Pahari and Tibetan Polyandry Revisited[1]

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Throughout the years the various behavioral complexes involving multiple males in union with a female have intrigued anthropologists seeking to understand them. Yet, a universal explanation for polyandry, as these are called, has eluded us. This lack of success raises the question of whether these behavioral complexes are really as similar as observers assume. Gerald Berreman (1975: 127-128), in discussing Pahari polyandry, has cogently argued that "polyandry is not a sufficiently unitary phenomenon to be explained in the same terms everywhere," and that it might be more useful to discuss the origin, function and consequences of Polyandry$_1$, Polyandry$_2$, etc. I concur with this position. The obvious similarity between polyandrous groups—the fact that multiple males maintain unions with females—has diverted attention from significant and often fundamental differences between such populations with respect to their marriage-family system. In this paper I shall demonstrate this by comparing the Tibetan and Pahari forms of polyandry.

Tibetan populations practicing polyandry are found throughout Tibet and along most of the northern reaches of the Himalayas, such as the Limi Valley in northwest Nepal where the author undertook field research trips in 1974, 1976, and 1977. The Pahari (lit. of the mountains) people are Indo-Aryan language-speaking Hindu hill farmers living mainly in the middle and lower sections of the Himalayas in India, Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan. While most Pahari speakers are not polyandrous, there are several such polyandrous Pahari groups in the Indian Himalayas from whom data are available.

On the surface, the Pahari and Tibetan marriage systems seem very similar. Both have polyandry of the fraternal variety and a household survey of either group would demonstrate the existence of a similar range of marriage types: monogamy, polygyny, fraternal polyandry, fraternal polygyny-polyandry, or polygnandry (two or more male siblings in union with two or more females), although, as we shall see, the frequencies of these types would be rather different.

Berreman (1975) accounts for much of this ground level diversity in the Pahari context as the natural consequence of the family development cycle. For example, two brothers initially take a bride together and then after some years take a second bride producing a fraternal polygynandrous family. Still later, one brother dies resulting in a polygynous family and then one wife dies leaving a monogamous nuclear family type unit. This is obviously an important element

in any explanation of the diversity of "ground level" marriage types but it clearly does not explain all diversity. To do this, it is necessary to focus on and attempt to understand the goal-oriented factors underlying marriage and family decisions. While Berreman does not exclude this dimension, discussing it briefly in a section on "circumstantial and optional factors," he does not place sufficient importance on it, although these factors are central to understanding the differences between these two seemingly similar systems of marriage and family, the Pahari and Tibetan.

I will argue in this paper that the underlying principles generating the surface patterns of marriage and family in these two societies are very different and that this accounts for the statistical differences in types between the two systems. I will also argue that the Tibetan form of polyandry is a functional analog of other wealth conserving kinship mechanisms such as primogeniture and that it is initimately intertwined with the system of stratification, the distribution of the means of production and social status.

TIBETAN POLYANDRY

Tibetan society is basically patricentric in that polyandry is normally fraternal, residence is normally patrilocal, and inheritance is normally patrilineal.[2] Since Tibetans have a considerable variety of marriage and family options, why then do some marry polyandrously and others monogamously? What objectives underlie the selection of these and other alternatives? What needs do they satisfy?

The Tibetans' own explanation of their preference for polyandry is highly materialistic.[3] They choose fraternal polyandry to preserve the productive resources of their corporate family unit intact across generations. Polyandry is perceived and consciously selected primarily as a means of precluding the division of a family's estate among its male coparceners and secondarily as a means of concentrating labor. They consider the maintenance of the family estate intact a critical factor in sustaining the quality of life associated with families of substance and social standing. Fraternal polyandry is the mechanism they use to accomplish this.

Tibetans believe that families having two (or more) conjugal units in a given generation (i.e., two or more married siblings with different brides) are unstable. Demographic anomalies in the number of children (heirs) from each conjugal pair, unequal allocation of resources to such conjugal units, and interpersonal animosities between the unrelated spouses, are among the common factors considered likely to precipitate serious internal discord and eventually fission of the family and division of its property. Polyandry is selected because it precludes such inherently unstable situations by producing only one set or stem of heirs (ie., the children of one wife) per generation.

Polyandry produces, therefore, a family type which is functionally analogous to the stem family characteristic of parts of Europe and Japan. Kitaoji's (1971: 1050) description of this family type in Japan illustrates this isomorphism:

> Because two or more siblings may not stay in the same family after marriage, only one married couple is selected to the senior positions. The institution of the selection may be presented by such rules as ultimogeniture, primogeniture, etc. By this systematic process of positional succession and

selection, the stem family perpetuates itself generation after generation. In this sense, the stem family is, in principle, a "*perpetual social organization.*"

The Tibetan "polyandrous" stem family also perpetuates itself along one stem. However, it does so by retaining all the sons in the natal unit but linking them in marriage to a single bride. The set of male siblings acts as a single jural entity vis-á-vis the wife. Not only does this reduce the risk of the family estate being divided (as does the classic stem family) but it also possesses one of the advantages of joint families; i.e., the concentration of labor in the family unit.

This functional isomorphism with the classic stem family, however, results in a very important structural contradiction. Goldschmidt (1971: 1069), in comparing peasant family structures, found patrilineal stem families to be associated with land scarcity and impartible inheritance. The Tibetan situation fits this in terms of land scarcity but not single-heir inheritance. While Tibetans value impartibility in inheritance, they have a normative system which permits partition of the family patrimony by males on demand.

Inheritance in Tibetan society is primarily patrilineal in the sense that males have demand rights to the immovable property of their natal family corporation whereas females do not.[4] Thus, the great emphasis Tibetans have in minimizing intra-familial conflict via the polyandrous stem family is understandable. Since all males in a family have rights to equal shares of land, intra-familial strife and conflict could result in one or more of the male heirs claiming this right and splitting the family corporation. In fact, one wonders why younger brothers do not split from their polyandrous alliances more often than they do.

The traditional answer to this goes back at least to the Jesuit Desideri who lived in Lhasa in the early eighteenth century and wrote a fascinating account of his experiences. He contended that it was necessary to marry polyandrously in Tibet because of the difficulty of eking out a subsistence existence in the harsh and infertile wasteland of the Tibetan plateau.

> One reason for this most odius custom is the sterility of the soil, and the small amount of land that can be cultivated owing to the lack of water. The crops may suffice if the brothers all live together, but if they form separate families they would be reduced to beggary (DeFilippi 1937: 194).

While arable land is certainly scarce in Tibet and the Himalayan areas of Tibetan culture, the reality of the situation seems to argue against this. All cases where there are multiple brothers do not result in polyandrous stem families, and all or even most instances where fission occurs do not result in "beggary" for the individuals concerned. Younger brothers splitting from their polyandrous natal family can survive even if they receive no land since labor shortages in Tibet provided an economic alternative, albeit not a highly profitable one. Similarly, very poor families (i.e., those with little or no land and few if any animals) characteristically do not marry polyandrously but undergo fission each generation. Such poor families derive their subsistence primarily from wage labor, crafts, or servitude. Since they have no estate of substance to conserve and since individuals are as competitive individually as they are in sets of male siblings, there is little advantage to marrying polyandrously. Fraternal polyandry, therefore, is actually characteristic of the landholders, including both the aristocracy and the serfs.[5]

In Tsang village, Limi, for example, the thirteen high stratum (*thongchen*)[6] peasant families had seventeen potential polyandrous situations (i.e., more than one son in a given generation) and only four splits (23.5 per cent) whereas the lower stratum (*mire*)[7] families had a 50 per cent fission rate (six out of twelve potential situations). Of the six *mire* polyandrous marriages (actually involving only four families), in four instances the families are extremely wealthy, in one it is moderately wealthy, and one is clearly upwardly mobile.

Tibetans do not consider fraternal polyandry a highly valued end in and of itself; e.g., something to be encouraged because of a fundamental belief in the value of sibling solidarity. They can articulate quite clearly the negative aspects inherent in it as well as what, for them, are its overriding advantages. Fraternal polyandry, therefore, is not seen to be without problems. Because authority is customarily excercised by the eldest brother, younger male siblings have to subordinate themselves with little hope of changing their status. When these younger brothers are aggressive and individualistic, inter-sibling tensions and difficulties often occur. Similarly, tension in polyandrous families may derive from the relationship between the wife and her husbands or from the brothers' relationship concerning access to the wife. While the cultural ideal in Tibet calls for symmetrical treatment in terms of affection and sexual access, deviations from this idea occur and generate intra-familial tensions, if not outright conflict. Such deviations are particularly common when there is a sizeable difference in age between the partners in the marriage. Thus, while polyandry provides an answer to one type of culturally perceived problem (albeit one which the subjects see as critical), it does generate other types of problems. Deviation from the polyandric ideal, therefore, is manifested not only by the very poor landless but also by those younger brothers who feel their intra-familial conflicts are unbearable.

More significant than these categories, however, are those cases where individuals could—in terms of interpersonal relations—remain together with their brothers yet individually might prefer more personal freedom and independence.

All polyandrous societies offer actors options other than polyandry and in comparing such societies it is essential to understand the decision-making structure underlying surface distributions of marriage types.

The choice facing all younger male siblings is whether to trade-off personal freedom for real or potential economic security, affluence, and social prestige. Young siblings who are not forced by interpersonal conflict to initiate fission must, before splitting, assess their potential for attaining satisfactory income and social status within some reasonable period. They must examine the opportunity cost of fraternal polyandry vis-á-vis going it alone.

Understanding actual Tibetan inheritance patterns is essential to this question. Although Tibetan inheritance norms permit the partition of the family estate among its male members and although each male in the corporation theoretically has demand rights to an equal share of land and animals, on a *de facto* level the system operates almost as if there is impartible inheritance.[8]

Let us take a hypothetical family consisting of a father, a mother, and three sons where one son decides to separate. Ideally, this son should receive a share equal to one-fourth of the estate with the rest of the members retaining three-

fourths of the property and the corporate identity. The matter of corporate identity is important in Tibetan society since it governs not only access to resources and obligations but also defines social status.

Tibetan society is organized into a number of hierarchically ranked strata.[9] Although status crystallization was incomplete, there was a strong tendency for the higher strata to control wealth and power in addition to prestige. Membership to these strata was basically ascriptive, it automatically devolved on all offspring of a legitimate female spouse in a family. On the other hand, one's initial status was retained only so long one remained a member of such a family unit. Females who marry out assume the status of their spouse's family. Similarly, when fission occurs, one segment of the natal family unit (that including the father and elder brother) retains the name and identity (as well as rights and obligations) of the initial unit, while the separating unit or units revert to a lower strata if one exists. In Tibet, for example, on the serf-peasant level, "taxpayer" serfs who separate from their families become *düjung*[10] serfs and in Limi, the *thongpa* or *thongchen* who do so become *mire*.

Furthermore, in constrast to the expressed partible ideal, the covert assumption and behavioral reality is that those members staying with and maintaining the initial family corporation get the major share of the estate. In a case such as that mentioned above, the departing son might receive only one-eighth or one-tenth of the land, and then mostly land of poorer quality. If the father and elder brothers were antagonistic toward him or were short of land and animals, they might well give him even less. Litigation, while theoretically possible, requires ready capital, political skills, and support networks normally not possessed by younger brothers and is rarely initiated. Consequently, the actual operation of inheritance in Limi and Tibet results in a system in which the maintenance of the economic integrity and viability of the perennial corporate family takes precedence over the theoretically equal demand rights of males.

Polyandry in Tibet, therefore, while clearly related to economic factors, is oriented primarily toward the social consequences of economic productivity rather than toward subsistence per se. Mary Douglas (1966: 268), in talking about the motivation for regulating population, noted that individuals "are more often inspired by concern for scarce social resources, for objects giving status and prestige" than for concerns about population, and the same can be said for polyandry in Tibet. Polyandry is primarily selected not for bread and butter motives—fear of starvation in a difficult environment—but rather primarily for the Tibetan equivalent of oysters, champagne, and social esteem.

Fraternal polyandry's economic advantages maximize the liklihood of generating income over and above caloric subsistence, replacement funds, ceremonial funds, and rent (tax) funds. Polyandry in Tibet maximizes the potential for attaining (or sustaining or increasing) an individual's quality of life in terms of the material markers of affluence, as well as social advantage and prestige. Taxpayer serfs lose their higher ascribed status in the social hierarchies as well as economic productive potential when they split and the small household serfs (*düjung* or *mire*) minimize their chances for attaining the good life.

Since the inheritance a younger brother receives is not likely to generate a resource base adequate for economic independence, what other alternatives might be available to a son/brother contemplating fission? The obvious avenues

for acquiring wealth and status, such as opening new fields, building up sheep and yak herds, and entering into traditional trade, are unlikely to be perceived by actors as highly viable options. Yet, resource availability is an important factor and Tibetan fraternal polyandry, as I have argued in other papers (Goldstein 1976, 1977a, 1977b) is part of a cybernetic system regulating population to certain types of low-capital resources. When resources or economic opportunities requiring little or no capital were scarce, fraternal polyandry was more strictly adhered to, but when such opportunities arose defections from polyandrous unions were common. This, in turn, produced an increase in overall fertility since unmarried females previously excluded from the reproductive pool now married and were brought back into a status of high conception risk.[11] This increased ferility and generated population pressure on the nonelastic resources finally leading to the reassertion of the conservative view of the opportunity costs of fission and stricter adherence to the fraternal polyandry alternative. The key to this process is the availability of profitable economic resources requiring little or no capital.

Most of the plateaus and valleys of Tibet are extremely arid and require adequate and reliable sources of irrigatable water for the sustenance of agriculture. In many areas this is not available and only pastoralism is possible, but even in areas such as Limi, where farming is practiced, opening new agriculture fields is still a dubious alternative. The soil in Limi and Tibet is extremely rocky and boulder-strewn and requires an immense effort to clear even a small plot, let alone construct permament terracing. Moreover, such newly cleared land has far lower fertility than established fields and is difficult to work since it is inevitably further from the main village's core field area.

Animal husbandry also presents difficulties. To make herding profitable, an individual or neolocal couple has to devote virtually full time to husbandry activities during both summer and winter, virtually precluding other income generating activities via agriculture, wage labor, crafts, or trading. More critical, however, is the fact that animal herding is extremely risky. Animal mortality does not operate "on the average" and it would not be unusual for a couple's initial (inherited) herd to die, or be decimated during the first winter. A recurrent saying in Limi, for example, is that "land doesn't die the way animals do." Yearly fluctuation in animal mortality due to climatic and disease vagaries is great and it is the small herders who are obviously most vulnerable.

Under what circumstances, then, might younger males perceive the opportunity costs of fission as not prohibitive? Traditionally, there are very few indeed. The most important would be when arable land and animal herds became available at minimal or no cost. That is, situations where natural catastrophes (such as epidemics, floods, and landslides) eliminated the membership of one or more family corporations. But, since these are few and far between, it seems highly unlikely that there would have been frequent occassions when sizable defections from the polyandrous model occurred over and above those prompted by unbearable intra-familial discord and those initiated by the poor and landless.

As a result, the estates of corporate family units of the higher peasant strata and the wealthier units of the lower stratum were preserved intact to a larger degree than among the poor and landless. Thus, over generations, a land-to-

people ratio was maintained by them that is higher since they had fewer offsprings per male (due to polyandry) and thus higher productivity on a per-capita basis. In Tsang village in Limi, for example, the hereditary higher status peasant families (*thongchen*) comprise only 25 per cent of the total families and slightly more than 40 per cent of the population but possess upwards of 60 per cent of the arable land.

Recent political events in the Himalayas, however, have created new economic options and a very different evaluation of opportunity costs regarding fission and fraternal polyandry. The Chinese take-over of Tibet in 1959 and the resultant flight of tens of thousands of Tibetans to India has had a major impact on Tibetan peoples such as Limi in the non-communist Himalayas. While the effects of these international events on areas like Limi are too complicated to discuss here, some discussion is necessary because one consequence of these changes has been an increase in fission which, in turn, has produced an increasing rate of population growth that threatens both the economic and environmental stability of that area.

Traditional trade in Limi was oriented to Tibet and the Nepalese and Bhotia people living in the east-west Humla Karnali River Valley just south of Limi. There was no pattern of trade with India and Kathmandu. Post-1959 Chinese policies in Tibet changed this by ending the laissez-faire policy of the traditional Tibetan government under which Limi people could trade when, where, and with whomever they pleased. The Chinese restricted trade to officially designated Trade Marts and then only with government personnel in government shops. Concomitantly, a new market emerged in India. The presence of thousands of Tibetan refugees in India triggered an upsurge of interest in Tibetan culture and, as an offshoot, a demand for Tibetan jewelry and artifacts among Westerners. It also opened a new market for the beautiful wooden eating and drinking bowls traditionally made in Limi but previously sold in Tibet.

As this trade developed, it very quickly became apparent that the sale of artifacts and jewelry not only was very profitable but required relatively little initial capital. Such items could be purchased in Tibet at low prices during the summer and then carried to India and Kathmandu by human transport during the winter. Parallel to this, the post-1959 years saw the Limi wooden bowls increase significantly in value as the wealth of the Tibetans in India and Kathmandu increased. In 1976, for example, the profit from the yearly bowl output of one person, when converted to the amount of grain it could purchase, was equal to the grain yield from the average amount of land held by the lower strata Limi families (the *mire*). The development of winter trade networks in North India and Kathmandu also facilitated Limi participation in the lucrative musk trade.

The changing political situation in Tibet affected Limi in another way. After the flight of the Dalai Lama and his government to India, thousands of Tibetans similarly sought refuge in India and the other contiguous Himalayan states such as Nepal. In northwest Nepal, many of the nomads from the Lake Manasarawa region just across the border fled with their herds into Limi. Since Limi is the end of the Tibetan type alpine steppe ecozone, these nomads could not take their sheep and yak further south into Nepal and could not remain in Limi. They were forced, therefore, to sell their herds to the Limi inhabitants at

extremely low prices. Many animals, furthermore, were simply abandoned and rounded up by whomever wanted them. It is said, although I have no verification, that some aniamls were simply spirited off during this chaotic period. In any case, this sudden and inexpensive supply of sheep and yaks also encouraged fission by younger brothers.

Given such new opportunities, it is not surprising to find that roughly 25 per cent of the younger brothers "in-risk" actually left their natal family corporations and established neolocal independent family units during the period from 1960-1970. This defection has decreased the fertility-reducing consequence of fraternal polyandry since it brought females into the reproductive pool who otherwise would have been excluded, and is playing a major role in stimulating noticeable population growth. Similarly, it can be argued that the increased income in Limi resulting from these activities and the large sheep and yak herds that were created has improved the amount and quality of diet. This, as has been shown for western Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (McKeown 1976), could very likely have reduced mortality rates. If this pattern continues (as seems likely) or becomes exacerbated, Limi will undergo sustained population growth which could severely alter its delicate economic-environmental balance and result in serious environmental degradation. There is already some question as to whether this is not now occuring with respect to the pasture and forest areas. The real question concerning the future of Limi, then, is whether a temporary expansion of population due to the short term emergence of new resources and opportunities has occurred, or whether recent trends mark the beginning of new patterns of marriage, family and reproduction—the beginning of a demographic and social transition.

PAHARI POLYANDRY

Like Tibet, Pahari society is patricentric in terms of inheritance and residence. Females move to the households of their husband and all males are coparceners with respect to their family's estate; i.e., brothers have demand rights to a share of property.

Marriage practices are also similar in that a variety of options are available; viz., monogamy, fraternal polyandry, polygyny, and fraternal polygynypolyandry (polygynandry).

In fraternal polyandrous (and fraternal polygynandrous) unions, the wife is shared by all the brothers. No brother can claim exclusive rights to a wife or to any portion of the family land unless he formally splits off from his natal family and additional wives added to polyandrous unions are considered the wife of all the brothers. Also, like Tibet, the eldest male dominates but cannot compel younger males to remain in the family unit.

The Pahari system of marriage unions differs, however, from the Tibetan in terms of the frequency of the various types of unions and with regard to the strategic principles underlying their selection.

Although initial studies reported high frequencies of fraternal polyandry, later work has revealed that most of what was called polyandry among Pahari was really polygynandry. Berreman (1975: 130) summarized the data for two Janusar Bawar villages and showed that fraternal polyandry is much less common than previously thought. In Lohani village, for example, the majority

of the 49 per cent of unions initially reported as polyandry end up to be cases of fraternal polygynandry (61 per cent). Of the 89 unions in Baila village, 33 per cent were polygynandrous, 25 per cent polygynous, 34 per cent monogamous, and only 9 per cent fraternal polyandrous.

These figures clearly illustrate the preference so-called polyandrous Pahari groups have for unions with more than one wife via either polygyny or polygynandry. They also indicate the presence of very different strategic values among the Pahari; i.e., that the Pahari actually prefer, or find advantageous, unions with more than one wife per generation. Unfortunately, ethnographies on these groups do not analyze the decision-making strategies underlying the multiplicity of family-marriage types. They do, however, contain data which are supportive of this contention. Majumdar (1955a), for example, writes that family prestige rises with its numbers but poor families can afford only one wife shared among brothers. Elder brothers are responsible for providing wives for their younger brothers (and would themselves like to have a second wife) but can only do so when economic conditions improve. Similarly, Parmar (1975) points out that while poor men must share a wife, prosperous men will have more than one. Saksena (1956) indirectly supports this when he writes that "A husband can have many wives and if he marries a young girl, the expenses incurred in the marriage are not much. So polygyny combined with polyandry is increasingly practiced."

Although no systematic information is available on how Pahari evaluate the opportunity costs of the various marriage options, this type of data suggests strongly that it is a lack of wealth (due in no small part to the traditional practice of paying brideprice rather than dowry) that forces Pahari brothers to marry polyandrously and not, in sharp contradiction with Tibetans, the perceived and intended "estate conserving" advantage.

Berreman (1977), in a recent discussion of the high frequency of polygynandry among polyandrous Pahari, reasserts his earlier view that there is no factor, e.g., ecology, sex ratio, inheritance rules, or population pressure, which can be shown to determine polygynandry (or polyandry) among Pahari. He (Berreman 1977: 12) argues that while polygynandry is "one of a number of cultural forms unique to the Western Pahari area whose origins are lost in unrecorded antiquity," it does provide synchronically a useful economic option in that it is a means of managing the ratio of workers and consumers to resources. There is little doubt that this is one relevant factor that Pahari consider strategically but, based on the Indian anthropolgists' material, it is certainly not the only nor the primary value considered.

While the lack of appropriate first hand data on these polyandrous Pahari groups restrains further analysis, it is clear that a fundamental dichotomy exists between the Tibetan and Pahari types of fraternal polyandry. Whereas the Tibetan marriage system is oriented toward the minimization of wives, the Pahari marriage system is oriented toward the maximization of wives. Social status, esteem, and wealth are associated with maximizing the number of wives among Pahari, whereas among polyandrous Tibetan populations it is associated with a corporate family's ability to minimize the number of brides per generation; i.e., to maintain fraternal polyandrous stem families.

Fraternal polyandry, while present in both Pahari and Tibetan society, is the

product of very different underlying values and strategies and thus, not surprisingly, is found in very different frequencies in these societies. Fraternal polygynandry and polygyny typify the Pahari context but are considered the least advanatageous options in Tibetan society and occur with the least frequency there.

TIBETAN FRATERNAL POLYANDRY AND OTHER WEALTH CONSERVING KINSHIP MECHANISMS

As indicated earlier, not only are there very significant differences between so-called polyandrous societies but there are also striking similarities between the marriage and family systems of societies heretofore considered very different. It is my contention that Tibetan fraternal polyandry is a functional analog of other wealth conserving mechanisms such as the primogeniture generated stem families of various parts of western Europe and Japan. In all of these, primary valuation is placed on the minimization of wives for each corporate family unit and the production of only one set or stem of heirs. In the European and Japanese situations this is achieved by restricting the stem to one male, whereas in the Tibetan system it is restricted to a group of siblings acting as a single jural entity. Although space does not permit discussion here, I think it is possible to show that in each of these situations the adaptation derives from an isomorphic combination of political, economic, demographic, and environmental factors. Interestingly, it is also apparent that these systems have the unintended consequence of reducing overall fertility and seem to fit the general cybernetic model briefly outlined for Limi. For example, let us examine the situation for Ireland.

The introduction of the potato in Ireland increased the yield per unit of land greatly and thereby facilitated the fragmentation of land holdings since a relatively small plot could support a family. This led to easy and early marriage, and a significant increase in the population growth rates. The potato famine ended this shift and led to the reassertion of old European patterns of marriage and inheritance. D. V. Glass, as cited in Lorimer (1969: 173) writes that after the catastrophic famine:

> The fragmentation of holdings went no further. Instead it became customary, *as it had before the potato era* [italics added by Lorimer] for the farm to be passed intact to one child. A father would, during his own lifetime, arrange the marriage of the chosen son and hand the farm to him, retaining certain rights to support during old age. The dowry brought in by the bride would be used partly to compensate the father for giving up the farm, partly to satisfy the claims of the other children. Other sons might receive a professional or business training. And if the sum of money brought by the bride was sufficient, the daughters might be given dowries and marrry farmers in their district. The alternative was to move into town and find jobs, or to emigrate. Women often went abroad to save money for a dowry; with that they might marry into a farm on their return home. Men also sometimes returned with their savings to re-establish themselves in their homeland . . . . Because of this total combination of demographic and social factors, Erie . . . has tended to become a nation of elderly bachelors. In 1841, 10% of the men between the ages of 45 and 54 years were unmarried.

Blake and Davis (1956: 216) argue similarly:

> Later, during the sixty years before the Famine, when the potato became the staple food and the economy shifted from pastoralism to cultivation, couples could get property at marriage by

subdivisions of the land, thus removing temporarily the main obstacle to early marriage. But with the crisis of the Famine, the futility of progressive subdivision led to the Land Purchase Acts stipulating that the loans which transformed tenants into owners were granted only on condition that no subdivision would take place. Since the annuities ran for 35 years, this represented some restraint on subdivision. A more powerful restraint was the fact that, once the tenants became owners, they grew unwilling to subdivide in behalf of their sons. The tendency was to retain only one son on the paternal land, the remainder of the children being dispersed, partly through migration abroad. The independent nuclear family was maintained, but the son who remained at home could not establish such a family until the father was willing to resign both authority and property. As a result the average age at marriage in Ireland came extremely advanced, reaching 29.1 for women by 1926.

Ireland, therefore, went through a series of changes that parallel roughly those discussed for Limi. From scarce land preserved intact across generations via stem families, impartible inheritance and lowered fertility due to late marriage and high rates of celibacy, a pattern of early marriage and fragmentation of land holdings emerged when a new resource—the potato—greatly increased the productivity of land and permitted economic independence with only small plots of land. The terrible potato blight that began in the 1840s ended this phase replacing it with the traditional wealth preserving patterns that predated the introduction of the potato as a subsistence crop. A similar situation seems to have occured in the Sherpa (Tibetan) area of Khumbu in Nepal.

Before the opening of Nepal to Westerners in 1950, this area was known to have been one in which traditional Tibetan fraternal polyandry was practiced. Today it is a rarity. Not suprisingly, the Sherpa population has been growing substantially and there is a great deal of seasonal and permanent out-migration to Kathmandu and Darjeeling. A major cause of this was the new economic opportunities presented by mountaineering and tourism. Like the trade opportunities discussed for Limi, these required little or no capital, and, as they developed, would have offered younger brothers both satisfactory income and social standing. It is not suprising, therefore, to find that fraternal polyandry ceased to be selected in this area and has virtually vanished from the scene. Obviously, all population growth cannot be attributed to tourism and mountaineering alone for excellent medical facilities have also been established there. Similarly, while no hard data are available, it is not unlikely that the introduction of tourism may simply have exacerbated an earlier shift in the perception of the opportunity costs of marriage alternatives caused by the introduction of potatoes—the current staple—to the area.

CONCLUSION

This paper has, very cursorily to be sure, tried to illustrate the manner in which two societies commonly considered to be fraternal polyandrous differ fundamentally. It also suggests, in a preliminary fashion, that Tibetan fraternal polyandry is a functional analog of other wealth conserving kinship mechanisms such as primogeniture, which operate to reduce the frequency of, or preclude, division of family patrimonies and, in an unperceived and unintended manner, also reduce fertility levels in their respective societies. In the metaphor of transformational grammarians, the two polyandrous societies have different deep structures with the same surface structure whereas the Tibetan and the nonpolyandrous wealth conserving societies have different surface structures with the same deep structure.

While the perennial anthropological quest for universal explanations of institutions such as polyandry will undoubtedly continue, there is no reason to assume, as Merton (1949) chided many years ago, that similar institutions must have the same function or need be produced by the same concatenation of causal factors. The Tibetan-Pahari case indicates the desirability of examining both the different functions of fraternal polyandry in different environments and the causal and functional similarities it shares with other nonpolyandrous institutions.

NOTES

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2. There are however, no patrilineal descent groups. As I have indicated in earlier articles on Tibetan social organization (Goldstein 1971b, 1971c), the largest kinship group is the family, although bilateral kindred are important and are used to define exogamy. Clans have been reported for parts of eastern Tibet, northern Nepal and northern Tibet, where they seem to function solely as marriage-exogamy definers but as yet there are no firm data on how these function, if in fact they really exist.

3. See Goldstein (1971a, 1976a, 1977a, 1977b) and Prince Peter (1963).

4. Inheritance is discussed further later in the paper.

5. A more extensive examination of the relationship between feudalism-serfdom and Tibetan polyandry is found in Goldstein (1971a) and a detailed analysis of Tibetan serfdom is found in Goldstein (1971b, 1971c).

6. Tibetan terms are cited in the standard phonemic transcription used in Goldstein 1975b. The written Tibetan transliteration will be presented in footnotes. *Ṭhoṇgchen* = *grong chen* sometimes simply called *ṭhoṇgpa* - *grong ba*).

7. *Miṛe* = *mi re.*

8. Jack Goody (1976) has recently linked female inheritance with the plough agriculture and social stratification characteristic of Eurasian societies. Tibetan society would fall under this rubrick but only in a marginal way. Females in Tibet inherit from their natal family corporations in two ways:

a) In the absence of brothers (i.e., male heirs), a female is sometimes kept in her natal family and an adoptive bridegroom brought in (uxorilocal marriage).

b). Females who marry out (the normal situation in Tibet) receive a portion of their family corporation's wealth at the time of marriage in the form of what is usually called a dowry but which in Tibetan actually means a share (*qēla; skal ba*) of some property or estate. This share, however, does not include immovable property such as land. For example, a daughter in an aristocratic family might have received one or two sets of jewelry and an assortment of clothes as her dowry. Occassionally a maid-servant would also be sent with her. In the villages, among the higher status peasant-serfs and the wealthier lower status ones, similar norms prevailed although the amount and value of the clothes and jewelry were much smaller. In Limi, a higher status girl usually gets a set of jewelry, clothes, one or two female bovines, and on rare occasions usufruct rights to some of the land of the natal corporation (with the land reverting to the latter on the bride's death).

9. The political-economic hierarchy in village Tibet (excluding the aristocracy) typically consisted of three strata:

taxpayer or *ṭhēēpa* (*khral pa*) serf (also called *ṭhoṇgchen, ṭhoṇgpa*) small householder or *dūjung* (*dud chung*) serfs (also called *miṛe*) *moṛang* or *phoṛang* serfs (*mo rang, pho rang*)

All of these could include inherently unpolluted, inherently polluted, and priestly lineage (*sngags pa*) serfs.

10. *dūjung* = *dud chung*
11. For example, in Tsang village, Limi, more than 30 per cent of the females over twenty are unmarried (see Goldstein 1976).

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