

## **Fairy lore in the high mountains of South Asia and the hymn of the Garhwali fairy ‘Daughter of the Hills’<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This essay is divided in two parts. The first part gives an overview on fairy-related traditions in the high mountains of South Asia. It concentrates on Nuristan and Dardistan<sup>2</sup> as well as on Garhwal (there especially on Bangan<sup>3</sup>) and highlights similarities and differences between these two areas. Moreover, it looks at more distant parallels and at relationships between fairy cults and Hindu Tantrism. The second part presents a recently recorded hymn to the fairy ‘Daughter of the hills’ and discusses its functions and background.

**Keywords:** Himalayan folk religions and oral traditions, fairy lore.

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<sup>1</sup> Her Garhwali name is *Disa Dhāṅkuri*. On the etymology see below at the end of part I.

<sup>2</sup> Whereas Nuristan is an official term, the designation Dardistan is used here as an informal cover term for the area where Dardic languages – plus isolate Burushaski – are spoken.

<sup>3</sup> Bangan is a hilly area in Uttarakhand between the river valleys of Tōns and Pabar close to the state border of Himachal Pradesh. The present essay concentrates on these three areas, i.e. references to Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh are only occasional even though it is clear that fairies are worshipped also there. However, scholarly literature on fairies in these areas seems to be hardly available.

## Part I: Fairy lore in the high mountains of South Asia

Claus Peter Zoller

### 1 Introduction

Martin Litchfield West remarks about Indo-European fairy (“nymph”) traditions in the different branches of the ancient Indo-European world (2007: 303): “With the nymphs we cannot trace any one name across linguistic boundaries. But they show such a remarkable uniformity of conception from India to the Celtic West that the hypothesis of a common Indo-European background seems unavoidable. Neither independent development nor diffusion has any plausibility as an explanation... One thing that does seem clear is that these were not gods to whom one prayed, sang hymns, or made offerings. One might recite spells to ward them off... There are no hymns to the Apsarases in the Rigveda...” This is certainly true; however, it is also true that there do exist in South Asia – and here mainly in the mountains of Himalayas, Karakorum and Hindu Kush – fairy cults with prayers, the singing of hymns and offering of sacrifices. One reason why fairy-related cults are not readily found in the major Indo-European traditions is certainly the odium of fairies not belonging to the highest rank of divinities. Even though also deities can pass through changeful histories, fairies frequently appear more wraithlike and ephemeral not least because their identity is typically hidden in a group of equals. Individual fairies with individual names are, it seems, the exception.

In accordance with West’s observation regarding the remarkable uniformity of physical appearance, nature and behavior of fairies and of the realms they inhabit we will come across many striking parallels between Hindu Kush, Karakoram and Himalayas. But, of course, there exists also a big number of differences and different views, in some cases even within one and the same area. Many a differences are due to the impacts of Islam in the north-west (e.g. on the fairy lore in Chitral) and of mainstream Hinduism in the Central Himalayas.<sup>4</sup> Other differences are due to regionally limited historical changes: for instance in Bangan one can see that a regional deity *Mahāsu*, who arrived in the area at some

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<sup>4</sup> Besides influence through mainstream Hinduism (e.g. making fairies to daughters of God Śiva), also Tantrism in its many varieties influenced the area already quite early over centuries as can be seen, e.g., in the great number of ‘Yoginīs’ with local names found e.g. in Himachal Pradesh (see Handa 2001).

time in the past – according to tradition from Kashmir – consequently subdued the local fairies<sup>5</sup> and made their male leader, called *Kōilāth*, become one of his guardian deities (*bīr* < OIA *vīrā-* ‘man, hero’ [12056]).<sup>6</sup> Paradoxically, *Kōilāth* also continues to be leader of the fairies. Regrettably, the general awareness of the presence of fairies has declined in many places and therefore sometimes characteristics of fairies get confused with those of different supernatural beings and groups.<sup>7</sup> And conversely, existing ‘deep’ relationships and similarities of fairies with related supernatural beings are not easily observed.

For instance, there seem to exist in Bangani structural similarities between *divine* fairies and *earthly* ‘female village power centers’ called *zāgas* or ‘places’ and found in most Bangani villages (see p. 111; more on their characteristics is found in Zoller 2007). The *zāgas* are regarded as projections of Mother Earth (*māṭi*) (Banganis call them “daughters of the Earth”). And projections of the *zāgas* are called *giria* ‘female house/family power centers’ (Banganis actually call the *gurias* “daughters of the *zāga*”). The *gurias* are found in many Bangani-Rajput houses: in the center of the stable floor there is a hole covered by a flat stone. Thus *gurias* are the house/family equivalent of *zāgas* and *zāgas* are the village equivalent of *māṭi*.<sup>8</sup> Unlike many ‘proper’ deities, both *zāgas* and fairies lack mythologies (but further east in Garhwal there are fairy hymns, one of which will be presented in the second part of this essay) and anthropomorphic representations, both don’t receive regular worship and sacrifices (but only after long and irregular intervals); *zāgas* have no names like other deities (they are only called *zāga* of village *xyz* which also implies that a *zāga* from one village is different from the *zāga* of

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<sup>5</sup> Two of the four *Mahāsu* brothers are in fact married to fairies. When one of the two brothers undertakes a *yātrā* on his palanquin, his fairy wife is carried along with him enclosed in a sack (see p. 105). Note also that at least in the Bangani core area of *Mahāsu*’s divine kingdom there are no goddesses.

<sup>6</sup> Note that figures in parentheses or square brackets refer to the lemmata in Turner’s *Comparative Dictionary of the Indo-Aryan Languages*. The transcription and transliteration conventions followed in this essay are the same as those used by most authors for Indo-Aryan, Dard, and Nuristan languages. These conventions do not match completely, but the differences cannot be presented here in detail. One example is  $\check{c} = \acute{c} = c$  which all denote the same unvoiced palatal affricates in different languages.

<sup>7</sup> However, it is a remarkable fact that belief in real fairies is still much alive in Pakhtunkhwa and the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Yet, detailed investigations also show that the life world of the fairies and the range of interactions with humans got severely reduced due to the increasing influence of fundamental forms of Islam. An interesting study documenting this has been written by Maria Marhoffer-Wolff. Elisabeth Schömbucher has written a good and readable review of the book (see bibliography).

<sup>8</sup> In the present essay I discuss only *zāgas* because of their much greater importance vis-à-vis *māṭi* and *giria*.

another village), and only a few fairies have, if at all, epithets rather than names like ‘the angry one’, ‘the mischievous one’ or ‘daughter of the hills’. The *zāgas* are responsible for the welfare of their village area, that is welfare of humans, animals and plants, and traditionally they drove with their characteristic energy (called *mīr*) the heroes, who were regarded as their sons, into battle frenzy. Bangani fairies, on the other hand, are especially close to herdsmen and hunters, but not to warriors. It is these two categories of men – together with the shamans – who are especially closely associated with the fairies in the high mountains of South Asia, typically in those parts where pastoralism and transhumance is practiced. Even though fairies are also worshiped in other areas of South Asia (see e.g. Feldhaus 1995), many of the typical features characterizing the fairies between Central Himalayas and Nuristan and Dardistan are limited to these highlands.

‘Fairy lore’ can be differentiated into several levels. I suggest here three:

- Level 1: Direct experience of, interaction with and worship of fairies
- Level 2: Stereotypes and patterns with regard to fairy characteristics and their life worlds<sup>9</sup>
- Level 3: The fairies in oral and written fairy tale traditions

In this essay we will deal with levels 1 and 2 only although there also exists, depending on the region, a copious oral literature on fairies. A main distinction between the two categories of fairies (1, 2 versus 3) is the fact that the former are seen as real living beings while the latter populate entertaining and romantic tales, typically describing the adventures of a prince who captures the heart of the fairy of his dreams.<sup>10</sup> Not surprising, one also comes across intermediate forms like the Garhwali ballad of the shepherd *Jitū Bagaḍvāl* and the *Ācharī* fairies<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> There is for instance the very common motif that they live in crystal palaces near milk lakes.

<sup>10</sup> As an example I may mention my own collection of this type of fairy tales from Indus Kohistan which I hope to publish in the not too far future. Also in Indus Kohistan exists this type of distinction between the entertaining stories, which are very popular in the area, and real-life encounters with these fairies whose descriptions were many times reported to me during my travels in the region. However, I have to stress that this distinction does not permit the conclusion that the oral stories are perceived by the Indus Kohistani people as mere fancy and entertaining stuff. They rather insist that the fairy tales are actually inherited from the fairies and the giants, thus they also have a kind of realistic dimension (see Zoller 2010).

<sup>11</sup> Derives < OIA *apsarās*- ‘one of the female divinities connected with water’ (502).

(Chatak 1958) which contains both ‘realistic’ and romantic elements. In the course of this essay we will get to know quite a number of different appellations for fairies<sup>12</sup> – reflecting their different natures – but the extremely common Persian term *Pari* (*Peri*)<sup>13</sup> is now frequently used for all types of fairies.

## 2 Some common characteristics of fairies in the high mountains of South Asia<sup>14</sup>

The following preliminary characteristics have been put together from accounts and reports of other researchers (see bibliography) and from my own field notes. Fairies are beautiful, blonde- or golden-haired, blue-eyed and fair-skinned like European women. They live in the purest regions, i.e. typically on mountain peaks or in high-lying alpine areas.<sup>15</sup>

## 3 Fairy-related terms and functions

A typical word associated with them and their life-world is OIA \**śucya-* ‘to be purified’ (12511) with modern meaning ‘pure’ in languages from Nuristan to Bangan as in Nuristani *suči* ‘fairy’<sup>16</sup> or Bangani *śucə* ‘pure’ (as e.g. honey or the blood of a Himalayan wild goat, both of which are offered to the fairies). In Bangan, the fairies are called *mātri* which most likely means ‘mother(s)’.

OIA *apsarās-* is usually rendered as ‘nymph; going in the waters or between the waters of the clouds; a class of female divinities: they inhabit the sky, they are fond of the water’ etc. This description is based on folk-etymology. Philological analyses rather suggest basic meanings as either ‘shapeless’ or ‘shameless’ (EWA, KEWA). Later reflexes (see Turner 502) are translated as ‘a celestial nymph, a hourie’ (Pa.), ‘fairy’

<sup>12</sup> The English word is itself a borrowing from French which goes back to Latin *fata* “the Fates,” plural of *fatum* “that which is ordained; destiny, fate.”

<sup>13</sup> From Avestan *pairikā-* ‘witch’. Note that Irntraut Müller-Stellrecht (1979: 191) rightly points out that behind the cover term *Pari* are actually a number of quite different beings. This does not only hold true for the Northern Areas and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but also for the other areas in the high mountains of South Asia discussed in this essay.

<sup>14</sup> Several of the following features are also found worldwide in many other fairy-knowing cultures. See, e.g., Ditte König 1998.

<sup>15</sup> However in Bangan their residence are sometimes also found not far from villages, i.e. at different altitudes.

<sup>16</sup> Turner considers also derivation < OIA \**suvatsikā-* ‘a goddess’ (13514) but that is out of the way. More likely, the Nuristani forms are borrowings from the Iranian parallel form \**sūč-* ‘shine’ (see EWA).

(S., Ku.), ‘nymph’ (P., Old Aw.), ‘goddess’ (Si.), etc. Other related terms like the widespread cover term *Pari* have at least since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century regularly been translated as ‘fairy’ (cf. e.g. G. W. Leitner 1889: 6 and Karl Jettmar 1975), certainly also because in South Asia such beings are regularly described in similar terms as comparable beings in Western fairy tales. So also Leitner (ibid.) has found out that they are handsome and live in crystal castles, and they are fond of music and dancing. However, the ‘fairies’ found in the high mountains of South Asia must not always be romanticized and infantilized because they are rather perceived – in those areas which appear to look back at old fairy traditions with little influence from outside – as simultaneously attractive and irascible divine beings living in a perfectly pure sphere. They demand from the people of their land sacrifices and observation of all kinds of taboos,<sup>17</sup> they interact with humans and gods, they control and influence nature (atmosphere and waters), and they are ever ready to severely punish wrongdoers, especially women. However, also without projecting romanticizing and infantilizing views on them it can be difficult to keep ‘fairies’ apart from similar supernatural beings – or one may rather say that there simply does not exist one ‘type’ of fairies. Thus, the ‘same’ fairies can be addressed with different terms and, conversely, sometimes apparently different beings are labelled with the same terms. Such oppositional trends, however, also reflect the rather elusive ‘cohort’ nature of these spirits, and in my eyes a better cover term than *Pari*, frequently used by D.D. Shama in UGK, is *vāyavīya devaśaktiyām* ‘aerial female divine powers’.<sup>18</sup> Thus, I will use the term ‘fairy’ in this essay in the sense of ‘aerial female divine powers’.

Basically fairies can interact with any person, but there are some professional groups, as stated above, to which they entertain closer and more intensive relationships. In the first place hunters, herdsmen and shamans are close to them.<sup>19</sup> Fairies can also entertain relationships with

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to understand that fairies are not repositories of morality or ethical perfection; instead, they are amoral (that is, beyond morality and immorality). Incidentally, this is also a character trait of many old regional gods and goddesses in the Central and Western Himalayas (Zoller 2014: 171ff.). Consequently, the taboos of these gods and fairies – e.g. prohibition of drinking milk or consuming honey, prohibition of wearing dresses with certain colors – do not concern moral imperatives. Another example are the royal *Haru* ‘godlings’ of Garhwal who do not tolerate in their presence tobacco, dogs, pumpkins, black blankets or turbans (Oakley 1905: 210).

<sup>18</sup> The different classes of these beings can also have male members, but usually they occupy only peripheral roles.

<sup>19</sup> But below we will see that the Bangani shamans only act as fairy exorcists and not as their mediums.

human and divine kings. As indicated above, their attitude towards women is characterized by strict control and sometimes rivalry. The special relationship with hunters and herdsman has to do with the fact that fairies are known in Nuristan, Dardistan and Bangan to tend animals: in Nuristan and Dardistan they tend ibexes (*Capra sibirica*) and markhor (*Capra falconeri*), and in Bangan they tend the Himalayan wild goat (*Hemitragus jemlaicus*). From the human perspective, all three types of goat are, however, wild animals whereas the human herdsman only tend domesticated animals. Thus one observes a mirror-image system: the same animals are tended by divine herdsman but hunted by male human hunters.<sup>20</sup> In Bangan, when a hunter brings down a game he can be called ‘sacrificer’ (see below p. 110), thus with a term close to that of a priest. Below we will see (p. 88) that, at least in Garhwal and Kumaon, this mirror-image system can be reversed: the fairies can also take on the roles of ‘hunters’, ‘herders’ and ‘sacrificers’ and some (human) men who have been spotted by the divine beings consequently become ‘wild animals’ to be brought down or become ‘cattle’ for the fairies.

The Old Indo-European word for ‘herdsman’ is *\*p<sup>h</sup>aH-/\*p<sup>h</sup>oH(i)-* ‘guard (flocks or livestock), herd’ and is e.g. found in OIA *avi-pā(lá)-* ‘shepherd’. The original basic meaning of the verbal root is ‘protect; preserve, observe’ (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1995: 601) and reflexes of it are also found in the high mountains of South Asia in connection with the fairies. But I may start here with the Iranian Sakian term *mātr̥vālai-*.<sup>21</sup> It is not clear to me whether the Sakian *mātr̥s* were fairies like the Garhwali and Eastern Himachali fairies which are also called *mātris* (*mātris*, *māci*).<sup>22</sup> A designation like ‘mother’ for a fairy or a goddess can and does,

<sup>20</sup> In parts of Dardistan (especially in Gilgit and Hunza) it is said that the fairies first have to slaughter and consume one of their animals – which then is revived in some way – before it can be brought down by a hunter (Jettmar 1975: 246f.). This seems as if the fairies first sacrifice the animal before it is actually hunted. Indeed, hunting of wild goats in Bangan is seen as being similar to a sacrifice as I point out in the next sentence of the main text and further below. Still, I have not heard anywhere in Garhwal that fairies first slaughter the goat, but the mythical idea as such is widespread and e.g. also found in the Caucasus (see Kevin Tuite 1998).

<sup>21</sup> According to Oskar von Hinüber (in Emmerick and Skærvø 1987: 115f.) the term derives < *\*mātr̥-pālaka-* ‘priest of the *mātr̥kā*’ which is rendered as *deva-pālaka-* in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit (ibid.).

<sup>22</sup> These designations for the Himalayan fairies or nymphs are found at least in the area between Garhwal in the east (see UGK sub *ācarī* ‘fairy, nymph’) and at least Chamba in the west where they are called *jal mātr̥ī* or *jal jōgan* ‘the nymph, residing near a water fountain, who is believed to cast spells over women and children and has to be propitiated with sacrifice’ (Tika Ram Joshi 1911: 175). But also in Kumaon one finds similar beings called *jyōti* or *jyūti* which UGK derives < OIA *jīvamātr̥kā-* (more details are found under this lemma) but which actually may also derive < OIA *\*jala-mātr̥kā-*.

of course, turn up independently in different traditions, but in any case the rendering of the expression *māṭṛvālai-* as *deva-pālaka* is remarkable and it suggests a more basic meaning \*‘priest as protector of fairies’. There is also Sanskrit *devapāla-* ‘god-defender’ as name of various persons and places, but it is not used in connection with fairies. However, reflexes of the Sanskrit term, which is not documented in MIA, are found in the large region between Nuristan and Western Garhwal.<sup>23</sup> Here just a few examples out of many: Wg. *dāl* ‘shaman’, Ind. *dāḷ* ‘a female oracle, shaman’,<sup>24</sup> Khaś. *diala* ‘oracular priest’, Bng. *devāl* ‘professional musician (drummer and singer) of a low caste’.<sup>25</sup> The Bangani meaning has undergone a religio-semantic change because in Bangan and its surroundings the present shamans are the so-called *mālis* (< OIA *mahallaka-* ‘old man’ [9935]).<sup>26</sup> Whereas the *devāls* are traditionally the musicians of God *Mahāsu*, the *mālis* are not mediums for fairies but only perform fairy exorcisms. The *mālis* have also other religious functions, but they are certainly not ‘priests of the *māṭṛkās*’. There are no fairy priests or fairy shamans in Bangan (except that, to some extent, this role is now held by the hunters), however, in many other regions of our area of investigation these *devapālas* are indeed the ritual specialists of the fairies and act as their mediators and mediums<sup>27</sup> (on the fairy shamans in the Gilgit, Chitral and Yasin areas see Müller-Stellrecht 1980: 65f., and in Hunza see Müller-Stellrecht 1979: 262ff.); they are rather ‘fairy-caretakers’ than ‘priests’.<sup>28</sup> We thus can conclude that the *devapālas* were

<sup>23</sup> This semantics suggests that the Monier-Williams Sanskrit evidence is not the direct origin of the following reflexes in Nuristani and NIA. It is rather one of very many examples testifying a difference between so-called Inner and Outer Indo-Aryan languages (to be discussed in Zoller forthcoming).

<sup>24</sup> In Burushaski and Shina they are called *ḍayāl* and *ḍāyāl* ‘shaman’ which seem to derive < OIA \**ḍākinipāla-* (cf. OIA *ḍākīnī-* ‘female attendant on Kālī’), but since there is also Shina *dāyāl* with same meaning but with initial dental stop this derivation is doubtful.

<sup>25</sup> The common designation of *devāls* and other professional musicians in Garhwal as being members of a low caste is not correct. These groups are actually neither members of the caste system nor are they outcasts. For more details see Zoller 2014: 186 and for a study under a similar perspective on the related *baddī* bards see Fiol 2010.

<sup>26</sup> This is the correct derivation whereas the occasional claim that the word is ← Pers. *mālī* ‘gardener’ is wrong. *Mālis* can come from any caste, but *devāls* form one ‘low caste’. Nowadays, the *devāls* are the bards of God *Mahāsu* and they are not involved in professional dealings with fairies.

<sup>27</sup> I ignore here the actually justified distinction between shamans and mediums not because the distinction is hardly made in the extant literature but because it is not a really relevant topic for this essay.

<sup>28</sup> The idea that a religious specialist rather controls and protects deities and fairies (and sometimes kicks them off) is still also similarly found in Garhwal where I have been told by



traditionally understood to be so-to-say herdsmen of fairies, gods and related beings.

### 3.1 Fairies as daughters of the wind?

Besides *suči*, *ācharī* and *mātri* there are more designations for fairies. Jettmar (1975: 61, 65) mentions also *wutr* (same as *wechi*, *varoti*) and *dānik* (same as *jeini*).<sup>29</sup> According to him, the *wutr* are rather demonic in nature, bloodthirsty and not really beautiful but rather ugly with long saggy breasts. The word is usually derived < OIA \**vātaputrī*- ‘daughter of the wind’ (11495)<sup>30</sup> but this is contestable when compared with a possible parallel in Garhwal:

*bayāl* either ‘(*āchariō kī*) *julūs*<sup>31</sup> – procession (of fairies)’ or, according to Benjwal (2010: 185), ‘*aśarīrī ātmāom kā samūh* – a group of disembodied spirits’.<sup>32</sup> The first component of the word could be compared with OIA *vāyū*-<sup>2</sup> ‘hunting’ (11545) with a modern parallel in Kho., or may derive < OIA *vyādhā*- ‘hunter’ (12199) with a modern parallel in H. Both interpretations are possible and perhaps more plausible than a derivation < OIA *vāyū*-<sup>1</sup> ‘wind’. However, it is unclear whether the two *vāyū*- can actually be etymologically separated from each other (see KEWA and EWA) and anyway KEWA suggests comparing Kho. *bayū* ‘hunting’ rather with Middle Iranian \**vāyug* ‘hunter’. Note also the following description of *bayāl* in UGK (my summarized translation):

*bayāl* is a Garhwali word designating aerial female divine powers. People believe that in the last part of the night of new moon bands of spirits of the dead move around the cremation grounds. If somebody crosses their ways, especially if it is a young boy, he will die immediately.

A somehow different perspective on them is offered in a Garhwali hymn praising a Yogi where there is this line:<sup>33</sup>

*he kani holi bāvani bayāle hā*

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professional musicians that their drum “is the Guru and the deities are the pupils” (of the drum).

<sup>29</sup> The correct forms are Kt. *dānik* and Pr. *jen’rī*; they are not ‘fairies’ but, as correctly noted by Morgenstierne (1949), ‘ogresses’ and both forms derive < OIA *dākīnī*- ‘female attendant on Kālī’ (5542).

<sup>30</sup> Modern reflexes are found in Ash., Wg., Kt. and Kal.

<sup>31</sup> According to a Garhwali informant.

<sup>32</sup> The *-āl* in *bayāl* is either a *vālā* suffix or, semantically more likely, derives < OIA *dala*- ‘party, band’ (6215).

<sup>33</sup> Recorded by Heinz Werner Wessler and me in November 2013 from the bard Mijazilal.

hey how will-be fifty-two fairy-rambling-groups yes  
 ‘hey how can it be (that you, oh Yogi, are wandering followed  
 by) a rambling group (of) fifty-two (fairies), yes’<sup>34</sup>

Our Garhwali consultant suggested to translate *bayāle* here as *vāyu jhūṇḍ* ‘group of aerial beings’ which means that it is indeed not unambiguous whether the term *bayāl* is based on ‘wind’ or ‘hunt’.

### 3.2 The Central Himalayan *ēri* ‘hunters and huntresses’

There is another class of ‘fairies’ rendered as *vanadeviyām* ‘forest-goddesses’ by Benjwal which in Garhwali are called *ēri* (actually usually the alliterating synonym compound *ēri-ācharī* is used). The word can designate both an individual male being and a troupe of female spirits and it derives < OIA lex. *ākheṭika*- ‘hunter’ (cf. *ākheṭa*- ‘hunting’ [1037]).

a) The male *ēri* ‘hunter’: A description of his is found in Atkinson (1882: 825) and presented here partly in summary and partly in quotes (added with some details from other sources): The hunter is a hideous forest deity with eyes on the crown of his head (i.e. at the upper back of his skull) and four arms holding a bow, arrow, trident and an iron rod. He rambles around only at night accompanied by the fairies (*Pari*) that dance and sing with him. “Their feet are turned backwards...” He is accompanied by his litter-bearers *Sau* and *Bhau* and a cry of bell-wearing hounds.<sup>35</sup> From the hunter’s mouth drops venomous saliva. Those people who hear the barking of the dogs are doomed, and those who see the hunter either die of fear or “are burnt up by a flash of his eye, or are torn to pieces by his dogs, or have their livers extracted and eaten by the fairies who accompany him.”<sup>36</sup> But if someone miraculously survives the nightmare he will, as usual, be rewarded with the disclosure of hidden treasures. The hunter’s “temples are found on hills and desolate tracts and are never met with in inhabited places. In the middle of such temples are set up tridents, which represent Airi himself, and the tridents are surrounded by stones representing *Sau*, *Bhau*, the fairies, &c. But in some cases the deity and his followers are actually represented by carved images. The villagers worship him during the bright half of [the month of] Chait [for ten nights] ... Those possessed with Airi are called Airi’s horses or Airi’s slaves

<sup>34</sup> This line reminds one of RV 10,136 ‘the longhaired sage’ and shows the complex layering of fairy traditions in the mountains.

<sup>35</sup> According to the Kumaoni dictionary entry by K.D. Ruwali, the dogs guard a flock of sheep. Note also that the fairies in the hymn presented in the second part of this essay are also accompanied by hounds, which clearly demonstrates their huntress nature.

<sup>36</sup> The last feature reflects a wide-spread custom in the high mountains of eating the still-warm raw liver of a just sacrificed or brought down animal.

(*dungariya*)<sup>37</sup> ... They dye a yard of cloth in red ochre (*geru*)<sup>38</sup> and bind it around their heads ... they allow no one to touch them, as they consider other men unclean<sup>39</sup> ... Kids are sometimes sacrificed, and a piece of red cotton stained in the blood of the sacrifice is set up as a banner near the sacred spot."<sup>40</sup>

b) UGK states (p. 62) that in the Ravain District of Garhwal (west of the Upper Yamuna Valley) *ēri* is worshiped as a goddess belonging to the Yaksha family of the fairy race.<sup>41</sup>

That *ēri* are deities rather than demons is supported by a line from a Garhwali Pāṇḍava *jāgar*<sup>42</sup> where a series of deities is eulogized, among them also the following: *jē dhār ke ēri ko devta* 'Hail, oh Airi deity of the mountain range'. It was explained to us that the *ēri* roam through the air. From UGK (p. 59) we get the following additional information: The original home of the male *ēri* is at the peak of *Byāndhūrā* Mountain in Champavat district (Kumaon). There is his temple which does neither have a roof nor a pinnacle.

Note: There are also some Yoginī temples in Himachal Pradesh without roofs (O.C. Handa, p.c.), and the so-called *zāga* 'female power centers' (see above) in Bangani villages are also mostly without roofs. It seems that this is a characteristic of temples for supernatural beings related to fairies. But I may add here that, according to Augusto Cacopardo (p.c.), "In the Kalasha area it is indeed the other way around: the male gods have open-air shrines, while the goddesses have roofed temples."

On whom the *ēri*'s shadow falls, they turn maimed or lame;<sup>43</sup> this is called *ēri*'s arrow; if the victims develop ulcers this is called *ēri*'s poison

<sup>37</sup> The translation 'slaves' is certainly not correct since "*dungariya*" clearly reflects OIA \**daṅgara-* 'cattle' (5524a).

<sup>38</sup> In the high mountains, fairies are very frequently associated with this color.

<sup>39</sup> Also this feature of fairies' extreme purity is found in many places all over the high mountains.

<sup>40</sup> UGK presents another version (p. 59) of the story of this hunter deity according to which he was originally a human hunter who died, while hunting, through an accident and then became the deity.

<sup>41</sup> In the Central Himalayas these Yakshas appear under the name *jākh* (also *jaks*) and they are worshiped in a number of temples (see UGK), thus they are deities. The word is also found in place and village names, and it is obvious that the *jakh* parallel the *yus* 'giant' of Dardistan and Nuristan (see Jettmar 1975, Snoy 1962: 157ff., and Turner *yakṣá-* 'a supernatural being' [10395]).

<sup>42</sup> Recorded by Wessler and me in November 2013 from the bard Mijazilal. On the religious genre of *jāgar* 'vigil songs' see UGK.

<sup>43</sup> Fairies in Chitral, when irate after someone abused them, may deal such a blow at the culprit that he turns into a cripple for the rest of his life (Jettmar 1975: 430). We deal here probably with an old and widespread South Asian practice. Gavin Flood writes (2000: 42):

(see below p. 91 the *bh(a)rāri* ‘fairies’ who are also called *viṣ mātri* ‘venom fairies’).

According to Bangani perceptions, the *ēris*<sup>44</sup>, who are not worshiped by Banganis, usually rove through the river valleys while they make music with various musical instruments. And they sing, however thereby only producing animal sounds. One hears them coughing, weeping and laughing. This sound making of the *ēris* is called *gazɔ-bazɔ* ‘singing and music’ (H. *gājā-bājā*). They are naked, ape-like, but their bodies are smeared with ashes, and they carry battle-axes. One can hear them from far when they are coming near having smelled human flesh. They also arrive dancing down the mountain gutters. They live below cremation grounds (*tūth* < OIA *tīrthá-* ‘ford’ [5846]). As a matter of fact, these ‘battues’ are actually wedding processions of the *ēris* and they use to move fast like the wind from one cremation ground to the other where the women of the other group already prepare cakes of cowpats which is their favorite dish.<sup>45</sup> They also eat maize corns consisting of iron and drink buffalo urine which gives them a kick.

The above information shows quite clearly that the Central Himalayan fairies are not only associated with herding of wild goats but they and their leader *ēri* appear also as a troupe of hunters and huntresses (this is also confirmed in part II) whose targets are humans. This can be read as the counter-image of the human hunters, herdsman and former warriors. Whereas the dominant role of the fairies in Dardistan and Nuristan is that of herders, this is only occasionally mentioned in the Central Himalayas where the belligerent aspect of fairies is frequently stressed. However, also in the Northern Areas of Pakistan, superhuman hunters are known under the name *Yamalo*. Jettmar (1975: 222) says that in some areas, like the valleys of Bagrot and Haramosh, people also believe in male fairies. However, they are conceptualized as huge, plump and hulky. They are manhunters, and their human victims appear to them in the form of ibex or markhor: also here we have a mirror-image.

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“Kautilya is keen to point out the powers of the king to disfigure, maim and execute for the maintenance of the social body, the upkeep of the segmented hierarchy of the medieval Indian kingdom.”

<sup>44</sup> There is also Bng. *ēṛ, ɔṛ* ‘battue (of demonic beings)’ < OIA *ākheṭa-* ‘hunting’ (1037).

<sup>45</sup> This is also the food in the underworld (*narak*), the actual home of the *ēris*. Incidentally, old men and women become youths when they come to the *narak*, but when a younger man arrives there after death he turns into a widower. However, the God of the Dead will arrange a new marriage for him with the help of a *būtu rɔ bamēn*, that is a low-caste demon-brahmin. Here we have yet another example of the Bangani mirror-image view of the cosmos.

### 3.3 The Shina *darniji* ‘fairies’

Jettmar says in his 1958 report (p. 89) that the *darniji* fairies are the smaller images of the fairy named *Murkhum*. In his book on the religions of the Hindukush (1975: 216, 219, 222), he states that *darnijis* are either demonic beings or, at least in the Bagrot Valley, beautiful and benevolent fairies, whereas the *baráai* (on which see next) are evil and dangerous.<sup>46</sup> The name *darniji* basically means ‘the outer or outside ones’ and is also used in the fairy term *dernīji mā* ‘outside mother’. Conceptually they have a parallel in the Burushaski supernatural beings called *bilás* who are ugly women with feet turned backwards. They are divided into *hólum bilás* ‘outer bilás’ and *úlum bilás* ‘inner bilás’. The ‘outer bilás’ are pure spirit beings whereas the ‘inner bilás’ are human women with supernatural faculties (Berger 1983: 31).<sup>47</sup> Shina *darniji* either derives < OIA *\*dvara-* ‘door’ (6651) where Turner quotes Sh. *dārīnyū* ‘foreign’, or, more probably, the word is an Iranian borrowing (cf. Ir. *dar* ‘door-way or gate-way’). To my knowledge, no conceptual (‘inner – outer’) or etymological parallels to the *darniji* are found in the Central Himalayas.

### 3.4 Burushaski and Shina *baráai* ‘fairy’ and Garhwali *b(h)arāri* ‘fairy’

Jettmar (1975: 219) considers Bur. and Sh. *baráai* ‘pure supernatural being, fairy’ and *rāaci baráai* ‘guardian spirit (of Bitans [sic] [shamans, soothsayers] and hunters)’ to be a variant form of Iranian *peri* ‘fairy’. This has been rejected by Berger (1983: 29) who instead suggests derivation < OIA *mántra-* ‘thought, prayer, spell, counsel’ (9834). Yet, although this derivation is phonologically possible, semantically it is very unlikely. Therefore, the word better compares with Garh. *bh(a)rāri* ‘parī, apsarā – fairy’ (also termed *viṣ mātri* ‘venom fairy’). The ending *-āri* seems to be an agent noun suffix and the same as in the Bangani fairy name *Ruṣāri* ‘the angry one’ (see below p. 101). The Burushaski, Shina and Garhwali words probably derive not directly < OIA *BHUR* (*bhurāti*) ‘move quickly’ (because of different root vowel) which, according to EWA (II 250), reflects PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup><sub>r</sub>H-*<sup>48</sup> but may rather directly derive < PIE *\*b<sup>h</sup>erH* (EWA *ibid.* *BHAR*<sup>1</sup>) ‘to swiftly agitate, hurry, bustle, convulse’.

<sup>46</sup> But note that Jettmar also stresses that even between the relatively small distance from Bagrot to Gilgit the ideas regarding fairies change considerably. And in Baltistan the *baráai* are seen as rather benevolent. However, they hate cattle, chicken and terrestrial women.

<sup>47</sup> The word *bilás* is an Iranian borrowing, cf. Taj. *abulhavas*, *bulhavas* ‘greedy’ (Berger *ibid.*).

<sup>48</sup> According to Mallory and Adams, the root is PIE *\*bher-* ‘see, bubble’.

## Notes:

a) Even though OIA *bhuráti* ‘moves rapidly, palpitates’ (9535) has several modern reflexes, it cannot be the origin of this ‘fairy’ lemma. Besides the reflexes mentioned by Turner, the OIA word is also reflected in Bng. *bùr*<sup>49</sup> ‘strong and quick floating of water (usually in water mill)’. But relationship with OIA *\*bhurvati* ‘boils’ (9536) is unclear, which itself may or may not have a Vedic precursor. For OIA *\*bhurvati* Turner quotes only a modern reflex in dialectal Paš., but the word may also be found in Garh. *bhurceṇ* v.i. ‘to burn, scorch’ (said about green vegetable that gets burnt in the pot on the hearth due to too little water). Note also that the ‘fairy’ words *baráai* and *b(h)arāri* match neatly with Young Av. *barənti* ‘if it storms’ (EWA II 250) which is etymologically related with OIA *BHUR*.

b) In the upper Tõns Valley north of Bangan there is an alpine lake called *Bharārsar Tāl* which is a pilgrimage site for people of the region (UGK), but I have no information whether the lake is regarded as a dwelling place for fairies. Moreover, in *Buḍā Kedār*, a pilgrimage site in District Tehri in Garhwal, there is a dual mountain called *Bharār* and *Bhigun*. It is standing to reason that the name of the first mountain is related to the *bh(a)rāri* fairies.

#### 4 More on fairies and their relationship with hunters in Nuristan and Dardistan

The following features and patterns have been collected mainly from Jettmar (1975). Many of them have parallels in Garhwal as will be shown partly in this section and partly further below. Once again: fairies are beautiful, blonde-haired, their face is red and white like that of “English ladies”, i.e. female Europeans (p. 220).

The colours red and white are also associated with Bangani fairies and represented through their red and white flags (see pictures below).

Some say their toes are turned backward (also Garhwali fairies have sometimes their feet turned backwards, see above p. 88, and so do females in the Bangani underworld). They can also appear as old hags with tusk-like teeth and they can transform into any shape, but fairies are also noble and eternally young. With blue eyes and shimmering clothes (p. 429) they appear before men with whom they fall in love. Fairies emit

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<sup>49</sup> Accent on the vowel of a Bangani word indicates a high-falling distinctive tone which usually, but not always, is the result of loss of aspiration.

a sweet smell. They fear dirt and black clothes (but are fond of lightish dresses).

In Bangan the traditional clothes of the people were/are dark. This has been explained to me that dark clothes are also worn as a protection against fairy attacks.

The name of the fairy residing on Mount Devameru (Nanga Parbat) is, according to Lorimer, *Mādi*.<sup>50</sup> In the Gilgit area they are also called *mayélgus*, *mayálgus*, *meélgus* ‘fire-sparking fairy (visible in meteors)’ (cf. Bur. *gus-* ‘woman’ and Berger 1983: 12) and Leitner (1889) mentions a “*méll khatun*” ‘a famous beauty among fairies’ which may literally mean ‘mountain lady’.<sup>51</sup> The fairies in this area live in village castles on top of the highest mountains like Rakaposhi or Nanga Parbat. There they live under the reign of a queen. It is also said that up there are milk sources that feed ponds in which the fairies like to bathe.

This is a pattern belonging to the above level 2 of fairy lore. It is widespread and, more remarkably, also found in a Mahābhārata song from Bangan (Zoller 2014: 47-49). In this song, Kuntī, the mother of the Pāṇḍavas, checks out various lakes (e.g. made out of iron, gold etc.) but finally decides to bathe in a lake of milk because “the Gods then will call me the daughter of a goddess.”

The fairies can shape-shift into ibex, markhor or eagle, but sometimes also into crows. According to Peter Snoy (quoted in Jettmar 1975: 221, fn. 151), they can also change into snakes, bees or wasps. Also in Bangan they metamorphose into bees (see below p. 102), and in Garhwal they are occasionally called *cācarī* (see part II) which compare with OIA (Udbhaṭa) *cañcarī* ‘bee’. Sometimes they fall in love with young men, typically shepherds. But a man may instead coerce such a fairy into the role of a mother who adopts him and who then guarantees him her continuous protection. Some people insist that fairies are so pure and holy

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<sup>50</sup> The word may be connected with OIA (partly lex.) *mādhavī-* a.o. ‘procuress’, ‘name of one of the *mātr̥s* attending on *Skanda*’, ‘honey-sugar’, ‘an intoxicating drink’ and ‘rich in honey’. Cf. Br. *mətəks* ‘honey’, Bshk. “*mud*” ‘wine’ (Biddulph), and Dari. *mātike* ‘to get drunk’ and *māṭla* ‘drunk’ (all with preservation of a medial stop), and Toch.B *mīt* ‘honey’ and *mot* ‘alcohol; alcoholic beverage’. A clearer case for the here suggested etymology is the name of a Ḍākinī worshiped in Himachal Pradesh in Saraj under the name “Devi Madabhakhan” (Handa 2001: 68) who is said to have come from Kashmir and whose name quite clearly means ‘she who feeds on intoxicating drinks’. Regarding the phonology of the above words, see Witzel (2005: 131) on the opposition *-t-* vs. *-dh-* in the word for ‘honey, mead’.

<sup>51</sup> But this etymological suggestion would not hold if “*mell*” does not mean ‘mountain’ (cf. e.g. Pog. *māl* ‘hill’) but rather is the same as *meél-* (in *meélgus*) whose etymology is unclear.

that any idea of a sexual connection is out of the question (p. 422). Also in Chitral the fairies are pure and benevolent but also moody and irascible. Some Chitrali rulers have claimed to have fairy ancestry probably in order to counter their image of being foreign immigrants (p. 425).

Similar practices are found in Garhwal. For instance, in the Garhwali fairy hymn presented below, the Nine Fairies are said to be the daughters of certain chivalrous or royal persons. Moreover, some deities, e.g. like God *Mahāsu* in Bangan, are married to fairies. To be more precise: *Mahāsu* comprises four brothers, and the two eldest of them, namely *Boṭh* and *Povasi*, have fairy wives. In their case it is plausible to assume that the marriages took place not in order to obliterate *Mahāsu*'s image of being an invader – since this image is rather cultivated in the annual performance during the *Daknācaṅ* festival in form of a ballad that celebrates his advent from Kashmir in the Tōns Valley – but in order to tame and confine the independent fairies.

On p. 427 Jettmar mentions a fairy living in a juniper tree, and that hunters would fix scraps of cloth on the tree.

In Bangan, fairies have different places of residence and some of them live in pine or fir trees which can be marked with red scraps of cloth (see below figure 6).

Fairies have sovereign territories (p. 428).

Also in Bangan they have their territories (see below p. 109f.).

Relationships can exist between a fairy and an individual hunter but also between her and a kin association. Fairies punish through rain, tempest, hailstorms and flood debris accumulation.

Also in Garhwal there are many stories and songs describing erotic relationships between fairies and young men (usually herdsmen). Two stories from Bangan are presented below p. 114. In Bangan lives (a type of) fairy called *śruai* who is worshiped in order to prevent hailstorms (see below p. 108f.).

It is said that quite a few times fairies have abducted young men. Fairies drink the blood of the animal brought down by the hunter (p. 430f.).

Both things are also done by Bangani fairies (see p. 110).

Especially women get possessed by fairies partly due to mistakes done by them (p. 442). In one case, a woman stepped on the toes of a fairy and in another case a woman gushed out hot water before the door and scalded an invisible fairy child standing right there.



Also in Bangan mostly women get possessed, usually due to some mistakes committed by them (see below p. 104f.).

But there are also the so-called Perizhuni, women who go into controlled possession and have the fairies speak through them (p. 443).<sup>52</sup> Fairies are exorcised by professional exorcists called Peri-Khan (p. 441).

In Bangan fairies are exorcised once a year jointly by a Brahmin and a shaman (*māli*) (see below p. 104).

#### 4.1 Jettmar on hunters

A hunter first needs to win the trust of one or several fairies. In the night before the hunting expedition they appear to him in a dream, sometimes in European clothing, and disclose to him where he can find the game. The hunter has to purify himself and avoid milk and sexual contact. In the morning he gives the fairies a sacrifice of bread doused with goat ghee which he distributes among children. After killing the animal, it gets disemboweled, and heart and liver are taken out and roasted: “Peris like the smell of smoking blood” (p. 246). A common idea is that the gun of the hunter pre-announces an imminent hunting success by turning restless and producing some sound (p. 248).

This can be compared with traditional Bangani ideas according to which some famous battle-axes (*daṅgrɔ*) formerly started to buzz in order to indicate that they were eager for a fight.

In the Northern Areas, fairies can get involved in combats. Jettmar was told (p. 249) that if in the Haramosh Valley a fairy appeared in a dream of a (bellicose) man carrying the head of an ibex or markhor, this indicated that the dreamer would soon kill an enemy.

In Bangan, the *zāgas* ‘female power centers’ in villages (their similarities with fairies have been mentioned above p. 81f.) roused through their energy (*mīr*) a battle-intoxication (*gêrɔ*) in the warriors and steered them into battle (see Zoller 2007).

In former times it was custom to bring back into the village the heads (or hacked-off hands) of the enemies.<sup>53</sup> Women danced around the heads, and the heads were used as polo balls before they were fixed above the gate of the village fortification.

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<sup>52</sup> This is not known to me from Bangan or Garhwal.

<sup>53</sup> See also Jettmar (1975: 359) for another example for fairies’ involvement in killing of enemies. He also calls attention (*ibid.*) to former similar practices among the Kafirs.

Also in Bangan it was formerly customary among the *Khūnd* sub-caste of Rajputs to bring home the heads of enemies and play football with them – the latter at least affirmed in oral hero songs. The heads however, were later-on deposited for a rather short time (because of fear of reconquering though the enemy) in the “mouths” of the *zāgas* which was done in order to increase their power (for more details see Zoller 2007). Above we have seen that Bangani fairies and *zāgas* share some common features. Therefore it is not surprising that in one area fairies are involved in head-hunting and in another the *zāgas*.<sup>54</sup>

Jettmar (*ibid.*) rightly highlights the similarities between hunting of animals and fighting with enemies, and he accentuates its religious basis. The warriors in the Northern Areas, like the hunters, acted to acquire fertility and blessing for their community like formerly also the Bangani warriors.

### **5 Summaries of other authors’ observations on fairy traditions in Nuristan and Dardistan**

Irmtraud Müller-Stellrecht notes<sup>55</sup> (1979: 262) that shamans in Hunza have seven or twenty-one protective fairies. They use the shamans as mouthpieces. During a session, the shaman drinks goat blood<sup>56</sup> (thinking that it is milk). In order to maintain his contact with the fairies, he has to be absolutely pure: no sexual contact before a session, clean body and avoidance of cows and all its products: milk, meat, leather, dung.

In Bangan and its surroundings, horses are traditionally regarded as impure, and milk and leather are subject to different kinds of taboos in certain villages and/or for specific lineages.

Means for getting a fairy under one’s control in the Northern Areas are the following: taking away their clothes, throwing cow-dung at them, making knots into their hair (1980: 66, fn. 156).

Taking away the clothes of the fairies in order to get control of them is also a procedure known in Bangan (see a story below p. 114).

Each hunter needs to win a protective fairy with whom he develops a personal relationship which can develop into a love affair (1980: 191).

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<sup>54</sup> On former head-hunting in neighboring Himachal Pradesh see Hendriksen (1976: 35). For similar practices in Garhwal and Kumaon see the hero stories collected in Oakley and Gairola (1935). In Zoller 2007 and 2014 more references can be found.

<sup>55</sup> Many details presented by her are quoted from Lorimer.

<sup>56</sup> In Bangan and some parts of Himachal Pradesh shamans drink goat blood that spurts out of the trunk of the sacrificed animal during sessions performed for deities.

Also in Bangan hunters had traditionally relationships with fairies (see below p. 109f.) and I was told that a 'sensuous' relationship could exist between a warrior and a *zāga*.

As already mentioned, fairies usually live on top of the highest mountains in wonderful palaces; they milk their domestic animals – ibex and markhor – in containers made of precious metal. They wear superb clothes. Besides hunters, shamans also have personal contacts with them in order to get from them answers to questions the shamans' clients have asked. Fairies command the weather and can evoke according to their will rain, hail, snow and storm. Fairies punish those men with whom they have a relationship when the men enter into a relationship with a human woman. Unmarried hunters are more successful than married ones (193 fn. 42).

D.L.R. Lorimer (1929: 519) observed that in the Gilgit region there are female (*peri*) and male (*periān*) fairies. Their eyes are vertical. "They can fly; but if cow-dung is thrown on a Peri, or if its clothes are held in the smoke of a cow-dung fire it becomes unable to move... Peris wear green clothing ... and they don't like people wearing red colors. Their human confidants are the Dayāls ... The Daiyals say, "We understand what the Peris say. We communicate it in songs to the people ..."

Below we will see that the fairies of Bangan wear ribbons in the colors green (rarely), red, ochre and white. There exist obviously color-related interconnections between Bangan and the other parts of Garhwal and the Northern Areas.

Alberto and Augusto Cycopardo (2001: 25-26) quote Jettmar (1965: 117) who had stated that "In pre-Islamic days this region [namely Kafiristan, Chitral and Gilgit or rather the whole of Kafiristan and Dardistan except Kashmir] shows a multiplicity of social and religious systems which can be regarded as variants of a single basic structure." They further observe that the Shin had "a 'pastoral ideology' constructed around goat-herding, and based on a polar opposition between the pure mountain areas and goat-herding on one side, and agriculture and the village areas on the other."<sup>57</sup> The opposition is gendered: males are closer to the sphere of the pure; females, especially their sexuality, to that of the impure. The sanctity of the wild mountain areas is connected to the belief in mountain

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<sup>57</sup> It seems that societies in mountainous areas with pastoral economy typically ascribe either to the goats or the sheep a central cultural-religious role. For example, among the Pamir Tajiks, the sheep fulfills a similar role as the goats in societies of Dardistan (Parkes 1987: 654, Litvinskij 1983).

spirits, mostly female, who herd the wild caprids as their domestic animals and own the pasture lands of the heights ... There can be little doubt that this peculiar constellation basically had its roots within the Indian universe ... The question is to what extent the Peristani systems should be seen as an independent development from an early Indo-Aryan basis, possibly harking back to pre-Vedic times ... and probably influenced by local pre-Indo-Aryan cultures, rather than a late and marginal by-product in the history of the great religions of the subcontinent.”<sup>58</sup>

## 6 Fairies in Garhwal

Govind Chatak (1973: 62) writes about the *ācharī*:<sup>59</sup> They live on mountain peaks like *Khait* Mountain (in Tehri Garhwal) and near lakes, they are beautiful and splendidly dressed. They plague women (the term for this is *chāyā lagan* ‘shadow contact’), but it is not difficult to stop this through worship and the usage of amulets. The fairies do not attack men, but they fall in love with them and abduct them, but having enjoyed them they jilt or even kill them.

The most famous Garhwali story about fairies seducing a young man is that of *Jitū Bagaḍvāl*.<sup>60</sup> In a crucial scene, the fairies sit into the corner of his eyes and in his ear channels and suck his blood and eat his flesh.<sup>61</sup>

## 7 The *mātri* fairies of Bangan

### 7.1 General features

Unlike gods (*deu, deuta*) and guardian deities (*bīr*), fairies (*mātri*) have little or no individual identity, and thus mostly – with a few exceptions discussed below – no own names. People say that one can see fairies

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<sup>58</sup> I will shortly take up this question again at the end of the first part of this article.

<sup>59</sup> My summary translation from Hindi.

<sup>60</sup> A good description concerning story, performances, publications etc. is found in Alter 2012.

<sup>61</sup> *sāt baiṇī ācharī ain, nau baiṇī bharārī* ‘there came the seven *ācharī*-fairy sisters, the nine *bharārī*-fairy sisters’. The phrase of the seven *ācharī* and the nine *bharārī* is a pattern found also in other Garhwali ballads and hymns, also in the hymn presented in the second part. I think this is a clear cue that *Jitū* got attacked by fairies in the shape of bees. Interestingly, Alter says about *Jitū Bagaḍvāl* (2012: 10) that “[I]like a bee he would fly this way and that.” I interpret this as an indication for his intrinsic fairy nature: before he got abducted by the fairies he already is of a fairy-like nature.

moving around either with sheep or with black dogs.<sup>62</sup> Fairies walk in groups ahead of their herds while spinning<sup>63</sup> and regularly shouting *pwwwaaa*<sup>64</sup> in order to goad the animals. A number of them live inside rock faces. In Bangan there are at least three such rock faces, one near the *Debēṇ* (*devavana*) temple for *Pṛvasi-Mahāsu* high up in a mountain forest (see picture p. 113), another in mid height between village Kiroli and the alpine site Loasu, and the third below village Rauṇa at a place called Kuāṇu not far from the Pabar River which forms the western and south-western boundary of Bangan.<sup>65</sup> Inside these rocks they live in houses and palaces made of silver, and close to the buildings are heaps of gold and silver. Other fairies live in the following trees which, however, must show a recess in their stem: *rōi* ‘type of coniferous tree’ (< OIA *rōka*- ‘light, splendour’ [10826]), *murōṇḍo* ‘type of pine tree’, *kevē!* ‘the Himalayan cedar *Cedrus deodara*’ (< OIA *kilima*- ‘a kind of pine’ [3187]). In some cases, such trees are thought to be surrounded by an invisible house (smaller than a normal house) with a slanting roof. Bangani fairies are exuberant and playful, and they like to dance, however usually single (i.e. not like in community dances in the villages). They are “loose character type of goddesses” and some people say they are the *devadāsīs* of the gods.

Bangani fairies have white skin, blue eyes and golden hair which reaches down to the heel, and older people say that they look like the wives (*mīme*) of the Europeans. They don’t wear headpieces. They have a (female) leader or a “queen” whose name, however, is not known. They wear a silvery, lightish transparent skirt<sup>66</sup> that reaches from the hips to the feet. From their shoulders fall multicolored ribbons to their feet which are called *dḥze* (probably connected with OIA *dhvajá*- ‘flag’ or rather < Dhātup. *dhvajati* ‘goes, moves’ which compares with Av. *dvažaiti* ‘flutters’) and which are “like a gown”. Fairies can fly through the air, indeed they like to commute up and down along mountain ridges. Some

<sup>62</sup> That fairies in Bangan and Garhwal can be accompanied by dogs will also be shown further below in this part of the essay, and it is also mentioned in the fairy hymn in the second part. It verifies the huntress-nature of fairies in the Central Himalayas. There do not seem to exist supernatural huntresses in Nuristan and Dardistan which may be due to the distinct masculinism there.

<sup>63</sup> Also male human herders in Garhwal use to spin while walking with their herds.

<sup>64</sup> Practically the same shout is heard in Indus Kohistan for goading donkeys or horses.

<sup>65</sup> There is no doubt that Bangani fairies are especially closely related with the high alpine areas; yet they also have residences in lower areas. On the other hand, the main temple of *Mahāsu* is in relatively low-lying Hanōl at the banks of the Tōns-River; however, his most high-lying major temple, which is in *Debēṇ*, belongs to *Pṛvasi-Mahāsu* who is particularly closely related with the fairies.

<sup>66</sup> Clothes in lightish colors are regarded as bad by Banganis.

Bangani villages that are located at the lower end of a ridge, like village Jāgṭa in the Khōṇiāṭo Valley, have put up at the uphill border of the village a menhir (see figure 1) the task of which is to stop the fairies from entering the village. The menhir itself is also called *māṭrī* and there may be a “*puja*-stone” at its foot. On the way from Tyuni Bazaar (at the confluence of Pabar and Ṭōns Rivers) up to village Kiroli, one passes through a forest where there is a wooden shrine devoted to the fairies. It is empty, but at least occasionally one finds multicolored ribbons fixed to the front of its roof and representing the clothing of the fairies. In some places a fairy temple consists of a kind of a stone wall which is called *māṭriū rō gōr* ‘fairy house’ (see figure 2). There are also fairies living in tents/ camps (*dēre*) close to milk lakes. In some places one finds small wooden fairy shrines with some stones placed inside on house gables, as in village Naitṽār,<sup>67</sup> these are *māṭri* shrines.



Figure 1. *māṭri* menhir at the side of a *murōṇḍo* pine tree.



Figure 2. *māṭri rō gōr* ‘fairy house’ at the side of a *murōṇḍo* pine tree.

When shepherds arrive at the alpine meadows, they use to offer sweets to the fairies. There are hundreds of fairies. They have one *syāṇi* (elder female leader), who is always the first to take a bath while the other fairies keep an eye on her clothes (so that they may not be stolen).<sup>68</sup> They also have to comb the *syāṇi*’s hair. Fairies are fickle and unsteady, and

<sup>67</sup> At the confluence of Rupaṅ and Śupaṅ, the two tributaries of the Ṭōns River. The old name of Naitṽār is actually *tharō* ‘(sacred) place’ (< OIA *sthātrā*- ‘station, place’ [13752a]).

<sup>68</sup> For parallels in the Northern Areas see p. 96.

fairies are very bloodthirsty.<sup>69</sup> They are close to six feet high but of very tender appearance.

Upland *Debēṇ* (*devavana*) in Bangan is the bygone center for fairy worship. *Koīlāth* is guardian deity of *Povasi-Mahāsu* who has a temple in *Debēṇ*. Both *Povasi* and his guard *Koīlāth* are aligned with the fairies in a somewhat paradoxical way: Both are engaged in keeping the fairies in check, but *Koīlāth*, despite his role as guardian deity of *Povasi*, continues to be leader of the fairy troupes. This is, for instance, suggested by the fact, that his symbolic representation, an iron staff with a horn-like attachment on top (see below photos on p. 106f.), is draped during *yātrās* with the same multicolored ribbons which are also found fixed to fairy shrines (and his own shrines) and which symbolize the dress of the fairies. And *Povasi-Mahāsu*, who is otherwise everywhere regarded as the controller of fairies, does not hesitate to regularly incarnate as bumblebee – the typical embodiment of the Bangani fairies.<sup>70</sup> If someone makes him angry, he scatters hemp seeds as punishment into the fields of the culprit (because hemp plants are annoying weeds) and then flies round them, i.e. he *contaminates* the fields. However, if he is in good mood, he likes to fly as bumblebee to the flower fields in *Debēṇ*.<sup>71</sup> The tree associated with him is the *kevēl* ‘the Himalayan cedar *Cedrus deodara*’, which is, as we have seen, a favorite habitat of fairies. Some people say that the wife of *Bōṭh-Mahāsu*, whose name is *Nōṭari* ‘the naughty, mischievous one’ (< OIA *niṣṭhura-* ‘hard, cruel’ [7505]), and the wife of *Povasi-Mahāsu*, whose name is *Ruśari* ‘the angry one’<sup>72</sup> (< OIA *RUṢ* ‘be angry’), are actually fairies.<sup>73</sup> They do not receive any worship,

<sup>69</sup> It is probably due to this rather oppositional character of theirs that they can be both associated with sinister beings like the *ēṛis* and portrayed as innocent beings living in crystal palaces near milk lakes.

<sup>70</sup> We have here, together with the just-mentioned case of *Koīlāth*’s representation through an iron rod draped with ‘fairy ribbons’, two examples for a more widespread South Asian phenomenon, namely *an identity contamination* of a ‘dominant’ and a ‘subjugated’ personality. This may be also seen in case of *Jīṭū Bagaḍvāl* who flies around like a bee (see above fn. 61) and it can be clearly seen in case of Himalayan deities whose core identities as snake gods got superimposed by identities of Mahābhārata actors like Duryodhana or Karna (see Zoller 2014: 178).

<sup>71</sup> The four *Mahāsu* Brothers are also associated with the four seasons. *Povasi-Mahāsu* is associated, not surprisingly, with the spring season.

<sup>72</sup> On the other hand, some people say that *Ruśari* is actually the wife of *Koīlāth*.

<sup>73</sup> Obviously, these are not ordinary names of goddesses. The *Mahāsu* brothers are of *Nāga* ancestry (Zoller 2014), and under this perspective the marriage of the two elder brothers with fairies is not surprising because also in the Northern Areas there exist striking affinities between fairies and snake deities, and in Garhwal (see part II) fairies are sometimes said to be the daughters of *vāsukī nāga*. Müller-Stellrecht (1980: 59) points out the following parallels: Both *Nāgas* and *Parīs* react strongly against pollution of water bodies; both reside

and during *yātrās* they are transported in sacks! (See below photo 3 which shows a boy standing at the left side with the sack hung around his neck and containing [the figure of] *Ruśari*. The long sword in his hand embodies the divine kingship of *Mahāsu*).



Figure 3. *Mahāsu yātrā* with professional musicians.

The rather hostile attitude of *Povasi-Mahāsu* and *Kōilāth* towards fairies continues in the so-called *zāga-pūjās* ‘sacrifices to the female village power centers’ (more on these centers below) which serve, apart from strengthening and rejuvenating the *zāga* (see Zoller 2007), also to drive away ghosts and fairies out of the villages. Fairies may also appear as parrots<sup>74</sup> (in Indus Kohistani and Tibetan traditions they can embody as doves [see e.g. Bielmeier 1984]) but most commonly they are visible, as pointed out above, as bees (*mākhi* < OIA *mākṣikā*- ‘bee’ [9696]). According to God *Mahāsu*, the fairies earned this curse which turned them into bees due to their “questionable moral conduct”, but also in Dardistan, as already pointed out, one of the manifestations of fairies are

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on top of the highest mountains; like *Nāgas* also *Paris* possess pearls, gold and jewels; and in stories with similar narrative patterns, sometimes *Nāgas* and sometimes *Paris* occupy the same actor functions. According to Khan Hasrat (1996: 189), a Khowar name for ‘fairy’ is “*nangīni*” basically meaning ‘mothers’ “a term used for fairies as an expression of respect” but actually related with OIA *nāginī*- in the sense of \*‘a female snake’.

<sup>74</sup> This may be an influence from a widespread motif found in fairy tale stories.



bees or wasps (Jettmar 1975: 221, fn. 151 who quotes Müller-Stellrecht and Snoy).

One month after the common Diwali of the Plains, in many hill regions in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand people celebrate another ‘Diwali’ which is transgressive in nature in various ways – e.g. when young men and young women dance in separate circles on the dancing ground and sing indecent songs. During this ritual festival, demonic beings from the underworld make their appearance,<sup>75</sup> but also fairies are attendand. The festival lasts for two night, the first night is called *rəṇ devāla* (with first word < OIA *rāṇa*- ‘delight, battle’ [10595]) and the second night *burī divāli* ‘old Diwali’. For instance, this festival is celebrated on a big ground outside the Bangani village Māūsār.<sup>76</sup> At the south-western edge of the ground there is a pine tree with a red-and-white flag marking the habitat of the fairy named *Kāli*.<sup>77</sup> At the north-eastern end stands a temple for *Pṛvasi-Mahāsu*, and directly outside the temple to the left of the entrance, two more red-and-white flags are deployed, marking the presence of fairies. The presence of the fairies during this transgressive festival is – together with other characteristics of Bangani and Garhwali fairies already mentioned above and to be mentioned below – a rather clear indication for their divine-terrifying double nature.

I may add here that the fairy *Kāli* is also found e.g. in a small shrine directly at the entrance to the compound of the most important temple of *Mahāsu* in village Hanōl at the banks of the Tōns River. And in high-lying village Deoti is another temple for *Pṛvasi-Mahāsu*; there *Kāli* resides directly in the sanctum. She is said to be a female *gaṇa* of *Mahāsu* (cf. OIA *gaṇā*- ‘troop, flock’ [3988]), and *Kōilāth* is sometimes called a male *gaṇa*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> These four beings are possibly the four fathers of the demonic Kauravas of the Mahābhārata. They are represented by young men wearing animal masks of a ram, a boar, a bull and a he-goat (on the demonic ancestry of the Kauravas in the *Pṛṇḍuan*, the Bangani oral Mahābhārata, see Zoller 2014).

<sup>76</sup> For a number of years the festival was abandoned in Bangan due to political correctness pressure from outside, but at least in some places it is now celebrated again “because the deity (*Mahāsu*) wants so”, I was told. I attended this festival in 1986.

<sup>77</sup> She has nothing to do with the *Kāli* of mainstream Hinduism, but her name is probably an adaptation or rather distortion of *Kōili*, still found as the name of a fairy consort of *Kōilāth*, and meaning ‘(she who looks as black as) charcoal’ (see below p. 105).

<sup>78</sup> The fact that *Kōilāth* is not only a guardian deity (*bīr*) of *Mahāsu* but also part of his *gaṇa* certainly reflects his fairy background.

### 7.2 *Some more details on Bangani fairies*

Small children in Bangan are not allowed to be taken out of the house until the *nāmkaṛaṇ* ‘name-giving’ sacrament has been performed. Otherwise they run danger to get possessed by fairies.

Bng. *uċṣṅgṵ, uċṣṅglṵ* ‘the effect of the influence of fairies or cremation ground ghosts upon s.b. (usually upon women and children); a bad omen; the ingratiating of o.s., the creeping into (if one ‘behaves like a fairy’)’ (with a *-l(ṵ)* suffix) derives <OIA *utsaṅga-* but not with main meaning ‘the haunch or part above the hip; lap’ (1870) but rather with lex. (and rather literate) meaning ‘embrace, association, union’.

### 7.3 *Bangani fairies and involuntary possession*

The *māṭrīs*, who are controlled by *Mahāsu*, mostly possess women from any caste. Usually, women get possessed by them if they have done something wrong, e.g., crying loudly in the forest, sleeping in the forest, (partially) exposing themselves. A few days after such a woman got touched by a fairy, she falls ill and gets fever, headache and debilities. Now before she gets treated, she is obliged to strictly observe purity prescriptions with regard to caste, food, etc. If she does not do so, her state will either worsen or the fairy discloses herself to her and admonishes her. This goes on until the woman decides to undertake a *yātrā* (*jaṭrṵ*) to *Debēṇ* where every April or May during a festival such possessed women undergo an exorcism (see a photo of the site below on p. 113). An infallible sign for the priest (*deopuzia*) and the shaman (*māli* < OIA *mahallaka-* ‘old man’ [9935]) – who are the exorcists – that a woman indeed is possessed by a fairy is, when during the exorcism the woman makes some propositions to the shaman through graphic gestures. The shaman would then turn away his face “because of shame”. In *Debēṇ* stands, as mentioned above, a temple of *Pṵvasi-Mahāsu*. There the fairy *Kāli* is found behind the temple in form of a flag. At the opposite end of the forest glade stands a big Deodar (Himalayan cedar) tree. In the process of exorcism, the fairies are banned into this tree by the shaman. This tree constitutes an element of a group of three: directly beside it are a temple of *Kṵlāth* and the remains of a former *Kṵli-maṇḍap*.<sup>79</sup> Very obviously, *Debēṇ* was originally a sanctuary of the fairies, the fairy leader

<sup>79</sup> The *Kṵlis* are the dominant outcastes in the area. Note, however, that traditionally their relationship with the Rajputs (the other dominant caste in the area) is not characterized by the opposition ‘impure – pure’ but rather by the relational term ‘menial – master’. Cf. OIA *kola-* ‘name of a tribe inhabiting the hills in central India’ and e.g. G. *koḷi* ‘a particular Śūdra caste’; and note OIA *maṇḍapa-* meaning a.o. ‘temple’.

*Kōilāth* and their ‘outcaste’ religious specialists,<sup>80</sup> before the sacred clearing was usurped by *Mahāsu*.<sup>81</sup>

Bangani *gods* have guardian deities who are inferior to them, whereas Bangani *fairies* have a male or female leader. Even though I could not find out the name of the female leader, my guess is that it is *Kāli*. The name of their male leader, as mentioned several times, is *Kōilāth*.<sup>82</sup> I suggest to derive his name < OIA \**kokila-nātha*- ‘the lord (who is black as) charcoal’.<sup>83</sup> The same *kokila*- is also reflected in *Kōilu* ‘name of a guardian god’,<sup>84</sup> *Kōili* ‘name of a fairy’ and *Kāli* ‘name of a fairy’. Interestingly, on a mountain pass above the Bangani village Sarās is a shrine for *Kōilāth* and his fairy wife *Kōili*. Thus it is quite obvious that the fairy couple of *Kōilāth* and *Kōili* are the old leaders of the fairies of Bangan. This is also supported by the fact that from among *Mahāsu*’s four main guardian deities, named *Kōilu*, *Kōpla Bīr*, *Śerkuṛia* and *Kōilāth*, only *Kōilāth* is said to be original and long-time resident of the area whereas the other three were immigrants who came together with *Mahāsu* from Kashmir. During processions *Kōilāth* is represented as an iron staff with a horn-like attachment on top on which can be fixed red or multicolored ribbons (see figures 7 and 8 below).

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<sup>80</sup> The structure of the sanctuary with the so-called *Kōli-maṇḍap* suggests that formerly the *Kōlis*, who are now regarded outcasts, were the shamans/mediums of the fairies. And I may again mention the fact that the fairies of Bangan do not have (any more) their own shamans/mediums as against the fairies of Dardistan and Nuristan.

<sup>81</sup> This may also be a reason that fairies in Bangan do get sacrifices, but there are no fairy hymns in Bangan.

<sup>82</sup> There are exceptions: On a mountain pass above the Bangani village Sarās is a sanctuary for *Kōilāth* and his wife *Kōili* (probably basically same meaning) who is a fairy.

<sup>83</sup> See OIA *kokila*- ‘charcoal’ (3484) and Turner’s remark that “all NIA. forms must or may rest on \**kōilla*-“ which is supported by the Bng. dental *-l*-.

<sup>84</sup> He is described as being always hungry for food. He does not have a weapon, so, in order to drive away ghosts he throws consecrated rice at them. He wears shoes and white cloth, is of fairly small size but athletic and young. He has short black hair, but no beard or moustache.



Figure 4. Shrine of *Koilāth* in *Debēñ* with dead 'fairy cedar'.



Figure 5. 5 Inner sanctum with *Koili* (right) and wild (left) and mild (middle) forms of *Koilāth*



Figure 6. Shrine entrance with bells and multicolored ribbons and 'handkerchiefs'.



Figure 7. The *çhori* staff symbolizing *Koilāth*.



Figure 8. *Povasi-Mahāsu* on palanquin,<sup>85</sup> *chōri* staff of *Kōilāth* and flags of fairies.

This staff is called *chōri* (< OIA *\*chaṭa-* ‘stick, cane’ [4966]), and is also said to be his *vāhana-* ‘conveyance’ although obviously it represents himself as a male fairy.<sup>86</sup> His weapon is a pike (*khāṇḍo* < OIA *\*khaṇḍaka-* ‘sword’ [3793]) and he fends attacks from demons: If they approach from ahead he blows on the combined fingertips of his right hand and then makes a moving out gesture with his right arm; if a demon approaches from behind, he breaks off a twig from the *bekhēl* thornbush and puts it on the path which then functions as a barrier (*bār*).<sup>87</sup> *Kōilāth* is

<sup>85</sup> The silver box contains his metal bust which is not called *mūrti* but, as everywhere in the region, *mōrō* (< OIA *mukharā-* ‘leader’ [10167]).

<sup>86</sup> For representation of a female fairy as a wooden pole see next page.

<sup>87</sup> Note also that the penetration of a fairy into a human body is experienced by the person like the pricking of a thorn. This is called *kāḍo kisālṇo* which either means ‘to create pain (with) a thorn’ or ‘to create pain (with) an arrow’ (see OIA *\*kāṇṭa-* ‘having thorns’ [3022] and *kāṇḍa-* ‘arrow’ [3023]). The origin of the verb is somehow unclear, but according to a language consultant it is connected with Bng. *kīs* ‘awn, beard’ (also ‘goose pimples’) which compare with OIA (Kālidāsa) *kaṇiśa-* ‘an ear or spike of corn’. According to tradition, the *bekhēl* thornbush had its origin in *Debēṇ*. Since formerly *Kōilāth* did not have an own weapon, he got this bush as weapon. In olden times, this bush was very big like a tree, and *Mahāsu* gave its timber to *Kōilāth* so that he could build his own temple. People extract oil from it, which ‘belongs’ to *Kōilāth*, and they use it in certain ritual festivals like *śūriāt* ‘Shiva ratri’.

described as an elderly but strongly built fellow, he walks barefoot, he wears long black hair but no beard or moustache, and he wears a white cloth.



Figure 9. Shrine of *Kāli* fairy in Bangani village Bhutanu together with fairy flags.

#### 7.4 Fairy protection against hailstorms

Wooden poles called *Śoruai* (n.f.) as protection against hailstorms<sup>88</sup> are found in Bangani on hilltops within a village area (never outside it) and are sometimes fixed to a *zāga* as e.g. in village Mainjani (figure 10). They are probably representations of fairies – though not every Bangani would agree with this – because also in Bangani it is said that fairies control the weather. In village Mainjani the *Śoruai* receives a sacrifice of a female goat on such a hilltop every year on a Sunday in March because the hailstorm season lasts from March to June. On the same day also other fairies, (the fairy) *Kāli* and God *Mahāsu* receive worship on hilltops. *Mahāsu* (especially *Čālda-Mahāsu*) is said to be responsible for rain.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. OIA *śaru-* ‘missile’ [12336] and Bng. *śoru* ‘hailstone’; the basic meaning of *Śoruai*, however, must be ‘arrow bearer’ or ‘spear bearer’ because the person who carries the royal parasol of *Čālda-Mahāsu* (the youngest of the four brothers) is called *čhoruai* ‘parasol bearer’.





Figures 10, 11. Śoruai-fairy defences against hailstorms.<sup>89</sup>

### 7.5 Fairies and hunters

Traditionally hunters (Bng. *naḷia* ← *nāl* ‘gun’ < OIA *nāḍī-* ‘tube’ [7047]<sup>90</sup>) organize their hunting expeditions also according to messages through dreams. Some dream patterns have to do with fairies: If they dream that fairies are leading (a herd of) sheep, this means that game can be hunted. If fairies are leading (a herd of) goats, this means that the hunter will bring down a *thiār* ‘Himalayan wild goat’. The hunters converse with fairies while dreaming and the fairies may tell them: “For 15 days we are there and there and for 15 days we are there and there.” In this way, the hunter can find his game. It is also said that formerly (in a former life) fairies were human shepherds, and anyway they are the protectresses of the wild animals. Hunters have to take care that no blood of the killed animals spills on their (own) clothes. Otherwise the fairies will punish them and tell them: “You have killed our animal!”

Bng. *oṛai* means (a) ‘a shelter or cover for hunters’ or (b) ‘the own hunting area of a hunter’<sup>91</sup> which is said to be roughly a circle with the radius of a gunshot. Such an *oṛai* also corresponds with the territory of

<sup>89</sup> The upright oblong stones which are topped by whitewashed round stones represent two of *Mahāsu*’s guardian deities, namely *Raṅg Bīr* and *Jaṅg Bīr*. The square stone construction further behind in front of the house is a *zāga*.

<sup>90</sup> Note also Bng. *naḷe ke deṅo* ‘to hunt (go for hunting)’.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. OIA *\*ōḍḍā-* ‘shelter, screen’ (2544) but more likely is derivation < OIA *avaṭā-* ‘hole in the ground’ (774).

one fairy. These *oṛai* are scattered outside the cultivated area with ‘hunting wasteland’ in-between, meaning that outside the *oṛai* no game can be hunted. If someone wishes to become a hunter, he moves around in the hills trying to bring down game. If he fails, he gives up the idea and says: “My sign of the zodiac (*rās*)<sup>92</sup> does not match with any *rās* of a fairy.” But the successful hunter returns next time to exactly the same place and will again bring down game there because his *rās* and the *rās* of the local fairy match.<sup>93</sup> A certain *oṛai* must not belong to only one hunter, but can also be shared by two or three. The killing of game through the hunter is a *sacrifice* for the fairy. Thus, when they appear to him in a dream, they prompt him to go hunting because they want a sacrifice.<sup>94</sup> Consequently, the moment the *naḷia* brings down a game, he is called *ḍaṅgruai* ‘carrier of a (battle-)axe’<sup>95</sup> (*ḍaṅgrɔ* ‘[battle-]axe’ < OIA \**ḍaṅga-* ‘stick’ [5520]). Then he takes out some blood with his hand and sprays it around in the cardinal directions. The fairies receive the soul (*sās* < OIA *śvāsá-* ‘breath’ [12769]) of the animal and consume it.<sup>96</sup> Actually, deities, guardian deities and fairies “eat” the *sās* of the animal and “drink” its blood by inhaling the smell of the blood. This blood is regarded *śucɔ* ‘sacred, pure’ and fairies relish its smell. Having brought down the game, the hunter carries it home, and only he is entitled to consume the heart (*ziḍoli* < OIA \**jīva-dola-* ‘live-litter’ [5239, 6582]) because *ziḍoli* (or rather *ziu* which is the invisible ‘essence’ or core of the *ziḍoli*) is after *sās* the second highest element in the animal. If he would not eat it, the fairies would take offence at him for a long time.

Fairies emanate an animating and radiating numinous energy which is called *tēz* ‘immaculate, pure splendor’<sup>97</sup> (< OIA *tējas-* ‘fiery energy’ [5946]). Also deities (e.g. *Mahāsu*) emanate *tēz*, however with a higher intensity than fairies.<sup>98</sup> Another commonality of deities and fairies

<sup>92</sup> Actually ‘moonsign at the time of the birth’ is meant here.

<sup>93</sup> This shows the need for a personal bond between hunter and fairy.

<sup>94</sup> This can be seen as a mirror-image of the ‘sacrifice’ conducted by fairies of Nuristan and Dardistan mentioned above footnote 20.

<sup>95</sup> Like the sacrificer in the village who is also called *ḍaṅgruai* because animals are traditionally sacrificed in Bangan with the *ḍaṅgrɔ*. In Kalashaland axes are used by shamans “against spells and curses” (Loude 1996: 332).

<sup>96</sup> Actually both men as well as animals have two souls each, in Bangani called ‘old soul’ and ‘young soul’. It is the ‘old soul’ which is consumed by fairies and deities. But ‘eating of a soul’ is also done by mythical heroes like Bhīmsen in the Paṇḍuaṇ, the regional oral version of the Mahābhārata, where it is said that he ate the souls of Droṇa, Bhīṣma and Karna after they got killed in the war (Zoller 2014: 377–79).

<sup>97</sup> The word seems to be an old *tatsama*. As a verb *tēzɔ* it means ‘to give a push (e.g. to a swing)’.

<sup>98</sup> Heaven is said to be filled with *tēz*.



is that both belong to the *deu zuni* ‘(beings) of divine origin’ (cf. OIA *devayoni-* ‘of divine origin’). The ‘earthly’ but also numinous complement of *tēz* is *zōr* ‘power’ (← Pers.): gods, heaven, sun and moon, and fairies only have *tēz*, the Bangani female power centers *zāga* (see figure 11 below)<sup>99</sup> and guardian gods (*bīr*) possess both *tēz* and *zōr*, whereas demon gods,<sup>100</sup> ghosts and demons, the god of the dead etc. possess only *zōr*.

Fairies like landscapes in light colors which are called *çitkə* (< OIA *çitrá-* ‘bright; variegated’ [4803]) and which are reddish, whitish, yellowish. Therefore, a place where fairies prefer to reside is called *çitkiaç*. The opposite is *bəškə* ‘dark-coloured’<sup>101</sup> like brown, black, dark blue, but also pale, pallid. The traditional dark clothes of Bangani men and women are believed to be protective against attacks from fairies, and, as mentioned above, Banganis have a traditional dislike for lightish clothes.



Figure 12. A Bangani *zāga*.

<sup>99</sup> In case of the *zāgas* of some Bangani villages like Peṭari or Thoḷi the flat stones that cover the sacrificial holes inside the *zāgas* (usually called “mouth”) are called “signs of the fairies”. Also this suggests a relationship between *zāgas* and fairies. This is also interesting because the regionally dominant god *Mahāsu* certainly tries (also through the exorcisms) to hold control over the fairies. His relationship with the *zāgas* has always been described to me as one of mutual respect. This may be a political correct statement, but I have also heard of occasional skirmishes between the two: once a *Mahāsu* procession passed by a *zāga* who, through her power, flung the palanquin bearers and accompanying Brahmins to the ground.

<sup>100</sup> They are called *rākṣas devta*, are worshiped in temples like ‘normal’ deities but are seen as very sinister characters. One example for a *rākṣas devta* is *Pōkhu* in village Naitvār.

<sup>101</sup> Perhaps connected with an allomorph of OIA *busá-* ‘chaff, any rubbish’.

### 7.6 *The erotic side of fairies and the notion of *čħruāñ* “ashes stuff”*

I must start by saying that the following section is not more than a snippet of an aspect of cultures in the high mountains of South Asia that has so far largely gone unnoticed: the (partly transgressive) erotic side of divine beings.<sup>102</sup> In many places between Nuristan and Himalayas one comes across divine/demonic beings – an example could be the Garhwali ‘bawd goddesses’ (see e.g. UGK p. 501) – related in immodest stories, sung in indecent songs and performed in indecent rituals that are in circulation but usually (and fortunately) evade the notice of casual visitors from outside. There are talks about fabulous penisses and multiple vaginas and other unusual ‘freaks of nature’. Such narratives do not squarely fit in our times – they relate transgressive sexuality with community fertility and prosperity– so they are endangered because local people fear stigmatization through outsiders who feel called upon the spread of timely ideologies in those peri-pheral regions and desire to clear out the old dust traps: the wild fairies have already been domesticated in many places, and their former shamans shoe-horned into their proper (i.e. low) caste place. Thus the following small observations are probably on the verge of becoming history:

1. In former times it was like this: Sometimes, when a man or a woman was outside the village with a non-relative boy or girl, then the adult took a handful of earth and pressed it “out of fun” on the genitals of the child. This is called *čħruāñ* “ashes stuff”.<sup>103</sup>
2. When one is on the way towards *Debēñ*, then there are – still at a distance – several elevations from which one can get the first glance of the forest clearing with the temple and the rock-face inhabited by fairies (see picture on next page and the fairy flag to the right).

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<sup>102</sup> One example is found with Jettmar (1961: 88f.) who says in connection with the above-mentioned fairy named *Murkhum* (see p. 91) that once a year a she-ibex was sacrificed to her (which had been sent by the fairy before). Only women were present for the occasion which the exception of one man, the priest (“*zhabāñ*”) of the fairy. And then “...the priest danced before the goddess (without clothes, as some audacious people maintained) taking liberties with the surrounding women.” Examples of ritual obscene speech in Nuristan are given by Snoy (1962: 106f., 118). Of course, festivals where salacious songs are sung, e.g. during marriages, are still common in many parts of South Asia. But ritual performances with a religious background where transgressive-erotic acts are staged are now very rare and about to disappear.

<sup>103</sup> It will soon become clear that this gesture symbolizes the ‘burning’ of the genitals. This has a counterpart in ideas that vulvas can split into many parts which itself may have a parallel in Kashmiri Tantrism: In Abhinavagupta’s *Parātrīṣṅikāvivaraṇa* Goddess *Mālinī* is characterized as *binmayoni* ‘she whose vulva is split’ (White 1998: 183, 193).

If a young man went for the first time that way, the following happened: at such a place the accompanying Koḷi straightened the ground and scratched a triangle into the ground, understood as the genital of all the fairies which was called *pus*. The newcomer then had to bow to and greet the ‘genital’ with the *ḍāḷ* gesture (folding his hands). After drawing the ‘genital’, the Koḷi said:

*aḍ dḍṇia be, kite ḍāḷ kḍr ki ḥḥruāṇ ja dinne nokhai<sup>104</sup> ε*

“Come down here, you either make the greeting gesture or the ashes stuff has to be applied; it’s an introductory gift.”<sup>105</sup>

In case an ‘apprentice’ has not done that, the Koḷi would throw him down in front of all the other companions, open his trouser and press a handful of earth on his genitals. If the ‘apprentice’ would still be reluctant, the Koḷi would say:

*nokhai ja dḍṇiā denne etke, ḍḍṇike ḍāḷ kḍrie te zīb laia*

“here you have to give an introductory gift, first make the greeting gesture, then touch (with) the tongue (the ‘genital’)”



Figure 13. *Debēṇ* with fairy rock-face and fairy flag.

<sup>104</sup> The word is ← Bng. *nokho* ‘unfamiliar, unacquainted’ which is < OIA *upākhyā-* ‘discernible, observable by the eye’ and negative prefix.

<sup>105</sup> A *nokhai* is a “first present” e.g. s.th. given or taken at a first visit.

Thus, if the apprentice is not willing to greet the fairy and kiss her ‘genital’, his genitals will be burnt symbolically.<sup>106</sup> I was told that for an ‘apprentice’ such a scene is shameful. Moreover, he is very scared about the reaction of the others who are also present. There is the following related story:

Once a shepherd slept on an alpine meadow when fairies came, took off his penis and covered the place with earth. They took away his penis in order to “play” with it. Later the shepherd woke up and noticed what had happened. But he fell again asleep and in a dream he saw the fairies. He bade them to return his penis. They told him: “Come the other day to this and this place. There we will return you your penis.” So it happened.

The word *choruāṇ* is connected with *chār* ‘ashes’ (< OIA *kṣārā-* ‘ashes’ [3674]) and I got the following explanation: The fairies put the earth on the genitals so that the young man thinks this is ashes and ergo he would conclude that his genitals got burnt off and he would not suspect the fairies. In some Old Diwali songs there is the line *peḷḷo mṛṛo zḷi* ‘(my) penis is burned off’ which corresponds, I think, with the very common curse used in everyday situations: “I burn your moustache/beard!” Another fairy story also contains some widespread patterns:

A young shepherd went for the first time up to the alpine meadows at the ridge called *Caī Śīl*.<sup>107</sup> In the morning he saw the fairies taking a bath in the morning dew. Meanwhile his sheep ran away, so he returned to the hut where also some old shepherds stayed. When the same incident recurred for several days, the old shepherds finally came to know the facts. So they advised the young shepherd to grab the clothes of the fairies, make a knot into them and run back to the hut. Since he had everything except a wife he agreed. Before the old shepherds left the hut, they advised him to keep the captured fairy inside a room without an opening. When he troupe of fairies arrived at the hut, their female leader negotiated with the shepherd and it was agreed that they would get back their clothes and he would marry one of them. So it happened. But one day his fairy wife asked the shepherd to bring her water because she was thirsty. Before going he locked the door very carefully. But there was a very small hole which he had not noticed, and through this hole the fairy escaped.

Also in the Northern Areas are stories in circulation describing young men lifting the clothes of fairies (Jettmar 1975), and the knot made into the clothes of the Bangani fairies can be compared with a story from

<sup>106</sup> It is worth noting that also in the Northern Areas fairies may emasculate men for which a story is found in Müller-Stellrecht (1980: 193).

<sup>107</sup> The northern end of this ridge merges with the chain of the High Himalayas.

Hunza where a shaman catches a fairy by making a knot in her hair (Lorimer 1929: 521).<sup>108</sup>

## 8 Widespread similar patterns for classification of mountain landscapes

### 8.1 *Bangan*

In *Bangan* the landscape is divided in three parts in terms of the opposition between ‘pure’ and ‘impure’, thus in ‘pure – mixed – impure’:

- a) *kāṇḍo*<sup>109</sup> ‘pure and cold alpine region with meadows and high peaks’
- b) *śucō kāṇḍo* ‘forests, hills, the middle area of human habitation (between valley ground and high peaks)’
- c) *nikami nevē!*<sup>110</sup> ‘impure and hot deep valley floors with the big rivers’

a) Associated notions are: *śucō* ‘pure’, *śot* ‘truth’, *śli* ‘veracious’. It is the area where fairies can easily be seen. It is compared with heaven (*gōiṅ* < OIA *gagana-* ‘atmosphere’ [3950]). The area is (traditionally) taboo for women and can be visited only by male shepherds and hunters. Note also that only wild animals can see fairies, not the domesticated ones. People, who come for the first time to the *kāṇḍo* area, may fall in a faint because of the pure fragrances.<sup>111</sup> To this area belong: musk deer, Himalayan wild goat (*Hemitragus jemlaicus*), Himalayan pheasant (*Lophophorus imeyanus*), musk deer, a type of eagle (*bōd*), but also cow, goat and sheep and the non-cobra snakes called *deu sāp* ‘divine snakes’; various types of grass and mushrooms, grape and wild strawberries, the Himalayan cedar *Cedrus deodara* (*kevē!* [also called *kemaḷo*]),

<sup>108</sup> The magic-symbolic character of both actions is obvious.

<sup>109</sup> *kāṇḍo* < OIA *kaṇthá-* ‘border, immediate proximity’ (2680) (Turner has mixed here several different lemmata, see Zoller forthcoming) with parallels in West Pahāṛī ‘*kanda*’ ‘high pasturing slopes and meadows’ (Handa 1998: 73), Kal. *khaṇḍér* ‘mountain pass’ and in Bal. *kaṇḍ* ‘hill pass’.

<sup>110</sup> *nikamō* < OIA *niṣkarman-* ‘inactive’ (7475) (cf. Kṭg. *nəkammō* ‘bad, useless’) and for *nevē!* (also *neū!*) I suggest derivation < OIA *\*nīpālaya* ‘lowland’ (cf. OIA *nīpā-* ‘situated low, deep’ [7548]) against Hendriksen’s implausible suggestion to derive Kṭg. and Kc. *neū!* ‘low-lying hot place’ < OIA *nīca-* ‘low’ and a suffix.

<sup>111</sup> Jettmar (1975: 359) writes that in the Bahuk Valley in the region of the Kalash are two mountains inhabited by fairies and a fairy lake called Bahuk-o-chat. Only pure boys are allowed to approach the lake, everyone else would fall in a faint.

*l̥ēvər* ‘a huge type of fir’ and *khərśu* ‘oak’ as well as cereals like wheat, millet, the sacred *anəni* rice (< OIA *aṇuni*- ‘millet’ [195] with nasal consonant swapping), *əlai* ‘amaranth’,<sup>112</sup> snow and spring water.

b) Area of human cultivation: mix of a) and c).

c) Associated notions are: *nikamə* ‘impure’, *əət* ‘untrue’, *badaliū* ‘skewed’. It is compared with the underworld *jəmpri* (OIA *yamapura*-). Here belong water buffalo, cobra, vulture, dung beetle, owl, rat, fish, frogs, chicken, horse etc., and trees like *əār* and *lōj* which are called *būt pēr* ‘demon trees’. It is said that people formerly thought that in the deep valleys no flowers can grow.

The opposition of *śucə* and *nikamə* is also projected on the bodies of humans, gods and fairies: the upper portion of a body from head to hip/navel is *śucə* and the lower portion is *nikamə*.<sup>113</sup> This division includes also the inner organs, e.g. *bšš* ‘lungs’ are *śucə* whereas *təllə śeuṭə* ‘large intestine’ is *nikamə*. Note, however, that both male and female sexual fluids (both are called *bīrya* – OIA *vīryā*- ‘semen’ [12061]) are regarded as *śucə* even though the female *bīrya* is thought to be located in the lower half of the body whereas male *bīrya* is placed in the upper half. During intercourse, the *tēz* ‘animating and radiating energy’ of man and woman creates heat which melts and mingles the two *bīrya*. Instead of *bīrya*, also the term *śucə məə* is used (Zoller 2007), the basic meaning of which is probably ‘honey fount’ and thus would derive, however as a borrowing from a non-West Pahārī language, from OIA *srutá*- ‘streaming’ (13886) and *mádhu*- ‘honey’ (9784). I have also been told that *śucə məə* has been given to man by God, but that it actually belongs to a woman, and that in heaven milk streams are flowing and there are honey springs which are also called *śucə məə*. This suggests a nexus between sexuality, honey and fairies (as bees), all of which are pure. In Nuristan, honey was an offering

<sup>112</sup> Amaranth is closely associated with fairies (perhaps because of its reddish colour?) as can be seen in the fairy hymn in the second part. This grain is quite similar to millet; the high value of millet in Bangan can be seen in the semantic development of OIA *aṇuni*- ‘millet’ into ‘sacred rice’. Millet is also highly valued in the Northern Areas, and Jettmar (1975: 63) points out that the *Yush* (OIA *yakṣá*-) ‘hunters’ are closely related with this grain which points to the ancientness of its use.

<sup>113</sup> So, at least traditionally, this opposition is not projected on the castes. Note also that the traditional representation of a deity in Bangan and large parts of Himachal Pradesh is not called *mūrti* but *mohra* (< OIA *mukhará*- ‘leader’ [10167]) which is a metal bust typically presenting the deity from head to navel. This differing term makes much sense because, as I will explain below in the last section 11, fierce deities and fairies (‘mothers’) can be organized in this tract of the Himalayas in families with a leader.

for the Goddess Kushumai (who appeared in goat-shape) (Snoy 1962: 145).<sup>114</sup>

### 8.2 *Indus Kohistan*

A very similar vertical geographical segmentation is found here as described by me (Zoller 2010). The corresponding terms are *sùz* ‘pure’ and *murdâr* ‘impure’:

Area	activity	types of beings	purity degree
high mountains	hunting	men and fairies	+
alpine pastures	herding	men and women	±
permanent settlements	agriculture	men and women	±
settlements in plains	business	men and women <sup>115</sup>	–

### 8.3 *Kalasha country*

Peter Parkes (1987: 640) suggests a ‘pure-impure’ bipolar pattern. Here the terms are *ónješta* ‘pure’ and *pragata* ‘impure’. Examples for pure

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<sup>114</sup> Maybe all this is the background for the fact that Kalash women are not allowed to eat honey and that honey appears sometimes to be a taboo in the Northern Areas of Pakistan (Stellrecht 1980: 193): When a man, who was married to a fairy, ate honey “the fairy wife became wrath with her husband” and consequently rid herself of him. About Nuristan, Parkes notes (1987: 650): “Like the meat of male goats, honey is treated as a highly sacred substance which is forbidden to women and must be treated under conditions of extreme ritual purity. The sacred status of bees and their honey is elucidated in several myths that present the hive as a divine exemplar of masculine social order, of male co-operation under the leadership of a ‘king bee’ (*maçhërik ša*), explicitly associated with the regal domain of the mountain *sūči* ...” The tabooing of honey in this area is probably old. Gavin Flood (2006: 144) quotes from the early medieval *Mrgendra-tantra*, which belongs to Kashmir Shaivism, about Shaiva practitioners who have taken a special *vrata* ‘observance’: “The *Mrgendra* defines an observer of *vrata* as someone who has given up meat, women and honey...” He thinks that the term ‘honey’ would refer to a fermented beverage but this is not really likely. On the other hand, one finds in Peter Bisshop and Arlo Griffiths’ presentation of Atharvaveda-pariśiṣṭa 40, which is a medieval text titled *Pāśūpatavrata*, in verse 6.14 the phrase “Those who undertake this observance of Paśupati with faith, to them they give nectar ...” where ‘nectar’ is translation of *madhu* (2003: 341). Also this quote may indicate an ancient magico-religious function of honey.

<sup>115</sup> This fourth segment is certainly a later addition, and also in Indus Kohistan the original system was ‘pure – mixed – impure’.

items given by Trail and Cooper are honey, wine, snow, spring water, flour, juniper and male goat meat.<sup>116</sup>

<b>pure</b>	<b>impure</b>
mountain	valley
pastoral	agricultural & domestic
male	female
divine	demonic

According to Parkes (op.cit. p. 649), under the category ‘pure’ in Kalasha country fall: mountains and pastures, juniper, holm oak (like *khɔrʃu* ‘oak’ in Bangan), markhor (like Himalayan wild goat in Bangan), honey-bees (are embodiments of fairies in Bangan and regarded as one of the purest animals), altars, goat-stables, men. Under the category ‘impure’ fall: lower valleys, onions and garlic (these items plus eggs are traditionally not part of Bangani diet, even though it is not clear whether they have been regarded as impure), “*rhoy*” (sic) ‘red tubers of a shrub, cattle, (sheep), hens and eggs (like in Bangan), birth-house (*bašāli*),<sup>117</sup> graveyard, women.

### 9 Some comparative observations on Nuristan, Dardistan and Bangan

Parkes claims (1987: 637): “... contrastive livestock codes, as noted by Blok ... in the Mediterranean, are intrinsic elements of a more general pastoral ideology of opposed male and female domains characteristic of transhumant mountain communities throughout Eurasia.” He substantiates this thesis with a number of data from Nuristan and the Kalasha area. Thus he shows that men take care of livestock and of all dairy production related activities whereas women undertake much of the work in the fields, including harvesting, winnowing and milling of grain. A similar labor division is observed in Bangan: whereas only men take the sheep up to the alpine pastures and do the ploughing work, women do harvesting, winnowing, milling, collection of water and weeding. On the other hand, it is women’s work to feed and milk cattle. Also in Nuristan (op.cit. p. 647) “... cattle ... are kept in village stables throughout the year, fed by women ...” In Kalasha language the enclosed grazing grounds at the high summer pastures are called *istǎ* which derives < OIA

<sup>116</sup> The items honey, wine, snow, spring water have exact parallels within the Bangani category of *šucɔ* where also are listed honey, grape (instead of wine), snow and spring water.

<sup>117</sup> Regarding the origin of this word cf. OIA lex. *vaša-* ‘birth, origin’.



*sthāna*- ‘station, place of standing or staying’ (13753). The word can be compared with Bangani *thāc* ‘alpine grazing ground’<sup>118</sup> which derives < closely related OIA \**sthātra*- ‘station, place’ (13752a) and which has many modern parallels in West and Central Pahārī where they frequently designate highly situated place names.

“Goats are conceptually opposed to women as the respective embodiments of ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ ritual spheres” and goats are “to be sacrificed exclusively for male deities” (op.cit. p. 640). Again, the situation in Bangan is partially similar and I wish to bring again to mind that in Bangan practically no goddesses are found but only the fairies and the female *zāgas*. As contrasted with Nuristan but similar with Tajikistan, in Bangan clearly the sheep are *śucō* ‘pure’ and not the goats because “it is the sheep that eat the pure plants.” However, meanwhile things have become mixed up “because of the Brāhmaṇ-*vād*” (i.e. Brahmin religious ideology) as one informant put it. In Nuristan, on the other hand, “[s]heep are also regarded as ritually inferior livestock and are never sacrificed at the major sanctuaries of male deities”, “[r]ams are therefore frequently used in offerings to the familial goddess Jeshtak ... sheep are also thought to be the livestock of debased *bhut* spirits or ‘demons’ of the lower valley region ...” (op.cit. p. 647f.). The different position of sheep vis-à-vis goats in the world of Bangan seems to be rather complex in connection with animal sacrifices for *Mahāsu* the conqueror, and the subjected fairies. *Mahāsu* would never accept a sheep sacrifice; he only accepts goat sacrifices and especially values sacrifices of he-goats. However, his guardian deities receive rams as sacrifice (*khāḍu* < OIA \**khaḍḍu* - ‘ram’ [3790a]) with the exception of *Kōilāth* for whom female sheep are sacrificed. On the other hand, the fairy *Kāli*, the ‘hailstorm fairy’ *Śoruai* and other fairies receive female goats.<sup>119</sup> There is one more occasion for sacrificing rams: If it happens that a ‘foreign’ guardian deity (*bīr*) manages to sneak into Bangan through marriage of a bride from outside into a Bangani family<sup>120</sup> and consequently creates strife or demands to be worshiped, a nocturnal sacrifice on the path leading to the bride’s parental home takes place. This can only be attended by male family members, and invariably a ram will be sacrificed by a shaman (*māli*).<sup>121</sup> This is called *pherāō* ‘sacrifice’ (← *pherāṇō* ‘to sacrifice’ < OIA

<sup>118</sup> But also ‘(sacred) spot in high altitudes (like opening, clearing, meadow)’.

<sup>119</sup> In the second part it is described that in Garhwal certain goats are raised in the name of *mātri* fairies. They are especially fertile and make their owners prosper.

<sup>120</sup> This is a common fear and it is thought that marrying-in brides can bring along also other evil and dangerous spirits.

<sup>121</sup> Only he and the attendant male family members are allowed to eat the sacrificial meat.

*sphetayati* ‘injures’ [13838]). Interestingly, a *zāga* can receive male or female goats or male or female sheep. The choice of the animal, I was told, depends however on the category of strength a specific *zāga* belongs to.<sup>122</sup> The choice of either goat or sheep as sacrificial animal for *Mahāsu* or the guardian deities or the fairies has nothing to do with different ‘sacrificial powers’ of goats and sheep but it is claimed that e.g. male goats give more power to the *Mahāsu* Brothers, female goats give more power to fairies, *zāgas* etc., rams give more power to guardian deities, etc.

It needs finally to be added that in many areas of Jaunsar and Baur (located to the east of Bangan) people do not eat the meat of female sheep. Summing up these observations, it seems that in Bangan the dual oppositions of ‘pure-impure’ and ‘male-female’ are not interlinked the way they are in Nuristan. Parkes notes (op.cit. p. 655) that “[t]here is a noticeable contrast in the dual symbolic livestock codes of mountain pastoralists to the more elaborate categorisation of animal values reported of predominantly agricultural communities.” Since in Bangan – other than in parts of Nuristan and Dardistan – agriculture appears now to be more important than transhumance (also under a cultural perspective), the more elaborate distinctions and classifications found in Bangan do not come as a surprise.

## 10 Parallels outside South Asia

Recalling Jettmar’s observation that the manifold social and religious forms found in Dardistan and Nuristan can be regarded as variants of a single basic structure, the conclusion is obvious that the *single basic structure* concerning the world of fairies and concerning the vertical segmentation of the mountain landscape is also found till today in parts of the Western and Central Himalayas. It is not a bold assumption to suggest that, despite countless differences, this must once have been a unitary cultural-religious sphere. Indeed, it seems that this sphere once was much more extensive, including the area of the Pamir-Tajiks (Litvinskij 1983) but also the hunting believes among the Boir Ahmad who live in the Zagros mountains of Southwest Iran. According to Reinhold Löffler (1983: 399ff.), the wild mountain sheep and goats are the herds of the *jenn* (i.e. Jinn spirits). The *jenn* live in camps in the mountains, and they

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<sup>122</sup> *Zāgas* are classified according to the number of (main) sacrificial items they receive, so there are “three-sacrifice-*zāgas*”, “six-sacrifice-*zāgas*” up to “twelve-sacrifice *zāgas*”.

tend and milk these animals. They punish humans very severely when they commit some undue behavior, etc.

Similar ideas are certainly also found in still other pastoral communities in other parts of the world. This cannot be pursued here, but I would like to return shortly to the central figures of hunters and herders. We have come across several reciprocal relationships between divine and human beings concerning these two social roles: human hunters hunting game that belongs to fairies (mainly in Nuristan and Dardistan, and less obvious in Bangan), beings similar to fairies who are hunting humans (in Garhwal, but less obvious in Nuristan and Dardistan), divine herders and human herders herding divine beings (the *devapālas* ‘herding’ fairies and deities).

### 11 Fairies, wild deities and Tantras<sup>123</sup>

In South Asia, the fairy traditions have been influenced – depending on their geographical location – to different degrees by Islam (relationship with *jinn*s) and tantric Hinduism. However, whereas the relationship between fairy traditions and Islam is largely one of before versus after conversion<sup>124</sup> – with the aerial female divine powers just tolerated outside the gates of Islamic theology – the relationship between fairy traditions and tantric Hinduism<sup>125</sup> is quite different. This is not at all to say that tantric Hinduism originated in fairy traditions; however, it was influenced in the sense that they were parts of a non-brahmanic tradition of Hinduism.<sup>126</sup> Flood notes (2006: 14): “There is much speculation about the origins of Tantrism. On the one hand the origins have been seen in an autochthonous spirituality of Shamanism that reaches back to pre-Āryan times in the subcontinent, yet textual historical evidence only dates from a more recent period. While certainly there are elements in tantric traditions that may well reach back into pre-history ... we simply do not

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<sup>123</sup> Before I can discuss connections between fairies and Tantras a fairly long introductory background has to be given.

<sup>124</sup> Kafiri religion is usually described as pre-islamic.

<sup>125</sup> And Buddhism, I have to add. Buddhism remains, however, outside the reflections in this subsection.

<sup>126</sup> I use this term in a similar sense as others speak of the pre-vedic religions of the Nuristani- and Dardic-speaking people (see Witzel 2004). However, I presume that pre-vedic respectively non-brahmanic religions were formerly much more widespread and certainly extended into the Western and Central Himalayas (Zoller forthcoming).

have sufficient evidence to speculate in this way. As Robert Mayer<sup>127</sup> has shown, there is no evidence for a non-Āryan substratum for Tantrism, which must be understood as a predominantly Brahmanical, Sanskritic tradition with its roots in the Veda.”

The attempted juxtaposition of Brahmanical, Sanskritic tradition with autochthonous spirituality of Shamanism or with a non-Āryan substratum had to fail because of a too monolithic perception of what constituted ancient ‘Aryan’ religions. My use of the plural is meant to suggest that speakers of Old Indo-Aryan dialects did not only follow Sanskritic, Brahmanical religion as it has come down to us in form of the Vedic heritage. There is clear and ample evidence that the spread of people speaking Old-Indo Aryan dialects into South Asia was not a singular event, and there is evidence that groups who successively entered the subcontinent had similar but not identical religions. Massive linguistic evidence for dialectal differences ‘from the beginning’, differences which are known in the relevant literature as a distinction between the so-called Outer Languages and Inner Languages, will be presented in my forthcoming book. With regard to possible religio-cultural difference between different groups of ‘Aryan’ migrants I can refer here, because of lack of space, only to one article<sup>128</sup> by Yaroslav Vassilkov about hero stones in India. He observes (2011: 198): “The territories with the hero-stones form a kind of belt around the subcontinent. They have something in common: we often find in them cattle-breeding societies with strong vestiges of an archaic social organization and traditions of cattle-raiding. Interestingly, there are no “hero-stones” in Madhyadeśa, i.e. the northern part of Uttar Pradesh, the cradle of the Vedic (Brahminic) civilization.” He suggests further (2011: 199) that the tradition of hero stones “... could possibly represent one of the non-Vedic waves of Aryan migration to India.” Thus it seems that the geographical distribution of hero stones in South Asia matches roughly with the picture of the geographical distribution of the Outer and Inner Languages (see Zoller forthcoming). If this ‘hero-stone culture’ was more martial than the Vedic Brahminic one, as suggested by Vassilkov,<sup>129</sup> then we may see in the martial traditions of head-hunting heroes and fierce

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<sup>127</sup> Flood refers here to Mayer’s paper “The Origins of the Esoteric Vajrayāna,” a seminar paper for *The Buddhist Forum*, London School of Oriental and African Studies, Centre of Religion and Philosophy, October 17, 1990.

<sup>128</sup> But see also with a similar line of arguments Gerald D. Berreman “Brahmins and Shamans in Pahari religion.”

<sup>129</sup> It needs hardly to be pointed out that cattle-breeders are more typically found in plane terrain whereas breeding of sheep and goats is the fitting for high alpine country.

gods and fairies found in so many places between eastern Afghanistan and Himalayas distant echoes of these ancient religio-cultural traits. Under this perspective it also does not make sense to categorize the different manifestations of Hinduism in this very area as little or folk tradition versus the so-called great tradition in the wake of the conceptualizations of Dumont, Redford, Singer etc. These manifestations cannot be called folk Hinduism because they too always had and still have their own religious elites and specialists, thus their regionally limited great traditions.<sup>130</sup>

The rise of Tantrism, at least in the north-west of South Asia, is to a large extent the result of an encounter between Brahmanic Hinduism originating from “Madhyadeśa” and a different archaic and non-brahmanic form of Hinduism that has mainly survived in the mountains of northwestern South Asia. The tantric texts were created in this area, as many specialists like Flood point out, by an elite minority. It is standing to reason that these creations were the result of interactions between these Brahmanical elites and the elites who represented non-brahmanical forms of Hinduism.

Above we have come across many instances showing the sinister or even dangerous character of fairies, Yakshas, autochthonous deities etc., and I have suggested characterizing them as amoral and transgressive (footnote 17 with a reference). Flood and many other authors have shown the transgressive traits within Tantrism. For instance Flood states (2006: 10): “Sanderson has pointed out that the tantric traditions of power defined themselves against the vedic tradition of purity and saw their power as lying in the transgression of vedic social norms.” He further distinguishes between two different forms of Tantrism (op.cit. p. 74f.), namely “... the tension between ‘institutionalized Tantra’ and ‘trans-gressive Tantra’ (which roughly map on to Samuel’s priestly and shamanic forms). The latter ... has emphasized those scriptures that transcend the orthodox revelation of the Veda whose practices transgress orthodox dharma, particularly in the emphasis on eroticism in worship and the violence of its deities. But this violence and eroticism become quickly incorporated within

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<sup>130</sup> Usually the religions of the Kafirs are not connected with Hinduism but seen as a (pre-) vedic offshoot that got never really influenced by the classical forms of Brahmanism. However, it has gone unnoticed that ‘Kafir’ words like Dardic Kalasha *diç* ‘period of three days of sexual abstinence in winter festival’ which is < OIA *dikṣā-* ‘preparation for religious ceremony’ (6345) or Nuristani Kati “*pochetr*” ‘the Musalman fast’ which is < OIA *prāyaścitta-* ‘atonement’ (8950) etc. betray old and continuous connections with the Hindu world.

institutionalized Tantra, particularly where political power is concerned.” Thus we see that probably in early medieval times Brahmanism expanded into areas in the north-west of South Asia that hitherto had remained outside its reach – for instance many parts between Kashmir and present-day Himachal Pradesh – where it itself got influenced by regional cults located at the fringes of the Hindu world. Regarding the role of north-western South Asia in the development of Tantrism White states (2012: 146): “Kashmir’s geographical location at the northern-most reach of the Indian subcontinent has made for a somewhat eccentric history with respect to Indic and Sanskritic traditions” and with regard to the geographical spread of medieval tantric works devoted to *demonology* (apparently among the oldest Tantras) White suggests (2012: 146, 154, 156) that Kashmir, Gandhara and Bactria, and to different degrees the Tarim Basin and sub-Himalayan North-western India “was a nursery for new cultural forms and religious doctrines and practices” (p. 146). Apparently he regards this geographical space as a rather special cultural area (p. 154).

Om Chand Handa writes about demonic gods and their temples in Himachal Pradesh (2001: 95): “The autochthonous demonic deities – the nature spirits – of this region have been of the terrific disposition ... The people chose to keep them at a safe distance on the mountain-tops, in the forlorn caves ... They never cherished the idea to settle them within the community or in their close vicinity. In order to keep those destructive deities in good humour, the people would propitiate and appease them occasionally or only at the time of exigency by offering numerous sacrifices. For the rest of the time, they were supposed to fend for themselves. There was, thus, hardly any reason to erect temples and shrines for those ill-disposed deities ... [W]e do not have any material evidence about the existence of any temple dedicated to an autochthonous deity prior to the late medieval times, although wooden temple built in the classical style for the goddess Lakshana Devi stood at Bharmaur in Chamba district as early as the seventh-eighth century.” Apparently only centuries later (op.cit. p. 96) “[s]mall shrines and platforms (*chauk*, *thada* or *than*),<sup>131</sup> thus, came to be improvised for them” (namely for the

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<sup>131</sup> “*chauk*” reflects OIA *catuṣka-* ‘quadrangular courtyard’ (4629), “*thada*” reflects OIA \**sthaḡha-* ‘base’ (13738) with modern reflexes having the same suffix and similar meaning in N. *thāro* ‘boundary’, Paṭṭ. *thari* ‘place’ and Bng. *thōri* ‘area of a village’ with the preciser meaning ‘area of a *zāga*, i.e. village and adjacent fields (that she invigorates with her power)’. It is obvious that the above-discussed *zāgas* ‘places’ are the modern descendants of the ancient ‘places’ and ‘bases’ mentioned by Handa, but it is unclear whether these ancient places were always places for *femine* supernatural beings.

demonic deities). Handa continues (ibid.): “Interestingly, most of the deities of this region, who descended from the autochthonous origin, observe ‘purdah’ and ordinarily do not allow to be visited or [to be] seen by the lay people, except on ceremonial occasions ... Mostly, the women are not allowed into the sanctum of the autochthonous deities, and the one in menstruation, not at all permitted.” This reminds one of the strict pure-impure gender distinctions among the Kafir and Kalasha people. However, over the centuries there was also a trend to domesticate these fierce deities. Handa explains (op.cit. p. 98f.): “The alien Brahmanical influence, perpetuated through the patronage of the petty rulers, overpowered the native beliefs and traditions, and the native people also thought of ‘domesticating’ their fierce deities. Besides the occasional propitiation, daily worship for them also came to be offered by the localized version of Brahmans, the Khasha-Brahmans<sup>132</sup> ... A wooden temple built in the heart of a village is generally known as the *bhandar*,<sup>133</sup> as against the *dehra*<sup>134</sup> – the root-place in the jungle, where the original ‘symbol’ of the deity is enshrined. In the *bhandar*, the trumpery or ‘duplicate’ image of the deity, in the form of a *mohara* (the face-image), is enshrined.”<sup>135</sup>

In Himachal Pradesh there do not only exist ‘root-places’ of fierce deities, there are also ‘root-deities’: there is a class of snake deities responsible for the weather called *Narains*.<sup>136</sup> In Turner’s dictionary one finds sub 10252 the entry \**mūlanārāyaṇa*- ‘name of a local deity (?)’ with a modern reflex in Ku. *muēṛə* ‘a demigod worshiped in Gangoi’. Turner refers here to OIA (RV) *mūradeva*- ‘a class of demons’ for which Manfred Mayrhofer (EWA) suggests as basic meanings “root worshipper” (‘Wurzelnbeter’) or even “yap gods” (‘Maulgötter’), whatever these could possibly mean. But actually similar compounds are also found in Himachal Pradesh. There is for instance a *Mūl Mahun Nāga*. According to Handa (2001: 55, 60, 88), his name means “the original Mahun Naga” because there are dozens of secondary *Mahun Nāgas* in the regions of Mandi, Shimla und Kullu. In addition, in Shimla

<sup>132</sup> The Khasha are actually an ancient martial ‘Kshatriya’ people whose name is found throughout the Himalayas. The existence of Khasha-Brahmans is thus due to Brahmanic influence. In Bangan ‘Khasha’ is a term of respect, but further east in Garhwal the word is used with contempt.

<sup>133</sup> < OIA *bhāṇḍāgāra*- ‘treasury’ (9442). So called because the building stores also property of people and the village.

<sup>134</sup> < OIA 6528 \**dēvaghara*- ‘temple’ (6528).

<sup>135</sup> On the term *mohara* see above footnote 113.

<sup>136</sup> The word has certainly nothing to do with *Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa* but for more details on the possible etymology see Zoller (2014: 181).

District there are two *Mūl Nāgas* whose *mohras* are said to have been spit out by a python (Handa 2001: 66). I do not think that the first part of *Mūl (Mahun) Nāga* is a direct reflex of OIA *mūla-* ‘root’ because there is for instance Bng. *muḷeṅ* ‘to sprout (as plants), to swell up (as water)’ which is rather connected with OIA Dhātup. *mūlayati* ‘plants or grows (plants)’ but must derive directly < OIA *\*mūlati* ‘sprouts’. The Bng. root appears also in *muḷ*, *muḷeṅ* ‘irrigation canal channeled off from a brook’ and *mūl* ‘family’ with masculine gender which contrasts with homophone *mūl* ‘root’ with feminine gender. A *Mūl Nāga* is thus a “well or sprout snake deity”.<sup>137</sup> Such a “well or sprout deity” is connected on the one hand with its many multiplications and on the other hand with its divine relatives, comparable to an irrigation system with a network of channels. Therefore Handa observes (2001: 91): “The native gods and goddesses of the western Himalayan region have strong suzerain identities and kinship ties” and (op.cit. p. 79) “[u]nless there exist interclan relationships between them, these local deities have strong inter-cultic rivalries and are generally antagonistic to each other.” In other words, these gods are either kindred or enemies.

The above-sketched structures, which appear in many myths, suggest a mythical world view based on concepts like divine sprouting and multiplying, and notions of family, clan and lineage, of bonding and antagonism. Because many of these supernatural beings are, as pointed out repeatedly, amoralic and thus beyond the opposition of *dharmā* and *adharmā*, they do not hesitate to engage in transgressive violence and sexuality. Even though they all are part of Hinduism, they are in marked contrast with typical Vedic and Brahmanic views based on *dharmā*. Legions of these beings found entrance into the Tantras. The 9<sup>th</sup> Century *Netra-tantra* speaks of “innumerable goddesses” who “... are exceptionally filthy, violent, merciless, fearless, (and) mighty” (White 2012: 146). Also in Bangan and elsewhere people speak of the very great number of fairies, and Handa writes about the deities in Mandi District in the upper reaches of the Uhl Valley (op.cit. p. 61): “The deities of this remote valley are ‘dressed’ in typically uncouth manner and are of very terrific disposition.”

Simultaneously, the Tantras are strongly informed by Brahmanic cosmological concepts like that of cosmic emanation (creation and absorption), the “common overall structure ... of pure, mixed, and impure creation” (Flood 2006: 109), “emanation and reabsorption of the cosmos” (op.cit. p. 129), spiritual paths “arranged in a graded sequence

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<sup>137</sup> In fact, various snake deities in the Himalayas are said to reside below springs.



from supreme to subtle to gross” (op.cit. p. 130) etc. On the other hand, the concepts of vertical landscape divided into pure-impure oppositions, as found in the high mountains, which correlate with the visibility or invisibility of supernatural beings like fairies, are manifestations of an ideology that can be termed non-brahmanic Hinduism. Also the Bangani conviction that sacrifices for *zāgas* not only strengthen them but rejuvenate them (in a concrete sense, i.e. they transform back into babies) can be seen as distantly related with the Brahmanic concept of emanation and reabsorption even though the more closely related Brahmanic notion of rebirth (or rather *punarmṛtyu* ‘redeath’) is, outside centers of Brahmanism, hardly found in the more remote parts of the high mountains, for instance in Bangan.

Above (p. 85) I have pointed out that the Sakian term *mātrvālai* derives < \**mātr-pālaka*- ‘priest of the *mātrkā*’ which is rendered as *deva-pālaka* in Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit. The term *deva-pālaka* continues to live on in the meaning of ‘shaman’ (or literally ‘herder of deities’) in many areas between Bangan and eastern Afghanistan, and therefore the meaning of *mātrvālai* may also rather have been ‘shaman or herder of the mothers’. Reflexes of the term *mātr* are used till today with meaning ‘fairy’ in parts of Garhwal (including Bangan) and Himachal Pradesh. But these ‘fairies’ or ‘mothers’ appear also frequently in tantric texts from the area. Again according to the *Netra-tantra* they form a ‘family’ (*kula*) and “[i]f someone is possessed by one of the innumerable ‘mothers’ who wish to harm a person, then the practitioner needs to perform worship to their source, namely the seven ‘great mothers’ (*mahāmātr*) ... from whose wombs they originated” (Flood 2006: 90). In other words, these ‘mothers’ form clans and lineages like the Himalayan fairies and autochthonous deities, and they *originate* from ‘great mothers’ in a similar way as the *gurias* ‘female house/family power centers’ are the “daughters” of the *zāgas* ‘female village power centers’ who are the “daughters” of *māṭi* ‘Mother Earth’.<sup>138</sup> This is a clear example for the impact of regional non-brahmanic Hinduism on a Tantra belonging to a Brahmanic elite tradition.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>138</sup> Seen conversely, this is a development from the one earth to a limited number of village centers to a great number of house centers.

<sup>139</sup> It is also important to keep these ‘mother’-fairies conceptually distinct from the Mother goddesses of Brahmanic Hinduism. Whereas the latter are typically real *motherly* goddesses, calling the former non-brahmanic fairies ‘mothers’ is a euphemism and insofar incorrect as most fairies neither have children nor are they especially child-friendly. My impression is that this distinction was not seen clearly enough by Shaman Hatley in his 2012 article “From *Mātr* to *Yoginī*.”

I have not heard that the Bangani *mātri* ‘fairies’ are the daughters of a ‘great fairy’ but they have a female leader (*siāṇi*) with whom they form a family. As described above in detail, they also have the male leader *Kōilāth* who seems to be married with *Kōili*. And again this can be compared with the *Netra-tantra* which says that the eight mothers “are the entourage of Kuleśvara”<sup>140</sup> (op.cit. p. 156). This, in turn, reminds us of the Garhwali *ēri* hunter and his entourage of bloodthirsty fairies.<sup>141</sup>

There is another parallel between a modern form of exorcism practiced in an area in Uttarakhand using a group of terms and concepts also mentioned in the *Netra-tantra* (but not elsewhere). A detailed description for the former is found in Sax (2009) and the comparison with the *Netra-tantra* has been done by White (2012: 146, 151-54, 156, 164). Here a very brief summary: the Tantra uses the terms *chāyā-cchidra* ‘shadow-crack’ and *chala* ‘witchcraft’<sup>142</sup> in connection with the treatment of the ‘evil eye’ (*dṛṣṭi-pāta*). The Lord explains to the Goddess that once in the ‘psycho-somatic coating’ of an evil person (who has neglected some dharmic duties) a crack (*chidra*) has developed, a *māṛṭ* can enter the evildoer and cause him or her to throw a shadow (*chāyā*) on an innocent victim, i.e. possess the victim, make him sick or kill him. After explaining this strategy, counter measures are described. White notes (op.cit. p. 151) that the grouping together of the three terms is only found in this Tantra and then again in modern “Dalit religion of Garhwal” (op.cit. p. 152) (i.e. in Chamoli District) in a long description of an exorcism ritual, called “*chal puja*” (ibid.),<sup>143</sup> given by William Sax (2009)

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<sup>140</sup> That is Shiva.

<sup>141</sup> White, commenting on a commentary by the Kashmiri Śaiva Tantric Jagaddhara Bhatta on fairy-like beings described in the *Mālatī-Mādhava*, observes (1998: 196): “These hosts of female figures live on, delight in, and are energized by the consumption of human flesh, and it is through their *extraction of the essence* of the bodies they eat that they are afforded the power of flight. Yoginīs or Dākinīs need human flesh in order to fly: this continues to be a commonplace of folk belief.”

<sup>142</sup> White rightly suggests this special meaning (p. 148) instead of the usual Sanskrit meaning ‘trick’.

<sup>143</sup> Such a *pijā* always involves a “masan” demon, and White finds Sax’ description confusing (footnote 9) because he uses “masan” in the plural. But Sax is correct, the term derives < OIA *śmaśānā-* ‘erection for burning dead, burial place for cremated bones’ (12658) and is thus again a personification of an item. In Bangan these terrific beings are called *mōśaṇ*, they live at burning places and in prehistoric stone circles with a single stone in the middle which are also called *mōśaṇ*. Oakley writes of such an embodiment of death (1905: 220): he lives “at places where dead bodies are burnt ... He is the chief or head of the other ghosts ... The belief is that wicked people ... and all who die a violent or wilful death ... become ghosts for a time. When the term of a thousand such ghosts expires ... the souls of the thousand are concentrated and transformed into one body, and the being thus formed is called Masan.” Note also that in connection with the *Netra-tantra* Alexis

where the three terms *chāyā*, *chidra* and *chala* have been reinterpreted as three different types of demonic beings. This shows a stunning parallel between the more than thousand years old Tantra and the modern ritual in Garhwali “Dalit religion”. It is unlikely that the group of terms and the ritual were taken by former “Dalits” from the Tantra, but it is very likely that it was the other way round. This is then additional evidence for my claim that Tantrism in the north-west of South Asia was strongly influenced by shamanic non-brahmanical Hindu religions. However, it also needs to be pointed out that the magical term *chāyā* (“shadow”, see above), which is widely used all over North India, has usually the meaning, also in Garhwal, ‘affliction through the influence of a ghost, fairy etc. leading to illness etc.’ Besides the “*chal puja*” there is in Garhwal also a *chāyā pūjaṅ* (see Purohit and Benjwal), and Garhwali *chəl* is defined by Purohit and Benjwal very similar like *chāyā* as affliction through ghosts or supernatural beings. Note, however, that Turner quotes sub OIA *chala*- ‘fraud, deceit’ (5001) Kṭg. *chəl* ‘haunt of an evil spirit, haunted feeling’ but Gaṅgōī dialect of Ku. *chaw* ‘goblin’. This suggests that *chala* is now perceived in the Himalayas either as a magical force or a supernatural being.

Another example showing connections between Tantras and fairy cults is this: the *Kumāra-tantra*<sup>144</sup> contains a chapter dealing with “the Śaiva exorcist deity Khaḍgarāvaṇa ... Here we find possession by twelve mothers (*mātrkā*) ... who are within the sphere of Khaḍgarāvaṇa, ‘Rāvaṇa with the sword’, who is described in the ISG<sup>145</sup> as having three heads each with three eyes and with ten arms holding a skull-topped staff, a trident, a sword, drum, a shield, a skull bowl, with the fear-not and boon-giving gestures.” Whatever the explanation for the presence of Rāvaṇa in this context may be, this parallels the fact that in Garhwali propitiation songs it is claimed that the fairy sisters are daughters of Rāvaṇa who had entrusted them to Lord Śiva (Nautiyal 1981: 154). However, since Khaḍgarāvaṇa can hardly be the Rāvaṇa of the Rāmāyaṇa, the question is whether this is an accidental similarity. The etymological origin of the name Rāvaṇa is unclear, but -rāvaṇa of Khaḍgarāvaṇa may derive < OIA *RU* ‘smash, break to pieces’ with possible semantic contamination by the concept of Rāvaṇa. The description of Khaḍgarāvaṇa with his characteristic features in the ISG is

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Sanderson refers to a cult (1995: 19f., 80) in which *Svacchandabhairava* and *Aghoreśvarī* are surrounded by a ring of eight cremation grounds (*śmaśānā*).

<sup>144</sup> “Filliozat thinks [that this Tantra] originated in the north and spread to Tibet and Southeast Asia” (Flood 2006: 91).

<sup>145</sup> *Īśanaśivagurudevapaddhati*.

similar to the *ērī* hunter figure described above (p. 88f.) and fits that of a deity in the Pāśupata tradition of ascetics – especially (deified) Lakulīśa – which included the two subgroups of the Kāpālikas and the Kālāmukhas (Lorenzen 1972). A distinctive feature of the Kālāmukhas was the *khaṭvāṅga*- ‘club’. Possible etymological relationships between *khaṭvāṅga* ‘a club shaped like the foot of a bedstead’, *khaḍga*- ‘sword’ and *\*khaṇḍaka*- ‘sword’ (3793) are unclear but possible and ought to be analyzed more closely. Thus, the term Khaḍgarāvaṇa may actually have a Pāśupata background. There is a certain parallel between the spread of Pāśupata ideology and the spread of Tantrism in the north-west of South Asia because the Kālāmukhas are believed by some to have had their origin in Kashmir or its surroundings (Muller-Ortega 1989: 33, Ingalls 1962, Fleet 1907: 426, Lorenzen 1971: 109),<sup>146</sup> and, according to Maheshwar Joshi (1989, 2010) and Nachiket Chanchani (2013: 139), the Pāśupatas had a stronghold in the famous temple complex of Jageshwar (near Almora in Kumaon) where one finds several figures of Lakulīśa (Chanchani p. 144), the founder of the Pāśupatas. Other presentations of Lakulīśa are found in many places in Kumaon and Garhwal (Joshi 1989, 2010), and like Khaḍgarāvaṇa also Lakulīśa of the Central Himalayas typically shows *abhaya mudra* and is sometimes portrayed with a trident instead of a club (Joshi 2010).

Even though the Pāśupata religion has died out in India, there may exist a small survival in Kumaon. Joshi writes (2010) in his concluding observations: “While concluding, it would not be out of place to add that in Uttarakhand Himalaya the Katyūrī-s<sup>147</sup> are deified and invoked during the Katyūrī-*jāgar* (spirit possession séance) rituals. In the Katyūrī-*jāgar* spirits of deified Katyūrī-s and one Lākuḍa-vīra possess the devotees. The characteristic attribute of Lākuḍa-vīra is a *sabbala* (crow-bar). However, literally Lākuḍa-vīra means: brave man, the wielder of a wooden stick. Since in *jāgar* rituals iron equipments are placed in the *dhūṇi* (altar/hearth) and when heated red hot are taken out by the possessed persons to show their divine power, it is but natural that a metal tool alone can serve the purpose, hence a metal bar is substituted for the wooden stick. It is likely that Lākuḍa-vīra represents a Lakulīśa Pāśupata ascetic, or Lakulīśa himself. In any case association of Lākuḍa-vīra with the *jāgar* rituals is interesting, and suggests incorporation of Lakulīśa Pāśupatism in Katyūrī traditions.” Joshi seems correct because Cecil

<sup>146</sup> But Elizabeth Cecil (2014: 143f.) suggests Upper Mālava (southwest Rajasthan and northwest Madhya Pradesh) as main centre of the cult. See also Joshi 1989 and 2010.

<sup>147</sup> This is the name of a dynasty which ruled large parts of the Central Himalayas over many centuries in the early Middle Ages until their disintegration in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> Century.

notes (2014: 142) that the Skanda-purāṇa “... contains the earliest purāṇic reference to Lāguḍi (a variant of Lakulīśa) as a manifestation of Śiva...” and Bisshop notes (2003: 332, fn. 88) that the Kālāmukhas were sometimes designated as Lāguḍas.<sup>148</sup> However, if Lākuḍa-vīra is identical with a (guardian) deity widely known in Western Garhwal and large parts of Himachal Pradesh – e.g. called *lāṅkuṛṇ* in Bangan – and frequently identified with Bhairava,<sup>149</sup> a different etymology seems possible because *lāṅkuṛṇ* may derive < OIA \**lāma-kuḍa-* ‘black boy, dark son’.<sup>150</sup> Whatever the origin of this name may be, the Bangani *lāṅkuṛṇ* is not one of *Mahāsu*’s four main guardian deities. However, he is the only one riding a black or white horse. Regarding size he is bigger than *Mahāsu* and “his internal power is big” due to his *mantra śakti*. His weapon is a trident. He wears long black hair but no beard or moustache and on his head he wears a black cap formerly typical for the area.<sup>151</sup> He is elderly, yet unmarried, and when he rides around a village at night as guardian he wears a knee-length black coat. Regarding the Himachali “Launkara Bir” Handa writes (2006: 76): “Wooden images of the Launkara Bir are very common in the interiors of Shimla district almost in all temples. ‘Launkara’ in the local parlance means a vagrant person, and that name fully justifies the capricious nature of this deity. For, when offended, he is known to harass the young women and milch cattle.”<sup>152</sup>

Another Bangani guardian deity who appears close to the old Pāśupati religion is *koṭṭa bīr* whose name is certainly connected with OIA *kapāla-* ‘skull; beggar’s bowl’. He is also called *ṅgārua bīr* ‘the coal-black hero’ (< OIA *aṅgāra-* ‘glowing charcoal’ [123]) or *chārua-ṅgārua (bīr)* ‘the ash-covered coal-black hero’ (< OIA *kṣārā-* ‘corrosive’ [3674]). He is regarded as the cruelest among all guardian deities. Ashes and glowing coal are his weapons which he can use to burn down houses

<sup>148</sup> Lakulīśa is iconographically always presented as ithyphallic (*ārdhvamedhira*) and usually as wearing a club, and I may mention here in passing that OIA *lakuṭa-* (but also *laguḍa-*) ‘club’ is reflected in many NIA languages also with meaning ‘penis’ (see 10875).

<sup>149</sup> Apart from being guardian of various gods and goddesses, he also has his own shrines and temples.

<sup>150</sup> Regarding first word see OIA \**lāma-* ‘defective’ (11021) where Turner suggests comparison with *rāmā-* ‘dark, black’, second word < OIA \**kuḍa-* ‘boy, son’ (3245). Variation of *r ~ l* is also found in the Himachali designation *ludar* for Rudra/Śiva.

<sup>151</sup> This type of cap is hardly seen anymore. It looks very similar to caps formerly worn in Dardistan and Nuristan, and a picture of it can be found in Chetwode (1972) on the plate opposite p. 23 where one sees a squatting drummer with a long beard and wearing this cap.

<sup>152</sup> Pictures of this deity are found in Handa (2006: plates 16 and 122), and the first is also found in Arya and Arya (1985: 55). The god is depicted wearing a sword and a spear (and a moustache!).

and temples. He wears long black hair (but no beard), shoes and black clothes. He is of young age and unmarried.

There are indications that the Pāśupatas were especially closely associated with the ‘mothers’. The earliest known inscriptional references to Pāśupatas are found in copper plates from the 4<sup>th</sup> Century in Madhya Pradesh, one of which “... records a land grant to the shrine of the Mothers (*māṭṛsthānadevakula*) which had been established by the Pāśupatācārya Bhagavant Lokodadhi in the village of Piñcchikānaka” (Bisshop 2003: 322, fn. 37; the same copper plates are also mentioned by Cecil [2014: 150]). And Gray points out (2005: 54) that the Buddhist tantric *yoginīs* and *ḍākinīs* – associated with meat eating, violent sexuality and with outcaste social groups<sup>153</sup> – are linked in the Buddhist Yoginī-tantras (which are also called “mother tantras” in Tibetan [op.cit. p. 59]) with left-hand Śaiva traditions like the Kāpālikas.

## 12 Thematic transition to the Garhwali fairies

### 12.1 Brahminized worship of fairies

A common brahminized way of worshipping the *māṭṛs* is found in a manual called *daśa karmādi paddhati*. It is used in Garhwal and Kumaon for carrying out domestic rites, and its third section is named *māṭṛ pūjā* (Atkinson 1882: 891). Atkinson explains (op.cit. p. 883f.): “The celebrant takes a plank and cleans it with rice-flour and then draws sixteen figures representing the *Mātris* and to the right of them a figure of Ganesha.”<sup>154</sup> This is followed by a *pratiṣṭhā* during which the ritualist places a flower on each ‘mother goddess’ while chanting “*Om gaṇapatayenamah*’ followed by Gauri, Padmā, Sachi, Medhā, Devasenā, Svadhā, Svāhā, Mātri, Lokmātri, Dhriti, Pushti, Tushti, and the household female deities” (ibid.).<sup>155</sup>

### 12.2 The recorded hymn and some remarkable words found in it

The name of the hymn needs some explanation. The singer uses *diśa dhāṅkuṛi*, although this contrasts with the more common denomination

<sup>153</sup> Gray quotes (ibid.) from the *Hevajra-tantra* the *yoginīs* called Ḍombī, Caṇḍali and Pukkaśī, all three of which denoting outcaste groups.

<sup>154</sup> Because of him being the Lord of the Troops. Note also that the notion of ‘Sixteen Goddesses’ is very common in Kashmiri Tantrism and in tantric *Śrīvidyā* (cf. e.g. White 1998: 185f.).

<sup>155</sup> Many of the goddesses mentioned here are daughters of *Dakṣa* (son of Lord *Brahmā*) and therefore close to Śaiva religion. Hence they are a suitable company for the ‘mothers’ who, as we have seen, can also be ‘daughters’.

*disa dāḡuri* (e.g. in Nautiyal 1981: 153f.). In the second part below it is suggested that *dāḡuri* is denomination for a particular class of fairies. This means, I think, that we have here again a case of personification of an item. But first my suggestion for the origin of *disa/disa*: the alternation *dīśa* ~ *disa* ‘daughter’ suggests older *\*dija* which compares with Indus Kohistani *dhižū* ‘a young daughter’ and Shina *dii* ‘daughter’ (but plural *dīžai*) all of which derive < OIA *duhitṛ-* ‘daughter’ (6481) as synonym compounds (literally ‘daughter-daughter’) built from two different historical reflexes of the OIA word (cf. e.g. Pk. *dhī(d)ā-* but G. *jhī* both ‘daughter’). For the second component I suggest – different from suggestions quoted in the second part below – derivation < OIA *\*daṅga-kuḍī-* ‘hill girl’ (cf. OIA *\*daṅga-* ‘hill’ [5423.16] and *\*kuḍī-* ‘girl, daughter’ [3245]). The whole expression would thus mean ‘the (fairy) daughter (who is a) hill girl’. The etymologically unmotivated aspiration of the initial stop in *dhāḡuri* is, in my opinion, poetic diction because it is also very common among professional bards in Bangan.

There are two more words found in the hymn below which belong to our topic of fairy lore but have not yet been discussed. The first word appears in hymn line 57: *pūtan* ‘dog’. This corresponds to OIA *pūtana-* ‘a partic. class of demons or spirits’ which is a term also found in the Buddhist demonological text *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñī-sūtra* in a list of demonic beings (White 2012: 156). The word, which is neither found in Turner<sup>156</sup> nor in MIA, is apparently shared by Tantrism and non-brahmanic Hinduism: the above-discussed *ēṛi* ‘hunter’ is accompanied by dogs and, hardly worth mentioning, a dog is the *vāhana* of God Bhairava. The second word quoted below in the second part is *sārī* ‘a kind of ritual conducted in villages to escape the demoniac powers of the *ācharīs* ...’ which is the same as Garhwali dictionary entry *sāru*, explained as ‘a tantric *pūjā* performed by the whole village to remove the misfortune that has befallen the village (in this ritual, a goat is sacrificed at the village border)’. The word derives < OIA *sāra-* ‘course, motion’ (13354) but is semantically close to the Atharva-veda term *pratisara-* (literally ‘that which turns back, reverts’) which designated a *mantra*-conjured amulet as a counter-device against demonic forces, and which – we understand this now – later converted into the Buddhist goddess *Pratisarā*.

<sup>156</sup> Besides Monier-Williams, the OIA word is also quoted in KEWA sub *pūyati* ‘becomes putrid, stinks’. Compare also Garh. *puakan* ‘to have repeatedly slight dysentery’.

## Part 2: *Disā Dāḡurī* : A Fairy ‘Hymn’ from the Central Himalayas

Ram Prasad Bhatt and Heinz Werner Wessler

### 13 *Aujīs* and *jāgars*

*Disā Dāḡurī*<sup>157</sup> is the title of a *jāgar* ‘hymn’ or ‘ballad’ from Central Himalayas usually sung by a *Jāgarī*,<sup>158</sup> mostly an *Aujī*<sup>159</sup> by caste. The traditional social setup of the Central Himalayan society consists basically of three groups, i.e. Brahmans, Rajputs (including Khasiyas) and Doms (i.e. Dalits).<sup>160</sup> The *Aujī* belongs to the third group, i.e. in modern India they are categorized as a “scheduled caste” that is traditionally regarded as “untouchable”. The hill Dalits – usually called *Śilpkārs* - have not much in common with the scheduled castes from the North Indian plains except the socio-political appellation.

*Aujīs* form one of 51 subcastes among *Śilpkār* according to the 1931 census.<sup>161</sup> Trained musicians from among the *Aujīs* specialise primarily in rhythmic instruments and singing. Besides, all kinds of instruments may be used. The song repertoire consists traditionally of songs and all kinds of hymns in local languages. *Aujīs* are also known to work as tailors and/or hairdressers. Educated *Aujīs* can profit from job reservations (“quota”) and tend to give up singing and drumming, since this occupation is usually identified with their low caste identity and therefore not prestigious.

However, members of the upper castes Hindus believe that without the participation of the *Aujīs* in rituals (an *Aujī* can be a *Jāgarī* but not all *Jāgarīs* are *Aujīs*) – temple festivals, birth, marriage and death rituals – any ritual function is perceived to be incomplete. His importance in religious performance however contrasts with his low social position in caste society.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Or: *dhākuṛīs*, with hard velar.

<sup>158</sup> Person who professionally sings a *jāgar* and who at times can be possessed and functions as a kind of shaman. The *jāgar* songs, mainly related to aggressive spirits, are also used by exorcists (*Gāruṛī* and *Aujhā*). The 1931 census lists a subcast under the name of “Jagari” or “Jagariya”, which are associated with shamanist practices (Subarddhan 2012: 50).

<sup>159</sup> *Aujīs* are “tailors and drummers; a section of hill Doms” (Blunt 1931: 341). For further details see Chandola 1969; Berremann 1971; Alter 2000; Fiol 2008.

<sup>160</sup> Blunt 1941: 135ff.

<sup>161</sup> Subarddhan 2012: 48.

<sup>162</sup> Joṣī (2011) calls this fact the “Brahmanhood” (brāhmanatva) of the low caste in Central Himalayan society.



The praise of fairies – *ācharīs* or *ācharīs*,<sup>163</sup> *mātarīs*,<sup>164</sup> *dāḡuṛīs*<sup>165</sup> and *bharārīs*<sup>166</sup> at ritual occasions, particularly related to spirit possession ceremonies, plays a central role in the traditional hymn repertoire. The term *disā/diśā* (Sanskrit *duhitā*– ‘daughter’, see above p. 132f.).<sup>167</sup> Sometimes *disā-dhyāṇ* is also used as a synonymous compound which means the daughter or sister of the family and the village (see Chatak 1967; Purohit & Benjwal 2007). In most Garhwali-Hindi Dictionaries however, the term ‘*diśā*’ is not documented and the meaning of the term ‘*disā*’ is explained as ‘direction’ (from Sanskrit ‘*diśā*’). *Jāgar* is derived from Sanskrit  $\sqrt{jag-}$ . The Sanskrit nominal derivative *jāgarāṇa* means ‘wakefulness’ or ‘religious vigil’ with a connotation of awakening a deity or a spirit (Williams [1899] 2004: 417). In the context of the Himalayas, it often refers to ceremonies of spiritual possession and the narrative of the deity during ritual performances (Alter 2000). Scholars such as Babulkar (1964) and Bhatt (1976) have divided the *jāgars* into three different categories according to their length and singing style. Beyond that *jāgars* are also divided by their themes or the musical patterns used for the hymns.<sup>168</sup>

#### 14 Fairies in Garhwal

In common Central Himalayan folk lore, fairies – *ācharīs*, *mātarīs*, *dāḡuṛīs*, and *bharārīs* – are believed to be demonic spirits of young girls of Brahmin and Rajput families, whose desires, especially for sexual union, remain unfulfilled. They are cursed to remain in *mṛtyuloka* ‘the world of mortals’ because of their inauspicious death and dwell on high hill tops, mountain ridges, pastures, river valleys and caves.

<sup>163</sup> Vedic *Apsarās* “one of the female divinities connected with water” (no. 502 in Turner 1965). In folk belief these are the spirits of young girls who die even before puberty. Chatak 1990 describes *ācharīs* as the spirits of the dead young girls of elite families in society (see Chatak 1990: 375). They are believed to live on the Khaṭṭ Mountain in Tehri Garhwal.

<sup>164</sup> *Mātarīs* are the spirits of very young girls in popular belief (see Nautiyal 1981; Chatak 1968; Bhatt 1976; Maithani 2004; Sharma 2006).

<sup>165</sup> *Dāḡuṛīs* are believed to be particularly demonic spirits of young girls of Brahmin and Rajput families, more dangerous than the *mātarīs*.

<sup>166</sup> A third group of the spirits of young girls differentiated by geographical boundaries. *Bharārīs* are more prevalent in the Piri (*Pīṛī*) Mountain, Balganga valley, Bhigun and Basar region. All these places are situated in Tehri Garhwal. The primary dwellings of the fairies are in fact revealed in a *ahvān gīt* ‘summons hymn’ that goes like this - *biji jāvā khēṭā kī āchariyō pīṛī kī bharārīyō* ‘the *ācharīs* of *Khaṭṭ* and the *bharārīs* of *Pīṛī* get awake’.

<sup>167</sup> It is quite common in Pahari languages that the sibilant ‘ś’ is pronounced and eventually written as ‘s’.

<sup>168</sup> See Chatak ([1958] 1996); Babulkar (1964:18); Bhatt (1976); Nautiyal (1981).

Chatak (1990) also mentions another term for the fairies under the name of *cācarī*. The term is not much known in Tehri Garhwal but appears to be originally used in Nagpuriya and Jaunpuri. He describes them as the spirits of *kanyās* ‘unmarried girls’ of the *sambharānt* ‘elite’ or ‘honoured’ families. What Chatak really meant by *sambharānt* is not clear, but by taking the caste system into account, his reference is probably to Brahmin and Rajput girls, as even Babulkar (1964), Bhatt (1976) and Nautiyal (1981), Maithani (2004) have stated. Maithani (2004) and Sharma (2006) describe *ācharīs* and *dāḡuṛīs* as the daughters of *vāsukī nāga* – the mythical snake Vāsukī – who is supposed to have once ruled the Central Himalayas.

In yet another version of folk story, they are considered as the seven sisters of a Rawat family – Rawat is a warrior caste (Rajput) – who were once abducted by a *huṇīyā* ‘barbar’. This story might have a historical background in an abduction of girls by a Tibetan warrior (Nautiyal 1981). Chatak (1990) has also documented that in folk belief, the *ācharīs* are believed to be the daughters of *Rāvaṇa*, the demoniac king of Lanka in the Ramayana story, who had donated them to Shiva. Babulkar (1964) has documented that the *ācharīs* are sometimes related to the *gopīs* (milkmaids) in love of Krishna. They are believed to go to bath to the bank of Yamuna River together with the Himalayan *Gujariyās*<sup>169</sup> and perform the classical *rāsu* ‘round dance’ (in the Himalayas usually a dance of the spirits) with Krishna in moonlit nights. Chatak (1996:98) has documented a complete *jāgar* on Krishna’s dance with the *ācharīs* on the Khait Mountain. According to folk belief, they go out for their bath during mid-day, especially in spring and summer, hunt during the dawn or mid-day while collecting food and flowers and dance in the moonlit nights.<sup>170</sup>

Some scholars argue that *dāḡuṛī* and *bharārī* are just alternative names for *ācharī* in some parts of Garhwal, especially in Uttarkashi, Jaunpur, Nagpuriya and Chamoli regions (Chatak 1967; Sharma 2006; Nautiyal 1981). However, others such as Dabral 1973, Kukreti 1983, Bhatt 1976 claim that *dāḡuṛīs* and *bharārīs* are originally different from *ācharīs* and *mātarīs* by their nature and their attitude towards humans, especially towards young women and men. According to a folk story *dāḡuṛīs* are the spirits of the nine young daughters of a Garhwali ruler living in the high hills of the Central Himalayas, between earth and

<sup>169</sup> Cowgirls/milkmaids.

<sup>170</sup> See Babulkar (1964), Nautiyal (1981), Chatak (1990). Ram Prasad Bhatt has heard these stories during his childhood in the village which is about 25 km from Ghonti, the river bank at the bottom of Khait Mountain.

heaven. The legend has it that the young sisters were abducted by a brutal Tibetan (*Bhoṭ*) rural bordering Garhwal. To protect their chastity the nine sisters jumped from a cliff on the way to Tibet and became the *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī* sisters, whose wishes to stay alive and lead a married life remained unfulfilled.<sup>171</sup>

Nautiyal has documented that *ācharīs* and *dāṅguṛīs* are the spirits of the seven sister of a Raut/Rawat family who were abducted by the *Huṇiyā* Demigod (Nautiyal 1981:153). Historically the *Hūṇas* are considered to be the barbarian people who once ruled in the Himalayas. The concept of “nine” as a number is well known in Hinduism and Tantrism. In *Śrī Yantra* nine maidens (at the same time considered to be goddesses) are mentioned several times. *Śrī Yantra* ‘sacred instrument’ also ‘*Śrī Cakra*’ is a diagram formed by nine interlocking triangles that surround and radiate out from the central point. The source of the nine *dāṅguṛī*-sisters appears to go back to the tantric context (Kukreti 1983).

It appears that *ācharīs* and *mātarīs* are closely related to Tantrism in the Central Himalayas. Nautiyal (1981:153) even believes that the *mātarīs* and *ācharīs* are the same and only the names are different. *Ācharīs* and *dāṅguṛīs* are supposed to be very beautiful and dressed splendidly, whereas there is no explicit description found regarding the beauty of the *mātarīs* and *bharārīs* (Nautiyal 1981; Maithani 2004; Sharma 2006).

There is some confusion about the number of the *ācharīs*, *dāṅguṛīs* and *mātarīs*. Sometimes the number of the *ācharīs* is said to be seven and the number of *dāṅguṛīs* and *bharārīs* to be nine. Others state that the number of both the *ācharīs* and *dāṅguṛīs* is nine. The number of *mātarīs* equals to the classical number of the *saptamatṛkās*, the seven mothers in Tantrism.

Throughout the Central Himalayas, folk belief has that the *ācharīs* and *dāṅguṛīs* live on the Khait (*Khait*) Mountain.<sup>172</sup> According to common folk lore, mortars, pestles, grain, bangles and flowers of *ācharīs* and *dāṅguṛīs* can be found in the caves on the upper ridges of the mountain. *Bharārī*-sisters are believed to reside on the *Pīṛī*<sup>173</sup> and *Bharār* Mountains

<sup>171</sup> A story reported from several reference persons to us in personal talks (Gajendra Nautiyal, Gairsain; Chandra Singh Rahi, Pauri Garhwal, D. R. Purohit, Srinagar Garhwal; Ganesh Thapliyal, Sirain; Surendra, Uttarkashi; Devendra Semwal, Ghuttu).

<sup>172</sup> A mountain near Ghansali in Tehri Garhwal on the bank of Bhilangana River.

<sup>173</sup> The Piri Mountain is also within the proximity of Khait Mountain. In the *āhvān gīt* ‘summons songs’ and the tantric mantras both the *ācharīs* and *bharārīs* and their dwellings are cited together (Chatak 1967; Nautiyal 1981).

in Tehri Garhwal, which are about 22 km from Khait Mountain. *Mātarīs* are supposed to live on the high hills all over.



Figure 14. New temple on Khait Mountain.



Figure 15. Khait Mountain.

Oakley has documented in 1935 that *ācharīs*, *dāṅguṛīs* and *bharārīs* like to play in water and are fond of collecting flowers from high hills and dense pine forests where pure water-springs and lakes are to be found. They fly and dive with the sunrays. Gairola, who has for some time worked together with Oakley, describes the characteristics of *ācharīs*, *dāṅguṛīs* and *bharārīs* as follow: “... they are kind hearted and they love the kids. They also put their shadow on the young girls. There are various stories of their abducting the young handsome warriors.” Stories of abductions of young handsome men by the *ācharīs* are part of the common folk memory, as in the case of *Jītū Bagaḍvāl*, *Sūraj Kāvaḷ*, *Barmi Kāvaḷ* and the warrior *Sidvā* of *Mukhem*.<sup>174</sup>

There is a strong belief even today that the fairies in the Himalayas are harmful to humans. *Mātarīs* are believed to attack young women, especially pregnant women. The *ācharīs* are believed to assail handsome young men as well as young women. *Dāṅguṛīs* are believed to abduct very young girls in order to play with them. They are supposed to be fond of bright colours, which is why young girls and newly married brides and even the bridegrooms are advised to take care and are not sent alone to forests or to fetch water from a spring that is outside of the

<sup>174</sup> Mukhem is a place in Tehri related to Nagraja Krishna, in the same range of the hills as Khait Mountain.

boundary/periphery of the village.<sup>175</sup> The perception of the fairies is however changing, particularly in urban centres in the Himalayas. The best evidence for this is the Khait Mountain itself, where people did not dare to go even in the daylight until recently. However, in recent years *jāgarans* are performed and a tourist fair is held on the Khait Mountain itself.<sup>176</sup>

When an *ācharī* or a *mātarī* assails the body of a girl or a young woman, an exorcist (*Gārūrī*) is called in to wade off the evil spirits. Neither a *Jāgarī* nor even an *Aujī* specialized in some form of exorcism can do much to wade off these evil spirit that are considered to be very aggressive and adamant while possessing the body of the victim, as they normally do not possess hard-core tantric knowledge that is believed to wade off evil spirits. The spirits are not sent away empty-handed, but are given their beloved items such as colourful bangles, vermilion, flowers, and small pieces of colourful clothes, comb, bindis (a colored round mark on the forehead of women, particularly married women) and other makeup items. A cock or a goat is sacrificed. *Rōṭs* ‘thick-sweet chapaties’ and *satanājā* ‘seven types of grains’ are also offered in the sacrifice.

The rituals are performed at a secluded place mostly on top of a hill or in the forest near a water spring. Several times, when even the *Gārūrī* is not able to successfully segregate the evil spirit from the body of the victim, people take refuge in the village deity which in Himalayan folk is considered to be more effective than e.g. the classical Gods and Goddess – Vishnu, Shiva or Shakti.

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<sup>175</sup> Personal talks with Mizajilal, D. R. Purohit, Ganesh Thapliyal, Trepan Singh and Ram Prasad Bhatt’s own childhood experience.

<sup>176</sup> <http://www.jagran.com/uttarakhand/tehri-garhwal-9292374.html> (22.12.2014).



Figure 16. A typical open fairy shrine on a mountain ridge in Tehri Garhwal.

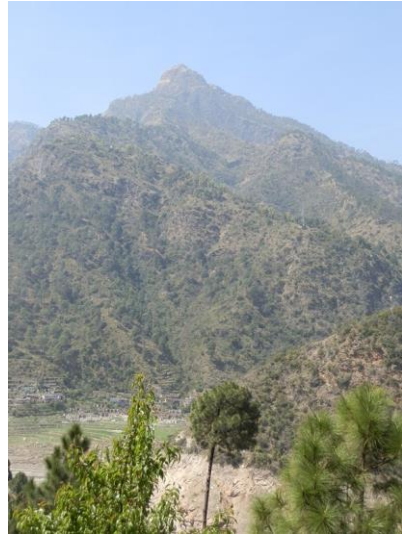


Figure 17. View of Khait Mountain from Pipal Dali (Tehri Garhwal).

According to folk belief, *mātarīs* are not always vicious. They can be kind and generous to the woman affected or shadowed by them. It is believed that if the *mātarīs* are happy, they bring prosperity to the family. The goat (*Capra aegagrus hircus*) that is kept and raised in their name is very fertile and makes the family of its owner prosper. Bhatt (1976:381) mentions *sārī*, a kind of ritual conducted in villages to escape the demoniac powers of the *ācharīs*, *dāḡuṛīs* and *mātarīs*.

The positive view of the folk even toward the evil spirit is marked by a saying in Central Himalayas – *bhūt sarīkho debtā ni ar māmā sarīkho pauṇu ni* ‘there is no generous God as an [evil] spirit and there is no greater guest than the maternal uncle’. In fact both the *pitṛ devatā* (the Deity venerated by the family) and the maternal uncle both play a great role in family matters in the social system of the Central Himalayan society.

The *ācharī* and *dāḡuṛī jāgars* consist of a setup of hymns referring to the stories of the fairies and are usually recited at a particular place and time<sup>177</sup> accompanied by a *dhōl*<sup>178</sup> and *damaū*<sup>179</sup> or by a *ḡaūr*<sup>180</sup> or *thālī*.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Our singer Mr. Mizajilal sang this *jāgar* song in Srinagar Garhwal in a room of a guesthouse for the recording convenience. Traditionally however, a *Jāgarī* would hesitate to sing such a ballad randomly at any place and time. Before the performance, the place is prepared and an environment is created, so that it [the spirit] does not cause any harm to any member of the village society and the singer himself.

Traditionally, these *jāgars* are sung either in a closed room or in a circumscribed area, mostly in front of the house of the victim or the medium of these spirits. The reasons for this are usually explained as follows: Firstly, it is believed that if these spirits are given a free space, they might roam around freely and affect others who are present at the spot or somewhere else in the village, as they are able to easily fly and shift from one victim to another instead of leaving the village boundaries. Secondly, the music and melodies played for these spirits might attract other evil spirits to the spot.

It is the socio-cultural and moral responsibility of the *Jāgarīs* and *Aujīs* to perform the tradition, not to endanger the security of small children, young girls and the newly married women in the village and to protect the environment of the village.<sup>182</sup> Generally people are afraid of *ācharī*, *dāḡuṛī*, *bharārī* and *mātarī* dances and sometimes avoid attending them. However, children, young women, men, upper caste people, low caste and Dalits are allowed to watch and participate in the performance together.<sup>183</sup> The participation includes hand clapping, joining in in refrain singing, rhythmical body movements and dance (usually men only).

Though traditionally *jāgars* related to *ācharī*, *dāḡuṛī*, *bharārī* and *mātarī* are not sung by popular folk singers; there are incidents when the particular *jāgar* which is in the focus of this article was also sung in a studio and in open spaces by a popular folk singer, the late Patiram Nautiyal. It was him who recorded an audio cassette of this particular *jāgar* song in 1980s in Uttarkashi. The song became one of the most popular *jāgar* songs throughout Garhwal Himalayas.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> A barrel-shaped drum which has both heads equal in size. Its shoulder strap is slung from the left side of the instrument over the left shoulder and under the right arm. The left side is played with hand and the right side is played with a gently curved stick (Nautiyal 1981, Alter 2000). *Dhōl* is also played as a solo instrument.

<sup>179</sup> A shallow kettle drums, higher in pitch and is usually played with two thin sticks together with the *dhōl* and hangs from a strap around the neck of the performer. It is rarely played solo.

<sup>180</sup> Many times it is also pronounced *ḡāuru* (Sanskrit *ḡamarī*) and is a small drum which has an hourglass-shaped body and is usually traditionally used in ritual songs.

<sup>181</sup> A plate, traditionally a brace plate played with *ḡāuru* or *huṛakī*, another type of small drum.

<sup>182</sup> See Kukreti 1983, in personal talk with D. R. Purohit and Dinesh Uniyal from Srinagar Garhwal, Mahipal Singh Negi and Ganesh Thapliyal from New Tehri, Mizajilal (our singer).

<sup>183</sup> The traditional caste system used to be much less rigid in the Central Himalayas as compared to the North-Indian plains, and the sense of community of people irrespective of their social background is a remnant of this, as among other Maheshvar Prasad Joshi (2011) tries to demonstrate.

<sup>184</sup> Patiram Nautiyal died on 20th August 2013 at the age of 74 years in Uttar-kashi.

### 15 Mizajilal *Aujī* and *Bājgī*



Figure 18. Mizaji Lal accompanied by a tambourine player.

Mizajilal (*Mizājīlāl*), the singer of the *jāgar Disā Dāḡurī* which is documented in this article, belongs to the *Śīlpkār* ‘artisan’ strata called *Aujī* group of the Dalit community in Central Himalayas. While referring to his professional art, he frequently refers to himself as *Bājgī* ‘musician.’<sup>185</sup> Both terms are interchangeable in their use, since in traditional society the musical performer in general and the player of drums and singer is understood to be an *Aujī* by caste. In religious and spiritual functions an *Aujī* is also called *Dhōlī* ‘one who plays the *dhōl*’, since the big drum is characteristic of his professional function. He is the one who carries the *dhōl* and plays the celestial rhythms that invoke certain spirits or deities. By caste an *Aujī* is usually *Dās* ‘the servant of the drum’. Mizajilal, however, does not use the term *Dās*, he instead calls himself a *Lāl* meaning ‘son’. The status of an *Aujī* or *Bājgī* in the social hierarchy within the Dalit community and the larger society in general is ambiguous. As a bearer of the tradition, he ranks high, but he is low in caste.

Mizajilal is trained from childhood to sing the characteristic sketches and stories of the spirit in question. Basically, anyone can

<sup>185</sup> Fioli 2011 lists *Bājgī* as a separate caste which unfortunately is misleading as socially and religiously *Bājgī* as well as *Jāgarī* are functional terms relating to playing and singing music in a ritual context, but are similar to *Nāgārī* ‘player of the *nāgārā*’ (a kind of drum) in use as names for subcasts, as in the 1931 census (Subarddhan 2012:50-51), probably identical with *Aujī*-subcast.



become a *Jāgāū/Jāgarīyā*, whereas *Aujī* is a hereditary designation. The term *Jāgarīyā* is generally understood as a functional term while *Aujī* is a caste as an endogamous social unit (Chatak [1958] 1996, Raturi 1988, Alter 2000).

Mizajilal is married and has four children. He presently lives with his brother and his mother in a small village called Muyal Gaon near Ghansali. He is the only one in his family who actively performs and continuing the tradition within the family. When asked about his age he bluntly said *cālīs ar sāt* (*fourty and seven*) years, i.e. 47. According to Mizajilal he has visited a primary school till 5<sup>th</sup> grade, but since he did not pass the final exam he simply discontinued.

He learnt drumming and singing from his father Girdharilal who died a few years back. Girdharilal's father, i.e. Mizajilal's grandfather, (name not known) originally migrated from village Pangrana, Hindau Patti to Muyal Gaon about 50 years ago. Some farming land was then allotted to him by the villagers to meet his basic needs. In general, villagers are his *jajmāns* 'clients',<sup>186</sup> i.e. those who employ a singer and remunerate him accordingly. Today, Mizajilal is a well-trained *Aujī* who professionally plays *Ḍhōl*, *Damaū*, and *Thālī* and has a local reputation for his *jāgar* performances in Garhwali.

Mizajilal explained to us repeatedly that people tell him that he as a *Jāgarī*, who plays a role of a kind of therapeutical psychologist for them. His father Girdharilal used to perform mild forms of exorcism with what Mizajilal freely calls '*phūk*', i.e. the 'blowing' away of spirits. Mizajilal himself, however, says he does not perform exorcism. However, he keeps a *ḍolī* (also sometimes called *rath* in Garwali tradition), a mobile representation of the divine in his house transported by two persons on their shoulders, which is taken on procession through the village on certain festive occasions and is an object of divination, deciding the way and the speed of the procession through the village on its own. It can also be approached through questions, and responds with "yes" or "no" according to the way it moves.

For Mizajilal, drumming at religious and social occasions and festivals and performing the *jāgars* in his village and occasionally even outside his village is his main source of income. He usually gets some cash and *ḍaḍvār*<sup>187</sup> from his *jajmāns*. His family also grows rice and

<sup>186</sup> The client of a priest, an *Aujī*. *Yajamāna* is a Sanskrit term meaning 'the person paying the cost of a sacrifice, the institutor of a sacrifice (who to perform it employs a priest or priests, who are often hereditary functionaries in a family)'.

<sup>187</sup> A share of grain that an *Aujī*, a *Purohit* (family priest) and a watchman received from their clients. *Ḍaḍvār* has been a common practice in the past throughout Himalayan regions

wheat. Since the soil of their few fields is not very fertile, the production is low and insufficient to sustain his family's needs.

Mizajilal does not own the drums he plays. They belong to the village council (*paṃcāyat*). He is free to use the drums whenever he wants and keeps donations and the honorarium for performances for himself. However, the maintenance of the instruments is his responsibility. Mizajilal reports that he mainly sings the *jāgars* in praise of *Nāgelū*, *Nāgarjā*,<sup>188</sup> *Narsimḡ* 'Viṣṇū', *Rājṛājeśvarī* 'Goddess *Durgā*', *Saidvālī*<sup>189</sup> and some folksongs.

Alter states in his thesis (2000: 137) that "most families of *Bājgī* musicians in Garhwal own drums which are several generations old". According to our information however, most of the *Bājgīs* in Garhwal unfortunately do not own their instruments. They are usually declared to belong to the village *paṃcāyats*. The financial and social condition of these musicians is very bleak, their important and acknowledged role in rituals notwithstanding. Though Mizajilal is a well known and somehow important person in the village community, his economic condition is poor like in the case of most *Aujīs* throughout Garhwal.

Similarly, the social respect given to *Aujīs* and their professional skills as performers of the tradition is rather low. They do not get respect from upper castes and very often face ridiculous behaviour of upper class men. Since playing drums and singing does not generate social respect, the young generation of these families tends not to continue their traditional family profession anymore. Instead, there is a strong tendency towards education, migration to the socially less rigid urban environment and to professional careers that are not necessarily related to their caste origin. If they manage to fulfil the minimum qualification for governmental reservations for members of Scheduled Castes, i.e. the matric exam (tenth standard), they are able to profit from governmental programmes. However, this is often not the case, since the number of school dropouts is high. Other performers change over to new market demands and perform "band" music instead of the inherited repertoire in Garhwali. "Band" is the common term used as an English loanword in

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when currency notes were not easy to get. With a continually growing monetarization of Central Himalayan economy the trend is more towards currency notes, which is perceived to be more convenient for both parties – for a priest and for an *Aujī* and for their *Jajmāns*. According to Mizajilal carrying the bags of grains is not easy up- or downhill. Apart from that, the growth of the crops in the hills has dramatically declined in recent years.

<sup>188</sup> Name of Krishna in Garhwal.

<sup>189</sup> *Jāgar* in the praise of a Said 'a demonic spirit' belonging to Islamic faith.

Hindi all over North India. The North Indian brass band music is in high demand particularly during marriages.

Mizajilal regrets that the young generation of *Aujī* families is unable to recognize the value of traditional Garhwali hymns and the importance of the profession they could inherit. Consequently, the traditional artistic skills of the *Aujīs* are “dying out” while “those who previously have looked down upon us are profiting from the new chances in the field of music and singing”, says Mizajilal.

Mizajilal murmurs often while singing, as is also noticed in the singing of the tantric Gurus and Nath Yogis. They consider the language of their tantric texts as mystic and do not necessarily allow normal people to understand it. Mizajilal does so probably to create a kind of mystic environment for the performance. He sometimes changes unaspirated sounds as aspirated, e.g. he pronounces the velar consonant “g” as “gh” or “g̃” and “k” and so on.

It is interesting that tune Mizajilal uses to sing the *ācharī jāgar* is different from the better known version of the great *jāgar* master Omkardas from Gawana village in Bhilangana Valley, Tehri Garhwal. This choice of tune and the hymn as such seems to be his own creation. Mizajilal has also not followed the text sung by Omkardas and popularly sung by Patiram Nautiyal. Mizajilal has his individual style of singing the *jāgars*, even though he frequently confirms that he strictly follows the tradition of *Dholsāgar*<sup>190</sup> ‘the ocean of drumming’ in rhythm and melody. His knowledge of this authoritative text is however obviously rather limited and may reflect not much more than hearsay.

## 16 The Jāgar “Disā Dāṅṅurī”

The first systematic work on Central Himalayan Folklore was published in 1935 by Oakley and Gairola. Their main focus was on ballads and folktales. Between 1955 and 1976 at least six important works including the anthologies and studies were published, namely, *Dhūyāl* (1955)<sup>191</sup> by Abodhbandhu Bahuguna; *Garhwālī lok gītō kā ālocnātmak adhyayan* (1956) ‘a critical study of Garhwali folk songs’ and *Garhwālī lok-gāthāē* (1958) ‘Garhwali folk epics’ by Govind Chatak; *Garhwālī lok-sāhitya kā*

<sup>190</sup> *Dholsāgar* is a classical work on the technics of drumming. For details see Alter (2000) and Chandola (1977).

<sup>191</sup> Probably ‘to make the sound, to produce a tone’ etc. The root of *dhūyāl* is *dhun* which means ‘tune’. *Dhūyāl* is performed by an *Aujī* before and after a *devpūjā* in any religious ceremony. It could be understood as a kind of call for descending and ascending of the Gods and Goddesses.

*vivecnātmak adhyayan* (1964) ‘a critical study of Garhwali folk literature’ by Mohanlal Babulkar and *Garhwālī bhāṣā evaṃ uskā sāhitya* (1976) ‘Garhwali language and its literature’. All of them discussed the folk traditions relating to the *ācharī*, *mātarī* and *bharārī*-sisters. The focus in all these studies is that in this Central Himalayan region, fairies are frightening since they do hunt humans.

However, none of these earlier studies mentions the term *dāḡurī*. It is Shivanand Nautiyal who for the first time refers to a *jāgar*<sup>192</sup> ‘hymn’ titled *Disāī Dāḡurīyō* ‘sister-*dāḡurīs*’ in his book *Garhwāl ke lok-nṛtya-gīt* ‘folk-dance songs of Garhwal’ published in 1981 from Allahabad. Around this time, Patiram Nautiyal from Uttarkashi recorded this *jāgar*, apparently yet another version of the *jāgar* in Bhagirathi valley. A cassette of this recording came out the same year. As already discussed in the first section of the second part of the article, the variants in the names of the fairies hint to a complex history that is not yet systematically studied, even though they are frequently identifies with each other.

It is strange that the term *dāḡurī* does not appear in the anthologies before the 1980s. Two possible explanations can be imagined: Either the scholars have bluntly not documented the term thinking that it was a synonym of *mātarī* or *ācharī* as some of them (Chatak 1958) have stated about *ācharī*, *mātarī* and even *bharārī*, or they have indeed not come across this term during their fieldwork.<sup>193</sup> It appears that the term is peculiar particularly in the Bhilangna valley. Neither Chatak, Bahuguna, Babulkar nor Bhatt are from Bhilangna valley and it seems that they have not studied the area either.

Beyond that, as already mentioned, there are ambiguities regarding the number of the *ācharī* and *dāḡurī*-sisters. Nautiyal (1981) and Chatak (1958) have documented the number of the *dāḡurī*-sisters as seven, whereas Babulkar (1964) and Bhatt (1976) claim that the number of the *ācharī*-sisters is nine. They also state that they belong to a Rawat family from a Garhwali village named *Dāḡurā*. The existence of the *dāḡurī*-sisters as the *dhiyāṇ* ‘family daughters’ of the Rawat clan is not contested by any of the scholars but no one has explicitly gone into the distinctions between *ācharī*, *dāḡurī* and *bharārī*-sisters. Nautiyal (1981) has stated that the *dāḡurī*-sisters were born in the mentioned village in Garhwal. Unfortunately we fail to identify a village in Garhwal that is called *Dāḡurā*/*Dāḡur*/*Dāḡur* in the list of the villages of India 2014.<sup>194</sup> The list shows the only village named *Dāḡurā* near Puri in Odisha. Several

<sup>192</sup> A genre of folk epic in Central Himalayas.

<sup>193</sup> Chatak does not mention *dāḡurī* even after revising his works during 1990-1998.

<sup>194</sup> <http://vlist.in/> (31.12.2014).

villages named 'Dangar' are situated in Kumaun and Himachal Pradesh, but not in Garhwal. The list even shows a village named *Dāngar Khoḷā* 'the quarter of the *Dangar*' near Almora.

*Dāḡurī* is connected by some with the term '*dāngar*' 'cattle'.<sup>195</sup> As stated in part 11 in the first part of this article, fairies are often believed to roam around in the wild with small quadroped animals, i.e. goats and sheep, but rather not so with cows or buffalows. An etymology relating the term to *Daṅgar* or *Daṅgur* 'bullock' is therefore rather fancy.

The fairies are supposed to have the power to turn human beings into stones, birds, into a goat or a beautiful young woman to bear children and lead a married life (Chatak 1958; Babulkar 1964, Nautiyal 1981). *Mātarīs* never attack a man. Whenever they attack a woman, it is impossible to get rid of them by force. One can only try to please them ceremonially and get their blessings, whereas *ācharīs*, *dāḡurīs* and *bharārīs* attack young girls and fall in love with young handsome men. It is possible to get rid of them with the help of a shaman (*Gāruṛī/Aujhā*) or a village Demigod (Chatak 1958; Nautiyal 1981).

Muyal Gaon, Mizajilal's village, is close to Ghansali, not far from the mountains where the *ācharīs*, *dāḡurīs* and *bharārīs* are believed to be dwelling. A similar *jāgar* has been documented by Shivanand Nautiyal in his book *Garhwāl ke loknṛtya-gīt* (1981: 153). And as stated earlier, another *jāgar* of similar content was reportedly recorded by a folk singer Mr. Patiram Nautiyal in Uttarkashi in the early 1980s, but unfortunately we were unable to obtain a copy of the cassette. According to D. R. Purohit, Srinagar (Garhwal), there is yet another version of this *jāgar* sung by Omkardas who also lives in Bhilangana valley.

### 17 Mizajilal's version of the hymn and its performance

The narrative content of a *jāgar* is revealed within the oral text as names of the characters and locations relate the visible and concrete reality to the world of the fairies. The oral text explicitly reveals the dwellings of the *dāḡurī* and *bharārī*-sisters, their appearance and their movements. The description of the dwellings of *dāḡurī* and *bharārī*-sisters in the text documented by Nautiyal (1981) is different from that of our text. This is

<sup>195</sup> See Turner 1965: *daṅgara* 5526 \***daṅgara** 1. 'cattle'. 2. \***daṅgara**-. [Same as *daṅgara*-2 s.v. \***daḡga**-2 as a pejorative term for cattle] 1. K. *daṅgur* m. 'bullock', L. *daṅgur*, (Ju.) *dāgar* m. 'horned cattle'; P. *daṅgar* m. 'cattle', Or. *daṅgara*; Bi. *dāgar* 'old worn-out beast, dead cattle', *dhūr dāgar* 'cattle in general'; Bhoj. *dāngar* 'cattle'; H. *dāgar*, *dāgrā* m. 'horned cattle'. 2. H. *dāgar* m. = prec.

simply because the stories are adapted to other local and regional geographical and socio-cultural conditions. According to our oral text the *dāṅguṛī*-sisters live in *Khait-Khāl* ‘Khait-Mountain’ and the *bharārī*-sisters live in *Pīrī* and *Bharārī/ Bhṛgu*-Mountains, whereas according to the oral text documented by Nautiyal (1981) the *dāṅguṛī*-sisters live as mentioned in a certain *Dāngurā* village, which the author locates in the Alaknanda valley of Garhwal.

The *dāṅguṛī*-sisters in our oral text dwell in caves and on the ridges and cliffs of Khait in summer huts close to the *Sundariyā* Lake, the *Gājaliyā* Forest, in general in the fields of amaranth (*rāmdānā*), in flower gardens, and in *Kemar Paṭṭī*, all within the proximity of the Khait Mountain. The *Bharārī*-sisters are supposed to dwell in the plains of *Basar Paṭṭī*, *Pīrī* and *Bharārī* Mountains, in the fields of Chakurasera, on the slopes of Ghumeti and in the sky. The *dāṅguṛī*-sisters are accompanied by the Demigods *Hiṇḍvān*<sup>196</sup> ‘the spirit of a warrior of Garhwal’, *Hū*,<sup>197</sup> *Vinsar*,<sup>198</sup> Krishna, and Raja Shah.<sup>199</sup> Similarly the *bharārī*-sisters are accompanied by the Demigods *Lāl Singh*, *Mān-Camphvā* and by a couple of dogs (*pūtan*), by a swarm of butterflies (*malesī bhīṛākū*), by a swarm of sparrows (*ghēduṛī bhīṛākū*) and both the *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī*-sisters roam in the sky with their *Garudā-ratha* ‘the chariot of *Garudā*’. *Garuṛā* or *Garudā* – the traditional *vāhana* (‘accompanying animal’ of Vishnu) – is a mythical bird that quite often appears in Nath literature as a kind of messenger of the divine world in this world.<sup>200</sup> This particular element

<sup>196</sup> *Mān-Hiṇḍvāl* or *Hindvāl* or *Hiṇḍvān* is believed to have been a powerful and tricky warrior in Central Himalayas who was in the service of the *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters. It is the *Hardyaul* in Kumaun, who is supposed to be the spirit of a prince. *Mān-Hiṇḍvāl* is synonymous to a powerful warrior. (as explained by Mizajilal, D. R. Purohit, Gajendra Nautiyal).

<sup>197</sup> *Hū* is a Demigod in Garhwal who is considered to be the well-wisher of the humans and the younger brother of the Demigod *Ghaṇṭākarna* (‘a character with bell-shaped ears’ – son of Bhīmsen and Hiḍimbā). *Hū* is a divine form of Shiva (*śiv se is devtā kī utpatti māni jāti hai*, Maithani 2004: 357). *Hū-Vinsar* as a divine couple is however sometimes identified with Krishna and Balarama. Beyond that, *Hū* is supposed to be the disciple of God *Nirāṅkāra* (‘formless god’). In Central Himalayas the term *Nirāṅkāra* is used for Shiva, the god of destruction and creation at the same time. The term *Nirāṅkāra* is used equally by *Aujīs*, tantrics, Nath Yogis and musicians in the Central Himalayas (see Nautiyal 1981: 87-95), Chatak 1967).

<sup>198</sup> *Vinsar* is usually identified with Vishnu’s *nāga* (‘snake’), i.e. Vishnu himself in form of the divine snake (Sharma 2014: 491).

<sup>199</sup> Probably a local warrior belonging to the Shah dynasty ‘the erstwhile rulers’, known as the Panwar dynasty of Garhwal. The term ‘Shah’ is obviously a honorary term conferred by the Mughal rulers.

<sup>200</sup> Turner 1965: 4041 *garuḍā*-m. ‘a mythical bird’ Mn. Pa. *garuḷa*- m., Pk. *garuḍa*-, °*ula*-m.; P. *garaḷ* m. ‘the bird *Ardea argala*’; N. *garul* ‘eagle’, Bhoj. *gaṛur*; OAw. *garura* ‘blue

indicates the remarkable and inevitable influence of the *Nāth Saṃpradaya* on the belief system of people of Central Himalayas. Our oral text does not vary the number of the *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī*-sisters and their flying chariots as is documented by Nautiyal (1981). Throughout the text they are nine fairy sisters and they possess nine flying chariots.

The outfit of both of the *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī*-sisters is described as bright and jazzy red and yellow coloured, a typical Pahari *ghāgharā* ‘circular skirt’, silk scarfs and flowers. Their cloths are the integral part of the aesthetic description of the fairies, and equally the rest of their appearance, particularly the sharp sickles as symbols of their demoniac power. The references to the colourful amaranth and the seven different sorts of grains, especially the odorant rice growing in the Bhilangana valley contrast sharply with their bloodthirsty and particularly carnivorous character at times when the seductive fairies fall in love with a handsome young man.

Mizajilal’s narration describes the *dāṅguṛī* and *ācharī*-sisters as the daughters of the Rawat (a warrior caste) clan and their maternal uncles are the Panwar’s, the erstwhile ruling family in Tehri Garhwali till 1948.<sup>201</sup> In another *jāgar* the *ācharī*-sisters are believed to have a queen from among themselves too.<sup>202</sup> The text shows that the fairies always appear in a group.

The drummer who is also the singer essentially marks the importance of the changing scenes in the oral text by a constant change between short or long beats. The intensive engagement of the drummer and singer with the spirits or deity is usually indicated by more intensive solo drumming in-between individual verses during the *jāgar* performance (Nautiyal 1994). For example our drummer-cum-singer has shown the importance of the particular divine characters and their presence through solo drumming after lines 10, 13, 14, 18, 20, 23, 38, 47, 55, 59, and 62, a kind of invocatory drumming for the characters

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jay’; H. *garuṛ* m. ‘hornbill’, *garul* ‘a large vulture’; Si. *guruḷā* ‘bird’ (*kurullā* infl. by Tam.?). – Kal. rumb. *gōrvélik* ‘kite’??.

<sup>201</sup> For details, see Ajay S. Rawat 1989.

<sup>202</sup> *āchariyō kī rāṇī āī phūl phulādī re*  
*bāī kī dālyō ma āī burās kā phūlu ma*  
*phyōli kā phūlu ma āī jhamkadā gūṭū ma*  
*phyōli kā phūlu ma āī jhamkadā gūṭū ma! Auṛī ho!*

Bhatt ‘Shailesh’ 1976:133

“The Queen of the *Ācharis* descends during the spring

She sits on oak trees and on rhododendron trees

She sits on the yellowflax flowers, she comes to listen to happy dance songs

She sits on the yellowflax flowers; she comes to listen to happy dance songs! So (tells us) the *Auṛī*!”

appearing in the respective part of the hymn. The solo drumming is particularly strong after line 10, when the Demigods *Hūt* and *Vinsar* appear, after line 13 with the appearance of Indra and again after line 20, when the term *dāṅguṛī* is substituted by *bharārī* without any explanation for the listener/reader.

In *jāgar* singing the singer frequently changes his role from the descriptive and narrative to the performative while singing. This is marked by the grammatical change from the third to the first person. The singer turns into the first person, forms part of the party that moves with the fairies and virtually moves from one place to another together with the *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī*-sisters.

An astonishing feature of the language of our singer is the spontaneous change of unaspirated consonants into aspirates. Without giving any particular reason for this peculiar change of phonemes during performance, the singer bluntly explained this by stating that this was simply the way they [the *Jāgarīs*] sing the *jāgar*. It seems that the *Jāgarī* deliberately produces unusual stress and spontaneous aspiration in phonemes to let his language sound strange and somehow mysterious.

The singer often changes the subject from *dāṅguṛī* to *bharārī*-sisters to relate to terms used in different geographical regions, which are within the rein of either *dāṅguṛī* or *bharārī*-sisters. The shift in the geographical regions and their importance is also marked by the style of drumming. Elements like rhododendron flower (*burās*), *Huṇiyā's* chariot, dripping water in the caves and a place named Ranthal which are found in all other oral texts related to *ācharī*, *dāṅguṛī* and *bharārī*-sisters in Uttarakhand are missing in our text.<sup>203</sup> Mizajilal may have omitted certain parts of the hymn, possibly due to the unusual performance out of its ritual context. However, his version of the *jāgar*, judging from the sequence of the story line and geographical description, appears to be more towards the original one than for example the version that is documented by Shivanand Nautiyal (1981).

### 18 *Disā Dāṅguṛī*: A Fairy 'Hymn' from Central Himalayas<sup>204</sup>

Singer: Mizajilal, Jakhnyali, Tehri Garhwal

Recorded: 15.11.2013 in Srinagar Garhwal, Uttarakhand

<sup>203</sup> See Nautiyal 1981, 1994, Bhatt 1976, Bahuguna 1954, Babulkar 1967, Chatak 1958, Kukreti 1983.

<sup>204</sup> Recorded by Heinz Werner Wessler and Claus Peter Zoller and edited by all three authors.



**Text**

1. *tum tə randā ūcā khēṭ khālə, disā dhāḱuryō*
2. *tum tə randā ūcā khēṭ khālə, disā dhāḱuryō* x3<sup>205</sup>
3. *hā, tumārā sāth chə mān-və-ḥiṇḍvālə, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
4. *hā, tum randā tēi uḍyāryō, disā dhāḱuryō*
5. *kanā randā tēi talai uḍār, disā dhāḱuryō*
6. *hā, tum randā tēi tarī udār, disā dhāḱuryō*
7. *hā, tumārū caḷu tə nō ʔolē kvē rathə, disā dhāḱuryō*
8. *tumārū caḷu tə nō ʔolē kvē rathə, disā dhāḱuryō*
9. *hā, tumārā sāth tə hīt-vinsarə, disā dhāḱuryō*
10. *tumārā sāth tə hīt-vinsarə, disā dhāḱuryō*
11. *hā, tumārā sāth chə hīt-vinsarə, disā dhāḱuryō*
12. *tumārā sāth chə kriṣṇ bhagvānə, disā dhāḱuryō*
13. *tumē holā tə indrā kī parī, disā dhāḱuryō*
14. *hā, tum hvālā tə indrā kī parī, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
15. *hā, mūḍu dharyāli bhē reśamī rumēlā, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
16. *hā, gati pēryālī pīgəḷī ghāghərī, disā dhāḱuryō*
17. *gati pēryālī pīgəḷī ghāghərī, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
18. *mūḍu dharyāli bhē reśamī rumēlā, disā dhāḱuryō*
19. *hā, tum tə jādā ḍāḍu kī marūrī, disā dhāḱuryō*
20. *tum tə jādā ḍāḍu kī marūrī, disā dhāḱuryō*
21. *hā, tum tə hvālā tə nō bēṇi āchurī, disā bharāryō*
22. *hā, tum tə hvālā tə nō bēṇi āchurī, disā bharāryō* x2
23. *tum hvālā tə rautu kī dhiyāṇ, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
24. *hā, tumārā māmā chan he pāvāra, disā dhāḱuryō*
25. *tumārā hvālā si māmā pāvāra, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
26. *hā, tumārā pitā si rautə he chan, disā dhāḱuryō*
27. *tumārū holu tə nō ʔolē kvāē rathə, disā dhāḱuryō*
28. *hā, saṅg mā caladu rājā sā(h) bhējī, disā dhāḱuryō*
29. *saṅg mā rādā su rājā sāh bhējī, disā dhāḱuryō* x2
30. *hā, tum jāṇā tə sundəriyō kā tāḷə, disā dhāḱuryō*
31. *tuman jāṇə tə gajəḷiyō kā baṇə, disā dhāḱuryō*
32. *hā, ab jāṇā tə mārčhū kā khētə, disā dhāḱuryō*
33. *tuman jāṇə tə mārčhū kā khetə, disā dhāḱuryō*
34. *hā, hāti dharyāli tə chuṅkyālī dāthuṛī, disā dhāḱuryō*

<sup>205</sup> “X3” at the end of a line marks double repetition, i.e. the line is sung three times, “x2” is a simple repetition, i.e. the line is sung two times.

35. *hāti dharyālī tə chūṅkyālī dāthurī, disā bharāryō*  
 36. *hāti dharyālī tə chūṅkyālī dāthurī, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 37. *hā, kanā gēnə tə mārču kə phūlə, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 38. *tuman baiṇi tə mārčū kāṭyālī, disā dhāḱryō*  
 39. *hā, kanā hōdā tə mārčā kə khīl, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 40. *kanā hōdā tə mārčū kə khīl, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 41. *hā, mūd dharyālī bhē reśamī rūmēlā, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 42. *hā, ab jāndā tə kemarā kī paṭṭī, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 43. *calā re bēṇyō tə kemarā kī paṭṭī, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 44. *hā, takh hōndu tə jīrī bāsmatī, disā dhāḱuryō x2*  
 45. *calā re bēṇyō tə kemarā kī paṭṭī, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 46. *takh hōndu tə jīrī bāsmatī, disā bharāryō*  
 47. *hā, tumārū hōlu tə cōbatyā bāsarə, disā bharāryō x2*  
 48. *hā, sāth mā caladā lālə-siṅə debətā, disā bharāryō*  
 49. *sāth caladu lālə siṅə debətā, disā bharāryō*  
 50. *sāth chaldū mānvā-caṃphuvā, disā bharāryō*  
 51. *hā, calā re bēṇyō tə cākurā kə serā disā bharāryō x2*  
 52. *hā, mān-caṃphuvā randū ghumeṭī kə pākhū, disā bharāryō*  
 53. *mān-caṃphuvā tə ghumeṭī kə pākhū, disā bharāryō*  
 54. *tumārū cali tə nə ʔolā kū rathə, disā dhāḱuryō*  
 55. *kanu caladū re nə ʔolā kū rathə, disā bharāryō*  
 56. *hā, tumārū caldu tə āsmānī rathə, disā bharāryō x2*  
 57. *hā, saṅg caladi tə pūtənō kī joṛī, disā bharāryō x2*  
 58. *hā, tumārū caladu tə malēsī bhīṛākū, disā bharāryō*  
 59. *kanu caladū tə malesī bhīṛākū, disā dhāḱuriō*  
 60. *hā, tumārū caladū tə ghedarī (ghēdarī)-sī bhīṛākū, disā bharāryō*  
 61. *kanu caladū tə nə ʔolā kū rathə, disā bharāryō*  
 62. *tumārū holu tə garuṛ-bāṇīrathə, disā bharāryō*  
 63. *hā, sajaṅ lēgī tə garuṛbāṇī rathə, disā bharāryō x2*  
 64. *kanu caladū ūpəṛī āgāsā, disā bharāryō x2*

## 19 Translation

1. Oh yes, you dwell on the high-rising slopes of the *Khait*-mountain, oh *Dāḡurī* sisters!
2. You dwell on the high-rising slopes of the *Khait*-mountain, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x3
3. Oh yes, you are accompanied by the demigod *Mān-va-Hinḍvāl*,<sup>206</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x2

<sup>206</sup> “va” is just an exclamation here.

4. Oh yes, you live in those caves, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
5. How [nicely] you live in those nether caves! oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
6. You live in that steep rock face cave, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
7. Oh yes, your nine wagons chariot moves around, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
8. Your nine wagons chariot moves around, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
9. Oh yes, you are accompanied by the demigods *Hīt* and *Vinsar*, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
10. You are accompanied by *Hīt* and *Vinsar*, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
11. Oh yes, you are accompanied by the demigods *Hīt* and *Vinsar*, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
12. Oh yes, you are accompanied by Lord Krishna, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
13. You are the fairies of Lord Indara<sup>207</sup>, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
14. Oh yes, you are the fairies of Lord Indara, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters! x2
15. Oh yes, you have put on a silken [head] scarf on your head, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters! x2
16. Oh yes, you have put on [your body] a yellow skirt, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
17. You have put on [your body] a yellow skirt, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters! x2
18. You have put on a silken scarf on your head, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
19. Oh yes, you visit the summer huts in the mountains,<sup>208</sup> oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
20. You visit the summer huts in the mountains, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!
21. Oh yes, you truly are the nine *ācharī* sisters! oh *Bharārī*-sisters!<sup>209</sup>
22. You truly are the nine *Bharārī*-sisters! oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2
23. Oh yes, you are the *dhiyāṇ* of the Rawats, oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters! x2
24. Oh yes, your maternal uncles are the Panwars,<sup>210</sup> oh *Dāṅguṛī*-sisters!

<sup>207</sup> Indra the king of the Gods is often accompanied by fairies in folklore.

<sup>208</sup> The sentence can be also translated as “you are going to the summer huts in the mountain”. *Marārī* or *Maror* are also the names of a place in the Himalayas, e. g. a place near Budhakedar, Tehri Garhwal.

<sup>209</sup> *Bharārīs* are supposed to live in the *Pīṛī* and *Bharār* hills (there are many hills in Garhwal, Kumaun and Himachal called *Pīṛī* and *Bharār*). *Pīṛī* is also worshiped as *Pīṛī māṭā* ‘mother *Pīṛī*’ and there is a temple devoted to *Pīṛīdevī* in Himachal near Shimla. Nautiyal (1981:141) has also mentioned “*Pīṛī kī bharārī*”. Traditionally “*khaiṭ kī ācharī*” and “*pīṛī kī bharārī*” are invoked in the beginning of the *jāgar songs*. The sudden change of names here supposes that the *Jāgarī* (the singer) is slowly introducing the other geographical region other than the Khait region, namely Basar and Kemar Pattis that are supposed to be the playgrounds of the *bharārī* sisters.

<sup>210</sup> Panwar is a warrior Rajput caste in Garhwal and Kamaun and one of the ruling dynasties of Uttarakhand. They ruled Garhwal until 1948.

25. Your maternal uncles are the honourable Panwars, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!  
x2
26. Oh yes, your father is the honourable Rawat,<sup>211</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
27. You own a chariot of nine wagons, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
28. Oh yes, your elder brother Raja Shah<sup>212</sup> accompanies you, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
29. Your elder brother Raja Shah is always by your side, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x2
30. Oh yes, you are going to the lake of *sundriyō*<sup>213</sup>, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
31. You have to go the forest of the *gāḷḷiyō*,<sup>214</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
32. Oh yes, now you are going to the amaranth-fields,<sup>215</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
33. You have to go to the amaranth-fields, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
34. Oh yes, you holding the *chunḡyālī* sickles<sup>216</sup> in your hands, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!

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<sup>211</sup> The headman of the Rawat warrior clan in Uttarakhand.

<sup>212</sup> The royal title ‘Shah’ appears in Garhwal only after 17th century, when the Mughal rulers started to interact with the Central Himalayan kings. The term ‘Shah’ is a symbol of power and mightiness in this context. The brother Raja Shah is supposed to possess the demoniac and divine powers.

<sup>213</sup> Most probably it’s the *sahasratāl*, the mystic lake in the Bhilangana Valley, which is about 40 km away from Budhakedar towards north. The lake is at about 14000 feet including the *siddhatāl*, *yamtāl*, *māṭṛkātāl*, *narsimhatāl* and *liṅgtāl*. The *Sundriyā* Lake is considered sacred in the Nath tradition. The Nath Yogis Macchendranath, Gorakhnath and Chauranginath are worshiped as gods in the Central Himalayas. In Tehri, where our singer Mizajilal comes from, the Balganga and Bhagirathi valley are known as places where Nath Yogis use to stay during their travels around the Himalayas.

<sup>214</sup> *Gājaḷ* is an ornament of flowers and leaves, especially of the fir tree. Here it appears to refer to a forest of colourful flowers, most probably the high Himalayan pastures and slopes, e.g. ‘Valley of Flowers’. See Sharma 2014. It is the folk belief that the *āchari*, *dāḡurī* and *bharārī* sisters are very active during the mid-days in the spring and summer when the flowers are blossoming everywhere in the hills and valleys.

<sup>215</sup> *Mārchū* ‘amaranth’ is one of the basic ingredients used in the oblations to the *mātaris*, *ācharis*, *dāḡurīs* and *bharārīs* due to its mystic colours and its peculiar attributes. The Himalaya Amaranth usually grows in higher altitude and is supposed to be the favourite food of spirits.

<sup>216</sup> *Chunḡyālī* is a sickle with a small bell that rings while being used. In folk belief the sickle is also used by the *mātaris*, *ācharis*, *dāḡurīs* and *bharārī*- sisters. Interestingly, the sickle with a small bell at its back nook is also used by many farmers for safety reasons. It is generally used to alert the reptiles so that they are not hurt when the grass is cut and they do not hurt the person cutting the grass.

35. You are holding the *chuṅkyālī* sickles<sup>217</sup> in your hands, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
36. You are holding the *chuṅkyālī* sickles in your hands, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
37. Oh yes, how [delightfully] you have approached the blooming amaranth, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
38. Oh sisters, you have already cut the [blooming] amaranth, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x2
39. Oh yes, the parched amaranth is so tasty, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
40. The parched amaranth is so tasty, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
41. Oh yes, you have [so nice] put on a silken scarf on your head, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x2
42. Oh yes, now you are going to the Kemar Valley,<sup>218</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!
43. Oh sisters, “let us go to the Kemar valley!<sup>219</sup>, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!”
44. Oh yes, there grows the *Jīrī Bāsmatī* rice,<sup>220</sup> oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters! x2
45. Oh sisters! Let us go to the valley of Kemar, oh *Dāḡurī*-sisters!”
46. Oh, there grows the *Jīrī Bāsmatī* rice, oh *Bharārī*<sup>221</sup>-sisters!
47. Oh yes, you rule the flat landscape of Basar region<sup>222</sup>, oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2
48. Oh yes, you are accompanied by the Demigod Lal Singh<sup>223</sup>, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
49. You (indeed) are accompanied by the Demigod Lal Singh, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
50. You are accompanied by *mān-vā-camphuvā*<sup>224</sup>, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!

<sup>217</sup> A sickle with small bells at the rear edge of it. These bells are usually meant to disperse the insects and reptiles when the farmers cut the grass or the crop.

<sup>218</sup> *Kemar Paṭṭī* is situated in Balganga Valley between Ghansali and Budhakedar. The term *paṭṭī* used to be an administrative division of villages in pre-independence India.

<sup>219</sup> The singer suggests to go together, including the listeners of his performance into the narrative.

<sup>220</sup> A variety of rice which has a very good fragrance and is supposed to be very nutritious. It grows in Balganga valley.

<sup>221</sup> Here the singer is changing his subject from *dāḡurī* to *bharārī* to show that it's a different geographical region that is within the rein of the *bharārī*-sisters and not the *dāḡurī*-sisters. With the change of the text and geographical region the importance of the tone and the style of drumming is also (sometimes) changed. The beats of drumming may become longer or shorter according to its importance.

<sup>222</sup> *Caubaṭiā*: Originally a crossing of two roads, i.e. the flat land in the region of Basar. “*Basar*” is a Sanskrit term and means ‘the day light’.

<sup>223</sup> *Lāl Simh* is a spirit of a heroic character in Garhwali and Kumauni folklore. It is very common in Central Himalayas that the spirit of a dead person is elevated and venerated as a demigod.

51. Oh yes, oh sisters, let us go to the rice fields of Chakura<sup>225</sup>, oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2
52. Oh yes, the demigod *mān-camphuvā* dwells on the colder slopes of Ghumeti,<sup>226</sup> oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
53. The Demigod *mān-camphuvā* is dwelling on the [cold] slopes of Ghumeti, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
54. Oh yes, your chariot that consists of nine wagons moves around,<sup>227</sup> oh *Dāgurī*-sisters!
55. Oh yes, your chariot of nine wagons moves so elegantly, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
56. Oh yes, your heavenly chariot is moving around, oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2
57. Oh yes, together with you move pairs of dogs,<sup>228</sup> oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2
58. Oh yes, your swarm of butterflies flies around with you, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
59. See! How beautifully your swarm of butterflies is gliding around, oh *Dāgurī*-sisters!
60. Oh yes, you are gliding around like a swarm of sparrows, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!
61. Oh see! How elegantly the chariot of nine wagons is moving around, oh *Bharārī*-sisters!

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<sup>224</sup> *Mān-Camphuvā* or *Mān-Camphvā* or *Campvā* ‘the great Champhva’ is considered to be an associate of Bhairava (i.e. Shiva) and *vīr* who keeps a couple of dogs with himself.

<sup>225</sup> Chakrusera is a flat piece of fertile land below Khait Mountain near Ghonti, Ghansali, Tehri Garhwali and known for good crops.

<sup>226</sup> A valley below the Khait Mountain, near Ghansali town.

<sup>227</sup> *Nautolai kvai rath*, can eventually also be understood as a reference to the tantric concept of nine powers (*navaśakti*).

<sup>228</sup> In Central Himalayan languages *put/pūt* is used in the sense of ‘dogs’ (see above section 12 in part 1), which are generally related to the Demigod ‘*Camphvā*’, who is supposed to be an attendant to *Bhairava* and *ācherīs*. It is a common belief in Garhwal and Kumaun that the demigod *Camphvā* is accompanied by dogs. *Camphvā* is probably the local form of the *paśupati*, i.e. Shiva as Lord of the Animals (Sharma 2006; Maithani 2004; personal talks with D. R. Purohit and Mizajilal). In Kumaon, *Camphvā* is known as *chaumū devtā*.

62. Your chariot is like the *garvāṇi* chariot,<sup>229</sup> oh *Bharārī*-sisters!  
 63. Oh yes, you have begun to decorate the *garvāṇi* chariot, oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2  
 64. How [beautifully] it is ascending up in the sky, oh *Bharārī*-sisters! x2

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<sup>229</sup> The singer is pronouncing the term *garvāṇi* as *garuḃhāṇī*. *Garvāṇi* means the hailstorm (Purohit and Benjwal 2007:106). *Garvāṇi-rath* means a chariot that is as powerful and strong as the hailstorm itself, i.e. a chariot that can even withstand the thunder and hailstorms. The *Garvāṇi* is also commonly used by the *Gorakḥpanthīs* in their songs and tantric rituals texts (Babulkar 1982; Kukreti 1983; Atkinson (1882) 1973). In folk belief in Garhwal and Kumaun, a Nath Jogi (Yogi) possesses the power to change the route of the hailstorm and thunder (Babulkar 1982, Kukreti 1983; personal talks with Mizajilal and D. R. Purohit). *Garuḃa*/Garuda is the riding animal of *Vishnu* and the enemy of the serpent race (Williams 1899: 348). In Tantrism and its repercussions in the *Gorakḥpanth*, Garuda is messenger between earth and sky, the worldly and the divine (Atkinson 1882 [1973]; Babulkar 1982; Kukreti 1983).

### Language abbreviations

Ash. Ashkun (Nuristani)	Kṭg. the Kōṭgarhī dialect of West Pahārī
Av. Avestan	Ku. Kumaunī
Aw. Awadhī	P. Panjabi
Bal. Balūčī (Iranian)	Pa. Pali
Bng. the Baṅgānī dialect of West Pahārī	Paš. Pashai (Dardic)
Bro. the Brokpā dialect of Shina	Patt. Paṭṭanī (also called Manchad or Lahauli) (Tibeto-Himalayan)
Bshk. Bashkarīk (Dardic)	PIE Proto Indo-European
Bur. Burushaski	Pk. Prakrit
Dari. Darai (Indo-Aryan [Nepal])	Pog. the Pōgulī dialect of Kashmiri
G. Gujarātī	Pr. Prasun (Nuristani)
H. Hindi	S. Sindhī
Ind. Indus Kohistani (Dardic)	Si. Sinhalese
Kal. Kalasha (Dardic)	Taj. Tajik
Khaś. the Khaśālī dialect of West Pahārī	Toch.B Tocharian B
Kho. Khowār (Dardic)	Wg. Waigalī (Nuristani)
Kt. Kati (Nuristani)	

### Other abbreviations

Dhātup. Dhātupāṭha	OIA Old Indo-Aryan
EWA see Mayrhofer 1986-2001	RV Ṛg-veda
KEWA see Mayrhofer 1956-80	UGK <i>Uttarākhaṇḍ gyānkoṣ</i> see Sharma, Devi Dutt
lex. lexicographer	
MIA Middle Indo-Aryan	

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