



The Story of Goddess Yuma Sammang

A god of the Limbu community in Nepal descends to earth disguised as a goddess named Yuma Sammang. The goddess wants to see if people will recognize her. She meets two brothers and gives them clues to her identity. What will happen if the brothers do not recognize her?



The Story of Goddess Yuma Sammang

Namoti Nembang

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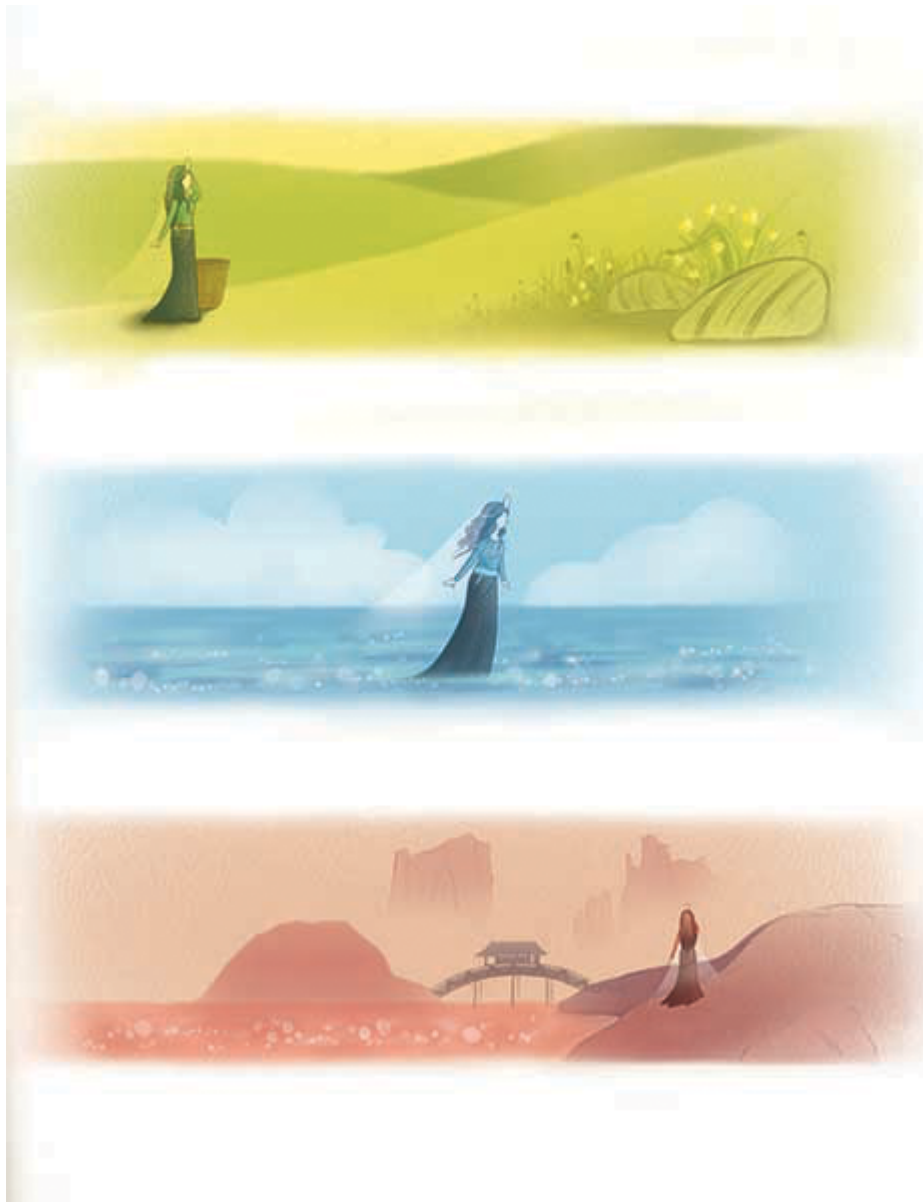
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Long ago, there was nothing. Then, a god of the Limbu community named Lord Tagera Nigwaphuma Mang created the sky, the planets, the constellations, the sun, the moon, and the earth. To make the earth beautiful, he also created water, air, and fire. He then created plants, birds, and animals. In the sacred land of Sodhung Munatembe, he created his ancestors, Sawayethang human beings, to resemble him. Then, he returned to the blue land of his origin, Sodhung Pomu Lepmu Tembe, and sat down to meditate.



A long time passed. One day, Tagera Nigwaphuma Mang got up from his meditation. He wondered what the Sawayethangs were doing on earth. Are they happy or sad? Do they have enough to eat, or are they hungry? He decided to go to earth and see. To disguise himself, he took the form of Yuma Sammang, a beautiful lady. Yuma Sammang wore gold and silver ornaments. She carried a silver and gold basket with cotton, thread, and other gold and silver colored materials that she needed for her loom. She tied a golden khurmi on her waist and headed for the sacred land of Sodhung Munatembe.



To Yuma Sammam's surprise, there were no Sawayethangs in Sodhung Munatembe. Where did all my children go? she worried. She went looking for Sawayethangs all across the earth. She started her journey in Munatembe and crossed Miring Warak, the Blue Sea. Next, she crossed Hembang Warak, the Red Sea. Finally, she arrived at Sinyuk Laaje, the ancestral land of the Chinese people which is now called China. The Sawayethangs were not there either.



She crossed hills, mountains, rivers, lakes, and ponds and finally arrived at Muden Laaje, the land that is now called Tibet. But there were no Sawayethangs there either. This made Yuma Sammang very sad. She was also very tired. She decided to rest in Tibet for a while.



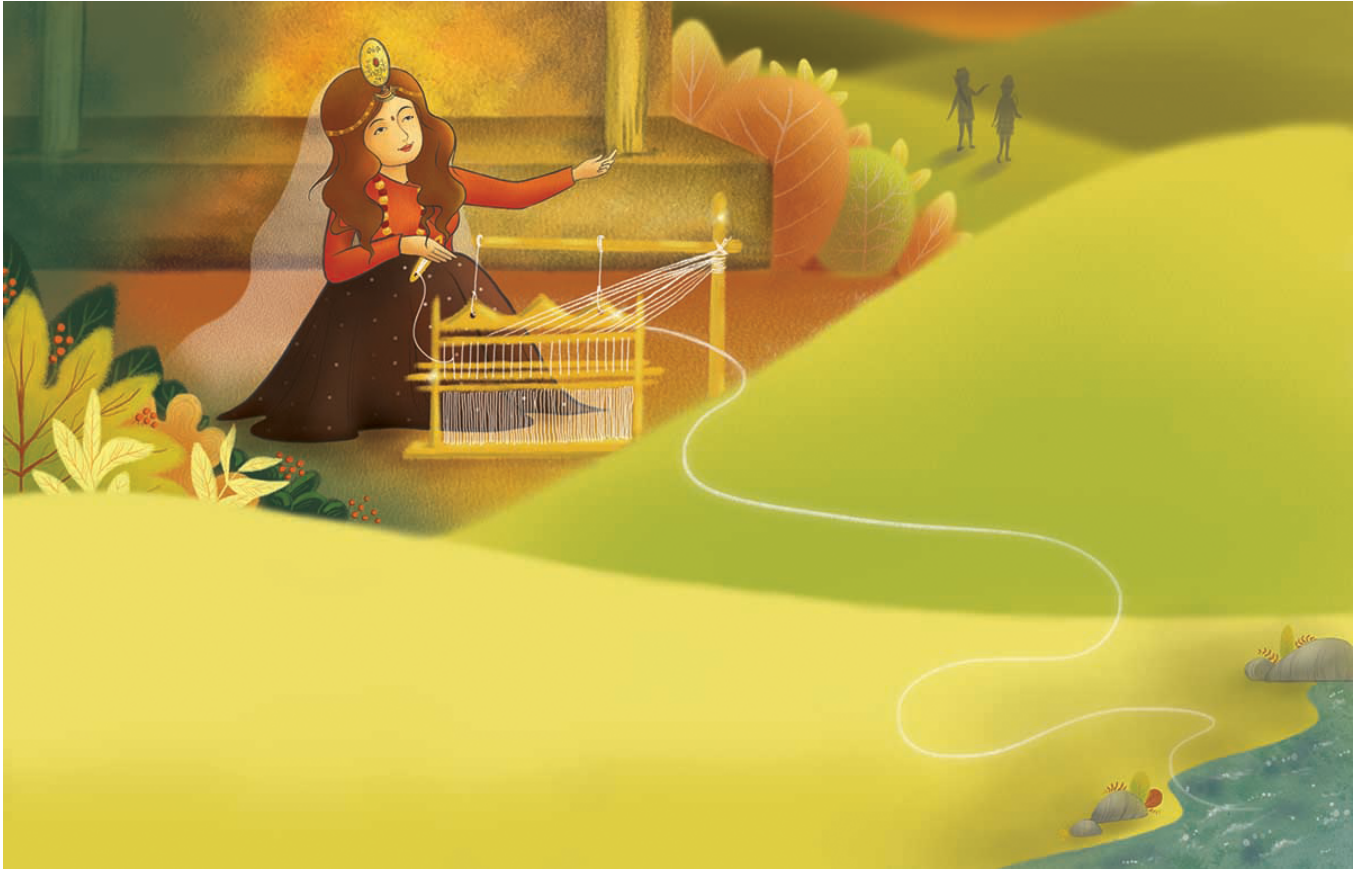
When she was ready to search again, Yuma Sammang went over snowy mountains and headed south. She crossed hills, mountains, lakes and ponds and finally arrived at Sawayethang Pangphe, the ancestral settlement of the Limbus. There, settled in the forest, she saw her youngest descendants, the Sawayethangs. She was relieved to see them.



She wondered if the Sawayethangs would recognize her. "I won't introduce myself but I'll give them some clues," she decided. She proceeded from the confluence of the Tamor and Nibhu Rivers to the source of the northeastern river. She liked the beautiful sunny place called Maxingwa that lay between the bank of the river and the forest. She sat down and set up her loom. Just then, two brothers named Jayachitre and Kharbale arrived. They belonged to the Mabohang clan of the Sawayethangs. They often hunted with the help of bows and arrows and cast fishing nets in the Nibhu River. The brothers saw a beautiful woman decked out in gold and silver ornaments. She was working at a golden loom using threads made of gold and silver. They were amazed. Yuma Sammang looked up at them. "Hello," she said. "Who are you? Where are you from?"



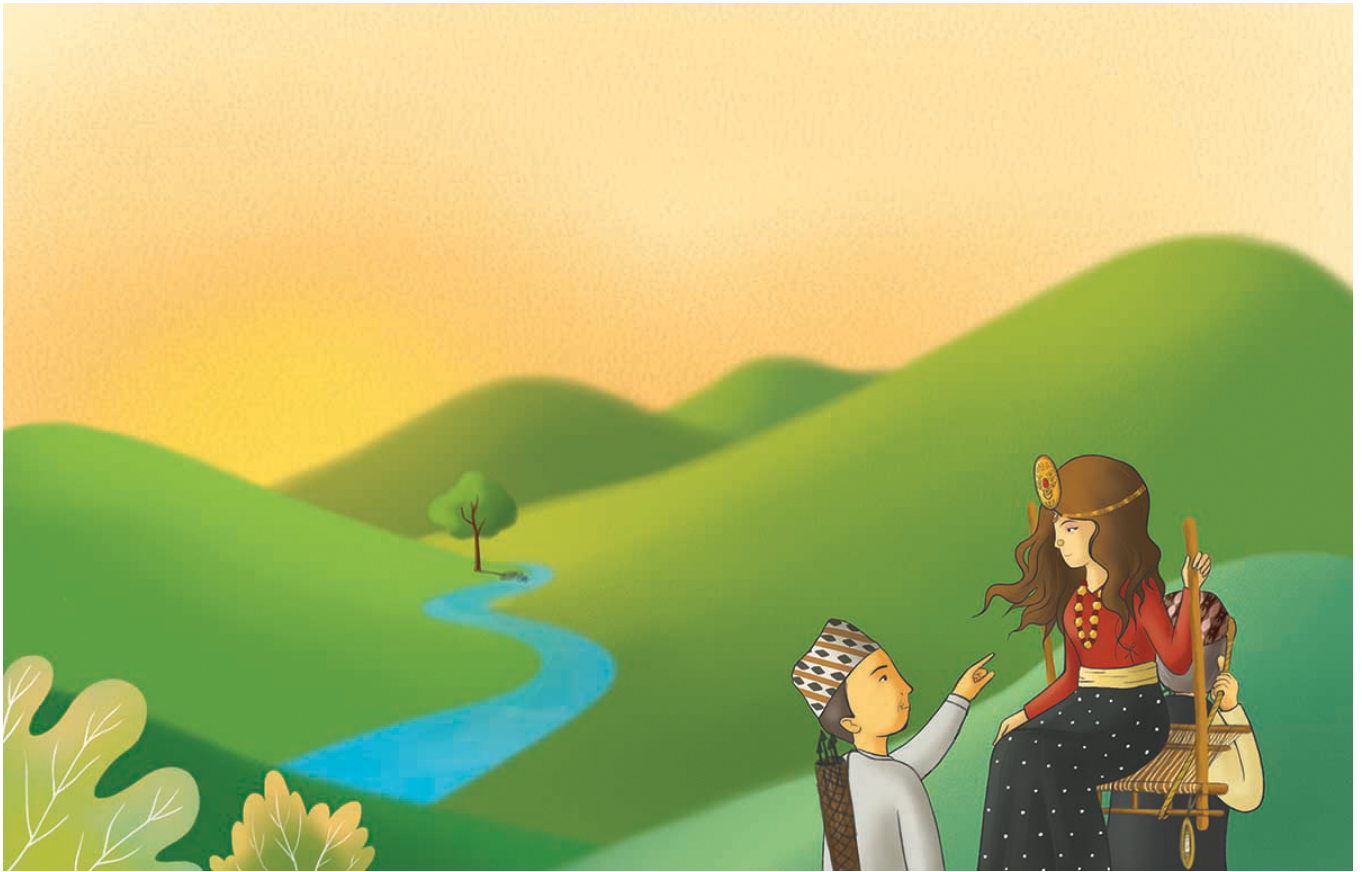
The two brothers felt embarrassed. Kharbale managed to ask, "Where do you live?" "I live on a ridge above Yakchana Ghat," said Yuma Sammang. "How do you live in a forest? Are you not afraid of the tigers and bears?" asked the brothers. "What else can I do? I'm all by myself. I set up my loom and weave. I have no problem with anyone," Yuma Sammang replied. "Why don't you come with us to our place? There, you can work without any interference," said the two brothers. Yuma Sammang was not happy that the brothers did not recognize her. "Instead of me going to your house, why don't you two come to my house? If you don't mind, you can help me carry my loom and its accessories and follow me," she said. Jayachitre and Kharbale did as Yuma Sammang asked.



They arrived at Yuma Sammam's house late in the afternoon. Yuma Sammam encouraged the two brothers to take a rest. She wanted to give them a clue about her identity, so she sat down at her veranda to work at her loom. The two brothers saw that the silver thread line extended all the way from the veranda to the Tamor River in the east. How can this be possible? How can the house, the courtyard, and the gardens all look so spick and span? Who is this ethereal beauty? Is she a human or a goddess? They felt uncomfortable. So, they got up from their seats quietly and headed for their home.



A few days later, the brothers' father ordered them to go and get some fish. They carried the fishing net and marched with bows and arrows on their shoulders. They took their dogs along as well. The dogs climbed onto a rock a short distance away and started barking. When the two brothers arrived at the rock, they saw a golden deer grazing at the confluence of the Siva and Nibhu Rivers. But when the brothers reached the rivers, the deer was gone. After some time, the dogs went missing also. In place of the deer, they saw the same ethereal beauty from the Yakchana Ghat, busy working at her golden loom. The two brothers went to her and asked, "Have you seen our dogs or a golden deer?" Yuma Sammang, who was busy weaving, replied that she hadn't. The brothers did not believe her. "Why are you working in a forest where there is danger of tigers and bears? Our house up at Faktep Village is safer. Why don't you come with us to our place? There, you can work without any interference," the brothers said to her.



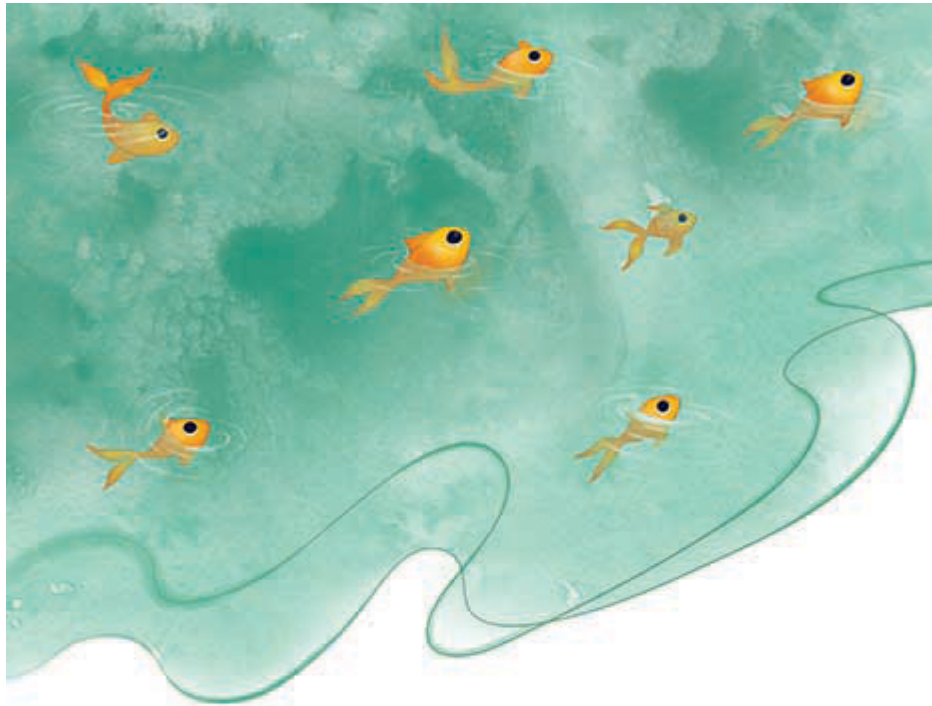
Yuma Sammang was disappointed that the two brothers still had not recognized her. She decided to introduce herself to the villagers instead. “Will you please help me carry my loom?” she asked the brothers. “I will teach the young ladies in the village how to use it.” The two brothers climbed the Yasok ridge and headed east. They placed Yuma Sammang on top of the loom and took turns carrying her. After they had walked some miles, they rested for a while and stretched their bodies. Yuma Sammang looked north toward Nambhun Yak Mountain. In front of her, in the northeast direction, was the Phaktep village that extended toward the northern side of the Seho Namlang ridge. The two brothers pointed out their village to her.



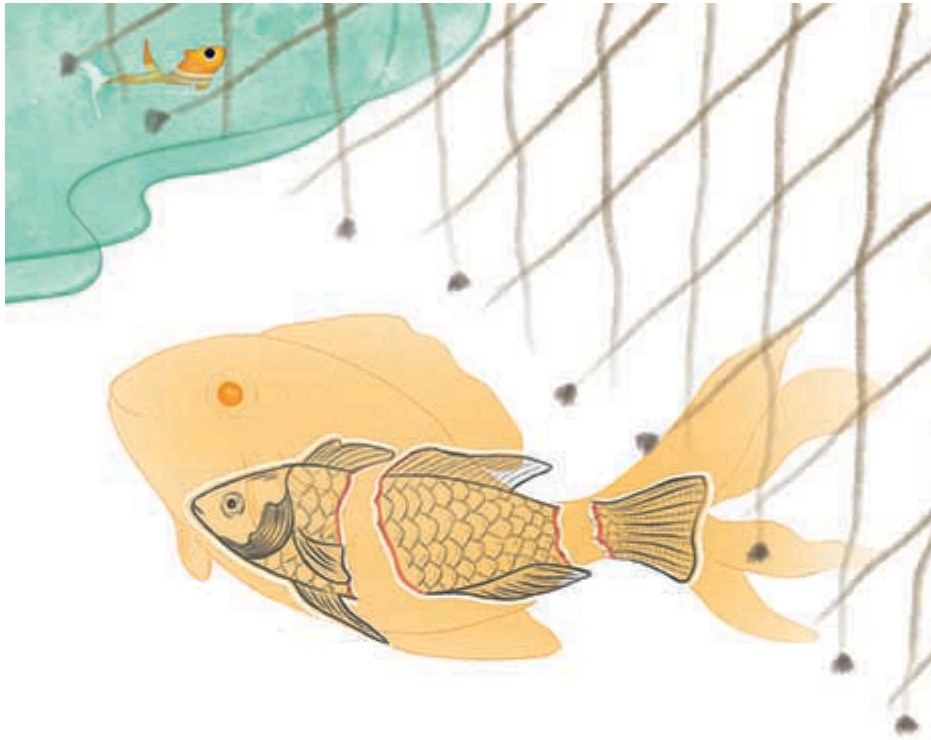
After resting for a while, they picked up the loom and continued on their journey. They didn't realize until much later that Yuma Sammang was no longer with them. They arrived home sad and disappointed. When the brothers reached home, they saw Yuma Sammang at their house, playing with the dogs on the veranda. The brothers were quite surprised. "How did you get here before us when we were the ones carrying you?" "I thought that you might get very hungry by the time you reached home. So, I came early to prepare some food for you," Yuma Sammang replied.



The two brothers cut down a large pine tree in the garden and made a bed for the Yuma Sammang. It made her very happy. She took good care of the house and taught the young ladies in the village how to work at the loom. After her arrival, conditions improved a lot. The storeroom was filled with grain and vegetables, and the village prospered. However, the wives of the two brothers were jealous of Yuma Sammang. They worried that their husbands might want her as a second wife. When Sammang found out how the two women felt, it broke her heart. She disappeared in front of everyone's eyes. After her disappearance, there were outbreaks of diseases in the village. No matter how hard the villagers worked, they had very little to eat and drink.



Jayachitre and Kharbale often remembered the gorgeous lady and felt very sad. One day, they went fishing in the Nibhu River to cheer themselves up. They hoped to see Yuma Sammang. It was very hot and the two brothers were very thirsty. They cupped their palms and drank the cold water from the river. Then they cast their fishing nets into the river. Yuma Sammang had returned to her home in Sodhung Pomu Lepmu Tembe. However, she wanted to give the brothers one more chance to recognize her.



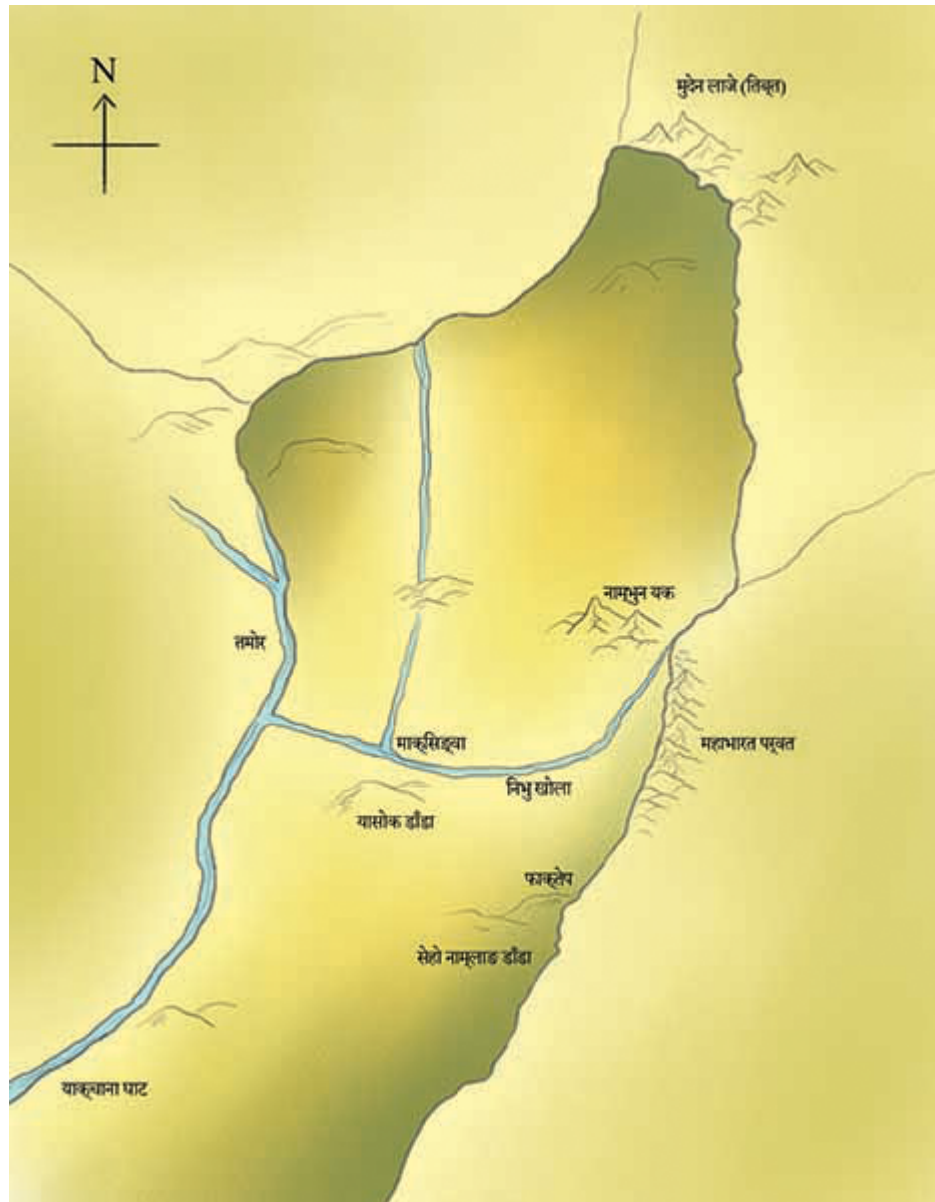
Soon, the brothers' fishing net was full of little fish and a very big fish was caught too. The big fish jumped and bounced. It was too big for the basket and the brothers worried it would escape. Kharbale got annoyed and poked the fish with the tip of his machete. Despite being severely wounded, the fish did not stop jumping. The two brothers cut the fish into three pieces. But magically, the pieces joined back together. They cut the fish three more times, but each time, the pieces would magically join. Unable to understand whether it was the work of a god or an ill omen, the two brothers prayed to Mang.



As soon as they finished praying, Yuma Sammang appeared before them. She said, "Oh you mortal beings, I am Yuma Sammang, the incarnation of Tagera Nigwaphu Mang. I am here for the safety and welfare of mankind. I'm here on this earth to bestow you with intellect and wisdom. Despite all the clues that I gave you, you could not recognize me. I'm your ancestor. You shall worship me every morning and every evening. If you do so, all the residents of Sawayethang Pangphe will flourish. Take the little fish from the river to your home and perform a worship ceremony. Then, bring the little fish back to this river and set them free. I will come and grant you wisdom and intellect and I will also bless you with land and property. All your enemies will be destroyed, and you will live happily ever after."



With those words, Yuma Sammang disappeared. Finally, Jayachitre and Kharbale recognized Yuma Sammang as the incarnation of Tagera Ningwafu Mang. And that very moment, Yuma Sammang blessed the brothers with divine power. As instructed by Yuma Sammang, the two brothers took the small fish home with them. They sat down to perform Yuma Sammang's worship. While performing her worship, the two brothers addressed Yuma Sammang with this prayer: “Decked out in gold ornaments, the one with a golden countenance.” “Decked out in gold ornaments, the one with a silver countenance.” “You work at a loom, Creation. You, Creator, who has descended from the Mabohang clan.” “You, the benefactor of wellbeing, the compassionate one, my loving grandmother.” Thus, Lord Tagera Nigwaphuma Mang descended to the earth in the form of Yuma Sammang, using the mortal bodies of Jayachitre and Kharbal of the Mabohang clan as avatars. Therefore, Yuma Sammang holds a higher position than any other deities in the Yakthung (Limbu) castes. She is the symbol of divine power. She is considered to be not only the chief goddess but the almighty, the omnipresent God.



Wonderful Words Limbu - an indigenous people in Nepal, a country in Asia Yuma Sammang - Yuma means “grandmother” and sammang means “deity” in the Limbu language. All Limbus regard Yuma as their great-great-ancestral grandmother. Yuma is considered the reincarnation, in the form of a woman, of the Supreme God who created the universe. Lord Tagera Nigwaphuma Mang - In the Limbu language, “tagera nigwaphuma mang” means “all-pervading source of knowledge and wisdom” Sodhung Munatembe- the sacred plains where human beings were created Sawayethangs - Ancestors of the Limbus Sodhung Pomu Lepmu Tembe - the sacred place where the god manifested himself/herself khurmi - a semi-circle shaped knife used in Nepal to cut grass

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