

STATUS OF AFFINES AMONG HIGH CASTE HINDU IN THE NEPALESE HILL AREA

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During the last decades some important studies have appeared on North Indian and Nepalese kinship. Increasing attention has been paid to the affinal relationships. The focus of many studies has been hypergamy, either analysing the kinship terminology (Turner 1975, Carter 1974, Scheffler 1980) or cultural studies on kinship (Vatuk 1975, Dumont 1975, Tamblah 1973, Bennett 1977, Gray 1980).

The term 'hypergamy' was introduced by Ibbetson (1881: 356):

"By hypergamy or the law of superior marriage I mean the rule which compels a man to wed his daughter with a member of a tribe (i.e. a group) which shall be actually superior in rank to his own."

In modern studies the term 'hypergamy' is used in three ways:

- (1) the marriage of a man from a higher caste with a woman from an inferior caste, in which the descendants have a lower status than the father.
- (2) the marriage of a man from a higher group with a woman from an inferior group (usually a clan or sub-caste) within the same caste, in which the descendants get the father's status.
- (3) the post-marital relationship between two kin groups after an isogamous marriage. Many social anthropologists agree that the marriage itself creates 'ritual superiority of the groom's people - and hence a hypergamous relationship - where there was formerly equality' (Bennett 1977: 263).

The studies mentioned above are mainly concerned with the third notion of hypergamy. The authors try to explain the marriage-induced-inequality between the wife-givers and the wife-takers by such criteria as deference, hospitality, gift giving on ritual and secular occasions (Vatuk 1975: 159) and participating in annual and life-crisis rituals and later marriages (Gray 1980: 3), or else take it for granted and use it as a starting point for instance in analysing kinship terminology (Turner 1975: 263 ff.). All authors view the ritual

supremacy of the wife-takers as a cultural fact, but they disagree on whether it is expressed by the kinship terminology or not. According to Dumont, hypergamy is a nominative principle extraneous to the terminology. Vatuk (1969), Turner (1975) and Carter (1974) see the form of the terminology as congruent with the hierarchical structure of the relationship of affines. Scheffler, on the other hand, warns that it is premature to conclude that any features of the North Indian system of kin classification are best understood or somehow explained by 'noting how they are consistent with' or 'reflect' a principle of hypergamous marriage (1980: 156).

AIMS OF THE PAPER

The present paper attempts to clarify the notion of post-factum hypergamy in isogamous marriages among high caste Hindu in the Nepalese hill area. It is based mainly on my own field data collected in 1980 in Belkot (Nuwakot District) with some references to data presented by Stone (1977) and Bennett (1977). In discussing the widely stated post-factum hypergamy I shall ask: What does the 'ritual supremacy' of the wife-takers actually mean? and: is the so-called hierarchical aspect the best way to understand the affinal relations?

I argue that, at least in the case of Belkot, it is not appropriate to speak of the supremacy of wife-takers towards wife-givers since the notion of 'supremacy' or 'ritual supremacy' has different meanings and does not exactly describe the relationships between the affines.

Before beginning the argument it is helpful to clarify the different meanings of superiority:

- (a) the notion 'superior' or 'ritually superior' is used in connection with clearly hierarchized entities, i.e. castes, sub-castes or clans. Thus the Upādhiyā-Brahmin of Belkot (and of other parts of Nepal) are the ritual superiors of the other castes.
- (b) the notion 'superior' (but not ritual superior) is sometimes used in connection with a higher secular status within a group of ritual equals. In this case supremacy depends on political influence or wealth. According to Madan: "Differences in the economic condition and social standing of the two families are important variables in the fixing of matrimonial alliances. A household always desires to marry its daughters into families of more distinguished descent than his own" (1975: 232). Some authors imply that the higher standing of a group can be acquired and confirmed through repeated marriage to affines at the clan level 'as long as the same direction of marriage and the hypergamous advantage is maintained' (Tambiah 1973:

93). In Belkot (or among the Silwal of the Kathmandu Valley - Gray 1980: 27) this is not the case. I stress this point since the terms 'inferiority' or 'deference' used in connection with the secular status of the wife-givers is definitely not appropriate for Belkot (in the sense of social standing).

- (c) One may also speak of the differences of ritual status between kinsmen; a father being the ritual superior of his son, an elder brother of a younger. However, among the consanguineals the women have two different positions or statuses. On the one hand a woman is the ritual inferior of her father (or FB) as shown by the fact that she may eat from his dish, but, on the other hand, she possesses a sacred position with regard to her male and elder female consanguineals. According to Bennett (1977) this sacredness is due to her superior ritual purity.

Obviously there are two notions of ritual purity in evidence here. One connected with the worshipful status of a woman who is given as a virgin to a husband, which confers on the donors a religious merit and the other one being based on the agnatic structure of Hindu society which ranks the relatives according to generation, sex and precedence of birth.

For the purpose of my argument, point (c) is the most important. As already stated, the terms 'ritual purity' and 'ritual superiority' are ambiguous. There seems to be a confusion concerning these ideas, since there are at least two ways in which they may be used and understood. I shall show below that just as a woman has two different positions towards her father and brothers in Belkot also her husband (and other wife-takers) has two different positions towards her consanguineal relatives. The main thesis is that the 'worshipful status' (Dumont 1966: 105) of the husband is a hierarchical feature in the Hindu society, but only one aspect of the hierarchy among the affines, because on the other hand the Hindu hierarchy attributes to affines positions according to generation, sex and age.

I shall proceed in the following way: Firstly I shall describe the main features of kinship among the Upādhiyā-Brahmin in Belkot. Then, I shall give an account of two important rituals which reveal both aspects of hierarchy in kin relations. Further I shall consider (I) marriage prestations and other gifts; (II) hospitality and the acceptance of food; (III) participating in ritual occasions; (IV) deference; (V) future marriages - I shall compare my data with North Indian cases. As a last step I shall show that the kinship terms collected in Belkot by no means reflect the post-factum hypergamy.

THE UPĀDHIYĀ-BRAHMIN AND THEIR KINSHIP SYSTEM

The Upādhiyā-Brahmin are the highest ranking caste among the Hindu of the Nepalese hill area. In Belkot they are, after the Tamang, the second most numerous group, being the 'dominant caste' of the village. They are agriculturists and some of the men act as hereditary priests, either *purohit* or *paṇḍit*. Their kinship rules do not deviate from the general North Indian pattern: patrilinear descent and inheritance and preferred patri-virilocal residence (uxorilocal residence also occurs). The most important kinship units are:

- gotra** - an exogamous unit consisting of several lineages, whose members do not necessarily belong to the same caste. Gotra membership is acquired agnatically and the persons within one gotra are considered, at least distantly related as descendants of the same ancestral ṛṣi. A man acquires gotra-membership after his initiation, a woman becomes a member of her husband's gotra on marriage. Marital unions with members of the mother's brother's gotra are not allowed.
- thar** - a group of persons sharing the same family-name. Persons of one thar do not necessarily share the same gotra-membership. Marriages within a thar are proscribed. A woman belongs to her husband's thar.
- kul** - an unilineal descent group. The members of a kul worship their common kul-deities, and they observe together the death and birth pollution. The woman's membership in a kul is not clear-cut.
- parivār** - a kin-group living in the same household, comprising distant relatives (*nātā* - see below) who settled definitely in the household, and excluding married daughters who as a rule belong to their husband's parivār and adult sons who established their own households. The size of a parivār corresponds to that of a household, ideally an extended family.
- nātā** - bilateral kindred, containing one's agnatic kin, as well as MB's, ZD's, ZS's, FZH's, WF's kin, the boundaries being undefined. Relatives designated as *nātā* are usually not allowed to marry.

There are two types of marriages: regular unions which have been sanctioned by Vedic rituals (*bihāite*) and concubinal marriages (*lyāite*) which may occur between members of different castes, being usually not a first marriage for either partner.

Two brothers or male cousins may marry two sisters or female cousins. Sororate marriages are allowed (a younger sister does not take part in the wedding ceremony of her elder sister), either polygynously or after the elder sister's death. Leviratic unions are proscribed among the Upādhiyā-Brahmin of Belkot.

There is no fixed rule on marrying outside the village but marital unions are usually contracted between persons living in different villages, at least at a distance of several hours walk. In her village (situated about 10 km further north from Belkot) Stone observed a preference to have daughters married into villages where their maternal uncles were living (1977). The Brahmin of Belkot show the same predilection, since one can expect that the mother's brothers will take care of a girl, especially in the first years of her marriage.

Sister exchange does not occur in Belkot and also a repeated giving of women from one household to another is proscribed. Both marriages would be a clear infringement of *nātā*-exogamy. There are nevertheless gotras who preferentially exchange women between each other.

For the purpose of our discussion it is important to mention two rituals in which some aspects of the hierarchy between relatives are demonstrated:

kan yādān - the gift of a virgin is one of the various wedding ceremonies and is preceded by the *ghoda dhune* (feet washing) ceremony. For the feet washing ceremony the bride and the groom are seated on a bed and the bride's relatives (her father, her mother, father's brothers and their wives, father's sisters, her brothers and elder sisters as well as the mother's brothers with their wives and children) bow to the bride and the groom, then wash their feet and sprinkle some drops of the water into their mouths.

After this ceremony the groom's party gives gifts to the bride (see below) and at an auspicious moment (which is fixed by priests) the proper handing over of the bride takes place. This is succeeded by the gift of a cow from the bride's father to the bridegroom. The gift of a virgin-daughter brings to the donor a big religious merit. Because of this, a woman given away becomes sacred to her consanguineal relatives. The feet washing ceremony is, according to Bennett (1977:262) "an expression of the bride's sacredness and superior purity vis-a-vis her consanguineal relatives". From the moment a woman is married, each time she arrives at, or leaves her parent's house her mother and father bow to her feet and give her a small money gift called *dakṣiṇā*. However, (as already stressed above) this superior purity is reversed in the transfer of food.

dasai - or *Durgā puja* is the biggest religious ceremony celebrated in Nepal. The feast culminates in the exchange of *ṭikā* (forehead mark) on the tenth day. For this purpose relatives visit each other. The omission of this ritual symbolizes the break in the relationships. The modalities relating to this ceremony are complex. It not only consists of the *ṭikā* exchange, but also of bows, and small money gifts called, depending on the relation-

ship, either *dakṣiṇā* or *bheṭi*. Finally great importance is also attached to the question who is visiting whom. The rule is that a person who is to receive the *ṭikā* comes to the *ṭikā*-giving relative's house. During the *ṭikā*-giving ceremony two kinds of status are expressed: on the one hand the agnatic model is displayed, this is the superiority of generation, sex and seniority, which is symbolized by the direction of the *ṭikā* transfer; on the other hand the worshipful status is symbolized by the gift of *dakṣiṇā*: a woman receives *dakṣiṇā* from all relatives from her natal lineage, except her younger sister (FBDy is equiv. to yZ), as well as from her mother's and mother's father's parents. A man receives *dakṣiṇā* from all those who give *dakṣiṇā* to his mother and his wife.

The *bheṭi*-transfer again follows the agnatic model. A man gives *bheṭi* to all elder male members of his *kul* and to their wives (he also gives it to FZH but not to FZ - he gives her, of course, *dakṣiṇā*). A woman gives *bheṭi* to her husband and to all those persons to whom he gives it. She receives *bheṭi* from the same persons as her husband, viz. younger male members of his *kul* (and from WyB). Within this strict agnatic model there is an exception: MZ is "equated" with M and also gets *bheṭi* (in consequence MZS → B, MZH → F).

When giving *bheṭi* or *dakṣiṇā* a person has to bow in front of the relative to whom it is offered.

The *dasai*-exchange between certain affines is especially interesting in this context[†].

- because of ritual avoidance the parental couples of husband and wife never exchange *ṭikā* on *dasai*
- a male ego receives from WM (*sāsu*), WF (*sasurā*) as well as from WeZ (*jethi sāsu*) and WeB (*jethān*) *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*
- a male ego gives WyB (*salo*) *ṭikā* and receives from him *bheṭi*
- a male ego receives from eBW (*bhauju*) *ṭikā* and gives her *bheṭi*
- a female ego receives from HF (*sasurā*) and HM (*sāsu*) *ṭikā* and gives *bheṭi*
- a female ego receives from eZH (*bhināju*) *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā* but only if she is much younger than her sister
- a female ego gives yZH (*juwāi*) *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*
- a female ego receives from HeB (*jethan*) *ṭikā* and gives *bheṭi*

It is immediately obvious that the *ṭikā*-transfer among the affines follows the same rules as among the consanguineals: an elder person gives *ṭikā* to

[†] Here, I am using mainly Bennett's (1977) data. However, I am ordering it in a different way. See also the appendix.

a younger person. However, it must be noted that the relative age of siblings-in-law is determined by reference to the relative age of the siblings, i.e. WeB is considered elder than ego, regardless of his real age. A man gives $\ddot{t}ik\bar{a}$ and $dakṣiṇ\bar{a}$ to his sister, regardless of her age, but eZH as an elder male is treated in the same way as an elder brother. Again, the brother's wife is treated as brother, depending on her husband's relative age towards his brother.

A male ego receives from WeZ $\ddot{t}ik\bar{a}$ and $dakṣiṇ\bar{a}$ and gives it to WyZ. Among the ego's consanguineals there is no female in the same generation who would give him $\ddot{t}ik\bar{a}$ and $dakṣiṇ\bar{a}$, since there is no female who would rank over a male within the same generation. Thus a man receives from WeZ the same treatment as from WM, with whom she also shares the same kinship term.

It is obvious that in the $dasai-\ddot{t}ik\bar{a}$ - exchange there is no sign of wife-takers ranking as a group higher than the wife-givers. Affinal relatives are treated according to generation, sex and relative (that means: spouse's) age.

MARRIAGE PRESTATIONS AND OTHER GIFTS

A very detailed account of gifts between affinal relatives in North India is given by Vatuk (1975). In her view, the kin of the wife are 'perpetual donors' to her husband's kin, not only at the wedding ceremony, but, at least ideally "forever afterwards" (1975:160).

The gifts presented by the agnatic extended family of the bride to her and to her husband are most important. Most of them are provided by the bride's father and his adult brothers. Another part of the wedding gift is provided by the mother's brothers, who usually give to their ZD jewellery, household utensils, clothing and cash (they also make some small gifts to the ZS on his marriage).

The gifts accompanying the girl's wedding can be called 'dowry' only to a certain degree. The girl herself may retain only a small quantity of the offerings, the rest being either intended for or requested by the groom's kin. So, apart from the items named above, the bride's family also provides furniture and other miscellaneous household goods and sets of clothing for the groom and members of his extended family and close kin: particularly important among these are the saris designated for his adult kinswomen (Vatuk 1975 :162).

The groom's family in their turn give small gifts to the bride, and sometimes to her younger siblings; s̄aris, cosmetics, hair ribbons and the like. The groom's parents also present jewellery to the bride, but without losing control

of these items. Subsequently the same jewellery may be given to a junior bride on her marriage to one of the groom's younger brothers or may be sold in cases of economic difficulty.

The bride also receives money for 'showing her face' to the groom's relatives after the wedding. However, she is not allowed to keep the whole amount; the larger part of it is demanded by the parents-in-law.

In Belkot the gifts exchanged between the bride-giving and taking parties are not as lavish as those described by Vatuk, and only the closest consanguineal relatives of the groom are given ritual gifts. My informants told me that, usually for the wedding, both parties have about the same expenses. The amount of goods provided by each party is not previously discussed. In contrast to Vatuk's case, a large part of the bride's new clothes are provided by the groom's family. In the wealthier families of Belkot the groom's relatives are expected to give to the bride at least seven sārīs with blouses, petticoats, jewellery, gold earrings, ankle bracelets, bracelets, cosmetics and other items for daily use. The mother's brother also makes small contributions to his sister's children at weddings, but they are usually small gifts of money or small items of clothing.

The food for the wedding meal is always provided by the bride's father. However the groom's party brings its own meat. The males accompanying the groom do not eat with the bride's father's guests; their meal is usually served in the vicinity in a freshly ploughed field.

A further expense for the wife-giving group is the giving of gifts to the groom, especially clothing (usually modern), eventually a watch, a radio or a golden ring (a ring may also be given by the groom's family to the bride). There is also a small dowry: some cooking utensils, dishes, in wealthier families a trunk and a bed. The dowry and the goods provided by the groom's family belong theoretically to the girl. However, quarrels sometimes arise over property rights, mainly on the separation of the households. The woman's jewellery is normally viewed as her widow-insurance, but sometimes there are cases of impoverishment in a given family, so that her jewellery must be sold in order to buy the necessary goods. In Belkot the bride may keep the whole amount of cash given to her at the 'face-showing ceremony', however, her father's household must return to the groom's household an amount of money which is slightly higher than that given to the bride. The main recipients of the wedding gifts are the bride (mainly from the groom's party) and the groom (from the bride's party) but to a smaller degree. Further relatives on both sides are usually not offered gifts, except the groom's sisters who receive blouses from the bride.

The function of the wife-givers as donors does not cease with the wedding, neither in Meerut (the village where Vatuk worked) nor in Belkot. In Meerut gifts are also given at other 'rites de passage' to daughters, sisters, their

husband and members of their households. No less important is the customary offering of gifts of money or clothing to them after the woman's visits to her natal home, or when a man visits a house to which a woman has been given.

In Belkot people do not have so many customary obligations to the affines as in Meerut. A woman receives ritual gifts when she visits her parents, after a visit to her natal home she has to bring some ritual food to her husband, and she and her husband receive gifts during the dasai *ṭikā* exchange (either *dakṣiṇā* or *bheṭī*).

In Belkot in the years following her wedding, a woman, and afterwards her children usually receive gifts from her natal household consisting mainly of clothing and money. The flow of gifts normally decreases over the years. As a rule, material help is especially necessary for a woman during her first years of marriage. The receiving of gifts emphasizes the woman's bond with her natal household. The wife-giving kin expresses in this way a certain control over the woman. On particularly striking occasions, i. e. when a woman has problems with the husband's relatives or when she is obviously badly treated by them, her brothers make a casual visit to their in-laws and provide support to their sister.

As Vatuk stated, a woman's status in her conjugal home depends on the gifts made by the natal kin. First, they give her, to some degree, financial independence, her private resources giving her freedom to make small purchases without consulting her in-laws. Second, her conjugal family frequently awards her respect and approval in direct proportion to the generosity displayed by her natal kin (1975: 187). Vatuk views the importance of the gifts as serving "to protect and insure indirectly the daughter's future security". Vatuk also admits: "While the focus of affinal gift-giving may be viewed as being the relationship of groups linked by marriage bond, an equally legitimate view would see this focus as the relationship of a married woman with her natal kin (1975: 193). For Madan: "Gift giving . . . is a most crucial cultural performance indicative of the existence of affinal links between households (1975: 226)". He adds that the marriage prestations are a means of directly compensating the daughter for her lack of rights of inheritance (1975: 234). This is not entirely true, since many goods are given not to the woman but to her husband's kin. Madan points out yet another fact: rich prestations secure the fame and prestige of the woman's natal family, which increases the chances of marrying other daughters into families of high standing (in our (b) sense - see page 3). This can also be of importance in Belkot.

To sum up: It is important to stress for Belkot as Vatuk stressed for Meerut that the affinal gifts express a relationship of groups linked by a marriage bond. The flow of goods between affinal relatives goes mainly in one direction (the prestations made in Belkot by the groom's household remain 'in the family'). This flow indicates on the one hand the direction of the woman-exchange,

the wife-givers being the perpetual donors. This may imply a sort of wife-giver's inferiority, but on the other hand the wife-givers acquire a big religious merit. In the further procedure I shall show that both parties may claim a superior status as well as that there are egalitarian aspects between the wife-takers and wife-givers.

VISITING AND FOOD TRANSFER

In Meerut the transfer of goods is maintained in the rules of hospitality. These are clearly associated with the notion of affinity as involving a donor-recipient relationship. One does not accept the hospitality of the wife-takers and must, on the other hand, welcome them when they happen to come to one's home. But a wife-giver should accept neither food nor drink in a place where his daughter lives with her husband and his relatives. Only in the homes of elder female relatives who have been 'given away' food can be accepted and even a place to stay overnight.

The flow of food is best demonstrated if one considers the marriage ceremony. The main part of it is held in the bride's home. The groom's party (which should be as big as possible) eats, on this occasion, food provided by the relatives of the bride. After the betrothal the female kin and the senior males of the bride's family - particularly her father - are barred from visiting and accepting the hospitality of those to whom they have promised a bride (Vatuk 160): the *dān* would be spoiled by accepting something in return (Vatuk 1973: 188).

In Belkot, at weddings, the wife-taking party brings its own goats, and eats separately from the wife-givers. Asked why both groups are separated the informants answered: in order not to eat the wife-taker's meat. The situation is only similar to a certain degree to that in North India. In the first years after the marriage the natal kin of a woman accepts neither hospitality nor food from her husband and his consanguineals. However, after some years, especially when a woman gives birth to a boy, her brothers, father and cousins would successively accept drink and food, so that after about 6-8 years they can also freely visit her, staying overnight (even for several days) eating all kinds of food presented to them. So, the lavish hospitality of wife-givers towards the wife-takers is completely reversed after some years, the in-laws of a woman eager to treat the woman's natal kin as well as possible (the rules of hospitality depend of course on the relationship between the two parties).

The reversal of hospitality is a difference between Nepal and North India. I at least found no indication that the hospitality would be reversed after some years in North India. Another differing feature is the North Indian custom which for Dumont proves the superiority of the wife-takers: the day after the

wedding ceremony the bridegroom refuses the bhāt (cooked rice) offered to him by the blood relatives of his new wife:

"Here the bridegroom's superior rank betrays itself: to agree to eat food with somewhat inferior people, the bridegroom claims a present" (1980:138).

In Nepal this custom is unknown. Thus, in the initial stage of the relationship established by marriage only the wife-givers are the food-refusers. According to Dumont without further implications:

"Food is here a minimal material gift, and its refusal is symbolic" (1980: 138).

In the Nepalese case, besides the reciprocal refusal of cooked rice between the Purbiyā and Kumāī (the two halves among the Upādhiyā-Brahmin of the Nepalese hill area) the refusal of the wife's kin is the only known situation in which members of equal caste refuse to accept food. According to McKim Marriott within the caste system "high rank is always deriving from the giving, low rank of receiving of foods" (1976: 170).

Of course it would be exaggerated to consider this fact as indicating the superiority of the wife-giving party, but also the opposite conclusion is in my view exaggerated:

"While Marriott's displaying of the mechanics of mutual ranking through food transactions are revelatory, we should note that in caste relations it is not in all spheres that the giver is superior to the receiver. While this is largely so with food and other material transactions, the logic is reversed in marriage and sexual unions" (Tambiah 1973: 218).

Stone (1977: 159) can also be understood in the same way:

"Whereas the use of food in relation to caste status has been discussed at length in the literature on Hindu India, far less attention has been given to contexts - for instance within the caste and inside family ... I would suggest that food is used to mark status distinctions here as well as in the intercaste context. But here some transfers are governed by a reverse of the principle employed between castes - i.e. low feeds high. This direction maintains in two contexts, both of which are evident in Dhungagaun and are known from India 1) at a wedding, and in patterns that persist after the wedding, the bride's family (low) feeds the groom's family (high) and not the reverse; and 2) a wife (low) by duty feeds her husband (high) and his family (high), although she may also be fed by them".

The rule 'low feeds high' is dangerous. Stone rightly admits that a woman can also be fed by her 'higher' relatives. In reality it happens very often that -

- a) as a rule it is not a wife, but her mother-in-law who is feeding the members of her household, so her superiors (husband, HeB) and the inferiors (sons, daughters, daughters-in-law and grandchildren).

- b) sometimes in the daily life the men do the cooking, for instance, replacing the woman at times of menstruation. Of course, if possible, they delegate this duty to another woman, but she can be their superior (FZ) as well as their inferior (a daughter of a brother living in another household).
- c) on ceremonial occasions cooking is always done by the men of the Upādhiyā-Brahmin caste.
- Also at a wedding the groom's party receives food supplied by the bride's relatives and they cook the food themselves. The cooks are friends or relatives of the groom. Thus, also in this case, the rule 'low feeds high' is not endorsed.

Vatuk's explanation might be more adequate, yet in Belkot the blood relatives of a bride stated that they would not accept water from their in-laws but they could drink their tea. In their conception tea is purer since it is prepared with milk. It seems that the wife-giver's refusal of food concerns especially the ritually dangerous and easily polluted foods. As already stated, the visits in both houses may, after some time and depending on the personal relationship between the relatives become reciprocal. The frequency of visits also depends on the mobility of the individual and on the distance between the two houses. The husband has more reason to visit his wife's natal kin because of his duty to accompany her when she goes and returns from her parents house. On the other hand a woman's brothers may also take her home and pay her husband and parents-in-law a visit. The husband of a woman must visit her parents on *dasat*. On this occasion he receives *ṭikā* from them as they are his superiors. According to the rule the visit is always to be paid to the relative who is giving *ṭikā*.

RELATIONSHIPS REGARDING FUNERAL RITES

According to Vatuk and Dumont the flow of gifts, mainly of food, at funeral rites also goes in the direction already indicated. Vatuk notes that "on the death of a married man, two kinsmen have central ritual responsibilities: his widow's brother and his daughter's husband, the former as donor, the latter as recipient of ritual presents" (1975: 171). One of the daughter's husbands (or BDH) is the chosen recipient of a gift of clothing and cash, other male relatives are summoned for the funeral feast and the anniversary feasts; real and classificatory brothers of the widow and of her daughters-in-law give money to the bereaved family: the deceased's daughters' and sisters' husbands receive cash from the family.

Dumont (1966: 94) mentions two further customs: one of the most general funeral duties consists of tying a turban (according Vatuk (1975: 171) provided by

the widow's brother) on the head of the main mourner. This may be done by the mourner's maternal uncle, but the tendency is to prefer a wife-taking affine (mainly ZH or FZH).

The same relatives - ZH or FZH - sometimes also have the function of replacing a family's domestic priest (purohit) in directing the mourner in the performance of rites, especially when the mourner has to bathe the feet of the purohit impersonating the dead relative. The substituted relative, the one who has received a wife, may receive the *sejjā* or bed which is to be given ordinarily to the purohit, a gift which provides the name of the whole terminal ceremony (1966: 94). In Dumont's view the reason for the choice of this kind of relative as opposed to MB or WB is close at hand: "We are in a hypergamous milieu".

In Belkot the wife-giving party has small duties towards their affines. At the end of the mourning period she has to provide a gift of uncooked rice and other food. There is also a second gift, made if their daughter has been widowed; a set of clothes to wear at the end of the year of mourning.

During my fieldwork I never came across the custom of the mourning ceremonies being led by any person of a wife-taking group. The mourning ceremonies were guided without exception by purohits and pandits. However, Bennett (1977: 269) states for her village that occasionally the duties of a hereditary priest can be fulfilled by the son-in-law or a sister's son. Bennett's and my field material differ in one important point: Bennett (1977: 269) states that the wife-givers are not invited to the yearly mourning rituals held in the wife-taker's house. In Belkot I was told that anybody who gives a *dasāy̐* *ṭikā* to the performer may be invited to this ceremony and the following meal. For instance on the occasion of a mourning ritual for a mother, her son invited the deceased's brother with his sons. The wife-givers in this case being clearly receivers.

It is also worth mentioning that the ancestors worshipped at the yearly ceremonies comprise not only agnates such as F, FF, FFF, FB but also relatives of other categories such as MM and MF. Ritual offerings are made to all of them.

DEFERENCE

The ritual deference of the wife-givers towards the wife-takers is mentioned in almost every article dealing with the post-factum hypergamy, as for instance by Vatuk:

"Role behaviour vis-a-vis members of affinally-linked kin groups takes the form of deference".

(1975: 159)

However, she, as well as many other authors, does not specify what she means by this statement. In Madan's opinion (1975: 226) the wife's brother is in a subordinate position since he is expected all his life to be an ally, supporter and well-wisher of the sister's husband's kin.

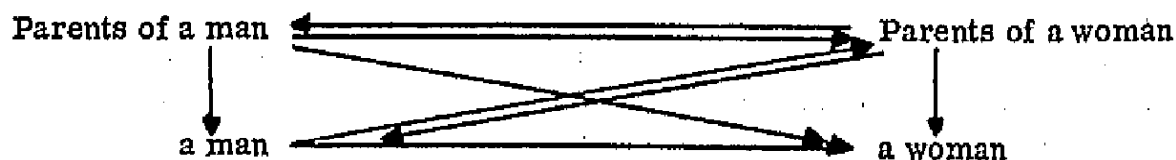
Why such behaviour should be an expression of subordination is not obvious. A brother is concerned with the well-being of his sisters, though; it is quite easy to understand that he is, for her and her children's sake, eager to support her household.

At any rate, 'subordination' in the context of standing does not imply the ritual status.

Bennett (1977: 263) is more exact:

"Each male is in a position of inferiority vis-a-vis groups to whom his father has given a sister ... or to whom he has given a sister ... or a daughter. He must respect (mannu parcha) members of these groups."

'mannu parcha' means in Nepali 'to respect', but also 'to obey' and 'to follow' - I used the same Nepali term asking my informants about the respectful relationships between the affines. But I received a very different answer which can be best expressed in the form of a diagram:



In Belkot the people view the affinal relations as reciprocal. Only the relation to the wife/daughter/daughter-in-law is not *mannu parcha* (infinitive from *parcha*) because of her low status within the agnatic model of the Hindu society.

There are of course ritual expressions of 'inferiority', i.e. bowing in front of certain wife-takers, or the already mentioned feet-washing ceremony. But, on the other hand the ritual *ṭikā*-exchange on *dasā* reveals, as already stated, another aspect of affinal hierarchy, following the superiority of generation, sex and relative age.

THE DIRECTION OF FUTURE MARRIAGES

The exchange marriages between two small kin groups, particularly the ZHZ marriage are, of course, incompatible with the hypergamous situation. However, they do sometimes occur (e.g. Madan 1975:240). Among the Gaur-Brahmin there is a customary avoidance of any affines which would involve the exchange of women between kin groups (Vatuk 158), and the same situation is normally stated in the case of Hindu of Uttar Pradesh. Dumont (1966:105) designates the wife-takers as worshipful for the wife-givers (indicated by the fact that the latter went through the feet washing ceremony) and states that "one does not take a girl from the local descent group of the worshipful". In his example there is also a prohibition of the reversal of intermarriage between larger units, e.g. local descent groups. Interestingly there is also a bar on the repetition of intermarriage between smaller units, e.g. households or families, which is for instance expressed in the proscribed marriage of the matrilineal cross-cousin.

McKim Marriott records a special feature from Kishan Garhi. Here, the marriage outside the village is not only preferred (as in most of the North Indian cases) but prescriptive, and the "wife-taking villages" cannot give their women to the wife-giving villages. In this case a marriage generates a 'village-hypergamy', future unions only being possible in one of the already established directions. The reversal of the bride-giving by direct exchange, should theoretically also be excluded in extended exchange. However, as Dumont states (1966:105) this need not be the case. He shows that (in 9.5 % of marriages of his sample) if A gives a bride to B, B to C, C can in turn give a bride to A which maybe has an 'equalizing effect'.

Among most of the Nepalese high caste Hindu (Krause, 1980 describes an interesting exception) the exogamous marriage units (e.g. gotra) are not stratified, and they can exchange women among each other in both directions. Unlike Kishan Garhi there is no hierarchy of villages receiving or giving women. As already noted, even an opposite situation can occur: Stone observed a preference for giving women to the natal villages of their mothers. Usually there is no exchange of women between households nor a permanent flow of women from one household to another; whatever exchanges of women there are, they prove neither hypergamy, nor isogamy as a post-marital fact. The literature on Nepalese kinship among high caste Hindu yields but one case of sister-exchange reported from East Nepal (Prindle 1974:207).

KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

As already stated above there is no agreement as to whether the terminology reflects the hierarchical relationships between the affines. According to Scheffler (1980:148):

"Following the lead of Dumont (1966), most writers have attempted to detect correspondences between kin classification and relations between persons as members of families or larger kin groups related by marriage. By and large, however, hypotheses about such correspondences have not fared well. Dumont himself (1966:114) concluded that, although there are certain similarities between north and south India in social relations between WB and MB ('wife-givers' in relation to a man's family) and between ZH and FZH ('wife-takers' in relation to a man's family), in north India these are not 'registered' in kinship terminology."

Scheffler comes to the conclusion that the structure of the terminology, at the level of basic category definitions, neither includes nor reflects a tripartite distinction between consanguineals, wife-givers and wife-takers (1980:152) (compare with Vatuk (1975), Carter (1974), Turner (1975) a.o.). He also does not offer another sociological or 'cultural' (1980:157) interpretation of the principles of the kinship terminology. He thinks it premature to offer one.

In this paper there is no space left to discuss this subject in detail. My position is in agreement with Scheffler's. But apart from the often discussed question whether the terminology reflects the kinship behaviour one may also ask whether the formal componential or semantic analyses with the many equivalence rules are the adequate method to examine the kinship terms. Let us look at the Nepalese terminology in another way:

The Nepalese kinship terminology differs slightly from Vatuk's example: in Meerut the reference terminology for consanguineals is bifurcate collateral in first ascending and descending generations, with Hawaiian-type sibling/cousin terms (Vatuk 1975:175). In my sample there is a tendency to bifurcate merging, the father's brother being usually named 'big father' (*ṭhulo buvā*); however, the alternative term *kākā* can also be used. In further ascending and descending generations the lineal-collateral distinction is ignored. The sex-of-linking-relative is important for the terminology, and within one generation there is a clear distinction between elder and younger siblings. In their own generation spouses use different terms for their conjugal relatives, but they use identical terms for relatives in descending and ascending generations.

G-2	<u>hajur bā</u> FF/MF/FFB/MFB	<u>hajur āmā</u> FM/MM/FFZ/MFZ
G-1	<u>thulo bā</u> <u>jethi āmā</u> <u>thuli āmā</u> <u>thulo bā</u> FeB FeBW MeZ MeZH	<u>jetha sasurā</u> WFeB/HFeB
	<u>bā</u> <u>phupāju</u> = <u>phupu āmā</u> <u>māju</u> = <u>māmā</u> <u>sāsu</u> <u>sasurā</u> <u>phupu sāsu</u> <u>māmā</u> <u>sasurā</u> F FZH FZ M MBW MB WM/ WF/HF WFZ/HFZ WMB/HMB HM/ WMZ/HMZ	
	<u>sānu bā</u> <u>sāni āmā</u> <u>sāni āmā</u> <u>sanu bā</u> FyB FyBW MyZ MyZH	<u>kānchā sasurā</u> WFyB/HFyB
	<u>dāi</u> = <u>bhāju</u> <u>jethāju</u> <u>āmāju</u> eB eBW HeB HeZ	<u>jethi sāsū</u> <u>bhināju</u> = <u>didi</u> WeZ eZH ez
	<u>didi</u> <u>dāi</u> HeBW HeZH	<u>sasurā</u> WeZH
G-0	<u>samdhi</u> SWF/DHF	<u>samdhini</u> SWM/DHM
	<u>bahini</u> <u>nande bhāi</u> <u>bahini</u> HyBW HyZH WyBW	<u>sāl bhāi</u> WyZH
	<u>bhāi</u> = <u>buhāri</u> <u>dewar</u> <u>nanda</u> yB yBW HyB HyZ	<u>sāli</u> <u>juwāi</u> = <u>bahini</u> WyZ yZ
G-1	<u>choro</u> <u>buhāri</u> <u>bhānje</u> <u>juwāi</u> <u>bhāntije</u> <u>juwāi</u> <u>bhānji</u> <u>buhāri</u> <u>bhāntiji</u> <u>buhāri</u> S/HBS SW ZDH BDH ZSW BSW WZS	
	<u>chori</u> <u>juwāi</u> <u>bhānij</u> <u>bhānij</u> <u>bhadā</u> <u>bhadai</u> HBD/ DH HZS HZD WBS WBD WZD/D	
G-2	<u>nāti</u> SS/DS/BSS/BDS etc.	<u>nātini</u> SD/DD/BS/BDD etc.

There is also a strong differentiation between spouse's elder and younger siblings. Here a very interesting point emerges. Although there is a differentiation in Vatak's set between husband's elder and younger brother the wife's brother has only one term - *sālo*. In the Nepalese set there is, as in all cases of siblings, a differentiation, WyB being *sālo*, but WeB - *jeṭhān*. In Vatak's sample *jeṭh* is HeB (in opposition to *dewar* - HyB). In my sample HeB is *jeṭhajū* and '*jeṭha*' means also 'first born sibling' within one generation (in Bengali *jeṭha* = FeB).

In relation to ego all relatives rank higher or lower - with the exception of SWF/DHF (*samdhi*) and SWM/DHM (*samdhini*). Note that precisely those relatives do not exchange the *ṭikā* on *dasat*; maybe they are too equal to partake in this hierarchy-revealing-ceremony?

All other relatives rank according to their age. The generations are distinguished, with the exception of *buhārī* (yBW and SW) and *juwāī* (yZH and DH): the spouses of younger siblings are terminologically equated with childrens' spouses!

Within one generation siblings rank according to seniority, and the affinal relatives according to their relative age: the elder siblings' spouses are clearly distinguished from the younger's, and the spouses' siblings according to whether they are elder or younger than the spouse. Note that ego's sex does not matter. The affinal relatives are distinguished from consanguineals. As in India (Dumont 1966:102) MB falls into the category of the consanguineals.

Especially interesting are the elder affinal relatives. For a female ego, with the exception of *sāsu* and *sasurā*, all elder affinals have 'ju' in the term: *māiju*, *phupāju*, *bhāju*, *jeṭhajū*, *āmāju* and *bhināju*. For a male ego it does not prove in the case of WeB and WeZ. The terminology ranks them as higher because of *jeṭh* and in case of WeZ also because of *sāsu*, but in the case of WeB there is no information in the term that he is an affinal relative - as opposed to all other affinal relatives.

In the case of GO it is interesting to compare the terms with the modality of the *dasat ṭikā* exchange. Remember, the exchange is done after the following criterions:

- in the same generation the men give women *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*
- the elder brothers give their younger brothers *ṭika* and receive from them *bheṭi*
- younger sisters get from elder sisters *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*.

The treatment of the affinal relatives is fitted into this model: *bhāju* treats her husband's younger siblings in the same way as he does. HeB is treated in the same way as H and *bhināju* treats WyZ in the same way as his wife does. It is more complicated in the case of male ego's eZH, WeB, WeZ and HeZ. Although a man gives his sister *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*, from elder sister's

husband he gets *ṭikā* and gives him *bheṭī*, thus he treats him as an elder consanguineal relative. In the same way *WeB* (*jeṭhān*) is treated. In the terminology it is reflected in one case in '*ju*' in the other in '*jeṭh*'.

In their own generation there is among the consanguineals no female who would give a male ego a *ṭikā*. A man is treated by *WeZ* (*jeṭhi sāsū*) as by his mother-in-law (*sāsū*) and *WeZ* is put terminologically in an elder generation. The same happens in case of *HeZ* (*āmāju*). Within the same generation a woman gets from an elder female *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*. Among the affinals this is not the case. A woman gives, as her husband, his sister *dakṣiṇā*, but she gets from her a *ṭikā*. Obviously *HeZ* is higher within the agnatic hierarchy. This may be the reason why she, as an affinal relative (*ju*), is terminologically put into a higher generation (*āmā*).

Thus, as in case of the *dasāṭ-ṭikā*-exchange the terminology also does not reflect the inferiority of the wife-givers, but adapts the affinal relatives into the consanguineal model.

CONCLUSIONS

At the beginning of this paper I asked: "What does the 'ritual supremacy' of the wife-takers actually mean?" I argued that the term has not been chosen appropriately, since it has an ambiguous meaning. I showed that there are different aspects of 'superiority' among the wife-takers and wife-givers. The superior status of the wife-takers is indicated by the flow of gifts and also by the feet-washing-ceremony, the *dakṣiṇā* gifts and the bows received from the wife-givers. On the other hand the wife-givers could be viewed as superiors since they are the bride-givers and because, in the first years after the wedding, they refuse food from the wife-takers, especially the easily polluted food.

But more important seem to be the equal aspects of their relationships. Some years after the wedding the hospitality and food transfer of the 'givers' and 'takers' may become reciprocal, and on ritual occasions, especially on the mourning ceremony, the wife-givers are recipients as well as givers. Both parties do respect each other, and the direction of the *dasāṭ ṭikā* transfer does not reveal any superiority of the wife-takers, but hierarchizes, like the kinship terms, the affines in accordance to the agnatic model among the consanguineals.

In North India as in Nepal we are in a hierarchical milieu. However, among the Silval of Kathmandu Valley (Gray 1980:26) as also among the *Upādhiyā-Brahmin* of Belkot there is equality in two senses:

- the caste is divided into two endogamous halves, but there is no hierarchization of groups within the caste;

- the different gotras may exchange women between each other, provided that the future spouse does not have too close kinship ties (nātā-exogamy).

Authors working on North Indian and Nepalese kinship search for hierarchy in the affinal relationships, and they find it in the superiority of the wife-takers over the wife-givers. In Belkot I found another hierarchical aspect. Here the affines are hierarchized according to the agnatic model, which orders the consanguineal relatives. In Dumont's terminology we might say that "affinity is ... encompassed within consanguinity" (1975:214).

The second question I asked was: "Is the hierarchical aspect the best way to understand the affinal relations?". My answer is no. I proposed to consider first that the wife-takers and wife-givers are related, and then to look closer at the bilateral features of their relations. They are revealed for instance in the ritual sphere (dasañ-ṭikā exchange, particularly in mourning ceremonies, ancestry) as well as in the insecurity to which kul a woman belongs, and in the nātā-exogamy. A bilateral usage has also been found in the kinship terms.

It is not possible for me to offer an elaborated alternative view of affinal relations. So let the main thesis of this article be that in Belkot the wife-takers are not the superiors of the wife-givers. My informants would surely agree with me. I asked them about the status of affinal relations after an isogamous marriage. The people in Belkot answered: "They are equals".

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APPENDIX

Dasaĩ-tikā-exchange and kinship terms

(1) ego receives tikā and gives bheṭi

ego	relative	(term)	bows	
			gives	receives
m	FFF	(kupra bā)	GD	
m	FFM	(kupra āmā)	GD	
m	FF	(hajur bā)	GD	
m	FM	(hajur āmā)	GD	
m	F	(buvā/bā)	GD	
m	M	(āmā)	GD	
m	FW	(āmā ¹)	GD	
m	FB	(bā ¹)	GD	
m	FBW	(kāki ²)	GD	
m	MZH	(bā ¹)	GD	
m	MZ	(āmā ¹)	GD	
m	eB	(dāi)	GD	
m	FBSe	(dāi)	GD	
m	MZSe	(dāi)	GD	
m	eBW	(ohaju)	GD	
m	FZH	(phupāju)	GD	
m	eZH	(bhlnāju)	GD	
m	WeZH	(sasurā)	GD	

f	HF	(sasurā)	MGD	
f	HM	(sāsu)	GD	
f	H	(śrīmān)	GD	
f	HeB	(jeṭhaju)	MGD	
f	HeBW	(didi)	no information	

1) 'ṭhuli', 'sāni'/'ṭhulo', 'sāno', depending on age

2) also: 'āmā' 1

GD = bow down to the feet of the higher ranking person

MGD = deep bow

(2) ego receives *tikā* and *dakṣiṇā*

ego relative	(term)	bows	
		gives	receives
f	FFF	(<i>kupra bā</i>)	MGD GD
f	FFM	(<i>kupra āmā</i>)	GD
f	MFF	(<i>jyju bābu</i>)	GD
f	MFM	(<i>jyju āmā</i>)	GD
f	FF	(<i>hajur bā</i>)	MGD GD
f	FM	(<i>hajur āmā</i>)	GD
f	MF	(<i>hajur buvā</i>)	GD
f	MM	(<i>hajur āmā</i>)	FD
f	F	(<i>bā</i>)	MGD GD
f	M	(<i>āmā</i>)	GD
f	FB	(<i>buvā¹</i>)	MGD GD
f	FBW	(<i>āmā²</i>)	GD
f	MZH	(<i>bā³</i>)	no bow
f	MZ	(<i>āmā³</i>)	GD
f	MB	(<i>māmā</i>)	GD
f	FZ	(<i>phupu, didi</i>)	GD
f	B	(<i>dāi/bhāi</i>)	GD
f	FBS	(<i>dāi/bhāi</i>)	GD
f	MZS	(<i>dāi/bhāi</i>)	GD
f	MZDe	(<i>didi/bahini</i>)	GD
f	eBW	(<i>bhauju</i>)	GD
f	eZ	(<i>didi</i>)	GD
f	FBDe	(<i>didi</i>)	GD
f	eZH	(<i>bhināju</i>)	no information

m	MFF	(<i>jyju bābu</i>)	GD
m	MFM	(<i>jyju āmā</i>)	no bow
m	MF	(<i>hajur buvā</i>)	MGD GD
m	MM	(<i>hajur āmā</i>)	no bow
m	MB	(<i>māmā</i>)	GD
m	MBW	(<i>māiju</i>)	no bow
m	MBS (e+y)	(<i>dāi/bhāi</i>)	GD
m	WF	(<i>sasurā</i>)	GD
m	WM	(<i>sāsu</i>)	MGD
m	WeB	(<i>jeṭhān</i>)	GD
m	WeBW	(<i>jeṭhāni didi</i>)	no information
m	WeZ	(<i>jeṭhi sāsu</i>)	no information

1) also *kākā*2) also *kāki*3) '*ṭhuli*', '*sāni*'/'*ṭhulo*', '*sāno*', depending on age

(3) ego gives *ṭikā* and *dakṣiṇā*

ego relative	(term)	gives	bows receives
f BS	(<i>bhadā</i>)		GD
f yBW	(<i>buhāri</i>)		GD

(4) no *ṭikā*-exchange on *dasā*.

ego relative	(term)
m SWF	(<i>samdhi</i>)
m DHF	(<i>samdhi</i>)
m SWM	(<i>samdhini</i>)
m DHM	(<i>samdhini</i>)

f SWM	(<i>samdhini</i>)
f SWF	(<i>samdhi</i>)
f DHF	(<i>samdhi</i>)
f DHM	(<i>samdhini</i>)

further kinship terms

<i>kupra bā</i>	FMF	<i>jiju bābu</i>	MMF
<i>kupra āmā</i>	FMM	<i>jiju āmā</i>	MMM
<i>sasurā</i>	BWF/eZHF		
<i>sāsu</i>	BWM/eZHM		
<i>samdhi</i>	yZHF		
<i>samdhini</i>	yZHM		
<i>chori</i>	fZD/mBD		
<i>bhadai</i>	fBD		
<i>bhadā</i>	fBS		
<i>choro</i>	fZS/mBS		
<i>bhānji</i>	mZD		
<i>bhāntiji</i>	mBD		
<i>bhānjo</i>	mBS		
<i>bhānij</i>	mZS		