many older informants, there never were food shortages in the past, as there was enough land to feed everyone. The village used to be almost completely self-sufficient economically. Nowadays, many people either buy grains from richer villagers, those with a surplus, or they must go outside

the village to purchase grains as well as other supplies. Although money is not as scarce as it used to be and has become more a part of everyday economic transactions, the prices of most goods have gone up far out of proportion in comparison to the increased availability of money. Fifty or sixty years ago, a milking buffalo might have cost Rs. 30, it now costs Rs. 300-400. About sixty-five years ago, a muri of dhan (unhusked rice) could be obtained for Rs. 50, now it is up to Rs. 100. In short, goods have gotten scarce and expensive and will probably be even more so in the near future. Despite all this, up until now, the income from army service and pensions have tended to keep the Gurungs on a fairly adequate economic level, allowing poorer people to supplement their income, since army recruitment is open to all, rich or poor 13.

As Macfarlane points out, in the past, large distinctions of wealth were not easily established and maintained over generations because of a number of factors, among them: impartible inheritance tended to break up landholdings at each generation, the absence of links to a market economy where surpluses could be used for investment and even greater profit; a shortage of labor (no unemployment), and an ethic of consumption and distribution 14.

In many Gurung ceremonies, as those described above, a significant feature (besides consuming a large quantity of food) is obtaining contributions from people, usually those individuals who are known to be well-off by village standards. The money is not used to enrich any one person or single group in the village, but eventually is distributed by means of the village fund or rodi houses, through the mechanism of feasting, involving many people. In the past, rich people were respected not because they owned a lot of land and goods, per se, but because they were generous with what they had. As one rich old man stated, "We have always had to spend a lot to maintain our prestige and status".

Nowadays, not only have goods become scarce, necessitating a reduction of drawn-out and costly ceremonies, but economic differentiation may be on the increase 15. As the ceremonies and rituals of Gurung society become less relevant and feasible, given future changes, so one would expect the important functions the various rodi groups play in carrying them out also to diminish. Indeed, although there is no tight correlation, in some villages where rodighar is reported to be disappearing, the traditional ghAAntō and other ritual dances have not been performed for many years. (Pignède) 16 The rodi houses, as focuses of spheres of distribution and circulation of goods within the village, with their values of reciprocity and competition for 'paying back well', would have to change, given a future society where these values were no longer esteemed and economic distinctions become socially relevant. As money becomes more and more a means of exchange, and economic differences between families widen, cooperative labor patterns may eventually be replaced by

work on a wage basis. Thus, another functional aspect of the rodighar (its role in labor-group formation) and its values of cooperation learned through years of young people closely associating and interacting, will become less important.

In other areas of Nepal, where Gurungs have resettled in large numbers, most of these traditions have all but disappeared. On one level, this may be attributed to factors of isolation and unfamiliarity, as in parts of Chitwan, where resettled families from various parts of the hills live in scattered settlements. More significant, however, is the absence in these resettlement areas, of a semi-closed village economy. In such an economy, these traditional activities take on important functions in maintaining cooperation and reciprocal labor ties and in the redistribution and consumption of material goods, where surpluses could not be easily or profitably invested. In addition, they are a source of entertainment and relaxation among people who are in intimate interaction, having lived together all their lives.

Although there are other varied mechanisms by which resources (both labor and material goods) are redistributed and an overall feeling of cooperation is achieved in a Gurung village, it is evident that the rodi houses play a significant role, since they act as training centers for young people in these matters. Much of the time of boys and girls is spent in communal activity, working together in busy times and in leisure hours, planning and preparing for village entertainment, ceremonies and feasts. For girls especially, the experience of being in such close cooperation with each other from an early age is significant--in a way, it sets the tone for what has been, up until now, much of the traditional activity that takes place in a Gurung village.

### Conclusion

If Hindu influence and social disapproval of the immorality the rodighar supposedly represents were a basic factor in the gradual disappearance of rodi, it would still not explain certain things. There is one old man in the village, for example, who considers himself to be the main exponent and interpreter of Hinduism for the rest of the villagers. Not only was there rodi held in his house when he was a boy, but it has continued through his daughter's time right up through the present rodi of his grand-daughter. Moreover, in several nearby Gurung villages, the influence of Hinduism is very marked and has been for years. There are, however, an abundance of rodi houses and a continuation of its traditionally associated activities. In these situations, there doesn't seem to be a necessary correspondence between Hindu influence and the demise of the rodighar. If the rodi does die out, it will more likely be linked to other types of changes, especially those occurring in the socio-economic base of Gurung society.

Footnotes and References Cited

1. Bista, Dor Bahadur People of Nepal Ratna Pustak  
Bhandar Kathmandu, 1972 p. 83-85
2. Macfarlane, A.D.J. Population and Economy in Central  
Nepal: A Study of the Gurungs un-  
published Ph.D dissertation, Univ.  
of London 1972
3. Pignède, Bernard Les Gurungs, Une Population Hima-  
layenne du Nepal Mouton Paris,  
1966
4. Hitchcock, John T. The Magars of Banyan Hill Holt,  
Rinhart and Winston New York,  
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5. Macfarlane op cit p. 55-59  
Pignède, op cit p. 217-218
6. The material presented in this paper is based on on-going re-  
search being carried out in a Gurung village in Central Lam-  
jung district, Nepal. Most of the data describes the speci-  
fic situation existing in this particular village. Although  
there are slight variations in tradition found as one goes  
from village to village, from comparative surveys carried  
out, it can be said that most of what is outlined in this ar-  
ticle reflects the general pattern in Gurung villages in the  
surrounding nearby areas.
7. Elwin, Verrier The Muria Gonds and Their Ghotul,  
Oxford Univ. Press Bombay, 1947
8. Fürer-Haimendorf, C. Von The Naked Nagas Methuen and Co.  
London, 1939
9. There is one major 4-jat (see note 10) with virtually no one  
within the village with whom they can intermarry. 16-jat be-  
cause of the proliferation of different clans have a much wi-  
der range of choice, but even so, approximately 60% marry  
out. This type of set-up (one major 4-jat with a number of  
different 16-jat lineages) is characteristic of many other  
local Gurung villages, although the frequency and geographic  
distribution of this sort of phenomenon is not clearly estab-  
lished.)
10. Gurung society is divided into two groups of hierarchically-  
ranked clans, the 4-jat and the 16-jat. The 4-jat are consi-  
dered generally to be socially superior, although they are  
not necessarily economically superior in all cases.

11. Pignède op cit p. 127-129 Macfarlane op cit p, 53-55
12. In fact, this theme is reiterated at the time of celebrating Baisakh Purne. On the third and last day of the GhAAnto, a parade is formed leading out of the village. A group of younger boys (under 30) and older men get into a mock ritual battle about the following matter: The older men say, in brief, that the ghAAnto should be ended because its a waste of time and involves useless expense. The younger boys reply that they want to keep on with the festival for as long as possible because it's fun. This is somewhat of a reversal from what one would normally expect, with the older people arguing for change and the younger for maintaining traditions. Just how much this theme, itself is a traditional one is unclear. This part of the Baisakh Purne celebration is not held in other villages.
13. Macfarlane, op cit. for further details on Gurung economics, see section III
14. Macfarlane, op cit p. 423-424. (also c.f. Pignède, op cit 185-6)
15. Macfarlane, op cit see especially Conclusion chapter.
16. Pignède op cit p. 304.