THE VERTICAL DIMENSION IN THULUNG CLASSIFICATION

(i) Introduction

Analytic tables of complementary oppositions sometimes contain pairs such as superior:inferior (e.g. Needham 1962:96), but by and large structuralist social anthropologists, following the lead of Hertz, have paid more attention to the lateral opposition of right and left than to the vertical one of up and down. The Thulung Rai,[1] who live some forty miles south of mount Everest, do not practise a system of prescriptive alliance (though there are grounds of a sort for supposing that they may have done so some three centuries ago), and one would not expect to find among them such regular correspondences between social and symbolic classification as have characteristically been demonstrated in societies which do practise it. It is indeed difficult to find such correspondences and we shall not attempt any sort of "total structural analysis". The question we pose is quite limited, namely what use do the Thulung make of the vertical dimension in ordering their conceptions of the world and society. Even so we must ignore many uses, for instance in Thulung cosmology and ethnophysiology (i.e. such facts as that anger, sweat and sneezes "come up"), and some of the others can only be treated scantily. On the other hand it seems to me important, as well as interesting, to attempt to distinguish uses which are likely to have been part of Thulung culture before it made effective contact with the Hindu Indo-European speaking world (probably somewhat over two centuries ago) from those which it has borrowed from that world. The culture of the Thulung, as of so much of the north-east of the subcontinent, is the result of the impact of Indo-European speakers on a Tibeto-Burman speaking world and it is impossible to learn a tribal language without the fact and its diachronic implications being constantly obtruded on one's attention. Where the text leaves the matter in doubt we mark Nepali words or loan words with a following N.

(ii) Language

It is a commonplace that alien languages often make distinctions where the outsider does not expect them, and conversely fail to make them where he does expect them. One practical difficulty of this sort was the demand that Thulung makes that one always take account of the vertical dimension in the expression of motion. The English verb "come" is translated by four separate verbs and selection of the wrong one results in the speaker being misunderstood or, if the context is clear enough, in his being corrected. One of the four, rok- "come circuitously or by chance, or from an unknown direction; turn up", is of little relevance here. Of the remainder bik- means, to a first approximation, "come across, i.e. from a starting point on a level with the point of arrival", get- means "come up from one that is lower", yok- come down from one that is higher". A parallel distinction is obligatory in the four verbs for "to bring", respectively ret-, phit-, khet- and seot- (of which at least the first three are etymologically related to their intransitives). "Going" and "taking" are each rendered by single verbs (løks- and løt-, again it seems related), but here the vertical dimension is expressed, equally obligatorily, but in a way that accords more easily with the habits of an Indo-European

speaker, in a series of particles comparable to our adverbs or prepositions (actually they are postpositions). In translating "to go or take to such and such a place" there is no single equivalent for "to"; the choice is between an undifferentiated "towards," and "across to", "down to", "up to". The latter three postpositions together with a different undifferentiated particle express the obligatory distinctions within our concept of rest at such and such a place.

Obviously this feature of the language is entirely appropriate to the terrain. A three-hour journey uphill is a very different undertaking from a three-hour journey downhill. The former would land one among the potato fields of the Buddist Sherpas, in a climate where a snowfall is a possibility; the latter among the rice fields of well established Hindu castes where malaria has only recently ceased to be a danger. The congruence of the Thulung language with the categories of action that the environment demands of its speakers, might be taken as a vivid, if facile, instance of what the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis would predict. For the purposes of this paper, especially of the next two sections, the linguistic data are important because they explain why it is impossible to speak Thulung and remain unaware of the importance of the vertical dimension in their conceptualisation of space. In Nepali the terms expressing the vertical dimension are usually optional, very much as in English.

(iii) Geographical Space

The typical Thulung village is set, roughly speaking, on a single tract of hillside, i.e. seen from sufficient distance it appears as occupying a simple inclined plane surface; in this case the application of the obligatory vertical distinctions offers no problems. Over larger areas, one possibility would be to apply them straightforwardly on the basis of absolute height above sea level, i.e. like contour lines, but this is not what is done. Instead, they are applied in the light of a larger scale schema of Himalayan geography. According to this the Thulung area is regarded as situated somewhere in the middle of an inclined plane running from the plains of India in the south to the snowy heights of the Nepal-Tibet border in the north. One comes "up" from anywhere in the south, down from anywhere to the north. This may be illustrated by a fragment of the routine conversation a fieldworker goes through time and time again with minor variations when he makes a new acquaintance.

Thulung: Where is your house?
Ethnographer: In England (the country is actually known in Nepali as belayat, a word of Turkish and Persian origin, which gave rise to army slang "Blighty").
Thu: It must be very cold for you here and it is difficult to grow rice.
Eth: Our country (to say "my" would be most immodest) is not towards India, but far away to the north-west (using the Nepali words uttar and paschim, both direct loan words from Sanskrit). It is cold and we can't grow rice, but we plant a lot of potatoes, and wheat and barley, like the Sherpas.
Thu: Ha? (the slowly rising pitch expresses surprise with perhaps a hint of polite doubt). When did you come up here?
Eth: It's been a year.
Thu: When are you going back down?

The association of westerners with India rather than with Tibet is obviously explicable on historical grounds, but the point of the dialogue is to emphasise that the geographical schema described embraces not only the Thulung area but also the entire geography of the world as conceived of by an uneducated Thulung.

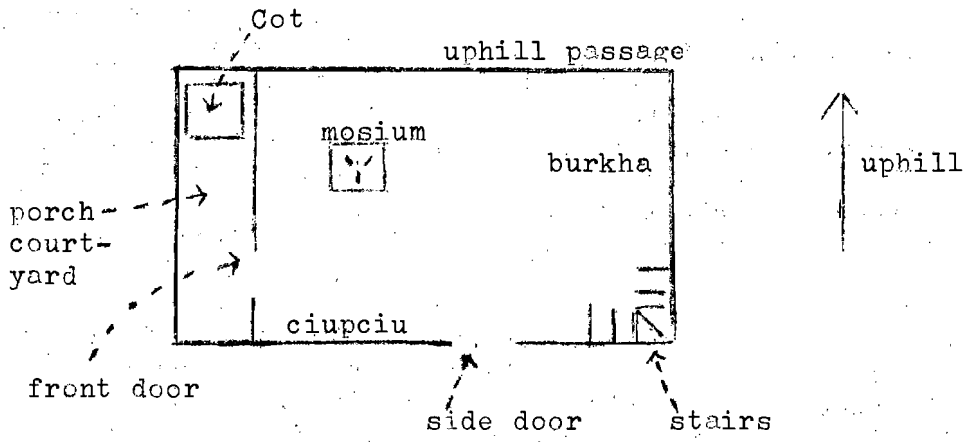
His language has probably always lacked terms for the cardinal points in the abstract. For east and west reference is typically made to particular places, for north and south most of the work can be done by the verbal and postpositional system described. Where nouns are required the Thulung usually borrow the Nepali pair aul and lekh, connoting respectively low, hot, southward place and high, cold, northward place, the equivalent Thulung pair waye and jejiu or jiujiu respectively being virtually obsolete. For obvious reasons the language very seldom has any call to distinguish relative altitude, latitude and climate, and as we have seen has the utmost difficulty in doing so.[2]

The relationship of north and south to up and down is by no means confined to Thulung. If the dialogue had taken place in Nepali the vertical dimension would have been used in just the same way, expect that it would not have been incorporated within the verb "come". When Thulung and Nepali coincide in some feature other than a lexical item it is often a problem to know whether the tribal language has adopted it from the national one or whether the national one has been influenced by the substratum of Himalayan tribal tongues, all of which bear at least some resemblance to each other as members of the Bodic Division of the Tibeto-Burman family. In its geographical schema we can be confident that Thulung has not borrowed from Nepali, and the second alternative seems plausible, although the facts of Himalayan geography make the association so natural that the Nepali usage could be independent.[3]

Of course local details of the terrain do not always harmonise with the overall schema and it may happen that the starting point of a northward journey is higher than the arrival point, and vice versa. In other words there is a conflict between the relative height criterion applying to movement on a single hillside and the north-south criterion applicable to the larger scale. In such cases the north-south criterion seems regularly to take precedence, though further data is needed. In any case each village in the language it uses of each other village necessarily classifies it as either up, across, or down, with only occasional instances where either of two classifications is acceptable. Sometimes reference to the map suggests a certain skew in the application of the categories. For instance, Tingla lies two hours to the west of Mukli, and only marginally to its south, yet it is obligatory in Mukli to speak of coming up from it. This might be because it lay close to the route ultimately leading southwards to Bahing territory (along which the souls of the dead are conducted.[4] Since indications of the vertical dimension of travel is optional in Nepali, it is unlikely that any such regular classificatory system is used by 'native' speakers of that language.

(iv) Domestic Space

Thulung houses invariably have their long axes transverse to the direction of the slope on which they stand. This is easily intelligible as a practical matter. Level ground is hard to find and to clear a flat terrace of given area more earth has to be moved if the terrace extends in depth into the hillside than if it extends in length along it. However the orientation to the average prevailing slope is maintained even when the house is built on ground which is actually flat. Although the long axis of the house is determined relative to the hillside, the axis is not itself conventionally polarised. The house has its porch and main door invariably on one of the short ends (which it seems natural to them and us to think of as the front end), but looking uphill one cannot predict whether this will be on the left hand or the right. The builder would decide according to the lie of the land, the position of neighbouring houses, springs, paths, etc.



Ground Plan of Thulung House

Certain features of the house's layout are strictly determined by its orientation relative to the slope, and positions and movements within the house are expressed in the up-and-down terms that this orientation makes appropriate. The key facts are that the main door is downhill in the front wall and that the hearth, with its three stones for supporting pots, two uphill, one downhill, is somewhat off-centre in the front uphill quadrant of the floor space (cf. diagram). The burkha is primarily the women's area since it contains supplies and cooking vessels, though there is no bar on men entering it. The mosium and ciupciu are referred to later. The stairs, traditionally a notched pole or trunk, was probably used originally to reach items stored in the rafters; it is usually downhill close to the back wall, but if it is uphill, as in some houses, it is not felt to be out of place.

Nowadays most Thulung houses resemble those of other castes in the area in being substantial two or three storey stone-built structures painted white and red, with upstairs windows painted black.[5] Even before the Gorkha conquest of approximately 1770 the "palace" of the village headman was stone-built but older people recall that in their childhood practically all Thulung houses were made of split bamboo smeared with ordinary mud. Some four or five houses in this style are to be seen in Mukli, and indeed they are

occasionally built in order to economise on time or money. The old people's memories and the evidence of the present day shacks is corroborated by lexical material. Parts of the house expressible only in Thulung are the ciupciu, the mosium and its shelf. The following parts can be expressed in either language: courtyard, hearth, hearth-stones, drying rack over fire, burkha, ladder, front door, uphill passage, areas around house where drips fall from eaves, forked stake used for supporting beams. Parts expressible only in Nepali are: garden (and most of what is grown in it), barn, porch, its roofing, cot, side door, second storey [6], windows (which are never set in ground floor), planks, carved capitals set on top of pillars, smoke exit holes, door bolt and door hinge, stone walls of house, stone foundation and its extension outside the walls, iron cooking tripod used as well as or instead of the hearth stones.

These lists serve to dissect the house into those elements that are likely to date from before the immigration of Nepali speakers into the Thulung area and those which have been borrowed from immigrants. It would be difficult to give a watertight theoretical justification for making an inference of this kind; suffice it to say that in practice the method gives generally coherent and plausible results, not only as regards houses, but in many aspects of both material and non-material culture. There is an additional check here in that for all but the last three items in the Thulung list I have recorded special names (depcinong), used when referring to them in rituals; in Mukli not one item in the Nepali list has a depcinong though some villages have given one to the side-door. The important point is that nearly all parts of the house that are closely involved in its conventional up-down orientation are expressible in Thulung and are unlikely to be borrowings. Conversely, very few of the Nepali items are relevant to the orientation. For instance, the tripod is placed in any old position inside or outside the three stones, the upstairs windows face in any direction, the barn, though typically facing the front wall from the other side of the courtyard, can be built wherever convenient or not at all. It is true that the side door (not always present) is obligatorily down-hill, but since it is the one used for throwing slops out of this is not surprising. Again given the position of the main door, the cot, if it is to be in the shelter of the porch, is necessarily uphill.

In its obligatory orientation the Thulung house contrasts sharply with those of the higher Hindu castes, in which so far as I could discover, no feature of the layout is strictly related to the slope of the hillside.

The orientation of the Thulung house has important implications in everyday life. The mosium is the place of honour where the master of the house usually sits. He will invite respected kinsfolk and guests to come "up" and join him there, but those who are not Kiranti, i.e. the anthropologist and members of any caste other than the Limbu, should keep downhill of it or the ancestors will harm them. Lokhim, in many ways the most "untouched" of Thulung villages, e.g. in having the smallest proportions of immigrants actually interspersed among Thulung, pays little or no attention to the prohibition, and one wonders whether the imputation of such xenophobia to the ancestors may not be a sign of Hindu influence. In any case the association with ancestors is very explicit. A very old man, who is already almost an

ancestor, may be referred to as mosium lɛ̀pa (lit. guardian or watcher of the place. The ancestors do not like goats (perhaps because when they were introduced they were felt to be alien to tribal tradition), and a householder who has eaten goat's meat should not enter the mosium for a week. Offerings to the ancestors are in certain rites placed not merely in the mosium, but on the shelf high up on its uphill wall. This is significant because the position in which a corpse is ritually laid out is on the floor, in the ciupciu. Now the central motif of the Thulung death ceremony is the rupturing of the link between the living and the recently dead. The properly integrated ancestors are a force for good, whereas a good proportion of mankind's woes are ascribed to the activities of dead spirits who have remained among the living. The dead man is told forcibly and repeatedly to depart to where he belongs, to the village of the ancestors. The sharpness of separation is expressed by reversal of the orientations that he has obeyed while alive. A sleeping man keeps his head pointing either uphill or longitudinally, i.e. parallel to the long axis of the house, but the dead man is buried with his head pointing downhill. A longitudinal sleeper can point either way in the mosium, or just below the fire) but in the ciupciu his head must be away from the front door, because (the Thulung are explicit) the dead are laid out heads poiting towards it.

For a living person to disregard these orientations would be kholo. This is an interesting term meaning something like "ill-omened, unlucky, taboo", and I have heard it applied to a number of heterogeneous prohibitions: filtering beer made of rice, wearing a Topi while being given a Tikā, throwing sweepings out of doors at night, hesitating in a doorway, uttering the word homsi "cucumber" in the month of Mangsir, mentioning a dead person's name or discussing his funeral soon after his death; its derivative kholom means "meat reserved for kholome", (officiants at tribal rites.). For confident treatment of the term we should need more data, both local and comparative, but in at least two further examples it refers to reversals of correct vertical relationships. It is kholo to store cooking pots upside down (cf. the English superstition sometimes applying to horseshoes hung over doorways), and it is kholo to spread a gundri N (rectangular mat made of rice straw) so that the part made first (the head end, recognisable by the shorter loops of the warps as they circle back to re-enter the weft) lies downhill

The Thulung say that the Nepali for kholo is khadam, a word which is not in the standard Nepali dictionaries. The existence of the Nepali term, even apart from the prohibitions involving such obvious borrowings as Tikā giving, Mangsir and gundris, suggests that the concept is by no means confined to the Rai, but the close association of kholo with death ritual and domestic architecture suggests that it has long been a feature of Thulung life.

There is a curious contrast between the systematic use of the vertical dimension in the conceptualisation of geographical and domestic space and the apparent lack of any overall conventional spatial schema for the village. The highest and lowest parts of the villages are often referred to, especially in Nepali, as its head and tail respectively (sir and puchar N), but no particular values or customs are nowadays attached to them. At best there exist only tenuous hints as to what may have been. The river phuliuku, from which Mukli takes its ritual name, runs roughly straight north-south and appears once to have separated

the village into two named halves, Congkom and Tekala (which could have been intermarrying moieties). The only previous student of Thulung, Hodgson, British Resident at Kathmandu in the 1820s and 30s, recorded in his unpublished notes (now at the India Office Library) the existence of classifier particles, a grammatical category which has since entirely vanished from the language. The particle bop then used in enumerating villages (as well as eyes, oranges, grains of rice and pillows) certainly referred to round things, as present-day cognate lexical items confirm. Suggestive facts can also be found in reports on peoples whose cultures can be argued to be distantly related to the Rais : cf. for instance the ritual importance of the uphill and downhill village gates among the Zemi Nagas (Graham Bower 1952:93) or the north-south orientation of Tharu houses and villages.(MacDonald 1969:71). Thus it may ultimately be demonstrable that the present lack of any structured village space has been the result of changes accompanying the Gorkha conquest, Hindu immigration, the introduction of intensive terrace farming, and the vast demographic expansion of both Thulung and immigrants.

The conceptualisations of physical space that we have been dealing with are quite distinct from the well known and widely distributed complex concerning the axis mundi or centre of the world, which is typically situated at some point of political or religious importance. This complex appears in relatively unsystematised form among both Thulung and other castes in certain ritual uses of poles, and possibly in connexion with the giant silk-cotton tree at which Thulung agricultural rites take place, but we cannot treat the subject here.

(v) Metaphorical Spaces

A logician might wish to give some sort of fundamental priority to the categories of physical space and speak of their being "carried over" as metaphors (the Greek etymology means precisely transference) to help in conceptualising and organising other areas of life. Sociologically one could as well start with these other areas, from the biological fact that children have to "look up" to adults, or that victors "overcome" and that vanquished "go under". It is equally biological and basic that to lose ones legs is to be crippled, to lose ones head is to die. No doubt all cultures use the vertical dimension metaphorically in their thinking and symbolising, relating in some way up:down with leader:follower, high status:low status, head:foot (or for obvious reasons, head:rump or "bottom"). The possibility of conceiving of bodily space, kinship space and social space in the same terms as physical space appears to be so inherent in the nature of things that it might be thought futile to attempt to analyse this aspect of Thulung life in terms of tribal and borrowed. One counter to this is theoretical. The methods of housebuilding employed by a society depend on its conceptualisation of the possible uses of what the environment offers; similarly the whole of philosophy rests on the fact that people do not in practice realise or express the ideas about the nature of things that are in a sense available to all human beings. If it is legitimate to analyse the methods of housebuilding in tribal borrowed terms, it is equally legitimate in principle, however difficult in practice, to make a similar analysis of the methods of conceptualising spaces.

Another counter is empirical. Cultures clearly do differ in the sorts of space they consider "bons a penser". An important theme of Bishop Robinson is that vertical imagery referring to a "god up there" was once natural and appropriate but is now an archaism; drawing on Tillich, he suggests (1963:22, 45-6) that if spatial imagery is necessary, that of depth would be more appropriate than that of height.

(vi) Bodily Space

The relative status of the bodily extremities crops up again and again. One should not dishonour the head by using trousers or shoes as a pillow. One should not stand on a pillow. If one treads by mistake on a Topi (hat) one should say Visnu, Visnu for the god may be offended. One should not push faggots onto the fire with ones foot; even worse would be to touch the sacred hearth stones with that extremity. When a person takes something from another's hand and says dhanyabād N (a Sanskrit loan word), it is a sure sign that he has been in close contact with westerners; the normal and proper way to receive an object is, as one brings it towards one, to raise it slightly with a gentle curve in the direction of the fore head, without verbal acknowledgement. Formal greetings are made not only on ceremonial occasions but whenever members of different households meet indoors. According to category of relative there are three grades of respect. The highest is expressed by the giver touching his forehead to the taker's feet. In the next the giver touches his right hand to the taker's feet and then either touches his own forehead or joins both hands. Between equals both parties stand and join hands.

The head is the favourite portion of a carcase of meat, and the one which an owner keeps for himself when he kills an animal for meat on a non-ceremonial occasion. At Mukli's major bhume rite, (agricultural and ancestral) numerous pigs' heads are cut off and placed at the base of the sacred silk-cotton tree, later to be eaten as kholom by the tribal priests. When cooking meat Nepalis do not separate flesh and bone but chop the animal up into small lumps which often contain both, and are particularly likely to do so when the head is involved. Gingerly separating the two the anthropologist is tempted to feel there is no accounting for taste; however with a structuralist background he cannot help recalling that if it is the head that is given to gods and priests, it is the tail plus a small lump of meat from the base of the spine that is given to the Damais, the lowest caste, at the end of a wedding.

There is no good evidence that any of the uses so far mentioned of the head:foot/tail polarity are tribal in origin. Those that involve borrowings and immigrants such as shoes, Topis, Visnu and Damais are evidently not. The polite gesture for receiving is all-Nepali. The gestures of greeting are the same as those used by the Hindu Chetris, both locally and generally (cf. Fuerer Haimendorf 1966:46), and apply to almost identical categories of relatives; the Thulung for "greeting" is sew, which derives from Nepali sebā or sewā "service, attendance on a superior, worship, homage", (though Nepali itself uses the word Dhok for "greeting"). It might be thought that cutting off a large number of pigs' heads and piling them at the base of a tree was about as tribal a custom as could well be imagined. Chetris and Brahmans of course neither keep or eat pigs, and a pig's head is taken to the bride's sister in the traditional Thulung wedding. However, it is clear from the wedding

ritual that the really traditional way of killing pigs is to shoot them with bow and arrow, not to behead them with a kukri, a method which is only used at this one bhurae rite. One Thulung actually suggested to me that the rite had been copied from the Chetri diwāli rite, which is held in honour of the ancestors and involves the beheading of a very large number of male goats, whose heads are temporarily deposited in shrines surmounted by tall bamboos. In all other ceremonies the Thulung ancestors receive inner organs or portions from the middle of the carcase. Pending analysis of the pig's head for the bride's sister, we conclude somewhat tentatively that there is no evidence of an evaluational polarity having been applied to the body in pre-contact times, and that if it existed, its application has considerably increased since contact.

(vii) Social Space

The vertical dimension is used quite explicitly to express the status and power structure of society in the recently introduced pancayes system. District politics is distinguished from village politics as belonging to a "higher level" (mathillo taha N); the terminology is taught in the schools in the "civics" classes (nāgarik N), and no doubt derives from western political theory, a particularly popular subject at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu.

Caste is not (as in western sociology) spoken of in the idiom of pure verticality ("high caste:low caste"), but in that of size. Touchables and Untouchables are contrasted as "big castes:small", Thulo jāt:sano jat N, and finer distinctions within each block are made in the same terms. A usage which appears related is the expression Thulo mānche ("big man") referring to any individual who is particularly rich or influential; the literal Thulung equivalent (Dokpu miuciu) is current but has the ring of a translation rather than of an old and indigenous idiom. Although castes are not ordered in terms of physical height pure and simple, it is interesting, especially in view of the last section, that the varna model of society (with which most Thulung are at least partly familiar) explicitly polarises society between the Brahmans, originating from the head of Prajāpati, and the Sudra, from his legs or feet.

Within Thulung society the clearest instance of connection between verticality and social relationships is in the kinship terminology and behaviour, which is in large measure borrowed (cf. Dumont 1966:55: "l'idee de hierarchie, si importante en ce qui concerne la caste, n'y est pas cantonnée, elle pénètre le domaine de la parenté"). Let us briefly review the remaining roles of importance in past and present Thulung society. (a) The term muliu, often used in the tribal ritual for "wise old man" is no doubt the Nepali muli "chief, ringleader, head of household". (b) The talukdār N (though most easily translated as "headman") does not seem within living memory to have been spoken of or symbolised as in any sense "above" his raiti. His main function is to collect taxes. This is not the place to examine his office in detail, but we may note that he has no Thulung name, makes no appearance in tribal ritual, has no ceremonial functions except at the Hindu festival of Dasain (when he traditionally gave a feast for his raiti) and at weddings when he receives the Rai TikaT (N - from English "ticket"); there is no motive for supposing that he existed before the Gorkha conquest gave him his

original title of Rai and his tax-collecting duties. (c) The term ngopceo means literally the "five men", and corresponds exactly to the Nepali and Hindi pānc=five (the root underlying "panchayat"). Nowadays the term seems to be used only in ritual contexts of the tribal priest and his four assistants but there is some confusion between it and ngopso "friend, neighbour"; however the translation pānc rākhnu = ngopceo prə mu "hold a council" clearly implies that it once had some role in village organisation. Most likely it applied to post-conquest councils consisting of the tālukdār and his four assistants. (d) The only pure Thulung word meaning "important man" in a general sense is ngaw or ngawa, which appears to relate to age rather than height or size (cf. ngāceo "old man", ngami "old woman"; possibly ngaddo "before" in time or space). (e) The pre-conquest village "rajas" were həp (or baya həp) "earth lord"), a term now used only in addresses to spirits, as sokmo həp "lord of the jungle". (f) The tribal priest is called dewa, a word which significantly is of Nepali origin, meaning originally "god, respectful term of address to honourable person". Now only the last two Thulung roles make any clear use of vertical metaphors or symbolism to express their social importance, and even so one must look quite hard to find it. People ordinarily sit on straw mats, either the disk shaped piro N, or the rectangular gundri N (both borrowings). In principle the priest officiates sitting on a special seat not used in other circumstances. As usual in Thulung material culture, the design is extremely simple: a board two foot long, eight inches wide is raised an inch or two off the ground by transverse ridges at either end. In spite of its simplicity its importance is shown by the fact that it is regularly mentioned in the priest's incantations even when there is not one actually available for the ceremony. Its ritual name is khosəngma sirangma (cf. kho "axe", səng "wood", sir N "head"); whether or not the first two elements are correctly identified, the third identification can be supported by the fact that the site of the "palace" in Mukli (a place called oga) also has as its ritual name ogama sirangma. sirangma occurs also in the ritual names of at least three other places (though not of any other objects); we cannot say whether this is because they were the seat of some important person, at the highest point of a village, at the head of a stream, or for some other reason. The important points are that outside kinship relationships the only clear instance of vertical symbolism in traditional Thulung social space (a) is expressed with the borrowed term sir (b) refers to the superior status of the head (cf. last section); (c) relates tribal priest and village raja.

There is no space to examine here the significance of the last point for a reconstruction of the social history of the post-contact pre-conquest period, but even the highly compressed data we have given is perhaps sufficient to suggest that before the conquest metaphorical uses of the vertical dimension to express internal social differentiation were being introduced as a result of Nepali influence. With the abrupt incorporation of the Thulung into the national state their vertical social conceptualisations have been in terms borrowed from and largely applying to this larger Hindu society. Only in the last two decades has the concept of bureaucratic hierarchy begun to become a familiar part of everyday thinking.

(viii) Height and wealth

Most pairs of opposites contain a potential asymmetry in that one member can be more naturally taken as a departure from the other than the converse, e.g. left-handedness is a departure from right-handedness, illness a departure from health, death from life, and so on. With a similar asymmetry the top of something suggests movement upwards more strongly than its bottom suggests movement downwards. The fact can be used in several ways. It contributes for instance to the appropriateness of the feathered headdress which enables the Thulung shaman to undertake his magical flights or of the tall pole or tree which may be used to make contact with beneficent powers from above. Here we will be concerned not so much with movement away from the earth as with movement up from it, as exemplified by growing things.

There are two customs that vividly associate wealth and height. When a man has threshed his rice by beating bundles of it on the ground, he sweeps the unhusked grain into a conical pile round which he traces a line with the edge of his winnowing fan as a barrier to evil spirits. If he leaves it for a time or overnight he places on the top a flower and plants a sickle, handle downwards and blade pointing to the north (Mukli). The meaning was said to be that he wishes the pile were as tall as the great mountains to which the sickle points. Similarly a bundle of flowers and straw (bung, phul N) may be tied to the top of a pole of the structure on which maize cobs are dried; people do it thinking "let there be plenty", as one informant put it. Note that the Thulung do not have a feeling of security about a harvest that has been "safely gathered in". It is liable for instance to be surrepticiously filched by demons with grabbing hands or taking the form of mice.

Regarding the origin of the customs (a) a Brahman suggested to me that the first was a proper and established one, implying that it was not confined to the Rai, (b) no specifically Thulung vocabulary arises in their description, and they are more likely to have originated among long established agricultural peoples than among an originally largely hunting people, (c) picked flowers, so regular a feature of Hindu rituals, are never used in those of Thulung tribal officiants.

Let us consider next the attitude to mountains expressed in the first custom. Siva (often called Mahadeu - "the great god") is "the most important god of the Nepali Hindu pantheon" (Turner: 1931), and his tridents are found in shrines all along the Himalaya. Siva and his spouse Pārbati (Sk Pārvatī "the daughter of the mountain") are peculiarly associated with the snowy Himalaya (above all in fact with Mount Meru). Hinduised Thulung consider their tribe to be sivamārgi, i.e. followers of the god, and use the fact to justify their habits of meat-eating. The use of mountains in honorific contexts is illustrated in a ritual dialogue where the bride's priest addresses the groom's as "baba (father, general term of respect), himāl, gaurav (importance, honour, influence), parbat" (all four honorifics being N). The conclusion then is that the pile of rice custom belongs to a complex of ideas which associates mountain summits, gods, res-

pect and prosperity. In contrast to Hindus (and Tibetan Buddhists), the Thulung appear to have shown traditionally a total disregard for spirits attached to mountain tops; mountains are not named, apart from the habitations or pastures that they offer. It is true that the ancestors are associated with the uphill side of the house but the hill to which they are conducted as last resting place is neither particularly high nor snowy, being situated to the south west; nor do they go particularly to its summit. There is one Thulung ritual phrase referring to "mountains of crops" but it seems likely that this, together with the whole complex discussed in this section is a borrowing.

(ix) Psychological Space

The association of the head with prosperity is particularly striking at the seances of an ethno-doctor. When one asks what he is doing to a person who is not ill but with whom he is evidently occupied, the answer whether in Thulung or Nepali is that he is "raising the person"s head" (sir uThaunu N, buy phamu). He may in fact be agitating a chicken around the head concerned, but he is certainly not raising it in any literal sense. English metaphors help to make the meaning clear. A man with "head held high" faces the future and the gods with confidence; one with "head hung low, or slumped, eyes cast down", is out of favour with the gods. However for deeper insight we must consider the complex of associations surrounding the head in the two languages.

In Thulung we are dealing with two roots, buy "head" and bung or bungma, literally "flower". The Nepali equivalents are respectively sir and phul (the latter meaning also "dry heated grain, menses, egg, testicle"), both of which we have met in other sections.[7] Whatever their etymological relation, if any, the Thulung pair show a close association with each other, as in the following ritual words and phrases:

inibung siribung "your head"
bububuyla "upon(-la) the head (buy)"
bubukomsi "sirani N, pillow, = komsi in everyday language"
jiujiubung bubebung "mountain (jiujiu) flowers" (the variation bubu/bube being most likely dialectal)

The Thulung root bung has wide ramifications, especially in the direction of fertility, but also cross-cutting some of the other semantic sub-fields of the system.

bok- = phulnu N "open (of flower), pop (of pop-corn), go white (of hair), thrive"
bubum "white" (probably cognate with bok-)
bungdo "youth, fertile part of woman's life"
bung "human mother's milk, ? and/or nipple"
bung Deak- "(of a witch) to make a woman infertile" (Deak- "block up a hole")
bung baTpa "influential man within hamlet" (baTpa "having")

Both bung and sir (less commonly phul) are particularly associated with compensation:

bungma Diu "phulpan N, beer offered 'in compensation' after wedding, small respectful gift"

u mam ku bung/sir "payment to mother on removal of bride"
nokcho ku sir "payment to priest"; cf. basanti N "payment to ethno-doctor" (literally "spring season", or "variety of flower")
sir rakhne "payment made to unmarried girl if you marry her younger sister"

Thus idioms like bung melsiTpa "drooping "of flower or person ", i sir blem "you will be humiliated," literally "your head will be felled", and the ethno-doctor's sir uThaunu have behind them a rich and tangled set of more or less metaphorical associations. It would be hazardous in this area to offer firm conclusions about the relations between tribal and borrowed vocabulary, though I am left with the impression that the association of heads and flowers is closer in Thulung than Nepali. However it is clear enough that the Thulung do make a close association of this sort, one that seems relatively rare in European languages (in spite of examples such as "head of cauliflower or chrysanthemum", and "maidenhead and deflower"); and secondly that what in some parts of the world is expressed in the idiom of "loss of face" is here expressed in that of "lowering of the head". Conversely the "raising of the head" in Thulung or Nepali expresses a concept not easily translated into English, one which combines a psychological element of high morale with a temporary ritual condition of positive liability to good fortune, a state of being in the grace and favour of the supernatural powers.

(x) Divisions of the Year

Many rituals such as the hut pa used to be and in some place still are performed regularly twice a year, once during the two or three months following the rains, once in the two or three months before them. The latter performances are called ubhauli N "upper", the former udhauli N "lower". The corresponding Thulung adjectives are never substituted. The informants questioned could not suggest a precise demarcation between the two halves of the year; very possibly they are formed by Magh and Saun sankrānti (mid-January and mid-July respectively), festivals which are widely observed both by tribals and Hindus. In any case the lexical evidence strongly suggests a Hindu origin for the division.

(xi) Final Remarks

This essay has attempted to continue the tradition of Durkheim and Mauss' "Primitive Classification", as expounded at Oxford, where a Diploma question of some years back asked for a comparison of vertical and lateral opposition. Another influence has been Ullmann's writings (1959) on synaesthesia and semantic change. After all, as Borges has said, "It may be that universal history is the history of the different intonations given to a handful of metaphors".

Nicholas Allen

NOTES

1. I should like to acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences Research Council during the course of field work carried out between July 1969 and March 1971, and the

long-term encouragement of my teachers, Professor C. von Fürer Haimendorf and Dr. R. Needham.

2. Littlejohn (1963:9) reports a similar situation in Sierra Leone where the word for "up" means east, that for "down" west, in correspondence to the lie of the land.
3. Our own convention, to be seen also in Ptolomy's map, of putting north at the top of the page, was not shared by the makers of the so-called T and O maps of the Middle Ages, cf. the Hereford Cathedral Mappa Mundi (ca 1300), where east is at the top of the page.
4. Comparable skews have been reported from Iceland regarding the application of the terms for the cardinal points and the inland: out-to-sea opposition (see Haugen.1957).
5. Colour symbolism is very little used in the area. White limestone, red clay and wastes from the blacksmith's are conveniently available and the people are no doubt right in asserting that they use them purely for their decorative effect.
6. The reversal of what would be the normal order in Nepali (mathillo talo) suggests an early borrowing. Pignède (1966:80ff.) need not have been puzzled by the fact that the Gurung (like the Thulung) use their airy and spacious upper stories for storage and not for living or sleeping; in both areas the upper storey is an innovation.
7. Thulung phul "flour" appears to derive from this meaning of the Nepali word. In English too "flower" and "flour" derive from the same (Latin) word.

References

Fuerer Haimendorf, C. von. 1966, Unity and Diversity in the Chetri Caste of Nepal in Caste and Kin in Nepal, India and Ceylon, ed. C. von Fuerer Haimendorf.

Graham Bower, U., 1952, Naga Path.

Haugen, E., 1957, The Semantics of Icelandic Orientation, Word 13:447-459.

Littlejohn, . 1963, Temne Space, Anth. Quart. 36:1-17.

MacDonald, A.W., 1969, Notes sur Deux Fetes chez les Tharus de Dang Objets et Mondes 11-69-88

Needham, R. 1962, Structure and Sentiment.

Pignède, B., 1966, Les Gurungs.

Robinson, J.A.T., 1963, Honest to God.

Turner, R.L., 1931, Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language.

Ullmann, S., 1959, The Principles of Semantics.