

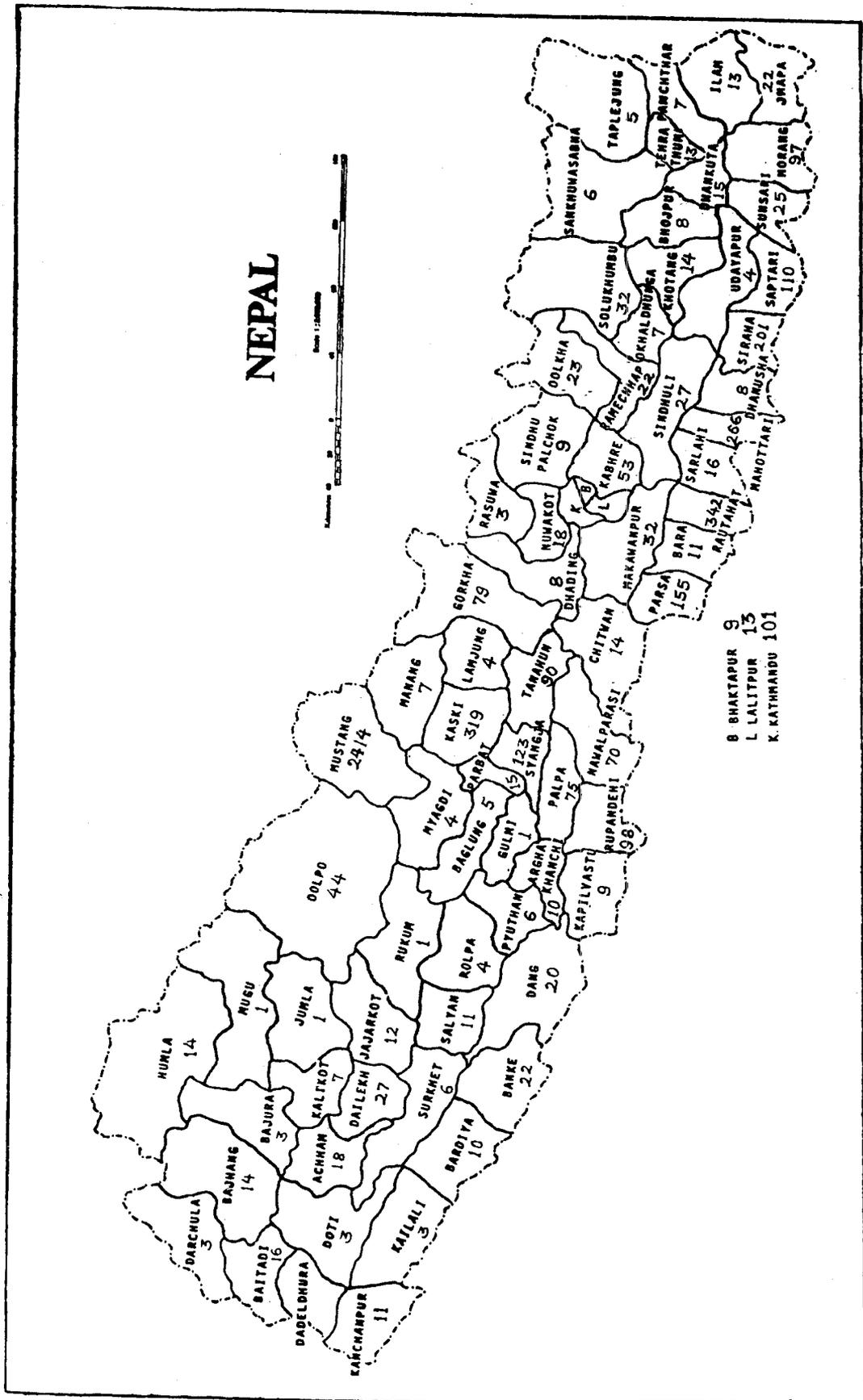
*Migration, Adaptation and Socio-Cultural Change: The Case of Thakalis in Pokhara, Nepal**

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Introduction

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss the adaptation, cultural continuity and change among the in-migrant Thakalis in Pokhara, Nepal. The Thakali community has attracted considerable attention in the recent years (Bhattachan 1980; Chhetri 1980; Furer-Haimendorf 1986; 1981; Gauchan and Vinding 1977; Iijima 1963; Manzardo and Sharma 1975; Messerschmidt 1975; Vinding 1984). However, a study dealing specifically with adaptation and change among the migrant Thakali groups in various parts of Nepal is lacking¹. Migration is not a new phenomenon for the Thakalis. In the past most of them were involved in a process which may be characterized as cyclic or circulatory migration². This was sufficient to bring them into contact with other communities in the lowland villages, towns and cities of Nepal and thereby initiate among them a process of social and cultural change and adaptation.

Some important arguments emerge from the discussion that follows which may be pointed out in the beginning here. This may also clarify the general assumptions guiding this paper. First, it is argued that adaptation is a two way process, i.e., it involves an interaction between the in-migrants and the host society. In this process both parties undergo adaptational changes although one of them may change more than the other which leads many of us to view the process of adaptation from the migrant's point of view only. Second, the process of adaptation may not necessarily lead to the assimilation of the in-migrants in the host culture and society. This becomes more true when the host society itself is multi-ethnic in character (as is Pokhara) and also when in-migrants in question mostly share the same social, cultural, linguistic and religious backgrounds (as in the case of the Thakalis in Pokhara) and originate from the same geographical region. Therefore, even though social and cultural changes may be observed in culture-contact situations, this does not necessarily lead to the creation of a fully homogeneous social and cultural setting in the place in question. This tells us why the "breakdown hypothesis" (Nair 1978:3) and the "melting pot" ideas do not hold good as viable theoretical concepts in discussing social change. What may be observed, instead, is adjustment or adaptation which may be defined as a process whereby a group's or community's social, cultural and economic life is modified to suit the needs of the new setting. In the discussion below an attempt is made to answer two main questions: (a) To what extent have changes taken place in the socio-cultural institutions, values, and norms of the migrant Thakalis in Pokhara? and



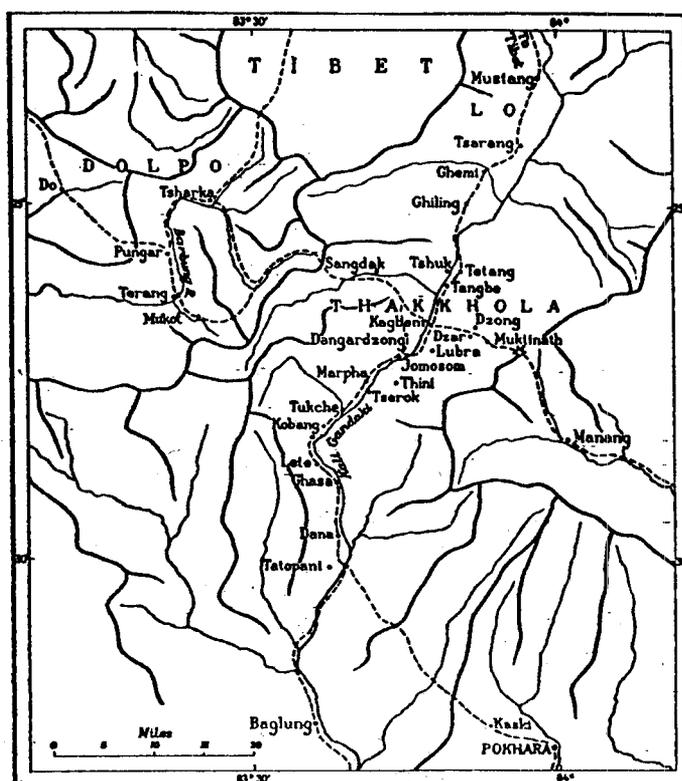
MAP. 1: Distribution of Thakali speakers (1981) as their Mother-Tongue.

(b) In what respects are the migrants adapted or adjusted? In the process of answering these questions, it will be shown that the "integration" of the migrants into the urban setting is mainly on the basis of their common economic interests while, at the same time, maintaining their distinct identity in terms of social and cultural life.

A third line of enquiry may be the question: How does the adaptational change among the migrant Thakalis affect the Thakali community at large in their native habitat? This question is relevant because the migrant Thakalis have maintained a close and continuous contact with the kinsfolk in their place of origin. The answers to these questions are attempted in the discussion of this paper which is based on two field works among the Thakalis in Pokhara and Thak Khola. The first field work was done between December 1979-January 1980 and the second during November 1980-January 1981. It was during the second field work period that I had an opportunity to visit the native homeland of the Thakalis in the Himalayan region of Mustang to observe their two-week long *Lha Phewa*³ (God has come) festival celebrated once every twelve years.

The Thakalis are culturally a Tibetan group of people⁴. They are divided into four exogamous and patrilineal clans: *Gauchan*, *Tulachan*, *Sherchan* and *Bhattachan*. Their mother tongue, known as "*Tamhaang Kura*", is a dialect of the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Thakalis are of course also fluent in Nepali which is the official/national language of Nepal.

Originally Thakalis belong to a small area known as Thak Khola or Thak Satsaye (Thak in short) in the western Himalayan region of Nepal. It is a region surrounding the Kali Gandaki region in the district of Mustang in Dhaulagiri zone (See Map 2). Back in the Thak, the Thakalis



had a mixed economy consisting of agriculture, pastoralism and trade. However, they were not highly dependent on agriculture and pastoralism although these were very important parts of their economy. The location of Thak in one of the important trade routes across the Himalayas, on the other hand, "led the Thakali to specialize in long-distance trade" (Blaikie, Cameron and Sheddon 1982:150). The conferring of the title of *Subbas* on some prominent Thakalis by the Nepal Government in 1869 (Messerschmidt and Gurung 1974:201) and then the granting of customs contract gave the Thakalis an increased control over the then important salt and wool trade between Tibet, Nepal and India. Their trade relations with Tibet helped them to attain a relatively high standard of living which otherwise would not have been possible through agriculture and animal husbandry alone. In the past, the Thakalis were, in fact, acting as a link in the barter trade between Nepal and Tibet - bringing in salt and wool from Tibet in exchange for cereals. This trade closed down during the second decade of the present century for two obvious reasons: (1) the availability of less expensive iodized salt from India providing the Nepalis with a more economical alternative which perhaps led to the abolishment of the Customs Contract System for this region by the Nepal Government in the 1920's, and (2) political changes in Tibet resulting from its Chinese takeover in the late 1950s⁵. The years between the abolishment of the customs contract system and the political change in Tibet presumably provided the Thakalis with the much needed time for adaptation to the new economic realities- and the search for new economic niche in the Hill and the Tarai region to the south. The migrations of the Thakalis in the beginning could be characterized as exploratory. It was purely circulatory and/or seasonal. In the second stage, however, it became a semi-permanent move: still seasonal but many of them now had some kind of "winter living place" in the lowlands. In this stage many Thakalis established "*Bhattis*" (inns and restaurants) along the trails during the winter months and many of them are seen going through this transitional stage even today. In the third stage, many Thakalis moved out of Thak permanently. This time, they also had kinsmen already settled in the lowland towns and cities who presumably were not only the motivators but also the ones who provided the new comers with necessary help in the beginning to get settled down.

Iijima (1963) gives an anecdote which sheds light on the views of the Thakalis in the past with regard to migrating southwards, especially to the palins. He writes:

...around 1930 Anangman Sherchan, a member of a prominent Thakali family, was appointed Treasury Officer of the central government and assigned to the Tarai, the '*Land of Awal*' (the land of malarial fever) in southern Nepal. His family members and other Thakalis bid him a tearful farewell, certain that they would never see him again if he went to this 'fearful land'. Contrary to their expectations, Anangman Sherchan returned to Thakola safely ... (1963:46).

Implicit in Iijima's description is the point that Thakalis had not travelled to the south before this date which is questionable. Notwithstanding this, the anecdote corroborates the fact that the Thakalis, (as did other hill people) in the past used to think that moving south was not a safe thing to do. But once the southward move started, the Thakalis seem to have migrated in streams, often leaving the villages in Thak almost deserted. Furer-Haimendorf who had visited Thak in 1962 visited the area again after fourteen years and observed "The majority of the Thakalis of Tukche (a one time important village in Thak) had moved to Pokhara and other places in the middle ranges, and Tukche had the appearance of a dying town" (1981:177, parentheses mine). The situation is not as grave as depicted by Furer-Haimendorf, but the fact remains that Thakalis are proliferating to all the corners of Nepal who once were reluctant even to visit the southern plains as suggested by Iijima's anecdote⁶. Today the Thakalis are distributed all over Nepal. A look at the 1981 census reveals that Thakalis are present in all the districts of Nepal except in Dadelhdhura, a district in far western Nepal (See Map 1). It should be cautioned, however, that census figures (See Table 1) do not give us the total Thakali population in Nepal. This

Table - 1

Distribution of the speakers of Thakali as mother tongue in different Zones of Nepal by rural and urban residence 1981.

Zones	Total	%	Rural	%	Urban	%
Mechi	47	0.89	41	0.78	6	0.11
Koshi	164	3.10	127	2.40	37	0.70
Sagarmatha	368	6.96	359	6.79	9	0.17
Janakpur	362	6.84	362	6.84	-	-
Bagmati	214	4.04	115	2.17	99	1.87
Narayani	554	10.48	523	9.89	31	0.59
Gandaki	622	11.76	399	7.54	223	4.22
Dhaulagiri	2438	46.10	2438	46.10	-	-
Lumbini	263	4.97	198	3.74	65	1.23
Rapti	42	0.79	42	0.79	-	-
Bheri	77	1.45	66	1.25	11	0.20
Karnali	67	1.27	67	1.27	-	-
Seti	41	0.78	40	0.76	1	0.02
Mahakali	30	0.57	28	0.53	2	0.04
Total:	5289	100%	4805	90.85	484	9.15

Source: Census of Nepal 1981.

only shows the Thakalis who in 1981 census reported Thakali language as their mother tongue. This is important for the discussion of adaptation and socio-cultural change and, therefore, will be taken up later. At this point, however, I want to emphasize the fact that Thakalis are seen as a very mobile community. Of the total Thakali speakers in Nepal only 46% are registered in Dhaulagiri Zone where their native homeland lies. This figure could further go down if the exact number of Thakalis were known, which may be approximately about ten thousand. The fact that Gauchan (1980:20-27) gives the number of Thakalis living in only 14 districts to be 5,330 in 1978 is an indication of the reality. Also, in 1978, the demographic survey of Pokhara Town Panchayat shows 606 Thakalis in the town while the 1981 census shows only 223 Thakali speakers. Thus we may have sufficient reason to believe that the actual number of Thakalis in Nepal is more than the speakers of Thakali as their mother tongue as reported in the 1981 census.

Table - 2

Communitywise Population Distribution of Pokhara (1978).

Name of the Community	Population	Percentage of the total population
Brahmin and Chhetri	17,489	48.3
Newar	6,386	17.6
Gurung	4,320	11.9
Pariyar	3,184	8.8
Magar	1,507	4.2
Thakali	606	1.7
Muslim	426	1.2
Lama	325	0.9
Tamang	179	0.5
Others	1,767	4.9
Total	36,189	100%

Source of data: Demographic Survey of Pokhara Nagar Panchayat, 1978. Carried out by the Nagar Panchayat and Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara.

From Map I and Table 1, it becomes evident that Thakalis have migrated and settled in different places in the Hills and Tarai region of Nepal, in the rural but mostly in the urban areas. Pokhara is one of such places where their number is gradually increasing. Pokhara is the administrative centre of the Western Development Region as well as the Zonal and District headquarters of Gandaki Zone and Kaski district respectively. Pokhara is also a municipality in its own and right. Besides, the various government offices, there are a number of banks, modern hotels, small scale industries, educational institutions, hospitals and various other modern institutions. The population of the city is heterogenous, comprised of people from a number of castes and communities such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar, Gurung, Thakali, Magar and many

ties such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Newar, Gurung, Thakali, Magar and many others including the recently resettled Tibetan refugees (Table 2).

Pokhara serves as a link between Kathmandu and the adjoining districts as it is the terminus of the Prithvi Highway. Furthermore, the Siddhartha Highway which links India and the interior of Nepal also ends there. It also serves as a stopover for the Thakali traders who come down from Thak Kholra as well as others who come from villages around Pokhara on their way to Kathmandu, Bhairahawa, and elsewhere. In fact, Pokhara is the nearest market centre for the hill people in the region. The Thakalis who are well known for trading and business skills have thus found Pokhara as one of the better places to resettle.

Migration and Adaptation: Background

With the process of migration coming into prominence, the studies of diffusion of cultures, acculturation, assimilation, integration, adjustment, adaptation, etc, in relation to migrants began to draw more and more attention. Talking about the rapid increase in migration studies by anthropologists during the second-half of the 20th century, Graves and Graves state, that "a wealth of descriptive material from all over the world is now available, providing a comparative perspective on the adaptive strategies which the actors in this modern drama display" (Graves and Graves: 1974:117). Migrations, are not isolated events in the sense that they are generally associated with some kind of economic, social and cultural changes to which people make an adjustment and/or adaptation. Migration brings together at the destination populations with different social and cultural background, and this in turn initiates a process of change in the social, economic, religious and cultural lives of the people in question in order to make adaptations and/or adjustment vis-a-vis each other.

Pokhara, where the present study was made, has been one of the fastest growing towns in Nepal. This becomes evident if we look at the population figures for the town over the years. In a period of about 30 years (1952/54-1981) the absolute increase in the town's population was 42,887. This is a growth of 1142%. The figure in Table 3 shows that the number of Thakali families settling in Pokhara has been increasing during the recent years.

Table - 3

Migration Stream of Thakalis to Pokhara (Till 1980)

Period in Years	No. of families Leaving Thak	No. of families settled in Pokhara
Before 1943	6	4
1944-'52	10	6
1953-'62	16	13
1963-'72	16	18
1980-Present	2	9

Source: Field survey 1980. Fifty household heads were interviewed in the field survey.

Internal migrations in Nepal is not a new phenomenon. Rana and Thapa while summarising migration in Nepal in historical perspective state aptly that it is "practically as old as the history of its (Nepal's) colonization by people from the north as well as the south (1975:45). However, most of the migratory movements in the past, at least from the Himalayan belt of Nepal, were seasonal characterized by cyclical or circulatory movements. The various reasons given for migration by the Thakalis in Pokhara have been summarised in Table 4 below.

Table - 4

Reasons for migration

Stated reasons for moving out of Thak Factors	Number of Responses*
Environmental (Severe winters)	11
Lack of cultivable land	4
Lack of occupation	33
Lack of medical facilities	23
Lack of educational facilities	19
Lack of transportation facilities	7
<u>Stated reasons for moving to Pokhara</u>	
A centre for trade and bussiness	33
Presence of relatives	10
Nearer to Thak	12
Modern amenities (education, medecine etc.)	27
Employment	2

* These are the number of responses and some people gave more than one reason. Thus the total adds up to more than 50.

Besides the reasons summarised above some families also expressed their subjective judgment toward the social life in Thak. They believe that the society in Thak was "backward".

With respect to the causes of migration and the process of adaptation, we can also talk in terms of such aspects as the role of family and kinship, frequency of visits to the destination before finally settling down there and also whether the move was direct or step-wise (Table 5).

The role of the family and relatives is seen to be important in the process of migration as well as adaptation. Generally, the migrant families living in an urban area tend to motivate their relatives to move to the place of their new settlement. This is more true in a situation where relatives from the origin keep visiting the migrant relatives in the urban centre and vice versa. This may be said to be true at least in the case of Thakalis in Pokhara because 88% of the migrants acknowledged visits of relatives from the Thak. It was also found that most

of the Thakali families had come directly to Pokhara after leaving Thak. Seventy eight percent of the families said that they migrated directly to Pokhara, while only 22% stated that they had lived either in Baglung, Syangja or Butwal after leaving Thak before they finally migrated to Pokhara.

Table - 5

Steps of move by units and decision

Variables	Stepwise	Percent	Non-stepwise	Percent
Frequency of earlier visits				
None	2	4	4	8
At least twice	-	-	5	10
Several times	9	18	30	60
Unit of move				
Alone	2	4	8	16
With family	9	18	31	62
Decision-making				
Self	3	6	24	48
Parents/ Grandparents	8	16	15	30

Number of families interviewed = 50.

Source: Field Survey 1980.

Frequency of visits is taken as a proxy for assessing the level of information. The assumption is that the greater the number of visits the more information a person is supposed to have. A close look at the migratory process (see Table 5) then helps us assume that many of the Thakali families had a fairly high level of information about Pokhara before settling down there. Even those Thakalis who made a stepwise move, 18% of them had visited Pokhara more than twice before they came to live there permanently. Because of the better information in they had about the destination, most of them (78% in this case) must have selected Pokhara for settlement right in their first move. This must have helped the Thakalis in the process of their adaptation in the urban setting.

Adaptation and Cultural Continuity and Change

Given the motivation for migration to Pokhara how are the Thakalis adapted to the urban life? In discussing adaptation it will be seen that the Thakali community is a dynamic community, interacting with the host society rather than passively submitting to the socio-cultural forces of change in the urban life. The notion of adaptation as used here would be in line with "a growing consensus among anthropologists that the nature of man is best described as neither totally active nor passive but interactive. Operating within the many constraints which his physical and social environments impose, he seeks to overcome the problems

confronting him by choosing among perceived available options" (Graves and Graves, 1974:177). Any migrant community in an urban setting tends to form a group in itself. Viewed from the structural-functional perspective it shows itself as a separate system, but at the same time forms a part of the whole urban system. Migrant community may show marked differences in certain social and cultural pattern from the host society. But nonetheless, they are found to be involved in the process of adaptation, adjustment, integration, acculturation - i.e., socio-cultural change in general.

Adaptations of migrants in an urban setting might be discussed by using different sets of indices and/or variables. Some have used such variables as residential settlement, housing, occupational adaptation, occupational mobility, family life-cycle change, social adaptation, cultural adaptation and attachment to the origin (Lee and Kim 1981:233). In my discussion, below I have used the following indices to deal with the adaptation of the Thakalis in Pokhara: (1) Occupational mobility, (2) Participation in Association, (3) Extent of contact with other communities, (4) Internalization of the culture of the host society, (5) Preference for neighbourhood, and (6) Exposure vs enclosure of the community. Let us now discuss each index in the context of the migrant Thakali families in Pokhara.

Occupation: Originally, the Thakalis in Thak were an agropastoral community (Manzardo and Sharma 1975, Furer Haimendorf, 1966, 1974). They were also involved in the salt, wool and grain barter trade, but this was not the primary occupation for majority of the Thakalis now in Pokhara. More than 91% of the migrants said that their primary occupation before migration was agriculture while less than 9% had business or trade as their primary occupation. However, today 80% of the migrant Thakali families in Pokhara have taken to business as their primary occupation. Business in the case of the Thakalis includes running hotels and restaurants, retail business in clothes, food items and other sundry goods, and working as contractors for various governmental and non-governmental building and construction works. Only 12% have continued with agriculture and the other 8% have taken to government service or jobs.

When asked about a change in occupation, most of the migrants pointed out that business as a occupation was much easier and also profitable compared to agriculture. They were also questioned whether they faced any problems due to the change in occupation in the new urban setting. Only 34% gave a positive answer while 66% of them said that they had no problems right from the beginning. For those who reported having faced problems, the nature of the problems were financial which were solved with the help of relatives or other Thakalis in Pokhara. The help was mostly in the form of *Dhikurs*, which is a form of rotating credit⁷. It is thus seen that the Thakalis adapted with relative ease to the new economic structure of the urban setting partly due to help from their community members.

It may be noted that the Thakalis are a close knit and very cohesive group of people. They help their fellow Thakalis in times of need,

Besides, another characteristic of this community is that even in adopting some kind of social mobility/change, they do it at the group level. Some have called this kind of mobility as "contest mobility" (Schermerhorn, 1978:54). Among the Thakalis "there seems to be not only a willingness to accept social reform, but a desire to embrace it as a community, rather than as individuals" (Manzardo and Sharma, 1975). This kind of group mobility has presumably helped them to adapt rather easily to the new urban setting.

Participation in Associations: Participation in the socio-economic and political associations and/or institutions at the group level as well as at the societal level may also be an index of the level of adaptation or adjustment reached by a migrant community in the urban setting. The Thakalis in Pokhara are all members of the *Pokhara Thakali Samaj Sudhar Samiti* (PTSSS)⁸ or Pokhara Thakali Social Reform Committee, which is an institution parallel to the "13 Mukhiya" system back in Thak. The PTSSS is a socio-political organization representing only the Thakalis in Pokhara confederated with the feeling of collectivity and co-fraternity (PTSSS Constitution- 1971, my translation from the Nepali text). Similar Thakali Samaj Sudhar Samitis exist in other urban centers like Kathmandu and Bhairahawa also. The associational clustering of the Thakalis through this institution has enabled them to perpetuate the culture of their place of origin and at the same time it has also made it possible for them to adapt to the new ways of life. This is done by introducing reforms in the socio-cultural practices in accordance to the exigencies of the new situations. Important reforms introduced by PTSSS are the banning of "marriage by capture" (which according to elderly informants used to be a common form in Thak. This is reflected in the proceedings of the Lha Phewa festival also.) and consumption of yak-meat, and the shortening of death - mourning period from 49 to 13 days. This has made the Thakalis acceptable to the Hindu society and also helped them to adapt in Pokhara.

Besides, the Thakalis also become members of the various *Dhikurs* - the rotating credit associations. These help the Thakalis to sort out their social as well as economic problems and thereby make it easier for economic adaptation. This association, though a continuity of the *Dhikurs* in Thak has also been subject to adaptational change. The traditional *Dhikuri* system had a welfare motive behind it which was to provide economic support to the needy Thakalis. This rotating credit association (Messerschmidt, 1978: 141-165) used to function on the basis of the principle of lottery while today, in urban areas, it is run by the written tender system wherein the highest bidder of interest on the *Dhikuri* amount gets it. It then serves the interest of businessmen rather than the poor and needy ones. Thus we see an instance of the continuation of a traditional institution with changes in its principles and motives as demanded by the new urban situations. It is also an example of an institution (a cultural element in general) given to the host society by an in-migrant group. The membership in the Thakali *Dhikuris* used to be open only to the Thakalis in the past. But now by opening up the membership to others, the Thakalis have been able to establish economic ties with people from other communities in the urban centre. This again is a timely

step towards adaptation made by the Thakalis to widen their economic relations and networks.

Besides participating in the in-group organizations and/or associations, the Thakalis are also participating in other social, political, economic and educational institutions in Pokhara. Within a short period, some Thakalis have even gained the status of social workers and politicians in Pokhara. The extremely resilient and adaptive stance has also given the Thakalis a considerable political advantage. This is exemplified by the fact that recently a Thakali was elected as the *Pradhan Pancha* (Mayor) of Pokhara Town. More interesting is the fact that one of the two representatives in the Rastriya Panchayat (National Legislature) from Kaski district was (1981-1985) a Thakali, who even became an Assistant Minister for Communication in the National Cabinet for some time. Baglung, another district where the Thakalis first came as migrants also has a Thakali as one of its representatives in the national legislature. These instances not only reflect the adaptive nature of the Thakalis in the social life in any part of Nepal but also indicate that they can win the confidence of the people in the host society far more easily than many other people.

Interaction within the group and outside the group: To find out the extent of contact or interaction of the Thakalis within the community as well as with the outsiders, the respondent were asked as to how often they had participated in such activities as picnics, visiting each other for meals, visiting friends, *pujās* (religious occasions), religious occasions, weaning, sacred thread ceremonies, marriages, mourning and meetings during the past one year. Table 6 shows the findings in summary. The in-group interaction is more frequent for the migrant Thakalis with regard to most of the indices except the sacred thread ceremony. The Thakalis do not have a sacred thread ceremony (an initiation rite of the caste-Hindus) in their culture and thus the in-group participation in this context is zero.

With regard to their participation in the activities with people from other communities, a different picture emerges. Except for such activities as visiting friends, attending marriages, and meetings, their out-group participation is relatively less frequent. This indicates that the Thakalis are socially well adapted in the host society.

Internalization of the culture of the host society: Generally, a migrant community tends to face a situation of conflict between their traditional values and norms and those presented by the host society. In the course of making adjustment or adaptation, what results is "continuity as well as change", i.e. while some of their norms and values continue to persist some others get replaced by new ones. It may be illustrated by some examples. First, the Thakalis gave up dressing in Tibetan fashion because this tended to place them with the Bhote community who are generally regarded as inferior by caste Hindus. They have now adopted the Nepali dress pattern as well as the "Western" pattern (See Furer-Haimendorf 1966 for details).

Table - 6

Extent of Group Interaction for the Thakalis by Socio-cultural Activities during 1979.

Activities	None	Once	Twice	More than twice
<i>Within the Thakali Community</i>				
Picnics	5 (10)	5 (10)	21 (42)	19 (38)
Visits for meals	2 (4)	2 (4)	13 (26)	33 (66)
Visiting friends	3 (6)	3 (6)	6 (12)	38 (76)
Pujās	1 (2)	3 (6)	14 (28)	32 (64)
Religious festivals	1 (2)	3 (6)	14 (28)	32 (64)
Weaning ceremonies	7 (14)	2 (4)	4 (8)	37 (74)
Sacred thread	50 (100)	-- --	-- --	-- --
Marriages	6 (12)	5 (10)	5 (10)	34 (68)
Death mourning	9 (18)	4 (8)	4 (8)	33 (66)
Social meetings	8 (16)	4 (8)	7 (14)	31 (62)
<i>Outside the Community</i>				
Picnics	30 (60)	3 (6)	7 (14)	10 (20)
Visits for meals	29 (58)	1 (2)	8 (16)	12 (24)
Visiting friends	15 (30)	2 (4)	9 (18)	24 (48)
Pujās	20 (40)	5 (10)	9 (18)	16 (32)
Religious festivals	26 (52)	2 (4)	6 (12)	16 (32)
Weaning ceremonies	23 (46)	4 (8)	3 (6)	20 (40)
Sacred thread	21 (42)	7 (14)	6 (12)	16 (32)
Marriages	14 (28)	4 (8)	4 (8)	28 (56)
Death mourning	39 (78)	-- --	2 (4)	9 (18)
Social meetings	22 (44)	2 (4)	5 (10)	21 (42)

Source: Field survey 1980. (Figures in the parentheses show the percentages)

Two more important changes are summarised in what Furer-Haimendorf says, "Just as at the end of the 19th century, Yak eating was proscribed, so in more recent years the custom of marriage by capture was formally banned by the headmen of the Thak Satsae" (Furer-Haimendorf, 1966:148). The Thakalis adopted the "Kanyadan" (formal giving away of the daughters) form of marriage which is common among the caste Hindus. In the course of getting adapted to the urban setting by internalizing the culture of the host society, the Thakalis have gone to the extent of "Hinduizing" themselves by claiming the status of *Thakuri* (a ruling caste) in the traditional caste hierarchy of the Hindus.

Another important change among the Thakalis has been in terms of observing the death pollution and mourning. The change in this respect was again effected by the resolution of the PTSSS. By reducing the number of days for observing pollution after death from 49 days to 13,

they have not only reduced the cost involved in performing various rites (because less days means less rites), but also have moved towards Hinduizing it. However, differences are still there. Among the orthodox Hindus in Nepal, the pollution is observed by agnate kinsmen of the deceased for 13 days whereas among the Thakalis even "brothers observe but one day's mourning" (Furer-Haimendorf 1966:150).

Thakalis in Pokhara are also found to have learnt the languages of the dominant linguistic group in their locality. This is also an index of internalization of the culture of the host society by the migrants. It is interesting to note that 58% of the migrant Thakalis said that they speak *Newari* or *Gurung* or both the languages besides their own mother tongue and the Nepali language which of course is spoken by all. This shows how the Thakalis adjust so easily with other groups of people in the heterogeneous urban society in Pokhara and else where.

Preference for Neighbourhood: Migrants in urban centers generally tend to prefer living in a locality where they have people belonging to their own community, or culture (Nair, 1978, Punekar, 1974). But in the case of the Thakalis in Pokhara, a different tendency is observed.

Table - 7,

Wardwise Distribution of Thakalis in Pokhara, 1980

Wards	Thakali Population	Total Population	Percent of Thakalis
1	122	3545	3.44
2	66	1723	3.83
3	13	2044	0.63
4	41	1567	2.61
5	-	1603	0.00
6	13	2475	0.52
7	64	3975	1.61
8	31	1864	1.66
9	148	2133	6.93
10	28	1760	1.59
11	13	1758	0.73
12	3	1915	0.15
13	11	1818	0.60
14	-	1843	0.00
15	1	2428	0.04
16	52	3712	1.40
Total	606	36189	1.7

Source: Demographic survey of Pokhara Nagar Panchayat 1978, jointly conducted by the Nagar Panchayat and Prithwi Narayan Campus, Pokhara.

They are found to be living in "mixed settlements" i.e. they are distributed in different areas of the town. Table 7 shows the distribution of Thakalis in different wards of Pokhara. In some of the wards the predominant caste or community is that of Newars while in others it is either the Brahmins, Chhetris, Gurungs or Magars. But the Thakalis seem to be happy in whatever locality they are. This becomes clear from the negative answers given by most of them to the question- "Have you ever thought of leaving this locality?" Again on being asked about their preference for the type of neighbourhood, 84% of them asserted that they preferred a neighbourhood of mixed settlement, i.e. where there are people belonging to different communities. Only 10% of the families said that they prefer to live only among the Thakalis and the remaining 6% said that they were in between the two extremes.

The reasons given for their preference were equally interesting. More than 60% of the families pointed out that a mixed settlement was congenial for the exchange of ideas and cultures, for business and for a better understanding of each others way of life. Some of them (22%) were of the view that people belonging to different castes and communities have different roles to play in the social, economic and cultural life and therefore, it is desirable to live among people belonging to different castes and communities.

Enclosure and Exposure: Total enclosure and exposure are two extreme states and no known community may exactly correspond to either of these. We may, however, talk in terms of the degree of enclosure and exposure of a community. A particular society or community may exhibit the characteristics of an open or exposed society in certain aspects whereas in others it may seem to be an enclosed one. Enclosure and exposure of a community in relation to others may be analysed by the use of various indicators such as endogamy and exogamy, ecological concentration, associational clustering, rigidity and clarity of group definition, etc.

In terms of marriage practice, the Thakalis are an endogamous community. They practice clan exogamy and community endogamy. In Pokhara, it was found that 96% of the marriages were within the same religious, linguistic and community group. Further, it was also found that 50% of the Thakali males had wives from thak Khola, 34% from Pokhara and remaining 16% had from Kathmandu, Bhairahawa or Baglung (These are other places having substantial number of Thakali migrants).

As is mentioned above, community exogamy is not socially sanctioned among the Thakalis. A few boys and girls who violated the rule of endogamy have been finding it difficult to get the relation socially sanctioned. Thus we see that from the point of view of endogamy or exogamy the migrant Thakalis are more an enclosed group. The strict adherence to the principle of community endogamy among the older generation of Thakalis expresses their inherent feeling towards maintaining group homogeneity in terms of culture, language, etc. But whether the rule of community endogamy can be maintained strictly for long is a pertinent question in this case. A change is already on the way which

is indicated by the preference of exogamous marriages among some of the younger generation of Thakalis. In the survey on youth Thakalis, only 55% of them reported that endogamy should be maintained. A difference of opinion with regard to upholding a traditional cultural practice is clearly visible here.

With regard to the index of ecological concentration, we saw above (Table 7) that Thakalis prefer to live among people from different communities. They are distributed in different wards of the town. The nature of their primary occupation also demands this and the Thakalis seem to be happy in whatever locality they are living.

Associational clustering: Thakali migrants do not have many such clubs or societies of their own in Pokhara. The only community level institution, as mentioned already, is the PTSSS, in which membership is restricted to the people from the four clan Thakalis, viz Chyoki (Gauchan), Salki (Tulachan), Dhimten (Sherchan) and Bhurki (Bhattachan). Another institution is an economic organization known as Dhikur. These institutions have been providing group support for the Thakali migrants in times of need and thereby helped them to get adapted.

Group definition: The claim of the Thakalis of their Thakuri origin is not less popular, and this is taken to mean that they have a desire to assimilate themselves into the caste Hindu social structure (Bista, 1967, Furer-Haimendorf 1974). This is, however, not the whole truth. The group definition among the Thakalis is very distinct. They have a "we" concept for themselves as against "they" feelings for non-Thakalis. The way the Thakalis define their own group is worth noting here. They refer to themselves as *Tamhaang* which is defined as a socially accepted child of a man belonging to one of the four patrilineal clans (Gauchan and Vinding, 1977:97).

One interesting thing which came up from the survey among the youth Thakalis,⁹ however, raises the question: To what extent the Thakali identity will be maintained in the future. Many young and educated Thakalis are gradually giving up learning their mother tongue. The survey on the youths showed that only 25% could speak Thakali language fluently. This indicates that the census data on the Thakali community is not reliable¹⁰. Besides, and this is the important point, it indicates that the group boundary among the Thakalis may grow hazy over time.

Another thing to be noted here is with regard to the terms and conditions set forth for membership in the PTSSS which is not open to outsiders or non-Thakalis. When asked "Is the membership open to others besides Thakalis?" all the migrants gave a negative answer. When further asked to give reasons for the restrictions, most of them invariably pointed out that "they" do not belong to the Thakali community and have different customs and traditions.

To get an idea about the rigidity of their group definition, they were also asked to give their opinions with regard to similarities and differences in terms of food habits, dress, life-cycle ceremonies,

festivals, religious ceremonies and place and method of worship between them and the non-Thakalis in Pokhara. Except with regard to dress and food habits, more than 85% of the migrants pointed out that they had marked differences with the people from other communities. However, inspite of the perceived differences, the Thakalis feel themselves adapted to the urban setting in general.

Summary and Implications

From the above discussion we see that the Thakalis are an enclosed community if we consider the indices of endogamy vs. exogamy and their "group" definition. It may be pointed out that as far as the cultural and religious aspects are concerned the Thakalis tend to show an enclosed and isolated character. But when the socio-economic matters come to the front, they tend to be open and showing a desire to adapt to the socio-economic life in the urban centre. It may further be added that the Thakali migrants in Pokhara culturally form a close knit society whereas socio-economically they form a part of the total urban society in Pokhara.

Again, we also see that the migrant Thakalis are preserving some aspects of their indigenous culture with some adaptational changes. This has been made possible by such institutions as the PTSSS and the *Dhikur*, which have themselves continued to exist with some modifications in the urban setting. Moreover, their integration into the urban setting has been made possible because of their positive attitude towards changes. Most of the Thakalis were expolice in stating that necessary changes in the traditional cultural norms and practices should be made from time to time to meet the challanges of the new setting. Whereas the structure of Thakali culture has been maintained, many of the functions of their social institutions have changed.

The process of adaptation and socio-cultural change as discussed above is observed to be occuring in various aspects of Thakali life, while cultural persistance continues to characterize them as a seperate cultural group. With the passage of time and generations, this situation might change gradually. Already the younger generation of Thakalis born outside Thak Kholā, i.e., in the towns and cities of Nepal, show a tendency to give up learning their mother tongue - Thakali dialect. In the course of time, the Thakali community in the urban centres might become less distinctive than it is today from other communities living in the same socio-economic and cultural setting. And it would not be surprising if in the future we find marked differences in terms of culture, language and religion between the Thakalis in the Thak and those who have moved out from their original homeland.

The discussions above has two major implications: one for the Thakali community and the other for the theories of migration and adaptation in general. As for the Thakalis, there are practical implications. The above discussion of how the Thakalis are maintaining and changing as a result of migration, shows the direction they are heading towards, the knowledge of which might help them outline their future stratigies.

With regards to the theories of migration and adaptation, this paper points out to the need to consider a two-way approach to adaptation. Most of the studies on migration, adaptation and socio-cultural change tend to look at adaptation of migrants as a one way process. They show how far the migrants have undergone changes to adapt to their new setting. This is a valid approach but proves to be inadequate. There is a need to look at the process of adaptation as a two way process wherein the migrants are not only undergoing changes but are at the same time introducing some changes in the total cultural system at the site of their settlement. In the case of the Thakalis, the migrants have contributed an economic organization to the host society by introducing the *Dhikuri* credit system. There is a need in the study of migrations to take a closer look at the bilateral direction in the process of migrant adaptation: the changes occurring not only to the migrants as they adapt to a new setting but also the changes taking place within the society of destination effected by the new settlers. This paper has demonstrated the heuristic value of adaptational studies of migrants, which might enable us to have a better understanding of the process in general.

NOTES

- * The material used in this paper comes from my research on the Thakalis between 1980 and 1984. The initial research was carried out in early 1980 as a part of the M.A. Thesis at the University of Poona. More data was collected later (November 1980-February 1981) while conducting a field-work as a Research Assistant at the Research Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS), Tribhuvan University. The information was updated in 1983-1984 while on deputation at the CNAS as a Researcher working for the Mustang Integrated Research Programme. I am thankful to CNAS for the research opportunities given to me.

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1. For a socio-economic study of migrant Thakalis in Pokhara, see Bhattachan (1980) while for an ethnographic study among the same people, see Chhetri (1980). Manzardo and Sharma (1975) discuss the role of the PTSSS in social reforms among the Thakali community. Studies from other urban centres have yet to show up.
2. There is an extensive body of theoretical and empirical literature on Circulation. However it is beyond the scope of this paper to review them here. For an updated knowledge of the conceptual and analytical distinctions between circulation and migration one may refer to the recent works by Chapman and Prothero (1985) and Prothero and Chapman (1985).
3. See Gauchan and Vinding for the historical aspects of Lha Phewa. Jest (1974) and Somali (1982) provide a summary of the diurnal

activities during the two-week long festival. Vinding's critique of Somali's 1982 paper (Vinding 1983) should be referred in order to have a clearer understanding of the Lha Phewa.

4. For a comprehensive introduction of the Thakalis, see Bista (1967), Ijima (1960) and Gauchan and Vinding (1977). The definition of the "Thakali" is provided by Gauchan and Vinding (1977) only.
5. Details with regard to the abolishment of the customs contract system are given in Furer-Haimendorf (1975) and Messerschmidt and Gurung (1974).
6. In a recent article Vinding (1984) reports that his informants in 1977 recalled a total of 270 Thakali families having left the Thak Khola region since 1960. Where they go is not reported. He cautions that this figure might be low because of the possibility of recall errors among his informants.
7. The term Dhikuri is a derivative of the original term Dhukor, 'Dhu' meaning wheat or cereal and 'Kor' meaning to rotate or to circulate. For the definition and details on Dhikuri see Messerschmidt (1978) and Chhetri (1980).
8. For details on the structure and functioning of the PTSSS and for its relationship with the '13 Mukhiya' system, see Manzardo and Sharma (1975) and Chhetri (1980). The 13 Mukhiyas refers to 13 headmen from 13 different villages in the Thak region. The institution is still active, and becomes conspicuous during important religious or social occasions and/or ceremonies.
9. A survey on the impact of urban and modern schooling, etc., on the attitudes of the Thakali youths was done in 1981. Twenty five youths between ages 15 and 30 were interviewed.
10. The census of Nepal does not collect information on community or caste affiliation in the strict sense of the terms. It only provides population distribution by mother tongue, which is certainly not the reliable indication of the size of the communities or groups of people.

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