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Address of the Author of the Publication:

Dr. J. G. REINHARD, 155 Fir Street, New Lenox, Ill. 60451, USA.

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Tel. (05 51) 2 10 34

JOHAN G. REINHARD, New Lenox, Ill.:

Film E 2196

Kusunda (Nepal) – Consecration of Hunting Equipment

Author of the Publication: JOHAN G. REINHARD

With 3 Figures

Summary of the Film:

Kusunda (Nepal) – Consecration of Hunting Equipment. The Kusunda arranges hunting equipment and ritual objects at the place of worship, makes sacred drawings, offers incense, consecrates the bows and arrows and exchanges auspicious markings with those present.

Inhalt des Films:

Kusunda (Nepal) – Weihung der Jagdwaffen. Ein Kusunda stellt Jagdgeräte und rituelle Gegenstände auf dem Kultplatz auf, macht sakrale Zeichnungen, opfert Weihrauch, weiht die Pfeile und Bögen und tauscht mit seinen Gefährten glücksbringende Zeichen aus.

Résumé du Film:

Kusunda (Népal) – Consécration des armes de chasse. Un Kusunda arrange les engins de chasse et des objets rituels sur le lieu de culte, fait des peintures sacrées, fait offrande d'encens, consacre les arcs et les flèches et échange avec ses compagnons des signes portant chance.

General Preliminary Remarks¹

The Kusunda were until recently a nomadic hunting and gathering tribe which roamed widely throughout the middle hill region of Nepal. They lived by hunting with bows and arrows, gathering forest produce, and trading and begging in villages. Today this tribe is nearly extinct. Of those few Kusunda still alive, most of those married have taken spouses from other castes and many of these Kusunda are themselves offsprings of such unions. Most know little of Kusunda customs of the past, and only a few still speak the Kusunda language, which appears to be

¹ The research upon which this article is based was supported by grants from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research and the Austrian Academy of Sciences. Film material was contributed by the Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film, Göttingen.

unrelated to any major language family in Asia. The term „Kusunda“ is applied to them by outsiders, and they prefer to call themselves *gilong dei mihaq* (people of the forest) or *ban raja* (kings of the forest) in Nepali.

Due to the disintegration of this tribe, it is difficult to present a coherent picture of their past culture, and they are so widely dispersed that significant variations in customs exist at present. The situation is further complicated by the Kusunda claim of belonging to the twiceborn Thakuri caste. Hence they claim to have Thakuri clan names and to follow (or have followed in the past) many Thakuri customs. Although most Kusunda have become settled to the extent that they remain in one village for at least a few years and engage in agriculture to some extent, a few Kusunda still possess bows and arrows and hunt for a part of their subsistence.



Fig. 1. River valley near Gorkha in which Kusunda live and hunt

Background to the Film

The Kusunda worship *Gwang Qaoli* is one of their most important deities. It is this deity which aids in hunting and is considered master of the bow and arrow. An adult tiger is his escort, and thus is considered sacred by the Kusunda. If a tiger roars often, then *Gwang Qaoli* is thought to be angry and must be worshipped. Offerings are regularly made to *Gwang Qaoli* at the two Hindu *Dasain* festivals in the spring and fall.

When new bows and arrows are constructed, before being used some Kusunda consider they should first be consecrated in a ritual for *Gwang Qaoli*. On the day

they are consecrated this deity is thought to enter the bow, and it should not be used the remainder of the day. Following the consecration, *Gwang Qaoli* eats the essence of any game killed with the bow and arrow. The consecration ritual should take place soon after the sun rises. Ideally saplings, red powder, cloves, hulled rice, areca nuts, red and white strips of cloth, oil, liquor, hot coals, water, and bows and arrows should be taken to a place away from the village. An area about a yard in diameter is cleared and two stones (one large and one small) are placed in the middle. Earth is placed around the base of the saplings, and the saplings and bows and arrows are tied with strips of cloth while the worshipper says a prayer to *Gwang Qaoli*. A cross, representing the four directions, is drawn using red powder. Rice and red powder are placed in small piles within each of the four angles formed.



Fig. 2. Kusunda with bow and arrows

Some red powder is placed on the small stone, while cloves and an areca nut are placed near the large stone. Incense is put on the hot coals, and the bows and arrows are circled above it. Red powder is applied to the bows, then red powder, cloves, and nuts are placed on the large rock. Incense is circled around this rock, and liquor

is poured on to hot coals. *Gwang Qaoli* is given a respectful salutation by the worshipper. People present should then touch their heads to the large stone and auspicious markings (*tika*) are applied by the worshipper.

Notes on Making of the Film

The film was made on February 8, 1969 near the village of Dhanubas in Dang District, West Nepal. A Kusunda man (age ca. 60) is the principle character appearing in the film. He is married to a Magar (hill tribe) woman and has three sons.

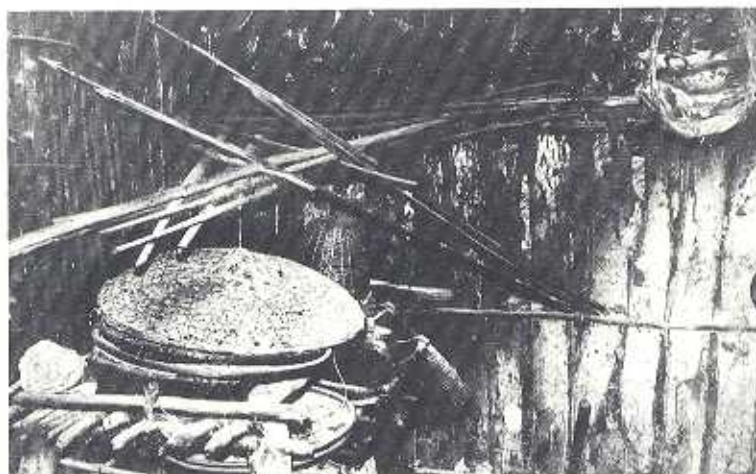


Fig. 3. Bows and arrows being hardened over a fire

He primarily gains a subsistence from his work as a shaman, hunting, and his herd of goats. He is bilingual, speaking Kusunda and Nepali. The consecration was performed at the instigation of the ethnographer who paid for the construction of bows and arrows and net bags. Both the net bags and money appear in the film.

Technical data: camera: Bell and Howell Model 70-D; lenses: Switar 16 mm, Bausch and Lomb 25 mm, Yvar 75 mm; camera speed: 24 f/s; film material: Kodak Plus X, black and white negative film type 7231.

Description of Film

The Kusunda carry equipment and ritual items to a place in a stream bed. The objects are placed, and strips of cloth are tied around the saplings and bows and arrows. Drawings are made on the stone, incense is offered, and bows and arrows are circled over the incense. Auspicious markings are exchanged between the worshipper and people present. The objects are gathered together and carried away.

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Sources of the Figures

Fig. 1–3: photography J.G. REINHARD.