



# Women as Witches and Keepers of Demons: Cross-Cultural Analysis of Struggles to Change Gender Relations

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## INTRODUCTION

How did changes in gender relations, leading at some point to the establishment of patriarchy, come about? Did these changes come about through gradual processes of accretion, leading imperceptibly to the establishment of male domination? Or were there "events" in this process, intense struggles during this process?

This paper looks at some events which are evidence of struggle between the sexes in the process of establishing male domination. It analyzes ideas of persons as harbouring evil as symbols of relations between parts of society, as symbols of hierarchy between women and men. It specifically analyzes the context and role of categorization of women as witches or harbourers of evil.

The phenomena analyzed are those of *dain* (witches) among the Santal and Munda tribes of the Austro-Asiatic language group in Jharkhand, India; the *pippa* (evil spirit) of the Dai belonging to the Sino-Thai language group in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province of China; and the *chao pu xi* (keepers of demons) among the Naxi and Mosuo of the Tibeto-Burman language group in Lijiang, also in the Yunnan Province of China.

Our study began with the analysis of the phenomenon of witches and witch-hunting among

the Santal and Munda of India. From this we formed an idea that such events represented the struggle of men against women in setting up male domination and that evidence of such struggles are likely to be found in a number of tribal or minority peoples, those which had only been recently or loosely brought under states. With this in mind we then looked at the communities of the Dai, Naxi and Mosuo in China. In each case we found similar categories of women as keepers of evil, of struggles between systems of religion and meaning.

The phenomena of *pippa* among the Dai and of *chao pu xi*, among the Naxi and Mosuo, have not attracted much analytical attention among Chinese scholars, not as much as witches among the Santal and Munda in India. While earlier field work in India, in the eighties, could easily be combined with other analyses of witches, in the case of China it was more difficult. Field work over five visits over the mid-nineties has been somewhat more tentatively combined with published material and discussions with Chinese scholars. But the material we have put together is sufficient to allow the basic outlines of an analysis to appear.

## EVIDENCE OF LARGE-SCALE STRUGGLE

Lijiang, the land of the Naxi, in



pre-Liberation China was notorious as the "suicide capital of the world." Large numbers of youth, many more women than men, committed "suicide for love" rather than accept the imposition of the Confucian system of arranged marriages. While 'suicide for love' was widely commented upon (J. F. Rock and Peter Goullart) and analyzed (Yang Fu Qiang), underlying this phenomenon was the denunciation of large numbers of these young women (or of other women in their families) as 'keepers of evil demons' or *chao pu xi*.

Among the Dai in Yunnan as among other Thai communities, like the Thai Yuan, in Northern Thailand, there was the phenomenon of mainly women being declared *pippa*. These women and their families formed separate villages of *pippa* and their descendants. We found at least six *pippa* villages in Xishuangbanna -Man Ying, Man Gue, Man Jingdai, Man Nungdiem, and Man Jingjun. There are other such *pippa* villages in other counties where the Dai live. In Northern Thailand there were reports by missionaries in the 1870s and 1880s of hundreds of people being accused of being harbourers of *phii ka* and being driven out of their villages (Anan Ganjanapan, 1984, 325).

The phenomenon of witch-hunting among the Santal in particular was much commented on by British colonial officials, like Dalton and W. G. Archer and European missionaries, like Bodding and Hoffman in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Police figures for one district of India (Malda) found that at least 46 persons had been killed as witches as late as in the period 1950 -1980 (A. B. Chaudhuri, 1987, 160). These were only the cases that came to the notice of the police and that too in a period when the phenomenon was experienced on a lower scale than in the nineteenth century.

From the above we can conclude that the phenomenon of women being denounced as witches or otherwise as keepers of evil spirits, and the accompanying violence, were large-scale in nature. They were not isolated or stray incidents. They thus need to be explained in terms of the underlying conflicts and social changes that were taking place.

## WITCHES AMONG THE SANTAL (INDIA)

The Santal are one of a group of Austro-Asiatic tribes in the central-eastern part of India, called Jharkhand. Other tribes of this group are the Munda, Ho, Kharia, Savara (in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh) and also the gatherer-hunter Birhor. Analysis of their origin and migration stories makes it likely that they came from Yunnan through the North-east of India to their present location and that they were part of one people, the Kherwar, before they separated.

While the Birhor are gatherer-hunters (their name means 'people of the forest'), the other Austro-Asiatic tribes are all agriculturists, with strong components of gathering of wild foods in their production systems. While the Munda carry out terraced field, wet rice cultivation, the Santal method is more of the 'slash and burn' swidden type. The Santal are well known for their expertise in clearing forest and turning it into arable land. Along with this they were notorious for moving. The nineteenth century British colonial official, Col. Dalton pointed out, "In marked contrast to the Kolarians of the Munda and Ho divisions, the Santals, as a rule, care little for permanently locating themselves" (1872, 208). Consequently they still continue the ritual of annual reallocations of agricultural land. On the occasion of the annual hunt (*lo bir sendra*) the heads of the households ritually give up their land and then get another piece back. The village official who attends to the farming arrangements "...disallows any monopoly of peculiarly fertile rice lands; all must take their share of good and bad" (1872, 213).

What this shows is that among the Santal, the concept of inheritance of land was not well-established, in contrast with, say, the Munda among whom patrilineal inheritance was well-established. But it was being established, and the question is, how? What kind of struggle did it involve?

In swidden agriculture there is a base of corporate activity in clearing the land and in its annual redistribution. This, combined with the continuing importance of gathering, where access to



the forest is a matter of corporate membership of the village community, may be associated with the importance of collective rituals. On the other hand, in the case of settled agriculture with inherited plots of land, the labour of each generation is handed down to the next generation through plots of land. With individual plots of land the generational connection is no longer corporate but familial.

The Santal have different sets of village rituals for the village collective and for the family. There is a complete exclusion of women from participation in the worship of family spirits, and their role in village collective worship is also very limited.

The family spirits (*abge bonga* and *orak bonga*) of the clan and the family are passed on from father to son. They are not known to women and those outside the clan, lest this knowledge be used to bring harm to the family. Men alone can relate to the family spirits through prayer and through partaking of a sacrificed animal.

Women cannot know the family spirits nor participate in their worship. Married sisters and daughters are not allowed access to the internal shrine (*bhitri*). It is usually cleaned by unmarried girls. But no woman is allowed to participate in the rites. They cannot sacrifice animals or witness the sacrifice (Archer, 1983, 129). They can assist in certain ceremonies but can only share certain portions of the sacrificial meat, i.e. other than the head, which is the ritually the most valued part of the meat.

Thus, women are ritually not full members of the clan or family. On marriage they leave the father's clan, but never become full members of the husband's clan. This is a crucial step in creating a class of persons with lower political rights.

Women are also excluded from most of the village collective rituals. They cannot enter the sacred grove (*jaher* or *sarna*). They do not participate in the main dance of the agriculturist harvest festival (*lohrae*). But in the gathering-related flower or spring festival (*baha*) they alone perform the main dance. Nevertheless they cannot enter the sacred grove, and the worship of the female spirits of the sacred grove (*jaher-era*

and *Gosaen-era*) along with the supreme male spirit, is performed by the male village priest, assisted by young men chosen through possession.

Thus, whether in public or in family rituals, women are virtually excluded from participation in worship. While women do participate in many matters of ritual, including preparation of the materials for the various sacrifices, they have a definitely inferior position in this regard and are not supposed to show familiarity with the various spirits, or *bongas*. Indeed, a "female who professes intimate familiarity with the *bongas* is looked upon as a witch and persecuted" (Archer, 1974, 294).

Witches, among the Santal, can only be women; and it has been repeatedly mentioned that witches are the main danger to Santal society. Kolean Haram, whose account of Santal life and religion in the nineteenth century was taken down by the Norwegian missionary, Skesfrud, said, "The greatest trouble for Santals is witches. Because of them we are enemies of each other. If there were no witches how happy we might have been" (Archer, in Troisie, 1, 4). Similarly, one participant in the Santal rebellion, Chotrae Deshmanjhi, described how numerous girls were accused of witchcraft in the rebellion and killed.

Santal witches have their own system of incantation, rites and magical codes. These are taught to young recruits by the older women. The power of a female to be a witch begins at puberty and she is said to be recruited into learning the rites as soon as she starts to menstruate.

Accounts of witches point out that during secret gatherings they chant and dance, starting from the prohibited shrine of the village ancestors (*manjhi-than*) and going to the also prohibited sacred grove. It is these secretly-practised rites by women that led Bodding to remark, "I am inclined to think that the practice of witchcraft by Santal women is, to a certain extent, really secret worship, resorted to by women because they are not permitted to take part with the men directly and personally in ordinary public worship" (1925, 224). Open participation in rituals gives men their authority; exclusion from these same rituals



deprives women of legitimacy: when they do participate in rituals, it is only as evil powers.

### ORIGIN OF WITCHES

The Santal myth of the origin of witchcraft ascribes it to the struggle between the genders, between men and women, in the family and in Santal society as a whole.

One day the village men assembled. 'We are men,' they said, 'Why are we disobeyed? If we say a word or two to women, they reply with twenty words of anger. We can bear this state no longer.' Then they said, 'Let us go to Maran Buru and learn an art so that these women will respect us more.' At midnight they met in the forest and called to Maran Buru. 'Grandfather,' they said, 'many men are so harassed that they have come to see you.' Maran Buru came to them. 'What is troubling you, grandchildren?' he said. They told of their trouble and implored him to teach them how to keep their womenfolk in order.

As the myth goes, the women came to know that the men had approached Maran Buru to teach them something. The women got the men drunk, dressed up in men's clothes and tricked Maran Buru into teaching them instead. "Maran Buru then taught them the incantations and gave them the power of eating men." The next day, when the men came, Maran Buru realized that he had been tricked by the women. He then made the men "expert in the art of witchfinding" (Archer, 1974, 292-93).

The idea that women had some power which was subsequently stolen from them by men, and then guarded carefully by men, is quite frequently seen in the myths of different tribes. The Mundurucu of South America, the Mbuti of Africa and the Baurya of New Guinea are among those tribes that have myths of trumpets, pipes and such symbols being stolen from the women. In the case

of the Santal myth, however, the men did not steal something from the women, something made by them (the women). Rather, it was the women, who through trickery, acquired knowledge that they had no right to. Nevertheless, what is important is that in all these myths there is a change in the order of society, and it is a change that establishes the authority of men.

While women's participation in rituals became a source of evil, men alone could be the witch-finders. The *ojhas* and *jan-gurus* performed this function, using a combination of divining and knowledge of the contradictions existing in the concerned village. The witch-finders, through their questions and other means, gather information from the complainants. The identification of the witch is then based on the information gathered. Initially, the names of witches are not mentioned. The complainants are left to make their own inferences. All this makes it very easy to identify the person whom the village (men) want to get rid of as the witch. Usually, the whole village knows beforehand the person who is going to be named a witch. The various tensions in the village and the identity of those women who are without support are both well-known.

In the first stage, a woman named as a witch may be framed, then asked to 'behave' herself and otherwise threatened. If deaths occur due to diseases that cannot be identified, or other tragedies happen in the village, which events are certain to occur in a not-too-long period of time, the occasion is used by the *ojha* to name the woman who is the witch. By this time there is already a consensus in the village that a particular woman is a witch. A recurrence of the usual tragedies is taken as proof that the witch is unrepenting. The woman may then be either driven out of the village or killed.

The categorization of women and men into witches and witch-finders respectively, was an essential part of the process of establishing the authority of men. The denunciation of women's ritual knowledge as evil can be seen as an attempt by the denouncers (men) to change the established order (which was very likely one in which joint authority was shared by women and men) and to set



up in its place an order based on the authority of men.

Witch-hunting is, in this analysis, the process of establishing the authority of men. Women are now turned into the source of all evil. Such an ideology is certainly conducive to the social process of controlling women. The threat of being declared a witch will help to restrict non-conformism or deviance from the rules that are being established. The power of one section of the community (men) to declare individuals of another section of the community (women) as witches is a great power that can be used to change the old order and establish a new one.

What we can infer from the above about the Santal is that (1) at some stage Santal women did function (equally with men?) in being spiritual mediators; (2) subsequently men established a monopoly over the higher ritual sphere; (3) women's participation in these higher rituals then became a sign of their possessing evil powers; but (4) women continued in some of the functions connected with these tabooed rituals, like preparing the sacrificial materials.

At present, it is not clear what was the ritual system of the Santals prior to the creation of women as witches. In the gatherer-hunter Birhor of the same Austro-Asiatic language group we can see that men had already monopolized the ritual sphere. But in the same language group, Savara agriculturists, women had important roles in the religious sphere and the Savara do not have any concept of women as witches (Elwin, 1955 quoted in Troisi, 1,296).

Every Santal woman lived under the threat of being declared a witch. At times of crisis, like epidemics, all the women of a village could be attacked as witches. In a study of Orissa it is mentioned that in one case of an epidemic of cattle disease, all the women of the village were indiscriminately assaulted and forced to carry dead bullocks to the field (S. P. Rout, 405). Archer mentions that in the village of Mahagama, cholera broke out and for some time four or five persons died each day: "All the villagers [*sic*] became desperate and seeing no other remedy, they beat all

the women in the village and made them drink human excreta" (Archer, 303, the Hill). Contact with 'foul things' like human excreta was supposed to drive the *bongas* away.

Along with a general ideological, religious and political attack on women, there was also a specific attack on women's land rights and the strengthening of men's domination over land. Within the patrilineal system of descent women had certain definite, though limited, rights to land. The rights of unmarried daughters, wives, and widows were all elaborately spelled out (see Archer 1984). Summing up the gamut of rights one can say that they are of two kinds – one is a life interest in land, a right to manage land and its produce, and the other is a right to a share of the produce of land.

Unmarried daughters have a right to a small portion of the crop which they have helped to harvest. Accumulation from *ir arpa*, as this share of the harvest is known, can also be exchanged against a part of the family land. Whatever is accumulated from such income belongs to the woman, and can be taken to her husband's home, where it will remain her property. A wife, however, has no rights to land. Whatever her relation to the land it is through the mediation of her husband.

It is the relation of widows to the land that is most important, and the sphere in which many changes have come about. A widow becomes, in a sense, a substitute father. (Archer 1984, 173) for her sons. If her sons are majors she becomes the head of the household and if they are minors "...the widow inherits all the land and moveables exactly as if she were their father"(Archer 1984, 173). She administers the household and supervises cultivation. In the event of the partition of land when her sons grow up, she gets exactly what her dead husband could have claimed. Overall, she has a right not just to be maintained, but a real life interest in the land. She has a right to manage the land, supervise its cultivation and use the resulting income as she sees fit. Moveables can be sold but not the land. In cases where a widow has only daughters or no children at all, the woman acts as a substitute for her late husband. So long as she is alive she inherits all the land and moveables. Of



course, in this, as in all other cases of a widow's rights, the right is conditional on her remaining in the village and on her not remarrying.

The life interest of a widow in her husband's land is the right that has been most under attack. Three phases in the degradation of widow's land rights can be seen. In the first, the widow has rights equal to those of her late husband; in the second, she has rights over a plot of land sufficient for her own maintenance; and in the third, any independent access to land is negated, and the widow merely lives on maintenance provided by the male heirs of her husband. This last position is not very different from that of widows in Hindu society. The difference that exists is due to the fact that Santal women continue to have rights to collect and sell forest products and thus can have an income of their own.

Santal women, when without husband or father, have residual life interests in land. They can dispose of the produce and income as they want. The life interest of a widow restricts the property rights of the male agnates of the husband, whose use of this land, for accumulation or for consumption, has to wait till the death of the widow. In the case of a widow with children, the heirs are her own children. The economic stake of a widow in this situation is much less. But it is the life interest in land of a widow without children that is the major fetter on the property rights of the male agnates of her husband. And being without children also means that she is unprotected and more vulnerable.

Various studies of witch-hunting show that the victims were not just women but that also those who were old and unprotected. A police officer analyzed records in one district (Malda) and pointed out: "Most of [them]...were widows and aged. ...the significant thing had been the lack of protection or coverage from powerful relatives" (A.B. Chaudhuri, 1987, 156). In other analyses the factor that stands out is that the accused women were closely related to the accusers (Kochar in Troisi, 1979, 6, 296 and Rout in Troisi, 1979, 6, 406), thus being within the circle of persons likely to benefit from the elimination of these women as claimants to land.

How did these residual land rights of women come to exist? One possibility is that prior to the attempted patrilineal descent system there was a bilineal descent system. The system of *ghar jamai*, the in-marrying son-in-law, was quite free among the Santal. Unlike in other tribes, like the Munda, it was not restricted to the situation where a couple had only daughters and no sons. With village approval, any woman could be married in *ghar jamai* fashion, and the sons could not object to it (Archer, 1984, 207). The ease of matrilineal marriage combined with patrilineal marriage as the dominant form, points to the possibility that there have been some kind of bilineal descent system, before the establishment of patriliney.

Witch-hunting then was the form of an internal (class) struggle through which the shared land rights of women and men in the swidden-cum-gathering economy was sought to be changed into the sole land rights of men in the patrilineal system.

One point follows from the above analysis. We would expect that, in tribes where women have greater rights to land, there should be a more intense internal struggle, reflected in witch-hunting being more widespread. What witch hunting reflects is an attack on the existing status of women. Both in the sphere of social authority in general and in that of land of rights in particular, such an attack would not be necessary where a low status for women has already been well established, where that control by men which is called patriarchy, has come into being. It is where women generally have considerable authority in society that it would be necessary to attack them as the "source of all evil", in order to establish the full authority of men. Where women's authority has been destroyed or reduced, such a continued attack would then not be necessary, as is seen among the Munda, where patriliney is well-established, and where witches can be both women and men and need not be women alone.

#### THE DAI OF XISHUANGBANNA, YUNNAN

The Dai are lowlanders, valley-dwellers.



They are similar in production methods, class structure and belief systems to other Tai people outside Central Thailand, like the Tai Yuan of Northern Thailand or the Shan. In the period up to Liberation there was a large number of persons who were declared *pippa* and, along with their families, were driven out of their villages. This *pippa* of the Yunnan Dai seems similar to the *phi ka* of the Northern Thai and the *phi paub* of the Northeastern Thai. In Northern Thailand (Lanna) there were reports in the 1870s and 1880s of hundreds of people being accused of being harbourers of *phii ka* and being driven out of their villages (Anan Ganjanapan, 1984, 325). Tambiah also reports that in Northeastern Thailand (Isan) in the village he studied there were some cases of *phii paub* accusations.

Spirits exist along with Buddhism in areas of Theravada Buddhism. But does that mean the *phii* (spirit) cults are part of Buddhism, and not the syncretic addition of pre-Buddhist beliefs into the Buddhist system? As a system of belief, Buddhism is monistic, with a hierarchy based on a single principle, 'the superiority of ascetics', and not on a balance of opposites (Kirsch, 1977). Thus, there is an ideological opposition between Buddhism and the *phii* cults.

There was also a political opposition between the two. In the Dai myth of the coming of Buddhism, the indigenous goddess of rice, Yohannan, left the area after the coming of Buddha. But this led to famine and the Buddha had to call her back and come to an agreement with her. The Shan myth also similarly has the goddess of rice defeating the Buddha. But in Central Thailand, though there is a goddess of rice, she is just one among many deities within the whole pantheon dominated by the Buddha (Richard O'Connor, 1989, 39). From this we can expect that the Dai and Shan societies may have more of the older (pre-Buddhist) elements left in their belief system than, say, in Central Thailand, which was the seat of the Siamese kingdom and obviously much more subject to transformation on the basis of court beliefs. Further, when Buddhism came to Lao in 1527, the king forbade spirit worship and ordered the destruction

of all sanctuaries of the *phii* cult. The shrine of the founding spirit in Luang Prabang was destroyed to be replaced by Buddhist pagodas (Georges Condominas, 1975, 252).

What this shows is that the co-existence of the *phii* cult with Buddhism does not mean that we cannot distinguish between the pre-Buddhist *phii* cults and Buddhist practices, as Tambiah argues. What it does show is that Buddhism could not completely replace the *phii* cults as a comprehensive world-view and as religious practice. What can we say about the *phii ka* or *pippa*? This was a malevolent spirit. Both women and men could harbour this spirit, but it was largely women who were accused of harbouring it.

The Tai Yuan peasants were organized in matrilineal (*kog phii*) and Richard Davis contends that they are the only Tai people so organized (1984, 264). Features of the Tai Yuan (or Muang) system are matrilineal descent and matrilineal post-marriage residence. The Dai of Xishuangbanna, Yunnan had a similar system of matrilineal descent and matrilineal residence, in that the women were custodians of the house spirit and the matrilineal descent group of a few generations is always named after its oldest living woman. Women inherited land and older women controlled land (Anan Ganjanapan, 1984, 327).

The origin of the *phii ka* of the Northern Thai lay in the transformation of the household spirit, *phii puu njaa*, representing those who have not received proper sacrifices and have turned malevolent. The *phii ka* are transmitted matrilineally, in the same manner as the descent group spirit (Anan Ganjanapan, 1984, 325). In Yunnan the transformation of the household spirit was reflected in the formation of a household spirit different from that of the maternal ancestors, the matrilineal cults. This new household spirit resided in the main post of the house, and in its worship women were forbidden to participate. The Dai also had a village spirit, or Devala, whose function was to protect the village from the malevolent *phii*. The functionaries of the Devala were men. Besides the village as a whole, individual men also needed to be protected from the evil *phii*, and this was done by



tatoeing. Men wore tatoos as protection from the *phii*; women, who were the ones who could harbour the *phii*, instead of needing protection, were the ones from whom protection was needed.

In the event of a person falling sick, an exorcist (*Po Mo* or *Pu Mo* in Xishuangbanna, *mau phil* in Lanna, *mau tham* in Isan) was called to perform an exorcism. The exorcist was always a man. This was so in Yunnan, in Lanna and in Isan. The exorcist calls upon the *thewada* or divine angels (in Isan), 'who are categorically opposed to the malevolent *phii*' (Tambiah, 1970, 328) to free the patient from possession. It is interesting to note that offerings to the *thewada* are vegetarian (Tambiah, 1970, 341), pointing to the possible intrusion of Brahmanic notions via the Khmer.

The exorcism ritual was not shamanistic, i.e. it did not involve possession. Instead of sacrifices, there were offerings to the gods. Further, while the oldest woman as head of the matriclan was the ritual officiant at *phil puu njaa* (matriclan spirit) rites, in exorcism the ritual officiant could only be men. Generally in *phii* rites women were the main mediums.

Illness was the usual occasion on which persons harbouring the *pippa* were sought out. The exorcist, *Po Mo* with the support and even instigation of the village headman, would prod the delirious patient with a tiger or dog tooth and force the patient to name the person harbouring the *phii ka* spirit.

Most persons accused of harbouring the *pippa* spirit were women. The women and their families were driven out of the village, with all the villagers too participating in the affair. There were some instances of men being named as *pippa*. For instance the uncle of the Dai woman writer, Xi Na, was driven out of his village. The founder of the *pippa* village of Man ling Dai was a man who, we were told, farmed with a "silver plough". There were other men who were said to have found "silver boxes". What the "silver plough" or "silver box" seems to refer to is men who were somewhat better off, either because their family had better land or their families were better organized in farming the land. So, the men who were targets of *pippa*

accusations were those men who were somewhat better off in the village. Anan Ganjanapan (1984) reports the same for Northern Thailand. In fact, their being better off fuelled the resentment of other villagers, who then participated in driving out the offenders from the village.

What happened to the land of the family that was driven out? In Xishuangbanna our investigations showed that the headman, who was appointed from above, seized the land of the persons driven out. Anan Ganjanapan reports that in Lanna the land was seized by the minor *caw* (or lords). "In most cases the petty *caw* (aristocrats of the Northern Thai royal family) benefited by confiscating the land, as no one else dared to take the abandoned fields lest they be associated with the expelled *phii ka*" (Anan Ganjanapan, 1984,325).

There are thus two kinds of conflict in the *pippa* denunciations and dispossession. First is the conflict between the woman-centred matricults and the new man-centred household spirits. At the level of ritual officiants this is reflected in the struggle between women shamans and men exorcists. The second conflict is that between the headmen and lords on one side and peasants on the other. The headmen / lords were organized patrilineally as against the matrilineally organized peasants. Andrew Turton (1972) has pointed to the conflict between the men-oriented spirits of the lords as against the women-centred spirits of the peasants. This conflict between descent systems was combined with the attempt by the headmen / lords to take over peasant lands.

Women not only were ritual officiants of the spirit cults; some among them were also shamanistic healers. But even as healers there was a prohibition against their learning to read and write, even in the pre-Buddhist systems of signs that preceded the Pali-based script that came with Buddhism. (Personal communication, Xi Na.) These women healers, as healers, were in conflict with the men exorcists. Consequently, special ability in a woman was looked upon with suspicion, as resulting from communion with malevolent spirits.

There is a widespread association of special ability in women with possession by an evil



spirit. Both among the Hani/Akha and the Dai in Yunnan those denounced for being possessed by the devil spirit (*pippa*) were women with special abilities. A woman who was capable, intelligent or beautiful stood in danger of being declared *pippa*.

In the same area, the highland Hani believe that women are not "full human beings", so those women who did acquire notable abilities or intelligence could only have acquired these by being in communication with or being possessed by evil spirits. Among the neighbouring Shan of Mae Hong Son province of Thailand, Nancy Eberhardt gives the example of a particularly good woman singer whose ability "many people have come to suspect...is the result of trafficking with the underworld—in particular, with the witchcraft spirits known as *phi phoe*" (Eberhardt, 1986, 87).

Besides special ability, many of the women *pippa* victims were said to have been very beautiful. In every account of *pippa* that we heard in Xishuangbanna the question of beautiful women always came up. This may reflect an attempt to subdue women's sexuality and bring it under men's control. Any woman who, because of her beauty, was likely to reverse this order, could be denounced as *pippa*. The threat of being denounced as *pippa*, according to one of our Han informants, resulted in Dai women not daring to contradict their husbands too much or too vigorously. To sum up:

1. The *pippa*, *phii ka* or *phi paub* was a malevolent spirit.
2. Women were the main harbourers of this spirit.
3. This spirit was a transformation of the house spirit of the matrilineal descent group.
4. The matriclans of the peasants were organized on the basis of matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence.
5. The *phii ka* were also passed on matrilineally.
6. The peasants were organized in matriclans.
7. The headmen and lords (minor princelings of the court) were organized patrilineally.

8. Women were the main targets of the attack as harbourers of *phii ka*.

9. Women and the matriclans lost their land and had to flee the villages.

10. Exorcism rituals to identify the *phii ka* harbourers were carried out exclusively by male exorcists, in league with village headmen and the minor lords.

11. The exorcism ritual involved a different belief system with vegetarian offerings. It did not involve going into a trance or possession. It was not shamanistic.

12. The exorcism ritual involves the displacement of women as the chief ritual officiants and their cults by men as exorcists, with new systems of rites and beliefs.

13. Women who were particularly gifted or capable were likely to be targets of *phii ka* accusations.

From the above, we can conclude that the *pippa* or *phii ka* phenomenon represents a simultaneous attack on matrifocality in production relations and in the religious system and also on peasant holdings of land in order to aid the strengthening of the class system. At the level of ritual and other knowledge, it was an attack on women's ritual knowledge as dangerous, and on women with well-developed, non-domestic capabilities as evil. Instead of shamanistic spirit possession with sacrifices, a new system of priest-officiated offerings was instituted.

We can put forward a further, subsidiary proposition. In the Xishuangbanna there was, at the time of Liberation (1949), a matrilineal system with matrilocal marriage. Women inherited land and the family house and thus had a strong position in controlling the family economy. In this region there was a strong ideological struggle, reflected in daily taboos—like women's clothes not being put up to dry where men might walk, men not touching women's clothing, etc. In this region there was a strong identification of women with *pippa*; almost all *pippa* were women.



On the other hand, in the Dehong area of Yunnan (on the border with China) the Dai had already changed to a patrilineal system, with the woman marrying into the husband's house. In this area the taboos against women were not so strongly observed, and, what is most important, *pippa* were more often men than women. (The above comparative account is based on information supplied by Chen, personal communication.) What this shows is that where women's position in control of the economy was strong, there the ideological struggle was more intense and there was a close identification of *pippa* with women. On the other hand, where women's position in the economy was already weakened, as with patrilineality, there the taboos against women may not have been so strong and the struggle to gain control of land did not concentrate on women, who were no longer the controllers of land.

#### THE NAXI AND MOSUO

Yet another way in which the authority of men was established took place among the Naxi in the Lijiang area of North-western Yunnan. This was by the imposition of the Confucian marital and sexual code. Initially Yunnan was brought under central Ran rule during the Yuan (Mongol) dynasty. But till the mid-eighteenth century, the new rulers did not do much to change the social structure they found, so much so that a Ran official historian in the eighteenth century said that "instead of naturalizing them [the Naxi] into Chinese, those Chinese officials who governed them were themselves naturalized into Barbarians" (in Rock, 1947, I, 46).

In 1723 direct central rule was imposed over the Naxi areas. With Lijiang sitting right astride the main trade route to Tibet, Ran influence was strongest in the Lijiang plain; while in more remote areas, the influence was much weaker. In distant Yongning, the section of the nationality, known as Mosuo, remained outside direct Ran influence and has continued with its system of matrilineality and 'visiting husbands' right till the present.

In an attempt to 'replace Naxi tradition by that of the Ran', education for males, boys and men was instituted. The Confucian values of the three cardinal rules (ruler controls subjects, father controls son, and husband controls wife) and the five constant virtues (benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom and fidelity), were propagated. With this Naxi women were expected to be bound by the feudal ethical code of three obediences (to father before marriage, to husband in marriage and to son after death of husband), and four virtues (morality, proper speech, modest manner, and diligent work).

In particular, the Confucian system substituted arranged marriage in place of marriage for love, and prohibited divorce. The result was that while Naxi youth continued to mix freely before marriage and fall in love in the process, they were expected to stop such love and marry the person chosen by their parents. In protest against this imposition of the Confucian marriage system, large numbers of youth committed 'suicide for love', giving Lijiang before 1949 the reputation of being the 'suicide capital of the world'. (The following account of the 'suicide for love' among the Naxi is largely based on Yang Fuqiang's study.)

In suicide deaths among the Naxi, the number of women who died for love was much more than the number of men. "According to my [Yang Fuqian's] field investigation made in Lijiang's Huangshan, Lashi, Baisha, Taian, Taching, Daju and Baoshan townships, in all these areas as well as Dadong, Longpan, Ludian, Qihe and Longshan, that is, in nearly all places where tragic death for love occurred, the number of women who committed suicide for love was much more than that of men. Although it was difficult to get detailed statistics, one sign that the number of women committing suicide was more than those of men was that in many villages, *there were numerous incidents of women dying for love all alone or in a group of women*" (Yang Fuqian, emphasis added).

Further, women were generally much more resolute in committing suicide than men. "Because women were afraid that men might hesitate and give up the attempt, they would manage to ask the men



to die first. For example, there was the case of a couple in which the man was found hanging from a high branch, while the woman had died leaning against the tree with a smile on her face. There were burn marks on the man's face. It was obvious that after the man died, the women checked to see if he was dead or not, using fire to burn his face, and then herself died with satisfaction" (Yang Fuqian).

Peter Goullart, who stayed in Lijiang for a number of years before liberation, in his book *The Forgotten Kingdom* mentions that the cases of women dying for love were more than those of men, and that women were more resolute in this than men. While men hesitated or turned back when relatives intervened, women usually carried on till they were successful in committing suicide.

Presumably the loss of love and the pain of arranged marriage would be the same for both young men and women. Yet many more women committed suicide than men. Why did many more Naxi women commit suicide for love than men? The folk analysis of the establishment of patriarchy among the Naxi is that it resulted from the imposition of Confucian values by the Chinese imperial state. But was there some, even if incomplete and partial belief base, in Naxi thought itself? The patriarchal arranged marriage may have been preceded by changes in the belief system, so that women began to be seen as representing darkness and evil, even in the system of the pre-Confucian Dongba religion of the Naxi.

That 'suicide for love' is not just a matter of the imposition of Confucian values is made probable by the following: "In Lijiang every village had some families who were called the keeper of ghosts (*Cao Fu Shi*). Therefore, among the youth who committed suicide for love, most were from the next generation of such families" (Yang Fuqian). Thus, there was a connection between suicide for love and the Naxi belief that those who were keepers of ghosts or demons were women (Yang Fuqian).

The person called the keeper of ghosts or *Cao Fu Shi* had the malicious name passed on from their ancestors and most of them

were women. For example, in Tachen and Ludian (Lijiang Naxi) most of the so-called *Cao Fu Shi* were women. In the Lijiang plains and nearby villages of the mountain villages, these *Cao Fu Shi* were passed on from mother to daughter. If a family did not have a daughter, then it would be passed on to the daughter-in-law.

If a person fell ill and it was not possible to treat them, or if there was some other misfortune in the family, then it was believed that it was caused by a woman who was a *Cao Fu Shi*. Rumours about such a woman were spread in the village. Though they were not able to show who was responsible, rumours were spread about a woman being a *Cao Fu Shi* and being responsible for the misfortune. The *Donba*, the exorcist, a male priest of the Naxi, however, played a key role in identifying the woman who was *Cao Fu Shi*. The *Donba* would hold a ritual for exorcising the evil. "Before holding the ritual the *Donba* sneaked into the vilified woman's bedroom and put fresh chicken blood under the straw mat of the bed head. Then, while they danced with swords, one of the *Donba* rushed into the bedroom and cut the bed with his sword. Then he showed everybody the spot with the chicken's blood and claimed that he had killed the ghost" (Yang Yuqian). The result often was that the condemned woman committed suicide.

Thus, the imposition of the Confucian arranged marriage system with no possibility of a divorce combined with the Naxi's own ideas of women as the keepers of evil demons to create the large-scale tragedy of 'suicide for love' among the Naxi. To understand the full implications of this shift, it is necessary to analyze the changes that had taken place in Naxi religion and the struggles that had taken place prior to the imposition of central Ran rule in the eighteenth century.

For instance, the idea that "women are lowly, men are noble" is probably part of pre-Confucian Naxi thought. The points of illustration that follow are taken from Prof. Ge A Gan's "Investigation on Naxi Women," 1996:



In some villages, women are not allowed to approach the altar to worship heaven. Women's apron or trousers are used as tools to wipe out ghosts, indicating that women are despised. Some women are regarded as demons and avoided by other people. Women's clothes are not aired in the dining room; nor can a piece from women's clothes be used to patch up men's clothes, while the reverse is possible. Men should not walk under a line containing women's clothes, nor should women sleep higher than men. Or, that it is not auspicious to see women when going out to hunt. Or, the various rituals for the dead, where nine grains are used for men and seven for women, nine dippers of water for men and seven for women, and so on. Or, the saying, "One-hundred year old man is a Buddha; one hundred year old woman is a demon."

What these scattered sayings and practices show is that women and men were not equally treated in various aspects of Naxi ideology, and that these ideas of inequality are not those which are attributed to Han influence. Thus, it is necessary to investigate the indigenous notions of inequality of women and men that existed among the Naxi and other such communities, along with an analysis of the influence of Han culture on the Naxi.

It is generally accepted that the Naxi and Mosuo were originally one tribe. While both came under Han rule, the Naxi and those in the areas near Lijiang were subject to greater Han influence, while there was not much interference in the Mosuo system. A chief supposedly of Mongol descent was set up over the Mosuo; but below the chief the Mosuo system was not forcibly changed. Among the Naxi too there was not much interference with their social and economic system. In fact, it was said about officials of the Yuan and Ming dynasties "that instead of naturalizing them [the Naxi] into Chinese, those Chinese officials who governed them were themselves naturalized by the Barbarians" (Rock, 1947,46). It was only in 1723

that direct Chinese rule was established over Lijiang and the Confucian system imposed on the area. Lijiang was important because it was astride the Silk Route.

What was the social and economic system of the Naxi at the time of imposition of direct Chinese rule in 1723? Was it like the matrilineal system of the Mosuo? Andrew Jackson's analysis of Naxi religion yields the conclusion that the Naxi were formerly matrilineal. But Quo Dalie's analysis is that by the time of the imposition of Han rule the Naxi were already patrilineal. Thus, one major transformation, from matriliney to patriliney had already come about. Can we find traces of how this change came about and the struggles surrounding this change?

The Naxi's *Donba* religion has a mythical founder, Shilo, an all-powerful shaman. But the *Donba* themselves do not act like shamans, i.e. they do not fall into a trance or get possessed. They are more like monks who chant prayers, or exorcists who conduct rituals to expel demons.

What is interesting is the story of Shilo. In the myth, *Donba* Shilo acquired all the initial texts from a woman Shaman, Pe Ci Sha Mei, again pointing to the replacement of a woman-centred religion by a male-centred one. Further, he established his power by using the giant bird Khyu t'Khyu to fight Ssu, the serpent god of life. Ssu is connected with female shamans, the *Phaw*, and the story could well represent the struggle between the woman-centred and the men-centred religious systems. Further, there is a very close parallel to (if not a direct borrowing from) the Rig Vedic myth of Indra defeating the serpent, Vrtra, with the help of Qaruda. The Naxi acknowledge that Shilo's giant bird Khyu t'Khyu is a version of Garuda. The difference in the two stories is that Ssu created a flood, while Vrtra impounded all the waters. In any event, what the stories reflect in common is the destruction of an earlier religious and social system by a male-centred religious and social system. But, in yet another difference with the Rig Vedic legend, the Naxi serpent is not killed by Shilo, as Vrtra was by Indra. Rather, Ssu is defeated by Shilo, and then the two come to an agreement.



As with the rice goddess of the Dai, who defeated Buddha and forced him to compromise with her, here too the Naxi Ssu was not totally replaced but was taken over into the new religion. Worship of Ssu continues as a village rite in a sacred grove, a clearly spirit based worship of nature, and not of heaven.

Symbolically the devaluation of women is represented by the use of a black triangle to represent evil. Black also stands for earth and is associated with women, while white is associated with heaven and men (Jackson 1979, 44) But a black triangle can be appended to any person, woman or man. The weapon for subduing the evil demons is a bundle of twigs made of pairs of differing wood. The pictograph for the active male principle and the twigs both clearly represent a penis. The Naxi word for 'magic' and 'sexual intercourse' is the same (*hpa*). The word means the combination of male and female and is also used to mean change or development. The penis then is the weapon that overcomes the evil demon of women or women's power and also leads to change.

It is intriguing that in Old Europe (i.e. pre-Indo-European) the symbol of good is a black triangle, again associated with the earth (black) and women (triangle), and that in many cultures the weapon to overcome evil spirits is a penis. In Isan (North-eastern Thailand) wooden penises are used to ward off evil spirits which are female and have the potential to harm men alone.

In the Naxi religion the ritual specialists (exorcists) *Donba* had assistants who were known as *Phaw*. They were not priests or exorcists, but shamans who used possession and trance to identify the evil spirits causing trouble. The exorcism was then performed by the *Donba*.

The *Phaw* shamans were originally women and represent the serpent spirit, Ssu, the life god. The *Donba* pictograph of *Phaw* shows a female figure, with hair flying as in a trance. These women became possessed and then carried out the rites. There were reports of women priestesses among the Naxi in the 19th century; they could have been the *Phaw* (Jackson, 1979, 57). Later, however, only men could become shamans and possession by

women was treated as an illness to be cured by exorcism, by a man.

Yang Fuqiang points out that every village of the Naxi had families that were supposed to harbour the evil demons. The story of the origin of these demons identifies them as having come into existence at the time of the flood (i.e. before the new moral order was established) and they had to be curbed by the founding ancestor of the Naxi people, Chong Ren Li En. The demons were of various types; they were called *Cao Pu*, and the most fierce demons of all were the *Du*. Their colour was black, the colour of women. These demons were harboured by humans, mostly by women, and women were the keepers of evil demons, they were *Cao Pu Shi*. The quality of harbouring evil was passed on from mother to daughter, i.e. not only matrilineally, but also only to females.

The *Donba* were the exorcists who removed the demons and identified the persons who harboured them. As pointed out above, the demon-keeper women were supposed to be possessed. In the one case of *Cao Pu Shi* which we were able to inquire into in Walnut village, the woman was said to have been 'mentally ill'. It was female possession, which initially was held to be communion with spirits, which was now redefined as 'mental illness'.

Any woman was under threat of being declared *Cao Pu Shi*. There was rarely an open declaration of *Cao Pu Shi*, more often rumour and innuendo. But, as Yang Fuqiang has pointed out, the *Donba* played a key role in the denunciation of a woman as *Cao Pu Shi*. Women thus became the source of evil and contamination in the village, and any woman was potentially the evil within the community. As with the *pippa* among the Dai, was it more capable and beautiful women who were likely to be targeted as *Cao Pu Shi*? Indeed, as we should expect, women said to be the harbourers of demons were said to be beautiful.

Among the still matrilineal Mosuo, where the grand-mother, living with her children and grand-children, is still the head of the household, beliefs about women's polluting quality are mainly with regard to contact with *Lamas*. For the rest we



could find no evidence of day-to-day taboos regarding menstruation or washing and drying clothes. Moreover, the domestic rituals of the Mosuo are woman-centred: daily offerings of food to the ancestors, which means the matrilineal ancestors, grand-mother and her brothers too. The offering is also made to the spirit of fire, which is represented by a drawing placed on a shrine above the hearth. But in social ritual, women play a very minimal or subordinate role. Healing, beyond that done by the members of the household, is the monopoly of *Dabas* or *Lamas*. Men alone participate in the funeral rites, including the preparation of the body. Women's role in the funeral is restricted to cooking for all participants.

The *Daba* represents the pre-Buddhist religion of the Mosuo, possibly, like the *Donba*, of Tibetan influence, and via Tibet Indian influence. Nevertheless, woman, as mother, is held to be the center of the world. Everything is supposed to originate from the mother's womb.

There are different versions (folk and *Daba*) of the origins of the Naxi. According to the folk version, the only person who survived the great flood was a girl; while according to the *Daba*, the only person who survived was a young boy. Only men can be *Daba*, whose functions include both divination and exorcism.

We could find no traces of women as shamans among the Mosuo. But there is a notion of women as harbourers of evil—sometimes described by the Ran word *Yan Gu*, at times also by the word *Cao Pu Shi*, as among the Naxi. Among the Mosuo even more strictly than among the Naxi, women alone are keepers of the demons, or *Cao Pu Shi*. This capacity was held by the head of the household and then passed on to the next head of the household. Since women were almost always the heads of households (although at times and temporarily, a woman's brother may be head), this represents an attack on not just matriliney, but on women as heads of households. Thus, among the Mosuo, while daily ritual celebrated the matri-ancestors, social ritual and politics were the monopoly of men, at least with the *Daba* religion. Along with this there was an attack on women as

actual or potential sources of evil. Yet the matriclans have survived.

In the first place this shows that the ideological/political struggle in fact established men's position in the political and ritual structure even while production and the household economy remained under women's control. In the second place, this also shows that the political and ritual devaluation of women may be necessary but is not a sufficient condition for the establishment of domination by men. The Mosuo, unlike the Naxi, were not on the main trade route between China and Tibet. Thus, trade, which was controlled by men, was not as important among the Mosuo as it was among the Naxi. The difficulties of growing rice meant that the productivity of land could not increase. And the institution of *Lamas* served to drain off economic surplus into non-economic channels and thus inhibited accumulation.

## DISCUSSION

In the Dai and Naxi cases there is clear evidence about the displacement of women ritual officiants by men. In the Santal case we do not have direct evidence of displacement; but the Savara who belong to the same Austro-Asiatic language group have both women and men ritual officiants, while the Santal only have men as ritual specialists.

The change in the gender of ritual specialists is paralleled by a change in the religious methods. While shamans are typically women and practice ecstatic methods of placating the spirits (adorcism), exorcists are typically men, and although using ecstatic methods, rather than placating spirits their method is essentially one of expelling spirits. At the ritual level women's adorcism is opposed to men's exorcism.

The new household spirits are patrilineal and it is forbidden for women to make offerings to them, or at times even to know them. While Mosuo women make the offerings to the ancestors and Dai women to the matricults, Naxi women cannot make offerings to the house spirit and Santal women are even forbidden to know the household spirits.

The opposition between different forms of



ritual and religious behaviour has important social connotations. The male exorcists, *Donba* among the Naxi, *Po Mo* or *Mau Tham* among the Dai, and *Ojha* among the Santal, are all the chief protagonists in the struggle to spiritually and socially devalue women. They represent, to paraphrase Lewis (1986, 130) 'the cutting edge' of the male-dominated order in its war against the 'demons' of the women-dominated order.

Exorcism has a social function. It "...is regularly employed, among other things, to control women" (Lewis, 1986, 137). This control of women is achieved by a number of transformations. Ritual knowledge possessed by women is defined as dangerous to society. Evil is now identified not only with non-human malevolent spirits and the spirits of dead humans, but as having living mediums, in the form of women. With this development, all women are potentially evil, and must be controlled by the threat of exorcist denunciation as possessing or nurturing evil spirits. This denunciation as witches or keepers of evil spirits (*dain*, *pippa* or *cao ph shi*) can be and often was followed by social ostracism, expulsion and even death.

The transformation of women into potentially evil creatures is accompanied by an emphasis on the dangerous or alluring nature of their sexuality. The condemned women among the Dai and Naxi were invariably described as being 'beautiful' and sexually sought after. Turning women's sexual attraction into a dangerous quality is a step in controlling women. As Wendy Doniger points out in her analysis of Indo-Aryan myths, "The logical chain is inescapable: women, being more libidinous than men, are going to make demands that cannot be satisfied; therefore, women are going to become witches" (1980, 278). In the cases we have covered there is no reference to libidinous capacity, but there is a clear connection between women's beauty and their danger as keepers of evil spirits. Further, special ability, other than in accepted women's roles, was also the occasion for the denunciation of women as keepers of evil. Social ritual knowledge as such was forbidden to women, as was literacy.

In the anthropological literature, spirits and

witches have both been analyzed as being peripheral, marginal or non-structural. Mary Douglas (1966, 102) characterizes witchcraft as non-structural; while I. M. Lewis (1986, 65) says that the spirit cults are peripheral or marginal. These statements may be true of the religious structures as they now exist. But our analysis leads to the conclusion that these cults, or what is now termed witchcraft, became peripheral or non-structural because they were defeated and relegated to the margins. They were central at one time; but are now peripheral, marginal or even underground, because of the defeat and persecution of women.

A related point is that of conceptualization and men's domination of the symbolic system. That even in the 'original affluent society' men had more leisure than women is clear from Lee's account of the !Kung Bushpeople. The men, in between hunting, had long periods when they mainly danced, sang and relaxed; while women's share of leisure was much less. Likewise, in the peoples that we have analyzed there is almost a male monopoly of leisure. Thus priests, who require full-time training (like *Donba* and *Ojha*, let alone *lamas* who completely retire from production), are invariably men. But this should not lead to the conclusion that only men undertook conceptualization and that men always dominated the symbol system. The ritual practices of Santal women as witches, of Naxi as *Phaw*, or of Dai women as worshippers of the matricults, all involved their own forms of conceptualization and symbols. Subsequently, however, with the establishment of men's domination, it was men who came to dominate conceptualization of the symbolic system. Thus, we should be careful not to read the present onto the past. Men did not necessarily always dominate conceptualization of the symbolic system.

Our analysis of the spiritual and social devaluation of women and of the fierce struggles that accompanied this social change has been shown to hold true in more than one cultural group, from the Dai belonging to the Sino-Thai, the Naxi to the Tibeto-Burman and the Santal to the Austro-Asiatic language groups. Though the Santal may have come from the same province of Yunnan as the other two



groups, it is a long time since they have been separated and had their own history. The cross-cultural significance of the importance of the denunciation of women's ritual knowledge as a dangerous social force is not diminished by this history.

How can we relate the internal and external forces to these changes? One possible way in which matricults and matrifocality could have been destroyed is that put forward for Europe by Marija Gimbutas (1989). She ascribes it to the 'aggressive male invasion' of the Kurgan culture of the middle and lower Volga basin, whose repeated incursions put an end to the old European culture "changing it from gynanic [linking women and men] to andocratic and from matrilineal to patrilineal" (1989, xx). Gimbutas does not analyze how this change came about, but the implication is clear that it was the conquest of Old Europe by the andocratic Kurgans that destroyed gynany, leaving the goddess religion and its symbols to survive as an undercurrent in many areas.

The peoples whom we have analyzed were clearly subject not just to their own internal changes, but also to influences coming from the large civilizations of India and China, with significant mediations through Tibet and Thailand. Buddhism, via Tibet and via Southeast Asia, Hinduism directly in the case of the Santal and indirectly in the case of the Dai and Naxi, via probably the Khmers and through Tibetan Bon too, and Confucianism through Han rule and, more recently Christianity, through British colonial rule and missionaries. These are some of the influences that have obviously been at work in the areas we have considered.

The one clear case of conquest and the imposition of patriarchal systems is that of the Naxi. But there too we saw that even before Mongol conquest, the Naxi had already undergone a transformation from a woman-centred *Phaw* religion to a male-centred *Donba* religion. Further, even the influence of Confucianism worked through Naxi social structure, so that far fewer men, who stood to gain, than women, who stood to lose from Confucian values, protested their imposition. In a

sense, external influences also worked through the indigenous social structure and not just as imposition by brute force.

But these internal changes were themselves accompanied by struggles, widespread and often violent, or with the threat of violence. The struggles were in the realms of religion, of ritual officiants in rites, of symbols and meaning, and of inheritance systems. Central in these struggles was the denunciation of women as actual or potential bearers of evil. The identification of evil with one section of society, women, was the critical moment in the struggle to establish a male-centred religious, social and economic system.

## CONCLUSIONS

Our main theses are:

1. There were struggles between men and women in the step-by-step establishment of patriarchy in the areas we studied. These struggles can be analyzed in the areas of knowledge, including ritual and mundane knowledge, marriage and sexuality, and production.
2. The struggle in the sphere of ritual knowledge and the transformation of the belief systems preceded changes in the control of labour and over production, marriage, etc. In a sense, the political control of men preceded their control over the economic system.
3. A crucial moment in the struggle between women and men is the denunciation of certain categories of higher or social ritual knowledge by women as dangerous, the replacement of women by men as ritual officiates (or the subsumption of women's domestic rituals by men's social rituals), the replacement of women shamans (possession) by men exorcists (expulsion of evil) and priests e.g. replacement of female *Phaw* by male *Donba* among the Naxi, and the identification of evil within the community with women, e.g. as witches, *pippa*, or *chao pu xi*.
4. The institution of men's control over social ritual and the categorization of women as potentially evil need not, however, result in an inevitable transformation of the systems of production and



inheritance. The replacement of matrilineal by patrilineal seems to require some further conditions of production and accumulation. Further, even the establishment of patrilineage, as among the Naxi or Santal / Munda in India, does not equal full male domination or patriarchy.

5. Where women's position in control of the economy is stronger, the ideological struggle is more intense and women alone are carriers of evil; and conversely, where women's economic position is weaker, ideological struggle is less intense and women and men can both be carriers of evil.

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