OCCASIONAL PAPERS IN SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY

10 *Observations on the Changing Societal Mosaic of Nepal*

Editors

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL: OBSERVATIONS ON THE CHANGING SOCIETAL MOSAIC OF NEPAL

We have decided to continue on with the idea of giving a thematic title to the Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology by calling the Tenth Volume *"Observations on the Changing Societal Mosaic of Nepal"*. As editors, we deem it essential to declare our reasons for selecting this particular title to represent the papers included in this volume. Any perceptive observer of Nepali society will agree with us that the societal mosaic of Nepal (defined by plurality of religions, caste/ethnic groups, mother tongues spoken, etc.) has never been simple and rigid but has rather been quite complex and fluid or transient all the time. Just as time does not stand still the nature of the social relationships and the resulting structures too have been dynamic—subject to constructions and reconstruction by the agencies inherent in the peoples. A careful reading of the six papers in this collection will reveal that 'change', 'development', and 'transformation' stand out as high priority agenda for contemporary scholars and researchers engaged in the Sociology and Anthropology of Nepal. The preferred vocabulary or the language used by the authors of the six papers in this volume in order to convey the ideas resulting from their respective observations of Nepali social and cultural life may be different. Nonetheless, they all seem to be talking about similar trends and processes in Nepal—that is, transformations, the changing social formations, defining and re-defining of social spaces, etc.

Chaitanya Mishra's article reviews the state of sociological works in Nepal. His diagnosis (primarily based on a review of selected publications in some journals) is that sociology in Nepal remains underdeveloped amidst growth. He cogently argues that the social transformative cauldron in Western Europe in the 19th century created the space for sociological thinking. He then proceeds to critically examine the conditions for the emergence as well as florescence of the specific nature of sociology in general and that of Nepal in particular. As a keen observer of Nepali society, Professor Mishra suggests that a better

sociology of Nepali society and their dynamics is possible by way of embedding the micro-level research agenda within the macro perspectives.

The Norwegian anthropologist, Professor Tone Bleie appears to concur with the suggestion of Professor Mishra with regard to the need for a choice of wider canvas even when discussing apparently localised phenomena. She argues that the unravelling of the intricate interplay between internal and external structural conditions and major national political events over nearly five decades challenges any facile characterisation of the Maoist rebellion as an internal conflict only. The main analytical focus of this article is on the structural conditions and agency actions that resulted in 1996 in a Maoist-led rebellion in Nepal. Using the rights-based perspective, Bleie has discussed how the negotiations over the defining attributes of state authority and of state-society relations at important conjunctures in Nepal's recent political history are related to political and economic conditions with national, regional and global outreach over many years.

Sondra L. Hauser, in her paper relates the dynamics of three border towns, focusing on Nepal's southern Tarai—a preferred destination of hill migrants in the country. This paper focuses on the contemporary geopolitical reality of the Tarai as a place in which both hill migrants congregate and through which migrants leave Nepal and travel to the Indian plains, in search of work, safety, and opportunity. Hausner critiques the rhetoric of trafficking as the sole measure through which the development industry – both international and national – views the movement of women across the Nepal-India border and opts rather to focus on the labour conditions of voluntary sex workers in Tarai towns. She contends that prostitution in border towns may appear as a localised problem while in reality it not the case.

David Holmberg examines the case of inequality within a supposedly egalitarian Tamang society. He does this by discussing how Tamangs treat the Kamis (Blacksmiths) living together in a hill village. He argues that the framework for ethnographic comparison in South Asia must move beyond the confines of the insular discourse of a Western/Hindu to include systems like that of the Tamang which treats

Kamis as untouchables while freely interacting with them in a number of day to day social spheres.

David N. Gellner and Sarah LeVine, examine how caste, class, and gender determine the benefits which monastics in the Theravada community of contemporary Nepal commonly provide for their families of origin. They note that monks, who in recent decades have been recruited mainly from poor families belonging to farming and occupational castes, are more likely to focus on helping their relatives in practical ways, whereas the focus of the nuns, who tend to come from more prosperous higher-caste families, is to provide members of their extended kinship network with opportunities to earn social prestige and spiritual merit through high-profile donations to religious institutions.

Finally, Don Messerschmidt, Gautam Yadama and Bhuvan Silwal, have elaborately discussed the manifestations and impacts of the short-lived National Development Service (NDS) movement that was part of the graduate studies program at Tribhuvan University during the 1970s. The paper also focuses on the rise of civic service and volunteerism in Nepal. The authors argue that the NDS which required all the graduate students to dedicate one year during their Masters degree studies to service in a rural community was considered by many to have been a catalytic social development experiment. They have also pointed out that the NDS had profound effects upon both its participants and host communities. Their analysis reveals that NDS in Nepal in the 1970s became the magnet for democratic participation in the absence of other legitimate avenues of democracy during the partyless Panchayat era.

We believe that these articles provide a good sample of contemporary sociological and anthropological research undertaken by scholars in Nepal. As such, the questions and issues raised and discussed in these papers should be of interest to the faculty and students at TU as well as other social scientists in general with an interest on Nepali societal mosaic and the dynamics and or the transformations therein.

Editors

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Kathmandu, April 2007

SOCIOLOGY IN NEPAL:
UNDERDEVELOPMENT ADMIST GROWTH[1]

Chaitanya Mishra

Rise of Sociology

The rise of the social sciences in post-16th century Western Europe has widely been attributed to the enormous political, economic and cultural contradictions—and struggles generated by the twin crises of feudalism and religious faith, the working out of reformation and renaissance, the rise of capitalism and, later, of the structure of democracy[2]. This large-scale and drawn-out dislocation and crises could find resolution only with a radical reorganization of life and society. This reorganization involved the creation, among others, of an expanded European and global market for wage labor, commodity production and reinvestment of profit; the class and state systems; a relatively centralized production regime which gradually reduced the role of the household as a site of production; spatially and socially distanced and "free", often migrant and urbanized, labor; a culture of "faithless" reason, doubt, empiricism, "scientific temperament"; human and historically generated, rather than supernaturally delivered and preordained, progress; and norms of citizenship. It also involved the democratic and liberating influences of the American and French revolutions, the industrial revolution, the Soviet and other socialist revolutions as well as the much more drawn-out processes of decolonization, state formation, democratization, nationalism, modernity and developmentalism within the newly independent regions and countries.

The comprehension and explanation, control and reshaping, and prediction of this large-scale political, economic and cultural struggles and transformation, which generated a wide ranging and intense departure from the established order at multiple levels—ranging from

individual and group identity to the nature and relationships among individuals, households, states, classes and the multifarious constituents of the global system, were the planks on which the social sciences were founded. Intellectual frameworks aligned with feudalism and faith were rendered incommensurate for the comprehension, explanation, prediction of, and intervention into, the processes of struggle and transformation as also of the transformed social world. Further, the transformation, by its very nature, signified an end to the stability of the old world and generated successively new rounds of systemic as well as anti-systemic struggles and transitions at the local, intermediate and global levels and in the structure of relationship among them. The altered and ever-changing social world, in turn, necessarily demanded a mode of social enquiry that was based upon the assumptions that the social world was historically (rather than divinely) constructed, that it was eminently knowable (rather than mysterious and humanly unfathomable) and that it could, within the limits and facilities set by historical processes as well as conscious and organized human social action, be consciously reshaped and reorganized. The altered and ever-changing social world would also demand an empirical, as opposed to authoritatively received, mode of social inquiry. Not only was the larger structural and state level political authority consistently challenged, but the social world, which was diverse, unstable, complex and changing and, by most accounts becoming ever more so, demanded that even social scientific authority, including those which emanate from specific metatheories, established research practices and organizational structures, for example, the university system undergo a "reality check" on a continuing basis and revalidate itself in the process. The new social world both obliged and encouraged newer social visions, theories, sets of information, interpretations, critiques, modes of social control and platforms for action. The social sciences in Europe and later the USA were founded within the context of this large-scale transformation.

Specialized fields within the social sciences largely evolved during the 19th century in response to the expansion and intensification of the process of transformation itself, popular struggles that this transformation entailed, multifarious impacts on religious affairs, polity, administration (including colonial administration), law, economy, culture, etc., it generated, and the emergent structures the transformation created, for

example, state, market, urbanity, impoverishment, crime. The demands of the state structure for information, analysis and policy- making—and implementation thereof— in order to selectively contain, expedite and streamline the process of transformation and its effects, as well as the struggles of urban workers and their unions, activities of social reformers and charities as well as the social science academia played significant proximate roles in the evolution of the specialization in the social sciences. The social science academia was slowly gaining legitimacy as an interpreter of specific aspects of the new and evolving social world and as a potential "fixer" of the multifarious "social problems" generated by the transformation. The success gained by the already relatively specialized natural sciences contributed both to the legitimacy of the social sciences in general as also to the "promise" held out by specialization within the "science of society". The part played by the social sciences, in particular, political science, public administration, economics, law and anthropology, during the colonial era further justified their utility.

It was within this space that sociology was gradually erected in Europe over the 19th century. The nature of the new, un-feudal, "faithless", familially and spatially "unhinged' migrant-, urban-, industrial-, capitalist-, class-based and conflict-ridden society, with pockets of extreme poverty, exploitation and seeming hopelessness was not only relatively unfettered from a host of traditional anchors of order and control, but it also raised the specter of rootlessness and formlessness. Uncertainties loomed large. Further, the rapidity of the transformation, and the successive waves of transition in social lives, and the relative of unpredictability of the future course of transformation were being widely and intensely discussed and acted upon.

It was this a transformative cauldron which created the space for sociological thinking. Sketching and elaborating the features of the new society, as contrasted with the older forms, expectedly, was the first item in the agenda of such thinking. Comte's "law of three stages" and Durkheim's explorations of the bases of religion, education, anomie, individualism (egotism) and social integration in the new society were symptomatic of the thinking. Durkheim's explorations also constituted a significant quest for the bases of order and stability in the new society.

Similarly, Weber's vast corpus sought to map this transformation in economic, political, administrative, social and psychological terms within a deeply historical and cross-societal comparative matrix. Marx's even vaster corpus, in turn, laid bare the history and functioning of the emerging mega structure of capitalism— the mother of all transformations, the contradictions that it produced and sharpened, and the impact it had on everyday social and personal lives. The Marxist corpus, in addition, also made the case for political action to challenge the capitalist transformation. All four sociologists, in addition, elaborated new epistemologies necessary in order to investigate the new society: non-empiricism; non-reductionism and "sociologization"; historical analysis, interpretation and disenchanted objectivity; and historical-dialectical materialism. For Comte, Durkheim and, to a certain extent, Weber, the new investigative perspectives would also legitimize sociology as an independent discipline in its own right. The institutional and financial bases of sociology, within the university system and with a certain level of public support, were rather painstakingly built upon during this period. It must be said, however, that the activities of many grassroots social reform associations lent legitimacy to sociology and to the strengthening of its institutional and financial base.

Following the relatively sterile interwar years, during which rural and urban sociology, symbolic interactionism, the "theory of action" and a couple of other broadly ahistorical perspectives (with the exception of critical theory, which emerged in Germany during the 1920s) made their beginnings, the functionalist perspective gained a near-hegemonic metatheoretical status in sociology and anthropology, particularly in the US. The rise and high dominance of this conservative perspective, which lasted till the mid-60s has legitimately been attributed to the historically unprecedented economic growth and prosperity in the US during the aftermath of World War II, the masking of latent conflicts that such rise in prosperity afforded, the absence of major and overt conflicts, and to the elevation of the US to the preeminent position in the global hierarchy.

Two of the key features of the post-World War II scene, particularly with respect to the colonized and other third-world countries, were decolonization and modernization-led development. Decolonization and modernization were at once liberating and imperializing (excepting, to a

certain extent in the socialist countries): The "natives" were liberated from particular colonial countries while at the same time that capitalist imperialism was strongly revitalizing itself to incorporate the globe following a five-decade long hiatus characterized by two world wars, the rise of the soviet system and one great depression. The image that the modernization framework cast was one of unilinear growth and development within which the more modern and developed economies, cultures and peoples, including those within the modernized and developed states, in effect, constituted the future of the less modern and less developed. The states and peoples which were "traditional", non-modern and less developed had only to traverse a path that had already been charted, including in relation to the generation and utilization of knowledge (including sociology) at the "local" level. It was merely a matter of filling in. This perspective was mirrored at the national level as well. Global, state and market—as well as most non-governmental— structures and institutions had just begun to engage in the search for "system-compatible and usable" information and interpretation. The search for such information and interpretation, which was large in scale, formed the bulk of social science work. The job market for sociologists was decidedly influenced by the search for such "usable" information and interpretation put at the service of modernization and development. These processes, which, among others, transformed the non-western settings and people into the "other" and coalesced within "orientalism", were, in turn, laid bare and severely criticized, during the 70s, among others, by Edward Said, Talal Asad and others.

Within the Western countries themselves, the rise of the civil rights movement, anti-Vietnam war protests, and women's and student movements during the late 60s and the early 70s, however, led to a serious questioning of the functionalist position, as also of the empiricist and ahistorical stance. These movements and protests have also had the effect of substantially expanding the sub-fields of sociology as well as the job market for sociologists within the governments, semi-governmental institutions, the private sector, international institutions and the universities.

The post-70 sociological thinking, in turn, has remained "pluralist": Even as the functionalist, empiricist and historical stances remain

widespread and legitimate, the last two decades have encouraged introspection (for example, Gouldner 1971, Clifford and Marcus 1986, among others); textual analyses, powerful interpretations of the inter-connecttion between power and knowledge and the interconnectedness of macro and the micro structures and processes. The world-systems perspective has been a singular contribution of the post-70 sociology, as is the feminist perspective. In addition, the post-70 period has seen the elaboration of a host of other frameworks, which seek to include the experience and struggle of a variety of excluded groups, for example, the races, ethnic groups, caste groups, migrants, senior citizens, disabled. History, holism, conflict and contradiction are in. Expansion of sub-fields and the job market, in the meanwhile, has continued, albeit at a slower pace, not the least due to the rightist neo-liberal and state minimalist position advocated and practiced since the 80s. Within the "developing" countries, the embracing of developmentalism and its corollaries—international financial assistance and "policy guidelines", international non-governmental organizations, etc.—have further opened the job market for sociologists and social anthropologists. Ethnic, regional and other voices and struggles for inclusion and wider demands for democratization and public services have also opened up the professional space for sociologists and social anthropologists. The obverse has been the case as well: Some sociologists and social anthropologists, at times, have disagreed to honor the agenda and themes put forth by modernization, developmentalism and globalization, critiqued them and found and worked with other frames and themes.

Finally, during the 80s and the 90s, serious questions have been raised on the legitimacy of the existing disciplinary contours and boundaries in the social sciences as well as on the legitimacy of the accepted theory and practice of the social sciences including sociology and social anthropology. Calls have been made for tearing down the old but strong walls between the social sciences on account of the fact that they inhibit insightful inquiry of the new social conditions. Calls have also been made for modes of social inquiry, which are historically and politically self-conscious and are at the same time plural, local as well as universal (Said 1978, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Wallerstein et al. 1997, Wallerstein 1999, also see Amin 1997: 135-52, Sardar 2002). The widespread call for indigenization of sociology and anthropology raised

primarily although not exclusively by non-western academics, including those in Nepal (see below), are also at least in part based on the lack of fit between political, economic and cultural conditions within the global metropolis, on the on hand, and the peripheral regions, on the other. The academic work of the metropolis is seen to misrepresent the social work of the outlying regions, societies and peoples.

Embedding

This rather long-winded introduction has been intended as a platform to enter into a discussion of the state of sociology in Nepal .It has argued among others that.

- The emergence as well as the specific nature of evolution of sociology (as well as other social sciences) is predicated on the scale and intensity of social struggle and social transformation. Large-scale and intense social struggle and transformation in Europe, particularly during the 18th and 19th centuries led to a *zeitgeist,* which insisted on a historical and worldly rather than mythical and ecclesiastical nature of the social domain. This revolutionary *zeitgeist* systemically and gradually transformed all social practices, for example, forms of government, forms of economic transaction, structure of the household, identity of an individual, as well as all branches of social expression, for example, art and literature, physical and biological sciences and to the emergence and transformation of "sciences of society", including sociology and anthropology. Even as the Nepali society is a making a salient transition away from faith directed and feudal traditions and towards a more democratic political culture at various levels and sectors, and even as the sciences of society are seeking to learn from the Western academic tradition, the peripheral, dependent and unsustained nature of the capitalist transition; the restricted nature of the urban and public domains; the miniscule, underdeveloped and non-polyvocal bourgeoisie; together with largely state dependent organization of higher education, relatively non-demanding and relatively unprofe-ssionalized academic systems as well as functionalist and developmental emphases that the carriers of sciences of society have taken on has inhibited the development of social sciences in general

and sociology in particular. The hegemonic impact of the Western academia, on the other hand, has also led to an inordinate emphasis on receiving rather than generating knowledge.

- The specific nature of evolution of sociology is also predicated on the nature of the transition, that is, what and which political and economic structures and regions, ideologies, institutions, classes, groups are driving the transition; how the dominant structures are negotiating the transition with other less dominant structures; and the relative strength of the other less powerful, but nonetheless competing, structures. The more powerful generally usurp the right to characterize and speak for the less powerful. This essentially is the crux of the practice of "orientalism" (see Sardar 2002 for summary as well as critique). Speaking for others, however, is not a monopoly of the orientalist tradition, a point which is powerfully brought out in Clifford and Marcus (1987). Such "filtering frameworks" also operate at the national level in the developing countries and bear significant implication for the development of the social sciences (Guru 2002). Interconnectedness between power and knowledge implies that the powerful, unless systematically resisted and exposed, cannot but seek to usurp the authority of representing, often misrepresenting, the "other". This strain is strong in Nepal and comes in the disguises of "salvage anthropology (and sociology)", romanticism and a strong reformist, developmentalist and modernist sociology and social anthropology. There has been, since the last decade, some improvement on this front, however. Encompassing political debates and transitions (after the 1990 political transition and during the ongoing "Maoist struggle") as well as ethnic, regions and to a certain extent, "gender", perspectives and voices have been in ascendance during the last decade. While not all of these have yet been translated into the sociological and social anthropological proper, these cannot but leave marks within the discipline within the next decade—even as the urban, the upper class and upper caste, statist, modernist and developmentalist interests may very well continue to dominate the sociological enterprise. The ethnic and regional voices are already being translated into sociological and social anthropological agenda. Further democratization of the polity

in Nepal, which is inevitable in many ways, is likely to push these academic initiatives further.

- The specific nature of evolution of sociology and social anthropology in the West and the rest of the world are of an embedded nature. This embeddedness was principally founded upon the structure and processes of the colonial and capitalist transition that the non-Western polities, economies and cultures underwent beginning the 17th century (see Frank 1998 for the interface between Asia and the rest of the world). In addition, between the 1880s and the 1950s, many of these countries also underwent further capitalist and imperialist as well as anti-colonial, nationalist and democratic transitions and struggles. The social sciences—together with other forms of knowledge and expression—in these structures and countries developed both as constitutive components and critiques of these specific struggles and transitions. The social sciences there also developed both as constitutive components and critiques of the post World War II global and local structures and ideologies and practices related to developmentalism and modernization, capitalism and imperialism, formation of new state structures, nationalism and statism, as well as democratization, the enlargement of the public domain, expansion of public administration and the empowerment of the newly created citizens. The affirmation and remapping of the identities, political roles and life chances of the diverse class, caste, ethnic, religious, regional, linguistic, gender and other groups mandated by encompassing political, economic and cultural transitions also shaped and reshaped the social sciences and sociology and anthropology. The stamps of these structures and processes can be found in sociology and social anthropology in Nepal as well. Academic organizations at the higher level are largely financed by the state, although there is a growing private presence there. (Most private higher education structures, however, gain from indirect state support as well as more direct subsidy from state-financed academic organizations, principally in the form of teachers who agree to work on low part-time wages in private colleges because they continue to receive full-time wages and pensions from state financed colleges.) Developmentalism is a strong theme within the syllabi and it largely drives the research agenda. The state is

almost universally seen as playing the most significant role in relation to development and modernization. Nationalism remains a key and overarching reference point in syllabi, research outputs and discourses on development, modernization and even class, caste, ethnicity, gender and regionalism. The syllabi do emphasize critiques of these dominant preoccupations, but only a small number of academics view these transitions critically enough.

• Embedding has become much more intense during the post-World War II phase of globalization. The expansion and intensification of the global political, economic and cultural interface has had a pronounced implication for the shaping and reshaping of sociology and social anthropology in non-Western countries and, lately, within Western countries as well. The evolution of sociology and social anthropology in the non-Western world, in this specific sense, is an heir to sociology and social anthropology in the West and thus to a substantial extent inherits both the promise and the pitfalls held out by the discipline. In a rather curious but highly significant twist, this embedddeness, among others, is also beginning to reshape the discipline in the west (for example, Clifford and Marcus 1986). This embedding encompasses multiple dimensions, among which the economic interface and its political and military (for example, the "war on terrorism") implications have been widely discussed. This embedding, however, also shapes what is defined as knowledge, the identification of valid modes of generating knowledge as well as the production and distribution of knowledge The West remains highly privileged on all these accounts. As such, it is privileged in developing the frameworks of social science inquiry and defining the agenda of the social sciences (cf. Wallerstein et al.) 1997: 33-69, Wallerstein 1999: 169-184 in particular as well as in the production and distribution of texts and references, including specialized disciplinary journals. This privilege allows the Western academic establishments a much higher level of access to global information and literature, organizational competitiveness, resources and professionalization. The search for the nomothetic, the general, the grand theories and the metatheories, and universal laws, privilege the west. These, in turn, generously contribute to the powerful edge that Western sociology and social anthropology has over the practice of

the discipline in other areas of the world. The larger economic and political privilege necessarily rubs off on Western academia in as much as the West not only has "been there" already, but also gauged and weighed alternatives and possibilities and the rest is at the stage of "catching up". Within the context of the embeddedness of the larger political and economic system and the hierarchy therein, the production of homologous and unequal intellectual and academic hierarchies are rendered inevitable.

• Nonetheless, and despite the growing salience of global structures and processes in the evolution of specific structures and processes that shape the polity, economy and culture in Nepal, sociologists and social anthropologists often continue to visualize societies in Nepal as uniquely local products. The significance of the macro and the long run in shaping the character of the micro and the present and the short run remain highly underemphasized both in the syllabi and the research agenda. The sociology of the interconnectedness of the global, the national and the local, the dynamics of this interconnecttion and the implications this interconnection have on the present and future lives of different social categories such as region, class, gender, ethnic group, caste group, the poor, etc., remains underemphasized. In addition, the significance of world-systemic processes on macroeconomic and sectoral public policies and their implications for processes such as centralization, democratization, etc., have largely been neglected in sociology and social anthropology in Nepal. Similarly, the developmentalist and functionalist perspective which remains dominant in Nepal, has inhibited teaching and research on frameworks and themes such as politics conflict, struggle, resistance, etc., despite, among others, the ongoing "Maoist" rebellion.

• The de-linking of the global, on the one hand, and the national and the local, on the other, becomes clear from a perusal of the "state of sociology" writings in Nepal. Most such writings fail to see the multiple levels of embeddedness involved in the evolution of sociology and social anthropology in Nepal: embeddedness of the polity and economy and the evolution of the discipline in the West itself, global and national embeddedness at the level of

encompassing political-economic frameworks—which contribute to disciplinary embeddedness and embeddedness of political economy and the evolution of sociology and social anthropology within Nepal. This is an area that needs to be urgently redressed.

Sociology in Nepal: Institution and Growth

We can now discuss the overarching as well as much more proximate institutional bases for the emergence and growth of social accounts, the social sciences and "pre-sociology" in Nepal. It must be emphasized right away, however, that the roots of such sociological endeavors have to be sought not only in other disciplines such as literature and in economic, political and social history, but also in more lay accounts of emerging social reform associations, agrarian conditions, labor migration, structures of resistance, popular struggles, etc. Both "proper literature" and lay social accounts, however, remain extremely sparse right till the 20th century. It has to be recalled that the literacy rate in 1950 was approximately 5 percent, the first college was established in 1917 and the 1846-1951 Rana regime was politically highly controlled and autocratic. The tradition of oral and/or reconstructive history and sociology has been weak as well (See Burghart 1984, Oppitz 1971, Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon, 1980, Mikesell 1988, Ortner 1989, Shrestha 1971, among others, however.) This is an area where significant contributions can be made. Nepali sociologists and anthropologists who have remained almost exclusively preoccupied within the agenda of future, that is, modernization and development, have been particularly unproductive in reconstructing the past as also in analyzing a historically informed present. Such reconstructions would have to take on the task of describing and explaining emerging transitions in Nepal during the 1850-1950 period. We should also be reminded that in the past those who dared to word the contradictions and transitions during the period were often discouraged, incarcerated, exiled or killed altogether

Nonetheless, there is significant scope for sociological reconstruct-tion based on historical accounts. Mahesh Chandra Regmi's document-tation-based historical accounts, particularly those related to the agrarian features of the 19th century Tarai, the conditions of life of the peasants and tenants there and their relationship with the state and its intermediaries as well as the social implications of the agrarian regime (Regmi 1978, 1984), has proved an extremely fertile site for a variety of social science disciplines. There is no doubt either that Regmi's corpus will continue to fuel much sociological reconstruction in the future. The pain and suffering of the early 19th century Hill peasants under conditions of the impending Nepal-East India Company war has been well sketched by Ludwig Stiller (1973, 1976) as well. Similarly, accounts provided by historians and others such as Prayag Raj Sharma, Kamal Prakash Malla, Harka Gurung, the Itihas Samsodhan Mandal., etc., have created a productive platform for sociological reconstruction. More recently Bhattarai's (2003) Marxist account of Nepal's political economy has provided a rich source for further reconstruction of socio-spatial relationships in Nepal. The old "colonial" account by William Kirkpatrick, (1811) Francis Hamilton (1819) and Brian Hodgson (1880) also constitute good source materials for a historical analysis.

If struggles and transitions make and reshape social experiences and, therefore, social accounts (including pre-sociological accounts), modern social accounts of Nepal would have to begin from the period of the rise of the world colonial capitalist bastion of the East India Company and the implications it had on the reorganization of states, markets and peoples in the north Indian region, including Nepal. The shaping and reshaping of Nepal and the peoples who inhabited it would have to be interpreted and explained within this specific global and regional context. The accounts of Mahesh Regmi and Ludwig Stiller (including *The Rise of House of Gorkhas*) constitute a "local", "insider" and Nepali perspective on these events and processes, but it is obvious that the shaping and reshaping of Nepal and its peoples was far more than a domestic event. Regardless, this shaping and reshaping resulted, among others, in the "silent cry" among the peasants of the Hills (Stiller 1976), as also in the creation of semi-capitalist agrarian conditions in the Tarai (Mishra 1987). It is likely that the encompassing Civil Code of 1854 (Hofer 1979) prepared and implemented during the early phase of the centralized Rana regime constituted an attempt to come to terms with, and regulate and reshape, the political, economic, ideological and normative transitions during the first half of the 19th century within a broadly autocratic, statist, Hindu, modernizing, rationalizing (in the Weberian sense), East India Company (and British Empire)- friendly, and dependent-capitalism promoting set up.

Some of the economic, agrarian, social and international implications of the set up have been described in considerable detail by Regmi (among others, in Regmi 1978, 1984; also see Mishra 1987). There were other implications as well, particularly in the overtly political and apparently, in the class, caste, ethnic and gender arenas. Several cases of resistance against the state have been recorded, for example, the revolt led by Sripati Gurung in Lamjung and Gorkha and the apparently larger revolt led by Lakhan Thapa, both of which took place in the 1870s, the longer running movement of Yogmaya, which ended d in a mass suicide in 1942 and the furor caused by a book on social and economic reforms by Subba Krishna Lal Adhikari (see Karki and Seddon 2003: 3-5). In addition, relatively oblique satires, more forthright criticisms as well as agendas for political reform and change were making their way into the public domain. More importantly perhaps, there were transitions of a more directly "political" nature. The short lived Prachanda Gorkha rebellion and the more genuinely political Praja Parishad movement constituted a social account and a political agenda, which underlined the contradictions between the "old and defunct" autocratic regime which was losing its popular legitimacy and a new, yet to become democratic state of Nepal. Then, of course, there were the Nepali Congress Party and the Nepal Communist Party, together with a number of others, whose accounts and agendas had touched the lives and imaginations of a sizable number of independent peasants, skilled workers, urban dwellers, merchants and a section of the disgruntled but politically potent aristocracy. In addition, the global and, in particular, the Indian anti-colonial struggle, the struggle of various emerging political parties and their political actions as well as the emerging discourses on the new, post-World War II world order and modernization and development gradually delegitimized the authority of existing states, economic structures and values and norms, and generated new and alternative imaginations, visions and practices. The implications of some of the social, cultural, political and ethnic and value-related transitions and the local implications of global processes between 1921 and 1951—including the material and normative changes brought about by the demobilized Gurkhas forces—both at the "grassroots" and national levels are sketched in an engaging manner by Pande (1982).

The details of the emergence and practice of applied sociology as such immediately following the 1951 transition has been sketched (see Thapa 1973 in particular). The interconnection between the emergence and practice of sociology and the larger emerging, developmentalist, modernist, international financial and policy assistance driven, statist and liberal democratic national and international agenda, however, appears to have been given a short-shrift in the search for details. What is clear enough is that in keeping with these agendas, and in keeping with the emerging concepts and categories in sociology, particularly those in the US, this early period of the practice of sociology in Nepal, like in many other parts of the developing world, found itself implicated and applied in a newly instituted "Village Development Program". The program aimed at training development extension agents in the areas of rural family and society and in community development. The training package changed and expanded considerably with the advent of the monarchy-led and undemocratic Panchayat political system and the expansion of the state apparatus. The Panchayat Training Center was charged with training the Panchayat political cadres as well as the senior staff of the bureaucracy and conducted courses on rural society, group dynamics, communication, local leadership and social survey and planning, and sought to justify the notion that the Panchayat political system was inherently development friendly (cf Thapa 1973). In addition, a number of trained sociologists and anthropologists were hired by the state in elaborating the ideological framework of the political system and elaborating a national scale educational program. Anthropologists (apparently including at least one reputed international anthropologist) were also enrolled to conceptualize and administer a remote area development program within which the clergy (Buddhist in this case) would play a significant role. It was no mere coincidence that the program was framed and instituted along the northern reaches of the country (which lay contiguous to the Tibetan Chinese border), at a time when the Cultural Revolution was on the ascendant in the People's Republic of China. Similarly, the resettlement program, under which landless and marginal landowners in the hills, as well as ex-military personnel, were resettled in selected locations along the southern Tarai plains, also availed the services of several anthropologists. These "strategic alliances" during this period between the state, on the one

hand, and sociologists and anthropologists, on the other, however, must not be overemphasized. The state was the largest employer of trained specialists and there were only a few trained Nepali sociologists and anthropologists so employed. Nonetheless, it does appear that the early interface between the state, on the one hand, and sociologists, on the other, was aligned with statist interest.

The nature of this early interface, the state's "imperative" to introduce "Nepal" to the wider, principally Western and aid giving world, the rapidly increasing demand for sociologists made by international funding agencies in Nepal - some of whose senior staff had been trained in the discipline itself, globally expanding developmental-ism and the demand for sociologists therein—primarily for ascertaining the "specificities" of the local, "rural" and "project site" structures and processes, crystallized together into an agenda for instituting a formal academic and degree granting program in the discipline. Ernest Gellner's 1970 report on the desirability and feasibility of a Department of Sociology in Tribhuwan University, which emphasized that "social research should be closely tied both to social development and to the exploration of the national culture", and Alexander Macdonald's enrolment as the first professor of sociology (For both events see Macdonald 1973) as well as Dor Bahadur Bista's appointment as the first professor of anthropology were responses to these agenda. While this venture had its share of problems (Dahal 1984: 39-40), it did serve to augment the legitimacy of the discipline in the eyes of the state, several international development agencies and Tribhuvan University.

These processes and initiatives culminated in the formation of a Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tribhuvan University in 1981. The department initiated a Master's level program and, in collaboration with the Sociology Subject Committee at the University, took steps to initiate bachelor's level programs in several campuses and colleges affiliated with the university. The initial course offerings, thematic emphases and the mode of expansion of the discipline have been described and critiqued by a number of participants (among others, Dahal 1984, Bhattachan 1987, 1996, Bhandari 1990, Gurung 1990 Gurung 1996, Bista 1987, 1996, 1997, Bhattachan and Fisher 1994; also

refer to Table 1). The next section elaborates these descriptions and critiques.

Organizationally, the academic program on sociology and anthropology has expanded rapidly within Tribhuvan University and is making a slow headway in other universities. Currently, a Master's program is being conducted in seven campuses, in Kirtipur, Patan, Trichandra, Biratanagar, Pokhara and Baglung. In addition, the Purbanchal University also conducts one Master's level program in the discipline. It should be emphasized that in part because most students enter the Master's level only after 10 years of high school and four years of college, the academic level of the majority of the students is internationally comparable to the Bachelor's level. Some of the students, on the other hand, compare well with graduate students of Western universities. The duration of schooling at the school level, however, is gradually shifting and the 12-year norm may be universalized in the next 5-10 years.

The Bachelors' level in the discipline is conducted in 17 campuses within Trihuvan University. In addition, Purbanchal University conducts two bachelor's level program. Further, courses on sociology and anthropology is also offered within various other disciplines, for example, development studies, rural development, forestry, agriculture and animal sciences, medicine, environment, and computer sciences. It is also offered in some higher secondary schools as an elective subject.

The discipline attracts a larger number of students: In terms of popularity among the Master's level students, it is likely that only economics rates higher. Part of the reason for this popularity is the fact that, unlike several other disciplines, entry to sociology and anthropology remains partially open to students from other disciplines, including physical sciences and technology. The root of this attraction, however, lies in the rather widely shared notion that graduates in the discipline enjoy an easier access to jobs in the development and "project" industry, for example, those implemented by international development and donor agencies, INGOs and some development agencies within the government.

In recent years, on average, the number of annual entrants to the master's level at all the participating campus has exceeded 1,200. However, one-half of the entrants drop during the second year. The proportion that graduates within a period of two years—the official duration of the course—is very small and possibly does not exceed 10 to 20 percent of those who attend the final examination. All in all, a rough estimate indicates that only about 1,500 students may have completed their Master's degree during the last 20 years.

There is a high level of variation in the quality of teaching at the Master's and, presumably, Bachelor's level in different campuses. In particular, the majority of the senior faculty teaches at the Kirtipur campus. The Dean's Office, the University's academic committee on sociology and anthropology and the Central Department of Sociology—the three principal agencies charged with promoting the discipline at Tribhuvan University—have accomplished precious little to bridge the wide gap in the quality of teaching across campuses in the University. Illustratively, during the last five years, the Dean's Office has organized only one experience-sharing event among teachers from various graduates and undergraduate departments. The Academic Committee has not met even once during the last four years. In addition, the Committee, though charged with the responsibility of overseeing the overall academic performance within the discipline, has historically interpreted its mandate extremely narrowly and focused only on the preparation of the courses of study. The *Central* Department, qualified as such because of the academically supervisory role it is expected to carry out in relation to other sister departments of sociology and anthropology within the University, has not pursued this mandate in a sustained manner.

The design of the syllabi at the Master's level remains uneven. Some of the courses are internationally competitive while a few others leave much to be desired. While the syllabi must remain sensitive to the job prospects of graduates, there are indications that job prospects are weighing much more heavily on the syllabi and the basics of the discipline are beginning to receive a short shrift. Bureaucratic bottle-necks, the centralized examination system, in particular, as well as the lack of initiative and unprofessional resistance among teachers often discourages attempts to revise the syllabi regularly.

Access to literature for both students and teachers remains extremely restricted. This, in part, is attributable to the facts that very few good texts have been prepared locally and international publications are generally highly expensive. Most of the departments do not have a library of their own. Even the Central Library of Tribhuvan University, which is located in Kathmandu, is perennially starved of funds and a large proportion of the meager collection of journals is availed through often irregular and short-term donations. Principally because of financial reasons, it cannot procure new high quality books, either. However, a couple of departments have initiated a system of generating funds from the students' body and utilizing the funds to procure texts and reference materials. The low level of competence of the majority of the students as well as many teachers in the English language also inhibits their access to high quality international publications in English.

The incentives given to university teachers, though broadly compatible with the incentives given to public officials, generally fails to attract new high quality teachers, particularly those with Ph.Ds and those who have graduated from reputed universities outside Nepal. Thus, many such graduates prefer to work for national and international non-governmental agencies and international development agencies which are much more paying. The criteria for the promotion of teachers through the academic hierarchy, while much more systemized within the last decade, nonetheless continue to prize seniority rather than research output and the quality of teaching. The centralized hiring and promotion mecha-nisms at Tribunal University often have foregrounded non-academic criteria and opted for semi-closed rather than open evaluations and contests. Such mechanisms, in addition, have encouraged the inclusion of non-professionals in organs charged with hiring and promotion.

The most significant and long-term problem that plagues teaching and learning at Tribhuvan University and the one that it shares with many other universities in the underdeveloped as well as some developed countries is the pervading climate of uncritical and unreflexive "intellectual" work. The severe lack of critical and reflexive outlooks bears serious negative consequences in the long run, among others, on the development of the social sciences and sociology and anthropology. The texts, generally, are both taught and learned not as platforms for

playful and creative thinking, as windows that facilitate a view of the wider world and as instruments that allow intimate dialogue with the self and society, but as something which constitutes the last word on the subject and as one which must be passively received. Many students and some teachers read but not engage with books. To a certain extent, this is understandable as well. The fact that many of texts and references they are required to read often do not address key attributes or problems of the society they live in does feed disengagement. In addition, many of the teachers fail to link, whether by way of illustration, comparison or critique, the text with the world the students inhabit. Such texts, in such a context, often acquire a fictive character. The apparently universal text, because it does not encompass the local or gives it a short shrift, fails to acquire local authenticity and, as a result, does not excite the imagination of the students. An unperceptive and uncritical mentor who fails to read the implicit meaning of the apparently universal text for local life and society, in turn, does not make the task of engagement any easier.

Review of State of Sociology

For a discipline that has a relatively short history, the number of state-of-sociology-and-social-anthropology-in-Nepal reviews has been rather astounding. These writings, expectedly, vary widely in quality with respect to quality of insight offered on these questions. While some of these writings are responses to periodic review events organized by Tribhuvan University, many such writings do represent deep personal concerns with what sociology is and is not doing, where it is headed and what it can and should do. These reviews also touch upon some of the key debates surrounding social sciences in general and sociology and anthropology in particular (in Nepal). I shall utilize this section both to summarize the reviews and to explore some of the key epistemological and substantive debates on the sociology and anthropology of Nepal

A couple of caveats are in order to put this review of reviews in context. First, because these reviews have been prepared at different periods of the evolution of sociology in Nepal, the arguments raised have to be read with reference to the period of publication of the assessment. Some of the assessments prioritize teaching, some focus on research and many others cover both the domains. Some even implicate the university,

the government and so forth. While many of the reviewers are Nepali nationals, some are international academics. Further, while at least half of the reviewers were at relatively an early stage of their academic career at the time they prepared the review, the rest were in their mid-career or had had a long and rather distinguished career behind them. Finally, some of the reviewers have assessed the discipline more than once and at different stages of their career. This paper, however, collapses such reviews and does not attempt to investigate possible changes in such assessment.

Table 1: Key Arguments in Reviews of the State of Sociology and Social Anthropology

Author, Year	Key Arguments
Gellner 1970*	Romanticism (exploration) and midwifery (social development) complementary, particularly in Nepal where past is very much present
McDonald 1973	At this early stage, should focus on training of researchers, studies of change; utility of research an important consideration; high significance of national academic contexts for all, including international researchers; romantic midwifery possible; should shun building an intellectual enclave and should connect with the state as well as international organizations; multi-disciplinary studies required
Mishra1980,1984**	Should center on the linkage between concrete everyday experiences and structural, dialectical and critical approach; recognizing and transcending the politics of sponsored research; going beyond the empirical and linking it with theoretical categories; dismantling barriers among the social sciences; locating the micro within the macro context; connecting the syllabi to local experiences
Thapa 1973	Discipline should serve the needs of society and the social problems; should assess the impact or major national political initiatives on social organization

Dahal 1993	Inquiry into theoretically informed ethnography, national building, migration, poverty important; micro-level studies vital; infrastructural problems hinder pedagogy; reservations on a single department of sociology and anthropology; the anthropology of the Himalayan region characterized by undue emphasis on the micro; neglect of interaction with outside; undue emphasis on search for "natives" and romantic locale
Gurung, G. 1997	While relative lack of theory consciousness should concern us, we are in an early stage of disciplinary evolution, and some progress has been made in this direction; financial problems hurting quality of teaching
Bhattachan 1987, 1997	Disciplinary progress much too slow; no original theoretical contribution even after five decades; preoccupied with "filling in" of details; should focus on local experiences, synthesizing Western and the indigenous; equality and social justice should become key themes; students should have ample opportunity for field research; many more electives required; departmental autonomy and higher financial incentives to teachers required; regular review of department and teachers necessary; split the department into two, i.e. sociology and anthropology
Rai 1971, 1984	International researchers should not be required to respond to national imperatives, although they should be sensitive to them; "salvage anthropology" required; language barrier should and can be reduced; essence of anthropology must be honored by guarding against intrusion of other social sciences as well as "pseudo anthropology"
Devkota 1984,2001	Romanticism and "otherness", not action-orientedness, remain predominant and promote intellectual colonialism; coordination required between teaching departments and research centers; popular resistance to state and modernization and poverty and environmental deterioration should become key areas of investigation

Bista D.1987, 1996***, 1997	Should attend to literature published in the Nepali language; should emphasize needs of the country, national identity, integrative processes and modernization rather than on nostalgia; bland ethnography not useful; dealing with real political, economic and social issues; short-staying international researchers cannot comprehend historical context; purposeful institutions key to disciplinary development; not all sponsored research sides with the "overdog"; important to link social/ideological features and development
Bista .K. 1973	High significance of applied anthropology; "salvage anthropology" important but "costly"; accounts by transient international anthropologists sometimes divisive; efforts required to reduce barrier posed by the English language
Berreman 1994	Should contribute to public education principally through comparative, holistic and contextual studies and by giving voice to the oppressed; approves Ivan Illich's call for "counter-research on alternatives to prepackaged solutions" as well as C. Wright Mills's call for social science to practice the politics of truth
Fisher 1987	"Romanticism" and development "often vacuous"; extent of "reverse romanticism" high and problematic; priority to large-scale and long-range perspective and critical vision of the big picture much more important than myopic and small-scale field studies; priority to universal problems and timeless issues
Bhattachan and Fisher 1994	Theorizing remains weak; physical, financial and organizational hurdles hindering disciplinary growth; sponsored research inhibiting the emergence of focal themes within the discipline
Mikesell 1993	Elaborating concrete conditions that shape life in Nepal and that are very different from those in the West; critiquing "development" that embodies imperialism and giving voice to the minorities important

Hachhethu 2002**	Lack of serious academic work by sociologists and anthropologists because of the lure of consultancy; financial incentives much higher in international agencies, INGOs, NGOs, private research centers and colleges; both students and teachers in the social sciences as a whole at Tribhuvan University (TU) regard their work in the institution as less than a full time job; erosion of personal honesty and integrity among both teachers and students; TU mismanaged and underfunded
Gurung, 1990	Inadequate physical infrastructure and educational materials constrain both teaching and research; discipline can serve the policy maker and the people as a social and cultural interpreter; this, in turn, requires political-economic and historical familiarity; need to develop local theory and methods
Bhandari 1990	Unattractive academic and financial incentives for teachers; texts not available in the Nepali language; Nepali language should become the medium of instruction in classrooms; expansion of career opportunities for students needs emphasis; emphasis required on policy component in teaching and research
Cameron 1994****	Shifting international fashions in development theory have rendered the image of Nepal fuzzy and shifting; this journey has been one of sound and fury as well as one in which the outsiders have been predominant; interdisciplinary efforts should be emphasized; priority to the inquiry of the global dimension that shows how interests of external agencies condition options available for internal choice; priority should be given to issues of power and accountability

*In Macdonald, 1973; ** Reviews social sciences in general; *** In James Fisher 1996; **** Reviews the theory and practice of development in Nepal, not on sociology

A number of running themes emerge in these reviews of the state of sociology in Nepal. The theme of romanticism (which is often defined as

a preoccupation with and glamorization of the past as well as the currently existing) versus midwifery (often defined as a preoccupation with the future) is clearly implicated in these reviews. It has been alleged, mostly although not exclusively, by Nepali academics, that romanticism is strongly implicated in the very choice of Nepal—and some specific regions and locations within it, selection of themes as well as modes of thinking and writing of mostly, although not exclusively, by international academics. It has been argued by many that this romanticism detracts from the contribution the discipline could make to the "dispassionate" understanding, as also to public policy formulation and implementation and development. The scent of applied science and immediately socially useful work is strong here, as is the sense of actively and directly intervening, doing and participating. Contemplation, analysis and remaining at a distance from the center of activity, that is, activities which are elaborated through the power of the state, international agencies, international non-governmental organizations and, generically, by development, is not prized enough here. (It must be said that voluntary engagement by Nepali academics also remains high within the domain of the rather politically unglamorous and financially non-paying civil society initiatives.) This contrast between the Nepali and international academics, however, must not be overdrawn. Many academics—both Nepali and international—have drawn attention to the significance of the large-scale and long run perspective that are theoretically and historically informed. Fisher (1987) reminds us that "reverse romanticism" arising out of the faith bestowed on the state, the international financial institutions and on the agenda of modernization can become counterproductive as well.

As Fisher notes, it is difficult to define romanticism (within the context of sociological inquiry); the allegation of romanticism as applied to particular inquiry is often vacuous. Romanticism is certainly not a matter of the physical or cultural location of the "field" or of subject matter or theme of inquiry. Nor is it a matter of a particular technique of generating data and information. It may perhaps be defined as a feature of an entire mode of inquiry that contributes to mystification rather than to clarification. Romanticism and mystification is inherent in the modes of inquiry that are non-problematizing, ahistorical, and non-comparative. Such attributes are also inherent in the modes of inquiry that do not

explore the encompassing context within which the concrete is located and that do not seek to resolve the interface between the whole and the part as well as the reconfiguration of the interface. Within the academia, the invocation of "disciplinary boundaries" often serves to hide the connectedness and wholeness of social life, particularly in relation to the larger political and economic conditions and processes. Romanticism and mystification is inherent in modes of inquiry that do not allow full and authentic expression of the "local". Romanticism and mystification is also implicated in attempts that unproblematically seek to slot the local into a predetermined substantive and theoretical conceptual framework.

The nationalist agenda is very strong in the writings of many Nepali academics. While this is evident from the preceding paragraph, the wide and frequent invocation of the nationalist—and sometimes ethnic, regional, etc., as also of the notion of "Nepal School of Anthropology"— is a telling expression of the sentiment. The call for indigeneity within the discipline and the emphasis on the investigation of the processes of national identity and integration also bear this out. On the other hand, John Cameron's (1994) warnings against the ill-consequences of changing international academic fads on the image of Nepal and the practice of development there does underpin the problematic nature of the external and universalistic gaze. (This criticism would, of course, apply to other countries as well.)

The 1950-1980 period was one of nationalist renaissance in Nepal (also see Onta 1996). In particular, this was the period when Nepal was partially unshackled in a number of domains—not least within the domain of education and school curricula, from India. Illustratively, school texts on the history and geography of Nepal were prepared and used in the school curricula, for the first time, during the late 1950s. Beginning the early 70s, a new uniform and nationalistic school curriculum was introduced in the much-expanded school system. This was also a period when the non-South Asian and non-Chinese world was started to intrude, and impact directly on, the lives of the majority of Nepalis. (This does not, however, imply that Nepal was "closed" prior to this period, unlike what many historians and politicians have asserted and as conventional wisdom incessantly repeats (cf Mishra 1987.) The current generation of sociologists was nurtured during this period. The

nationalist agenda within sociology and anthropology, however, should not be equated with the search for indigeniety within the discipline. This search, in part, goes beyond the notion of nationalism and constitutes a resistance against the universalistic claims of (primarily Western) social science and sociology and anthropology. It also constitutes a call for providing full and authentic respect to the local, for not the privileging current Western experiences and frames of thought and for an authentic interfacing between the particular and the general. It is a voice of protest against the political and economic hierarchization within the world system. Similar voices have been heard for nearly five decades from academics in the underdeveloped countries. More recent voices along this line have been summarized in Moore (1996; in particular see the introductory essay by Moore and by Norman Long on globalization and localization).

In consonance with the emphasis on nationalism, modernism and developmentalism and the resistance against romanticism, ethnography as the dominant mode of doing sociology and social anthropology has been strongly questioned both by Nepali and international sociologists. This mode of practice has been strongly questioned on the grounds of authenticity (cf. Furer-Haimendorf vs. Ortner in Ortner (1973), Manzardo's (1992) mea culpa on "impression management" among the Thaklis, Kawakita Jiro's (1974) retraction of his initial characterization of Marphali women). It has also been questioned on the grounds of adequacy of explanation, for example, Ortner's (1989) criticism of spatially and temporally shackled ethnography and Dahal's (1983) criticism of Lionel Caplan in relation to Hindu dominance over ethnic groups (Caplan 1970). It need not be overemphasized that the dominant mode of doing ethnography was, and to a certain extent remains, "shackled". One reason for such shackling is/was methodological: Participant observation, in practice, generally did not allow for historical and/or an explicitly cross-cultural vision. If historical vision remained consistently deemphasized in ethnography, cross-cultural perspective was generally defined as falling within the domain of the Ph. D. supervisors and other high ranking "theorists", rather than "field level" and Ph. D.-seeking anthropologists. Such perspectives were often regarded as negating the definition of a culturally and/or physically defined field, regardless of the fact that the negation mortally violated

holism, the time honored principle of anthropological investigation. The dominant mode of doing ethnography not only encouraged discrete studies, but also legitimized the invalid notion that societies and cultures investigated were unconnected with wider expanses of time, space, cultures and polities and economies. For this artificial "whole" to stand on its own, it had to be set apart, often invidiously, from macro level and wider as well as immediately neighboring societies largely by means of "professional" fiat, rather than by means of historical criteria. It is for these reasons that ethnographers have been charged not only by the state, the nationalists and the culturally dominant, but also by trained sociologists and anthropologists with encouraging divisiveness. Thus also the emphasis in the preceding reviews that "integrative" structures, conditions and processes should legitimately be regarded as key themes of anthropological inquiry.

On the other hand, the nationalist and culturally dominant strain, as noted, remains strong among Nepali sociologists and anthropologists. One implication of this character is obvious from the preceding review. Few Nepali academics have acknowledged that resistance, conflict, struggle and emancipation—all somewhat divisive themes—ought to become a key site of sociological inquiry. Indeed, the emphasis on the developmentalist, nationalist, statist, and modernist agenda has been quite strong. The preceding review, in consequence, generally fails to acknowledge that social criticism has a legitimate place within the discipline. While many international academics have, somewhat understandably, shied away from these themes, except as applied to the local context, some others have insightfully explored them (for example, Caplan 1972, Gaige 1975, Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon 1980, Mikesell 1999). Though some Nepali academics have also highlighted such themes (for example, Mishra 1987, Bista 1992), most analyses by Nepali academics have either sought to downplay conflict and resistance or to find ways to "manage" it. Rather plentiful but discrete inquiries on "resource management", for example those related to particular forest tracts, drinking water systems, are examples. No surprise then that a few sociologists and anthropologists have provided substantive accounts of either the 1990 transition or the Maoist insurgency (see Bhattachan 1993, Karki and Seddon 2003, however). This must be regarded as a serious failure. The use of arms in the "Maoist struggle" has certainly inhibited

field-based studies—the staple of many within the discipline. So has the government's security perception, particularly during periodic bouts of "national emergency", which views access to, storing and utilization of Maoist literature as an act of offense against the state. (Access to Maoist Party literature remains difficult in any case.) And, during this period of armed struggle between the Maoists and the state, academics as well as others, to a large extent justifiably, have remained worried and fearful on account of the "Marxist" and "Maoist" books on their shelves. Further, there is a pervading sense of insecurity among academics, journalists and many others that specific conclusions they reach and publish may invite reprisal from the government security forces or the Maoists. The ensuing sense of insecurity is a powerful inhibitor of academic engagement with the ongoing "Maoist" struggle. Nonetheless, these inhibitors cannot justify the paucity of inquiry into the struggle. Part of this failure, which is both personal and professional—at least as far as Nepali academics are concerned, must be attributed to old disciplinary emphases on ethnography, isolated ritual performances, "integrative" features, modernity and the newer disciplinary as well as local emphases on development, resource management, and the routine of project-level feasibility and evaluation studies.

Allied to this is paucity of inquiries on large-scale and long-range issues (cf. Fisher 1987) and the micro-macro interface. Despite the legitimate criticism of discrete micro studies by several academics cited in Table 1, few of the articles in *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (henceforth *Contributions*), the premier sociological/anthropological journal published in Nepal and one that has been in operation for three decades, explore such themes. The political-economic perspective, which arguably lends itself much more readily to such themes, has remained relatively neglected. This neglect, among others, is tied to the academics and politics of the "field", empiricism, anthropological holism, the agenda of spatially and sectorally delimited development, the nature of sponsored research and the nature of the "development project" within the ambit of which many micro-studies are carried out. I will come to the wider implications of sponsored research later.

One area, in which resistance, conflict and struggle have been rather widely studied, particularly in recent years, is the area of ethnicity. While

ethnicity was often implicated—to varying extents—in most ethno-graphic studies, the politics of ethnicity, ethnic conflict and the interface between ethnicity and nationalism has recently become a substantively salient area of inquiry. The 1990 restoration of democracy has furnished a potent site for organized political action on an ethnic basis and for inquiries into ethnic identity, discrimination and exclusion. The implications of emerging notions of ethnicity and ethnic political action on the nature of the Nepali state, Nepali nationalism and social justice and democracy are being widely discussed as well.

This ethnic debate has taken two principal forms. The first visualizes ethnicity as historically and socially constructed and contin-gent. Ethnicity, in this view, is constructed and sharpened and blunted within the context of specific political, economic and cultural structures and processes. The second form, which is essentialist in nature, in turn, posits that ethnicity is a primordial attribute of a group of people—an attribute (or set of attributes) that always was and, by extension, will always be, in existence.

The non-essentialist position has led to a rich debate on ethnicity, ethnic conflict and nationalism. While Ortner (1989), Holmberg (1989) and a few others laid the ground, the 1997 volume edited by Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka and Whelpton elaborates this position in great detail and with respect to the state and its evolution, various caste and ethnic groups and the emerging cultures and their career. The voices represented in the volume are diverse and amply demonstrate that ethnicity is historically constructed through specific political, economic and cultural structures and processes (see, in particular, the contribution by Pfaff-Czarnecka). The contributors to the volume also argue that because ethnicity is not an ahistorical construct, it is necessary to problematize and interrogate it.

As Gellner emphasizes in his introduction, the "true" essentialist position, which smacks of the days of "headhunters" and barbarians and races and tribes, has a few adherents now (For an overview and critique of the notion of tribe, see Dahal 1981, Caplan 1990). The legitimacy of the essentialist position has also been eroded by expanding intercultural interaction, movements of population and labor, the modernist, develop-menttalist and liberal democratic nature of many states, and the galloping commodity and labor exchange regime under capitalism and imperialism,

which is sometimes subsumed under the notion of globalization. Further, the essentialist position often defeats itself as many of those who take such a position in relation to the past and the present, nonetheless, argue that future ethnic political consciousness and practice (that is, ethnicity) will undergo a transition to the extent that certain specific contradictions find a resolution.

Regardless, "less pure" and softer versions of the essentialist position remain in vogue among ethnic political activists and politically committed academics (for example, National Ad hoc Committee for International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples, Nepal, 1994, Bhattachan 1995). These visions freeze history, create unidimensional "ethnics", eschew diversity and invidious political interests within and between ethnic groups, force a disconnect with encompassing political and economic issues and, in addition, seek to delink such issues from the question of ethnic identity. These visions, nonetheless, point out accumulating contradictions in a politically powerful manner and underscore the continuing significance of participatory and equity-based cultural and political negotiations.

Even as ethnography and ethnic studies have been in full bloom for several decades, the extreme lack of attention on the Dalits by sociolo-gists remains both curious and sad (see Caplan 1972, however). This inattention must be regarded as a serious flaw within the sociology of Nepal. Indeed, the omnipresent and powerful caste system as a whole has received far less attention than ethnicity and several other themes. The Gellner, Pfaff- Czarnecka and Whelpton volume is no exception, except for a relatively peripheral treatment of the caste system among the Newars by Gellner. The politically and culturally excluded have also been left out of the intellectual discourse by Nepali academics. As far as international academics are concerned, could it be that those interested in the caste system and the Dalits find neighboring India more interesting instead?

The "reverse romanticism" with developmentalism and modernity—and with state and international development and donor agencies as well as INGOs and NGOs who remain at the forefront of these agendas—within sociology and anthropology in Nepal as noted by Fisher, remains pronounced. The preoccupation with feasibility and impact studies

resource (for example, forest, irrigation, drinking water) management, etc., remains notably intense. The participation of sociologists and anthropologists, both national and international, takes place within the frame of a project and by its very nature is generally limited to "field" level information generation, analysis of data and preparation of report. The reports generally do not contextualize the project and the field within a larger historical, spatial and theoretical-conceptual frame. Most such reports are not publicly and intellectually scrutinized and they thus do not contribute to public, intellectual and disciplinary debate. Project literature, not least because they are zealously guarded from public scrutiny, very often does not even contribute to the practice of national and international development debate and the larger agenda that cut across different sectors, different development agencies and different levels of government.

One key, although not the only, reason for the relatively high level of participation of sociologists in such "sponsored" research is the high level of distortion in the structure of wage incentives. The incentives to engage in sponsored research are several times more than the incentives to teach at the university (It is also the case, on the other hand, there is a sharp and just about impenetrable barrier in incentives for the national and international researchers). In addition, many international development agencies contract work out to individuals rather than institutions. Most academic institutions, on the other hand, are organizationally, although not academically, unequipped to organize research programs and to collaborate with the government and international development agencies to that end.

The engagement with sponsored research, however, has not all been negative for the evolution of the discipline. It has contributed to the interfacing of the disciplinary texts—which, to a substantial extent are repositories of specific Western experiences—with local structures and lives. This interfacing has helped national academics to engage in a comparative reading of the texts as against national and local structures and lives. It has made available a platform for the generation of comparative information and insight. This platform can serve as a creativity-promoting site, particularly within a setting within which the authority of the text has tended to remain unquestioned and sacrosanct.

In addition, to the extent that the line between applied and basic research is permeable, sponsored applied research can provide valuable input to more basic disciplinary research.

Emphases in Sociology in Nepal

The evolution of the discipline in Nepal can also be characterized and assessed through a review of the outlets for sociological and anthropological writings. Such writings, however, remain scattered in several academic and semi-academic journals, magazines and newspapers. The significance of semi-academic writings by sociologists and anthropologists, while lying along the borders of the discipline, should not be underrated. It serves not only as an aid to public education but also to the training of aspiring and "junior" sociologists. These outlets, which are not the exclusive privilege of the trained academics, provide valuable space to those who wish to write in the Nepali or other vernacular languages and have helped several non-sociologists and non-anthropologists make valuable contributions to the discipline (See Rai 1984, however).

At present, several journals cater to the writings of sociologists and anthropologists *Contributions* (1973-), which is published by the Center for Nepal and Asian Studies, of course, has remained the principal outlet for the last three decades. *The Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology* published by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur Campus since 1987, is an additional outlet. By 2001, seven volumes of the journal have come out. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, published by Center for Social Research and Development since 1996, *Kailash*, the publication of which has recently become irregular, and the journal of Nepal Research Center are other significant outlets. In addition, there are several other academic and semi-academic journals and magazines, published in the English and Nepali language, such as *Pragya, Mulyankan, Himal, Himal South Asia, Asmita, Rolamba*. In addition, during the last decade, several semi-academic and news magazine publications have focused on issues related to gender ethnicity and ethnic groups, Dalithood and Dalits as well as specific regions of the country. Such publications have started the polyvocal genre within social thinking and writing and are beginning to

make to make their presence felt within public policy institution. Further, several weeklies and dailies occasionally publish articles by sociologists and anthropologists.

This review will focus on the *Contributions* and provide quantitative information on some aspects of the nature and "productivity" of Nepali and international sociologists and anthropologists describe the theme of the articles and assess decadal trends with respect to productivity and themes. In addition, the articles will also be categorized in terms of their level of "theory consciousness". Further, the themes covered in *Occasional Papers* will also be described. It must be emphasized that this description and assessment is of a preliminary and quantitative nature.

Table 2. Themes Covered by Articles in *Contributions*

Theme/Period/Number of Articles	1973-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001	Total
Ethnography, ethnicity, nationalism, identity	17	13	7	37
Resource management, population, ecosystem	5	4	2	11
State, economy, market, livelihood	4	11	2	17
Politics, resistance, conflict, struggle, inequality	2	0	3	5
Gender, caste, kinship	3	7	2	12
Ideology, knowledge, sociology, anthropology	2	1	1	4
Health, education, environment, development	1	8	4	13
Social and cultural change	3	2	1	6
Religion, rituals, shamanism	11	0	6	17

Ethnography, livelihood, rituals and shamanism and faith healing are the most favored genre within *Contributions*. Many of the ethnographic articles are also based on very short-term and one-shot visits to particular "field" sites and, partly as a consequence, provide a simple descriptive account of a specific aspect of an ethnic group's cultural life, for example, discrete ritual performance, shamanism, trans-humance, dimensions of livelihood, demographic attributes. Often the articles implicitly evoke a sense of material poverty, physical and social isolation and rather stark boundedness among the ethnic group described. The descriptive focus, generally, is on relatively unusual "ethnic

attributes" and the descriptive mood is often somber. In turn, there is little history, little "wholeness", little explicit cross-cultural comparison and little emphasis on locating the subjects within larger, that is, regional, national, international or more encompassing political, economic and cultural patterns and processes. These features indicate that there is more than a whiff of anthropological romanticism here, even as such ethnographic efforts have opened our eyes to the diverse nature of social structure and culture, provided a base for deeper and wider investigations and furnished perspectives and information, which are potentially useful for preliminary ethnographic mappings.

On the other hand, sociological and anthropological writings, as reflected in *Contributions* have seriously deemphasized themes related to politics, ideology, resistance, inequality, contradiction and change—themes which have been starkly highlighted and acquired a particular urgency during the current era of "Maoist conflict". Romanticism, "salvage anthropology" functionalism, developmentalism, scientificity, political neutrality, boundedness and the failure to look at the larger picture, despite their value, have performed a potent disservice to the sociological and anthropological enterprise. Studies of these genres, on the other hand, do serve to highlight the significance of sociological and anthropological studies which focus on the larger picture and which seek to interconnect different sections of the larger picture. They also highlight the significance of the historically informed studies that do not fetishize "culture", but locate it alongside and within a specific and changing political economic structure and which give sufficient space to political processes and to the genesis and consequences of social contradiction.

Approximately 30 percent of the articles published in *Contributions* substantively locate themselves within, or seek to interrogate, relatively established conceptual-theoretical frameworks and contribute to the interpretation, buttressing or refutation, of the relatively established schools of thought or to the development of a more or less novel frame. The scope and significance of such articles is also broader than their immediate empirical engagement. One-half of the articles, even as they do locate themselves within a relatively established conceptual-theoretical framework, do so in a peripheral manner. Such articles do not

bring themselves to bear on such frameworks. About one-fifth of the articles remain at the level of "lay description". The academic significance of the later two categories of articles, the last category in particular, necessarily remains low.

Table 3: Level of Theoretical Consciousness" in Articles in *Contributions*

Period	Articles by sociologists and anthropologists	Articles that substantively implicate a theoretical framework	Articles that marginally implicate a theoretical framework	Articles that remain at the level of lay description
1973-1980	48	15	21	12
1981-1990	47	14	24	9
1991-2001	33	9	20	4
Total	**128**	**38**	**65**	**25**

Trends indicate that the proportion of articles, which substantively implicate specific conceptual-theoretical frameworks while setting up and/or "solving" a research problem, has remained nearly constant through three decades of publication of *Contributions*. On the other hand, there has been a discernible rise in the proportion of articles that peripherally invoke a conceptual- theoretical framework. Whether this represents a step toward a more intense and explicit recognition of the significance of conceptual-theoretical and comparative analysis in the future remains to be seen.

Table 4. Productivity of Sociologists and Anthropologists in *Contributions*

Period	Issues published	Articles published	Articles by sociologists/ anthropologists	Articles by Nepali authors	Articles by international authors
1973-1980	14	96	48	7	41
1981-1990	22	133	47	15	32
1991-2001	23	180	32	11	21
Total	**59**	**409**	**127**	**33**	**94**

This decadal comparison of *Contributions* shows several notable features. First, sociologists and anthropologists contributed one-half of all the articles published during the 70s (columns 3 and 4). During the 80s, the number of articles authored by sociologists and anthropologists declined substantially in terms of proportion. Ditto in the 90s, both in terms of number and proportion. Sociologists and anthropologists contributed only about one-fifth of all articles published during the 90s. This quantitative reduction, however, also has to be viewed against the "expanding inclusivensss" of editorial policy as well as the overall growth of social science academic writing in Nepal. The initial domain of *Contributions* lay along the disciplines of history, linguistics and anthropology and sociology. The growth of academia and research outputs in other field of social sciences for example, economics, development, political science, human geography, etc., obliged the editors of *Contributions* to cater to articles in these fields as well. While the consequent "expanding inclusiveness" of *Contributions* does in part explain the proportional reduction in the number of articles authored by sociologists and anthropologist, it fails to explain the reduction in terms of absolute number evidenced during the 90s. This reduction is much more troubling than it appears to be in as much as the number of sociologists and anthropologists, including those employed at Tribhuvan—and to a much smaller extent other—universities grew rapidly during this very period. In addition, Tribhuvan University, which remains the principal institutional locus of academic sociology and anthropology, had increased the premium on the publication of articles as a basis for promotion within the academic hierarchy. While it is not possible here to exhaustively scan the reasons underlying the reduction in the number of articles published by sociologists and anthropologists in the journal, it can be safely said that the opening of other avenues of publication as mentioned earlier and engagement in the fast growing sponsored "project" research might have accounted for the reduction.

Second, during all the three periods, Nepali sociologists and anthropologists published fewer articles in the *Contributions* compared to international sociologists and anthropologists. Some progress, however, has been discernible on this front: While Nepali authors contributed only one-seventh of all articles—seven in all—published in the journal during the 70s, the proportion rose to one-third during the

latter two decades. Once again, however, the "expansion" of the disciplines of sociology in Nepal during the 80s and, particularly, the 90s is hardly substantiated by the record of publication in *Contributions*. The record, on the other hand, does show that the presence of international authors continued to remain strong within sociology and anthropology in Nepal.

Table 5. Themes Covered by Articles in *Occasional Papers* (1987-2001)

Theme	Number of Articles
Ethnography, ethnicity, nationalism, identity	5
Resource management, population, ecosystem	9
State, economy, market, livelihood	6
Politics, resistance, conflict, struggle, inequality	1
Gender, caste, kinship	5
Ideology, knowledge, sociology, anthropology	7
Health, education, environment, development	14
Social and cultural change	1
Religion, rituals, shamanism	2
Other	4
Total	**54**

As noted, one of the possible reasons for the low presence of Nepali authors in *Contributions* is the opening of alternative avenues of publication in sociology and anthropology. *Occasional Papers*, which was first published by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur campus, in 1987, is one such avenue. Till 2001, seven issues of *Occasional Papers* have been published. Most of the articles have been in the Occasional Papers have been authored by members of the faculty in the Kirtipur campus.

The focus of *Occasional Papers* is much more explicitly "developmental" compared to *Contributions*. A large proportion of the articles on education, environment, resource management, population, ecosystem, livelihood, etc., in the journal falls within the "development" genre. On the other hand, and like *Contributions*, there are few writings

on politics, ideology, resistance, struggle, inequality. Unlike *Contributions*, on the other hand, it has fewer writings on ethnography, rituals caste, kinship, gender, shamanism, etc., the traditional core of sociology and anthropology. During the early years, somewhat expectedly, and as evidenced by the information provided in Table 1, the journal was also preoccupied with "appropriate sociology and anthropology" and the preparation of a programmatic agenda for pushing the discipline towards greater "appropriateness".

Acknowledgements

ENDNOTES

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2. Whether sociology is distinct, relatively recent and modern European product or whether the discipline—or a recognizable precursor of it—can be traced to other specific spatial and historical setting(s) has, surprisingly, remained a nearly unexplored issue within sociology. To the extent that historical and social thinking and writing is rooted in social struggle and transformation, one could certainly have expected the sociological genre to have marked its presence during the formation and dismemberment of the Greco-Roman empires and civilizations, the opening of the Euro-American and Eurasian trade routes, the decimation of the American-Indian peoples and cultures and the rapid ascendance of the European civilization in the Americas during the 16th to 20th centuries, the slave trade in and across Africa, the formation of North Africa and Arabic urban regions, the ups and downs of the Sinic and Japanese civilizations, the initial institutionalization of the extremely oppressive and deeply divisive caste in India as well as the ferments created during the rise of all great religions and various larger scale and long-winded religious, sectarian, ethnic and national wars and their aftermath. The overall economic, political and cultural significance of these struggles and transition may very well have been relatively narrower, shallower and slower and, therefore, more contained than those produced by

capitalism and imperialism. Nonetheless, sociology has remained poorer because of the virtual absence of explorations, which seek to link these and other large-scale struggles and transitions on the one hand and modes and substances of social imagination and investigation on the other.

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THE DECADE OF VILOENT DESTABILIZATION IN NEPAL: AN ANALYSIS OF ITS HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND TRAJECTORY

Tone Bleie

This article[1] will discuss how the negotiations over the defining attributes of state authority and of state-society relations at important conjunctures in Nepal's recent political history are related to political and economic conditions with national, regional and global outreach. The unravelling of the intricate interplay between internal and external structural conditions and major national political events over nearly five decades (1950-1996) questions any facile characterisation of the Maoist rebellion (which started in 1996) as an internal conflict only. The exposition moreover questions any characterisation of the Nepalese state as increasingly "developmentalist" and hence accountable from a rights-based perspective (see Bleie et. al, 2000).

The main analytical focus of this article is on the structural conditions and agency actions that resulted in 1996 in a Maoist-led rebellion in this richly endowed Himalayan kingdom.[2] This focus inevitably raises the need for an analytical framework to explain the causes of the inception of the Maoist uprising in Nepal. To outline the whole network of interacting ultimate and proximate causes and effects is exceedingly demanding, analytically speaking, as well as space consuming, and thus too tall an order for an article. Instead, this article seeks to establish a more tentative explanatory framework of the dialectic between structural conditions and agency actions, which to some degree explains both some enduring features of the autocratic state and its ability to adapt — at least for an intermediate period over the last 50 years — under dramatically changing circumstances. Well-known historical events, including the palace revolt in 1951, the democratic reforms of 1959, the 1980 referendum, the People's Movement in 1990, the declaration of People's War in 1996 and the April Movement in 2006, are analysed by combining insights from political science, public administration and anthropology. A straightforward instrumentalist view of government that conceptualises policy as technical, rational, action-oriented instruments for effecting change is supplemented by an anthropological view of governance (see Shore and Wright, 2001). This view conceptualises governance as governed by more complex and diffuse symbolic processes which establish indigenous institutional rules and codes of conduct that are internalised. Through these processes, certain fundamental tenets of the prevailing order of governance are naturalised and therefore scarcely subjected to reflection. Such a perspective is applied in order to explain the strikingly widespread and deeply-felt belief in the sacrosanct Hindu monarchy among supporters both of the autocratic regime and of liberal democracy.

This view of governance, derived from political anthropology, also gains analytical strength from drawing on a more comprehensive theory of the nature of this Hindu state and its underlining cultural models of divine kingship, sovereignty, body politic and the nature of cultural diversity.[3] This analytical approach to governance is found to be useful in explaining how and why the monarch has been unaccountable until the historical decision in 2006 of the reinstated House of Representatives, and how the bureaucracy in Nepal has been imbued with an institutional logic based on patronage and loyalty, a logic unlike the Western notion of accountability as answerability to human rights concerns.[4] While Nepal's rulers, for purely pragmatic reasons, in the period between 1950 and 1990 tapped legitimacy through a development discourse, the internal workings of the government, bureaucracy and public domain created few incentives for establishing basic accountability mechanisms.[5]

In 1990, the People's Movement (Jana Andolan) fought through a new democratic constitution. This led to the creation of a democratically elected government, which subsequently ratified a number of human rights conventions. These unprecedented events promised a new era of intensified efforts to institutionalise basic accountability mechanisms. The reasons why such high expectations were dashed will be explored.

The discussions in this article are confined to analysing most, if not all, the structural conditions for the violent conflict between the state and the military and political movement led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Thus, the exposition is *not* meant to cover all the necessary and sufficient causes for the *rapid escalation* of the conflict, which has over the last decade engulfed large parts of the country in civil war and led to a reduced presence (and in certain areas full withdrawal) of the "old state's" functions. This does not detract from the fact that a number of the structural causes outlined here are of considerable relevance in understanding the escalation of the conflict, including the otherwise inexplicable positions of the main stakeholders (the ruling monarch, the Royal Nepalese Army, the mainstream political parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) in a situation that seem nearly unsolvable, but eventually ended in a Comprehensive Peace Accord in late 2006.

In order to be able to cast some light on the degree of continuity and change in the Hindu state, the article starts out with a brief analysis of the state since the unification of Nepal in the late eighteenth century. This is intended to clarify and explicate the salient structural features of the state in 1951, including its underpinning cultural models, when strictly autocratic rule ended and a period of early contestation of the Hindu state began. The article argues for caution against sweeping assertions about the political history of the last half century as a period of shifts between autocratic and democratic government. It argues instead that the old political regime underwent certain restructurings as it reasserted its political dominance through a dramatic expansion of a bureaucracy with a modern appearance, but governed by institutional rules and practices grounded in an upper-caste, patronage-oriented court culture. This massive expansion of the state apparatus only created the appearance of a progressive Nepalese accommodation to international norms of demo-cracy and a redistributive and accountable state ensuring human rights. In real terms, the expansion led to a certain upward mobility predominantly of men from the higher castes, whose co-option into the state apparatus allowed a revitalisation of the old regime. This restructured and consolidated regime could now, though bureaucratic expansion and legitimate development rhetoric, directly penetrate rural society and pursue a policy of centralisation in spite of its rhetoric to the contrary.

Thus, it is only apparently a paradox that the integration of the mountain kingdom into the world community (accompanied by a large influx of development assistance) enabled the regime to tap both Western and indigenous sources of legitimacy. Donor assistance was used by the regime to expand a bureaucracy that emulated the old patronage culture, now flourishing on generous monetary and technical assistance. While helping to ensure the hegemonic grip of the old autocratic regime in the shorter run, the development assistance also had other contradictory effects, reinforcing economic differentiation, restructuring social disparities and transforming political consciousness of ethnic, caste and gender-based injustices at both collective and individual levels.

While both international political developments and development assistance in the four principal development decades (1960s to 1990s) engendered first the seeds and later the ferment of political dissent — centred on a Western liberal discourse on the nature of the state and state-society relations — there was another set of national actors who represented an alternative chorus of dissenting voices, based on Marxist-Leninist and Maoist political ideology. This stream of political thought, which claimed to be scientific and of universal applicability, contained a comprehensive set of propositions about the nature of world history, of global/regional and national interdependencies, and thus also of Nepal's history. Based on this political ideology, the communists had, from their establishment of the first communist party, challenged the autocratic monarchy and called for a constituent assembly in order to create what they coin "the objective conditions" for a radical rupture in the old political order and the genesis of "a new state".

This state would effectively combat gender, caste, ethnic and regional oppression. In recognition of the importance of this growing political movement and its regional basis, the article briefly describes the major shifts in the institutionalisation of communism in Nepal, through bewilderingly numerous fissions and fusions. These were at times the results of personality-based politics and other more pragmatic postures. But the fissions and fusions were at times the results of deep ideological dissent, resulting in the purging of minority views.

The article eventually focuses on the sudden rise in 1990 of a popular movement, which led to a new constitution that enshrined

constitutional monarchy and multi-party democracy. Three main lines of argument are developed about the 1990/91 events and the following period up to the proclamation of the insurgency. Firstly, the article pinpoints that the cultural hegemony of the notion of Hindu monarchy and certain international and national political constellations resulted in a quelled mass movement and an incongruous constitution. Secondly, the article stresses the importance of 1990/91 and the following years as a radical juncture for the communist movement in Nepal. Some of these leftist parties became parliamentary actors. One newly merged communist party (Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist) turned to social democratic ideology and went into government. Three other Maoist and outrightly republican parties, though opposed to the constitution and the multiparty system, created first a political front (the Unity Centre) so as to expose tactically the inadequacies of the parliamentary system, then later withdrew from parliamentary politics, while utilising the expanded liberties of civil society to make an unprecedented comeback. Thirdly, the reasons for the failure of both leftist and rightist democratic parties to build effective coalitions around national interests and to start institutionalising a democratic transition are outlined. This blatant failure to embark on a road of democratisation may be understood as much as an effect of the old regime's political and mental grip over policy making and administration.

But, this effect led, in turn, to an intolerable disjuncture between on the one hand a fermenting and spreading consciousness of political grievances (in a civil society invariably moulded by foreign development aid and the communist movement) and on the other, the state's failure to start responding to basic democratic demands, through the establishment of accountability mechanisms. In fact, the state instead took on a conflict-inducing and escalating role, resorting to repressive means through the intact, authoritarian state apparatus. The constellation of these internal conditions and in addition the ideological victory (within the Unity Centre) of the hardliners in favour of armed struggle left the ground fertile for the declaration in February 1996 by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) of the political and military programme of a so-called "People's War". This programme aimed at creating a mass-based movement through first establishing so-called 'base areas' in the remote rural areas, and then later surrounding urban areas and seizing state

power. The Comprehensive Peace Accord of November 2006 can be characterised as a victory for the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), though they have for pragmatic reasons conceded to a deal that is based on liberal democratic values.

THE RISE OF THE HINDU STATE IN NEPAL

Unification and Early Consolidation during the Shahs (1768–1846)

Both in the South-Indian region and Indo-Gangetic region, a number of expansionist kingdoms rose during the medieval period. They were organised on religions based on sophisticated textual sources, on the culture of caste and Hinduism, and on sacred kings considered gods and great conquerors (Inden, 1990). The rise of Hindu kingdoms in the foot and mid-hill Himalayan region should be seen as part of these region-wide trends in state-formation. The unification of Nepal in the middle and late eighteenth century by Prithivi Narayan Shah was based on a combination of military force, marriage alliances between immigrants and ethnic elites, state patronage of earlier local or regional deities, exterminating some contending chiefly lines while offering others high-ranking office, and promoting the migration of Hindus to tribal domains.[6] As a result of the alliance between Hindu settlers and central elites, tribal lands were turned into state lands or cleared for cultivation. This resulted in increased taxation which accrued to the state treasury.

State religion in Nepal was based on the royal lineage's religious practices, and only this lineage was accorded the power to offer patronage and confer state status to the state rituals. This basic notion has also proved extremely resilient and can be discerned in the contradiction (to be debated in a later subsection) between the 1990 Constitution's stress on the one side of a sovereign Hindu monarch and descendants from the Shah lineage's exclusive right to the kingship, and on the other side, a multi-ethnic and religiously diverse state. This contradiction was sought solved at the supra-structural level by the recently (in April 2006) reinstated House of Representatives, which claimed itself sovereign and abolished Hinduism as state religion and cut deeply most of the privileges of the kingship.

With the adoption of the Hindu notion of the king as epitomising society and hence the embodiment of his subjects, it was natural that

sarkar referred both to the government and the king as the embodiment of his subjects. While the more subtle interpretation of the founder warrior king's treatise Divine Teaching (*Dibya Upadesh*) remains contested, the fact that the founding statement of Nepal as a Hindu kingdom, a garden of four classes (*varnas*) and of 36 castes (*jats*) was even incorporated into the democratic 1990 Constitution is worth reflecting upon (see Sharma, 1997).[7] As we will see below, the cultural model of the monarchy as Hindu has delivered a main state-defining feature that has proved extremely compelling in Nepalese society. This model, expressed and legitimised in state rituals, remained virtually uncontested until the 1920s when, as we will later see, some small societies started to question the legitimate basis for the kingship's divine rule and the hierarchical caste order.

Closely linked to the Shahs' assimilationist and conciliatory strategies in relation to tribal religion, they also opted for a policy of selective integration of local lords and nobles and chiefly lines from the heartland into the state apparatus. The same heartland (the western and mid-western hills) was to become the core area of Maoist resistance in the late twentieth century.

The Consolidated Hindu State: The Rana Era (1846–1951)

Jung Bahadur of Kunwar asserted himself as a seminal figure in Nepalese political history through the Kot massacre in 1846. By means of the famous royal *sanad* (charter), he managed in 1856 to curtail the *de facto* authority of the Shah patrilineage of succession and established his own patrilineage (adopting the title of Rana) as the heirs[8] to the Premiership, which were accorded extremely wide powers (see Uprety, 1992: 3-4).[9] Rana rule thrived during the next nearly 100 years within the already well-established institution of divine kingship. The king as the sovereign was the supreme dispenser of land and offices amongst others. He was the patron of an extensive pyramid-like ritual exchange network[10] as well as the head of command structures and of direct/ indirect political control of remote areas, also exercising dominion over a centralised taxation system (based on a particular land tenure regime) in addition to monopoly trade. The centre of judicial, legislative and executive powers was the Maharaja and his Council, who appointed and

commanded the district officers (*badahakims*). The Ranas centralised the bureaucracy even more than during the rule of the Shahs. Even minor appointments needed the Premier's approval. A rule of annual renewal of offices from lower-ranking offices up to Commander-in-Chief ensured a strict upward "accountability system" based on loyalty in exchange for patronage. This principle was matched by a principle of hereditary succession to all major civil and military positions. The state apparatus was thus grounded in a bureaucratic culture defined by a patronage system that mobilised both kinship and caste principles.

The official state realm was devoid of the Western distinction between the public and the private. At the very top was the Premier, who after 1856 substituted in persona the erstwhile king as the head of government (*sarkar*) and thus as the embodiment of all matters of collective interest. In other words, the Ranas ruled and the Shahs reigned. The idea of a harmonious, hierarchical order between ruler and subjects co-existed uneasily with the ruling family's violent intra-family feuds over the right of succession to the position of Premier. Of the ten Rana Premiers, only four died natural deaths while in office. The others were either assassinated or forced to abdicate (see Uprety 1992:5). The hierarchical order was also formalised through the promulgation in 1854 of the first civil code, Muluki Ain. The promulgation of a civil code was inspired by the rulers' exposure to the British Empire's use of codifications. The content of the code represented an ambitious, yet pragmatic effort to superimpose an orthodox Hindu caste structure based on the idea of castes as *qualitative species*, some slaveable and other unslaveable. Any notion of the individual was subsumed under the concept of the collective as an ascribed category of caste. One outstanding feature of the Code's pragmatic attitude is the middle position conferred to tribal groups, which the Code ranked as pure castes, both subdivided into slaveable and unslaveable.[11] This very substantial reform is an early precursor to political reforms by successive generations of authoritarian rulers in Nepal. Certain formal features are borrowed from Western institutions and political language and wedded with political notions and practices of the Hindu state, regardless of whether these were truly rooted in Nepali society or simply imposed through combining force with more subtle forms of coercion.

The pragmatic alliance with the white, impure masters on Indian soil allowed the Ranas to pursue a foreign policy of strict isolation. This policy suited well the central nation-building objective of reinforcing a notion of Nepal as a unique nation of the ritually pure. In addition, the policy — whether intentionally or not — practically isolated the elite and the subjugated multi-ethnic population and lower castes from direct exposure to 200 years of dramatic political upheavals that led eventually to political and industrial revolutions in the Western world.[12] The full impact of this isolationist policy is impossible to spell out in any satisfactory manner here, but the implications for political imaginations of governance and economic development seem noticeable even until very recently.

The end of the Rana period has been characterised by contemporary and later commentators as the end of conspiratorial violent politics in Nepal. But the exceptionally unclear circumstances surrounding the assassination of the royal couple and their nearest kin in June 2001 do not make it unreasonable to question whether this conclusion is premature. The political culture (institutionalised for more than 150 years of Shah and Rana rule) with its underlying models of the public order, of centralised Hindu state religion, and of loyalty based on patronage and favouritism would also prove very resilient against later efforts to reform the polity from above.

THE RESTRUCTURED HINDU STATE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

The Early Post-Rana Period

The formal ending of Rana rule in Nepal was due to a particular circumstantial constellation of global, regional and domestic conditions. The recruitment of Gurkhas[13] into the British Indian Army led to a simmering political consciousness about the political regime in Nepal. The Gurkha's participation in the two World Wars, and their stationing in India during the most decisive years of the Indian Nationalist Movement, was of particular importance for their earliest political conscientisation. After they were pensioned, a not insignificant number of Gurkhas refused, partly on political grounds, to resettle in Nepal. In addition to the ex-Gurkhas, a small number of elite intellectuals who

stayed in India due to family connections and higher studies were also groomed politically in the Nationalist Movement. They came to form the core of the small anti-Rana groups. The victory of the Liberation Movement in 1947, the subsequent withdrawal of the British and the instalment of the first post-independence government created a new political situation in Nepal. The Ranas were deprived of their old colonial ally and found themselves with a neighbouring government which had every reason to dislike the Ranas, who through the supply of Gurkha soldiers had directly helped the British to maintain their empire. Internal dissent over succession in the rapidly expanding Rana family helped to weaken the Ranas' ability to close the ranks in this new international situation (see Uprety 1992:5).

While some anti-Rana activities had already taken place in India in the 1920s and 1930s,[14] the 1940s brought a rapid growth in political activity, which included one assassination attempt. This was discovered. Some of those implicated were punished by execution and thereby became the first martyrs for the democratic cause. In the late 1940s the Nepali National Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal were formed. When Nepal experienced its first incipient civil disobedience movement, the erstwhile Rana Prime Minister found it necessary to undertake some limited reforms[15] so as to cope in the new international situation. These steps generated an internal backlash, leading to the resignation of the Prime Minister (Padma Shamsher) and a ban on the recently formed Nepali Congress Party. To appease the new Indian government, the Ranas let the Indians use Nepalese troops during the Hyderabad and Kashmir crisis and accepted, in 1950, a Treaty on Trade and Commerce and another on Peace and Friendship (see Shaha, 1990b:195). The latter treaty made Nepal an integrated part of India's security policy. The Trade Treaty opened Nepal up for Indian economic interests on very unequal terms and laid the basis for a growing Indian domination of the Nepalese economy in the 1960s and 1970s, with profound long-term consequences for Nepal's subsistence economy and the poverty situation. With the influx of industrial goods like manufactured cloth (augmented later in the 1960s by farm implements and household utensils), the artisan and service occupations of Nepal's numerically large service castes were undermined. Also, the import of Indian food items, such as a large variety of spices and salt (the salt trade

with Tibet was made impossible by the Chinese occupation in 1959), altered the viability of particular occupations and economic institutions amongst some of the ethnic groups.

Already in 1951, the Communist Party for the first time demanded the drafting of a new constitution by a constituent assembly. This demand was voiced during the following 50 years by a number of communist actors, including the current Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist), which waged a war against the "semi-feudal" state until 2006.[16]

The actual significance of the Shah royal family in anti-Rana activities in the 1930s, 1940s and in the Ranas' ultimate downfall in 1950 is disputed (see Shrestha, 1984:121; Brown, 1996:14-22). In November 1950, the king and other royal family members sought asylum at the Indian embassy in Kathmandu. The royals were later flown to India. The circumstances surrounding the royal family's flight reveal both India's direct and indirect roles in the ousting of the Ranas' rule. As we will repeatedly observe over the next five decades, India was ambivalent in its strategic postures towards its northern neighbour. The Congress's armed resistance movement, Mukti Sena,[17] received only limited support from the Indians, who feared the immediate effects of an unstable northern frontier however much they wanted a more palatable rule in Nepal (Rose 1971).[18] Delhi doubted the Congress's capability as a prospective ruling party, and feared the Congress's collaboration with the Nepali Communist Party at the time of the communist takeover in China. Consequently, they went for a carefully guided transition based on a so-called power-sharing arrangement through a coalition government of the Ranas, the kingship and the Congress (see Rose 1971:194).

The Delhi Settlement of 1951 was largely formed by Delhi's pragmatic strategic interest. The Settlement, or Delhi Compromise as it was also called, can only be said to have been a compromise of a cosmetic kind, since the Congress was mostly excluded from the real political negotiations. There was certainly a reshuffling of the power-sharing arrangements between the Shah family and the Rana family. Somewhat more political power was yielded to the kingship and the king in persona, whilst the Ranas' dominance within the palace administration and the army was mostly left intact. The consequence of the Delhi Compromise could be seen as highly influential for the political

development in Nepal until the present. The autocratic state centred on the institution of kingship was largely left intact. The term "intact" is purposely used here to underline the fact that the institution of kingship as a form of reign could survive a century of Rana political "foot-binding". The Ranas very cleverly did not interfere with the traditional and effective modes of publicising and exercising kingly authority through patronage of a number of national religious festivals and temple institutions situated both in the capital valley and throughout the rugged countryside (see Bleie and Bhattarai, 2002).

After the Delhi Settlement, the Congress's room for manoeuvre to bargain for any real democratisation was severely limited. The regime was, in other words, intact. Only the partly co-opted and inexperienced Congress Party gave the new government an aura of democratic legitimacy. The Delhi Settlement was largely made by Indian actors in New Delhi, some of whom had multiple economic, kinship-based and ideological links to the Shah and Rana contenders. The "compromise" provided new political capital to the king, who could return to Kathmandu in triumph, declaring his commitment to building democracy in Nepal.

This Royal Declaration, like later political statements from Congress politicians, was of a rhetorical nature. The composition of the old elite was intact. The practice of marriage alliances between the Shahs and the Ranas continued, as did the customary patronage practices of giving positions within the bureaucracy to clients, kinsmen and other allies. Though some of the traditional privileges and power bases of the Ranas and Shahs were undermined or abolished outright, they successfully expanded into new sectors of the Indian and Nepalese economies.[19] The India-groomed Congress, superficially victorious, actually lacked a popular countrywide support base and proved itself incapable of bringing the Kathmandu-based anti-Rana intellectuals into the party echelons (see Joshi & Rose, 1966:123-124). The Koirala brothers were in the top leadership. B. P. Koirala wanted a real dismantling of the Rana state, while M. P. Koirala had strong royalist leanings. M. P. Koirala is representative of the great majority of the 1950s generation of leadership which was accultured in India and had internalised the Sanscritic world view of divine kingship and a

hierarchcial social order of rulers and ruled. Neither the palace administration nor the incipient bureaucracy, or any other central social or political institutions, nurtured cultural ideas and practices which could act as catalysts toward a democratic political culture. To be sure, political statements could be heard that carried a new aura of liberal political aspirations. But neglecting to initiate anything akin to modern party-building from grass-roots constituencies, the newly groomed Congress leaders and aspiring leaders resorted to traditional modes of patronage and political decision-making which suited the invigorated kingship very well. The outcome was an empowered king who the Congress hoped would be a balancing agent against disgruntled Rana elements. The king and his courtiers had more ambitious intentions than the Congress hoped, and they succeeded in acquiring considerable power over the indecisive and disunited party.

This set of developments led to a series of short-lived governments bent on internal rivalries, unchecked by any popular party-based or electoral accountability. The king appointed M. P. Koirala to the position as Prime Minister twice in 1952/53. Both this and other offices were handed out as gestures of royal benevolence and patronage, not as appointments based on any popular mandate. Benefiting individuals in their turn became empowered and capacitated to dispense their own extended patronage. During this period, the traditional elite formed their own pressure groups. The Communist Party was banned in 1955. The party continued underground to influence some permitted civil rights organisations and, more importantly, it started to build a cadre base in some parts of the western and eastern hills. In these western hills (Pyuthan, Rolpa and Rukum), the Maoist insurgency would start about five decades later. Already in those early years of party-building, the communists were ideologically divided over the role of the monarchy in Nepal (Brown, 1996:27).

As the king expanded his power base and the array of short-lived governments provoked disillusionment with so-called democracy, the king abandoned his promise of a constituent assembly and in 1954 proclaimed that supreme power was to be vested with the kingship (see Shaha, 1990:303-305). These moves between 1951 and 1953 have certain parallels with the 1991–1999 period (see discussion below). The

1955 successor to the throne, King Mahendra, was bent on consolidating monarchical absolutism. The elections promoted earlier were postponed and the administration reorganised to facilitate the ambitious monarch's direct control and patronage.[20]

During the post-Rana period, novel avenues for political careers opened up. The new build-up of bureaucratic institutions, also aided by the influx of development funds, resulted in an increase in both political and bureaucratic offices.[21] This led to new opportunistic competition for offices and influence. Also during this period, Indian influence and to some degree outright interference in domestic affairs continued and inevitably provoked growing anti-Indian sentiment. To provide a thin façade of democratisation, the ban on the Communist Party was lifted in 1956. This lifting paved the way for a joint campaign with the Congress for elections. After years of internal scrambles, the Congress managed in 1956 to consolidate a socialist platform. Despite the parties' successful pressure for an election, they were not able to stop the king from promulgating a new constitution directly and dishonouring the demand for a constituent assembly. The new 1959 Constitution vested all juridical and executive power in the king. Nevertheless, the appointment of the experienced B. P. Koirala on the basis of the 1959 elections led to a brief period of incipient democratisation under Koirala's unifying leadership.

The Aborted Democratisation under B. P. Koirala

B. P. Koirala's appointment was a pragmatic compromise, but the palace's cool reception shifted to staunch resistance when the king felt threatened by the emerging prospect of new, Western (democratic) accountability structures based on an elected parliament. During this phase, the communists (who took a strong pro-Chinese stand) led a fairly effective opposition in the parliament (see Brown, 1996:34). The B. P. Koirala government, with its recently adopted socialist programme, started promoting the concept of an interventionist state which should deliver basic services, run economic enterprises and uphold an independent judiciary. This new programme led to certain land reforms and to an early effort to institute an independent judiciary. The Koirala

government mostly succeeded in the precarious balancing act of maintaining fairly good Indo-Nepali and Sino-Nepali relations.[22]

The not insignificant gains of the B. P. Koirala government during its early period gave Koirala a growing popularity and authority. The government's early effort to institutionalise a more independent bureaucracy threatened to marginalise the palace-based administration and the traditional patronage-based politics (See Joshi and Rose, 1966:386; Rose and Scholz, 1989:48). In December 1960, the Prime Minister and his cabinet were arrested. The constitution was suspended and direct palace-based rule instituted. The conspicuous lack of public resistance from the smaller parties, the traditional elite and the upper echelons of the bureaucracy against the royal ousting of an elected government shows just how profoundly the patronage-based political culture permeated these public institutions. Also importantly, the international community did not strongly condemn King Mahendra's move. The ousting of the government and the ban on the party led Congress members to start a resistance movement in India. This movement could not muster enough support for conducting raids on Nepal's soil that would represent any real military challenge to the regime. The Indian endorsement of the insurgent activities on their side of the border was soon withdrawn, on account of the Sino-Indian border conflict in particular, which altered Himalayan geopolitics.

During the 1950s and the first years of the 1960s, the monarchy quite effectively managed to manipulate and contain the incipient seeds of democratic transition. With some level of credibility, the king could denounce parliamentary democracy as a foreign import. Instead, the monarch announced the establishment of the four-tiered Panchayat system (underpinned by a new constitution), which he claimed would be based on Nepalese political culture.[23] In addition, the regime — inspired both by Maoist ideology and by the Nepalese notion of unity in the public order — instituted class organisations (*bargiya sangathan*) for farmers, women, youth and former servicemen. These organisations were seen as representing private interest groups which were entitled to nominate some representatives to the National Assembly.[24] Other private interest organisations needed government approval to enter public space or were banned altogether (i.e., the communists) from the same space.

As Burghart (1994:1-14) has pinpointed, the 1962 Constitution contains a striking contradiction. On the one hand, it was to constitute political relations between the king and his people in harmony with the traditional order. On the other hand, the constitution was a modern legal means by which a remoulded political culture was to be created. The Panchayat system represented certain novel organisational forms (such as the class-based organisations[25]), but tapped into and expanded local and supra-local traditional forms of political authority favouring men from the highest castes. Local and central public arenas revolved around chains of chiefly and royal authority. The Rana-instituted governance practice of mobile official tours (*daudaha*) was revived. The monarch held annual audiences (*darshan*) in the zonal and district centres and accepted *salami*, the ritual offering (similar to the offering of gifts to deities in temples) of a coin to the royal authority in appreciation for being appointed to a public office.[26] The practice of *pajani*, the annual renewal of offices, was also given new emphasis by the royal authority. These public practices were also expressive of the royals' full control over any legitimate expression of public service.[27]

All these engagements were guided by a notion of public order defined through unity, ultimately vested in the institution of kingship. This notion was different from the Western notion of public order as a negotiating space for diverse, partly conflicting, partly converging personal interests. Thus, in Nepal dissent and conflict were by and large not permitted.

Nation-building efforts (*desa banaune*) during the Panchayat years showed how contested and incomplete the project was. A language policy issue such as the role of regional languages in education and mass communication was highly contested already in the 1950s. This and other language issues reappeared soon in political dehate. In 1962, Nepali was made the sole medium of instruction in all state schools, and broadcasts in Hindi and Newari were terminated on Radio Nepal in 1965.[28] By a combination of statistical and rhetorical means, Nepali was made the only official language and the Nepalese, claimed to be "one people".

Similar means were used to construct the common religious identity the Hindu kingship needed for its legitimate reign. A notion of the Hindu nation could be forged by manipulating the number of Hindus in the

1961 Census. As an accommodation to international human rights norms, the state officially abolished the caste system. The regime thus had to resort to the vague claim of being the defender of "local tradition". Undoubtedly, such a stance indirectly lent legitimacy to the still entrenched caste system, which the same regime had recently officially abolished.

While some progressive reforms were enshrined in policies and the 1962 Constitution,[29] and the somewhat reformed governance system gave the appearance of separated executive, judicial and legislative branches, appointments and promotions and dismissals were handled by the expanded sovereign authority of the king. As Hayes has noted (See Hayes, 1975:616-628), the monarch skilfully managed to combine tapping two sources of legitimacy, the traditional Hindu kingly authority and the Western notions of representative democracy. Direct elections were only held at the village assembly level. Here the segments of the population with high ritual status and landed property dominated the assemblies. If popular accountability at that level was variable, it was minimal at higher levels of the indirectly elective system. At the centre, the parliament endorsed formally decisions already made by the Central Secretariat — the apex of royal authority. As comprehensive civil liberties were forbidden, the regime committed human rights violations. However, the ruler's alliance-building and patronage of the police, army and rural and urban elites was successful towards preventing excessive direct use of violent oppression. Internal criticism within the system was contained by intermittently approving certain minor reorganisations. The expanding middle class was kept politically inactive by providing its members with new economic opportunities that also gave social status. Of principal importance were job opportunities within the government and the aid sector, which started to grow in the 1960s and virtually exploded in the following two decades. The disillusioned and exiled Congress experienced in the 1960s a considerable stream of defections; many entered the ranks of the Panchayat institutions, indicating their opportunistic power-seeking motivations.[30]

Opportunism towards being able to rule and divide also characterised the royal authority's official and unofficial dealings with the banned leftist parties in this period. The communists (divided into

pro-Beijing and pro-Moscow factions) were not considered as real a contender for power as was the Congress. The Beijing faction was thus assisted in order to undermine the Congress's support-base. The Panchayat regime also received considerable aid from the Maoist Chinese regime. As the communists gained in influence, the palace shifted sides and started to be more liberal to the Congress. Amongst others, political prisoners (including the aging and ailing B. P. Koirala) were released. The 1971 elections to the Panchayat and class organisations showed popular discontent with the system (Brown, 1996:50). Moreover, Himalayan geopolitics again changed in the 1970s as communist China's international position became weaker. The king, who had considered the Chinese regime his closest ally, increasingly had to recognise that his southern neighbour was a contender for the position as a regional superpower.

The Middle and Late Panchayat Period

During the late Panchayat period, the hierarchical social structure underwent certain changes, but without offering opportunities for upward mobility for individual women or for individuals from the previous untouchable castes and most of the ethnic groups. The mechanisms for upward mobility and incipient class formation were based on formal education, particularly favouring Brahmin men with proper command over a Sanskritised Nepali. The new employment opportunities in the government were snatched not only by Brahmins, but also by Chhetri and Newari men — all from caste groups from the hill region which had earlier dominated the bureaucracy.

Since the bureaucracy in the 1970s and 1980s also expanded very rapidly at local levels, it gave ill-informed outsiders the impression of an increasingly decentralised administration with enhanced capacity to function as a redistributive state apparatus. The expansion of government offices at regional, zone and district levels was changing state-society relations, but not in a manner conducive to democratic constitutional notions of impartibility, separation of the three cardinal functions of government and of local self-governance. Instead, donor-dependent growth let to an unprecedented expansion of the centralised patrimonial state, within which the extra-constitutional political centre (the Central

Palace Secretariat) demanded loyalty from the upper echelons of a satellite-like and steadily growing bureaucracy. High caste patronage culture, consisting of a complex set of behavioural codes and practices including favouritism and "bribery", was extended down to the lower grades of civil servants and outwards to the newly formed rural administrative tiers. In the 1980s, a court dialect used by the Rana aristocracy in the previous century on social occasions was the routine form of address among civil servants when signalling and negotiating status and role expectations (see Pandey, 1989:326).

The Palace Secretariat had managed to get a constitutional basis for their control over all policy decisions.[31] This was a fateful structural incongruity which crippled proactive policy-making and implementation from the level of ministers down to top bureaucrats and below, as all were vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal not on grounds of incompetence but because of either a failure to show sufficient loyalty (*chakari*) or the top patrons' shifting alliances and subsequent changes of incumbents. The rapid influx of aid money into such a patronage-based usury system led to a redefinition of the well-established and morally accepted system of "bribery" and *chakari* as well as to increased outright embezzlement of funds.[32]

The rapid and soon heavy dependence on donor aid (especially bilateral aid), which in this period covered not only a substantial portion of development expenditure but also the state's administrative expenses, created a new category of patrons. These external Western patrons had their own notions of good governance and accountability structures which the ruling Nepali politicians and bureaucrats had to please. The accommodation of two outrightly different political notions and institutional practices, one inner life based on age-old notions of dispensing patronage in exchange for loyalty by personalised idioms and one outer life for the donor community and the international community, necessitated a sophisticated art of impression management and (self) deception. Administrative reforms, including a number of technical assistance programmes, were enacted but, to the dismay of the donors, with limited effects on the efficiency and quality of the administration, its service delivery and development efforts. Ironically, the Palace Secretariat, the centre of political power and the chief producer of the

caste and patronage-based values and governing style, was overlooked in these reform efforts.[33] The very structure and function of the administrative and political system operated according to very different "unwritten" institutional rules, which I have briefly described and analysed above. In order to accommodate the donors' urgings for results, another strategy for quasi-solution of the administrative impasse was the establishment of parallel institutions (such as Development Boards), which had their own rules, regulations and salary structure.

In the 1970s, it was all too evident that the much-debated and long-awaited land reform (enacted in 1964) had done little to change the inequalities in size of landholdings (see Zaman, 1992; Riedinger, 1993). In the hills, the growing livelihood crisis[34] was, to some degree, mitigated by migration to the low-lying fertile Terai. This plain region had become a malaria-free zone with American aid. The state's biased land allotment policy and resettlement schemes in the Terai led to a reproduction of the hills upper-caste social order in the Terai (Shrestha and Conway, 1985). Temporary migration to India and to the cities also acted as safety valves in the crisis-ridden hill communities. The donor-financed construction of some roads starting in the 1960s and continuing in the 1970s facilitated a rapid influx of Indian manufactured goods. This led in the first place to the rapid expansion of rural markets thriving on selling manufactured goods and then to urbanisation, mainly in the Terai and in Pokhara and Kathmandu valley. These developments then affected the social structure, undermining the traditional interdependency between the service castes and high castes. Since no alternative state-sponsored social safety net was in place, and caste discrimination still barred these people from entering the expanding and profitable non-agricultural sector, their livelihood situation deteriorated further. As smallholders, these sections (whose composition in terms of ethnic affiliation and caste status varied considerably) had marginal access to the material rewards from the large and mostly bilaterally financed development projects, such as the USAID Rapti Zone Integrated Development Project. Both the rhetoric of "a right to development" and "poverty alleviation" espoused by these development agents, as well as "class-based justice" articulated by the communists sowed the early seeds of what would ferment in the 1980s and 1990s into a widespread subjective political consciousness of grievance and relative deprivation. The Maoist rebellion would come to

start from some of the districts under the Rapti Zone (Rolpa, Rukum and Pyuthan).

The new King Birendra, in spite of his Western elite education, continued his predecessor's authoritarian political line. The Congress remained banned and the leaders exiled. The precariously forged unity was disturbed by a number of violent attacks,[35] the most consequential in retrospect being the Jhapa Uprising in 1971. The uprising showed the regional link of the outlawed Maoist Communist Party to the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which started the Naxalite movements in Bihar and West Bengal. Only the border river Mechi separates Jhapa from the epicentre of the movement, Naxalbari. The Naxalites' practice of so-called revolutionary justice was taken up by young Jhapa activists, and some local landlords were murdered in the way of executions. While the uprising was brutally quelled by the government, it was politically mobilising and led to the formation in Jhapa of the All Nepal Communist Coordination Committee, which started forming local groups. Such class justice came more than 20 years later, to be taken up on a large scale by the Maoist Movement.

During the deteriorating political situation under Indira Gandhi, the exiled B. P. Koirala (then President of the Nepali Congress) returned to Nepal in a proclaimed effort to contribute to national reconciliation after India's threatening (with Nepalese eyes) annexation of the Himalayan kingdom Sikkim in 1975. Koirala's cult-like position was not sufficient political capital for any revitalisation of the party, though there was some opposition to the regime. The execution of Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was an opportune catalyst for public demonstrations, again shattering the precariously forged unity of public life. The spreading demonstrations were also indirectly protests against the execution of the persons convicted for the assassination attempt on Birendra a few years earlier. This spontaneous unrest led the royal authority to proclaim a referendum to decide the future of the Panchayat system. The referendum in May 1980 resulted in a small but significant majority voting in favour of the Panchayat system. The result may be interpreted as the outcome of pragmatic support for a reformed Panchayat system, a lack of trust in the political parties and the *panchas'* massive economic expenditure to promote their campaign. In addition,

the Congress and the communists failed to see the importance of building an inter-party alliance to win the referendum (see Brown, 1996:91).

B. P. Koirala's disastrously poor judgement during his final years, which nevertheless did not lead to his removal as elected leader, shows how strong the culture of respect towards elders continued to be in the political domain. This culture would, as we shall see again, become conspicuous as we move to consider the Congress leadership of the 1990s.

Between 1983 and 1990, the Nepalese communist movement was riddled by ideological differences and personality-based conflict.[36] The movement and its ideological debates and struggles occurred in India, where many of the activists worked and studied.

As Brown among others has pointed out, there was a confined political liberalisation after the 1980 referendum. Among the reform measures were election of the Prime Minister by the National Assembly and the introduction of the adult franchise. But these measures were accompanied by an expansion of the royal authority's extra-constitutional sources of power.[37]

The inadequate understanding by the powerful donor community in Nepal of state-society relations and its reductionist perception of good governance as a matter of reforms and building technical capacity, and poverty as a result of demographic explosion causing an environmental crisis, diverted attention away from the two critically interdependent core issues. These were (1) the elite's centralised control of the state apparatus, and (2) the distributional aspects of the poverty issue. The latter issue would have put land reform and the management of water and other bio-resources centre stage (World Bank, 1988).

While the political pressure increased during the 1980s, the overall livelihood situation remained poor. According to a conservative World Bank estimate, about 50 percent of the population faced chronic or seasonal food deficits (World Bank, 1991), and a very large proportion of the children were stunted. Regional imbalances in food production and life expectancy were also considerable (World Bank, 1990). Gender discrimination remained pervasive, as Nepali women remained among the most overworked, undervalued and politically excluded of all the

world's women — despite more than a decade of women-targeted policies and programmes.

THE DEMOCRATIC CHALLENGE TO THE HINDU STATE

People's Rebellion: The Seeds of a Revolution Betrayed

In late 1989, the controversy over the Indo-Nepali Trade and Transit Treaty was unresolved. The urban population in particular felt the repercussions of the dispute and the ensuing trade boycott. Incorporated into the global electronic news network, the Nepalese received radio and television news about how people's power in Eastern Europe could overthrow oppressive dictatorships. People's imaginations were receptive to these media-sent ideological messages.[38] The Nepalese audience could also observe through the international media how people could concretely organise for political change. In early 1990, a loose alignment was established by a bloc named the United Left Front (ULF), composed of seven leftist parties, and the Congress Party.[39] A number of other small leftist parties decided at this stage of fight separately, but in collusion with the Congress and ULF. The anti-regime protests (Jana Andolan 1) started on a highly symbolic and official day, Nepal's Democracy Day, 18 February.

The outburst of increasing crowds of agitators in a public domain based on a model of harmony and consensus was first met by the regime with a certain degree of repression. The regime also resorted to the well-known recipe of undermining (the movement's) credibility by playing on anti-Indian sentiments. Limited concessions were not considered at this stage. During the build-up and climactic stages of the movement, the police violated not only human rights but also indigenous moral codes of conduct, leading to stronger anti-government reactions.[40] The protests initially grew and waned. Then the demonstrations grew in spurts as the protests spread to all the towns of Kathmandu Valley and later to the towns in the Terai, culminating in bloody confrontations with the police in April. Alongside a curfew, the monarch gave some concessions, such as lifting the ban on political parties.

The nearly exclusive urban and mostly middle-class foundation of the protest movement, no doubt mirroring the centralised nature of state power in Nepal, would prove to have major consequences for the

outcome of the movement. As it grew and the regime's oppressive apparatus was felt not only by more people but by new types of demonstrators (including educated professionals not accustomed to face direct brutal repression), anti-royalist attitudes gained ground.[41] As Brown among others has argued, the widely circulated accounts claiming that the well-meaning King Birendra was manipulated during those critical weeks by his courtiers are highly dubious. The king and his inner circle of advisors must to some extent have underestimated the popular momentum of the movement.[42] Following the climax of bloody clashes caused by indiscriminate firing by the security forces on 6 April, the palace, for reasons not fully known, did not opt for a major clampdown by the well-equipped and royalist army. Instead, the regime opted for a negotiated "compromise".

The sets of conditions that led the leadership of the Congress-ULF alliance to opt for a compromise are too complex to be given proper scrutiny here. Congress and communist activists shared common experiences of exile, imprisonment, insurgency and unpredictable palace politics. Nevertheless, the alliance was frail from the start and was riddled with ideological and personal differences, disparate party cultures and varying credibility in royal and international circles. The Nepali Congress had a history beyond that of a banned opposition party. It had in certain periods been a partner-in-government (see the above political history between 1951–1990). Therefore, the palace saw the Congress as a more obvious negotiating partner than the more overtly anti-monarchist leftist parties in the alliance.

At that time, the outrightly anti-monarchist leftist parties which had not joined ULF started to play an increasingly prominent role in the rebellion. It showed signs of momentum as a mass movement with a broadening support base. These developments worried leading Congress activists who were royalists and had no ambition to let loose a revolution that would dismantle the entire power structure of Nepalese society.

The popular mass demonstrations gained momentum in a public domain structured on a model of non-dissent and the unifying unique person of the king. However, at this moment no full-fledged political programme for democratic transition from an absolute monarchy to a responsive, pluralist secular state was worked out. Such basic neglect

would prove very influential indeed. Without such a political programme, one on an *ad hoc* basis instead relied on slogan-like claims for a constitutional monarchy and electoral democracy. This *ad hoc* strategy revealed more fundamental shortcomings of the lead party of the United Left Front, Nepali Congress, party's organisation and culture. Its organisational culture was based on principles of patronage, respect for seniority, caste status and opportunism. Elections to leading offices were not based on any proper democratic accountability structure and rules, which were so basic to a cadre-based party culture. With many of the senior Congress politicians under arrest, the second layer of leaders, who had not been permitted to gain solid political experience by their detained patrons, found themselves suddenly in charge of the challenging task of steering an escalating movement in collaboration with the more militant and experienced communists. This created alarm among both the aspiring leadership as well as the senior Congress leaders. Without consultation with the communist leaders, the Congress leaders brokered the compromise with the palace.

As noted, the very outburst of and organisational form of the People's Movement reveals Nepal's recent integration into a globalised electronic network. The international media's subsequent reporting of the movement helped create some degree of international support and a certain pressure on the government. The diplomatic community in Nepal also exerted pressure on the discredited government and maintained contact with the ULF. Some diplomatic missions seem to have specifically engaged themselves. According to Brown, US officials actively encouraged Congress leaders to reach a compromise with the palace that included the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in order to contain the growing leftist influence in Nepal.[43] The American position was again reiterated in strong language when the Congress Party supremo Ganesh Man Singh visited the Bush administration in December 1990 in order to muster support (see Thapa and Sinjapati, 2003:36).

The relative importance of other international, albeit regional actors is more difficult to assess. The Indian coalition government as internally divided on this issue. One of the coalition partners, Janata Dal, had for quite some time been supportive of pro-democratic forces in Nepal. The religious Bharatiya Janata Party was a strong supporter of the Hindu

monarchy. In order to balance these opposing stances, the government officially stressed a policy of a middle course, but this official posture may not represent the entire picture.[44]

The compromise prevented Jana Andolan from becoming a national movement, supported by the country's oppressed population of small peasants, low castes, many of the ethnic communities, and rural women. More conservative political leaders with loyalist inclinations hoped the deal would give them full access to the state through new political channels. To them a compromise with the old regime, however opportunist, patronage-ridden and anti-democratic, appeared to be a much safer solution than an unpredictable alliance with the more extremist left groups, which wanted a new social order and a "new state".

The April bloodshed and deal brokered was followed by the establishment of an interim government and a period of prolonged negotiations between the newly elected leaders, political parties and palace. The new government[45] was to lead the nation through a difficult transitional period, during which democratic legislation would be formulated, a free press created, general elections held and the volatile law and order situation controlled. In addition, the new coalition cabinet promised to curb corruption and to strengthen the judiciary which was asked to investigate human rights abuses during the Jana Andolan. The cabinet also promised to start redressing discrimination against women and ethnic communities. The agenda was, in other words, tall indeed, and included many of the grievances voiced by the more radical sections of the Jana Andolan.

During the following months, the interim government showed a limited ability to follow its own directives, provoking strong criticism from the more radical sections of the UPF and civil society. This lack of political ability— perhaps also of will — revealed the highly problematic terms of the "compromise" with the regime, a concession which leading actors within the donor community in Nepal actively supported. The aid community in Nepal at that time predominantly held a neo-liberal understanding of a lean(er) Nepalese state in addition to a greater role for the market and civil society actors, in order to generate growth. They were, therefore, unreceptive to the left's political programme of dismantling the elite's parasitic grip on the state by instituting republican

rule, which could have cleared the ground for an active redistributive state that could intervene with the market forces. It remains uncertain whether the donor community fully contemplated the regime-conserving and conflict-escalating impact of their stance.

The old regime was more or less intact. Yet, some of its supporting pillars showed signs of fracturing. The political establishment was divided over the need for political reforms, hardliner *panchas* stood against liberal *panchas* (with Congress sympathies). They were nevertheless still unitedly opposed to any radical legislation that could threaten the interests of the old elite and the middle class. The Congress leaders, including the Interim Prime Minister, saw the institution of monarchy as the very essence of the Nepalese nation and believed that it was possible to steer a transition from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy (see Brown 1996:147-149). In order to try to save whatever could be saved of the legitimacy of King Birendra and to shore up the institution of monarchy, no legal action was taken against the senior civil and police officials whom two human rights commissions held ultimately responsible for the human rights abuses during the Panchayat and the Jana Andolan.[46]

The culturally unquestioned belief in the Hindu monarchy, resulting in a fear of strong influence from the republican left, might largely explain the Congress's and other leading stakeholders' rejection of the demand for a constituent assembly to draw up the new constitution. As shown above, this demand has repeatedly been raised by the communists since they first formed the party. We will come back below to why this demand was to become probably the main reason for the Maoists' withdrawal from the final rounds of negotiations in both 2001 and 2003.

The Contradictions in the 1990 Constitution

Different versions of the new constitution were drafted, showing the ongoing struggle between the king's unwavering will to remain the source of sovereignty and the democratic alliance.[47] The commission also invited inputs from the political parties and the general public and sent a lawyer to study other relevant cases of constitutional monarchy. The majority of suggestions concerned regional, religious, linguistic, gender and ethnic issues; in other words, issues of how to accommodate

differences into a state monopolised by the high caste men for centuries. The commission and the government chose largely to overlook these suggestions, denouncing them as a threat to the nation state's unity. The leader of the commission, Justice Bishwanath Upadhayaya, characterised most of them as "unfortunate" and "peripheral" issues that revealed the general lack of constitutional knowledge among the citizenry (Hutt, 1994:36).

The 1990 Constitution, as will be discussed below, represents in some respects a real advance compared to the earlier constitutions, in establishing a democratic order in Nepal. But it was, as we have seen in several earlier examples in the post-Rana period, the result of a "compromise" of a kind that contained some irreconcilable contradictions. These would prove more disruptive than many stakeholders foresaw at the time.

One such contradiction is between the statement in Article 3 that the sovereignty of Nepal is vested in the Nepali people and the emergency powers admitted to the king in Article 115. Previous constitutions from 1959 and 1962 had given the king the right to revoke the constitutions in their entirety and to assume all powers of government. Indeed, King Mahendra used this provision in 1962 to oust the elected government of B. P. Koirala. The article in the 1990 Constitution says that a proclamation must be ratified by the House of Representatives within three months. The constitution does not provide strong safeguards against the king's suspension of the elected parliament during an emergency situation. Commentators have held that the constitution's statement (Article 3) that "His Majesty is the symbol of the Nepalese nationality and the unity of the Nepalese people" reinterprets the role of the king from an autocrat to a constitutional monarch, especially since the formulation is connected to the provision that executive powers lie with the Prime Minister. This interpretation becomes highly problematic if we also consider the symbolic attributes of the king's person, as stated in Article 27(1) and the provision of emergency powers to him.

The much awaited and debated issues of defining the core attributes of the Nepali nation was "resolved" by the following contradictory statement in Article 4(1): Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign, Hindu, constitutional

kingdom.[48] The new constitution, in other words, reaffirmed Nepal as a Hindu state, founded on the institution of monarchy. This fundamental concept was also affirmed by Article 27(1), which stated that the king had to be a descendant of the Shah King that unified the nation, a maintainer of Aryan culture and a Hindu. The strongly articulated demands from ethnic groups and the regional party for recognition of their cultural rights were thus largely unmet. The constitution gives somewhat limited recognition to mother tongues as national languages (*rashtriya bhasha*) and to a right to run schools that can provide education in the mother tongue at the primary level. The regional Sadbhavana Party's demand for Hindi as a second state language was not met: only Nepali was given status as the state language.

Another defining feature of the Hindu king was his right as Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Nepalese Army. The constitution allowed the king to retain this right, and to appoint his Commander-in-Chief on the Prime Minister's recommendation. A National Security Council led by the Prime Minister will be in charge of all other military operations. These formulations, when seen in connection with the same constitution's concession of emergency powers to the king (which should be seen as a serious threat to the democratic elements of the constitution), would prove (see discussion below) to be significant after the insurgency started and the question of the Royal Nepalese Army's role in quelling the insurgency became a pressing issue.

Other strongly articulated human rights claims were also only partially accommodated: even if discrimination on the basis of sex was to be abolished, women were not in all respects accorded equal citizenship rights.[49]

Considering the dramatic political events in 1990, the first Jana Angolan might most appropriately be understood as a rebellion rather than a revolution. However violent and urban-supported it may have been, it did not fundamentally change the political order. At this point, certain historical parallels between the 1951 and 1990 uprisings can be discerned. Both the "palace rebellion" in 1951 and the 1990 "urban rebellion" lacked mass support in the predominantly rural population. Both occurred at conjunctures of significant change in the international order (the fall of the British Empire in South Asia; the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent democratisation). In 1951 as in 1990, both the pro-democracy parties and the regime's loyal protagonists had ideological and social ties with likeminded political parties in neighbouring India, indicating a number of regional connections. In addition, the official Indian stance was of great importance, especially so in 1951. The Indian government and Indian political parties of secular and staunchly Hindu fundamentalist persuasion were active players during the 1990 events. New international actors (belonging to the donor community), however, had also gained considerable political leverage in Nepalese policies. In 1951, the democratic forces were out-manoeuvred in the political negotiations and presented with a political *fait accompli*. In 1990, the democratic forces gradually asserted a stronger agency through mass demonstrations. But this agency was considerably weakened by the ULF's internal ideological differences and by the tacit consensus on the indispensable role of the Hindu monarchy, which united the influential moderate Congress-led section of the ULF and the old regime.

The drafting of a new constitution in the volatile transition period nurtured great hopes that the constitution would indeed have agency as a "model" for the real restructuring of the political order. Such hopes were dashed. The "compromises" in the constitution would turn out to be irreconcilable, and a testimony to the shared upper-caste and Hindu elite orientation of the Congress and the old regime, and thus to the unresolved power contradictions between the authoritarian state and a rapidly diversifying civil society. The 1990 Constitution may thus more appropriately be analysed as a model of these politically contradictory and unresolved realities surrounding the negotiated "compromise".

A Halted Democratic Transition and Institutionalisation of Human Rights

The establishment of a multi-party system, the growth of a vital civil society, the ratification of a number of human rights conventions and the establishment of a National Human Rights Commission, all give the appearance of a democratic transition (between 1991–1995) with consi-derate efforts to institutionalise human rights. This subsection seeks to examine briefly how a contradictory development of political and civil rights and an uneven economic development unable to address basic

social and economic rights of the great majority of the rural citizenry came to have destabilising consequences.

Prior to the 1991 election, a plethora of new political parties sought registration, some of them lacking even an elementary political programme. The major political parties also underwent fissions, fusions and supporter shifts. Many former Panchayat leaders became members of the Congress Party, a sign of the old political elite's opportunism. The Congress leader-ship welcomed this influx, as they hoped the *panchas* would give them an extended support base in the rural areas where their outreach was limited. The old patronage culture of exchanging allegiance for political offices flourished. Two of the leftist parties from the ULF merged and established Communist Party of Nepal Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) and emerged as the Congress's main political rival.[50] Among the other communist contenders was the United People's Front Nepal (the political wing of the Unity Centre), which would soon turn from parliamentary politics and start playing a major role as an extra-constitutional force. In spite of the exodus to the Congress, two parties of earlier *panchas* (politicians from the Panchayat period) — with dubious democratic credentials — stood for the election. Both parties were headed by earlier Prime Ministers from the pre-democratic period.[51]

The 1991 election campaign in the rural areas was plagued by many parties' inability to pursue a nation-wide campaign. Unlike the controversial royalist *panchas* and the united communist party (CPN-UML), many lacked the basic party infrastructure in rural areas to engage in the campaign. Political repression by illegal and extra-political means was also fairly common.

Parts of the Rapti Zone (Rolpa, Rukum, Dang, Pyuthan and Salyan) of mid-western Nepal had long before the People's Movement (dating back to the 1950s) been an area of underground political agitation by the then underground communist movement. In fact, one of the national leaders, the veteran Mohan Bikram Singh, came from this area. The eastern part of Rolpa, formerly part of Pyuthan district, was already ruled by communists in 1957 (see de Sales, 2000). One of the Maoist splinter parties, CPN (Masal) called for a boycott of the 1991 elections.[52] This call received widespread support, Pyuthan had the lowest voter turnout of all districts (see Thapa and Sijapati, 2003:66). The Samyutka Jana

Morcha (SJM) was the political wing of the CPN Unity Centre.[53] The CPN Unity Centre had not joined the United Left Front (ULF) alliance, but operated independently during the Jana Andolan. Many of the political cadres within the CPN (Unity Centre) had found the 1990 compromise near to unacceptable. Nevertheless, they decided to utilise the multi-party system to engage in open public advocacy in order to gain immediate parliamentary access, while retaining their longer term objective of a revolutionary overthrow of what they saw as a regressive regime. In the first General Election in May 1991 the Congress won seven of the 11 parliamentary seats held by the Rapti Zone constituentcies. SJM won three (two in Rolpa and one in Rukum) and the CPN-UML one. The support for the SJM is notable and relevant to our understanding as to why the Maoist insurgency later started in Rolpa and Rukum. Among the nominated Congress candidates, there were a sizeable number of leaders from the Panchayat era. Reacting against the placing of *panchas* high up on Congress lists, many voters chose to support SJM.

The ensuing violent means of political competition between Congress and SJM cadres can only partly be explained by both parties' long history as underground movements, used to violent political methods. In addition to intact non-democratic institutional practices and party cultures untainted by even proto-democratic "rules of the game", two other factors were also of importance. One was the grossly unequal access of the Congress and the CPN-UML to the civil and military branches of the state apparatus. Another important factor to reckon with was the new availability of a public space in which political vendettas could be undertaken.[54] The general election was conducted relatively peacefully and reasonably fairly, indicating that elections were not a novelty in Nepal as such. About 65 percent of the electorate voted, a rather high rate compared with countries of similar levels of literacy, poverty and communication systems. But there was evidence of use of intimidation, vote rigging and vote purchase, suggesting that the turnout of genuine voters was somewhat lower than the official voter count. Two parties stood out as the winners. The Congress gained 54 percent of the seats (110 of 205 seats) and CPN-UML won 34 percent of the seats. The far leftist party SJM also did well in a number of constituencies and won nine seats. The two parties of the former *panchas* did very poorly and

gained only four seats (HMG(N), 1991:179-181). The communist parties' entry into parliamentary politics was unprecedented.

Retrospective studies of the voting behaviour at a national level in the 1991 election show the core support areas and voter groups of the communists and the Congress in those critical years before the insurgency was launched. The communist parties did well in the Kathmandu valley and in central and eastern Nepal. Moreover, they did relatively well in the mountains and hills of the western and midwestern regions (such as the Rapti Zone). The Congress did quite well in the plains areas of the western, midwestern and far western regions. Congress's electorate drew heavy support from elderly voters in the traditional castes. The communists, on the other hand, had a younger electorate, coming from rural small-holder, urban working class and aspiring middle class backgrounds (See Borre, et. al., 1991:356-362; Kumar, 2001). The royalist party (RPP) drew mostly support from voters with an ethnic background.

From mid-1991, Nepal had a democratically elected, Congress-headed government and a promulgated constitution endorsed by most but not all the leftist political parties. In the following months, G. P. Koirala's government did not deliver on many of its promised initiatives. Also, the economic indicators were unimpressive, inter-party rivalry for spoils was on the increase and Indo-Nepali relations re-fuelled the political system and public.[55] The parliamentary opposition again resorted to the streets, demanding Koirala's resignation. Even so, the Congress government stayed in power for another short period through the 1993 flood disaster and finally resigned in 1994 as a result of serious intra-party dissent. The parliament was dissolved. The mid-term election resulted in a hung parliament and the formation of a minority government headed by the party president of the CPN (UML), which had won the largest number of seats. SJM (Unity Centre-United People's Front Nepal), which had recently split, did not win any seats. The UML-led government was only in office for nine months, and was followed by a coalition government under Congress leadership, supported by the until then discredited party of the former *panchas* (Rastriya Prajatantra Party) and the Terai-based Nepal Sadbhavana Party.

This split in 1994 was indicative of the serious ideological disagreements within the SJM during the years 1990–1994. The party had found the 1990 compromise more or less unacceptable. Already in March 1992, SJM had presented the moderate-majority government with a list of demands.[56] During the following weeks, they launched protest programmes which were met with police violence and the killings of demonstrators. Such excessive use of force could not but radicalise SJM supporters.

During the whole 1990–1994 period, the party engaged in intense ideological debates. These debates centred on the general applicability of Maoism as compared to Marxism and Leninism, in addition to the role of political struggle in relation to armed struggle and, in the case of armed struggle, the relative merits of rural and urban insurgencies. The ensuring dissent, also fuelled by personal rivalries, resulted in the purging of the minority fraction of the Central Committee. The minority fraction stood for the mid-term election as noted above. Also, the majority fraction wanted to partake in the election due to tactical reasons, but was not approved as a party by the Electoral Commission. Facing non-approval, they called for a boycott of the mid-term election, probably as a face-saving measure. This fraction went underground right away and started its preparations (both on Indian and Nepalese soil) for a new stage of struggle. These plans were forged in close dialogue with its sister parties under the auspices of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM). Following the promulga-tion of the 1990 Constitution civil society in Nepal expanded very quickly and also diversified as a result of an enormous growth in the number of development-supportive and human rights-based international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Nepal. This growth was non-evolutionary, and artificially rapid due to mainly two factors — both structurally related to the neo-liberal development paradigm: (1) a massive influx of development assistance increasingly geared toward supporting the NGO sector and, (2) massive establishment of national, regional and local NGOs by both former civil servants (who had lost their jobs due to structural adjustment measures) and by bureaucrats and politicians, who saw the creation of own NGO as both a viable strategy for economic diversification and for gaining a political voice in civil society. The massive growth coincided with the

globalisation of new social movements increasingly addressing gender, religious and ethnic differences. Greater exposure to advocacy about gender justice and to formal employment gave increasing numbers of rural and urban Nepalese women a political consciousness of grievances and the importance of collective action. The globalisation of the new indigenous movement gave political legitimacy and direction to the new fluorescing of ethnically based-associations in Nepal. Considering the rate of growth and proliferation of civil society actors engaged in "the politics of difference", they could be seen as indicators of a considerable improvement in certain aspects of political and civil rights (the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, the freedom of association and of expression, freedom of thought) in Nepal during those tumultuous years. But these indicators can only be meaningfully interpreted when they are put in a context of a much more thorough look at the accountability of the INGOs and NGOs. As the works by Bhattachan, Dahal and Bleie amongst others have shown, there were pressing questions both the NGO sector's dependency (and top down accountability) on northern donors; its urban, regional, caste and gender biases; weak accountability to community-based institutions (and the ultimate beneficiaries) and dependency on both the Nepalese state and on markets (see Bhattachan et. al., 2001; Bleie et. al., nd.; Dahal, 2001). As is evident from both the above exposition and the subsection which follows, other aspects of political and civil rights (the freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, equality before the courts, equal protection of the law, freedom from arbitrary and unlawful interference into privacy and home) were increasingly violated under the nascent multi-party democracy. This becomes particularly evident if we examine the deterioration of civil and political rights in the Rapti Zone of mid-western Nepal, where the Maoist rebellion was initiated in 1996.

Preparations for People's War

Reports from human rights observers indicate that in Rolpa District alone, perhaps as many as 1,000 people were arrested between 1992 and 1996 under the Public Offences Act (See SAHRDEC, 1996). Allegedly, hundreds of SJM activists were harassed and were also facing false charges by NC and RPP party members. The 1992 local elections form the direct backdrop for these charges. The district administration,

including the political authorities as well as the police and judiciary, did not handle these cases in a transparent and fair manner. In fact, evidence suggests the local elite party cadres acted in collusion with the police.

In 1994, SJM centrally decided to boycott the mid-term poll. CPN-UML (which, based on the results, came to form a minority government) captured some of the earlier SJM voters. Also, NC obtained a favourable electoral result in the Rapti Zone. Reports of political and police violence in Rapti led the newly elected CPN-UML government to commission a report on the allegations. The report, which spoke of unlawful detention on false grounds and forced incrimination by police and local political leaders, was not widely published by the government, allegedly to not overstrain relations with the Nepali Congress (See SAHRDEC, 1996). Their local cadres were implicated in a number of the investigated incidents. As the Nepali Congress again came to power in 1995, the party's central and local leaders intensified their efforts in order to extend their voter support even further by undermining and taking over SJM's support base. Many SJM supporters chose to leave the party as it officially went underground. The party expelled those members who took part in the mid-term election. Many of those who did not partake went to live in India, where the Maoists had well-established collaboration with a number of militant leftist Maoist parties. Jointly, they started ideological and military preparations for an uprising on Nepal's soil. This uprising was seen as integral to a world revolution of the proletariat.

Observing closely both the developments at the central and local levels, the underground central leadership of the CPN (Unity Centre), the Prachanda Fraction, developed its final and consequential ideological considerations for the next stage of struggle. Party documents, interviews and the published writing of the Prachanda Fraction's chief ideologue Baburam Bhattarai provide us with few clues for judging whether the leadership devoted time to a last, specific political assessment of whether they should consider to make a final effort to create a broader popular movement in pursuit of a non-violent solution to the mounting cultural, political and economic contractions of the Nepalese society (see Bhattarai, 2003a and 2003b).

As the formal decision for a protracted war was to be taken, in 1995 the Maoists' and their supporters experienced human rights violations by a new regime claiming to be democratic and accountable to its international human rights commitments. Precisely how these experiences affected the leadership's decision to opt for warfare is difficult to ascertain, but the experiences undoubtedly had a mobilising effect when they started to prepare ideologically and organizationally for the uprising in Rolpa and Rukum (two neighbouring districts). A forerunner of the uprising was the Sisne-Jaljala (the names of two mountain tops) campaign. This political campaign was started by the SJM in Rolpa and Rukum from May 1995.[57]

In September 1995, a Congress-led coalition government succeeded the minority government led by CPN-UML. With a hawkish, law and order-oriented government, local politics in Rolpa and Rukum turned even more violent in the autumn of 1995 than in the previous years. Informal Sector Service Centre (INSEC), national human rights NGO, reported human rights violations in 1994 and 1995 by police forces in those areas of Rukum and Rolpa that were strongholds of the United People's Front (SJM). The same reports also contain accounts of SJM supporters' attacks on Congress workers (INSEC, 2002; 2003).

One major incident that led to further escalation of violence took place in Rolpa in October 1995 in connection with the launch of a cultural programme. A clash broke out between NC, RPP and SJM activists, leaving a sizeable number of supporters injured and arrested.[58]

The NC-RPP coalition government's response in November-December was a large-scale police operation called "Operation Romeo".[59] There are a number of reports documenting excessive use of violence and a large number of arrests (of both SJM members and of ordinary non-activists) on false or arbitrary grounds (See SAHRDEC, 1996). Most were arrested under the Public Offences Act. Reliable reports suggest that police made extensive use of the rape of women and girls as a collective punishment, in order to shame and humiliate.[60] According to reports, party workers from the ruling party directed police searches of homes of UPF cadres in 11 villages in Rolpa (See SAHRDEC, 1996:12). Such acts discredited the forces of law and order,

alienating local activists and ordinary villagers and fostering resistance among already radicalised political elements.

By late 1995, the fateful decision to engage in armed struggle was taken. The brutality of "Operation Romeo" thus suited the preparations of the central Maoist leadership of SJM for protracted warfare, to be launched in February 1996. On 4 February, the 40-point charter of demands was presented by the SJM Chairman Baburam Bhattarai to Prime Minister S. B. Deuba. The list contained demands for a new constitution drafted by a constituent assembly, abolition of the monarchy, abrogation of all unequal treaties with foreign governments, and several specific demands related to political, civil rights and economic rights (improvement of livelihoods) (see Thapa and Sinjapati, 2003:189-194). Before the deadline had expired, a number of government installations were attacked on 13 February. The political nature of these attacks is evident from the ways in which they were carried out. In the attacks on two police stations in Rukum and Rolpa, political slogans were shouted before and after the police were out-manoeuvred. No one was killed in these incidents. The attackers looted explosive materials and other valuables. The same day the plant of Pepsi Cola was attacked in Kathmandu and a liquor factory in Gorkha was blasted. These early attacks were ideological statements about the main targeted class enemies: the multinationals, local/national capitalists and the extended arm of the repressive government.[61] The People's War, a military extra-constitutional means of realising the political aim of first establishing a "new democratic state" and eventually a communist state, was on. It would soon spread to other western and mid-western districts and further to the far west as well as some of the eastern regions.

Considering the 1991–1996 period as a whole, the early years of a multi-party system would have been challenging for even a highly competent government. With the old axis of palace together with the army and police being largely intact, added to an entrenched culture of patronage in the upper echelons of government and within the mainstream political parties, the most basic requirements for starting to establish democratic governance based on answerability to human rights concerns were neglected. With simmering political discontent and a

determined under-ground Maoist party with a regional support base, the situation was ripe for confrontational politics by using violent means.

Violent Conflict Between 1996–2006

As stressed in the introduction, this article does not pretend to explain in full the unprecedented escalation of the conflict between state forces and Maoist guerrillas and militias during the decade. Instead, I will briefly illuminate how the above analysis of constitutional wrangles as political struggles over the attempt to define a principle of sovereignty and the palace's ability to maintain and recreate extra-constitutional sources of authority is relevant for understanding (1) why the two efforts at negotiation apparently failed over the issue calling a constituent assembly, (2) why the issue of whether the king or the Security Council should control the army is so sensitive, (3) the repercussions of the royal massacre in June 2001 and how they interconnect with the current king's use of emergency powers.

When the nation was still in an early stage of grieving over the killings of the king, queen and their nearest relatives, the beleaguered Premier G. P. Koirala stepped down, due to being under investigation for the abuse of authority[62] and a wrangle with the Royal Nepalese Army. Koirala gave way to one of his party opponents, S. B. Deuba, who had been arguing for some time that the Maoist insurgency was a conflict in need of a political solution. Deuba immediately declared a ceasefire (the announcement was reciprocated by the Maoists' military and political leaders) and started to prepare in earnest for negotiations. His political ambitions at that stage for solving the impeding crisis were related to his recent high-level contacts with the rebels, and also to his family connections to elite Ranas, who are influential within the Royal Nepalese Army.[63] After the wrangle with the former Premier G. P. Koirala, the Royal Nepalese Army had an interest in showing a willingness to collaborate with the elected government. In spite of these enabling conditions, the negotiations failed in November 2001 after three rounds of talks.

The main reason for the breakdown was the Maoists' demands for a constituent assembly and a republican state.[64] Nearly two years later, the government's dismissal of the Maoists' demand for a constituent

assembly was again one major reason for the breakdown of talks after seven months of ceasefire. King Gyanendra's dismissal of the Deuba government and his assumption of executive powers in October 2002 formed the backdrop for the second ceasefire in late January 2003. The new royalist government, which was deemed illegal by the parliamentary parties, also contained ministers this time with a conducive mix of personal, caste/ethnic and royalist connections, mustering the social capital necessary to act as dialogue partners.[65] The protracted negotiations again found themselves stranded[66] in regard to the issue of a constituent assembly and the army's serious violation of the ceasefire — the so-called Doramba incident. In response to the Maoists' demand for a constituent assembly, the govern-ment posed its version of constitutional monarchy, based on the principle of the sovereignty of the people. Remarkably, this government party was appointed by the king, who had just violated this principle on grounds of extraordinary circumstances, as spelled out in Article 115 of the 1990 Constitution. The Maoist leadership, like so many of their communist predecessors, again failed to gain acceptance of their demand.

But much more important in the longer run, the Maoists managed to use the seven-month ceasefire to engage politically with the general public and mainstream political parties in a manner which lifted the demand for a constituent assembly to the national level. This widened sympathy for their basic demand is a step forward. So is, most definitely, an increased recogni-tion of its democratic rationale as a process leading to a new constitution that can be "a model for" reconstituting state-society relations in Nepal. Even with this new openness to the demand for elections to a constituent assembly, however, there are justified concerns and fears about the road towards its realisation and about what kind of constitution would be the outcome. One such worry is how such elections could be conducted fairly in a far-flung country where, in many districts, government presence is confined to the district headquarters, and in a number of areas the Maoists are now the sole governmental and political actor. The party structures of all the parliamentary parties are mostly disrupted.

In January 2004, a spokesperson for the Maoists stated that they would be ready to accept a constitutional monarchy if the king were

willing to relinquish his command of the army and accept that a sizeable number of military officials should be removed from their positions.[67] This stance, if fully backed by the political and military leadership, is a significant signal of the Maoists' fundamental ideological and military concern with dismantl-ing the kingship-army axis as one founding pillar of the monarchical state. The demand for the axing of the top and middle level leadership of the army is also part of this dismantling strategy. It seeks to address the need to undermine the old axis between the top echelons of the military and the extra-constitutional centre, the palace. Thus, their recent move, if serious, could be understood as being related both to communist ideology in regard to how the conditions for transforming a semi-feudal state into a transitory democratic (bourgeois) state and later into a communist state can be established, and to the Nepalese communist movement's memory of the past 50 years of political struggle against an autocratic monarchical state. As the above discussion reveals, the Maoists' political predecessors have over and over again experienced the monarchy's firm backing from the army and police in remaining the centre of authority, whether this meant suspend-ing constitutions or disregarding constitutional proto-democratic reforms.

As shown above, circumstantial convergences of international and national events both in 1950 and 1990 influenced the course of political events in Nepal. The 11 September attacks, which occurred during the second and third rounds of peace negotiations, came to alter Nepal's role with respect to the international security agenda. The world's only super-power and its allies placed the conflict in Nepal on their own mental and geographical map of Asian "terrorist hot spots", and therefore offered substantial military aid. The Nepalese government was not able to withstand the US and UK's mix of courtship and pressure, and opted for a military solution to the conflict. This was conveniently used by the new king, who declared a state of emergency on 26 November 2001, using the aforemen-tioned Article 115 on emergency powers in the 1990 Constitution. The constitutional rights enshrined in the constitution were suspended, except the right to file *habeas corpus*. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and its supporters were declared terrorists.[68] Thus, the 11 September attacks were used by the executive monarch to alter some of the rules of the game and the relative strengths of the stakeholders fighting for control over the state. The Royal Nepalese Army was, for the

third time in more than 150 years, mobilised against its own citizens. With the increasingly well-equipped and numerous army troops entering the battlefield, the number of deaths, casualties and human rights violations increased dramatically. Perhaps less immediately noticeable, but still very significantly, this deployment fundamentally altered the way the king (as Supreme Commander) was constructed as a sovereign. Since Nepal's imperial expansion was stopped by the Sagauli Treaty with the British in 1816, the king-army axis has built on the notion of protecting Nepal's stable national border. The employment of the Royal Nepalese Army against its own citizens undermines this border definition, and establishes a much more contentious basis for the notion of the sovereign warrior king. The deployment of the army was the culmination of years of dispute between previous elected governments, the army chiefs and the palace. The dispute reflects another defect in the 1990 Constitution. As a compromise, the king was conceded the position of Supreme Commander, but had to act on the advice of a National Defence Council (to be led by the Prime Minister). After 1990, the political system had neglected to assert their role in the Council.[69]

The murdered King Birendra's reluctance to mobilise the army against the Maoists guerrillas during the early years of the emergency is well-known, though this is not the full background for his tacit understanding with the Maoist leadership. The differences between the elected government and the palace over who was the commanding authority actually was given emphasis in 1999, due to the preparation for an internal security and development plan. This included the employment of the army in all seriously insurgency affected districts. As already discussed above, G. P. Koirala resigned partly over these wrangles. The army remained immobili-sed until after the Maoists overran a district headquarters in September 2000. Then it was mobilised for security duty in 16 districts and remained so until the declaration of emergency about a year later. This new, militarily engaged, highly visible king-army axis, oriented towards internal enemies, might in the short run consolidate the axis, as the army is tethered with new positions and advanced weapons. However, fighting in hilly terrain cannot be undertaken only by air strikes alone. As the losses of army personnel increase, resentment and hatred by the population caught between the combatants will also grow. In the face of such prospects of increasing de-legitimisation of the army,

one can foresee the possibility of strategic alliances between elements in the army and other parties searching for a non-military solution.

Another key agent implicated in determining the role of monarchy in the short and longer term is the current King Gyanendra himself. The circumstances of this king's accession to the office are extremely contentious. As long as the official version of the bizarre events to the effect that the crown prince committed regicide because he was forbidden to marry his long-time girlfriend are not better substantiated, the great majority of Nepalese— with their acute historical memory of conspiratorial palace politics— will remain suspicious of the possible role of the current king and other surviving relatives in the massacre of his own brother, sister-in-law, their children and some other close relatives. This tarnished image of the Nepalese monarchy internationally is a mental burden on the intellectual middle class and elite, who are painfully aware that even the slightest hints of such serious allegations would result in full investigations in any state where basic judicial accountability mechanisms are in force. There might be indications of another parallel trend of a more distanced, reflexive attitude among the rural population in insurgency afflicted areas towards the monarchy. If these tendencies are reinforced in the coming years, the cultural hegemony of divine kingship shall indeed be under challenge in Nepal.

The king's political performance so far indicates that he might be ready to and capable of consolidating his power at the expense of any new deal between the state and civil society. He is, in other words, a worthy successor to the legacy of his authoritarian and unscrupulous predecessors, whose central place in the political history of Nepal was analysed in this article. The Kot Massacre in 1846 brought the Ranas to rule Nepal for a century. Then internal strife within the Rana family acted as a factor in the downfall of the Rana autocracy in 1950. Again internal strife, whatever the actual circumstances were, struck in 2001 when the country was already facing a dramatic destabilisation. These notable, but less visible and discussed repercussions of the royal massacre on public support for the Hindu monarchy might very well accentuate the drift towards a republic in Nepal.

The years 2005- 2006: a Second People's Movement - ending in a Comprehensive Peace Accord

The last few years have seen political change of a structural kind in Nepal. The scenario has moved from a seemingly entrenched triangular conflict between the autocratic and power-seeking royal regime, a fragile seven party alliance and a still assertive Maoist movement, to a basically bi-polar conflict that evolved into a second people's movement, which finally pressured a recalcitrant ruling monarch to reinstate the dissolved parliament. The reinstated House of Representatives enacted a number of historical decisions. The state was declared as secular and constitutional control and control over the army was transferred from the kingship to the parliament. The parliament also accelerated the stale peace talks with the CPN (Maoist), by opening up for real negotiations over the most disputed issues, including the future role of the monarchy, the composition of the interim government, modalities and functions of the Constituent Assembly and of the disarma-ment, demobilisation and reintegration process.

Let me first describe in some details the trajectory of this rapid-moving political transformation, which many would say, is unprecedented. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) support for the agitation of the seven-party alliance (SPA) could not but in the longer run weaken the King's bargaining position. The agreement between the new partners was mainly limited to the issues of the royal takeover and constituent assembly, as the CPN (Maoist) opposed the SPA's demand for revival of the House of Representatives. The alliance's "roadmap" for peace was no doubt inade-quate, due to its heavy reliance on the political and constitutional events of the 1990-movement. The roadmap's inadequacy also reflected the ongoing intra- and inter-party conflicts and the increasing gap between senior leaders still supportive of the constitutional monarchy, and second and third-generation leaders who were increasingly supportive for at least a real debate about a republic. One might say that the alliance's roadmap was hopelessly outdated, as it promised a return to a parliament and a leadership that in fact had contributed to the conflict escalation in the first place.

The 12-point pact from November 2005, between SPA and the CPN (Maoist) to oppose the royal takeover, should nevertheless provide one

important precondition for the popular movement that unfolded unprecedented over 19 days (April 6-24). This amorphous movement"' expanded its support-base day by day and came to include all sections of the citizenry; also district towns became the hubs of popular demonstrations whose force and message of the importance of human rights, peace and democracy had a self-reinforcing effect. The attention to the excessive use of force against demonstrators in international and domestic media, protests from the diplomatic community and international human rights groups and Nepalese Diasporas, served to strip the regime for whatever remained of its legitimacy and facilitated the final outcome. The final days of the movement became a demonstration of a diversity of popular expressions of women, youths, children, elders who had never taken to the streets before and the sections of the citizenry who were quite experienced street fighters. The mass-character of this movement and its democratic and peace-promoting aspirational values, make it reasonable to argue that the Second People's Movement of April 2006 was different from the rebellions of 1950, 1979 and 1990, whose character I have analysed earlier in this paper.

On April 24, the hard pressured and domestically and internationally discredited King Gyanendra announced the restoration of the House of Representatives that he had dissolved in May 2002. Shortly thereafter, on May 18, the House of Representatives declared itself the sovereign body in the country, and dissolved the Royal Privy Council, reduced the power and the privileges of the Kingship (such as the right to decide heirs for the throne) and the Nepalese state was declared as secular.

This early accelerated phase between April and June 2006 was followed by a much more contracted and unpredictable phase of tough negotiations over the most contested issues: the status of monarchy, the interim constitution, composition of the government, the modalities of the constituent assembly and arms management. The tireless efforts of a number of principal negotiators, pressure from the continued people's movement and the intentional community, eventually resulted in the 10-point Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) that was signed after the SPA-Maoist summit meeting by Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala and Chairman of the CPN (Maoist) Puspa Kamal Dahal (Prashanda) on November 21, 2006.

The CPA's preamble is an expression of the agreement as a compromise between a revolutionary movement, which indirectly state it ends the early 11 year long "people's war" and the mainstream political parties."' The CPA contains objectives and directive principles for restructuring of the Nepalese state, goals for reforms of state-bearing institutions, decisions to form (interim) institutions and bodies like the constituent assembly. As has been remarked earlier in this paper, constituent assembly has been a longstanding demand, dating back to the early phase of communist party politics in Nepal. The Peace Accord also spells out the conditions for a permanent ceasefire, demobilization, disarmament, reintegration and resettlement.

While these political developments have been characterised as unprecedented, they are explainable within the framework of analysis of this paper. The simmering and action-inducing collective consciousness as citizens among the rural and urban populace, that triggered the (largely peaceful) mass-character of Second People's Movement, was based on a convergence between certain distinct political movements and related consequential events from 2001 and onward. The Maoist movement's decade-long ideological awareness raising about the nature of the Nepalese state gradually affected large sections of the society, and the civil society's (and some media houses) steady-fast espousal of liberal democratic values of social justice and participation (backed by the international community, though not always united) came to reinforce one another - opening up a genuine public questioning of the old hierarchical order centred on divine kingship. The circumstances around the royal massacre and the questions of trust surrounding the successor King and the Crown Prince, and the decision to deploy the Royal Nepalese Army against the country's own citizens, served to intensify the de-legitimisation of the century-old state-bearing model of a sovereign king, protecting his people against foreign invaders.

CONCLUSION

The Nepalese Hindu state was formed by the combination of brute force and more benign co-optive and assimilationist political and social strategies. Consent was built on cultural models of divine kingship, of the bond between rulers and subjects and of a caste-based social order. These

models gained a hegemonic status through state and state-sponsored rituals which displayed the king's power in the representative public domain, through the bureaucratic court-centred culture, and a civil code as well as land tenure and taxation system that the Rana rulers appropriated and consolidated. In order to balance Nepal's sovereignty with continued domestic control of the state apparatus, the Ranas accepted a certain level of semi-dependency under the British in exchange for their non-intervention and acceptance of an isolationist policy. During the rule of the Shahs and Ranas, the Nepalese state developed a historical trajectory which had certain unique features. This apart, the Nepalese institution of kingship shared certain basic structural similarities with Indian princely states, whose actual power had been drastically curbed by the British, who remained tolerant of the pompous state rituals. The Rana rulers' isolationist policy, in a state based on rule by command and an honour code that made political dissent a religiously sanctioned sin, limited even the elite's exposure to Western political ideas of democratic governance and a body politic of elected rulers and citizens.

The earliest exposure to any such ideas occurred in the 1920s and 1930s. This exposure grew stronger in the 1940s as a direct result of the nationalist independence struggle, which eventually led to independence and a completely new political regional scenario. The events prior to and during the 1951 revolt, known somewhat misleadingly as ending autocratic Rana rule, were rather intimately orchestrated by the newly independent democratic Indian government, whose security interests had primacy over the more uncertain prospects for genuine democratisation in Nepal. The course of development in Nepal during the following decades was predicated by the Indian economy's increasing dominance and successive Indian governments' somewhat weary tolerance of the preservation of autocratic rule — including the regime's successful containment of the seeds of democratisation sown by B. P. Koirala's brief period in government. The geopolitical location of the mountain kingdom between two very large countries, communist China and democratic India, set the terms for the pragmatic foreign policies of Nepal's rulers, and provided them with sufficient political space to consolidate their control over the state apparatus, together with a nation-building project that became more contentious than during the earlier Shah and Rana periods.

After the 1951 palace rebellion, the ruling monarch quite successfully managed to accommodate the expectations of the post-war international community, newly independent India and the traditional elite by embarking on a modest modernisation of the state. The rapidly growing influx of foreign technical assistance and financial support facilitated and accelerated this process of restructuring, which successive ruling monarchs followed up. By continuing to offer the traditional elite privileged access to leading positions in the expanding civil and military apparatus while also accommodating to some degree the emerging elites and aspiring middle class (groups whose very existence was the result of new in-country educational opportunities), the monarchs managed to consolidate their power. The aid-dependent expansion allowed the flowering of a patronage-based and Hinduized bureaucratic culture, which, in the short term, strengthened both centralisation and the monarchy. The concentration of authority in the hands of officials at the palace created a classical mismatch between authority and responsibility, distorting elementary principles of accountability and favouring personalised *ad hoc* decisions, informal communication channels and disregard for basic principles of competence and impartibility. Pinpointing how a new, complex and potentially destabilising form of economic semi-dependency developed after 1950, this article has analysed Nepal's political and administrative development between 1950 and the late 1990s. A new critical form of reliance on Western donors developed, in addition, an increasing economic dependence on India and a less solid reliance on China.

While the regime was fairly successful for the time being in bargaining expanded economic and educational opportunities against acceptance of a limited kind of participation in "advisory" political assemblies during the Panchayat period, the highly discriminatory nature (towards service castes, ethnic groups and women) of this process of integration, which was not only not effectively redressed but accentuated by the development programmes of the 1970s and 1980s, created a simmering process of political conscientiousness with respect to relative deprivation, injustice and state responsibility. The communist parties which operated as much on Indian as on Nepali soil in the 1980s in spite of their internal ideological struggles consolidated their position as an

alternative political voice to the Western liberal one, which was espoused by the patrons of aid.

The 1990 movement was in certain respects triggered by regional and international political events. And the form of the movement in certain respects shows national political agents' active use of models for political action that were disseminated by the international media. The exposition has illuminated how frail the alliance was, fraught by memories not only of past decades' ideological differences, but of personality clashes and opportunistic power politics. The political agency of the movement was not only stifled by this frail foundation for joint action. The movement was also stifled by the partially co-opted position of certain key political actors (most importantly the Congress's) within the old regime. This co-optation was helped by the Congress politicians' adherence to the hegemonic notion of a Hindu monarchical state. The old political elite were also fractured. Hardliner *panchas* stood against *panchas* with democratic leanings. The negotiated compromise and contradictory constitution were largely results of these structural conditions' containing and crippling effects on the 1990 movement. The uneven alliance between the old palace-centred regime and the moderate and rightist parties more appropriately characterised as patronage-based networks created an array of effects bound together in mutually reinforcing ways that virtually blocked any institutionalisation of accountability mechanisms. Since a number of the connections and their cause-effect-cause chain-like nature are still inadequately researched, the question of the relative responsibility of the main leftist forces — the United Front, Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and CPN-UML — and of the non-partisan democratic middle-class for neglecting to join political forces to obtain a basically political solution during the 1991–1995 period remains a sensitive and unresolved issue in the face of increasing death tolls and the destruction of Nepal's infrastructure.

The analysis has shown how the last 50 years of political contention and partly failed efforts to restructure the monarchical state in Nepal have to be in no small measure explained as the result of contradictory multi-scaled regional (Nepalese-Indian) interdependences. These were found at the levels of governments (security policies versus a boarder panacea of political and economic priorities), the parliamentarian party

systems (the orthodox royalist parties versus the social democratic and some communist parties), civil societies (also comprising underground revolutionary communist parties), and lastly at the level of a shared Gangetic Hindu culture— affording religious and political legitimacy to the Hindu monarchy. The CPN (Maoist) international connections, also expressed through proclaiming the "People's War" as the vanguard for a world revolution, have recently created new global-regional and local interdependencies.

Political institutions in Nepal after the introduction of multi-party democracy were not restructured either to respond to or fully to contain the new pluralist, centrifugal forces fuelled by structural adjustment and a rapidly expanding civil society. Like a "pressure cooker without a safety valve", an intolerable pressure built up that resulted in the declaration of war by a Maoist party bent on dismantling the monarchical state and perusing a phased strategy for attacking the key functions of this state and stripping it of what remained of its legitimacy.

The Second People's Movement, and the reinstated House of Representative's historical constitutional decisions, including to declare Nepal as a secular state and to open up for a negotiated settlement, lead after a period of tough negotiations to the Comprehensive Peace Accord, signed in late 2006. With a restored multi-party democracy, a peace accord whose implementation requires continued commitments from several stakeholders, a government authority with weak accountability, gender, caste and ethnic-based social exclusion, a war-torn economy and a radicalised citizenry, the consolidation of peace in Nepal depends on a difficult social transformation in the years to come.

ENDNOTES

Martin Nijhoff Publishers, Brill, Hotei Puhlishing and IDC Publishers) for granting me permission to publish this revised article.

2.   The clashes between the People's Liberation Army and the militia on the one side and the Armed Police Force and Royal Nepalese Army on the other had, between February 1996 and late January 2004, killed 8,826 people (many of them civilians) as well as injuring several thousands. See INSEC (Informal Sector Service Centre), at: http://www.insec.org.np/killings_/data, 14 February 2004. As a Peace Accord is signed, one can establish the exact death toll, which is expected somewhere between 15,500 and 16,000.

3.   For an in-depth review of anthropological and historical colonial and post-colonial theories of the divine state in South Asia, see Ronald Inden, *Imagining India* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990).

4.   Accountability refers to mechanisms by which the population/citizenry can make the authorities answerable for addressing — or failing to address — concerns grounded in human rights. See Bleie et al. (2002).

5.   The four basic categories of mechanism are judicial, quasi-judicial, administrative and political.

6.   The unification in no way ended conflicts within and between fractions of the political elite, which was predominantly composed of high castes, but also of former trihal chiefly families who had heen offered civil or military positions and had managed to elevate their status as Ksatriyas.

7.   See Prayag Raj Sharma (1997). There have heen some discussions about why the notion was incorrectly transposed as four *jats* and 36 *varnas* in the original text.

8.   Since this Rana patrilineage was not of high-ranking Chhetri descent, it became critically dependent on Brahmin priests for manufacturing genealogies and assistance for other rank-seeking strategies.

9.   See Uprety, *Political Awakening in Nepal* (1992). The *sanad* declares the king's indirect confession of previous acts of tyranny and his surrender under the extended authority of the Premier.

10.   This network was centred on the Dasain festival and patronage of earlier tribal deities. For in-depth documentation and analysis, see Tone Bleie and Lok Bhattarai, (2002) and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka, (1993).

11.   For a most insightful and elaborate exposition, see Andras Hofer (1979).

12.   According to Uprety (1992), there were only seven Europeans in Kathmandu in the first quarter of the twentieth century: the British envoy, his niece, an English electrical engineer with his family and a nurse

employed at the court. Also, residents in the capital needed passports to leave Kathmandu. Likewise, residents from the plains needed passports to enter through the gates of Kathmandu.

13.   The Gurkhas represent the first-ever integration of any Nepalese professional group into the globalised economy.

14.   Prachanda Gorkha was among the earliest militant groups aimed at overthrowing the Rana oligarchy and establishing a constitutional government in Nepal. See Uprety (1992:59-63). The term *Prachanda* (meaning a fiery revolter) is currently used by one of the Maoist leaderships as a pseudonym and name for their revolutionary policy (*The Prachanda Path*). Though brutally eradicated, the Prachanda Gorkha gave inspiration to the Praja Parisad, the first organised party in Nepal. See Uprety (1992:67–83).

15.   These included the country's first-ever constitution in 1948, which granted some civil rights but reaffirmed the hereditary rights of the Ranas.

16.   A constitutional convention is a special gathering pursuant to constitutional or extra-constitutional authority, to deliberate on the revision or replacement of an existing constitution, or to write a new constitution. A well-known case in European history is the 1792 French assembly, where the republic was proclaimed, the king was given the death penalty (and executed) and the assembly committed itself to rule France for a short period. See Robert L. Maddex (1996:70).

17.   Mukti Sena was launched with arms from the Burmese government at the same time as the royal family fled from Kathmandu. See Brown (1996:18).

18.   Rose also argues (1971:191–192) that the refugee King Tribhuvan, under guidance from the Indian authorities, did not come out with a public statement in favour of the Nepali Congress and its Mukti Sena. The Indian authorities also placed restrictions on Mukti Sena's movements on Indian territory. According to Parmanand (1982:41), perhaps as many as 3,000 Indians joined the Mukti Sena despite the official Indian position.

19.   The land tenure category *birta* was abolished. An expanded and partly new bureaucratic apparatus with certain organisational resemblances to modern Western bureaucracy was established.

20.   Secretariat positions were granted to loyal royalists and alternative organisations like Royal Commissions were formed to bypass the Council of Ministers. See, e.g., Joshi and Rose, *supra* (note 29), p. 227, and Brown, *supra* (note 23), pp. 30–31.

21. During the Rana rule, the number of civil servants increased from around 2,700 (in 1849) to 7,000 in 1951. In 1963/64, the numbers had more than quadrupled to 29,000. A decade later they were 49,000, and two decades later (1983/84), they had risen to 79,000 (for details see Pandey, 1989:315-329).

22. The Koirala government managed to negotiate a new Treaty for Trade and Transit that was more favourable than the massively imbalanced 1950 Treaty.

23. Village assemblies were elected. They elected the district assemblies, which in their turn elected the zonal representatives, who elected a certain portion of the members of the National Assembly (*Rashtriya Panchyat*). The absolute monarch maintained the right to appoint 20 per cent of the members. Four members were elected by the Graduates' Constituency.

24. The National Assembly (*Rashtriya Panchyat*) was, in practice, not the sovereign legislative body. The Central Secretariat, which had no constitutional basis, was the *de facto* supreme decision-making body, accountable only to the monarch. See Brown, 1996:44.

25. According to (Baral, 1977:110-145), some of the class organisations were also channels for regime critique.

26. The same ritual could be observed as recently as in 2001 and 2002 (also shown on Nepali Television), when the new ministers thanked King Gyanendra for appointing them.

27. On a daily basis, the official newspapers contained many reports about royal attendances and initiations of anything from new road links to trade fairs.

28. In order to manipulate the picture of relative predominance of different languages, the regional languages in the Terai were classified in the 1971 Census as separate languages and not as Hindi dialects, so as to render the number of Hindi speakers low. See Burghart, (1994:4).

29. The land reform was implemented and the caste system formally abolished. These measures created goodwill among educated intellectuals and the foreign missions. However, these enacted reforms were not backed by any comprehensive sets of measures, which were necessary to redistribute land effectively and undermine the entrenched caste hierarchy (Cf. Joshi and Rose, 1966:475).

30. According to another study by Lok Raj Baral (1983:165-166), as many as 60 percent of the then members of the National Assembly were made up of defectors from the political parties.

31. While according to the line management structure, the civil service is answerable to the Council of Ministers, there was a contravening constitutional provision that made the Council only responsible for day-to-day management, leaving the king and his secretariat responsible for all political decisions (See Pandey, 1989:319).

32. Embezzlement was considered theft under Rana rules and punishable by law.

33. The Service Commission under the first Koirala government prohibited civil servants from seeking support from the Palace Secretariat, but the Commission's reforms and the later Civil Service Act have been largely ignored.

34. There were several interacting factors at play of which the aforementioned failed and reform was but one. Also, the Nationalisation of Forests Act led to decreased community access to vital resources: the population in the hills increased rapidly while the absolute limit for expansion into new arable agricultural land in this ecological zone had been reached.

35. A Royal Nepal plane was hijacked by Nepal Congress activists, the residence of the Central Secretariat was burned down and a grenade was thrown at the newly enthroned king during a visit to the border town of Biratnagar.

36. See Thapa and Sijapati (2003:43-50), for a more schematic genealogical exposition of fusions and fissions within the communist movement between 1949 and 2002.

37. These included the establishment of the Social Services National Co-ordination Council responsible for supervising and approving community development (including donor-sponsored ones) and the National Sports Council, a kind of semi-military unit.

38. The fall of the communist regime in East Germany was of course noted, but perhaps even more so some of the subsequent falls of dictatorships. The fall of the Romanian President Ceausescu, who had come on an official state visit to Nepal in 1987, made a special impression (see Brown, 1996:114).

39. Two major communist parties joined the alliance: the NCP (Marxist-Leninist) and NCP (Marxist), as well as the Varma, Manandhar, Amatya and Fourth Congress fractions, added by the Workers and Peasants Party.

40. The human rights violations included indiscriminate firing, false allegations without securing detainees' rights to legal assistance and trial, mass arrests of demonstrators, detention and imprisonment under torture, unsanitary

conditions, without trial and censorship (see Amnesty International, 1990a and 1990b). The police violated basic moral and religious codes by not returning dead bodies for funeral rites.

41. Information about the royal family's economic interests was circulated, and also comments that amounted to a critique of the traditional notion of the state's treasure as the sovereign's own purse.

42. See Brown's (1996:25–127) account based on interviews with the most prominent political leaders.

43. Brown, (1996:137–139) stresses that the Indians' backstage politics is not fully known. But it seems clear that the Indians were actively engaged in forcing concessions from the king and in trying to promote a draft treaty which would have limited Nepal's sovereignty in certain respects (*personal communication*, Dev Raj Dahal).

44. Some leading Indian politicians gave full support to the movement. Also, Indian activists gave assistance along the border. See Brown, (1996:137).

45. Krishna P. Bhattarai (President of the Congress Party) was appointed Prime Minister. The Council of Ministers was composed of four ministers from the Congress, three from the ULF, two nominees of the king and two independents.

46. One commission investigated disappearances during the Panchayat period and the other (the Malik Commission) alleged violations during the Jana Andolan (between 18 February and 13 April). None of the reports were published. The Malik Commission made suggestions for action against the ultimately responsible officials within the police, in the Council of Ministers and in the administration. The Attorney General did not take any legal action, relying on a series of extremely unconvincing arguments.

47. For a detailed account of the whole drafting process, see Michael Hutt (1994). One of the (in)famous incidents during the drafting was the version released by the palace on 21 November. The draft, which gave the kingship very extensive powers, was claimed to have been written in consultation with the Prime Minister. For details see also Brown (1996), and Raeper and Hoftun (1992).

48. See the official translated version of the constitution: HMG(N) (His Majesty's Government of Nepal), *The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal 2047 (1990)*.

49. Article 9 gives only children of male citizens the right to be acknowledged as Nepalese by descent.

50. The Nepal Communist Party (Marxist) and the Nepal Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist) merged into the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

51. The National Democratic Party (Rashtriya Prajatantra Party) was headed by Surya Bahadur Thapa. Thapa held the office of Prime Minister during the dramatic days of April 1990 and thus was discredited in the eyes of the political left. The other party was headed by Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Both would return as Premiers after the people's war had started.

52. CPN (Masal) was one of the splinter parties of the party also having the name CPN (Masal), which was formed by Mohan Bikram Singh in 1983. In 1984, this party was one of the founding members of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) (see Thapa and Sijapati, 2003:27).

53. The CPN Unity Centre consisted of CPN (Mashal), CPN (4th Congress) and a splinter group of CPN (Masal), which had got registered by the Electoral Commission in early 1991.

54. See SAHRDEC's (1996:8-9), which argues that many instance of personal animosities supported under the Panchayat system were translated into political conflicts in the new public space created by the multi-party system.

55. The Tanakpur Agreement between India and Nepal became a matter of serious political contention, as the constitution was ambiguous on the terms for ratification. The Supreme Court ruled in December 1992 that the treaty should have been ratified by the parliament.

56. The full list is published in Thapa and Sijapati, (2003).

57. See the reference in SAHRDEC (1996), to an interview in 1996 with the erstwhile Deputy Superintendent (DSIP) of Police in Rolpa. The DSIP saw the Sisne-Jaljala Movement as the real start of the People's War.

58. Of the 24 people arrested, seven of them were charged under the Public Offences Act of 1970 and 13 for attempted murder. SAHRDEC (1996).

59. According to Thapa and Sijapati (2003:71), the operation was headed by a Congress Home Minister known to be a ruthless politician. He was already sued in a criminal case, accused of being implicated in a fatal shooting incident which killed UML activists during the 1994 mid-term election. After he became Home Minister, it seems he managed to stop the case from being pursued in the court system.

60. Baburam Bhattarai's view of what happened during Operation Romeo was referred to in *The Independent*, 13–19 December 1995.

61. See the ML Party's own article on these incidents in *New Worker*, No. 2 (1996).

62. G. P. Koirala was under formal investigation by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (see Thapa and Sijapati, 2003:115).

63. K. P. Bhattarai's short-lived government in 1999 appointed Deuba as the leader of a high-level committee to suggest solutions to the Maoist problem. After promising initial contacts, the bitter intra-party dissent over the initiative resulted in Bhattarai's fall, and his critic G. P. Koirala, who advocated a law and order approach to the Maoists, again became Prime Minister.

64. Evidence about how the Maoists used the ceasefire to reorganise politically and militarily suggests that they had little faith in the negotiations. Immediately after the breakdown, the Maoists proclaimed the establishment of their parallel National People's Government and a number of large-scale offensives were launched in various parts of the country. Sudhir Sharma, *The Ethnic Dimension of the Maoist Insurgency* (draft), (Kathmandu, 2002).

65. Minister Naryan Singh Pun, strongly royalist Magar and successful businessman, is a good example of such a pro-regime actor.

66. Both parties showed no commitment to follow the agreed Code of Conduct and preparations were poor. Both parties' official statements were inconsistent. Both sides were influenced by hardliners who pushed for military solutions. There was no proactive support from the parliamentary parties, which were not a formal party to the negotiations and whose main agenda was the reinstatement of the parliament.

67. See http://www.kantipur.online.com/php/kolnews.phs&nid, 22 January 2004.

68. The basis was a Terrorist and Destructive Activities Control and Punishment Ordinance, which was followed in 2002 by the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA).

69. Former Chief Justice Bishwanath Upadhyaya, who drafted the constitution in 1990 and also the Civil Code in 1964 under King Mahendras autocratic regime, is unusually blunt about this omission in a recent interview in The Kathmandu Post (available at: http://www.nepalnews.com/Kathmandupost, 12 January 2004). He says: "Even in the case of the army, the constitution formed a Defence Council with the majority of parliamentarians to operate this body. But the political parties never asserted their role and let the king operate such a sensitive organ."

70. For a valid viewpoint questioning the role of civil society in the second people's movement see C.D. Bhatta's article in The Rising Nepal on 27 July 2006: Role of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution, also available at http://nepaldemocracy.org/conflict.

71. The CPA states in its preamble "Pledging for progressive restructuring of the state by resolving prevailing problems related to class, ethnicity, regional and gender differences." The preamble continues by stating: "Reiterating commitments to competitive multiparty democratic system, civil liberties, fundamental rights, human rights, complete press freedom, rule of law and other norms and values of the democratic system". Available at http://www.nepalnews.com/archive/2006/nov/nov08/Full_text_summit_meeting.php

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BORDER TOWN IN THE TARAI: SITES OF MIGRATION[1]

Sondra L. Hausner

This paper relates the dynamics of three border towns, focusing on Nepal's southern Tarai as a belt of migration. This paper focuses on the contemporary geopolitical reality of the Tarai as a place in which both hill migrants congregate and through which migrants leave Nepal and travel to the Indian plains, in search of work, safety, and opportunity. The theoretical aspects of the paper touch on the questions of voluntary versus forced migration, and also, analogously or not, voluntary versus forced prostitution (De La Costa and Alexander 1993, Doezma 1998). It is grounded in a critique of the rhetoric of trafficking as the sole measure through which the development industry – both international and national – views the movement of women across the Nepal-India border (Fujikura 2001, O'Neill 2001), and opts rather to focus on the labor conditions of voluntary sex workers in Tarai migrant towns. Prostitution in border towns is a global reality – border crossings in the Tarai are no exception – and our reflections on this region of Nepal must include ways to ensure the proper treatment of sex workers.

Each Tarai border crossing poses a particular set of geographic, cultural, and political realities, with various histories – certain routes are more plied than others at different moments in time, which reflect variable labor and market economies in India (Rankin 2004) and, in more recent history, the Gulf, where an estimated half a million Nepali migrant wage laborers live and work (Seddon et. al 1998, Seddon 2005), almost all men.[2] Women who migrate are by no means all victims of trafficking rings (Frederick 1998, Hausner 2005), but those who are trafficked are nonetheless among those who migrate. As far as we know, trafficking destinations are not usually large towns on the border. But active sending

routes change over time (Liechty 2001), and will determine whether a particular border area is a place where high numbers of traffickers cross into India. Junctures with direct lines to railway stations to Mumbai, for example, are long-standing routes of established trafficking networks; others pose fairly new markets.

In the years at the height of conflict in Nepal, at the beginning of the millennium, violence between Maoist cadres and the Royal Nepal Army was worst in the Mid- and Far-Western Development Regions of Nepal, and this too affected the changing rates of migrant outflow at different border points. Many more young men were choosing to become labor migrants to India as an explicit alternative to joining the Maoists in western Nepal than in eastern Nepal.[3] When my team conducted our fieldwork, in 2004, the number of migrants leaving Nepal through each border town that we looked at increased as we moved farther west, where the roots of conflict were coming to fruition (de Sales 2000, Friedman 2005) and where, at that time, the intensity of conflict between Maoist insurgents and Royal Nepal Army security forces was strongest (Lama-Tamang et. al 2003).

Nepal's Tarai: 3 Sites of Migration

The paper is not about the Tarai as a singular location but as a border area and place of active migration to India, as well as a destination itself, for migrants from other parts of Nepal. Understanding the Tarai in contemporary geopolitical terms means acknowledging its role, among others, as a series of points of exit and entrance, and therefore as a region of transience (Adhikari 2006). What I want to do is bring to light the realities of people's migratory choices at a pivotal moment in their lives, through the lens of the locations in which they occur. I am particularly interested in the question of women's experiences of migration; my research team elicited this information through ethnographic research in three Tarai bordertowns: Kakarvitta, Jhapa district, on Nepal's eastern border; Bhairawa, Rupandehi district, on Nepal's southern border, and Nepalganj, Banke district, also on Nepal's southern border, about 300 kilometers further west.[4]

The research was predominantly conducted with women crossing the border, but we also interviewed border guards and local community members, who likely observed many comings and goings of women and their companions, and were well aware of the realities of migration and prostitution. Our methods were open-ended, informant-guided, ethnographic conversations. The research was not based on pre-formulated questionnaires or conducted in focus groups, but rather took the form of informal exchanges with migrants as they passed through the national border.

The border between Nepal and India is a porous one: many more crossing points exist than are formally policed or patrolled, and these movements are legal. The Tarai region is a place of old migration: most border town settlers are themselves people who migrated from the hills three to four decades ago, in the 1960s and 1970s (Thapa 1989, von der Heide and Hoffman 2001). We must not think of migration through the Tarai as a recent phenomenon (although it has certainly increased in recent years), nor of migrants as a new kind of population. These are questions that must rather be fitted into a longer history of regional labor migration, and a larger view of state relations between Nepal and India, and also of communal identity (Hutt 1997).

In what follows, I discuss the three sites of border research, in turn, giving snapshots of each, focusing on the dynamics of migration, and particularly on the realities of border town prostitution. I end with a number of policy recommendations, emphasizing (i) the importance of educating women on processes of "safe migration" so that they may more productively and securely move to and through border towns; (ii) the need to establish refuges or rest homes for women who have been abused, trafficked, or thrown out of their communities, and the potential usefulness of existing border patrol facilities for this purpose; and (iii) the need to ensure that border town sex workers are protected, not demeaned, by armed forces. The easy equation that prostitutes need not be treated well – they sell sex, after all – means that the greatest difficulties for sex workers may come from members of those institutions that are paid to protect women and communities more broadly: the police force, the army, the insurgents.

i. Kakarbhitta-Siliguri

The Kakarbhitta-Siliguri border falls on an old trade route to Darjeeling, Sikkim, Shillong, and Calcutta. Migration between

Kathmandu and these parts of eastern India – and the kind of town such movements give rise to – is a well-known story here. One hotel owner told us, "You see, Kakarbhitta is a place of migrants. Fifteen years ago, people from Meghalaya and Assam started coming and settling down here. Here you find all castes and kinds of people."[5] This is a common tale in Tarai border towns, and we see how it has become part of residents' identity as well.

Most of the women traveling from Kakarbhitta through the border to India were not migrating but shopping, because goods are cheaper in India. Although border traffic is steady, migration did not appear heavy across this border at the time we did research there, in November 2004. Most women who were traveling through the border and not returning with goods were returning to their cross-border marital homes after the Dashain and Tihar festivals, usually with children, sisters, sisters-in-law, husbands, or brothers in tow. Very few Kakarbhitta informants were leaving Nepal for India for good, or for the first time. Migration through this border did not seem to have been particularly affected by conflict; at the time the research was conducted, Nepal's eastern areas were less affected by violence and forced recruitment than western regions, and this likely accounts for less out-migration through Kakarbhitta. Migrant flow was much heavier through the southern border points that lead to the vast plains of India.

Many commercial workers cross the Kakarbhitta – Siliguri border daily in pursuit of work that comes when a large, mobile population needs to be catered to: people shopping for cosmetics and trinkets to sell in small shops and market places; merchants shopping for vegetables and foodstuffs that could be cooked and sold in transitory *chai*-shops; and women crossing the border – in both directions – to do household chores in hotels and restaurants, and to sell sex to migrant workers, truck and bus drivers, local residents, and travelers temporarily freed from small-town scrutiny. Bengali women come to Nepal, and Nepali women go to Siliguri. Local hotel owners told us that women would cross the border for the day, servicing clients, and return home in the evenings.

What came out very clearly over the course of this research is the vast difference between trafficking across a border – the assessment of which was the original inspiration for the study we conducted – and

street-based or brothel-based prostitution in a border town. Kakarbhitta is a Maiti Nepal border post because of it falls on the route to Calcutta, where the brothel industry relies on powerful networks that traffic Nepali women (Frederick and Tamang 2005). The prostitution that takes place in Kakarbhitta town itself, however, appears not to rely on trafficking networks at all, but rather on women choosing to participate in a voluntary market for sex. This is a critical difference – that of consent – and succinctly demonstrates how viewing women's migration exclusively through the lens of trafficking both inhibits women's freedom of movement across an open border, and fails to ensure that public health provisions and social protections are provided to border town sex workers in their proper context.

Because it is an old, well-plied border crossing between two poor regions (eastern Nepal and the plains of West Bengal), Kakarbhitta has something of a reputation as a brothel town. The hotel owner where we stayed told us, "There is a lot of prostitution in this town although people are slightly cautious these days. It is not as open as it used to be. But what I have heard is that a recent trend is developing: village children – school children 14 or 15 years of age – also engage in sex work. See, the hotels have to pay rent. Look at my hotel – it has been mentioned in the Lonely Planet; it is more expensive than the other hotels and most foreigners come and stay here but still I find it difficult to pay the rent sometimes. How do the other hotels manage? They have to have some side business".

Another informant told us, "According to police station data, there are 300 hotels in Kakarbhitta. Let's say 50 are clean: all the rest are involved in prostitution. There are hotels that do not cook any food; the hotel is just a façade for carrying on sex work." When asked about migrants who come to work in the hotels, she replied, "What help do they need in the kitchen when no food is being cooked? What to do, sister; it has reached a point where we sometimes feel ashamed to say we are from Kakarbhitta."

Following a series of raids, the local Hotel Association had recently circulated a petition condemning prostitution as a practice in their establish-ments. A cabin restaurant visited by our research team was completely empty, possibly as a result of the recent raids. Prostitution is

a convenient issue on which both police and Maobadi want to "crack down," citing sex work as a social ill: while five women caught with men in hotels were being held as prostitutes at the border police station at the time we were there, the Maoists had recently cut the hair off a prominent local madam.

ii. Bhairahawa-Sunauli

At the Bhairahawa border, as in Kakarbhitta, many local residents travel back and forth to India daily for purchasing goods. The number of people especially men–migrating to India for work through the Bhairahawa border is extremely high, however: border patrols estimated that as many as 1000 people cross the border to India daily, more than half of whom are labor migrants. Moving westward through our three border points, the difference in labor migration between Kakarbhitta and Bhairahawa was remarkable.

Our Bhairahawa researcher estimated that most migrants were men between the ages of 18 to 30, migrating in a group of 5 to 15. Many had come to visit relatives over the holiday and were returning to India to work. About half of the men (but many fewer women) identified conflict – particularly the demands of the Maoists – as the primary reason they had moved or were moving to India. The other half identified economic reasons as their primary motivation: they told us that "no matter how hard they worked in the fields, it was not enough for their families to eat two meals a day." What is clear is that the political and economic sides of the coin are not far removed from one another: political instability causes economic devolution, and economic devolution causes political instability. People experience the combination of events; how they report them depends on how palpably they feel the effect of each, and on how much they trust us, the questioners.

The girls and women migrating through the Bhairahawa border, mostly from the surrounding districts Gulmi, Palpa, and Arghakanchi, were very uneducated. Few had been to school or could read or write; those who had gone to school had dropped out at class five. A few girls knew how to use the telephone. Our researcher found that they did not know anything about their destinations. Five girls did not know the names of their own villages, or the name of the places they were headed in India. None had the contact addresses of their destinations, nor did

they have any money on them. Women who were going to visit their husbands did not know what kind of jobs their husbands were doing in India. These women were entirely reliant on male family and village members, with no resources, address contacts, or information. They had no idea how to go about making contact with prospective employers, relatives at home, or institutions that could help or protect them if things go wrong, like the police, the Nepali Embassy, or a transit home. Many said that whether they worked or not, how long they stayed in India, whether they would be able to study, and whether and when they would return to their home villages were decisions their husbands alone would make.

Almost all the girls and women we spoke to said they trusted their families, and although a few first-time travelers said they were scared, most told us that they felt no fear as long as they were with their companions. "When I'm traveling with my own brother-in-law, why should I be nervous?" one young woman who did not know the name of her home district asked. A woman from Gulmi said she did not feel scared to migrate as her "husband had not left her for a second." Others confessed their fears; one woman moving to Lucknow to be with a new husband said she was scared to move to a big city, but as her husband lived in Lucknow, she had to live with him whether she liked it or not.

Many women we spoke to stated their confidence in husbands they had not met in years. This reflects a deep cultural value in Nepal – not limited to the Tarai – that women should look up to and place faith in men, and shows how encouraging women's independence may be a critical part of preventing trafficking and assuring safe migration. The essence of successful anti-trafficking programming lies in teaching girls to believe they have some role to play in their travels, in learning their geographies, and in questioning the circumstances of their movements, even if this means taking on responsibilities that men normally bear.

A number of women said they were enjoying their trips, and were excited to cross the border, viewing their migration as an opportunity to be in a new setting. "Safe migration" means that women should be encouraged to watch what their companions are doing, and how they handle the exigencies of travel, rather than stand passively by. In this way, women might gain experience and independence, rather than

remain reliant. This is a matter of gaining confidence, in part, as well as experience, so that travel, short- or long-term migration, and labor can all fall more easily under women's own purview.

iii. Nepalganj – Rupediya

The most heavily-plied border town of our research period was undeniably Nepalganj. Upon arriving in Nepalganj, one member of my research team reported, "It looks like all of Nepal is emptying out of Nepalganj!" Bus station officials told us that they had added extra buses to accommodate the extra flow: 60 30-person buses – around 1800 people – were leaving from the government bus station daily. (Recall that our research period was just after the Tihar holidays, when numbers of migrants were particularly high.) Even with post-holiday traffic, however, this figure indicates an extremely high level of migration to India through Nepalganj. As in Bhairahawa, a relatively small percentage of migrants (our researcher estimated 5-10%) were women and girls, almost all of whom were traveling with male family members to meet their husbands or brothers. Conflict had clearly impacted many informants' lives, but in most cases they did not identify violence as the main reason for migration, although many said the situation was complicated and uncertain.[6] As in Kakarbhitta and Bhairahawa, labor migration through this Tarai border point is a long-standing phenomenon; too few employment opportunities and too little land are problems that preceded the conflict, and indeed gave rise to it. Almost everybody hoped they would be able to return to Nepal at some point in the future, and even appeared mournful at the thought of not being able to.

The population of Nepalganj itself has certainly increased in recent years, because of conflict. If migrants to India more often cited economic reasons as their primary motivation for moving, migrants newly resettled in Nepalganj more often cited the conflict itself (although these two motivations should not be viewed as entirely separable entities). Women migrants to Nepalganj told us quite explicitly that they had had to leave home because Maoists had demanded too much food and money. Families migrating to the city of Nepalganj are likely more wealthy, and from higher castes, than those crossing the border from Nepalganj into India for work, who largely come from very poor families (Hausner

2006); most told us they did not have enough cultivable land to feed the family for the year. More wealth means that a family is first, more heavily targeted by Maoists, but also more able to reestablish itself in a new city, with the upfront economic investment that requires.

Nepalganj has also been concentrated somewhat, as people from outlying areas have moved in; surrounding districts were no longer considered safe. A woman who had moved from Bardiya, a half-hour away, said that Maoists had not allowed her and her husband (who had since migrated to Saudi Arabia, which had increased Maoist demands for money) to run their small *bhatti*, or liquor shop.[7] In Nepalganj, she said, opportunities were higher. She herself had become a sex worker: "After all," she told us, "a bazaar is a bazaar. We can earn money here somehow." Quite a number of recent women migrants to Nepalganj were family members of men who had migrated to the Arab States; some had found work as prostitutes.

As in other border cities, prostitution in Nepalganj is quite high – it is a border town, an army base, and an increasingly populated urban center of refuge from the conflict-ridden western and far western regions of the country. About half of the roughly 150 sex workers in the local prostitutes' support organization were recent migrants. One sex worker complained to us, actually, that the increasing number of sex workers meant that local rates of services were going down – what used to cost Rs. 500-1000 now cost a tenth of that sum, or Rs. 50-100. Nepalganj sex workers work out of small tea and liquor shops, as well as little *paan* stalls, where they meet and solicit customers, many of whom are Indian men crossing the border expressly to find Nepali women. Indeed, Indian men seem to be willing to pay more for a Nepali woman, and were therefore the preferred clients of the Nepalganj prostitutes we spoke to.

A number of sex workers we spoke with had been abandoned by husbands or had been widowed; others were married to men who didn't earn enough (rickshaw drivers, for example, who earned Rs. 80-100 per day), and who might turn a blind eye to their wives' source of supplemental income. Many came from abusive family backgrounds. A small number of more educated women said they were sex workers because it was fun, a kind of entertainment. Most said they would never encourage women to work in the profession; one woman said that when

she met new sex workers, she suggested they leave as quickly as possible. All the sex workers with whom we spoke were looking for alternative sources of income generation: most wanted to open a shop or start a small business.

Although there is a long history of prostitution in the area (including Badi women), police and other public offices have clamped down on prostitution in the last few years. Police had raided the major hotels and restaurants a few months before our research, and most hotels in the area had since refused to hire new women employees. Sex workers told us that the RNA and police were their main clients, however, as well as their main adversaries.8 Even though hotels would not publicly hire women employees in November 2004, a client could still bring a prostitute to his room. Not hiring women is a policy that clearly discriminates against women laborers because of false assumptions that all women migrants are prostitutes: such a policy means, of course, that more women will become prostitutes, because there are fewer labor options. Ultimately, the refusal to hire women so as to avoid public scrutiny most severely affects women migrants, the very people such public scrutiny intends to protect.

Policy and Programming: A Few Recommendations

In the rhetoric of the development industry, women's experiences are largely cast in terms of the need for protection from sexual predators:9 protect girls from trafficking (even if it means prohibiting migration); save women from prostitution (even if it is engaged in voluntarily as a viable means of income). In this article, I too call for ways to ensure the safety of -- or to protect – migrating women and girls, but without, I hope, the patriarchal or patronizing mechanisms that assume that women are not in control of their own movement, or their own sexuality. Rather, I wish to insert these realities of women's lives - moving with or without family members to find work; opting to migrate to a town where new economic opportunities might open up; choosing to become a sex worker in order to make enough money to live – into our view of Tarai border towns. Acknowledging these arenas of women's agency – and these aspects of life in the Tarai – is one way programmers and policy makers can help ensure women are socially protected, not in the sense of being

tightly restricted in their movements or behaviors, but rather in the sense of being free from harassment and judgment on the basis of their sexuality.

1. Establish education centers at borders: retrain border guards as safe migration educators, not interceptors.

Women we spoke in regions all over Nepal – migrants and prostitutes, educated and uneducated – hoped most fervently for education for their daughters, arguing that the independence and knowledge brought about with higher levels of education is the best social protection possible. The poor levels of education among women and girls crossing the border mean that they are entirely dependent on their male companions, and often unable to muster resources of any kind should trouble arise. Improving national levels of education for girls – and educating women and girls on the means and modes of migration specifically -- would mean that they would be more prepared for their journeys, and their destinations.

A number of organizations, most prominently Maiti Nepal, have trained women border guards to be on the lookout for cases of potential trafficking. This training and placement can be very useful to preventing trafficking, but not quite in the way it is now operating. Fighting trafficking will not happen effectively at borders, because there is no way to know whether, in any one case, a patroller is effectively stopping a trafficker or inhibiting a migrant woman's mobility. Stories of policemen and women taking bribes so as not to raid certain border town hotels (or not to stop certain people going through the border) are rampant. In Bhairahawa, one policewoman was accused of sending girls to India for money herself. And in large part because Maiti Nepal's advocacy efforts have been so successful, traffickers know they must go through "*chor bato*" – thief roads – when they are actually smuggling girls to India. As a Kakarbhitta customs officer told us, "Frankly speaking, there is a great deal of smuggling going on – both goods and people – but not through this route. They go through "*chor-batos*" – through the jungle or border villages. Now that the river is dry, they cross the border by walking through the riverbed."

Rather than act as investigators and police, border guards from women's organizations like Maiti Nepal, Saathi, and ABC Nepal should

act as educators and information brokers. Girls need to know how to check offers of potential employment or marriage, and become accustomed to the idea of acting independently. Education about how to migrate safely, such as how to keep records of contact addresses which can be shown to someone for help; the importance of having one's own money; and learning about borders, travel routes, and names of places, could be very helpful. A Bardiya woman working in a Nepalganj hotel did not know how much her salary was, as her brother collected it for her. The importance of teaching girls how to control their own money – and indeed that this might be a value at all – cannot be overstated.

Education materials forming the basis of a safe migration curriculum should be incorporated into girls' and women's empowerment efforts in both home villages and urban centers (SCN and S.A. 1996), as well as in border areas. As one long-term advocate of the issue told us, the best results come from programs that encourage girls to "check it out. An offer of marriage? Check it out. An offer of employment? Check it out. Who are these people? Where do they want to take you?" By encouraging scrutiny, critical thinking, and independence, girls will feel more resourceful and empowered, and be better able to protect themselves.

2. Establish safe havens for migrating women and girls: support transit homes in border towns and resource centers in destination cities.

A. Support transit homes

Currently, transit homes have been established to accommodate those girls intercepted at the border, who must wait for parents or guardians to pick them up and escort them home or to a legitimate destination. But large, well-run, and well-funded transit homes can accommodate many more girls than are stopped at the border. In some cases – certainly the Kakarbhitta transit homes – local communities have taken over the homes for a much better purpose: places of refuge for runaway girls, usually from domestic violence from either husbands or parents-in-law. None of the three girls at the Kakarbhitta transit home, for example, had been formally intercepted, and none had been engaged in prostitution.

These transit homes are clearly useful, but they would be more useful still if they publicly acknowledged that their primary purpose was to serve as a refuge for women who need or want to leave their domestic situations. Awareness about the broad uses of a transit home would also help the girls who live there, who said no one came to visit them, perhaps out of a stigma that all the girls and women affiliated with Maiti Nepal were prostitutes or had HIV or AIDS. The communal support available in transit homes, especially with a well-trained and dedicated staff, is an important way to ensure productive counseling, rehabilitation, and reintegration efforts of all kinds; these are successes that should be built upon.

B. Establish migrant resource centers

A number of informants told us that well-established and well-publicized "contact points" in Indian cities could be very useful for migrating women, and a transit home *writ large* in an urban center might well serve this purpose. One programming suggestion that has not yet been acted upon but which holds great promise is the establishment of Migrant Resource Centers, which could provide legal, educational, and refuge facilities for migrants from all areas in major urban cities. These centers, with phones and message boards, could serve as the "contact point"– for both families wanting assurance of a daughter's safe migration and possible employers – desired by so many migrants with whom we spoke.[10]

From a donor perspective, a migrant resource center is very efficient, as migrants from all countries and in all circumstances can be catered to under a single administrative structure. Women from many different areas of the subcontinent working in neighboring brothel areas would also be able to convey information to one another about how to get assistance that is not limited to women from a particular country. An ideal model might be transit homes in subsidiary cities and resource centers in large cities, although they would in the end perhaps serve very similar roles.

3. Ensure protective mechanisms for prostitutes, and encourage viable alternative income generation possibilities.

Mechanisms to protect prostitutes rather than penalize them would be quickly felt. Those NGOs that provide vocational training and

rehabilitation are greatly appreciated: the local support organization for sex workers in Nepalganj, for example, supported in part by GWP (General Welfare Prathisthan) appeared to be a model network, providing condoms, a drop-in center, and a phone center. A center that provides such services is a prototype that might be built upon for women migrants more generally. In Bhairahawa, too, local sex workers were very supportive of one another.

Although there is much debate on this point, legalizing prostitution would probably be the most protective mechanism for prostitutes: above-ground unions might be the best way to make sure labor conditions are sound, for example; women who are abused by clients could take proper legal redress; and sex workers might be relatively free from the harassment of police. Police can be a big problem for prostitutes. Some donors have insisted that male policemen undergo a course in gender-sensitivity training; whether or not this is acted upon, police should be roundly penalized for harassing sex workers. Police policies and procedures should be explicit about the penalties of mistreating prostitutes, and all policemen should be held strictly accountable to these.

In areas where they did not already exist, a number of women suggested establishing collective welfare funds as a critical part of building solid community support among sex workers. NGOs providing alternative jobs – beyond sewing or knitting, which are not viable means of income and which perpetuate rather than challenge gender stereotypes – should be supported, as many girls and women said they yearned for economic options. Ideally, loans could be provided as seed money in order that women could start small businesses. A long-time advocate in this area said women could easily be encouraged to work in business, as they already have advanced skills as negotiators and in managing transactions. They can hold their own, and even talk back to clients if need be; with years of experience, they can negotiate with customers as equals. Women themselves suggested opening *paan pasals* or small grocery shops; small-scale factories for chocolate, candles, or soap; or communication centers.

Finally, the women we spoke with explicitly requested that NGOs offer training or awareness programs for civil society – the police, the

press, and perhaps bar owners too – in order to mitigate the negative reputation and reduce the exploitation and harassment of girls and women working in the sector. Many women hoped that the impressions of women who worked as dancers, waitresses, and/or sex workers could be changed in part so that they might marry or remarry. In order to counter negative social experiences, women also requested rehabilitation centers, for those that have become reliant on alcohol, and perhaps most importantly, counseling facilities, especially for those women who have suffered exploitation and abuse.

In a region of transience, we see how those who might otherwise slip through the cracks can sometimes find unexpected stability, in domains not usually considered socially acceptable. As we advocate for equal consideration of the disparate regions of Nepal, let us not allow gender disparities to go unnoticed, or impose puritanical social assumptions on women who have defied them. Indeed, only by changing predominant views about women's roles in society can we hope for a just and equitable Nepal.

ENDNOTES

1. This paper was presented at the Social Science Baha Conference "Tarai: Contexts and Possibilities" in Kathmandu in March 2005. It is printed here with their kind permission. A Nepali language volume of the conference presentations, including this paper, was published by Social Science Baha in 2006 (V.S. 2063).

2. Men migrating to the Gulf often fly directly from Kathmandu, rather than crossing by land to India first. Because of strict laws regulating women's migration to the Gulf (now finally being contested in 2006), women who intend to move to the Gulf states almost always migrate to India first, often through land borders.

3. See Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict (2005) for an account of forced recruitment by Maoist cadres.

4. The research for this paper was conducted under the auspices of the Save the Children-USA Himalayan Field Office, Kathmandu, by a team of eight for a project on the Safe Migration of Women and Girls, in partnership with Maiti Nepal.

5. We were also told that a sizeable wave of settlers came into Kakarbhitta from Burma in the 60s, under King Mahendra's rule.

6. Those from Dailekh and Jumla (followed by Salyan) most often cited conflict as the reason for migration. Many families from these districts had migrated to resettle in Nepalganj proper, rather than cross the border to India; this usually implies more capital with which to start a business and reestablish a home (see below).

7. A Surkhet man and his sister-in-law had also moved to Nepalganj because the Maoists had increased their 5% donation requests upon learning that the man's brother had migrated to the Gulf.

8. Some Nepalganj residents told us that they had to fight the police when they wanted to close down Badi institutions of prostitution. Police action against prostitutes, then, seems very arbitrary, and more closely related to individual desire or inclination – in more ways than one – than to an execution of duty.

9. My thanks to Carole Joffe for demonstrating this link.

10. This programming suggestion was first recommended by advocates of the issue in Bangladesh. The beauty of the model is that it bypasses questions of which country bears responsibility for which migrant: the Centers could be internationally funded, and would benefit migrants to a particular city from any country.

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OUTCASTES IN AN "EGALITARIAN" SOCIETY: TAMANG/BLACKSMITH RELATIONS FROM TAMANG PERSPECTIVE[1]

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It is now common to critique the social anthropology of South Asia as caught up in the essentialization (Appadurai 1988) of a "hierarchical" caste India and an "egalitarian" West, however, the terms of comparison are more complex. Critics of the Orientalist traditions of ethnological and historical scholarship on South Asia (cf. Appadurai 1988; Guha 1983; Dirks 2001) erase the place of "tribals" in colonial formulations of South Asia.[2] The contrast between "tribes and castes," however, finds its way into innumerable gazetteers, ethnographic accounts, missionary ethnography, travelogues, and colonial reports well before the peak of the colonial ethnographic project of the late 19th century. The comparison is not, as both the Orientalists and their postcolonial critics would have it, simply dialogical; they are at a minimum triangular.[3] An opposition between hierarchical "caste" groups and egalitarian "tribes" has particularly structured the study of Nepal since the inception of ethnography there. Hodgson's first paper on "military tribes" in Nepal, for instance, was delivered in 1833 (Hodgson 1971 [1874]) to the Bengal Asiatic Society. Nepal emerged in anthropological imagination beginning in the early part of the 19th century as a domain of tribals who by definition were understood in contrast to caste Hindus as more fundamentally "egalitarian."[4] Brian Hodgson - the earliest systematic ethnologist of the Himalayan region describes the "tribes" of Nepal in these terms: "The whole population is tribal... But the barrier of caste, in the true sense, is unknown" (1874:32). This initial characterization had a substantial affect on subsequent anthropological work as the early professional anthropologist to enter Nepal in the 1950s focused almost exclusively on non-caste populations (Sherpa, Gurung, Magar) to the neglect of other cultural ethnic groups.[5]

My concern in this paper is with an understanding of how "egalitarian" Tamang have intimate and explicitly unequal relations with *kami* or Blacksmiths, the highest of the *pani nacalne choi chito halnuparne jat* or castes from whom, in dominant Hindu perspective, one can not accept water and whose touch requires purification (Höfer 1979: 53-67). If one of the sacrosanct boundaries in the anthropologizing of Nepal is that between caste Hindus and noncaste Tibeto-Burman speaking hill groups, how can the latter have caste? Moreover, if they do have "caste" how can they be egalitarian? My intent here is not to resolve these questions but to propose that our opposition between "hierarchical" and "egalitarian" may need to be reframed in different terms particularly those which look at systems of exchange and everyday interactions as they work in the production of cultural value. I am concerned less with questions of rank than with exchange relations especially those of symmetry and asymmetry and how they related to relations of domination and subordination (cf. Cameron 1998). I propose that Tamang govern their relations with Kami according to a different set of values or *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977) than Hindu caste villagers do theirs. Before turning to the specifics of Tamang/Kami relations in the area where I worked in Nepal, let me briefly reiterate the basis on which the egalitarian image of groups like the Tamang emanates.

Tamang Egalitarianism

It is largely in domains of marriage and commensality that concepts of hierarchy and equality take anthropological form in Nepal and South Asia. Western Tamang on the local level divide themselves into local patrician segments[6]. Until recently these patricians consistently practiced bilateral cross-cousin marriage with an announced preference for men to marry patrilateral cross-cousins or father's sister's daughters. The structural effect of these rules was to generate a regime that through time emerges as one of restricted symmetrical exchange among equal social segments. Although strict adherence to cross-cousin marriage is becoming modified in contemporary Nepal (Ahearn 2001), the logic of exchange in both practice and ideology - albeit of more generalized form

- remains intact in Tamang kinship and social life. These practices produced social divisions in the western Tamang region that were not - in contrast to neighboring Hindu societies - ranked endogamous castes then but unranked exogamous clans and *de facto* moieties (Holmberg 1989a). Even where status asymmetries in Tamang communities have been documented (Fricke 1995), these status distinctions do not perpetuate as clear hierarchical divisions like those found in Hindu communities in Nepal or village North India where marriages have typically reproduced a ranked endogamous divisions among castes. Tamang commensality, like marriage, is markedly open and reciprocal in contrast to closed commensal practices found among caste oriented village populations in hill Nepal. As Toffin concludes: "Tamang society is fundamentally egalitarian." [my translation] (1986:42). Thus, the presence of lowly Blacksmiths in Tamang villages poses a contradiction to conventional representations.

Kami in Tamang Villages

In the western Tamang hamlets and villages to the Northwest of Trisuli Bazaar in Nuwakot, Rasuwa, and Dhading districts, households or clusters of households of Kami or untouchable Blacksmiths are found in villages otherwise dominated by Tamang. Kami along with *sarki* and *damai* are the three main *d~lit* or Untouchable groups (*pani nacalne choi chito halnuparne jat*) found in this hill region and many other areas of Nepal. There were no Sarki or Damai in the immediate area where I worked and they tended only to be attached to villages with high-caste Hindus. One can usually recognize these Kami households readily by their separateness and by their coating of black charcoal dust accumulated from activities associated with the working of iron in their forges. The documented sizes of Blacksmith settlements attached to Tamang villages varies from none or a few to upwards to one hundred. Ethnographers have generally neglected Kami and other outcaste communities (Sarki and Damai) in their concentration on dominant hill Tibeto-Burman speaking populations (cf. Gellner 1995). This neglect certainly characterizes my own research and I want to emphasize that my interpretation here is directed almost entirely toward the formal interactions of Tamang/Kami and toward Tamang views of Kami and not

the inverse.[1] Thus, it is primarily about Tamang constructions of socio-economic relations. It is about Kami to the extent that Tamang are the dominant group in the area where I worked and their perception of Kami constrains Kami life in significant ways. My material is drawn primarily from the village where I resided supplemented by the Andras Höfer's (1976) preliminary accounting of Kami social, ritual, economic, and technical life. Tamdungsa[2] - the village of my research - had five households of Kami and 67 households of Tamang in the mid-1970s, a number that has not changed significantly in 30 years even though the number of Tamang households has increased dramatically.

Kami were and remain effectively landless and gained their livelihood through iron work for Tamang patrons or field labor for wealthier Tamang. Relations were structured on models similar to those we associate with the *jajmani* system of North India or what is commonly referred to the *kamaune* system of in hill villages of Nepal. Kami provided iron working service to Tamang patrons - whom Kami refer to as *bista* - for contractual amounts of millet, maize, and unhusked rice at the time of harvest. Relations between particular Kami and Tamang households tend to continue hereditarily and contracts are formally renewed annually. In addition to these agreed upon payments, Kami were entitled to meals at major ritual occasions (weddings, death feasts, sacrificial days, Dasain and the like) and receive special payments for major new tools. Most Kami find it hard to subsist on what they receive in return for metal work and most must work in the fields of wealthier Tamang households in return for payments in grain. For instance, at the occasion of planting rice, one of the dominant Tamang households of the village in the late 1970s employed 14 Kami (along with Gurung and other Tamang) who received meals plus either grain or money. Some Kami in the region but not the village where I lived produce, in addition to iron tools, beaten copper vessels and aluminum wares on a cash basis. Some were also proficient as carpenters and were regularly employed in that capacity by Tamang households.

Although aspects of Tamang/Kami relations approximate those of the *jajmani* or *kamaune* system, there are notable differences. The most significant one is the absence of ritual service accompanying occupational contracts, a characteristic *jajmani* practices in Hindu

villages. Tamang and Kami in fact live separate ritual lives despite their close economic relations. Kami replicate general Hindu practices with their own specialists- sometimes referred to, according to Höfer, as "Bahun." (1976:351). They do not participate in any major Tamang rituals or take blessings from Tamang Buddhist lamas. Kami *jhankhri* or shamanic specialists, however, often train with their Tamang counterparts - known as *bombo* - who are the undisputed masters of the spirit powers inhabiting the regional cosmos. More generally, the ritual life and obligations of Kami link them to other Kami communities in the region. The mother tongue of Kami is Nepali but they speak Tamang fluently. They also occasionally employ a "pig Latin" that Tamang are not supposed to understand. In their separateness, Kami remain, though, a ubiquitous presence in Tamang villages. They are always there at the margins of Tamang social rites getting their share of feasting foods or, on a more regular basis, begging, pleading, demanding, and cajoling food, tobacco, or *raksi*. It is in fact this characterization which plays elementally in Tamang constructions of them - an issue I will return to shortly.

Pure/Impure in Tamang/Kami Interactions

If asked Tamang will tell you that Kami are defiling and that if they are touched by a Kami that they must observe purificatory ritual. Toffin (1976:45) reports further that vessels touched by Kami must be ritually cleansed. Tamang refuse Kami entrance to their houses and will not accept cooked food or water from Kami hands. Kami and Tamang can not share the hookah and when men smoke together Kami receive the *chilam* part of the water pipe when all others are finished[3]. Marriage is formally prohibited and sexual relations are not supposed to occur between Kami and Tamang. Kami squat on the verandas of Tamang houses and are not allowed to sit on raised benches. Inequality clearly structures interaction. I remember distinctly the return to the village of a Kami who had resided in Darjeeling for some time. Immediately upon his arrival to his home village in Nepal, he attempted to interact on an equal footing with Tamang. He sat on the benches reserved for Tamang and his demeanor was not subservient. The power of communal sentiment soon transformed this social hubris and in the matter of a few days, he was back to proper form, squatting on the floor cajoling in

distinctively Kami style. Likewise, I had announced quite publically that I would not adhere to these sorts of strictures and that Kami were welcome in my living quarters, however, not one Kami ever attempted to enter my house the entire time I was resident in the village; they always sat outside even when explicitly invited inside. I, no doubt, was perceived as a temporary resident who was unable to mitigate or supercede pressure of local Tamang, especially my local patron in whose compound I lived. These strictures are familiar to anyone who has lived in hill Nepal and these practices appear to reflect an ideology of pure/impure and of necessary separation and hierarchy that we have come to associate with social practices of Hindu caste villagers.

Observers commonly explain the unequal relations between Tibeto-Burman speaking hill groups like Tamang and *pani nacalne j-t* as a function of the historical contact with and subsequent acculturation to greater Hindu Nepalese society, what has been commonly referred to as the process of sanskritization. Tibeto-Burman speaking hill groups as Fürer-Haimendorf suggests for the Sherpa "imitate" (1972:14) high caste Hindus in their treatment of low castes. In other words, the contradiction of "outcastes" in otherwise ideologically egalitarian societies becomes a function of immigration of Blacksmiths into new areas and the dominance in Nepal of caste Hindus. There is, I believe, a modicum of truth in this assertion but I propose that there is more going on than simply acculturation to caste ideology. Although Tamang observe what appear to be rules similar to those we associate with caste relations in Hindu society, the nature of relations and their conceptualization are distinct.

Tamang do not have an elaborate set of restrictions surrounding purity and impurity (Dumont 1970) or inauspiciousness (Raheja 1988), values isolated by anthropologists in the analysis of transactions in Hindu society. Tamang do not elevate common pollutants to the socially charged significance they seem to carry for Hindus or for that matter even recognize them as pollutants (for instance, menstrual blood). Significant named pollutions (*dip*) are associated with birth and death and they are ritually cleansed almost immediately without lasting implication.[4] In Dumont's (1970b) terms, all Tamang pollutions are "temporary." Tamang furthermore tend to handle the pollutions of death

reciprocally and symmetrically. To the extent that people handle pollutions they do so in a direct give and take. For instance, the impurity acquired through contact with corpses and the personal effects of the deceased passes back and forth in Tamang society among affinal kin in a pattern whereby groups reciprocally defile each other. Although Tamang adhere to Hindu-like restrictions on commensality with non-Tamang, within Tamang society the emphasis is on exchanging food - including in some ritual instances food from a common receptacle - and not on restricting food. Kami may formally be said to defile one if touched, Tamang and Kami in fact touch with great regularity and in my experience, almost never perform purificatory rites even though most individuals can describe those rituals. I have watched young Tamang women and Kami women parade around in festivals with their arms around each other. I witnessed a senior and influential Tamang man have his torso massaged by a Kami without ill effect or ritual cleansing. Tamang, thus, gloss relations with Kami in a rhetoric of pure and impure but their relations are, I would argue, constructed on very different principles of exchange and meaning.

Kami and Evil in Tamang Social Imagination

Outcasting of one form or another is not, in fact, confined to Hindu society in Nepal or elsewhere. Hutton (1973[1946]:133-148) and Passin (1955) provide comparative evidence on caste practices elsewhere. In Nepal, Tibetans, Sherpa, Gurung, Thakali and others outcaste groups like Blacksmiths and Butchers. Tamang have close historical links to Tibet and we may be able to gain some comparative insights by examining their practices which appear to be structured differently in these societies. Aziz (1978: 58), for instance, makes the following observations:

. . . . outcaste individuals in both Sherpa and Tibetan society have a chance (albeit a limited one) for upward mobility that will lift them into the mainstream of their society. Interaction is facilitated through commensality among all Tibetans including ya-wa [outcastes], who join public gatherings and are served food and liquor along with other guests. In addition to secular foods, ya-wa can also take ritual foods, votive offerings (tsog) distributed throughout the community.

Although both Sherpa and Tibetans view outcastes as defiling, this pollution is constructed very differently and gets linked with notions of the demonic and of evil. Ortner observes that in Sherpa symbology, "The lower castes as polluting seem best explained in terms of the demonic principle - violence and aggression - though sheer physicality also plays some role." (1973:55). Aziz reports a conversation with her cook about an outcaste man, "She [her cook] claimed he was evil, and when I retorted that in my dealings with him I had not found his so, she conceded with the remark, 'He's not too bad, but his kind of people are evil. All ya-wa are dangerous.'" (1978:58).

Likewise Tamang imagine Kami to be not so much polluting but perpetually wanting, begging, and, by implication, inherently evil. Connotations of evil culturally supersede impurity or defilement in Tamang representations. Tamang are likely to accuse Kami of being *boksi* or witches, of keeping *bir* or familiars for the appropriation of wealth and vitality from others, or in female form, to capture the shadow-souls of young children. Tamang exorcists and sacrificers chant out the evils of "Sarkini, Damini, Kamini" - female representatives of hill outcastes - when curing or protecting children. Kami are not the only ones who are accused of being *boksi* or of keeping familiars (*bir*) or of being evil. Tamang accuse each other of such predilections as well as of being *mengko* or poisoners. Tamang, however, figure Kami as being inherently predisposed toward evil whereas Tamang are not; they must prove it through their accumulative and greedy actions, actions which defy the reciprocal ethos. To understand this formulation of Kami and ultimately how Tamang frame their interactions with Kami, we must see Kami in light of Tamang village social ideology and practice. Kami as social evils are constructed like spirit evils according to a logic which stresses inclusive reciprocity. Evil is for Tamang linked to those who are left out of symmetrical exchanges, those who do not receive their fair shares.

Much has now been written on the ethos of reciprocity among Tamang and related Tibeto-Burman speaking groups in Nepal and I will not elaborate on it here at great length. Tamang are well known for the hospitality accorded to their fellows as well as visitors. There is a sense embedded in lore and social practice that if you horde and do not share,

your possessions will diminish and that if you share, they will expand. In the most ordinary circumstances and often with paltry resources, Tamang feel obliged to treat guests with food, drink, tobacco, and whatever they have at hand be their guests a local kinsman or a visitor from outside. More eventful social and ritual circumstances are marked by elaborate formal prestations and commensality proffered with elaborate etiquette (March 1987). This symmetrically reciprocal order takes highest structural form, as I have noted already, in the local social system of *de facto* exogamous moieties made up of patricians who exchange spouses in a system which can be accurately described as one of restricted exchange.

I want to emphasize, however, that at the same time that one can characterize Tamang social ethos as one of reciprocity among structural equals this does not constitute a total description of social relations. This ethos forms - as it were - in a field of social relations and practices which are in violation of this ethos. Accumulation, cheating, bickering, bitter factionalism are also a significant aspect of Tamang village life right along with harmonious interchange. In fact, the system itself entails structural asymmetries at any point in time between giver and receiver. My point here is simply that reciprocity is valued at times to the obfuscation of relations marked by inequality and asymmetry. Reciprocity must be seen as a value that emerges in a wider field of social relations and possibilities. The primacy of this value, however, is seen in Tamang predilections to moralize around issues of wealth and poverty. Those who accumulate or horde without a nod to redistribution or patronage are thought to be evil.

Social giving, though, is more than a fetish disguising real relations of accumulation and exploitation in a rhetoric of reciprocity. For Tamang, giving is a powerful act in that it establishes social relations in a specific form. It has the practical effect - as is well known - of engendering obligation and establishing control. In a quite real way, Tamang attempt to order the world by establishing obligatory exchange relations. Tamang ritually attempt to enclose social and cosmic forces into a rounds of reciprocity. Specialists are fastidious in being as inclusive as possible in their ritual offerings. They chant long lists of spirit beings that extend to the bounds of Tamang consciousness of the

world. Likewise, at the simplest meals Tamang offer symbolic portions up to the gods and down to the evils with every being getting their share. When they sacrifice, Tamang distribute portions for all. In the grand scheme of things, Tamang draw a circle around a moral society of reciprocity either direct or redistributive. Those who lie outside the circle of a moral community are generally those whom Tamang conceive to be not only "other" but to have denied a fair share.

If Tamang struggle on one level to distribute shares in a reciprocating universe, the also imagine some human and extrahuman beings are left out. There is an antithetical backside to the social closure of reciprocal distribution peopled by a society of witches, poisoners, and evil spirits. Among the most prominent evils in the Tamang cosmos are the four *mhiga* whose principal definition is those who are left out. The haunting refrain of the exorcism of this metaevil of Tamang social imagination is, "In death, you did not get a share/In life, the portions were insufficient." Tamang recognize not only the logical potential but the reality of incompleteness to their reciprocal efforts. Lurking in those social margins is danger. To deny is to incur malevolent aggression in return. In Tamang logic, those left out crave the good fortune of those with possessions. Evils like unwanted guests keep returning, demanding fair shares but providing nothing in return. Kami for Tamang villagers embody the social counterpart to spirit evils. Blacksmiths approach their Tamang patrons pleading, begging, demanding but not tied into the reciprocal relations that mark interchange with other Tamang. They are exploited and poor. In their relative want, Tamang imagine them to be perpetually covetous of Tamang good fortune and wealth. Their craving jealousy enters and ruins prosperity. An envious glance at a milking cow, a baby, a stocked granary can ruin, either sickening or poisoning. Kami women in particular are thought to afflict in this manner.

Symmetrical and Asymmetrical Exchange

From this outline of Tamang perspectives on outcaste Kami and their relations, I wish to raise in conclusion a comparative question. To what extent can Tamang outcasting of Kami and Hindu outcasting of untoucha-bles be understood as the same or different phenomena? I would argue that they are fundamentally different and that an

examination of patterns of exchange allow; us to compare these systems. The most obvious quality of transactions in Hindu South Asia is that they are inherently asymmetrical. This asymmetry holds true whether one works from a Dumontian perspective (1970b) which sees the opposition of pure/impure as encoded in Hindu village exchanges or from critiques of this vantage (Marriot and Inden 1977). Most work on high caste communities in Nepal see the relations among castes as consistent with greater South Asian practice.

In Hindu caste communities, symmetrical exchanges across caste lines are rare but asymmetrical transactions abound. Asymmetry marks transactions in the so-called *jajmani* system. Transactions appear charged with ritual meanings, marking separation, difference, power, inequality, and rank whether: one works from a Dumontian scheme (1970) of castes forming a "religious society" or in Raheja's (1988) stress on the "ritual centrality" of land holding castes. In Raheja's village of Pahansu in Uttar Pradesh, for instance, Bangi or sweepers receive *dan* or gifts and thus "inauspiciousness" from their patrons in an array of ritual contexts; they "remove the 'affliction'" of sick children during cures, and have ritual obligations at weddings and other social rites (1988). For Dumont (1970), Brahman and untouchable are linked through their mutual ritual dependence whereby the untouchable keeps the Brahman pure and thus ascendent and the Brahman communicates with the divine. Dumont bases his argument on the idea of wholeness whereby high and low are kept in systemic complementarity. My intent here is not to resolve debates in social anthropology of Indian villages but to make a comparison which is sustained no matter the interpretation of Hindu caste society to which one adheres.[5]

As I noted at the outset, Tamang and Kami do not articulate their interactions in a common cultural code. Tamang/Kami exchanges are antithetical to Tamang exchanges. Höfer captures the quality of Tamang/Kami demeanor that suggests something quite different from reciprocal exchange:

> The slightly plaintive intonation, feigning misery - a token of servility and thus an attribute of many untouchable castes - and the stereotyped allusions to his poverty appear only when Kami bargains [with] or visits his clients on holidays and begs for

some alcohol. In the smithy, however, an impatient client is rebuked harshly and a Tamang asking a Kami for a cash credit is frequently compelled to flatter and beg for some time before getting the ten rupees asked for.

The Tamang call Kami a caste of beggars and liars and point out that the Kami are never satisfied with what they get, even in cases of over-payment. The Kami openly admit that begging is a habit of theirs, fulfilling thus the role expectation people have of them. (1976:353).

Relations are not mediated by either the ethos of reciprocity or of relative purity and inauspiciousness at work in the generation of Hindu caste asymmetry. Tamang exploit Kami to the highest degree but remain constrained in their dependence on iron work and field labor. Tamang have more power but Kami have some too. There is a social anonymity to the exchanges which allow Tamang to act in a purely exploitative manner toward Kami, extracting in a way that is thought to be unseemly within Tamang society.

Tamang villagers situate Kami at the margins of a closed society and according to a different cultural logic from that reported for high-caste Hindus. Kami do not carry pollutions in order that Tamang retain a purer position nor do they receive *dan* and it's concomitant "inauspiciousness."[6] Tamang, moreover, do not respect the Brahman in any ritual sense. Ritual connections with either low or high are unelaborated and at best circumstantial. The lowness of Kami and their danger are best interpreted as an inverted refraction of symmetrical reciprocity.

Sahlins (1972) in his comparative work on exchange systems distinguishes between balanced, general, and negative reciprocity. Negative reciprocity is characterized by Sahlins as follows:

> Negative reciprocity is the most impersonal sort of exchange. In guises such as 'barter' it is from our point of view the 'most economic' The participants confront each other as opposed interests, each looking to maximize utility at the other's expense." (195)

Self-interest of this "most economic" type overtakes Tamang/Kami relations in direct contrast to a formal ethos of self-denial that is enforced in Tamang internal exchanges whether generalized or balanced. Kami ultimately end up with the short end of the stick because self-interest is limited by relative power and Tamang have the upper hand. In Tamang perspective, Kami occupy the position of outside insider and in this capacity can only be incorporated with the debility of being evil. The tag of defiling seems to be a secondary development through which Tamang relate to the historic rise of dominant Hindus Brahman and Thakuri.

Counter Cultures

Although Sahlins' scheme has some utility in understanding Tamang/Kami relations as they are constructed in Tamang terms, it does not really provide for an understanding of exchanges in caste society. Sahlins like his predecessors, Mauss, Malinowski, and Levi-Strauss, has a two poled comparison of "primitive/modern." His typology does not fully encompass the kinds of valued transactions that govern Hindu village life. Transactions in village India, as have been demonstrated consistently (Tyler 1988), are inherently asymmetrical and of ritually valued materials[7] among humans and between humans and the divine in a way that is markedly different from Tamang no matter what the interpretive stance one takes toward the issue of hierarchy. These asymmetrical exchanges constitute a moral economy but not one of balanced reciprocity, generalized reciprocity, or negative reciprocity.

Tamang outcastes and Hindu *pani nacalne choi chito halnuparne jat* are different even though the effects of their relations appear identical. These cultural boundaries are, I believe, significant but to discover their significance requires looking beyond Tamang/Kami interactions to the wider field of socio-political relations of Tamang in Nepal. In their historical resistance to domination by the state Tamang sustained a culture of symmetrical exchange, I would argue, as a form of counter culture. In other words, they reproduced an ethos of symmetrical exchange in the production of social solidarity that empowered them in resistance to state domination. It is not by chance that much of Tamang practice looks like the inverse of Hindu practice. (See Holmberg 2000; and Holmberg et. al. 1999). Ultimately Tamang culture as we witness it

today formed in an integral way in a dialogic process with encompassing Hindu culture.

In conclusion, South Asia gains prominence in anthropological studies primarily because it was one of the few domains where an active comparative social anthropology unfolded, led in large measure by Dumont's contrast of an ideologically egalitarian West and a hierarchical Hindu South Asia. The emphasis of recent work on South Asia especially in American anthropology has been to undermine Dumont. On the one hand, there has been an empirical effort pursued from many directions to prove Dumont wrong and an attempt to uncover the true and essential nature of Indian culture and social practice. On the other hand, there has been an effort to deconstruct Dumont's formulation as an artifact of an Orientalist project to "essentialize" which in turn leads to "exoticizing," and "totalizing" as the hallmarks of the production of anthropological knowledge (Appadurai 1988) in Hindu South Asia. Most of these critiques are well-taken, yet, we should not abandon a comparative perspective that allows for difference outside of this narrow dichotomy. Moreover, the frame of the comparison in South Asia must move beyond the confines of the insular discourse of a Western/Hindu to include systems like that of the Tamang. Embedded in cultures like that of the Tamang is a sociologic and a culturologic that counters both poles in this dichotomy and colonizer and colonized get refigured in intriguing ways where for groups like the Tamang their overlords were the Shah and later Rana royalties along with their administrative operatives. The language of exchange and attention to everyday interaction may well lead us in the right direction to translate across different systems. It is precisely in the encounters of different cultures in Nepal outside of direct colonial rule by the West that we will be able to displace the opposition which has dominated the thought of postcolonial critics of the anthropological project, critics who fail to take seriously the differences in societies like Tamang and their caste neighbors and the role of localized colonizations embedded within the larger scheme of relations between the West and South Asia.

ENDNOTES

1. Much of the recent work on India's *dalit* or untouchables has concentrated on either acceptance of or resistance to formal caste ideology concerning

their position (see Moffat 1979; Freeman 1979; Khare 1984). My concern is with social relations and the dominant Tamang construction of them.

2.   Pseudonym.

3.   Höfer (1979: 216) reports that Kami where he worked are not allowed to touch any part of the pipe.

4.   Tamang specialists innumerate the following kinds of pollution in ritual incantations: mouth pollution, pollution of black bear meat, pollution of cannibalism, pollution of eating orphaned animals.

5.   Raheja's critique of Dumont works from the logic that gift transactions do reproduce values but that those values are not those of encompassment or hierarchy at least as it is structured by Dumont in an opposition of pure and impure.

6.   Cameron (1998) argues in a similar vein in her interpretation of low castes in western Nepal. Her emphasis on viewing exchange in the everyday interactions framed in relations of domination and subordination is consistent with my perspective here. I would only add that these "economic" relations are, however, directly related to cultural value and reproduce both each other in a non-reductive way.

7.   As Gellner has noted in his own critique of Dumont, "The caste system requires Untouchables to be integrated as an essential defining feature and ritual role, the essence of which is that they must be different, excluded, and powerless." (1995:294).

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ALL IN THE FAMILY:
MONEY, KINSHIP, AND THERAVADA
MONASTICISM IN NEPAL

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Historical Background

The figure of the monk–shaven-headed, ochre-robed, intent on enlightenment– is a key symbol in all Buddhism, but it is far more central in some forms or traditions than in others. In the traditional form of Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal, known as Newar Buddhism, the contrast between monasticism as a symbol and monasticism in practice is perhaps greater than anywhere. The story of the Buddha's renunciation was well known, in the Mahayanist version given in the *Lalitavistara*. The main shrines of Newar Buddhism nearly all contain statues of Shakyamuni Buddha himself and main Buddha shrine is usually flanked by the Buddha's two main monastic disciples, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana.[1] These shrines are found in temple complexes, usually small courtyards given over to Buddhist monuments, known colloquially in Nepal Bhasha (Newari), the local language of the Kathmandu Valley, as *bahah* or *bahi*, and honorifically by the Sanskrit and Pali term, *vihara*. In other words, from the point of view of the tradition, these sacred Buddhist courtyards are monasteries and the ritual specialists who inhabited and owned them are monks. And yet there are no full-time monastics in Newar Buddhism. Instead there is a sacerdotal caste of married domestic and temple priests, the Vajracharyas and Shakyas, the male Vajracharyas being the only ones entitled to be domestic priests, the menfolk of the two groups together providing the temple priests of the Newar Buddhist *viharas*. Thus Vajracharyas and

Shakyas are in practice part-time monks. They are householders (*grhasthi, gristi*) and pass on their sacred statuses patrilineally. Vajracharyas and Shakyas may and do intermarry, but there is a slight preference for endogamy; thus, effectively, they form a single caste with two ranked sub-sections with different socio-religious identities (Gellner 1995). While carrying out their religious roles they adopt the position of monks: thus Vajracharyas fast and maintain strict purity rules while carrying out domestic rituals for Buddhist Newars; both Vajracharyas and Shakyas, while carrying out the role of temple priests in a *vihara* adopt the dress and rules of monks, with a monastic robe and eating only one full meal a day.[2] In the past, most members of the caste earned their living as artisans, especially as goldsmiths, silversmiths, coppersmiths, carpenters, god-casters, and so on. A few became rich traders while in Tibet.

The term for monk in this traditional form of Buddhism was *bare*, derived ultimately from the Sanskrit *vandya* or 'venerable'. In Nepal Bhasha the word refers primarily to the Shakyas as a caste, though it is also used by many to refer to Vajracharyas and Shakyas together (Gellner 1992: 67). Shakyas and Vajracharyas do not themselves like the term, because it is used in a non-honorific and, they believe, insulting way by the high-caste Hindu Shresthas, and therefore they avoid its use as much as possible. It is, however, an unavoidable part of certain set expressions, and in particular of *bare chuyegu*, the primary name for the ritual of initiation by which a Shakya or a Vajracharya boy becomes a member of his father's monastery. *Bare chuyegu* means, literally, 'becoming a monk'. Euphemistically the ritual is often called *cudakarma* or 'tonsure'. The texts call the ritual *bhiksu-pravrajya* or 'renunciation as a monk'. During this ritual the boy spends four days as a monk and on the last day he goes through a rite called 'laying down the robe' (*civar kwakayegu*) in which the boy's domestic priest reads out a recitation, on the boy's behalf, in which he is supposed to say, 'The [monastic] path of the Shravakayana is too hard for me to follow permanently. Please show me an alternative.' To this priest responds by initiating the boy into the Mahayana and Vajrayana paths of Buddhism.[3] The ten or five most senior members of a Newar Buddhist *vihara* are known as 'elders' (*sthavira*) and they carry out the most important regular rituals. Colloquially they are called *aju*, i.e. 'grandfathers'.

Although Vajracharyas and Shakyas carry out these rituals of monasticism in a number of contexts, they only form a small part of their overall religious practice. The highest salvific practice is to take Tantric Initiation, a secret ritual that lasts many days and is ideally taken with one's sexual partner. It involves following practices that are in direct contravene-tion of monastic codes: the ritualized and sacramental consumption of meat and alcohol, sacred dance performed by the initiators, and possession (Gellner 1992: 266ff.). The divine representations of the highest Buddhist path show Tantric Buddhas in full sexual intercourse. But, and this is a key point, these divinities were displayed traditionally only inside shrines to which access was restricted to the initiated. The way in which they can now be seen on sale to tourists and in shop windows throughout the city is a flagrant breach of traditional conventions. No one who had not taken the requisite initiations was supposed to see or know about them. Consequently, the more ascetic and monastic values of the religion – though not the actual practice of monasticism – were a large part of the public face of traditional Newar Buddhism (though the Vajracharya priests' predilection for alcohol was also a stereotype of popular culture).

In short, monasticism within Newar Buddhism was restricted to certain public contexts, it was primarily symbolic, and the high status of those allowed to enact it was passed on patrilineally. Monkhood was indeed all in the family (and caste). Monasticism was a key legitimating symbol, but even the most learned and ascetic of Newar Buddhist practitioners were not, at least not primarily, monks. They inherited their position as Buddhist priests and – one or two very rare exceptions apart – they did not withdraw from family life, but rather depended on it for their religious privileges. Vajracharyas' position was legitimated by their status as guardians of the Tantric Buddhist (Vajrayana) path; Shakyas were traditionally mostly known either as Shakyabhikshu ('Buddhist monk') or as Shakyavamsha ('of the Buddha's lineage'), and, apart from the fact that they filled the local role of Buddhist monks, it was indeed as kinsmen of the Buddha that they found their deepest legitimation.[4]

Newar Buddhism has always existed in contact with Tibetan Buddhism (Lewis 1989). Centuries ago Tibetans came to the Kathmandu Valley in search of Buddhist teachings. They continued to come on

pilgrimage to the Buddhist holy sites of Nepal, principally Swayambhu, Bauddha, Namobuddha, Lumbini, and the Buddhist shrines of the Valley cities of Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur. Some followers of Tibetan Buddhism, usually Tamangs by ethnicity, have always lived inside and around the rim of the Kathmandu Valley. Occasionally, even before the twentieth century, Newars took ordination as a Tibetan monk. Newar Buddhists recognized Tibetan Buddhism as a form of their own Tantric Buddhism, with the same divinities and practices, even if the institution of incarnate lamas was unique to Tibet. Theravada Buddhism, on the other hand, was unknown to them and it was only in the 1930s that they became acquainted with it for the first time.

Among Newars of the Kathmandu Valley today there are still some households where there is a preference for Tibetan Buddhism, in which the pious members of the family (usually the elders) say their prayers in Tibetan. There are many more where they have gone over to Theravada Buddhism and where devotions are carried out in Pali, the language of the Theravada scriptures, and these include many more young people. Such households – whether pro-Tibetan Buddhism or pro-Theravada – do not usually cut themselves off from their Newar Buddhist heritage. They still continue to call their Vajracharya priest for necessary life-cycle rituals. But their optional religious observances will be carried out in another idiom and using other specialists.

There is then a co-existence in contemporary Newar society of (a) Vajracharya priests; (b) the Vajracharya and Shakya caste, who traditionally claim to be 'married monks' but are now almost entirely secularized and embarrassed by the claim to sacerdotal status (and even practising Vajracharya priests nowadays dress like laymen most of the time), (c) Theravada monks and nuns who practise celibacy, and (d), on the fringes, Tibetan lamas, some of whom are members of celibate orders, while others are married. The Theravada monks and nuns disparage traditional Newar Buddhism, saying that it is not real Buddhism, and criticizing its ritualism, its connections to animal sacrifice, and the Vajracharyas' use of alcohol. The Vajracharya priests, for their part, regard monks as selfish, receiving the alms of the laity and giving nothing in return. Some Theravada monastics inhabit what used to be Newar Buddhist religious sites, having been given small, decrepit or

abandoned *baha* to occupy. None the less, architecturally and iconographically, the various Buddhist traditions are as easy to distinguish from each other as they are sartorially or liturgically. Theravada *vihara*s are usually modern, functional cement buildings painted yellow. In a few cases, munificent (usually foreign) donations have transformed them into marble-paved halls, or, as in Kirtipur, into a gigantic and highly visible simulacrum of a Thai temple. The *baha* of traditional Newar Buddhism, on the other hand, are usually situated around a courtyard set back from the road, with characteristic carved wooden tympani over the doors of the shrines, carved wooden struts supporting a tiled roof, and at least one, and often numerous, *caitya*s adorning the courtyard in front.5

The introduction of the Theravada movement has opened up leading Buddhist religious roles to men and women of all castes and backgrounds, where previously they were restricted to Vajracharya, and to a lesser extent Shakya, men. The emergence of new roles for women is a remarkable innovation, for which the women have had to struggle for fifty years. Since the Theravada monastics (unlike Vajracharya priests) may not work (except at teaching), they almost never have salaried employment and rely on the laity to support them. This means that a series of overlapping lay communities supporting the monastics and focused on specific *vihara*s has grown up, which re-creates – in a more modern, less caste-bound, and more open and fluid way – the communal focus that existed, and still to some extent does exist for their members, in the traditional Newar Buddhist *baha*s. Traditional *baha*s belong to, and have as members, the male members of one, several, or (in the case of a few large ones) a large number of Vajracharya and Shakya patrilines. The Theravada *vihara*s belong to (are donated to) the Sangha or monastic association, of Nepal, and are run by self-chosen committees of lay people. These lay people may be related to each other but there is no requirement for them to be so.

The Beginnings of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal

Given this background, it is perhaps understandable that Shakyas and Vajracharyas should be predisposed to be impressed by the Buddhism they encountered in Tibet; it also made good commercial sense as well to

seek the protection of powerful Buddhist institutions in Lhasa and elsewhere. Then, in the 1920s, there was an upsurge of Buddhist revivalism in the Kathmandu Valley itself. A number of factors seem to have come together to produce this revival. Pandit Nisthananda Vajracharya of Kathmandu went to Calcutta in 1914 in order to have his Nepal Bhasha (Newari) version of the Buddha's life-story, the *Lalitavistara*, printed. Both before and after the printing he held numerous public readings of it. A group from Uku Baha, Lalitpur, were inspired by this to put on a play of the Buddha's life, which was widely influential. Dharma Aditya Dharmacharya, born Jagat Man Vaidya, went to Calcutta to study commerce, came under the influence of Anagarika Dharmapala and his Maha Bodhi Society, and was attempting to revive Newar Buddhism by various modernist activities, such as publishing Buddhist magazines, founding new organizations, and holding conferences. In 1925 a charismatic Tibetan celibate, Kyantse Lama, came to Kathmandu and gave teachings to which hundreds of Newar Buddhist devotees flocked. Under the influence of all this five young Newar men became monks in the Tibetan tradition. By caste they were three Shakyas, a Manandhar, and a Shrestha. The last was Mahapragya, destined to become one of the most influential Nepali monks. Because Mahapragya was a Shrestha, and therefore presumed to be born a Hindu, the Rana authorities took umbrage and expelled all five plus the lama who had initiated them to India. There they made contact with the Maha Bodhi Society and Theravada Buddhism, though they did not convert immediately. Mahapragya continued to Tibet, and in Lhasa he recruited a young Newar trader, an Uday, who became Karmasil (later Pragyananda). Together they performed austerities, but unconvinced, they returned to India. In successive years, 1929 and 1930, they went to Kushinagara, where the Buddha died and attained ultimate enlightenment, and took ordination as Theravada novices from the Ven. Chandramani, a Burmese monk who had been sent to Kushinagara at the instigation of the Maha Bodhi Society.

It is an important and interesting question why they chose to give up being monks in the Tibetan tradition. The evidence, at least for these early founders of the Theravada movement, is that they did not see any fundamental difference between Theravada Buddhism and Tibetan Buddhism. What was important was to be a monk and thus to reintroduce

permanent monastic practice to the Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley. They became persuaded that Pali was easier to learn for Nepalis than Tibetan and that Theravada Buddhism was easier to study and teach than Tibetan Buddhism.6 The position of female converts was different, because the Theravada nuns' ordination lineage had disappeared from South Asia in the eleventh century and had never been revived. Thus, the nuns, unlike the monks, were stepping into a hitherto almost unknown role. As the tradition had died out, and because it takes a minimum of five nuns to ordain a new nun, they could not have the status of a fully ordained nun or *bhikkhuni*. Thus they were merely ten-precept laywomen or *anagarika* (homeless ones).

The young religious reformers of the 1920s-1940s sought to *reform* Newar Buddhism, rather than to *replace* it, and to do so by reintroducing to Nepal the genuine monasticism which had metamorphosed into a caste of householder priests in the Middle Ages. They also sought to rid Newar Buddhist traditions of what they saw as un-Buddhist practices, especially animal sacrifice, adopted from the dominant Hindu culture, and they sought to educate the laity about the dharma and provide them with vernacular translations of canonical texts. They encouraged devotions focused on Sakyamuni Buddha rather than on the traditional elaborate Hindu-Buddhist pantheon of gods and bodhisattvas.

Several of the new Theravada monks had once been married but had left their families 'to go into homelessness'. All the nuns were formerly-married women seeking to escape the social marginality of widowhood or divorce. For many years their only recourse was to share quarters with the monks who repeatedly obstructed their relationships with the laity and expected them to fill the role of monastery servants.

From perilous beginnings in which they were harassed, imprisoned, and even exiled by the brahmanically orthodox Rana government, the Theravadins saw their revival movement slowly gain momentum, particularly after the Rana regime was ousted in 1950/51. By the mid 1970s, forty years after the first Theravadin monks preached the dharma in Nepal, there were 44 monks and 37 nuns; by the end of the 1980s there were 59 monks, 72 novices, and 70 nuns, and in 2001, 78 monks, 94 novices, and 118 nuns. Where there had been no Theravada monasteries in Nepal in 1930, today there are 98, including 17 nunneries.7

Although almost all Newar Buddhist still call Mahayana priests to perform domestic life-cycle rituals, they often do so in the most minimal way compatible with their social status. The Theravada Buddhists have succeeded in almost wiping out one traditional ritual and replacing it with one of their own devising. This is the traditional *barha tayegu* puberty ritual for Newar girls, for which now the vast majority of Buddhists substitute *rishini pabbajja* ('the renunciation of a sage-ess'), sending their daughter to a Theravada *vihara* for between three and twelve days of instruction in Pali and Buddhist precepts. What the Theravadins have succeeded in doing in the case of this one ritual they may eventually succeed in doing in others as well. Even if they do not, ideologically many prefer Theravada Buddhism which, being more comprehensible, egalitarian, and inclusive of women, they see as better suited to modern life.

The Theravada monks are called *bhikshu*, and their presence in the Kathmandu Valley has more or less effaced the Shakyas' and Vajracharyas' claims to be the monks of Newar Buddhism. No Shakya today uses 'Shakyabhikshu' ('Buddhist monk') as his surname. Lay people address Theravada monks using the newly introduced term *bhante* (Pali 'venerable') and this word is often used colloquially in reference to mean 'monk' and in the plural to mean 'monks'. Very senior Theravada monks are called *sthavira*, 'elder', just like the elders of a traditional Newar Buddhist monastery; but no one would use the colloquial *aju* (grandfather) for a Theravada monk. Between themselves monks do use kinship terms for address; thus a very old monk will be addressed as 'Bhante grandfather (*bhante bajya*)'. This use of kin terms as a respectful way to address unrelated seniors is carried over directly from Nepali and Nepal Bhasha. A slightly older monk may be addressed as 'Bhante older brother (*bhante dai*)'. Younger monks are normally addressed by name. More formally the Pali word *avuso* or *ayusman* ('friend'), either on its own or with their name, may be used.

For female monastics the situation is more complicated. The nuns' Order had died out in Theravada Buddhism, so technically renunciate women could not lay claim to the status of full nuns (*bhikshuni*) and were only 'ten precept laywomen', for whom the new word *anagarika* or 'homeless one' was adopted from the 1930s. In the 1980s a movement,

led by Western feminist Buddhist, started for the re-establishment of the nuns Order where it had died out and its establishment where it had never existed (e.g. in Tibet). The older Theravada monks in Nepal follow the monastic establishments in Burma, Thailand, and Sri Lanka, in rejecting the possibility of re-founding the nuns' Order and therefore refuse to refer to contemporary nuns as *bhikkhuni* (Pali) or *bhikshuni* (Sanskrit), or to their nunneries as *vihara*. Instead they continue to call them *anagarika*. Colloquially the problem is avoided, because the most common way to address nuns, and to speak about them in reference, is as *guruma* ('guru mother'), the term that was and is used for the wife of a Vajracharya priest, who accompanies her husband to domestic rituals as a kind of assistant.8

Caste in Newar Buddhism

Sakyamuni Buddha established a monastic order based on a hierarchy of ordination rather than of caste and accepted recruits from many backgrounds, including untouchables. In this regard the egalitarianism of the early Sangha contrasted sharply with the hierarchical structure of South Asian society in which it was embedded and in which the Buddhist laity, like Hindus, was ordered by caste. Although we can only speculate about the structure of society in the Kathmandu Valley before the common era, inscriptional evidence from the Licchavi period (fifth to tenth century CE) indicates that a caste society similar to that of the Indian plains had developed. By the fourteenth century, when the Sangha is thought to have completed its long process of laicization, it came to occupy the summit of a baroque and complex caste system. At its apex stood two householder priestly castes: on the one side the Vajracharyas and Shakyas, on the other side Hindu Brahmans. Although far more numerous than the Brahmans, the Vajracharyas, in particular, were, and were seen as, the Buddhist equivalent of Brahmans. Below them in the hierarchy of purity/impurity came five more 'blocs' of castes: (i) traders and landowners (Shresthas, mostly Hindu, and Uday, Buddhist); (ii) farmers (Maharjan-Jyapu, in the west of the Valley Buddhist, in the east mainly Hindu); (iii) many small 'clean' occupational (artisan) castes (mostly Buddhist); (iv) the Butcher/Milkseller caste, theoretically not untouchable though water was not supposed to be taken from them; (v) Untouchables, mainly Sweepers.9 Shresthas and Udays as well as

Vajracharyas and Shakyas were eligible to take Tantric initiations which enabled them to participate in salvific rituals from which members of lower castes were excluded. Although upper-caste wives took such initiations along with their husbands and the wives of Vajracharyas took supportive parts in ritual practice, the great majority of Buddhist women, excluded from religious instruction, were confined to a devotional role.

The first small group of Newars who took Theravada ordination came almost exclusively from upper-caste and Buddhist backgrounds. With the exception of Mahapragya, who was a Shrestha, all male as well as female monastics were either Shakyas, Udays, or Manandhars. 10 As occasional temple priests but not domestic priests, Shakyas were barred from making a livelihood by performing rituals for the laity; instead they worked as goldsmiths and icon makers. The traditional identity of Shakyas as 'sons of the Buddha', 'descendants of the Buddha' (Shakyavamsha), and Buddhist monks (Shakya-bhikshu) in a ritual sense, if not in actual life conduct, meant that Shakyas were particularly likely to feel the call of monasticism. For an example of the way in which Theravada adherence tends to cluster in related households, see Figure 1.

Figure 1: A Shakya Lineage and its Theravada Attachments
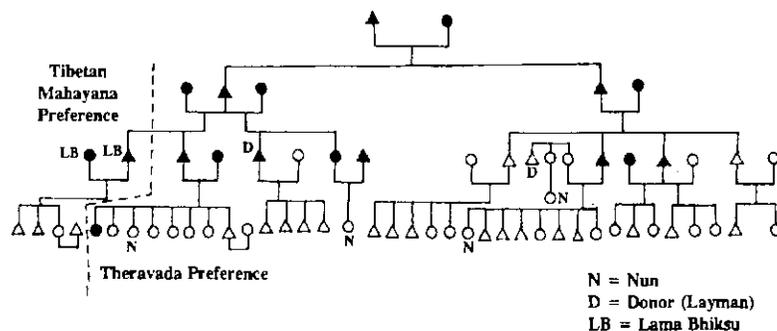
The Udays meanwhile had recently become embroiled with their Vajracharya priests in a long-running and bitter dispute over relative

caste status, which meant that they were very open to criticisms of the Vajracharya's version of Buddhism (Rosser 1966). In the movement's early years the small group of donors on whom the Sangha depended for financial support was composed of rich merchants and businessmen from the same upper-caste background as the monks and nuns.

Monastics and inheritance

At ordination monastics shave their heads, exchange lay dress for monastic robes, take up their begging bowls, and go 'into homelessness'. However, as Gregory Schopen's studies of the *Mulasarvastivada Vinaya* have shown, monks in medieval north India were not required to renounce private wealth at ordination; rather, they were expected to retain it, to use it wisely, and to bequeath it to the Sangha at their death (Schopen 2004: 3-4, 13-14). Indeed, monastic status and reputation were closely related to wealth. While the source of funds is never indicated, Barnes' study of donative inscriptions dating from the second century before to the third century after the beginning of the common era shows that nuns and well as monks were making substantial gifts to stupas (Barnes 2000: 21). Although donations from devotees may have been a more ample source of their wealth, inheritances received from parents and other members of the family of origin both prior to and following ordination were viewed as legitimate and not uncommon (Schopen 2004: 102).

With the exception of two who, before they renounced the world, had been involved in the Lhasa trade, monks in the first cohort of Newar Theravadins had no personal resources to speak of when they joined the Order and thereafter were dependent on donations from their lay followers. A few monks lived long enough to accumulate wealth and property through donations; but although, under the Nepal Law Code, they were also entitled to inherit a share of their father's property equal to that of their brothers, since most were from poor families, in practice they renounced their rights to paternal property. The same is true today. A monk in his late twenties named Suman ordained as a novice at age 14, shortly after the death of his father, was intending – albeit unofficially— to renounce his patrimony. More recently, he thought seriously about leaving the Order but in the end, as he told us, decided to remain a monk

because he realized that, at this late date, to ask his brother to give him half their father's property, a small piece of agricultural land in an outlying village, would be "the most painful thing I can imagine".

Prior to a change in the inheritance law in 1975, only daughters who had no brothers could inherit parental property, and even then it helped to remain unmarried. A daughter with brothers had no further claim on parental property after she got married and received a dowry (*stridan*) of gold jewelry, clothing, and household requisites. As childless widows and divorcees, most nuns in the first cohort were at least as impoverished as the monks. An exception was Vasaka, a divorcée who, because she had no brothers, had inherited her father's property, drew on personal resources to help her co-religionists and to travel abroad, in addition to supporting herself in the substantial house she had inherited (S.M. Tuladhar 1993). There is no evidence that the childless widow Dharmachari, who from the 1930s until the mid 1960s was the leading nun in Nepal, inherited money or property from her own or her husband's family; never the less, because she attracted many devotees from the well-to-do merchant community to which she belonged, in the late 1940s she was able, with their donations, to build the first nunnery in Nepal, in which, once they were living independently, the nuns largely evaded the monks' control.

The 1975 law gave daughters who reached the age of 35 without getting married an equal share of their father's property. In theory it should have had a major impact on the nuns, especially those who came from wealthy families; in practice, however, the only nuns who actually claimed their inheritance were those who had no brothers. As a nun named Dhammasevi, an only daughter who had two brothers, told us in 1997, "I'm not going to ask for anything." If she did, she explained, she would antagonize her sisters-in-law. "If my brothers decide to give me a share, I'll accept it, but it's up to them." In 2001, the law was changed to allow all adult unmarried daughters (aged 18 and over) equal property rights to those of their brothers. However, if, after receiving her inheritance (either following a property division while her father was still alive or after his death), a daughter married she was required to return to her brothers whatever remained. To date we have not heard that any nuns have tried to take advantage of the new law. As a senior nun from a

wealthy family told us in 2004, customs are more important than laws. She would continue to depend on the generosity of her three businessman brothers. "If they give to me voluntarily, that's fine," she explained, "but if I pushed them, that would cause problems with my sisters-in-law, and I might end up with nothing." This seems to be the consensus.

Motivations for entering the Order

The first generation of monks and nuns shared a reforming zeal and a desire to study the dharma and to teach it to others. All saw ordination as an escape from normative adult roles. The monks, whether married or single, were looking for a haven from householder life while the nuns, all of whom had once been married, were in flight from the social marginality of widowhood and divorce. Life in Kimdo Baha, the ancient Newar Buddhist monastery that a rich merchant had restored and where the majority lived throughout the 1930s and most of the 1940s, was not easy, especially for the nuns, who, since the laity viewed them as lesser 'fields of merit', received many fewer donations than the monks; but at least there was time for religious devotions and teaching the fundamentals of Buddhist belief and practice to lay people who sought them out. Most of the monks, with the help of the Mahabodhi Society, were able to travel abroad to study in Burmese or Sri Lankan monasteries, opportunities which were denied the nuns until many years later (Kloppenborg 1977).

In the 1950s, after a century of isolation, Nepal started to open up. Western schooling, until now confined to a small elite in the Kathmandu Valley, began to spread throughout the country. A trickle of development aid became a flood, communications improved, tourists arrived in ever increasing numbers, the towns began to grow and develop rapidly, so that the gap between town and countryside became ever wider and harder to bridge, and a new middle class emerged defined by new consumption patterns (Liechty 2003). Since in pre-modern Nepal the higher castes were by definition more advantaged, when society started to modernize they were best-placed to seize on new opportunities and to win the lion's share of political and professional positions. The structural inequalities that were revealed by census figures in the 1990s became a serious political issue and have been frequently invoked to explain the success of

the Maoist movement in attracting the poor, the female, the low caste, and the Janajatis.

The consequence of these social changes for Theravada Buddhism was that young men from upper-caste families, faced with a variety of education and career options, found the idea of studying Buddhism for a decade in a monastery in Mandalay much less attractive than securing a well-paid position with an INGO after studying on a scholarship in Germany, China, or the US, exporting curios to East Asia, or opening up a tourist hotel. Celibacy, in itself an alien if not bizarre concept in a community that had had no monks for hundreds of years, was the main drawback to monasticism. Even though an adolescent boy might be too shy to articulate his objections, his parents most definitely could articulate theirs: they believed that a man should marry and have children, care for his parents in their old age and perform their funerary rites at their deaths and from then on until he himself passed away. As religious virtuosi, monks were to be admired, venerated, and supported financially, but they should by preference be other people's sons.

Thus, by the 1970s, unless his family was too poor to educate him past primary school, monasticism had ceased to be a desirable or even acceptable career for boys from upper-caste Buddhist families. Although the most senior monks, all of whom had entered the Order in Rana times, were from upper-caste backgrounds, Hartmann (1993) showed that by the 1980s novices (*samanera*) were being drawn almost exclusively from impoverished rural families belonging to farming or lower (but clean) castes. Their parents, in contrast with Shakya and Uday parents, encouraged ordination because, in the short run, by 'giving a son to the vihara' they stood to earn prestige in their community as well as spiritual merit. In the long run, since the culture of *aphno manche* ('one's own person', i.e. person who is either kin or an old contact) prevailed in the monastery as well as in lay life, as he proceeded up the monastic ladder a monk was expected to help his kin and those with whom he had long-term ties whenever possible. In Nepal, as in Sri Lanka, ordination is preferably a life-long commitment, but it does not have to be. Increasingly the Burmese and Thai ritual of temporary ordination has gained currency, and with it the South-East Asian presumption that there is nothing wrong with a man leaving off being a monk. This notion has

been taken advantage of by young Nepalis and their families. When a young monk reaches adulthood – provided he is willing to face the disappointment of his community who had invested in his training – he can disrobe, take the conventional path of marriage and fatherhood and – with the credentials and language skills acquired abroad – get a good job and contribute to the economy of the joint family.

Although, as before, widows and divorcees continued 'to come to the vihara', in the 1940s the nuns' Order began recruiting young single women, some of whom, like the novice monks, were village girls from Jyapu families. Meanwhile upper-caste girls were continuing to ordain. The most prominent nun in Nepal today is Dhammawati, daughter of a Shakya goldsmith from Lalitpur, who aged fifteen ran away from home to become a nun; after studying for thirteen years in Burma, she returned to Nepal in 1963 resolved to teach Buddhism to people of all ages and most especially to women. Although she inherited nothing from her father (who had bitterly opposed her becoming a nun), two of her brothers gave her part of their inheritance to buy land in old Kathmandu on which, with donations from her devotees (who included her mother), she built Dharmakirti Vihara, to which flocked many prominent merchants as well as Buddhist women of all ages. In 1988 she and two companions took full *bhikshuni* ordination according to Chinese rites at Hsi Lai monastery in California. Since then, defying the interdiction of the senior monks, one third of Nepali nuns have followed their lead.

Over four decades Dhammawati's intelligence, courage, and energy have attracted many young women who, like herself, are from upper-caste, even privileged, backgrounds. By the 1960s, when very few girls were as yet in school, several recruits had attended secondary school; by the 1980s a few were university graduates; and in the 1990s two devotees with Master's degrees abandoned successful careers in government service to ordain as Buddhist nuns while two others, with family support, went on to receive PhDs. Of 75 nuns resident in the Valley in 1999, 45 (60%) were upper-caste (Vajracharya, Shakya, Uday, and Shrestha), 22 (29.5%) were Jyapus, 4 (5.3%) were from non-Newar Janajati ethnic groups, and 4 (5.3%) were Manandhars, members of the Newar Oil-Presser caste. While a few Shakya nuns were from impoverished backgrounds, the majority were well-to-do. Again, although some Jyapu

nuns were also from poor families the majority were comfortably off. Coming from families who believed that educating daughters was as important as educating sons, most of these nuns – unlike the monks – came to the vihara with credentials in hand.

As with Bartholomeusz's Sri Lankan *dasa sil mata* informants (Bartholomeusz 1994), the primary objective that all recruits to the nuns' Order shared was to avoid marriage. For Newar women, marriage normally requires 'going to live in the house of a stranger' followed by many years of subordination to mothers-in-law and husband's elder brothers' wives while, provided they bore sons, their status in the household hierarchy slowly improved. Far from being a harsh deprivation, these young women viewed the celibacy that their ordination vows imposed as an incomparable blessing. Instead of a 'renunciation', they saw ordination as an 'emancipa-tion' from the restraints of householder life: they could study and teach the dharma, meditate, travel, pursue religious studies in nunneries abroad, translate and edit texts, and, through their work as ritualists and counselors, earn the affection, admiration, and respect of the laity. Not all Newar women get married but even today a single professional woman of good family would not consider living alone. Those who remain single, whether by choice or because a suitable match has not been found for them, have to stay in their natal homes, where there is almost inevitably tension with their brothers' wives. Thus one important long-term advantage that the Order has to offer is that, instead of being dependent on resentful in-laws, elderly nuns can live in the nunnery, where they will be cared for by younger nuns, their *cheli*, whom they themselves have trained.

Although over the seventy-odd years since Theravada Buddhism came to Nepal many more men than women have taken ordination, a large proportion – possibly half – of the monks have eventually disrobed. Latterly, many have chosen to settle down in the Buddhist countries where they have received their education since their credentials and their status as former monks have more purchase there. By contrast, having 'shaved their heads', few nuns have left the Sangha. In their decision to ordain, many met with intense opposition from their families which, since parental consent is required, often took months if not years to overcome. Parents view arranging good marriages for their children of

both sexes as their most important spiritual, as well as social, responsibility and frustration in this regard as a personal tragedy. But once having consented to her ordination, most give their wholehearted support to their daughter's monastic career. Rather than losing her to another family as they would if she were to have married, they keep her, as it were, and at the same time they, as well as she, earn prestige and merit to which, as they support her projects in the nunnery, they add over the years. In such a case, just as in traditional Newar Buddhism, though even more narrowly, merit and wealth are circulated within the family.

HELPING THE FAMILY

1. Opening doors

Monks and nuns are expected to help their family members in various ways, in particular by arranging for the admission of young relatives to the Order. This requires finding a senior monk or nun with the resources to provide for the daily needs and education of the novice or young nun. In the early years the Theravadins made up a small disparate group of individuals each of whom was taking a leap into the unknown. Even so, several were related to each other, as were the devotees who supported them. At least some kin could always be relied on if all else failed. Although the lay community is now much larger, it remains tightly knit through kinship and friendship, and so does the Sangha. Of seventeen nuns living in Dharmakirti in 1999, the majority had grown up in Theravada families; eight had sisters or first cousins who were nuns and four had brothers who were monks.

Most recruits today come from Theravada families. Aside from a few who belong to Janajati groups and grew up in remote areas which monastics rarely visit, most have known and even been close to monks and nuns from an early age. As small children, they accompanied their mothers to the vihara; they saw monks and nuns come to chant, teach, counsel, and receive the midday meal (*bhojana dana*) in their homes; when they reached primary school age they started to receive religious instruction in the vihara and many took temporary (ten-day) ordination there as well. Once they have made the decision to take the precepts (or their parents have made the decision for them), if they have relatives in

the Sangha, the parents' next step is to ask them to intervene with a senior monk or nun on their child's behalf.

A monk named Dipaka, the eldest of four sons of poor parents, ordained as a novice soon after the death of his father and was sent by his preceptor to study abroad. Within a few years he was able to place two of his younger brothers in a Kathmandu monastery, leaving only one brother to take care of their widowed mother. But his responsibilities for his siblings did not end there: last year he arranged for one of his brothers, a recent secondary school graduate, to enter an Australian monastery; now he is looking around for a foreign Buddhist institution willing to take his other brother.

A nun named Padmawati recalled that when a cousin's husband died leaving several young children, her cousin begged her to take the eldest, a girl named Ratna, who at the time was nine years old. Padmawati, who was only about twenty, was in no position to do so because she did not have the resources to care for the child. As a young nun, the lay people viewed her as a poor field of merit; thus she received little *dana*, barely enough to cover her personal expenses. But through her good offices, her abbess, Dhammawati, accepted the child and for the last twenty years has provided for her education, just as she has for several other fatherless girls whom family members, as a last resort, have 'brought to the vihara'. Today Ratna has a university degree, and after spending extended periods of time in Fo Kuang Shan monasteries in Taiwan and California where Dhammawati had contacts, speaks good Chinese and English. Meanwhile Padmawati has herself become an abbess. Thus when her brother-in-law died a few years ago and her widowed sister asked her to take in one of her daughters, she was able to do so. Soon after giving the girl the precepts in an elaborate ceremony which she paid for, Padmawati found a place for her in a Burmese nunnery whose abbess was a close friend. When, after some time, her niece became dissatisfied with the education she was receiving – she wanted to learn English – Padmawati again used her foreign contacts to secure a place for the girl in a Sri Lankan nunnery school which featured English in its curriculum.

Nuns sometimes make arrangements for young male relatives and vice versa. A monk named Kosala tells how, as a young boy growing up in a village in the Kathmandu Valley, he would visit his aunt, who was

one of the first Jyapu women to ordain, in the Lalitpur nunnery were she was living. When, some time later, he began to show an interest in the dharma, she arranged for him to live in the next door monastery, where he became the abbot's servant; he eventually took novice ordination there and, thirty years later, is now its abbot himself. About ten years ago he ordained his father who, he says, "had been waiting to come" for a very long time; the old man now lives in the next room. His mother would like to ordain as well, says Kosala, "and my father and I would be happy to give our consent. But my brothers won't give theirs," he adds sadly, "and without it, she can't leave home."

Another Jyapu monk who had grown up in Bhaktapur but has been studying in Thailand for many years, learned that his sister, whom he scarcely knew, since she was born after he left home to become a monk, was deeply unhappy living with a relative after both their parents died. He was able to secure a place for the girl in a nunnery outside Bangkok, find sponsors willing to support her stay, and raise the money for her airfare as well. When, after a few months 'trial' in the nunnery, she asked to take the precepts, he paid for her *pabbajja* (ordination ceremony) himself.

2. Arranging for medical care in foreign hospitals

Given the poor state of medical care in Nepal, anyone who can afford to do so prefers to be treated abroad. Vellore (in south India), Delhi, Singapore, and Bangkok are the favoured destinations. In fact, Nepali monks stationed in Bangkok can find a very large amount of their time being taken up with accompanying visitors from Nepal to hospitals, shopping malls, and Thai holy sites. Almost all the monks and some of the nuns have spent long periods studying abroad and since many speak local languages as well as English and are familiar with foreign medical systems, they are called upon to arrange treatment for sick relatives as well as members of the lay community generally. Whereas nuns, whose families are often rather well off, are 'only' required to organize the treatment process and stay in hospital with the patient, monks, whose families are of much more modest means, must also raise the funds to cover the considerable expenses involved. Provided they are senior enough, they do this from donations that in the usual course of events they receive from the laity.

3. Caring for elderly parents

Zangskari nuns are required by their families to perform many domestic tasks from caring for young children to working the family fields in return for the life-long economic support without which they and their nunneries could not survive (Gutschow 2004). By contrast Nepali nuns' hands-on responsibilities to their natal families are generally confined to caring for parents. (No Nepali monastic would ever labour, in the fields or anywhere else.) Monks, too, are expected to contribute to their parents' support, but whereas it is enough if they simply give money to the old people themselves, or if they are infirm, to a brother living in the same house, nuns are expected to play a central role, especially in the care of their mothers. Even if there are several daughters-in-law in the household a mother still feels closer to and trusts her daughter more, and, if she is unmarried, she is seen as 'available', regardless of her responsibilities in the nunnery. Thus nuns are frequently called home for indefinite periods not only from local nunneries but from abroad. In Dharmakirti in 1997 three of the seventeen nuns had been called back from their studies in Thailand to care for ailing mothers. Padmawati, who as abbess of Mayadevi Vihara runs a complex operation, dreads the days when her mother falls sick; she knows that, despite having three daughters-in-law, her mother will want her to be at her bedside. The best solution, one that Thai abbesses commonly resort to also (Falk 2000: 44), would be to bring her mother to live in the nunnery. ("But will she be willing to leave her home?" Padmawati wonders. "Probably not...")

4. Building contracts

Senior monks and nuns are frequently engaged in construction projects and need to hire contractors to carry out the work. Although in recent years Dhammawati, a Shakya, and Padmawati, a Manandhar, have carried out ambitious projects, neither has given contracts to relatives. It so happens that neither has relatives in the construction business. By contrast, Kosala, a Jyapu, hired his contractor brother to rebuild the vihara in Lalitpur of which he is abbot, a project which took several years and cost many hundreds of thousands of rupees.

5. Private property

According to the rules promulgated by the Mahasangha, the umbrella organization of the Theravada Monks' Order in Nepal which was established in 1944, a monk is required to register any property, however he may have obtained it, in the name of the Sangha; similarly, he must bequeath all the money he may have accumulated to the Sangha; and after his death his personal possessions are to be distributed among his fellow monks. The nuns, as ten-precept lay women, are excluded from the Mahasangha (thus far the senior monks have refused to acknowledge their fully ordained status) but have adopted similar rules. Each nunnery is supposed to be registered in the name of its management committee, which includes lay people as well as monastics, and bank accounts should be registered in the same way. The basic rule is that all monastic property belongs to the committee, which, at the death of the abbess, will be charged with finding a replacement.

A professional woman who sat on a management committee observed that even their treasurer, a man with a great deal of experience in business, knew little about the monastery finances. This was because, when making donations, donors distinguished between those that were for the institution, for which they were supposed to receive receipts, and those which were for the personal use of the abbot or abbess. Furthermore, even though monastery accounts underwent an annual government audit, many cash donations were never recorded let alone deposited in a bank account; money came in and was spent and, as our informant told us, "Only the abbot knows where that money went." In short, a situation open to abuse.

Although thus far the nuns have escaped financial scandal, the monks, some of whom have received large sums of money from foreign sources, have not. An early case in point occurred when Amritananda, founding Secretary of the Mahasangha, abbot of Anandakuti Vihar, and for forty years the chief spokesperson for Theravada Buddhism in Nepal, raised funds (including 200,000 rupees from Chou Enlai, whom he visited in Beijing) for a Buddhist school to which he appointed his son-in-law headmaster. With the massive expansion of private schools from the 1980s, its originally Buddhist character has become increasingly irrelevant and it is now a private-for-profit school like any other and the

personal property of Amritananda's daughter (the only child of his early marriage) and son-in-law. Amritananda, however, was never publicly challenged in this regard. Another notorious case occurred more recently when, after his death, it was revealed that a prominent monk with lucrative foreign contacts had registered in his own name a house which a member of the lay community had donated to the institution that he headed; he had also registered in his own name a bank account in which he had deposited substantial amounts of money from foreign donors. By Nepalese law all these assets would pass to the next of kin, in other words, his brother, who also happened to have been his business manager. Delicate negotiations had to be held between the Sangha and the family members in order to avoid costly and embarrassing court action. By contrast, Sudarshan, abbot of Sri Kirti Vihara, was fully aware of these issues of inheritance and was punctilious in making proper arrangements so that when he died his monastery, as well as the money, in the various bank accounts set up for different purposes related to its running, passed without incident to the Sangha.

6. Earning merit through endowments and ritual sponsorship

When monks and nuns 'go to the vihara' their families stand to earn prestige by association; but while a monk's family members hope that, through education and contacts with influential people, he will lead the rest of them into the middle class, a nun's family members are more likely to look to her to provide opportunities to earn merit and raise their status in the community. Devout Buddhist parents who would be horrified if their son told them he wanted to ordain may be enchanted at the prospect of a daughter 'shaving her head' and generously support her thereafter. The monasteries are either traditional Newar *baha* which were given by their owners to Theravada monks who renovated them, or, if newly constructed, were built on land donated by devotees. By contrast, Nepali nuns, like Buddhist nuns elsewhere in Asia (Kawanami 2000; Falk 2000; Salgado 2000a, 2000b) and Catholic nuns in medieval Europe and nineteenth-century America (McNamara 1996), are much less likely to receive endowments from the laity. Although a small number of nuns who become widely known for their piety and good works may be able to raise funds to build a nunnery, most are built by wealthy families for their daughters, who then take in other poorer nuns to live with them.

Thus several nunneries in Kathmandu and Lalitpur and one in Pokhara were either constructed by families for their daughters or built by the nuns themselves with inherited funds. Some families may intend, at the death of the abbess, to take back the nunneries they paid for; but meanwhile they sponsor festive meals and ritual events and provide their daughter, sister, or cousin with funds to support recruits from mostly rural backgrounds.

Kamala, the eldest of ten daughters, trained for many years in a Moulmein nunnery in Burma before returning to Kathmandu, where she earned a university degree. After living for some time in Dharmakirti, she developed rheumatoid arthritis. Wanting her at home where it would be easier to care for her, her rich parents built a vihara on their own property, where she lives with five younger nuns whose routine maintenance her family underwrites. Although, as a daughter, Uppalavanna received no inheritance when her father died in the 1960s, after she returned from training in Burma her businessman brothers built her an impressive house in Lalitpur on land they had purchased expressly for that purpose; they topped the attached dharma hall with a replica of the great stupa at Swayambhu. Uppalavanna has brought a succession of young women to live in her vihara while she arranges for places for them to study in nunneries abroad. Meanwhile her whole extended family regularly turns up with beaming faces for ritual events in the vihara, which they also pay for.

The fourth of eight university-educated daughters, Viryawati is the pride of her family. Having ordained after two years in the university, she spent 12 years in Burma, where she earned the Dhammachariya, the highest qualification in the government-sponsored Burmese Buddhist education system, followed by a year's training as a vipassana meditation teacher. On her return to Kathmandu, her family donated a substantial sum for a women's centre which, when it is completed, Viryawati will head; in the meantime she translates for the Burmese monk in residence in the meditation centre where she currently lives, and teaches meditation to adults and elementary Buddhism to children in the Saturday school.

Dhammasangha is a strikingly handsome woman who, when she took the precepts at age 21, already spoke several languages and had completed an MA in Mathematics. She says she's too busy to live in a

vihara; monastic routine would cut into the time she needs for her work in the community. Instead, she lives in her own quarters at the back of the parental mansion in Lalitpur from which, with her brothers' support, she pursues half a dozen educational and scholarly projects.

Unlike these nuns, all of whom are from wealthy upper-caste urban Theravada families, Padmawati, abbess of Mayadevi Vihar, a nunnery on the outskirts of Kathmandu, is a Manandhar from a town outside the Valley who aged eleven ran away from home to become a nun when she discovered that her father was intending to marry her off. She recalls that it took her at least a decade to persuade her parents, who though well-to-do were traditionalist, that, as she puts it, "Theravada is better than Vajrayana". But ever since she won them over, her family, including several cousins, have been generous with their time as well as their money. She explains that because she doesn't belong to the wealthy Shakya/Uday community of Kathmandu, building a circle of donors among the Jyapus living near her nunnery is a slow business and she is much more dependent on her family than she would like. Her parents have contributed a large part of the construction costs of her vihara, an ever-expanding project whose end is not yet in sight. One cousin provided plumbing fixtures for six bathrooms; another cousin gave her a car and taught her how to drive it; two brothers sit on the vihara management committee; another brother helps with the vihara magazine; her sisters-in-law are kind to the adolescent nuns in her care and efficiently supervise the kitchen where meals for several hundred people are produced on festival days; and at least one relative almost always stays overnight to provide adult company in what might otherwise be a lonely, albeit increasingly high-profile, life. In short, Padmawati's family has embraced her institution-building project as their own; in this life they bask in her reflected glory while earning merit for a good rebirth in the next.

Conclusions

For Newar women from Buddhist backgrounds, renunciation as a nun today is not such a great challenge to kinship norms: (a) because it is not so unusual to be unmarried; (b) because, despite the rise in female employment, there is still little expectation from a daughter's future

earning power (it is assumed that it will accrue to her husband's family if to anyone), whereas sons are looked on as one's security in old age; (c) because, in the ways described, women who become nuns are not really lost to the family, but come to be seen as a valuable source of merit, a way to keep religious activity all in the family. Even in those much rarer cases of women from Hindu backgrounds becoming Theravada nuns, the families do not seem to find the adjustment as stressful as they certainly would in the case of a son.

By contrast, men who renounce are a loss to the family. Where there are many sons it may be a loss that can be borne and which may eventually turn out to have been a valuable investment. But where (as is increasingly the case) there are only one or two sons, the break with family norms and expectations is often very painful. And when it is also the case that the young man in question comes from a Hindu background, so that there is no feeling of merit gained and, on the contrary, the possible negative spiritual consequence of a son lost, in addition to the economic aspect, the parents sometimes cannot reconcile themselves to what has happened and continually urge their child to abandon being a monk and return home. The fact that this is known to be possible and to attract no blame in Thailand and Burma does not make it any easier for the monk.

At the start, the first monks had to be brave and willing to fight against the conventions and expectations of their society (and before 1951 against the very political powers as well). They seized upon the symbols of Buddhist renunciation within the traditional Buddhism of the Kathmandu Valley and infused them with new life and new meaning. In the process they broke the link between monasticism and patrilineal inheritance, a radical act made possible only with the support of their families and extended kin group who were willing to play the role of devoted Buddhist laity.

The women, for whom there was not even the sanctioning role of a symbol within the indigenous tradition, had to innovate even more radically and had to face considerable obloquy and vicious rumours for their pains. At this period the support of family, for those Buddhist monastics who could rely on it, was particularly crucial (when the eight Theravada monks were expelled by the Ranas in 1944, some of the nuns

– whose renunciation was a large part of what had angered the authorities – took refuge outside the Valley with relatives in Trishuli Bazaar).

By the time that Theravada was well established, a different set of considerations came into play. Monasticism became a career that some youths could embark upon. But it was not an easy one, as we have discussed, and, especially as society itself became freer, and career options and international links expanded, the rules of the monk's life became increasingly to be experienced as a series of restrictions. By contrast, because of the still greater expectations and restrictions on women's behaviour, becoming a nun was and is experienced as the winning of great freedom, despite the rules that surround being a nun.

Seventy years after the first Theravadins began teaching the dharma in the Nepal, almost all members of that early cohort are dead. But while the charismatic monks of that era have not been replaced and the monks' Order languishes, or at the very least is not as successful as the early founders and activists believed it would be, the nuns' Order flourishes under the leadership of a few dynamic women. True, the monks have built impressive monasteries in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Kirtipur in recent decades. The nuns, too, have major projects to their credit in Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Lumbini. But whereas the abbots built their monasteries largely with foreign funding, the nunneries' construction costs were paid for by local donations. Although some of the senior monks are much admired as scholars and teachers, rumours about their sexual behaviour have long circulated. Donors want to give their money to the purest field of merit and, in that respect, the leading nuns are impeccable. The nuns raised some of the money for their projects by going house to house, but most came through their wide networks: well-to-do family members led the way and friends of the family followed. And the names of the donors whose money helped build those fine dharma halls and dormitories are embedded in the walls where anyone who passes by may read them.

Nevertheless, though successful in its own terms – in building up its support base within the Kathmandu, in reaching out to other ethnic groups and other parts of the country, in recruiting the next generation, and in building international links – the Theravada movement is still much smaller and much less well funded than the various Tibetan

Buddhist sects. The latter, drawing on Tibetan refugees, recruits from enclaves of Tibetan culture throughout the Himalayas. With extensive global links, numerous Western followers and donors (Moran 2004), and a large and rich support base in Taiwan and South-East Asia, Tibetan Buddhists have managed to turn every available hilltop, as well as many other sites, in the Kathmandu Valley into sacred centres of Tibetan Buddhism. One consequence is that in terms of international visibility, Tibetan Buddhism, even within Nepal, overshadows the Theravadins who have been discussed in this paper.

Appendix:

Extracts from Bhikshu Ashwaghosh's The Life of a Monk (tr. H.L. Singh)

Taking the present situation into consideration, it appears that even monks must please householders and fulfill their wishes. They must extend helping hands to them. They must give loan to those who come to beg. They are obliged to do other works not at all concerned with Buddhist activities. They have to meet officials and campus chiefs for getting jobs to job seekers or to call the District Judge for settling criminal cases. Besides this, some people do not hesitate to beg money from the monks. They also have to arrange pilgrimages for pleasing the householders. They have to do works not connected with their religious activities. Therefore, it is true that nowadays it is not enough that the monks give sermons and give discourses. They have to do the works of priests (purohit). They have to visit the press for printing books, edit magazines and run organizations. They have to handle money matters in the monastery construction works.

To be involved in construction works shouldering the financial responsibility is not suitable for a monk. Because if for some reason he becomes involved in misappropriated a sum larger than Rs 75, he has committed a parajika, he is defeated, or fallen. It is not only by becoming attached to womankind, getting involved in inappropriate behaviour, and giving birth to offspring that a monk is defeated (parajika).11 The

Buddha had said that avarice is [also] a heinous sin. To pretend that one is virtuous and to publicize that one is skilled and accomplished is also becoming a defeat (parajika). Therefore, the financial transactions must be done only by upasikas and upasikas. But, it is sad that upasakas and upasikas have not paid attention to this matter. It is easy to spread the rumour that the character of monks is not spotless. It is also heard that the gap of mutual trust between the upasakas and monks regarding money matters is widening these days. This is a case of misunderstanding, definitely not a pleasant matter... (pp. iii-iv)

Monks of Nepal are facing a big problem. They have no capacity to make adequate arrangements for fellow monks and Upasakas of Sri Lanka, Burma and Thailand during their visit to Nepal. Providing the facilities of boarding, lodging and transportation to the visiting monks and Upasakas and Upasikas has remained a big problem. The monks of Nepal are provided these facilities while visiting these countries. But, in Nepal, the monks have to be victims of humiliation sometimes while requesting the well-to-do Upasakas to provide the vehicles for the sight-seeing of the visiting monks and Upasakas... (p. vi)

There is another reason that makes a monk's life difficult. A monk's life is dependent on others. In the past monks could not live long without four things, e.g., chivara [robe], pindapatra [begging bowl], sayanasana [bedding], and medicine. Nowadays, these four things are not sufficient for the monks. Time has tremendously changed. Nowadays, monks have to buy books, pens, shoes, umbrella, etc. They have to construct or renovate viharas. The management of the above with the help of donors alone has become an impossibility. The attention of upasakas and upasikas is simply confined to the worship of the Buddha, inviting monks to the ceremonies like Annaprasana, birthday and reciting the Paritrana after a death in the family. The monks are simply entangled in priestly functions [and] in activities that have nothing to do with their dharma-related works. For example, they are asked to take upasakas and upasikas to foreign countries on pilgrimages, bring foreign goods for them, get students admitted in schools and colleges, get jobs for their boys and girls etc. They are even involved in the job of matchmaking. Some [lay people] come to borrow money. Those monks who do not help them in such matters are neglected. [I]f they are unable to give lectures

due to illness or old age, they are neglected... I asked some people who had abandoned him, "Don't you go to Mahapragya nowadays?" They replied, "Now, there is no opportunity of hearing words of wisdom from him. He is unable to give sermons. Therefore, we do not go." After hearing so many words of wisdom, the people abandoned him when he was in bad health. Such is the fate of monks. (pp. 56-7)

With the change of time, the life style of the monks also changed. There are times when monks could not spend their time to please the upasakas. It is not proper to expect that monks should live as strictly as at the time of the Buddha. Some monks have been living a very unnatural and unbecoming life. It is not reasonable to say that the change of time and circumstance is responsible for the change in their character and conduct. There are reasons for the same, too. Some persons did not become monks after having acquired a good knowledge of Buddhism. They also do not learn much from the Acharya with whom they stay a year or so, nor is there a practice of teaching the same. The Acharyas are also not strict in providing education and explaining the teachings.

They consider their job done once they perform the rite of ordaining by giving the yellow robe. There are many people who became monks simply to get the facilities of a monk in expectation of foreign visits, respect and honour from the people, and education without spending money. There are a very few people who became monks out of dedication for the service of the people. It is still worse to become a monk in old age.

There were fake monks at the time of the Buddha as there are at present. For 20 years after the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment by the Buddha, the number of monks were few. The number of rules were few, too. Later, the number of monks increased by leaps and bounds. The condition of the Bhikshu Sangha worsened once the educated, lazy, unrestrained and ignorant people became monks. The formulation of many rules became inevitable. (pp. 57-8)

ENDNOTES

This paper draws on the research on Theravada Buddhism in Nepal that we have carried out intermittently between 1997 and 2004 (see LeVine & Gellner 2005).

For comments on earlier versions, we thank Richard Gombrich, Anil Shakya, and participants in a workshop at Nanterre, Paris.

1. Locke (1985: 8) points out that, though viewed by Newar Buddhists today as Shakyamuni Buddha, some inscriptions identify the image as Akshobhya, the 'transcendental' Buddha who has the same earth-touching hand gesture as Shakyamuni. This can perhaps be taken as evidence that historicist interpretations of the nature of the Buddha, on the one side, and Tantric or cosmological ones, on the other, were not so distinct in the past.

2. A full set of rules of this sort can today only be observed in Kwa Baha, Lalitpur (Gellner 1991). In other Newar Buddhist temples the god-guardian often only carries out an elaborate ritual in the morning, and in a nod to monastic dress, removes his shirt from his right shoulder. The fullest study of this subject is Sharkey (2001).

3. On this ritual, see Gellner (1988) and von Rospatt (2005).

4. On traditional Newar Buddhism, see Locke (1980), Gellner (1992, 2001: chs 4 -7), Lewis (2000), and the website of the Lotus Research Institute (www.lrcnepal.com). On Shakya titles, see Gellner (1989). On the history of Newar Buddhism, see Douglas (2002) and von Rospatt (2000).

5. The newly re-built Dharmakirti Vihara, the headquarters of the Theravada nuns in Nepal, combines a neo-traditional Newar façade with a thoroughly modern interior, complete with marble floors.

6. They were therefore in a quite different position from the, essentially secular, Magar ethnic activists of recent years who had decided they must break from Hinduism but were not sure what to put in its place. Both have ended up with Theravada Buddhism but by very different routes. The early Newar reformists were committed to celibate monasticism and only later came to a critique of Hinduism; the contemporary Magar activists started with a rejection of Hinduism for political and cultural reasons, without a fundamental commitment to celibacy, and have indeed started to train non-celibate priests, known as *pandits*, to carry out life-cycle rituals in a Theravada Buddhist idiom.

7. For these figures, see Kloppenberg (1977: 311), Gellner (1992: 322) Hartmann (1993: 77), and Kondanya (2001).

8. See LeVine & Gellner (2005: ch. 7) for details of the attempt to raise the nuns' status by taking *bhikkhuni pabbajja* from the Taiwanese Fo Guang Shan sect.

9. On Newar castes, see Toffin (1984) and Gellner & Quigley (1995). In contemporary Nepal the politics of caste and ethnicity now mean that ethnic activists claim that the Newar are just one group, belonging to the Janajati. The spokesmen of the low Newar castes have stated that they do not want to be included in the Dalit (ex-Untouchable) category (see Gellner 2003).

10. Technically Manandhars were not high caste, but Manandhars from Kathmandu had been upwardly mobile, educated, and often wealthy for two or three generations by then.

11. For this and the previous sentence we follow the Nepali translation. A *parajika* is an infraction of the monastic code so serious that the offender is automatically expelled from the Sangha.

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HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICE (NDS): CREATING 'CIVIC SPACE' AND COMMITMENT TO SERVICE IN NEPAL DURING THE 1970S[1]

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Introduction

During the last half of the 20th century Nepal witnessed an increasingly complex and dynamic mix of rising political, economic and social aware-ness and expectations, alongside societal disruption and conflict, and increa-singly disparate lifestyle conditions, rich and poor, punctuated by dramatic socio-cultural changes. Yet, in the midst this seeming turmoil, the nation's civil society and varieties of 'civic service', 'volunteerism' and 'social action' have thrived and grown. The social and political inclinations of the nation's youth, in particular, have had profound impact on historic and current events, including a major role in support of a potentially powerful, though short-lived National Development Service movement during the decade of the 1970s. This paper documents the rise of civic service and volunteerism in Nepal, and discusses some of its manifestations and impacts.

Beginning in the early 1950s, as Nepal turned away from a century of repression and stagnation and opened up to outside influences, and as modern systems of education and political action began to develop, the nation's students became seriously involved in causes and movements that injected change and innovation into the social development scene. During most of the 1970s, the Nepal government through the Tribhuvan University inaugurated a creative youth civic service program called NDS, the National Development Service (*Rastriya Bikas Sewa*). First

inaugurated in the early part of the decade, the NDS grew to enjoy phenomenal support until the end of the decade when adverse political concerns forced its premature closure. Despite its short life span, the NDS is still remembered today as a model program of civic service.

The NDS is considered by many to have been a catalytic social development experiment in the life of the nation. It was founded in association with the New Education System Plan of 1971 (NESP). Under that program, all post graduate students were required to dedicate one year during their Masters degree studies to service in a rural community. At first, the NDS was vigorously resisted by students who saw it as an unwarranted disruption of their studies and career development, but as the first year's participants returned to campus from the rural communities their enthusiasm and support for NDS sparked a reversal in student interest, and it quickly became a hallmark of development and modernity, with strong and lasting support across the university and in the broader society.

The NDS had profound effects upon both its participants and host communities and, it is argued, on the development of the strong civil society movement that arose immediately after the 1990 national 'Movement to Restore Democracy'. Since then, Nepal has experienced a concerted effort to effect a democratic polity (with difficulty) and an active civil society (with relative ease). Some observers believe that the NDS experience created a certain 'civic space' in the society, which was rapidly filled by community-based organizations (CBOs) at the local level, and various group-based federations, networks, NGOs and social movements at local, regional and national levels (Biggs, Gurung & Messerschmidt 2004), many of which have been founded on an ethic of 'civic service'.

The Cultural-Historical Context of Civic Service and Volunteerism in Nepal

Civic service (volunteer service to society) is not new in Nepal. It is built upon a strong cultural heritage. There's a story that every Nepali school child knows, about charity, service and volunteerism. It describes a village grasscutter, materially poor but rich in spirit who, by digging a spring for drinking water created a monumental legacy for all. The story

has been immortalized in what is probably the best known short poem in Nepali: Ghāsi Kuwa ('The Grass Cutter's Well') by Bhanubhakta, Nepal's 19th Century 'Pioneer Poet'. In English translation, the poem begins:

Devoting his life to cutting grass, he earned some money, and, wishing to be remembered, dug a well.

The grass cutter is so poor, but what spirit! And I, Bhanubhakta, have done nothing with my good fortune.

Of wells, inns or resthouses I have made none. All my wealth lies at home.

And from this grass cutter, what do we learn? That it's a shame to sit idle doing no good deed.

Digging a spring or well (kuwa, inar), constructing a fountain or waterspout (pani dharo), building and maintaining a shady trailside resting place (chautaro) or a resthouse (pati, pauwa), and contributing free labor (shramadan) to public works, are all traditional acts of volunteerism, good neighborliness, public service, and charity, which many Nepalis aspire to perform or achieve before they die. The high value of doing good things and serving others is captured in such terms as paropakar garnu ('to do selfless service for others'), swechhalé paropakar garnu ('to serve selflessly and freely, of one's own will', 'volunteerism'), and swayamsewa garnu ('to serve others of one's own accord', 'to volunteer'; i.e., the 'act of serving'). It is only a small step from such simple acts of duty and thoughtfulness to more expansive forms of civic service.[5]

The tradition of voluntarily serving others has deep roots in Nepal and across South Asia. In contemporary times, disrupted and distorted by social, political and economic strife, the origins of the volunteer spirit and civic service are sometimes forgotten. Much of what passes for civic service nowadays, through community-based organizations (CBOs), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society organizations (CSOs) is thought by some to be new and novel. 'Except for a few,' writes one observer, 'all the NGOs have no roots in the native soil. They are the inventions of donor agencies' (Maskay 2000:106).

We take a more positive view, grounded in historical tradition—that modern civil society organizations in Nepal are founded upon a long, strong and proud tradition of civic service, originating ages before such terms as 'CBO' and 'NGO' were invented. We agree with those who point out that modern Nepalese NGOs have deep roots in temple-based endowments and trusts such as traditional guthis (Timilsina 2000:1) and in similar public-minded associations (samsthan). 'Modern NGOs of Nepal,' writes Ghimire (2000:212) 'are basically transformed Guthis [Trusts], and are an outcome of the 20th century social transformation movement of South Asia', although most have been transformed recently towards 'a development orientation [with] global interaction and assistance'.[6]

Civic Service Movements in 19th and 20th Century Nepal

The culturally ingrained spirit of civic service and volunteerism saw its first public expression in Nepal beginning in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, under the leadership of several prominent individuals, each of whose pioneering spirit had great effects in generating a civic service awakening in Nepal (Chand 1998:49). One was Tulsi Meher, a follower of Gandhi, who has been called the 'Founding Father' of Nepal's NGO movement. His Charkha Movement was one of Nepal's first local NGOs (Chand 1998, Maskay 1998:75). Another was Khagendra Bahadur Basnet, who founded the Disabled Society of Nepal. Yet another was Daya Bir Singh Kansakar, who established a voluntary medical dispensary called Paropakar Aushadhalaya. Kansakar, until his recent death in 2001 at age 90 was considered one of modern Nepal's best examples of selfless service to others (Limbu 2001). His initial organization was later transformed into the well-known Paropakar Samsthan (Paropakar Organization) consisting of an orphanage, ambulance service, maternity hospital, and secondary school. Both Kansakar and Tulsi Meher and their respective movements had great effects in generating a civic service awakening in Nepal (Chand 1998:49 & 2000).

Sometimes volunteer service groups arise out of disaster events. Nepal's original Paropakar medical dispensary, for example, was founded during the cholera epidemic in 1948. In addition, a temporary

service organization called the *Bhukampa Sewa Dal* was organized immediately after the devastating Nepal-Bihar earthquake of 1934 to help cope with the effects of homelessness and displacement. Many such groups last only for the duration of the emergency and its immediate aftermath.

In a recent study of development groups in Nepal, a long list of customary voluntary and civic service groups was prepared and is presented below.[7] In that study, a distinction is made between 'customary groups' (longstanding, both 'indigenous' and 'traditional') and 'sponsored groups' (established and supported by development agencies, NGOs, and the like).[8] The large number of customary groups on the list, performing various functions, firmly establishes the fact that there are strong traditions of civic service in Nepal. Most examples predate modern times, although there are a few that are relatively new. The list is illustrative (not exhaustive):

1. Natural Resource Management (e.g., communal forest, pasture, and irrigation management, etc., including resource processing _ ban samiti is an example);

2. Agriculture, Horticulture, Livestock and Fisheries Management (e.g., production and income generation, and temporary field labor, etc. _ parma and nogar are examples);

3. Savings & Credit (e.g., mutual aid, rotating credit, etc. _ dhikur/dhikudi is an example);

4. Education & Human Resource Development (e.g., local school management, indigenous language preservation, non-formal and functional education, etc. _ cheli-beti is an example);

5. Community Multi-Purpose & Support (e.g., settlement, hamlet or tol management; caste, ethnic and clan affairs management and development; also temple affairs and festival management; funeral and graveyard management; welfare and philanthropy _ guthis are an example);

6. Health, Emergency Management (e.g., community health, and emergency response _ Bhukampa Sewa Dal, noted above, is an example);

7. Dispute & Conflict Management (e.g., pancha bhaladmi and dharma panchayat)

8. Children & Youth Affairs (e.g., san/thuli samuha and rodi);

9. Infrastructure Development & Management (e.g., trail and bridge management, canal management, drinking water system management, etc. _ khane pani samiti is an example);

10. Enterprise & Income Generation (e.g., local money raising and entertainment _ ama samuha, sorathi nach and Krishna charitra are examples); and

11. Other, Miscellaneous

Some of the voluntary organizations and movements listed above have relatively short, ephemeral life spans, often formed on a seasonal basis or in response to a crisis. But a great many of them are more permanent, lasting many generations. Some are motivated by communal solidarity, others by personal feelings of religious service or generosity. Most are localized at the neighborhood level, and many are based on ethnic group or clan/lineage identity. A few crosscut the boundaries of class, caste, ethnicity and gender. All tend to be bound together by the crosscutting ties of mutual friendship or interpersonal loyalty, by good neighborliness, and by trust_a key ingredient to the survival of all self-help groups and volunteer service societies. 'Trust', in the sense of reliance, responsibility, confidence and authority, is the foundation stone underlying volunteerism and, indeed, all of civil society (Fukuyama 1995; see also Brown 1999:17ff; Wilson and Musick 1999). Virtually all such groups or movements noted for Nepal fit the concept of 'civic service', which we define as an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant (after Sherraden 2001a:2; see also Sherraden, Moore & Cho 2002.)

None of the examples from Nepal listed above involve reward other than feelings of good-neighborliness, self-esteem and satisfaction. But, taken together, they set the socio-cultural stage upon which the Nepal government launched the NDS in the 1970s.

Rise of Nepal's National Development Service (NDS)

The NDS was created as an integral part of the New Education System Plan of 1971 (NESP), a central feature in the government's attempt to modernize education and development.[9] An early NDS volunteer and noted Nepalese diplomat and educator has said that the NDS 'was a great program, with the students making such rapid changes in the villages! It brought important political, social and economic exchange and awareness...' And an international volunteer and life-long development worker posted to Nepal has observed that 'NDS was perhaps the best thing that Nepal ever did for rural development... If you ever meet people working in rural development in Nepal who seem to stand out from the pack, just ask them if they were in the NDS. Chances are that they were, and remember it as transformational in their lives...' These statements indicate, first hand, how important the 1970s NDS program is still considered in Nepal today, by Nepalese and knowledgeable expatriates, alike.

The Nepal experience with NDS must also be examined in terms of its political significance, an important aspect of volunteerism in some societies. It may not be universal but, in both the development and the premature demise of the NDS, politics and Nepal's struggle to create a Democracy have played significant roles. The NDS was begun on a pilot basis in 1972, inaugurated in 1974, and enthusiastically sustained until 1979. Despite its short life, it provided a vital and significant learning experience both for the participating youth and their host communities, and an early breeding ground for Democracy and a vital civil society that, by definition, accompanies Democracy. In the opinion of many, it was an unquestionably successful student study service program (Aditya & Karmacharya 1988, Karmacharya 1980, Pradhan 1978, Shrestha 2002, Upadhyay et al 1989, Vaidya 1978 & 1992a, 1992b).

Inception and Design

The origins of the NDS are often attributed to the 'noble philosophy' and inspiration of Nepal's late King Birendra (1945-2001), when he was Crown Prince. Formal plans for a national development study service first emerged in 1971 as an integral part of the NESP. This education plan was intended to remove some of the defects of Nepal's older system of learning that was increasingly seen as insufficient to meet the nation's growing development needs. It was also designed to better prepare youth for public service in the development of the nation, as a training ground for the civil service.

The NDS motto was 'Education for Development' and its vocational and development service goals were so closely linked that at first it was considered anti-intellectual and un-academic. It appeared as a very traditional and hierarchical structure based on a bureaucratic view of knowledge systems. That, and the added fact that it was mandatory, at first aggravated some students who saw it as a system of national conscription (not unlike military conscription) and as an unwarranted interruption in the midst of their formal studies. Although resistence was expressed at first, after the return of the first volunteers from the field and their convincing accounts of its importance and promise in socio-political terms, the NDS became embraced positively as a cause célèbre among the students. Later in the decade, it was reported that 96% of future participants sampled (i.e., incoming new students) were enthusiastic about joining the NDS (Pradhan 1978: 174-175).[10]

All Masters level students enrolled in Tribhuvan University, then the nation's only postgraduate educational institution, had to participate. Completion of a year's service and final written report counted for one of the nine papers required to earn the degree. Service began with training and orientation, followed by a mandatory 10 months in a rural community (although some students stayed longer). It ended by return to campus and submission of the final report. Assignment to remote areas was given priority. Most students were sent out to teach, and were typically posted together in groups of two or three. Their work was overseen by the local school headmaster and the district education officer, and by a supervisor who occasionally visited them from Kathmandu.

The program's operating expenses were funded entirely by the government, and were increased annually (see Table 1). The only outside help came from a few U.N. agencies and the Canadian IDRC who together provided minor logistics support, consulting services, some publications costs, a few vehicles, and some field supplies for the

Table 1. Synopsis of Nepal's National Development Service (NDS), 1972-1979

	New Education System Plan (NESP) launched	NDS Directorate established	Pilot program tested	NDS formally launched	NDS operating normally		1977-78		NDS formally closed
	1971	**1972**	**1974**	**1974-75**	**1975-76**	**1976-77**	4th summer	5th winter	**1978-79**
Batch:			pilot	1st	2nd	3rd			6th
Number of participants:			22	212	416	356	519	665	737
Participation by gender: (f / m)			f 0 / m 22	54 / 158	88 / 328	87 / 269	107 / 412	124 / 541	135 / 602
Number of districts:			3	27	35	33	71		72
Number of villages:			14	124	324	189	670		414
Annual budgets (NRs):			n/a	1,700,182	3,124,444	2,734,523	3,846,386		6,090,563

Objectives:
- Make education broader in outlook, more practical, attuned to national development needs.
- Encourage students to assist in rural development activities.
- Give students opportunity to interact with the rural populations.
- Give students practical development experience.

Requirements:
- Mandatory service as part of Masters degree program.
- 2 months orientation and training.
- 10-months assignment to rural districts.
- Prepare village profile, teaching, special projects, final report.

Original 4-Corps Design
- Education Service Corps
- Health Service Corps
- Agriculture Service Corps
- Construction Corps

Only the Education Service Corps was fielded between 1972 and 1979.

Postings:
To 1,735 villages in 72 of Nepal's 75 districts

Total Students:
2,927
(22% f, 78% m)
Total Expenditure (1974-79):
NRs 17,406,099
(c. US$800,000)

Inspiration:
Similar to study service schemes operating at the time in Ethiopia and other countries. Encouraged and supported by royalty. First met with suspicion, then enthusiastically supported by students.

Funding:
Nepal Government, plus a little support with materials and logistics from donor agencies, through Tribhuvan University.

Sources: Pradhan et al 1978, Aditya & Karmacharya 1988, Vaidya 1992, 2002, Shrestha & Upadhyay 2002, NDS Staff 1988. Some minor differences in statistics exist between these sources. *f* = female *m* = male

participants. Other than this, NDS was proudly promoted as a program conceived, funded and administered by the Nepalese (Poudyal 1979:64) in the well-established spirit of 'self-help' (on a national scale).

An NDS Directorate was established in 1972, and the first two years were a time of trial, error, correction and fine-tuning. It began with 22 volunteers who were posted to nearby rural communities on a trial basis. The program was formally inaugurated in July 1974, and a further 212 students were sent out. Between 1972 and 1979 (when the program was suddenly closed), nearly 3,000 students were involved. Altogether, 72 of Nepal's 75 districts received NDS volunteers (Table 1).

Program Objectives and Activities

The plan's declared objective was 'to supply trained manpower for national development', led by the public sector, 'with the priority to be given, among others, to the "Promotion of active students' participation in nation building"' (Vaidya 1992b:129, quoting the New Education System Plan of 1971; also Chand 1988:109). The unwritten objective was to 'make the community the classroom' (Fussell & Quarmby 1974, in Chand 1988:109; and Poudyal 1979). Its designers wanted to assure that higher education would reflect more than 'theoretical bookish knowledge' by exposing young students to the realities of life and of development in the rural areas. Each student received a modest monthly stipend and a few field supplies. The stipend was enough to cover living expenses in the village, not enough to live any better than the average villager. It did not allow anything left over to save. The formal objectives and a synopsis of the program are given in Table 1.

The NDS objectives have been interpreted in two complementary ways. For one, it was as an attempt to induce change in the outlook and skills of the nation's educated youth by building upon Nepal's traditional culture of service. For another, it was designed to affect the attitudes and develop the skills of the rural populace, under the rubric of self-help development and modernization. While the latter objective is not very clearly articulated in official documents, it is generally acknowledged that the program was all about awareness-raising among the rural poor, assisting them to more fully utilize their local resources, and to help instill in their lives and communities a more active participation in the

development process and a strengthening of national unity (Vaidya 1992b:132, NDS Staff 1988:7). Recent discussion underscores the importance of civic service in general for its impact not only on the server but also on the direct and indirect beneficiaries in communities where service is being performed (Perry & Thomson 2004).

The initial plan was to field NDS volunteers in four sectors: health, education, agriculture and construction (engineering). During its short life, however, only the education corps was mobilized. Besides teaching, each volunteer had to complete a village profile, to link theory and practice as well as to demonstrate academic competence and experience rural reality. The profile's baseline data were intended to help planners identify local needs for development.

Many NDS volunteers also worked on small technical and social development projects in their communities. They assisted on small scale construction works, agricultural improvements, drinking water schemes, minor irrigation projects, bridge building, family planning, public health education and sanitation, literacy, and the prevention of alcoholism and gambling, for example (Pradhan 1978:273-274 & passim, Poudyal 1979, Karmacharya 1980, Aditya & Karmacharya 1988).

NDS Impact on Both Student and Rural Communities

That the NDS program was 'successful' in several ways is widely accepted in Nepal. Unfortunately, only two impact assessments of the NDS exist (Pradhan 1978, Karmacharya 1980). One focuses mostly on initial impressions of the student volunteers and their rural village hosts, the other on economic aspects. In addition, one early NDS Director conducted a limited cost-benefit analysis after the first few years. He determined that the return to the nation was four times the investment (Vaidya 1978).

Given the dearth of studies, the subject needs further analysis from one or more independent sources. No studies exist, for example, of the program's impacts on local economy, on social structure or politics, on community organizations or the level of social capital formation, or about the long-term social and political effects of involvement on the participants themselves.

The program's impacts in these areas are largely conjectural, based on a few brief observations at the time (Baral 1977, Fussell & Quarmby 1974, Poudyal 1979, Poudyal and Tiwari 1978, Vaidya 1978), as well as several more recent retrospective observations (Chand 1988, Gurung 1988, NDS Staff 1988, Pradhan 1988, Shrestha & Upadhyay 2002, Shrestha & Upadhyay et al 2002, Vaidya 1992a,b & 2002), and on extensive interviews. Extrapolating from these sources, it appears that the NDS served well to introduce students to rural conditions and realities, to enhance rural education in selected villages and schools, and to bring some of the rural populace more closely into the development dialogue.

The NDS program helped create social capital in participating communities and schools, thus creating a better atmosphere in which to build trust and reciprocity among citizens and between local communities and development agencies. Similar trends have been noted in the international literature on volunteering (see Smith: para 24-28). Drogosz (2003:250) summarizes the link between civic service and social capital: 'We cannot strengthen the ties that bind us as a nation unless our civic duty is fostered by 'bridging' social capital that helps us create links across groups. There is a 'strength in weak ties' that stretch across lines of race, class, and religion since these weak ties allow us to recognize our dependence on one another so we can become more than communities of strangers'.

NDS provided just such an opportunity for bridging social capital where students and citizens in impoverished rural communities forged new alliances. It also raised political consciousness and the potential to change the nature of existing and highly conservative political culture. The new alliances, however, threatened to dismantle existing traditions, the status quo, and old entrenched relationships between local elites and the monarchy. This was one of the main reasons that the life of the NDS was cut short in 1979. That it was closed before it was sufficiently mature is considered by many observers to be one of the great tragedies of Nepal's recent socio-political history.

For the volunteers themselves, NDS service provided a type of social development experience that led directly to the enhancement of human capital. It subsequently influenced lifestyle choices and career directions of many participants. Razzaque, Masud and Mian (1978:5)

point out that NDS students, predominantly of urban backgrounds, had a unique opportunity to grasp 'he country's problems and assess actual needs in preparation for careers in government service after graduating. Many NDS graduates went on to become well known leaders, academicians and professionals, including participatory development practitioners and human rights activists. During their year long exposure to the facts and conditions of rural life, the volunteers made new friends, learned new skills and enhanced their own self-confidence and respect. NDS is generally acknowledged to have raised awareness and personal satisfaction among participants. The value of volunteering in creating social and human capital is widely noted in the literature (cf. Smith 1999: para 29-31).

The NDS program also impacted on villagers, district administrators, traditional leaders and local school teachers, as well as on university teachers and the students' parents. Its impact upon traditional local leadership, however, was mixed and often controversial. When the student volunteers first arrived in the villages, many of them were perceived as a threat to the entrenched and powerful local leaders of a system where development activities were closely guarded and controlled, where development allocations were well-kept secrets, and where the village elite monopolized the flow of information and largesse. Into this traditional scene came energetic university students who encouraged participation and practiced consultation, transparency, trust and sharing (all deeply political), serving as good communicators, facilitators and motivators. They encouraged locals to undertake a number of self-help development activities. As they raised the consciousness of many villagers, the old style of closed and unaccountable leadership came under scrutiny. As Pradhan has noted (1988:10-12): 'The villagers would ask themselves why the NDS students are so dedicated [to] village development activities despite the fact that they were not from the village... [while, in contrast] the local leadership did not have the same amount of dedication. . .'

Furthermore, NDS volunteer activities included campaigns against usury, polygamy, child marriage, bonded labor, and other 'social evils' such as alcoholism and gambling, the profits of which often lined the pockets powerful local elites. Thus, while it threatened the existing power structure, the NDS experience also had the potential for significant social and political change.

The program's impact on rural schoolteachers was also significant. In many instances, NDS teachers brought improvement to school administration and, by their example, promoted 'academic values' such as holding class regularly, facilitating a proper examination system and keeping good records (Pradhan 1988).

Among the 385 villagers and 111 local authorities interviewed during Pradhan's 1978 assessment, researchers found near unanimous support of the program.[11] Local support was made explicit when almost all villagers interviewed favored continuing the NDS program in future. When asked why, they referred to the role of volunteers in disseminating new information and ideas, in raising people's consciousness by promoting literacy, in understanding the priority needs of the villages and pursuing appropriate development programs, and in expressing cooperation and an enthusiastic 'voluntary spirit'. And, because they were different from local leaders, as generally selfless, creative and informative friends, the villagers did not want to lose their company (Pradhan 1988 & 1978).

Former directors of the NDS evaluated volunteers' impacts on host villages in similarly positive terms. The students were respected locally as 'catalysts of reform and change'. They brought awareness to the villages and were looked upon very positively, as people in whom the villagers could confide and place their trust. Implicit in these observations is recognition of the diverse and versatile qualities of the volunteers.

Respect for Nepal's NDS program also spread internationally. Civic service planners, leaders and administrators from as close as India and as distant as the United States looked closely at the Nepal NDS as a model program of volunteerism. Its leaders were invited abroad, to Indonesia and the Philippines for example, to describe and discuss the Nepal program, and give advice to others. UNESCO formally praised it, and it was written up for a broad audience (see Fussell & Quarmby 1977, Poudyal & Tiwari 1978, Razzaque, Masud & Mian 1978, Vaidya 1992a,b).

Despite the largely positive reflections on the NDS at home and abroad, a few negative criticisms have also been voiced. The program's inability to spur revision and improvements in university education, for example, is noted by both Shrestha (1988) and Mishra (1988). Mishra describes it like 'a horse that trotted briskly, often unaware of its destination...' and as 'a great opportunity lost' (1988:102-103). Mild expressions of suspicion have also been discussed, that in some of the remote districts the NDS experience may have raised unfulfilled expectations that, in turn, fueled the sort of rural discontent that found its expression two decades later in the start of Nepal's debilitating Maoist insurgency. This sort of criticism, however, can be brought against any democratic movement, NGO or government aid project trying to address inequities and the causes of poverty.

Amidst all the praise for NDS, one important outcome of this national youth service program has been overlooked the role students played in mobilizing communities and how new alliance between students and villagers arose as credible threats to local elites that were aligned with the monarchy. Such threats put in motion a series of events that are still unfolding in Nepal, a society that by any measure is dominated by a narrow elite, and disenfranchised masses. It is important to recognize the role of NDS in stirring the seemingly calm waters of Nepalese society.[12]

NDS and the Interplay of Students and National Politics

Government-sponsored civic service programs always operate within a political context. While the literature on volunteerism generally avoids or neglects reference to its political ramifications, in Nepal the politics of NDS and the national political context within which the NDS was created, operated and closed down are important to understand. The ups and downs of national politics, including volatile student movements, combined with the activities of the banned political parties, various other socio-political activism, and the inevitable difficulties and disappointments that arose during the decade of the 1970s, were all associated with how the NDS was viewed, and ultimately influenced its impacts.

To understand the situation behind the design and implementation of the NDS the reader must forebear a brief (simplified) introduction to the recent history of Nepalese socio-politics. In 1960 King Mahendra abolished the nation's first struggling multiparty parliamentary system and replaced it with a partyless Panchayat system, sometimes characterized as a form of 'guided democracy'.[13] Because all political parties were banned, there was only one official or legal point of national allegiance and political articula-tion—the partyless Panchayat system, with the royal palace at its apex.

The new Panchayat system was based upon popularly elected village and municipal assemblies (Panchayats) that articulated up to district assemblies. At the center was the national assembly, the majority of whose members were elected by District Panchayat members from among themselves. For three decades, from the early 1960s through the national referendum of 1980, to the 'Movement to Restore Democracy' of 1989-90, powerful and largely conservative Panchayat leaders called 'Panchas', and various government administrators and functionaries, arose within the system to dominate and control both local and national politics.

A relative insider and one of the severest critics of Nepal's royal rule has categorized Nepal's modern style of governance in Weberian terms as a 'patrimonial system' focused on the royal palace in Kathmandu (Shah 1982 & 1993). He describes the manner of palace rule under the Panchayat system as a highly authoritarian style of 'peremptory command' (hukumi shashan), much the same as in autocratic Rana times prior to the revolution of 1950-51. The populace remained 'subjects' beholden to the king and the powerful elites, though many were chafing to become 'citizens' under a more truly democratic form of sovereignty.

It is not hard to imagine the Panchayat era, 1960-1990, as a time of political turmoil and struggle. 'The regime's inability to achieve qualitative changes in the economic conditions of the people despite its uninterrupted monopoly of power... added to the woes of the people generally' (Baral 1993:41-42). Despite their being banned, political parties existed, nonetheless illegal and underground. There were also several student constituencies active, open and above ground, which

reflected and often served as mouthpieces for the banned political parties (Baral 1993:46).

Into this political stew, the government attempted sincerely but ineffectually to create change and development, especially in the educational sector. Within a few years of its promulgation, however, the New Education System Plan (NESP) of 1971 was considered a failure, a fact that did not bode well for its NDS component. While the government's avowed goal was sweeping social and economic change and national unity, and while some profound changes in Nepalese society did occur, political and social life was guided from a citadel of conservatism beneath which personal and political freedoms remained severely restricted. The overarching goal of encouraging education and development, and of broadening social perspectives, was thwarted by the very fact of the severe constraints the leaders placed on society and politics.

It was in this paradoxical atmosphere that the NDS was launched, surprisingly succeeded (despite the failure of the rest of the NESP), and was summarily closed, all within little more than half a decade. Notwithstanding the glowing accounts of local support for NDS volunteers, many district and local leaders (the Panchas) watched with growing alarm as student volunteers brought social and political awareness into rural communities. A few volunteers were even reprimanded for their outspoken contempt of certain powerful, corrupt or oppressive Panchas. The NDS was supposed to be free from politics, political pressures and local rivalries (Pradhan 1988:4); but clearly, in the overheated political environment of the times, political neutrality by students in far off rural villages was very difficult to monitor or achieve.

By the end of the 1970s, social and political life in the capital, Kathmandu, and in other cities and towns around the kingdom was also considerably unsettled. Strikes and other confrontational civil actions were being staged almost daily against an overriding incompetence and corrup-tion in government. The Panchayat system was a failure, and the people wanted to return to a multiparty parliamentary democracy. On May 23, 1979, a violent confrontation occurred in Kathmandu between a combined force of police and army troops and an estimated 20 to 30 thousand university students. It was the culmination and expression of a deep and growing discontent among the citizenry. The following

morning, King Birendra, in a bid to quell the unrest, made a famous royal proclamation, announcing that a national referendum would be held to choose between continuing the partyless Panchayat system with suitable reforms, or reinstat-ing the multiparty system of parliamentary democracy (Shah 1993:51-52).

The Fall of NDS

The king's announcement alarmed many Panchas and other powerful politicos. While they did not dare speak out against the king's will, their actions nonetheless had an immediate and chilling effect upon the NDS. Some Panchas were convinced (with good cause) that NDS students would try to persuade rural voters to vote against the existing system and select the multiparty option instead. If that happened, their local power and position would be doomed. What the Panchas least wanted was what some NDS volunteers encouraged—grassroots consultation and ownership of development initiatives, opposing (head-on) a culture of partisanship and ignorance of democratic principles. Although they could not stop the referendum, the Panchas and others were able to exaggerate the gravity of the situation (the threat to their power) and persuade some of the very conservative decision-makers in Kathmandu to force the university to withdraw the NDS.

Under the circumstances, King Birendra backed its closure. His palace directive forced the NDS Director to order all NDS participants home immediately, for their 'physical protection', it was said. In the 'official' view, NDS was closed due to funding problems, but few people believed it. The polite reason, reported in the news media, was 'to keep the NDS above the controversy in the context of the proposed national referendum' (The Rising Nepal, Kathmandu, June 29 1979, quoted by Poudyal 1979). Most informants interviewed for this study put it more bluntly: 'Closing the NDS was basically a political decision, a political act.'[14]

Earlier, we pointed out that the NDS, as part of the new educational plan of the 1970s, was implicitly designed to prepare the nation's youth for public (or civic) service. Paradoxically, this was the root of its undoing. It was created and deployed under conditions not fully conducive to the sort of democratic citizenship that both the students and

villagers hegan exercising. Once the NDS its participants experienced realities of life in the far-flung districts of the realm, however, the disjuncture between state-sponsored ideal of 'Democracy' and the democratic citizenship fostered in students and ordinary citizens threatened the power and privilege of the few, and eventually contributed to its demise.

Nepal's first serious nationwide civic service movement, was summarily abandoned in 1979, but its positive influence on so many lives and communities has not been forgotten. Its popularity and its place in the psyche of the nation, never waned, though they remained in abeyance. It is interesting to note that the short saga of the NDS_from first doubts and resistance, to enthusiastic support and success, to its threat against the establishment and its overnight closure, and its role in student and national politics of the 1970s_is strangely absent from most socio-political commentaries and recent historical analyses. If noted at all, the mention is typically a brief post mortem (e.g., in Maskay 1998:99-100). The reasons for its absence from contemporary literature seems clear enough. For one, much of that literature is written by outsiders or younger scholars without historic perspective. And, for another, the NDS was part of the failed New Education System Plan, virtually all formal reference to which has died with the erasure of the memories of that by-gone and (now) irrelevant plan.

A Weak Revival, 1983 to 1991

In 1983, after a three-year hiatus, the NDS Directorate was reopened at Tribhuvan University and a 'special crash program' version of NDS was reinstated. It lasted until 1991, and involved several thousand more Masters level students. But it was a tepid follow-on to the original NDS, watered down to a three months assignment, only one month of which was spent in a rural community, barely enough time to prepare the required village profile. During the interlude little remained of the original NDS objectives, spirit, or local self-help development activities that had characterized its predecessor. This was a classic example of redesigning a pre-existing model but neglecting to retain its 'soul'. The revived program was poorly planned and coordinated, and was run with minimal supervision, monitoring or evaluation. The original NDS spirit

(rastriyatako bhavana) was gone. What remained, in the words of some former NDS officials and volunteers, was a weak miniature NDS_'a formality', 'nominal and symbolic'.

Looking back on the NDS in its heyday, one former director has made this terse observation: 'The king's people were very sensitive to the program. The courtiers were more conservative than the king.'

Ultimately, politics prevailed, for by the late 1980s the Panchayat system was under its most serious threat to its survival so far, and conservative leaders and palace courtiers were on the defensive. Anti-Panchayat sentiments were heating up, only this time they led directly into the successful 'Peoples Movement for the Restoration of Democracy' of 1989-90. Politically, the timing for a rejuvenated NDS program was all off; the context was not right.

After the new era of Democracy began in Nepal in 1990, the NDS died a quiet death. Meanwhile, the political unity that had won Democracy quickly dissolved back into contending factions. With party politics now legal and in the open, student strikes and demonstrations subsided. But, the new Democracy suffered one crisis after another and from 1996 onwards it was dogged by a growing Maoist insurgency in the rural areas, paralleled by corruption and inept leadership at the center. (And, since October 2002, there have been no local elections and local government at the VDC level has been on hold.) All of this has prevented political leaders and the government from moving forward constructively, aggressively, with programs of rural development and poverty alleviation.

But it has not stopped many well meaning citizens, some of them former NDS volunteers imbued with the spirit of civic service, to take advantage of both the socio-political vacuum and the new civil freedoms that came with Democracy, to begin to form a strong civil society movement. The 'civic space' created under the NDS was now becoming creatively filled by a spectacular rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs, CBOs and CSOs). Many of them were led by or supported by former NDS volunteers (and by others inspired by their example). Thus, in an important sense, the notion of social capital bridging groups (Drogosz 2003) can be expanded to one that also bridges time.

During the decade of the 1990s, the organization responsible for registering NGOs, the Social Welfare Council (formerly the Social Service National Coordination Council) recorded and certified a tremendous surge of civic service activities. Prior to the 1990 Democracy Movement, at a time when the Panchayat system was highly distrustful of citizen movements, the council recorded less than 200 local and national NGOs in Nepal. A decade later, however, it recorded almost 9,000 NGOs, in ten categories of which the largest was Community Development (SWC 1999-2000).15 It was during this recent burst of NGO and civic service spirit that the NDS was successfully rejuvenated ' in a new form.

NDS Reincarnated: The NDVS

In 1998, amidst the phenomenal growth of Nepal's civil society institutions, the National Planning Commission decided (again) to revive the NDS, and after a period of planning, the new 'National Development Volunteer Service' (NDVS) was formally inaugurated in April 2000, in time to join in celebration of the International Year of Volunteers 2001. This time, a decade after the success of the Democracy Movement, Nepal's political climate was in some respects more favorable, more progressive, and the objectives of the new student volunteer were more broadly conceived than earlier (compare Aditya & Karmacharya 1988, Upadhyay et al 1989).

The first NDVS participants were fielded in a pilot program in 1998. Since then, well over 500 volunteers have been mobilized and posted widely across the mountain, hill and lowland districts of Nepal. Unlike its direct predecessor, the NDS, these volunteers are not active students, but are mostly new graduates armed with technical skills in agriculture, engineering, solar energy, health sciences, and water management, along with a few from liberal arts, management and planning. This emphasis on technical expertise marks one of the basic differences between the new NDVS and the old NDS, which was more of a rural teacher corps.

The NDVS strictly prohibits political activism and volunteers must sign a sworn statement not to engage in political affairs of any kind. From the perspective of the state, one of the key lessons learned from the NDS is that overt involvement of participants in political activities, even

the expression of a political opinion, is counter productive to the neutrality that volunteers should maintain (Shrestha & Upadhyay 2002).

Discussion and Conclusion

The case of national service in Nepal underscores the importance of examining the social and political context into which service is introduced. Service programs can be a source of widespread societal change and a vehicle for expressing discontent with the status quo. Inextricable links between civic service and democratic citizenship have been noted in the literature, for the intent of civic service is often not only to promote democratic citizenship but also bring social change through new institutio-nal arrangements (Perry & Thomson 2004; Dionne, Drogosz & Litan 2003).

If a significant consequence of civic service is to foster democratic citizenship, then, as the NDS case suggests, it is necessary to examine the nature and life course of service programs in repressive and undemocratic regimes that offer very little in the form of democratic expression to its citizens. In a Nepal with few opportunities to express dissent or mobilize communities outside of the traditional hierarchies, the NDS provided a ready-made vehicle for youth and rural poor to organize and mount a credible threat to the status quo. While national service is not usually envisioned as a vehicle for political activism, and on the face of it, curtailing activism seems appropriate, it is important to underscore that when avenues for democratic participation are few, as in the case of Nepal, national service programs can play a significant role in manifesting the urge to assert democratic citizenship. Therefore, in the absence of true democratization, Nepal's first formal civic service program was a welcome opportunity to assert citizenship rights, though it later become a casualty of its own success in fostering the beginnings of democratization.

The expectations and aspirations of volunteers to address social and economic disparities soared directly because of their participation in NDS. The NDS began dismantling the historical divide between the privileged and the poor, although certainly not by design, and only briefly. Student volunteers were able to instigate a more active participation by ordinary citizens—the economically and socially

impoverished and excluded—in the affairs of their respective communities. A direct challenge to local elite (a singular source of state power) and indirectly to the state quickly diminished the prospects of a national service that was giving voice to an independent civil society. NDS was quickly dismantled, but the ripples it created in Nepalese politics and society later were foundational to the Democracy Movement and the opening of civic space that came with it, and the still unfolding struggle for Democracy in Nepal.

Here we want to stress that while the NDS merely threatened the status quo, it is evident from current development discourse in Nepal that the dominance of an entrenched political and social elite in Nepal is still pervasive. NDS was important in introducing the ideas of democratic citizenship to far corners of Nepalese society that otherwise had not seen them. Subsequent calls for greater citizenship rights and democracy were not grassroots campaigns, but were, as Brown (1996:211-212) has noted, purely urban: '...born out of a compromise between the traditional elite and the professional middle class. The poor were not a party to the compromise. The urban poor participated in Nepal's revolution in the sense that they gave the leaders of the Jana Andolan [the 1990 'Peoples Movement'] leverage over the palace.'

The outcome has been one of continuity, where power and wealth remain elusive to the rural and urban poor, and a narrow elite still governs Nepal. This, however, does not diminish but only strengthens our thesis that (a) national civic service under such conditions can foster democratic citizenship from the grassroots, but that (b) it becomes difficult to sustain such a program when it begins to threaten an entrenched elite and intense scrutiny of the powerful.

We conclude with the idea that civic service is inherently democratic, inviting citizen participation in social development, especially when other roads to democracy are blocked. In Nepal, national service program became the magnet for democratic participation in the absence of other legitimate avenues of democracy. The observations of Clotfelter (1999:10), from an international perspective are that: 'however politically neutral in their conception, these service programs tend to stir up waves in the pool of politics, especially when they are funded directly

by the government... Much more prominent on the political radar screen, though, are the actions of those recruits.'

Amartya Sen's call for expanding real freedoms of citizens and the removal of unfreedoms to unleash development seems appropriate even for understanding how national service unfolds in the absence of Democracy (Sen 1999). The case study of Nepal illustrates some of the complexities surrounding a national service program. We contend that if a significant aspect of service is to foster democratic citizenship, then it cannot be divorced from the climate in which it is deployed.

> ...Citizenship will not be strengthened if service is entirely divorced from politics. Yes, service is essential to civil society and it is part of what makes us citizens. (Drogosz 2003:250-251)

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ENDNOTES

1. For a more extensive version of this paper, describing and analyzing civic service and youth volunteer movements in South Asia, with the Nepal NDS case study, see Yadama & Messerschmidt 2004.

2. Don Messerschmidt is an applied anthropologist, consultant, researcher, writer (and former American Peace Corps Volunteer). He has authored several dozen articles, many reports and several books on Nepal, mostly dealing with development topics.

3. Gautam Yadama is an associate professor in the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, USA.

4. Bhuvan Silwal is currently with the U.N. in Eastern Europe on assignment to a local governance and development project in Albania. In 2001 he served as Nepal National Coordinator for the International Year of Volunteers (IYV) program under the office of the U.N. Volunteers/Nepal. He has considerable experience as an advisor on volunteer affairs in Nepal, including the new National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS).

5. At the root of volunteerism in Nepal are the strong cultural-historical concepts of 'service' (Nepali: *sewa*) and 'duty' (*dharma*) constituted to promote a dharma-based 'good society' where the weak and the powerless are served by those occupying a better position in life (Dahal et al 2002:34-35, Menon, Moore & Sherraden 2002). There is a very thin line between the meaning of 'service' that is freely given and 'duty' that is expected to be given. Engaging in some voluntary 'service' to society is easily interpreted as simply the socially expected performance of one's moral 'duty'.

6. Maskay (who questions any association of Nepal's contemporary civil society movements with past service traditions) saw it slightly differently when he wrote: 'Evidence exists here and there that NGOs existed in Nepal in the remote past, long before the written history of Nepal...' (1998:68).

7. The list is slightly modified, from by Biggs, Gurung & Messerschmidt 2004. It is based on their own research as well as an extensive literature: Bhattachan 1996, 2000 & 2002; Chhetri & Kattel 2004; Dhakal 1994 & 1996; Fisher 1989 & 1991; Gurung (J.) 2000; Gurung (S.M.) 2000; Joshi, Sharma & Thapa 2000; Limbu 2001; Messerschmidt 1979, 1981, 1985, 1986, 1987 & 1995; Pradhan 1983 & 1989; Pun 2001; Regmi 2002; and Shrestha 1999.

8. Bhattachan (1996) designates the same as 'indigenous' and 'induced'. We have adapted 'indigenous', 'traditional' and 'sponsored' from Fisher 1991. *Indigenous* refers to a system (or group) developed within a local community (by insiders), identified as locally-originated, locally-'owned' and 'customary'. *Traditional* implies well established and accepted, usually with some degree of antiquity, something 'old' in the eyes of the beholder, but not necessarily indigenous. *Sponsored* groups are those initiated or 'induced' from outside the host community by projects, programs, government agencies, NGOs or other outside organizations.

9. See Biggs, Gurung & Messerschmidt 2004 for an in-depth discussion.

10. The remaining 4% were undecided due to personal or family concerns, not in opposition to the program.

11. 'Local authorities' are identified as persons related to NDS program, as distinct from local leaders, many of whom were threatened by it. Of the 111 local leaders and 385 villagers surveyed, 100% and 99%, respectively, expressed their favor of the program (Pradhan 1978:275).

12. A recent assessment of the root causes of the Maoist insurgency, from districts where Maoism first arose in Nepal in the mid-1990s, points to local discontent with the status quo and, especially, with the neglect by the palace and royal retainers of local needs and aspirations (Gersony 2003). That study, however, makes no reference to the presence of NDS volunteers during the 1970s. Gersony's reference to outside influences begins, unfortunately, only with the implementation of a large donor-funded development project in 1980. Thus, the likely influence of NDS volunteers in the same districts over the previous decade was ignored.

13. For more detail on the political setting, see Baral 1993, Hoftun et al 1999: 26-45, and Shah 1990 & 1993.

14. In a close vote, the National Referendum resulted in a win for the king's preference to continue the Panchayat system with appropriate reforms although, in the end, it only marked time, one decade, until the popular revolutionary movement to restore Democracy won out in 1990.

15. By 2002 this number had risen to almost 14,000 NGOS affiliated with the Social Welfare Council (Pyakural 2002). Not all, however, are fully functional and professionally sound. This number does not count the scores of international NGOs that also operate in Nepal, many of which, along with international aid agencies, fund much of the national and local NGO community through which they channel specific development activities.

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