

Strategic Positioning and the Reproduction of Inequality

The case of the Johari Shauka of the Kumaon Himalaya, India

Andreas Benz

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Strategic Positioning and the Reproduction of Inequality.

The case of the Johari Shauka of the Kumaon Himalaya, India

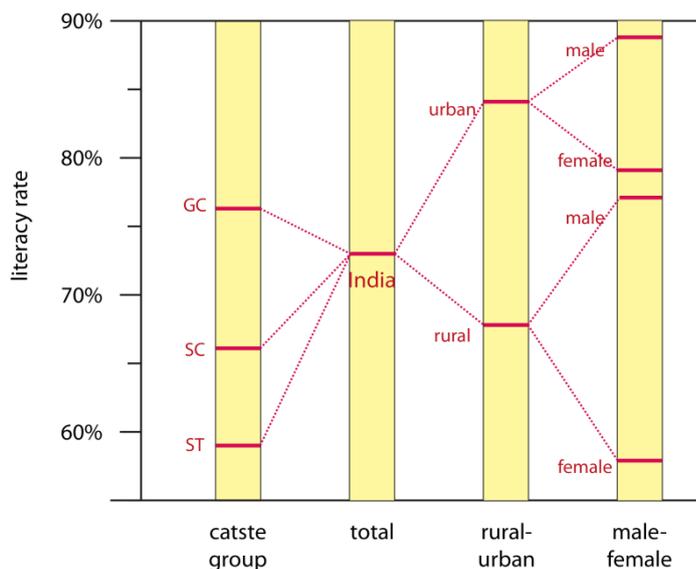
Andreas Benz

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|---|----|
| 1 | Introduction | 1 |
| 2 | Theoretical Framework | 3 |
| 3 | Introduction to The Case Study Site: Munsiri in the Gori Valley..... | 6 |
| 4 | The Deep Roots of Current Inequalities: Socio-Economic Stratification, Education and Strategic Positionality through the Ages..... | 11 |
| 4.1 | A life on the move – Mobile ‘Bhotia’ livelihoods in the 19th and early 20th century | 11 |
| 4.2 | The British period: Colonial politics, trans-Himalayan trade and the role of the Johari Shaukas..... | 13 |
| 4.3 | Development of trade during the British period: the rise of the Johari Shaukas in wealth, status and power and increasing social inequalities..... | 17 |
| 4.4 | Unequal access to education during the British period..... | 19 |
| 4.5 | Declining trade and shifting positionalities..... | 21 |
| 4.6 | Strategic positioning vis-à-vis the newly established Indian state | 23 |
| 4.7 | Educational expansion after 1967..... | 25 |
| 4.8 | Livelihood dynamics and social stratification in the Johar valley since the end of the trade economy in 1962..... | 26 |
| 5 | Current Socio-Economic Disparities in Johar | 31 |
| 6 | Conclusion | 40 |
| 7 | References..... | 43 |
| | Information on the competence network Crossroads Asia | 48 |
| | Publications in the Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series | 49 |

1 Introduction

The social structure in India is characterized by deep social and economic inequalities. More than 630 million people, i.e. more than half of India’s population, is living in multi-dimensional poverty (UNDP 2014a:180). More than one quarter of the population is classified as ‘destitute’ (Alkire et al. 2014:1), i.e. being among the poorest of the poor, while at the same time the gap to the rising Indian middle class is widening, not to speak of the profound divide distancing them from the Indian elite. Inequality and poverty in India can be attributed in part to India’s particular social texture characterized by caste structures. Despite a decline in the significance of caste hierarchies in many respects, caste still matters in India in the context of socio-economic inequalities, particularly in the fields of education, employment, income, well-being and status (Corbridge et al. 2013; Deliège 2011). Caste often “intersects in important ways with other axes of social difference [...] to privilege some and markedly disadvantage others” (Corbridge et al. 2013:257). For example, educational disparities in India are characterized by caste structures, and also other axes of inequality, e.g gender and locational divisions (Figure 1). Since unequal access to education has “knock-on effects” on other dimensions of inequality, e.g. the capacity to compete for secure and well-paid work (Corbridge et al. 2013:251; Jeffrey et al. 2005), education is a key determinant of future inequalities, and plays a central role in the reproduction of socio-economic status and inequality.



Caste groups: GC - General Caste (upper castes and Other Backward Classes), SC - Scheduled Castes, ST- Scheduled Tribes
 Data: Census of India 2011 (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/>; retrieved: 27.05.2014)
 Design: Benz 2014

Figure 1: Educational disparities in India

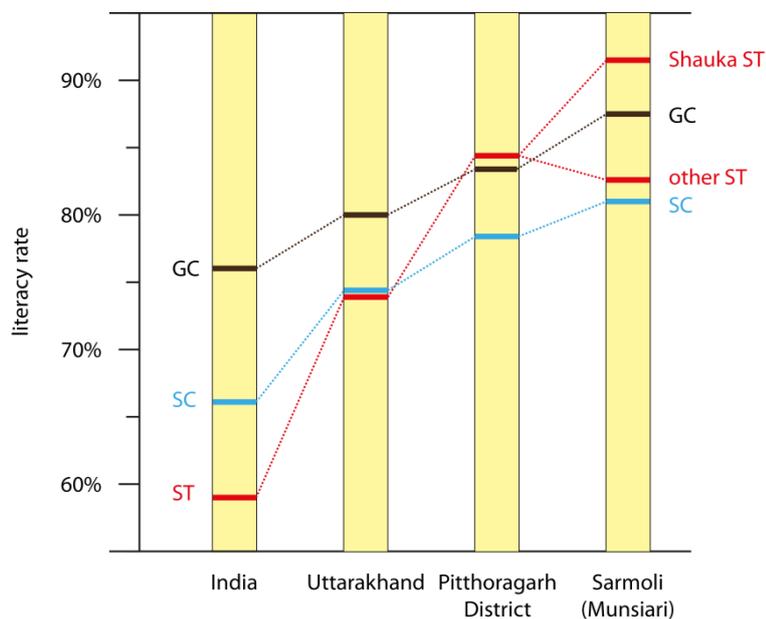
Particularly the Scheduled Castes (SC)¹ suffer from various forms of discrimination and deprivation, including limited opportunities for education (Chauhan 2008; Jeffrey et al. 2004; Ramachandran

¹ The categories of ‘Scheduled Castes’, ‘Scheduled Tribes’ and ‘Other Backward Classes’ are used by the Indian affirmative action policy, under which people and groups of people officially recognized as falling under one of

2004; Shah et al. 2006). This is reflected, e.g., in a much lower literacy rate among the SC population than among higher caste groups (Figure 1). The Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations in general figure even lower than the SC population with regard to the literacy rate.

The Himalayan state of Uttarakhand, consisting of the Kumaon and Garhwal regions, is often said to be an area in which socio-economic differences, social fragmentations and caste hierarchies are much less pronounced than in most parts of India. In popular imagination, building on colonial stereotypes of the people of Uttarakhand being “backward”, genial and egalitarian” (Dyson 2014:34), the high Himalayas are not characterised by caste and class differences. Several scholars have contributed to the argument that “class, caste and gender discrimination is much less marked in Uttarakhand than in [the] plains [of] north India” (Dyson 2014:34); such scholars include Berreman (1963), Guha (1989) and Jayal (2001). Putting an emphasis on this alleged caste-class egalitarianism is also part of the narratives in many accounts of the Chipko movement (Guha 1989; Rangan 2001). Here, often a “myth of the community” (Rangan 2001:11) is constructed, in which village societies are portrayed as unified, homogeneous and harmonious units.

Such rather romanticizing and idealizing accounts have been rejected and revealed as popular myth by a number of scholars, who point in their studies to the existence of pronounced socio-economic and caste-related inequalities in the contemporary society of Uttarakhand (Dyson 2008, 2010, 2014; Klenk 2003; Kumar 2001; Liedtke 2011:94-97; Polit 2005, 2006). This can be seen, for example, with respect to education, where disparities exist along the same axes as in India in general, among them caste lines (Figure 2).



Caste groups: GC - General Caste (upper castes and OBCs), SC - Scheduled Castes, ST- Scheduled Tribes
 Data: Census of India 2011 (<http://www.censusindia.gov.in/2011census/>; retrieved: 27.05.2014)
 and Village Survey in Sarmoli, Benz 2012;
 Design: Benz 2014

Figure 2: Educational disparities between caste groups

The pattern of educational inequality does differ in Uttarakhand in one important regard, however: the gap between the ST and SC groups apparent in India as a whole barely exists. For some of the

these categories enjoy certain privileges, e.g. in the context of the quota reservation system in government sector employment and public universities.

northern districts of Kumaon the pattern differs even more. In these areas, various groups of the so-called 'Bhotias', who are officially recognized as Scheduled Tribe, form a strong minority. In the Pithoragarh district of Kumaon, for example, this ST group has the lead in terms of education compared to all other groups. At smaller scales, a particular sub-group of these 'Bhotias', the Johari Shaukas, excels even more, exemplified here by data from the Sarmoli village in the Gori valley (Figure 2).

These figures show that marked inequalities do exist in Kumaon, but that they exist in a rare and unusual form compared to other parts of India. The pattern of social stratification in Indian society as a whole is virtually turned upside down here, at least as far as the relationship between SC and ST groups is concerned.

In this paper, I will investigate the exceptional pattern of inequality existing in the Gori valley in the Kumaon Himalaya of Uttarakhand, taking as an example the village of Sarmoli in the Munsiri settlement. The following research questions will guide the investigation:

- How did the currently prevailing patterns of socio-economic inequalities in the Gori valley come into existence? Along which particular historical trajectory did they evolve?
- What factors have decisively shaped the patterns of inequality in the Gori valley and how have they been reproduced and modified over time?
- What types of strategies were applied by the different actor groups to reproduce, sustain and improve their own positionality and/ or to keep competing and/or dominated groups in their positionality?

2 Theoretical Framework

This paper is concerned with socio-economic inequalities and their (re-)production, empirically inquired for the particular case of the upper Gori valley in the Kumaon Himalaya of India. The strand of so-called reproduction theories of critical sociology offers a well-established theoretical basis and starting point for such an analysis of inequalities and their development over time². These theories consider current socio-economic positions and inequalities as largely dependent on preceding, former inequalities. They interpret the current status quo of disparities as being the most recent stage of a path-dependent trajectory, along which inequalities have developed and been (re-)produced over time. Multi-dimensional approaches of reproduction theories go beyond a reductionist understanding of inequalities merely related to the economic and materialist sphere, and account for multiple dimensions of inequalities, e.g., in the social, cultural and political sphere. Bourdieu, for example, in his theory of practice, considers inequalities in different social fields, in which social positions are defined by the volume and structure of a person's capital and in relation to other positions in the same field (Bourdieu 1977). The value attributed to different types of capital varies from field to field. Positions in these relational social spaces and the implied social inequalities are reproduced over time through the transferability of different types of capital, such as economic capital, social capital and cultural capital. In this context, Bourdieu particularly stresses the role of education (as part of cultural capital) for social status reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Embodied cultural capital, transmitted in the context of the family and in socially segmented school

2 For an overview of theories of social reproduction, see Benz (2014a:27-31).

systems, as well as objectified in form of educational credentials as legitimate cultural capital, is among the most effective forms of hereditary transmission of capital and thus receives “proportionally greater weight in the system of reproduction strategies” compared to other forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986:49). Cultural capital, certified by educational achievements, can, e.g., be transformed into economic capital and social capital, since it is a necessary condition for attaining qualified jobs and for accessing upper class social networks. Education is a crucial means for social reproduction and maintaining a certain position. Any analysis of social reproduction and inequalities therefore needs to pay particular attention to the role of education.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice provides a relational understanding of inequalities by describing subject positions in social fields in relation to other positions. More recent approaches to inequality research stress the role of different spatial dimensions (Leitner et al. 2008) and of spatial mobility for explaining the (re-)production of social inequalities (Manderscheid 2009).

Sheppard’s concept of socio-spatial positionality extends the relational social fields of positions by adding a spatial (geographical) dimension to it and by stressing the co-implications between social and geographical situatedness (Leitner et al. 2008:158). The term positionality introduces an additional trope to describe how different entities are positioned to one another by paying attention to both, their geographical and social situatedness (Manderscheid 2009:13). Sheppard builds his concept on the notion of ‘positionality’ as developed in feminist theories and feminist strands of inequality research, which is used to describe multiple and intersecting social situatedness, i.e. situated positions of subjects along the lines of gender, ethnicity, class, sexuality, religion and other axes of social difference (Leitner et al. 2008:163; Nagar and Geiger 2007:267). Sheppard emphasizes a number of aspects, which he has adopted from feminist theories along with the notion ‘positionality’, and which he considers essential to his conceptualization of the term:

“First, positionality is a relational construct; the conditions of possibility for an agent depend on her or his position with respect to others - as in network theory. Second, positionality involves power relations, both in the sense that some positions tend to be more influential than others and in the sense that emphasizing the situated nature of all knowledge challenges the power of those who claim objectivity. Third, positionality is continually enacted in ways that both reproduce and challenge its preexisting configurations. That is, it is both persistent, in that most enactments reproduce previous configurations, and subject to unexpected change, because each repetition is imperfect.”
(Sheppard, 2002: 318)

Particularly the last point emphasized by Sheppard leads us back to the issue of inequalities and shows how deeply socio-spatial positionality is linked to the question of social reproduction. Unequal power relations are part and parcel of positionality, and power asymmetries are deeply embedded in the connections and interactions of differently positioned subjects (Leitner et al. 2008:163; Sheppard 2002:319). Socio-spatial positioning always entails “processes of border-drawings and inclusion and exclusion, as well as [...] the production of socially significant differences” (Manderscheid 2009:20). Thus, positionality is simultaneously about difference, inequality and domination (Leitner et al. 2008:163). The multiple positionalities of actors in different social spaces (e.g. the economic space, the political space, the educational space) do not exist independently but are closely linked with each other, thus often re-articulating the same social inequalities in different social spaces (Manderscheid 2009:15). Similarly, the positionalities in social space co-implicate with positionalities in geographical space. For example, the capacity to be mobile, also termed as mobility capital or “motility”

(Kaufmann 2002; Kaufmann et al. 2004; Kesselring 2006), is unequally distributed corresponding to unequal socio-spatial positionality. Those actors occupying a powerful positionality at the upper levels of social stratification command a high “spatial autonomy”, allowing them to become mobile themselves or to dictate the movement of information, goods and other people; opposite these actors are those in positionalities “characterized by sparse resources and very little mobility capacity” (Manderscheid 2009:18). The “access to the spatialities of resources, activities and goods” as well as the capacity to build and sustain social networks across geographical space largely rest and depend on mobilities (Manderscheid 2009:7). Therefore, stratified (i.e., unequally distributed) mobility capital itself functions as “a stratifying force, through which unequal life chances are being continuously reproduced” (Manderscheid 2009:7). Consequently, a particular focus on mobility should be included in any analysis of social inequality and social reproduction.

Positionality is not fixed, but is “re-enacted on a daily basis, in ways that simultaneously reproduce and challenge positionalities” (Leitner et al. 2008:163). Social reproduction therefore can be read as the reproduction of positionalities and vice versa. Socio-spatial positions and the mechanisms of their reproduction are subject to ongoing social struggles (Manderscheid 2009:20). Nevertheless, established positionalities often tend to show a “remarkable persistence and path-dependency” (Sheppard 2002:319), i.e. they cannot be changed arbitrarily and contain a strong element of reproduction.

While it is certainly true that actors are in many respects ‘positioned’ by external forces, positioning can also be a deliberate and strategic act of self-(re-)presentation. This is particularly true in the field of cultural identity, i.e. regarding the way in which a group or an individual positions itself in relation to the surrounding world. Cultural identity, understood in a non-essentialist way, is nothing eternally fixed or objectively rooted in a historical past and inherited traits, but is rather subject to an ongoing production and reproduction, “which is never complete, always in process” (Hall 1990:222) and undergoes constant transformation. Identities and their representation are always contingent and in play; they are renegotiated and vary depending on place and time and in relation to particular questions (Hall 1990:228). Therefore, identity is as much a process of “becoming” as of “being” (Hall 1990:225), a “cultural play” (Hall 1990:228) in which changing combinations of different and often contradictory elements allow for a multiplicity of meanings, connections, and representations, i.e. articulations of identity. Hall considers any fixation of boundaries and meaning of (cultural) identity (i.e., the “temporary break” or “cut of identity” (Hall 1990:230) in a particular moment, situation, place and context) an act of deliberate re-positioning, which creates new positionalities (Hall 1990:228, 237). The way in which these identities are articulated, i.e. the way in which specific discursive or ideological elements are adopted and appropriated by a group of actors, also repositions this group in the political arena as “new political subjects” (Hall 1996:143) and gives them a new language and position from which to assert their interests. Thus any articulation of identity is intrinsically political. Hall considers the fixation of identity as an act of strategic positioning, and uses the notions of “politics of identity” and “politics of position” in this context (Hall 1990:225, 230).

The deliberate (re-)articulation of identity can be strategically used by (a group of) actors in order to achieve political ends, i.e. to secure their interests and secure or improve their positionality. This was shown, for example, by Murray Li (2000) for indigenous groups in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, where the appropriation of a ‘tribal’ identity was used by these groups as a strategic tool in times of conflict to unify (possibly heterogeneous people in) a group, to draw boundaries to the outside, to politically articulate their interests and to obtain access to certain resources and benefits earmarked for ‘tribals’ and ‘tribal development’ by the state and NGOs. Murray Li argues that “there is a tactical

element in the cut of positioning which may become explicit at times of heightened politicization and mobilization” (Murray Li 2000:153). This strategic cut, seen as the “contingent product of agency and cultural and political work of articulation” (Murray Li 2000:151) became manifest when “group boundaries were rendered explicit and differences entrenched” (Murray Li 2000:169) in the context of competition for resources to secure access for one’s own group and exclude members of other groups. For example, some groups strategically re-articulated their identity as “environmentally friendly tribes” in order to gain access to external resources and political support from environmental and human rights NGOs (Murray Li 2000:173). Drawing on Hall (Hall 1995:8), Murray Li reminds us that the scope for re-articulating identities and thus re-positionings are “limited and pre-figured by the fields of power or ‘places of recognition’ which others provide” (Murray Li 2000:152). If a re-articulation of identity is rejected and ignored by others, it remains politically and socially ineffective. These places of recognition are at play, for example, in the context of government programmes which define certain categories of population as the eligible beneficiaries of targeted programmes, e.g. in the context of affirmative action policy or ‘tribal development’. Matching the official categories with actual living people on the ground is always “a matter of interpretation and negotiation” (Murray Li 2000:154) and involves a range of actors (e.g. state authorities, potential beneficiaries, third parties) struggling for or against being matched or matching others. Strategic re-articulation of identity always addresses others. Decisive for the recognition of the re-positioning is the capacity of the group to present their identity in forms acceptable, intelligible and accessible to an audience (Murray Li 2000:152, 169). Otherwise such re-articulations “fail to forge connections to wider circuits of meaning” and to “broader social forces” in order to gain recognition and build alliances (Murray Li 2000:172).

The analysis of socio-economic inequalities undertaken in the remainder of this paper will combine the theoretical elements, concepts and ideas outlined in this section in order to apply a multi-dimensional and relational perspective on inequalities. I will emphasize the socio-spatial positionalities of the actors concerned and the historical dimension thereof, i.e., the path-dependency of reproduction and its specific development trajectories. Since they play a key role in the reproduction of socio-economic inequalities, special attention will be dedicated to the role of (access to) spatial mobility and migration as well as to education strategies. The Johari Shaukas of the upper Gori valley in the Kumaon Himalayas can be understood as using flexible strategic positioning and deliberate re-articulations of identity and self-representations in changing socio-economic and geo-political contexts; these actions, in turn, have provided the basis for changing strategic alliances that secure access to resources, enabling the Johari Shaukas to reproduce a privileged socio-economic status in the valley’s society over the last two centuries.

3 Introduction to The Case Study Site: Munsiri in the Gori Valley

The settlement of Munsiri is located in the Gori valley (whose upper part is locally called Johar)³ of the Kumaon Himalaya in the transition zone between the hill area of the Lesser Himalaya (*himanchal*) and the High Himalaya (*himadri*) (Figure 3). Munsiri, a former winter settlement and trade depot, is

³ In this paper, I will use the term ‘Gori valley’ with reference to the valley in general, and ‘Johar valley’ or ‘Johar’ with particular reference to its upper section beyond the village of Madkot (located about 4km downstream from Munsiri).

a settlement cluster consisting of 15 villages stretched out and scattered across a mountain slope in altitudes between 1,400 and 2,400 masl. During the 20th century, Munsiri developed into the most populous settlement of the Johar valley and into its economic, educational and administrative centre.



Figure 3: Map of the Kumaon Region

With its diversified wholesale and retail stores, financial institutions, service providers and workshops in the bazaar area, it forms the main market centre of the valley. Munsiri is the seat of the administrative headquarters of the Munsiri Block, a subdivision of the Pithoragarh District with a population of about 46,500 inhabitants (Census of India 2011). Even before Pithoragarh was carved out as a separate district from the Almora District in 1960, a block development office was established in Munsiri in 1956 (Prasad 1989:144). About 21.5% of the population of Munsiri Block are listed under the official Scheduled Caste (SC) category, and 15.0% under Scheduled Tribe (ST). The population shares of both categories are above the Uttarakhand average (18.8% SC and 2.9% ST population) and the Indian average (16.6% SC and 8.6% ST population) (Census of India 2011). The remainder of the population in the Gori valley is made up by high-case Paharis⁴, the so-called Khasias⁵

⁴ 'Pahari' literally means "from the mountains" and is widely used as a general designation for the hill population of the Central Himalayas (Berreman 1963:14-15; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012) and used by the hill

Brahmins and Khasia Rajputs, as well as immigrant Brahmins and Rajputs from the Indian plains. People belonging to lower caste groups—officially listed under the ‘Other Backward Classes’ (OBC) category—only form a small minority. This is in line with the general population structure in Uttarakhand where Brahmin and Rajput *jatis* (castes) constitute more than 70% of the population (Mawdsley 1998:42; Polit 2006), while the OBC groups form only about 2% of the population (Dyson 2008:165; Mamgain 2004), which is much less than the Indian average of about 32% to 36% (Pazich and Teranishi 2014:59).

The Scheduled Tribes population in the northern parts of Uttarakhand belongs to the so-called ‘Bhotia’⁶, a quite heterogeneous ethno-linguistic group speaking (for parts at least in former generations) Tibeto-Burman languages and inhabiting a number of transversal valleys cutting into the main ridge of the Central Himalayas. The different ‘Bhotia’ groups of Uttarakhand were formerly engaged in trans-Himalaya trade across the high-altitude passes at the head of their respective valleys, which allowed seasonal access to the Tibetan Highland. The ‘Bhotias’ of Uttarakhand form a socio-culturally heterogeneous group which splits up into different communities along the valleys they inhabit. In Garhwal, these groups are the Jadh from the Jadh valley of the Uttarkashi District, and the Tolcha and Marcha in the Mana and Niti valleys of Chamoli District; the ‘Bhotias’ of Kumaon are called Shauka, and further differentiate into the Johari Shaukas of the Gori valley and the Rang Shaukas in the Darma, Byans and Chaundas valleys (Bergmann et al. 2008:11; Brown 1984; Chatterjee 1976:7-9; Nautiyal et al. 2003; Prasad 1989:29). In contrast to the Tibeto-Burman speaking (‘Bhotia’) groups in Nepal, who are Buddhists, the ‘Bhotias’ of Uttarakhand are Hindus (Brown 1992:164). The process of ‘Hinduization’ and ‘cultural approximation’ is most advanced in the case of the Johari Shaukas, who – as the only ‘Bhotia’ group of Uttarakhand to do so – have even given up their former Tibeto-Burman language and have adopted the Indo-Aryan Kumaoni hill dialect

people to refer to themselves (Krengel 1997:171). Pahari is also used as a general language term for Kumaoni and Garhwali, the two Indo-Aryan hill dialects of Uttarakhand (Berreman 1963:15).

⁵ ‘Khasia’, ‘Khasiya’ or ‘Khasa’ is the name of an Aryan tribe mentioned in the Sanskrit literature (Mahabharata and Puranas) which is said to have penetrated into the Central Himalayas in ancient times (Berreman 1963:15-16; Chandola 1987:18-21; Edye 1994 [1923]; Joshi 1994). The term is used to designate the upper caste Pahari population of the Central Himalayas, i.e. Rajput and Brahmins, and to distinguish them from more recently immigrated Rajput and Brahmin groups from the Indian plains (Brown 1984:43; Srivastava 1966:187-195). Though, after centuries of close connections and inter-marriages with the immigrated population from the plains, a clear distinction between Khasia and immigrants can hardly be maintained in Uttarakhand: “The line of division between the Khasiyas and the immigrants from the plains is daily becoming fainter, and has practically reached the point of disappearance” (Chandola 1987:21).

⁶ ‘Bhotia’ is a generic term derived from ‘bhot’, an old Sanskrit word which means ‘north’ (Chatterjee 1976:4; Hoon 1996:66). In the Sanskrit literature of India, ‘bhot’ has served as appellation for the Tibet region since medieval times (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:64). In the Central Himalayas, it was applied by the Pahari hill population for the northern fringe of the Lesser Himalayas and the valleys stretching into the High Himalayas, inhabited by Tibetan-Burmese speaking trans-Himalayan traders (Chatterjee 1976:4). The British popularized the term ‘Bhotia’ and applied it to a great variety of mostly Buddhist groups involved in the trans-Himalayan trade and inhabiting the alpine valleys along the Himalayan arc from Ladakh to Assam, in order to distinguish them from the Pahari population in the Lesser Himalayas and the residents of the Tibetan Plateau (Bergmann et al. 2008:210; Brown 1992:159-160; Mandelbaum 1970:611). Since British times, the term ‘Bhotia’ has widely been used as group designation in administrative documents, political discourse and in the scientific literature, even though it is a rather rough category and lumps together very heterogeneous groups who often feel they do not have much in common. Particularly for the Hindu ‘Bhotias’ of Uttarakhand, the term has a derogatory connotation, due to its popular association with ‘impure’ non-Hindu practices such as eating beef (Brown 1984:27-28; 1992:158-159; Mandelbaum 1970:611-612; Polit 2006:27). Thus, the Kumaoni ‘Bhotias’ prefer to be known by their indigenous names such as ‘Shauka’ and ‘Rang’ (Dangwal 2009:98; Hoon 1996:66).

(Hoon 1996:73; Sharma 2009:186; Srivastava 1966:177). Also in terms of religious practice, ceremonies and rules, the Johari Shaukas, who themselves claim Rajput origin and ritual status, have very successfully and far more than the other 'Bhotia' groups of Uttarakhand adopted the religious conduct of the immigrant Rajput Hindus in Kumaon (Mandelbaum 1970:611; Srivastava 1966:195-211).

The Gori valley has a high geo-strategic importance owing to its function as a natural pathway from the Indian plains to Tibet. Similarly to other high mountain passes in altitudes of up to 5,600 masl in the neighbouring valleys, the Unta Dhura pass (5,377 masl) at the valley head of the Gori valley provides from June to October seasonal access to the Tibetan Plateau. These valleys have for centuries been important sections of trade routes connecting the Indian subcontinent with Tibet and Central Asia (Zurick and Pacheco 2006:94). The direct trade and transport across the high passes was operated by different 'Bhotia' groups, who for a number of reasons were able to maintain a monopoly in this trade⁷, from which they could accumulate substantial wealth (Brown 1984:112-113; Gerwin and Nüsser 2008:112; Majumdar 2005 [1949]:14-15). In the Gori valley these traders were the Johari Shaukas, who further distinguish and identify with a number of exogamous clans (lineage groups). These clans are closely associated with one of the 13 main summer settlements in the higher section of the valley (locally called Malla Johar), where the Johari Shauka formerly used to settle seasonally in the context of transhumance animal husbandry and trade-related mobility patterns (Prasad 1989:82-83, 98). The Johari Shaukas formed the population majority in the upper Gori valley until about the mid-20th century. Due to strong out-migration and de-population of the former summer settlements in the upper valley section, particularly since the end of trans-Himalayan trade in 1962, and due to increasing immigration of Paharis into the valley, the Johari Shaukas have been reduced to a minority (cf. Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Nüsser 2006:18) with a population share of less than 10%⁸. Despite this, they are said to still form the most prosperous, wealthy, influential and powerful group of the Gori valley (Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Bergmann et al. 2011:117; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100; Liedtke 2011:69, 94-97).

In April and May 2012, I spent 5 weeks conducting field research in Mungsiari, with a particular focus on the village Sarmoli (composed of the hamlets Sarmoli, Nanasem and Shanka Dhura) in the upper section of Mungsiari, located near the main road at a road distance of about 1.5 km north of the market centre. During the 20th century, more and more Johari Shauka families abandoned trans-Himalayan trade, transhumant animal husbandry and the related seasonal mobility, and settled permanently in their former winter settlements, such as Mungsiari. Most people who have settled in

⁷ The trade monopoly of the 'Bhotia' was secured by a number of factors (Brown 1984:108-109; 1992:156-157; 1994:240-246): a) their ability to speak the Tibetan dialect (which the Pahari traders were lacking), b) long-lasting institutionalized and exclusive relations to particular Tibetan trade partners (the so-called *mitra* system) preventing any possibility of competition, and thus once termed "individual monopolies" by Traill (1992 [1851]:132); c) their payment of dues to get access to certain marts in Tibet and exclusive trade rights for particular commodities; d) having the means of carriage (mostly goats) necessary for trade between India and Tibet at their exclusive disposal, e) the refraining of caste Hindus from sharing food with Tibetans, which for them was a precondition for trade relations (cf. Srivastava 1966:180-181); f) legal restrictions preventing the Tibetans from entering Kumaon and 'non-Bhotia' Indians from entering Tibet; Tibetans traders were not allowed to have commercial relations with traders from cis-Himalaya other than 'Bhotias'.

⁸ According to the latest Census (2011), the 'Bhotia' share (i.e., the ST share) in the Mungsiari Block is 15%. The 'Bhotia' category comprises both Johari Shauka and non-Shauka 'Bhotia' groups, for which a further split-up of the data is not available. Local informants estimated that the Johari Shaukas form about 60% of the ST population in the Mungsiari Block.

Sarmoli are from Johari Shauka clans that were once associated with the following summer settlements: Milam (the respective clan names are Rawat, Pangtey, Dhamsatu and Nikhurpa), Tola (the respective clan name is Tolia), Martoli (clan name Martolia) and Sumdu (clan name Sumtial) (cf. Brown 1984:73; Hoon 1996:222; Prasad 1989:82-83). According to the latest Census data (Census of India 2011), Sarmoli is comprised of 260 households with 1,027 inhabitants. The 'Bhotia' ST group forms with a share of 61.6% the most populous group in Sarmoli, followed by 31.3% 'upper-caste' Paharis and 7.1% belonging to Scheduled Castes. According to an unpublished village census survey conducted by the local women's group *Maati Sanghatan* in 2010, the 'Bhotia' ST group divides into 57% Johari Shaukas and 43% non-Shauka 'Bhotias'.

The analysis of current livelihoods and structures of inequality presented in this paper is mostly based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with household members, narrative interviews and informal discussions with local experts (NGO workers, government employees, school teachers and headmasters, shopkeepers and entrepreneurs, and local scholars), as well as on a standardized household survey. The survey was conducted in April 2012 in Sarmoli, Nanasem and Shanka Dhura with the help of local field assistants, covering a total of 100 households and 494 household members (i.e., 48% of the village population). The sample households were selected with the help of local NGOs, who have worked in the village for many years, with the aim of achieving a stratified sample, in which all above mentioned population groups are represented according to their respective population share⁹. The historical sections in this paper are based on an extensive review of secondary sources.

Throughout this paper I will apply the above introduced social group categories based on the official caste group classification. In particular, I will refer to the following four social groups: 1) 'Johari Shauka ST', 2) 'Non-Shauka ST' (which in the Gori valley is formed by the non-Shauka 'Bhotia' ST group), 3) Scheduled Caste (SC), and 4) 'General Caste' comprising of the Rajput and Brahmin upper caste Pahari and immigrant populations. The usage of this group classification is justified less by the official ascriptive categorization by the Indian state, but much more by the emic conception and use of these group categories in local contexts. They form central emic reference points for people's identities as well as for the identification of the 'other', and they have an important structuring and normative function for social relations and interactions. This can be seen, for example, with respect to marriage patterns, where the social norm strongly discourages intermarriages between members of these four groups, and prescribes endogamy within these groups or respective sub-groups (e.g. in case of Rajput and Brahmins) (cf. Prasad 1989:137-138). Consequently, only very few individual cases of intermarriages between these groups could be found in the sample, while 97% of the marriages followed the endogamous norm (Figure 4).

⁹ The sample of 100 household comprises 33 Shauka ST households, 23 Non-Shauka ST households, 30 General Caste households (28 Rajput and 2 Brahmin), and 13 Scheduled Caste households.

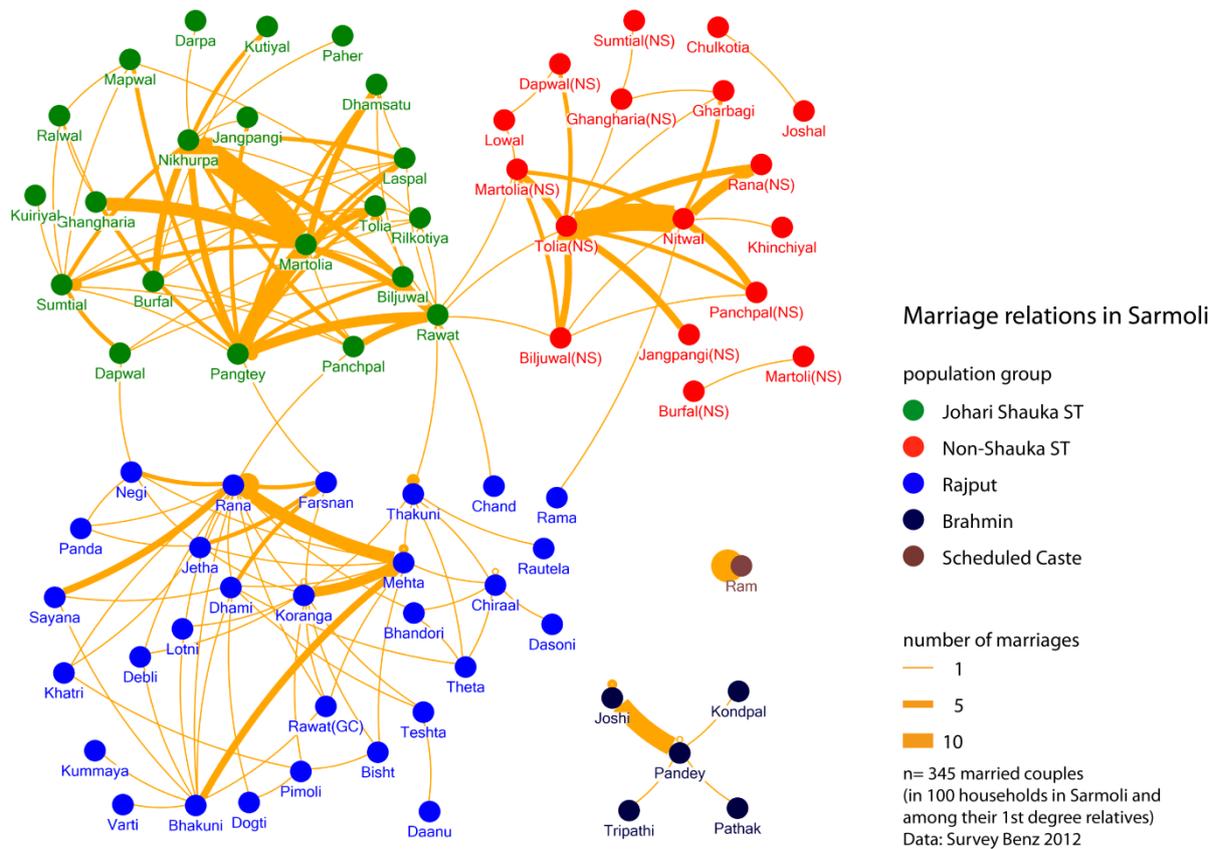


Figure 4: Marriage relations between different clans in Sarmoli

4 The Deep Roots of Current Inequalities: Socio-Economic Stratification, Education and Strategic Positionality through the Ages

4.1 A life on the move – Mobile ‘Bhotia’ livelihoods in the 19th and early 20th century

For the early periods before the onset of British rule in Kumaon in 1815, only very few records are found which could shed some light on the social and economic history of the ‘Bhotia’ people of Kumaon and the transversal valleys they are associated with (Srivastava 1966:204). Probably the earliest mention of ‘Bhotia’ groups in Garhwal is found in the reports of the Portuguese Jesuit Francisco de Azevedo, who passed through the Mana valley on his way to Tibet in 1631, and described the inhabitants as “thriv[ing] on their sheep and on the salt and grain trade they carry on between the hills and the plains of cold Tibet” (Brown 1994:224). Also copper plate inscriptions and revenue records from the time of rule of the Chand dynasty in Kumaon (13th century to 1790) indicate that ‘Bhotia’ groups of the northern transversal Himalayan valleys of Kumaon were practicing a flourishing trans-Himalayan trade at least since the early 17th century (Brown and Joshi 1995). For the subsequent periods of Nepali Gorkha rule in Kumaon (1790-1815) and particularly for

the British period (1815-1947) detailed descriptions on the 'Bhotia' groups of Kumaon and their livelihoods are found in revenue records and administrative reports.

The livelihoods of the Kumaoni 'Bhotia' during the British period and after Indian independence until the border closure to Tibet in 1962, were mainly based on three pillars: trans-Himalayan trade, transhumance animal husbandry and mountain agriculture. Trade was the primary feature in this system, while the other two were subsidiary and auxiliary fields of activity in order to enable and maintain the system of trade relations (Brown 1984:42; 1994:219; Dangwal 2009:86; Negi 2007:115). The transhumant lifestyle of raising large flocks of sheep and goats directly corresponded with the needs and requirements of the trade system, where they were needed as pack animals for transporting commodities across the high passes (Hoon 1996:81). Part and parcel of these livelihoods was a high degree of mobility of the whole 'Bhotia' population along diversified and annually repeated patterns of seasonal migration. This mobility comprised of a) the shifts of the whole families between winter settlements (*gunshas*) in the hill zone and summer settlements (*mait*) in the alpine valley sections, the two types usually located 50-80km apart from each other; b) the seasonal movement of male traders between markets in the Himalayan foothills in winter and trade marts on the Tibetan Plateau in summer; and c) the movement of male shepherds along with their flocks of goats and sheep between the rich winter pastures in the *therai-bhabar* region and the high pastures (*bugyal*) in the upper Himalayan valleys during summer (cf. Brown 1984:42-57; Chatterjee 1976:9-10; Dangwal 2009:86-87). The 'Bhotia' groups practicing this livelihood system lacked any year-round permanent settlements and were living a life "on the move" between seasonal settlements (featuring permanent built structures) and mobile camps (using portable tents) (Dangwal 2009:87; Hoon 1996). The winter settlements of the Kumaoni 'Bhotias' are located in the northern parts of the *himanchal* region, in villages like Askot, Darchula, Didihat, Galanti, Gangoli, Kapkot, Munsiri, Niglopani, Sabla, Tejam, Thal, Sera, and many others (Brown 1984:52; Dangwal 2009:86; Hoon 1996:222). They served as family homes from October to early June and in addition were used as trade depots for commodities earmarked for sale in or purchased from some of the annual trade fairs (*mela*), e.g. in Bageshwar, Jauljibi, Tejam and Thal, or in permanent market places in the Kumaoni hills, such as Almora, Ranikhet and Joshimath. In the course of the 19th century Kumaoni 'Bhotias' increasingly also visited market towns in the *bhabar* region, e.g. Haldwani, Kashipur, Kotdwara, Pilibhit, Ramnagar and Tanakpur, and the richer traders went as far as Agra, Amritsar, Bombay (Mumbai), Calcutta, Delhi and Kanpur for trade (Brown 1984:46-54; Dangwal 2009:86; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:96-97; Pant 1935:52, 57; Smyth 2006 [1882]:162). Usually, the winter settlements were commonly used by 'Bhotia' families associated with a range of different summer settlements – sometimes even located in different valleys – and the dwellers of a particular summer settlement usually dispersed across a number of different winter settlements (Chatterjee 1976:10; Hoon 1996:222). Some families of the Johari 'Bhotias' even moved between three or four different seasonal settlements (Brown 1984:42; Chatterjee 1976:10). The summer settlements, located in the alpine upper sections of the transversal valleys in closer proximity to the high passes leading to Tibet, usually served as trade depot for Tibetan trade between April and October and as family residence between June and October (after which these valley sections are usually buried under a thick snow cover and are impassable until mid April) (Pant 1935:52). During their stay in the seasonal settlements, the 'Bhotias' and their servants (on which I will come back later in more detail) were practicing agriculture and horticulture (mostly buckwheat, barley, millet, pulses and a variety of herbs and vegetables, as well as wheat and rice in the winter settlements) and processing wool (which was mostly derived from trade with Tibet), the products of which were again traded on marts in the Kumaoni hills (woollen cloth, carpets) and to Tibet (food grain) (Atkinson 1886:374; Brown

1984:42-43; Dangwal 2009:86; Hoon 1996:81-82). While agriculture (if not done by servants) and wool processing was mostly a female domain, trade was exclusively a male affair. The majority of 'Bhotia' men and boys starting from an age of 13 or 14 years were constantly moving back and forth between the seasonal settlements (serving as trade depots) and seasonal market places, i.e., between the winter settlement and different annual trade fairs during the winter season and between the summer settlement and Tibetan trade marts during the summer season (Brown 1984:55; Smyth 2006 [1882]:161). For example from the upper Gori valley, during the short period between July and September, when the Unta Dhura pass was open and allowed access to Tibet, two trade cycles could be managed by a trade party, visiting temporal Tibetan marts in Gartok, Gyanima, Taklakot or Tholing (Dangwal 2009:86; Pant 1935:52, 56). Usually, large herds of about one hundred sheep and goats served as pack animals for carrying the commodities of such a trade party, only supplemented by few ponies, mules and *jibus* (yak-cow crossbreed hybrids) to carry heavier or bulky goods (Dangwal 2009:86; Pant 1935:52). While the pack animals spent only a few weeks before the start of the Tibetan trade season in the *bugyal*, the remainder of the flocks stayed there until September, supervised by hired herdsmen. The trans-Himalayan trade centred around the barter exchange of grain (barley, millet, rice) from the hills and the Indian plains with salt, wool and borax¹⁰ from Tibet. Located at the "interface between two main ecological and subsistence zones" (Brown 1994:218) – terraced hill agriculture in the *himachal* and *bhabar*, and extended but meagre grasslands on the Tibetan Plateau – the 'Bhotias' were provided a unique opportunity to trade in the two indispensable commodities, which abounded in one but were lacking in the other zone. The Kumaoni hills were lacking any natural salt deposits, while no grain could be cultivated in Central Tibet. Beyond this trade pivot, a whole range of other commodities were exchanged in that trade, which changed in response to shifting patterns of demand and supply. With the expansion of the industrialized colonial economy of British India the trade diversified and increasingly included industrial products traded for cash instead of barter (Asher et al. 2002:5; Brown 1984:114)¹¹.

4.2 *The British period: Colonial politics, trans-Himalayan trade and the role of the Johari Shaukas*

In the context of the British colonial expansion in South Asia, the British showed a keen interest in obtaining access to and control over trade with Central Asia, Tibet and China (Bergmann et al. 2008:213). Trade between Central Asia and India was of high importance in the early 19th century and included such highly valued products like borax, gold dust, wool and shawl wool (*pashmina*) (Brown 1992:151-152). For the British, control over this trade and securing its successful execution not only promised access to these wanted resources and related profits, but it was also "crucial for consolidating colonial development and forwarding their influence towards Central Asia" (Bergmann

¹⁰ Raw borax (*tincal* or *sohaga*) is a mineral found in the saline lakes of Central Tibet. It was an important item in trans-Himalayan trade even before the British advent in India, and was used by silversmiths to cleanse gold and silver. In colonial times it was primarily utilized by the British-colonial and European porcelain industries as a mordant in dyeing (Brown 1994:228; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:94).

¹¹ Further products traded to Tibet were sugar, cotton, cotton and woollen cloth, tea, brass, copper ware, spices, indigo, cutlery, looking glasses, spectacles, furniture, tents and many items more, which "could at times consist of any commodity marketable" (Brown 1984:113) and anecdotally even a disassembled Enfield motorcycle has been carried on pack-animals over the Unta Dhura pass to Tibet (Asher et al. 2002:5). In the opposite direction, commodities imported from Tibet further included gold dust, shawl wool (*pashmina*), sheep, goats, mules, ponies and horses, rugs, blankets, shawls, skins, yak trails (used in Hindu rituals), musk, drugs and parts of medicinal plants. (Brown 1984:47; 1992:152; 1994:219, 227-228, 231; Dangwal 2009:86; Pant 1935:52, 57; Smyth 2006 [1882]:161)

et al. 2012:96). Thus, a blend of economic and political considerations fostered British interests in the areas beyond the northern fringes of British-India. At least since the Gorkha invasion in Kumaon in 1790, the region had become part of British geo-strategic calculations. For the British, “the high mountain border region of Kumaon represented above all a gateway to the geopolitically and economically significant centres in Tibet and Central Asia” (Bergmann et al. 2011:111). Even before their coming into power in Kumaon, the British had signed several conventions aiming at opening Tibet up for trade (Brown 1992:150) and established direct contacts to trans-Himalayan traders in Kumaon (Brown 1994:229). The Gorkha rule in Kumaon interfered with commercial communications with Tibet by enforcing restrictive regulations and levying high taxes on trade, thus directly affecting vital British interests (Brown 1994:229). The re-establishment of commercial communications and securing British control over trade with Tibet was a major “*casus bellum*” and “the principal motive” for the British military intervention in Kumaon (Brown 1994:234). With the defeat of the Gorkha and the establishment of British colonial rule in Kumaon in 1815, the British got for the first time direct access to the border to Tibet. With this, the ‘Bhotia’ groups of Kumaon, holding the monopoly in trans-Himalayan trade in the area (Bergmann et al. 2008:214; Brown 1992:156-157; 1994:227; Srivastava 1966:180-181), became key figures in British economic, political and geo-strategic considerations. A number of features made the ‘Bhotia’ the ideal brokers for the British for establishing contacts and securing British interests in the Tibetan trade. The ‘Bhotia’ were the only group in Kumaon who spoke the Tibetan language and who constantly and smoothly moved in and out between the spheres of Tibetan Buddhist and Hindu cultural influence (Bergmann et al. 2008:214). Thanks to mongoloid features in their physical appearance they could travel inconspicuously through Tibetan territory (Bergmann et al. 2011:111; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:97). They disposed of long-lasting personal trade partnerships and extended social networks in Tibet, and they were the only group who disposed of the necessary means of transport (large flocks of goats and sheep) for the carrying trade over the high altitude passes (Brown 1992:156-157). Moreover, the ‘Bhotia’ “were the only people allowed by the Tibetan authorities [...] to enter their country for purposes of trade” (Smyth 2006 [1882]:161) and – based on the system of exclusive and enduring trade partnerships (*mitra*) – were the only ones the Tibetan traders were willing and legally allowed to trade with (Bergmann et al. 2008:214; Brown 1984:87-97, 108-109; Prasad 1989:57-58). Consequently, the ‘Bhotia’ were seen as crucial agents of high strategic importance for securing British participation in and control of trade with Tibet as well as for enforcing British geo-political interests in the fragile Himalayan border region and beyond (Brown 1994:227; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:96). The ‘Bhotia’ group of the Johari Shaukas was of particular interest for the British, since they were the only group who were not restricted by the Tibetan authorities to a particular trade mart, but were allowed to establish trade in any Tibetan mart they chose (Atkinson 1886; Brown 1994:243; Srivastava 1966:186). Thus, the Johari Shaukas were allowed to visit and to freely travel between several marts, sometimes acting as trade agents for other excluded ‘Bhotia’ groups (Bergmann et al. 2008:215). Even before the arrival of the British, the Johari Shaukas had negotiated these special rights with the rulers of Kumaon and Tibet, which allowed them to run a very prosperous trade. Thus, at the beginning of British rule in Kumaon, the Johari Shaukas (and among them particularly the Rawat and Pangtey clans of Milam) were already the most successful and well-to-do ‘Bhotia’ group in the area (Bergmann et al. 2008:215). The Rawat clan was also the most influential and powerful group in the Johar valley, and since generations was holding such important functions as the post of the village headman (*pradhan*) of the largest settlement, Milam, which “carried important privileges including the initiation of trade ceremonies that opened up trade with Tibet” (Brown and Joshi

1995:184). The counterpart and contact person of the official Tibetan representative (*sarji*) was always a Rawat of Milam (Bergmann et al. 2008:215).

The British encouraged the Johari Shaukas' willingness to cooperate with the British according to their interests by providing them a number of incentives and privileges. During most of the 19th century, the British colonial administration in Kumaon pursued a markedly pro-Shauka policy, under which particularly the Johari Shaukas could draw many benefits from the preferential treatment they enjoyed compared to other groups of the area. After the conquest of Kumaon, in order to win the 'Bhotias' loyalty and to facilitate trans-Himalayan trade, the new British administration started to reduce revenues, transit duties and taxes due to be paid by the Johari Shaukas and other 'Bhotia' groups to about one fifth of what they formerly had paid under the Gorkha rulers (Atkinson 1886:147-149; Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:96; Prasad 1989:43; Srivastava 1966:186). In addition, the 'Bhotia' villages were freed from the supply of indentured labour for public works projects, which was compulsory for all other settlement areas of Kumaon (Tolia 1990:10). Thus, after the onset of British rule, the 'Bhotia' economically fared much better in comparison to other groups in the area as well as in comparison to the preceding Gorkha regime (Bergmann et al. 2011:111).

Another means of the British to win the loyalty and cooperation of the Johari Shaukas was to provide selected members of this group with local administrative functions and positions, such as the revenue and tax collector and record keeper (*patwari*), and by this in turn securing British control over trade activities (Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Brown 1984:126; Prasad 1989:143). Particularly after the passing of direct control over Kumaon from the British East Indian Company to the British crown in 1858, the need for help and assistance by "local people, who carried out administrative tasks such as revenue collection and regular reporting of affairs to executive headquarters" rose (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:97). Through a policy of strategic appointments and patronage, the British "created a new type of leadership in Johar" (Srivastava 1966:204) by raising the fiscal and juridical power of selected groups, particularly of the Rawat and Pangtey clans from Milam (Bergmann et al. 2008:215). At the same time, the British recognized the local system of clan and village headmen and allowed the 'Bhotia' communities a large degree of self-governance in internal affairs (Prasad 1989:44, 98-99).

The Johari Shaukas readily accepted the offers made by the British policy of providing incentives, reduced taxes and local power positions for them and were ready to cooperate with the new British administration. Under the previous Gorkha regime, the 'Bhotia' communities were "subjected to heavy taxation and the irregular demand of officers" (Srivastava 1966:186) and suffered from harsh restrictions on their trade (Brown 1994:229). Particularly the Johari Shaukas, who strongly opposed the Gorkha and had violently resisted the conquest of their valley for nine years after submission of the rest of Kumaon, were "marked [...] out for peculiar exactions" (Traill 1992 [1851]:126). In light of the supportive and patronising British policy towards the 'Bhotia', many were convinced that they could benefit from the new rulers not only in economic terms but by securing protection for themselves, and thus were positively drawn towards the British and ready to cooperate (Srivastava 1966:186).

Their turn towards the British in the early 19th century can be seen as just one act of positioning in a larger, highly dynamic web of strategic positionality, which has been constantly adjusted to changing contexts. The Johari Shaukas' active positioning vis-à-vis the Gorkhas, the Tibetan traders and the Hindu caste society in the hills and the plains form further examples. The rejectionist stance on the

Gorkhas was mainly rooted in fears for their rule and regulations negatively impacting the Shaukas' trade and income (Traill 1992 [1851]:126). With respect to the Tibetans, the Shauka cultivated enduring personal trade partnerships (*mitra* system) and extended networks of social relations. In this context they necessarily had to ignore the Hindu rules concerning touch-pollution, since sharing food and tea with (Buddhist, beef-eating) Tibetans was considered an indispensable part of trade relations in the context of the *mitra*-system (Brown 1984:110-111; 1992:164; Prasad 1989:56-57; Sherring 1906:118; Srivastava 1966:180-181). The intentional popularization of this issue by the 'Bhotias' also helped to maintain their trade monopoly, since other Hindu traders "would not dream of eating with the 'filthy, beef-eating', Tibetan Dogpa traders or drink from the same cup with them a beverage which invariably has a piece or two of meat [possibly from a yak-cow] thrown in" (Srivastava 1966:181). At the same time, the Johari Shaukas at least since the early 19th century put high emphasis on their high caste Hindu identity claiming Rajput immigrant origin and status, and stressed their distinction from the Tibetans (Brown 1984:25). This active construction of an identity mainly served as strategic positioning vis-à-vis the Hindu Pahari society in the hills and the Hindus of the plains, who tended to look down upon the 'Bhotias' as crypto-Buddhists with an Tibetan origin (Bergmann et al. 2008:14; Brown 1984:110). Particularly for the economically successful Johari Shauka traders, their claims for Rajput status can be seen as an "attempt to seek ritual recognition of their achieved [economic] status and thus [to] add to their power and prestige" (Srivastava 1966:205). During the British period, the efforts of the Johari Shaukas for recognition of their Hindu Rajput identity intensified (which can also be read from the increasing use of Rajput names since about 1820, particularly the name 'Sing'), and strived for greater religious and cultural approximation with the particular form of Hinduism practiced in the Pahari hill society (Brown 1984:29-31, 120-123; Chandola 1987:26; Majumdar 2005 [1949]:14; Mandelbaum 1970:612; Srivastava 1966:185, 205-207)¹². The British, obviously as part of their pro-Shauka policy, showed goodwill and accepted their claim for Rajput origin and status (Brown 1994:32).

One of the culmination points of their pro-British cooperative attitude was the readiness of Johari Shaukas to act as undercover surveyors and informants for the British in Tibet. In times of rising imperialism and intensifying rivalry between the British and the Russian Empires for supremacy in Central Asia in the context of the "Great Game", the British in the second half of the 19th century aimed to further expand their influence in Tibet by sending European explorers, expeditions and Indian undercover surveyors across the Himalayas for the collection of information and conducting land surveys in – from the British perspective – hitherto unmapped territory (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:98; Kreutzmann 2007). From the Kumaon region, particularly Johari Shaukas of the Rawat clan from Milam were chosen by the British, and earned some merits in this respect: Deb Singh Rawat assisted William Moorcroft on his expedition to Tibet in 1812 (Atkinson 1886:112) and later accompanied the brothers Henry and Richard Strachey on their expeditions to Tibet in 1846, 1848 and 1849 (Mason 1923:430); the German brothers Adolph and Robert Schlagintweit entered Tibet in 1855 starting from Milam, accompanied on this and subsequent missions to Tibet and Ladakh in 1855-1857 by Deb Singh Rawat, his son Mani Singh Rawat¹³ and his nephew Nain Singh Rawat

¹² A process which has been termed by many authors with the notion of 'Hinduization' (e.g., Bergmann et al. 2008; Chatterjee 1977; Mandelbaum 1970; Srivastava 1966) or 'Sanskritization' (Berreman 1963; Edye 1994 [1923]; Hoon 1996; Pathak 1997; Polit 2006); for a critique of these concepts, see Brown (1984).

¹³ Mani Singh Rawat was at that time the *patwari* of Milam and the "chief native official" of the Johar valley (Atkinson 1886:112; Smyth 2006 [1882]:162). His father Deb Singh Rawat was said to be one of the "most

(Atkinson 1886:112; Mason 1923:430; Pangtey 1997:65; Pathak and Bhatt 2006a). In 1863, Mani Singh Rawat and Nain Singh Rawat were selected as the first Joharis to participate in a 2-years training programme of the Great Trigonometric Survey Office in Dehradun imparting the necessary knowledge and skills for independently conducting land surveys and mapping exercises (Mason 1923:431; Smyth 2006 [1882]:161-164). This training programme had been set up in 1861 for the purpose of training Indian natives for cartographic surveys in the regions across the Himalayas when worsening conditions prevented any further European survey mission there, while Indians, and particularly 'Bhotia', could travel more inconspicuously than Europeans (Mason 1923:430). In 1865 Nain Singh's brother Kalian Singh, and in 1867 his first cousin Kishan Singh passed through the same training programme (Mason 1923:439). All of them were delegated by the British on several secret survey missions and mapping exercises into Tibet, China and Mongolia conducted between the mid-1860s and late 1880s. Particularly Nain Singh Rawat became most famous for his 1865/66 expedition to trace and map the course of the river Brahmaputra between its source up to Lhasa, and his mapping of the trade route between Leh, Lhasa and Assam in 1873-75 (Pathak and Bhatt 2006b)¹⁴.

4.3 *Development of trade during the British period: the rise of the Johari Shaukas in wealth, status and power and increasing social inequalities*

Even before the advent of British rule in Kumaon, the trans-Himalayan trade was a very lucrative and profitable venture. The Kumaoni 'Bhotias' strongly benefitted from their trade activities with Tibet. Already in the era of the late Chand rulers they had earned the reputation of being wealthy people in terms of ownership of land, animals and houses (Brown 1984:112; 1994:224; Liedtke 2011:50). During the British period, the trans-Himalayan trade through Kumaon strongly intensified due to the reduction of taxes and transit duties, the rising demand of the expanding "British-Indian *economie-monde*" (Spengen 2000:142, original italics), a shift of the major trans-Himalayan wool trade routes from Ladakh to the Indo-Tibetan borderlands, and the availability of new industrial products. Increased demand for Tibetan wool by the evolving mechanized wool production in the British wool mills in Indian plains and the rising demand for borax, which was the most profitable item in trans-Himalayan trade through Kumaon in the early 19th century (Brown 1994:231), pushed the trade volume and benefits to ever higher rates until the late 19th century (Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Bergmann et al. 2011:111-112). Thanks to their monopoly in trade with Tibet, the 'Bhotia' – and particularly the Johari Shaukas – could accumulate substantial wealth from that trade during the British period (Brown 1984:112-113; Majumdar 2005 [1949]:14-15; Prasad 1989:62-63), which allowed them "to live in a prosperity that was unsurpassed in the region" (Liedtke 2011:50).

Since about the 1850s, the Johari Shaukas used the accumulating wealth from their prosperous trade to heavily invest in agricultural land in the major stages of their seasonal migration and around their winter settlements, particularly in Munsiri, Tejam, Bageshwar and Thal, as well as for the construction of representative family residences (Batten 1851:220; Bergmann et al. 2011:112; Brown 1984:44, 112-113; 1994:234; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:98; Srivastava 1966:180). By the mid-19th

wealthy and respectable Johari Bhotias of Kumaon" (Tolia 1990:45), being from a "family respected and esteemed" (Mason 1923:429).

¹⁴ Nain Singh Rawat's work was published in the Journal of the British Royal Geographical Society in the 1870s, and he was honoured with several decorations, among them the 'Companion of Indian Empire' (Mason 1923:438). In 2004, the Indian Government issued a set of commemorative stamps in remembrance of the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India, which showed the counterfeits of Nain Singh Rawat and Kishan Singh Rawat.

century, they had turned into the “by far [...] biggest landowners in the Gori valley” (Liedtke 2011:94) and owned the largest houses found in the area, which were often three stories high, made of solid stone and richly decorated with wood carvings, thus well expressing their new wealth and social position (Brown 1984:113). Particularly traders of the Rawat and Pangtey clans of Milam dominated the cross-border trade through the Johar valley, and the resulting prosperity not only made them the main landholders of the valley but also put them into a hegemonic position towards other population groups (Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:98). A British settlement officer who had visited to Milam in 1843 reported that “its inhabitants only yield in wealth and prosperity to the first class of merchants in Almora” (Batten 1851:219). Chatterjee describes the ‘Bhotias’ of this era as “affluent traders” with many of them being “rich people by standards prevailing in the plains” (Chatterjee 1977:129), and Srivastava characterizes the Johari Shaukas’ socio-economic status as follows: “The Bhotias have [...] enjoyed the highest standard of living in these parts [i.e., northern Kumaon]. The Khasiya Brahman and Rajput cultivators in the vicinity of Bhot [i.e., the ‘Bhotia’ valleys] are poor compared to an average Bhotia trader” (Srivastava 1966:180). “Their wealth and prosperity, their possessions of land, houses and animals, their social status in Johar valley, their antecedent advantages, and the influential leaders [...] who occupied important positions in the British government have given the Johari Bhotias considerable prestige in the area” (Srivastava 1966:195-196). Many other such statements are found in the literature, describing the outstanding wealth and social position of the ‘Bhotia’ traders, and especially of the Johari Shaukas, in relation to the Pahari society in the Kumaoni hills and even by standards of the Gangetic plains (Majumdar 2005 [1949]:15; Prasad 1989:95-96). Though, such descriptions for the Johar valley and the areas surrounding their winter settlements only refer to the class of successful Johari Shauka traders and often occlude existing social disparities within the group of the Johari Shaukas as well as the huge disparities with a highly stratified society in these areas, which also comprised of several non-Shauka groups. With the accumulation of wealth and power of the Johari Shaukas during the 19th century, these other groups were increasingly pushed into subordinate positions of dependent tenants and servants. A new hierarchical social order emerged in the 19th century in these areas, based on economic classes, in which the ‘Bhotias’ “became the highest of the social classes with their wealth, land, and also education” (Prasad 1989:95), holding a “superior economic and political position” (Prasad 1989:95) and forming the “apex” and “aristocracy” of the local society (Srivastava 1966:198). The resulting political and economic “hegemony towards other resident groups” (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:98) was accompanied by Johari Shaukas’ attempts to build higher ritual status by claiming a Hindu Rajput caste identity, which was reinforced by employing Brahmins of the region as ritual specialists and the development of “patron and client” relationships between Shauka and Brahmin families (Prasad 1989:95-96). On the expanding land property of the Johari Shaukas in the lower valley sections and in the vicinity of their winter settlements, they employed small-holder Pahari peasants (i.e., Khasia Rajputs and Khasia Brahmins) of the area as share-cropping tenants, sometimes even turning former smallholders into landless dependants (Brown 1984:44, 47; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:98; Prasad 1989:70; Srivastava 1966:180). With increasing wealth, the successful Johari Shauka traders’ families refrained from personal involvement in agricultural labour on their fields but engaged others for these tasks (Brown 1984:44; Prasad 1989:70; Srivastava 1966:180). While in the lower sections, the local Pahari peasants – bound in a “tenant-landlord relationship” (Prasad 1989:95) – were tilling the Shaukas’ land (Bergmann et al. 2011:112), the Johari Shaukas engaged for the cultivation of their land in the upper valley sections during summer landless low-caste servants who seasonally moved with them to the summer settlements, and who were “entirely dependent upon the rich Bhotias for their subsistence” (Prasad 1989:70). These lower caste groups are generally known as Shilpakar in

Kumaon and are roughly equivalent to the groups which later have been given Scheduled Caste status by the Indian state. The Shilpakar were not only employed by the Shauka families as agricultural labourers on their fields, but were also closely involved in a number of other chores. There was a “strict association” of certain Shilpakar households with certain Shauka trader households, and “almost every trading household had one or several such [Shilpakar] ‘servants’ attached to it physically, and which moved with the trading families during the migrations” (Brown 1984:55), and who were living in the same village, albeit separately (Browne 190-?:8). The Shilpakar servants “were directly connected to the daily activity of the trading families” and were “obliged both to participate in the domestic activity around the domiciles as well as accompany the traders on their journeys when needed” (Brown 1984:55-56), in the latter case mostly functioning as freight shepherds (Hoon 1996:82). In addition, each Shauka village had a certain number of Shilpakar families associated with it working as artisans, e.g. as carpenter, mason, blacksmith, musician and others (Brown 1984:66; Browne 190-?:8; Prasad 1989:95-96). British sources of the 19th century often describe Shilpakar servants associated with individual households of the Johari Shaukas as being “slaves” or living in a slave-like state (Atkinson 1886:512-513; Brown 1984:66; Srivastava 1966:181-182; Tolia 1990:50). Another group of servants of the Johari Shaukas with a higher social status than the Shilpakar were the Nitwal, i.e., an endogamous group of Garhwali ‘Bhotia’ people who had immigrated from the Mana and Niti valleys into Johar, and who do not belong to the Shauka group (Brown 1994:11, 64; Srivastava 1966:198-199). The Nitwals consider themselves to be Brahmin and thus claim higher ritual status than the Johari Shaukas, who claim Rajput origin. The Shauka accepted their ritual claim but have still assigned them to a lower socio-economic rank and accorded a servant status on them by employing them as cooks (for reasons of ritual purity), servants and ritual specialists (before they later were replaced by Khasia Brahmans in this function in the course of the 19th century) (Brown 1984:64-65; Srivastava 1966:198-199). Even though Nitwals (as being ‘Bhotias’) were allowed to trade and enjoyed the same privileges in Tibet as the Johari traders, they primarily relied on the Johari Shauka traders for their livelihood and lived in a state of economic dependency (Prasad 1989:92-95). Yet another group of ‘servants’ were hired by the Johari Shaukas in the context of animal husbandry, who were reimbursed for their labour as herder (*anwal*) or muleteer/horsemen (*deba*) in kind or cash (Brown 1984:56; Pant 1935:56). These herders and muleteers were mostly employed from the Khasia hill population or from the *terai*, but principally they “could be hired from any group [except of the Shilpakar] that wanted the work and/or was poor enough to need it” (Brown 1984:57).

The early preferential treatment of the Johari Shaukas by the British put them into a favoured social and economic position, increased their power and wealth and thus sowed the seed for inequalities to evolve out of this. With the rising wealth of the Johari Shauka traders during the 19th century, a diversified class of servants evolved, who lived in a state of high-grade dependency on the Shauka, which has often been described as a situation of suppression, exploitation and exclusion. The servant groups “had no autonomy over their own desires, social and economic activities. They have been fully exploited for a petty wages” and thus “remained innocent, ignorant, and illiterate” (Prasad 1989:95). This laid the foundation for a highly stratified social structure, growing inequalities and unequal opportunities between the different groups.

4.4 Unequal access to education during the British period

The British favouritism of the Johari Shaukas had yet another dimension which left a lasting imprint on the valley’s society and its stratification: they introduced formal education to the valley through

establishing the first schools in Johar and provided the Johari Shaukas privileged access to education compared to other groups in Kumaon (Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:97). Until the mid-19th century, formal education did not play an important role in the Johari society, and only a few better-off Johari Shauka families employed private tutors to teach their sons in their homes basic skills in literacy and numeracy, as relevant for correspondence and calculations in the context of trade activities (Pangtey 1997:96; Prasad 1989). In 1859 the British opened the first school of the valley in Milam, a vernacular boys' school providing basic education up to class two, and filled the teacher posts, sanctioned by the Education Department in Almora, with members of the influential Rawat clan (Pangtey 1997)¹⁵. Even though girls' education was not given a high priority at that time (Prasad 1989:96-97), a girls' primary school was established in 1867 in Milam, being the first girl's school of the whole Almora District (Pangtey 1997). During the 1880s and 1890s, in the context of an effort of the British colonial government to promote education in the 'Bhotia valleys', the number of schools in Johar and neighbouring valleys increased considerably, comprising of both, official District Board schools and private missionary schools (strongly supported by the colonial government) (Browne 190-?:iv, 6; Kennedy 1885:142-146; Pangtey 1997; Prasad 1989:97). The American Episcopal Methodist Church had established a mission and school in Nainital in 1857 (Kennedy 1885:154) and opened a second missionary school in Darchula in 1895 (Pangtey 1997). The London Missionary Society was active from its mission centre in Almora, established along with a mission school and student hostel in 1850 (Kennedy 1885:142-148). All of the early schools in the 'Bhotia' valleys were 'mobile' schools which shifted along the families' seasonal migration pattern between winter and summer settlements, having school buildings in both places (Grypa and Pangtey 2009; Pangtey 1997:3). For further education beyond the usual two years of basic education as offered in these schools, the children had to attend the missionary schools in Almora, Darchula or Ranikhet, which taught Hindi and English as well as Urdu and Tibetan as optional subjects (Pangtey 1997). An example of such early student migration is given by two sons of the explorer Nain Singh Rawat from Milam, who both attended the missionary school in Almora, converted to Christianity and studied medicine in Agra (Smyth 2006 [1882]:164). Conversions to Christianity were few among the Johari Shaukas (Brown 1984:24; Prasad 1989:97), but those who converted often realized impressive professional careers under the British. Another two Johari Shaukas who attended high school in Almora in the 1890s and converted to Christianity were Uttam Singh Rawat and Thakur Dalip Singh; the former became clergy of the Anglican Church and Chairman of the District Education Board Almora, while the latter became the Deputy Director in the District Education Department of Almora (Pangtey 1997; Prasad 1989:96-97). The son of Uttam Singh Rawat, Henry John Rawat, became high school principal in Almora (Pangtey 1997). From these positions they also worked in favour of their own Johari Shauka people and pushed the educational expansion in their area. During the 1920s the District Education Department started a new wave of school establishments in the Johar valley, establishing new schools in Burphu, Tola, Martoli and Bilju, which were mostly staffed with Brahmin teachers (Pangtey 1997; Srivastava 1966:206). On local initiative of Johari Shaukas of Milam (from the Rawat clan), and supported by the District Education Board under Uttam Singh Rawat, the first middle school of the Johar valley was established near Munsiri in 1920 (Pangtey 1997). Educational migration from the Johar valley gained momentum after the 1920s among the sons of the richer families, due to increasing numbers of students passing the local basic education and due to increased options for further studies in the region thanks to newly established middle

¹⁵ The first two teachers were Mani Singh Rawat and Nain Sing Rawat of Milam, who also served the British in mapping and survey missions (Mason 1923; Pangtey 1997:431).

schools in Kanda, Didihat or Kapkot (Pangtey 1997). In all these places Johari Shauka traders had trade depots and houses, in which the student migrants could live. Almora, into which the elite of the Johari Shauka were being increasingly drawn and where they settled temporarily or permanently for their business, government employment or education (Srivastava 1966:205, 208), remained the most important site for Johari student migrants seeking higher education. Migrant students from Johar could stay in Almora in a special *johar bhawan* (Johar house) serving as hostel, or they lived with one of the Johari families who had moved there (Pangtey 1997).

From the outlined educational expansion in the Johar valley and the increasing educational opportunities for the Johari under the British, mostly the richer traders among the Johari Shaukas could benefit, while the economically weaker non-Shauka 'Bhotia' groups (Nitwal) as well as the non-Bhotia groups of Johar (Khasia Rajput and Brahmin as well as Shilpakar) "remained deprived from even the basic education" (Prasad 1989:96). Thus, the British preferential treatment of the Johari Shaukas with respect to education "augmented social disparities among the Bhotiyas and with other groups of the region throughout the 19th century" (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:97). In the late 19th century, the Joharis were "decidedly the most intelligent [i.e., educated] and most wealthy of all the Bhotias" (Atkinson 1886:112). Or, as Srivastava puts it: "The Johari Bhotias, at the turn of the [19th to the 20th] century, were prosperous by any standards. Members of their community had received honours and recognition from the government. Education received considerable impetus in Johar through the influence of new leaders" (Srivastava 1966:204).

4.5 *Declining trade and shifting positionalities*

The trans-Himalayan trade through Kumaon experienced its climax in the last decades of the 19th century¹⁶. Soon after the turn of the century, the trade volume started to decline due to a loss in competitiveness of the most important trade items wool, woollen products, salt and borax (Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Bergmann et al. 2011:113; Dangwal 2009:91). Improvements in transport technology and infrastructure (railways, roads, motorized traffic) enabled cheaper imports of wool and salt from the Indian lowlands and other parts of the British Empire, which started to replace the commodities of 'Bhotias' trans-Himalayan trade. A chemical process was discovered which allowed the synthetic production of borax on much cheaper rates (Brown 1984:118-119). Cotton cloth replaced more and more the woollen products made by 'Bhotia' women. Due to increasing population in the hills, Uttarakhand turned in the early 20th century from a grain surplus production area into a grain importing region, which made grain as the main barter product for Tibetan trade more scarce and expensive (Dangwal 2009:91). The new networks of wool and salt trade were firmly in the hands of Pahari and lowland traders (Dangwal 2009:92). The 'Bhotias' monopoly for Tibetan trade was not only undermined by an increasing monetarization of trade and the strive of the British to establish a 'free trade' regime, but it also lost its strategic importance with the redirection of trade flows away from the 'Bhotia' valleys (Brown 1992:158). For the same reasons, control of the trans-Himalayan trade was no longer a main political concern of the British, and the 'Bhotia' traders lost their role as important agents and brokers for the British in this context. Even more, with an increasing consolidation of spheres of imperial interest in South and Central Asia, 'Bhotias' were no longer needed as undercover surveyors and secret informants for the British. The British interests

¹⁶ The trans-Himalayan trade through Kumaon already reached its climax for borax in the 1870s (Brown 1994:232). The loss in borax trade from the 1880s onwards was compensated by a greater demand for Tibetan wool, which reached a trade peak around 1910 (Brown 1994:232-235).

changed in a way which turned the 'Bhotia' from wanted and coddled key agents in the sensitive British border zone to troublesome vagabonds thwarting newly arisen British interests in the natural resources of Kumaon. Rising demand for timber since the mid-19th century for numerous public works, particularly for sleepers in the rapidly expanding railway network of British-India, led to a rising interest in the Himalayan forests as a strategic resource, from which the British increasingly tried to exclude native users with a set of new rules and regulations (Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Dangwal 2009:89-90). The introduction of 'Reserved Forests' strongly restricted and taxed forest and pasture use for the 'Bhotias' of Kumaon, and constricted the 'Bhotias' uncontrolled movements during seasonal migration to a few officially sanctioned halting places along their routes and by constricting assignments to particular market places (Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Bergmann et al. 2011:112-113; Brown 1992:163; Dangwal 2009:91).

In the context of declining trade, a changed geo-strategic setting and new British interests in natural resources of the Kumaoni hills, the Johari Shaukas' positionality was changing considerably, and this time not in their favour. The British have changed their view on the 'Bhotias' in unfavourable ways, and income from trade was on the decline. Instead of various benefits enjoyed under a pro-Shauka British policy they now were confronted with new restrictions and taxations of their central livelihood activities by the British. In this altered situation many Johari Shauka adapted their livelihoods by applying a number of far-reaching changes: by reducing or even quitting their trade activities, by reducing the size of their herds of sheep and goats and by withdrawing from seasonal migration. As a consequence, more and more Johari Shaukas settled permanently in the former winter settlements, where they re-engaged in sedentary agriculture and keeping cattle instead of flocks (Bergmann et al. 2008:213; Bergmann et al. 2011:113-114; Dangwal 2009:92; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100).

These trends of livelihood change still continued among the Johari Shauka when the British colonial rule came to an end and India became an independent state in 1947. But despite of declining volumes and profits from trans-Himalayan trade, which became even more difficult after the Chinese invasion in Tibet in 1950 and the re-orientation of trade flows towards Chinese markets (Srivastava 1966:196), this trade was still an important source of income and many Johari Shaukas continued to be involved in trade-related activities. Therefore, it meant a deep cut into their livelihoods when the trans-Himalayan trade eventually came to a complete halt in the wake of the Indo-China war and the closure of the border to Tibet in 1962. It is estimated that at least two thirds of the 'Bhotia' population were living almost exclusively on income from trade and thus were deeply affected by the sudden end of trade (Hoon 1996:81; Negi 2007:115). Not only the Shauka communities were affected, but also other population groups in the 'Bhotia' valleys who were employed by the Shauka traders as servants, herders or agricultural labourers and therefore indirectly depended on trade incomes. Mobile animal husbandry and seasonal migration drastically decreased in the 'Bhotia' valleys after 1962 (Bergmann et al. 2011:114; Silori and Badola 2000:274), since both activities were undertaken principally for the purpose of enabling and facilitating cross-border trade (Brown 1994:219; Negi 2007:115). With the end of trans-Himalayan trade, these migrations became pointless and largely "undesirable" (Dangwal 2009:94). Since sheep and goats were no longer needed as pack animals and since stationary pastures around the permanent settlements did not suffice to sustain large herds, the number of 'Bhotia' flocks sharply declined after 1962, which also adversely affected the 'Bhotias' woollen cottage industries (Prasad 1989:117-118). A few years after the border closure virtually "all land-based activity [in the upper valley sections of Johar] came to a standstill" (Asher et al. 2002:5), and the summer settlements, formerly crowded and busy during the summer

season, remained nearly vacant and may houses were exposed to decay¹⁷. The number of seasonally migrating households in the Johar valley went down from 1,475 in 1961 to only 61 in the mid-2000s (Negi 2007:115). In the mid-1980s, only about 11% of the 'Bhotia' households of Johar were still practicing sheep and goat rearing (Prasad 1989:128). In Sarmoli in 2012, only 6% of the households had some sheep or goats, and only in 2% of the households the herd size exceeded five animals. Several studies found that it were mostly "the poor and the old" (Asher et al. 2002:14) who continued this seasonal migration, who owned little or no land in the middle and lower valley sections (preventing them from a livelihood transition to sedentary agriculture), who lacked alternative sources of income and highly depended on income from their animals (Asher et al. 2002:5; Silori and Badola 2000:275). They still kept sheep and goats along with ponies and mules as pack animals, which they used for transporting maintenance goods and supply to the post of the Indo-Tibetan Border Police in the upper Johar valley near Milam. Even in recent years, when the use of summer settlements experienced a small-scale revival in the context of collection and cultivation of aromatic and medicinal plants (Asher et al. 2002; Bergmann et al. 2011; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012; Negi 2007), only 12% of the formerly used agricultural land in the upper valley section was actually again under cultivation (Silori and Badola 2000:275). The use of high pastures is at least since the 1980s mostly practiced by paid shepherds from outside the Johar valley, who take the cattle and remaining flocks of the Joahris along with their own herds (often double the size of the entrusted herds) to the *bugyal* (Bergmann et al. 2011:115; Hoon 1996:92; Nüsser 2006:19).

4.6 *Strategic positioning vis-à-vis the newly established Indian state*

The sudden end of trade in 1962 meant a severe rupture of the formal trade-based livelihoods of the 'Bhotia' in Kumaon, which required quick and sustainable answers to adapt and reorient their livelihood systems. A continuation of mobile animal husbandry and seasonal migration was not a promising option, as becomes clear from the outlined developments above. Also, the renewed uptake of sedentary agriculture in the vicinity of the winter settlements was considered only a temporary and compromise solution, particularly by the better-off Johari Shauka households, who formerly despised any personal involvement in agricultural work and who were used to have these tasks done by servants (Brown 1984:44; Prasad 1989:70; Srivastava 1966:180). Instead, a more promising livelihood adaptation seemed to exist in prioritizing off-farm employment, particularly in the government sector, in which many Johari Shauka families were already strongly engaged, combined with a renewed emphasis on (higher) formal education. Right after the independence of India, i.e. before the border closure but in a time when income from trade was already dwindling, a number of influential Kumaoni 'Bhotias' formed the "Kumaon Bhotia People's Federation" (KBPF) in Almora as a lobby group to articulate their interests vis-à-vis the newly established Indian state (Bergmann et al. 2011:114; Dangwal 2009:98; Majumdar 2005 [1949]:20; Srivastava 1966:208). Most of the founding members and the driving forces behind the movement were Johari Shaukas who were educated and employed in urban areas, many of them living in Almora. In order to broaden their basis and "put up a united front" (Srivastava 1966:196), the Johari Shaukas "made overtures to

¹⁷ The decline in trade and seasonal migration is well illustrated by the example of Milam, the biggest summer settlement, which also served as an important trade depot for trans-Himalayan trade. The number of households living there during summer constantly decreased from 700 households in 1882 (Hoon 1996:42), to 600 households in the 1930s (Pant 1935:240), to 300 in the 1950s (Murray 1951, cited in Bergamnn et al. 2001:114), to 23 families in 1988 (Hoon 1996:222), and further down to 18 households in 1996 (Silori and Badola 2000:275) and 2004 (Nüsser 2006:20).

the previously deprecated eastern Bhotias” (Mandelbaum 1970:612), i.e., the Rang Shaukas in the Darma, Byans and Chaudans valleys, and presented petitions and memorandums to the Government demanding special social, economic and political protection for all ‘Bhotias’ as a backward community (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100; Srivastava 1966:208). The Shauka leaders had recognized the need to develop alternative income sources to trade based on formal education and off-farm employment. In order to get access to new opportunities in these fields provided by the Indian state in the context of the newly introduced system of reserved quota in education and government sector employment for members of certain officially recognized ‘disadvantaged’ groups (comprising of the so-called Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)), the Johari Shaukas, in a move of strategic re-positioning, started to fundamentally re-construct their group identity by portraying themselves as disadvantaged and underdeveloped tribal group. In 1953 the KBPF, still under the leadership of Johari Shaukas, issued a memorandum in which they demanded the ‘Bhotia’ group to be included in the list of scheduled tribes (Srivastava 1966:196). Similar strategies were pursued by other ‘tribal’ group leaders in India, who in the context of the Indian affirmative action policy soon after independence “urged a turn toward the newly advantageous posture of a culturally deprived [tribal] people” in order to obtain “political and material advantages to attain more rapid social rise” (Mandelbaum 1970:594; cf. Shneiderman 2010:308). But in the case of the Johari Shauka, this strategic move was in sharp contrast to their more than a century-long (and quite successful) struggle of claiming an immigrant high-caste Rajput identity. The Johari Shaukas in the context of their strategic re-positioning, deliberately accepted the loss of status in the caste-hierarchy associated with the newly deployed tribal identity in order to achieve ST status and related benefits (Bergmann et al. 2011:106, 114-115; Mandelbaum 1970:610-612; Srivastava 1966:208-209). For the same reasons, the Johari Shaukas were ready to join hands with the eastern Shauka groups of Kumaon, which they had formerly regarded as “‘primitive and backward’ and having nothing to do with it” (Srivastava 1966:196). They accepted to be identified as being part of a ‘joint Bhotia community’ of Kumaon, a thing which had not existed before and only came into being through the work of the KBPF (Majumdar 2005 [1949]:14; Srivastava 1966:196). The KBPF’s campaign for the recognition of the ‘Bhotia’ as scheduled tribe met the opposition of the majority of the Pahari population in Kumaon as well as of the Uttar Pradesh government, but it was strongly supported by the Central Government, who intended to win the loyalty of the ‘Bhotia’ groups inhabiting a sensitive border region (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100; Gerwin and Nüsser 2008:214; Mandelbaum 1970:612). Backed by this support, the ‘Bhotia’ eventually succeeded in achieving the official recognition as Scheduled Tribe in 1967, which guaranteed them quota-access to universities, employment in government services and a reserved seat quota in legislative bodies, besides other privileges (Bergmann et al. 2008:214; Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100). This was an important catalyst for the necessary change in livelihood systems and diversification of income sources through pursuing qualified employment strategies. Even though certain other population groups of the ‘Bhotia’ valleys also enjoyed such quota privileges, e.g. the group of the Shilpakar, which has been recognized and listed as Scheduled Castes, it were the Johari Shaukas who benefitted the most from the affirmative action amenities. This can be explained by the fact that — in contradiction to the original intention of the affirmative action policy to support the marginalized, suppressed and disadvantaged population groups — in the case of the Johari Shauka these privileges have been bestowed to the richest and most powerful group who since long formed the local social elite. In other words, measures which were originally thought to create more equal socio-economic opportunities and to tackle the reproduction of inequalities, in the case at hand worked quite in the

opposite way and supported the already better-off and consolidated the reproduction of existing inequalities.

4.7 Educational expansion after 1967

After gaining the ST status in 1967 and facilitated by the new privileges of quota access to higher education, “a tremendous increase of education” (Prasad 1989:97) took place in the ‘Bhotia’ communities. The pace of the educational expansion among the Johari Shaukas had already accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s, when local primary education was increasingly continued, at least among the richer families, in urban schools of the Kumaon region in the context of student migration. The 1940s saw the first university graduates from the Johar valley, all of them being Johari Shaukas, whereas the other population groups of the valley remained largely “untouched by education and were oppressed by the Shauka landlords” (Pangtey 1997, cf. Majumdar 2005[1949]:18). Until the early 20th century the Johari Shaukas saw the main purpose of education in providing the necessary skills needed in the context of trade, and they considered the most preferable occupation to be that of a trader (Pangtey 1997; Prasad 1989:96-97). These views considerably shifted with the decline in trade. Government sector employment and other white-collar jobs were now preferred over trade as a more secure and beneficial source of income and social status, and higher education as the major precondition for its access received increased emphasis among the Johari Shaukas (Dangwal 2009:95). The end of trans-Himalayan trade in 1962 and the necessary livelihood adaptations, along with the new opportunities related to the achievement of ST status have led to a “break-through in Bhotia education” (Prasad 1989:143). Also, the volume of student migration and the geographical distances covered in their migrations increased considerably. More and more student migrants were seeking higher education in cities outside the Kumaon region, such as Delhi, Lucknow, Allahabad, Kanpur and Agra (Prasad 1989:143). Education levels have rapidly risen during the 1960s in the Shauka communities of the Gori valley, particularly among the men, but increasingly also among the women, as can be seen in Figure 5 and Figure 6 for the Johari Shauka of Sarmoli.

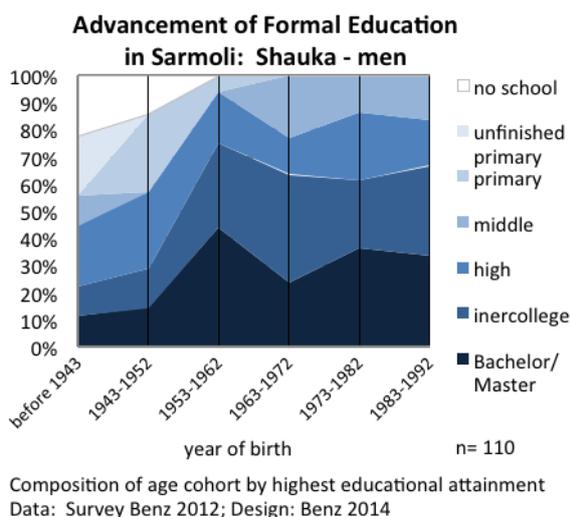


Figure 5: Male education levels among the Johari Shauka of Sarmoli

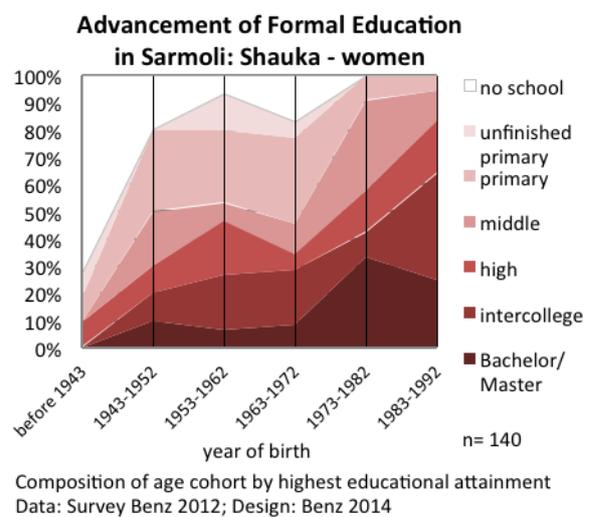


Figure 6: Female education levels among the Johari Shauka of Sarmoli

Thanks to improved education and again backed by the quota privileges related to the ST status, the Johari Shaukas managed to access government sector positions in large numbers in Kumaon (e.g. in

the context of the newly carved-out Pithoragarh district in 1960) and in the administrative centres of the federal state of Uttar Pradesh in the Gangetic plains, to which the Kumaon region was administratively assigned after independence (Bergmann et al. 2008:215; Bergmann et al. 2011:114-115; Dangwal 2009:95; Prasad 1989:97, 125, 140).

In the context of the new view and consciousness of the importance of education among the Johari Shaukas, they started to work for the expansion and improvement of the local education facilities in the Johar valley. Since the pace of expansion of the government education system in the valley was felt being much too slow, some influential Johari Shaukas took the initiative and established a number of private primary schools and the first middle and high schools in the valley in the 1940s and 1950s, some of which later have been taken over by the District Education Board (in which the Johari Shaukas were holding important positions) (Majumdar 2005 [1949]:18; Pangtey 1997; Prasad 1989:141). After 1960, as part of the district development measures in the newly established Pithoragarh district, “the authorities took special care in terms of opening schools and colleges in the Bhotia region” (Prasad 1989:140). In 1961, the first Intercollege of the Johar valley was established in Mungsiari, and the availability of government schools in the valley has much improved since then thanks to many newly established or upgraded institutions. Since 2001, when a degree college was established in Mungsiari, even graduate studies can be taken locally in the Johar valley¹⁸. Despite the improved availability of educational institutions, the local schools and colleges, particularly at the higher levels of education, are virtually only used by children of poorer families, while all families who can afford it send their children to urban centres due to a perceived much lower quality of education in local institutions. In recent years, a number of private English-medium schools have been established in Mungsiari, responding to the growing demand for English-medium and ‘quality’ education among the parents.

4.8 Livelihood dynamics and social stratification in the Johar valley since the end of the trade economy in 1962

All population groups in the ‘Bhotia’ valleys were heavily affected by the closure of the Chinese border in 1962 and the resulting sudden end of trans-Himalayan trade. The livelihoods of most households in these valleys were in some way directly or indirectly dependent on trade-related activities and income from trade. The sudden loss of this livelihood basis enforced rapid adaptation strategies towards livelihood diversification and accessing alternative income sources. As has been outlined above, the Johari Shaukas were in the best starting position to adapt their livelihoods to the new situation, since their good education combined with the privileges related to the achieved ST status allowed them to take up new livelihood opportunities in form of professional employment in the government and private sector. But also for the other population groups in the ‘Bhotia’ valleys, off-farm employment became increasingly important. Due to a lack of local employment opportunities, the level of out-migration from the ‘Bhotia valleys’ was strongly rising after 1962, mostly directed towards the hill towns of Kumaon and cities of the Indian lowlands (Prasad 1989:125-126; Silori and Badola 2000:275; Srivastava 1966:211). Less educated ‘Bhotias’ often only found work in “petty jobs, like those of porters [and] labourers” or became “petty contractors, concerned with the transportation of goods” while “the educated among the Bhotias have tended to

¹⁸ In 2012, the education facilities in the Mungsiari block comprised of: 1 degree college, 7 intercolleges, 8 high schools, 40 upper primary schools and 178 primary schools (data provided by the Block education office in Mungsiari, 27.04.2012).

migrate to the south to the plains of India in search of white collar jobs” (Chatterjee 1976:15). Some of the richer former trans-Himalaya traders used their capital and relations to traders placed in the *terai* to re-engage in settled trade by establishing trading companies, shops and hotels in the towns and cities of the Kumaoni hills, an occupation which “prompted many Bhotia families to abandon their home villages and get settled at places where the prospects for opening shops were bright” (Prasad 1989:124). Also, recruitment in the military service, which has a long-standing tradition in the ‘Bhotia’ valleys of Kumaon, intensified after the border closure in 1962 (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:101). As a consequence of these alternative livelihood strategies increasingly pursued after the end of the trade economy, a huge proportion of the population has out-migrated from the ‘Bhotia’ valleys since 1962. Prasad (1989:152) estimated that between 1962 and 1978 alone, about 36% of the ‘Bhotia’ households have left the Johar valley permanently to resettle in urban areas elsewhere. According to more recent estimates, the share of permanently out-migrated Johari Shauka households has gone up to three-quarters, and most villages in the upper valley section have become virtually abandoned (Bergmann et al. 2008:215). The outmigrants, though, are not ‘lost’ for their communities of origin, but are instead still closely linked to it through kinship relations and a strong sense of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ to the valleys from which they or their ancestors have once out-migrated and which “still forms an important part of their identity” (Bergmann et al. 2011:122). On a practical level, these ties articulate in densely woven multi-local networks of interpersonal relations, which link the ‘Bhotia’ valleys to numerous urban places within Uttarakhand and India, and which form an important livelihood asset for the pursuance of education and employment strategies in the context of migration (cf. Prasad 1989:135-140). On occasion of particular celebrations and village rituals, often “all village members are expected to participate, especially those who reside elsewhere in India or abroad” (Bergmann et al. 2011:119).

With the end of the trade-based economy in the ‘Bhotia’ valleys, the social order and social stratification underwent significant changes. The formerly close and often inescapable ties of economic and social dependency broke up and disentangled when the seasonal trading mobility stopped, transhumant mobile animal husbandry along with the number of flocks drastically declined, income from trade ebbed, and the Shauka traders no longer could afford to pay their servant groups (Prasad 1989:137-139). Based on the affirmative action policy of the Indian state, the group of Shilpakar (officially recognized as SC group) and the non-Shauka ‘Bhotias’ (e.g., the Nitwals) (officially recognized as part of the ‘Bhotia’ ST group) similarly enjoyed the privileges of quota-access to education and government employment, which opened up new livelihood opportunities for these groups. The formerly dependent tenants from the Rajput and Brahmin Pahari peasant communities, tilling Shauka landlord’s agricultural fields, were turned into the proprietors of this very land by force of the ‘Kumaon and Uttarakhand Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act’, which was implemented in the region during the 1960s (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:99; Hoon 1996:83; Prasad 1989:139). By this act, the ownership of agricultural land was transferred from absent landlords to the actual cultivators and the pressing landlord-tenant relationships resolved. For the Johari Shaukas, this meant a complete loss of their land in the foothills and the Lesser Himalaya, even though they could manage to keep a certain amount of agricultural land in the vicinity of Munsiri by making use of their local power position and political influence in the region (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:99). Nevertheless, for example in the village of Sarmoli, the General Caste group has turned into the group with the largest landholdings and the highest number of livestock (Table 1). The end of trans-Himalayan trade implicated also the end of large-scale goat rearing and a strong decline of mobile animal husbandry. A century ago the average herd size of a Shauka trader was around 100 to 125 goats (Brown 1984:55; Pant 1935:52). After 1962, most traders sold their flocks and invested the

returns in new business ventures. Sheep and goat keeping in larger numbers is today only practiced by a few General Caste households in Sarmoli, while 94% of the households have neither sheep nor goats.

Table 1: Landholding and livestock in Sarmoli

| average household (n=100) | per arable land (in <i>nali</i> *) | cattle | sheep and goats |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|-----------------|
| Johari Shauka | 6.9 | 0.8 | 0.1 |
| non-Shauka ST | 6.5 | 1.4 | 0.2 |
| General Caste | 11.1 | 2.7 | 3.2 |
| Scheduled Caste | 2.3 | 0.7 | 0.1 |

* 1 *nali* = 0.02ha

Data: Survey Benz 2012

Despite the resolution of direct relations of dependency of non-Shauka groups from Johari Shaukas in the Gori valley after 1962, and despite a number of policy measures which created new opportunities and assets for disadvantaged social groups, the social stratification in Johar has only reluctantly and gradually changed since the 1960s. The different social groups (Johari Shaukas, non-Shauka 'Bhotia', Rajput, Brahmin and Scheduled Caste) continue to form distinct and separate social entities based on a strong endogamous norm and ascribed and claimed differences in ritual status. Despite of the difficult situation in which the Johari Shaukas found themselves with the end of trade and after the disappropriation of large sections of their land, and despite of their dwindling share in the population of the Johar valley to a minority of less than 10% due to continuing out-migration, they still managed to maintain a dominant and influential position in the local politics and economy of the valley and its major settlements, such as Munsiri (Liedtke 2011:50, 94). For example, in the growing *bazaar* of Munsiri, the Johari Shaukas "were not only able to retain, but also to expand their property" since the end of trans-Himalayan trade, currently owning about 70% of all shops in the market (Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:100). Similarly, they exercise disproportional influence and power in the *van panchayat* committees in the Johar valley, i.e. community-based units in which access to and resource use of more than 70% of all forests and grassland of the valley is regulated (Nüsser 2006:20). In these committees and in the context of the land and forest settlement of 1965, the Johari Shauka "made their voice heard better than those of other [...] competitors" (Bergmann et al. 2011:117). Thus they were able to secure much more forest land to be managed under the *van panchayats* of their respective villages than, for example, SC villages could do, which resulted in the present unequal distribution of village forests to local communities (Gerwin and Nüsser 2008:115; Liedtke 2011:69; Prasad 1989:145).

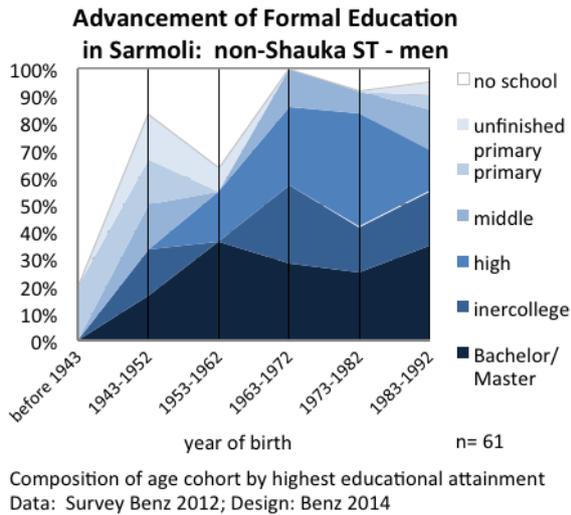


Figure 7: Male education levels among the non-Shauka ST of Sarmoli

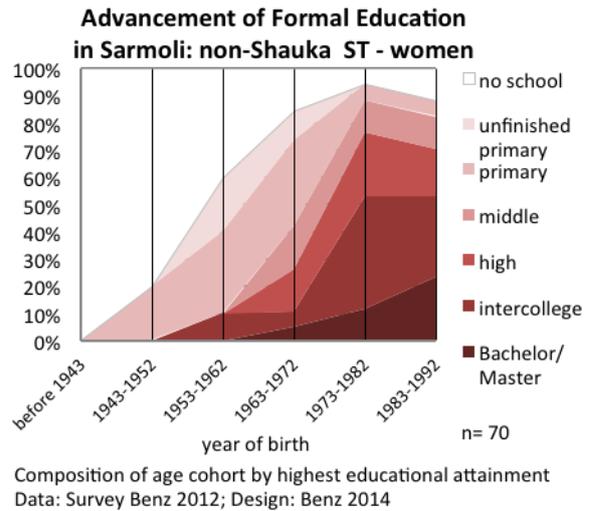


Figure 8: Male education levels among the non-Shauka ST of Sarmoli

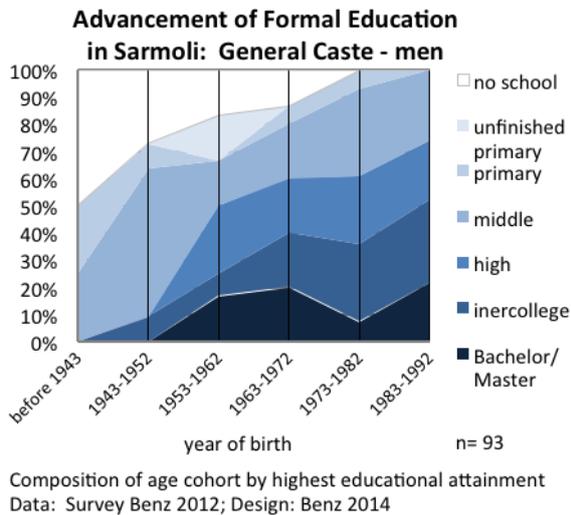


Figure 9: Male education levels among the Rajputs and Brahmins of Sarmoli

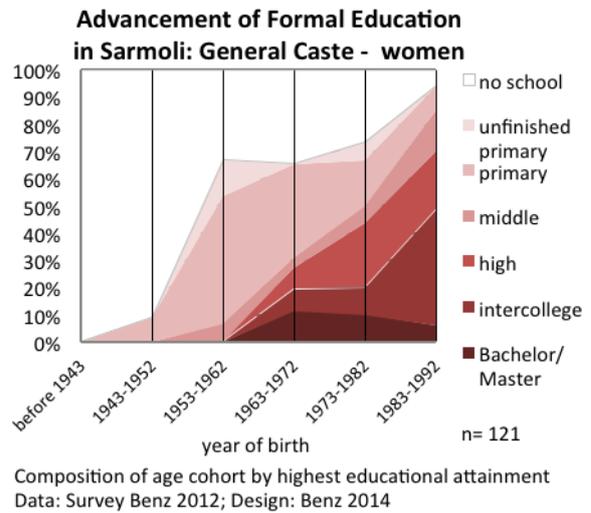
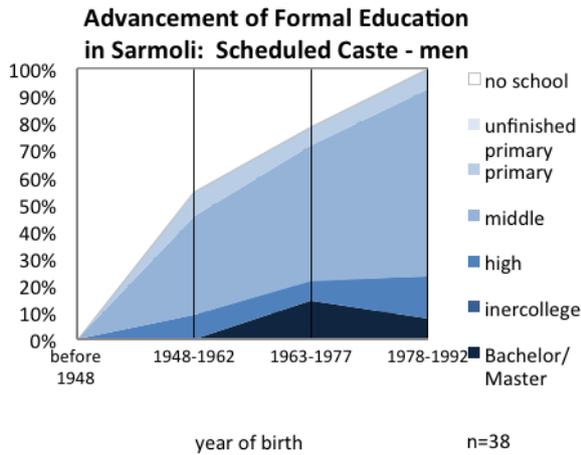
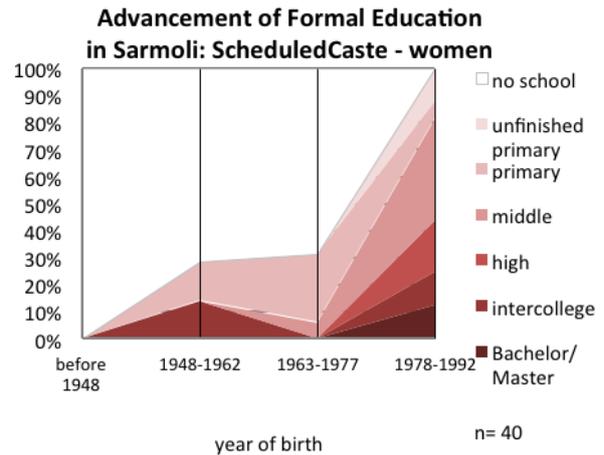


Figure 10: Female education levels among the Rajputs and Brahmins of Sarmoli



Composition of age cohort by highest educational attainment
Data: Survey Benz 2012; Design: Benz 2014



Composition of age cohort by highest educational attainment
Data: Survey Benz 2012; Design: Benz 2014

Figure 11: Male education levels among the Scheduled Castes of Sarmoli

Figure 12: Female education levels among the Scheduled Castes of Sarmoli

The new opportunities in the field of formal education, which were provided by the expanding and improved education system in the Johar valley as well as by reserved seats for ST and SC students in higher educational institutions could only partly be utilized by the non-Shauka groups in the Johar valley. For example, a comparison of age cohort-wise education levels among the non-Shauka population in Sarmoli village shows that the advancement of formal education in these groups took a quite different course than among the Shaukas of the same village: it started later, advanced with a much lower pace, took longer to reach higher education levels and is characterized by pronounced gender disparities (Figure 7–12). The educational pattern from British times, in which new educational opportunities could for the most part only be used by the better-off social group of the Johari Shaukas, seems to have persisted after the end of colonial rule, at least for some decades, and could not easily be overcome by the affirmative action policy of the Indian state. Nevertheless, all population groups in Sarmoli show a clear trend of increasing education levels from the older to the younger generations, which are indicative for improved access and opportunities to education as well as a changed prioritization and awareness regarding (higher) formal education among all population groups. But despite of this overall positive trend, pronounced disparities continue to exist between the population groups and between the genders, with particularly the Scheduled Castes and women being the most disadvantaged groups and lagging behind the overall educational advancement.

Some of the old relations of dependency of certain groups from Johari Shauka continue to exist in modified form until today, particularly with respect to the Scheduled Castes. The SC groups of Johar are still “engaged in a range of subaltern roles, ranging from performing arts to begin feudally attached to [Johari Shauka] families as agricultural and domestic labour, [and] to skilled labour such as blacksmiths, carpenters and masons” (Asher et al. 2002:4; cf. Gerwin and Bergmann 2012:94-95).

5 Current Socio-Economic Disparities in Johar

As has been shown in the last section, the Johari Shaukas are still the dominating and most powerful group in the local economy, politics and society of Johar, irrespective of their dwindling population share. They managed very well to secure and reproduce their high socio-economic position which they had achieved during the heydays of trans-Himalayan trade, in spite of a number of adverse developments which severely affected their livelihood basis, such as the loss of British favourableness and tax privileges, the end of trans-Himalayan trade after the border closure in 1962 and the disappropriation of large sections of their land in the 1960s. The non-Shauka groups in the Johar valley have made substantial advancements in their socio-economic development due to the new opportunities provided by the affirmative action policy and other development measures of the Indian state, and due to the cessation of the suppressive relations of dependency from the Shauka elite with the end of the trade economy. Nevertheless, their catch-up development has not yet been able to fully close the gap to the group of the Johari Shaukas, who still form the local elite. In this section, I will take a closer look at the currently prevailing inequalities and disparities between the different population groups in the village of Sarmoli, based on village survey data from a stratified sample of 100 households collected in April 2012.

The current livelihoods of the people in Sarmoli are based on a combination of mostly subsistence-oriented small-scale agriculture cum animal husbandry and a range of off-farm income generating activities. The very small average landholdings of 0.15ha per household, mostly located in the immediate vicinity of the dwellings, does not allow for substantial cash-crop production and is mainly used as vegetable gardens, orchards and small crop-fields for self-use purposes. Respectively, agriculture and animal husbandry are only for about 12% of the adult population of Sarmoli their main occupation, and for another 7% a secondary occupation. Subsistence production plays a major role, with cash income generated only by about every second person involved in agricultural occupations. Women (23%) are more frequently involved in agricultural occupations than men (15%). Agricultural occupations are of highest importance among households of the General Caste group, where the share of adults involved in such tasks is as high as 30% for men and 40% for women. Many households have one or two cows which provide the daily fresh milk for the household members. In some cases fresh milk is also sold to neighbouring families with small children, since 46% of the households lack any dairy cattle (particularly SC households) and depend on purchasing milk. Cash income from agricultural or animal products is only generated in 16% of all households of Sarmoli, with clear disparities between the population groups: 38% of the General Caste households are involved in cash-crop production, while this is only the case for 9% of the 'Bhotia' households, and for no household in the sample from the SC group. Income from cash crops accounts for INR 1,006¹⁹ per capita and month in the involved households, and thus can only function as a supplement to the main income from off-farm sources. Agricultural cash-income is mostly generated by sales of potatoes, different vegetables, kidney beans, milk, eggs and *ghee* (clarified butter). While most households are no longer involved in the production of wool (94% of the households rear neither sheep nor goats), the woollen cottage industry (carpet- and blanket-weaving, felting, knitting), exclusively done by women and formerly of high importance for the 'Bhotia' household economies (Prasad 1989:153), still plays a significant role. In order to compensate for the losses from the interrupted trade, these activities were supported and facilitated by government programmes in late

¹⁹ INR 1006 equalled €14.37 at the time of survey.

the 1960s (Dangwal 2009:98), and later on by local NGOs and women self-help groups. It is mostly the women from the 'Bhotia' groups, i.e. Johari Shaukas and non-Shauka ST, who are involved in the woollen cottage industry. In Sarmoli about 43% of all women from these two groups were regularly occupied with such activities, while this was only the case for 6% of the women from the other population groups. In almost half of the cases (47%), the produce is sold in the market, and thus these women are able to generate an additional monthly income of INR 980²⁰ on average for their household.

Given the comparatively low local potential for generating income from the agricultural sector, the major share of Sarmoli households' cash income derives from off-farm occupations, which is also reflected in the occupational structure. About 77% of the men and 35% of the women (aged 18–65 years) of Sarmoli are involved in off-farm income generating activities, while only 9% of men and 11% of the women in this age group are pursuing cash income generating agricultural activities. It is again particularly the General Caste group in which cash-crop production absorbs more than a fifth of the working-age population, which might also be an explanation for the comparatively lower female participation rate in non-agricultural income-generating activities (Table 2).

Table 2: Participation in remunerated occupations

| (n=311) | participation rate in remunerated non-agricultural occupations (in age group 18–65 years) | | participation rate in remunerated agricultural occupations (in age group 18–65 years) | |
|-----------------|---|--------|---|--------|
| | male | female | male | female |
| Johari Shauka | 79% | 43% | 5% | 4% |
| non-Shauka ST | 75% | 42% | 3% | 6% |
| General Caste | 77% | 21% | 21% | 23% |
| Scheduled Caste | 75% | 40% | 0% | 0% |

Data: Survey Benz 2012

A closer look at the (cash income-generating) occupational structure in Sarmoli reveals great structural differences between the major population groups (Figure 13).

²⁰ INR 980 equalled €14.00 at the time of survey.

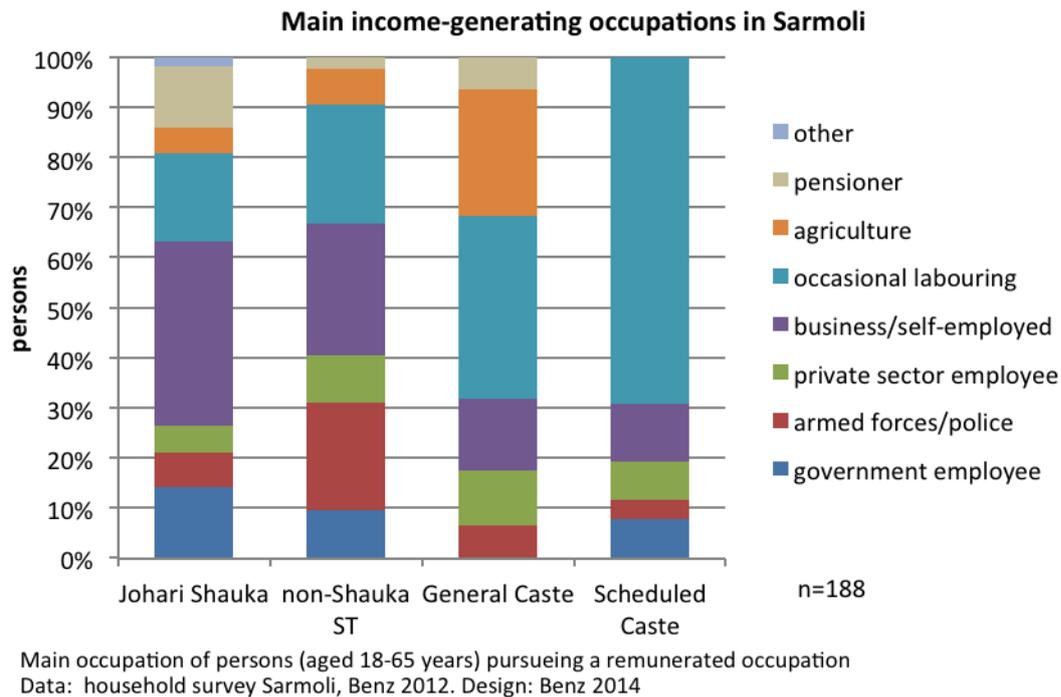


Figure 13: Main income-generating occupations of Sarmoli household members

Employment in the government sector is of high importance in every group with privileged access to government jobs through a quota system, while not a single government employee was found among the 63 income generating members in the surveyed GC households. Among the Johari Shauka the share of government sector employment was highest, and most often these employees occupied higher positions. In addition, the proportion of pensioners, which is also highest for the Johari Shauka, (in most cases) indicates former government sector employment. The Indian Army, paramilitary forces such as the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, and the regular police corps form an important source of employment particularly in the non-Shauka 'Bhotia' ST group; approx. every third male earner is employed in one of these occupations. The proportion of private sector employees is low in all population groups and involves only about 15% of all earners. This comparatively low share of private sector employment, as well as the fact that about half of these earners are employment migrants working in cities of the Indian plains and remitting to their household in Sarmoli, underline the severe scarcity of local employment opportunities in the private sector in Johar and in the Kumaon region. The difficult job market situation is also reflected in the fact that in the households of the sample more than every third young man (aged 20–35 years) with an academic qualification (Bachelor or higher) was unemployed and seeking a job at the time of survey.

In such a situation, self-employment provides an alternative for many, as can be seen in the high share of earners who are running their own small-scale businesses as their major occupation, ranging from 12% among the SC earners up to 37% among the Johari Shaukas. An additional 9% among all earners of Sarmoli run a business as a secondary occupation in order to complement the income from their main occupation. In some cases two or more businesses are run in parallel. Small-scale business ventures in Sarmoli mainly comprise market-oriented woollen cottage industries (51% of all

small-scale entrepreneurs²¹), the rental of rooms or cottages for tourists and visitors (40%), running small general stores and other shops (16%) and offering different crafts and services (10%), such as drivers, carpenters, electricians and others. On a local initiative by the *Sarmoli Jainti Van Panchayat* (Village Forest Council) and in cooperation with *Maati Sanghatan*, a village-based women cooperative, a 'Homestay' programme has been quite successfully implemented since 2004 in Sarmoli and neighbouring villages, which provides accommodation for tourists in villagers' houses (cf. Roy 2011). Through this programme, which is run and managed exclusively by local women in a cooperative venture, the participating women are able to generate an annual extra-income of about INR 22,000²² in average per homestay. The benefit of this extra-income, though, is quite unequally distributed across the population groups, with only 'Bhotia' households (70% of all homestays in the sample) and some GC households benefitting from this tourism-based source, but none of the surveyed SC households.

The most important income-generating occupation for SC households is occasional labouring. This mostly means irregular earnings from physically challenging work, e.g. in agriculture or on construction sites. Since it is characterized by exhaustive, unhealthy and often exploitative conditions, low social status, low wages, irregular payment and frequent unemployment, this field of occupation is certainly the least preferred option for job-seekers. The high share of more than two-thirds of SC earners working in this sector as their main occupation indicates the severe lack of employment alternatives for members of this group, despite of quota reservations in the government sector for SC people. This is probably due to the comparatively low education status in the SC group and their continued social stigmatization in the caste society (cf. Chauhan 2008; Shah et al. 2006).

The affirmative action policy as well as the general expansion and improvements of the public education system has effected rising education levels in the SC group over the last decades. Though, the pace of improvement was too slow and could not put an end to the situation that this group is still lagging behind other population groups in terms of education. This is true not only for India and Uttarakhand in general, but also for the Johar valley. In Sarmoli, the SC group shows the lowest education levels of all population groups. The average years of formal education acquired by adult SC household members is only 6.7 years for men and 6.4 years for women, which distances them from the leading group, the Johari Shaukas, by a gap of 4.1 years of education from men and 1.7 years for women (Table 3). Among the young adults (18 to 30 years old), the gap between the two groups has narrowed to 2.3 years for men—a slight ray of hope towards achieving greater social equality—but widened to 3.2 years for women.

²¹ Note that an entrepreneur can be involved in more than one business, so that the sum of answers in this multiple response set exceeds the number of respondents, and accordingly the sum of percentage values given here exceed 100%.

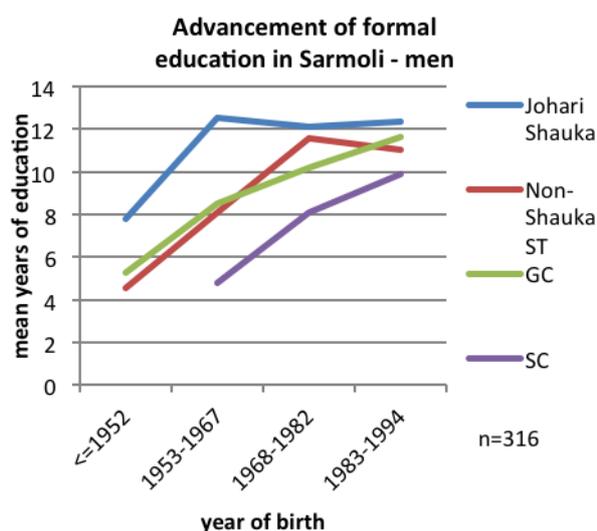
²² INR 22,000 equalled € 314.29 at the time of survey.

Table 3: Education levels in Sarmoli

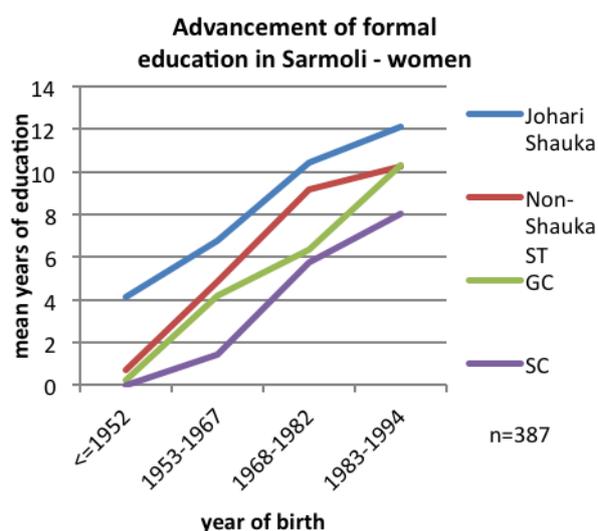
| | average years of formal education (adult population, 18+ years old) | | average years of formal education (young adults, 18-30 years old) | |
|-----------------|--|--------|--|--------|
| | male | female | male | female |
| Johari Shauka | 10.8 | 8.1 | 12.4 | 12.1 |
| non-Shauka ST | 10.1 | 6.7 | 11.0 | 10.3 |
| General Caste | 9.1 | 6.7 | 11.7 | 10.4 |
| Scheduled Caste | 6.7 | 6.4 | 9.9 | 8.1 |

Data: Survey Benz 2012

The Johari Shauka succeeded in maintaining and reproducing their leading position in terms of formal education in the Johar valley, which they occupied for the last two centuries, until the present. Though, due to the changing social, political and economic circumstances as well as readjusted livelihood strategies along with higher prioritization of formal education, their lead in education has increasingly been challenged by other population groups, particularly by the non-Shauka ‘Bhotias’ and General Castes. While for Johari Shauka men, the education levels (measured in average years of formal education) stagnated after the birth cohorts of the mid-1950s and seem to have reached a certain point of saturation, the other population groups could achieve continuous improvements in their male education levels with progressing birth cohorts (Figure 14).



Mean years of formal education in respective age cohort .
Data: Survey Benz 2012; Design: Benz 2014



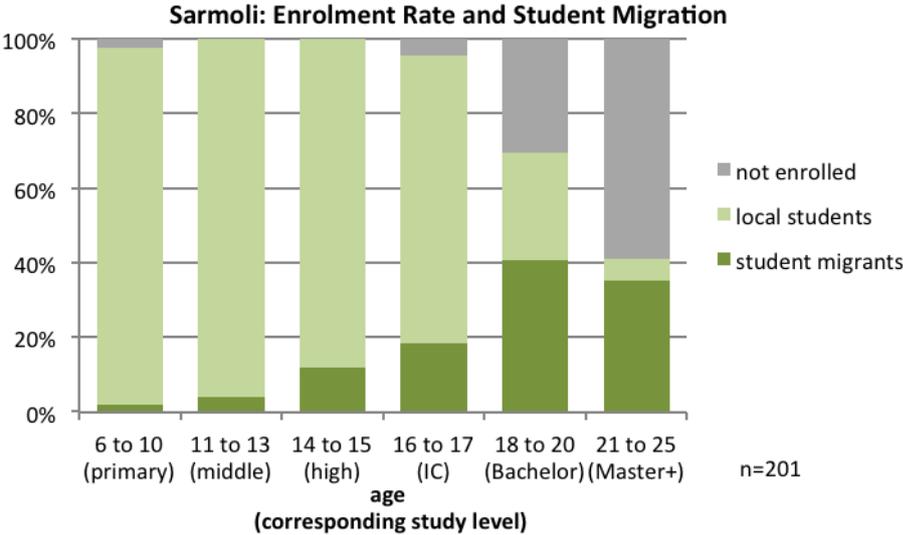
Mean years of formal education in respective age cohort .
Data: Survey Benz 2012; Design: Benz 2014

Figure 14: Rising education levels in Sarmoli: Men

Figure 15: Rising education levels in Sarmoli: Women

In this way, particularly the non-Shauka ST group and the General Caste group could nearly catch up to the level of the Johari Shaukas. The female educational expansion is still progressing in all four population groups and apparently has not yet reached a point of saturation. The female education

levels have steadily risen over the last decades, largely reproducing the same pattern of disparities along progressing cohorts: the highest education levels prevail among Johari Shauka women, followed by non-Shauka ST and GC women, while the lowest levels are constantly found among the SC women (Figure 15). A closer look at the unequal current education strategies followed by the households of the different groups provides important insights into how the Johari Shaukas (at least until the present) were able to reproduce their leading position in education.



Share of local students (enrolled in Munsiri) and student migrants of 100 Sarmoli households in respective age group.
 Data: Household survey Sarmoli, Benz 2012. Design: Benz 2014

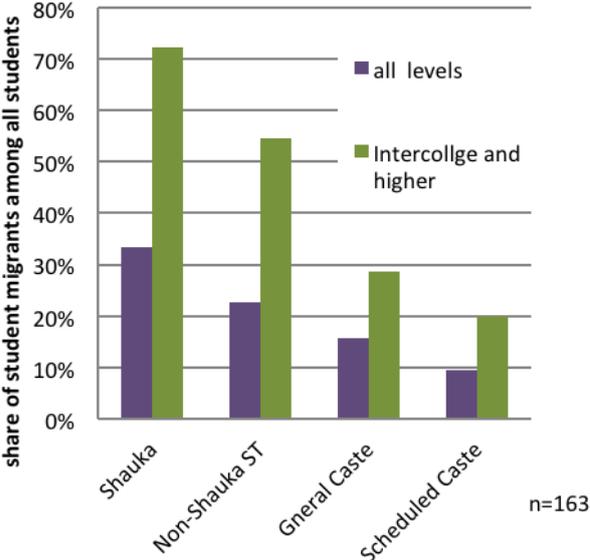
Figure 16: Enrolment and student migration in Sarmoli

Universal enrolment has been achieved in Sarmoli among all population groups from the primary to the high school levels (Figure 16). In the surveyed households, out of 85 children in the age group of six to 15 years (the official school age between the primary and high school level), there was only one child (in an SC household) who was not enrolled in school. Even among the 16 to 17-year-olds (corresponding to the intercollege level), all children of the surveyed households were enrolled except of those from the SC households, in which only two thirds in this age group were still enrolled. Enrolment rates decrease beyond the intercollege level, and strong disparities between the population groups become obvious at the higher levels of education: the share of 18 to 25-year-olds (corresponding to the Bachelor and Master levels²³) who were still pursuing formal education was highest among the GC group (66%) followed by the Johari Shauka (57%), while among the non-Shauka ST 40%, and among the SC only 29% were still enrolled.

Due to severe limitations of the locally available supply of formal education with respect to the prestige, range and level of institutions as well as to their quality of teaching, many parents and students opt for alternative non-local education options. Among all students, the proportion of

²³ Per official definition, certain age groups are assigned to certain levels of education in India. But in practice, students of a certain age are often enrolled in lower levels of education than officially assigned. In Sarmoli, this could particularly be observed among students in the age groups of 16 years and older. Late enrolment, class repetitions and interruptions are among the reasons for such over-aged enrolment. In Sarmoli, many of those students who have reached the official age assigned for Bachelor studies, for example, actually are still pursuing their inter-college education.

migrant students — in this study defined as students of Sarmoli households studying outside the Johar valley — is steadily rising from lower to higher levels of education (Figure 16). While at the primary and middle school level less than 5% of the students study outside Johar, the migrants’ share rises to 12% and 19% for the high school and inter-college levels respectively. At the Bachelor and Master levels, a strong majority of 59% and 86% respectively attend colleges and universities in the cities or pursue other post-graduate courses (e.g., for teacher certificates or professional trainings) there. Student migration is locally seen as the only way to get access to higher education, to quality education and to desired specialist education (e.g. in the fields of engineering, medicine and business administration), all of which are considered preconditions for successful higher level professional careers. Though, in Sarmoli access to such non-local educational opportunities is highly unequally distributed, as the comparison of the different population groups regarding their participation in student migration reveals (Figure 17). The disparities are particularly pronounced at the decisive higher levels of education, where 72% of all Johari Shauka students and still 55% of all non-Shauka ST students study outside Johar, while only 27% and 20% of the students from GC and SC households, respectively, are migrant students.



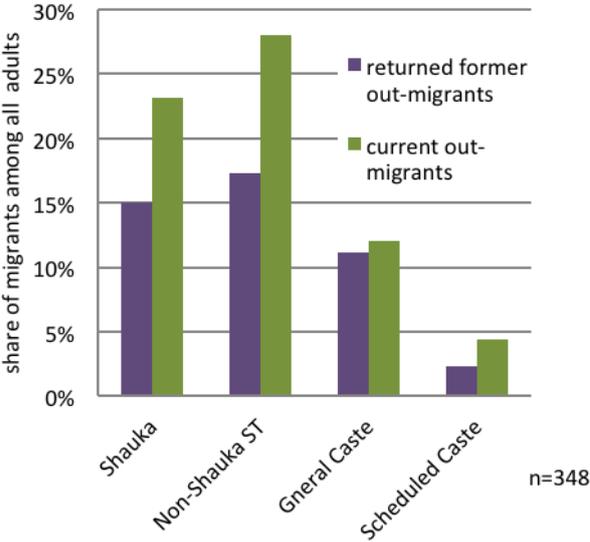
Share of migrant students among all students of 100 Sarmoli households.
 Data: household survey Sarmoli, Benz 2012. Design: Benz 2014

Figure 17: Unequal participation in student migration

The average distance covered by student migrants from Munsiri increases with the level of education attended. While the majority of student migrants enrolled at the high school and intercollege levels study in nearby places within the Pithoragarh district (but outside the Munsiri tehsil), a vast majority of 93% of students pursuing Bachelor- and Master studies are enrolled in institutions in Uttarakhand (outside the Pithoragarh district) or in other states of India. Within the Pithoragarh district, the city of Pithoragarh is the by far most important destination of student migrants from Munsiri. Within Uttarakhand, the cities of Almora, Dehradun and Haldwani (in this order) are the most frequently selected places, attracting together more than 80% of all Bachelor and Master student migrants from Munsiri. Only a small minority of less than 5% of the migrant students from Munsiri study in places outside Uttarakhand, with New Delhi being the most favoured destination here.

Munsiari is itself a destination for student migration for children from the upper Johar valley, since Munsiari forms the educational centre of the valley and offers a variety of schools and the only degree college of the valley. Most of these internal student migrants are enrolled at the high school, intercollege and Bachelor level education in Munsiari. Several private hostels in Munsiari cater to these individual students from upper-valley villages. In some cases, even entire households are shifted for their children’s education. In the sample of 100 households there were three households (one each from the group of the Johari Shaukas, the non-Shauka ST and GC) who had moved from upper-valley villages to Munsiari when their children had reached primary or middle school age. All of them stated that one reason among others was to get their children enrolled in schools of better quality in Munsiari; one household cited education as the most important reason for moving.

The above outlined disparities between the population groups with respect to participation in student migration strategies is paralleled by disparities regarding migration strategies in general. Among the ‘Bhotia’ population groups of Sarmoli, migration to places outside the Munsiari tehsil is much more frequently practiced than in the households of the other population groups. For example, in the Johari Shauka households, about 23% of the adult members were living in places outside the Munsiari tehsil at the time of survey in 2012 (Figure 18). Among the non-Shauka ST, the migrants’ share was even as high as 28%. This is in strong contrast to the households of the General Caste group, where only 12% of the adult members were migrants, and to the SC group, were only 4% were migrants. The fact that the respective shares for former, returned migrants in each population groups provide a similar pattern indicates that the current inequalities in migration participation in Sarmoli are not a new phenomenon, but rather build on a longer history of continued inequalities, which have been reproduced over time.



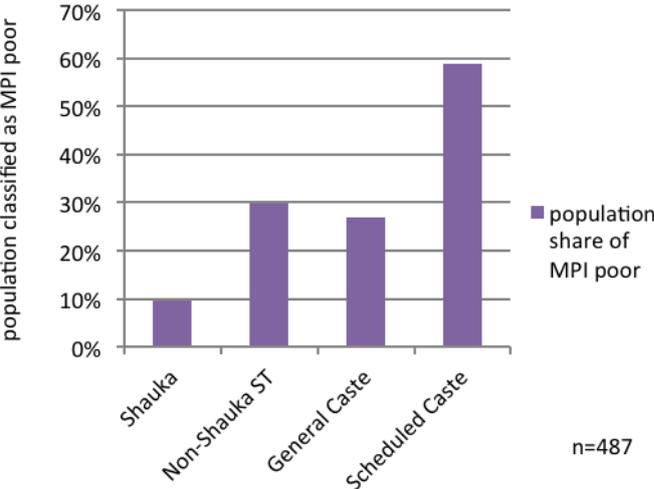
Share of former and current out-migrants from Johar among all adult members of 100 Sarmoli households.
 Data: household survey Sarmoli, Benz 2012. Design: Benz 2014

Figure 18: Unequal participation in migration strategies

As an outcome of their migration activities, many households of Sarmoli have become multi-local, i.e. with members dispersed between two or more places of living. The unequal prevalence of multi-local households in the different population groups corresponds to their unequal degree of involvement in migration strategies. While two-thirds of the non-Shauka ST households, and 42% of the Johari

Shauka households formed multi-local social structures with members living outside the Munsiri tehsil, this was only the case for 36% of the General Caste households, and for 23% of the SC households. All except of one of the multi-local households in the GC and SC were characterized by bi-local structures, meaning their members were only living in one place outside the Munsiri tehsil in addition to their family home in Sarmoli. The multi-local ‘Bhotia’ households, in contrast, often were distributed among three or four different places.

Obviously, the ‘Bhotia’ groups of Sarmoli were skilled in translating their former trade-based and animal husbandry-based mobile and multi-local livelihoods into equally mobile and multi-local off-farm income-based livelihoods, including high levels of migration for education, business and formal employment. Already having had extended, multi-local social networks in the era of the trade economy, the ‘Bhotia’ today again build on such networks to facilitate their migrations. To have a supportive person, e.g. a close family member, a relative, a friend or a business partner, in a certain place facilitates migration to this place and lowers the costs and insecurities of migration. Such multi-local ties enable in-place assistance, e.g. with respect to providing information, finding a job and a place to live, getting contacts and overcoming bureaucratic obstacles. The multi-locality of households and social networks is an important asset for the realization of migration-related livelihood strategies and thus can contribute to a household’s well-being as well as to facilitating translocal development processes in general (cf. Benz 2014b; Benz 2014c).



Data: household survey Sarmoli, Benz 2012. Design: Benz 2014

Figure 19: Prevalence of multidimensional poverty in Sarmoli

The disparities between the population groups of Sarmoli regarding education strategies tie well in with the above outlined disparities regarding employment structures: higher levels of education as well as access to higher quality education, desired specialized fields of study and well-reputed educational institutions in other places obviously correspond with higher levels of off-farm and formal sector employment, government sector employment and prestigious higher-ranking positions. This can be seen for the Johari Shauka and to a lesser extent also for the non-Shauka ST and GC groups. Deficiency or lack of such educational opportunities seems to translate into higher levels of informal and irregular employment, low and insecure income, frequent dependency on day labouring, engagement in low status occupations, and a higher dependence on agriculture and animal husbandry, as can be seen for the SC and partly for the GC group in Sarmoli. Similarly, these

educational and employment-related factors correspond to the socio-economic situation and well-being of households of the different groups. The prevalence of multi-dimensional poverty is highest among the SC group. Measured by UNDP's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), which is a household-based measure of basic indicators for well-being covering education, health and living standards²⁴, 59% of the SC population in Sarmoli is living in poverty (Figure 19). The poverty rate in the non-Shauka ST group and in the General Caste group stands at much lower values of 30% and 27% respectively. The Johari Shauka group is the group least affected by poverty, with less than 10% poor among all people of this group.

6 Conclusion

The detailed analysis of the development trajectory of inequalities and their most recent manifestations in the Johar valley has shown how deeply rooted the contemporary patterns of disparities are. The current socio-economic inequalities and social stratification in Johar are the outcome of a more than 200-year sequence of historical events, fluctuating socio-economic relations and changing geo-political and economic contexts, within which inequalities have been created, modified and reproduced over generations. The current inequalities can only be understood by taking into account their deep historical roots and the particular development trajectories from which they resulted. The historical trajectory in the Johar valley has been shaped by a range of factors and interventions at different scale levels reaching from the local to the global, as well as by the active and strategic responses of affected local groups.

In accordance with the considerations related to the concept of positionality, the history of the Johari Shaukas can in large parts be read as a history of active and strategic re-positioning in relation to other groups and institutions. The ongoing re-articulation of Johari Shauka identity in different contexts and at different times served as a tool to cope with the challenges of changing conditions, as well as to reproduce and/or improve their socio-economic status. They made use of their particular geographical location at the interface between the ecological zones of the Indian hills and lowlands and the Tibetan plateau by positioning themselves as trans-Himalayan traders living on the exchange of mutually exclusive goods between these zones. In order to facilitate their trade and to crowd out competitors, the Johari Shaukas, in an act of identity policy, (re-)presented themselves to their Tibetan trade partners as quasi-Tibetans, only superficially Hinduized, speaking the Tibetan language, being connected through generations-old trade partnerships between certain Tibetan and Johari Shauka families, and only loosely following Hindu dietary rules, e.g. by accepting beef in their meals. This articulation of their identity vis-à-vis the Tibetans allowed the Johari Shaukas to establish exclusive and durable trade partnerships in the so-called *mitra* system, which also secured them a monopoly in trans-Himalayan trade in their area. At the same time, in order to counteract others' derogatory attempts to position them as out-caste 'crypto-Buddhists' and to improve their relational

²⁴ The MPI measures multiple dimensions of poverty at the level of the household and its individual members along the dimensions health, education and living standards. In the health dimension it considers nutrition and child mortality; in the education dimension it considers adult education levels and current child enrolment; and in the living standards dimension it considers the availability of drinking water, electricity, adequate sanitation facilities, the type of floor in the home, the type of cooking fuel used and a range of material assets, e.g. related to access to information and mobility. For more details on the composition and calculation of the MPI, see UNDP (2014b:8-10).

social status in Hindu society, the Johari Shaukas re-articulated their identity very differently vis-à-vis the Kumaoni hill society by presenting themselves as high-caste Hindu Rajputs, immigrated in ancient times from the plains. They stressed this re-articulation of their identity during the 19th and early 20th century by profoundly undergoing a process of 'Sanskritization' in their exhibited 'orthodox' religious conduct (thus attempting to become more 'Hindu' than the Khasia Rajputs of Kumaon), making 'Singh' (as an indicator for being Rajput) part of virtually every male personal name, and by engaging Brahmins for holding their religious ceremonies and rituals. In this re-articulation vis-à-vis the Kumaoni hill society, a clear boundary was drawn towards other 'Bhotia' groups of Kumaon and Garhwal as well as to the Tibetans, which is in sharp contrast to the articulation of identity vis-à-vis the Tibetans.

After the onset of British colonial rule in Kumaon, the Johari Shaukas made use of their unique geo-political situatedness. Wedged between the zones of influence in the imperialist struggle between the superpowers in the context of the Great Game, they positioned themselves as ready accessories of the British, e.g. in the form of under-cover surveyors, informants and local functionaries. In return for their strategic re-positioning vis-à-vis the British, hence their cooperation, they largely benefitted from the British pro-Shauka policy and from participation in the colonial economy as part of a globalizing imperialist world system. Increasing trade volumes and reduced taxes under British rule allowed the Johari Shaukas to realize huge surplus from trade, which turned them into quasi-feudal landlords forming the socio-economic and political elite of their area. They further benefitted from their strategic positioning vis-à-vis the British in terms of education, local political power positions and employment in the colonial administration.

With the end of British colonial rule and the foundation of India, the Johari Shaukas made yet another strategic move to re-articulate their identity in ways which were in stark contrast to their previous self-representation. In order to re-position themselves vis-à-vis the Indian state and to gain access to benefits from its affirmative action policy, e.g. in the form of quota access to higher educational institutions and government sector employment, they were then claiming a tribal identity. Former meticulously watched boundaries separating Johari Shauka identity from all non-Hindu origins and from other 'Bhotia' groups were suddenly torn down and new strategic alliances formed by re-articulating Johari Shauka identity in the framework of a joint 'Bhotia' tribal identity. This new identity was powerfully articulated by the Kumaoni Bhotia Association, established as a political lobby group just for this purpose, portraying the former affluent feudal elite of the Johari Shaukas as being part of a 'backward people' in dire need of preferential state support.

The case of the Johari Shaukas shows how strategic positionality has been used by this group to obtain and secure preferential access to resources (e.g. trade income, education, government sector employment and political power positions) by strategic positioning and identity policy in changing contexts. Through these flexible re-positionings, the Johari Shauka could defend and reproduce their socio-economic position. Thus strategic positionality has been used as just another tool of social reproduction.

In line with the theories of social reproduction, the presented case also shows that education has served as a decisive mechanism for producing and reproducing social inequalities. The Johari Shaukas used education as a strategic tool to secure and reproduce their dominating socio-economic position in a changing environment in which they lost the sources previously securing their position (decline in trade, border closure, loss of landholdings through the Zamindari Abolition and Land Reforms Act). They strategically put emphasis on higher education as the key to obtaining highly valued off-farm

employment, particularly in the government sector, in order to compensate the loss of other sources of privilege. In this way they could reproduce their hegemonic social position and maintain socio-economic distance to the other groups, who could not in the same way, intensity and pace switch to higher education strategies and higher formal employment positions.

The Johari Shaukas have been able to defend their privileged position in the local society of Sarmoli (and Johar in general) up to the present day. Their strategic re-positioning and re-articulation, i.e. strategic self-presentation, identity policy and the making and de-making of strategic alliances in particular circumstances and places at particular times, has proven effective not only for safeguarding their livelihood in dynamically changing contexts and for securing benefits and compensating losses, but also as a tool of social reproduction and maintaining a hegemonic socio-economic position vis-à-vis other groups in local society. The particular case study of the Johari Shauka presented in this paper strongly underlines the need to include a relational, geographical and historical dimension to the analysis of inequality. In order to gain a better understanding of the contemporary patterns of inequality, as well as to reveal their deep historical roots, the long history of re-positionings and re-articulations of identities in complex and dynamically changing relational fields, as well as their success and failure at certain times in certain places and contexts, needs to be taken into account.

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Information on the competence network Crossroads Asia

The competence network Crossroads Asia derives its name from the geographical area extending from eastern Iran to western China and from the Aral Sea to northern India. The scholars collaborating in the competence network pursue a novel, 'post-area studies' approach, making thematic figurations and mobility the overarching perspectives of their research in Crossroads Asia. The concept of figuration implies that changes, minor or major, within one element of a constellation always affect the constellation as a whole; the network will test the value of this concept for understanding the complex structures framed by the cultural, political and socio-economic contexts in Crossroads Asia. Mobility is the other key concept for studying Crossroads Asia, which has always been a space of entangled interaction and communication, with human beings, ideas and commodities on the move across and beyond cultural, social and political borders. Figurations and mobility thus form the analytical frame of all three main thematic foci of our research: conflict, migration, and development.

- Five sub-projects in the working group "Conflict" will focus upon specific localized conflict-figurations and their relation to structural changes, from the interplay of global politics, the erosion of statehood, and globalization effects from above and below, to local struggles for autonomy, urban-rural dynamics and phenomena of diaspora. To gain a deeper understanding of the rationales and dynamics of conflict in Crossroads Asia, the sub-projects aim to analyze the logics of the genesis and transformation of conflictual figurations, and to investigate autochthonous conceptions of, and modes of dealing with conflicts. Particular attention will be given to the interdependence of conflict(s) and mobility.
- Six sub-projects in the working group "Migration" aim to map out trans-local figurations (networks and flows) within Crossroads Asia as well as figurations extending into both neighboring and distant areas (Arabian Peninsula, Russia, Europe, Australia, America). The main research question addresses how basic organizational and functional networks are structured, and how these structures affect what is on the move (people, commodities, ideas etc.). Conceptualizing empirical methods for mapping mobility and complex connectivities in trans-local spaces is a genuine desideratum. The aim of the working group is to refine the method of qualitative network analysis, which includes flows as well as their structures of operation, and to map mobility and explain mobility patterns.
- In the "Development"-working group four sub-projects are focusing on the effects of spatial movements (flows) and interwoven networks at the micro level with regard to processes of long-term social change, and with a special focus on locally perceived livelihood opportunities and their potential for implementation. The four sub-projects focus on two fundamental aspects: first, on structural changes in processes of transformation of patterns of allocation and distribution of resources, which are contested both at the household level and between individual and government agents; secondly, on forms of social mobility, which may create new opportunities, but may also cause the persistence of social inequality.

The competence network understands itself as a mediator between the academic study of Crossroads Asia and efforts to meet the high demand for information on this area in politics and the public. Findings of the project will feed back into academic teaching, research outside the limits of the competence network, and public relations efforts. Further information on Crossroads Asia is available at www.crossroads-asia.de.

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