Tharu. With the establishment of the National Park and the prohibition of grazing in the forest, the number of cattle declined drastically, in some villages by 80%. The animals starved to death. The farmer now face a lack of dung and of working animals. Because of problems in collecting firewood - it has to be stolen - more and more dung is used as fuel. The increase in the population of wildlife has caused the Tharu to suffer loss of harvest and of livestock for which there is no compensation. The regular collection of edible and medicinal plants, of materials for making houses and household items, has become nearly impossible (Muller-Boker, 1991a).

It is the Tharus in particular who have been greatly affected by the loss of access to land extensively used in the past. In the face of their immediate problems of survival, one can understand why they close their ears to arguments supporting the preservation of a biotope and the protection of endangered wildlife. For the Tharus the forest is not only an important economic resource, it is also their form of economy, their way of life and cultural identity (Muller-Boker, 1991b:112). For them it is hard to accept the ideas of Western ecologists who see the forest and savannas as a living space for wild animals only, one in which the Tharus no longer have a place.

The ecologically sensible decision to protect and conserve vast areas of Chitwan contradicts the infrastructural development and the opening of the region to people from the outside. The Tharus are the victims of a twofold dispossession. Only a conservation management which involves the needs of the local population, providing them with effective support, can counter the growing impoverishment and criminalization of the autochthonous inhabitants and prevent illegal encroachment on the protected areas.

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INTERVIEW
Reorientation at the Royal Nepal Academy: An interview with Vice-Chancellor Prof. Isvar Baral
Martin Gaenssle

He refused to go to Princeton in the late fifties, because this would have committed him to the School of International Studies (SIS) in New Delhi, which had arranged for the scholarship, for a further five years - and he intended to go back to Nepal. The political changes in 1960, however, put an end to this plan, so he went to London to get his Ph.D. from SOAS and eventually stayed in Delhi, where he taught south Asian politics and the history of modern Nepal at the SIS (Jawaharlal Nehru University) for what came to be 34 years. For a long time he had been in the bad books of the Panchayat system because of his democratic credentials, but last summer, after the restoration of multi-party democracy, when Prof. Isvar Baral came - as usual - to his home country for vacation, he was made Vice-Chancellor of the Royal Nepal Academy. (The post of Chancellor has remained vacant since the restructuring of the Academy).

When he wrote his doctoral thesis on The Life and Writings of Prithvi Narayan Shah in London under the supervision of the late T.W. Clark, he used the archives of the India Office Library and became - as he recounted - 'the first
person in the world who has seen all the volumes of the Hodgson papers from cover to cover - and the first Nepali of course." Besides being a distinguished scholar in the fields of history and political science, Isvar Bara is well-known as an authority on Nepali literature (for example as editor of "Jhālabāja", "Himalcift", "Sayapati", "Mohan Kūra-lakā Kavīti", etc.) - and as a writer. He is also a linguist, well versed in the Sanskrit language and literature, and speaks fluently Hindi, Maithili, Bengali and Bhojpuri.

Asked for the reasons for taking up his present post, Prof. Bara replied that it was his long-standing interest in history on the one hand, and literature on the other, that made the job attractive to him. He went on to explain that the Royal Academy is meant primarily for the development of five branches of knowledge: language, literature, culture (which includes history), art (painting, music and drama), and philosophy. But later on he pointed out that at first he had had reservations: "I was not very enthusiastic in accepting this job, primarily because I have left a few things incomplete, writings: I have a plan of publishing about 15 books, 7 are in the last stage of completion. My plan was to retire early from Jawaharlal Nehru University and devote the rest of life to full time writing. Now I don't get the time. So this is a great loss to me, that is why I was not very enthusiastic. But secondly there was the challenge - the challenge to strengthen the foundations of democracy in the country through the activities of the Royal Academy."

This challenge was the central theme of our talk. When I asked him about the major changes in the set-up of the Academy, Prof. Bara first explained some administrative problems he faced.

"The first thing I had to do here was how do we say? - spring cleaning." This implied stock-taking of previous commitments and liabilities. For example, bills for the printing of books had to be paid, which no longer reflected the policy of the Academy. The case of the employees had to be taken up, as there had been "anomalies" in their appointment, stagnation in their salaries and academic grading, etc. And thirdly, the financial situation had to be reviewed: as the government no longer provided a developmental fund of two million rupees, and the increment of salaries took up more than one million. The Academy faced a decrease of three million rupees in its budget.

We then turned to the question of restructuring the academic activities. What kind of shift had taken place in the orientation of the Academy's projects?

"We made certain innovations. First we included studies regarding different languages in the country, not only Nepali. Previously, only Nepali was being encouraged, only studies and books in Nepali were being published. And all the activities were related to the Nepali language. We modified that, and our activities now are related to other languages also."

Prof. Bara then went on to explain the newly started projects on four languages (other than Nepali): Limbu, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Newari (for details see below). Later on, he continued, other languages, such as Magar, Tamang, and Gurung, will be included in the programme. A similar shift of emphasis has taken place in other activities, like the performance of dramas.

"Every year a drama festival was held here in which only Nepali dramas were staged for a week or so. So this time dramas in other languages also will be staged. We included two languages this year, other than Nepali: Newari and Maithili. Next year we will include two other languages. So in this way all the languages will be given a chance as best as possible."

For this drama festival, which was scheduled for 26th September, already more than 150 scripts of non-professional drama groups, literary organisations etc. have been submitted. The best presentations will be awarded prizes.

Another change concerns the "research fellowships" awarded by the Academy. Previously, these fellowships were mostly given for creative writing, to essayists, poets, novelists. But now, true to their name, they will be strictly given for scientific and methodologically sound research only.

This does not mean, however, that creative writing will no longer be promoted. The Vice-Chancellor emphasized that the Academy will continue to support the publication of creative writing, "... but they must be of a standard. Thus, if somebody wants to publish an anthology of poems for example, it has to be seen what particular or contribution these poems are going to make to the development of Nepali poetry."

Apart from such shifts in the emphasis new projects will also be introduced. In the beginning of February 1992 a Festival of the People (lokotsava) is going to be held, which is meant for the presentation of folk songs, "songs of the tribal people of different languages, not modern songs, only such songs which are part and parcel of the cultural life of the people." The plan is to group these presentations according to different genres, such as heroic ballads (like those of the Gaine), songs pertinent to women (like those sung on Tij), or relating to certain religious festivals, or agricultural seasons etc. Asked whether these songs will also be recorded and published later, Prof. Bara affirmed that this is intended. Summing up he continued: "So we are trying our best at new things which previously had not been taken up. As you asked earlier, certainly I thought there would be very exciting things for me, to make innovations and to depart from the normal, the activities, and to contribute something to the cultural environment of the country. So I thought an opportunity had been given to me."

The "opening up" of the Royal Academy's activities to a wider field of interests also creates a bigger ground for possible collaboration with foreign scholars and institutions. When we came to that point towards the end of our talk Prof. Bara stressed the necessity to keep each other informed and initiate "mutual cooperation and an exchange of ideas."

(Interview held on 19th August, 1991)

Current and Projected Language Projects of the Royal Nepalese Academy

**Limbu**

1. Study on Limbu Language, Literature and Culture: The major objective of this project is to collect materials on Limbu oral tradition and publish them in **devanagari** script with Nepali transliteration. Several books are in preparation: 1) short introduction to the Limbu language and literature (this is already completed and is to be published in 1992); 2) collection of folk songs and tales; 3) collection of proverbs and idioms (fieldwork for this will start in 1991-1992); 4) studies on the **mundhum** (one ritual text, sung by a phe-
dangma for the benefit of a pregnant mother and her expected child, has been recorded and edited by Vairagi Kahila and is presently in press).

2. Limbu-Nepali-English Dictionary: This is a reedition of the dictionary which was originally compiled by I.S. Chemjong and published by the Academy (1961/62). The new edition will be revised and enlarged.

Chief editor: Vairagi Kahila
Committee: Dr. Subhadra Subba, Dr. Navel Kisor Rai, Bikram Ingwaba

**Newari**

History of Newari Literature (in Nepali). This will be the first comprehensive history of Newari writing covering the various periods and genres in the light of changing political contexts. The volume of approximately 700-800 pages is planned to be published in about three years.

Chief editor: Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan
Committee: Narmadesvar Prasad Pradhan, Dr. Janak Man Vaidya, Kashinath Tamot, Madhav Lal Karmacharya

**Nepali**

Dictionary of Literary Terms (in Nepali). The compilation of this dictionary is among other things intended to facilitate the understanding of and communication with the western tradition of literary history and criticism.

Chief editor: Krishna Chandra Singh Pradhan

Maithili

1. Maithili-Nepali Dictionary. The plan is to first publish a concise dictionary with about 35,000 entries. Later this will be enlarged up to 60,000 words or more. Three collectors will be deputed to three different areas in Nepal: one in Mahottari and Sarihal, the second in Janakpur, the third will be in Siraha and Saptari (up to Rajbiraj). Thus, not only standard Maithili, but also variant dialects (like those close to the border with Bhojpuri speakers) will be included, as long as different words are in usage. (If the difference is only in spelling, the standard spelling will be given).

Chief editor: Prof. Dr. Harideva Mishra Committee: Prof. Ramawat Yadav, Dr. S.N. Chaudhari, Dr. Rei Krishna Jha

2. Nepali-Maithili Dictionary. This dictionary is designed for Nepali speakers who want to learn the Maithili language. It will be based on dictionaries which are already published and therefore will not involve field-work. Later it will be supplemented by a grammar in Nepali.

Chief editor: Prof. Dr. Isvar Baral Committee: Dr. Yogendra Yadav, Ram B. Kapadi, Dr. Rajendra Vimal

3. Representative Collection of Maithili Writings. An anthology will be prepared in two volumes, one focusing on prose, the other on poetry. The collection is intended to represent the whole history of Maithili literature from earliest times up to the present and will include various literary genres (also short-stories, essays, literary criticism, narrative poetry etc.) Use will also be made of manuscripts kept by the National Archives. The text will be presented with an introduction about the authors (as far as possible). A glossary of obsolete terms is to be attached.

Chief editors: Dr. Dhireswar Jha (Prose), Parameswar Prasad Singh (Poetry)

**Bhojpuri**

Grammar of Bhojpuri. For this project a committee has been formed with Prof. Isvar Baral as president and Dhunesh Chandra Gautam, Jagdish Sharma, Uma Shankar Dvivedi and Dr. Shruba Chandra Gautam as members.

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**RESEARCH REPORTS**

**Group Projects**

**Gulmi & Argha-Khanci Inter-disciplinary Programme**

Since late 1985 the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique and the Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique have been conducting inter-disciplinary research in two districts of mid-western Nepal: Gulmi and Argha-Khanci. The programme was undertaken under the Cultural Cooperation Agreement between the Nepalese and French governments. Further, the CNRS team was affiliated to the Royal Nepal Academy. The research was supposed to help in the preparation of an EEC development programme scheduled in the same area. The decision to choose these two particular districts was taken by HMG.

For the CNRS and INRA, this project was their second inter-disciplinary endeavour in Nepal, following a joint programme conducted in 1981-83 in Salme village, Nawatkot District. However, Gulmi and Argha-Khanci was the first undertaking at a regional level. The Salme and Gulmi programmes were both conducted under the GRECO-Himalaya, an inter-disciplinary structure involving numerous French researchers working on the Himalayas.

Till now, some 30 persons have contributed to the Gulmi-Argha-Khanci programme, for various lengths of time. Six major fields of study were covered: geography, ecology, agronomy, rural economy, history and social anthropology. Moreover, specialists in remote sensing helped in the collection of data, and the Topographical Survey Department (HMG) issued a "Baseline survey", a set of maps displaying the basic geographical features of the districts.

Twelve junior researchers spent between 6 and 18 months in field surveys and provided the bulk of information on the area. In addition, they used these materials for their doctoral degrees in Ecology (L. Redaud, C. Michaud), Social Anthropology (M. Comte-Tilouine, P. Ramirez) and Agronomy, Water-management and Agro-economy (J. Assie, A. Aubriet, J.P. Fontenelle, A. Knepper, J.P. De Verdieres, J. Andrieu, N. Sibelet, F. Segala). Furthermore, seven post-doctoral and senior scholars undertook studies in particular fields: J. Smadja (human geography), G. Krausskopf (study of the Khamal potter-fishermen), C. Panten-Bruinck (labour relations), Y. Houdard and J. Bonnemaire (agriculture). J.P. Defontaines (land use) and G. Toth (Dasaing).

C. Jest extensively toured the districts and monitored the work of junior researchers. R.R. Subedi of T.U. History Dept. collected available manuscripts and historical data.

Gulmi and Argha-Khanci (600 000 inhabs., 2500 km²) are situated in the heavy populated middle hills (8000-2000 m) to the west of the Kali Gandaki, inhabited mainly by Nepali-speaking Hindus: Bahun, Chetri, Thakuri, Kami, Sarki, Damai, Gaine, Tibeto-Burmesse groups, Magar and Gurung, represent less than 15% of the total population, and they generally use Nepali as their mother tongue. Before 1804, the area was divided into six Thakuri principalities, founded in the early 16th century and more or less under the suzerainty of neighbouring Palpa.