

Tamang Transitions: Transformations in the Culture of Childbearing and Fertility among Nepal's Tamang

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Introduction

When we were asked to present a paper on the fertility transition among Nepal's Tamang, we naturally accepted. Our work among two Tamang populations has been an ongoing project covering the last 10 years while one of us has been engaged in research in a single Tamang community for over 15 years. And although our work has been concerned with a whole array of transitions, the sets of behaviors surrounding childbearing have certainly been among them.

Nevertheless, we need to make clear that we work as anthropologists. Our orientation is toward community based research in which principal investigators are in close contact with the people they study. The communities are seldom chosen to be representative in the sense of being drawn from a random sample of communities and the intensity of anthropological research methodologies makes it impossible for us to know more than a few communities with the kind of familiarity that allows anthropologists to talk so confidently about so many things. This is all by way of introducing what we mean when we talk about the fertility transition among the Tamang. If by Tamang, we

mean the entire population designated by that label in Nepal, then we cannot speak in empirical terms for the whole group. On the other hand, if we mean by fertility transition that moment when any portion of the entire group begins to consciously control the timing and level of childbearing then we can say that the Tamang have undergone that transition. And we can explore the concrete processes of that transition in those Tamang subgroups and speculate about the kinds of relationships we might be expected to find across the whole population.

That is what we intend to do here. Although our empirical data is largely the result of field research in two widely separated Tamang communities, one in the northernmost Village Development Committee (VDC) of Dhading District and the other just up the road from Kathmandu in the area surrounding Budanilakantha, we want to summarize what we have found in such a way that we can make generalizations to other groups and contribute to our understanding of the range of trajectories by which fertility transition will be accomplished in Nepal. In what follows, we begin with a note on our overall orientation; we follow this with a discussion of the relevance of fertility transition processes among the Tamang for wider groups in Nepal; the rest of our comment will be concerned with the fertility transition in our two study communities and the variety of other transitions that are a necessary part of this change.

Our data come from the Tamang Family Research Project (TFRP), an ongoing micro demographic study of social change, its impact on family relationships and life course transitions, and the consequences of these for fertility. Influenced by the micro demographic research agenda developed by John Caldwell (Caldwell, 1982; Caldwell et al., 1988), the TFRP involves a multidisciplinary team using combined quantitative and qualitative data collection in two Tamang communities (Axinn et al., 1990). One of these communities was, at the time of initial research, five to six days walk from a motorable road; the other was within easy commuting distance from the markets and job opportunities in Kathmandu. These crucial differences were associated with others such as presence of schools, monetization of the household economy, degrees of reliance on agriculture, and exposure to consistent family planning programs. Our data collection strategies resulted in extensive individual level survey data for every person in the two communities aged 12 and above in addition to such qualitative materials as open-ended interview transcripts, observational data, genealogical materials, and more general ethnographic materials for investigating social and cultural processes.

Theoretical Perspective

Our theoretical orientation follows directly on the watershed insight of John Caldwell that fertility is not a simple outcome of individual decision-making outside of larger contexts; rather, fertility levels are a reflection of family organization and fertility transitions are themselves better seen as a part of larger family transitions. For Caldwell, the key transformation enabling fertility transition is the change from a system in which wealth flows are in the direction of junior generations to senior generations to one in which flows are from seniors to juniors, parents to children. It's important to note here that Caldwell's notion of "wealth" broadens out to include--in addition to simple material, labor, and monetary flows--intangibles such as satisfactions, pleasures, and the sense of security that comes of an assured future.

For anthropologists, Caldwell's move to locate fertility transitions within familial and ideational contexts translates quite directly into the longstanding disciplinary interests in social organization, kinship, and culture. It also suggests that, in spite of the fundamental transformation in wealth flows that Caldwell argues to be a key characteristic of all transitions, we might expect to find differences in the surrounding characteristics of these transitions that are linked to relevant variations in pre-transition family and kinship systems and cultural evaluation systems. While this is not the place to develop these notions in detail (they receive more consideration in Fricke, 1997a and 1997b, and in Dahal et al., 1993), these are the underlying assumptions that require any discussion of fertility transition to make reference to surrounding transformations in family and kinship relationships and cultural morality. And this allows us to argue for the relevance of the Tamang.

The Relevance of the Tamang

The Tamang are an interesting group for reasons that go beyond their actual numbers within the population of Nepal. Official statistics on ethnic populations in Nepal are highly problematic in any case, being based on reported mother-tongue in the national census and on other often ill-defined criteria in the surveys that report ethnic identity; in addition to these problems of definition, there is a general lack of consistent data across time for the fully fleshed out ethnic comparisons that would make for strong statements about the sources of variation.

What we do know from the spotty record, however, is that the Tamang and a number of other ethnic groups generally classed as Tibeto-Burman have consistently lower pre-transition fertility levels than those of Indo-Aryan groups (Macfarlane 1976; Ministry of Health, 1977; Ross, 1984; Fricke, 1994). Thus, Fricke reported for Timling during 1981 fieldwork that the total cumulative fertility of women up to age 49 was 5.2 births compared to 6.2 births for women in the Tarai (1994: 91). Even looking at aggregate figures from Banister and Thapa (1981) one finds that fertility drops as one ascends from the Tarai through the Hills to the Mountain regions of Nepal with 6.2, 6.0, and 5.6 total births, respectively. These aggregate figures are, of course, not broken down by ethnicity, but the increasing density of Tibeto-Burman representation in the population as one moves across these regions supports the general conclusion that their fertility is lower.

From analyses with the Tamang we know that this is most likely due to the generally later ages at marriage characteristic of Tibeto-Burman groups in the past (more recently, increasing marriage ages related to education and the like has muddied this simple relationship between ethnicity and marriage). But the tie to systems of kinship and marriage is suggested by the almost identical average ages at marriage (age 19) for Gurung and Tamang, for example, two groups that are distinguished by their cross-cousin marriage systems. These marriage systems are characteristic of a number of Tibeto-Burman groups, especially those in the northern tier of Nepal and sharply contrast with the kinship and marriage systems of high caste Indo-Aryan groups in Nepal in precisely the same ways that other researchers have noted a North and South Indian distinction in marriage and kinship domains, the social standing of women, and demographic patterns (Dyson and Moore, 1983).

Insofar as differences in family system are important, then, we argue that an understanding of Tamang transitions offers more general insights into the full range of transitions among populations characterized by similar kinds of social organization. Understanding Tamang transition dynamics offers the possibility of insights into Gurung, Magar, and other Tibeto-Burman dynamics to the extent that variations in underlying family organization systems can structure the processes of wealth flow reversal. Our reading of the work of John Caldwell and his colleagues in South India (1988) suggested this to us from the beginning when we noted similarities in family transition that were clearly important for the Tamang but were not emphasized beyond

a quick mention in the South Indian work. One of these similarities included a shift in the primary relationships organized or ratified at marriage, so that where past marriages created links between members of senior generations (that is, between fathers-in-law), current marriages in a setting where young men are more likely to hold attractive economic prospects apart from their familial positions tend to involve the establishment of links between a woman's parents and her new husband (that is, a father-in-law/son-in-law link). Such a shift could only be important in a marriage and kinship system in which marriages are central to the creation of lateral links between families, one of the central distinctions between the cross-cousin marrying Tibeto-Burman groups we mention above and the high caste Indo-Aryan groups in Nepal.

Some anthropologists, including the two of us (Fricke et al., 1993; Dahal et al., 1993; Dahal et al., 1996), have called those cross-cousin systems that include a cultural stress on the ethos of reciprocity "alliance" systems. Thus, to use John Caldwell's framework for studying fertility transition in terms of processes of change in wealth flows and increasing individuation among the Tamang is to discover features of transition peculiar to alliance systems. It is these that we will draw out in our discussion.

Tamang Transitions

We turn now to the behavioral transitions that have characterized our two study communities. As we have already mentioned, our communities were chosen to explore family dynamics in markedly different settings inhabited by members of the same ethnic group. Timling, our remote settlement, was chosen to represent a community at one extreme of the continuum of integration into Nepal's rapidly monetizing infrastructure. Located far from roads and markedly subsistence oriented, it was a community with minimal participation in government sponsored programs (Fricke, 1994). Our Kathmandu Valley community, which we call Sangila (Fricke et al., 1991), was in contrast far more integrated into the web of relations characteristic of the rapidly developing areas of the country and may be taken to represent the other end of that continuum.

As we might expect, exposure to formal family planning programs occurred at different times in these settings. Sangila's entry into the fertility transition was well along by the time of our 1987 fieldwork. Timling's had only just begun. A comparison of the different

transitions undergone by these two settings will help us to highlight some of the features of the Tamang fertility transition later in our presentation.

Fertility Transitions

In 1987, when systematic data collection began in Sangila we found that 17% of those 374 ever-married women under age 65 were in unions characterized by some form of contraceptive use (Axinn, 1990 and 1992a). When looked at by birth cohort, the trend toward increasing acceptance of contraception becomes more obvious. Thus, no woman aged 55 or over reported any use of contraception; 12% of women aged 45-54 reported such use; 31% of women aged 35-44 reported contraceptive use; 33% of women aged 25-34 reported such use; and just 7% under 25 reported contraceptive use (Axinn 1992a; see Table 1 of this paper). Mean numbers of children born to these cohorts are 6.4 and 6.1 for the two older groups, 5.0 and 3.4 for the middle groups, and 1.1 for the youngest cohort.

Table 1 Cohort trends in fertility behavior and preferences in Sangila

	Age Group				
	<25	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
Average no. children ever born	1.1	3.4	5.0	6.1	6.4
Contracepting (%)	7	33	31	12	0
Desire more children (%)	69	24	9	0	0

Source: Axinn (1990: 76).

The evidence for a behavioral shift toward fertility control is clear in the comparison of the older cohorts. Some of the nature of that shift becomes clear from other statistics. Thus, fertility limitation up to that point was largely directed toward stopping childbearing rather than controlling birth timing. As Axinn (1992a: 509) writes: "In fact, our evidence is consistent with the conclusion that before the decision to stop childbearing, Tamang women find it difficult to articulate their fertility plans. Among women who said they wanted more children, a full two-fifths of the women aged 25-44 were unable to say how many additional children they wanted, even after repeated questioning."

Similarly, fully 77% of the reported contraceptive use involved permanent sterilization and the majority of these sterilizations (69%) were vasectomies.

The prevalence of both contraceptive use as stopping behavior and of vasectomies is reflected in the taped discursive interviews conducted with contraceptive users in Sangila. In discussing the rationales for engaging in contraceptive use, virtually every informant discussed the issue in terms of ultimate family size (with a preference for 3-4 children of which ideally 2 would be sons). The comments of two men, 38 and 46 years old, are typical:

It is good to do family planning. But you do it when you feel that you have a large family size, don't you? (male, 38 years old, ID no. 0070)

I've already told you the benefits of family planning. Because we have no property, it is not a good thing to have a large number of children. We must limit the number of children in consideration of our economic situation (male, 46 years old, ID no. 332).

Regarding the reasoning for preferring vasectomy to laparoscopy, our informants based their preferences on the perceived impact of the operation on the continued ability of the recipient to function in work. Those who felt a vasectomy would compromise the strength of the husband argued for female sterilization while others used the same rationale to argue for male sterilization. In general, most informants perceived the laparoscopy as more threatening to strength because it involved internal body parts.

Timling's transition during this field data collection was far less advanced than that of Sangila. Yet, it is in many respects more dramatic because of the contrast with earlier 1981 fieldwork in which no person reported contraceptive use (Fricke, 1994). Indeed, during that earlier period, informants reported exposure to mobile family planning clinics making their way up the Ankhu Khola Valley while emphatically making the case for their need to engage in unrestricted fertility. Their expressed reasons for having children constituted a textbook example of Caldwell's pretransition model. Children, it was argued were necessary to the well-being of parents and the lineage. The following quotations from discursive interviews make that clear (Fricke, 1994: 183):

Parents without children have a life of sorrow. They do all the work themselves. Who goes to Trisuli to haul salt for them? When they are old who will care for them? And when they die, their brothers will eat their land--

their brothers who have done nothing for them. I want as many children as come...one to send outside the village to work, another to cut wood, yet another to plough. If one dies, there will always be another to work (male, aged 23).

Having many children divides the work and makes sure there are more if some die. Parents will be taken care of. Children tie us to other households. They teach each other their skills (woman, aged 32).

Parents without children have a harder time working. And who will do their death rituals? Who will care for them (woman, aged 60)?

Nevertheless, between 1981 when those interviews were conducted and 1987 when TFRP data collection began five Timling men ventured to a mobile clinic in a neighboring village and became the first men in the village to undergo vasectomy operations (Fricke, 1997a). Prior to 1985, when these men initiated the fertility transition in Timling, the only fertility control for which we have records were in the very rare event of abortion induced by severe trauma among unmarried women who had become pregnant by men unwilling to take them as junior wives (Fricke and Teachman, 1993). The rationale for these abortions had nothing to do with family planning in the conventional sense.

Discursive interviews with these five men revealed similarities with Sangila. That is, family planning was engaged in among all of them for the purposes of stopping childbirth after a desired family size was reached. The same concerns about the effects of the operation on strength were also expressed. Qualitative research since 1987 has suggested that fertility limitation has become more widespread among Tamang of this area, especially among couples who have relocated to a growing migrant community in Kathmandu, but here we wish to focus on the circumstances surrounding the beginning of fertility transition. Before discussing the rationale for fertility control in more detail, we turn next to other family transitions occurring in the two communities.

Family Transitions

Following John Caldwell, our theoretical perspective suggests that we place fertility change within familial contexts. We have explored transitions in individual and family relationships in a number

of papers (for example, Dahal et al., 1996; Dahal et al., 1993; Fricke et al., 1990 and 1998; Fricke et al., 1993) and we summarize some of the relevant findings for the two settings here. Our data come from the surveys administered to all inhabitants of the two communities aged 12 and above, but we confine our discussion to reports for ever-married women (these reports are consistent with findings for ever-married men and, for reports of premarital experience, unmarried respondents).

Life course theory suggests that changes in experience at early stages of the life course will lead to changed experience at later stages. In developing contexts, much attention is given toward variables associated with individual autonomy. Because of the focus on the Tamang, a society we have characterized as organized in alliance terms, we are concerned here with indicators of both individual experience and of relationships between generations within the same family and across families united by marriage.

Increasing economic monetization is one indicator of movement away from the pretransition subsistence economy. Living away from parents before marriage is an indicator of circumstances allowing greater autonomy in personal behavior. For intergenerational relationships, we will look at trends in participation in choice of spouse. For relationships of alliance, we look at the two variables of cross-cousin marriage and the provision of bride service, or free labor, by the husbands of married women. These figures appear in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2 Cohort trends in individual experience, autonomy, and inter-family alliance in Sangila

	Birth Cohort			Total
	<1946	1946-65	1966-75	
Lived apart from parents (%)	4	11	20	10
Wagework (%)	1	10	33	9
Chose spouse (%)	12	14	25	15
Married non-relative (%)	49	49	58	50
Brideservice (%)	35	41	36	37

Sources: Fricke et al. (1993: 407); Brideservice from Fricke et al. (1998).

Note: The denominators differ for brideservice figures but with no impact on general trends.

The story for both communities is one of transition in all of these indicators. Looking at Sangila women first we can contrast the

experiences of ever-married and ever-cohabiting women born before 1946 with those born between 1966-1975 (figures are from Fricke et al., 1993). For changes in individual experience we find that among those older women only 4% had ever lived away from their parents before marriage compared to 20% of the women in the youngest cohort; similarly, only 1% of the women in the oldest group had worked at wage labor before marriage compared to 33% of the youngest cohort. For choice of first spouse, 12% of the oldest cohort reported the decision to be entirely their own compared to 25% of the youngest group. And for changes in the alliance relationships organized by marriage, we find that 49% of the oldest group reported marrying a person not related as a cross-cousin compared to 58% of the youngest group. Our reports of bride service (from Fricke et al., 1998) are more flat with 35% and 36% reporting it in the two birth cohorts.

Table 3 Cohort trends in individual experience, autonomy, and inter-family alliance in Timling

	Birth Cohort			Total
	<1946	1946-65	1966-75	
Lived apart from parents (%)	14	33	63	28
Wagework (%)	15	27	58	26
Chose spouse (%)	18	42	53	33
Married non-relative (%)	26	33	37	31
Brideservice (%)	82	63	50	69

Sources: Fricke et.al. (1993: 407); Brideservice from Dahal et al. (1996).

Note: The denominators differ for brideservice figures but with no impact on general trends.

Trends on these variables for Timling tell a similar story of change although the levels differ. For changes in individual experience we find that among those older women 14% had ever lived away from their parents before marriage compared to 63% of the women in the youngest cohort; 15% of the women in the oldest group had worked at wage labor before marriage compared to 58% of the youngest cohort. For choice of first spouse, 18% of the oldest cohort reported the decision to be entirely their own compared to 53% of the youngest group. And for changes in the alliance relationships organized by marriage, we find that 26% of the oldest group reported marrying a person not related as a cross-cousin compared to 37% of the youngest group. Bride service transitions (figures are from Dahal et al., 1996)

are much more dramatic for this setting than for Sangila, both in initial level and trend. Here, 82% of the oldest group of women reported their husband's engaging in such labor while 50% of the youngest group reported this service.

Apart from differing levels, our two settings display general trends toward increased non-familial experience, autonomy of individual decision-making, and atomization of the nuclear unit on nearly all of these dimensions. The one exception is for Sangila where the practice of bride service was already at reduced levels for the oldest cohort. Differences between the two settings have to do with differences in their relative proximity to Kathmandu, the influence of high caste Hindu culture, and starting levels and are of less concern to us in this presentation than the fact of transition itself.

Economic Contrasts and Transitions

The individual level transitions listed above both demonstrate the impact of larger structural changes at the individual level and suggest a degree of contextual change at the level of household and community economy. Within communities, the transition has been toward an ever-increasing reliance on monetized pursuits and involvement in the permanent wage labor economy. That transition is, perhaps, most dramatic for Timling where the realities of a declining land base relative to population has encouraged relocations of young people to the Kathmandu Valley and a large rate of recruitment into the Nepali armed forces.

Contrasting economic bases between Sangila and Timling at the time of the original survey suggest that the differential reliance on family networks between the two settings is tied to economic orientation as well. In 1987, for example, Timling showed much higher levels of non-monetary cooperation between families as illustrated by pasturing arrangements in which 79% of the households reported that they pastured their cattle and buffalo with other households; of these co-pasturers, only 6% did so with non-relatives. In Sangila, by contrast, only 31% reported such pasturing arrangements and of these 41% did so with non-relatives.

The availability of permanent, rather than seasonal, employment in Sangila was also much higher with over half the men aged 12 and above in Sangila reporting permanent, year-round employment compared to nearly none of the men in Timling. As with pasturing

arrangements, the greater overall monetization of economic life in Sangila is reflected in help networks for crop harvesting. Timling household heads reported that only 1% of those who helped in a household's harvest were unrelated and that only 2% of those who helped were paid in cash; Sangila household heads, on the other hand, reported levels of unrelated help at 27% and cash payments to 16% of those who helped. These figures are suggestive of Caldwell's point that economic change is a large part of the engine leading to family and fertility transitions (1982).

Moral Transitions

Up to now, we have focussed on behavioral transitions associated with fertility change. It is clear that Tamang fertility transition has occurred along with a number of other individual and family transitions. We have not explored the institutional or program changes that have enabled contraceptive use although they should be obvious in the form of the mobile family planning clinics reaching Timling and the longer presence of such clinics in the Sangila area, encouraged by such development programs as the Small Farmers Development Program in this setting (Axinn, 1990 and 1992b). But Caldwell's demographic transition model suggests deeper evaluative changes in people's thinking. We have referred to these elsewhere as moral transitions (Dahal et al., 1996; Fricke, 1997b) in order to capture a sense of cultural shifts in notions of virtue and obligation.

Caldwell has focussed on a number of general reorientations, central of which is the shift in the balance of obligations from children to parents in the pre-transition context to a flow from parents to children in the transition context. This is, of course, not to say that obligations don't flow in multiple directions in either context--it is a question of expressed moral emphasis in addition to the behavioral fact of material support. We saw in our summary of findings above that Timling informants in 1981 expressed the important functions of children in terms of their provision of labor and services for their parents. Along with those roles, informants were also reluctant to place any restriction on the numbers of children they desired. "I want as many children as come," is how one informant put it. Note here, too, Axinn's report that even in transitional Sangila, women expressing a desire for more children were loathe to discuss the actual number.

Our transcribed discursive interviews with selected informants in both settings revealed a more systematic thinking about the relative

advantages and disadvantages of numbers of children. In both Sangila and Timling, those who had participated in family planning programs as permanent contraceptors tended to suggest that 4 children represented an ideal number. If they mentioned 3, it was always in the context of 2 sons and a daughter while those mentioning 4 spoke in terms of 2 sons and 2 daughters. At one level, the personal calculus involved here is consistent with Caldwell's contrast of pre-transition and transitional environments:

Disaggregation is a product of external observation or, even more significantly, of hindsight. In relatively unchanging societies no one sees the separate bonuses conferred by fertility. The society is made of a seamless cloth.... Indeed, the respondent's ability to see clearly the separate aspects of children's value shows that the old system is already crumbling and children's roles are not as certain as before (1976: 343).

At another level survey data along with our transcript information reveals those more far-reaching transformations in the balance of obligation flows that are also a part of Caldwell's argument. To take the survey information for Sangila first, we note Axinn's finding that the correlations of parental educational attainment with contraceptive use are only weakly positive (Axinn, 1993). Women's schooling had barely begun for those old enough to engage in fertility-stopping contraception while men's schooling was only weakly positive in its correlation with contraception. Children's schooling, on the other hand, had a large positive effect on contraception and a strongly negative effect on desires for more children.

These findings are consistent with our transcripts for Sangila in which the rationale for engaging in family planning was phrased almost entirely in terms of the need to provision children. For an example, listen to the words of one man contrasting the past with the present in Sangila:

No, this kind of thing [discussions of family planning] was not there in the past... In the past, there were no words as such for doing family planning; people did not know much about it. Later, people began talking about issues like whether you could nurture your children or not--and if not, you do family planning. (male 46 years old, ID no. 332)

Or this same man's wife contrasting rich and poor families:

You see... if a person has wealth and room, he can have 6 or seven children and they can all be taken care of. They say that their [richer households' appropriate] family size is increased. But for people who lack this wealth, what can do they do with so many children? So you think about how many children fits the family situation, you see. (female, 44 years old, ID no. 333)

Another woman made the connection with education explicit:

You see, a person has to lead a hard life if he has many children. One has to educate one son, and then later another son. Likewise, one has to send a daughter to school. In consideration of one's own economic situation you need to ask why you would produce many children. It's simply not worth it, am I right, if this kind of thing creates troubles for one's life. (woman, 40 years old, ID no. 639)

In a similar vein, another informant referred to the need to provision children with an inheritance:

You see, what happens is that there is little land and if there are 6 or 7 members in the family, there will be no land left [for the next generation] to even build a house. (man, 31 years old, ID no. 223).

The contrast of these sentiments with those mentioned by Timling informants in 1981 couldn't be more clear. But such cross-sectional contrasts might be argued to be community differences rather than transformations across time. Thus, we turn finally to transcripts from Timling where evidence of a shift toward children's interests are as clear.

In analysis of 1993 discussions about marriage timing in Timling (Fricke et al., 1995), we noted that a shift in arguments around women's marriage age characterized our informants. Younger men and women were much more likely to bring up the need to put off marriage until parents were in a position to properly raise them. They argued that parents must be able to provide for their schooling and other material needs while older informants argued the advantages of earlier ages at marriage to hasten the provision of workers for the household economy. The contrast was striking. Among men the arguments for later ages at

marriage to be able to properly raise children occurred only among those under 45 years of age. While women of all ages argued for the advantages of early childbirth for providing the household with workers, only women in the youngest age groups spoke of the need to provision children themselves.

These shifts toward considerations of child well-being were even more explicit in the transcripts about family planning use. Thus, the argument for needing to provision each child with an adequate inheritance was an overwhelming concern for each of the five men receiving vasectomies in 1985. One man recounted his discussion with another Tamang man on the reasons for getting a vasectomy:

He told me, "Look your grandfather had only four plots of land and he had two sons; so, each son got only two plots of land. And, from these two sons, there came again three sons each and they also divided their land equally into three small plots from their share. And, again, when each has two sons, where are they going to get their next share of land." When he said this kind of thing to me, I thought about it and decided it had to be true. As you know, the number of people is increasing and yet the area of the land stays the same. So, as a result of this kind of deliberation, I did my vasectomy operation. (male, 48 years old, ID no. 2467)

Discussion and Conclusion: A Tamang Transition

The arguments for vasectomy in Timling, given in taped conversations in 1993, offer a clear contrast with the 1981 stress on children as providing opportunities for household diversification. Not that these older arguments have disappeared, as our transcripts for arguments concerning the appropriate ages for marriage indicate. But what we find in 1993 is a shift in the balance of already existing considerations toward an emphasis on children. Thus, all of the men receiving vasectomies couched their discussions in terms of need to support children adequately, to send them to school, and to provide for their inheritances. These considerations were present in 1981 but were consistently in the background of conversations and regarded as unproblematic givens.

In an earlier consideration of the transition in Timling (Fricke, 1997a), we suggested that the adoption of novel behavior in the form of sterilization was, in fact, motivated by a core Tamang ethos stressing

reciprocity and obligation. We argued that this ethos was unchanged, if battered, and that the arguments for resorting to family planning in Timling were an understandable change in behavioral strategies in light of changed material circumstances.

The changed circumstances in Timling are expressed in the excerpted transcript we have just looked at: new arable land for clearing is no longer available and large family sizes will lead to disadvantages for subsequent generations. This is a conservative argument for at least two reasons. First, it assumes that land (rather than success in business or the wage labor market) will continue to be the determinant of self-sufficiency; second, it acknowledges a responsibility to equip the succeeding generation with means for survival. We have treated the reasons why this obligation fits into the wider Tamang ethos stressing exchange and reciprocity in great detail elsewhere (Fricke, 1997a) and lack the time to develop it here. Support for this argument comes from the pre-existing presence of this ethos and its application to children and from a look at the characteristics of the five men of Timling who introduced the fertility transition through their vasectomies.

Standard expectations in the literature would lead us to expect these men to have lived lives embodying novel experiences, to have been exposed to new ideas through schooling or other means, and to have engaged in novel behaviors in other domains of their lives. Our analysis showed that, in fact, these men were among the most conservative of their age cohort. On several dimensions, these men lived lives and had characteristics similar to those most typical of much older Tamang. Only one of these five could read Nepali. Only one had lived away from Timling for a month or longer before his marriage. Only one man married outside of a cross-cousin relationship and all of their marriages were arranged by parents. Finally, all but one of these men performed brideservice for their in-laws after marrying. As a group, these men represent a strikingly lack of innovation. Indeed, one of these men was in 1981 one of the most vocal defenders of the need to have unrestricted fertility.

Yet, in this one area of fertility control, these men are the vanguard of the fertility transition. Our argument is that their doing so is entirely understandable in terms of the guiding ethos of Tamang culture. Change in this initial phase of transition, whatever it may become in the future, is a result of deep cultural continuities that demand new behavior in light of changed material circumstances.

There are, of course, other elements of this transition. The movement away from brideservice in Timling suggests the possibility of future transformations in the ethos that we see as central to Tamang motivation. Other changes in marriage and familial relationships recounted elsewhere (Fricke, 1997b) suggest a good deal of complexity. Our underlying points here, which we only sketch out with reference to a wide range of published materials, is that (1) the Tamang fertility transition highlights both cultural continuity and shift in the light of changed circumstances; (2) suggests that a society organized in terms of alliance strategies activated by marriage may be undergirded by a cultural ethos of a particular type, here called by us the ethos of reciprocity; (3) this ethos may make these populations susceptible to adopting fertility controls in the absence of individual level causes conventionally thought to be necessary to adopting novel behaviors.

Our comparison setting of Sangila, for which we suspect, based on oral testimony, a much more familial orientation in the earlier parts of this century exemplifies a Tamang setting in which many of the elements of contemporary change in Timling have already occurred. Here we see a much sharper boundary between the household unit and wider patriline and clan links in the areas of cooperation, a greater individuation of the moral universe to mix our own terms with those of Caldwell. Once again, this individuation seems to have occurred through the mechanisms of larger structural changes—in land availability and immersion in the monetized economy—and their impacts on individual experience through the life course. At the same time and in spite of these changes, we also see the cultural continuities in marriage behavior and tendencies toward alliance idioms that echo the pre-existing ethos of reciprocity.

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