Chapter 2

Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

Judith Pettigrew, Yarjung Kromchaï Tamu & Mark Turin

Situating anthropology

Judith Pettigrew

In August 1992, I interviewed Major Hom Bahādur Tamu, treasurer of the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh (Tamu Cultural and Religious Organization) at the ancestral village of Kohla:

‘How does it feel to be in Kohla?’ I asked,

‘Great, it's our old village, the place of our ancestors.’

He followed this with, ‘I think that we should get people up here with shovels to dig the place up and put the proof in the kohibo.’

I commented:

‘If anyone is going to dig it up, there should be archaeologists involved as they will know how to dig without damaging the old buildings.’

Hom Bahādur nodded his head and replied: ‘Yes, that would be a very good idea.’

The Kohla Project for Archaeology and Ethno-History which developed as a collaborative venture between University of Cambridge researchers and members of the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh (TPLS), a Tamu (Gurung) religious and cultural organization, has its origins in this discussion which took place at the ancestral village of Kohla in August 1992.

The Kohla Project was concerned with archaeology and ethno-history as a ‘community process.’ Its multi-dimensional approach incorporated archaeological survey/excavation alongside the collection of oral histories and interviews with Tamu people regarding their views of the past. A ‘project within a project’, it was also concerned with how history is created in the present and the role that our work played in this venture. A central feature of the Kohla Project was its commitment to the concept of multiple voices — separate but equal. The Jana Andolan (People’s Movement) of 1990 in Nepal created new possibilities for organization, discussion and activism among the people who call themselves janajāti (ethnic minorities or minority nationalities) and adivāsi (indigenous peoples). Much of the immediate post-1990 discourse related to their position within the nation-state, their desire to negotiate new relationships to the state and to enjoy new rights within it. The demands were based on contemporary realities and the experiences of the past which, in the early and mid-1990s, were being carefully examined from the perspective of the long-term effects that they have had on janajāti groups.

Among the Tamu-mai, this re-examination took place on many levels and in talking to a wider national forum, the Tamu-mai also talked to themselves. The prime topics of discussion included the question of historical origin, the religion(s) of the Tamu-mai, the preservation of language, loss of culture and the effects of Hinduization. Of particular concern were the seventeenth- and nineteenth-century Hindu-authored genealogies (bãsāvali), which posited a mixed Indo-Aryan and Mongolian origin for the Tamu-mai and portrayed one group of clan lineages, the Sõgi (Nep. cār-jāt) as being ‘superior’ to another, the Kugi (Nep. sohra-jāt).

In the post-Andolan years, these discourses led to the foundation of a plethora of new ethnic organizations. One such organization is the TPLS which was founded in Pokhara in 1990. Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh’s self-appointed mandate is to preserve and revitalize Tamu cultural traditions and in particular the shamanic traditions of the pachyu and klehbrĩ and the ‘bön’ lama. The TPLS is concerned with shamanic interpretations of the past, the effects of Hinduization and status relationships between the clans. While a significant number of other Tamu organizations exist, including the national Tamu organization Tamu Chõj.
Dhĩ, the Kāski district organization Tamu Dhĩ and the Buddhist organizations Bauddha Arghaun Sadan and Tamu Bauddha Sewā Samiti, TPLS is the only organization directly concerned with the shamanic traditions and its position as such is uncontested. Its stance on the relationships between the clans, however, while widely supported at an overt level, is contested, often covertly, by those Tamu-mai who perceive that a hierarchical relationship does exist.

In the absence of documented sources, the present re-examination of Tamu history has proceeded along different lines of enquiry (see Des Chene 1996, 117). These include the search for evidence of Tamu kingdoms, the re-evaluation of the place of the Tamu-mai in the Hindu kingdoms, the study of language and the study of religious history. The last of these is the approach taken by members of the TPLS.

Tamu shamans are considered by many Tamu-mai to be experts in indigenous knowledge and understandings of the past. What they know about Tamu history is based on knowledge contained within the 'oral texts' (pye), including texts such as the Tõhdã and Lẽmakõ (see below) which narrate the downward migration of the Tamu-mai, sections of which are retraced in reverse during the shamans ritual journey in the pai laba death ritual. As the shamanic version of
history relates to a literal landscape, the search for a more authentic version of the past led TPLS members to travel into this landscape where they attempted to match text to geography. During a 1992 research trip, I accompanied TPLS members on their first expedition northward through the districts of Kāski, Lamjung, Manāng and Mustāng (Fig. 2.1). We ‘discovered’ that there are significant ruins at the historic village of Kohla. While shepherds and cow-herders were fully aware of the village, they saw the ruins as a source of stonework for their temporary shelters, rather than as part of their heritage which should be preserved.

The purpose of the 1992 trip was to discover if the places listed in the pye exist in the physical landscape. The first part of the journey retraced the overlapping downward migration route of the Tamu-mai and the upward ritual journey route along which the shamans guide the souls of the dead in the pai laba death ritual (Fig. 2.3). While the ideal would have been to travel the entire length of both routes, in practice it was only possible to trace those sections of the journeys that lie within the districts of Kāski, Lamjung and Manāng.

The ritual journeys of shamans from different villages merge in the high pastures of Thurchu (some shamans do not have the pye which takes them to Thurchu and so they ‘fly’ from the village they are performing in). Prior to Thurchu, shamans from different villages have their own routes. On our journey, we followed the route of the shamans from the village of Yāngjakot. This route was chosen because several of the TPLS participants were originally from Yāngjakot. At the point on the trail where the soul journey ascended the large rock at Oble, we continued following the downward migration trail that overlaps with the landscapes referred to in several different pye.

Although the TPLS members already knew that most of the geographic places on the routes existed, they hoped that the trek would provide concrete (experiential but non-shamanic) confirmation and documentation of their existence. The journey was therefore not only of spiritual importance, but also of emotional, historical and political importance. It was simultaneously a pilgrimage to sacred places and a journey into the past. More importantly, it was a quest for origins — origins which are perceived to be ‘somewhere in Mongolia’ and intimately tied to the shamanic traditions. Oral texts narrate the northward soul journey, the downward migration route and a series of overlapping physical landscapes. Thus, it was not only the oral texts which were under scrutiny, but also the entire orientation of the shamanic world.

The TPLS trip members, none of whom, with the exception of the shaman and founder member, Yarjung Tamu, had visited more than a few places on the proposed route, were very conscious of the implications of their venture (see below for an account of Yarjung’s original visit). They knew that a successful trip would place them in a much better position to address questions about the past and the cultural embeddedness of the pye-tã lhu-tã. The term ‘proof’ was often used, and on several occasions I heard people saying that they were ‘going to retrieve the proof.’ ‘Proof’ referred to verification of the historical migration route as well as to the shamanic journeys. Not surprisingly, the trip received considerable attention among the wider Tamu community, particularly in the urban centre of Pokhara.

We left Pokhara on a sunny August morning in 1992. We were a group of sixteen — eight participants (seven TPLS members, two of whom were shamans, and myself), one guide, five porters and two cooks. Our first night was spent in the village of Yāngjakot, and the second at the site of the ancestral village of Khudu. On our third morning, we saw the historic village of Kohla for the first time: a small distant treeless area amidst the heavily forested south-facing slopes of the Lamjung Himal. Further along the trail at Chikrei, ruins were spotted and members of the group took rough notes and measured buildings.

On the fourth night, we camped in a dismal monsoon downpour above the treeline at Naudi Pak. Early in the morning, we walked the short distance to Kohla (Fig. 2.2). I knew of its importance as I had been told many times that it was the ‘last joint village before the Tamu-mai split into smaller groups and moved down to the locations of the present villages.’ I was not, however, expecting what we found — visible standing ruins of a very large village. With notebooks, measuring tape, cameras and a video recorder, the group moved through the ruins recording what we could see despite the high monsoon-fed overgrowth.

On the basis of what was visible to us, a process of ascription began taking place which was based on people’s knowledge and their experience of contemporary architecture. The largest and most prominent house was thought to be the ‘Klye (Ghale) chieftain’s house’. The standing stone to its side, which stood in relationship to the house in a way that is still found today in house/stable complexes in extant Tamu villages, was the ‘stable’. We couldn’t locate the cemetery, but when the pachyu shaman Yarjung Tamu began to have pre-trance sensations after touching some large stones, people said ‘that’s probably the cemetery or a place where rituals used to take place. The ancestors are nearby, that is why Thagu (eldest son) feels shaky’.

After leaving Kohla, we spent two nights in the shepherds’ huts at Thurchu before crossing into Manāng district by cutting through the mountains. In Manāng, our route took on an added dimension. As well as being the trail of the shamanic soul journey, the ancestors’ migration route
Figure 2.2. A shaman’s perspective: A) Yarjung and guide, Damarsingh, at Kohla during the 1992 TPLS trip (photograph: J. Pettigrew); B) Tamu-mai shamans gathered in Kathmandu, 2003 (there to record their chants and drumming for the CD, Divine Ancestors, made in collaboration with the School of Oriental and African Studies, London; note their prominent drums); C) a shaman’s study (Yarjung’s), Pokhara, 2005, including Kohla environs satellite image (1), a photograph of Yarjung in full regalia and ‘performance’ (2), his collection of flat-drums (with both Siberian and Irish examples) (3), a Phai Lhu Chon shrine to ancestors (4), a portrait of Yarjung’s shaman father (5) and a bound series of Yarjung’s transliteration of various pye ‘texts’ (6; with detail right).
and the salt trade route, the route had also become other peoples' trails — an important tourist route, the trail down which the 'Tibetan refugees spreading Buddhism' travelled, a route dotted with small Tibetan and Tamu villages. Tamu gods, shamans and ancestors thus share their landscape with foreign trekkers, Buddhist lamas, Tibetans and people from elsewhere who run the local administration.

At Oble, in the shadow of the large dome rock which deceased Tamu ascended to reach the afterworld, the group practised the singing and dancing of the pachyu Serga Pye. The Serga sends the deceased to the afterworld in the pai laba, the three-day death ritual. The section referring to the local landscape was to be sung at Majju Deurāli, the site of an ancestral village, and the point on the route at which the human trail curves to the left while the trail of the dead goes to the right, up and over Oble.

As we continued our journey, we passed villages that are mentioned in the pye as ones in which Tamu ancestors had lived. The list corresponded to that given in the texts, and landscape corroborated the shamanic version of the past. In each case, the villages appeared in the order in which they are listed in the pye, many names were clearly the same although the pronunciation, and in some cases the actual name, was different. The ancestors, however, had left little trace of their habitation — the contemporary villages were all of Tibetan origin. The landscape was populated by gods that can be beckoned by contemporary Tamu shamans who live on the other side of the Himal. The valleys leading to Thorang La (Pass), famed and feared among trekkers, were inhabited by Tamu gods. Crossing the pass the following morning we looked down, in the early hours of the dawn, on a landscape which incorporated the famous Hindu pilgrimage site of Muktināth. In Tamu shamanic geography, this location is referred to as Muchhitrachamgoye.

A high point of the expedition was the side-trip to the village of Lubra (Lipro Mharsō in the pye), a place of past learning for the klehbrĩ shamans. The village was inhabited by Tibetan-speaking people who had no memory of the klehbrĩ and were bemused by the group’s earnest enquiries. We were taken to see the Bön-po monastery. Excitedly, the group members examined the painted deities on the ceiling, which bore a great resemblance to those on the klehbrĩ urgyan (‘crown’). As Yarjung filmed the images, he narrated the names of the gods to the camera. As we left the monastery, someone pointed to a miniature iron bird suspended just above eye-level and cried, ‘look, it’s just like the klehbrĩ bird’. Writer and historian Bhovar Tamu questioned the villagers, ‘where did this come from?’, ‘what do you think it is?’, but the locals had no idea. We were told of an old monastery that was on the other side of the ridge behind the village. There was talk of sending me and a couple of others up to film and photograph it, but there was no time. We left. There was a distinct but unspoken awareness that our excitement was not shared by the locals, a certain disappointment that they did not realize how ‘important and historic their village is to the Tamu-mai’. At a distance from the village, Ba Klehbrĩ chanted the section of the pye that refers to Lipro Mharsō. Lipro was ‘reclaimed’.

We reached Jomsom. To the locals we were just another group of ‘tourists’ looking for accommodation, so we decided to press on. Time, money and what are always referred to as ‘rations’ were beginning to run short. Jomsom is not mentioned in the pye, but the nearby village of Thini is. There were only a few brief minutes in which to film and chant the section of the pye that refers to Thini (named Thini Kyhalsō in the pye). In Tukche we bought apples for friends and families and hired a porter to carry them down.

The next day we passed the large waterfall of Maiwha Chhara that is mentioned in Prõprõ pye. Yarjung, who had never before physically visited it, recognized it immediately as a place that he had visited in trance. The pye tells that the mho (demons) that live in the waterfall used to be able to change into people. One day, a ritual was held in the village during which all the pots and pans were laid out. During the ritual, a ladle was stolen and from that day, the mho have been unable to transform themselves into humans. According to Yarjung, a ‘king and queen still live in the waterfall’. We approached an old man wearing a bamboo basket. ‘Do you ever hear the sound of bells and drums coming from the waterfall?’ asked Yarjung. ‘Yes we do’, replied the old man.

We reached Baglung two days later. The new Chinese-built road to Pokhara was temporarily blocked due to a landslide creating a long delay. In the afternoon, we finally managed to get a truck which took us back to town. In slanting rain, huddled under sheets of plastic, we perched atop the Chinese truck. Through the rain, and between the hairpin bends of the new road, we passed the familiar villages of Birethanti, Nayapul and Lumle. As Dhampus came into view Yarjung said, ‘My father had a bad fight with witches in that village about 30 years ago’. It was almost dusk when we finally reached Pokhara.

We met the following day — to celebrate, to apologize should we have offended each other in the difficult circumstances of the trip, to thank the porters, guide and cooks, and to watch the video. When we came together, we heard that we had received messages of congratulations from many people along with requests to watch the video.

The expedition recounted above is the second journey in the chronology of TPLS journeys into the land of the ancestors. It formed the basis for the construction of new historical narratives and, as ‘our 1992 trek’, it became part of the history that it was designed to discover. When those who participated in the journey talk about their historical research, they trace the beginning of the search for evidence to this trip which allowed them to see and
experience first hand the relationship between the *pye*,
the landscape and the shamanic journeys (as opposed
to hearing about it from shamans, who usually have
not visited the sites themselves). This evidence sig-
ificantly shifted the discussion about history as it
provided a firm foundation on which to counter ver-
sions of the Tamu past based on Hindu interpretations
(for which the only evidence is the widely discredited
seventeenth- and nineteenth-century genealogies).
During and after the trip I spoke to TPLS members
about the role that archaeology could play, and
asked if they were interested in my making contact
with archaeologists who could help with a research
project on the history of the village of Kohla and other
ancestral villages. They replied that they were, and
on my return to Cambridge (to write up my PhD dis-
sertation), my discussions with colleagues led to the
suggestion that I contact Christopher Evans, Director
of the Cambridge Archaeological Unit, which is part
of the Department of Archaeology. In the summer of
1993, Yar Jung Tamu (who was in the UK to work on a
museum project at the Cambridge University Museum
of Archaeology and Anthropology) and I met Evans.
Out of this meeting and subsequent negotiations, the
Kohla Project developed as a collaborative venture
between University of Cambridge researchers and the
TPLS (and subsequently the Government of Nepal’s
Department of Archaeology).

Archaeological research plotted new routes
into the landscape of the ancestors. The land was re-
mapped but in a different way, and the archaeological
maps did not always coincide with existing inter-
pretations. The maps provided by the archaeologists
expanded indigenous understandings of the land-
scape and provided new material for interpretation.
That the scripts were somewhat different, although a
source of much discussion, was relatively unimpor-
tant. The interpretations co-existed in simultaneously
overlapping and separate domains. Local people and
archaeologists talked both to each other and past one
another. What was important was the journey, for it
was the journey that provided the context and the
opportunity for interpretation and the construction
of narratives. My initial role as a broker continued,
and much of what I did as the anthropologist on the
project was to act as an interpreter. My interpretation
included the usual range of language and culture, but
also included mediating between different modes of
thinking, knowledge and interpretation as shamans,
local people and foreign and Nepali archaeologists
engaged in an ongoing dialogue about the Tamu past.
Ethnographic research also included translation of the
oral texts relating to Kohla (see below) and oral history
interviews with people of different ages, genders and
generations in Kāski and Lamjung districts, as well
as in Pokhara. These did not, however, provide sig-
ificant material, as although all interviewees stressed
that the Tamu-mai migrated downwards from a north-
ern direction, and most had heard of Kohla, few could
provide any additional historical information.

The encounter with archaeology created a degree
of previously denied access to the ancestral world.
The emotionality of journeying into the landscape
of the ancestors (and conversely the landscape of the
ritual journey) was further enhanced by actual
physical contact with the ancestors’ material culture.
Unlike the original TPLS journey, the range of peo-
ple who could at some level participate, who could
‘touch and be touched’, was now much wider. The
first archaeological expedition’s return to Pokhara
attracted a wide audience to the kohibo who came to
look at photographs of the trip, talk to the participants
and touch the pottery of the ancestors.

Journeying of the type undertaken by TPLS
members on their 1992 trek was an attempt to show
that the places mentioned in the *pye* existed, and thus
prove the historical authenticity of the shamanic ver-
sion of history, which could be counterposed against
what appeared as the historical inauthenticity of the
Hinduized version. There was a moral dimension to
the journey, suggesting the contemporary righting of
past wrongs. Geography fostered a moral continuity
with the past. Landscape and morality were linked in
a manner that is reminiscent of that described by Basso
(1984) for the western Apache. Among the Apache,
moral narratives are constructed in landscape. One
does not necessarily need to hear the stories but only
to see or remember the landscape of the stories, ‘the
moral significance of geographical locations ... is
established by historical tales with which the locations
are associated’ (Basso 1984, 44). What was different in
the Tamu case was that the encoding of morality in
landscape was based not on historical tales but on nar-
ratives constructed in the present, but which related
to the landscape and memories of the past. It was also
different in that it concerned historical morality rather
than everyday conduct.

Landscape and morality were linked through
the ancestors. The landscape had to be negotiated in
a particular way: to be disrespectful to the land was
potentially to be disrespectful to the ancestors. To
simultaneously pay respect to ancestors and manage
the pragmatics of everyday life required constant
negotiation. The situation was similar to that described
by Turner (1974, 182–3) for pilgrims. As the pilgrim
moves away from home, s/he becomes increasingly
sacralized as s/he meets shrines and sacred places and
objects, and increasingly secularized as s/he must cope
with the difficult practical demands of everyday life in a strange and temporary place. Those who journeyed confronted problems created by this juxtaposition of roles. Sometimes the subtle balance was lost. Following our brief 1992 visit to Kohla, it was suggested that we had become lost because we had not burnt herbs or said prayers to the ancestors. On another occasion, herbs were hastily burned because it was felt that we had constructed our toilet close to the dwelling place of an area god. The arbiters of morality in landscape were the shamans who decided when to appease or not appease the Afterworld. On our 1994 research journey to Kohla, the frequency of hailstones worried some members of the research team who often urged the shamans to burn herbs in order to keep the ancestors happy. The underlying fear was that we were making the ancestors unhappy, thereby causing them to send hail. The shamans, working on a different understanding of, and relationship to the landscape, sometimes refused to burn herbs, explaining that it was the weather and not the ancestors. At a temporary resting place en route to Kohla it began to hail and Yarjung appealed to the place-god to stop the deluge. As he stood in the middle of the hailstorm burning herbs and chanting, the group watched, and his actions (and apparent success) were captured on film and video. Journeying, which required shamanic mediation between the landscape and the ancestors/Afterworld, provided an additional domain of authority for shamanic practice.

While ‘proof in the landscape’ provided the basis for a reconstruction of history, I suggest that journeying was the actual construction of historical narrative — the writing (or walking) of history. Rather like committing a historical account to paper, journeying was the construction of a performative historical narrative located in landscape. As Tilley (1994, 28) writes, ‘movement through space constructs “spatial stories”, forms of narrative understanding’. As Tamu revivalists walked up and down the trails from the town to the high Himalaya, they constructed, both for themselves and others, a chronology which was simultaneously past and present, and past in the present. A narrative was constructed which included and interlinked the actors of the past with the actors of the present. In this way, a perspective was created which associated the contemporary actors with the telling of history, thereby establishing authority. As the shamanic and the historic interacted, the establishment of history-making authority was at once the enhancement of shamanic authority.

To understand the potential that journeying had in conveying an interpretation of history, it is necessary to consider the audience to which history-making was directed. While it was important to provide written accounts of the Tamu past for outsiders — to explain and share perceptions of the injustices of the past, to reinterpret, to assert an identity based on one’s own cultural perceptions — it was more important to provide an account for one’s own people. While published historical accounts might receive the attention of a small number of well-educated people, most Tamu-mai, whether urban dwellers or villagers, do not read them or have access to them. For some sections of society, understandings of the past continue to be based on the Hindu-authored genealogies. While in the early-mid 1990s, some people were engaged in the re-examination of the past, and others were aware of it and eager to learn more, there were (and continue to be) Tamu-mai who premise their understandings of social life on ideas of clan hierarchy and dismiss the perspectives of TPLS activists as ‘the talk of people who have a chip on their shoulders’.

Of interest to most people are the local events of the village, the ‘lived-in’ experiences. Also of interest is the landscape — the forests above the villages where people go to cut firewood, the stones, rocks and rivers where the human and spirit worlds overlap. The ancestral landscape is one which the Tamu shepherds traverse, where people go to cut bamboo, gather herbs and walk through en route to Hindu pilgrimage spots. These places have well-known and emotive names, like Kohla, Chomrong, Thurju, Dudh Pokhari, places which a great many people from all clans aspire to visit, places which exist in consciousness, seen or unseen.

While the past as a written account, or even as a narrative account, normally does not receive much attention from people when detached from the landscape, the past ‘located’ in the landscape is a different matter. A high profile visit by urban Tamu-mai with video cameras and maps, accompanied by foreign researchers and local porters who are ‘going to the old villages to study Tamu history’, gained enormous attention. So did the return trip a month later, and the subsequent showing of the video of the trip. This attention was reinforced by the hearthside recollections of the porters and support workers, hired from the villages, and the villagers’ own stories of what the visitors did, where they went and what they said. Such stories were also reproduced in the town with people telling and re-telling what they had heard had happened and where it had happened. The stories were ‘brought home’ in a manner reminiscent of Kwon’s (1993, 67–74) account of stories recollected in the evenings by Orochon reindeer herder-hunters from Siberia. As in the narratives of Kwon’s herder-hunters, the stories of what happened in the landscape can only be shared if one ‘has a certain shared map. The location, where an observation or a
recollection is made, was not referred to by east or west’ (1993, 67), but by the location of events or in relation to a particular geographical feature. The stories and places constructed thus reproduced each other (Tilley 1994, 33). As with the Orochon, Tamu stories create and alter social relations, and differentials exist between the old and the young. The teller of tales, however, could enjoy temporary elevation to a status ‘above’ that of his/her normal one.

Narratives were constructed and located in the ancestral landscape that they were intended to address — narratives that included the events of the journey, interspersed with images of the actual activities making history. In this way, an account of how the cook used to send Thagu (‘eldest son’, a support worker hired from a village) through the forest at Chikrei carrying mugs of tea and biscuits for the researchers and their helpers, who were measuring the old houses, drawing the kuni (rice grinder) we found near the trail and looking for the chogô (cemetery), was simultaneously a recollection of a rather amusing daily life event and the conveying of historical information. At Chikrei there were old houses, material culture which was continuous with the present, and the burial place of ancestors. The potential for reinterpretation was extensive. History became meaningful, relevant, close by. Links were created to the present — trails along which both past and present could be experienced. Events that were contemporary were interrelated with powerful visual images of the past. The ancestor’s kuni could be looked at, touched, and held. It became a relic. The old buildings could be inspected and wondered about, and everyone could enter the discussion about why the chogô (cemetery) was not found.

Prior to departure and on route to the ancestral landscape, people told us of places and things to look out for. The possibility existed for everyone to be a historian, for stories about places, people, gods, spirits, ancestors to be remembered, brought out, constructed, interpreted and reinterpreted. The possibility, however, did not exist for everyone to be an expert; this remained the domain of the few; those who entered the landscape to research it, those who established the authority to investigate the past and make it speak in the present, those who had made the journey, those also, who had the knowledge to speak to the past, those who knew the pye, those who had the migration genealogies, in other words, the shamans. The research team could not have operated without a shaman as a central figure. For those who were interested, and many clearly were, shamanic practice narrated and located the past and by doing so, located itself.

As identity is bound up with place (Tilley 1994, 15), journeying contributes to the construction of identity. Journeying associated those making the journey with what is considered to be quintessentially Tamu — the world of Tamu ancestors. Those who made the journey were simultaneously seen, and saw themselves, to be associated with the essence of a cultural past. Despite their residence in the town, by journeying they established their direct continuity with the culture of their ancestors. This went some way towards counteracting the widespread opinion that the purest most authentic form of Tamu cultural life is lived by those who remain in the villages. The people who went on these journeys, all members of the urban diaspora (except for the porters), showed themselves to be town-dwellers who ‘could walk’. Thus, the stereotype of town people who ‘cannot walk’ was debunked. Not only could they walk, but they could walk further than many villagers who have never been in the hye (uplands). Journeying into the ancestral landscape and closely associating with the ancestors, not only established a direct continuity with the ancestral Afterworld but also a moral continuity that could be matched against the perceived ‘immorality’ of the town. It created a shared Tamu hyula (country/locale/homeland) — a hyula which included town-dwellers, villagers and ancestors. In other words, a common sense of landscape in which town and country, past and present could merge. Journeying was thus transformative in the sense that a pilgrimage is transformative (Turner 1974, 204–6); those who made the journey at some level transformed how they were perceived and how they perceived themselves.

Journeys into the landscape of history were simultaneously journeys into the geographical and metaphorical ‘landscape’ of the shamanic. Shamanic landscape overlaps with the landscape of history, reaching northwards to the Afterworld and origins, and southwards through history to the landscape of the present. Like the past, shamanic practice exists in other spaces and other times. To interact with the history of the landscape is to interact with the ‘landscape’ of the shamanic. The historical significance of landscape is enhanced through ritual, which ‘invests historicity in sites that do not themselves embody events of the past’ (Rappaport 1990, 153). The performance of ritual activities, as illustrated in the account of the journey described earlier, imbued (or reimbued) geographical location with both shamanic and historical significance. For the audience watching the video of the journey, the chanting of the pye at Maiju, Lubra and Thini not only invested these locations (which for many would have previously only been names) with historicity, but associated the conferring of historicity with shamanic action. The shamanic legitimized both history and landscape. In this relationship, the shamanic was the senior player. Shamanic action in
anthropology and shamanic considerations

landscape has been continuous (it had never ceased). History (in its non-Hindu interpretation) was discontinuous. History in landscape was relocated and re-created by those who had never left the landscape — the shamans. As interest was refocused on the past, it was simultaneously refocused on the shamanic. At a time when shamanic practice was seen as being on the decline and under pressure from other religious and secular ideologies (Buddhism as well as cosmopolitan secular ideas), this kind of history-making made a contribution to its revaluation. It also helped to remind the urban dwelling Tamu-mai, in particular, that this was their indigenous religion and that the shamans were the custodians of Tamu history. Since their beginnings in 1990, TPLS members have been very successful in recentering the shamanic traditions and ensuring that they still have currency in the new national and international Tamu diaspora. The Kohla Project aimed to expand understandings of the Tamu past, and as such it brought out histories that had long been submerged. It also accorded a degree of attention and authority to the work of TPLS members, supporting their role as shamanist-activists.

Reflecting on the past and remembering the path
Yarjung Kromchāi Tamu, Mark Turin & Judith Pettigrew

This section is devoted to the perspective of the Kohla project’s principal pachyu shaman and co-director, Yarjung Kromchāi Tamu. The truly interdisciplinary nature of the fieldwork endeavour and the research which ensued, combining anthropological, archaeological and shamanic forms of knowledge, was new not only for the academics involved, but also for the shaman. Moreover, while the lead anthropologist and archaeologist both have an extensive scholarly vocabulary at their disposal for articulating reflexive thoughts about knowledge production in their native English, this was not the case for the lead shaman. This collaborative fieldwork experience was truly experimental for Yarjung Tamu and challenging in ways that he could not have predicted.

How best then to represent the experiences and impressions of the Nepali- and Tamu-speaking lead shaman to an international audience in an academic publication? It was clear to the editors of this volume that in Nepal, narrative sequence and presentational style are intimately tied up with the cultural expectations of both the audience and the speaker. A canonical translation of the lead shaman’s narrative, whether from a structured interview, a relaxed chat or from his own field notes contained in a diary, would likely not reflect his nuanced perspective of the experience. Instead, it was decided to conscript the help of a linguistic anthropologist who has been working in the Himalayas since the early 1990s, had visited the project area and is fluent in Nepali. The other issue is that of trust, since Yarjung Kromchāi Tamu is concerned about the incorrect appropriation of his knowledge and all too aware of the importance of representing his ideas in an idiom which has currency and meaning to an international scholarly audience. The longevity of the relationships between Tamu, Turin and Pettigrew, including many successful prior collaborations in the realm of language teaching, publications and computer support, have done much to build and reaffirm this trust.

This chapter is divided into discrete subsections, each of which address a specific issue or concern of the shaman. Throughout the chapter, the voice is that of the lead shaman, Yarjung Tamu, and the text is therefore written from his perspective and in the first person. The contents of this chapter were elicited by Mark Turin over a period of sixteen months between October 2002 and March 2004, in occasional, if intensive, periods of questioning, recording and transliteration of Yarjung’s written Nepali and Tamu. Four languages were used in the conversations between the linguistic anthropologist and the shaman, in decreasing frequency: Nepali, the vernacular Tamu language (called Tamu Kyui and hereafter referred to as TK), the ritual language known only by shamans from the ethnic group (known as Cõ Kyui and hereafter referred to as CK), and finally English. Important names, places and terms were written down both on paper and entered digitally into an Apple Macintosh computer in a Devanāgarī font which was later checked for spelling errors by the shaman. The chosen method of transliteration reflects well-attested and long-standing Indological guidelines and has been chosen by the linguistic anthropologist in the interest of compliance with international norms. It should be noted that this method of transliteration is at odds with Yarjung’s own method which reflects a perceived phonetic reality of spoken Tamu but fails to take into account the phonology of cognate Tibeto-Burman languages. In particular, we had differences about how and where to indicate aspiration or breathiness on consonants, but have resolved to follow linguistic best practices rather than a local and indigenous method of transliteration. The material gathered by the linguistic anthropologist was supplemented with additional data collected over eighteen years of ongoing collaborative research between Tamu and social anthropologist Judith Pettigrew. This data did much to provide context as well as flesh out the shamanic narratives presented by Tamu.
Figure 2.3. Yarjung’s mapping of the ‘soul journey’ north (note Hwaple/Oble top centre; see Fig. 4.34).
**The composition of the first team to visit Kohla**

Kohla is a very important place for the Tamu-mai. Our *pye* and the oral history of the shamans tell us that many important things happened at Kohla. When I retired from the British army, I visited the Kohla area for the first time. In some sense, this felt like going ‘home’, even though it was a home I had never seen.

I travelled with another ex-Gurkha soldier, also from my ethnic group, by the name of Bālā Singh. While not a shaman, Bālā Singh knew a fair amount about the places we would pass since he had worked as a cowherd. We took another guide with us, a 60-year old man called Buddhimān. Buddhimān was also not a shaman, but rather a shepherd. He didn’t know the texts of the *pye*, nor did he know of the importance of our journey, but he had heard of or visited all of the places and locations mentioned in my shamanic texts. All three of us hailed from the Kromchaĩ clan, and we were related which gave us a sense of security and trust with one another. We also took with us a porter called Khorā. Of our group of four, then, Bālā Singh knew the layout and names of the lowlands areas through which we would pass (on account of his tending cows), while Buddhimān was better versed in the features of the higher pastures (since he tended sheep).

My father, Parsingh Kromchaĩ Tamu, had always believed that the places shamans mentioned in their chants and rituals were to be found on earth, and not in the sky as some others believed, and that the locations of the ancient migration route lay to the north. I had always wanted to visit these places and see them with my eyes, but had never had the time and money. Only now that I was retired did I have the money and time to make my dream a reality.

We set off on our journey on Sunday, July 22, 1990, departing from my home village of Yāngjakot. When we reached the high pastures, Buddhimān explained the landscape to us and told us the names of all the places along our route which I compared with the place names in the *pye*. Each time the *pye* described a village we could see evidence of a past settlement. We also found other places that are mentioned in the *pye*, like rivers (*syō*) and resting places (*nhe*). It took us a week to get to Thurchu, by which time all our rations and money were finished. Thurchu is at about 15,000 feet and is an important base for Tamu shepherds (Figs. 2.1 & 2.3). Thurchu is where the various ritual journeys of Tamu shamans meet up and also the location through which all the souls of the dead (*plah*) from different Tamu villages pass on their final journey to Targila (the Tamu Afterworld). We wanted to cross Ekrai Mountain into Manāng as Ekrai is the place where near-dead Tamu souls prowl in the hours and moments before death, but Buddhimān said that we didn’t have the equipment for climbing through the snow. At this point, we decided to turn back. Because of the hardship we sent our porter and Buddhimān back to Yāngjakot, while Bālā Singh and I returned by ourselves. On the way back, we got lost taking a shortcut in Lamjung, and the going was difficult. In total, the whole trip took us fifteen days. We had followed exactly the route of the chants. After this trip, I realized the strength of our traditions and knew that it was important to do more research. However, our journey had been self-funded and sadly, we had no more resources to undertake further studies.

**The importance of the *pye***

The *pye* are the sacred oral texts of the Tamu *pachyu* and *klebri* shamans. They also explain the history of the Tamu-mai. At the beginning of a ritual before we start the *pye*, we chant and describe what we are going to do in the ritual. After that we start the *pye*. Some *pye* are effective by themselves, you just need to chant them to bring about change. *Pye* vary in length, some take 30 minutes to chant and others, like the *serga* in the three-day death ritual, take about ten hours to complete. Some *pye* describe actions or events, others call evil spirits or gods and ancestors. During a major ritual when a *pachyu* needs the extra protection of the *pachyu* god Pakrei Klhyesõdi Prehsõdi in his body, he chants a ‘calling’ *pye* so that he can enter trance. At the end of a ritual, we chant about the success of the ritual and for the protection of the participants.

Altogether there are perhaps three or four hundred different *pye*, so this is a very rich oral tradition, perhaps one of the richest in the Himalayan region. Shamans from different villages know different *pye* or slightly different versions of the same *pye*. I know over a hundred. The *pye* are chanted in a ritual language named *Cõ Kyui*. *Cõ* is the Tamu place of origin. Although we now speak Tamu Kyui, *Cõ Kyui* is our original language. In some ways, it resembles a secret language, as nowadays few people understand or speak it. Many shamans don’t know it and they just chant the texts from memory without understanding the content.

There are different types of *pye*. Some explain the origins of shamanic objects, animals, plants and other sacred things such as yeast (*prhama*) and millet wine (*pah*). Others tell the stories of gods, ancestors, famous people and famous shamans. There are also *pye* that tell of shamanic journeys and about shrines and ancestors. Others are about evil spirits, witches, stars, luck, illness, death rituals and funerals.

The *pye* also describe the Tamu past and list all the places we travelled through on our migration from...
Mongolia. Some anthropologists refer to our *pye* as myths, but I do not think that this word is accurate as the *pye* contain historical facts.

**The route that we walked and the importance of place names**

I want to take the time to carefully explain the route that we took. It is important to me that readers should know all the names of the places that we passed and what these names mean. I also want to make it clear whether the names are modern spoken Tamu language (TK) or the ritual language which is only known to shamans like myself (CK).

We set out from my home village. In Nepali, the name of the village is Yāngjakot (Figs. 2.1 & 2.3), but we know it as Yōjku in my ritual language (CK). Villagers refer to the village as Yōjū which is an abbreviation of Yōjū. The toponym derives Yōjū from the words Yoja, which is a clan name of an ethnic group, and ku, meaning ‘nine’. It is thus the village where the nine Yoja brothers founded a village. The Nepali name Yāngjakot is derived from the indigenous term, and the suffix *kot* is clearly a term of Hindu provenance, likely from *kot* meaning ‘guardroom, prison, station’ and referring to the location that buffaloes are slain during the yearly ritual of Dasain. This Nepali term became common usage only after the rule of the Bhaise Chaubise Rājā (twenty-four kings).

Leaving Yōjku, we travelled on to Thāurõ, a word from my vernacular (TK) meaning ‘a species of inedible bead derived from a fruit’. It is believed that such beads were found in this place. From there, we journeyed on to Liduce, a place name which means ‘veranda of a house’ in my ritual language (CK), on account of the terraced landscape which is reminiscent of such a veranda. Thereafter, the path continues on to Čāsū, derived from the TK words *cū* ‘bridge’ and sū ‘mouth’, meaning ‘mouth of the bridge’ or more commonly ‘gate’. Thence we trekked up to Cyuhjyu Ple, which means ‘wet, damp and flat place’ in my ritual language (CK), and derives from *cyuhjyu* ‘wet, marshy’ and *ple* ‘flat’. As anyone knows who has visited this location, the name is fitting and requires no further explanation.

From Cyuhjyu Ple, we walked on to Kuniholdõ, a place whose name derives from the spoken Tamu words *kuni* ‘foot pestle’ and *holdõ* ‘mortar’. The hole in the ground is still present for all to see where grains were beaten so many years before. Thereafter we travelled on to a place with a most interesting name: Mār Chõlõ Chyāh. All of these three words derive from spoken Tamu (TK), with the following meanings: *mār* ‘gold’, *chõlõ* ‘putting shot’ and *chyāh* ‘to throw, take aim’. It is said that in this place, a man who visited once found a gold shot-put on the ground. Delighted with his find, he hid the gold orb in his backpack which he then hung on a tree for safe-keeping while he went to collect wood. On returning to the tree, with a full bundle of kindling, the pack had disappeared and no matter how hard he tried, he never found it back. This is how this place came by its name.

Leaving Mār Chõlõ Chyāh, we walked on to a place known as Sōgyāpũh Koyā. It is not commonly known that this place name is a mixture of ritual language and everyday vernacular: *sōgyāpũh* means ‘junction’ or ‘crossroads’ in CK, while *koyā* is a vernacular Tamu place name. This is an important junction as several paths meet here with routes leading to different villages. People walking through can bring diseases or evil spirits with them and sometimes witches pass by; so we bunch together a minimum of three and a maximum of nine thorny plants such as *palā* or *chutro*, and the eldest man — or a shaman if one is present — sweeps each person from head to toe as they leave the crossroads. This prevents bad spirits and illness following the travellers and causing trouble on the journey. At any rate, the road splits at Sōgyāpũh Koyā, which in part explains the toponym. Soon after, we reached Krasa Nēḥ, another location whose name is a mixture of two languages. *Krasa* is the term for the purification ritual which a daughter conducts for her parents in the ritual language (CK), while *nēḥ* is a ‘resting place along the path’ in vernacular Tamu (TK).

Close to this area is a stone memorial to a hunting dog. In the past, hunting was a very important activity and hunting dogs were much loved. One day a hunting dog died, and his owner was so upset that he decided to bury him on the trail instead of bringing him back to the village. This way he could see his memorial and remember him when he walked along the path to and from hunting.

After a total of six hours walking, we ended our first day of trek in Sa Pu Cyo, a place name with the following etymological components: *sa* ‘clay’ (CK), *pu* ‘pottery’ (CK) and *cyo* ‘hanging’ (TK). It is said that in our history, the Tamu people populated this place and produced various forms of hanging clay pottery from the local supplies of clay. The toponym derives from this activity.

The second day started with a brisk walk to Köhkyā, a place name which is made up of two vernacular elements *kōh* ‘upper’ and *kyā* ‘path’, (both TK), and whose name is indicative of which path we took. After leaving Köhkyā, we ascended to Dōth Kharka, in which *Dōth* is a proper name in vernacular Tamu and *kharka* means ‘land around a village, pasture’ in Nepali. The name relates to the arable land in this loca-
tion. From Dõth Kharka we continued on to Krapu Pro
and thereafter onwards to Krapu itself, a total of four
hours walk from Sa Pu Cyo. Krapu is a proper name
in spoken Tamu (TK), while pro means ‘steep ridge’ in
the same language. The path closely follows a ridge
and then evens out at Krapu. Krapu is the highest
peak in the area and at Krapu Deurālī, which is a kind
of ‘gateway’ between the village and the wilderness,
we prayed to the local gods and placed flowers on
the stone offering place to ask them to help make our
journey a success. On our return, we gave thanks for
a safe journey and another flower offering. Deurālīs
are always positioned in the middle of the path and
when going out, people pass on the left side and when
returning, they pass on the right side.

The next location we reached is called Kudami
coh Lhidĩ, a toponym based on words from both ritual
and vernacular Tamu. Kudami coh means ‘sternum or
top of a ridge’ in vernacular Tamu while a lhidĩ is a
bamboo tent rather like a yurt in my ritual language
(CK). This name refers to two sides of the path: one
side resembles a ridge while the other has the charac-
teristics of a temporary shelter. As this place is shaped
like a breastbone, we say that a heart is housed inside,
and we believe that if you go to the top of the peak and
make an offering and pray, your sai or ‘heart-mind’
(TK) will become very strong.

Thereafter we came to Sĩyõ Kharka, known for
its plentiful stocks of firewood. In the vernacular
Tamu language, sĩ means ‘firewood’ and yo indicates
availability, while kharka means ‘land around a village,
pasture’ in Nepali. From Sĩyõ Kharka we moved on to
Kowār Kharka, and then Phulu Kharka. Kowār, in the
vernacular language, is a type of round bowl and the
toponym Kowār Kharka describes the round pasture
land in this area. In the ritual language (CK), phulu has
the meaning ‘pleasant’ or ‘good’, and Phulu Kharka is
indeed an excellent patch of land for farming.

We left the three kharkas behind us and continued
on to Khūidō Toh which is invariably cold, as its
name would suggest: in the ritual language known
to shamans, khūidō means ‘cold, freezing’ while toh
means ‘village’. We spent the night in Khūidō Toh,
only moving on to Kye Pal Ti Nêh the next morning.
This is a very important location and a very interest-
ing place name. In the ritual language (CK) as well as
in the vernacular (TK), klye refers to the Ghale ruler,
while pahl means ‘foot, leg’ in vernacular Tamu (TK),
ti means ‘to kill’ and nêh is a ‘resting place’. In Tamu
history, this location is known to be the place where
the Klye Mru (Ghale Rājā) was chased by villagers,
chopped in the leg and felled. There is an interesting
variation in the name, which also reflects a different
ending to the story of the Klye. The Lamjung Tamu
refer to the place as Klye Pal Ti Nêh ‘the resting place
where the Klye was chopped in the leg and killed’,
while the Yāngjakot people use the toponym Klye Pal
Tu Nêh ‘the resting place where the Klye was chopped
in the leg and wounded.’

Leaving Kye Pal Ti Nêh, we moved on to Chyo-
msyo Yosi, a toponym derived from the ritual (CK)
word chuomsyo ‘nun’ and the vernacular (TK) word
yosi meaning ‘long nail’, on account of the land being
so long, angular and thin in this place. Above Chyo-
msyo Yosi lie Cômrô Toh and Cômrô Nêh. Cômrô is
derived from Tamu ritual language cõ ‘distant or high
place’ and ro ‘to see’, while toh means ‘village’ and nêh
is a ‘resting place’ in the vernacular. These places are
so called on account of the long vistas.

After leaving Cômrô Toh and Cômrô Nêh, we
continued on to Ngoy Plã Ngoyh. This complicated
place name is made up of three elements of vernacular
Tamu: ngoyi ‘traditional woman’s dress’, plã ‘to wash
by beating’ and ngoyh ‘lake, pond’. It is told that this
location was used our foremothers in the Kromchāi
clan to wash their soiled clothes after giving birth. On
account of the blood pollution, Kromchāi clan mem-
bers may still not drink the water. As a Kromchāi clan
member, visiting this location was very powerful for
me. Slightly above Ngoy Plã Ngoyh lies Cikrê Toh,
Cikrê being a proper name and toh meaning ‘village’.
This place was originally inhabited solely by members
of the Kromchāi clan, which explains why their wom-
enfolk would wash their clothes in the lake below.

Moving on from Cikrê Toh, we came to Põmrõ
Hâju Toh and Põmrõ Hâju Nêh. Põmrõ Hâju is simply
the proper name of this settlement which lies essen-
tially opposite Kohla, although separated by a river.
This village was once a Tamu settlement of mixed
clans. After Põmrõ Hâju, we came to Taprõ Toh and
Taprõ Kharka. Taprõ means ‘crow’ in the ritual lan-
guage (CK), so the place names could be translated
as ‘Crow Village’ and ‘Crow Pasture’ respectively.
From there we moved on to Mihjãĩ Toh, a village
by the name of Mihjãĩ, and thereafter Ladâ Lîdã Nyogh, a
pond or lake called Ladâ Lîdã. This then lead to Nyogh
Kôh, a pond or lake shaped like a kôh, a ‘backbone,
spine’ in the vernacular Tamu language. At the next
stop, Sa Pu Nêh, there is a fork in the path, one of
which leads to Kohla. The place name Sa Pu Nêh
derives from the ritual terms sa ‘earth’, pu ‘pottery’ and
the vernacular nêh meaning ‘resting place’. It is said
that people used to make clay and earthenware pottery
there. Soon thereafter we reached Kohla Sômpré Toh,
the destination of our journey. Kohla is the place name,
sômpré is made up of the elements sô ‘three’ and pre
‘part’, while toh means ‘village’. The combined mean-
ing is thus ‘the village of Kohla in three parts’. 35
Leaving Kohla, we travelled to Kokar Kharka in which Kokar is a place name in our ritual language (CK) and kharka is the Nepali word for ‘pasture’. Thereafter we walked on to Naudi Pakh, a term derived from Tamu ritual language naudi ‘steep, uphill’ and from Nepali pākho ‘side, hillside, land’, and from there on to the steep pasture land at Naudi Nēh. From Naudi we made our way on to Sāurō Kharka, Sāurō being a proper name in the ritual Tamu language (CK) and kharka meaning ‘pasture’ in Nepali. Soon after Sāurō we came to Nghedku Nēh, a toponym derived from the term nghedku in our ritual language meaning ‘plentiful milk, fertile’ on account of the excellent pasture in the area.

We arrived in Sāurō Syō on Tuesday, July 24, 1990. This place derives its name from its first settler, a Tamu by the name of Sāurō. Syō means ‘river’ in the ritual language (CK), and true enough there is a stream which runs through the land. The following place we came to is named Kane Kō, two words in our ritual language which refer to the outstretched body of a large animal lifting or arching its back. The hill is so named because it has the form of such an animal. From there we travelled on to Talle Coh, derived from talle ‘sharp, long, fine, pointed’ in the ritual Tamu language and coh meaning ‘ending, summit’ in the vernacular (TK). This place name accurately reflects the topography in this place, and it is plain for all to see why our ancestors named the place Talle Coh.

From there, we walked on to Kudrē which means ‘winding hill’ in our ritual language, and then onto Khēbi which carries the meaning of ‘den or resting place for wild animals, a territory occupied by wild animals who roam.’ From Khēbi we moved onwards to Khē U, so named because it refers to a nest or resting place for wild birds in our secret ritual language (CK). From the wild territories, the path levelled out in Khudi Kharka, in which khudi means ‘flat river bank along the source of a river’ and kharka is a borrowed word from Nepali meaning ‘pasture land’. We then turned uphill once again to reach Sargē, a toponym meaning ‘a steep uphill or winding path to a summit’ which perfectly described the path we took. After Sargē we came to Puhruj Nēh which derives its name from puhruj meaning ‘holy, pure, sacred’ in our ritual language and nēh meaning ‘resting place’ in Tamu vernacular. Leaving Puhruj we came to Pagrē, the name of a very powerful ancestor spirit after which the hill has been named. Leaving Pagrē we came to Thurchu, a rather even pasture whose name fittingly means ‘flat place’ in our ritual language. The last part of our journey led us from Thurchu to Homa Nghairu Nghoy which is now a place of pilgrimage for Hindus and known in Nepali as Dudh Pokhari. In our ritual language, homa is a holy word or mantra, nghairu means ‘white, milky water’ while nghoy is a ‘pond’ in the Tamu vernacular. This ‘holy pond of milky water’ is so named on account of the consistency of the lake and is a very spiritual place.

My own thoughts on reaching Kohla
I was naturally very proud and excited to locate all these places and to see them with my own eyes. Our pye describe the landscapes of different areas, but I didn’t know exactly where these places were. Before my father Pachyu Parsing passed away, he and I had many discussions about the landscape mentioned in the pye. While I visited these places spiritually, I had never seen them physically and so I wondered if these places really existed and also in the order that we chant them. Because of my doubts, my father suggested that I travel into the mountains to try to find them. Each evening after we set up camp we sat around the fire discussing the match between the pye and the landscape. It was very interesting for us: while Buddhimān knew the landscape, he didn’t know the pye, and while I knew the pye, I didn’t know the landscape. Putting them together was really exciting and I was very impressed. I had studied the pye for 25 years, since I was a young boy, and had often argued with my father as I had strong doubts about whether these places actually existed. Now I could finally say that I had seen them for myself.

It was particularly important and meaningful for me to visit the villages from which my own clan ancestors had migrated, and it gave me an excited chill inside to think that I may have been the first person from my clan to touch the places that we shamans chant about in our rituals. Finding Kohla also gave me more respect and appreciation for my father and what he taught me, and his unwavering belief that these ancestral villages existed on our plane and not in the heavens. Aside from the existence of Kohla, it was amazing to find all these ruined villages, to walk through what I think English people might call the ‘sacred geography’ of the past, and to see the layout of the whole region. It is natural that the finding of Kohla should be given some priority given all the incidents narrated in our history which deal with the place and the historical importance and prominence of the then Klye chieftain, but we also uncovered many other villages which we should investigate. The pye which I chant mentions 80 habitations in Kohla at that time, and the village ruins that we found were quite substantial with some surrounding land, indicating a large settlement. Since visiting Kohla, many people have asked me whether I felt as if I was on a pilgrim-
Buddhimān, then 60 years old, insisted on bathing in the freezing lake three times to purify and cleanse himself. I knew what to do, but Khorā wasn’t and was quite afraid. Buddhimān, had thoughtfully brought some fuel to make a fire and burn some incense. Our guide, a shaman, he was accepted by the main god during the journey, even though Bālā Singh was not. Working out the pattern of the settlements was not always easy since shepherds had more or less destroyed what was left of the settlements for useable resources such as firewood, stone or larger rocks. On trek, I and others in the party would attempt to get in touch with ancestors in our dreams. Many ancestors spoke to members of the group in our dreams, pointing us in the directions of their graves, but we never actually found the specific locations of graves.

Both Bālā Singh and I often went into trance during the journey, even though Bālā Singh was not a shaman, he was accepted by the main god Pakrai who entered his body and made him go into trance. In such cases, we felt that the best thing to do would be to make a fire and burn some incense. Our guide, Buddhimān, had thoughtfully brought some fuel with him in case I should go into trance in a remote location where wood was hard to find or when it was too wet or windy to make a fire. By the time that we reached Homa Nghāīru Nghoň, Bālā Singh and I were in trance. Buddhimān was used to seeing trance and knew what to do, but Khorā wasn’t and was quite afraid. Buddhimān, then 60 years old, insisted on bathing in the freezing lake three times to purify and cleanse himself.

Going up the mountain and going back in time
In certain ways, going up the mountain was equivalent to going back in time. This was primarily on account of the practicalities of the travel and the hardship of the journey. While quite used to living without comforts, it was an adventure to sleep in caves and have to search for firewood to cook our meals. All of us in the group marvelled at how our ancestors could have survived, and even flourished, in such a place. Every time that we came to a new settlement, the first thing that we thought of was where the graves of our ancestors might lie. I would often stop and meditate on the locations of such graves and also try to find some connections to the bodies of individual forefathers. Working out the pattern of the settlements was not always easy since shepherds had more or less destroyed what was left of the settlements for useable resources such as firewood, stone or larger rocks. On trek, I and others in the party would attempt to get in touch with ancestors in our dreams. Many ancestors spoke to members of the group in our dreams, pointing us in the directions of their graves, but we never actually found the specific locations of graves.

Both Bālā Singh and I often went into trance during the journey, even though Bālā Singh was not a shaman, he was accepted by the main god Pakrai who entered his body and made him go into trance. In such cases, we felt that the best thing to do would be to make a fire and burn some incense. Our guide, Buddhimān, had thoughtfully brought some fuel with him in case I should go into trance in a remote location where wood was hard to find or when it was too wet or windy to make a fire. By the time that we reached Homa Nghāīru Nghoň, Bālā Singh and I were in trance. Buddhimān was used to seeing trance and knew what to do, but Khorā wasn’t and was quite afraid. Buddhimān, then 60 years old, insisted on bathing in the freezing lake three times to purify and cleanse himself.

My relationship to archaeological knowledge
Over the years, the Tamu people have met and worked with many anthropologists, but not with archaeologists. On returning to Pokhara after visiting Kohla, we started having meetings with other Tamu who were also interested in our history, religion and culture. In Kārtik 2047 (October–November 1990), we founded an official organization to study Tamu cultural traditions and our indigenous shamanic religion, the pye-tā Lhu-tā. Almost all of the founding members are ex-Gurkha soldiers and officers. Our organization is called Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh (TPLS). All Tamu-mai are welcome to become involved in TPLS and help us study and preserve our cultural traditions, language and indigenous religion which are now endangered. The study of shamanic history is also very important as it tells us that there are no ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ clans among the Tamu-mai. Nowadays, many people, especially the young, thankfully no longer accept these old ideas that have caused such problems in our society.

Some months after we founded TPLS, we met Judy Pettigrew, a social anthropologist, who was a student of Professor Alan Macfarlane at the University of Cambridge. At that time, Judy was doing research for her PhD on Tamu cultural traditions.

In August 1992, TPLS organized a trip through the districts of Kāski, Lamjung, Manāng and Mustāng to discover if the places listed in the pye existed in the geographical landscape. The first part of the journey retraced the downward migration route of the Tamu-mai with the overlapping upward ritual journey route along which shamans guide the souls of the dead in the pai laba death ritual. We wanted to travel the entire length of both routes, but for practical and financial reasons it was only possible to trace those sections of the journeys that lie within the districts of Kāski, Lamjung and Manāng. The ritual journeys of shamans from different villages merge in the high pastures of Thurchu.

Prior to Thurchu, shamans from different villages have their own routes. As on our previous journey, we followed the route of the shamans from the village of Yāngjakot. At a point on the trail known as Māijyu Deurāli, where the soul journey goes up and over the large rock at Oble, we continued following the downward migration trail which overlaps with the landscape referred to in several different pye.

Of all the journeys I have been on, this was the greatest as we found many ancestral settlements and each time a place was mentioned in the pye it was there in the land. We were a large group so many people had a chance to see the correspondence between the landscape and the pye, and this delighted me. At Kohla I video-taped a conversation between Judy and TPLS treasurer Major Hom Bahādur Tamu during which
Hom Bahādur said that he thought we should get people to come to Kohla to dig it up and put the proof in the kohĩbo, our Tamu cultural and social centre in Pokhara. Judy suggested that if anyone was going to dig things up then there should be archaeologists involved, as they are the experts in doing this kind of work. When I heard her talking about developing a research project and getting archaeologists to work with us it felt like a dream, as previously I had no idea how we could involve archaeologists as I had never heard of such people before. Amazingly, this was a dream which came true!

This was actually my first visit to the settlement of Kohla as on our previous trip we hadn’t quite reached it. I was naturally very excited to finally see such a famous place. At all the important places on our journey, the klehbrĩ shaman and I chanted our respective pye referring to the specific location we were in. At Kohla I couldn’t chant as I was hyper-sensitive and could hardly even touch the stones without shaking and getting other pre-trance sensations.

I really didn’t know anything about archaeology, what it was, how it worked or what kinds of information archaeologists collect, before I met Chris Evans. I had a sneaking suspicion that archaeology had something to do with baking breads in large ovens. Perhaps they bake their ‘data’ in large ovens! In my opinion, and this is only my perspective, archaeologists are looking for proof and evidence while anthropologists are more on the look out for stories, tales and history. I see archaeology as studying facts, and anthropology as studying ideas and memories. Scientifically, then, it strikes me that archaeologists are more rigorous in their methods. Since they don’t ask living people any questions, they are not so often deluded by their local ‘guides’. Anthropologists, on the other hand, are far more contingent on their guides and can only represent what people tell them. Archaeology is therefore more likely to be truthful. But there is another side to this also: while anthropologists have to be smarter and more critical to be able to differentiate between truth and lies, archaeologists can just rely on their machines to sort out the wheat from the chaff for them, as they just have to collect the facts. While archaeology is more scientific, I think that you have to be smarter to be a really good anthropologist.

This is how archaeologists follow leads, find data and form their ideas: they work methodically, step by step, formulating ideas, opinions and thoughts, and they test them out at every point along the way. This is not how shamans work. Shamans, like me, just know things. We believe things since they are written in our texts, and more often than not, we are proven right. Archaeologists are particularly helpful and useful in uncovering and understanding small things such as pottery shards and pieces of necklaces. When we find them, we simply have no idea what they are, but archaeologists can read such kinds of data far more accurately than shamans can. In fact, archaeologists and anthropologists are pretty similar, like related cousins really. The only difference is that anthropologists can write what and when they want, but archaeologists have to find things first before they can write about them.

Archaeologists are not always satisfied with my historical accounts and the stories in my ritual texts. They find them interesting, but as they are proper scientists, they can’t just trust my oral history about how many houses there are in Kohla, for example. Well, I told them that there would be 80 habitations in Kohla, but they found more than one hundred. So my aim was right, but they ended up excavating more details than my texts had told me. There are other examples of the difference in approach between my kind of knowledge and that of archaeologists. One particularly interesting example was when they found some rocks in a cluster and then some human bones nearby. When I asked the archaeologists what they had found, they thought that it might be a cemetery. I disagreed since I know that we Tamu people do not bury people within the boundary of a village, but rather outside of a settlement in a northerly direction, as this is the direction of heaven. Then they thought that it might be a burial site for children, but still I disagreed since I know that we just don’t do that. I wanted to find the chogõ ‘cemetery’ so that we could locate the bones of our ancestors and offer them proper respect and make sure to not disturb them during our work. We searched every part of the village and the surrounding area but we were not able to find the chogõ. This puzzled me, but Chris felt that we were unlikely to find our ancestors bones, as there is so much acidity in the ground at Kohla and also lots of erosion. During the excavation season in 2000, the ancestors told me in a dream where they were buried and I found the cemetery hill, but large trees had grown on top of it and it was quite inaccessible. I took Chris to the location and he agreed that I might be right, but as they did not have time to excavate, I was not able to get actual proof. I was very disappointed not to get a physical reminder of the ancestors.

On Kohla expeditions, with one anthropologist and a team of archaeologists, my role was actually pretty minor. After all, I already had found my interest and calling, then anthropology found me, and together we found archaeology. I was the shaman — the holder of oral history — and I gave information whenever it was needed. Obviously, many of the things I know
are secret and I don’t give such information away. I make careful decisions about what information to make public, but too many shamans have taken their knowledge to their grave and then it is completely lost. To save our traditions and to help people learn more about our true history, nowadays it is important to share our knowledge. During Kohla project trips, I was also a kind of co-ordinator or manager, making links between people, keeping everyone happy, explaining to villagers what we were doing and why. In the army we would call this job a quartermaster. This is not a very glorious role, but it is an important one, since I helped to make things happen.

On our archaeological trip, the first thing that I did when we arrived at a location was to burn prunai ‘herbs’ to the local sildo naldo ‘god of the area’ and to the khe-ma ‘ancestors’ to let them know that we respected them and also to ask their permission to do our research in their area. The first time we visited Kohla was during the monsoon and because the grass was so high, it was difficult to see clearly. When we re-visited, I immediately saw um-ta-te, the very large stone from which the village caller would send out his messages. Um-ta-te is mentioned in the pye. Nearby there was a small rock cave where we found the body of a dead cow. Chris thought that this was a shrine as he felt that the space was laid out in a formal manner as one would expect in a ritual place. He thought that maybe the cow had been sacrificed. I don’t believe that it is a shrine. The dead animal must have been old and not able to keep up with the others, so the cow herders probably left it in the cave with grass and water and that’s where it died. On the 1992 visit, at one of the other places that Chris called a ‘shrine’, I started having pre-trance shakes. I believe that this place must have been the house of a pachyu shaman. I agree with Chris that the place on the other side of the village is indeed a shrine.

En route to Kohla during the 1992 TPLS trip and the Kohla project survey in 1994, we hit a very bad hail storm, and on both occasions I conducted a ritual to control the weather. It hailed because we made too much noise and disturbed the ancestors and the locality gods. They are sensitive and you shouldn’t speak loudly in the uplands. In 1992, the gods were angry because a TPLS colleague and I had an argument about Tamu history, and in 1994 our large team of porters were noisy and made the place dirty. After that I spoke to the porters and told them to be quieter and to be especially careful about where they went to the toilet. I also spoke to the ancestors and the locality gods and asked them to excuse us if we had done something wrong and I explained to the ancestors that we were coming to learn more about their lives and the places in which they lived, and in this manner I asked for their protection and assistance.

During our trips to Kohla, I spent a lot of time alone in the forest. When I was on my own, I ran with the locality gods and with other jungle spirits. They beckoned me with their secret calls and I followed them. I ran all over the jungle with them but I never got lost as they always brought me back safely to where I started. When I run with spirits I get a special kind of energy and I feel very good. This energy helps me afterwards when I am doing healing rituals. Above Kohla is a long flat piece of ground where our ancestors used to race horses. Several times, I ran with the spirits in this area. I found a tree that had been split by lightning. I gathered wood from this tree as it is especially good for making tools such as the weaving implements that women use. If you keep a piece of wood from a tree like this in your home, your house will be protected against lightning. I also took some of the bark of the tree as it can be used as a medicinal herb and also for making amulets.

During our survey trip to Kohla, my father told me in a dream that before we started excavating, we must sacrifice a goat and present it to the ancestors and the locality gods. He told me that if we did this, then we could excavate the village without problems. So when we returned in 2000 to excavate, we brought a goat with us and sacrificed it on the first morning of work before we started digging. There was also a visiting shaman present on that day and we both chanted after the sacrifice and before the work began. Because of this, I believe that our work was successful and we didn’t experience any problems.

In terms of what the archaeologists actually did, I am happy with their findings. They worked hard even though the conditions were difficult, and did their dating on two objects. I do think, however, that we should not stop here but continue to dig deeper since this is where older artefacts are likely to be preserved. After all, they only excavated in one place, in the centre of the village, and very little is still known about the outlying villages. The charcoal which they found was tested and found to be around 1000 to 1200 years old. I believe the settlements in the area to be much older, perhaps between 1600 to 1900 years old. I have my own scientific reasons for believing this, which I explained to the archaeologists when they asked me for my opinion on the dates. My father told me that the texts of the Tamu people predate our civilization and our establishment as a stable and unique ethnic group. These sacred texts existed before letters and writing were invented, when the Tamu people were still living like wild men in the jungle. There are trees in Kohla which are most likely more than 1000 years
old. I believe that these trees would only have been planted, or sprung up, after humans settled there. The humans settled there before the trees, so the site is surely older than the dating shows.

I would like to return to Kohla from time to time, as it is a very important place both spiritually and historically. We need to do further archaeological research but given the present political situation and the activities of the Maoists, this is impossible. In the future, I do hope that the Kohla project will resume. We need to talk to Tamu people about what should be done with Kohla. It could become a site for pilgrimage, or even a healing centre as it is an area where many and varied verbs are grown. The future of Kohla is for all Tamu people to decide and it will be important to have consultations with as many of our community as possible.

**The nature of recording: a glimpse into a shaman’s diary**

In my field log book or diary, I wrote down an exhaustive account of each and every day: what time I got up, when I left the tent, how long we walked, what problems we encountered and whether I conducted protection rituals for the group in cases of high risk or danger. While I was writing this down, others were recording the situation with a video camera. I noted down the things that happened, such as the big hail storm which threatened to slow us down. For us to continue, the hail storm had to stop, so I conducted another ritual for this.

I wrote down all of these events and wrote about how they affected me and the efficacy of the expedition. There was another added danger: since we might be walking on decomposed bodies and perhaps even digging near the bones of the ancestors, they could have reason to be angry with us. I had to pacify the spirits and explain what we were doing and why, and part of this meant burning herbs in the evenings and praying. I simply had to inform the ancestors that we were coming and that we meant them no harm and no disrespect, and whenever I conducted a ritual of this sort, I noted it down in my book. Other times, during discussions between the archaeologists and the village elders, I took notes on how they presented their views. Often I would make an effort to meet with the village elders and headmen of the places we came through in order to explain what we were doing and to reassure them that the foreigners were not tourists but researchers, and were conducting important work. Sometimes these discussions took the form of lectures or little speeches, and I would often make some notes in my book beforehand to make sure that the event went smoothly and to ensure that I didn’t forget to mention any important points.

Another topic on which I took notes on was the health of the group. If people got ill, which they did, I would write down what they were feeling, what they were eating and also try and keep an eye on their physical and mental state. I was very concerned about the food, both in terms of making sure that our group members were eating enough and also checking that what we were eating was healthy and clean. My occupation with the health of the group concerned all members: from the foreign archaeologists to the porters whom we had hired. All of this writing about the daily routine of our group meant that my note books read more like a trip log than a research diary. I didn’t usually write down much about the research itself, although if there were particularly interesting finds or events I would jot those down. My part of the scientific documentation project was using the video camera to capture the moments on film. The archaeologists were less interested in the video than I expected them to be, but then I suppose they have their own way of recording facts. For me, the video camera was a way of setting in stone the reality of what we saw, and showing others the footage means that no-one can ever say that it was different. I take video footage and photographs in the way that I like, and use the images as visual proof in a way similar to the way that archaeologists use the finds that they dig up from the ground. When people later ask the archaeologists what they did, Chris and his team can show them the bits of broken things which they found and this counts as their proof. When my villagers and community ask me what I did on this project and what we found, I want to be able to show them the video proof. Taking a camera, tape and batteries along was not the archaeologist’s idea, it was Judy’s and my idea and this should be seen as a contribution that I made towards the scientific documentation of what we did. The first video camera belonged to Judy and the second one belonged to my brother while the still camera was my own. Archaeological photography is very different to how I take photos. Archaeologists measure things and use photography only as a tool for their science, while I use photography and video both as a way to document a scientific proof and also for my own personal reasons, to record where we went and how. Dates and places are very important to me.

**On anthropological responsibility to the community**

Many PhD degrees have been granted to foreign scholars, many of them anthropologists, who have worked with the Tamu communities of Nepal. While these people then call themselves Doctor, we Tamu cannot say that we benefit in practical ways from their knowledge and few, if any, of the scholars have
Figure 2.4. Yarjung’s depiction of the migration route of the Tamu-mai (part I; southern length): 1) Yangjakot; 2) Kohla (with enlarged inset lower right); 3) Thurchu.
Figure 2.5. Yarjung’s depiction of the migration route of the Tamu-mai (part II; northern length with origin of world lower right-end): 1) Chame; 2) Whowaple/Oble; 3–4) Lines 85–101 of the pye referring to ‘countries’ or ‘homelands’; 5) Kai Patiye, Line 39 (‘Kai Pati Toh’).
worked really collaboratively. Judy Pettigrew is the first anthropologist to have listened to what the community wanted and worked in an equal way with local people to help them get what they wanted: in this case, we wanted the archaeologists. You see, we Tamu had no idea where to find these archaeologists but Judy did, and she brought them to us. This is a point which must not be forgotten.

Some of my scientific findings

The full name of the village we reached is Kohla Šô Pre, and this has an interesting and important local meaning in my language. Šô means ‘three’ while pre means ‘part, division’, thus the full meaning of Kohla Šô Pre is ‘Kohla of the three parts’. The archaeologists gave these parts the names KI, KII and KIII. But what is the meaning of these parts? To this day, there are little streams which separate the three parts of the village, and this may give us some indication as to what once happened there. In fact, the text of the Tamu pye tells me the meaning:

Ha Ha Kohla Šôpre Tohmiyā Suji Cûmaiba?
Ha Ha Yojá Kohl Lemmaï Nohmaï Khemaiji Kohla Cûmaiba!

Question: Who founded the village of Kohla?
Answer: The founders of Kohla are the ancestors of the three clans known as Yoja, Kohl and Lemmai!

The story that I know goes like this: the three ancestors did not each settle one section of the village, as many people think, but rather settled and lived together at the beginning. They happened upon the location of Kohla one day when hunting, and they chased a deer into the clearing which is the present site of Kohla. As they entered, they witnessed the fantastic location and decided to settle there after killing the deer. The hunters had carried some grain with them in their quivers, which they immediately planted at Kohla. They reasoned that if it sprouted and did well, then the location was habitable and fertile. Next year, when they returned to see how their crops had grown, they found a herd of animals eating the succulent crops. Realizing that the land was fertile, they decided to live there and promptly set off to call their families and villagers who were living higher up the mountain at Rabrô Toh above Kohla. Kohla is known as ‘the three villages’ on account of the many people who came to settle there after our ancestors first moved there. The settlement soon became so large that it had to be divided into three sub-divisions. Many people think that Kohla is the first place that our ancestors all lived together, but the reality is really the opposite. Kohla is actually the last village at which all our ancestors were gathered together in one place and is the final village on our historical migration route. Our ancestors had been living together for a very long time before they all moved to the fertile lands of Kohla. This is why I believe that Kohla may be much ‘younger’ from an archaeological perspective than other ruins of villages higher up the mountain from which our ancestors migrated.

To be quite clear, the first settlement in the whole area for the ancestors of all the Tamu people was Có or Úcô Hyul. When our ancestors were here, they were not known as Tamu or Gurung but rather as mihnāku, a term which has no meaning to my knowledge. (According to Turin, the first element of this interesting ethnonym, mih, may be a reflex of the well-attested Tibeto-Burman lexical item mi ‘man, person, human’. Moreover, it is worth noting that a settlement north of Kangding, in dkar mdzes/Ganzi prefecture in Tibet, is known as ‘Mynak’, written Tibetan mi nyag. The area is known to be inhabited by nomads and agriculturalists, and is home to many Buddhist monasteries of the Sakya school which is also the sect overwhelmingly represented in Mustang gompas. Originally the home of speakers of the now extinct Tangut language, who were known as Minyag by the surrounding Tibetans, there are still some speakers in Mynak who speak a little-known Tibeto-Burman Qiangic language notable for its phonemic tone.) Only after our ancestors came down the hill and settled in Sa Pu Ti Kyhālsā did they come to be known as Tamu, through interbreeding with other people. There is a detailed explanation for this, all of which is mentioned in the pye, but some of it is secret. Only after our ancestors settled in Kohla, did they come to be known as Gurung. This name was given to the Tamu people by the local Hindus, who wanted some way to distinguish between their own Hindu gurus ‘learned one, teacher, religious practitioner’ and Tamu shamans, which they called Gurung.

The tale of the two sisters

One day, many years ago, two Tamu sisters were lying asleep together. At midnight, the elder sister called Kali Ghyāmu stood up and walked off in her sleep, got lost and turned into the Kāli River. In Nepal, this river is known as the Kāli Gandaki, while we Tamu still refer to it as Kali Syō because Kali Ghyāmu walked quietly and the river also moves silently. Anyway, in the early morning, the younger sister called Mharsyō Ghyāmu arose, noticed that her sister had gone, and crying copiously, set off to find her. As she ran, she made lots of noise and screamed loudly, and she turned into what the Nepali speakers call the Marsyangdi river, which in Tamu is known as Mharsyō Syō. This explains why the Kāli Gandaki is such a silent river, while the Marsy-
The story and origin of the Klye (Ghale)

The man popularly referred to as the Ghale Rājā ‘the Ghale king’ or ‘king of the Ghales’ was actually the bastard son of Guru Rinpoche and a nun. Guru Rinpoche was ashamed of having impregnated a nun, so he asked her to say nothing of this event to anyone else. The nun emerged pregnant from a long period of meditation, and when questioned about her state, she explained that a mouse had made two holes in the walls of the mountain cave in which she was meditating and that sunlight from one side and moonlight from the other shone on her stomach at the same time, causing her to become pregnant. To this day, the Klye’s ancestors are known to the ‘Tamu people as ‘sunbeams’ and ‘moonbeams.’

At the time of Kohla’s prominence, there were many other branches of Tamu peoples living in villages and settlements of a smaller size. The man known as the Ghale Rājā was not really a king—he was just the village leader in one of the places that Tamu people settled — and he quickly demanded their loyalty. In the Tamu ritual language (CK), the Ghale Rājā was first known as Kyālbu Ruju, then he became known as Kyālbu Krôh and finally as Klye Mrũ. The meanings are as follows: kyālbu is a clan name, ruju literally means ‘born’, but also has the metaphorical meaning of ‘someone who fights with others and shows his strength’, krôh means ‘leader, headman of a village’, while mrũ indicates someone who is a visionary and has foresight or who is a born leader.

Long before Kohla was settled, Klye Mrũ wanted to become king and leader of the area. The Tamus didn’t like him nor did they accept him as their undisputed leader, so they left the five villages of Lisõ Yhul in Manāng to settle in the primarily Ghale village of Maiju where they intermarried with the Ghale people. One day, there was a massive landslide in Maiju, after which the Tamu people were completely dispersed and settled in different places. The Klye Mrũ nevertheless demanded allegiance, and while most Tamu clans gave in and agreed, two or three clans resisted and were forced to leave the area to settle elsewhere. After Kohla was settled, the Klye Mrũ became angry since people were settling in and around Kohla and establishing new settlements without accepting his sovereignty of the region and also without clearing their movements with him first. The Klye Mrũ insisted that all the villagers pay tax to him in exchange for his permission to settle in the area. In Kohla, serious disagreements emerged between Tamu ancestors about whether or not to ally with the Klye Mrũ. The Tamu eventually got rid of the Klye Mrũ and in Klye Pal Ti Nēh, below Kohla, they chopped off his leg as described above.

The Klye Mrũ was the first king under whose control our ancestors came, and it was by no means a positive experience. Our Tamu people had leaders and headmen, but not kings, and the clans and social divisions in Tamu society predate the arrival of the Klye Mrũ. The fractions and tensions in our society date to the period of the rule of the Klye, and artificial divisions were created in Tamu society at this time causing tensions and disagreements which exist to the present day. We have the Klye Mrũ to thank for the tensions and divisions in Tamu society today. As a historical footnote, I should add that the Tamu people only came under the control of the kings of Kāski and Lamjung after the destruction of Kohla.

Lêmako Rõh Pye
Judith Pettigrew, Yarjung Kromchaï Tamu & Mark Turin

Lêmako Rõh Pye is chanted by the pachyu shamans in the sergu ritual on the third day of the pai laba death ritual and is part of the process of sending the dead to the Afterworld. It is a ‘question’ and ‘answer’ pye as the shamans form two groups with one group chanting the questions and the other the replies. Lêmako is one of the longest pye and differs from other texts in terms of topic and content. Most pye relate the story of specific local events and people. Lêmako, on the other hand, is an epic as it speaks of human and animal origins, the names of the places the Tamu-mai migrated through, deals with conquest, affiliation and resistance as well as recounting a series of events in Kohla and its environs.

Lêmako Rõh Pye is 509 lines long and can be subdivided into a series of different sections. Lines 1 to 15 are preparatory. They explain the significance of the pye, why it should be performed and what will happen if it isn’t. Whatever their topic, pye begin with the creation and origins of the main actors and the subsequent section recounts the creation of humans, a people called the minakuju, animals and birds.

In the following sequence, the minakuju look out over their locality and then they move (Figs. 2.4 & 2.5). There are no explanations as to what prompted them to relocate, although we are told that they moved in a southwards direction and that members of the group scattered out in different directions. At Kaipatiye, they changed their name and become mhinakugi, which according to Yarjung is because they split off from a larger group. Lines 42 to 79 recount the meeting with
a man named Nochani followed by a series of discussions regarding his origins, his ancestors, what food he ate, his physique and what work he did. He asked to stay with the mhinakugi, was given permission and married and had children. His children were named Lam, Lem and Kon and they were the ancestors of the present day Sōgi clans. At this point in Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye, the group became Tamu.

Line 80 marks the beginning of another series of migrations which took the Tamu-mai through a series of named but undescribed localities (see Fig. 2.5 above). By line 110 they had reached Muchhitachamgoye (Muktinath). In Upper Manāng (Lho Mantāng) they encountered a Tibetan king named Kamba Rājā. This meeting is not included in Yarjung’s version of Lēmakō Rōh Pye below, however, some pachyus have stories about this ruler. The Tamu-mai moved into present-day Manāng where they met the Klye (Ghale) chieftains who ruled the area. The biggest Tamu village in the area was Maiju where they lived for a long time as it is surrounded by good hunting forests. Following a landslide at Maiju (which is the place where the paths of humans and those of the dead separate), the pattern of reconnaissance and migration continued and they moved down towards Kohla. The Klye followed them, and on top of Ekrai Mountain (which is above the town of Chāme in Manāng) demanded that they subjugate themselves to him. Some clans agreed and remained behind but others did not and moved away.

Line 144 describes how some clansmen came across Kohla when they were hunting. Line 150 describes the founding of the village and the arrival of the Klye ruler. Lines 155 to 171 provide descriptions of the number of houses in the various villages in the wider area. In line 186, the Klye announces the introduction of taxes. The remainder of the pye (lines 187 to 492) deal with the story of Lēmakō, the chieftain’s assistant, who was appointed tax collector. The story chronicles the difficulties he faced when trying to collect taxes from his mother’s brother, his curse, his death, the incorrectly performed death rituals which led to his inability to reach the Afterworld, his subsequent redemption and the redoing of his death rituals which freed him from liminal purgatory and enabled him to reach the Afterworld (for a summary of this story see Pettigrew and Tamu 1999).

Lēmakō Rōh Pye, chanted on the third day of the three-day core ritual of Tamu life, the pai laba, serves as a reminder that the rituals of death cannot be performed without certain essential objects, the co-operation of kin and the performance of appropriately trained ritual specialists. The consequences for deviating from these prescriptions are severe as the deceased does not reach ‘heaven’ or become an ancestor. Rather, such deceased are trapped ‘betwixt and between’ the world of the dead and the living and between the human and animal form. Lēmakō Pye recounts the story of the beginning of taxation, how the social relations of hierarchy changed and how people resisted that change. Despite the emphasis on the importance of reciprocal kinship relationships, this pye also draws attention to individual agency as people sometimes go against what is believed to be the correct way to behave towards kin. Lēmakō was the last event that was made into a pye.

Interviews conducted in 2001 with 90 shamans confirmed the centrality and consistency of this text as they all have it in their repertoire. While some referred to the pye as Chyumi Huidu Pye, in all cases the story remains the same, although the perspective from which it is told may be different. In the version presented below, the story recounts the experiences of Lēmakō. When the pye is titled Chyumi Huidu, the emphasis is on the story of Lēmakō’s mother’s brother named Chyumi Huidu.

1. sula sumaye pye sele? pedã klhyemaiba
   Which pye to chant? Pedã Klihyemaiba

2. sula sumaye lhu sele? lhudã klhyemaiba
   Which lhu to chant? Lhudã Klihyemaiba

3. tamu hyalsa hyulsaye pye sele pedã klhyemaiba
   Let’s chant the pye about the Tamu countries

4. tamu hyalsa hyulsaye lhu sele lhudã klhyemaiba
   Let’s chant the lhuda about the Tamu countries

5. lēmakō rōhmaye pye sele pedã klhyemaiba
   Chant the pye of Lēmakō Rōh

6. lēmakō rōhmaye lhu sele lhudã klhyemaiba
   Chant the lhuda of Lēmakō Rōh

7. tamu hyalsa hyulsaye pye aasesyã khaiju tamoba?
   If we do not chant the pye about the Tamu countries, what will happen?

8. lēmakō rōhmaye lhu aasesyã khaiju tamoba?
   If we do not chant the lhu of Lēmakō Rōh, what will happen?

9. targi la nibai mhari tihrö chohlo aakhãbago
   We cannot reach Targi La Nibai Mhari Tihrö

---

1. This pye is owned by Pedã Klihyemaiba (a guru, teacher, master). Pedã refers to the chants.
2. Lhudã refers to the shamanic techniques, rules, guidelines, ways of behaving, being, concepts, etc.
3. Two of the many names for ‘heaven’ in Cõ Kyui.

Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

45
If we chant the pye about the Tamu countries, what will happen?

Can we reach Thori Nghaisõ?

Chant the pye of the Tamu countries

Chant the lhu of the Tamu countries

Chant the pye of Le ̃ makõ Rõh

Chant the lhu of Le ̃ makõ Rõh

Where were human beings created?

Humans were created in Krõngai

Created in Singai

Created in Tohngai

Created in Sangai

Where in Sangai?

Hyula is a Cõ Kyui word which is now also used in Tamu Kyui to mean ‘country’ or ‘homeland’, but in this context it means ‘locality’ or ‘territory’.

The country was inhabited by the Mhinakuju

The country was filled with humans

Trees and bushes filled with birds

What happened in Chõye country?

The country was inhabited by the Mhinakuju

They looked out from their village in Chõye country

They looked out from their location in Chõye country

What happened in Uĩ Chõ country?

East, west, south, north, the Mhinakuju spread out in all directions

What about the ancestors of the Mhinakuju?

They looked towards the south

They moved down to Kaĩ Patiye country

The Mhinakuji crossed rivers and travelled through different landscapes

They saw and moved down to Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye

Who did they meet at Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye?

They met Nochani Rõh

They asked him who his family was

They talked to him about his family

They talked to him about his family

They asked him who his family was

They talked to him about his family

They asked him who his family was

They talked to him about his family

Ple nghyo khamai refers to ‘reconnaissance’ and looking for another place to move to.

At Kaĩ Patiye, nine ancestors separated from the larger group, the Mhinakuju, and became the Mhinakuji.
Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

45 kyõmi khanai pachhai khalo, nochani rõhgo?
‘Where have you come from, Nochani Rõhgo?’

46 kyõmi khanai mha chhaiñ khalo, nochani rõhgo?
‘Where have you wandered from, Nochani Rõhgo?’

47 marô lôchhyobai tîlsa waşe ple nghyo khalo
‘I have come from the south’\(^{11}\)

48 kyõye khe mai mi khaïju nghegaïba
They walked about the ancestors

49 kyõye khemâmi sugo bhimaïba?
‘Who were your ancestors?’

50 thebse thebai khemi mayâm di goba
‘My most senior ancestor was Mayâm Di’

51 chahye prhirbaye khemi masâyâm di goba
‘Next was Masyâm Di’

52 chaye prhirbaye khemi paim nhâgyâ goba
‘Next was Paim Nhâgyâ’

53 chaye prhirbaye khemi paim thîrâyâ goba
‘Next was Paim Thîrâyâ’

54 chaye prhirbai khemi nharâba khorlo goba
‘Next was Nharâba Khorlogo’

55 nharâba khorloye chahnmi nochani rõh goba
‘Nharâba Khorloye’s son is Nochani’s Rõh’

56 nochani rõhmi ngasyo mhinakugimai
‘Mhinakugimai, I am Nochani’

57 kyõye chabai kâî jumi khaïju nghegai ba?
‘What food do you eat?’

58 kuhlû whamaye sâmî ngaye kâïgo ba
‘I can eat a whole goat or sheep in one go’

59 kuînõi kuboîye nhojumi ngaye khuîgo ba
‘I can drink a large pot of wine’

60 nhaujû whamaye riîjumi tîno primô ba
‘One of my ears reaches to the ground and I sleep on it’

61 nhaujû whamaye riîjumi neon primô ba
‘One of my ears covers me when I sleep’

62 kyõye kedê kejumi khaïju nghegai ba?
‘What kinds of things can you do?’

63 kaiîdu waîîi khabai palîrêi koîlo kdàmô ba
‘I can stop the monsoon streams which come from above’

64 kyoro waji khabai nhâmru ya koîlo kdâmôba
‘If a hurricane comes from below, I can stop it’

65 kyõye toh nîbâi sîrôrôde chhyöyöño pinôbâ
‘Let me stay in your village’

66 tîlle, ngîllë, sîlle plîlîlle, nhallë, nghachhyàbu timai ba
He stayed for one, two, three, four, five years

67 tullë, ngîllë, prîhllë, külë, kuchhyàbu timai ba
He stayed for six, seven, eight, nine years

68 ngerûbu têîhbu de kramo bhîmaî nochanirôhmi
Nochani said ‘I would like to marry’

69 ngerûbu têîhbu de kramo prînmai nochanirôhji
Nochani got married

70 ngerûbu krabai lîsöra khaïju tamaîba?
What happened after the marriage?

71 puhja puhuîaïde khamo prînmai nochani rûô la
Nochani had children

72 chahsö wamaîde khâmû prînmai nochanirîhû la
Nochani had three sons

73 lam, lem, kônîde khâmû prînmai ba
Lam, Lem and Kôn were born

74 khyapâï pîpîaîde tano prînmai sa-pu-ti kyhalsû ra
There was a pai at Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye

75 tagrâ hogrûde tano prîmai sa-pu-ti kyhalsû ra
There was an argument at Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye

76 kugi rûhmâye khêmàni ngîga kôòago
‘Can we join the Kugi ancestors?’

77 tamu wamaîde aata bisi tåjû chhômaîba
They had a meeting to decide ‘yes’ or ‘no’

78 tamu wamaîde tamu bisi tåjû solàjê
They discussed this at a meeting

79 sa-pu-ti kyhalsaye hyûlaïj tamu pû chhîyâmâi
From Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye they became Tamu

80 sa-pu-ti kyhalsaye hyûlaïj ple ngyo yuûmaî
They looked down from Sa-Pu-Ti Kyhalsaye

81 sjaîe, nhûjû, lôjë chhôjîe tamu pûyûm ai
East, west, south and north the Tamu-mai spread out

82 chhyöliô bhyôbà ye nhêni tådu kaiî ye hyûlarô chhyûjû je
They arrived in Chhyöliô Bhyôba country

83 khôsyalâ syôrû ple ngyoûju mai
They saw the river of Khôsyala and moved down

\(^{11}\) Nochani arrived from a place that was south of where the Mhinakugi were settled at that time.
Tamu people crossed many rivers and hills
They saw Rimyũwaye country and moved down
They saw La Tihũwaye country and moved down
Tamu people crossed many rivers and hills
They saw and moved down to Chhairiñ country
Tamu people crossed many rivers and hills
They saw and moved down to Sydõ Waye country
Tamu people crossed many rivers and hills
They saw Timyu Kreye country and moved down
They saw Chyõhgara Myaye country and moved down
Tamu people crossed many rivers and hills
They saw Muli village and Muli river and moved down
They saw and moved down to Muchhitra Chahmgõye
They saw Thĩni Kyhalsõ and moved down
They saw Thoye and moved down
They saw a river area
They saw Muchhitra Chahmgõ and moved down
They saw the area of Manõ
What happened in the area of Manõ?
Uiñ Sõye country had a Tibetan king
The low country had a Klye king
In Manõ there was an argument

84. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
85. riũmyũwaye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
86. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
87. la tihũwaye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
88. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
89. chhairiñ waye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
90. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
91. sydõ waye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
92. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
93. timyu kreye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
94. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
95. chyõhgara myaye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
96. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
97. lam myabai hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
98. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
99. phreduñ waye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
100. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
101. layutiye hyularõ ple nghyooyu mai
102. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
103. sisarangi ni thõsara kyurõ ple nghyooyu mai
104. polusa polunghyorõ ple nghyooyu mai
105. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
106. rhuni toh rhunisyõra ple nghyooyu mai
107. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
108. muli tõhnibai mulisyõra ple nghyooyu mai
109. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
110. muchhitra chahmgõye tohrõ ple nghyooyu mai
111. kohñri syõride tho yumai tamu rohũmai mi
112. thĩni kyhalsõye hyulami ple mrõkha mai
113. thĩni kyhalsõye hyulami ple nghyooyu mai
114. thoye hyalsa hyulsa waji ple mrõkha mai
115. thoe hyalsa hyulsa waji ple nghyooyu mai
116. syõge hyalsa hyulsa waji ple mrõkha mai
117. muchhitra chahmgõ waji ple nghyooya mai
118. manõ hyalsa hyulsa ple mrõkha mai
119. manõ hyulañe tohrõmi khaíju tamaiba?
120. uiñ sõye hyulara paihju mrũũ tamaiba
121. lisõye hyulara klyeju mrũũ tama
122. tagrã hogrã de tano priñmai manõ hyulara

12. Present-day Muktināth.
13. Present-day Thāk Kholā.
14. Present-day Manāng.
15. Present-day Lho Mantāng.
Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

mhina kumaiye khemaimi charô chohyu mai
The Mhinakuji ancestors arrived

mhina kumai chohbai tisôra khaiju tamai ba?
What happened after the Mhinakuji ancestors arrived?

klyejuwhamaye rujuri mruñ tadimai ba
The Klye became king

prahaaga, nghawala, kyuruwe tohmayi ya charô tadimai
There he founded the villages of Prahâga, Nghawala and Kyuru

tagrã hogrãde tano prîmai manõ hyulara
In Manô there was an argument

manõ hyalsa hyulsaye tohwaji ple nghyokha mai
He looked out from Manô

maiju whamaye hyularô ple mrôgyu mai
He saw and moved down to Maiju country

toh nibaisyôa chyônô prîmaiaba
He made a village

maiju whamaye hyularô khaiju tamaiba?
What happened in Maiju country?

tyudâ tyuijuji myarno priñmai maiju hyulami +++
A landslide covered Maiju country +++

lhaju phrebai hyula tano prñimai maiju hyula mi
At Maiju the routes separated

maiju whamaye hyulaji ple nghyokha mai
Looking out from Maiju and moving down

tara yekre ye lhôını khaiju tamaiba?
What happened on top of Ekrai?

klyeju mruñmi charô chohdi mai
The Klye king was there

yuını tâteîye chohrômi pahîju theiniai ba
He planted his feet wide apart on two stones on the path

ngaju koînîye mhi mâimi khoji kyulyado
‘Those who accept me, pass between my legs’

krômchhaiî, mhauchhaiî, kyapchhaiî, lhëgaiî, yobchhaiî,
kubchhaiî ye khemaimi mha aô kyulago +++
Krômchhaiî, Mhauchhaiî, Kyapchhaiî, Lhëgaiî, Yobchhaiî and Kubchhaiî ancestors did not pass between his legs +++

hyurplâ plenade toçamai mhinakuju mai
The Mhinakuju returned

thurchu wamaye toh waji ple nghyokha mai
Looking out from Thurchu and moving down

rabrô whamaye toh waji ple mrôkha mai
Looking out from Rabrô

kohla sôreye tohmaini ya ple mrôkha mai
Looking out to see Kohla Sôreye

kohla sôreye tohmi ya suji chuîmaiî ba?
Who founded Kohla Sôreye?

pammî, kohlmai, lemaiye ke maijî kohla chuîmaiî ba
The Pammai, Kohlimai and Lemai founded Kohla

phaiblô barôde neyûma charô chohyûmai
They discovered it while hunting

mrômrô toride mrônô prîmaiaba?
What did they see?

cheplô hyabaye hyulade mrônô prîmaiaba
They saw a flat place

tôlde syendega de syonoriîmai kohla tohrômi
They made a village

klyeju whamaye mruñju mi charô chohyu mai
The Klye became king

tela kohla sôreye tohrômi khaiju tamai ba?
What happened in Kohla?

kohla sôreye tohrômi kuîjju mi khaiju tamaiba?
How many houses were at Kohla?

kohla sôreye tohrômi kuîjju mi charô chohyu mai
The Klye became king

lêmko hanaye rohîmi dware tadi mai
He made Lêmko his assistant

kohla sôreye tohrômi kuîjju mi khaiju tamaiba?
How many houses were at Kohla?

kohla sôreye tohrômi kuîjju mi charô chohyu mai
The Klye became king

kohla sôreye tohrômi preçhju kuî chyomai
At Kohla Sôreye there were 80 houses

kohla hyalsa hyulsaye tohrômi khaiju tamaiba?
What happened in Kohla?

kohla hyalsa hyulsaye tohrômi tôhju chyuîmaiaba
In the area of Kohla villages were founded

ma krapu kohgarai tohrômi khaiju kuî munai?
How many houses were at Krapu?

16 This line is followed by some secret lines which are only known to initiated shamans and have therefore not been translated. These are clan names. This line is followed by untranslated secret lines.

17 This refers to the three clans who founded Kohla.
In the area of Krapu there were 20 houses.

How many houses were at Khuñidõ?

In the area of Khuñidõ there were 19 houses.

How many houses were at Chõmrõ?

In the area of Chõmrõ there were eight houses.

How many houses were there at Chikreñ?

In the area of Chikreñ there were 20 houses.

How many houses were at Pamrõ, Hachu and Mhichu?

In the area of Pamrõ, Hachu and Mhichu there were 30 houses.

How many houses were there at Naudi Rabrõ?

In the area of Naudi Rabrõ there were five houses.

How many houses were there at Lelkhu?

In the area of Lelkhu there were 10 houses.

What was at Tasa Khowa?

Horses were kept at Tasa Khowa.

What was at Thullhey?

Goats and sheep were kept there.

What happened at Taprõ Mhijya?

Chyumi Huñdu’s ancestors arrived.

‘Who are you?’ asked the villagers.

Villagers talked about who they were.

‘I am Lẽmakõ’s mother’s brother’.

Mother’s brother introduced himself.

What happened after that?

Kyalbo made an announcement.

The Kyalbo chieftain gave information.

‘The Kohla Sôpreye area and country is mine’.

‘Villages have to pay tax’.

‘Lẽmakõ will collect the taxes’.

‘My assistant will collect the taxes’.

Lẽmakõ went.

The assistant went.

Lẽmakõ reached Krapu village.

There was an argument with Lẽmakõ.

They paid tax to Lẽmakõ.

Lẽmakõ returned.

Where did Lẽmakõ go?

Lẽmakõ reached Pomrõ Hachu village.

He asked the villagers for tax.

Asų means ‘wife giver’ and refers to those who have given a daughter in marriage to Lẽmakõ’s lineage.
Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

198. *sermā sōmade sailalado aangi chyōmai ba*
He asked Āngi Chyōma [mother’s brother] for tax

199. *aasaila whamade aasaila lēmkū rohmai ba*
‘No, no, won’t give it to you, Lēmkū’

200. *tāju chhono priñmai tohngai mhimaini*
Villagers discussed this

201. *sermā sōmade aa piiñmai aangi chyōmaimi*
Āngi Chyōma didn’t give tax

202. *hyarplā plenade toyaje lēmkū rohmaimī*
Lēmkū returned

203. *kohla sōpreye tohrōmi lēma chohmimai*
Lēma reached Kohla Sōpreye

204. *sermā sōmade sailalano primai kohla sōrami*
He asked for taxes in Kohla Sōra

205. *tagrā hogrāde theno priñmai kyalbo ruji*
He argued with Kyalbo

206. *kyalbo rujuye ngarōmi lēma chohnimai*
Lēma returned to Kyalbo

207. *cchharga puhrgade seno priñmai kyalbo rujuanī*
He told Kyalbo what had happened

208. *kyōjabin tohrōmi khaiju nghegaiabrā*
What happened in the other villages?

209. *pomrō hachuye tohrōmi khaiju nghegaiabrā*
‘What happened in Pomrō Hachu’y

210. *tagrā hogrāde theno priñji kyōjabin tohrōmi*
‘There was an argument in the other villages’

211. *kyōjaini aasýō kumaye sermāmi khaiju nghegaiabrā*
‘What about mother’s brother’s tax?’

212. *aasaila wamade aasaila aasýō kumaiabrā*
‘I didn’t bring it, I didn’t bring [tax] from mother’s brother’

213. *tagrā hogrāde theno priñji pomrō hachura*
‘There was an argument in Pomrō Hachu’

214. *sermā whamade saila paquo aasýō kumaiabrā*
‘You should bring tax from mother’s brother’

215. *sermā whamade aasaila aasýō khaiju nghegaiabrā*
‘If I don’t bring tax, what will happen?’

216. *kyōjai kathuride pehū wamo lēma roh go*
‘I will sack you, Lēma, from your position’

217. *khaiālā khailade tanoprīmai lēma rohmi*
Lēma wondered what to do

218. *hyarplā plenade toyame lēma rohmi*
Lēma went

219. *ma chhyodo wamaye syōrōmi lēma chohmimai*
Lēma reached the river of Chhyodo

220. *aangī wamaye chyōmairi lēma chohmimai*
Lēma reached Āngi Chyōma

221. *tagrā hogrāde tano priñmai chhyodo syōrāmi*
There was an argument in Chhyodo Syōrāmi

222. *hyarplā pleñnade toyamai lēma rohmi*
Lēma left

223. *ta pomrō hachuye toh rōmi lēma chohmī mai*
Lēma reached Pomrō Hachu

224. *tagrā hogrāde tano priñmai aasýō kumai ni*
He had an argument with mother’s brother

225. *tagrā hogrāde tano priñmai toh nibai syōni*
He had an argument with the villagers

226. *kyāju thobaiye tāju chhoma lēma rohñimī*
‘Lēma, this will be the end of our relationship’

227. *mhi karēn chokimai khuno priñmai lēma rohñji*
Lēma called the village leaders

228. *pahaye kuiñdi de krānō priñmai aasýō kumaiabrā*
They charged mother’s brother one pot of millet wine

229. *nghebai mejude pehnō priñmai aangi chyōmairai*
They charged Āngi Chyōma one milk cow

230. *tibai kregi ni hyobai kahyade pehno priñmai aasýō kumaiabrā*
They charged mother’s brother one kregi [turban]

231. *syōrāmi chhyodo whamade phunro priñmai aangi chyōmairai*
They destroyed Āngi Chyōma’s water mill by the river

232. *chihdo whama de thonō priñmai aasýō kumaiabrā*
They punished mother’s brother

233. *ngheju whamade thonō priñmai aasýō kumaiabrā*
They punished Āngi Chyōma

234. *mudō tihrbāye tagrā tano priñmai lēma rohmaini*
The argument with Lēma could be heard in the sky

235. *saō tihrbāye hogrā tano priñmai aasýō kumaini*
The argument with mother’s brother could be heard in the river

236. *kyāju thobaiye tāju chhoma lēma rohñimī*
‘Lēma, this will be the end of our relationship’

237. *tagrā hogrāde tabai lisōrā khaiju tamaibai?
What happened after the argument?

238. *hyarplā pleñnade toyamai lēma òrhō mi*
Lēma returned
sabu tiihrbai krolu jhonõ priñmai aangi chyõmaimi
Āngi Chyõmaimi cried very loudly
mbu tiihrbai krolu jhonõ priñmai sasõo kumaimi
Mother’s brother cried very loudly
pahrje sõmade põnõ priñmai aangi chyõmaiji
Āngi Chyõmaiji put a big curse on him
pahrje sõmade põnõpriñmai aasõo kumaiji
Mother’s brother put a big curse on him
kyõmi kohla sõpreye tohrõmi mha aa chohdo ba
‘You will not reach Kohla Sõpre’
kyalbo whamaye rujuni mha aa tohdoba
‘You will not meet Kyalbo’
neye chhainibai rhïriye chhaini kyõ tohdoba
‘You will get a horrible disease’
nhãgabai nã aa nhõbaye padõra kyõ mhadoose
‘You will get lost before sunrise’
ngesabai nã aa riñ bai padõra kyõ sidose
‘You will die before sunset’
kohla sõpreye mhimaini mha a chohmaiba
‘You will not meet the people from Kohla Sõpre’
chhyodo sõrbai mõnmai kyõ tohnese
‘You will meet the ghost of the water mill’
pahrje sõmade põnõ priñmai aasõo kumaiji
The curse given by mother’s brother
pahrje sõmade põnõ priñmai aangi chyõmaiji
The curse given by Āngi Chyõmai
pahrje sõmade põbai lisõra khaiju tamaiba?
What happened after the curse?
neye chhai nibai rhïriye chhaini lëma tohnimai
Lëma met with a horrible disease
mõnibai hãniga lëma tohnimai
Lëma met a ghost
tuñje ryuino ga tayamai lëma rohñimi
Lëma began to vomit
muñje syalano tayamai lëma rohñimi
Lëma began to get diarrhoea
tahiyã koiba mhaïṣïsa phyobade tanõ priñmai ba
The sun could not help him, the night could not help him
thaami syomide nghyõnõ priñmai lëma rohñi mi
Lëma’s eyes became glazed

Mharsõ khlyo khlyo de noyamai lëma rohñ mi
Lëma died
Mharsõ khlyo khlyo de noyamai lëma rohñ mi
Lëma died
kohla sõpreye tohrõmi mha a chohmaiba
He could not reach Kohla Sõpre
nhâsõ raye padõra khaiju tamaiba?
What happened after that?
mhîngai mhichhîyode tanõ priñmai kyalbo rujami
Kyalbo was very upset

khîyê paiîpde lëmo bhîmai kyalbo ruji
The Kyalbo chieftain performed a pai for Lëmo
pachyu ni pahiîbo mhai chyõmamai
He didn’t call a proper pachyu or pahiîbo

syaîje mhîmaiîmi syajye aëyõmai
He looked to the east, but couldn’t find one
nuje mhîmaiîmi nuje aëyõmai
He looked to the west, but couldn’t find one
chyõhje mhîmaiîmi chyõhje aëyõmai
He looked to the north, but couldn’t find one
pachyu mhîmaiîmi pachyu aëyõmai
He looked for a pachyu, but couldn’t find one
pahiîbo mhîmaiîmi pahiîbo aëyõmai
He looked for a pahiîbo, but couldn’t find one
khaiju whamaye pye tasi chu tamai?
Why did this happen?
aasõo wamade aapa bisi chu tmai
Mother’s brother didn’t come
syõla syõkõide aayõna chu tamai
He didn’t receive a gift of cloth from mother’s brother, so it happened
aoli kaiîde aayõna chu tamai
He didn’t receive a gift of rice from mother’s brother, so it happened
sundo chyu de aayõna chu tamai
He didn’t receive a gift of millet from mother’s brother, so it happened

This is the CK word for klehbrĩ.
They gossiped in Kohla.

There was much discussion in Kohla.

Some people shouted at the Kyalbo.

A that had not been seen or heard before.

The pai was done without the offer of a thẽhchu kyakyãde.

The pai was done without the offer of a kohkyu thukyu.

The was made to eat rice.

The was made to talk.

The was made to drink water.

This strange pachu did a one-day pai.

This strange pachu did a pai without pye.

This strange pachu did a pai without lhu.

What happened after that?

The thẽhchu is a goat that is sacrificed by pachu at the beginning of a pai. The kyakyãde is the goat that is sacrificed by the klehbrĩ during the first night of a pai. A kohkyu is a sacrificial sheep which represents the deceased and the thukyu is the ‘friend’ sheep who acts as a companion on the journey to the Afterworld. The pla is an effigy of the deceased. These goings-on were considered to be bizarre. In a usual pai, activities such as eating and drinking are undertaken by representatives of the dead person such as a sheep. The pai laba is a three-day ritual.

It is not possible to conduct an activity in a shamanic ritual without describing it first.

This refers to the shamanic objects without which it is impossible to perform.

Part of ‘heaven’.

A strange, high-pitched noise.
They heard the sound ‘peju, peju’

They listened carefully with their ears, looked carefully with their eyes

What did they see?

The seven pachyu saw that its mouth looked like the beak of a bird

The nine paihbo saw that its legs looked like wooden legs

They saw a body that looked like a door

They asked ‘who are you?’

‘I am Lẽma Rõh from Kohla Sõpreye’ [he replied]

‘How did this happen to you?’ [they asked]

‘I died from the curse of Āsyõ Kumai’

‘I died from the curse of Āngi Chyõma’

‘I didn’t get the special cloth from mother’s brother, so this happened’

‘The route wasn’t clear so I didn’t find the way to La Kyã’

‘I didn’t sacrifice the goat, so I couldn’t find Nghikyã’

‘I didn’t sacrifice the sheep, so I didn’t get a friend’

‘I didn’t get Syõla Syõkõide, so I don’t get warmth and shade’

‘I didn’t get a sheep to represent the body’

‘A real pachyu should have done it’

‘A real paihbo has to do it’

‘An unreal Syõla pachyu did it’

‘Couldn’t find the correct route and the resting-places along it’

‘Syõla pachyu did it without a pye’

‘Syõla pachyu did it without a lhu’

The creature bowed to them seven times

The seven pachyu went

The nine paihbo went

In Kohla Sõpreye village, chant the story

In Kohla Sõpreye village, explain the problem

The creature bowed to them seven times

The seven pachyu reached Kohla Sõpreye village

The seven pachyu reached Kohla Sõpreye village

The seven pachyu reached the village crossroads

Part of ‘heaven’.
Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

sõgyãpuhñye kohisõra paihbo kumai chohnimai
The nine paihbo reached the village crossroads

350

tõkhu syõkhu tano priñmai sõgyã puñãrami
The villagers gathered at the crossroads

351

paimo wamade aapaimo toh ngain mhimaiba?
‘Did anyone die in this village?’

352

mhaimo wamade aa mhaimo syõngai mhimaiba?
‘Was anyone from this village lost?’

353

tõimo wamade aatõimo toh ngain mhimaiba?
‘Did anyone from this village leave?’

354

ngyoisu põsu de lano priñ mai toh ngain mhimaini
They asked the villagers

355

apa wamade aapaimo pachyu ngimai ba
‘Nobody died, seven pachyu’

356

aamha wamade aahaimo paihõbo kumai ba
‘Nobody died, nine paihbo’

357

aatõ wamade aatõimo pachyu ngimai ba
‘No one died, seven pachyu’

358

tõimo, mhamo, paiho de bhino priñmai pachyu ngimaijì
‘Someone must have died, must have died’, said the seven pachyu

359

leñmã rohñ ride pano priñlo pachyu ngimaiba
‘One Lẽma died, seven pachyu’

360

leñmã rohñ ride mhamo priñlo paihõbo kumaiba
‘One Lẽma died, nine paihbo’

361

lẽmã rohñ ride tõno priñlo pachyu ngimaiba
‘One Lẽma died, seven pachyu’

362

klhyapai phipeide lanõ priñje kyalbo rujì
‘Kyalbo did the Klhyapai Phipeide’

363

targì la nibai mhargithirõ chohlo khâjegõ
‘He reached Targì La and Mhargithirõ’

364

thedo wamade thedose totngaiñ mhimaiba
‘Listen, listen villagers’

365

thedo wamade thedose sõngaiñ mhimaiba
‘Listen, listen friends’

366

targì la nibai mhargithirõ lẽmã mha aachohgoba
‘Lema did not reach Targì La and Mhargithirõ’

367

thori nghaisõye hyularõ mha aachohgoba
‘He did not reach Thori Nghaisõye’

368

kheni wamaye mãniyã mha aachohgoba
‘He did not meet the male and female ancestors’

369

ta heni nhobayê chhajãrõ leimã chohnimì
‘Lema is not between the mountains and the high pastures’

370

suñimì chhayasûde pphadimo leimã rhuûla mi
‘Lema’s mouth looks like a bird’s beak’

371

kohmi mraye kohjude pphadimo leimã rhuûla mi
‘Lema’s body is like a door’

372

pahle siñye pahlede pphadimo leimã rhuûlamì
‘Lema’s legs look like wooden legs’

373

chabai kaiñjude aayõna myakli chadimu
‘He has no food, so he eats cow dung’

374

thuûbalì kyude aayõna myakuñ thuûdimi
‘He has no water, so so drinks cow urine’

375

peñ ju whamade peñjuli charõ nghedimai
‘He cries “peju, peju”’

376

lasu sebaye padûra kyalbo coh khâje
During this story Kyalbo arrived

377

shharga sõmade selo khaçë pu-chyü ngimaïjì
The seven pachyu finished telling their story

378

peñju wamade peñjuli nghenõ thimaiba
‘He did not meet the male and female ancestors’

379

khoûgì mraye khojude pphadimo leimã rhuûla mi
‘Lema’s body is like a door’

380

khañjì la nibai mhargithirõ chohlo khâjegõ
‘He reached Khañjì La and Mhargithirõ’

381

yharplã plenade toymai kyalbo rujì
Kyalbo went

382

yharplã plenade toymai kyalbo rujì
Kyalbo went towards that place

383

chharga pphadì seba ye lisõra khaijû tamaiba?
‘What happened after the story?’

384

tagreñ wamade kreno priñmai kyalbo rujì
to Kyalbo arrived

385

Kyalbo got on a horse

386

hyarpî plenade toymai kyalbo rujì
Kyalbo went

387

chohmì khañjû chohnimai kyalbo rujì
Where did Kyalbo go?

388

ta heni nhobayê chhajãrõ kyalbo choñimì
to Kyalbo went to the place between the mountains and the high pastures

389

peñju wamade peñjuli nghenõ thimaiba
He heard the ‘peju, peju’ sound

390

kyõmi ngayê leimã rhuûgà de buyàgà
‘If you are my Lema’ [he said]
388 phyoguru lajide Kohibora syokho se
‘Bow to me and come to my lap’

389 chharga wamade sōji khadu hyapymai
He said this and threw down the shawl

390 kutu wamade kuthuli phyoguru lamai
He bowed nine times

391 khadu wamade phurōmi lēmā syokhamai
Lēmā came to the shawl

392 hyarplā plenade toyumai kyalbo rujuni
Kyalbo returned

393 hyarplā plenade toyumai kyalbo rujuni
Kyalbo returned

394 ma kohla sōpreye tohrōmi kyalbo chohyumai
Kyalbo returned to Kohla Sōpreye village

395 khaima khaiajude lababisi tāju chhomaiba
He organized a meeting to decide what to do

396 khyapai phipāide labo tāju chhol khāmai
We will have to do the pāi again

397 pachyu nibai pahibō maini nguosu lamai
He asked the pachyu and pahibo

398 Pachyu nibai pahibōmaini pōsu lamai
He requested the pachyu and pahibo

399 syõla syõkōide aayõsyã sipai mha aa tagoba
‘Without a cloth from mother’s brothers, we cannot conduct the death ritual’

400 kohdã sōmade aayõsyã rhipai mha aa tagoba
‘Without a sheep to represent the body, we cannot conduct the death ritual’

401 thechu, kyakgyāde aayõsyã sipai mhaa ta
‘Without a sacrificial goat, we cannot conduct the death ritual’

402 kohkyu thukyude aayõsyã sōpai mhaa ta
‘Without a companion sheep, we cannot conduct the death ritual’

403 aasqō kumayē hāṣyuulu sodo kyalbo ruju
‘You have to invite mother’s brother, Kyalbo chieftain’

404 takku syōkhude ladose kyalbo ruju
‘You have to invite the villagers, Kyalbo chieftain’

405 mhōkhu synokhude ladose kyalbo ruju
‘You have to invite the relatives, Kyalbo chieftain’

406 riñni chañinimai khudose kyalbo ruju
‘You have to invite the female relatives, Kyalbo chieftain’

407 takku ngēn kwdhe ladose kyalbo ruju
Kyalbo gathered his relatives

408 chharga puhrāgade sōlo khāje pachyungimai ji
The pachyu gave the messages

409 chharga puhrāgade sōlo khāje pahibokuma ji
The pahibo gave the messages

410 hyarplā pleñinade toyamai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo went

411 hyarplā pleñinade toyamai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo went

412 kya pnomrō hachuye tohrōmi kyalbo chohnimai
Kyalbo reached Pomrō Hachuye

413 yodō whamade aakurna chihdō kurnimai
He started to bow

414 ra ru whanade aakurna kyu ru dō kurnimai
He bowed like the horns of a sheep

415 keñti pahtide noyamai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo took bread and wine

416 mar te mai te te noyamai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo took gold and silver

417 kregi kohtide noyamai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo took a turban

418 phyola phokurude lano priñmai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo bowed again

419 syõla syõkōide nonose aasqō kumaiba
Give the cloth, mother’s brother

420 syõla syõkōide nonose aangi chyômaiba
Give the cloth, Āngi Chyômaiba

421 syõla syõkōide mha aa pimai aasqō kumaiba
Mother’s brother did not give the cloth

422 syõla syõkōide mha aa pimai aangi chyômaiba
Āngi Chyômaiba did not give the cloth

423 hyarplā plenade toyumai kyalbo rujumi
Kyalbo left

424 hyarplā plenade toyumai ukyalbo rujmi
What happened next?

425 kya kohla sōpreye tohrō kyalbo choñime
Kyalbo reached Kohla Sōpreye Tohrō

426 nhasō whamaye padnora khaiju tamai ba?
What happened next?
Anthropology and Shamanic Considerations

427 phaante warabai rohiringe thahnõ priñmai ba
He chose a cunning person

428 pobaji tohhaa korbai padõra kyalbo ruji
Before dawn, Kyalbo chieftain

429 chyahrbra chyuhharuji hyul aa korbai padõra kyalbo ruji
Before the birds wake, Kyalbo chieftain

430 obaji naa aa nhõbai padõra kyalbo ruji
Before the cock crows, Kyalbo chieftain

431 mhainõ ba ye padõra kyalbo ruji
At midnight, Kyalbo chieftain

432 warbai rharigya kulgõ priñmaiba
He sent the cunning person

433 hyarplã plenade toyumai warbai rhõ mi
The cunning person went

434 kya põmrõ hachhyue tohrõmi chohno priñmaiba
He reached the village of Põmrõ Hachhyue

435 asyõ kumaiege tohrõ chohno priñmaiba
He reached mother's brother's village

436 klyhyae mharbasõra chohnimai Asyõ kumaila
He reached mother's brother's house

437 phiye mriõsõra chohnimai āngi chyõmaila
He reached Āngi Chyõmaila's house

438 kiõ kiõ toride kino priñmaiba warbai rhuõji?
What did the cunning person take?

439 rheñdõ myurbai naariji sundõ chyu lamaiba
Millet from the centre hole of the quern was given as special grain

440 rheñdõ phyolude kinõ priñmaiba
A piece of cloth collected from quern was used as mother's brother's cloth

441 kundõ dhuñrbai suiõngraji oli kaiñ lamaiba
Rice from the foot grinder was cooked and made into rice offering

442 kohla sõpreye tohrõmi warbai chohkaie
The cunning person reached the village of Kohla Sõpreye

443 kohla sõpreye tohrõmi khaiju tanaiba?
What happened in Kohla Sõpreye?

444 klyhyapai phyipade tanõ priñmai leõmã rhõla mi
The pai began33

446 sipai rhopaide tano priñmai leõmã rhõlami
The pai began33

447 kohidi kohipade chhono priñmai leõmã rhõlami
It was arranged for Lẽma

448 kohidi kohiside dhõnõ priñmai leõmã rhõlami
It was arranged for Lẽma

449 rhalmõ rhõiye mhajimi kyã tômaiba
The soul of a goat was sent as a friend

450 rhalmõ rhõiye mhajimi teh chumai ba
The goat started the ritual34

451 lhuye whamaye kohñjaji koh chuyõimaiba
The sheep represented him

452 lhuye whamaye kohñjaji thu chuyõimaiba
The sheep became his friend and porter35

453 rheñdõ myurbai naariji sundõ chyu laimaiba
Millet from the centre hole of the quern was given as special grain

454 rheñdõ wamaye phyolujyi syõla syõkõi lamaiba
A piece of cloth collected from quern was used as mother's brother's cloth

455 kuni dhuñrbai suiõngraji oli kaiñ lamaiba
Rice from the foot grinder was cooked and made into rice offering

456 tabai wamaye rhijega rhitemai
Doing the correct ritual

457 rhalmõ wamaye rhijii mai chyõmai
Completed with the goat

458 chyhane kone rhijii ne kõmai
Completed with the birds

459 klyhypai phyipai lano kõmãi leõmã rhõlami
Lẽma's pai was finished

460 targi la nibai mhargi thõõ leõmã chohnimai
Lẽma reached Targi La Nibai Mhargi Tih

461 aaj j khenibai ajaimõi leõmã chyõlõi mai
Lẽma joined Āji Khe and Āji Mā36

33 The type of pai which is conducted immediately after death and in a house with an ancestral shrine.
34 This refers to the sacrificial goat without which a pai cannot begin.
35 This refers to the ‘friend’ sheep and is different from the one which represents Lẽma. The role of this sheep is to act as a friend and porter to carry his things on the way to ‘heaven’, and to assist and make things easier for him.
36 The male and female ancestors from the place of creation.
Lẽma joined Khebrenla and Mhabreñla

Lẽma joined the nine moon and the nine sun ancestors

Lẽma reached the area of Thori Nghaisõye

Lẽma reached Inji Tehwa Chaïñgye Singa

Lẽma joined the nine moon and the nine sun ancestors from the place of creation.

A part of ‘heaven’.

Other male and female ancestors from the place of creation.

The next three lines are secret. They explains that unless this text is chanted, it is impossible to reach heaven

What happened next?

What happened next?

Kyalbo did not understand

Kyalbo did not care

Kyalbo took the taxes and ate them

He wanted to put everyone under his feet [i.e. dominate them]

Why did this argument happen?

The headman selected the best food

The chieftain selected the best water

Next day, Kyalbo chieftain

Kyalbo was alone

Separate from the people of the area

At midnight, Kyalbo chieftain

He took his family and left

First, second, third, fourth and fifth of Kyalbo’ s family

They looked in all four directrions for the Klye family

This means they disappeared and were not seen for this number of days.
The Kohla Project began with my conversation with Hom Bahādur Tamu that opened this chapter. How then do those who ‘commissioned’ the project evaluate it thirteen years later? In December 2005, I put this question to Yarjung, who replied:

The Kohla Project was important, but because it was cut short we didn’t really achieve very much. We identified our ancestor’s villages and we found some material culture which originated from the north which helped provide proof of our northern origins. We dated some objects, but I do not think these were a good sample, and I think that the actual age of Kohla remains unknown. I am very excited that the numbers of houses at different villages listed in the pye make sense when calculations are done based on our contemporary population. This is fantastic and provides additional evidence for the historical accuracy of our oral texts. In the future, some of our young educated people will hopefully carry this work on. Nowadays no one is really interested in this research, people don’t talk about it and they don’t think about it. Maybe once our books are published they will become interested. I hope so. There are many Tamu-mai living in different parts of the world and I feel that we should be able to support such work ourselves. There is no reason why the Tamu-mai cannot raise funds for this research. They can, and I believe that to preserve our cultural heritage, they must.

Despite Yarjung’s relatively modest evaluation of the impact of the project, I think that there are achievements that he has overlooked. The Kohla Project is an example of a successful multi-disciplinary collaboration between community activists, foreign and Nepali archaeologists, a social anthropologist and a linguistic anthropologist. Multi-agency and professional-activist collaborations along these lines are relatively rare and have not previously taken place in Nepal. The Kohla Project opened up new ways of working for local communities, archaeologists and anthropologists, and plotted a potential route for how ethnic communities might collaborate with government archaeologists in the study of their past.

The project has undoubtably made a unique contribution to the study of Tamu ethno-history as the detailed archaeological findings of this book clearly attest. It was at times difficult to define a clear role for ethnographic research and this was made more complex by the findings of oral history interviews which provided little or no significant data. Furthermore, there were tensions both in the fieldwork and in the production of the text, as the project was overwhelmingly archaeologically orientated, which at times diminished the more implicit achievements of ethnographic enquiry. Despite the high profile of the archaeology, however, anthropology was intrinsic to the development and success of the work as it was dependent on the networks, linkages, cultural understandings, insights and brokerage skills that developed out of in-depth and long-term ethnography.

Political insecurity as a result of the Maoist insurgency prevented planned research on the pye in different districts. The meeting of shamans in December 2002, however, provided an alternative which enabled the essential comparative work on Lêmko Pye to be undertaken. Further work on the pye, and its associated cultural knowledge, remains an essential element of research on the Tamu past, and a documentary project on the pye is due to begin in 2009. As additional work is undertaken, the full extent of the resource becomes clear and the depth of the contribution it can make to understanding the history of the Tamu-mai better appreciated. The work undertaken to date has an important role to play in reminding Tamu-mai, regardless of their clan affiliations, that their coalescence as an ethnic group is rooted in antiquity. As the pye illustrates, clan tensions and arguments are not new. However, the ongoing over-attention to the Hindu-authored genealogies and their impact has distracted attention from the longevity and depth of these alliances formed...
in antiquity. Tamu-mai of all clans share a long history of collaboration, migration and co-existence. They have been together for a very long time, and there is much to celebrate in their shared past.

The involvement of linguistic anthropologist, Mark Turin, in the latter stages of the project highlighted the need for ethnolinguistic analysis, and this remains an important avenue for future exploration. The major publications arising out of the Kohla Project, this manuscript, and a planned anthropology-led book, should not be seen as the conclusion of the work but rather a catalyst for additional research. Furthermore, if Yarjung is correct, then publications such as these will continue to engage the Tamu community, thus increasing the possibility that further studies will be undertaken.