Sherpa Marriage Customs

This is a transcription of "Sherpa Marriage Customs" as told by Mr. Ang Gelbu, who is at present residing in Kathmandu. The material was submitted by Luke and Marie Zylstra, August 13, 1968.

Though morpheme breaks have been inserted, the meaning of all of them is not clear to the authors at present, hence there may be inadequacies in the free translation. Tone is not indicated. Sherpa is a member of the Bodic group of the Tibeto-Burman family.

1. syer-wi gye ku-tju ki-tjang
   Sherpa-P marriage to make customs

   1. syer-wi gye ku-tju gomaalaa makpi-ki
      Sherpa-P marriage to make first bridegroom-P

   papaa tjang mamaa-ki tji pum-bajaa tji khore
   father and mother-P that girl- that his

   pujyung-laas gye ku-tju-laas lo-tjang djiku mi-djuku
   son- marriage to make- year- equal NEG-equal

   lhe-wi // 2. tji pum tji pujyung-laas gaa laa-sung
   are- that girl that boy-to like feel-

   maa-laas gomaalaa tii-kiwi // 3. pujyung tji-laas gaa
   NEG-feel first ask- son that-to like

   laa-si giwi sa-si-ma papaa tji-ki mii ngii
   feel-PART is ask-PART-PERF father his men two

   daljaa ti-ni aaraak pung kang-tang phe-mar
   help take- wine jar full-and flour-butter mixture

   khur-ni pum tji-ki khangbaa djwi // 4. gomaalaa
   carry- girl her house go first

   pujyung tjang pum tji-ki lor-tjaa djiku mi-djuku
   boy and girl their age- equal NEG-equal

   lhe-wi / per-mi ting-me tjang khyaawa gerpu osi
   are- wo-man small and husband big if

   gye -kutju-laas pum tji-ki papaa tjang mamaa
   marriage-to girl her father and mother

   me-ngen-diwi // 5. lor-tjaa dik-si-maa pum
   NEG-accept- age same-PART-PERF daughter

   ter-kiwi // 6. syer-wi tji pum win-si-maa
   give- Sherpa-P that daughter offer-PART-PERF

   dam-jyaang tjang pejyaang si-ru giwi // 7. dam-jyaang
   engagement call " dam-jyaang"
Si-ru-tji  gomaalaa  du  ke-lu-laa  diwi  //
call.  -that  first  grain  bring-  go

8. pyaa-jang  syok  saa-si-maa  mii  khaal-nga  tuk
   marriage  to  come  ask-PART-PERF  men  score-five  six

ti-ni  jantji  djokaarang  diwi  /  tji  belaang  aaraak
   take  guests  same  go  that  time  wine

khur-ni  do  go-kiwi  //  9.  gye  kutju  belaa  lamaa
   carry  go  OBL  marriage  time  lama

mak-pi  pati  sur  ti-ni  diwi  //  10.  lamaa  tji-ki
   bridegroom  side  of  take  go  lama  his

kholu  khur-kiwi  janti  dop  belaa  makpi
   sacred  clothes  carry  guest  go  time  bridegroom

khalaak  tjuwaa  gari  ti-ni  diwi  tji  belaa  majyaa
   relative  they  all  take  go  that  time  clothing

lemu-lemu  kon-giwi  /  11.  dop  belaa  gari-ki  sindjur
   nice-nice  put  on-  go  time  all-  red-powder

ku-kiwi  cilaa  sisi  mak-pi  pati  sur  janti  wou
   put  on-  because  bridegroom-P  side  of  guest  came

mii  yin  si-ru  hak-ou  lagi  //  12.  buksyaal  tji
   men  are  call-  knowing  for  cymbal  that

mu-djung-giwi  /  geling  tji-rang  puuh-kiwi  //  13.  na-mi
   NEG-use-  flute  only  blow-  bride-P

khangba  lep-u  si-ru  belaa  mewaak  kasse  ge-kuwi  //
   house  come  call  time  gun  much  use

14.  na-mi  khang-bi  patti  tjuwaa  sur-jyaang  aaraak
    bride-P  house-P  side  they  incense  wine

jyong-ni  lamaa  la  cye  ti-kiwi  /  sur-jyaang
   put-  lama  to  worship  give-  incense-

sin-si-ma  makpaa  cye  djen-du-laa  nanglaa
   finish-PART-PERF  groom  worship  see-  at  inside

ti-ni  diwi  //  15.  mak-pa  tjowa  kho-wu  aaraak
   take-  go  bridegroom-NOM  side  take-  wine

gari  nami  papaa  aamaa  la  tjer-kiwi  nami  khalaak
   all  bride  father  mother  to  give-  bride  relative

gari  nami  khangbaa  giwi  //  16.  nami  tjowa  sang
   all  bride  house  are  bride  side  also
kacyaa wo-si tsukatji patti tjhak nyimu changga
invitation came which side close relations

nok tiki patti diwi // 17. mak-pi patti sur
are her side are bridegroom-P side of

kacyaa wo-si jaantji ung-gu gomaalaa gol-ni jaantji
invitation came guest came before go- guest

mulaa giwi // 18. goka sama so sin-si-ma
together come might food eat finish-PART-PERF

lamaa tjuwa yiki lap-kiwi goka cyuje sum ji-laa
lama their book read- might o'clock three four -or

gye-ku-kiwi / gye-ku-tju gomaalaa nami patti cyangga
marriage- marriage- before bride side relative

tjuwaa-laa gari la phe-mar cyo-kiwi gari la
they-at all at flour-butter worship all at

phe-mar ma-long-si khatjaa jyo-kiwi // 19. yulki
flour-butter NEG-sufficient scarf put-
village

pemwulaa phe-mar kutjuk rang cyik
representative flour-butter separate PL one

jyo-kiwi // 20. gye ku-tju belaa na-maa tang
put- marriage time bride-NOM and

mak-paa la kel-mi cyik cyik go-kiwi mak-pi-ki
bridegroom-NOM to friend-P one one OBL- bridegroom- -on

na-maa-laa sindjur paalaa sum ku-kiwi /
bride-NOM- red powder times three put-on-

kho-rang sang paalaa sum ku-kiwi // 21. sindjur
himself and times three put on- red powder

ku-tju belaa mewaak kasse ge-ku-wi // 22. tja-maa buksyaal
put on- time gun much shoot- then cymbal

tang geling djung giwi // 23. mak-paa tji
and flute play are bridegroom-NOM this

na-mi patti khaalak tang na-mi tji mak-pi
bride-P side relative and bride-P this bridegroom-P

khaalak la lakpaa goo-la jong-ni cyak pul-giwi /
relative to hand head-on put- respect Fay

tju-wi belaa the-rang-bu si-wi na-mi patti tang
they-P time congratulations say bride-P side also
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mak-pi  patti  nyi-kar  lu  long-giwi  /  tji
bridegroom-P  side  two-together  song  sing-

that

goka  nam  tjok  long-giwi  //24.  topla  na-mi  khangba
night  whole  sing-

morning  bride-P  house

samaa  so  sin-si-maa  yulki  mii  ki  denla  ti
food  eat  finish-PART-PERF  villager  man  of  guest  take
diwi  //  25.  ter  tjho-ki  tu-wi-ki  ter-kiwi  ter

give  able  they  give-
give

mo-tjho-wi  ki  me-tjer-u  //  26.  gari-ki  samaa  sin-si-maa
NEG-able-

NEG-give-

all  food  finish-PART-PERF

na-mi  khangba  giwi  //  27.  na-maa  la  tjang-gu
bride-P  house  come  bride-NOM  to  send

belaa  lep-si-ma  na-maa  cha-ni  yanung  paalaa  cyik
time  go-PART-PERF  bride-NOM  dress- again  time  one
gye  ku-kiwi  //  28.  tja-maa  na-maa  mak-pi
marriage  mark  put-

then  bride-NOM  bridegroom-P

khangba  tji  tjang-gu-wi  //  29.  na-maa  mak-pi
house  that  send-

bride-NOM  bridegroom-P

khangba  dop  belaa  alaa  nyi-wi  /  mak-paa-laal  na-mi
house  go  time  much  cry  bridegroom-NOM-to  bride-P

khangbaa  sur  khatjaa  tja-ni  tjang-giwi/  na-maa  tje
house  on  scarf  put  send-

bride-NOM  that

kha-laal  ti-ni  tjong-giwi  //  30.  mak-pa  khangba
horse-on  take  send-

bridegroom-NOM  house

lep-si-maa  goka  yanung  /  gye  ku-ku-wi
reach-PART-PERF  night  again  marriage  mark  put-

tji  cyermu  na-maa  tjang  mak-pa-la  mu-la  ngilak
that  day  bride-NOM  and  groom-NOM  together  sleep

cyi-kiwi  //  31.  na-mi  mu-la  kelmi  ti-ni  diwi  //
give-

bride-P  together  friends  take-
go

32.  na  tji-la  kaki  sol-si  gye
two  days  after-

last  day  eat-PART  marriage

sin-si-maa  yulgi  cyang-ga-cyali  gari  ke  kiwi  //
finish-PART-PERF  villagers  relatives  all  go

33.  na-maa  tjang  mak-pa  laa  cyik  co  kora
bride-NOM  and  groom-NOM  month  one  Quan  honeymoon
1. If a Sherpa boy wants to marry, his father and mother must first find out whether his age is the same as that of the girl he wants to marry. 2. They then ask the girl whether or not she likes their son. 3. If the boy is liked, his father, with two men to help him, carries a jar full of wine and a flour-butter mixture to the girl's house. 4. The boy and girl must be of a similar age and the husband must be bigger than the wife, otherwise the father and mother of the girl will not accept the marriage proposal. 5. If the age is the same, the daughter is given. 6. When a daughter is offered for marriage, it is called _dam-jyaang_ in Sherpa. 7. When _dam-jyaang_ is called, grain is brought first. 8. The marriage having been arranged, five or six score of the same guests (as attended _dam-jyaang_) go, carrying wine. 9. During the wedding ceremony, the lama takes the side of the bridegroom. 10. At that time the lama wears his sacred clothes and the guests and bridegroom's relatives all put on their nice clothes. 11. All put on red powder, so that the guests will know who belong to the bridegroom's side. 12. Cymbals are not used; only the flute is blown.
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13. They are hailed with many gun shots when they arrive at the bride's house. 14. At the bride's house, they present wine and incense to the lama. When the worship is finished, the groom is allowed inside. 15. The bridegroom's side give wine to the bride's father and mother. All the bride's relatives are at the house. 16. The close relatives on the bride's side had also received an invitation. 17. Those of the bridegroom's side who had received an invitation now meet together with the other guests. 18. The actual marriage takes place about three or four o'clock in the afternoon, after the lama has read out the sacred writings. Before this, all the relatives on the bride's side offer their flour-butter mixture. This alone is not sufficient; they also have to give a scarf. 19. The village representatives present the flour-butter separately. 20. At the time of the marriage the friends congratulate the bride and groom one by one. The bridegroom puts red powder on the bride three times, and then on himself three times. 21. While the red powder is put on, there are many gun shots. 22. Then the cymbals and the flutes are played. 23. The bride and bridegroom pay respect to each other's relatives by putting their hands on their heads. That whole night is spent on congratulating both sides, and singing together. 24. In the morning, after food is eaten at the bride's house, the villagers are taken in as guests. 25. They give gifts according to their ability to give. 26. All eat at the bride's house. 27. When it is time for the bride to leave, she once again has the marriage mark (butter) applied to her. 28. Then, the bride is sent to the bridegroom's house. 29. When it is time for the bride to go to the bridegroom's house, she cries very much. The bridegroom puts a scarf on the bride, and sends her away on horseback. 30. Having reached the bridegroom's house, the marriage mark is again applied. That night the bride and groom sleep together. 31. The bride's friends go home together. 32. After two days, having eaten, and the marriage being completed, the relatives and villagers go home. 33. The bride and groom go on a honeymoon of one month. Afterwards they return wine and flour-butter to the girl's father's house. 34. After their honeymoon they again return to their parental homes to live there during the days. 35. Year by year, a jar full of wine and flour and butter is taken to the girl's house. 36. Until a baby is born, the bride and groom live separately during the day. Only after a baby is born will their parents give them property. 37. After property has been received from both sides, they will live on their own.

Key
NOM = Nominative  OBL = Obligatory
P = Possessive  PL = Plural
NEG = Negative  // = Primary break
PART = Participle  / = Secondary break
PERF = Perfect  Quan = Quantative