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'Gurkhas' in the Town: Migration, language, and healing
Judith Pettigrew

Introduction

The *serga pye*[1] recalls how a group of Tamu-mai[2] (Gurung) came upon what is now the ancestral village of Kohla, planted some grain, returned to find that it had produced a high yield, and moved across the Lamjung Himal to settle in the forests above their present villages. Many Tamu-mai consider the move across the Himalaya to be the final stage in their migration, without realizing that they themselves are engaged in an equally historic migration. This article examines the contemporary rural-urban movement of the Tamu-mai, which is intimately tied to the experience of service in the British army, and explores some of the associated social and cultural changes. As people plot new urban geographies, and as the second generation grow up as town-dwellers, a new Tamu social landscape is created and the sense of what it means to be Tamu is shifting. In this new environment, the cultural landscape is being re-drawn. As the map is reformulated, some knowledge and practices have lost their cultural centrality. Language, for example, has been displaced, and few of the second generation speak Tamu Kyui. In contrast, despite a wide choice of alternative options, shamanic healing practices retain their cultural salience.

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[1] This is a chanted shamanic 'oral text' which conveys the deceased to the afterworld on the final day of the three-day *pai laba* death ritual.

[2] 'Tamu' is the singular of 'Tamu-mai', the ethnonym the people better known as 'Gurung' apply to themselves when they speak in their own language, Tamu Kyui. At one level, 'Tamu' can be considered to be an emic and village construction of identity and 'Gurung' to be the corresponding etic and town construction. It is, however, more complicated than this because different social, symbolic, and political meanings are embedded in the terms (for a further discussion of this see Pettigrew 1995). Throughout this article I have chosen to use both terms. There are two reasons for doing this. First, it conveys a sense of shifting and contested identities. Second, it preserves a sense of inclusiveness: there are a large number of urban-dwellers who do not speak Tamu Kyui and therefore always refer to themselves as 'Gurung', just as there are a significant number of ethno-activist town-dwellers who wish to be referred to at all times as 'Tamu'.

The first part of this article focuses on the experiences of migration, army service, and urban relocation and describes the changing social landscape of Tamu/Gurung urban settlement. The second part examines the loss and retention of two cultural 'institutions', language and healing, and explores why it is that language is under threat while the healing traditions continue to flourish.

Gurkha Service and Migration

Until the 1970s, Tamu ex-Gurkha soldiers returned to their villages and their previous farming livelihoods because there was little to attract ex-servicemen to settle in the urban centres. By the 1970s, the developments that had started in the town of Pokhara in the 1950s had begun to provide services and facilities which were increasingly attractive alternatives to the hard life of a hill farmer. Of particular importance to many Tamu families, who hold education in very high regard, was the growing availability of good educational facilities. Today almost all Tamu ex-Gurkha soldiers settle in the town.[3]

Migration statistics recorded for the village of Thak (12 miles north of Pokhara) by Harrison, Gurung, and Gurung (n.d.) provide an interesting illustration of the links between the army, wealth, and urban relocation. In 1969, the 103 households, which included the whole village and nearby surrounding areas, numbered 491 persons. In 1992, although the ethnic composition was somewhat different, the population was 494 persons (excluding migrant workers and children at school in Pokhara). In 1969, there were three Thak households in Pokhara; by 1992 this number had risen to 43 households. This did not include households in which there were Thak women who had 'married out' and migrated to Pokhara with their husbands. Nineteen of the relocated households were 'headed' by men who were ex-British army, nine were ex-Indian army, and the remaining fifteen were 'other'. Thus, in total, the category 'army' accounted for 28 out of 43 migrant households. The dates of migration are also of interest. The first recorded migration is of a British army family in 1961, the first 'other' family migrated in 1975, and the first Indian army family migrated in 1977. Of the 35 families whose dates of resettlement are known, 15 migrated between 1961 and 1981, and 20 migrated between 1982 and 1992. In 1999 there were 156 Thak households, 58 of which were Pokhara-based. The number of British army households in Pokhara is unchanged as no Thak man has been recruited into the Gurkhas since the mid-1970s. The only recent Indian army retiree

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[3] Caplan (1995: 51) notes a similar trend towards urban settlement among ex-Gurkhas in eastern Nepal.

is living in the village, a fact which Harrison *et al.* suspect "is a reflection of the disparity of pay rates between the British and Indian army."

The first wave of Gurung migrants to Pokhara settled in the heavily populated bazaar area and were engaged in a wide variety of occupations including owning shops or teashops, renting rooms or buildings, soldiering, working in the transportation business, driving taxis, doing carpentry, or working in the hotel business (Doherty 1975: 143). As such, they played a significant role in the economic life of Pokhara in the early 1970s. In the ensuing 30 years the demographic picture of Pokhara has changed enormously. The Tamu-mai have now settled in far greater numbers and although there are Tamu-mai involved in the same activities as those that were listed during the 1970s, a much larger proportion are in the army or are ex-servicemen. A high number of these are unemployed, underemployed, or repeat migrants. Despite the fact that Pokhara has developed almost beyond recognition (with a population of 95, 286 in 1994[4] compared with approximately 21,000 in 1972 (Shrestha and Gurung 1973: 36)), employment opportunities for the Tamu-mai have not increased at the same rate.

The normal length of service for a Gurkha soldier is fifteen years, after which he can retire with a pension.[5] Officers, particularly those promoted to the higher ranks, frequently serve for longer, typically upwards of twenty years (less than 10% of Gurkhas hold high-ranking positions in the army) (Gurung 1993: 24). Recruitment takes place in the British camp in Pokhara on an annual basis. Competition for places is very high, and only those who have been successful in preliminary screenings are invited to attend the final selections in the camp. I have watched preliminary selections which involve hundreds of young men competing for only a few places. Following successful recruitment, basic training takes place in the UK.

Periodic training exercises take the soldier to a variety of countries including New Zealand, Canada, Fiji, Cyprus, and Scotland. First leave is usually granted after

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[4] Central Bureau of Statistics, His Majesty's Government of Nepal 1994.

[5] Pensions are not as large as they are believed to be, and the wealth of soldiers is variable, depending on years of service, rank, and the amount of money a soldier has been able to save. The monthly pension of a rifleman in the British Army was increased in April 2000 to 7881.60 Nepalese rupees (there are approximately 107 rupees to the pound). Although they carry out the same tasks, the pay and salaries of Nepali citizens and British citizens in the Gurkhas were unequal until recently. While they have officially gained parity there is a sense among serving soldiers that inequalities still exist as pay is calculated differently and they are not provided with a breakdown. Nepali citizens serving in the Gurkhas remain ineligible (unlike their British colleagues) for a pension after three years of service. As noted above, they must serve for fifteen years before they are eligible for a full pension.

three years and is for a duration of six months.[6] The majority of soldiers get married during their first leave, a decision which may be more about pragmatic choice than ideal preference.[7] Marriage on first leave puts a soldier in line for 'family permission' which allows wives and children to accompany their spouses either to the UK or Brunei for a specified length of time (usually three years). The family members of those above the rank of staff sergeant are permitted extended periods of 'family permission'.

'Family permission' allows families to live together and gives a greater semblance of 'normal life'. When the Gurkha headquarters were based in Hong Kong, Gurung women who joined their husbands spent most of their time with their children, looking after their homes, cooking, or visiting friends. There were few opportunities to work outside the home, although some did manage to get jobs. Following the relocation of the headquarters to the UK at the end of 1996, almost all of the wives who join their husbands work outside the home. Those with very young children who do not seek outside employment often work as paid carers for the children of those who do.

Whether stationed in Brunei or the United Kingdom, army wives and children are exposed to a world that offers a high standard of living, good educational and recreational facilities, and a set of values which is quite different from that of the village. Yet, when 'family permission' ends, spouses and children return abruptly to Nepal where they are expected to pick up the threads of their former lives. There is no facilitation of the resettlement process for family members, and there is considerable concern over reports of maladjusted returned Gurkha children who are involved in crime, hooliganism, and alcohol and drug abuse (Aryal 1991: 19). The

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[6] An essential aspect of returning home on leave is gift-giving which marks the soldier's reintegration into his family and the wider community. Des Chene (1992: 342) estimates that about half of a soldier's pay over a three-year period is brought back in the form of gifts. A further quarter of his pay is contributed to his family's household, the remainder is brought back in gold which is his investment in the future. Gift-giving accrues prestige for both the soldier and his family, compensates for his absence, shows that he still knows how to behave as a 'proper Gurung', and marks his re-entry into the exchange system.

[7] Although most Gurkhas marry Nepali citizens (and are encouraged to do so), a small but increasing number marry non-Nepalis. Those who wish to marry foreigners must request permission from their commanding officer six months before they intend to do so. Only women who are Nepali citizens are allowed to live in the camp with their husbands. Consequently, foreign wives who wish to reside with their husbands must take out Nepali citizenship. Most men who marry foreign women leave the army, although this is beginning to change.

greater opportunity for wives to work outside the home in the UK has led some couples to choose to leave their children in the care of relatives in Nepal. There are increasing concerns regarding the behaviour of some of these children who in the absence of their parents are perceived to be 'out of control'.

The Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO), which campaigns for improved pensions and welfare benefits, wants the British government to assist in creating educational and training institutions for the children of Gurkhas. GAESO, as quoted in Gould (1999: 389), "maintains that since most Gurkhas are separated from their families for twelve out of fifteen years' service, their children are deprived of a father figure and, as a result of this and of the inevitable disruption of their education through travel to and from the United Kingdom and elsewhere, tend to be 'wayward'."

Unlike the usual picture of rural-urban migration, the Gurkha situation is complex and can be divided into a series of different stages. These include: (1) recruitment into the army followed by a series of overseas migrations; (2) six-month visits back to Nepal every third year; and (3) retirement and the completion of the village-town migratory pattern. In step (2) the shift is made gradually from village living to urban dwelling. Soldiers usually buy land on their first or second leave but may not build a house until after their retirement or on subsequent leaves. Their leave usually consists of periods in the village visiting their parents, and periods in the town staying with relatives and making the first steps towards relocating to the town. The move from village to town thus takes place over a lengthy period of time. Although other migratory patterns bear similarity in terms of length of absence, distance from home, or relocation experiences (see Ballard 1987: 28-9, Gardner 1995, Gmelch 1980), the uniqueness of the Gurkha experience lies in the nature of migration as service in a foreign army, and the attendant social meaning of this particular migratory experience. This has a close bearing on the particularity of the experiences of relocation.

The young man who left his village in his late teens is a very different person to the man who returns after fifteen years of service to become a town-dweller. Many of the classical problems of rural-urban relocation, therefore, do not arise. The returned soldier and his family do not face the normal adjustment problems of finding a place to live, making new friends (they live surrounded by other members of their family who have gone through the same experience, and by their army friends), lack of sophistication, or uncertainty about urban living. They return to Nepal and automatically become members of the most cosmopolitan, sophisticated, competitive, upwardly mobile section of Pokhara.

Homecoming

Many descriptions of Tamu village life are available (Macfarlane and Gurung 1993: 8-14, Messerschmidt 1976: 24-27, Pignède 1993: 46-51), but there is little on life in the towns. A soldier's family usually lives in a one- or two- storey flat-roofed cement urban house in one of the large Tamu settlements within easy reach of the centre of Pokhara, such as Mati Pani, Visapatan, Bagar, or Ram Bazaar.[8] Most families have a small garden in which they grow vegetables. Many keep chickens and some may keep a buffalo. Most have some land, usually at a distance from their house on the outskirts of the town, on which they grow rice and other crops such as maize and millet. Family sizes are usually small—not more than three children—and planned. Although family planning is still relatively rare in the village, it is more widely practised in the town, particularly in army families. The motivation for keeping family sizes small is economic. The cost of living is high and education, particularly private education, which Gurkha parents desire for their children, is extremely expensive. Family planning methods may include the birth control pill or sterilization, commonly (but not necessarily) of the wife following the birth of the last desired child. Family sizes are also kept small by the long periods during which couples are separated.

Inside the family home, the consumer goods and memorabilia of Hong Kong, Singapore, and London are in evidence. On the walls hang souvenirs from London, New Zealand, or Brunei, photographs of the army and the family taken on trips to faraway places. The gas or kerosene stove has replaced the fire, and rice is now cooked in a rice cooker. All homes have electricity and most have televisions.

Gurung urban settlement patterns bear a strong resemblance to their rural settlement patterns. As in the villages, the Pokhara Tamu-mai prefer to live in densely nucleated clusters. As the population has grown, the Tamu-mai have spread out from the bazaar centre to live in the suburban areas of the town, which are frequently near to the roads that lead out to the villages. Urban families usually retain close links with family members and friends who live in the village. Although many town-dwellers rarely visit the village there is a constant movement of villagers to the town to buy and sell, attend hospital, or visit kin.[9] Villagers usually bring with them things that are not available in the town, for example, vegetables from the forest, and bamboo products.

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[8] A three bedroomed one-storey house costs approximately £15-20,000 to build. A larger two-storey house will cost substantially more.

[9] Some urban-dwellers still own land in their village of origin, which is share-cropped.

To a certain degree, the urban Tamu-mai can be considered to be 'urban villagers'. They remain connected to and, to an extent, dependent on their villages. Despite their other incomes they almost always pursue some agricultural activities. Yet, if they are portrayed as 'urban villagers' they are denied the full experience of their urban existence and are seen as being located somewhere 'in-between' the village and the town. In certain respects the urban-dwelling Gurung are liminal, but in other important ways they are not. There is a marked difference between living in a village and living in the town, aside from the obvious material and infrastructural differences. To live in a large Gurung village is to live in a predominantly Gurung world. To live in a town is to live in a predominantly non-Gurung world. Despite the changes that are affecting the villages there is still a significant difference—a gulf across which language, identity, and certain cultural practices do not easily cross and are not readily transferable.

The primary motivation for settling in the town is a desire for an easier life and improved educational opportunities. As has been noted by other writers, Tamu-mai place enormous importance on education (Des Chene 1992: 7, Macfarlane 1989: 180, Ragsdale 1989: 50-3, 83). The long-term esteem in which education is held is related in part to army service. Following World War I the British army required all soldiers in Gurkha regiments to be literate (Ragsdale 1989: 50).[10] Educational training takes up much of the new recruit's first year in the army and the passing of various certificates enhances a soldier's promotion prospects.[11] Education is thus perceived to relate to advancement in army life and, increasingly, to advancement in civilian life as well. As Macfarlane observes:

> People rightly perceive that if Nepal is to join the great world consumer society, to integrate itself with the international world of communications, business and bureaucracy, it cannot avoid education. Since everyone perceives this, a huge amount of Gurung and other resources are funnelled into the competitive spiral. (Macfarlane 1993: 460)

Ex-servicemen's children, some of whom have been born in Hong Kong or Brunei, almost without exception attend 'boarding schools'.[12] The issues raised by education are complex. Aware of their marginalization in wider Nepali society, many Gurung parents feel that their children must receive an education of the highest

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[10] The Tamu-mai have levels of literacy which are much higher than the national average.

[11] Ironically, the qualifications they acquire have little currency in Nepal.

[12] The term 'boarding school' refers to a private English-medium school. Most of these schools are primarily non-residential although they usually have some 'boarders'.

standard if they are to have any hope of penetrating the limited, Brahman- and
Newar-dominated urban job market. Although parents are putting inordinate effort
into educating their children, there is to date little evidence that education will lead
to increased employment opportunities in the near future. Jobs are scarce, and
clerical positions in the bureaucracy, towards which Nepali education is geared,
remain dominated by Brahmans, Chetris, and Newars. Many students who have
received university-level education are unemployed or join the long exodus of those
'going to foreign' in search of work. As migrant workers they are usually employed
in unskilled jobs which do not allow them to make use of their educational qualifi-
cations.

The enrolment of children in private 'boarding schools' is related not only to edu-
cational aspirations but also, just as most outward things are, to status and pres-
tige.[13] The ever-present quest for, and maintenance of, status and prestige under-
lies and greatly influences the actions, beliefs, and behaviour of the town Gurung
and is intimately related to the experiences of service in the army. It is also related
to wider urban transformations taking place in Nepal in which consumerism and
'modern' behaviour are part of a "social currency that individuals can and must
use in order to successfully claim middle-class status" (Skinner *et al.* 1998: 9). The
town provides opportunities for people to draw "from cross-cutting value systems
to accrue honor" as "wealth ... become[s] more important than lineage, and educa-
tion confers esteem" (McHugh 1998: 170).

Most Tamu parents strive to arrange a marriage with a soldier for their daughter,
perceiving that such an arrangement will give a woman a stable economic future,
a high standard of living, and the opportunity for foreign travel.[14] As marriage is
essentially an agreement between two families, the benefits for the family who
marry a girl to a soldier are thus a combination of economic advancement and

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[13] I distinguish between the terms 'prestige/honour' (*nanimi* in Tamu Kyui and *ijjat* in
Nepali) and 'status' (*mui laba theba mhi* in Tamu Kyui, which can be translated as a person
who has become 'big' by money, and *sthān* in Nepali). I agree with McHugh (1998: 158-9)
that status has to do with social rank and prestige has to do with moral behaviour. Service
in the Gurkhas provides opportunities for improved status on the premise of increased
financial resources. Prestige, on the other hand, can only be accrued on the basis of moral
behaviour. These concepts are, however, closely inter-related. For example, wealth may not
be the foundation for prestige but it makes it easier to maintain. While it is relatively easy
to increase social status, the maintenance and achievement of prestige is more complex
because behaviour is open to different and shifting interpretations and evaluations.

[14] Today, although a significant number of young people are opting for 'love' marriages and
many more aspire to them, the practical issues of timing make such marriages difficult for

increased social status. For a village-dwelling family, the marriage of a daughter to a British soldier widens their social network and provides them with future urban connections. Although there are stresses, the lives of urban women are physically easier than those of their village counterparts. In the town, many of the most demanding jobs such as carrying water and cutting firewood are no longer necessary. Electricity and a water supply inside the home make many household chores less time-consuming and less demanding. Women who marry soldiers and live in the town perceive their lives to be easier and better than those of village women, and feel themselves to be particularly lucky. As one of my informants said of a woman who had divorced a soldier:

> I don't know why she did it. She's poor now and has many children. As for me, I'm rich and live in a big house in the town. I don't have to carry water or cut firewood and I only have two children who are both being educated at good schools.

Des Chene (1991: 258) explains the situation well:

> Young women today see marriage to a Hong Kong *lahore*[15] as a path that leads out of the village. Such a path leads out of the fields, and out of in-laws' homes [where as junior women they often experience considerable hardship, especially in their husband's absence]...Young women imagining such a future for themselves think mainly of the advantages. They picture themselves in saris, perhaps even wearing make-up. Those who have achieved this dream have more mixed emotions. They say, on the one

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a soldier. As one of my informants said, "I would have liked to have had a 'love' marriage but I didn't fall in love with anyone on my first leave." Furthermore, as army connections confer prestige and wealth, parents select a wife for their soldier son very carefully (usually a girl who is educated). For example, a poor family who has a son in the Gurkhas can expect a 'better match' for their soldier son than for their other sons.

[15] The term *lāhore or lāhure is* the name assigned to "any hill-man who sought his fortunes in the armies of states to the west of Nepal" (Pahari 1991: 7). In the absence of a term for 'migrant labourer' the word is applied to any man who works for wages outside Nepal; thus a *lāhure* is not necessarily a soldier. Those who work in Saudi Arabia are 'Arab *lāhures*(s)', those who work in Japan are 'Japan *lāhure*(s)'. Gurkhas are usually referred to as 'Malaya *lāhure*(s)', 'Hong Kong *lāhure*(s)', or 'British' or 'UK *lāhure*(s)'. In each case the location refers to a place that the Gurkhas previously served in or are currently based in. A women married to a *lāhure* or a women who is working overseas is called a *lāhurinī*. When this term is applied, the economic motivations for migration to the army are brought clearly into focus. Service in the Gurkhas is thus just one of the ways—albeit currently the most prestigious and financially lucrative one—to gain a foreign wage.

hand, that they could never again live in the village. They can no longer walk and work like that. But they harbor a certain nostalgia for village life too. Like images of town among young women in the village, the village becomes, from the perspective of town, the site of what is missing in one's life. Marriage to *lahores*, whether actual or imagined, makes such dreams and such ambiguities possible.

The life of a retired soldier is frequently one of enforced leisure. Despite the aspirations and outward presentation of a comfortable material life, despite the fact that the ex-serviceman may travel around town on a flashy motorbike, army pensions are still relatively small, the cost of living is high, and there are few jobs. While the ex-soldier may have acquired a trade in the army he often encounters considerable difficulty in obtaining a job to match his abilities, and as with his army educational certificates, his skills certificates are not recognized. There is little industry in Pokhara, and, as I have noted, jobs in bureaucracy and government are rarely applied for, and still more rarely obtained, by Tamu-mai. Some ex-Gurkhas do enter business and open shops, particularly 'fancy stores', which sell imported clothes from Hong Kong and Thailand. In recent years, several Tamu-owned supermarkets have opened but none have been particularly successful. One has gone out of business and a second has been unable to compete with the more established Newar-owned enterprises. These failures have wide repercussions because all those who invest in the venture lose money. I have been told of several soldiers who returned home on leave to discover that the businesses in which they had invested most of their savings had failed. An informant lost 9 *lākh*[16] when a restaurant she had invested in was forced to close. Other financial enterprises the Tamu-mai undertake with variable success include petrol stations, bus services, and tourist lodges. Significant numbers of people become money-lenders. While this enterprise is potentially lucrative as interest rates are high, it carries a considerable risk because it is not always possible to recoup loans. A small but expanding Gurung professional elite includes doctors and other healthcare professionals, administrators, teachers, development experts, and university lecturers.

Tamu-mai enter business in lower numbers than expected and must face very stiff competition.[17] In general they lack the institutional backing, contacts and business skills of the established Newar business community, or the Thakalis who have a

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[16] One *lākh* = 100, 000 Nepali rupees.

[17] Ragsdale (1989: 79) notes that a certain degree of financial transaction and trading takes place in the army (this includes rotating credit associations, *dhiku*). Some ex-servicemen continue to be involved in these arrangements and in trading which, Ragsdale states, is operated from shops in Pokhara, and in Bhairawa, near the Indian border.

dominant position in the tourist trade. A significant number succeed as taxi drivers, but for all those who succeed, there are many who fail. A Tamu friend who cannot drive, but who invested in a taxi, explained that he was selling his taxi as it was difficult to get honest drivers and thus much of his profit was lost. Other trends have come and gone. During my first period of fieldwork in the early 1990s small-scale chicken farms were a common income-generating project. Some were successful and expanded, but others were a poor investment as the chickens easily fell prey to the latest fowl disease. The situation is illustrated by Macfarlane and Gurung , who observe:

> Of thirty Thak men who had retired from foreign armies, permanently living in Pokhara, one third were doing nothing in particular, other than living off pensions and invested capital. The rest were engaged in various jobs: farming, army welfare work, and as drivers. What was noticeable by its omission was any involvement in local government and bureaucracy, or in local trade and industry such as shopkeepers, entrepreneurs or small businessmen. (1993: 60-1)

In general, high-ranking officers manage better than lower-ranking soldiers. Not only do they have more money to invest and lend, they also have important networks and contacts, and usually higher levels of education, which widen their employment prospects. Some invest in businesses, some work for foreign companies, others work as agents, recruiting fellow Gurung (and others) for overseas labour. As this involves extensive contacts it appears to be an area that is easier for officers to penetrate. It is difficult to state with any degree of accuracy the number of people who are working as foreign agents, because it is hard to gather information about these ventures. However, I have met several ex-servicemen who operate very lucrative agency businesses and are perceived to be offering a good and reliable service. While they demand the usual monetary deposits from those they hire, they provide the jobs promised, which many agents do not.[18]

Although the army sends all its retired soldiers on resettlement courses, until relatively recently these were aimed mainly at employment in the agricultural sphere, a career that most ex-servicemen have no interest in pursuing. Resettlement courses in commerce are now available and, according to Collett (1994: 104), these have played a role in encouraging ex-soldiers to enter business. Army experiences in

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[18]As the process of securing an overseas job may involve more than one agent, it is difficult for those agents who are honest to ensure that the agent to whom they pass a potential employee will not pocket the deposit and provide no job. Thus, the whole business is viewed with suspicion.

general, however, do not foster the development of entrepreneurial skills that would be useful in a post-retirement context. The scaling down of the British Gurkha forces in the mid-1990s led to a large number of early retirements which encouraged the army to widen the scope of its resettlement services. This included making links with an agency that assists ex-soldiers to obtain work, usually in the security business. Independent agencies which specialize in helping ex-servicemen find work overseas have also opened up in recent years.[19]

The whole issue of resettlement and employment is complicated by the prevalence of an ideology of migrant labour. The Tamu-mai have long depended on earning their living outside Nepal. The existence of foreign employment options has had the effect of dissuading them from searching for other occupational niches. Consequently, there has been little development of a stable economic or business base among the Pokhara Tamu-mai.

To maintain their standard of living and educate their children, most ex-servicemen continue their pattern of migrant labour, leaving Nepal to work as security guards,[20] or as unskilled labour in restaurants or factories in Hong Kong, the UK, Germany, Malaysia, Japan, or the Gulf states. While most go through official employment agencies which arrange legal employment, some pay agents to arrange their illegal entry into a country. While these ventures are economically successful for many, there are always some who return empty-handed. Having failed to enter the country of their choice they lose the large fee they paid to the agent (a fee for an industralized country can be as much as 12 lākhs). The continuing cycle of migrant work serves to prolong the separation of family members. Husbands and fathers who have been away from their families for lengthy periods of time in the army are again separated from their wives and children. While previously the separation would have been spread over fifteen years, except for periods of 'family permission', it is now prolonged to twenty years or more. In the words of one informant:

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[19] Ex-Gurkhas do not receive work permits for the UK following retirement, and this fact is deeply resented by most ex-servicemen. A post-retirement right to work in the UK is one of GAESO's demands.

[20] The majority of ex-Gurkhas who go abroad work as security guards and obtain their jobs via specialized employment agencies. The positions they acquire include security work in shops, factories, offices, embassies, and with private employers. Officers, particularly those with skills such as bomb disposal, obtain more specialist employment in the security field.

> My husband retired from the army two years ago when he was in his mid
> 30s. He is now working as a security guard in Malaysia. To allow us to
> educate the children and have a nice life, we have worked out that he will
> have to stay in Malaysia until he is in his fifties.

While there have always been a large number of young men away in the army,
there are now a large number of both young and middle-aged men away.[21] Most ex-
soldiers, therefore, only briefly relocate to Pokhara to live in the homes that they
have built with their army pay. Although many are reluctant to return overseas, they
feel that they have little choice. Some resist going, but often succumb under pres-
sure from their wives and families. For some, re-migration is a natural progression
of their army life and of the experience of being a member of a cohort of army
friends. Just as the young man enters the army with his friends, endures army life
with them and retires with them, he also re-migrates with them. Extended male
absence means that women are burdened not only with the prolonged single-handed
running of the household, but also the single-handed rearing of children over very
long periods of time. The pattern of male-only migration is changing as women are
now migrating, in many cases leaving young children behind in the care of rela-
tives.

There is ongoing speculation about which overseas labour markets are accessible,
which family members should migrate, and the potential cost of doing so, but
the information available is often incomplete, unreliable, and sometimes outdated.
People are commonly forced to make important life decisions and commit large
amounts of money with limited information and no guarantee of success. The
public discourse surrounding migration emphasizes the successful arrival in the
chosen country and the forthcoming remittances but rarely attends to the psycho-
logical and cultural impact of migration. Migrants, as Helman (2000: 210) notes,
have not only

> ... left family, friends and a familiar locality, but many of their assumptions
> about their world are no longer valid. They are often faced with language

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[21] Women (both single and married) also emigrate in search of work, although they do so in
smaller numbers. Single women usually migrate with their friends to a country where they
have a network of friends or kin. Married women normally emigrate with their husbands.
This is changing as small numbers of married women now migrate alone or in advance of
their husbands. Migrant worker husbands may request their wives to join them if they have
departed alone. In such a situation it is the woman who makes the decision to go or to stay.
One of my informants told me that her husband had asked her to join him but she was not
going because she felt that her children were too small to be left behind.

> difficulties, with hostility or indifference from the host population, and
> with new cultural practices that may be at variance with their ... beliefs
> ...While some of the migrant's cultural values, such as emphasis on family
> cohesion, may be protective against stress, the experience of migration is
> usually a profound psychological transition—analogous in some ways to
> bereavement or disablement. (Helman 2000: 210)

In their quest for new occupational opportunities an increasing number of people
negotiate the complexities, demands, and contradictions of the migrant experience.
A young woman who initially migrated to the UK without her husband describes
the pressures she experiences and her concerns for her mental health:

> I feel there is a weight on my shoulders all the time. Sometimes I can
> hardly move because of it. I worry all the time, especially about money.
> I have to support my children and other family members in the town and
> my brother's family in the village. They are poor. I am lucky because I
> have a good job but what if I become sick and can't work: what would
> happen then? Sometimes I feel that I will go mad because of all these wor-
> ries—that's all I think about. I am doing all of this for my children so they
> can have more opportunities than I had. I want them to become doctors
> and things like that.[22] They are still in Nepal and I really miss them. My
> relatives are kind to them but I worry that my relationship with them will
> be weakened as they are growing up without me. In a few years I will try
> to bring them over to this country.

Attention to the question of migration focuses almost exclusively on the material
gains to be acquired by going overseas. Yet the money sent home is often acquired
at a very high personal cost. While day-to-day stories of hardship in foreign lands
are actively concealed by returned migrants in an attempt to maintain prestige and
also to spare worried relatives, an increasing number of tragic stories which are
less easy to conceal have entered popular discourse. Many of these stories relate
to mistreatment by employers, violence against women, or infringements of human
rights. Recently I attempted to assist a very disturbed young man in Kathmandu
Airport who, according to his friends, had "gone mad in Arab because something
very bad happened to him".[23] For the few stories that enter popular discourse there

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[22] Parental expectations are usually very high. It remains to be seen to what extent they will
be fulfilled.

[23] 'Arab' is the colloquial term for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. As the police quickly
removed this young man from the arrivals hall I was unable to uncover any further details.

are many more that never do. My recent research on Tamu migrant workers in the UK and Hong Kong reveals that beneath the endless journeys 'to foreign' are silent narratives of suffering, sacrifice, and discrimination. My preliminary findings suggest that the hidden costs of mobile lifestyles are high levels of stress-related problems many of which result in chronic physical complaints or illness.

Living in the Town

In the 1970s Victor Doherty (1975: 131) outlined four organizing principles of Tamu society which he perceived to be extremely important in terms of their adaptation to urban living. In the following section I review Doherty's model and show how these principles are being modified in the contemporary context. They are:

1. Generation. Primary identification with a generation, and with an age group within it. The direction given by this principle is lateral, towards group orientation.

2. Egalitarian-competitive. There is stratification but it is modified through group participation; and through special arrangements, as for marriage, if it becomes unbalanced. Power and status are scarce and in demand, but they are shared.[24]

3. Inclusion. One's identity is importantly defined by membership in a group, and by participation with equals within this group.

4. Reciprocal-successional. Emphasis on the development of give-and-take situations and on the orderly succession to power. Prestations and counter-prestations are continually offered. Relationships between generations, and generational succession to power, have this pattern.

The emphasis on sharing of resources, a strong sense of reciprocity, and an ideology which favours an orderly succession to power combined with a strong communal orientation allowed the Tamu-mai to form business alliances without difficulty in the 1970s. These characteristics, combined with the ease with which the Gurung who relocated to the town gave up farming,[25] caused Doherty to conclude that

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[24] Although egalitarianism is an ideal, reality does not usually measure up to it. Despite outward appearances, people are very concerned with gaining and maintaining status, and people are more unequal than equal.

[25] This factor would now appear to be having negative ramifications. In the town basic foodstuffs such as rice and other grains are very expensive and many families are not self-sufficient. Had migrants kept their land in the villages, they would now have two possible food sources.

these people have made what can only be considered a very real urban adaptation. Moreover this has been done in a short time, and without the advantages which could have been assumed to have accrued to the Brahmin-Chetris because of their prior settlement in Pokhara; their longer history of education; and their still near monopoly, along with the Newars, of government service and administration. (Doherty 1975: 143)

Do Doherty's organizing principles still hold for Tamu social organization at the beginning of the 21st century? Initial examination suggests that they do, since the Gurung continue to place great emphasis on issues like group inclusion, respect for elders, and the ability to work communally. The picture, however, is complicated. Although life in the village is perceived by town-dwellers to be very difficult, life in the town is equally difficult. The psychological stresses are enormous. The pressures may be different but they are similarly demanding. In an urban context many of the 'traditional' responses are no longer useful, a fact which creates additional stresses. Aside from the economic pressures, which the Tamu-mai have always faced to a greater or lesser extent, town-dwellers face social, psychological, and cultural stresses which are not experienced in the village context.[26]

A combination of life in the rapidly modernizing world of Pokhara and overseas service has created images of a wealthy consumer world, whose benefits are eagerly sought. The fact that the images are selective, and the costs of acquisition very high, are at this point relatively unimportant.[27] Position and status are appropriated primarily on the basis of wealth. The pressure to maintain the appearance of relative affluence is enormous, particularly for the poorer families. As I have noted, there is often a significant gap between outer presentation and inner reality.

In the 1970s Doherty perceived Tamu achievement orientation to be related primarily to group participation. Although group participation remains important, and continues to be highly esteemed as an ideal, it has been undermined in the urban

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[26] The stresses I am referring to here include those to which I have already alluded, and to some which will be addressed later in the article: loss of 'culture', the often negatively experienced encounter with caste society, the ongoing pressures of 'keeping up' with neighbours, kin, etc. in an increasingly consumerist world.

[27] The picture of the world outside Nepal is incomplete and often unrealistic. It is a world that has been presented on television and reinforced by the presence of 'rich' foreigners and tourists. Although the Gurkhas travel widely they see the countries they travel to through the filter of a sheltered, segregated army existence. Thus, what they see is predominantly superficial. While the obvious trappings of wealth are noted, the hidden realities of unemployment, homelessness, poverty, etc. are rarely confronted.

context. In the village, group membership is essential for survival. The completion of agricultural work, the upkeep of the village, and the performance and maintenance of communal ritual and social activities all demand close cooperation and interdependence. The situation in the towns is different. Although people need each other's assistance they are no longer so dependent on each other, especially for work. Reciprocal interdependence in agricultural activities is no longer necessary, and many Pokhara Tamu-mai use hired labour to plant and harvest their crops. The communal agricultural work groups and their related social activities no longer exist. Responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of neighbourhood facilities is in the hands of the bureaucracy. Neighbourhood committees such as 'mothers' groups' or committees of people who originate from the same village continue to exist and are especially important for the organization of social and ritual activities such as funerals or other types of rituals. Group networks forged in the Gurkhas are important in business and to an extent in obtaining overseas employment.[28] However, there are counteracting forces which discourage group participation and foster a narrowing of allegiances. These include financial inequalities, increased competition, jealousy, and the continual financial demands and expectations that are placed on army families.

The emphasis on 'generation' that Doherty cites as one of the primary reasons for the Gurung success in the army remains a strong force. Shared experiences with age-grade members, such as belonging to the same battalion, are an important basis for friendship and cooperation. However, this tendency, which motivates those concerned to work together for the common good, has a negative side. In the mobile world of the modernizing town, it is a contributing factor to the 'keeping up with the Joneses' ethic that is rampant in Pokhara, where such pressures are unrelenting. 'Keeping up' requires constant evaluation of what others are doing, wearing, and buying, and where they are going. It means constantly adjusting your behaviour so that you too are in line. The town, with its multi-ethnic community and greater integration into the national and international economic order, has the potential to provide many chances for 'getting ahead'. On the other hand, this potentiality is thwarted by the very real lack of opportunities, unemployment, and under-employment. All of this has resulted in increased competitiveness, jealousy, secretiveness, and back-biting.[29] These pressures, added to the less communal nature of urban life,

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[28] An important aspect of getting work overseas is maintaining a network of people who can provide up-to-date information on current job opportunities.

[29] This does not mean that these behaviours are absent from the village—clearly they are not—but rather that they have taken on new dimensions in the town where the potential for material advancement is greater and the need to create a 'modern' identity more acute.

are combining to create a more individualistic ethic. Neighbours, friends, and the members of your own family (particularly those in your own generation) are often viewed primarily as competitors. In the words of a friend:

> Everyone is for themselves these days. It's like everyone is in a competition. Who's got the nicest clothes, whose motorbike is the biggest? You have to be careful, lots of people are jealous.

Writing about consumer culture and identities in Kathmandu, Mark Liechty suggests that:

> By 'keeping up with the Joneses', people are not necessarily trying to outdo each other, but are simply "trying not to be excluded" ... The consumer anxiety that people speak of in Kathmandu is typically less a matter of competition aimed at surpassing others, and more about discursively synchronizing the categories of value within groups who share similar social and material conditions. To "win" in this competition is to maintain social parity within the space of the middle class. To "lose" ... is to be left behind, unable to meet the changing demands for membership as one's social reference group transforms its identity standards. (1998: 15)

In the Tamu case I suggest that both processes are at work. People are very concerned with meeting the changing requirements for membership *and* there is intense competition. This may be accounted for by the fact that numbers within the reference group are relatively small, that the group shares an ethnic identity, and as employees/ex-employees of the same 'organization' people are closely interconnected.

Reciprocity, a strongly valued behaviour, continues to be very important to the Pokhara Tamu-mai but the cost of participation is rising. What is given must be repaid at a later date. This is not problematic if there is relative equivalence between the giver and the receiver, but problematic when there is not. Reciprocity is thus tinged with an extra edge of wariness. At the gift-giving at a recent *pai laba* death ritual I watched as a representative of a large family, most of whose sons are soldiers, gave the deceased's family a very large sum of money that in the words of a friend "might have to be given back at any time" (at a *pai* in the giver's family). My friend continued:

> In one way the system is good because you get money, but in another way it's horrible, you have to worry about giving it back. Nowadays you will probably have to give it back and also give a little extra money.

The demands of giving are compounded by the fact that poorer relatives, particularly those from the village, view the soldier as being "very wealthy" and frequently make demands for assistance. As Des Chene (1992: 6) writes, former soldiers, to maintain their respect, "must be highly skilful in the arts of giving yet retaining". Thus, on the surface, the ex-serviceman may appear wealthier but, unlike his village brother or sister, he may not know where he is going to get the money to support his family in two years' time. In the words of an informant:

> It's so difficult, my husband is the only soldier in his family so we have to help everyone. There are constant requests for money, for help. When relatives come from the village we have to help them with everything, it's not just help with money, they don't know how to do things in the town. I go to the hospital with them, to the court, to government offices.

An informant describes the strategies that a woman, married to a soldier, employed on an outing to a village for a wedding:

> We had to leave before the dancing started, as my friend said that if she stayed she would have to give the dancers a lot of money, which she couldn't afford. On the way back to the town we had to sneak through one village, running from house to house, as my friend had relatives there, who if they saw her would ask for some money.

Increasing demands are matched by an increasing gap between generations. The gap is widened partially by the decline of the Tamu language.

Losing 'Culture': Language in the town

Most Pokhara Gurung above the age of 30 are first-generation town-dwellers. They have been born in a village but have relocated as adults. Many have retained strong emotional links to their villages, which they still visit periodically. Although their world view has expanded to incorporate their army and urban-dwelling experiences, they are *au fait* with, and knowledgeable about, the social, cultural, and historical context of the village and its surroundings. Their rural up-bringing and ability to speak Tamu Kyui provide them with a particular perspective on the social and geographical landscape and a knowledge of the cultural traditions of the village. This is a world view that their children do not share. Few urban Tamu-mai under the age of 20 speak Tamu Kyui with any degree of fluency, and most do not speak it at all. The ability or inability to speak a language is much more than the sum of

its words. Culture-specific concepts do not easily translate and because it does not speak Tamu Kyui there is much that the second generation does not know. One first generation Pokhara resident explains the problem:

> Everything has changed. I speak to my children in Gurung and they answer back in Nepali. The children have no time to learn about Gurung culture. I want my children to speak Tamu Kyui, I try to teach them after school but they have so much homework to do and then they have tuition [private coaching]. After that they want to play and watch television. I want to take my children to visit the village, they don't know anything about Gurung culture. They don't know what is happening when they see a *pai*.

Inability to speak Tamu Kyui also inhibits ease of movement between urban and rural contexts. One sometimes hears young Pokhara Gurung say that they find it difficult to visit the village because they do not speak the language. There is, however, another separation between young urban Gurung and their village cousins. Aware that their parents relocated 'for a better life', and educated in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the 'boarding school', they feel little affinity for the village.

From the perspective of town children, the village may be viewed with a slightly condescending attitude and perceived as an interesting place to visit occasionally, the place where their poorer cousins live, but not a place that bears any direct relationship to their lives.[30] As Mikesell (1993: 32) emphatically writes:

> Classroom discipline, examinations and certification authoritatively determine what is "true knowledge", and devalues the knowledge practices and languages of the villagers ... An immense class of people is presently being schooled in Nepal to despise their own rural background.

For well-educated urban children, the future, however, is more uncertain than that of their country cousins. High expectations, lack of opportunity, the stresses related to Gurkha location and relocation, unemployment, generational tensions, and differences in education and world view are contributing to a growing youth problem.

Although Doherty's organizing principles remain as ideals, circumstances have ensured their modification. Thus, more competition is evident. Inclusion is more narrowly focused on the nuclear family and the individual, and people are by necessity less communally minded. Reciprocity continues to be highly valued but grow-

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[30] One of the ironies of 'boarding school' education is that while children may know a large number of English nursery rhymes, they will not know any Gurung songs.

ing differentiation, constant demands for assistance, and unequal access to a potentially limitless number of resources have created extra stresses. While the images of generosity, reciprocity, hospitality, and the obligations of exchange are maintained, the skilful art of juggling them has become harder. The Tamu-mai in the town have brought their marriage patterns, kinship principles, and death rituals with them, but as they begin to speak less Tamu Kyui, as some of the practices and knowledge of the village become irrelevant, and as the influences of state and town increase, significant numbers of people feel that much of what is perceived to be quintessentially Tamu is no longer evident in the towns.

The issue of loss of 'culture'[31] is complex and has become embroiled in a discourse which is as much about the construction of image as it is about losing 'culture'. Having spent considerable time over the last ten years observing a movement whose stated aim is "to preserve Tamu culture" I have been puzzled by what appears to be a lack of attention to certain dimensions of this problem. While an impressive infrastructure has developed and a shamanic monastery and a museum have been opened, a language school (which would seem to me to require minimal resources) has yet to be established. My confusion led me to make further inquiries. Initially I was told what I had been told before: "It's really bad, our culture is being lost, the young people don't know, we need to teach them." My enquiries finally took a different direction when an exasperated friend said:

> Don't you understand? Of course the young people say that they don't know how to do things and the older generation talk about culture loss, but this is just show. The young people don't want to let on that they know how to do things the village way, because they want to be seen as modern. The older people, who have come from the village can't deny their knowledge, but they also want to show how modern their children are so everyone says 'The young people don't know anything about their culture'. But that's only part of the story. Things have been lost, the young people don't know the language and with it there are many important things they don't know, but there is still lots that they do know. For example, if I died tomorrow my children would know exactly what to do. It's just that when you are thinking about your image you can't let on that you know, but when you have to

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[31] I place the term 'culture' in inverted commas for two reasons. First, I consider the term to be problematic as it gives a false sense of a relatively bounded, clearly defined entity. Second, in the context with which I am concerned 'culture' is a widely used term that has a relatively narrow definition. It refers mainly to those 'traditional' practices and knowledge which have been designated as needing to be 'saved', which is an understanding that I do not endorse.

do it you can.

The distinction made by Borofsky (1994: 335) and Keck (1998: 10) between 'knowl-edge' and 'knowing' is relevant. "Knowledge", Keck suggests, is "understanding that is definite and lineated, *what* is known, as an abstract pool of information." "Knowing", on the other hand, is "understanding that is more fluid and flexible in character, *how* something is known, knowledge in practice". The difference is between a declarative type of knowledge and a procedural type of knowledge. While the second generation have not acquired 'knowledge' they have acquired 'knowing'. The situation is more complex, however. Some of the second generation have undoubtedly acquired 'knowledge' but in the multi-ethnic upwardly mobile world of the town this devalued knowledge is actively concealed. Knowledge in practice—which by its nature is less obvious—is essential at the important junc-tures of life and in a private Tamu context of suffering.

The ambivalence about addressing language loss is due in part to people's feeling that their children know what they need to know. They are aware that they have procedural knowledge: the "hidden, implicit common knowing" (Keck 1998: 11), the "habituated experiences unconsciously embedded in the body" (Borofsky 1994: 341), the knowledge that is only accessed through performance. They are also aware that, although there is a substantial loss of declarative knowledge, in the upwardly mobile town there are trade-offs. Many of the first generation are very aware that they do not speak fluent Nepali and have placed great emphasis on their children acquiring the fluency they lack. Fluency in Nepali is not only about edu-cational and employment opportunities but it is also about 'fitting in' in the town. While fluency in Nepali (and English) has been emphasized, fluency in Tamu Kyui has not. Although it might be nice to teach the second-generation the Tamu lan-guage—and parents are often nostalgic about this—there is a reticence to teach things that are perceived to have no value in the world that their children inhabit. The choice is not merely practical, it is also about adopting strategies that lessen the chance of children being discriminated against as 'hill people' and guarding against the attendant social and psychological impact of that discrimination.

The ambivalence surrounding the language issue is reflected in the ambivalence that preservationists have towards opening a language school. When I ask about plans for a school I am repeatedly told that it has not yet been opened as there is not enough money to do so. When I point out that a small 'Saturday school' could be opened without a lot of resources I am told that people don't have enough time to teach the children and that no one will volunteer. The extensive fund-raising and development of other facilities contradicts these statements. Rather, I suggest that the answer lies in the ambivalence that many Pokhara Tamu-mai have towards

their own language. This is partly to do with the problems they faced when initially trying to make their way as Tamu Kyui first-language speakers in a Nepali world, their wish to ensure that this does not happen to their children, and their desire to be seen as 'modern' town-dwellers.

The public/private dichotomy and its relationship to the discourse about modernity can also be extended to the topic of language loss in an intriguing way. While the second generation do not speak Tamu Kyui, they understand it. In the private space of the home they listen and comprehend.

I know only of two-second generation urban Tamu-mai who both understand *and* speak Tamu Kyui. The first is a young boy who spent several years with his family in an isolated and difficult overseas situation during which his parents taught him the language. Although he can speak Tamu Kyui he is reluctant to do so—back in the context of Pokhara it is not an option he wants to choose. The second example is a young woman who worked for me for many years. Kanchi's journey into speaking Tamu Kyui took place gradually. My own Tamu Kyui has always been better than my Nepali, and I frequently arrived back from the village tired and in a Tamu Kyui speaking 'mode of thinking'. Fatigue combined with the challenge of instantly having to re-adjust to both the urban context and the change of language often prompted me to speak to Kanchi in Tamu Kyui. For a long time Kanchi responded only in Nepali. Gradually, however, she began responding in Tamu Kyui and nowadays we always speak to each other in this language. While Kanchi is quite comfortable speaking to me (a 'high-status person') publicly in Tamu Kyui she will not speak to anyone else in this language, reverting instead to a mixed language conversation in the presence of a Tamu Kyui speaker.

While linguistic comprehension is acceptable and even practical (because a certain amount of home conversation, particularly with elderly relatives, takes place in Tamu Kyui), speaking is a different matter. The squirming child of a new Pokhara acquaintance who suffers the indignity of being told off publicly in front of me for not speaking Tamu Kyui is in fact 'playing the right game'. Despite his/her momentary discomfort, to be seen as an educated upwardly mobile young Pokhara-dwelling Tamu requires them not to speak Tamu Kyui. In the private space of the home, however, it is not only acceptable but also necessary to understand Tamu language.

Retaining 'Culture': Healing in the town

Language and shamanic healing practices are considered by many to be markers of things that are quintessentially Tamu, but while language appears to be dispensable, healing has had a different fate. Despite the wide range of healthcare options

available in the town, ranging from the state funded hospital through to private clinics, shamanic healing remains popular. Although the shamans sometimes complain that they are only consulted when all other options have been exhausted, this is only part of the picture. It is clear that shamanic healing has made the transition to the town. Shamans carry out numerous consultations and perform a wide range of curing rituals.

At times of adversity people look to the sources of cultural and psychological support available to them. The continuance of these healing practices perhaps suggests the retention of beliefs about illness causation which are based on a shared notion of personhood. Tamu town-dwellers, irrespective of generation, know that the body, which is made up of a number of *plah* (souls),[32] is vulnerable to soul loss. Shocks, bad experiences, close proximity to death, and strong feelings, among other things, can cause bodily disintegration and illness. Shamans are specialists in retrieving lost souls. In the face of existential suffering, retaining the shamans could be considered to be an important cultural strategy for dealing with misfortune. Undoubtedly it is for some. For others, however, consultation may have more to do with the pragmatics of care-seeking behaviour and less to do with shared belief. Illness is a private world of misfortune, fear, and loss, and decision-making is eminently pragmatic. Shamanic healing is believed to be efficacious for certain problems and, depending on the nature of the illness, it is just one of a range of options that can be used.

While biomedicine offers effective cures for the body, it has nothing to offer those afflicted by spiritual problems. Beliefs in witchcraft and spirit attack coexist with ideas about computer technology and the best way to make money, although town-dwellers are sometimes reluctant to admit to them. Shamans are masters of a mapped cosmic landscape within which the causes and cures of illness coexist. In times of uncertainty ritual healing offers an idiom for understanding and takes the client and their family into a culturally familiar symbolic and performative world. The landscape of shamanic healing—from the form, content, and structure of the ritual through to the cosmic worldview—has deep and enduring meaning. Rituals may decrease the anxiety provoked by illness, provide a route through the territory of suffering, and assist people to integrate their experiences.[33]

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[32] Men are believed to have nine souls and women seven.

[33] It is also possible that a ritual may achieve none of the above. The continuing prevalence of ritual practice among urban Tamu-mai, however, superficially suggests that ritual performance remains important. This topic awaits further attention.

Although efficacy and culturally meaningful practices prompt people to continue to consult shamans, the situation is complex. The continuing practice of the elaborate death rituals appears to support the argument that the Tamu-mai have retained their most central cultural practices. The rituals of death, however, unlike the rituals of healing, have become caught up in a discourse about modernity. The practice of the major mortuary ritual, the *pai laba*, is now contested. The argument concerns animal sacrifice, an integral aspect of this shamanic ritual. Some, mainly town-dwelling, Tamu-mai now commission Buddhist lamas to perform the *pai laba* despite the fact that its cosmic world-view is entirely shamanic.[34] They choose to do so for several reasons, some of which are to do with clan tensions, but overwhelmingly their choice of practitioner is due to their desire to have a ritual without sacrifice. Animal sacrifice, they claim, is an out-dated, embarrassing practice that has no place in a modern world. Shamans point out that sacrifice, which is to do with gift-giving to deities, is essential to the process of enabling a dead person to make the journey to the Afterworld. Without sacrifice the dead neither reach the Afterworld nor become ancestors. Denied this opportunity, the troubled souls exist in a liminal state and cause the living much grief. Despite the implications, however, there are Tamu-mai who are willing to take this risk. The major death ritual, however, is only partly about cosmology.

A *pai laba* is a multi-level ritual and social event that recreates ties based on reciprocity, kinship, fictive kinship, affinity, and friendship. It is enormously expensive to host and is only conducted when the deceased's agnates can afford to host it. There is much at stake for the hosting family who are responsible for the smooth running and organization of an event which, if successful, will bring prestige to their family. As the central communal institution and major domain of transformation in Tamu life, a *pai* is simultaneously concerned with the most intimate and personal aspects of life and death and is a social arena in which to negotiate and construct identity. What is at stake is both personal and ethnic identity: how people

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[34] Almost all Tamu-mai in the main areas of Tamu habitation in Gandaki Zone perform *pai*. The exceptions are small numbers of Christian converts or those particularly influenced by Sanskritization. Without accurate statistics it is difficult to estimate what proportion of Pokhara Tamu-mai use lamas rather than shamans. My informants tentatively suggested that 25 percent use lamas, 25 percent use a combination of lamas and shamans and 50 per cent continue to use shamans. Urban-dwellers from different districts display different patterns. For example, the majority of Tamu-mai from the districts of Kaski and Lamjung use shamans or a combination of shamans and lamas, whereas greater numbers of those who originate from Parbat district use lamas.

are viewed by their own society and how the Tamu-mai are viewed by wider Nepali society.

While the disagreement about sacrifice is long-standing and is part of a larger argument about religious affiliation (Buddhism versus shamanism), it has taken on new dimensions in the town. Whereas it was previously mainly about moral behaviour (the sin of killing), it has now become an arena in which to think about 'modern' behaviour, or rather a particular type of 'modern' behaviour. Specifically, it is about outward public social behaviour—how the Tamu-mai should be seen to behave in the contemporary urban context. It is also about international religious affiliations versus local ones—the desire to belong to a global Buddhism and the respectability it confers as opposed to a shamanic tradition, which, Buddhists claim, 'only exists in the districts of Kaski and Lamjung'. It is, however, not by any means a one-way discourse because the shamans and their supporters (many of whom are high ranking ex-Gurkha soldiers) have launched an increasingly successful counter-movement (for further discussion on this topic see Pettigrew 1995, 1999).

Healing rituals, on the other hand, which are conducted by the shamans and frequently involve sacrifice, have never been a focus of the discussion about how to live a modern life. The answer to this seemingly paradoxical question appears to lie in pragmatic notions of how to deal with adversity, the relatively private experience of illness, and the morally neutral nature of therapeutic decision-making. Although healing rituals are partially public (kin, neighbours, and friends attend) they fall within the private burden of the suffering of the living. Unlike the deceased who, while deeply mourned in the *pai*, have usually been dead for several years, the ill require the best healing options available regardless of the incompatibility of the belief system or the potential connotations for image. Clearly, people do not always believe in what they are doing or act strictly in accordance with their beliefs, which in any case, are not always consistent. As a friend commented:

> You have to adjust your behaviour depending on the problem. It is mainly a practical matter. When someone is ill you are very worried and you try everything you can. You might not use the *pachyus* [shamans] for a *pai* in your family but if they have a good reputation for healing you call them.

The practice of ritual healing appears neither to take from nor to add to the construction of a 'modern' town-dwelling identity, but is simply available as a viable healing option. As an informant commented: "Choosing a healer has nothing to

do with prestige. You won't gain prestige from calling the shaman to heal and you won't lose it either."[35] Not only do the shamans continue to be requested to heal by Tamu-mai who would never call them for a *pai*; they are also frequently consulted by non-Tamu-mai. As a shaman commented: "It is not just Tamu people who call me but also Brahman neighbours, Tailors, Blacksmiths and even lamas." Shamanic healing is an expanding cultural practice, its potentiality limited only by the shortage of apprentice shamans, which is a direct outcome of the effects of urban living.

Despite a widespread belief that indigenous knowledge is being lost, no detailed research has been conducted among the Tamu-mai to ascertain the extent of this loss. Research among the Siberian Yupik, however, presents an interesting comparative case. Like the Tamu-mai the Yupik have a widespread perception of culture loss. Research by Krupnik and Vakhtin (1999: 236-52) on indigenous ecological knowledge, which was based on sixty interviews and focused on declarative knowledge, illustrates that the "volume of cultural heritage people currently share is relatively stable. Significantly less has been lost than the majority of Yupik people themselves thought had been lost from their culture." Of most interest to my work is their finding that "although informants equate the loss of the Yupik language with cultural loss, this is not the case." While there is a clear correlation between the degree of mastery of the language and the extent of culture loss (the young usually speak less well) in the case of the Yupik cultural heritage, there is much less direct correlation with age. Krupnik and Vakhtin argue that change and replacement of indigenous knowledge is not a one-way process. There is actually a far more complicated scenario than a simple generational model built on patterns of language shift would suggest. Instead, the authors argue that what is created is a type of 'mixed culture' wherein certain traditional ideas and beliefs are reinterpreted and reformulated from the perspective of other cultures. For example, remnants of old Yupik beliefs are merged with modern popular ideas about the environment, and expressed in Russian.

While the reformulation of knowledge in new cultural forms is evident to a certain degree in the Gurung case (see Pettigrew 1995), the lack of a correlation between language loss and loss of cultural knowledge is fully supported by my research.

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[35] Although there may not be a relationship between choice of healer and prestige, there is a relationship between healing and prestige. Because prestige is related to moral behaviour it can be damaged if it is believed that adequate interventions were not made on behalf of an ill relative. I had originally thought that prestige could be enhanced by taking a family member to a private clinic in Kathmandu. My informants, however, denied this.

Although the ability of second-generation Tamu urban-dwellers to communicate in Tamu Kyui is limited, clearly they have retained substantial cultural knowledge. Social context, however, deems that it should be concealed and denied until its performance is required.

Conclusion

This article has examined the contemporary rural-urban movement of the Tamu-mai, which is intimately tied to the experience of service in the British army, and has explored some of the associated social and cultural changes. The rural-urban migration of the Gurkhas differs from the usual pattern of urban relocation. The direction is from rural to 'foreign-urban' followed by periodic visits to 'home-urban', followed by a repeat of the latter two movements over a protracted period of time. Although other migratory patterns bear similarity in terms of length of absence, distance from home, and the interlinking of the global and the local, the difference in the Gurkha experience lies in the nature of migration as service in a foreign army, and its attendant social meaning. This has a close bearing on the particularity of the experiences of relocation.

This article explored the manner in which the Gurkha pattern of migration affects the decline and retention of two cultural practices: language and healing. Ex-Gurkhas return to Nepal with the financial means to establish themselves as sophisticated urban-dwellers who can build impressive houses and educate their children in private schools. Their international experience and material wealth, however, has not translated into political power, because the urban bureaucracies remain monopolized by Brahmans, Chetris, and Newars. By choosing to relocate to the town the Tamu-mai continue to confront high-caste Hindu stereotypes in which they are caricatured as 'simple hill people'. These constructions have their parallels in the encounter with British officers where, as Caplan (1995: 147) argues, they are seen as "... boys, playful but simple, needing the firm hand of control and leadership ... because [they are] ... less than fully grown." Ironically, the money earned in the latter relationship enables them to live in a townscape where they encounter the stereotypes of the former. Sensibilities sharpened to the gaze and judgment of others and the reality of ongoing political marginalization make the first generation of urban Tamu-mai especially concerned with constructing an identity in which they distance themselves from the knowledge and practices of the hills. In an attempt to construct 'modern' urban identities, certain cultural practices (including language) have fallen into decline. The picture of language loss is not complete, however, as the pragmatics of communication and a deeply held desire to retain Tamu cultural practices at the major transformations of life require the second generation to reject the language of their parents in public while partially retaining it

in private.

The attempt to escape the 'simple hill farmer' stereotype has ironically led to the development of a new stereotype of the Tamu-mai as being 'too modern'. This caricature builds on real but relatively rare accounts of young Tamu people involved in drug abuse, or on images of young women attired in scant Western clothing. The implications, however, are similar to those addressed in the original stereotype, because yet again the Tamu-mai are reproduced as inferior. The behaviour that was previously judged as 'simple' is now reformulated as 'immoral'.

Healing rituals, unlike death rituals, have never become a focus for the discussion about how to live a modern life. The answer to this seemingly paradoxical question appears to lie in pragmatic notions of how to deal with adversity and the relatively private experience of illness. Although town-dwellers present an outward picture of prosperity and successful urban adaptation, this facade hides an inner reality of financial insecurity, uncertainty about the future, and the impact of ongoing discrimination and marginalization. At a deeper level there is an awareness of the psychological impact of these stresses. The retention of shamanic healing is the retention of a deeply patterned, culturally effective way of coping with the stresses of life, which for the urban Tamu-mai are primarily related to migratory practices.

While the motivation to migrate and serve in foreign armies is a search for a better life, it is not to transform life. In agreement with Des Chene (1992: 7), I believe that migration is undertaken to retain the aesthetics of Tamu life—the complex systems of social and ritual exchange and reciprocity, the presentation of social harmony, the appearance of generosity, the interrelatedness of kin, the ordering of society based on age, gender, and kinship, and what Des Chene calls the "artful innovation" of working these systems. Nevertheless going away inevitably means change—by providing children with better educational opportunities, and an easier life for all—but I argue, again in agreement with Des Chene (ibid.), that reproducing life and guiding its transformation are one and the same thing. Although the outward forms of life may change, effort is directed at maintaining the essence of being Tamu-mai. What is defined as cultural essence, however, is negotiable particularly when it interferes with the construction of a sophisticated town-dwelling identity. Migration is therefore unavoidably transformative. As Gardner (1995: vii) observes:

> … those who step across cultural and geographical boundaries are, in varying degrees, likely to find themselves transformed. As we physically move, so too do our personal and social boundaries shift; in this sense, migration involves a constant process of reinvention and self re-definition.

For urban Tamu-mai the transformations are multiple and circular. Through the process of urban relocation the social boundaries have realigned in such a way that the Tamu-mai confront versions of themselves that require the renegotiation of their identity—a process that in itself is transformative. The effect of this transformation (i.e. loss of 'culture') has led to a movement to revive threatened cultural practices. The attempt to revive the cultural practices of the village in the town further ensures their transformation. While Gurkha migration is ostensibly an economic venture (and is still talked about as such), it has had a profound social, cultural, and ideological impact on the Tamu-mai.

Note on Orthography

Tamu Kyui (Tamu language) is an unwritten Tibeto-Burman language with no standard orthography. I have chosen to use a phonetic approach and render Tamu words in their simplest possible spelling. My choice of spelling is in line with that used by indigenous scholars.

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The Kham Magar country, Nepal: Between ethnic claims and Maoism

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(translated by David N. Gellner)

Identity politics were unheard of in the early 1980s, when I carried out my first fieldwork among the Kham Magar, a Tibeto-Burman population of west Nepal. If people felt like comparing or defining themselves, they focused on very local differences: on the dialects of different villages, their specific festival calendars, their different ways of covering haystacks (by means of a cover made of goatskin or with a straw roof), the different itineraries they followed with their flocks, or the boundaries of their communal territories. Subjects like these were discussed again and again. Such conversations presupposed a common shared identity, of course, but there was no context in which Kham Magars needed to articulate it. For example, relations with their cousins, the Magar, the largest minority in Nepal, were undefined and the exploration of differences between Kham Magars and Magars did not appear to be important, at least to the Kham Magar themselves. In sum, Kham Magar villagers preferred to see themselves and to be seen as the inhabitants of one 'country', *deś* in Nepali (the term has been adopted into the Kham Magars' Tibeto-Burman language). A 'country' is a given natural environment in which one is born and where one lives alongside others similar to oneself. It is the Kham Magars' 'country' that has turned out to be the stronghold of the 'People's War' launched four years ago by the revolutionary Maoist movement. The life of the Kham Magar has been turned upside-down by this, and many of them have died.

The present essay seeks to answer several questions: Why was this region chosen by the Maoists? How have rural people reacted to the campaigns of politicization originating in the towns? How is that they have found themselves involved in, and how have they allowed themselves to be dragged into, fatal combat? And, finally, how do processes of identity formation develop in the face of these new pressures? I begin by presenting the necessary historical background, in particular the democratic revolution of 1990, which was a turning point for identity politics in Nepal. I will then attempt to explain (i) why the Maoists based themselves in the Kham Magar country, (ii) what techniques the Maoists have used, and (iii) what the motivations of the Kham Magar may be. There is a certain paradox in revolutionaries

basing themselves on a tribal heritage from which in principle they distance themselves. Whereas the ethnic ideologues who are concerned with the problems of defining the cultures which they claim to defend often find themselves without any means of political action, the Maoists have skilfully appropriated certain traditional techniques in their strategy for conquering the Kham Magars' territory.[1]

The historical and political context
The revolution of 1990: The beginnings of mass politics
The 'People's Movement' (*jan āndolan*) was officially declared on February 18 1990 by the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD) which brought together liberal parties and communists, both of which were banned under the Panchayat regime. After numerous demonstrations, which caused several hundred deaths across the country, King Birendra lifted the ban on political parties on April 8. In mid-November he promulgated a new constitution which established parliamentary democracy. The revolution of 1990 marked the beginning of mass politics, for which forty years of profound social change had prepared the country.[2]

The first democratic revolution in 1950 had put an end to a century of dictatorship by the Rana Prime Ministers. Ultimately, the revolution lasted for a very brief period and only served to restore the Shah dynasty, which had been kept away from the centre of power since 1846. The revolution was the work of a small élite of intellectuals and politicians who had been educated in India and had participated in the nationalist movement for independence there. None the less, the 1950-51 revolution served to open up to the world outside a country that had been turned in on itself since its formation under Prithvi Narayan Shah and his descendants in the second half of the 18th century.[3] During the years of his short reign (1951-55), King Tribhuvan, in alliance with the Congress Party and under the close control of India, developed a series of policies which already revealed the priorities that would change the face of the country: economic development financed from abroad (especially India and the USA), and education.

Tribhuvan's son Mahendra took over the reins of power in 1960 after seventeen months of a Congress Party government elected by universal suffrage, and in 1962

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[1] I will not attempt here to give a complete account of the Maoist movement, which has spread well beyond the region and the population that I analyse here. For some general reflections on the Maoist movement, which is still little studied, see Ramirez (1997).
[2] In this first section on the history of Nepal I follow Hoftun, Raeper, and Whelpton (1999), who describe the two democratic revolutions Nepal has experienced in the last half century.
[3] Some recent work has attempted to qualify this view (see especially Mikesell 1988).

he installed the Panchayat system. This regime, described as 'guided democracy', in reality allowed the king to reserve all powers to himself. The ideology on which it was based was inscribed in the Constitution of 1962 and had a profound influence on the country.[4] The project was to build the unity of the nation and to develop national sentiment. Simultaneously, a certain conception of identity was born. In one of his speeches, King Mahendra translated the Western notion of the equality of all citizens into essentially religious (Vaishnavite) terms. In this form of identity, "all the devotees of Vishnu [have] an identical subtle substance that unites them within the subtle body of Vishnu in the form of Parbrahma." Thus, all Nepalis are conceived of as identical (*samān*) or 'one and the same' (*ek ra samān*) in their devotion to the nation-state (Burghart 1996: 257).

The efforts to 'build the nation' quickly led to a contradictory situation: in order to avoid ideological conflicts encouraged by political parties, the parties themselves were banned and there was a general repression of the mass media. On the other hand, in order to develop national identity, schools were established throughout the kingdom.[5] But education played a key role in politicizing the people, who consequently became less and less willing to accept repression from the government. When King Birendra submitted the continuation of the Panchayat regime to a referendum in 1980, his victory over the opposition, which sought the liberalization of political life, was gained only by a narrow margin.

Economic development was another banner waved by the governments of the Panchayat period. But the opening up of the country to a modernity which remained inaccessible to most of its inhabitants[6] only served to provoke frustration among the people who felt themselves to be unfairly neglected. I will return to this point. Thus, even if the revolution of 1990 was also, initially, carried out by an elite of students and city-dwellers, its repercussions were much more profound at all levels of the Nepali population than the first revolution forty years earlier. The revolution was prepared by the gradual development of political awareness in the country; but in its turn the revolution was a key factor in promoting widespread politicization.[7]

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[4] See Gaborieau (1982) for an analysis of the 1962 Constitution.

[5] Whereas literacy stood at 5.3 per cent in 1952, in 1989 it had reached 40 per cent. It should be noted that the population doubled in the same 40-year period (Gurung 1998: 85).

[6] In 1987 the World Bank included Nepal among the seven poorest countries in the world (Gurung 1998: 167).

[7] "This second revolution in Nepal's modern period did not only come as a result of a raised level of political consciousness. The revolution itself made the people politically conscious" (Hoftun, Raeper, and Whelpton 1999: xi).

Until 1990, rural people were far removed from the centres of power—necessarily so in view of the facts of Nepal's geography. More than two thirds of the country is made up of mountains where the means of communication are very basic. But, above all, monarchical institutions gave individuals hardly any chance of partici-pating in decisions at the national level. One should not conclude from this that Nepalis passively accepted their lot. The different groups which made up the Nepali population knew how to negotiate the rules that were imposed on them.

Forms of identity before 1990
Some good examples of the local manipulation of national regulations are provided precisely by the fluctuating identities of ethnic groups. A national legal code, the Mulukī Ain ('law of the country'), was established in 1854. It assigned each group to a very precise position in the hierarchy of castes and regulated the life of the citizens in the smallest details of their life and death. The tribal groups occupy a middle position in this hierarchy, between the Twice-Born or Tāgādhārī who are ritually superior to them, and the Untouchables who are inferior. They form the group of Matwālīs or 'alcohol-drinkers'. Among the latter, there were those who were not permitted to be enslaved, such as Magars and Gurungs, and those who could be enslaved, such as the people of Tibetan origin (known as 'Bhoṭe'), certain groups of Newars, and the Chepang (Höfer 1979: 45).

Each community was granted rights or privileges and duties, which they were quick to use in their relations with the central government. Rights over land and trade were not the same for everyone. Thus, belonging to one group or another had both political and economic consequences. Several studies over the course of the last twenty years have shown how the ethnic identities that can be observed today are the outcome of various processes of mutual accommodation between regional ethnic systems and the policies of a centralizing state.[8]

I was myself able to observe a similar process among a population of miners (*āgrī*) in the Dhaulagiri region. Work in the mines gave individuals of suspect origin (the offspring of intercaste unions, for example) the opportunity to take on a pure identity, and it allowed others to climb in the hierarchy. The government sought to increase the number of miners by giving them various privileges, including that of

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[8] Cf. Levine (1987) who gives some general reflections on this subject and analyses the case of the Humla region where it is not only individuals but entire villages which have succeeded in changing their ethnic affiliation and their position in the overall Nepalese caste hierarchy. By providing the first analysis of the Mulukī Ain of 1854, Höfer (1979) did much to encourage such research in Nepal.

not being susceptible to enslavement (for example, because of debt). Taking on the status of *āgrī* thus allowed an enslavable alcohol-drinker to be promoted to a more desirable category which included the Magar and the Gurung. Thus, individuals of diverse origin (Magar, Bhote, Chetri) formed communities which were united in the first instance by their occupation and the desire to take advantage of the newly announced rules.

In 1920, the government closed the mines and offered the miners land as compensation. The latter then began to search for a new identity. They took on the name 'Chantel', and adopted (1) customs from their Magar neighbours, (2) a history that saw them as the descendants of a Rajput clan from west Nepal, and above all (3) a language, which has become the ultimate defining feature of an ethnic group (de Sales 1993). The campaigning work of one individual, Dil Bahadur Chantel, an emigrant to Kathmandu, was particularly crucial in arousing this feeling of identity among the villagers to whom he distributed pamphlets which gave them a summary of their own culture. He founded an association which had as its primary aim the acceptance of the Chantel as a distinct category in the population census. Only success in establishing the category would legitimate them as a new ethnic group. It is noticeable that there is a difference here from the earlier motivations for creating an identity. It is no longer merely a question of acquiring the means to improve one's political and economic position, but also of winning recognition as a Chantel.

Studies such as these show how individuals have succeeded in modifying their lot, for all that it was so strictly controlled. They also show that group attempts to establish identity correspond to given historical situations. But it is above all the continually changing aspect of pre-1990 identities that needs to be stressed. Ethnic identities in this period seem to have been labels that one could change, labels that had political, economic, and legal reference, rather than a social or cultural one. Changing a label did not necessarily involve any existential crisis. It was primarily a question of a more advantageous adaptation to a given situation.

This frankly instrumentalist vision of identity, seen in the strategic use of the rules laid down by the 1854 law code, should not cause us to forget these groups' need for recognition which emerged in the process of these manipulations, even if such deep-seated sentiments can easily be exploited for political ends.[9] In Europe this need was born "in the middle of the 18th century, when the old system of honours,

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[9] For a discussion, in the Nepalese context, of the debate between primordialists or essentialists, on the one hand, and instrumentalists or modernists, on the other, see Gellner (1997a: 6-12).

reserved for a few privileged persons, fell into disuse, and everyone aspired to his own public recognition, to what one would come to call one's dignity" (Todorov 1995: 29).

This historical detour through Western thought can help our understanding of identity in Nepal. In the last 100 years Nepal has experienced a profound questioning of the ancient hierarchies which had provided the taken-for-granted framework of daily life. After the conquest of the 18th century the different peoples remained attached to their 'countries', from which they drew their 'natural' identity, so to speak, as was suggested above for the Kham Magar—for the old forms of organization were never completely obliterated and can still be seen today. In the 1854 law code all groups are designated as *jāt* or 'species', that is to say, as social units, detached from their territorial base and integrated within the same interdependent system (Burghart 1996: 251-3). Thus, when a new state system was put in place whose aim was the building of a nation, the groups were led to redefine their identity, to find distinguishing elements in their culture, and to establish definitions which were as rigid as they were artificial, in order to achieve recognition. This movement was reinforced after 1990.

The warrior who is cursed and powerless

It is worth considering for a moment this need for recognition as it was expressed by the cultural associations of certain tribal groups even before 1990. The explosion of identity politics which occurred after 1990 may lead one to forget that the first consciousness-raising movements were less concerned with making demands and rather more concerned with self-criticism. One can cite as an example the Association for the Defence of the Language and Culture of the Magars, on which we have some fine and valuable observations by a Nepali ethnographer, K.R. Adhikari (1991). This association was formed on the initiative of some Magar soldiers who had retired from the British army. On their return from the Second World War, where many of their fellows died a hero's death, they were struck by the fact that those who had stayed in the village did not seem to appreciate their heroism and continued to have a very low opinion of themselves.

In 1956 the Reform Association of the Magar Society [sic] was formed in 63 districts with the aim of "root[ing] out the evils that existed in Magar society", i.e. "over spending and over drinking". Annual meetings were held in the form of picnics, because the government considered any ethnic meetings to be 'communal propaganda'. During these meetings the Magar accused themselves of being responsible for their own poverty and 'backwardness' and relied only on their own determination to get out of it. Adhikari was present at a meeting of the association

which had become the Nepali Langhalee Association (Nepali Langhalee Sangh) in April 1989. By this time the issues present at the origin of the movement had developed a political dimension. Thus in order "to preserve the language, culture, and identity of the Magars" it was necessary to reconsider

> 1. Customs of spending on eating and drinking at birth and death rituals beyond limitation of one's means.

> 2. Excessive belief in ghosts and spirits and the custom of sacrificing animals in the name of gods and goddesses instead of offering just flowers and food... (Adhikari 1991)

I myself have heard similar proposals from Magars living among other castes who are often better off than they are, or from Kham Magars who, having lived elsewhere, return home with a new perspective on village problems. The image of Magar culture that is revealed here is the negative side of high-caste Hindu values: to tribal excesses, the Brahman opposes his own preference for economizing (to put it at its mildest), his rejection of alcohol, and his worship of pure and vegetarian Hindu divinities. Most important of all, communal rituals—the very activities which are precisely the context in which tribal culture comes into play—are picked out as threatening to it. That which the activists propose to suppress (or weaken) in order to save Magar culture is the very thing that constitutes it.

Other quotations are eloquent. An orator, recalling how the Magars have contributed to the conquest of great Nepal and how they have been praised throughout the world for their courage in the past 100 years, adds that at present, "The Magars are like those warriors who have forgotten their power and strength because of a curse, and they will remain weak unless they are reminded of their strength for the struggle" (ibid.).

This curse has to be understood as an expression of the Magars' alienation caused by their subordination to the dominant groups in Nepali society, as is proved by the negative image of their own customs reflected in the mirror they hold up to the culture of the high Hindu castes. They are trapped by their contradictory conceptions and this confused feeling paralyses them and ensures that their attempts to participate in the enterprises of modern society usually fail.[10] It is clearly a question of a suffering that is not acknowledged, of a need for recognition. This need can no longer be accommodated within a politics that seeks merely to ameliorate

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[10] The biographies of villagers who have departed to seek their fortunes make rather depressing reading. Not only are they often the victims of dishonest middlemen, they have also failed to form networks of mutual assistance sufficiently strong to defend themselves.

the material conditions of life: it needs to be met, in the first place, on the symbolic level. Moreover, it seems as if winning this recognition requires violent means to be employed. The cursed and weak warrior may wish to seek his revitalization in the sacrifices entailed in a revolutionary struggle.

A third and new argument, which was more directly political, made its appearance as a consequence of this discourse in the period leading up to the revolution: 'The Magars are an exploited group. They should no longer tolerate this exploitation, they should struggle for their rights.' It is one thing to play by rules that have been imposed from above, it is quite another to wish to play a part in deciding on new rules. After the revolution of 1990 a new political sensibility, that is to say, the beginnings of a feeling among individuals that they could change the contours of their own social life and participate in the government of the country, penetrated even the most remote villages. This political awareness took several different forms.

Before presenting the different organizations and their ideologies, it is necessary to mention those individuals, who have become increasingly numerous in recent years, who have had experience of realities other than those of the daily life of the village. Whether their personal journeys have been in search of a better education or, more commonly, in search of work, whether they have gone to the flatlands of the Tarai, to the capital, or abroad, they have come into contact with a modernity which, even if it is not viewed as 100 per cent positive, marks a Rubicon. The perception of rural areas like theirs as dead ends, forgotten by the rest of the world, discourages the young people, who are more inclined than in previous times to join a militant project for a society in which they would have a more respected place and a better life. And these projects, whether revolutionary or ethnic, are all about making identity claims.

Ethnic movements after 1990

A brief glance at the events which followed from 1990 shows that there is a considerable gap between the claims put forward by individuals, their motivations, and the political responses they received. Immediately following the Jan Āndolan and during the six months leading up to the promulgation of the new constitution, ethnic parties multiplied alongside the big national parties. The last national census of 1991 listed 60 *jāt* or 'species': these included 26 ethnic groups, making up 35 per cent of the total population, 30 castes, and 3 religious groups (Tarai Muslim, hill Muslim, and Sikh), and a Bengali group (Gurung 1998: 43-5). The census also

recorded about twenty Tibeto-Burman languages.[11] Many of the ethnic groups have retained their original shamanic or oracular religion to a greater or lesser extent, even if the census classification is not always able to convey this.[12] In the west of Nepal, certain groups, such as the Magars and Tharus, have conserved their own religion while integrating into it Hindu practices such as the cult of Shiva or the Goddess, which means that they are officially classed as Hindus.

In order to build a national identity, which was the principal aim of the 'Panchayat philosophy', the Nepali language was imposed from the beginning of primary school, to the detriment of other languages. Children learned, and still learn, the history of the unification of the country by Prithvi Narayan Shah as a 'unification'—though many today would prefer to describe it as a violent military conquest. Schoolbooks on Nepali culture include the biographies of historical personages who have been designated as national heroes. A good example is Drabya Shah, an ancestor of the reigning dynasty, who is presented as having imposed himself in a Magar and Gurung milieu by means of his wisdom and physical prowess (de Sales 1998). A final element was that Hinduism was presented as the religion of the kingdom. The legal code forbade both sorcery and the specialists who were traditionally charged with combatting it. This proscription did not prevent these traditions from maintaining themselves (sometimes secretly), but it was seen as oppressive. People in Kham Magar villages still remember angrily how for several years their shamans were forbidden to beat their drums or to denounce sorcerers by making them dance.

The 'People's Movement' was the chance for this repressed diversity to come out into the open. The domination of the high castes of the hills (the Parbatiya) in every sphere—economic, political, and religious—was openly criticized. This tendency was already manifest during the 1980 referendum campaign. Ten years later the international context provided indirect support for such claims. It has been suggested that the collapse of Soviet power and the reawakening of the nations of

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[11] The latter can be placed in six principal groups: Magar, Bhotia, Gurung-Tamang, Newari, Chepang-Thami, Danuwar. The difficulty of distinguishing a language from a dialect means that more than a hundred languages have been identified in Nepal. About fifteen Indo-Aryan languages are recognized in the census, including Nepali (spoken as a mother tongue by 50.3 per cent of the population) and Maithili (Gurung 1998: 59-60).

[12] The first census to record religion was that held in the aftermath of the first revolution, between 1952 and 1954. The census of 1991 is more complete and distinguishes, in addition to Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, Christianity, Jainism, and 'Kiranti' (taken from the name of the tribes of east Nepal) (Gurung 1998: 95).

eastern Europe which followed on from it played an important catalytic role in the Nepalese revolution. When the United Nations declared 1993 'International Year of Indigenous Peoples' it provided world backing for local problems.

The first political party to be established after the revolution was the National Front for the Liberation of the People (Nepal Rāṣṭriya Janamukti Morchā), made up basically of Tibeto-Burmans of the hills. The secretary general, Ghore Bahadur Khapangi, presented a memorandum demanding a federal government to the commission preparing the new constitution. Another party, the Janajāti Party or 'minorities' party', led by Khagendra Jang Gurung, which was more violent in its mode of action, campaigned for the division of the kingdom into twelve autonomous ethnic states. Alongside these parties, which attempted to organize nationally, each ethnic group formed one or more parties made up only of its own members.[13] These ethnic parties are sometimes old cultural associations founded during the Panchayat period which had to hide their political ambitions, as was the case with the Magar association discussed above.

A simplified map of Nepal reveals, from west to east, several ethnically Tibetan enclaves in the north of the country, whereas the plains in the south are the habitat of various different Tharu groups dotted around a mosaic of very different peoples (Muslims and Chetris in the west, Yadavs and Bahuns in the east). By contrast the hill peoples have a tendency to form solid blocs. The Karnali basin in the west is inhabited predominantly by Chetris of Khas culture. There is a Magar zone in the mid-western region bordering on an area inhabited by Bahuns. From the Kali Gandaki river eastwards the people of the Parbatiya caste hierarchy form only a half, more or less, of the population. The northern half is the homeland of the Gurungs and further east of the Tamangs. Finally, in the east of the country there are three cultural zones dominated by the Chetri, the Rai, and the Limbu respectively. It is here that ethnic movements are the most active. The Limbus have a strong tradition of opposition to the state, focused on their claims to tribal land-rights (*kipaṭ*), going back to their conquest in the eighteenth century. By contrast, the Gurungs and the Magars were a part of that conquest and provided a large part of the military personnel that carried it out.

The ethnic movements are organized primarily around the three themes of *bhūmi, bhāṣā, dharma* ('land, language, and religion'), a phrase which recurs like a ritual formula in the activists' discourse. Protection of the mother tongue, secularization

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[13] The Newars are an exception here. Gellner (1997b) examines the reasons why the Newars, despite being a highly educated and politicized group, were slow to set up an ethnic party.

Ethnographic map of Nepal
Ethnic/Caste dominance by districts

Legend:
Chetri
Bahun
Tamang
Tharu
Magar
Rai
Yadav
Musulman
Gunung
Limbu
Newar

CNRS . SIS . UMR 8564
Centre de compétence thématique 'Modélisation, Analyse spatiale, SIG'
Sources: Gurung, H., Nepal Social Demography and Expressions. Kathmandu, New Era. 1998 : 52.
Logiciel ARC/INFO version 7.2.1
Realisation F. PIROT , M. LEGRAND , A. DE SALES

of the state, and, to varying degrees, local autonomy, were the main issues which came to the fore in the spontaneous days following 1990—to the point that people feared the appearance of regional or communal conflicts of the sort seen in India. These were the issues which were thrashed out in tea houses and led to angry fist-shaking during political meetings. These discussions inevitably led to more and more debates over the definition of particular groups, and with them came the fundamentalist notion of pure and unequivocal ethnic affiliation. In this way of thinking, either one is born a 'pure' Magar, or not. This exclusive notion of group belonging defined in terms of blood derives from a concern to erect barriers between categories that previously were permeable. It can even be interpreted as an expression of alienation arising from the domination of the high castes who are well known, as noted above, for their use of purity to exclude and subordinate others.

Shortly after the new constitution was promulgated, those who sympathized with the ethnic organizations held an enormous demonstration in Kathmandu to protest specifically against Nepal's official designation as a 'Hindu kingdom'. Their call for a secular state that would no longer legitimate the superiority of the Tāgādhārī over the Matwālī (not to mention the low castes) went unheard.

Moreover, the national elections which followed did not reflect these priorities: not one single MP was elected from the ethnic organizations, either in 1991 or in 1994. Even in the eastern hills, the region with the strongest presence of organizations fighting for the rights of ethnic groups, and where several neighbouring districts form a bloc dominated by Limbus, the National Front for the Liberation of the People took second place to the communists. These political setbacks have generally been explained not only by the inevitable divisions between those making identity claims that reduce their importance at the national level, but also by the fact that, when people enter the voting booth, they prefer to vote for projects which are likely to improve their everyday life. Everyone is concerned about drinking water, jobs, and education, and national parties, including the communists, win votes with policies on these issues.

None the less, it is interesting that the ideals for which people are willing to be mobilized and risk death in street demonstrations do not appear or are much diluted in the political programmes that succeed at elections. The very same people who carry out a revolution to defend their identity will vote for politicians who promise them clean drinking water. To interpret this gap between the need for recognition and political action as a sign that the former is less important or less urgent than the latter would be to misunderstand individual motivations. Rather, it is a question of different motivations coming into play at different moments. But the very fact that

the dominant political process does not take identity claims seriously into account means that these claims are left unsatisfied; they remain full of life, and potentially revolutionary.

Another pole of opposition to the government is formed by the revolutionary communist movements which have figured regularly and prominently on the front pages of the daily newspapers for nearly five years. It is necessary to examine the history of their foundation in order to undestand how they have taken root in particular locales.

The emergence of the Maoist movement

The Communist Party of Nepal was born towards the end of the Rana period, on September 15 1949, in Calcutta. Its founder, Pushpa Lal Shrestha, remained a radical republican up to his death in 1978, refusing all compromise with the king and insisting, in line with Maoist tradition, on a mobilization of the peasantry in order to overthrow the 'feudal state'. However, another tendency became apparent early on, which prefigured the emergence of a policy of reconciliation with the constitutional monarchy as a form of transition to the establishment of a republic. This position was taken up, to different degrees depending on the period, by Man Mohan Adhikari, who was elected general secretary of the party in 1953.[14] In the general election of 1959 the communists won only four seats (out of 109), which demonstrated the small significance of the party at that period. Mahendra's coup d'état in 1960 forced the communists to go underground again. Factions multiplied.

At the end of the 1960s the peasant revolt in Naxalbari, in the Bengali foothills of east India, encouraged the Nepali revolutionaries to form a fraternal movement. Called after the district of Jhapa, which adjoins Naxalbari, the Jhapalis began 'a campaign to eliminate class enemies', which was forcibly repressed by the Nepalese army in 1973. From this group at least two further factions developed. The first, called the 'Fourth Convention', emerged in 1974 and is particularly well established in the natal region of its founder, Mohan Bikram Singh, in west-central Nepal (Gorkha and Pyuthan districts). Just before the 1980 referendum, which the Fourth Convention boycotted, the army was put on a war footing in this region (Hoftun *et al.* 1999: 237). After several internal splits, this faction became the Communist Party of Nepal (Mashal), which is at the forefront of the revolt today.[15]

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[14] This position was taken up above all by Keshar Jang Rayamajhi, who gave his name to a faction of the party in 1963. It was pro-Soviet and hardly exists today.

[15] Hoftun *et al.* (1999: 392) give a useful diagram which represents all the numerous splits and regroupings of the various communist factions between 1949 and 1995.

The other group emerged in 1978 and became the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) or 'Mā-lé', first led by Pushpa Lal until his death in the same year, and later by his widow, Sahana Pradhan. The Mā-lé distanced themselves more and more from their Jhapali origin and gave up terrorism as a means of political action. Eventually they were close to the position adopted by Man Mohan Adhikari, with whom they allied themselves to form the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) or UML, which in 1991 became the second-strongest political force in the country after the Congress Party. They even formed a minority government of the country for nine months in 1994. The accession of the communists to power involved them abandoning the very principles which were at the origin of the movement. They accepted the Hindu kingdom and aimed for agrarian reform rather than armed combat against big landlords.

Small groups of revolutionary communists did not accept this tendency and turned their backs on those they accused of having slavishly followed the social-democratic policy of the dominant party 'as a tail follows its dog'. They remained faithful to orthodox Maoism and accused the new Chinese government, which overturned the Gang of Four in 1976, of being counter-revolutionaries. During this period, mainly in the USA but also in Britain, revolutionary international movements were formed which advocated armed revolution against imperialism and revisionism. In March 1984 the CPN (Mashal) was represented at the second international conference of Maoist parties in London. This conference ended with the delegates of nineteen revolutionary movements, including the Peruvian Shining Path, signing a declaration that saw the birth of the Revolutionary International Movement or RIM.

In 1989-90 Mashal, as a party, did not join other Communists and the Congress in the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD). None the less, its members were very active in the many demonstrations which began in February 1990. One of the young leaders of the party, Baburam Bhattarai, organized an alliance of extreme leftist groups under the name United People's Front (Saṃyukta Jan Morchā or SJM). Day after day the SJM pushed forward each stage of the struggle and was quick to criticize the MRD for failing to keep constant vigilance and being incapable of taking advantage of its position of strength to extract real concessions from the king (Nickson 1992: 366-70).

Bhattarai decided to stand for election in 1991 without intending to take his seat in Parliament. His aim was to show that his movement, which remained underground, was not a negligible force: they won nine seats and the status of a national party (with more than 3 per cent of the votes).

The map of the electoral results in 1991 is significant in this regard. It clearly demonstrates the cleavage between the Kathmandu Valley and the east of the country, where the communists won a majority of seats, and the west, dominated by the Congress Party. The regions which were the most politicized, and which returned communists, were also the best off economically, whereas the west contains the poorest districts. The few islands gained by the Maoists were to be found principally in the traditionally conservative west, specifically in the districts of Rukum and Rolpa which are of particular concern here.

The years which followed the first election were marked by extreme governmental instability. Different ministerial teams succeeded one another, alliances between the parties were made and remade in accordance with individual allegiances, which satisfied no one. In this new democratic context, those in power managed to lose their legitimacy in the eyes of a population which, in different forms, seemed to have lost its illusions.

On February 4 1996, the SJM submitted a list of forty demands to the government, requiring a response within two weeks or it would begin a 'People's War'. The memorandum strongly criticized the Hindu kingdom and demanded a republican constitution drawn up by a constituent assembly elected by universal suffrage. At the same time it evinced a virulent nationalism which criticized all Indian and Western influence.[16]

The government did not consider it wise to respond to this memorandum, and on February 13 the SJM carried out simultaneous raids against police stations in Haleri (Rolpa) and Athbiskot (Rukum). In Haleri the telephone lines were cut and a temple was set on fire. There were no deaths but the Maoist operations became more frequent. Three and a half years later, in 1999, a fortnightly leftist magazine[17] had on its cover a photograph of Musikot, the district headquarters of Rukum, which had become the 'Maoist capital'; the (official) tally of deaths from the People's War had reached more than 1500.

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[16] In the first place it demanded that all treaties with India which threaten Nepali sovereignty must be abandoned (on these treaties, see Hoftun *et al.* 1999: 260 and 275). In addition it required Western imperialism to be fought, both as expressed in international development aid, which encourages general corruption, and in the 'pollution' of the media (video and licensed newspapers).

[17] *Naulo Bihānī 2056* (1999, Baisākh-Sāun).

How the Maoists established themselves in the Kham Magar country
A natural guerilla site

Numerous newspaper articles have attempted to explain why this region has become a Maoist stronghold. Three factors are usually cited: the presence of the forest which offers a natural opportunity for guerilla operations, the particularly poor economic conditions, and finally a local population, mostly Magars, who are seen as

> a naïve people… easily swayed.. but who, if they can be enlisted for a task, continue in it or die in the attempt. There is irony in the fact that as many Magars have been killed by the Maoists as by the police. According to unofficial statistics half of all victims have been Magars. (*Awaj Weekly Chronicle*, February 15 1999, Vol. 2, No. 23)

Poverty and the presence of the forest have certainly played their part in the rise of the Maoists, although the same conditions are of course found in many other regions of Nepal. The third point—the presence of the Magars—requires some commentary. The northern part of the area selected by the Maoists is in fact partly covered by the National Park of Dhorpatan, and the communal lands of the villages are still largely wooded: more than half of the districts of Rukum and Rolpa are forested.[18] Furthermore, the extremely primitive state of the communications network keeps the hills in isolation.

These characteristics, which make the region an ideal refuge for fighters, equally impede its development. It is, along with some of the districts further to the northwest, one of the least developed of the country (Gurung 1998: 169, Fig. 30). In the two districts of Rolpa and Rukum there is, for example, not a single hospital nor any industry. Ninety-five per cent of the population live from agriculture. The most fertile land in the southern parts of the region is inhabited by Chetris, whereas the Kham Magar to the north and north-west live above 2000 metres and supplement agriculture with transhumant animal husbandry and the secret production of hashish.

This configuration is not unique to the region. The districts further to the west are, as just noted, equally isolated and poor and have experienced a very high level of emigration to India: every year hundreds of villagers in the area around Jumla are

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[18] Cf. HURPES (1999). HURPES is a Nepali human-rights NGO funded by the Norwegian Human Rights Fund. Its report traces the history of the leftist parties since 1990 and the birth of the Maoist movement in Nepal. Much of its information about the districts affected by the People's War is derived from investigations in the field.

forced by hunger to leave and seek whatever work they can find. Epidemics also ravage the enfeebled inhabitants. The great majority (more than 70 per cent) are Chetris and they tend to support the Congress Party. The success of the Maoists in establishing themselves in the west-central region does seem to be due, at least in part, to the presence of the Magars, the third frequently invoked factor.

It is easy to recognize in the quotation given above the stereotypes frequently used for those groups which provide recruits for the Gurkhas: naivety, courage, endurance, and loyalty to their leaders (who, one may suspect, are responsible for propagating the stereotypes in the first place). The military qualities of the Magars, Gurungs, and Kirantis have been praised many times—in inverse proportion to the degree to which those in charge have given them a place in running the country. And it may be that the young mountain-dwellers—brought up in harsh surroundings and enrolling at the end of their adolescence in the military (the only way they see of obtaining what they lack: regular income, education, travel)—do in fact correspond to these descriptions. It remains true that these are stereotypes and it would be false to imagine the Magars as a people who go to war blindly, unanimously following their leader.

Bearing these qualifications in mind, it is necessary to underline the similarities between the Nepalese situation and that which gave birth to the Naxalites. In his famous study of the revolutionary movement in India, Sumanta Banerjee noted that "a special feature of the peasant rebellions has been the role of the tribal population… It is significant that Naxalbari, where the first uprising took place in 1967, is inhabited by Santal tribal people who took a prominent part in the movement. In Srikakulam in the south also, where the movement matured in 1968, Girijans or the hill tribals, formed its nucleus" (Banerjee 1980: 33-4). That the tribals should have been the spearhead of the peasant revolts can be explained in the first place by the fact that they were the first to suffer because of continual immigration by peasants from the lowlands. But he also remarks that "through all these vicissitudes, the tribals have jealously guarded the autonomy of their various social institutions, and have retained a certain amount of militancy…" (ibid.: 34). If Banerjee had been writing today, no doubt the term 'identity' would have sprung naturally from his pen in connection with the tribal peoples.

The potential of these peoples for activism was well perceived by the leaders of the revolutionary movements. Banerjee (1980: 36) suggests that in the case of Srikakulam "both the existing economic frustration of the tribal peasants and their past militancy encouraged the leaders of the RCC [Revolutionary Communist Committee] to concentrate their activities in this area" (which was moreover largely for-

ested). One may well suppose that the leaders of the Nepalese Maoist movement followed a similar reasoning when they chose Rukum and Rolpa as the base area of their guerilla movement. The two leading figures of the Maoist movement are both Brahmans, originally from west Nepal and coming to politics during the student movements of the 1980s. Baburam Bhattarai, mentioned above, studied in India and presents himself as the theorist of the movement, whereas P.K. Dahal, better known by his *nom de guerre* Prachanda, is the commander in chief of the 'people's army'.

Certainly the situations in India and Nepal are different, if only because the events compared are separated by thirty years and the world and political forces have changed. It remains true that the Nepali revolutionaries see themselves as continuing the Naxalite heritage. The magazine of RIM, *A World to Win*, celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of the Naxalbari revolt at the same time as the first anniversary of the People's War in Nepal. A selection of writings by Charu Mazumdar, 'the pioneer of Maoism in India', was published in this issue as a source of inspiration for the activists of today. It is very likely that the Nepali leaders based themselves on the analysis of the earlier ideologists in organizing their guerilla campaign. Although many other scenarios may have been conceivable,[19] the Kham Magar country probably appeared as a tempting target.

The country of the Kham Magar
As we have seen, the term 'country' refers to an entity that is simultaneously geographical and cultural: those who live there automatically feel attached to it. Each year the Kham Magar migrate south with their flocks of sheep; the southerners call

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[19] Although geographic and economic criteria would naturally tend to indicate the west of Nepal as the choice for a base, the Tharu groups in the Tarai could also have been susceptible to Maoist propaganda. Far more than the Magars, they are a people who have suffered from the exploitation of large landowners belonging to the high Hindu castes for whom they have to work in a kind of feudal relationship. Perhaps the Tharus' reputation for timidity—they do not share the warlike character attributed to the hill populations—has played a part in the Maoists' not taking this option. But this is not to say that the Tharus have remained unaffected by the movement. By contrast, the Kiranti groups in the east of the country are well known for their tradition of resistance to the state. The Limbus, as noted above, have a long tradition of fighting for their privileged form of tribal land tenure. However, not only are forests rarer in that part of Nepal, and impoverishment less extreme, but these tribal groups also possess a political organization which is perhaps more solid and less easily penetrated by the radicalism of the Maoists. Instead, the communists have been able to establish themselves in this region by skilfully including strong ethnic claims within their programme.

A Maoist propaganda poster stuck to a tree in Dolpo district, north of Rukum. Only part of the text is visible in the photograph. It is signed by a Maoist group and announces to passers-by that they are entering the territory under its jurisdiction. The authors refer to an assembly of people united in their opposition to hangings carried out by the government. In the foreground of the poster men and women are shown brandishing their weapons against government forces who can be seen running away from explosions in the background. The scene is dominated by a communist flag flying from the summit of a mountain behind which the sun is rising. In line with conventional communist imagery, this symbolizes the dawn of a new era. (I thank Marietta Kind for providing me with this image.)

them Shes and Shesini, i.e. 'those who live high up, hidden away' (Nep. *śeṣ*:'end', 'remainder'). They have long lived far from the centres of power and this distinguishes them from their cousins, the Magars, who are nowadays scattered everywhere throughout the kingdom. The Kham Magar inhabit about thirty compact villages in the higher parts of Rukum and Rolpa districts. All of them are peasant cultivators of land which they themselves own. They have hereditary relations with low service castes (blacksmiths and tailor-musicians) who live at the edge of their villages; no other caste has settled in their territory. With a history different from that of other Magars, the Kham Magar have conserved or developed many of their own unique cultural practices. They preserve a particularly rich and lively shamanic tradition, for example, which leads them to call their land 'the country of the blind' where only shamans can see (cf. Oppitz 1991). Their compact villages have as many as 300 or 400 houses and several thousand inhabitants.

These sizeable communities are endogamous. The Kham Magars marry preferentially with their matrilateral cross cousins: this form of alliance engenders a difference of status between the sons-in-law, the wife-takers, who thereby become inferior, and their maternal uncles, the wife-givers, who are superior to them. Numerous rituals, from weddings to funerals, and including ritual healing, reinforce this fundamental relationship, which defines every individual. Another important relationship exists between the founders of a given site, where a village is established, and later settlers. The former are believed to have a privileged relationship to the earth, which legitimates their dominance, both politically and religiously, in the community. Of course this dominance can be questioned. The analysis of some rituals allows one to surmise that the tensions between the two sides, i.e. the founders and the rest, are in fact at the heart of social dynamics in these communities (de Sales 1996).

These two structuring relationships, between founders and later immigrants on the one side, and between marital allies on the other, once coincided with each other, since the first founders made the later immigrants into their sons-in-law, by giving them both daughters and land. This bipartite schema became ever more complicated with time and the division of clans and lineages, but these social units are still visible in the layout of the village as well as of the cultivated fields which surround it. Behind the unity of these large villages, it is necessary to know how to discern clan-based fragmentation.

Members of the same clan believe that they share a common ancestor and common geographical origin, which, in the last analysis, determines clan exogamy. Thus each of the four Kham Magar clans—Pun, Gharti, Buda, and Rokha—is known

by a second geographical designation, which locates its ancient site of residence. Two members of different clans but originally coming from the same village may not marry each other. The conclusion is inevitable that belonging to a clan is not a matter of blood alone, but also of territory. In fact it is territorial attachment that is the ultimate determining factor.

The lack of identity politics despite the long-term presence of communism
The relative isolation of the Kham Magars may explain why ethnic activists have made little impression on them until recently. Ghore Bahadur Khapangi, the founder of the first national ethnic party, is himself a Magar, but he comes from the eastern Tarai. He is also the secretary of the National Magar Association (Nepāl Magar Sangh), which did not have a single Kham Magar volunteer or employee working in its office in 1997. Since then the Association has remedied this embarrassing lack, but Khapangi himself, when questioned on this point, argued that the Kham were not yet politicized and were difficult to mobilize because of their "lack of education".[20] One may add that very few of them had entered the British army up to the middle 1980s, though their number has increased since then.[21] The role of retired servicemen in the politicization of ethnicity has already been pointed out.

In contrast it seems that the village of Thawang, in the heart of the Kham country (in the north of Rolpa district), had already become communist as early as 1957. It was a bridgehead of the revolutionary movement founded by Mohan Bikram Singh in the neighbouring district of Pyuthan. Later, in 1980, a local with a very strong personality, Barman Budha, was elected the mayor of Thawang. He is known for having boycotted the referendum and burned the portraits of the King and Queen which are supposed to be displayed in every government office. He was imprisoned for five years and his project of establishing a commune in the village failed. But he returned and was elected as a Maoist (SJM) MP in 1991.

Locals relate how, before he went underground, he turned up at the first sessions of the National Assembly dressed as a Kham Magar peasant: around his thighs a short piece of cloth made of woven hemp, which left his legs naked, was held up by a long woollen belt wound several times around his waist, in which was stuck a large dagger (*khukurī*), the symbol of the hill peoples. An upper garment that crossed over his chest and formed a pocket on his back was the distinctive sign of Magar

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[20] Interview with the author, May 1998.
[21] In 1981, when I began my first fieldwork among the Kham Magar, not one of the 2,500 inhabitants of the village where I lived had joined the British army. Nowadays there are about twelve who have done so.

dress. The contrast between this and official Nepali costume was certainly strik-
ing. This story, told as a joke against the dominant high castes, shows how the
revolutionary Maoist movement learned very quickly how to make skilful use of
ethnic symbols.

Although the success of the SJM at the national polls in 1991 was relatively modest,
in the following year's local elections it obtained a majority in Rolpa district and
in neighbouring Rukum it came a very close second to the Congress Party. This
advance of the Maoists was evidently seen as very threatening by the party in
power (Congress). It was then that the activists of the two rival parties began a mer-
ciless war against each other. Amnesty International reported numerous cases of
arbitrary arrest by the police, of torture and murders "including numerous Magars,
members of the low Hindu castes, lawyers, teachers, and young people" and, on the
other side, murders by Maoist activists of 'class enemies', meaning local politicians
who belonged to the Congress Party.[22]

Ancestral conflicts become murderous
It is not only crimes: false accusations have also become more common. They
enable us to understand how it is that members of the same community have come
to the point of killing each other, in the absence of the traditional safeguards that
used to prevent conflict from getting out of hand and encouraged compromise
between warring parties. Most false accusations are treated as matters of public
order. The slightest altercation between two people in public, at a fair (*melā*) for
example, is likely to be reported to the police by a witness. The case then becomes
the responsibility of the Chief of Police. The accused is put in prison and stays there
until his case appears in court, unless he can put up bail of 28,000 rupees. Very few
villagers can afford or raise such a sum. Above all, in this context, the accused will
doubt that the strength of his case will have any relevance, because the police chief,
appointed by the Home Minister, will back up the supporters of the party in power.
The majority find that the only solution is to run away 'into the forest', to a city,
to the plains, or even to India in the hope of passing time there until their relatives
manage to sort out the dispute.

An accusation by a neighbour who supports the Congress Party in power will be
much talked about in the village, where all neighbours are relatives to some degree
or other. Usually it serves to stir up ancient conflicts which would previously have
been dealt with inside the community. The senior men of the clans would hold a

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[22] In addition, two SJM activists were assassinated in Rolpa and three communists in Dang
during the national election campaign of 1994 (Amnesty International 1997: 3-4).

meeting at the headman's house in the presence of the parties to the dispute, and the difference would be discussed and settled. Villagers rarely resorted to the state's legal institutions in the district capital. Nowadays disputes of this sort very quickly move out of the control of the protagonists themselves. The Maoists get hold of it and send their hooded guerillas (*chāpāmār*) to kill the 'class enemy' who has made a 'false accusation'.

The 'people's army' is organized in such a way that the fighters in any one district always come from outside it. They are mostly young peasants (all castes mixed up), some of whom have suffered setbacks when attempting to emigrate to the town or abroad. They are led by leaders who are said to have received special training, sometimes in India. It is also said that in order to rise up in the hierarchy of the revolutionary army and to achieve the status of *chāpāmār*, it is necessary to kill a 'class enemy'. The fighters are informed about their victims by their contacts in the village, but they do not know them personally. This is how ancestral conflicts, rarely fatal until now, have become so.

In the past the opposition between 'us' and 'the others' (our clan and our affines, or the founders and the more recent settlers) was counterbalanced by a whole network of relationships which enabled life in common to carry on within the community. Affiliation to national political parties has dissolved the boundaries of the village. The neighbour who makes an accusation is protected by the party in power, the accused is 'defended' by the revolutionaries. The two sides then become pawns who are manipulated by forces outside the community. This type of scenario occurs more easily in a society that has already become fragile, a society whose members are no longer in a position to unite in the face of forces coming from the outside.

It is striking that the opposition between the two parties at the local level makes far more use of a logic of identity reduced to its most basic form than it does of political convictions. The large village of Taka illustrates this phenomenon particularly well. Two clans there marry each other: the Gharti, the founders of the site, and the Budha, who arrived later. If one knows that the Gharti support the Congress Party, it is not hard to guess that the majority of the Budha support the SJM. This should not blind us to other cleavages which are important nowadays, in particular the generational gap between the youth, who are more easily seduced by Maoist propaganda, and their elders who no longer have the right to pronounce on political matters, whatever their clan. None the less, it remains true that the overturning of traditional rules exacerbates the logic of identity and leads to murder.

Khapangi was very quick to denounce a situation in which Kham Magar peasants were fighting a war that was not theirs, but that of the two parties fighting for territory. He emphasized that once again the Magars were the victims of high castes, since the political leaders both of the Congress Party and of the revolutionary movement were equally Brahmans. The Maoist conquest has been made at the cost of Magar blood, just like the conquest of 'great Nepal' by Prithvi Narayan Shah. The founder of the first ethnic party wants to awake the feeling of Magar identity among the Kham. Such ethnic feeling will follow paths that are hard to predict.

The development of the situation
The situation which has just been described obtained at the beginning of the 'People's War' in 1996. But it was transformed by the intervention of the police who were supposed to re-establish order. Conflicts were displaced. It was no longer a case of villagers settling scores by using the Maoists as intermediaries. It became a direct confrontation between the Maoists and the state. There is no space here to go into the details of the police procedures which have been denounced for four years by numerous organizations concerned to defend human rights. It is enough to know that, in addition to almost daily cases of arbitrary arrest or murder reported in the national press, three special police operations have been launched. In November 1995 a squadron of 165 policemen, of whom 50 had received special military training, were charged with 'winning the hearts and minds' of the people of Rolpa in an operation dubbed 'Romeo' (an involuntary irony derived from the language of radio transmission: Romeo was the 'R' for Rolpa). In June 1998 there began an operation called 'Kilo Sera Two' what was to last for more than a year in eighteen districts. The police were charged with finding the Maoists in the most remote villages and in the forest where they were hiding. Finally the last operation appeared in the newspapers under a name that requires no commentary: 'Search and Kill'.

The organization of daily life in the village is paralysed: peasants who leave the village risk being arrested by the police who suspect them of helping the guerillas. Thus taking animals to pasture, departing for summer residences, going to the forest to collect berries and mushrooms, which form a not insubstantial part of the village diet, have become either impossible or extremely problematic. Schools are closed. Young men, those who have not joined the guerillas in the forest, have left to hide in the big cities or in India. It is said that the women plough and the old people keep silent.

All the accounts I have received describe an impossible living situation. The villages are harassed at night by Maoists who have to be fed and during the day by policemen looking for suspects. But very quickly, and whatever their political incli-

nations, my informants admit that they prefer the Maoists, who make do with maize and salt, whereas the police demand chicken and alcohol. Above all, the Maoists have shown themselves over time to be predictable in the way they deal with people. They inform the villagers about their activities during programmes that they hold, usually at night. Individuals from whom money is demanded are informed by letter. They have the reputation of never harming poor people, whereas the police, no doubt themselves often under pressure, consider any peasant they meet on the path to be guilty and often beat them without any further investigation.

The villagers view their country as currently being unjustly persecuted by the forces of the state. A feeling of revolt has developed that focuses on the defence of their territory, a sentiment that has been cleverly exploited by the revolutionaries who promise the Kham Magars autonomy. Thus the situation has evolved considerably over the four years of the People's War. It began as intra-communal conflicts which were used by two opposed political parties, and it has become transformed into a struggle for territorial autonomy, an entirely new idea for the Kham Magar. This idea put forward by ethnic activists only caught on among the Kham Magar with the development of the Maoist guerilla movement. The villagers do not notice the paradox of the revolutionaries, fervent defenders of a new nation, becoming activists in favour of ethnic autonomy. Ideological principles, which are in any case rarely made explicit, give way before the necessities of action. The needs of the Maoists (to have a secure base territory for their guerilla action) and those of the villagers (to protect themselves from a government that has become hostile and dangerous) coincide, even though their projects are not the same. The Maoists' techniques are capable of covering up such ambiguities.

The symbolic conquest of territory and its revitalization
Despite its overt anti-religious statements, Marxism possesses a hidden religious dimension that has often been remarked upon. The first analysts who were interested in this question in the Nepali context sought to point out the continuity between communism and certain elements of Hindu and particularly Buddhist tradition (Hoftun *et al.* 1999: 215-18). Philippe Ramirez demonstrates how a materialist ideology has been adapted to Nepalese reality, "a society where religion does not constitute an autonomous domain" (1997: 52), and how the practice of Nepalese Maoism is hardly a secular affair. He mentions in particular the cult of 'martyrs' (*śahīd*), a term that refers both to the communist victims of repression under the Panchayat regime and to present-day Maoists killed by the police. According to Ramirez, this cult can be traced back to traditional conceptions in which "the martyr who dies a violent death can only escape from eternal wandering by a recognition of his status, which is the equivalent of reintegrating him into society"

(Ramirez 1997: 60). In the region discussed here this fundamental ritual of Maoist propaganda has been adapted in a way that returns us precisely to the discussion of territory.

An article that appeared in a Maoist-aligned magazine in May 1998 contained a balance sheet of two years of the 'People's War' in Rolpa district: 56 civilians killed by the police were declared as martyrs.[23] Their names were combined and given to two gardens set up in their honour, to about a dozen paths, and to five wayside stopping places with stone platforms (often constructed in the shade, they enable travellers to put down their loads).[24] Although the gardens are a new idea (borrowed, presumably, from a communist vision of urban development), the resting platforms and paths are traditionally built in memory of the dead, who then, in Kham Magar belief, become ancestors. Established in a locality where he will receive regular worship, the dead spirit will, it is believed, ensure the prosperity of the place. It seems that the revolutionaries have adopted this reasoning: they seek to neutralize the violent deaths of the victims of the People's War by turning them into benevolent ancestors.

Another example illustrates how the Maoists are willing to follow local traditions. Two commemorative pillars have been erected. One, at the top of a hill, celebrates the second anniversary of the 'people's war' and is called 'Śahīd'. The other has been put up exactly on the Jaljala pass, the highest point of the district. It has been baptized 'Sija', from 'Sisne' (a neighbouring pass) and 'Jaljala'. This site is particularly rich in symbolism for the villagers of the valley it overlooks. The god Braha lives there and each year hundreds of rams are sacrificed in his honour. Braha is a local god attached to a specific village territory (there are numerous accounts of conflict between neighbouring Brahas); he is closely linked to the ancestors (de Sales 1991: 145-6). Establishing a commemorative pillar on his site shows that the revolutionaries do not think that it is sufficient to occupy a place physically, but that they have to root it in a specific history of events in which the principal actors are locals. The veneration of dead heroes both ties this history to the place and opens it up to the other world.

Alongside this appropriation of space by means of ritual activity, the Maoists take care to eulogize places, just as they exalt the dead. The article cited above finishes with a series of praises in the epic style of communist propaganda:

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[23] *Muktiyuddha* (The War of Liberation), no. 1.
[24] Several of the names were represented by the first syllable only, in order to make a single name by running them together.

> Rolpa will be immortal in the history of Nepal. Rolpa is not just a district, it is Nepal. It is the source of revolution, the centre of hope. Glory to Jaljala, glory to Sisne! For Jaljala [we feel] an infinite faith and for Sisne a deep love!

Thus the 'country' that was forgotten in its remote fastnesses is placed at the centre of the nation, praised for *being* the nation itself, and the mountain passes that are so intimately related to the villagers' everyday landscape are recognized by everyone as the source of deep attachments. This need for recognition, the source of the revolt over identity, is expressed most movingly in revolutionary songs. More than a hundred songs are recorded on cassettes that are handed around clandestinely. They deserve a separate study, but it should be noted here that although propaganda rhetoric is present, most of them simply describe the suffering (*dukha*) of the peasant trying to survive in a country where the conditions have become too difficult and which he is often forced to leave to seek his fortune elsewhere. The musical style of the traditional folk songs of west Nepal conveys with nostalgia all 'the love for this country in the shadow of Dhaulagiri, stretched out in the cool of the evening'.

It is difficult to know whether the revolutionaries make use of such traditional techniques for their own ends in full consciousness of what they are doing, or whether such techniques impose themselves as a spontaneous response to a situation of crisis. Or, to put it another way, whether it is a question of a strategic or a traditional use of local tradition. Either way, local tradition continues to live on in their practices. The ethnic movements, by contrast, have set themselves up to defend a tribal heritage which loses its vitality in the very efforts made to define it, when it is represented in cultural programmes or made the instrument of political ambitions.

Another example goes in the same direction. When the Magar activist calls himself a warrior who has been cursed and is without strength, he is certainly the victim of the stereotypes which depict him as a brave and long-suffering fighter. The hill tribes have been trapped by these descriptions by means of a process of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (Clarke 1995: 114-15). It remains true that the depression and frustration which results cannot find much satisfaction in the contradictions of ethnic revivalism, as expressed in the desire to save Magar society by reforming its 'excessive' or superstitious customs.

In contrast, the revolutionary struggle may seem to offer a solution when it preaches the 'annihilation of class enemies'. Charu Mazumdar, the ideologist of the Naxalite movement which the Nepali Maoist leaders view as a forerunner to their own, conceived of battle (and murders) as the only way in which "the new man [can]

be reborn" (cited in Banerjee 1980: 145). The conception of a 'nation sacrificed by feudals', 'eaters of men', is central to Nepali revolutionary propaganda, as is the necessity of 'taking revenge for the blood of the martyrs'. The conceptual universe revealed by these few key terms of activist discourse is evidently organized around a sacrificial schema, and this suggests that the combatants, by participating in the revolutionary struggle, are seeking some kind of symbolic revitalization.

It was suggested above that there was considerable truth in the remark made by Khapangi, to the effect that the Magars have found themselves fighting a war that is not theirs: they are just cannon-fodder for the two parties struggling over their territory. Perhaps one could go further and suggest that the young people enrolled by the Maoists are fighting precisely in order to revive the strength of the warriors that they suppose their grandfathers to have been, and to free them from the curse that has paralysed them and reduced them to silence in their own territory. This would then be their way of appropriating the war and making it their own.

Conclusion

In conclusion let us consider the way in which the Kham Magars have resorted to an intensified sense of identity in relation to their 'country'. Should one see it as a resurgence, in a situation of crisis, of a traditional identity which combines both territorial and cultural ties in one, which fixes on the locality's uniqueness rather than on its differences from the other countries of the kingdom? Richard Burghart expressed this Nepalese notion of 'country' particularly well when he remarked, "Although a native may claim that his country is best of all, the point… is not that one's country is better than any other country; it is that one's country is best for oneself" (Burghart 1996: 235). No doubt the villagers caught up in the chaos of the guerilla war feel great nostalgia for their country, either because they have been forced to leave it, or because they have to see it being torn apart by incessant fighting. But their attachment to their country and their efforts to defend it or to claim autonomy for it are about as far as it is possible to be from the projects of the revolutionary leaders. Maoist propaganda is quite clear: when it draws a metonymic link between Rolpa and Nepal ("Rolpa… is Nepal"), it is attempting to construct a nation out of all these countries, a nation in which all these countries will be united and ultimately dissolved. The Maoist project with respect to the nation is remarkably similar to that of King Mahendra as evident in the discourse, discussed above, in which all subjects were to find their 'identity' in their shared devotion to the newly conscious nation.

Let us note, finally, that the guerilla war is simply accelerating the exodus of the mountain-dwellers for the valleys further south where the dynamism of the nation

is located. Thus, the focus of the Kham Magars on their identity in relation to their country has to be viewed as the response of individuals who are caught in a bind. Once the crisis has passed, however that may come about, they will abandon their autonomy and their principal aspiration will be to merge into the wider Nepali population.

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Utopia and Ideology among the Magars:
Lakhan Thapa versus Mao Dzedong?

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

The Magars form the largest minority in Nepal, with one and a half million individuals recorded in the 1991 census. They are scattered throughout the country, but are more concentrated in their original territory, the Magarant, located in west-central Nepal. The majority of Magars are peasants, but Magar men are numerous in the Indian and the Nepalese armies and often emigrate temporarily to India to earn money. Since the 1990s the Magars have been closely linked with Maobadi activism, both as victims and actors, especially in the districts of Rolpa, Rukum, and Pyuthan.[1] Despite the great number of articles that have been published in newspapers, information on this secret war is scarce and difficult to analyse, because it often originates from biased sources such as the police, journalists who have not done fieldwork, leaders of the movement, or villagers talking from hearsay. According to the latter, who are perhaps the best source for an understanding of the sociological origin of the guerrillas, the majority of the Maobadis are young men, comparatively educated, who have no hope of finding salaried work and are unwilling to work as farmers like their fathers. They live in groups in the forests, where they hide during the day. Villagers often say, "During the day the policemen walk, during the night the Maobadis walk." Maobadi armed groups mainly attack police stations and their aim, according to the people, is to get rid of the police as well as the wealthy men.[2] Many wealthy families in the hills owned lands both in the Tarai and around their houses, but they usually preferred to spend most of

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[1] On this subject, see de Sales (this issue), and on the Nepalese Maoist ideology in general, see Ramirez (1997). I would like to thank them both: the former for having sent me her unpublished paper and the latter for having communicated to me the text 'Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal' as well as for his helpful comments on the present article.

[2] Their target, as formulated in the text entitled 'Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal' which was adopted by the central committee of the Maoist party of Nepal in March 1995, is as follows: "...the target of armed struggle will be the confiscation of the lands of feudals and landlords and their distribution amongst the landless and poor peasants on the basis of the land-to-the-tiller principle, and in order to cut the roots of imperialist

the year in the hills where the climate is more temperate. Many have already been forced to quit the hills to settle in the Tarai, in order to flee from the Maobadis. However, the simple peasants also fear the Maobadis, because burglars take the opportunity of the guerrilla war to rob the common man. The villagers say that they cannot distinguish the Maobadis from the *dāubādī*s, a name for these opportunist thieves. The ideology of the Nepalese Maoist movement is strongly egalitarian and communalistic: these two features are attractive to the Magars because they have always stressed the sense of equality and mutual help which prevails among their group.

The question of status is also largely debated within the framework of the other major ideological movement which has emerged in the last decade in the Magar community: ethnic revivalism. Indeed, parallel to the secret war, ethnic associations, ethnic meetings, and ethnic publications have flourished. These two streams developed at the same time. Though they are not visibly connected, there are some striking examples of individuals who are activists in both movements, such as the Magar poet, Khadgasimha Baral, who is (or was) both an ethnic activist and a Maoist militant.

In many respects these two movements appear as two distinct paths: one advocates peaceful changes within the law, the other advocates the use of violence and revolution.[3] Both advocate something approaching a utopian ideology, i.e., aiming to build an ideal society where there will no longer be rich or poor, low or high, alcoholism, etc...

In this paper I shall discuss and analyse the case of a Magar rebel of the 19th century whose story shares many features with that of the Maoist guerrillas. Interest-

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exploitation to attack projects such as industries, banks etc. which are in the hands of comprador and bureaucratic capitalists, and also projects run by government and non-government organizations." The Maobadis' main allies tend to be farm workers, bonded labourers, landless peasants, porters and poor peasants, cart pullers, ricksaw pullers, and drivers of tempos and taxis. Their strategy is to take peasant revolution as the backbone, and to rely on and unite with the peasants to surround the city from the countryside.

[3] These two paths are also specifically related to each of the two major sub-groups constituting the so-called Magar ethnic group. While ethnic activism is apparently more prevalent among the 'southern' Magars, Maoism is strongly connected with the 'northern' Magars. However, this occidental taxinomy is not used by the Magars themselves, who distinguish between the eastern and the western Magars, on the basis of more accurate geographical observations.

ingly, this rebel is a major figure in Magar ethnic activism and is also recognized as a revolutionary by the Maoists.[4] This rebellion may shed light on current events by placing them in a historical continuity of revolutionary movements; in return, the current situation will help to articulate the recent reinterpretation and instrumentalization of this old rebellion within the framework of ethnic and/or political Magar movements.

Lakhan Thapa was probably born in 1834. He joined the Magar battalion created by Prithvi Narayan Shah, but after he had attained the rank of captain he quit the army in 1869 and established himself in the village of Bungkot, in the neighbourhood of Manakamana, Gorkha district. There he organized a rebellion against the government of Jang Bahadur, creating a real utopian kingdom. He built a palace with an exercise ground for his 'soldiers' and in 1871 he was consecrated as a local king by the population. He used to say:

> Jagadamba Kalimata offered me this prediction, (*bardān*): 'Jang Bahadur has sold Nepal to the barbarians (*mleccha*), the people call for help. Displace Jang, relieve Mother Nepal of the burden of sin, re-establish the *satya yug* in Nepal!' Let's go, my brothers, be ready! (Ranamagar 1997)

Although Lakhan Thapa was hung to death in front of his house in 1876, he is believed to have used his tantric powers to bring about the death of Jang Bahadur seven days after his own.

In his well-known history of Nepal, Balchandra Sharma describes Lakhan Thapa as "ridiculous"; the Ajanta dictionary (n.d.: 490) goes further: the entry under his name reads, "a worthless person; a good for nothing fellow". Who was this 'ridiculous' and 'worthless' man in whom the Magar ethnic activists have found a potent symbol of their movement? An official acknowledgement of the ill treatment meted out to this Lakhan Thapa was the first of the ten claims the Nepal Magar Sangh set before the Nepalese government in the 1990s.

In February 2000 the anniversary of Lakhan Thapa's death was the occasion for a great meeting organized jointly by various Magar associations: the Magar Samāj Sevā Kendra (Lalitpur), the Nepal Magar Sangh (Kathmandu), the Soraṭhī Kalā

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[4] In 'Strategy and Tactics of Armed Struggle in Nepal', one reads, "Here, even after the development of the centralized Nepalese state, the Nepalese people have been fighting and opposing in their own way the atrocities let loose by the ruling classes, especially the Ranas and the Shahas. Notable among these are many clashes within the different ruling classes and the rebellion of Lakhan Thapa against the Ranas."

Kendra, and the Central Magar Students' Union.[5] The *Rising Nepal* of 24 Febru-
ary 2000 announced that His Majesty's Government had decided to declare the late
Lakhan Thapa as a 'first martyr' and to provide Rs 500,000 to install his statue
in the village of Bungkot, in Gorkha district, where he led his action and died. An
article in the same newspaper, dated 6 March 2000, reported that the Magar asso-
ciation had expressed its appreciation to the Government for this decision, but its
members had gone further, asking the Government to establish a statue of Lakhan
Thapa in Thapathali, to rename it 'Place of the Martyr Lakhan Thapa', to issue
a stamp bearing his portrait, and to rename the Manakamana cable car 'Lakhan
Thapa Cable Car'.

Numerous articles and even some books have recently been devoted to the life
and deeds of Lakhan Thapa. All are written by Magar authors. Some older texts
also mention him, but only in passing. I shall first sketch out his biography using
these older documents, whose biases are obviously different from those of the more
recent ones. I shall then examine his new image as moulded by Magar scholars,
and finally compare the differences between these two views.[6]

Only the more recent writings debate the birthplace of Lakhan Thapa. According
to Shivalal Thapa, his chief biographer,[7] he was born in Arghau, a village located
in Kaski district, Central Nepal. When he was 4 or 5 years old, he was taken away

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[5] From *The Kathmandu Post*, Feb. 15, 2000. "Lalitpur, Feb 14. People from different walks
of life gathered here today to mark the 124th death anniversary of Lakhan Thapa, the first
martyr of Nepal. Lakhan Thapa was born in 1834 in a remote village of Bungkot, Kaule
VDC in Gorkha. He retired as army captain after 14 years of service and later became a
religious preacher. He started revolting the general public against the rule of Jang Bahadur.
As a result, he was hanged to death in his own residence at the age of forty-two. The
program was jointly organized by Magar Samaj Sewa Kendra (Lalitpur), Nepal Magar
Sangh (Kathmandu), Sorathi Kala Kendra and Central Magar Students' Union. On the
occasion, Minister for Local Development Chiranjivi Wagle assured any kind of support to
the task or plan related with martyr Lakhan Thapa. He said, 'We will soon include Lakhan
Thapa in the school curriculum.' At the function, various other speakers highlighted on the
role played by martyr Thapa. The programme was chaired by Nepal Magar Sangh district
chairman Dharma Raj Thapa."
[6] The documents consulted for this article are as follows: military reports published in the
Regmi Research Series; an undated chronicle published in Nepali by Gyanamani Nepal; and
the biography of Jang Bahadur Rana written by his son. With this corpus I contrast recent
Magar writings, which claim to be based on local oral traditions.
[7] The most often quoted reference for Lakhan Thapa is Shivalal Thapa's book *Ojhelmā
Parekā Magarharū*.

from there to Lucknow by his father, who was a soldier in the British Indian Army. According to this author, he was educated there. Other Magar writers have rejected this hypothesis. According to Ranamagar (1997: 73), Lakhan Thapa was probably born at Manakamana,[8] as he bears the name of the famous saint who founded the sanctuary of the goddess Manakamana. Why, argues this author, would he have gone from India to Bungkot, a village close to this sanctuary, and why would he have enrolled in the Nepalese army if his parents were in Lucknow and his father was in the Indian army? Similarly, Ranamagar finds it whimsical to believe that Lakhan Thapa's name derives from the city of Lucknow rather than from the name of the saint Lakhan Thapa, as Shivalal Thapa stated. According to Harkabahadur Budha Magar (1997), it is ascertained that Lakhan Thapa was born in vs 1891 (1834) to a Magar family residing in Kaule, a hamlet located in Bungkot, in the neighbourhood of Manakamana. This author also rejects Shivalal Thapa's version of Lakhan Thapa's birth and childhood. Why, he asks, would Lakhan's father have risked taking his family along the dangerous path, "infested by tigers, bears and brigands" leading to India? Budha Magar also notes that the line of the saint Lakhan Thapa's younger brother inherited the priesthood at the Manakamana temple and still maintained the custom of adding the name of the founder to their own, that is Lakhan Thapa (the first). On the basis of his name, Budha Magar argues that Lakhan Thapa the second was from this same lineage.

In 1911 (vs 1854), aged 20, Lakhan Thapa joined the Nepalese army and was attached to a Magar battalion, the Purāno Gorkhā Gaṇa, which had been created by Prithvi Narayan Shah. The history of this Magar battalion sheds some light on the participation of this ethnic group in the great geo-political changes which occurred in Nepal during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Purāno Gorkhā Gaṇa had taken part in the 'unification' of Nepal, playing an important role in the successive annexations of the Eastern Chaubisia kingdoms, the Kathmandu Valley, the western Chaubisia and Baisia kingdoms, and Kumaon and Garwhal.

This battalion of Magar tribal recruits was first attached to the Shah Thakuris' cause and helped them in their conquests. Soon after that blitzkrieg, the battalion distinguished itself in 1815 during the Anglo-Nepalese war. When Lakhan Thapa joined it, these deeds were still quite fresh and they certainly contributed to the fame of the Purāno Gorkhā Gaṇa. Soon after he was recruited, however, the Purāno Gorkhā Gaṇa, which was then under the command of Jang Bahadur, the usurper Prime Minister, was sent to rescue their previous enemies, the British, during the Sepoy mutiny. Lakhan's battalion was sent to Lucknow in 1857. Indeed the Purāno

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[8] The Manakamana temple is located in Gorkha district.

Gorkhā Gaṇa was one of the 25 Nepalese battalions which were sent to help crush the Sepoy mutiny. This event certainly upset the Nepalese order and should be placed in its proper context if it is to be understood.

Obviously, the position of the Nepalese soldiers was difficult under these circumstances. In fact, more generally, it should be noted that Magar soldiers have often served causes which have not directly concerned them or the defence of their territories. Leaving aside the feelings of the soldiers who 'unified' Nepal, it seems that during the reign of Jang Bahadur rebellions emerged among the tribal recruits of the Nepalese army.[9]

The Ramsay narration (reproduced in Hasrat 1971: 334) reports a rebellion which is surprisingly similar to the Lakhan Thapa case but took place 20 years earlier, in June 1857—just before Jang's decision, in July of the same year, to send 14,000 men to India to reinforce the British army:

> On the 2nd of June a serious event was expected at Kathmandu, owing to the state of feeling which was supposed to exist in the sipahis of Gurung class, and the measures which the Darbar intended to adopt should they hesitate in pronouncing sentence of death upon a Gurung Jamadar, who had confessed being engaged in a conspiracy to assassinate Maharaja Jung Bahadur. It had been decided to attempt to annihilate 1700-1800 men, (52 guns had been placed in position for the purpose) should they not promptly pass the sentence of death that was required of them. Happily, the Resident succeeded in inducing the Minister to change his plans and a bloody

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[9] According to an undated chronicle of the kingdom of Garh (Dabaral Charan 1973), "Ram (sic) Bahadur Shah gave orders for the conquest of the hill principalities. This order set off a wave of jubilation in [...] the army. Soldiers were paid full salaries during a campaign, and also expected to profit from plunder." Interestingly, the main thesis of the Maoist text 'Strategy...' is that the Nepalese people are by nature violent, and that "[t]he reactionary propaganda that the Nepalese people are peace-loving and that they don't like violence is absolutely false." The text is an apologia for the use of violence. It remarks that, "Until today, whatever general reforms have been achieved by the Nepalese people have had behind them the force of the violent and illegal struggle of the people," but it severely criticises the engagement of Nepalis in other people's struggles: "Foreign imperialism and its running dog, the domestic reactionary ruling class, have conspiratorially turned the brave Nepalese into mercenary soldiers." Long before 'foreign imperialism', Nepalis, and especially Magars, were engaged as mercenaries. Thus, B. Acharya (1975: 169) writes of the Malla kings of the Kathmandu valley: "They also used to invite Khas and Magars from Gorkha and Tanahu for military assistance."

struggle was averted, which, had it taken place, might have led to a revolution and a total change in the Nepalese policy towards the British Government.

Although we do not know exactly if this rebellion was linked to the decision to send the Nepalese army against the sepoys, this affair is a precedent for the Lakhan Thapa rebellion. In addition, it shows one aspect of the then Nepalese government's policy toward ethnic problems. As this case illustrates, this policy consistently induced the members of an ethnic group (here organized in a single battalion) to punish their defecting member or otherwise receive collectively the same punishment.[10] This perverse and efficient totalitarian policy seems also to have been adopted in the case of Lakhan Thapa, whose denunciation and arrest was led by a group of soldiers among whom historical documents attest the notable presence of Magars.[11]

The British Resident also mentions another agitator whose politico-religious discourse may be brought together with the allegations against Lakhan Thapa. A man, whose identity is unknown, is said to have wandered through Nepalese villages in the year 1852, claiming that Jang Bahadur was planning to sacrifice 150 children to the gods and that he was himself in charge of collecting them. The terrified mothers, it is said, offered him huge amounts of money in exchange for their children. This man was arrested and taken to the Tundikhel in Kathmandu, where he was forced to confess his crimes in front of the army.

Although detail is lacking, the similarity with Lakhan Thapa's case is striking. Indeed, Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana states that before his rebellion Lakhan Thapa had already been arrested and judged by Jang Bahadur for having extorted money from villagers, disguised as a 'holy man':

> He had for some time been in the habit of masquerading as a saint about the streets of Gorkha, and of extorting money from the simple-minded rustics who gave credence to his pretensions. He had been sent over for trial to the Maharaja, before whom he confessed that he was assuming that disguise merely for bread, and then he was let off as a silly fellow from whom no danger could be expected. He then used this pardon for the pur-

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[10] While the Ramsay account appears to indicate that the Gurung rebel was not killed, a letter written by the same resident, quoted by Whelpton (1991: 211), reports that he was put to death by his own regiment at the Tundikhel.

[11] He was perhaps executed by Magar soldiers as well, but no document mentions who hanged him.

> pose of further cheating the people to whom he represented that he had
> won forgiveness from the Maharaja by virtue of his saintly qualities. The
> pardon had encouraged him in his malpractice, till he was arraigned of the
> charge of fomenting a rebellion and hanged... (1974: 302-4)

This account does not allow us to know exactly what the 'malpractice' of Lakhan Thapa was at this early stage, for numerous holy men wander and beg in the Nepalese villages without being prosecuted. This first arrest of Lakhan Thapa may indicate that his speech already had a subversive tone against the government, before he decided to instigate an organized rebellion.

As for the man mentioned by the resident, his tongue was cut out in front of the troops after he had confessed his crime. Why were this confession and this torture organized in front of the army? Was this man a soldier? Or was the scene intended to edify the army?

Other historical details tend to indicate that under Jang Bahadur the army was viewed as a reduced and idealized image of the whole society. Thus, it was in front of the army, for instance, that the king announced to his 'people' the nomination of Jang Bahadur as Raja of Kaski and Lamjung in 1856 (Hasrat 1971: 332). In fact, since its creation by Prithvi Narayan, the composition of the Nepalese army had consistently reflected the social structure. It had been divided by this king into four ethnic battalions, which corresponded to the division of society into four classes to which he often alluded in his memoirs: Bahun, Khas, Magar, Thakuri (Naraharinath 1964: 7). This initial ethnic organization of the army was retained (or recreated) under the Rana regime. But in each battalion there were both artisanal castes and high castes, presenting an image parallel to the caste system: the head of the army was the king (or the prime minister), the highest positions were given to his family and high-caste individuals, the bulk of the troops were mid-ranking groups (including all the tribal groups), and this ensemble was served by low castes, such as musicians or blacksmiths. This organization in a way mirrors the codification of the groups as it appeared in the code of Jang Bahadur,[12] dated 1854. As dreamed of by any dictator, the army plays the role of an ideal society which is made real, organized and modelled at will, where control and command are not obstructed by individuals.

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[12] Whelpton (1991: 210) writes that Jang Bahadur "decided to segregate the different groups in their own regiments. The intention... was to minimize the danger of mutiny..."

Under Jang Bahadur, the *mise en scène* of the execution of the rebels is particularly symbolic and sets a striking example. It explicitly connects an individual with the group to which he belongs, as a reminder that from the king's bird's-eye view only communities can be seen, rewarded or punished when they, or any of their members, commit a misdeed.[13] Such was the case of the Gurung soldier mentioned by Ramsay, whom Jang Bahadur planned to see executed by the 1700 men of his own battalion, who were themselves surrounded by 52 guns which were ready to fire. The case of the man who was forced to confess his crimes on the Tundikhel in front of the army before having his tongue cut out and being paraded in this state in all the villages he had visited was also symbolic; as was the case of the five people who were beheaded at the five gates of Kathmandu for having plotted to assassinate Jang Bahadur. Lakhan Thapa's execution was symbolic as well, as we shall see.

As a leitmotif, the Magars tell of the military bravery of their ancestors, claiming that it has not been recognized by the state, whatever high-caste leadership they helped to create. For example, in the history of the unification of Nepal, they picture themselves as heroes who built the country, without considering the possibility that they themselves cut the branch on which they sat by annihilating the power they had in petty kingdoms such as Palpa where they were numerically dominant and closely linked to the royal family. This situation is perhaps due to the fact that the petty kingdom which grew into a nation by swallowing its numerous neighbours was precisely a former Magar territory, where members of this group were numerous and closely related to the royal family through their cults. In a way, the Magars undoubtedly have the feeling that Gorkha's victory is also their own. In current historical reconstruction, the Magars present themselves as the champions of the Thakuri, welcoming them in their territories, protecting them against the Muslims, consecrating them as kings in many places, offering them their princesses, and serving them faithfully in their temples and their armies.[14] In many regards, Lakhan

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[13] Whether mono-ethnic or not, the company was a single body. Thus, when Bakhtwar Singh Thapa was dismissed and imprisoned by Bhimsen Thapa, the Samar Jung Company he had commanded was equally punished: "Men of all other companies were given a weekly holiday on Saturdays, but the Samar Jung Company was denied this privilege. Even its flag, known as 'Devata' was not spared, and was treated in an undignified manner. The flag-bearers... used to raise the flag above their shoulders, and install it on the ground when necessary. Bhimsen Thapa enforced rules requiring the flag of this company to be carried on the shoulders in a low position, instead of being raised, and to be thrown on the ground as occasion demands... These rules were strictly followed even by the Rana rulers and remained in force till democracy was proclaimed in Nepal" (Acharya 1972 : 66-7).

[14] On this subject, see Lecomte-Tilouine (1997).

Thapa's action, as recounted by Magar scholars, is fully in continuity with this relationship between the Magars and those who hold power.

Lakhan Thapa's rebellion and the 'kingdom' of Bungkot

In 1869 or 1870 Lakhan Thapa and his faithful friend, Jaya Simha Cumi Rana, received three months' leave. They went together to Bungkot, where his friend's family—and maybe also his own—lived. There they decided not to return to the army and started to build a utopian and rebel kingdom. It is said that they constructed a palace and an exercise ground to train their 'soldiers' in Bungkot. A report on Lakhan Thapa's arrest dated March 1876 provides a more precise description of this palace (Regmi 1980). Written by soldiers sent to Bungkot by Jang Bahadur, it reads, "The house in which Lakhan Thapa lives is surrounded on all sides by a wall 8 cubits wide and 16 cubits high, like that of a fort." The building boasted five floors, as is indicated in an extract from a chronicle published by Joshi and Rose (1966: 43-4). Lakhan went still further and was consecrated as king by the local population, according to some sources (Shivalal Thapa, V.K. Ranamagar). The biography of Jang Bahadur written by his son Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana reports this fact, but in a more ambiguous way: "…a rebellion of a somewhat curious nature disturbed the peace of the country. A certain Gorkha, formerly a soldier in the army, set himself up as a king…" (Rana 1974: 302).

This point seems to trouble some Magar scholars, such as Harsabahadur Buda Magar (1997: 23). Without providing any historical reason, but simply because it seemed unthinkable for him that such a 'devotee of the king and the country' (*rājabhakta, deśabhakta*) could proclaim himself king, this author denies the reality of this consecration. Bringing Lakhan Thapa to a more suitable position in his view, he states that he merely declared himself Prime Minister. V.K. Ranamagar (1997: 77) does not deny the reality of the royal consecration, but tries to find an excuse for Lakhan Thapa's pretension, attributing it to the influence of the royal blood which flowed in the veins of the Magars of Gorkha:

> When he said, "Having killed Jang Bahadur, I must reign", Lakhan Thapamagar was perhaps more motivated by his blue blood [in English in the Nepali text] than by anything else. Indeed, there was a time when the Magars were the kings of Gorkha. They were kings and their descendants acted in this way from the effect (*prabhāva*) of their blood. There is nothing ridiculous in this.

However, the royal consecration is not mentioned in all sources and remains unconfirmed. Whether it happened or not, it fits well in the political context of the time, when the seizure of power was usually marked by the accession to the title of Raja.

Jang Bahadur himself felt the necessity to be consecrated as the king of two provinces of Nepal (Kaski and Lamjung) by the king of the country or the 'king of kings', in order to legitimate and make permanent his ambiguous and fragile position as omnipotent Prime Minister. In the same way, numerous rebel leaders of the Sepoy mutiny proclaimed themselves kings. These leaders are even said to have offered Jang Bahadur the kingship of Lucknow if he would join their side, as reported by a British resident in Nepal:

> From the moment he reached Gorakhpur, on his march towards Lucknow, Maharaja Jung Bahadur, by his own account, was in communication with the rebel leaders, who offered to make him the king of Lucknow if he would join their cause and turn upon the British army. This had an ill-effect upon the Gorkha soldiery, many of whom openly gave out that they would return to the plains during the next cold season to annex certain of our districts. (Hasrat 1971: 336)

Lakhan Thapa was among those Nepalese troops who were in contact with these rebels and perhaps found in them a model for his own political programme.

Whatever the historical veracity of Lakhan Thapa's consecration, he had built a fort or palace and gathered weapons and men, thus building a veritable utopian kingdom within the kingdom, and indeed at its most symbolic point, in the vicinity of Manakamana's temple. Obviously, Lakhan Thapa did not merely provoke an unorganized and spontaneous revolt. He seems, on the contrary, to have worked methodically, following a well-established programme, to build an alternative government, as his fort, his army and his accumulated wealth attest. His proposition to the emissaries of Jang Bahadur is another clue showing further evidence of the institution of a government within his 'kingdom'. In their report dated March 1876 (Regmi 1980), these emissaries noted:

> Lakhan Thapa has promised to appoint some of us as generals, and others as colonels and captains. He designated Jahare Chumi as a general, and Biraj Thapa Magar, Juthya Thapa and Jitman Gurung as colonels.

This short extract is particularly interesting. Taken from a report written by Major-Captain Shumshere Jung Thapa Chetri, who led the expedition, it shows Lakhan Thapa trying to engage these men in his own army, and offering them very prestigious positions. As a matter of fact the proposition was made to Magars and Gurungs. With regard to the reported attitude of Lakhan Thapa, one wonders under what circumstances this first expedition to arrest him was conducted. We may legitimately suppose that these soldiers were strategically chosen from among the Tibeto-Burmese populations and that they acted as spies, pretending to adhere to

Lakhan Thapa's cause to show him up more easily.

The utopian kingdom of Lakhan Thapa was centred around his palace, which combined a royal aspect with a military aspect, as it was not only a palace but also a fort surrounded by a thick, high wall as well as an arms depot. In addition to these two aspects, and on the model of every Nepalese fortress, Lakhan Thapa's palace also had a highly religious dimension. It is said repeatedly that Lakhan Thapa claimed to be the reincarnation of the saint Lakhan Thapa, the latter being called the first, and the former the second. We will never know for certain whether Lakhan Thapa the Second was a descendant of Lakhan Thapa the First, a fact which would have facilitated his pretensions. If his adoption of the name suggests that he was from the lineage of the priests attached to the Manakamana temple, as noted by H. Budha Magar, other facts suggest the opposite. First, he was recruited as 'Lakshman Thapa' (Buda Magar 1997: 13), which shows that he adopted the name 'Lakhan' later, in keeping with his new pretensions. A second and more revealing fact is his establishment of a temple dedicated to Manakamana inside his own fort. An extract from a chronicle (Nepal 1983) relates clearly how Lakhan established a new cult of Manakamana:

> Again under the reign of this king, in the area of Gorkha, a plotter (*luca*) of Magri caste declared: "I am the avatar of Lakhan Thapa, it is not necessary to go to Srimanakamana to offer the *pūjā*, I will do it here; I worship her by making the *sandhīpūjā*, having myself built a house with several floors and having placed a sacrificial post in it." In this way he gained the confidence of people, who flocked from many villages to offer *pañcabali* and other sacrificial ceremonies. By doing this, the villagers ceased going to worship in Srimanakamana's temple, causing the anger of the goddess.

This account shows that Lakhan Thapa made a point of separating the worship of the goddess from her famous temple, and consequently from her traditional priests. This fact still reinforces the assumption that he was not the legitimate priest of the goddess, and that he was even opposed to the latter by diverting the devotees from the path leading to the Manakamana temple and inducing them to come to him instead.

As can be seen, this chronicle reproaches Lakhan Thapa most strongly for having founded a new cult to the goddess in an illegitimate place, thus usurping a significant aspect of power. The diversion of worship from an instituted temple to a private residence seems to have constituted a serious offence and an act of political bravado. A chronicle relating the history of the Newar kingdoms reports a similar case, which was severely punished (Wright 1970: 250-1). During the reign of Jaya

Prakash Malla, a certain Sodhan, the head of the monastery of Bu Bahal in Patan, acquired a particular authority over his disciples through the tantric powers he deployed when he sat on the body of a man sacrificed by a yogi. He then settled with them in a house where he gathered the emblems of the gods and made each of his disciples the incarnation of a divinity. He diverted the devotees from the temples to make them come to his place, where, he said, all the gods were. It was sufficiently serious as an offence for him to be sacrificed on the command of the king of Patan, along with his disciples, who were each offered in sacrifice to the sanctuary of the divinity they were supposed to incarnate. The chronicle does not report any other crime apart from this diversion from the legitimate place of worship.

To understand the significance of the diversion operated by Lakhan Thapa (the second), it is necessary to emphasize the role of Manakamana and her priest Lakhan Thapa (the first) in the history of the kingdom of Gorkha, and by extension that of the country (Nepal) which was unified by the sovereigns of Gorkha. According to many legends, whether oral or contained in the chronicles of Gorkha (*Gorkhāvaṃśāvalī*), Manakamana is the form taken by the wife of Ram Shah, who reigned over Gorkha during the first half of the 16th century. According to the chronicle of Gorkha, this queen was venerated during her lifetime. She exhorted the men of Gorkha to fight against the powerful army of Lamjung, telling them that they would be protected by their dharma. The Goddess and Gorakhnath are said to have marched in front of the men of Gorkha, who were not wounded by the enemy's weapons, even when they were hit. After the victorious outcome of the battle, the chronicle says, offerings were brought to the queen (Naraharinath 1964: 42).

The queen maintained close relations with Lakhan Thapa, a Magar ascetic who was her servant and advisor. The eminence of the political role he played in the kingdom may be measured by a brief mention of him in the Gorkha chronicle. The chronicle records that it was Lakhan Thapa who took over the reins of government during the prolonged absence of King Ram Shah, who went away for several months in order to practise austerities (Hasrat 1971: 109). Gorakhnath himself, in an audience he gave to the king and Lakhan Thapa at the top of a wooded slope, entrusted the protection of the royalty of Gorkha to Lakhan Thapa. Many episodes in this text refer to this ascetic, of whom numerous feats are reported, such as the ability to be in two places at the same time. One day the king asked him whether he could obtain for him the favour of reigning over the territory of Nepal, and Lakhan Thapa answered, "It is not for you, but for your descendants (*santān*); but why do you ask me this? Ask it of your wife who is an incarnation of Devi." The text relates that one day the Magar ascetic saw the latter in the court of the palace, accompanied

by her divine troop. He then followed the divine queen, who was mounted on a lion, up to Beni, where Gorakhnath and other gods were having a meeting. That day, the queen revealed to Lakhan that she was the goddess Manakamana and told him her wish that he and his descendants would offer her worship. One day Lakhan Thapa suggested that the king should touch his wife's body in the middle of the night on certain dates. He would then realize that she was cold. He also advised him to remain awake during the night of *Bhaumāṣṭami*, which is the day of the *pūjā* addressed to the goddess-queen. The king did as suggested and saw the queen in her divine form, accompanied by Lakhan Thapa and Gorakhnath. On this occasion he obtained from her the promise that one of their descendants would rule Nepal (Naraharinath 1964: 33-9). Finally, when Ram Shah died, according to the chronicle, as soon as the queen threw herself onto her husband's burning pyre their two bodies disappeared, to the astonishment of the crowd. At the very same time, Lakhan Thapa also disappeared (Naraharinath 1964: 54). Lakhan Thapa's role and his relations with the queen are therefore exceptional and enigmatic.

Another version of the origin myth of Goddess Manakamana relates that the king was surprised one night when he found that the queen was not in her room. He then discovered her in the form of the Goddess, accompanied by Lakhan Thapa who had assumed the form of the lion upon which she was mounted.[15] The prosaic reader of the chronicle will be astonished by the queen's nocturnal escapades with this Magar, and will perhaps suspect a more ordinary adventure, rendered strange by this deification. Was the infidelity of the queen unthinkable, was it a precaution against a possible rise of the Magar community, was the king weak, or must one quite simply believe in wonders? Whatever the case may be, other queens of the Shah line of Gorkha, such as the wife of Krishna Shah, Ram Shah's grandson, were thereafter regarded as incarnations of Manakamana. More generally, this goddess provided the kingdom with her protection throughout its history. These stories show how the relation of the Thakuri kings with the goddess was mediated by this Magar ascetic and his descendants. This configuration is not unique, but corresponds with a widespread model in the old confederation of the 24 kingdoms of central Nepal.[16]

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[15] These oral myths are reported by Unbescheid (1985) and Shrestha (forthcoming).

[16] A comparison with Lecomte-Tilouine (1997) shows that the same mythic motives are present both in the Lasargha shrine dedicated to Alam Devi and in the Manakamana temple. In both cases the goddess is most important for the royal Thakuris and is served by a Magar priest. In both places the *Buddleia asiatica* tree is venerated: as the tree on which the palanquin of the goddess was placed in the middle of the Lasargha shrine, and as the walking stick of Lakhan Thapa, which grew as a tree after his disappearance, in

By presenting himself as an incarnation of this famous mediator, did Lakhan Thapa aim to restore the power of the Shah kings, which had been usurped by Jang Bahadur, or was this an act of self-promotion? Without doubt, he intended to get rid of Jang Bahadur. According to Pudma Jung Bahadur Rana,

> His graceful manners and persuasive tone soon procured him an armed following of 1,500 men, at the head of whom he threatened to march to the capital, and after assassinating Jung Bahadur, to seize the reins of government, and inaugurate the golden age of Nepalese history. On receiving news of this insurrection, the Maharaja at once despatched a few companies of the Devi Dutt Regiment to put down the fanatic, instructing them not to use force unless they were met with force. Happily the rebels surrendered their arms after a brief resistance, and were soon caught and sent over to Kathmandu in chains. The ringleader 'Lakhan' and twelve of his firmest supporters, whom he probably called his 'apostles', were brought in bamboo cages, and the rest on foot. Subsequent investigation brought to light the details of the whole plot. They were then to march to the capital, where Lakhan was to be proclaimed king amidst the shouts of the whole population.[17]

The chronicle quoted by Gyanamani Nepal does not report any endeavour to launch an assault on the part of Lakhan Thapa and his troops, but only one arrest for an illegal gathering of weapons.[18] However, the report of Major-Captain Shumshere Jung Thapa Chetri specifically devotes a passage to the action:

Manakamana. In both places, a hole is considered holy: this is a hole into which the goddess disappeared in Lasarga, and into which Lakhan Thapa disappeared in Manakamana. These two shrines appear as variations on the themes of the Goddess, the Thakuri king, the Magar priest, the Buddleia tree, and the hole. This suggests a common underlying structure which should be investigated in other similar places.

[17] This is the same text as the one quoted by Rose and Joshi (1966: 44): "According to a semi-official account, the leaders of the agitation had planned to kill Jang Bahadur at Deorali on his return from a hunting expedition with the Prince of Wales in the Terai and to 'march to the capital, where Lakhan was to be proclaimed king amidst the shouts of the whole population'."

[18] "At this time, in the year 33, this cunning Magar having said, 'I am going to take my revenge against Shri 3 Maharaj', held a counsel with bad men who were obeying him. They gathered swords, rifles, bows and arrows. The people of Gorkha learned about that and having spied them and verified the facts, went to Nepal to bring the news to Shri 3 Maharaja who sent soldiers and officers to bring him back" (Nepal 1983: 45, n.9).

> On Falgun 26, 1932 (approx. March 9, 1876), Lakhan Thapa, accompanied
> by a large number of Bhotes armed with muskets and swords, proceeded
> toward the west pretending to join (Prime Minister Jung Bahadur's) entou-
> rage, but actually with the intention of making an attempt on his life.
> (Regmi 1980)

This report then discloses Lakhan Thapa's project as follows:

> He has announced that Prime Minister Jung will be assassinated, that
> the Second Prince (Upendra Bikram) will become king, and that he him-
> self will succeed (Prince Upendra Bikram). He said he would assassinate
> (Prime Minister Jung Bahadur) at an opportune moment either at Tarku or
> Manang-Besi (in Lamjung district). If this was not possible, he would go
> to Tibet, secure the help of the Tibetans, accomplish his mission, and then
> become king. (ibid.)

As reported here, Lakhan Thapa's project fits perfectly within the context of the
time, as it exploits the conflict between Nepal and Tibet and the eternal competition
between the brothers for the throne. In this document, it looks more like a realistic
political programme, using the various forces which were involved, than a simple
utopia born of the imagination of an isolated villager. Interestingly, his plan con-
sisted not only of killing Jang Bahadur, but also installing King Surendra's younger
brother Upendra on the throne, and in the longer term, of sitting on the royal throne
himself. This ambition does not fit well with the status of a martyr, that is, with
the supposedly disinterested sacrifice of oneself for one's country, but we should
emphasize that the report quoted here may have blackened Lakhan Thapa's reputa-
tion intentionally.

Lakhan was arrested by the army, apparently while he was still in his fort. This
detail either contradicts the claim that he was marching towards the west in order to
lay an ambush, or else it should be presumed that this attempt failed before he was
arrested. The chronicle published by Nepal states precisely:

> Having encircled the house of this conspiring Magar, nearby Gorkha, they
> put under iron all his henchmen and seized all the weapons they had gath-
> ered, then led them to Thapathali. The examination of the facts took place
> during a lawsuit and [Lakhan Thapa] was put in jail as well as his principal
> accomplices, while all the others were left free. Later, in the month of
> Paus of the year 33, this plotter Lakhan Thapa was hung in front of his
> house as well as alongside his principal accomplices. His house and his
> temple were destroyed and razed to the ground. (Nepal 1983: 45-6)

M.C. Regmi adds some interesting detail:

> The Prime Minister ordered Colonel Tek Bahadur Rana to reinforce the troops under his command with those in Palpa, if necessary, and capture Lakhan Thapa and his accomplices. Major-Captain Shumshere Jung Bahadur Thapa Chetri was ordered to render necessary help to Colonel Tek Bahadur Rana, capture Lakhan Thapa and his accomplices if they passed through Palpa, and send them to Kathmandu, and report the matter to Prime Minister Jung Bahadur through the Indrachok Police Station. In addition, he was ordered to take necessary security measures to protect Prime Minister Jung Bahadur from assassination in case he visited Palpa in the course of his tour. (Regmi 1980)

Pudma Jung indicates the sentence which was passed on Lakhan and his close relations:

> Lakhan and six of his followers, who had taken an active part in the conspiracy, were sentenced to death; the others whose offence was merely that of passive participation were pardoned, and allowed to go back to their homes. Lakhan was hanged on a tree in front of the shrine of the goddess Manokamna who, as he alleged, had inspired him to the deed of blood. (Rana 1974 : 303)

These 'historical' texts, produced rather soon after the event, dwell only briefly upon the end of Lakhan Thapa, but note that he was hung on the site where he had conducted his action—beside his house or the temple of Manakamana—after he had been judged in Kathmandu. It is significant that the execution took place there, as if to show to his former partisans the particularly striking symbol of his defeat and his imposture. The goddess herself was made a witness to the death of her alleged elected devotee, in accordance with an extremely humiliating and cruel idea of Jang Bahadur.

Before comparing the above with the contents of Magar publications on Lakhan Thapa, it should be noted that in his book on the Josmani sect Janaklal Sharma (1963) offers another interpretation of Lakhan's political action. According to this author, Lakhan Thapa was a *siddha* of the powerful Josmani sect, which developed under its sixth *santa*, Shashighar, during the reign of Prithvi Narayan. These ascetics initiated many influential people at the court of this king and later received several land grants from Jang Bahadur to establish monasteries in the Gulmi area. Shashighar is known to have had eleven gurus and the Josmani sect, as it developed in Nepal, seems to have been a mixture of different streams, such as Nathism and Haṭha Yoga. This sect was not restricted to the twice-born castes and recruited

many adepts from among the Nepalese tribal groups. Shashighar had four famous disciples, whom he sent in the four directions to preach: one was a Magar, one was a Gurung, and one was a Sunuwar. Lakhan Thapa is said to have been initiated by Mokshamandal, the Magar disciple of Shashighar. The most famous of Lakhan Thapa's Josmani *santa* contemporaries was Gyanadil Das. He was born in Ilam and initiated in Okhaldhunga and he founded a new monastery in the Gurung village of Rumjatar. Janaklal Sharma (1963: 87-8) reports that there were numerous Matwali in his monastery and that this provoked the anger of the local Brahmans. This author describes Lakhan's fort as a Josmani monastery and writes that Jang Bahadur arrested him because he felt that this sect represented a threat. As a matter of fact, Gyanadil was arrested and led to Kathmandu at the same time as Lakhan. If the latter was sentenced to death because of the army and the weapons he had gathered, no such charge could be found against Gyanadil, who spent six months in jail and soon became very influential in Jang's entourage. He initiated many prominent people, such as Ranaudip, Jang's younger brother. He finally left the Kathmandu valley carrying a white flag and a *nagara* drum offered to him by Jang Bahadur, which he installed in his monastery. In this account, Lakhan's political action seems to be inserted into a wider religious organization which took the revolutionary step of treating the Twice-Born and the Alcohol-Drinkers as equals. Lakhan's membership in the Josmani sect explains why he was 'parading disguised as a holy man', as recounted by Pudma Jung Rana.

We shall now compare this tentative reconstruction of Lakhan Thapa's life, which has been based on contemporary and ancient sources, with recent presentations by Magar scholars, which are apparently based on oral traditions.

I shall base my discussion mainly on an article by Shivalal Thapa Guruchan Magar, whose writings on Lakhan Thapa (e.g. S. Thapa 1996) are particularly significant, because they are often reproduced, summarized, or discussed by other Magar authors. Furthermore, this author is the secretary of the central committee of the Magar association of Nepal (Nepal Magar Sangh), a fact which gives some official weight to his writings. The psychological portrait of Lakhan Thapa is much more developed than it is in the preceding writings, and it goes without saying that it is of a radically different tone. He is described as "small of size, but having much wisdom", "solving problems quickly", "skilful in combat, the handling of weapons, and horsemanship"; "going everywhere himself during the combat", and "disciplined and friendly". As a loyal son, says Shivalal Thapa, his project was to found a family on his return to Nepal and to bring his parents there with him. Moreover, this author insists on his faithful friendliness, and repeatedly mentions the close friendship between Lakhan and Cyami, which led them both together to the same

death.

In this posthumous psychological portrait and biography, Lakhan Thapa is presented as the very archetype of the Magar: a modest villager who emigrated to India, a valiant soldier and faithful friend, moved by the suffering of his people, and, finally, a martyr. All of these aspects link him with the self-portrait the Magars make for themselves: with their supposed 'rightness',[19] and to their shedding of their blood for the motherland which they have established as a symbol of their identity, as their insoluble print on the country. Lakhan Thapa is described as an enterprising and very generous man. He not only took the initiative to build his palace, but, according to Shivalal Thapa, he also built himself a temple equipped with four gates. There he placed a round stone icon and other stone statues, and installed various divinities in them through his tantric powers, including Gorakhnath and Gorakhkali. His palace contained great riches, which he also produced through his supernatural powers. This extraordinary man, says M. S. Thapa (1992), used each day to assume the form of a child in the morning, an adult in the afternoon and an old man in the evening. He displayed his powers spectacularly on an occasion reported by Shivalal Thapa:

> When Jaya Simha Cumi decided to follow the example of his friend Lakhan Thapa and did not return to the army after their three months of leave, he was reprimanded by his grandmother who told him, "Whence came this Lakhan Thapa to die here? He perverted our Jaya Simha. Our grandson, who was very well employed, is to become a good for nothing like him." Having heard that, Lakhan Thapa addressed her. "What do you need grandmother? Rice?" And he touched an empty basket and filled it with rice. Then he added, "Do you need vegetables?" and he filled the house with the vegetables she desired. Having thrown sacrificial rice, he even made the stones and the wood move, and these arrived of themselves by walking. This is how he gathered riches. After having filled up his great reserves of rice he distributed some. When they saw these acts, all were surprised. (S. Thapa 1996: 6-7).

In this account by Shivalal Thapa, the intervention of the supernatural allows Lakhan Thapa to be described in a completely royal role of rich benefactor and spendthrift, concerned to ensure, like Ram Shah or Henry IV, that no one should suffer hunger in his 'kingdom'. As for the incredulous reader, he may wonder how

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[19] The adjective *sojho* is often applied to the Magars. It means 'uncrooked, straightforward, open, frank, honest', but has also the negative connotation of 'simple-minded'.

Lakhan gathered the money to finance his rebellion. The speech credited to the grandmother is revealing. It offers a view which is the opposite of the author's general presentation of the events. This embedded counterpoint suggests from the very start the fate of Lakhan's rebellion.

According to Shivalal Thapa, the reaction against Lakhan's revolutionary kingdom did not emerge from the government but from the local high castes.[20] Very symptomatically, in the present context of ethnic revivalism, he ascribes this reaction to a conflict of caste:

> All these acts [of Lakhan Thapa] displeased the local Bahun-Kshetri. They were jealous to see that those who were their herders and ploughmen had become kings and ministers. (Thapa 1996: 5).

To show the reader the extent to which the local Bahun-Kshetri had subjected the Magars within their own territories, Shivalal Thapa notes, "They were so deeply established in Gorkha that even the place names consisted of their clan names (Devakoṭā Gāun, Thāpā Gāun, Vāgle Gāun)." Interestingly, Lakhan Thapa's arrest, and even his death, is now attributed by Magar authors to the high castes and not directly to Jang Bahadur. Shivalal Thapa recounts how the Thapa Kshetri of Simudipani stole a box containing documents from the palace of Lakhan Thapa: "On one of these documents was written 'I am a devotee of Gorakhkali. The goddess sent me here to become the king. Jang Bahadur governs the country tyrannously, I must raise my weapons against him. My faithful minister is Jaya Simha Cumi. We must prepare a good army.'" (Ibid.)

The Kshetri of Gorkha, he continues, went to Jang Bahadur with these documents. As a result, the latter sent his soldiers to Gorkha with orders to hang Lakhan Thapa. But just after that, reports Shivalal Thapa, Jang Bahadur's wife had a dream. She saw a man with white moustaches and a beard, who told her, "If Lakhan Thapa is killed, your husband Jang Bahadur will die exactly seven days after. If you want to spare your husband, tell him not to kill Lakhan Thapa." The queen, so the story goes, woke up and told her dream to Jang, who did not even listen to it. Then she wrote eight letters to her husband, but he did not read them. While she was bringing him the ninth letter, she fell unconscious at the feet of Jang Bahadur, who finally asked one of his guards to read it. When he had heard its contents, he declared, "I have made a serious mistake" and immediately sent soldiers with new orders: "Go and tell them that Lakhan Thapa should not be hung." The soldiers rushed to

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[20] The chronicle quoted by Nepal attests that Lakhan Thapa was denounced by the 'people of Gorkha' (see note 20).

Gorkha but when they reached the Budi Gandaki river they were prevented by the felon Thapa Kshetri from crossing it. Indeed, when they learned that soldiers were approaching with the order to spare Lakhan's life, the Thapa Kshetri ran to the river and for three days prevented the Bote and Majhi ferrymen from taking them across. Meanwhile, the army of Jang Bahadur surrounded the rebel army and seized Lakhan Thapa as well as Jaya Simha Cumi. "They could have escaped, but they were not fleeing death, and as heroes they were ready to die." The soldiers read out the death sentence which had been pronounced by Jang Bahadur and took the two men to hang them from nearby trees.

These events are reported in a similar way by M. S. Thapa (1992), who states, however, that it was the Bhusal Jaisi of Bungkot who prevented the soldiers from crossing the river, and adds that when the Magars of Bungkot came to know what they had done, they expelled them from their village.

The most striking part of Lakhan's life in the Magar writings is certainly his death. Most of them report the same facts, but here I will again quote from Shivalal Thapa's account. Before his execution, Lakhan Thapa addressed the crowd thus: "If my body rots and falls to the ground after my hanging, know that Lakhan Thapa is dead. But if my body dries and shrinks, know that Lakhan Thapa is alive. Keep preciously the cord with which I was hung, I will come back one day" (Thapa 1996: 6).

Even now, local people tell of how Jaya Simha Cumi's body rotted and fell to pieces whereas Lakhan Thapa's body dried up and remained tied to the tree, as he had predicted. In a similar account, written by Samjog Lapha Magar (1997), Lakhan Thapa is also supposed to have said before his execution, "Jang Bahadur will be my sati", thus predicting the supernatural deed which is nowadays attributed to him: the death of Jang Bahadur. Indeed, Lakhan died on the second day of the month of Phagun, and seven days later, as had been predicted, Jang himself died in strange suspicious circumstances. It is sometimes said that he was killed by a tiger, but for Shivalal Thapa (1996: 6), "It is probably because it was difficult to write that Jang Bahadur was killed by the tantric powers of a Magar, that some historians say that he was killed by a tiger." M. S. Thapa (1992) reports that some people believe that Lakhan Thapa assumed the shape of another man after his death and killed Jang Bahadur. He mentions a story according to which Jang was killed by a young Magar whose wife had been seduced by the Prime Minister.

Through his own death, followed by Jang's death, Lakhan becomes a prophet and a messiah. He announces the signs of his immortality which are to be read on his own corpse, which he intends to prevent from rotting, as a manifestation of his peren-

niality. He confers the status of a relic on the instrument of his death when he asks
that it should be carefully preserved. And, finally, he presents his death as his vic-
tory over Jang, who is described as his *sati*. The fate of Jang is thus closely attached
to that of Lakhan through this apotheosis, this grandiose victory of a victim trans-
formed through his death into a divinity.

In a way, the current Magar presentation of Lakhan's life tends to exonerate Jang
Bahadur, who is presented merely as a Pontius Pilate. He is shown to be frightened
by his own decision, and to recognize that he has made a mistake. In fact, he is even
said to have gone himself to Bungkot to beg Lakhan's corpse for a pardon: "When
Jang learned [from his soldiers] the news [of Lakhan Thapa's execution], he had
no more peace of mind. He jumped on a horse and, followed by his army, reached
the spot where Lakhan Thapa had been hung. He then asked for pardon from the
hanged corpse of Lakhan Thapa" (Thapa 1996 : 6).

Lakhan was deified through his death. Several Magar authors note that the villag-
ers of Bungkot worship him every year during the month of Paus, offering him
animal sacrifices. He is worshipped as a Bhayārī Devatā, a member of a category
of divinities related to the earth which come into being as a result of a violent death.
If the nineteenth-century texts specify that the palace of Lakhan was destroyed by
the army, the local tradition, as reported by Shivalal Thapa, states that it remained
uninhabited for a long time because people thought that "one day Lakhan Thapa
will come back alive" (Thapa 1996: 6).

Lakhan Thapa's rebellion was obviously a messianic movement. It is significant
that the local tradition remembers the leader's charisma and supernatural powers
much more than his strategic or political programme. Numerous parallels can be
drawn between this rebellion and revolts organized during the same period among
the tribal groups of India. The leaders of these revolts were ascetics, holy men, rein-
carnations. They were endowed with magical powers, notably the ability to trans-
form bullets into water. They promised their followers the return of a Golden Age
when the tribes were not dispossessed of their lands.[21] All of these attempts ended
in blood.

These messianic and utopian rebellions took no account of the reality of the struc-
tures they would have to fight, or the gap between the two sides' weapons and
organization. As Fuchs underlines (1992: 22), the tribal groups "had no material
and political resources to defend themselves, and thus were forced to take refuge
in religious and magical means to find redress." This is Mannheim's famous thesis

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[21] On this subject, see for example Fuchs (1992).

according to which the non-consideration of reality is characteristic of utopia and typical of the dominated classes. Should we then take it that a utopian movement is a still-born form of rebellion, the desperate and final reflex of an oppressed group, which has no effect? I shall answer in the negative, because if utopia does not take reality into account[22] it is then by nature revolutionary. Now, as Polack and Bloch have shown, utopia is also an anticipation of the future.[23] That which is a utopia in the 19th century may well become a realistic ideology in the following centuries, because utopia shakes up reality. Thus, messianic utopian revolts annihilated in blood are not mere checks, but models. They are in fact sacrificial models, and of the same nature as those which, in the Hindu world, are the foundation of the universe and royalty. As such, they confer power, they are generative.

It is said that through his 'sacrifice' Lakhan was thus able to get rid of Jang Bahadur. The initial sacrificial model also confers another type of power. It becomes for future generations the founding myth and model upon which new types of political action, more realistic or less idealistic this time, can stand.

In his story as presented by Shivalal Thapa or M. S. Thapa, Lakhan Thapa appears more as a martyr of caste conflict than of the Rana regime, which is his official 'title'. The demand that the government should nominate Lakhan Thapa as the 'first martyr' was thus not a neutral claim from the Magar Association's point of view. Rather than being just another condemnation of the already much-blackened Rana regime, it was a political act aiming at competing with the high castes on their own ground. Indeed, martyrdom became a new form of political legitimacy after the fall of the Rana regime in Nepal, just as the 'résistants' took all the political positions in France after World War II. The martyrs and the individuals associated with them have acquired, so to say, a symbolic right as compensation for what they have endured. Interestingly, each party has its own martyrs and is also seen by opposed groups as creating new martyrs when it is in power. Thus the communist parties, which were martyred under the Panchayat Regime, are now creating martyrs for the Maoist groups.[24] Even when they do not suffer a violent death, political leaders transform their natural deaths into the gift of their selves, by offering their corpses to the country, in the political act which consists of offering one's eyes. This act is highly visible: for instance, the removal of Man Mohan Adhikari's eyes featured

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[22] It would be more exact to say that utopia does take reality into account but in a different, shifted register. Thus the leaders of Indian tribal messianic rebellions used to say that they would transform British bullets into water. Reality was known but understood in a different register: a religious or magical one versus a technical one.

[23] On the history of utopia, see Tower Sargent and Schaer (2000).

[24] On martyrdom in Nepalese communist ideologies, see Ramirez (1997).

in large colour photographs on the front pages of Nepalese newspapers. Although political parties founded on ethnic or caste grounds are denied a legal existence, ethnic activists have noticed that most of the martyrs come from high castes. M. S. Thapa (1992) thus writes in the prelude to his article on Lakhan Thapa: "Whereas Tanka Acharya, who was not executed because he was a Bahun, was called a 'living martyr' and paraded on a cart, the Nepalese make fun of Lakhan Thapa Magar, Thiravam Malla, Bhimadatta Pant, Laldhvaj Gurung, Chokabahadur Gurung, Ramprasad Rai, Ratna Bahadur Bantava (Rai)…"

In their different versions of Lakhan Thapa's life, the Magar ethnic activists reveal their political positions. The Magar associations include both individuals acting to promote the dignity of the Magar group, such as Harsabahadur Buda Magar who plays down Lakhan Thapa's personal ambition in order to raise him to the level of a defender of the country, and individuals of a more revolutionary bent who aim to fuel communal conflict on an ethnic basis by interpreting their history as a simple and unidirectional subjection. This may lead to the identification of one group as the oppressive ruling class and of the others as the oppressed proletariat.[25] As if to

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[25] An article published in the *Kathmandu Post,* January 12, 1999, suggests a close link between ethnic and political activism among the Magars: "Kathmandu, Jan 11. Nepal Magar Association (NMA), member of the Nepal Nationalities Federation, today announced that they have no affiliation with the underground Nepal Communist Party (Maoist). The association announced this at a press conference organized today. Addressing the press conference, Gore Bahadur Khapangi Magar, chairperson of the association, said though the association has no affiliation with the Maoists, the Magars are being victimized. He said most of the victims of the Maoist Movement have been Magars. 'If you look at the number of those who've died in the police-Maoist clash you'll see that most of them were Magars', he said. In a press release distributed today, the association has condemned the government for arresting its members on false charges. The association has demanded that the government release those who were arrested on charges of being Maoists, resettle those who were displaced by the conflict and compensate those who have lost their family members. Khapangi said the association had submitted a memorandum to this effect to the government three months back. He added that none of the successive governments have been serious about the nationalities movement. Citing one such example, he said, 'When the association apprised the then Home Minister Khum Bahadur Khadka about the high incidence of Magar killing he said in a place where Magars are the majority who do you expect to die? Certainly not the Brahmins." In the same way the *Kathmandu Post*, Jan 10, reports a similar suspicion addressed to the chairman of the All Nepal Nationalities Association: "Newly elected chairman Ale Magar, when asked if his group was associated with communist parties, denied any such link. But he admitted that 'though the association shares beliefs with leftist parties, we have no affiliation with any political party'."

illustrate Mao's writing as quoted by the Nepalese Maoist party,[26] Magar scholars aim to change their current status by revising the history as written by the dominant castes. This idea is expressed by numerous authors, such as Samjog Lapha Magar (1997): "That which is called the history of Nepal is a partisan and illusory history, which we reject. History is the writing down of that which is dead, but history itself never dies. This is why it is time now for all the Magars to write down their history." However, the history they have chosen to dig up is the story of a popular (and ethnic) rebellion, as if they are speaking of the present situation through the past.

I would like to end with a poem written by Lakshman Alemagar[27] in which the suffering of a group deprived of its own history is beautifully rendered. When nothing else is left, an attachment to the land is the major link to an identity, through the striking image of the soil imbued by the blood of the ancestors, which combines the two basic forms of identity which are distinguished in Europe. This image comes back as a leitmotif in Magar writings and sheds new light on the importance of martyrdom and violent action: on the dire necessity which perhaps compels them to 'write history with warm blood'.

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[26] "...The only intention of the proletariat to know the world is to change it" (sic). See 'Strategy...'

[27] This poem, entitled 'Lekhnu cha itihās hāmīle', is published in *Gyāvat*, Baisakh 2050, p. 69.

We are writing history ourselves

We are the priests of this country,
It is we who were the kings here,
History was given to be ours,
Why is it now out of our reach?

If we look and search in history
Our name is in the first place.
We are the protectors of this country,
Nobody should think that we are weak.

We are the original inhabitants of this land.
We know everything over there,
We take care of them all.
History brings us its help.

Our power is boundless,
Equal to the heroes and valiant warriors.
History, we write it with warm blood,
As did our immortal ancestors.
...

Look, all these hills, all these fields,
All are imbued with our ancestors' blood,
Saying: "Where is the karma of our descendants here?"
Today they are worrying.

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Unadmitted Histories:
The lives of Dalchan and Garjaman Gurung
Michael Hutt

Certain beliefs about the history of the Nepali population of southern Bhutan are widespread among the 94,000 people who are currently registered in Bhutanese refugee camps in south-east Nepal.[1] This article considers one such tradition; but first some historical background is necessary.

Traditionally, the governors (Pönlops) of various districts of the Bhutanese heartland included sections of the southern belt within their possessions. By the late 19th century the Pönlops of Paro and Tongsa were the two most powerful of these. The south-west belonged to Paro when Nepali settlers first began to arrive there in significant numbers some time after the conclusion of the Duars War in 1865. The administration of southern Bhutan amounted to little more than the collection of rents and taxes at this juncture. Nepali settlers paid their taxes in cash, while the 'indigenous' farmers and pastoralists paid their taxes in kind.   In 1900 Paro was marginalized when responsibility for collecting revenue from the whole of southern Bhutan was entrusted to the Dorje family of Ha, who retained control until the late 1950s. Ugyen Dorje had made common cause with Ugyen Wangchuck, the Pönlop of Tongsa, in his efforts to gain ascendancy in Bhutan. When Ugyen Wangchuck was installed as the first hereditary monarch in 1907, Dorje became his agent in Bhutan's dealings with the British. Meanwhile, the cash revenue collected from the growing number of Nepali cultivators in the south was delivered to the office maintained by Ugyen Dorje and his successors at Bhutan House in Kalimpong. Some portion of this revenue also appears to have been paid to Paro, either directly or via Kalimpong. Until the mid-20th century the Dorjes governed the Nepali villages of southern Bhutan through intermediaries known as *ṭhekādār*s, literally, 'contract-

holders', who collected revenue from village headmen (*maṇḍal*s), took a cut for themselves, and then passed what remained up to their overlords.

So much for the historical/political context. In the camps it is widely believed that during the first half of the 20th century one of these *ṭhekādār*s, a man named Garjaman Gurung, became very powerful in the south-western district of Samchi—so powerful, in fact, that the Paro Pönlop came to regard him as a threat and had him brought to Paro and killed (poisoned, in most accounts). Standard histories of Bhutan make no mention of Garjaman Gurung whatsoever. Usually, responsibility for southern Bhutan is ascribed solely to the Dorjes, and the only Nepalis who are credited with having played any role in the administration are a Newar family named Pradhan, particularly an individual named Jhulendra Bahadur ('J.B.') Pradhan. This is probably because Leo Rose's book *The Politics of Bhutan* is the source upon which most authors (for whom the history of the south has been largely a peripheral matter) have drawn. According to Rose:

> the Dorjis utilized the services of a Nepali family, the Pradhans, who brought a large number of Nepali migrants into southern Bhutan after 1910 on a contract system. A member of the Pradhan family, the Sipchu Kazi, was assigned responsibility for administration and revenue collection in southern Bhutan. (Rose 1977: 184; see also Sinha 1991: 216)

However, J.B. Pradhan is accorded only a minor role by informants in the refugee camps, who recall him as a district commissioner in the south-eastern district of Samdrup Jongkhar at a much later juncture. Whatever the facts of history may be, Garjaman Gurung looms much larger in their historical consciousness.

D.B. Gurung's Memoir

Although the names of Garjaman and his father Dalchan are widely known in the refugee camps, and also, I gather, in southern Bhutan, the only text I have obtained which contains details of their lives consists of an unfinished handwritten memoir by the late D.B. Gurung.[2] D.B. was a grandson of Garjaman, and a leader of the Bhutan State Congress, a Nepali-led party which launched an abortive political campaign in southern Bhutan during the early 1950s. The memoir was committed to paper in Samchi in June 1989. D.B. Gurung's original intention seems to have been to write a history of the Bhutanese Nepali community, and he commences with the story of how Dalchan Gurung and his family came to Bhutan. Whether or

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[2] He is always known simply as 'D.B. Gurung', and I have not been able to ascertain what his initials stand for.

Photograph of Garjaman Gurung, date and place unknown.
Courtesy of Jyotsna Subba.

not the memoir was ever completed is uncertain: I have acquired only 16 pages, at
the end of which the text ends abruptly. I have been informed that D. B. Gurung
was unable to complete the task because of old age and failing eyesight. The fol-
lowing is a summary of his account; the extracts are my own translations.

Past and present tenses alternate in D.B. Gurung's memoir, as they often do in the
older style of Nepali narrative. The account begins by stating that 'Dalchand' (sic)[3]
is the first Nepali to set foot in 'Chamarchi Duarpani Bhutan'. He is born in Bhavu
village in the Ilam district of eastern Nepal, moves to the Darjeeling district of
'Mugalan' (India) in 1853, and eventually settles in a village named Dalapchand
near Kalimpong in 1855. He and his wife Gayatri live there in humble circum-
stances on land owned by a local Brahman. Their first son is born in 1861.

> His wife Gayatri Devi began to suffer pain in her weak body from mid-
> night onward. The women of the neighbourhood began to take turns to sit
> with her in order to offer her assistance. Eventually the son was born at
> dawn.

> The matter of how the weather really was before the son's birth. For most
> of the day it had not appeared to be so cloudy that heavy rain seemed
> likely. However, there had been some light rain and rainbows (*ghām-pānī*)
> around the village. The day passed like this, the dusk was yellow, and then
> night fell, and then after some hours, at midnight, there was suddenly the
> fearsome sound of thunder from the sky.

> The son was born. The priest and Brahman were called. First the task of
> plastering the house and yard with cowdung was completed, and although
> the grandfather tried to insist that he should be named in accordance with
> the astrological signs, the boy was named Garjaman,[4] in line with the
> opinions of all the friends who were gathered there. Because everyone
> said, "The sky thundered. The mother Gayatri had begun to feel birth
> pangs and so the thunder from the sky could be a good omen", and because
> everyone was agreed on this the boy was named Garjaman. This was the
> year 1861 in the English calendar.

Garjaman's mother has a portentous dream before he is born:

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[3] 'Dalchand' appears to be a Nepali-ized version of 'Dalchan', a name which was perhaps
felt by D.B. and others to have an inappropriately Tibetan ring to it.

[4] *garja-* is the stem of the Nepali verb *garjanu* 'to thunder', while *mān* means 'honour' or
'pride'. Thus a tentative translation of Garjaman's name might read 'Honoured by Thun-
der'.

Before her son Garjaman was born, Śrimati Gayatri Devi had a very astonishing dream. Morning was approaching and the sun had risen in the early dawn, and she had swallowed the sun. Oh, what kind of dream was this? Was it a good omen, or was it meaningless? As soon as she woke up she awoke Dalchan Gurung, who was sound asleep. Dalchan sat awake until the morning came, and did not allow his wife to close her eyes either.

The news of this dream spread from ear to ear throughout the village. There was a lot of talk about what a strange dream this was. On the advice of the village, an astrologer Brahman was called to explain these portents (*herkor nimti*). Dalchan told him everything about the dream. The astrologer Brahman tells Dalchan that the result of his inspection is that his [Garjaman's] horoscope (*bhāgyarekhā kuṇḍalī*) is that of a boy whose future will not only be bright, but who will attain the power and authority of a king.

During Garjaman's childhood, there are further portents of his future greatness.

It is time for the fields belonging to the Brahman on whose land they are living to be sown. Like the village wives, Gayatri Devi too goes to help in the work. The old Brahman woman goes home to fetch food and water for the fieldworkers. She has just arrived when she catches sight of the boy Garjaman lying in the cradle. A fearsome snake is sitting there, its hood outspread to enclose the cradle on every side. The snake was sitting at the head of the cradle and it seemed as if it was protecting the boy. As soon as she saw this unbelievable sight, the old Brahman woman ran straight back, shouting and yelling, to where the labourers were working. As soon as they heard, the workers fought to be the first to run there. They arrived to see the snake covering the boy with its hood as he slept in the cradle. The tradition is that the snake then left the cradle, disturbed by the gathering of so many people and the noise they made.

The astrologer also examines Dalchan's fate, and advises him 'go down in an easterly direction from Dalapchand village' if he wishes to prosper. Dalchan and his family arrive in 'Chamarchi Duarpani' on the first day

of Magh (January/February) in the year 1863. At first Dalchan is unsure whether Duarpani, his new place of residence, falls within Bhutan, or whether it is in British India.[5] Then he discovers that it is to Bhutan that he must pay his taxes. There are a few scattered settlements, but at this time the region is 'undeveloped, barren, and untilled'.

> It will not be necessary to repeat that before the Nepali community set-tled there the level land of southern Bhutan was a place of thick jungle and various kinds of dangerous animals and diseases. Thus, what condi-tions must the ancestors have undergone when they had to confront these difficult circumstances? Many of them must have fallen victim not only to malaria, but also fallen into the mouths of fierce animals—their bones must have enriched the fertile soil still further. The fruits of those ances-tors' harsh struggle can be seen today: wide fertile soil, the ancestors' gift.

Soon Dalchan begins to make a living by supplying the British tea gardens that are springing up just outside the southern border with wood, bamboo, thatch, rubber, and lime (*cunār*) from Bhutan.[6] He obtains permission to trade in this manner when he makes the acquaintance of the Kazi who is deputed to lead graziers down to the south from Paro during the cold season. Having obtained this permission, Dalchan returns briefly to his village in Ilam, where he recruits workers who are only too happy to migrate to Bhutan. A weekly market (*hāṭ bajār*) is established at a place that comes to be known as Mangalbare, and the 'indigenous Bhutanese' (*ādivāsī bhuṭānī*) begin to come to purchase commodities such as salt, areca nuts (*guvā*), tobacco, cloth, raw cotton thread, and a commodity named *lauhākoftī* which I have so far failed to identify. The 'Indians' and the 'Bhutanese' cannot understand one another's languages, and they communicate through sign language.

After the Duars War against the British and the conclusion of the Sinchula Treaty in 1865, the Paro Pönlop has to consider the security of his southern border with

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[5] Chamarchi is now in India, while Duarpani is inside Bhutan: presumably Chamarchi was a part of the Duars territory that was ceded to the British in the Treaty of Sinchula of 1865.

[6] In 1910, Charles Bell observed that Bhutan lay for 220 miles along the border of British India: "The Bhutan hills border on tracts occupied by British capitalists and prosperous villages, where almost every acre of land is fertile and capable of high cultivation." (C.A. Bell to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign Department, dated 25 January 1910 Camp Tsa-li-mar-pe, Bhutan. OIOC L/P&S/12/2226, "Bhutan. Status of: - extraterritoriality in".)

greater seriousness:

> Although both [Bhutan and the British] were now governed by the Chinsula (sic) treaty, how would they [the Bhutanese] now protect their border? It can be understood that it was natural for the ruling class of Bhutan to be very worried about this problem, because the indigenous Bhutanese subjects did not leave their mountain homes [and] there was no strong provision for frontier security. Now the Paro Penlop Raja Rinphu turns his attention to finding a solution to this problem, and he remembers Dalchand Gurung, who has come to live in Chamarchi Duarpani Bhutan.

> Eventually the Paro Penlop sends a report to Śrī Pāñch the Dharmaraja at Thimphu,[7] and as a result a freehold lease (*jamīdārī paṭṭā*) is issued in the names of Dalchand and Garjaman, the father and son... in Nepali Sambat 1944, or the English year 1887.[8] After receiving the lease as a result of the labours of Garjaman Gurung, Nepali subjects (*raiti*s) began to settle in the border areas of southern Bhutan, forming a natural boundary.

The settlement of the south by Nepalis brings about changes in the revenue system:

> Probably from the ancient times, people, in accordance with the economy of Bhutan, did not use money but instead worked by exchanging commodities and livestock. Even for government taxes the people paid in grain, chicken's eggs, ghee, and the horses they reared. The custom was that if a mare was born it was the people's and if it was a stallion it was the government's. This economic tradition that had come down through the ages can be understood as a blind tradition.

> Now, after the Nepalis began to settle there it was natural for there to be some changes in this custom. If you consider the real situation—because of the untiring labour, encouragement, and active assistance of the late Dalchand Gurung and his son Garjaman Gurung the economy had taken on a new framework. The father and son had acquired the freehold lease

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[7] In Nepal, 'Śrī Pāñch' is an abbreviated way of expressing the honorific formula Śrī Śrī Śrī Śrī Śrī, which is used exclusively to refer to the Shah king and members of his immediate family. In Bhutan, Nepali-speakers have used it to refer to the supreme ruler of the country: first to the Dharmaraja, an incarnation of the Shabdrung, and subsequently to the Wangchuck kings.

[8] The original texts and English translations of the Nepali and Tibetan versions of this lease are appended. An English translation of the Nepali text of the lease appears in Dhakal and Strawn (1994: 602-3).

from Raja Rinphu the Paro Penlop in 1887. They began to pay the allotted taxes in cash. The Nepali settlements began to trade with one another. Cash began to be used. It was natural for this to affect the indigenous Bhutanese in the north as well. What this means is that the economy began to adopt a new unified framework throughout the whole of Bhutan. No one could disagree that this was helpful in providing the country with the basic means of development.

Finally, according to D.B. Gurung, Garjaman Gurung is sent as a member of a delegation to Kathmandu in February 1907, to ensure that Chandra Shamsher Rana and his government will recognize the Wangchuck monarchy when it is installed at Punakha in December of that year. D.B. Gurung mentions that a Chetri named Burathoki from Chirang is a second member of this delegation, and the Nepalese historian Ramesh Dhungel believes that this was a delegation of five which included three Nepalis (personal communication, Kathmandu, July 10 2000). I have yet to locate any documentary evidence for this.

Using the Legend

The life of Garjaman is an important strand in the account of southern Bhutanese history that is told and retold in the refugee camps of south-east Nepal. In D.B. Gurung's account, his birth is accompanied by portents which are identical to those which accompanied the birth of Prithvi Narayan Shah, now regarded as the founder of modern Nepal, as recorded in the *Gorkhā Vaṃśāvalī*. The episode appears as follows in Wright's *History of Nepal:*

> Rājā Narbhūpāla Sāh had two wives, of whom the senior was pregnant at this time. The junior dreamed one night that she swallowed the sun, and, awaking, she told the Rājā. He however only abused her, which so hurt her feelings that she did not sleep all the rest of the night. In the morning the Rājā told her that it was merely to keep her awake that he had abused her, because, if she had slept again, the effect of the dream would have been lost, and he considered this dream was as good as a promise that his kingdom would be enlarged. After this the junior Rānī became pregnant, and after seven months gave birth to a son, who was named Prithinārāyana (sic) Sāh. (Wright 1877: 198) [9]

One can only assume that D.B. Gurung was familiar with the old story and simply

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[9] In the Gorkhā Vaṃśavalī, Nar Bhupal Shah is said to have 'beaten' (*kuṭnu, piṭnu*) his wife, while, according to Wright's version, he 'abused' her. My thanks to Marie Lecomte-Tilouine for alerting me to this tradition.

'borrowed' it for his grandfather to reinforce the idea that he was born to be great. These portents are also similar to those which accompanied the advent of Buddhism to the kingdom of Bhutan, which suggests that an attempt might have been made at some point by Garjaman's descendants to create a local tradition which mimicked, and, to some extent subverted, the standard foundational narrative of the Bhutanese nation-state. The story of the snake also recalls similar episodes from the lives of Krishna, the Buddha, and others. The settlement of the south by Nepalis brings about a transition from a 'backward' economy in which barter is the principal medium of exchange to a more 'modern' cash economy: the Nepali settlers, led by Dalchan and Garjaman, are thus cast in the role of modernizers and agents of economic development. Next, Garjaman Gurung is accorded some status in the political hierarchy and even provided with a temporary diplomatic role, and finally he is murdered at Paro Dzong. According to a senior male resident of Goldhap refugee camp I interviewed on November 25 1999, "Garjaman was killed, he was taken to Paro and poisoned. This was because he had gone above the Tīn Sarkār."[10] Similarly, an 86-year-old man I interviewed in Beldangi Extension refugee camp on July 1 2000 recalled that:

> Garjaman earned some wealth, and then he went up to Tongsa without asking Paro's permission. And from Tongsa he requested the [title] of Tīn Sarkār. And Tongsa gave it to him. Then he came home. And Paro summoned him, saying "Now you are the Tīn Sarkār, we will serve you and pay you our respects." But this was a trick, and Garjaman never returned from Paro.

Among informants in the refugee camps, Garjaman's death is generally held to have occurred during the 1940s or even as late as 1950, and there are also suggestions that it led in some way to the emergence of early political activism among the Bhutanese Nepalis (see Dhakal and Strawn 1994: 137). For those caught up in the recent crisis in Bhutan, Garjaman is perhaps an embodiment of Nepali political aspirations in Bhutan, and his fate is felt to prefigure their own.

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[10] From 1846 until the Shah king reassumed his powers in 1951, Nepal was governed by a group of families who assumed the title 'Rana' and the honorific prefix of Śrī Tīn, i.e. Śrī Śrī Śrī. *sarkār* is a word that can be used to mean both 'king' and 'government'; thus, the Tīn Sarkār in Nepal was the Rana ruler of the day, and later incumbents assumed the title of 'Prime Minister' (*pradhān mantrī*). In Bhutan, it appears that the Dorjes were considered by their Nepali subjects to occupy a position similar to that of the Ranas in Nepal. The parallel was later reinforced by Jigme Pelden Dorje's assumption of the title of 'Prime Minister'.

Questions of historicity

British accounts of the Nepali population of southern Bhutan during the early decades of the 20th century mention Dalchan ('Dalchand') Gurung and Garjaman Gurung on several occasions. According to a confidential report filed by one Capt. C.J. Morris, who visited Chirang and Samchi in 1933 to assess the potential for Gurkha recruitment in those districts, "Among the first arrivals [in Samchi] was one Dalchand Gurung who, having more foresight than his companions, in course of time obtained a concession from the Bhutan Government for an area which seems to have been practically coincident with that now occupied by the Nepalese."[11] In 1904 Charles Bell (then Settlement Officer in Kalimpong, later the Political Officer in Sikkim) recorded that Garjaman Gurung was one of the Nepali *thekādār*s who controlled various districts of south-western Bhutan, and that 1,000 houses were under his jurisdiction.[12] Some documentary evidence does exist which endorses British assertions concerning Garjaman's pre-eminence in the Samchi district. This consists of tax receipts issued to local cultivators during the early 1940s which, unlike others of the period which are headed 'Bhutan Government' (in English) or 'Bhutan State' (in Nepali), are headed 'Samchi Garjaman State— Bhutan' (in Nepali).[13] Garjaman is said to have built a 'palace of 52 doors' for his family on a hilltop at Saureni near Samchi town. In Nepal in 1999 I was shown a photograph which its holder claimed to be of this building.

The descendants of Garjaman I have met insist that he actually died during the late 1920s, and certain details suggest that this earlier date is more likely. For instance: if he died during the 1940s, and the birthdate given by D.B. Gurung is correct, Garjaman would have lived to an advanced age of over 80 years, which would have been exceptional, though admittedly not impossible.[14] Also, C.J. Morris identified Hemraj Gurung, a 'grandson of Dalchan' who was then aged 25, as the owner of the

[11] "A Report on the Immigration of Gurkhas into Bhutan" by Captain C.J. Morris, 2nd Bn. 3rd Q.A.O. Gurkha Rifles. Date 28 Feb. 1934, Received 19 Mar. 1934. OIOC L/P&S/ 12/2230.

[12] "Report on area in Bhutan west of the Ammo Chu" by C.A. Bell. Confidential to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal, dated Gangtok the 21st July 1904. OIOC Mss Eur F80/159b.

[13] A second type of tax receipt, dating from the 1950s, is headed 'Jumsa State, Bhutan' but I am unsure of whether this 'Jumsa State' figures in the story, and if so, how.

[14] Tsering Penjor, during whose period of office Garjaman is alleged to have died, was the Paro Pönlop from 1918 until his death in 1949. The image of this Pönlop which emerges from a recently-published account by one of the present queens of Bhutan (Wangchuck 1999) is of a ruler who often resorted to unscrupulous means to protect his power base.

Samchi concession in 1933, and made no mention of Garjaman.[15] The logical con-
clusion to be drawn from Morris's account is that Garjaman had died by 1933 and
the Samchi concession had been passed down to the next generation of his family.
Interestingly, Garjaman's name does appear in a list of 'notable' Nepalis who were
associated with Thakur Chandan Singh in the formation of the All India Gorkha
League in 1924, alongside those of Nepalis from Bhagshu (Dharamshala), Shil-
long, Calcutta, Manipur, Aizwal, Sikkim, Darjeeling, and Assam (Lama 1997: 37).
Taken together, the evidence suggests that he must have died some time between
1924 and 1933.

However, this earlier date for Garjaman's demise is rejected by residents of the refu-
gee camps in Nepal with a claim to historical knowledge. One theory advanced is
that the name 'Garjaman' conflates two separate individuals—one the son of Dal-
chan, the other a later descendant. Another is that although younger members of
his family may have taken over his role and duties as Garjaman became elderly and
died, his name continued to be used as validation of their authority because of its
presence in the grant document issued by the Paro Pönlop in 1887. And indeed, all
of the tax receipts issued in Garjaman's name that I have seen thus far do date from
the 1940s, and not earlier.

It is probable that Rose, Sinha, and other authors who omit the powerful Gurung
family of Samchi and Sibsu from their accounts of Bhutanese history were simply
recounting what they have learned from Bhutanese government officials and were
not sufficiently curious to enquire further. For the Royal Government the figure
of Garjaman is politically problematic, and it therefore gives greater prominence
to J.B. Pradhan—who is, after all, the father of Om Bahadur Pradhan, who has
served as a government minister. The version of the story given by D.N.S. Dhakal,
an oppositional activist, and his co-writer Christopher Strawn is that Garjaman
Gurung was "one of the two Thikadars for the South" and that J.B. Pradhan alone
administered the south for the Dorjes "after Garjaman Gurung was killed" (1994:
147). Again, this is a simplification which probably owes much to the political
circumstances within which the history is being reconstructed. Garjaman's alleged
poisoning is harnessed to the exiles' political cause. It is brought forward in time so
that it can be linked with political movements launched by the Bhutanese Nepalis
during the late 1940s, and it is asserted that power over the south passed directly
into the hands of the Pradhan family, who are portrayed as government quislings.

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[15] Hemraj (b.1906) was Garjaman's fourth child and eldest son. His mother was Garjaman's
first wife, whose name I have not discovered.

However, the Gurung family's record complicates this. Garjaman had two wives: after his demise, the family claims, his second wife, Bhairupa, remarried, and her new husband, Raghubir, managed the Samchi estate. In c. 1940, Bhairupa's second son Jashraj (1909-69) moved to Sibsu, a section of Garjaman's Samchi landholding, which he then managed separately, and Motiraj (Garjaman's seventh child, by his first wife) took over the administration of Samchi. The whole of the estate is said by the family to have been taken over by the government of Bhutan in the mid-1950s, and Jashraj is said to have received a privy purse until his death in 1969. One of Garjaman's grandsons is said by the family to have served as a Royal Advisory Councillor during the 1960s, and another as Sub-District Officer for Samchi at about the same time. A third still occupies a senior position in Bhutan's Royal Civil Service Commission. Inside Bhutan, therefore, the several inter-related Gurung families of Samchi and Sibsu still retain a relatively high status, regardless of the alleged poisoning of their progenitor, their omission from the offically approved version of history, and the fact that other family members are identified with oppositional forces in Nepal. As a whole, the narrative reflects the manner in which Tongsa, whose Pönlop became the first hereditary monarch in 1907, gradually extended its control over southern Bhutan by marginalizing first Paro (a major source of opposition in the late 19th and early 20th centuries), then Nepali contractual landlords such as Garjaman, and finally the Dorjes. The process was complex and much of the detail remains unresearched: without access to the relevant records in Bhutan, it is likely to remain so.

Conclusion

Refugee narratives often consist not only of a story of trust betrayed or violated, but also of claims to a measure of wisdom before the event of betrayal. Forced into a condition of exile, refugees frequently re-evaluate and question the dominant historical narratives of the nation or society that has disowned or expelled them, and begin to construct alternative versions of those narratives. In these the truths of the original narrative, which were once so self-evident, are told as already suspect, already invoking mistrust. The original narrative is often found to have concealed events and personalities which complicate it, challenge its simple teleological truths, and provide the people who have become refugees with explanations for their plight.[16] According to Mary Layoun (1995: 80-81),

> The assertion (in the narrative present) of trust betrayed is the assertion, at least implicitly, of a claim for what *should have been* (in the past of the

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[16] These (unoriginal) generalizations draw heavily on Malkki (1995) and Layoun (1995).

story), for the necessity of a critical community 'then'. But equally, it is a claim for what *should* be (a future). It is a moral or ethical claim; it is an assertion of potentially different value or meaning or narrative order. It prefigures the future and what should, and perhaps would be, if the story (and its telling) were different, if the critical community could establish and maintain itself. This is both the threat and the promise of (stories of) the refugee experience. And it is one recognized by the 'host' countries or communities in which the refugees seek (often temporary) asylum and the original countries or communities from which they flee.

If the Bhutanese government's current quarrel with a large section of its Nepali community is to be resolved, the solution may need to include not only a restoration of trust on both sides, but also a reconciliation of divergent readings of history. A full account of the lives of Dalchan and Garjaman Gurung, based on research inside a Bhutan to which refugees had returned, would provide an illuminating (and conciliatory) footnote to the central historical narrative of the Drukpa state.

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Appendix

The Paro Pönlop's 1887 *kasho* to Dalchan and Garjaman Gurung

Nepali text:

svasti śrī hāmrājamin basnyā camārci īlākābhitra basnyā sardār dālcan guruṅsaṃga basnyā duniyā graiha basti abadekhi uprānta pachi partta (?) sardār dālcan nepālilāī mohor garidiñye jagā purva bālāduvār tursā nadideṣi pasi ucunpato kholā deṣi purva yetibhitrakā jamin jagā sardār dālcan guruṅ garjamān guruṅ duī bābu chorālāī diyāko cha. aba uprānta tyo jagā diyāko artha lāī choṭā baḍā kohi kasaile kehi garna pauṃdaina bhanyā yo paṭṭā sardār bābu chorā duīko nāmmā diñyā yasbhitra choṭā barā kasaile pani jagā thicomico gari ujur garnu pāuṃdaina bhani bhararājā rimphurājāle paṭṭā dastakhat garidinyā īti sambat 1944 bhadau mahinā.

yo jagā bālāchuvār tursā nadi [purva…..] ..sā pachi cunapatā ṣolādeṣi purva cunematīko sir umbho leṣ deṣi dakhin angrejko simāna bu[ru/ka?]sdeṣi uttar yesbhitrakā jagāko mohor paṭṭā daskat gari diyāko bamojim aba uprānta tyo jagābhitrako mācha māṭo ḍhungā kāṭh bāṃs coyā pāt sab graiha jaminmā byābharko calān gari hāmrā sarkārko vajanā bharnā garnu. [ansadara santān bhar?] sog bhog calān gari ṣānu jāri (jāhi?) garnu vijāī vidot nagarnu jagā guljār garnu ujār nagarnu basti basāunu rasti calāunu sardār dālcan guruṅ bābu chorālāī mohor paṭa gari diyāko yesmā kohi choṭā barā kasaile bāt ujur garnu pāunyā chaina bhanyā [sahari?] bābu chorā duīlāī mohor gari hāt diñyā yesmā gaihra duniyāle choṭā barale mālum garnu so jagāko sog bhog garnu kām garnu diyāko cha. īti sambat 1944 bhadau mahinā śubham.

Translation:

I have issued this official document (*mohor*) to Sardar Dalchan Nepali, all the villages of commoners living with Sardar Dalchan Gurung on our land in Chamarchi district (*ilākā*) [.….] declaring that from now on the land extending to the west from Baladuwar Tursa river, and to the east from Uchunpato river, the land of this area is given to Sardar Dalchan Gurung (and) Garjaman Gurung, the father and the son respectively. It is now declared that nobody, whether great or small, may do anything to [alter] the meaning of the grant of land and this deed is given in the name of the father and son [and] within this [district] nobody, whether great or small, may commit injustice [on] the land or lodge an appeal [against this grant?], the Bhar Raja Rinphu Raja signs this document dated vs 1944, the month of Bhadau.

The land that has the Balachuwar Tursa river to the east, the Chunapata river to its west, is to the south of the hills at the head of the Chunemati, and to the north of the British border. The land within these [boundaries] is granted by this signed document (*mohor paṭṭā*) and thus you must make use of all the fish, soil, rocks, wood,

bamboo, cane, foliage on the land of this area and pay the taxes of our government. [Your children should live off this land(?)], refrain from injury and oppression (*bidyut-bijāī*), make the land productive not barren, establish villages, [enhance the environment(?)], I have granted this document to Sardar Dalchan Gurung, to the father and the son, so that no one whether great or small may appeal against the matter […] and I have set my hand to this grant to the father and the son, may the whole world know, great and small, that permission is given to work and enjoy the fruit of this land, dated vs 1944, the month of Bhadau, *śubham*.

Tibetan text:

(1) / da lan / 'di zhabs kyi mnga' 'og tu bsam (2) rtse'i cha 'dus sdod mi so dha ri dar li tsang gtsos (3) pa'i rgya gar ne pa la dmang [khar?]   [da?] nas phar ji srid (4) nam gnas kyi bar so dha ri dar li tsang 'og sa gzhi (5) gnang bas sa khram bkod par [?] gdung na khong las (6) krong shar no di sa nas phar bcad btsu. ne spa (7) stang chu bshag chu'i bcad tshur bcad te sa gzhi de (8) [dang?] so dha ri dar li tsang pha [phus?] gnyis kyi khongsu gnang (9) bzhag yod   da nas phar sa gzhis 'di'i bskor nas (10) che phra med pa sus dang gang gi yang bslab zer byed mi (11) chog pa'i bka'i tham 'di so dha ri dar li gtsang pha bu'i (12) lag bzhag tu thams cad 'dul zhes me mo phag lo (13) zla bdun 'gro bzhin zla ba'i dkar tshes bzang por rin spungs rgyal (14) khab nas gnang bar dge /

Translation:
At this time: to the villages of commoners of the Indian Nepalese headed by Sardar Dalchan, residents of Samtse district within our jurisdiction.

By this grant of lands in perpetuity to Sardar Dalchan, the lands shown on the map extending from Dung Nakhong (?and) from Trongshar Nodisa, as far as the Chunabata river (?where it meets the) Shak river are granted for the possession of Sardar Dalchan and his son.

This document (kasho), against which nobody whatsoever, great or small, may appeal concerning these lands from this time forth, is given into the hands of Sardar Dalchan and his son on an auspicious day during the first half of the seventh month of the female fire-pig year known as the 'All-conquering' from the Court of Rinpung.

Translation by Philip Denwood. Line numbers of text are given in brackets, with unclear syllables in square brackets. The wider spacing in lines 3 and 9 correspond to wider spacing in the text and to paragraphs in the translation. Text 'as is' with no corrections. The epithet 'all-conquering' should perhaps refer to the year name, though it could refer to the Rinpung Court.

Conference Reports

Franco-Nepali conference on 'People, Environment and Landscapes of the Himalayas' 19-20 April 2000.

Conference report by Joëlle Smadja

A conference on 'People, Environment and Landscapes of the Himalayas' was held in Kathmandu on 19-20 April 2000 under the auspices of CNAS (Nepal) and CNRS (France). The papers presented were discussed by both Nepali and French scholars. The papers presented by the French scholars were summaries of research from an interdisciplinary programme sponsored by the Environmental Programme of CNRS, which has lasted for four years. A book presenting these data is under process. This programme aimed at a better understanding of the landscapes that can be seen today, their transformations and eventual environmental problems, the relationship of Himalayan societies (in Nepal and Ladakh) to their natural environment, and the ways they have used land and managed their resources over time. The landscape was here considered as the product, the result at a given time, of the use and management of space and resources by a population according to: physical environmental data, a society's perception of its environment, its cultural and social values, and its political, economic and technical history and needs. We have insisted on the variability of observations according to spatial and time scales and have recalled observations from the region before 1950. We have pointed out that, as Nepal was opened to experts, researchers, tourists, journalists, etc. only after 1950 and that at the same time numerous changes occurred—the eradication of malaria and the deforestation of the Terai, the demographic explosion, deforestation along the trekking routes—the 1950s became ground zero for observation which lack any context. But our field investigations in different parts of Nepal and Ladakh lead us to conclude that our observations make no sense unless they are situated within a spatial, historical and cultural context. Thus research has focused on the physical features which can explain diverse landscapes, historical documents, and qualitative and quantitative field enquiries related to the perception of space, resource management and land use. This was the main thrust of our interdisciplinary programme and of this conference.

Theme : Landscapes

Session I: Geographical and Cultural Features
Joëlle Smadja: Presentation of the programme 'Explanations of the diversity and the evolution of some landscapes in the Himalayas: examples from Nepal and Ladakh'.

Monique Fort: 'The role of invariant, physical factors in the shaping of landscapes of central Nepal'.

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine: 'Mental representation of the landscapes as an exegesis of the country'.

Pratyoush Onta: 'Cultivating Bhanubhakta: local landscapes of Nepali national culture'.

Pascale Dollfus: 'Landscape units and placenames in Ladakh'.

Ramesh K. Dhungel: 'The people and place-names of Lo/Mustang: historical and etymological perspective'.

Joëlle Smadja: 'The territory and landscape of the Tamang from Salme'.

Theme: Environmental Changes

Session II: Historical Features
Philippe Ramirez: 'When under-population was a nightmare: Gorkhali state and the transformation of Nepalese landscapes'.

Pascale Dollfus and Marie Lecomte-Tilouine: 'History of rice, maize and potato in the Himalayas'.

Mahes Raj Pant: 'A step towards understanding the historical seismicity of Nepal'.

Session III: Case Studies
Blandine Ripert: 'Parcelling, privatisation and collective management of space and natural resources on the Salme watershed'.

Satya Shrestha: 'Adaptation of people from a Jumla village to the setting up of the Rara National Park'.

Gérard Toffin in collaboration with Krishna Prasad Rimal: 'Tradition and change among the Balamis of central Nepal'.

Narendra Raj Khanal: 'Population and landscape dynamics in the Nepal Himalayas. A case of the Madi watershed, western Nepal'.

Tristan Bruslé, Monique Fort and Joëlle Smadja: 'A Bocage landscape, Masyam

Ga.Bi.Sa in Palpa District'.

Dilli Ram Dahal: 'Madhese regionalism and national integration: a case of the Nepal Tarai'.

Pierrette Massonnet: 'A short presentation of the CNRS Documentation Centre: Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes.

Himalayan Panels at the 16th European Conference
on Modern South Asian Studies

Edinburgh, 5-8 September 2000

Three panels with a Himalayan regional focus were convened at the above conference. Two one-day panels were sponsored by the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* (EBHR). These were 'Resistance and the state in Nepal', convened by David Gellner of Brunel University, and 'Himalayan life histories', convened by Michael Hutt of SOAS. In addition to these, a panel on 'Bhutan: sociocultural parameters and changing times' was convened by Françoise Pommaret of the CNRS, Paris. A fourth panel, on 'Child-focused development discourse and practice in South Asia', convened by Rachel Baker and Rachel Hinton of the University of Edinburgh, also involved a large number of presenters and participants from Nepal.

The panel on **Resistance and the state in Nepal** provided a very useful opportunity for scholars to exchange views on ten years of Nepali democracy, and on the Maoist insurgency which has arisen in the west of the country since 1996. Discussion was wide-ranging, covering topics from the domination of village 'user groups' by local elites to the interpretation of Lakhan Thapa's rebellion in the 19th century. All present benefited greatly from the contributions made by Krishna Hachhethu of the Centre of Nepal and Asian Studies in Kathmandu, who presented a paper on political parties in Nepal, and Dipak Gyawali, RONAST, who provided a fluent and stimulating concluding comment on the day's proceedings. It is hoped to publish the papers in book form. The papers were presented under three headings, as follows :

The state, development, and local politics
Ian Harper and Chris Tarnowski: 'A Heterotopia of Resistance: Health, community forestry, and challenges to state centralization in Nepal'.

Ben Campbell: 'Resisting the Environmentalist State'.

William Fisher: 'The Politics of Difference and the Reach of Modernity: Reflections on the state and civil society in central Nepal'.

Krishna Hacchethu: 'Political Parties and the State'.

The state and ethnic activism
Karl-Heinz Krämer: 'How Representative is the Nepali State?'

Gisèle Krauskopff: 'NGO and Ethnic Associations among the Tharu of the Tarai'.

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine: 'Utopia and ideology among the Magars: Lakhan Thapa versus Mao Dzedong?'

The state and Maoist insurgency
Colin Millard: 'Perceptions of Democracy and Dissent in the Valley of Dhorpatan'.

Judith Pettigrew: 'Guns, Kinship, and Fear: Maoists among the Tamu-mai'.

The seven papers that were presented in the **Himalayan life histories** panel interpreted the theme of the panel in an interesting variety of ways. The lives that constituted their subject matter included those of the last Sherpa painter of traditional thangkas, the earliest Nepali settlers in southern Bhutan, recent Muslim converts in Nepal, an elderly Rana woman who was Nepal's first female lawyer, a prominent Newar Buddhist nun, a participant in the Chipko movement of Garhwal, and a sampling of Rai shamans' remembrances of their calling. The following papers were presented:

Theme 1: Lives as heritage
Eberhard Berg (University of Zurich): 'Gomchen Au Leshey (1900-c.1978): the life of one of the last traditional thangka painters among the Sherpas of Solukhumbu (Northeast Nepal)'.

Michael Hutt (SOAS, London): 'Subversive Histories: the lives of Dalchan and Garjaman Gurung'.

Stefanie Lotter (Heidelberg University): 'Mrs. Shah's Boxes'.

Theme 2: Changing identities
Alfiani Fadzakir (Brunel University): 'Internal Conversions: Hidden identities in a Hindu kingdom'.

Sarah Levine (Harvard University: 'Learning, Living, Spreading Dharma, A Post-Modern Journey from Uku Baha, Lalitpur to Hsilai Monastery, Hacienda Heights, California: How Ganesh Kumari Shakya became Bhikkhuni Dhammavati'.

Theme 3: Selfhood and identity
Antje Linkenbach (Heidelberg University): 'The Relativity of Personhood: Two life stories from Garhwal'.

Martin Gaenszle (Heidelberg University): 'Life-Journeys: Rai Shamans' Narratives on their Calling'.

The panel on **Conflict or convergence? Exploring the extent to which South Asian cultural perspectives are embraced within child focused development discourse and practice** was organized by Dr. Rachel Baker, Dr Rachel Hinton and Dr Deepak Behera. The panel exposed a wide diversity of perspectives on the child labour and human rights issues from NGOs, national institutions, academics and journalists. The papers demonstrated that current researchers on childhoods in South Asia are using a range of participatory methodologies and collaborative approaches. Key points raised in the four topics were as follows:

The context of childhood and cultural traditions in South Asia
In her research on child clubs in Nepal, Jasmine Rajbhandary ('Discovering child rearing and child rights ethno-theories in four villages of Nepal') observed that despite their relatively high work load, girls are less frequently praised for their work than boys. Boys are given status for the tasks they undertake and more freedom and mobility from a very young age. In view of what is known about the high value that children place on their work contributions, this finding has implications for the decisions made by girls and boys on the type and level of work they undertake. This paper also showed that while research with children in South Asia has attended to cultural context, it has neglected to understand children within their family contexts.

Esa Alaraudanjoki ('Nepalese Scenario of Working Children under Cultural Conflict') used some interesting psychological tools to question the risks and possible benefits from work in childhood. He argued that where work is valued, it could be an important part of their development.

Masako Ota ('Elimination of Child Labour: Poverty-oriented Approach vis-à-vis Education-oriented Approach in rural Andhra Pradesh, India') highlighted the ongoing dispute as to whether parents' and children's decisions about work are made on the basis of economic poverty or educational opportunity. In India, programme approaches to child labour have dichotomised around these two root causes of the problem. Her study showed that despite the initiation of a savings and credit programme, school drop-out rates were increasing.

Different actors, different perspectives

Clare O'Kane's paper ('Street and Working Children's Participation in Programming for Their Rights: Conflicts Arising from Diverse Persperctive and Directions for Convergence') analysed the negative impact of the development projects on children and compared these with more recent attempts to allow street children scope to participate in decisions affecting their lives, for example in the Butterflies project in Delhi.

Sanulal Maharjan's paper ('Child Rights and Social Norms') showed that the transformation of welfare ideology into that of children as rights holders is causing difficulties for INGOs and NGOs working at the local level. He pointed out that the role of the cultural concept of *Karma* (akin to fatalism) in Nepalese understandings of adverse life situations must be recognized in any planning framework for improving human rights.

Shraddha Shrestha ('Is collaborative research effective for achieving child rights?') exposed how the varying ideologies of different research organisations influence the questions defined, the sampling process and data produced. This speaks of the urgency of collaborative research if accurate and full understandings of childen's livelihoods is to be achieved.

Sarah Bachman discussed the practical implications of the variable data produced by government, academic and NGO sources. She exposed the powerful impact that reporting in the press can have on policy makers and public opinion. Her case study demonstrated that the negative impact of consumer is often counter to journalists' best intentions.

The following papers were presented in the panel on **Bhutan: socio-cultural parameters and changing times**, convened by Dr Françoise Pommaret:

John Ardussi and Karma Ura : 'Population and Governance in mid-18th Century Bhutan, as revealed in the Enthronement Record of Thugs-sprul 'Jigs-med Grags-pa I (1725-17)'.

Marc Dujardin: 'From living to propelling monument: the monastery-fortress (*rdzong*) as vehicle of cultural transfer in contemporary Bhutan'.

Lopen Karma Phuntsho: 'Traditional scholarship in modern Bhutan: current educational trends and their impact on the traditional systems of learning'.

Samten Karmay: 'The traces of Dorje Lingpa (Dorje gling pa 1346-1405) in Bhutan'.

Thierry Mathou: 'The politics of Bhutan: change in continuity'.

Adam Pain and Deki Pema: 'Continuing customs of negotiation and contestation in Bhutan'.

Françoise Pommaret: 'Modern Bhutanese scholarship in human sciences'.

Nicholas Rhodes: 'The monetisation of Bhutan'.

Richard Whitecross: 'Signs of the Degenerate Age: the desecration of chorten and lha khang in Bhutan'.

Abstracts and in some cases the full texts of the papers presented in these panels can be found on the Conference website at

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/sociol/sas/conf16/panels.htm>

Obituary
Hugh Richardson

Resident British Diplomat in Lhasa, Tibet. Scholar and Author.

Hugh Richardson died three weeks short of his 95th birthday. He spent a total of eight years as a diplomat in Tibet between 1936 and 1950, six of them as Head of Mission, Lhasa, first for the British and then for the Indian government. With the exception of two Italian missionaries in the eighteenth century, no westerner has lived longer and none gained a keener appreciation of the history and culture of the Land of Snows. After his retirement, Richardson began a second career as an independent scholar, publishing numerous articles and several books on many aspects of the Tibetan heritage. His standing was such that it is almost impossible to open a book about Tibet published since the mid-1930s without finding numerous references to him. He was a dedicated friend of all Tibetans, a life-long friend of the Dalai Lama, with whom he kept in frequent contact, and a prominent advocate of the cause of Tibetan independence.

Richardson had met Basil (later Sir Basil) Gould when the two were serving in Baluchistan. The junior man impressed Gould, who had been Political Officer Sikkim and who had returned once again to this post. Knowing that Richardson was interested in working in Tibet, Gould assisted him in taking up the post of British Trade Agent Gyantse in July 1936. Gould shortly afterwards invited Richardson to accompany him on the British Political Mission to Lhasa in 1936. The purpose of this visit was ostensibly to mediate between the then Panchen Lama and the Tibetan government, but in reality, it was an elaborate demonstration to show that the Chinese, at that time, had no special status in Tibet. The mission also aimed to straighten out certain Tibetan problems and to lay down a more definite policy towards the country. To this end Richardson was to establish personal contacts with Tibetan governmental officials in order to exchange advice and information. The mission arrived in Lhasa on 25 August 1936 and two days later called on the Regent, the Prime Minister and the Cabinet in the Potala.

The members of the mission much enjoyed their time in Lhasa and were fascinated by its highly developed culture. They temporarily introduced football to the city, including seven-a-side. The game was later to be banned by the Lhasa authorities who felt it to be inauspicious, and, in the event, the goalposts were stolen for fire-wood anyway. Having obtained the 1938 Everest Expedition permit, the mission departed Lhasa in mid February 1937. In private talks, Gould had agreed with the Kashag, the Tibetan Government's Cabinet, that as some matters were outstanding Richardson (along with army radio operator Lt. Dagg) would stay on to discuss them. The presence of the mission thus became permanent.

The relative peace and stability of those times allowed Richardson to travel widely and cultivate the friendship of Tibetans of all classes, both monks and laymen, who encouraged him in his scholarly interests in the land, its people, religion, culture and wildlife. His main interest was the study of ancient inscribed pillars. His work had to be done at "a slow and ceremonial pace.'" He came to compare much of the mediaeval-like country favourably with Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. He spent much time learning Tibetan. According to the Tibetan Finance Minister, T.W. Shakabpa, he spoke "Impeccable Lhasa Tibetan with a slight Oxford accent". His classical written Tibetan was also excellent.

In his memoirs the 14th Dalai Lama recalls that when he arrived as a young child in Lhasa before his installation, he was greeted outside the city by the Prime Minister, the Cabinet, the leading monasteries, and by Hugh Richardson. However, Richardson was not to remain in Lhasa for the actual installation ceremony because shortly afterwards he was posted to the North-West Frontier of India. On his way there, he met his old friend and mentor Basil Gould coming up from Sikkim for the event in February 1940. Returning to Lhasa a few years later, Richardson was unable, for reasons of protocol, to meet the Dalai Lama privately, but maintained contact with him via the Austrian mountaineers Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschneiter. Only after the Dalai Lama had fled from the Chinese in 1959 did they have the opportunity to meet privately.

In August 1947, India gained independence and requested Richardson to stay on as their representative. According to Richardson, "the transition was almost imperceptible." However, Indian independence, along with the end of the Second World War, changed the whole balance of power in Asia and ultimately led to the occupation of Tibet. Richardson had already witnessed great changes in the country during the war as large amounts of trade passed through neutral Tibet from India to China. During his time as the representative for India, Hisao Kimura, a Japanese agent working as a British spy, arrived destitute in Lhasa. He went to find Richard-

son, whom some time previously he had briefly met, to seek assistance and later described his reception as "somewhat less than I had anticipated." He was told "There are two reasons why I cannot help you. One is that I am no longer the British Representative. The other is that even if I was, you have no right to divulge your mission, if true, to anyone, even to me."

Hugh Richardson retired from service at the end of August 1950, so ending a British presence which had been established in Lhasa on and off since 1920. The sense of impending crisis was confirmed when China invaded Tibet the following October. He aided belated Tibetan efforts to establish international relationships and membership of the United Nations. In December 1949 fears of Chinese invasion prompted Richardson to grant Tibetans visas for India when Tibet sent missions to Britain, Nepal, India and the USA in an attempt to secure the support of the UN and to gain membership of that organisation. After the Chinese invaded Tibet in 1950, he was to accompany a delegation to New York to lobby for the Dalai Lama's appeal for help to the UN via a direct letter to the Director-General Dag Hammarskjold. He wrote of the Tibetans' appeal of that year, 'Only El Salvador had the courage to move the condemnation of the unprovoked invasion. It must be recorded with shame that the UK delegate, pleading ignorance of the exact course of events and uncertainty about the legal position of Tibet, proposed that the matter be deferred.' As developments took place, Richardson was horrified by China's destruction of Tibetan civilisation. In 1959, the Tibetan uprising was put down brutally and the military occupation was completed. At the UN, where Richardson was busy lobbying for support for Tibet, a joint resolution was put forward by Malaya and Ireland about the situation and status of Tibet, and although the resolution was carried, Britain abstained without the UK's delegate putting forward any explanation as to why Tibet's status was far from clear under article 2 (7) of the UN Charter. Richardson wrote, "In all practical matters the Tibetans were independent but the British Government sold the Tibetans down the river. I was profoundly ashamed of the government."

Richardson wrote very little of his personal thoughts and feelings. He was, however, a polymath, with a keen interest in ornithology, botany, entomology, topography, and gardening. He was also an enthusiastic photographer, relating late in life, that "I wasted a lot of film on the Potala. I have all these views of it." His writing energies went into the historical and cultural: self revelation would have been totally out of character. He did relate, however, that he had been delighted to be in Tibet, but only later in life had he been aware of what a privilege it had been. He was the perfect gentleman, though a very determined character, elegant, tall and lean. Even late in life, he would spare much time for many people seeking informa-

tion and advice on Tibetan affairs even if they were two generations younger. At the age of 94, he would spell out long Tibetan words faster than one could write them down.

Hugh Richardson was the greatest friend and defender of the Tibetans. Much of his work and research supports Tibetan autonomy and their right to rule themselves. Any future political settlement will have to take into account the many historical arguments he has put forward for this.

Hugh Edward Richardson was born in St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland on 22 December 1905, the second of three children, two boys and a girl, the son of Colonel Hugh Richardson and Elizabeth née McClean. Richardson went to school at Trinity College, Glenalmond, and later read classics at Keble College, Oxford, graduating in 1928. After teaching at his old school for a year, he passed the Indian Civil Service Exam. His first posting, 1932-4, as Sub-Divisional Officer, was to Tamluk in present day Bangladesh from where he found time to trek in Sikkim and make his first journey into Tibet, crossing the Himalayas to Phari. In 1934 he joined the Foreign and Political Service, Government of India, and spent a year as Assistant Political Agent at Loralai, Baluchistan, now in Pakistan, and was much involved in matters following the massive Quetta earthquake. Between 1936 and 1950 he spent long periods in Tibet acting as British Trade Agent Gyantse, or Head of the British Mission, Lhasa. He was Political Officer Sikkim for six months in 1937. During the Second World War he was Assistant Commissioner and then Deputy Commissioner in Charsadda, North-West Frontier Province, India, followed by time spent in Chungking, China, as Assistant to the Agent General for India; finally he served in Delhi as Joint Secretary to the Government of India, External Affairs Department. He returned to Tibet in April 1946 and remained there until August 1950. After a short spell in Malaya, he retired to his birthplace and in 1951 married Huldah née Walker, widow of Major-General T.G. Rennie, killed in action in 1945. She was a lady of great beauty, intelligence and kindness who brought him two stepchildren, David and Elizabeth. She predeceased him in 1995.

As an independent scholar, Richardson taught in educational institutes, including time in Bonn, and was visiting professor at Seattle. Amongst his great many publications, the following are of particular note:

Tibetan Word Book (1943)

Tibetan Language Records (with Basil Gould, 1945)

Ancient Historical Edicts at Lhasa and the Mu Tsung/Khri Gtsug Lde Brtsan Treaty of AD. 821-822 from the Inscription at Lhasa (1952)

Tibet and its History (1962)

A Cultural History of Tibet (with David Snellgrove, 1968)

A Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions (1985)

Ceremonies of the Lhasa Year (1993)

High Peaks, Pure Earth: Collected writings on Tibetan history and culture (1998)

Roger Croston, Chester, 2nd January 2001

Book Reviews

Naxi and Moso ethnography: Kin, rites, pictographs edited by Michael Oppitz and Elizabeth Hsu. Zürich: Völkerkundemuseum, 1998. 396 pp.

Reviewed by Nicholas J. Allen

Until the late 1980s students of the Nakhi were few and far between. The founding figure was Joseph Rock (1884-1962), a self-taught scholar of Austrian extraction, who published copiously in a notably rebarbative style. He was a difficult character (for his biography—not mentioned here—see S. B. Sutton, *In China's Border Provinces: the turbulent career of Joseph Rock, botanist-explorer*, New York: Hastings House, 1974), and he did not have an academic post such as would have enabled him to foster students; but he did collect and distribute Naxi pictographic manuscripts, some 7,000 of them, to various libraries. Among those who studied the manuscripts was the anthropologist Anthony Jackson of Edinburgh University, who is one of the nine contributors assembled here by the editors. Meanwhile, a number of home-based Chinese scholars interested themselves in the area, and it is good to see that they too are represented. More recently still, a number of younger students have undertaken doctoral fieldwork on the area, some being of Chinese extraction, others not.

The area in question surrounds the double bend of the Yangtse River in North Yunnan, spreading into South Sichuan. As so often in and around the Himalayas, the indigenous ethnonymy is complicated enough, and is further confused by the labels imposed by outsiders—not to mention the classifications of linguists and the mountainous terrain. To a first approximation (this is very crude), the Naxi and Moso speak the same language, but the former, in the south, are patrilineal and use pictographs, while the Moso in the north are mostly matrilineal and rely wholly on oral tradition. The Naxi number nearly a quarter million, the Moso only about 15,000. No doubt both groups ultimately come from the north, though it is not clear how to evaluate their claims to Mongol ancestry. The language is classified under the Loloish or perhaps the Qiangic branch of Tibeto-Burman.

The first third of the book deals with kinship, focusing on the remarkable contrast between the two closely related groups. This is something of a *cause célèbre* in Chinese anthropology, which has been officially committed to the doctrines of Morgan and Engels, and hence has regarded the matrilineal pattern as a primitive survival which willy-nilly the Moso ought to and will abandon as they follow the Naxi in their progress towards Han and socialist ideals. In fact, as is lucidly shown by Susanne Knödel, the Moso have resisted reform and continue to practise their

system based on *tisese*, 'walking back and forth'. Brothers and sisters live together in largish households, and men only come to visit their partners at night. This lack of emphasis on the role of the husband accounts for the title of another recent work on the Moso, Cai Hua's *Une société sans père ni mari: les Na de chine* (PUF, 1997). Although the institution of visiting husbands is known from elsewhere, the most obvious comparison is with the historical Nayar of south-west India, so often cited in anthropology textbooks.

Elizabeth Hsu, who mentions both Cai Hua and the Nayar, examines the Moso and Naxi material in the light of Lévi-Strauss's ideas on *sociétés à maison*, especially as reformulated by Carsten and Hugh-Jones. Hsu's is a theoretically lively text which merits development for a wider audience. She suggests that over a wide area stretching from China and Tibet to south-east Asia we need to recognize two different kinship ideologies: one, alliance-oriented, deals with the exchange of women and with rank and honour, while the other, hearth-oriented, stresses domestic harmony. The implication is that such concepts will enable us to overcome the over-sharp conceptual opposition between Naxi patriliny and the matriliny attributed to the Moso.

The second third of the book contains a great deal of material on ritual, illustrated with copious photographs, some taken by Rock. The chapter I most enjoyed was Christine Mathieu's account of the *ddaba*, a little-known type of ritual specialist from a remote Moso village (which is in fact patrilineal), and the mythology relating to his activities.

In the final third of the book, Jackson and his former pupil Pan Anshi argue strongly, against Rock, that few if any of the Naxi manuscripts were produced before the second half of the nineteenth century. The officiants in fact produced three types of manuscript for different purposes: divination manuals, listings of what was required for particular rituals and, above all, mnemonic texts for the mythic chants that make up so much of a ritual. The main writing system is pictographic. Most signs, though standardized, are recognizable as depictions, but the texts cannot be thought of as comic strips without the balloons. One normally needs some background knowledge to interpret the signs, and familiarity with the spoken language alone would not permit a correct reading. There is, however, also a phonetic syllabic script, based on strokes in the Chinese manner. Many pages of pictographs are reproduced, but perhaps the best way to understand how the system works is to begin by consulting the last article. Here Oppitz presents, syllable by syllable with interlinear translation, a version of the deluge story taken from the main creation myth. Oppitz, now director of the Ethnographic Museum at Zürich,

makes good use of material culture and visual anthropology to explore the nature of the object in which the First Man survives the flood, but a firm solution proves elusive.

Oppitz, who will be known to readers for his earlier work on the Sherpas and the Magar, says that the main object of the book is "to offer some incentives for a comparative anthropology of the wider Himalayan region", and with this in mind I shall raise a few themes that might repay comparative study. Being nowadays particularly occupied with Indo-European comparativism, I favour the hypothesis that for the Himalayas too a language-family framework will be useful, and that some of the similarities one finds in the region will go back to a Tibeto-Burman proto-culture. Of course, however, generous allowance must be made for diffusion as well as common origin, and for diffusion both within the area (notably the spread of Tibetan Buddhism and organised Bon) and from outside it (Sinification, Hinduization, import of Buddhism, etc.). The task is vast, and no doubt it will be some decades before we have a satisfactory comparative anthropology of the whole region.

The Naxi-Moso kinship material points to several sorts of comparative issue. Can anything be learned from a comparison of the Moso with the matrilineal Garo? Why do both the Naxi and the Moso resemble so many other communities in the area in recognizing four proto-clans (following Knödel: Hsu adds two further Moso protoclans)? And do these protoclans represent some ancient ranked stereotypic division of labour? (cf. my two papers from 1978: 'Fourfold classifications of society in the Himalayas', in J. Fisher (ed.) *Himalayan Anthropology: The Indo-Tibetan interface*, Mouton, pp. 7-25, and 'Quadripartition of Society in early Tibetan Sources', *Journal Asiatique* 266: 341-60). We know that the Naxi prefer to marry the father's sister's daughter: 'the mother's brother grasps the sister's daughter' according to native idiom (the somewhat alarming transcription discrepancies between p. 31 and p. 86 are not typical of this well-produced book). But how does this relate to the bilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriage patterns that are found elsewhere in the region, and in particular, are these relations compatible with the hypothesis that Tibeto-Burman kinship terminologies were originally symmetrical prescriptive?

The possibilities for comparison in the field of ritual are endless. Thus the Central Valley specialist might compare the Newar *guthi* with the Moso *sizi*, the group which collectively organizes funerals, or they might note Rock's observation of a Moso goat sacrifice during which the chest was cut open and the heart torn out (p. 211). McKhann's report of the division of the pig's head and its distribution (p. 184)

recalls the classic carving charts in the ethnography of the Chin, and many subsequent reports. The annual journey of the Moso gods to Lhasa in order to gamble (p. 224) reminded me of the annual assembly of the Kinnaur deities on the local Mount Kailash. The *ddaba*'s method of divining, using cut twigs with (as it were) a heads side and a tails side (p. 218), has analogues among the Rai and the Nagas, and no doubt elsewhere. The ritual division of labour, often binary, is another interesting theme, and Oppitz assembles fifteen versions of the myth of a competition between two types of officiant or shaman (in Tibet typically a lama and a bonpo). But perhaps the richest theme of all would be the rituals themselves, especially the death rituals which, as is typical of the region, are far more elaborate than weddings. The chanted cross-country journey to the home of the ancestors, the white 'way cloth', the collaboration of lamas with local priests, the dough figurines and effigies of animals (perhaps substituting for animal victims), the use of horses for prestige, the elaborate laying out on the ground of offerings and ritual paraphernalia, the house gods and central pillars, the sacred groves, the careful written recording of gifts: all of these will be familiar to most Himalayanists. The editors have indeed provided plenty of food for the comparativist.

Multiculturalism: Modes of coexistence in South and Southeast Asia edited and published by Sasakawa Peace Foundation. Washington DC: Sasakawa Peace Foundation, 1999. 401pp.

Reviewed by Ursula Sharma

The bad news is that, as Ernest Gellner has taught us, ethnic nationalisms are in great measure a product of modern state formation. The good news (often obscured by the many instances of conflict in the contemporary world) is that none the less there are still many instances of peaceful ethnic coexistence, although these are seldom subjected to analysis by social scientists.

This book consists of ten clearly written and informative working papers, the product of the Sasakawa Peace Foundation's research programme on 'Culture and Identity: Ethnic Coexistence in Asia'. Three are on India, three on Nepal, one on Sri Lanka and three on Thailand. (No particular rationale is given for this choice of 'South and South-East Asian' countries, nor is there any editorial attempt to relate the papers to one another.)

Classifying the papers in a different way, some provide historical or general

accounts of the politics of ethnicity in a particular country. For example, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka's paper on 'Debating the State of the Nation: The ethnicisation of politics in Nepal' provides a historical overview of modern state formation and the role of ethnicity in this process, ending with a thoughtful discussion of the ways in which the negative effects of ethnicization might be averted. (Ethnicity, Pfaff-Czarnecka argues, must not be treated in isolation from underlying social problems which are common to most Nepalis, yet cultural and identity issues must have proper public debate and not be swept under the carpet; a quota system might enhance minority participation in the state, but would have to be preceded by proper political preparation.) As a reader who has limited knowledge of any of the areas covered apart from India, I found these general papers very helpful; they offered long-term perspectives on political and social processes in the countries concerned, together with sufficient reflective discussion to enable one to relate the specific case to theoretical discussions of ethnicity in the social sciences.

Other papers provide material on specific locations or arenas of ethnic differentiation. There is a paper by Arjun Gunaratne which compares the process of Tharu identity formation and the dynamic of Tharu-Brahman relations in two areas of Nepal, relating the political processes to the local organization of agrarian production and other economic factors. A paper by David Gellner takes the case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley and makes explicit links with Baumann's work on ethnicity in Southall, London; among the Newars, as in Southall, there are linkages which cut across 'ethnic groups' and create complex local networks of solidarity and cleavage, so that the "modernist 'one and only one culture per person' model" can only lead to a dangerous polarization of ethnic identities.

In spite of the Sasakawa's Foundation's laudable objective of drawing out positive lessons from research into ethnicity, it is the problematic and conflictual aspects of ethnicity which dominate the collection. Reading much of this material, one does not hold out much hope that the process of ethnicization will do anything but accelerate. What are the short-term rewards for politicians who do not draw upon processes of ethnicization (directly or indirectly) for their maintenance of power? Can the clock ever be turned back where ethnicization of politics in Sri Lanka is concerned, and can the process of polarisation of ethnic identity described in Darini Rajasingham's paper ever be diverted? Yet several papers point to instructive models. Adria Tassy Prosser's paper on the Thai Chinese shows that, where a minority shares religion and other cultural traits as well as general phenotypic appearance with other groups, common educational institutions and intermarriage can create an accommodation. Thai Chinese have not been objects of the same hostility suffered by Indonesian Chinese. The role of education highlighted in

this paper suggests that British government policy is right in stressing the need
to ensure greater inclusion of minorities in higher education, but misguided if
it encourages further establishment of sectarian schools (this is my conclusion,
not the author's). Two articles on Indian cities (by Ashis Nandy on Cochin and
Shail Mayaram on Ajmer) suggest that old Asian models of urban cosmopolitanism
existed which still survive. Mayaram's paper on Ajmer is particularly interesting as
it identifies the specific local social processes which have contained conflict, e.g.
the role of shared mythic space by different religious communities in Ajmer, the
role of neighbourhood based panchayats in managing disputes so that they do not
get inflated and ethnicized, and the role of medical pluralism in enhancing mutual
participation in therapeutic traditions associated with particular religious cultures.
Some of the early modern polities were characterized by ideologies of hierarchical
complementarity in which the domination of the state by a particular class, ethnic,
or religious group did not render other groups cultural or political 'outsiders'. Or,
as Deborah Tooker's paper on Akha/Thai relations in Northern Thailand argues,
earlier forms of complementary exclusion permitted an ethnicity which was not
essentialized yet was based on a healthy self-other distinction. This is not to hark
back to a golden age but it does bear out Ashis Nandy's contention that it is worth
thinking about how non-secular modes of tolerance can be activated and built upon.
After all, in many of these states the ideology of a political zone which is blind to
ethnic/religious identities is (for the majority at least) meaningless, because their
experience of participation in civil society does not support such an idea.

Perhaps this is not the place to discuss how realistic this idea might be in con-
temporary India. However I think it illustrates the kind of constructive questions
that emerge when we go beyond the simple study of local processes of ethnici-
zation (which anthropologists and sociologists have been very good at and have
turned into a veritable industry) and dare to draw political conclusions. Not all the
papers explicitly attempt this, but taken together they form a thought-provoking and
instructive collection.

I would have liked to use this book for a course on ethnicity and globalisation
which I taught recently; although the individual papers will be of interest and value
to regional specialists they are also accessible to the non-specialist student. How-
ever this would be difficult in their present form. There is no editorial attempt to
relate the papers together (even within regional groupings), the copyediting has
been poor, and there are numerous typographical errors. Some papers could be sub-
stantially edited where there is overlap of content. However these do not claim to be
more than working papers. The introduction suggests that Sage will publish them
as a collection in the near future. This is to be warmly welcomed.

La Foresta Ancestrale by M. Nicoletti. Milano: Franco Angeli, 1999. ISBN 88-464-1636-8. 294pp.

Reviewed by Hildegard Diemberger

La Foresta Ancestrale, 'The Ancestral Forest', is a fascinating journey through the world of the Kulunge Rai, a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group inhabiting the hills of eastern Nepal. A scene from a ritual hunt opens the narrative, like a revealing trailer. In fact it is in this scene that the reader first encounters the forest with its concrete and tangible aspects as well as its mysterious forces and mythic inhabitants, which are less visible to a foreign eye but are equally, or even more, present and powerful. These aspects are closely intermingled in the Kulunge way of inhabiting and conceiving their forest, as well as their community. Nicoletti, however, follows a narrative 'pathway' which allows the reader to disentangle and understand these dimensions by looking at different angles. A concise description of the community, located in its specific environment of the Hongkhu valley, and the history of its Tibeto-Burman inhabitants, a branch of the Kiranti, provides a useful starting point. The forest is here the environmental feature in which the Kulunge ancestors lived by hunting, gathering, and shifting cultivation, and which they cleared to a considerable extent while they increasingly became farmers and herders. Nevertheless, the forest still conditions the life of the Kulunge, even if this occurs to a lesser extent than at the time of their ancestors, at least from a material point of view. The forest is endowed with a symbolic dimension which apparently exceeds its current concrete usage as a natural resource. And it is to this aspect that the largest part of the book is dedicated.

The forest and the deeds of the ancestors reappear in the discussion of a ritual narrative, the *mundum*. Presenting features comparable to those of an epic cycle, the *mundum* constitutes a pivot of the Kulunges' understanding of themselves and the world. As Nicoletti points out, the *mundum* of the Kulunge represents one variant of a mythical complex which is known from other Rai groups thanks to the work of scholars such as Nick Allen, Charlotte Hardman, and Martin Gaenszle. More broadly, it shares elements with other Tibeto-Burman and Tibetan traditions. The narrative of the *mundum* starts with the explanation of the origin of the world from water and leads to the ancestral serpent-spirits, to the appearance of the human beings, to the origin of the Rai and the relevant genealogies, to the manner in which the ancestors of the Kulunge created social institutions and the currently inhabited site. The explanation creates a continuum between the mythic time and the historical memory of the Kulunge and entails a normative effect in conveying the key

elements of the Kulunge social and individual ethic. This narrative is recited in a highly ritualized form in which the language reflects (or at least is considered by the Kulung to reflect) an ancient language common to all the Kiranti groups. The highly ritualised form of the narrative is known only by specialists who are similar to bards, and is used exclusively on ritual occasions. However, Nicoletti underlines how the themes of the narrative are also re-proposed in various ways and contexts in the currently used languages, both Kulunge and Nepali. It is therefore possible to understand how this mythical complex could preserve meaningfulness to the common people by emphasizing at the same time the difference between the 'now' and the ancestral time through its language. It is primarily on the basis of a Nepali version of the myth that Nicoletti discusses this tradition.

In the discussion of mythical narrative the forest is introduced as representing a world of its own which is opposed to the inhabited one. On the one hand this opposition is not considered to be an exclusive feature of the Kulunge tradition, and Nicoletti recalls that this has already been noted by Nick Allen in the mythology of the Thulunge Rai. On the other hand, this theme is not used according to a generalizing nature/culture or chaos/order model. In fact Nicoletti explicitly states: "…far from adhering to ahistorical or metahistorical categories….[we] try to interpret the manner in which the Kulunge Rai conceive and organise reality, taking into account the cultural peculiarities of this people and the historical moment in which the research was carried out" (p. 22).

The theme of opposition between the forest and the human world reappears in the analysis of the organization of the inhabited space, especially the house, as the Kulunge construct it, live in it, and perform the relevant rituals. Here the forest is a domain haunted by dangerous forces, and the inhabited human world has to assert itself in contrast to it. This connotation dominates the rituals inherent to the inhabited space, to the agricultural areas and to the community as a whole. It is also the background against which concepts informing social life such as the 'head held high' (Nep. *sir uṭhāune*) are discussed, recalling in some ways Sagant's work among the Limbu.

Another, interrelated, perception of the forest lies in what this domain represents for the shamans. In fact it is there that they obtain their powers. This is the kingdom of Laladum, the deity which manifests itself as a young girl and initiates the young shamans. The clear-cut opposition between the two worlds at this point reveals itself as complementary and dialectical. It is in the forest with all its concrete and invisible inhabitants, with all its different layers of interpretation, that the narrative journey to the Hongu culminates: "Once arrived in the kingdom of Laladum our journey through the religious imagery of the Kulunge comes to an end. Following

the itinerary of the many 'mystical journeys' made by the ritual specialists of this ethnic group, we have also chosen to abandon the houses in the village to venture along the pathways which penetrate the thickest part of the forest—the undisputed protagonist of all these rituals aiming at obtaining invisible energies which are vital for the human community"(p. 239).

The meta-journey in which Nicoletti has engaged the reader and himself, however, leads further than the Hongu valley, to a more abstract questioning about the perception of time. In his conclusions he draws parallels between the world constructed by the Kulunge in relation to their ancestral past and Vico's 'corsi e ricorsi' in human history. He observes that "the Kulunge have turned their philosophy of history towards the past" (p. 240), that "the Kulunge relation between past and present is based on a circularity" (p. 241) and "in this philosophy, which connects history to the archaic myth of the eternal return, the essential aspect of the Kulunge 'way of thinking' finds confirmation" (p. 241). The forest is thereby at the same time origin and destination.

However it is the very representation of a 'mentalità Kulunge' which, perhaps, might be challenged by the multiplicity of concrete narratives which constitute the oral tradition. The concrete process of transmission from one narrator to another is earlier described as follows: "Considering the number of histories mentioned in the *mundum* and the complexity of genealogies contained in it, it sometimes happens that the celebrating specialists, while receiving their training, perform pilgrimages from one teacher to another so that they can rely on the memory of more elders… It is therefore possible to provide an explanation for the dynamic and sometimes polymorphous character of the Kulunge mythic tradition. In its main features this preserves unmistakable and common semantic cores but allows individuals the freedom of adapting some of its elements considered as marginal…" (p. 41). Questioning if and to what an extent the multiplicity is significant and in which differing ways continuities, discontinuities or transformations might be constructed could lead to a further understanding of the complexity of the tradition and the relevant social practice. In this perspective Nicoletti's fascinating portrait of the Kulunge raises many inspiring questions for further research in relation to the recent changes which have been affecting this community. Does this form of oral tradition reflect and react to recent political transformations? How does the mythical and ritual construction of the world of the forest relate to environmental issues such as deforestation? Or even, how is this construction affected by the implementation of a natural park which in the name of environmental conservation has taken control of the management of resources and imposed rules such as the prohibition of hunting—and thus also of ritual hunting?

Anthropology and Sociology of Nepal: Cultures, societies, ecology and development edited by Ram B. Chhetri and Om P. Gurung. Kathmandu: Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON), 1999. ISBN 99933-301-1-6, ISBN 99933-301-0-8. 384 pp.

Reviewed by Christian McDonaugh

This volume represents a first in two senses. It is to be welcomed as the first book ever published by the Sociological and Anthropological Society of Nepal (SASON) since its inauguration in 1985, and it presents papers delivered at the first international conference organised by SASON, in this case jointly with the Department of Sociology/Anthropology, Tribhuvan University. The conference, employing the same title as the subsequent book, was held in Patan in March 1997. Actually, back in 1992 SASON had held its first and so far only National Congress, which was effectively a kind of international conference timed to dovetail with the international conference on the Anthropology of Nepal (itself the first of its kind to be held in Nepal) organised by Michael Allen from Sydney University with the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University.

As the editors of this volume point out, Nepali and *videśī* scholars have not always interacted and shared their knowledge sufficiently, particularly because Nepali scholars often lack the funds to attend conferences and workshops abroad. To enable as many scholars as possible, both Nepali and foreign, to share their work, it was decided to hold this conference in Nepal. The resulting book is international in terms of the nationalities of the contributors, though, as is appropriate, the majority of contributions (13 out of 24) are by Nepali scholars. It is striking, however, that European scholars are only represented by Norway (three papers), Germany (one paper) and the UK (one paper). The conference title was designed to bring in as many speakers as possible. The inevitable result is that the collection of papers is very diverse, spanning a range of topics and methodological and theoretical approaches, and this is probably why the editors wisely opt not to review or survey the papers in their introduction. In fact, some 46 papers were delivered at the conference, and it is perhaps a shame that more were not offered for publication—not only to give potential readers a better view of current research but also to enable the editors to replace some of the weaker contributions to this occasionally uneven collection.

The volume is divided into five sections. The first provides an introduction from the editors and two opening keynote addresses, while the remaining sections present 21 revised conference papers grouped under the following headings: 'Rituals and

Ethnic/Caste Identities' (5 papers), 'Demographic Studies' (4 papers), 'Management of Natural Resources' (8 papers) and 'Medical Anthropology and Sociology' (4 papers). This is followed by a list of contributors, a short introduction to SASON itself, and an end piece from the editors which gives a brief background on Professor Dor Bahadur Bista and his mysterious disappearance and calls on the government of Nepal to make all efforts to find him.

In the Introduction the editors give an overview of the development of anthropology and sociology at Tribhuvan University, before listing a series of points that emerged from conference discussions as concerns for the future. Most of these concerns are fairly predictable, including the lack of access of Nepali researchers to academic sources, especially work produced by foreign scholars, and the lack of a more theoretically informed and systemic analysis of development issues in Nepal, partly because of the way that Nepali researchers are tied into lower level, more apparently 'practical' applied research. Research gaps are identified, on the Tarai and on the Bahun-Chetri groups, as well as on more fundamental social institutions such as marriage, family, caste, and ethnicity. The questions raised here about the role of foreign researchers are interesting. There is some scepticism about how much has been gained on the Nepali side from university-level academic links and exchange programmes, and it is also noted that "quite a few *videshi* people are found doing 'research' in different parts of Nepal today" without a proper research visa or affiliation (p. 8). This is an old problem and rightly leads the editors to ask how a better system could be set up to facilitate such research at the same time as avoiding any potential problems and harmful consequences resulting from such unofficial work.

In his keynote address, Harka Gurung also make some tantalisingly brief but interesting comments on the place of foreign researchers in the wider scene in Nepal. He notes that the discourse on Nepalese history and culture has until recently been very much that of the dominant castes and has excluded the marginal ethnic groups. In this context, Nepalese scholars, "mostly from higher castes" have criticised foreign scholars for "their divisive habit of romanticising the culture of minorities", while in a parallel way the authorities have disapproved of such studies "as giving encouragement to communal movements" (pp. 11-12). Ethnic minorities, however, tend to view the foreign researchers' accounts as more authentic. He suggests that this has led to the emergence of, "on the one hand, a nexus between the outside and marginal perspectives and, on the other hand, a divergence in perception between the natives according to whether they subscribe to dominant or marginal perspective" (p. 12).

As its title suggests, Section 2 includes a heterogeneous mix of papers. Ishii compares the life cycle rituals of Newars, Parbate Hindus and Maithils. Among his conclusions Ishii finds that Newars' relations with the supernatural world are closer than those of the other groups who deal with these relations in more abstract ways. An analysis of affinal prestations reveals no particular status differentials among the Newars, in contrast to the Parbates among whom the groom's side is superior. This is not surprising, but the Maithil case, where previous equality between affines appears now to be conforming more to the Parbate model under the influence of dowry, is more interesting. In all three groups there appears to be an increasing attenuation in the practice of these types of ritual. Gyanu Chhetri's paper presents part of the analysis of a sociological survey of 483 households of Occupational Castes in the middle hills, and is to be welcomed as a contribution to thus far little-studied groups. The paper is useful in providing firm evidence to support what most researchers would already suspect, namely that the younger generations are abandoning traditional caste occupations partly for economic reasons and because of the effects of education, but also in order to escape from their low-status position. As the paper makes abundantly clear, caste hierarchy and caste-based discrimination "does not exist in theory but is prevalent in practice" (p. 57). Hagen's excellent paper on identity and ethnic politics in Ilam district is also important as a contribution to research on ethnicity. Hagen's clear analysis of the theory or discourse level of identity construction in the Mongol National Organization is nicely balanced by attention to the more everyday level of social practice, which shows that individuals actually opt for a revised single ethnic identity as Limbu or Rai etc. rather than as 'Mongol', and look to the MNO as a political rather than a social identity.

Dilli R. Dahal's paper opens the next section on demography with a comprehensive review of anthropologists' contributions to migration studies in Nepal. Dahal criticises survey methods for neglecting the complexity of context and provides a strong argument for using qualitative cultural analysis to complement more conventional and technical quantitative approaches in demography. To keep the more qualitatively oriented reader on their toes, and as an example of the striking range of approaches included in this collection, the next paper by Shyam Thapa presents a thoroughly statistical analysis of ethnicity as a factor in determining the timing of family formation in Nepal. This again provides hard data in support of ethnographically informed insights that in certain hill ethnic groups women tend to have a relatively higher status and marry later. It also shows that the earliest age of marriage occurs particularly among a cluster of Tarai caste groups. Shara G. Neidell's paper in this section also relates to women's autonomy and status. She argues that, contrary to the findings of some recent surveys, women's decision-making power

has not declined but rather they are becoming more aware of the limitations placed on them. This has resulted from their increasing internalization of outsiders' definitions of decision-making, education and work.

Section 4 on the management of natural resources contains the largest number of papers (eight) and is the main section of the book. Most of these papers consider aspects of the Community Forestry Programme in Nepal and focus particularly on issues of community participation, local level institutions, and conflict. Indigenous natural resources management systems also receive some attention. The section opens with D. Gilmour and R.J. Fisher's excellent overview of the evolution of forestry policy. This paper then turns to the constraints on contributions from anthropologists, whose work has become increasingly relevant as the scale of community involvement has grown. Many of the comments here echo other literature on the roles of anthropologists in development; nevertheless it is useful to have this extended example of the kinds of problems that anthropologists face. These problems include scepticism on the part of other development professionals, and especially economists, about a perceived lack of sufficiently robust and identifiable anthropological 'tools'. Lack of space does not allow the authors fuller discussion, but it would be very useful to know their suggestions for meeting this challenge. Ram B. Chhetri's paper constitutes a valuable critique of the rhetoric of 'People's Participation' in conservation and development. Through four case studies he unravels the real problems of 'People's Participation' on the ground. The analysis reaches a number of specific conclusions, along with the overall point that to be effective People's Participation requires a pragmatic and holistic approach to ensure that all relevant local groups actually are involved and that all their interests are properly considered. The following two papers both deal with local-level conflict and other problems in the way Forest User Groups (FUG) operate. Elvira Graner makes a very clear argument that conflicts over the membership of FUGs are very important but are as yet not properly studied or even identified as a distinct form of social conflict. Tulsi Ram Pandey identifies a range of internal and external problems in the effective running of FUGs, but again one of his key findings is that difficulties have arisen over the mismatch between membership of FUGs and the actual groups of people who make use of the forest resources. This paper and the one by Om P. Gurung both provide evidence that local people have been and can be highly effective in managing and conserving forest and other natural resources. Taken together, most of these papers will be important reading for development professionals working in this sector. They show again that the fine-grained local level research of anthropologists and sociologists can make a vital contribution to policy and practice.

The papers on medical anthropology and sociology are somewhat uneven, but this section is dominated by the excellent analysis by Marta Levitt of the conflict between Nepali management culture and the implementation of a culturally appropriate programme designed to train Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA). Levitt shows how the culture of programme management at district and community levels is shaped by traditional cultural attitudes and practices, such as "*afno manche, jagir* culture, *adesh*, and *chakari*" (p. 315). The result has been that in some cases the wrong people have been trained as TBAs so that there remain untrained TBAs in districts where training targets have been completed. This is an authoritative and informed paper, based as it is on long-term hands-on involvement with the programme, and it represents an important contribution to the analysis of the cultural dimensions of Nepali bureaucracy and management, an area much in need of further research.

It is clearly not possible for a single volume to provide a comprehensive showcase of the full range of current anthropological and sociological research on Nepal. Nevertheless this collection does reflect the development- and problem-oriented nature of much current research, especially by Nepali scholars. It is noticeable, however, that there are only two papers on the burgeoning phenomenon of ethnicity in Nepal. Harka Gurung's comments in his opening address are thus not explored. As is often the case with volumes of conference proceedings, the collection includes many valuable as well as some weaker papers, and there would have been scope for the editors to drop some papers, at least in their present form. Unfortunately the text is also marred in a number of places by missing references and other typographical errors. Nevertheless, as a whole the volume will be of interest and value to anthropologists and sociologists as well as other scholars with an interest in Nepal, and it should certainly take its place on the shelf alongside the gradually increasing number of other similar volumes arising from conferences on Nepal.

Autonomy: Life cycle, gender and status among Himalayan pastoralists by Aparna Rao. 1998. Oxford: Berghahn Books. pp 350. ISBN 1-57181-903-7.

Reviewed by Ben Campbell

Anyone wanting an insight into the lives of the Bakkarwal transhumant pastoralists of Jammu and Kashmir will find in this book plenty of informative description, well illustrated by the inclusion of people's own narratives, and backed up with tables of demographic statistics. Its ethnographic strengths, though, are unbalanced by a title that is never fully engaged with conceptually, a structure that is not wholly justified by its subject matter, and editing that leaves much to be desired.

Rao claims to offer an empirical approach, and sets out to explore processes of authorizing legitimacy in human agency with a focus on the variables of gender, economic status, and age. The compelling quality of the book is that it provides a rich analysis of Bakkarwal categories and understandings of selfhood, the morality of the person, and the cultural recognition and denial of agency. It contains some excellent writing, especially around weddings, and moments of deep ethnographic understanding stemming from the author's familiarity with the Bakkarwal over a fieldwork span of some twelve years. She writes from a closeness that only comes when your assigned role is to take care of sick lambs and kids.

The interwoven fates of herders and herds, and the connections made between animals and people in terms of principles of character, personality, and kind come over with great force. Through the structuring of the book according to the life cycle we learn that, to begin with, goat colostrum is given to a baby to bind it to its future occupation, and to treat the animal like a mother (sheep's milk would not do, being 'cold' compared to the goat's being 'hot'). At the other end of the bio-social spectrum, 'big men', a local man says, are "like certain billy-goats [who] go forward on their own to show the way to others" (p.282). Demographic data on reproductive issues are complemented by telling commentaries, such as when two women left in a Jammu hospital were visited by the author, who was later told: "We ... cannot afford to be so soft hearted—for us first come our animals and then our children" (p. 215). Cultural concepts that are developed to discuss capacities for human agency are given their fuller salience by locating them also in their usage for domestic livestock. Different species, and people as individuals have their 'innate tempers' (*mijāj*), and goats are said to have more *ōsh* than sheep. *ōsh* is the capacity for conscious personhood, and sympathy, that for instance makes a woman stay with a husband despite being unhappy. By contrast *nafas* is an egocentric selfhood,

and it is thought desirable to have a balance between *ōsh* and *nafas*, though men are deemed to hold more legitimate *nafas* than women. Each person's unique level of *ōsh* is affected by heritable characteristics of body substance and nurturing influences. There is no hierarchical rank ordering of *zāt* (p. 128), and endogamy is perceived as the legitimate autonomy of *zāt* in avoiding excessive mixture. For Rao this indicates an understanding of personhood at odds with Marriot's model of the South Asian ideology of dividuality, and suggests instead a continuum between individual and di-vidual (p. 16).

Rao's most convincing arguments are constructed by bringing together her analysis of concepts of personhood with her understandings of the dynamics of domestic pastoral economy. She highlights "the crucial connection between availability of labour and decision making in every sphere of pastoral life" (p. 220), and yet she is particularly eloquent on the cultural denial of agency to women in the gendered division of labour and space. A table of domestic and economic activities on page 247 is highly illustrative: "decisions I classified as having been taken exclusively by women are not considered by Bakkarwal men to be decisions at all." Here comes the nub of her analysis, in the fact that actions classified as 'habit' or 'custom' are not accorded the semantic weight of a decision (*pheslā*). 'Decisions' belong to the public sphere "which precludes the construction of women's autonomy" (p. 196). Autonomy and decision making are recognized among men of well-being, and noted in terms of a capacity to take apart and refashion constraints and boundaries around them and expand spheres of influence. Agency is attributed to those who demonstrate features of well-being.

The rationale for the title of the book is hard to grasp except as an overwhelming gendered refusal. Rao refers to young women's "extreme lack of autonomy" (p. 165), drops in the comment that "women are intrinsically incapable of shouldering much responsibility" (p. 246), and asserts that a woman "*is* married, she *is* sent away, she *is* divorced, and she *is* remarried" (original emphasis). It is only by the back door that the agency of women is offered to the reader, such as in arranging for a bridewealth payment to be returned after a marital breakdown, and in statements such as her claim that nuclear households give women more autonomy than joint forms. Rao does not, though, engage with important discussions of South Asian women's perspectives, that have attempted to reclaim women's agency (e.g. work by Raheja and Gold, or Bina Agarwal).

At the end of the book, which lacks a proper conclusion, Rao suggests that choice is considered minimal in life, apart for a few high-ranking men. The individual is not responsible for significant life events. Choice is not recognized among the ideologi-

cally unauthorized. There is a low level of articulated personal aspirations. That's it! No reprise of the issues is made. The term 'autonomy' appears only briefly in the theoretical introduction, and though present in the subsequent chapters is not significantly integrated into the earlier discussion of the individual. Political and ontological aspects of autonomy are not brought into any systematic theoretical interplay—an intention that the title and subject matter of the book, and the Afterword's comment that negating agency is at the core of South Asian politics, seem to imply.

Publication shortcomings include a map of migration routes with illegible place names in the unconnected opening discussion of concepts of the individual, personhood and culture. In fact there is no introductory section to provide the reader with the historical and regional context of the study and its community. A glossary is sorely missed. And 'teknonym' is consistently misspelled.

The serious contribution of this book, however, is in subjecting certain key terms of analysis in social science and development discourse, such as 'household', 'choice', and 'decision-making' to cultural critique. A beautiful revelation of gendered perspectives is contained in Rao's comment on people's responses to questioning on their domestic demographics. Different responses were given depending on women's tendency to answer in terms of *shakas* (physical beings) and men's answers only in terms of *bandā* (persons with names, social rights and duties). *Autonomy* deserves to be read by anyone interested in Himalayan livelihoods, not least for the suggestion of an "overall syndrome of verticality" (p. 51) in which pastures, herds, health, and well-being are all better at altitude.

Information for authors

Proposals for articles should in the first instance be sent to the lead editor, Michael Hutt. All articles submitted are subject to a process of peer review.

Please use author-year citations in parentheses within the text, footnotes where necessary, and include a full bibliography. This is often called the 'Harvard' format.

In the body of your text:

It has been conclusively demonstrated (Sakya 1987) in spite of objections (Miller 1988: 132-9) that the ostrich is rare in Nepal.

In the bibliography:

Sakya, G.D. 1987. *Nepalese Ostriches: A trivial myth*. Kathmandu: Mani Pustak Bhandar.

Miller, M.D.D. 1988. 'A comprehensive rebuttal of G. Sakya' *Kailash* 6(2): 121-83.

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