

EBHR 42 Spring-Summer 2013

ARTICLES

Stability in Transition: Development perspectives
and local politics in Nepal 9

James Sharrock

Struggling on Two Fronts During Nepal's Insurgency:
The Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace and
the meanings of 'civil society' 39

Celayne Heaton-Shrestha and Ramesh Adhikari

Shaping a Livable Present and Future: A review of youth
studies in Nepal 75

Amanda Snellinger

Learning in a Guerrilla Community of Practice: Literacy practices,
situated learning and youth in Nepal's Maoist movement (1996-2006) 104

Ina Zharkevich

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The 13th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies 134

Fiona McConnell

History in Nepalese Chronicles: Report on a Workshop in Nepal 138

Astrid Zotter

Himalayan Connections: Disciplines, Geographies, Trajectories 140

Austin Lord, Andrew Quintman and Sara Shneiderman

The 16th Conference of the International Association for
Ladakh Studies 144

Martijn van Beek

Development Challenges in Bhutan 147

Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt and Line Kikkenborg

Report on the Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal
and the Himalaya 2013 150

Shaileshwori Sharma

OBITUARY

- George Neilson Patterson (1920-2012) 156
Roger Croston

BOOK REVIEWS

- Alex McKay and Anna Balikci-Denjongpa, eds.: *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture.* 164

Guntram Hazod and Mélanie Vandenhelsken

- Bernardo A. Michael: *Statemaking and Territory in South Asia: Lessons from the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-1816).* 170

Saul Mullard

- Francis Khék Gee Lim: *Imagining the Good Life: Negotiating Culture and Development in Nepal Himalaya* 173

Martin Saxer

- Charles Ramble: *The Navel of the Demoness: Tibetan Buddhism and Civil Religion in Highland Nepal.* 176

Mark Turin

- Sanjeev Uprety: *Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas* 182

Matthew William Maycock

- Mark Turin: *A Grammar of the Thangmi Language* 185

Heleen Plaisier

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDITORIAL

Welcome to EBHR No. 42. The articles contained herein all focus on aspects of political and social change in modern Nepal. I believe that each represents an unusually valuable contribution to the growing literature on this topic, not least because they challenge a number of conventional assumptions and preconceptions

James Sharrock offers us a penetrating critique of international development constructions of and perspectives on Nepal's political culture. I hope this piece will be widely read in the relevant quarters, and indeed that it will provoke further debate on this sensitive and important issue, perhaps in the pages of a future issue of EBHR.

Celayne Heaton-Shrestha and Ramesh Adhikari provide us with a nuanced and clear-eyed account of the Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace that played such a vital role in the struggle to establish a new order in Nepal. In the process of doing so they raise and address a number of important questions about the meaning and role of 'civil society' in that country.

Amanda Snellinger and Ina Zharkevich both focus on Nepali youth. Snellinger's comprehensive and discursive guide to the relatively new field of youth studies in Nepal is a useful companion piece to the special issue of *Studies in Nepali History and Society* published in September 2012 and I believe it will be widely welcomed. Zharkevich's account of reading practices among young Maoist cadres during the recent conflict in Nepal sheds valuable new light on an under-researched aspect of the insurgency and adds yet another strand to the analysis of its root causes.

Many thanks to all involved in bringing this issue into print: authors, reviewers, copy-editors, and Rita Bhujel and her colleagues at the Social Science Baha.

Please note that all past issues of the EBHR up to and including No. 40 are now online at: www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/ebhr. Each and every article published in this journal since it was founded in 1991 can now be downloaded as a separate pdf. My thanks to the Digital Himalaya team in New Haven and Dhobighat Dhara for achieving this for us. *Dhanyavaad and badhai!*

– Michael Hutt

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Stability in Transition: Development perspectives and local politics in Nepal

James Sharrock

Introduction

This article is about ways of looking at local politics in Nepal after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006.¹ The first part of my paper draws on ideas developed in Sudan, Afghanistan and the DR Congo to critique thinking by development actors about 'post-conflict' countries. I first suggest that development actors and others wishing to intervene in Nepal's local political environment should not concentrate solely on what they think local politics lacks, according to ideal frameworks of the state. Instead, I highlight different ways of viewing the state and local politics in developing and post-conflict countries, focusing particularly on theories that seek to better understand local informal political realities. I then use brief case studies to illustrate examples of local level transitional politics in Nepal. After this I highlight some possible benefits to development actors of cultivating such an understanding of local politics. This will be followed by a suggestion of how to carry out such an analysis. I conclude that development actors need not resign themselves to an acceptance of the reality of politics; nor should they only ask 'what is missing?' when looking at local politics and the Nepali state. Instead, I suggest that a realistic and more effective form of analysis would integrate detailed studies of the local political reality with continuing and necessary long-term goals to reform practices such as corruption and patronage.

In particular, this paper argues that an understanding of the impact of political practices can assist interventions in identifying political practices which are effective and supported locally and those that are not. The alternative to this is a continued (and often wilful) ignorance of the complex reality of local Nepali politics. Although the focus of the paper is on critiquing forms of analysis, I also explore some of the difficulties

1 The views expressed are solely those of the author and do not represent the views of the United Nations, The Carter Center or the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID).

development actors face in implementing analytical findings. My paper is aimed at development actors as well as analysts working on security, peace building and post-conflict issues. It is also a contribution towards analysing local level politics in Nepal, a topic that has been researched in the past but not widely since the end of the conflict.² It should be noted that the form of the paper still reflects its origins as a short discussion paper intended to generate a debate among development actors in Nepal.

Methodology

This paper is based primarily on my own field experiences, gained mainly in the Eastern region and Dailekh district while I was working with the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), The Carter Center and the UK Government's Department for International Development (DFID) during 2007-2008 and 2011-2012. Nearly all the case studies were gathered during field trips. I also draw on publicly available reports published by the United Nations Resident & Humanitarian Coordinator's Office (UN RCHCO), International Crisis Group and The Carter Center. My field experiences were short (usually one-week) trips made as a member of mixed teams of Nepalis and internationals. Each visit focused on one district and typically involved spending time in the district headquarters as well as outside the headquarters in Village Development Committees (VDCs).³

On field trips I conducted interviews with a range of interlocutors including politicians, NGO representatives, journalists, government officials and citizens. My presence as a foreigner had an impact on what I was told in ways that are difficult to assess. However, I benefited from not visiting with any redistributive capacity or aid to disperse, a fact that became more widely known in each district as the number of my visits increased. In this paper I focus on findings from Dailekh, Ilam, Taplejung, Udayapur, and Sankhuwasabha, all essentially hill districts. This is due to the large amount of data I have from these districts. I have used data from Dailekh in the Mid-Western region in order to illustrate the dynamics of a different

2 Work covering local level politics and the state in Nepal includes Baral et al (2004), Borgström (1980), Burghart (1996), Caplan (1975), Gellner (2001), Gellner and Hachhethu (2008), Holmberg, Pettigrew and Tamang (2009), Ramirez (2000), and Sagant (2008). An outstanding example is International Crisis Group (2010).

3 Nepal has 75 districts, which are divided into administrative units known as Village Development Committees (VDCs). These are divided further into wards, with at least nine wards in each VDC.

region for comparative purposes. However, the fact that it is included is somewhat arbitrary and based on my own work assignments. The rest of the districts are located in the Eastern region. Tarai districts are not covered, as my field visits to the Tarai were less frequent. They may or may not share the general dynamics outlined in this paper. The current data is enough to generate some initial thoughts on political dynamics, but my findings are tentative and very far from in-depth anthropological or social scientific research. It is also worth noting that the information collected on my field visits was originally collected for purposes other than those of an academic paper. More research is needed, especially in developing detailed case studies across a greater range of districts and regions.

For ease of usage this paper describes Nepal as being in ‘transition’ or as a ‘post-conflict’ state, which are both problematic terms. It is important to recognise that Nepal’s political history has involved several other transitional periods.⁴ The definition of Nepal’s ‘transition’ during the peace process or Nepal’s ‘post-conflict’ status is highly debatable, particularly given the continuities between politics before, during and after the conflict. Also, identifying a ‘transition’ or ‘post-conflict’ time period implies that this is a phase that will end and that it also has a natural, agreed end: neither has been the case in Nepal. This paper focuses on the post-2006 situation and highlights local arrangements that developed primarily after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and during this transitional period; thus, the terms ‘post-conflict’ and ‘transition’ retain some basic usefulness to describe this time. One aim of this paper is to question and unpack, rather than redefine, these and other popular development-led terms, including ‘stability’ and ‘good governance’.

This paper stresses the importance of analysing local politics and the state. Much of it analyses both politics and the state together, because, through political parties in Nepal, they are inseparable and mutually dependent on each other (International Crisis Group 2010: 40). Local government is the most important level of government for ordinary Nepalis. However, there are clearly strong connections between local, regional and national politics. A common analysis in Nepal, as in many countries, defines politics as political decision-making in the capital, especially by political parties. Local level actors are all presumed to be waiting for

4 Including, for example 1951 to 1960, as mentioned in L.S. Baral (2012: 98).

top-level party and state decisions. Alternatively, earlier anthropological studies of Nepal tended to view local actions in isolation from national processes. In reality, as the examples show, the interaction and feedback between different levels of politics is much more complex than either a top-down approach or an approach that views local politics in isolation from regional or national levels.

Assessing local politics

The assessment of current local political arrangements in developing countries has often revolved around focusing on what is missing from an ideal picture of a functioning and service-delivering state. This is particularly true of assessments carried out by development actors and analysts working on security, peace building and post-conflict issues. Discussions generally follow well-trodden paths about fragile, frail or failed states. A clear expression of this view is in the edited collection *Nepal in Transition* (2012). At the end of the book the editors bemoan the fact that Nepal 'is still far from qualifying as a liberal democracy in which the procedural aspect of elections is complemented by respect of individual liberty, the rule of law, and the respect of basic rights, all of which are secured by checks on the power of each branch of government, equality under the law, impartial courts ... and separation of religion and state' (von Einsiedel, Malone and Pradhan 2012: 368).

Few Nepalis would dispute the importance of holding local elections, introducing greater accountability and making citizens feel more secure. Advocating for ideal outcomes is also important for local civil society actors, victims of the conflict who seek justice, and those excluded by current political processes. Reducing patronage and corruption is undoubtedly a politically desirable outcome in the long-term. However, asking, 'what is not working?' or variations such as 'where is the next conflict going to come from?' is not the only or even the most effective form of analysis that development actors can carry out. Actors could also, this paper argues, carry out a detailed study of local political practices, including political interests, patronage and corruption, before they make interventions.

The root of an analysis that defines states in terms of what they are not lies in a common understanding of Max Weber's work on the state. According to Weber, 'the state is a relation of men dominating men, a

relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e., considered to be legitimate) violence'. Weber famously also said, 'A state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Weber 1958: 78). Even though Weber was very cautious in his use of this definition, social scientists have been quick to categorise many kinds of states as operating under this ideal description of a coherent, effective bureaucracy. Translated into development analysis, this means viewing the Nepali state and Nepali politics solely in terms of what they cannot deliver—both in terms of weak delivery of services and a failure to provide security. This is undoubtedly an important and necessary form of analysis, but it is not the only approach and it can obscure more than it reveals.

An approach in which 'state capacity is gauged against a measuring stick whose endpoint is a variant of Weber's ideal-type state' (Migdal 2004: 15), also ascribes too much power and coherence to the state. As Migdal says:

...it posits a human society where one incredibly coherent and complex organisation exercises an extraordinary hegemony of thought and action over all other social formations intersecting that territory. It provides no way to theorize about arenas of competing sets of rules, other than to cast these in the negative, as failures or weak states or even as non-states (ibid.)

In contrast, Migdal's state-in-society approach offers an alternative definition. Migdal defines this as an assessment of both the state's 'image of a coherent, controlling organisation in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory' alongside its 'actual practices' (Migdal 2004: 16).

Migdal's view is echoed by a recent report, which sums up six years of research on crisis states. The authors state:

The dominant position in the policy community when addressing the condition of a state, or public authority, in the developing world is based on the proposition that 'good governance', defined as liberal democratic and free market institutions, is the source not only of a

state's ability to preside over peace and stability, but also over growth and development. These are generally assessed by the formal rules adopted by a state and the policies articulated and implemented. Our research suggests that a better understanding of the possibilities of progressive institutional change and policy reform can be achieved by seeing the state as a political settlement embodying a set of power relations (Putzel and Di John 2012: iii).

Other approaches have considered alternative ways of understanding how state and political practice actually works in developing countries, including those affected by conflict.⁵ Alex De Waal's ideas on the marketplace of politics in Sudan and other countries are particularly useful in this connection (2006, 2009, 2010), despite the politics in Nepal and Sudan being markedly different. De Waal's work focused on international engagement with 'fragile states' but his analysis can be applied to states defined internationally as 'post-conflict' too. Applied to the Nepali context, De Waal's approach would suggest that instead of solely measuring Nepal against a post-conflict Weberian ideal state, academics and policy practitioners with knowledge of Nepal could also concentrate on understanding what the practice of politics looks like at present and then marshal their knowledge and findings in ways that inform current development debates and policy. Alex De Waal made several points about Sudan which are arguably applicable to Nepal and other similar states. He writes:

These countries are defined by what they are not: they are not delivering services in an equitable manner; they are not exercising a monopoly on violence within their territories; they are not choosing their leaders through democratic processes, and they are not putting international assistance to its rightful use. In turn this approach leads to approaches for peacemaking, peace building, reconstruction and development that are premised on trying to achieve a particular normative standard (2009: 5).

5 The studies by Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999), Chabal and Daloz (1999), Coburn (2011), Khan (2001) and Migdal (2004) proved useful for the purposes of this paper.

Thus, policies aim to replace what is perceived to be missing, and do not consider what works, or what is actually taking place. This approach ignores some important questions, such as why local politics has remained relatively peaceful in Nepal since 2006.

De Waal also attempted to develop a theory of patronage in the political marketplace of ‘fragile’ states. He did this in the context of multiple peace agreements between various rebel movements in Sudan and the central Khartoum government. De Waal defined patronage politics as ‘the ability to gauge the monetary price that can be offered to any particular individual to secure his loyalty (it is a very gender-specific exercise), and more widely to read the market so as to know the likelihood of that price rising or falling in the future’ (De Waal 2009: 8).⁶ The point De Waal makes about the failure to incorporate the role of patronage in political affairs and conflict management is applicable to Nepal (2009: 7). Without an understanding of how patronage works and why people ‘may have more confidence in them than in weak formal institutions’ (2009: 2), external interventions in local politics will almost inevitably be misguided. As De Waal writes, ‘one of the drawbacks of the western, institutionalized normative standards is that they do not draw a clear line between patronage systems that maintain stability, and those that generate instability’ (2009: 12). As a first step he recommends understanding how political patronage markets work. This paper aims to make a very small contribution to such an effort.

At the same time, a more informed approach might help development actors to understand the strength (not fragility) of current local political arrangements better, and to distinguish between different types of patronage and corruption, in particular practices that are less harmful and may—generally for a limited period—aid stability, and those which do not. In broader terms, it would also help to identify what International Crisis Group described as the ‘resilient flexibility’ of the Nepali state (2010). In practical terms, this approach could mean that national development projects such as the multi-donor Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP), could be reconfigured to take local specifics into account. Practically, this would mean that

6 De Waal also highlighted various elements of the market place that are worth assessing when seeking solutions to a conflict: namely affordability, sustainability and the increasing monetisation of patronage systems.

LGCDP's well-intentioned efforts to try to quickly remove corruption and patronage would recognise local complexities, and would use this knowledge to identify the very worst excesses whilst ensuring that further problems were not created by the intervention itself.

Development actors and local politics

In addition to the particular frame of analysis that this essay seeks to critique, development actors have other reasons for ignoring local politics. This includes willful ignorance, lack of interest in the topic, centralisation in capital cities and organisational constraints. Instead of analysing the practice of local politics to assess what works, donors may effectively turn a blind eye to all corruption and patronage, viewing them as a price literally worth paying in order to generate a form of stability. This has arguably been the case in Nepal, in the form of donor support for Local Peace Committees (explained below) and, at the national level, continued DFID support for the Nepal Police despite criticisms of the project and the lack of police reform.⁷

National partner staff are often acutely aware of how local political practice works, but may not be easily able to feed their knowledge into programme design; nor may they have any incentive to do so. In the DR Congo, Séverine Autesserre identified international inaction on local conflict and micro-level issues as ultimately stemming from the 'dominant international peace building culture' (2010: 22). This culture 'established the parameters of acceptable action' and 'made it possible for foreign interveners to ignore the micro-level tensions that often jeopardize macro-level settlements' (Autesserre 2010: 10). Autesserre also says that internationals perceived violence to be routine in the DR Congo and that this was another barrier to a stronger focus on local peace building.

This main focus of this paper is on how development actors have analysed local politics in the post-conflict period. I go on to suggest one possible method of analysing local politics, along the lines of a political economy study. Part of my optimism that a study of local level politics can take place comes through my involvement in a study in Dailekh, carried out on behalf of DFID in 2012. Myself and a team of Nepali researchers, including

7 See, for example, the public Independent Commission for Aid Impact report on DFID's Peace and Security Programme in Nepal (2013). ICAI reports to the UK Parliament through the House of Commons International Development Committee.

NGO staff from Dailekh and researchers based in Kathmandu, spent one week in each VDC asking a series of questions to try to understand local politics. We visited five VDCs, developed our own semi-ethnographic methodology and focused our questions on leadership, institutions and political change. The study benefitted greatly from the combined involvement of researchers from Dailekh, who generated trust among key informants (although they did not research their home VDCs), and researchers from Kathmandu, who possessed technical skills. In the space of one week it generally proved difficult to obtain information on internal political conflicts inside a VDC, but a potentially useful outline analysis of trends in local politics in Dailekh emerged. I will go on to explain some of the findings, and the benefits of doing such a study, below.

My optimism is also based partly on the fact that many development organisations have recognised, often in what appear to be theoretically advanced models, the importance of different ways of looking at the state in developing and post-conflict countries (see OECD 2010, 2011). This is often highly generalised and, typically, still ultimately focused on the goal of a Weberian ideal state. However, a large set of theoretical literature, toolkits and guidance notes now exists which explores the notions surrounding, for example, a 'political settlement' (The Asia Foundation No. 2, 2010); or provides guidance on carrying out a political economy analysis (DFID 2009); or stresses the importance of unpacking different types of patronage and corruption (Stabilisation Unit 2012).

However, despite these reasons for optimism about the potential of development actors to carry out such a study, I have less confidence in the ability of large development organisations to integrate and implement political analysis into their planning and programming. This is an additional challenge, which this essay does not intend to explore. Development actors have carried out political economy analyses before in Nepal (although they have only rarely looked at local level informal structures), with little sign of implementation. Also, the extent to which development actors have been able to incorporate theoretical thinking from headquarters into programming and implementation in the field is unclear. The continuing approach, in Nepal at least, has been to continue an analysis of politics along the lines of the 'what is missing?' thesis. As a result of my focus on analysis rather than policy and implementation, this paper does not engage deeply with the debates around the nature of

development raised in, for example, Ferguson (1990) or Mosse (2005). Nor, however, does my paper assume that there are no politically attuned local development projects currently working in Nepal.

Local political bodies in Nepal during the transition

Formal politics at the local level in Nepal takes place through a number of institutions. The core institutions established under the Local Self-Governance Act (1999) are the District Development Committee (DDC), Village Development Committee (VDC), and Municipality, which were all established as elected bodies. However, local elections have not been held since 1997 and unelected representatives have headed local bodies since 2002. They have done this largely by chairing meetings termed All Party Mechanisms (APMs). APMs consist of local political party nominees and key government officials, and are chaired by unelected civil servants.⁸ APMs represent a link between national and local politics, as they are, in many respects, a replication of central-level arrangements. As explained below, they have subsequently developed local logics of their own.

In the transitional period, although formal authority rests with unelected civil servants, political party representatives have, through APMs, assumed de facto responsibility to settle disputes, manage budgets and oversee local development work. Following widespread allegations of corruption and mismanagement, the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development abolished APMs in January 2012.⁹ However, APMs remain informally active and politically important in VDCs and district headquarters. Another important institution, Local Peace Committees (LPCs), were created in 2006 as part of the transition but central-level political disputes meant they were not fully active until 2009. As with APMs, LPCs were established at DDC and VDC levels and controlled by political party representatives, who also rotated the chair.

Formally, LPCs were given a wide local peace-building mandate, but in practice they came to be used primarily by political parties to handle the distribution of interim relief compensation to conflict victims. Very

8 These were the Local Development Officer for the DDC; the Village Development Committee Secretary for the VDC; and the Executive Officer for Municipalities.

9 The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development officially disbanded APMs on 3 January 2012, following recommendations from the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority.

quickly it became apparent that party members and those connected to them were seen to be receiving relief funds, alongside some actual conflict-affected victims. Most LPCs soon became inactive, and they remain so. Political parties at the local level also developed informal roles in many other local bodies such as DDC Coordination Committees, VDC committees and smaller scale user groups. With no elections or other political programmes, participation in APMs, LPCs, committees and user groups remains a major activity of district and VDC political party branches (Carter Center 2011c: 2).

Another important local body, especially in Eastern hill districts, is the Indigenous Nationalities Coordination Committee (INCC). This was set up at the district level to make recommendations to APMs on the 15% of the DDC budget specifically allocated for socially marginalised groups.¹⁰ The INCC is chaired by the district Local Development Officer (LDO) and typically includes representatives from major political parties, the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). In several Eastern hill districts, NEFIN has gained strong influence over the use of these funds. This paper argues that an analysis of how transitional politics has worked shows that APMs, LPCs and (in the Eastern hills) INCCs were all important in generating a form of stability at local level, albeit undemocratically, particularly through their use of patronage and government spending. Later case studies highlight ways in which these formal structures of leadership and decision-making interacted with more important informal ways of practising politics.

Debating local political arrangements

It is worth placing the discussion in this paper in the context of wider debates on political arrangements in Nepal. It is important to remember that many of the political trends described here are not new. Earlier in the 1990s, as Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka has described, 'distributional coalitions' gained ground in local politics. They were successful at resource capture 'because politicians, bureaucrats, and entrepreneurs form coalitions and manage to institutionalize their practices in a sustainable manner' but they

¹⁰ The 2006 procedures actually state that the 15 percent is intended for socially and marginalised communities, including senior citizens, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, disabled, Madhesis, Muslims, and other underprivileged groups. In several districts, NEFIN and other identity-based groups have claimed control of this 15 percent.

'decisively reduced' people's confidence in the state and democratisation (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2008: 72). Prashant Jha has also argued forcefully that the 1990s were a failure in democratisation, including at the local level (Jha 2012). In contrast, Kanak Mani Dixit has stated that the 1990s were a relative success, including in 'promoting participatory development and local government' (Dixit 2012). In current debates about the peace process, assessments of the extent of democratisation in the 1990s have proved to be an important fault line between different commentators.

Two broad views exist on local political arrangements in Nepal during the current post-conflict period. One view states that local bodies such as the APM are a necessary evil in post-conflict situations in order to maintain peace and stability. Adhikari (2010) highlights some of their functions, demonstrating that an expanded group of actors benefited from patronage and government spending. This argument says that the creation of a money-fuelled harmony was a price worth paying in order to build cooperation and 'peace-build' among local political leaders. Donor support for LPCs, in particular, can be viewed as an attempt to institute barely disguised elite capture in order to generate local peace.

If donors were not aware of how corrupt LPCs were, then newspaper reports made their practices common knowledge (Shah 2011). Soon after the 2008 elections, many actors also made the argument that local polls would be highly disruptive and likely to exacerbate conflict (this argument subsequently fell out of favour). This view of elections was, incidentally, shared by King Mahendra, as part of his broader argument both in favour of the partyless Panchayat system, introduced in 1962, and in opposition to Western-style democracy in Nepal, claiming that it was unsuited to the Nepali soil (L.S. Baral 2012: 286). Recognition of the reality of local politics in corruption cases after 2006 involved development actors similarly equating support for stability with support for the status quo. Politicians claimed a loose democratic legitimacy and stated that their representation, which was broadly based on the existing balance of power at the centre, was at least preferable to that of unelected government officials.

A contrasting view of local post-conflict political arrangements says that APMs and other such bodies have become unacceptably corrupt, and have deepened unaccountability as well as the democratic deficit (through an inability to change representatives at the ballot box). APMs

are also seen as having the potential to create problems for the future. This view prevailed when APMs were abolished in January 2012, which at least removed their official legitimacy. It was argued that in post-people's movement Nepal it was a mockery to have such arbitrarily nominated bodies in Nepal. Political representatives, so the argument went, were accountable to no one except their parent parties. Prashant Jha articulated these concerns, noting the exclusionary nature of bodies like the APMs (Jha 2011). According to Jha,

the mechanisms do not take into account changing social realities and newly emerging political forces. While they provide the appearance of stability, such bodies undermine institutions and the rule of law in the long run. This, in turn, has the potential of inducing conflict and so the present calm is deceptive at best (Jha 2011).

It is useful to understand debates on local bodies in the context of post-conflict Nepal. An APM or an LPC certainly had the ability to generate some inclusivity and a form of stability whilst also and at the same time deepening the democratic deficit and becoming more and more closely linked to corruption. To some extent, as the case studies below illustrate, their poor performance has less to do with any inherent flaw in, for instance, the design of APMs, and more to do with the fact that they have been co-opted by local political processes, often in ways which ultimately encourage local political stability at the cost of any democratic accountability.

Although the focus of this paper is on ways of analysis and providing examples of how local politics works in practice, rather than taking views on existing arrangements, I generally side with the second, more negative view. As the transitional period stretched out beyond 2006, local political arrangements became increasingly unsustainable. The distribution of patronage and corruption in such arrangements is typically linked to political goals, not inclusion. Development actors too can point to a long list of local governance failures linked to APMs and LPCs. What this paper seeks to challenge are assumptions about the best methods of handling such political practices. I will argue that if development actors continue to pursue an analysis using only the 'what is missing?' thesis alongside an unquestioning or willfully ignorant approach to stability, then little will

change. It is likely that the worst excesses of patronage and corruption will remain unreformed, thereby continuing to marginalise many people.

Case studies from the field

This paper will now present some case studies as examples of how local politics in the post-2006 period has been working in practice. Before doing this it is worth highlighting some factors that are unique to the Eastern region hill districts and Dailekh. Eastern region hill districts are unusual in Nepal for their relatively high level of political awareness and especially the high level of identity-based politics, which has a history that dates from long before upsurges in activity during April and May 2012.¹¹ Some possible factors behind this include the relative wealth generated by cash crops, income from a long tradition of migration including to foreign armies, infrastructure development enabling many hill citizens relatively easy access to the Tarai, and the cultural importance placed on education. Dailekh district in the Mid-Western region is particularly unusual for having a long history of opposition to the Maoist movement during the conflict, creating political fault lines that re-emerged in early 2013.¹²

Quiet cooperation and sharing the spoils

In multiple visits to Eastern hill districts and Dailekh district in the Mid-Western region I heard about tensions, disputes and accusations as well as clashes that had occurred over tendering processes, all between political parties. However this activity appeared to exist within certain bounds. Levels of cooperation—especially between political parties and government officials—were very high. Many groups had a strong interest in demonstrating to visiting outsiders that they were important local actors. However, when it came to potential disputes, local actors seemed to find ways of avoiding substantial confrontations that would threaten the continued flow of the resources they were seeking to control. As stated in the International Crisis Group Nepal's 'Political Rites of Passage' report (2010): 'budget lines involving donor money risk getting cut off if violent

11 Hangen (2010) and Fitzpatrick (2011) are interesting recent works on aspects of hill East Nepal.

12 See Lecomte-Tilouine (2008) for more on the anti-Maoist movement in Dailekh during the conflict.

contestation of local disbursement is too visible and no one involved is interested in losing the resources they are competing to control.' Whether this cooperation would last under the impact of elections or other external shocks is unclear.

Most district and VDC councils in Eastern hill districts operated on a largely consensual basis and were usually free of serious conflict. Political parties often operated according to informal norms, in which their influence on local bodies was in proportion to their relative organisational or electoral strength, with positions and influence divided accordingly. The APM, in many districts, influenced every stage of the 'planning process, through contracting, implementation as well as quality control' (UN RCHCO No. 37, 2012: 2). These practices of cooperation and consensus were described by others using different terms. Many non-party affiliated interviewees described the same processes as one of 'dividing up the budget' according to party interests, and noted that there was financial incentive for parties to agree quietly on 'who gets what' projects and positions (Carter Center 2011c: 4). A government official in the Eastern region complained: 'This is not "loktantra" [democracy] we live in, it is "loot-tantra"' (Carter Center 2010: 3). The case studies below will help to illustrate how political actors worked through these bodies.

In Sankhuwasabha in 2011 local journalists stated that when it came to the allocation of development budgets, political parties worked very closely together, especially through the APM (personal communication). At one point local Maoist party representatives demanded 100,000 NPR (1 lakh) from the VDC development budget in order to build a social trust in the name of a deceased party member. This led to a dispute in which the three main parties (NC, the UML, and the Maoists)¹³ eventually reached an agreement to each take 1 lakh each from the budget. While the parties claimed to have used the money in order to build social trusts that would benefit the whole community, local journalists stated that the money had been primarily used for party activities or the personal enrichment of party members. Because APMs and LPCs have involved the main parties 'democratically' dividing the spoils, the benefits of continued political cooperation are clear.

13 There are three main political parties in Nepal: the Nepali Congress Party, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) and the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). I will use the commonly-used short forms NC, UML and Maoist.

Multiple government, political party, media and civil society representatives across the Eastern hills and Dailekh stated that having an influence on local bodies was a major source of political patronage for parties in the district headquarters and VDCs. In Taplejung, journalists and the local Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) complained about the ability of all political parties, including the two main Limbuwan parties, to have people accused of crimes released from jail.¹⁴ As in Sudan, informal 'patronage mechanisms can dispense resources, sometimes in a way that is recognizably fair' (De Waal 2009: 2). In one case a group of Limbuwan movement-affiliated cadres in Sunsari who were arrested in early 2012 actually quit a Limbuwan party and joined the NC, partly due to the (correct) assumption that the NC had more informal power to prevent them from going to jail than local Limbuwan leaders did. After they joined the NC, a strike was called in the local town, enforced by the NC, and all charges against the former Limbuwan cadres were reportedly dropped. Necessary and vital support for formal structures by development actors should be first understood to operate in this highly effective informal context.

Managing disputes and demonstrating local influence

Local citizens or visitors to Eastern hill districts and Dailekh who see widespread corruption, impunity among political party cadres, clashes between political parties, tendering disputes and the deep reach of political parties into every decision-making body have reasons to believe that local political life is far from calm or peaceful. But alongside this, as described above, there exists a certain form of stability in which no party has attempted to overthrow the local political order, albeit also during a time of no elections or other external shocks (such as a natural disaster or a sudden decline in remittances). What happened when disputes arose or when new forces challenged the local all-party consensus? The following case studies will look at the ways in which the boundaries of acceptable political behavior were policed by all-party consensus.

Unsurprisingly, political disputes and clashes were most often resolved informally, rather than being resolved through formal judicial processes.

14 The two main Federal Limbuwan State Council parties are the FDNF-affiliated Kumar Lingden party and the Sanjuhang Palungwa party.

Resolutions often took the form of arrangements between political parties and informal leaders or emerged from APMs. Chief District Officers (a CDO is the most senior government official in a district) and senior policemen, who were reluctant to expose themselves to political pressure, usually encouraged political parties to resolve their disputes privately rather than everyone facing the multiple costs of cases going before courts. However, in some districts serious political disputes were brought before APMs called by the CDO or police. An agreement reached between political parties after clashes typically involved apologies, compensation for injuries or property damage, and promises not to repeat such behaviour. In one case in Ilam, a personal financial dispute between NC and Maoist members in a VDC threatened to turn violent. However, the issue was resolved peacefully, with political parties taking a leading role in mediation, encouraged by the administration, local police and civil society organisations.

In the transitional period, political parties have been increasingly used in order to prevent relatively 'apolitical' disputes from spiralling out of control. This can also be looked at, from another perspective, as the unhealthy growing 'politicisation' of local disputes. In Sankhuwasabha in 2011, journalists said this trend was due to the fact that at least one person involved in a dispute would seek the support of a political party, effectively compelling the others involved also to seek political party support (personal communication). Sometimes this happened even before the local police or district administration knew about the case, illustrating the strength of political party networks when people wanted to get things done. In a VDC in Udayapur, an informal mechanism had been set up whereby representatives of political parties and local intellectuals were consulted in order to resolve local disputes.

In VDCs in Dailekh and the Eastern hills it was clear that informal dispute resolution was the norm. Vertical accountability mechanisms such as Ward Citizens Forums (WCFs), which are supported by development actors, often lacked access to the village's decision-making political core. In one Dailekh VDC in 2012 the WCFs were completely cut off from the political core. The social mobiliser post in VDCs was also not, typically, politically empowered by local leaders. However, disputes among top-level village and district leaders were resolved within the leadership, illustrating the existence of a measure of exclusive and informal

accountability at the top. In one VDC there were allegations that a user group representative had misused the budget intended for a new Health Post office. In response to these complaints, the accused representative was withdrawn from the user group by his own party. He was punished by the party at the VDC level and was not allowed to participate in user groups again.

There is also widespread recognition that political parties' networks and local influence, although corrupt, can generate positive outcomes that work in the short term. This demonstrates the need to distinguish between different types of corruption and patronage. Mushtaq Khan (2001) has usefully explored ideas around good and bad corruption and called for a distinction to be made 'between situations where corruption has impoverishing effects from those where corruption allows rapid growth'. Khan also writes that 'structures are the problem so anti-corruption strategies which are concerned with the possible effects of corruption on development have to explicitly identify the underlying political problems' (Khan 2001: 132).

NC and Maoist cadres clashed during a dispute over positions on a Campus Management Committee in Sankhuwasabha in 2011. The situation was resolved when representatives of all three main parties were guaranteed key positions within the Committee, with limited representation from smaller parties. Eventually, in a very typical outcome, a UML supporter was appointed campus chief, a NC supporter was made vice president and Maoist supporters were allowed to dominate the rest of the management committee. Despite problems around the politicisation of the committee, there was widespread recognition locally that political parties, with all their attendant patronage, corruption and informality, had actually assisted the campus because of their ability to access crucial VDC and DDC funds. Without this money the Campus would have found it very difficult to survive. As one interviewee said: 'without political parties we would not get this extra money'.

Handling new political forces

Political parties also adopted particular strategies when dealing with new or minority forces who could challenge the prevailing consensus. A judgement took place as to whether new political forces should be taken seriously and whether continued exclusion would be more harmful in

the long term. New forces may be admitted or not, depending on the context, and on local pressure.¹⁵ Gaining access to and understanding aspects of this local analysis would greatly assist development actors. In districts such as Ilam, Panchthar and Taplejung, access to 'distributional coalitions' (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2008) has improved in the transitional period for NEFIN and organisations representing Rai and Limbu communities, especially Kirat Rai Yayokkha and Kirat Yakthung Chumlung. A local political judgement was made that these forces were too strong to exclude. Interestingly, in part this was also due to new formal local government procedures, introduced in 2006, which require 15% of all local government spending in districts to be spent on 'marginalized communities, including senior citizens, Dalits, indigenous nationalities, disabled, Madhesis, Muslims and other underprivileged groups' (DDC and VDC Procedure No. 11(3) v.s. 2067).

Generating expanded coalitions that recognised new political forces such as NEFIN has arguably been a factor in generating a form of local stability within these districts. NEFIN played a prominent role in the Indigenous Nationalities Coordination Committee (INCC) meetings in DDCs in many Eastern hill districts. INCCs have a large say over how the 15% for socially and marginalised communities is spent. NEFIN gained a prominent position on the INCC in different ways in each district. In Udayapur, interviewees said that NEFIN's act of locking up local politicians in the DDC office in 2010 played a big part in convincing politicians to agree to NEFIN demands for greater representation. It was widely stated that, since then, NEFIN has had a strong voice on the INCC and a close relationship with the Local Development Officer. The NEFIN district president said: 'we strongly protest if the INCC tries to implement the budget on its own without consulting us'.

Yet, in an example of the exclusivity of informal arrangements, other groups within the same district were not considered deserving of admittance to local coalitions. In Udayapur in 2011, the Tharu Welfare Assembly, a NEFIN member organisation, said that they were left out of the INCC process and resented NEFIN's gatekeeper status. This decision to continue to exclude Tharus was, in part, based on a calculation regarding Tharu

15 This is in contrast to what Coburn (2011: 179) found in Istalif, Afghanistan, where the inherently fragile situation and weak state encouraged political groups to cooperate without testing each other.

political strength and numerical support within the district (both were seen as low). Across the East and in Dailekh, the larger parties dominated decision-making. Interviewees in numerous districts stated that smaller parties were regularly sidelined—potentially, as Jha (2011) argued, storing up problems for the future.

Leadership and institutions at the VDC level

Visits to Eastern region hill districts and Dailekh in the Mid-Western region brought to light a number of issues in the practice of transitional politics at village level. In villages in Dailekh, political decision-making was typically restricted to a ‘political core’ of important village leaders. This small group was central to decision-making, conflict resolution, and the control of village resources. The effectiveness of other village-level leaders, as well as institutions and projects in the village, depended on the strength of their connection to this political core group of leaders. The large number of institutions and potential positions also formed an important part of political patronage networks, as developed by the political core. The perception of the power of institutions was also closely tied to which leader was in charge of a particular institution.

The political core of village leaders in Dailekh usually differed from the formal expectation of who is supposed to hold power in a village. In theory, under transitional arrangements, the VDC Secretary and VDC Council members should have played an important role. However, the political core did not usually involve the VDC Secretary (except in the unusual case of one VDC in Dailekh). This was despite the increased formal powers granted to VDC Secretaries in the absence of local elections. Nor were the other VDC Council signatory members (namely the village Junior Technical Assistant and Health Post In-charge) seen as uniformly powerful, despite their formal positions. The real political core typically consisted of four to five leaders in each village who held a mixture of formal and informal positions. It regularly included NC and UML members of the APM, one or two government officials (such as important school teachers) plus influential informal leaders, including those with strong links to the district headquarters. Meetings took place informally and outside the APM.

The political core in one southern Dailekh VDC consisted of the three main party representatives (NC, UML and Maoist) and an additional Maoist cadre, co-opted for his ability to cultivate higher-level links at the district

and national levels in order to bring funds into the village. In the majority of VDCs visited, members of the political core also came from historically powerful village families. A common pattern was that earlier generations of the dominant family were village leaders in pre- and early-Panchayat times, around the 1950s and 1960s; typically, members of the next generation of the same family were then appointed as Pradhan Panchas in the 1970s/1980s; followed by the next generation taking on formal village positions in the APM or other transitional bodies in the present day. These families tended to dominate the NC and UML parties but also, to a lesser extent, the NWPP¹⁶ and the Maoists. One example was in a remote Dailekh VDC, where men from the same family used to hold the Mukhiya position in the Panchayat period, the next generation included a Pradhan Pancha in the early 1980s, and the youngest politically active member from the same family is now a UML-affiliated School Management Committee Chair.

Political parties were also prominent actors in institutions in which parties formally have no role, such as user groups and School Management Committees (SMCs). SMCs have a range of responsibilities, including the appointment and dismissal of certain categories of teachers. User groups are responsible for the management and implementation of local development projects such as irrigation and road building. Parties frequently accused one another of trying to ‘dominate’ these bodies. I found numerous cases of political parties trying to influence SMCs and user groups, partly as a way of demonstrating local strength. Sometimes, this took the form of political parties monopolising key positions in their own strongholds (such as ‘capturing’ the whole SMC of a particular school). Other parties complained about this but often tacitly accepted the result, knowing that their own areas of strength would remain unchallenged in turn.¹⁷

Sub-VDC perspectives

Another important issue, which only an in-depth analysis of local politics would reveal, is that sub-VDC perspectives may be more important than the VDC-level perspective for many citizens, particularly as a factor in exclusion. More developed areas inside VDCs tend to correspond with areas where leaders and former leaders live, and also where there are

16 Dailekh is one of the few districts outside Bhaktapur where the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party (NWPP) has a prominent presence.

17 For more on this, see Carter Center (2011c).

roads, markets and VDC offices. Dalits were often among the most marginalised communities inside a VDC, but isolation, a lack of political leadership or not having access to the political core can also affect other castes and ethnicities, including those who are assumed to be powerful. Exclusion from village-level power structures can take place politically along community and caste lines, and geographically by ward, cluster of wards, neighbourhood or area.

In several VDCs in Dailekh, Chetris and Brahmins were among the most marginalised communities. Brahmins in one remote VDC were excluded from power, essentially because they lived in wards located away from the dominant Thakuri majority. One source of exclusion (e.g. geographic isolation) sometimes overlapped with other sources (e.g. being a Dalit). In one VDC wards 1, 2, 3 and 4 were relatively well developed and, not coincidentally, the home of current and former village leaders. Also, the main road passed through these wards and the market was located there. In the same VDC, wards 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9 were relatively underdeveloped with ward 7 in particular also being isolated geographically and containing a majority ethnic group (*janajati*) population. Development actors who plan an intervention that does not take into account these kinds of local differences at district, VDC and sub-VDC levels may end up reinforcing current transitional arrangements in local politics.

Implications

The above case studies illustrate on a small and limited scale that post-conflict local politics operates according to complex dynamics that are not immediately visible or easily understood by external actors. A large driver of continued cooperation and stability is the need to maintain a flow of resources and funds. New members are admitted or rejected to the local 'distributional coalition' depending on assessments of their political strength. The distribution of resources and funds marginalises many citizens but, among top leaders, is routinely divided relatively equally. Patronage mechanisms are central in understanding local politics: they further political power and are widely viewed as more effective than formal structures. When disputes or corruption occurs, informal mechanisms are preferred over formal routes. Top leaders in the political core are primarily held accountable by each other, not by ordinary citizens. Party and family politics influences the majority of appointments

and decisions inside a VDC. The informal political core of leaders in a VDC has more say over the development budget and decisions than formal leaders. Institutions and citizens that are not linked to the political core are usually politically weak. Marginalisation below the VDC level, in terms of access to decision-making and political power, can also be significant.

An understanding of how local politics in the post-conflict period has been operating could bring benefits for development actors and others, without those actors necessarily abandoning long-term goals of change. Understanding the nature of patronage and distribution of resources would help development actors, for example, to consider the impact of creating new institutions (as opposed to reforming existing ones), which often provide yet more opportunities for patronage and corruption. An in-depth analysis of local and VDC politics which recognises that it is the nature of power relations in a particular area that determines political and developmental outcomes would also help to explain why institutions behave differently in different contexts. This analysis involves identifying the political core of informal leaders in a VDC or district, particularly so that interveners understand who their programmes should at least acknowledge in order to be effective.

Further beneficial analysis would include assessing which institutions and lower level leaders are linked to the political core and which are not, in order to build a picture of local winners and losers. This would also help to indicate different types of marginalisation at the district, VDC and sub-VDC level. Understanding disputes can also help development actors think about existing accountability mechanisms, especially in how to rethink important formal vertical structures, such as Ward Citizens Forums, in a political context that is generally dominated by informal horizontal mechanisms among top leaders. A recognition that formal structures may need to be adapted to local realities (say by linking Ward Citizens Forums to the local political core of leaders) should also be compatible with long-term goals to reduce corruption and patronage. In order to effectively read the local political balance of power, development actors could also learn from how local political actors assessed potential new political forces that may be admitted to the local 'distributional coalition'.

Each type of analysis suggested here would underline the importance of local specificities and hopefully encourage development actors to reconsider using national frameworks for programme implementation, such

as in the multi-donor Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP), which arguably, when planned, assumed a level of homogeneity across Nepal. This kind of analysis is, to my knowledge, not currently taking place as a part of the planning process before development actors intervene. When implementing development projects, the current practice for the UN, donors and some NGOs is to see local politics as a secondary consideration. In general, this is done through actor mapping of the key stakeholders, a security analysis of risks, or a contextual analysis of major political forces. All of these approaches are largely based on the ‘what is missing?’ framework that this paper seeks to critique. What is not taking place currently, and what this paper is advocating, are studies of political interests, especially patronage and corruption, at a local, micro-level before interventions take place.

Mapping local political interests

While analysing local political realities, development actors should not have to follow an attitude of resigned acceptance or willful ignorance. De Waal suggests one approach, which essentially advocates framing analysis in order to purchase a form of stability. He writes:

If it is correct that stability can be ‘bought’ through a well-managed patronage system, it should be possible to calculate the optimal ‘stability payoff’—the level of resources that should ideally be spent on stabilisation through patronage (De Waal 2009: 13).

However, a ‘stability through patronage’ approach may result in an exclusive, unaccountable and anti-inclusive short-term fix, which could easily collapse under external shocks. Instead, would it be possible in Nepal to model and map local patronage networks as part of assessing the possible impacts of outside interventions without necessarily working towards a stability payoff?

Existing political economy analyses produced by development actors tend to be highly generalised, national-based and theoretical (DFID 2009). Here follow some thoughts on what a VDC-level study in Nepal could include in practice. One approach would be to research in detail local political interests at the beginning of a study. This is qualitatively different from actor mapping, security analysis or a contextual analysis in

terms of the level of micro-detail being gathered, the focus on informal structures and the guiding principles behind it (not ‘what is missing?’ but ‘what is happening?’). An understanding of the economic, social, historical and political context and a mapping of local leaders and institutions, including who is involved in the political core of decision-making, should, ideally, take place at the beginning of a study. Studies need to find out how decisions are taken locally and who takes them, the reality of how money is spent, and which groups are included and excluded. All of this would also take account of links between the local political core and district, regional and national actors.

This initial scoping of how local politics broadly works and how decisions are made would make it easier to identify corruption and patronage practices, who benefits, who is marginalised, who takes decisions and what (if anything) has changed during and before the conflict period. It would also make it easier to identify aspects of political practice that are wholly negative and need to be addressed immediately as part of an intervention, and those aspects that effectively generate some form of stability at present and could be dealt with through longer-term strategies. After this, the issues to gather would include the views of ordinary citizens on leadership, the nature of institutions and decision-making in the VDC or district, answers to how people obtain jobs or decisions or approval for projects, and questions on how leaders become powerful and what makes them locally legitimate.

Further details could be sought about decision-making blockages, accountability mechanisms, sub-VDC exclusion, and how new political forces are handled by existing powerful groups. Developing these approaches would assist those designing interventions to a) understand what is different and unique about local political dynamics at the VDC or sub-district level and b) identify those political practices which are effective and supported locally and those that are not. Potentially, development partners could then, for example, consider which types of intervention would be most likely to work in a political settlement, in particular through a greater knowledge of local political interests and incentives.

Conclusion

It is clear that if development actors are seeking political marketplace-based solutions in Nepal, it may be worth them trying to understand the

local political situation, as described above. The limited case studies I have used suggest that in a never-ending transitional period politicians and others will continue to practise local politics in ways that satisfy donors and the government and ensure that money keeps on flowing. Although real divisions and competition exist, there remain, in the absence of elections or other external shocks, strong incentives to cooperate through corruption and patronage mechanisms. Institutions set up in the transitional period, such as APMs and LPCs, work to generate stability because they have been co-opted, usually in an exclusive way, by local political elites. Further research needs to be carried out on this topic, but it is clear that corruption, patronage and managing the continuation of development funds are likely to remain a part of post-conflict Nepal in the near future.

Making efforts to understand local realities does not mean justifying or supporting current practices. As stated, it is clear from many parts of Nepal that an emphasis on stability through transitional political arrangements marginalises many and is not inclusive. Would continuing to design programmes and operations around versions of an ideal Nepali state or continuing to ignore the reality, without analysing local political practices or the resilience of current arrangements, really help marginalised communities? Creating new institutions and structures through interventions does not take place on a blank slate. Strategies for political or economic reforms that challenge interests embodied in a political settlement will either fail or can, in the worst case, even provoke new conflicts. Also, as suggested, the gap between existing development tools and analysis and actual policy practice, an area not covered by this paper, remains wide.

The current approach of development actors in Nepal can be characterised as formal adherence to the ‘what is missing?’ model of looking at local politics, mixed with occasional willful ignorance regarding the reality of political practices. As suggested, the aim of achieving good governance and security is still a necessary standard for development actors and civil society to try to achieve, as well as a vital goal for citizens to demand from the state. Assessing the security situation, carrying out actor mapping and doing a context analysis are important forms of analysis for development actors to understand political processes in post-conflict situations. However, these approaches need to be placed alongside

other more analytically rigorous micro-level frameworks which privilege understanding what is happening informally through a detailed study of local political interests. Ideally, this should occur before any interventions are designed and should co-exist alongside long-term efforts to reduce, for example, the importance of corruption and patronage. What is needed is the maintenance of both an important long-term ideal and short-term pragmatism about what actually works.

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Struggling on Two Fronts during Nepal's Insurgency: The Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace and the meanings of 'civil society'

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Introduction

This paper focuses on a citizens' movement during the last few years of the Maoist insurgency in Nepal (1996-2006). It forms part of a broader project which is looking into the transformation that civil society underwent as both an idea and a practice during the insurgency and its immediate aftermath. In this contribution, we concentrate on a distinctly new form of public action in Nepal, exemplified in what became known as the Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace, in Nepali *Loktantra ra Shantiko lagi Nagarik Andolan* (CMDP or *Nagarik Andolan* in short). We are particularly concerned with the conceptual struggle waged by CMDP (hereafter, simply 'CM')¹ and its impact on understandings of 'civil society' in Nepal.

The paper is intended primarily as a contribution to the ethnographic record on non-governmental public action in Nepal and is broad in its consideration of the CM itself. Many aspects of the movement are not considered—for instance, the ludic element, which is characteristic of new social movements elsewhere (e.g. Shepard *et al* 2008). Other striking features of the CM, such as its individualism and its politicality are explored in Heaton-Shrestha and Adhikari (2010c). Similarly, a complete analysis of the conditions for the emergence of the CM is beyond the scope of this paper. We will only highlight one factor behind the emergence of the CM, namely the disruption of civil society activists' expectations of what works politically.

We proceed as follows: first, we will provide a background to the emergence of the CM during the latter part of 2005, in the wake of the king's coup of February 1 that year. This involves sketching out the activities of the political parties who were ousted from power, and how their protest

* This contribution is based on a paper presented at the World Conference of Humanitarian Studies, 4-9 February 2009, Groningen, The Netherlands.

1 We use the abbreviation 'CM' rather than the full form 'CMDP' as it is closer to its shortened Nepali name, *nagarik andolan* (literally, 'citizens' movement').

movement articulated with and was perceived by civil society groups. By 'civil society groups' we mean to refer to non-state, not-for-profit associations, including the more formal civil society organisations (CSOs). Next, we outline how the notion of civil society came to be introduced and understood in Nepal, highlighting in particular its normative opposition to the political domain. We also touch upon the question of what was generally expected of civil society in the struggle for democracy. In the next few sections, material relating to how civil society activists understood their role in relation to one crucial set of actors, namely political parties, is presented. Key features of the CM are described, and the ways in which the CM challenged expectations of civil society and its role in peace building are described in detail.

The paper draws on interviews with members of 'civil society', i.e. senior NGO representatives and human rights volunteers; notes from observations and participation in events organised by 'civil society' over the course of 13 months of fieldwork in Nepal (between April 2007 and July 2008) and shorter visits thereafter (2009-2011); and online archives of two major national daily newspapers and other news clippings from a variety of English and Nepali-language newspapers compiled by a network of human rights organisations involved in the movement, covering protest activities between 2004 and 2006.

Background: Political parties and civil society in the struggle against the autocratic regime

Protests of political parties

On 4 October 2002, citing the 'incompetence' of the political parties, King Gyanendra dismissed the government of PM Sher Bahadur Deuba, assumed executive powers, and appointed an old palace faithful as prime minister. Behind these events was the collapse of talks with Maoists at the end of 2001, which led to the imposition of a state of emergency and the government's full deployment of the army against the rebels. From early 2002, political parties became increasingly uneasy about the state of emergency and the indiscriminate shootings by security forces. When the state of emergency came up for renewal in May 2002, parliament opposed it. Largely due to continued squabbling within his own Nepali Congress Party (NC), Deuba asked the king to dissolve the lower house of parliament

and call for elections. When the Maoists declared that they would mobilise a national strike to coincide with the parliamentary elections, Deuba requested that the ballot be put off for a year, which resulted in the king's dismissal of the elected government.

Political parties were prompt to respond to their exclusion from government. They initiated a programme of protest, holding parliamentary sessions in the streets and demonstrations on a daily basis. The parties demanded the restoration of parliament and their target was 'regression' and not, as later on, the monarchy. Widespread protests by the student wings of the NC and the Nepal Communist Party (Unified Marxist Leninist) (hereafter, 'UML') repeatedly brought much of the country to a standstill. College campuses became sites of angry protests, the burning of government vehicles and altercations with security forces. Large numbers of police and military were deployed, and the number of reports of student leaders being disappeared or killed increased (ICG June 2003).

The movement of political parties and their student wings gathered momentum until September 2003, but then cooled somewhat, as the political parties became hopeful of a breakthrough in talks with the king and the possibility that the dissolved parliament would be reinstated. By November, having still not reached a compromise with the king, the five main political parties declared the launch of the next phase of agitation. Still, marred by disagreement as to the manner of agitation and the inclusion of certain political parties, the five-party alliance did not stage any significant programmes until 16 December 2003, when they held a two-hour pro-democracy rally in Kathmandu. With this rally, political parties were entering *the tenth phase* of their agitation. As in previous phases, the alliance announced demonstrations, rallies, sit-ins, picketing, torch rallies and effigy burning throughout the country. Student agitation picked up again in late December and continued pretty much along the same modality into the first few months of 2004.

In 2004, the political parties' movement began to attract a broader range of participants: teachers, members of the Nepal Bar Association (NBA) and the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ) began to join protests alongside political parties and student unions. That this was perceived as a significant development—at least by the press—is indicated by the fact that the agitation began to be referred as the 'People's Movement

II', in the media.² Protests dwindled once again, however, when talks between the king and political parties led to Deuba being reappointed as prime minister, 20 months after his dismissal by the king. Deuba's government was joined by the UML, which opined that 'regression' had been 'half-corrected', and two other political parties, the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and the Nepal Sadbhavana Party (NSP). Protests by other political parties continued, but these did not receive much coverage due to increasing censorship by the authorities.

On 1 February 2005, accusing Deuba of failing to make arrangements for parliamentary elections and of being unable to restore peace, the king seized effective control of all levers of power. This period witnessed the most severe crackdowns on democracy and the rule of law. Senior politicians were put under house arrest and activists held in army camps, and internet and phone lines were cut. At least 35 ordinances were issued without due process, of which more than half were introduced after the lifting of the state of emergency; all of them were designed to strengthen the palace.³ An important development during this period was a rappro-

2 This is the name given to the popular uprising of April 2006 that brought political parties back into government and saw the House of Representatives reinstated. The 'People's Movement I' referred to the 1990 movement for the restoration of multiparty democracy after 30 years of partyless Panchayat democracy.

3 For example, the Ordinance amending some of the Nepal Act related to the Media (October 2005) banned news programmes on FM radio, increased penalties for defamation tenfold and prohibited news deemed damaging to members of the royal family. The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance or TADO, which allowed for the prolonged detention of anyone alleged to have taken part in a terrorist act, was amended (December 1st 2005) so that all anti-terrorist cases would be heard *in camera* and defending lawyers in such cases would not be provided with legal documents. Furthermore, the accused would henceforth have to bear the burden of proof. A final example is the ordinance to amend the Civil Service Act, promulgated on 9 May 2005, proposing discretionary power for itself to control the bureaucracy. Major aspects of the proposed amendment related to revising the modality, criteria and system of the efficiency evaluation of civil servants. The main objective of the amendment was to provide a greater role to the government in choosing persons for the secretary's post from a wider number of joint secretaries, and to give seniors a chance to serve in top bureaucratic posts. Other ordinances included the Social Welfare Council (First Amendment) Ordinance, the National Human Rights Commission (First Amendment) Ordinance, the Code of Conduct for Social Organisations, and the Labor Act (Second Amendment) Ordinance. Among other drastic measures to curtail basic freedoms was a one-door advertising policy introduced by the royal government. Using this policy, the government deprived dozens of independent publications and broadcasters of funds by giving preferential treatment to state-controlled media when advertising commissions.

chement between the political parties and the formation, on 8 May 2005, of a seven-party alliance (NC, NSP, UML, Nepali Congress-Democratic (NC-D), Jana Morcha, United Left Front, Nepal Workers and Peasants Party), popularly known as the SPA, and a common political programme 'against regression'. At the top of their agenda was the revival of parliament and reforms to the 1990 constitution.

The nine months that followed the king's coup of 1 February saw two main periods of agitation by political parties. These occurred soon after the coup, from mid-February to late April, and then again in September, in the wake of a unilateral ceasefire by the Maoists. The months of April to September and October to December 2005 witnessed only occasional protests by political parties. These were largely confined to party cadres and had little popular support (Shah 2008: 14-15). The International Crisis Group reports: 'Few tears were shed when Gyanendra sidelined [political parties] after October 2002' (2005: 8). This was to change with the conclusion of a 12-point understanding between the SPA and the Maoists in November 2005.

This understanding was concluded after months of talks that had been facilitated and encouraged by India between the SPA and the Maoists. It laid out a framework for the defeat of the monarchy, ending the insurgency and the sharing of power between the SPA and the Maoists. It was hailed as a turning point in the fortunes of the political parties. One of the main points of the understanding was an agreement to call upon civil society and professional organisations, political party wings, intellectuals 'and people of all communities and regions' to join in a peaceful movement. Within days of the understanding, the SPA announced a new phase in their agitation, promising 'huge mass meetings and protest rallies', and fully involving 'the people, professionals and intellectuals'. As in May 2004, the political party movement began to attract larger numbers of people outside the ranks of party cadres. On 2 December, the UML mass meeting was dubbed the largest street demonstration since 1990. January 2006 saw further mass meetings by various political parties and the SPA, some larger still. Organisers of the 12 January SPA mass demonstration in Janakpur claimed that 100,000 people had attended the event.

Political party protests continued throughout January and February 2006, as did rallies to garner support for the boycott of municipal elections

called by the king in early February 2006. The next significant phase of agitation was the People's Movement of April 2006. In response to calls from the SPA, a general strike was launched on 6 April 2006. On 9 April, the decision was made to extend the three-day strike to an indefinite one, in view of the unexpectedly high levels of participation by members of the public. During the 19 days that followed, demonstrators were to become increasingly mutinous, openly defying curfews and other measures announced by the government to contain the situation. Violent confrontations with security forces became daily occurrences, with the death toll eventually reaching 18. The decisive moment came on 21 April, when hundreds of thousands of people defied the curfew and marched on the Kathmandu ring road, causing the army to withdraw into the city. That same evening, the king announced that he was handing back the executive power he had seized fifteen months previously. The SPA rejected his offer and announced that they would bring two million people onto the ring road on 25 April. The king made a second address on the night of the 24th in which he conceded all of the demands made by the SPA, including the reinstatement of parliament. The leaders of Nepal's seven largest political parties nominated NC leader Girija Prasad Koirala to serve as interim prime minister. The SPA formed a new government and distributed ministries among its constituent parties. A twenty-member cabinet was formed on 2 May 2006, and Parliament was convened on the 28 April for the first time since May 2002.

The contribution of political parties to the April 2006 movement is a matter of controversy, with both civil society activists and political parties claiming leadership of the movement. The only publication that begins to explore the organisation of the People's Movement II, by Saubhagya Shah (2008), gives a prominent role to political parties and to the media, but is unduly modest about the role of civil society in the movement. We write 'unduly' because even political parties were more generous than Shah in their evaluation of the contribution of civil society to the People's Movement.⁴

4 Indeed, after the successful outcome of the movement, NC president Girija Prasad Koirala thanked civil society for its 'outstanding contribution' to the democratic movement. In the inaugural speech of the restored parliament, the speaker of the house also acknowledged the role of civil society.

Civil society protests

The political party movement articulated with that of civil society groups in several ways: at times, civil society groups would join the political parties' movement, responding to a summons by political parties to take to the streets (May 2004; April 2006). At other times, civil society groups would 'fill in' when political parties fell back and civil society would then take up leadership of the democratic movement (July–November 2005). Yet at other times, civil society groups and political parties operated in parallel, organising programmes, either separately from each other, or together but retaining autonomy from the other in terms of leadership (in September 2005).

Civil society groups seemed relatively inactive prior to the May 2004 protests called by political parties, or at least there is little evidence of organised protest activities by CSOs before that date. Observers of civil society prior to 2004 described it as 'weak' and 'ineffective' (Onta 2004); 'timid' in the wake of the state of emergency of 2001 (Dixit 2002); and 'silenced and depoliticised by donor money' (Bhattarai 2003). A research report issued soon after the king's dismissal of parliament in 2002 found civil society to be unconcerned with the increasing violations of human rights and the curtailment of liberties and generally 'largely unconcerned about imagining a democratic political future' (Bhattarai *et al* 2002: 34). The media reportedly turned 'pro-government', while NGOs sought to get on with 'the business of development' and humanitarian aid, adapting their work to the conditions of conflict in a bid to survive the insurgency (e.g. Pradhan 2006, Dahal 2006).

After the May 2004 protests, protest activities by civil society groups all but died down until 19 December 2004, when a rally of social and professional organisations pressing for peace talks and an end to violence was organised. Apart from the occasional statement urging the government to resume peace talks with the Maoists, and statements by the NBA and human rights organisations against the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Ordinance, there was little activity from civil society groups until February 2005. Although civil society groups responded more quickly than political parties to the king's coup, issuing statements that condemned the king's move, protest activity by these groups only picked up from June 2005 (led by journalists, against new media laws) and intensified from July through to December 2005. It was at this juncture that Nepali civil society saw a

significant development, beginning from July, namely the emergence of the Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace. This heralded not just an intensification of civil society protests, but also a qualitative change.

From May to September 2005, civil society groups followed by the CM itself were more active than political parties in terms of street protests. This period is remembered by some activists as a 'festival of civil demonstration'. It is during this period that the civil society movement can be said to have 'filled the vacuum' left by discredited political parties, and civil society became the main actor in demonstrations, while political parties were not to be seen on the streets. But even as political party protests gathered strength in September 2005, and then more decisively and consistently from January 2006, civil society protests were not to subside.

The limits of politics as usual

While, as the preceding account shows, political parties were not *inactive* during the period under consideration, there was a persistent sense among civil society activists that political parties were 'ineffective' or that they were 'not doing anything'. One of the original members of the CM recalled:

One day, volunteers were here and one staff member of NESAC [Nepal South Asia Centre] was here ... and we few people discussed: 'the king is declaring new ordinances everyday to make himself stronger... the country is turning into an autocratic regime. ... We need to do something because political parties, six months gone, and they are not doing anything.'⁵ (B. Guindel, June 2007).⁶

From the accounts of CM activists, it appears that during the months immediately following the emergency, party political power was revealed as 'empty' or void of true power—the power to mobilise and to contest the autocratic state. Politics were widely likened to drama, suggesting they were insubstantial and ineffective, and this theme was taken up by cartoonists and film makers at the time: political parties became daily objects of caricature and satire in TV serials. At the time of our research,

5 We use E and N to indicate whether the original was in English or in Nepali respectively.

6 Where respondents are named in this paper, their real names have been used, at their own request or with their consent.

recollections of the situation in 2003 made use of a similar vocabulary: party protests would be described as ‘just a ritual’, ‘a drama’—or, in Thapa (2004), a ‘routine but meaningless effort’. In the latter part of 2005 and early 2006 the political party movement was criticised by well regarded civil society leaders for being ‘insufficiently aggressive’ and in need of ‘intensification’. This sentiment was shared by scholars such as Saubhagya Shah, who would comment that ‘political parties were thrown off guard by the king’s move and were slow to react in any substantial way’ (Shah 2008: 13). The incomprehensibility of the situation—the powerlessness of the political parties—is captured by B. Guindel’s recollection of the period:

The political parties ... started to organise demonstrations against the king. And in their demonstrations there were few... people. One hundred, 200 people.... [in a demonstration] *called by seven political parties—can you imagine?* ... They organised a People’s Parliament in Patan, on the street. Only a few hundred people were there.^E (June 2007)

And again, the same disbelief and disorientation is expressed by former finance minister Dr Devendra Raj Panday, who became a leading figure in the CM. He recounts the moment that marked a turning point in civil society activism, namely, the attempt by MPs of the dissolved House of Representatives to conduct a mock session of parliament in the Royal Nepal Academy Hall, on 19 July 2005:

That afternoon, I was having tea, Anil Bhattarai phoned: the parliament is meeting at the Royal Nepal Academy, it will be fun to go. We went there, and all MPs were scattered... And Girija Prasad Koirala [NC president] comes in a car, goes to the gate and the gate is locked. Nobody can do anything. Madhav Kumar Nepal [UML general secretary] comes and it’s the same thing. He makes one or two statements and goes home. Gagan Thapa [NC student wing youth leader] shouts slogans and that was it. Fortunately, at 3pm we had pre-arranged a meeting at that time. Before we had the name CMDP. I remember ... Anil was saying we should call it a *people’s conference* and I got up and said no, it’s not a conference, it’s a *movement*. Political parties had paid NR28,000 for a hall and if a

small policeman can send them home—[it shows that] these people are obeying the law of the regime they call illegal—so we have to go to the streets.^E (January 2008)

The last sentence ‘we have to go to the streets’ does not do justice to the departure from established practice and thinking about the role of civil society that this action represented for civil society activists—to take up protests, independently of political parties, for the cause of democracy. We will make this point by first looking at the models of civil society and ideas about their contribution to peace building that dominated public discourse in Nepal at the time, and then detail the ways in which CM activists understood their role in the democratic struggle.

Dominant understandings of civil society and its role in peace and democracy building in public discourse in Nepal

Framing the CM

The introduction of the term ‘civil society’ in Nepal owes much to its ‘re-discovery’ by international development agencies in the 1990s, and its worldwide promotion through the injection of substantial sums of money to non-governmental organisations (Lewis 2002, Robinson 1995). Donors in Nepal followed suit and supported the emergence of and strengthening of NGOs in their bid to help develop ‘civil society’ (Parajuli 2004). Initially restricted to intellectual circles, the term has acquired a much broader currency in Nepal beyond academia (on which see the excellent volumes edited by Gellner 2009, 2010) and the world of international development (e.g. Dahal 2006). The term has also acquired a broader range of meanings. Although Tamang’s criticism in the early 2000s was well founded (Tamang 2002), it is no longer the case that the notion of civil society appears in a simplified form (frequently synonymous with ‘NGOs’) with the sole purpose of accessing international funds. The various citizens’ groups (and most notably the CM) that emerged after 2001 have challenged the identification of civil society with more formal and organised kinds of collective action (particularly NGOs). Where NGOs were once synonymous with civil society (for all but a handful of critics, e.g. Gyawali 2001, Siwakoti 2000), they are now seen as a poor imitation of the real deal: writer and civil society activist Khagendra Sangraula, for example, comments:

The term civil society smells of NGOs. NGOs have to be termed 'job making society'. To call NGOs 'civil society' is no different from calling a paper flower 'rose'.⁷ (Sangraula 2009: 2).

In the later 2000s, in their emphasis on individual actors of some social standing rather than institutions (e.g. Upreti 2006, Panday 2008, Hachhethu 2006), understandings of civil society more closely resembled the ancient Greek public sphere described by Arendt (1958) than de Tocqueville's (1990) account of associational life in 19th century America⁸. At the time of the emergence of the CM, however, civil society was widely understood as a collective of non-state, not-for-profit organisations, in line with the conceptions that prevailed among development agencies (Lewis 2002). Analysts in Nepal would include the multiple forms of 'indigenous' or traditional 'membership' organisations in their descriptions of the institutional contents of civil society (e.g. Shrestha and Farrington 1993, Dahal 2001), as well as community-based organisations such as user groups, savings and credit organisations (e.g. Shrestha 2001). Not only did prevailing conceptions emphasise organisations, they focused predominantly on the more formal among these, and frequently on those associations established by the more articulate sections of society (as noted elsewhere, e.g. Hann 1996). Another salient feature of the dominant conceptions of civil society around the time of the emergence of the CM concerned the resolutely apolitical character of civil society, in the sense of 'being distant' from political parties.

7 All quotations in Nepali in this paper are translated by Ramesh Adhikari.

8 For example, according to Upreti (2006: 153), civil society, '[C]overs a wide range of actors... such as professional organisations, business community, media, human rights activists, scholars and researchers, teachers, writers, lawyers, engineers, doctors, professional experts, NGO staff, religious groups, etc.' Similarly, Devendra Raj Panday, a leading member of the CM, describes 'human rights activists and members of various professions ... [who] made some contribution to the political change in 1990' as an example of 'civil society in action' (2008: 10) and political scientist Krishna Hachhethu writes (2006: 119): 'in Nepal, civil society exists as a forum, both formal and informal, of enlightened people ...: academics, lawyers, professionals, journalists, human rights activists, NGO holders, ethnic activists, women activists, Dalit activists, and to some extent retired bureaucrats and politicians...'. 'Civil society leaders' in turn, are generally understood to be professionals and intellectuals in senior positions in their field. They include persons such as the chairperson of the association of college teachers, the personal physician of a top political party leader, the NBA president, the head of the FNJ, prominent human rights defenders and journalists, and so forth.'

The emphasis on apoliticality, common among donors in relation to civil society (Lewis 2002, Jenkins 2001), has a long history in the case of NGOs in Nepal and a clear link to donor practice and funding. Reportedly, NGOs have been discouraged by their funders from engaging in any activity deemed 'political'; and suspected or actual relations between political parties and NGOs have become routine news material and grounds for defamation of these organisations.⁹ As a result, NGOs have been led to re-enact, on a daily basis, the distinctions and boundaries laid out by the 'three sphere model' prevalent in development policy research and action, as they attempt to distance themselves performatively both from the market and from the state (Heaton-Shrestha 2002 and 2010a, see also Lewis 2008, Gellner 2009 and 2010). NGOs in Nepal have often been deemed not just apolitical but antipolitical (see also Fisher 1997) and even depoliticising; as obstacles to radical social change (Siwakoti 2000) and as supports to the elite and the status quo (Ulvila and Hossain 2002). In spite of their well known and longstanding relationship with political parties (many of the older human rights forums were established by persons once closely associated with the Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist Leninist), they have even been accused of 'corrupting political parties' (Khagendra Sangraula, July 2008) and distancing Nepali youth from politics. Normative statements on the relation of civil society to the political domain similarly insist on their distinctiveness and complementarity. For example: 'The function of civil society is not to defeat the state and government but to make it accountable to the people' (Panday 2008: 6), and: 'it's very risky to the nation when civil society starts to become stronger than political parties' (ibid), or: 'Civil society is the important organ of the nation which helps the government' (Adhikari 2004: 225).

The closeness of civil society to political parties was deplored, as in the

9 For example, in June 2007 the daily newspaper *Naya Patrika* ran a series of news items condemning the close relations between party members and NGOs. In one article, senior political party members who were known to run NGOs were listed and challenged to account for their involvement in the NGO sector. The journalists' questions were met with denials or, exceptionally, shrugged off. A *Naya Patrika* journalist recalled one such instance: when probed, the then Minister on Development of Water Resources retorted: 'I am running an NGO, I don't drink [alcohol], I don't play cards, why do you blame me?' ('Netaharu parti kambhanda NGO badhi calaunchan' ('Political leaders spend more time running NGOs than they do on the party') *Naya Patrika* 1(72) Sunday 10 Asar 2064 (24 June 2007).

case of NGOs, for instance in Hachhethu (2006). Describing the strengths and weaknesses of Nepali civil society, Hachhethu argues that one limitation is that ‘Nepali civil society, though it has non-state organisations, is not apolitical’ (Hachhethu 2006: 120); he adds however that ‘a thing to be celebrated [is] that the distance is widening between civil society and parties. A trend of depoliticisation and de-partyisation of civil society has gradually been emerging since the last half of the 1990s’ (Hachhethu 2006: 129).

It might be noted that the claims to being a- or anti-political or depoliticising that suffuse discourse about NGOs and the third sector in Nepal, are based on a relatively narrow understanding of ‘politics’, with an emphasis on formal political institutions and activities. This is reflected in more scholarly work, for example Hachhethu (2006). Although more nuanced understandings of politics and the political domain existed within the research setting, a detailed analysis of these is beyond the scope of this paper. For now, we will simply note that ‘politics’ was identified with the activities of political parties; and that distinguishing party activity from civil society activity—i.e. the boundaries between political party and political party activity, and consequently their respective roles in the democratic struggle—was a central concern for civil society actors.

In the next section, we discuss the dominant understanding of the role of civil society in peace building and in relation to the struggle for democracy, and to political parties in the course of that struggle.

Political parties, civil society and peace building

Political parties as the main political actors: By all accounts, the record of political parties during the 1990s was poor. Historian Rishikesh Shah’s (2003: 51) scathing words echo a widespread sentiment:

Unscrupulous, viciously selfish and narrow minded party politics has already made the common people despair of political pluralism even before it attained its adulthood.... Their utter lack of any sense of accountability, efficiency and capacity to implement their election promises and deliver the goods have made people cynical about the nation’s prospects in the future.

Disunity among ruling parties (Shah 2004); failure of political parties to discipline their members; overlooking of personal aggrandisement and

misdemeanours (Onta 2004); these have been variously cited as critical factors in the spread of the 'People's War'. In the latter years of the insurgency, incidents such as the injudicious price increase in petroleum products under the ministership of Ishwor Pokhrel (UML); corruption cases brought against NC leaders; and the drastic miscalculation of UML and NC-D in June 2004: all deepened the gulf between the general population and political parties.

In spite of the perceptions of political parties as being corrupt and more interested in their own personal advancement than 'service', of being plagued by organisational problems (their rigid hierarchy, gerontocracy and their non-inclusive character were criticised by CM activists), they were widely seen as the main, if not *the only*, political actors. Thus:

Political parties are needed to run the state whether they are good or bad. We were clear on those things.^N (Khagendra Sangraula, July 2008).

Ultimately we don't have any other actors. They [political parties] are the ultimate actors to lead the country.^E (Thakur Dhakal, human rights activist, July 2007).

Political parties were expected primarily to act as mobilisers and provide leadership; to administer the affairs of the state, besides engaging in and reaffirming democratic practices and principles. Their role as instruments to express the will of their constituencies, on the other hand, was de-emphasised. This was a role that was to be played by civil society. Comments that civil society was 'the voice of the people' and carried forth 'people's agendas' and 'philosophy' were frequently recorded during the course of the study.

Many CM activists had lived through and participated in the first People's Movement of 1990, which brought to an end 30 years of partyless 'democracy'. Many activists had done jail time together. In the spring of 1990, while professional groups provided the backbone of the movement, the banned political parties had initiated and steered the movement for the restoration of democracy and the reintroduction of a multiparty system (Raeper and Hoftun 1992). This scenario had largely been expected to hold in the contemporary context, and CM activists themselves were of the opinion that the democratic movement was to be led by the parties:

CMDP was very clear that the political parties should lead the movement.^N (Jhalak Subedi, editor of *Naya Patrika*, June 2008).

We need political parties to change society... we are just a catalyst, we can only be the voice of the people, political parties have to steer the movement.^E (Bishnu Rijal, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions, January 2008).

In the following section, we outline how civil society was expected to take part in the democratic struggle.

NGOs and professional associations in the democratic movement: protecting the interests of its members

Both NGOs and professional associations were seen as representing the private interests of a given group. Although officially, most NGOs are ‘non-membership’ organisations, culturally they are seen to operate as ‘membership’ organisations set up to benefit their own members, that is, their general members, board and staff. The NGO’s target groups are seen to be the *secondary beneficiaries*—although in official NGO discourse, these target groups are portrayed as the only beneficiaries (see Heaton-Shrestha 2002).

Various professional groups (such as the Nepal University Teachers’ Association (NUTA), FNJ, NBA, civil servants unions) were also engaging in protest activities during the period under consideration. Indeed, most of the civil society protests that took place before July 2005 were organised by one or several of these groups. On the whole, however, they raised issues that affected their members (e.g. demanding the release of arrested professors by NUTA¹⁰; the union of civil servants protesting the amendments to the civil service ordinance¹¹) or that fell within their professional expertise (e.g. NBA condemning the passing of ordinances and other unconstitutional practices by the state¹²). While, over time, these

10 February 19th 2005: The NUTA issues a press release demanding the immediate release of arrested professors and warns of protest programmes should this demand not be met.

11 July 9th 2005: The Union of Civil Service Employees issues a statement protesting that the Civil Service (Amendment) Ordinance passed by a cabinet meeting is undemocratic and detrimental to the morale of civil servants and warns of severe consequences for the government.

12 June 4th 2005: An assembly of over 600 lawyers from across the country demands an end to the ongoing promulgation of laws through ordinances, saying that frequent

groups began to tag the 'restoration of human rights, peace, democracy' to their demands, more often than not they remained tied to a single profession and its membership. The same applied to NGOs. Although NGO involvement in the democratic movement was not unimportant, openly oppositional action by NGOs did not become significant until November 2005, when a series of protests was organised against the attempt by the government to introduce a more stringent code of conduct for NGOs.¹³ Prior to this, in 2004, the NGO Federation of Nepal had acted as the secretariat of a Citizens' Campaign for Democracy and Social Transformation, an alliance of NGOs and professional associations founded to create public pressure for peace and democracy. But, apart from a series of activities during December 2004 that included rallies and interactions and the submitting of a memorandum to the Speaker of the House on International Human Rights Day, the campaign never attracted much media attention or public support. The activities of NGOs remained somewhat muted, and where they did exist, they remained unreported.

'We are a bridge': The first role that these groups were expected to play in the struggle for democracy was that of a 'bridge'. This was fully consistent with the role envisioned for civil society in the literature that was produced around that time (e.g. Upreti 2006, Pradhan 2006, Dahal 2006) and also in the generic peace building literature (e.g. Paffenholz 2009a, 2009b, Paffenholz and Spurk 2006). Consistent with the understandings of civil society outlined above, this literature conceives of civil society as a supporting, rather than a driving force in the peace building process, while 'the central impetus' is provided by 'political actors' (Paffenholz 2009b: 6). This role elicited the least amount of disagreement among members

enactment of ordinances is against the constitution and principles of the rule of law; they condemn the appointments of zonal administrators, and regional administrators, terming the appointments 'unconstitutional'; and criticise the king's repeated use of Article 127 of the Constitution, labelling the exercise of the said provision as an 'arbitrary and ill-attempt to constitutionalise autocracy'.

- 13 The NGO federation of Nepal (NFN), a network of over 2000 NGOs across the country, led the protests, handed over a memorandum to the then minister for Children, Women, Social Welfare; organised a special meeting of national NGOs in Kathmandu to express opposition to the code; requested members across the country to burn copies of the code of conduct; organised a petition and handed it over to the Supreme Court; raised black flags in front of NGO offices across the country and worked in their offices with black bands tied on their hands for one week; and conducted a protest on Human Rights Day 2005.

of the CM. Civil society was seen to be acting as a bridge among two sets of actors: between political parties and ‘the people’ and among political parties themselves (including the CPN (Maoist)). This bridging involved putting pressure on one side to listen to the other, bringing people to the streets on behalf of political parties, and bringing ideologically divergent forces (Maoists, parliamentary parties, ‘liberal commoners’) together for a common cause.

Bringing political parties and their constituencies closer together was one of the stated aims of the CM. Bijay Guindel explains, paraphrasing discussions the CM held with political parties in the early days of the movement:

We can assist you ... We want to make you stronger ... So you have to be there to listen to people. And if you come among people to listen to [them], then slowly people will think about political leaders, about the political system and maybe you can gain their trust and belief again.^E (June 2007).

Former UML MP and civil society leader Padma Ratna Tuladhar describes the ‘bridging role’ of civil society during the run up to the 12 point understanding of November 2006 between the SPA and the CPN (Maoist):

So I found the leaders sometimes not very serious about a peaceful solution; sometimes they lacked willingness, sometimes they lacked commitment, sometimes statesmanship. But after four or five years, I myself could arrange a secret meeting between the then deputy PM and home minister, Ram Chandra Poudel... and a Maoist central committee leader, Rabindra Shrestha. I arranged everything: the car was driven by my son, I took the minister from his quarter to the venue, I lifted the Maoist leader from the street to the venue, and that was the first direct meeting. ... in 2000 that was ... I still kept that very secret ... And I still remember they had talks. Mr Rabindra Shrestha introduced himself saying he started his politics from *nebisangh* [student wing of NC]; ... he also reminded Ram Chandra Poudel that ‘I know you started from *akhil*’, the left student wing. It was a very friendly atmosphere. So I remained with them sometimes, sometimes I stayed outside so that they could talk confidentially. And when the

talks finished, [driving the deputy PM to his quarters]... in the car I told how the Maoist are, how they are gentle, how soft spoken they are. They [PM, deputy PM] had the impression that Maoists could be ... very dangerous people, very demon like. So I told him 'Mr Minister, how the communist leaders speak you see, so politely'... I still remember ... The meeting was so successful; they could understand each other, they could discuss several issues including disappeared persons.^E (June 2008).

This last account also draws attention to some of the factors that permitted civil society leaders to act as mediators, namely their pre-existing relations with these various forces and their authority as senior members of society with a 'clean image'.

Reproducing the boundaries of political and civil society and keeping within internationally prescribed roles of civil society as 'watchdogs', was the 'educating' function of civil society in relation to political parties.

'Educating political parties': 'Educating political parties' was central to the CM's perception of its own role and purpose early on:

When Gyanendra did what he did and UML and Deuba joined the government, we began meeting more often. We were thinking, political parties are the main actors; how can we educate them?^E (Devendra Raj Panday, January 2008).

This role was still played by civil society in the years following the People's Movement of 2006:

Still we are not satisfied with these minimal changes. In this context, I painted the longest painting in Dharahara, threatening the political parties that the movement has not ended. I was taking Dharahara as a symbol of the eyewitness of history of different movements by the Nepali people. I was threatening political party leaders to be as firm as Dharahara, to stand firm in the face of difficulty.^{N14} (Kiran Manadhar, July 2008).

14 Dharahara, also known as 'Bhimsen Tower', is a nine-storey tower at the heart of Kathmandu. It was built in 1832 by the Prime Minister of the time, Bhimsen Thapa.

And in the run-up to the constituent assembly (CA) elections of April 2008, Padma Ratna Tuladhar recalls his ‘scolding’ of political parties:

There were killings, so many things, which may obstruct the whole process. So we wanted to talk to the leaders. We asked the PM, Comrade Prachanda and Comrade Nepal to be together at the PM’s residence. ... [there was] a one point agenda: to ask the leaders whether they could perform the election peacefully or not. ... So I began to speak. I told Comrade Prachanda on the left: ‘How come, you being a great leader, can make that kind of speech?’ Because he was ... saying everything against UML leaders, very substandard speeches. ... Madhav Nepal ... was also making that kind of speech. ... I told him: ‘How come you being a communist leader can make that kind of dirty speech?’ I was calling them children. ... And again I asked the party leaders to form an ... emergency type of committee, ... to look after the election, for 24 hours ... and they agreed.^E (Padma Ratna Tuladhar, July 2008).

This ‘educating’ role was consistent with the primarily middle-class and professional character of Nepali civil society, and also in keeping with popular ideas about the functions of civil society in the early and mid-00s, namely to run workshops and conferences. Generally, then, the voiced expectations of political parties by CM activists; the role that NGOs and professional associations came to play in the democratic struggle; and the notion that civil society should be a ‘mere support’ to political parties, educating or bringing them closer: all of these reproduced the normative opposition of civil society to the political domain at the heart of the dominant version of civil society in Nepal and debates within the international peace building community. Next, we will see how the CM challenged these distinctions and went beyond the functions expected of civil society in the peace building literature. Before we do so, however, we outline some of the CM’s key principles.

Pushing back the boundaries: CM principles and practice

The Citizens’ Movement: some key principles

Officially, the CM was formed five months after the king’s coup of 1 February 2005. The CM went on to lead a series of events, widely

acknowledged as having acted as a catalyst for the broader movement that gathered strength from September 2005 and culminated in the People's Movement of April 2006.¹⁵ The CM developed a unique style of protest, drawing on political parties' repertoires but also innovating, in particular in the widely attended citizens' assemblies, with their combination of speeches, songs, poetry recitals and drama. The CM also distinguished itself from past attempts to mobilise a broader section of the population against the regime by their mode of organisation; their resourcing; the basis of participation in the movement; and their willingness to take up 'political agendas'.

CMDP organisation and resourcing: During the 1990s, NGOs acquired a negative image among the public at large, and their efforts at mobilisation in the 2000s suffered from a distinct lack of public backing, at times verging on hostility. We will only cite one incident to illustrate this point. It was recounted by a human rights activist and reportedly took place during the People's Movement of 2006:

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- 15 CMDP mass events and their stated objectives until the People's Movement were as follows:
 July 25th: demanded the restoration of human rights, civil liberties and the rule of law; safeguarding the achievements of the 1990 movement and establishing absolute democracy; boosting the movement already launched by political parties, lawyers, journalists and civil servants;
 August 5th: protested the king's takeover and urged all citizens to join the movement to establish people's sovereignty; urged Maoists to immediately shun violence and initiate coordination with political parties for the larger interest of democracy;
 August 16th: demanded the immediate restoration of a democratic system, peace and civil liberties;
 September 2nd: urged political parties to jointly take up the slogan of democratic republic to settle the current political crisis; warned parties to recognise and respect the public spirit and the fact that 'democratic republic has become the agenda of the entire nation'; protested the king's visit to the UN, 'as he is not our representative';
 September 26th: urged leaders of the seven-party alliance to intensify their ongoing pro-democratic movement with a more aggressive agenda, to serve the greater interest of people in order to establish a democratic republic;
 October 26th: urged all countrymen and democratic communities not to waste time in uniting against the autocratic regime;
 November 12th: demanded an end to autocracy and the withdrawal of a 'draconian media ordinance';
 November 25th: demanded an end to autocracy;
 December 10th: demonstrated in defiance of the government imposed prohibitory order for the area;
 December 19th: protested the Nagarkot massacre and the government's refusal to reciprocate the unilateral ceasefire declared by the Maoists.

We were in the front line. After an incident journalists brought injured people. People [from a large human rights NGO] came and took pictures and journalists were going to beat up the human rights activists, [shouting:] ‘You are earning dollars, where were you in the incident?’^N (June 2007).

The desire on the part of the persons who formed the CM to distance themselves from NGOs and NGO modes of working—their dependence on international funding and their formality—was rooted in such experiences. Many of these individuals have been or are still involved in the NGO sector. Several people have tried to develop alternatives to ‘traditional’ NGO culture for some years (e.g. Shanti Samaj, Collective Campaign for Peace). This approach was also at the heart of the CM’s desire for informality¹⁶. The CM, and the various citizens’ groups that emerged from 2001, favoured an informal structure, devoid of formal positions; decisions were taken orally and there was no formal or written reporting, no minuting of decisions.¹⁷ As for resourcing, not only did the CM not look for funds from donors, they expressly refused any offers of funding:

We said officially that *we would not take a single rupee from anybody*, it will not be a donor funded campaign. It will be purely a people’s campaign, a citizen’s campaign. We will ask for money on the street, we will beg for money.^E (CM activist, July 2007).

The vast citizens’ assemblies organised by the CM in and outside the Kathmandu valley and other activities (such as press releases, rallies, sit-ins, etc), were funded through a mix of donations by members of the audience at its programmes and contributions from active members of the CM; using personal facilities of individual members (e.g. phones); asking artists to perform voluntarily, for example, in musical shows raising funds for the movement; and also through the use of NGO resources—email,

16 See Heaton-Shrestha (2002) for an account of how NGOs were perceived in the latter part of the 1990s in Nepal. Perceptions of NGOs had changed little by the mid-00s, even if NGO practice had. In Heaton-Shrestha and Adhikari (2011a) we give an account of the ways in which certain NGOs had sought to ‘de-NGOise’ themselves during the last years of the insurgency.

17 See Heaton-Shrestha and Adhikari (2010) for a more detailed analysis of this phenomenon.

printers and photocopiers for placards and leaflets, halls for meetings and as shelter for activists who had failed to reach their homes before the curfew. Strictly speaking, ‘not taking a rupee from donors’, and the distance that the CM put between itself and the NGO world did not mean that no resources came from NGOs or the international community. Indeed, personal expenditure incurred to sustain these actions was often enabled by employment in the NGO sector, and trips abroad to raise support for the movement were financed by international organisations, while NGO offices provided access to all manner of facilities and the materials for protests as well as NGO volunteers to organise these activities. During the citizens’ assemblies, resourcing turned into a veritable performance: organisers would go to the crowd, announce the sums collected and spent over the microphone. In some cases, organisers would have photographers take pictures of CM activists collecting monies, display the detailed expenditure of the event, and on occasion, they would call the press to bear witness to the fund raising. They would thereby defuse allegations of ‘antinationalism’ from the state, while also distancing themselves from donor funding and NGOs. Another objective of raising funds in this manner was, as one interviewee put it, ‘to make the campaign collective... to promote ownership’. The term ‘collective’ points to a further principle of the CM: that the movement would not *represent* any specific interest group—in contrast to NGOs and political parties usage once again. Bijay, a CM activist, explained:

We said, OK everybody will be involved in his personal capacity. We will not use the name of any particular organisation. It will be a collective campaign.^E (June 2007).

Movement participants would participate as ‘citizens’, ‘individuals’ or ‘the people’, but not as representatives of one or other group or organisation. The ‘banner issue’, or the explicit identification of an organisation *qua* organisation representing certain interests in CM events, was to remain a point of contention within the CM, and was a matter of ongoing disagreement between leading figures in the NGO sector and the CM. The CM willed itself to be a broader, more inclusive movement, defining the basis of participation in the movement as citizenship, rather than professional or organisational affiliation and identity.

The CMDP agenda: Whereas the demands of professional groups and NGOs were limited to the interests and needs of their members, after 2005 CMDP and citizens' groups espoused a much broader agenda. Not only was the CM's agenda broad, it was also politically radical. First of all, the CM called for an overhaul of the constitution of Nepal which they saw as flawed, rather than limiting themselves to calls for the restoration of the dissolved House of Representatives and amendments to the 1990 constitution, as was demanded by the mainstream political parties. Likewise, the possibility of a republican set-up in Nepal was supported by the CM before political parties had themselves embraced the idea. Another task the CM set for itself was to ensure that 'progressive forces in struggle with the royal regime' did not enter into 'a hasty compromise' with the king. The CM also, on occasion, joined other voices in the condemnation of specific incidents (e.g. the Nagarkot massacre of December 2005, when a drunken Royal Nepal Army soldier shot 12 civilians) or ordinances (e.g. the 12 November 2005 demonstration demanding the withdrawal of a 'draconian' media ordinance). After the People's Movement, the CM's agenda has included: continuing to push for a republican set-up (2005-7); full proportional representation in elections to the CA (2008); rehabilitation of those displaced in a major incident in the Tarai (Kapilbastu, 2007); against allocating a budget to King Gyanendra and his family in the coming fiscal year (2007); against the government's decision to allow the deposed king to stay at Nagarjun palace and permit his mother and grandmother to live inside Narayanhiti palace (2008).

[We also said], *we will not give any political colour to this campaign. We made this campaign to strengthen political parties, but no political party should put their influence on this campaign. It should be purely on behalf of citizens. And no political leader will be allowed to deliver a speech in our campaign. All the speakers will be from civil society.*^E
(CM activist, June 2007).

Since its inception, the CM had sought to distance itself from party politics. However, in drawing on many of the notions (e.g. 'absolute democracy') and agendas pursued by political parties, as well as taking sides in these broader debates, the CM would, on occasion, attract criticism for being 'too political', to the extent of being dubbed a 'wing' of a political party (the

CPN (Maoist)). Frequently, comments about the ‘proper role of political parties’ were also meant as a commentary on the ‘improper’ conduct of the CM, suggesting that it had overstepped the bounds of legitimate civil society activity. The ways in which the CM challenged understandings of civil society and the distinctions between civil society and political party roles are introduced below.

Blurring the distinction between political parties and civil society

‘*We are like political parties*’: The CM acted in a ‘party-like’ manner in several ways. Civil society members expressed that at times they had acted in cases where political parties should have done so. Civil society became ‘party-like’ when it paid attention to disaster-struck areas and communal unrest, listened to grievances and mobilised the general public in support of democracy, and led movements against autocracy or celebrating democracy where the occasion called for it. A journalist for a national daily newspaper recalled the role of CM in 2005:

People had no trust in political parties at all because of many factors.... Civil society criticised this and said we can lead this movement, take the king out.^N

This ‘vacuum filling’ role continued after the return to formal democracy. Khagendra Sangraula justified the CM’s visit to the site of rioting in the Madhesh in September 2007:

There was a vacuum in society Our visit to the Madhesh was important because political parties were not there. Once the gap is filled by political parties, we’ll have a smaller responsibility.^N (July 2008).

Padma Ratna Tuladhar explained the rationale behind the celebrations organized by civil society on the day before the first sitting of the newly elected CA, on 28 May 2008, and on the following day:

If we had left the parties alone,...maybe we would still not be having any kind of celebration at all. It was praised by the whole world: ... a strong monarchy was abolished peacefully ... a republican state was

declared, without any bloodshed. That was a great historic event but we Nepalese people still could not celebrate because of differences among the parties. We wanted the government to organise a celebration programme to be attended by representatives from governments from different countries, if not the PMs from different countries, if not the foreign minister of different countries, if not, the ambassadors, so we could get international recognition. ... The event was very important not just for Nepal but for the whole world, [demonstrating] that through peaceful means we can achieve very radical changes. But the government and parties failed to have that celebration.^E (July 2008).

The ‘party-like’ character of civil society was highlighted by a comment from Daman Nath Dhungana, the former Speaker of the House and civil society leader, on the latent rivalry of political parties and civil society:

They see them as competitors. Now some are saying that the government is lacking legitimacy ... Those in power are thinking civil society leaders are the alternative to power. Every time the CA election is postponed, all have eyes on civil society leaders and political parties are also seeing them in that light. Suppose that the political parties fail to hold the CA elections, people will be restless. Who will fill the vacuum? Civil society leaders.^E (January 2008).

This position of leadership was dramatically enacted in the citizens’ assemblies. During these events, political party leaders were invited but not allowed to take to the stage; rather, they were made to sit below the stage, ‘forced to listen’ and ‘compelled to regret their misdeeds’. More recently, we were to witness an event that spoke eloquently of these issues. The event in question was a sit-in programme on the occasion of the anniversary of a human rights NGO, HURPES (Human Rights and Peace Society) or *Shanti Samaj* in Nepali, in the summer of 2007. It took place on a roundabout, a stretch of parched grass at one of the busiest junctions in Kathmandu, a popular venue for protests. HURPES is well known in the human rights circle in Nepal, not least for the identity of its charismatic founder, Krishna Pahadi, also a key figure in the CM. Very much to our surprise, the Speaker of the House and a coterie of MPs joined

the sit-in programme. They were made to stand in line, in the scorching sun, and a list of ten demands was handed to each one individually. The programme concluded with the Speaker of the House thanking the NGO for ‘informing them’ how legislators might bring peace to the country. In a context where relations between government officials and members of the public are marked by considerable deference and where connections with politicians are crucial for social advancement, the attendance of the Speaker of the House and MPs at such a banal event—the anniversary of one of Nepal’s 30,000 NGOs—and at such a venue, a dusty roundabout, was incongruous. It was also a powerful statement of the authority of civil society members, and an acknowledgment by politicians of their leading role in the democratic movement. Like a political party, civil society was now summoning, mobilising, giving speeches, while political parties were listening. But if civil society groups, through the CM, did take on the role of political parties, they did so without becoming a political party, as had been the fate of many social movements elsewhere (see e.g. Goldstone 2003).

‘We are beyond political parties’: The CM was not just party-like, it was carrying out the expected functions of political parties *more effectively* than existing political parties. Civil society members saw themselves as ‘beyond (existing) political parties’ in several ways: in their style of protest (‘more aggressive’), their more radical agenda and their willingness to go beyond the law during the king’s administration.

In the [April 2006] movement, there was a vast difference between political parties and movement. The political parties were not at all aggressive in the movement, they wanted to make a peaceful movement. But people were so aggressive: sometimes they even wanted to put civil society leaders in place of political parties leaders.^E (CM activist, November 2007).

Highlighting the failure of political parties in leading the movement, Suvash Darnal, CM and Dalit activist, recalled their absence at the site of serious clashes between demonstrators and the security forces during the People’s Movement:

Now we can very easily discuss with political parties leaders,

challenge them: ‘when I was in Gongabu, were you in Gongabu?’; Most of the political parties leaders will say ‘I was not in Gongabu’.^E (October 2007).

On several occasions, CM leaders were to issue statements urging political parties to ‘intensify their stir’ and be ‘more aggressive’ in their agitation. Reportedly, too, the push for a general strike beyond the three days proposed by the political parties in what became a nineteen-day movement (People’s Movement 2006) came from civil society. While seeing political parties as essential to the kind of democracy it envisioned for Nepal, civil society considered itself the guardian of democracy—more central to democracy even than political parties:

Civil society... [was] established to lead this democracy.^E (Political analyst, March 2007).

What civil society should do now is to force political parties to accept the normal democratic system of giving the largest party the opportunity to form the government.^N (Jhalak Subedi, after the CA elections, July 2008).

While CM activities served to shift understandings of the roles of civil society and political parties and the boundaries between them, this was not an unproblematic process. The obvious delight and sense of irony of civil society members in making MPs stand in line during the HURPES programme—as well as a simultaneous sense of the appropriateness of the act—spoke of an ambivalence towards their own, new leadership role. It spoke, in other words, of the continuing hold of models of civil society that cast civil society and political party in strict opposition. In our final section, we give further illustrations of this conceptual battle.

Struggling with dominant models of civil society

The ‘struggle’ that was occurring on the conceptual front was manifest in two ways: firstly in the reaction of political parties to civil society, and secondly in the ambivalence expressed by CM members in interviews towards their role and particularly their relation to power.

We saw earlier that CM leaders had publicly committed *not to take positions*. In practice, CM members expressed mixed views about this

principled stand, for example by making a distinction between ‘different kinds of position’, or by justifying their acceptance of a position in terms of the ideal of the role of ‘civil society as a bridge’. Khagendra Sangraula was among those approached by the Maoist leadership as a potential CA candidate from their civil society quota¹⁸. He refused the offer and explained the core CM members’ stance towards the issue, when the proposal was made that a ‘civil society leader’ be appointed as the first president of Nepal in June 2008:

The first president of the country has great significance. Though he doesn’t have executive power, it has meaning. If Dr [Devendra Raj] Panday was unchallenged as candidate, we would think of it positively. [It is different from] the case of appointments as minister or CA member.^N (July 2008).

Political analyst Hari Roka, who was nominated as MP in the interim parliament and then appointed in the civil society quota of CPN-M, explained:

In the Nepal context, political parties have their own kind of ideology and political programme and one differs from another. To help all political parties come together, a few people were needed to manage meetings and to manage differences ... that’s why it’s necessary to have [civil society members] in power. They are not going to be a minister or a functionary, only an MP.^N (May 2008).

This ambivalence hints at the coexistence of contradictory models for civil society action. On the one hand, one model sets political parties and civil society in a rigid dichotomy; on the other hand there is a model in which civil society and political parties can take up roles normally filled by the other, either consecutively or simultaneously. This ambivalence, however, was not shared by all participants in the CM. For some, the political party-like role of civil society was to cease with the return of political parties to government. This view was reflected in the reduction

18 In the Constituent Assembly of 2008, 240 seats were allocated according to the First-Past-the-Post system, 335 through proportional representation and 26 were allocated to ‘civil society members’.

in the numbers of participants in the CM after April 2006. Two well known CM participants explained:

After the People's Movement II, I have not been with CMDP, more with my party, NC... to make it strong ...I didn't make a dissenting note, but I quietly withdrew. I support the movement still, but I am not involved physically. People don't like one day as a civil movement activist and another day as party activist.^E (Krishna Khanal, Tribhuvan University Professor of Political Science, July 2007).

I disassociated myself just as I did after 1990. I don't have political ambitions ... Now it's political parties' job.^F (C K Lal, columnist, June 2007).

For such individuals, the roles of civil society and political party were always clear cut and distinct, and they reproduced the distinctions between civil society and political party by withdrawing from the movement. The CM, however, persisted, albeit with a reduced membership, and continued to challenge the boundaries of political party and civil society roles. Thus, towards the end of the research period, the CM protested President Yadav's move to overturn the government's decision to sack the Chief of Army Staff Katuwal in early May 2009. The protests against the president's action, which the CM dubbed 'unconstitutional' given the president's ceremonial status, received heavy criticism for being 'political'. Critics objected that the time had come for civil society to limit itself to 'advising political parties' rather than taking to the streets.

The struggle was also experienced by the CM in their relations with political parties. Above, Daman Nath Dhungana pointed to a rivalry between political parties and civil society. Others also spoke of a power struggle between political parties and civil society at the outset of the movement and, after the movement, an increasing reluctance on the part of political parties to include them in the political process, preferring a return to the *status quo ante* and the strict separation of roles between political party and civil society. This is illustrated by the final two quotations:

Political parties asked for help from civil society when they were in a critical situation but after finishing the movement they have forgotten civil society.^N (Kiran Manadhar, July 2008).

All the parties were waiting for the chance to drive civil society in their way. But political parties came to that [civil society] meeting because they were well aware that people were not ready to come to [political party] programmes.^N (Jhalak Subedi, July 2008).

Conclusion

We began this discussion by sketching out the background to the emergence of the CM in Nepal—namely, the limited ability of political parties to raise a broad movement against autocracy, the modest scope of involvement by civil society groups prior to May 2004, and a growing sense of crisis among civil society activists after the king's coup of 1 February 2005. We then highlighted elements of the dominant understanding of civil society and its role in the peace process in Nepal around the same time. The dominant vision of civil society in public discourse in Nepal emphasised its distinction from politics and the political domain and the identification of civil society with more formal and elite modes of associating (mostly NGOs). Civil society was expected to protect the interests of its members, to act as a bridge among political forces (which did not include civil society actors), and to educate political parties. It was envisioned as a support, rather than an active player in its own right in the democratic movement. In the third part of the paper, we described the CM that grew after July 2005, and paid particular attention to its relations with political parties. While emphasising its distinctiveness from parties, the CM became 'party-like' in its actions and at times more effective in that role than political parties. Finally, we highlighted the ambivalence of CM activists toward the position of leadership they had achieved and the CM's changed relation to the political domain. This hinted at the continuing hold of the 'apolitical model' of civil society on civil society activists' thinking. At the same time, it indicated that pre-existing conceptions of roles and the normative distinctiveness of the roles of political parties and civil society had been disturbed.

Together with the new political opportunity created by the king's coup and the sidelining of political parties, the foregoing account suggested that this 'disturbance' was an important factor in the success of the movement. Other elements deemed important for the emergence of the movement, notably the availability of resources (see MacArthy and Zald 2009) existed long before the summer of 2005. The resources

that sustained the CM, namely personal funds and resources from the NGO sector, were of long standing, and the social networks were also in place before 2005—as the core of the CM goes back to 1990. What was new was the CM’s ability to imagine that a movement led by actors other than political party actors could be successful. In interviews, CM activists recalled how they had had few hopes at the outset that they, as civil society, might be able to mobilise a mass against the regime, and how their confidence had grown with the success of each new event. The CM involved therefore not just a struggle against an autocratic regime and its assaults on democratic institutions. Activists faced another struggle, namely against understandings of civil society that relegated it to a neutral, apolitical, supportive role and cast political parties and civil society roles as mutually exclusive. This conceptual struggle was accompanied by a social one: fending off criticism and suggestions of impropriety by members of the general public and attempts at cooption and then avoidance by political parties. The ‘disturbance’ at the conceptual level is arguably as significant as the struggle the CM waged against autocracy. Indeed, the latter would not have been possible without the former. In the years that followed the elections to the Constituent Assembly, the voices of the CM have been somewhat lost in the din of demands and protest activities. Erstwhile supporters have criticised *nagarik samaj* (referring usually to CMDP) for ‘being asleep’, while recalling its heyday in the summer of 2005. But even if, since those days, the CM has not been able to mobilise large crowds and has at times divided public opinion, its legacy is beyond question. Indeed, we showed in Heaton-Shrestha and Adhikari (2011b) that many protest activities in the years of transition deliberately sought to inscribe themselves in a ‘tradition’ of activism that had been inaugurated by the CM. Some of the events—notably the infamous ‘peace assembly’ of 7 May 2010¹⁹—were far removed from the CM in content and intention; often CM participants were notably absent. Still, these events unmistakably recalled CMDP actions and assemblies. And, to the present authors at least, there is perhaps no more eloquent a testament than this to the enduring legacy of the innovative CM on understandings of ‘civil society’ in Nepal.

19 This is analysed in Heaton Shrestha (2010b).

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Shaping a Livable Present and Future: A review of youth studies in Nepal

Amanda Snellinger

Several youth describe Nepal as akin to a lock, fixed and static, and youth as the key to open the nation to development and change (De Schepper and Poudel 2010: 27-28).

Studies of youth and youth culture in Nepal have mirrored the focus of more general youth studies: they have emerged as a social commentary in response to the development of a middle class and to social changes resulting from industrialisation and formal education that have created a discrete phase of life between childhood and adulthood (Wulff 1995).¹ The social distinction of youth is a modern concept and there are few parallels in the multiple cultural traditions found within Nepal's borders. Dor Bahadur Bista has argued that amongst ethnic communities whose economic livelihoods are agriculturally based, there is no dichotomisation between children and adults in which, under particular circumstances, one ceases to be a child in order to become an adult (1991). Rather, Bista states: 'Life is a single continuum with no apparent disjuncture between childhood, youth, and adulthood' (1991: 69). Bista, however, cites the notable exception of *vratibandha*, the sacred thread-wearing ceremony that marks male initiation into adulthood, practised amongst Parbatiya Bahuns and Chhetris, ethnic Newar Hindus, and 'twice born' Hindu castes of the Tarai. I have argued that the Hindu life cycle is one native paradigm from which to understand cultural conceptions of youth in Nepal, since the *brahmacharyasram* period for education and learning from society is central to the life stage process (2009: 48-49). It must be noted, however, that during Rana rule (1846-1951) it was mainly elite, high-caste males who had access to the education that allowed for a social experience that replicated the Hindu life cycle in its ideal form. And while high-caste

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Hindu values officially dictated citizens' roles and responsibilities during the Panchayat period (Onta-Bhatta 2001 & Tamang 2000), the life cycle experiences of most Nepali citizens were still dependent on social factors dictated by caste, ethnicity, and gender.

Other Nepal scholars have searched for social distinctions that distinguish childhood from adulthood. Lazima Onta-Bhatta has traced the socio-legal history of what has constituted childhood from the first legal code (*Muluki Ain*) of 1854 to the Children's Act of 1992 (Onta-Bhatta 2001). She notes that childhood has been extended in the legal codes over those 138 years; for example, in the original *Muluki Ain*, the minimum marriage age was set to five years for girls, but by 1976 the minimum age had been extended to sixteen years with parental permission and eighteen years without parental permission. In the 1992 Act, the age of innocence was set until ten years, while it was eight years in the 1955 act and not specified at all in the original 1854 code (ibid. 231). Onta-Bhatta argues that even though the state's ideology, policies and legal provisions were dictated by evolving Hindu values, people's social experiences of childhood were defined by work responsibilities, access to education, punishment, and marriage, all of which were negotiated by families and local communities. Onta-Bhatta's work is one of the first studies to incorporate the social and state construction of childhood into Nepal's historiography. Despite the standardisation of legal discourse, Onta-Bhatta demonstrates that multiple factors—caste, class, gender, cultural ideology, social institutions, and personal biographies—play a role in structuring the lived experience of young people.

Rachel Baker, Catherine Panter-Brick and Alison Todd's research (1996) with street children emphasises a similar point. Their position is that children are social agents who actively change their world; thus it is important to see how children engage and interact with their physical and social environment. It is for this reason that the authors argue for a mixed-methods approach to researching the lives of children, proposing the use of both biological and social methods amongst four populations of young people to create a comparative basis from which to ascertain how street children are perceived and how they perceive others. Furthermore, the authors made the children active participants in the research in order to see how they represented themselves. The authors advocate their mixed-methods and multidisciplinary approach because of the political

undertones of identifying 'children at risk' and the impending interventions (ibid. 192). For example, they argue that the consideration of earning capacity and assets as the only means to assess homeless young people's success ignores the multiple social strategies young people have for coping with the uncertainty of homeless life (Baker, Panter-Brick & Todd 1997). These coping mechanisms demonstrate that homeless peers replace the family and adults as the social network that provides economic and emotional support (ibid. 142).

Baker, Panter-Brick and Todd's research embodies the post-modern paradigm shift in scholarship focusing on young people; they approach young people's lives and behaviours as a social process, not a static position (1996). Baker expands this approach in her follow-up work with Rachel Hinton on children's right to work, focusing on child labour in Nepal's carpet factories (2001). Baker and Hinton analyse how local knowledge and cultural values impact upon the social processes that the lives of young people entail. Their intervention is meant to question the efficacy of the prescribed labour mandates of the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labor Organization Convention 182, which, the authors argue, do not take the perspectives of poor children and their families into account (ibid. 177).

Baker and Hinton distinguish between the traditional model of childhood, in which children are seen as capable household contributors, and the modern model, in which children need to be protected. They argue that in Nepal, particularly amongst the working poor, the capacity to work is not considered the domain of adulthood; instead, labour is integral to the maturation process in which young people learn from their peers and elders (ibid. 177). The polarity between the reality of people's lives (based on the traditional model of childhood) and externally enforced child labour rights mandates (based on an imported modern model) is not helpful in recognising the social and economic realities that young people in Nepal experience (ibid. 191). Furthermore, by not considering local attitudes to child labour, global interventions are not promoting laws that protect children in their working environment and provide them with proper education and training to enable them to progress beyond the work they do as children.

The focus on child soldiers during the conflict and post-conflict periods also exposes a discrepancy between the modern, formalised

descriptions of childhood upon which international mandates are based and the actual experience of childhood in Nepal (Housden 2009; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2008; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2010; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2011; Kohrt & Maharajan 2009; Kohrt, Tol, et al. 2010; Pettigrew 2007; Sharrock 2011). Like Baker and Hinton, Sharrock critiques the UNICEF-led Children Associated with Armed Forces and Groups Working Groups (CAAFAG WG) for focusing too heavily on a protectionist approach to rehabilitation at the expense of other child rights, particularly children's right to exercise their own agency and to have it supported by adults, as mandated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2011: 381, 400).

Many of these studies are derived from research done in cooperation with the Transcultural Psychosocial Organization (TPO) whose mission is to inform national and international interventions aimed at rehabilitating child soldiers in Nepal. This scholarship reveals the stakes of policy based on legalistic and formal notions of childhood and the limited extent to which improvements can be made in the psychosocial wellbeing of young people who were traumatised by the conflict if local socio-cultural contexts are ignored (Kohrt, Tol, et al. 2010). Much of this literature considers social ecology along with the individual, communal, and macro factors that affect recruitment, war experience, and rehabilitation (Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2008; Kohrt, Tol, et al. 2010; Tol, Jordans, et al. 2009). Recognising the political, social, and economic processes that drive recruitment can help provide effective advocacy against conscription (Kohrt, Tol, et. al. 2010).

Kohrt and Koenig argue that anthropological engagement can help to identify sociopolitical push-pull factors and foster effective community responses in rehabilitating former child soldiers (2009). Predictors such as exposure to trauma (especially torture), the opportunities and freedom offered in wartime, and the way child combatants are incorporated back into their communities can also help in measuring outcomes for former child combatants (Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2010). The social ecological approach is meant to counter the blanket pathologisation of all child combatants and to emphasise psychosocial solutions for war-affected communities as a whole, which accommodate individuals based on their needs (Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2008).

Using child-led indicators in therapeutic intervention is meant to address the concerns of young people rather than impose the agenda

of adults and international conscripts (Karki, Kohrt, and Jordans 2009). This approach prioritises a culturally grounded understanding of psychosocial wellbeing and distress based on the notion of *man* (heart/mind). In many Nepali cultures, *man* is the organ of emotion and memory; it is the source of anxiety, sadness/depression, and happiness (Kohrt, Tol & Harper, 2007; Kohrt & Harper, 2008). Pettigrew argues that the long term psychosocial impacts of the 'culture of terror' on children depends on the degree to which their heart/mind (*man* in Nepali and *sai* in Gurung) is developed (2007: 340-342). Thus the TPO has developed a seven-step programme which involves heart/mind mapping to identify the main source of psycho-social distress, resource mapping to identify the socio-ecological resources in the community from which children can cultivate wellbeing, and activity listing to allow children to achieve wellbeing and identify progress toward wellbeing (Karki, Kohrt, Jordans 2009). This approach tries to balance 'expert knowledge with children's knowledge, so that children's voices do not become lost in the chorus of more traditional sources of power' (ibid: 102). As will be demonstrated, the challenge of balancing youth's knowledge in traditional power structures comes up repeatedly in studying youth in Nepal.

I provide further detail on the child-combatant literature in the third section of this paper. First I focus on the social impact of mass education on the life trajectory, and specifically on the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Education, modernity and aspiration

It was the broadening of formal education and the increase in literacy during the Panchayat period (1962-90) that made the social boundary between childhood and adulthood a common experience for the general population. Since the 1960s, mass schooling has taken over more traditional forms of vocational training as the culturally legitimate and dominant form of education (Skinner and Holland 1996; Valentin 2005). Skinner and Holland argue that increased education enrolments were causing more Nepali citizens to distinguish between the educated and the non-educated, a marker of status that was giving students more opportunities than their parents (1996). Formal education shaped understandings of modernity and development for an increasing number of Nepali citizens, in terms of a quest for scientific knowledge which shaped an educated

worldview that broke with a traditional past (Pigg 1996: 163 & 180). Stacy Pigg demonstrates that education was one aspect of the development regime that separated villagers from those who were connected to the outside, larger world (1992). Laura Ahearn has documented how the increased literacy rate affected people's sense of agency with regard to how and when they choose to make life decisions (2001). For example, literate women have played a more active role in determining who and when they will marry. Thus, Ahearn argues that literacy has transformed social values and practices, particularly with regard to young people's relationships with their parents (*ibid.*). Laura Kunreuther documents the role of the phone and FM radio in allowing youth to create modern relationships beyond their kin circles (2006). In his survey of internet usage amongst Kathmandu youth, Prem Kumar Luintel observes that the web expands social interactions beyond physical space into cyber space; however, it does not necessarily disconnect youths because they often browse and chat online in groups huddled around the same computer (2005).

Schooling has also affected people's sense of future opportunity (Carney and Madsen 2009; Skinner and Holland 1996), providing alternative opportunities to step outside caste-based or familial occupations (Snellinger 2010a) and hope that they can transcend their class (Liechty 1997 & 2003) or erase their caste identity markers (Valentine 2011). Schooling is central to how young people and their parents imagine new possibilities (Madsen & Carney 2011; Valentine 2011). Schooling blends everyday life experiences with promises of economic and political opportunities, making the imagining of a better life a communal process (Liechty 1997: 68). These scholars have contextualised their research in the paradigm of 'education' and 'educated persons' as culturally produced by the interplay between state education policies, international development policies, and local cultural categories (Levinson and Holland 1996: 14-5). What emerges from this analysis is that the category of 'youth' is a by-product of the socio-historical production of 'educated persons.' As a result, Nepali citizens now have a uniform experience of becoming adults through education that discretely marks off the dependency of childhood from adulthood.

Mark Liechty was the first scholar to write extensively on the social category of youth or teenager in Nepal. He contextualises the emergence

of this social category within modernity and defines modernity as a combination of 'state modernity' executed through centralised government policies promoting *vikas* (development) and 'consumer modernity'. These coalesce to promote the logic of modernity that citizens should embrace (1995: 169). Liechty has argued that education, coming out of the state modernity programme of *vikas*, has become a commodity in which people invest to raise their class standing. Thus, education becomes a part of the new lifestyle of an emerging urban middle class that links consumption and youth identity (2003). Liechty later observed that English medium private education has become part of the consumption ambitions of middle class urban Nepalis who are trying to enhance their prestige and social standing (2003). The urban youth, with whom Liechty worked, were cognisant of a larger global youth culture through media, local tourism, and the burgeoning consumption market, and Liechty argues that they framed themselves in terms of materiality (1997). The urban youth did not see themselves as teenagers simply because they embodied a particular age; rather, it was a new symbolic identity that represented a lifestyle to which they aspired; they hoped to achieve it through a particular mode of consumer behaviour (1995: 177). This teenage identity challenged the culturally sanctioned identities these young people inhabited but over which they had less control, including religious, ethnic, and geographical identities (1997). Nonetheless, '[t]he rhetoric of backwardness, development, foreign aid and education collapses time and space such that Nepali youth learn to situate themselves on the margins of a meaningful universe as consumers of an externally generated material modernity' (Liechty 1995: 187). Liechty poignantly argues that the emerging social possibilities of urban teenagers were intertwined with the awareness of Nepal's position in the global order, i.e. geographically, economically, politically and socially marginalised on the periphery.

Much of the recent literature has focused on the failure to deliver on the aspirations of opportunity through education. Shabnam Koirala-Azaad argues that this is exacerbated by the stagnant passivism that results from the rote memory learning style of education in Nepal, which continues to perpetuate caste, class, and gender inequities (2008). Valentine demonstrates that the urban poor view education as a gateway out of their current life into one that is respectable and believe that it will allow them to gain access to a world outside their own and to be embraced by it. When

a *jaqir* does not transpire, her interlocutors often blame it on not having passed the SLC. Thus both the source of and the solution to their problems is education, but more education is out of reach for many (2011). The Marxist anthropologist Stephen Mikesell provides a trenchant critique of Nepal's education system:

The rural schools in Nepal basically serve the role of disqualifying rural young people from roles in society and turning them into failures. In the School Leaving Certificate examinations of 1996, my last year of residence in Nepal, not one child from rural schools passed in the first division, which means that rural kids are eliminated from more prestigious college tracks, particularly from being engineers and doctors, the aspiration of middle class parents for their children (2006: 55).

Martha Caddell documents how private schools have also taken advantage of parents' and students' aspirations by selling them dreams that the private school sector has failed to fulfill (2006). Carney and Rappleye argue that inadequate schooling and poor labour markets have knocked down the 'developmental stairways' that originally fuelled educational aspirations and replaced them with 'exclusionary walls' (2011: 6). Madsen and Carney describe how young students simultaneously thrive for connectivity and experience exclusion, which makes their lives ambiguous and uncertain (2011). They posit that young Nepali students' experience echo Ferguson's notion of 'anti-membership' in which their 'feelings of desire and attachment, confusion and alienation and, ultimately, non-belonging, undermine the significance and progressive purpose in their life struggles (2011: 128). The social position of youth, therefore, is a deeply ambivalent one, framed by a growing gap between imagination and reality for young people who, through education, are trying to become something more than their parents are.

Failed aspiration: youth and conflict

In an introduction to a *SINHAS (Studies in Nepali History and Society)* special edition on conceptions of youth in Nepal, Liechty argues that youth has historically been associated with the middle class, for which an extended gap between childhood and adulthood is first shaped by education and then

by the 'socio-economic complexity that requires a delaying of adulthood' (2009: 35). After the 1990 shift to multi-party democracy, a large section of Nepal's population has moved into the middle class. This is partly due to the broadening of formal education and the opening up of media and consumer markets, and the widening of the private sector. A middle class position has thus become a commonplace aspiration. Along with this comes a propagation of middle class values and consumer behaviours that people embrace whether they have entered the middle class or not. Nepal has fallen into the same trap experienced by other developing countries that have transitioned into industrialised, capitalist economies over the last five decades. The promise of the middle class dream earned through education was open to all, but in reality there are more applicants than there are jobs. Thus, Liechty argues, such economies suffer from a surplus of adults, who are subject to a prolonged experience of waiting, and youth becomes a holding pattern that is both a marker of class privilege and class ambition (ibid: 37). He asserts that it is the conflict between the two realities of class privilege (for those who have arrived) and class ambition (among those aspiring to social mobility) that makes youth a potential site of crisis. As a result, education inadvertently promotes an unravelling of the social order it was meant to sustain.

Liechty's observations in the *SINHAS* introduction were made with a close eye on the unfolding of events in Nepal over the last decade, during which ten of thousands of young people joined the Maoist civil war and student activists inhabited the streets for three years, first demanding the reinstatement of the democratic government and then the ousting of the monarchy in favour of a multi-party democratic republic. There is a growing literature on the negative fallout from students' failed aspirations. Education has been cited as a key factor prompting young Nepalis to react in radical ways to the gap between their aspirations and realities (Eck 2007; Pherali 2011; Shields & Rappleye 2008a & 2008b). Whelpton has noted that the expansion of education has led to an increase in the number of dissidents, especially because education has failed to lead to employment (2005). Shields and Rappleye have built on this argument and asserted that unemployment amongst the educated has been one of the Maoist's best recruitment tools (2008a and 2008b). In his memoir Gangabhadur Lama admits that he did not enter the Maoist cause due to a solid understanding of political ideology; rather that like many young urban males, he

was underemployed and bored, and thus wooed by Maoist activists who attributed his frustration to underlying political causes (Hutt 2012: 116). Pherali's research bolsters this point, arguing that in rural areas students receive more political awareness than livelihood skills, which fuels frustration and conflict worldwide (2011). He demonstrates how the ANNISU (R) (Maoist student organisation) was extremely systematic in indoctrinating rural school children to be critical of the broken promises of development and modernity (2011).

The relationship between indoctrination, education, and oppositional politics has a long history in Nepal. Many of the activists who participated in the overthrow of the Rana regime imported the political awareness they received at Patna and Benares Hindu University (Joshi and Rose 2004 [1996]). Under the 1971 National Education Plan, MA students were required to spend a year doing rural service in the 'Back to the Village National Campaign' (1971-1974). This nationwide campaign was loosely modeled on Chinese Cultural Revolution policies, aiming to bring development to villages, reconnect urban educated professionals with traditional subsistence values, and create levels of state surveillance in village life (cf. Baral 2006 [1977]; Hoftun, Raeper, and Whelpton (1999); Upreti 2008). An unintended consequence of the 'village study' programme was that students affiliated with the underground political parties indoctrinated villagers throughout the country. Their indoctrination efforts played a role in preparing the citizenry for the 1980 National Referendum in which a multi-party system was narrowly defeated (Hoftun, Raeper, and Whelpton (1999); Snellinger 2010a). After 1990, many middle class and high caste youth invested in student politics as a career opportunity because they did not see other paths available to them (Snellinger 2010a).

The Ministry of Youth and Sports' 2008 founding agenda confirms the gap between post-education aspirations and the ability to translate them into socio-economic mobility. The MYS's mandate is to address the needs of a volatile youth demographic, which is defined as people between the ages of 16 and 40, making up 38.8% of the population (MYS 2010). With 40% of the total urban population under the age of thirty (NCP 2007) and 400,000 young people entering the labour market every year (AYON 2011), there is indeed a surplus of young adults struggling with the 'socio-economic complexity that requires a delaying of adulthood' (Liechty 2009: 35). In a comparative piece on rural youth activism in Brazil, Egypt, and Nepal,

K.B. Ghimire highlights the irony of global capitalistic attempts to court young people in order to increase consumer demand. In doing so, global capitalism has unintentionally increased the opposite: unsuccessful youth who cannot attain the lifestyle that education, media, and consumer markets have promised them (2002). The sense of worthlessness this group of people feels as a result of not conforming to the images of middle class success motivates young people to fight against global capitalism and their unfulfilled dreams (2002: 68).

For this reason it is not surprising that the main scholarly focus of youth studies in Nepal over the last decade has been on youth activism. The overarching theme of this literature is a counter to the development agencies' and general public's moral panic that the leaders of various political factions are politically manipulating vulnerable young people (Evans 2008 & 2009; De Schepper and Poudel 2010; Ghimire 2002; Hirslund 2012; Kohrt & Maharajan 2009; Sharrock 2011; Snellinger 2010a; Zharkevich 2009). Rather, these studies—which analyse the impact of empowerment programmes amongst Bhutanese youth (Evans 2008 & 2009); the psychological and social positions of child soldiers (Housden 2009; Karki, Kohrt & Jodans 2009; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2008; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2010; Kohrt, Jordans, et al. 2011; Kohrt & Maharajan 2009; Kohrt, Tol, et al. 2010; Pettigrew 2007; Sharrock 2011); the range of rural youth activism (Ghimire 2002; Ghimire 2010; Pettigrew 2007); Maoist cadres coming of age experiences (Hirslund 2012; Snellinger 2010b; Zharkevich 2009); political and nonpolitical youth perspectives on activism (De Schepper and Poudel 2010; Kohrt et al. 2008; Snellinger 2005); and student activism as a gateway into party politics (Snellinger 2010a)—contextualise what motivates the activism of young people and how young people define their social place by asserting themselves politically. These studies provide nuance by problematising youth agency.

The critical approach of many of these studies takes a cue from earlier studies of the impact of Maoist activism in the countryside. These earlier studies showed that people experienced a sense of empowerment from joining the Maoist revolutionary agenda (Pettigrew 2003; Shneiderman & Turin 2004; Sharma & Prasain 2004) and that their motivations for engaging in radical politics may even be a result of development awareness projects that were meant to empower women and children (Gautam et al. 2001; Leve 2007; Manchanda 2004; Pettigrew & Shneidermann 2004).

Rosalind Evans engages with this critical line of argumentation to demonstrate that aid agencies' programmes that were intended to empower young Bhutanese refugees to become ideal apolitical civil society members actually provided them with the tools to assert their political agency (2008). These empowerment tools were not useful to their situation, since as refugees, they were unable to work and they did not have the rights of free citizens. Thus, they utilised their new skills to improve their situation in the way that was available, by supporting the Communist Party of Bhutan's armed struggle to reinstate the refugees in Bhutan. Evans argues that neither the aid agency employees nor the refugee parents paid enough attention to what was shaping the political and moral opinions of the young refugees (2008: 60). Similarly, Zharkevich explains that being a Maoist captured the imagination of Nepali rural youth because it promised a 'genuine experience of sociality beyond the boundaries of their native places and control of the elders' (2009: 68). In his analysis of Maoist memoirs, Michael Hutt also notes that a number of authors viewed participation in the Maoist movement as an opportunity to reposition themselves from marginalised rural youth to empowered national actors who worked not only to transform their villages but the nation as a whole (2012: 121). Ghimire's (2002), Hutt's, and Zharkevich's arguments support Pettigrew's assertion that the guerilla movement offered rural youth a way to actively search for modernity (2003 & 2007), which, they emphasise, was promised to these young people through education and media but nonetheless had been inaccessible.

Zharkevich's above quote emphasises another focus of these studies of youth activism in Nepal, highlighting the moral reasons that motivate the politics of young people. Much of this work asserts that young people become politically involved out of a sense of responsibility for their community (Evans 2008 & 2009; Kohrt & Marajan 2009; Pettigrew 2007; Zharkevich 2009). Anita Ghimire notes that internally displaced youth have been an integral force in the lobbying efforts of the Maoist Victims Association (MVA). The MVA youth wing recruits war-affected youth to carry out demonstrations against the Maoists and the government. These young IDPs value the MVA for providing a social network, sense of security, purpose and home (2010: 99). In the instances when the involvement of young people is individually motivated, it is often to escape endemic caste and gender prejudice or poverty; this is particularly the

case in revolutionary activity (Kohrt & Koeing 2009; Kohrt, Tol et al. 2010; Pettigrew & Shneiderman, 2004; Sharma & Prasain, 2004).

Other scholars highlight that some are motivated by material goals and will support whichever political force is in power, and thus it cannot be assumed that all rural activism will be revolutionary (Ghimire 2002). Others problematise the false dichotomy between self-motivation and communal motivation because the politics of some young people are a mix of opportunism (politics as profession) and idealism (political ideology) that, in themselves, are not at odds with one another (Snellinger 2010a). It is for this reason that the dismissal of the statement that political leaders use youth is not so straightforward; young people are used by the leaders, but often with their consent because these individuals are consequently entering the party establishment through sister organisations of the political parties. Therefore, student politicians are used both by politics and are also seen as the political vanguard (De Schepper & Poudel 2010; Snellinger 2010a). What is noticeable in all the different factors that push young people into politics is that they all follow a 'predictable pattern based on the restriction of power and agency from the macro-social all the way down to the individual level in Nepali society' (Kohrt, Tol et al. 2010: 103).

Whichever calculus motivates the politics of young people, sacrifice is a dominant narrative in youth politics (Hirslund 2012; Snellinger 2006, 2010; Zharkevich 2009). All of these recent studies of youth activism engage with the question of how the subject positions of young people are affected by their political activities. These studies analyse youth as a social/political category by highlighting that through activism 'transformations of youth identities and reconceptualisations of politics become[s] possible' (Hirslund 2012: 1). Zharkevich's work on young Maoist soldiers (2009) and Hirslund's research on Young Communist League cadres (2012) emphasise that the experience of becoming a revolutionary shapes the coming of age of young people in very specific ways. For many marginalised individuals, participating in the Maoist People's War provided them with a sense of agency in a social process on both the macro and micro levels, which had an impact on the degree to which they suffered from postwar dysfunction (Kohrt, Tol, et al. 2010: 105).

I have argued that the *andolan* is integral to the political imaginary of party politics because the *andolan* is the traditional coming of age process

that student activists go through to become politicians. Being an *andolan-kari* is the basis for political identity in Nepali party politics (Snellinger 2010a). Hirslund, Zharkevich, and I have identified struggle (Snellinger 2006), sacrifice (Hirslund 2012; Snellinger 2010a; Zharkevich 2009), martyrdom (Snellinger 2010a & Zharkevich 2009), and heroism (Hirslund 2012 & Zharkevich 2009) as the underpinning narratives that define the commitments of young people to their activism. We also emphasise that ideology is the mechanism that especially allows Maoist youth to contend with their violent past (Snellinger 2010a & Zharkevich 2009), espouse a moral orientation that distinguishes them from other youth (Hirslund 2012 & Snellinger 2010a), and maintain organisational consistency through a disciplined lifestyle that Maoist cadres strive to embrace (Snellinger 2010a, 2010b). I have also analysed how the ideology, lifestyle, social networks and political narratives of each organisation shape the political commitments of young activists. These various components structure the organisational culture in which the student activists are embedded (Snellinger 2010a, 2010b). All these studies highlight that young people socially construct themselves through their public assertions.

Nevertheless, there is heterogeneity in the way young people choose to assert themselves and in the routes that are available to them. Many youth have become leery of party politics since 1990 multi-party democracy, dismissing it as a dirty game. This has created a gap between political and non-political youth, especially amongst the educated urban youth (Snellinger 2005). Before 2006, this pervasive attitude contributed to a distinction between the political and the civil. The only options for those who wanted to be active but were unwilling to choose a political side were civil society organisations and youth clubs (De Schepper and Poudel 2010, Sitaula 2010; Snellinger 2010a). Young people in Nepal may have had limited space to take non-partisan political stands, whereas abroad many have found the space to do so. Bandita Sijapati highlights the 'globalisation of domestic politics' that Nepali students engaged in political campaigns amongst the diaspora (2010). Since 2003, websites and blogs, such as liberaldemocracynepal.org, sajha.com, demrepubnepal.blogspot.com, samudaya.org, as well as campaigns lobbying foreign governments, elevated the political situation of Nepal to the level of transnational debate (ibid: 148-149). Young migrants erred on the side of western liberal democratic values, which had an impact on the political discourse in Nepal. A

direct result of this has been an increase in non-partisan political youth participation in groups such as 'Nepal Unites' and 'Occupy Baluwatar', who have attempted to exert pressure to keep state reconstruction on track following the 2008 constituent assembly elections. These groups can be seen as post-political protest groups that have adopted techniques from multiple influences, including taking over the Citizens' Movement for Democracy and Peace (CMDP) regular position in front of the Prime Minister's residence in Baluwatar. They have also taken a cue from the Youth Communist League, mobilising volunteers in campaigns such as 'Clean the Bagmati 2011' in order to demonstrate that they are willing to actualise the vision of Nepal for which they are fighting. These groups also take advantage of virtual space to propagate their platform; they use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Skype to connect with each other throughout the country and worldwide. In fact, the ubiquitous usage of these virtual spaces has all but erased the distinction between diaspora activism and local activism, causing a space-time compression in the political mobilisation of these young people. These technologies have added a more intimate dimension to the 'globalising of domestic politics' (ibid.).

Some of these recent studies critically analyse what the categories 'youth', 'childhood', and 'young people' mean, and question whether international demographic prescriptions map accurately onto local experience (Evans 2009; Ghimire 2002; Housden 2009; Kohrt & Maharajan 2009; Luger 2000; Pettigrew 2007; Sharrock 2011; Snellinger 2009). Sharrock demonstrates that the international humanitarian community used extralegal definitions of child soldier as a moral rallying cry after a number of UN failures to curb crisis throughout the globe (2011: 386). A shared conclusion is that there is no single definition for childhood, adolescence, or adulthood in Nepal, and that the existing models are flexible and contextual. Kohrt and Maharajan (2009) are concerned that development programmes that are meant to rehabilitate child soldiers may be falling short of their objectives because international development workers are oriented to the UN agreements that a child is anyone under eighteen, rather than accommodating local understandings of who their child soldiers are. Kohrt and Maharajan analyse survey responses from a range of Nepali citizens who were asked what constitutes a child and the degree to which this is dependent on age. They found that a 'person-dependent model' is the more common way for Nepalis to understand the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Basically, a person is assessed with reference to their emotional maturity, cognitive and decision-making maturity, physical maturity, and/or other forms of responsibility, rather than their age (ibid: 133). Housden furthers this argument by asserting that rural Nepali communities are confounded by CAFAAG programs directed at the reintegration of child soldiers back into their communities, since these 'children' have taken on adult responsibilities in the fields at ages as early as fifteen and are not considered child soldiers by their communities (2009: 14). Pettigrew documents how the 'culture of terror' has required some young people to fulfill adult roles because parental role models are not present, including becoming the 'man of the house' at the age of ten (2007: 335). Ghimire argues that setting voting rights at the age of eighteen means that many young people, who are considered full adults and are engaged in reciprocal labour arrangements in their communities, are left outside the formal political circuit, and thus have no choice but to assert their opinions through direct forms of activism (2002: 40). People from the countryside have articulated the same thing to me, saying that if a fifteen year old can pick up a hoe and plough the fields, he is capable of making the decision to pick up a gun or a rally torch if he chooses (field notes 2008).

Evans (2009) extends the argument critiquing childhood as a static category by demonstrating that changes in socio-political context also transform people's understandings and experiences of childhood. In her work with Bhutanese refugees she finds that being raised in a refugee camp has changed the coming of age experience within one generation. She argues that youth was not a salient category for adult refugees, because they did not differentiate that period from others in their own recollection of growing up in Bhutan (2009: 157). However, the young refugees have a different experience: in the camps they were exposed to development ideologies and education but did not have work prospects. These young people are caught between development values and the cultural values of their parents, neither of which is very relevant to their situation. They endure the clash between traditional rights and universal rights, in which their parents encourage them into marriage (the traditional route to adulthood) and the UNDP workers discourage marriage before eighteen (when they are considered 'adults'). The young refugees are indeed in a holding pattern, inhabiting the all too familiar youth subjectivity: young, educated, unemployed, and politically frustrated (ibid: 172).

I have analysed youth subjectivity—young, educated, unemployed, and politically frustrated—in a different context, demonstrating very different results. In party politics youth spans a much larger age demographic—sometimes up to sixty-five but more generally to forty—since there is little opportunity for people to advance. If you are considered junior then someone might refer to you as a ‘youth activist’ because you have not joined the echelons of party leadership; and you may find yourself claiming to be a youth activist because there is political capital in claiming to be a marginalised youth whom the political establishment should acknowledge. Thus, youth has been extended to incorporate people of additional generations into ‘micro-categories of emergence and waiting’ (2009: 62). Youth as a political category is indicative of one’s position of influence within the political landscape, which shifts within each interaction, similar to the big person/small person (*thulo manche/sano manche*) dynamic (ibid: 60). This reality was reflected in the national youth policy drawn up in 2008, which defines youth as ages 16-40. Youth leaders of the political parties were some of the most influential stakeholders in the drafting of this policy. A number of them were in their late thirties and thus still identified as youth, even though they were not considered to be youths by global standards. This situation demonstrates how the category of ‘youth’ in party politics, which is out of synch with general cultural norms, is being propagated into mainstream culture through the national youth policy. Through the enforcement of this policy over time, we may see a political conception of youth that stems from the socio-historical context of party politics becoming normalised in mainstream society.

Future trajectories

The future is a central theme in youth studies. Despite a postmodern shift to focusing on the present context of young people through their ‘situatedness’, much of the youth studies data reveal that young people still struggle with a sense of incompleteness, echoing a central focus on the teleological structure of universal adolescence as a life stage (Bucholtz 2002: 528). This phenomenon can be attributed to the discrepancy between the prevalence of social institutions that give coherence to the process of life, and the lack of opportunity for young people to proceed in socially expected ways (Johnson-Hanks 2002). These socio-economic factors have led to identifying youth experience

as emerging or delayed adulthood in which preparing for the future replaces agentive action in the present (cf. Furlong ed. 2009; McLeod & Yates 2006). I have focused on the nature of the future orientation of student activists. Nepali students become involved in activism because of their struggle to shape a livable present, and therefore they postpone their aspirations and abstract them toward a future in which they might be realised, intertwining their personal aspirations with the political aspirations of the democratic movement (2010 a). This is not an experience that is unique to student activists. Like many young people in the Global South, Nepali youth generally experience the gap between their social reality and their aspirations in an anxious 'not now, not yet' state (Chakrabarty 2000: 256). Thus it is important to focus on what hopes and aspirations young people project toward the future, and how the experience of postponing and waiting affects their subjective experience of their worlds. It is also important, however, to identify future analytic trajectories in order to track the ongoing dynamic between socio-cultural reproduction and change.

A focus on youth is continuing to thrive in Nepal studies, with a number of new projects on the horizon. Himali Dixit has started research into youth clubs in Janakpur. Heather Hindman has been researching young dual national Nepalis ('Duapalis') and their attempts to influence political and civic life in Kathmandu from a supposed 'post-political' stance. Shrochis Karki has completed his research on the relationship between education, employment, and socio-economic mobility for marginalised communities. Andrea Koebel has been researching affective modes of in-betweenness of young college students at Patan campus. Nima Khanal is looking at the dichotomy of public versus private education and the involvement of youth, particularly the ANNISU-R. Casper Mayland has performed a focused ethnography of campus politics at Prithvi Narayan campus in Pokhara. Emily Medeiros is problematising the assumed pathology of child soldiers by researching how the involvement of young people in the People's War shaped their subjective worlds in Rukum. Sujit Shrestha is looking at alternative forms of the political participation of young people beyond party politics. These projects are all fascinating endeavours that will contribute to the ongoing scholarly tradition of youth studies in Nepal. Here are a few questions that I encourage us all to consider. By doing so as a collective, we will target emerging

themes of the experience of young people in Nepal and extend youth as a conceptual category across the social science disciplines.

Youth subculture has not been heavily researched since Mark Liechty took it up in the 1990s. There are many interesting case studies worth pursuing, for example: boy bands, volunteering pursuits that bolster college applications, or recreational drug use. One thing that needs to be reconsidered is whether Liechty's observations regarding urban youths' perception of themselves as being located on the global periphery still holds weight, and if so, for whom. Many young Nepalis have returned to Nepal after years of working and studying abroad. They have changed the retail landscape of Kathmandu in order to provide themselves and their peers with the amenities and lifestyles they have become used to. Their entrepreneurialism merges their life abroad with their families and traditions in Nepal, while also providing economic opportunities. As a result the cityscape is becoming more cosmopolitan. How do trends like these affect the sense of selfhood among young people, or their negotiation between family expectations, their broader aspirations, and their lifestyle? How do these trends impact on global and local flows of media, knowledge, production, and consumption? Are these entrepreneurs changing middle class values and the nature of social mobility? If so, what is their impact on more general societal values and perceptions of opportunity? Heather Hindman's work with 'Duapalis' touches on some of these questions, focusing on social entrepreneurship instead of market entrepreneurship. She is researching how the neo-liberal ethic these entrepreneurs have adopted while studying abroad is motivating their insertion into Kathmandu's civic life (2013).

There are also plenty of questions to pursue regarding migration, which is an increasingly relevant issue in Nepal. A number of scholars are exploring this topic in regard to youth studies. Anita Ghimire, for instance, notes the reluctance of internally displaced young people to return to their villages. These young people experience the pull of urban amenities, and they increase their human capital by pursuing schooling and employment opportunities not available in their villages. Thus, their long-term urban migration ultimately benefits their families too (2010). Barbara Berardi Tadié has documented the role of urban ethnic associations that transmit culture to younger generations who are not regularly exposed to the customs of village life. She says associational networks

serve as meta-spaces linking rural, urban and international levels (2010: 89). Bandita Sijapati has written on the 'transnational social field' within which young Nepali students in the U.S. participate (2010). She argues that their networks are 'fluid concentric circles' that allow them to contribute to family, community, socio-economic activity, and political structures in both the U.S. and Nepal on a daily basis (ibid: 139). These networks provide continuity between Nepal and the U.S., allowing these students to navigate the contradictions and ambiguities that marginalised life in America entails. By participating in ethnic, political, and nationalist associations, young migrants can embody the social status they held in Nepal and have it recognised; such validation is important since many of them do not have the same status in the U.S. and must struggle with low level jobs, poverty, and often illegality. This research demonstrates the usefulness of associations as analytics to track the circulation of ideas that shape the social worlds of young people. This observation echoes the importance of social networks in the way young people experience the transition to adulthood in Nepal (Baker & Hinton 2001; Sagart 1996).

The studies mentioned here have begun to scratch the surface in analysing the subjectivities of young migrants, but more is needed to get a nuanced understanding of the long-term impacts of migration. Some further questions to pursue could be: How does the migration experience shape young Nepalis? What is the impact of the subjective flow of coming and going on people's sense of opportunity, tradition, family, and social ties? How does migration affect their transition into adulthood? How does it influence their relationship to the state as citizens? Are young migrants positioning themselves in a global, knowledge-based economy rather than a national economy? To what degree is the migration experience even or uneven, depending on the nature of migration, class, caste, and ethnicity? Is migration emphasising or de-emphasising caste or class identities? How is this changing the rural and urban economic, social and political landscape in Nepal? How does the trend of rapid emigration affect young people in Nepal? And, for those who have now taken up citizenship in other countries, to what degree do they maintain links to Nepal and what are the implications of those links? What impact does their relationship to Nepal and their traditions have upon their subject position in their new nation? Bandita Sijapati has continued providing insight into these queries with her team at Centre for the Study of Labour

and Mobility in Kathmandu (<http://ceslam.org/>), which could serve as a clearinghouse for research projects on the experiences of Nepali young migrants in other countries.

The impact of youth focused policy is another field that requires more examination. Over the last decade and a half, there has been a convergence of international and national interest in a pro-active youth policies agenda. Heavy investment has gone into creating a National Youth Policy, The Ministry of Youth and Sports, and broad scale education and employment schemes in the post-conflict era. It is not surprising that youth policy has become a priority since it has been a global focus of the U.N. and other multilateral organisations since the early 1990s. What is more interesting is that youth policy is one of the rare priorities shared by all sides—the far left parties, democratic parties, royalists, the general public, and donor agencies. The majority of democratic activists and Maoist combatants were of the youth demographic. In order to keep them loyal, all the parties recognise that they must address the concerns of their young cadres. Moreover, donor agencies and the general public directly correlate investments in youth opportunity with maintaining peace and stability. Pieter De Schepper and Binoj Raj Poudel (2010) and Robin Sitaula et al. (2010) have provided overviews of these policy developments. I am currently working on a discursive analysis of the development of the National Youth Policy, which includes interviews with all participating stakeholders. Nevertheless, the impact of policy and aid agendas should be a central concern of anyone pursuing youth studies in Nepal. One of the trademarks of youth studies has been to observe the dynamic impact social, economic and political structures have on young people. This approach empirically grounds the ways in which youth studies scholars track social change and the relationship between structure and agency (Beck 1992; Furlong and Cartmel 2007; Giddens 1991). In Nepal, a focus on policy and development also unravels the relationship between the international donor regime and the state. This approach provides insights into what mediates cultural flows and social change across sovereign borders. For instance, what has been the impact of empowerment programmes in Nepal (Leve 2007)? Or what are the lasting effects of the Nepal National Youth Policy designation of the youth demographic as 16-40 rather than the international consensus of 15-24? Such questions propel ongoing analysis of the relationship

between universals and specifics, or in current parlance, the relationship between the global and the local, and the implications for Nepali youths as they navigate their life trajectories.

It is also important to consider the category of youth in post-conflict Nepal and how ongoing debates regarding federalism, secularism, affirmative action and state restructuring are unifying or dividing young people across ethnic, geographical, and gender lines. Is the national political environment causing young people to have distinctive experiences that keep them from relating to one another as a unified youth demographic? Or is the political rhetoric surrounding these debates divisive in and of itself, further entrenching social divisions despite the common experiences of young people, their anxieties and aspirations? I encourage researchers to ask whether frustration in the political landscape fuels division or encourages cooperation amongst young people, and how these dynamics contribute to understanding youth as a social and political category. Also, it is worth heeding Michael Hutt's point that little of the analysis of the motivations of young people for joining the Maoist movement rely on first-hand accounts (2012). There is indeed a dearth of textual analysis of the representations by young people of themselves, from which Nepali youth studies could benefit.

The consensus that has emerged from observing youth navigate late modernity is that 'young people do identities rather than have identities' (Miles 2000: 18). This observation mainly comes from studies in the West in which 'autobiographical thinking' (Giddens 1991:54) has become the default mode of the neoliberal individualist ethic. Studies focusing on the Global South describe a different situation, in which the biographical agency of young people is very much constrained by the structural inequalities of the global economy, despite the fact that young people aspire to the progressive life towards which their education has oriented them (cf. Jeffrey 2008; Jeffrey et al 2008; Mains 2007). There are inherent liabilities in what Ulrich Beck has termed "risk society", a result of the social asymmetry the globalised knowledge economy has produced (1992). This is starkly obvious in Nepal. Nepali youth demonstrate that risk is an uneven experience: an opportunity for some and vulnerability for others. It is important that we continue to study the extent to which young Nepalis navigate their lives between doing (consuming and producing) and being (inhabiting their position

within their kin and community networks) and what the implications are for the multiple cultures that comprise Nepali society. In this regard, youth continues to be a ripe analytic to track creative possibilities as they unfold.

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Learning in a Guerrilla Community of Practice: Literacy practices, situated learning and youth in Nepal's Maoist movement (1996-2006)

Ina Zharkevich

The arts of war are better than no arts at all.

(Richards 1998: 24)

Young people and conflict, unemployed youth, risk and resilience have emerged as key research themes over the past decade or so. The so-called 'youth bulge theories' have contributed considerably to research on youth and the policy agendas that prioritise the study of youth. It is postulated that the vast numbers of young people in developing countries do not have opportunities for employment and are therefore at risk of becoming trouble-makers (see the critique in Boyden 2006).

The situation in South Asia might be considered a good example. According to the World Bank Survey, South Asia has the highest proportion of unemployed and inactive youth in the world (*The Economist*, 2013).¹ So, what do young unemployed and inactive people do? Since the category of 'unemployed youth' includes people of different class, caste and educational backgrounds, at the risk of oversimplifying the picture, one could argue that some have joined leftist guerrilla movements, while others, especially in India, have filled the rank and file of the Hindu right – either the groups of RSS volunteers (Froerer 2006) or the paramilitaries, such as Salwa Judum (Miklian 2009), who are fighting the Indian Maoists. Both in Nepal and in India, others are in limbo after receiving their degrees, waiting for the prospect of salaried employment whilst largely relying on the political patronage they gained through their membership of the youth wings of various political parties (Jeffrey 2010), which is a common occurrence on university campuses in both India and Nepal (Snellinger 2007).

This article seeks to understand why young people are attracted to all kinds of political and quasi-political activities in South Asia. What is it that drives youth towards political movements with ideologies ranging from

¹ This is partially explained by the exclusion of young women from the labour force.

the far right to the far left? This article suggests that the constraints of the economic environment and the dire prospects for social mobility are only a part of the answer to this question of young people's involvement in radical movements.

By drawing on the extreme case of the participation of young people in the Nepali Maoist Movement during the conflict of 1996-2006, this article explores whether there is more to the experience of youth within radical movements than just violence. In doing so, the article attempts to shift the emphasis away from violence as a key concept in the exploration of the youth experience of conflict and towards other social processes, such as learning and skill acquisition. Building on the work of Richards on youth and conflict in Sierra Leone (1998), the present article stresses the potential of radical organisations to become a source of schooling and a contemporary form of apprenticeship in the context of war. To quote, 'Where they [young people] joined the rebels with any degree of enthusiasm it was to seek training. The arts of war are better than no arts at all. The army was simply seen as a new form of schooling' (Richards 1998: 24). While Richards stresses that the competencies Sierra Leone youth acquired in the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) were mostly 'the violent skills of guerrilla bush-craft' (ibid: 28), my research² on the participation of young people in the Nepali Maoist Movement suggests that the learning process in guerrilla movements is not limited to military fighting. According to many of my informants, books were part of the daily routine of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) fighters as well as guns:

2 This article is largely based on fieldwork carried out in Nepal during the summer of 2008, in Kathmandu and the district of Rolpa. It is based on in-depth interviews with 27 Maoist youths, of whom eight were interviewed more than once. These were complemented by conversations with parents of Maoist youths (in Rolpa), with NGO staff, and with unaffiliated youths who had experienced Maoist campaigns. Access to the field was negotiated through Maoist sister organisations. All the interviewees started their Maoist career during the insurgency and considered themselves to be committed Maoists at the time of my fieldwork in 2008. Therefore, this research focused not on Nepali youth as such, but specifically on young Nepali Maoists. These features of my research invariably affected not only the process of my fieldwork but also the angle of my subsequent analyses. Subsequent fieldwork, carried out with a different research theme in mind in 2011, complemented and enriched the findings from 2008. Especially fruitful in this respect was my trip to one of the Maoist cantonments in the south of Rolpa in 2011, where I had the chance to observe the post-war activities of former Maoist combatants and speak to them about their war-time and post-war experiences of the movement.

PLA got different books for us and asked us to study them every day. It was difficult to carry all the books around, so each would carry one or two books and exchange them [Kedar].³

There was always a book in my rucksack, one or two. We stored books in villagers' homes, in the safe ones [Narendra].

Carrying books in backpacks, compulsory independent study for several hours per day, and learning the basics of Marxist social theory and propagating it to Nepali villagers were common practices among Maoist youth during the 'People's War' of 1996-2006. In a country where a book is still rare in many remote villages and libraries virtually non-existent, and where schools in remote areas are often not functioning because of the absence of teachers, these facts pose a question about whether the Maoist Movement can be viewed as a source of learning, acquiring skills and participating in a range of literacy practices that are otherwise inaccessible to young people in rural parts of Nepal.

The article explores this proposition by first outlining the theory of situated learning, which it uses as a framework for understanding the kind of learning young people were exposed to in the Maoist Movement. The article then gives a concise historical overview of the educational and pedagogical strategies of communist movements around the world. Next, it explores literacy practices within the Maoist Movement and then concludes by analysing the nature of learning as experienced by young people within the Maoist communities of practice during the war.

Theory and practice: situated learning in the Maoist Movement

I will argue in this article that in order to understand the educational experiences of young people within Maoist or other kinds of radical movements, it is important to understand learning to be not merely a result of teaching or ideological training but rather an outcome of 'the social practice in the lived-in-world' (Lave & Wenger 1991: 36) and participation in distinct communities of practice. Drawing on the ideas of Lave and Wenger (1991), who argue that learning is not equated solely with cognitive processes but involves the whole person, where individual relations, feelings and activities become an important source of knowing,

3 All names are coded. For the backgrounds of interviewees, see Annex 1.

I will argue that informal or situated learning has played an important role in the process of educating Maoist youth.

Concentrating on Maoist cultural groups and political motivation teams, I will show that by participating in these communities of practice young people accessed not only a new set of skills or a new corpus of ideas, but also learned a distinct set of values and mores. This process is crucial for understanding the nature of the learning that happens within ideologically inspired movements. It is therefore important to stress that the intellectual or ideological side of learning, whether it be attending political 'indoctrination' sessions or reading certain books, is only part of the transformative learning process experienced by youths once they are in radical movements. Arguably, the most important change happens at the level of values and worldview. This is accomplished through the intensity of their engagement with the real world, either in the form of interaction with fellow comrades or critical engagement with non-aligned people. It is no coincidence that the members of all radical movements are marked by a zeal to change and transform the world around them, their own selves having been deeply altered in the process.

The transformative nature of knowledge is stressed in the Marxist and Maoist theory of knowledge, where learning is seen as a collaborative form of social activity aimed at transforming reality (Stetsenko & Arieivitch 2004: 68). According to Mao,

Marxists hold that man's social practice alone is the criterion of the truth of his knowledge of the external world... If you want to know a certain thing... you must personally participate in the practical struggle to change reality, to change that thing or class of things... only through personal participation in the practical struggle to change reality can you uncover the essence of that thing or class of things and comprehend them (Mao 1937).

Mao defines knowledge as one's engagement in social practice, which, in his view, involves first and foremost the revolutionary project of transforming society and engaging in the social problems of the real world. Not only is knowledge derived from practice; it should also have a practical, i.e. transformative, value to it. Interestingly, the theory of situated learning developed by Lave and Wenger echoes the Marxist

theory by saying that practice, activity and engagement with the world are key to learning:

Learning as increasing participation in communities of practice concerns the whole person acting in the world. Conceiving learning in terms of participation focuses attention on the way in which it is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relationships; this is of course consistent with a relational view of persons, their actions, and the world, typical of the 'theory of social practice' (Lave & Wenger 1991: 50).

In short, knowledge creation is not an individual process but rather a process that happens in context and is constituted through multiple interactions with the world and the people and objects in it. This article takes this point further by exploring how a certain historical situation (that of war) and a certain type of radical organisation (the Maoist Movement) enabled a distinct experience of learning in Nepal – one which was largely derived from the praxis of realising the Maoist revolutionary project through the use of military, ideological or cultural tools. The striking and peculiar feature of war-time learning within the Maoist Movement is that it combined both intellectual and practical modes at a time when most formal institutions of learning, for instance rural schools, became dysfunctional due to the vicissitudes of war and the legacy of the state's unequal education system.

Literacy practices in leftist movements around the world

The Maoist Movement of Nepal was not unique among leftist movements around the world⁴ in its attempt to be self-consciously pedagogical. Raising political awareness and educational levels among disenfranchised parts of the population were key components of the emancipatory projects of revolutionary movements in highly illiterate societies, from the Bolsheviks in Russia in the 1920s to the Maoists in China in the 1940s.

4 This emphasis on education is not unique to leftist radical movements. Both the Hindu right and Islamic activists emphasise the importance of transforming the minds of people and spreading new ideas through different educational practices. For more detail on various strategies of the Hindu right see Jaffrelot (2005) and on Islamic movements in South Asia see Metcalf (2002).

According to Russian revolutionaries, imparting education to the masses was not simply an educational issue, but also a *political* issue, for ideals of 'equality, fraternity and freedom' could not be realised in a society where knowledge was the privilege of a small stratum of the population (Lunacharsky 1984: 285) – as was the case in Russia before the Bolshevik revolution in 1917.

Bukharin, one of the ideologues of the October Revolution, clearly stated that 'liquidating illiteracy among working class youth' was a basic task without which it would be impossible 'to move forward' (Bukharin 1984: 59). The efforts of radical educators in Soviet Russia to bring about comprehensive literacy by organising united labour schools, *rab-faks* (working faculties), Pioneer children organisations and Proletkult (Proletarian Cultural Organisation) illustrate the centrality of the educational project in the revolutionary endeavours of the Bolsheviks. The fact that the Ministry of Education in the former USSR was called the Ministry of Enlightenment is in itself a sign that the Bolsheviks were approaching the educational project not just as a task of imparting literacy skills, but rather as a task of forming new kinds of citizens, social and political subjects. In the words of the first Soviet Minister of Education, the overarching goal was the 'transfer of knowledge to each individual, that is, with broad enlightening work resulting in maximum mass consciousness' (Lunacharsky 1984: 286).

China was another highly illiterate peasant society where communist ideas received considerable popular support. It has been recorded that during the period of the civil war in China, the routine of the Chinese PLA was full of educational sessions where fighters learned how to read by using communist concepts such as 'Red flag, communism and landlord' (Snow 1972: 243). In addition, where Maoists controlled the territory, they engaged in the process of 'changing the mentality of people' by organising ideological classes for Chinese peasants (Snow 1972: 241). The Socialist Education Movement was launched in China in the 1960s, and while pursuing the goal of fighting 'reactionary' elements within the Communist Party, it was also part of the socialist education project aimed at enlightening the 'dark masses'. Brigades of zealous young people were sent into the countryside to impart Maoist ideology to villagers through the medium of stories, songs and study groups (Madsen 1984: 108–120). Like the Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia, the Maoists in China approached

education as one of the central political issues faced by the new socialist state, the issue of nation-building.

In quite a different story, the Shining Path of Peru, of which Nepalese Maoists claim to be successors, concentrated on ideological work with disenfranchised student youth who comprised the backbone of the Peruvian Maoists (Degregori 1992). Rather than imparting basic literacy skills or Maoist ideology to peasants, Peruvian Maoists worked with educated but unemployed youth from the backwaters of the country. Apparently, the youth, who did not have many prospects for employment or activities elsewhere, were keen to absorb the Maoist vision of reality, which explained their grievances and provided them with a sense of purpose in life (Degregori 1992). It is symbolic that almost a decade after the start of the civil war, the leader of the Shining Path, who was a former university professor, has never been depicted in a military uniform or with a gun. Instead, he was always portrayed clutching a book (Goriti 1992: 151), making the book the symbol that was associated with the leadership of the Maoist guerrillas in Peru, rather than the gun.

While one might dismiss such educational efforts as brainwashing aimed at the mobilisation of rebels and the selling of a distorted picture of reality to naive youth or peasants, it is important to note the context in which such efforts proved successful. These were societies characterised by extreme inequalities, of which educational inequalities formed only a minor part, and in which knowledge was the privilege of a small elite. Nepal was no exception to this rule. Whereas in Nepal education is in theory available to everyone, in reality only a small stratum of the population has access to quality education. Furthermore, at the onset of the 'People's War', it is estimated that only 48 % of the population was literate (UNESCO 2000). This feature makes Nepal similar to other semi-literate societies where leftist movements took deep roots and where the conscious-raising campaigns of communists found a fertile ground.

Schooling and failed prospects of social mobility in Nepal

It has been argued that education was deeply embedded in Nepal's violent conflict (Shields & Rappleve 2008). To show why this might be so, one should illustrate the magnitude of educational inequalities in Nepal. Whereas in 1991 the literacy rate of young people (15-24 years) in Kathmandu was 75.9%, it was only 38.3% in the mid-Western region of

Nepal (World Education Forum 2000), the latter being one of the major recruitment grounds for the Maoist Movement during the war.

However, regional inequalities are only a small part of the picture. Nepal has a two-tiered system of school education, which puts graduates of private English-medium schools at a disproportionate advantage (see Graner (1998), Shields and Rapple (2008)). 80% of the graduates from these schools pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC), in contrast to 30-40% of youth from government schools (Whelpton 2005: 227). In 1996, the year in which the 'People's War' commenced, not a single child from a rural area passed the SLC in the first division (Mikesell 2005). This effectively meant that no young people from rural areas could pursue a higher education that would lead to prestigious professions such as doctors or engineers, which eventually bestow the status of 'big man' in Nepali society. In this context, the voluntary recruitment of young people to the Maoist Movement can be partially attributed to the failure of the Nepali state to provide youth, especially from rural and remote parts of the country, with any opportunities for social mobility, either through formal education or employment. As one Maoist youth explained to me:

The country's education system is about buying and selling. If the person has the capacity to buy, he can study at the higher level. If you don't have money, then you are out. We believe that each individual has similar capacities and skills but the country's system is arranged in a way that makes it impossible for some individuals to study [Ramesh].

In addition, some young people commented that the formal education system was not scientific because it was removed from reality and the practical problems of the world. For instance, one of the interviewees noted that school history classes were based around legendary stories about kings, whereas Maoist sessions approached the history of Nepal from the point of view of contemporary development problems. In advocating communist education (*janabadi shiksha*), the Maoists called not only for a more equal system of opportunities but also for a syllabus which was more relevant to the conditions of life in Nepal.

The inequality of the educational system in Nepal limited the choices of young people in rural parts of the country either to the option of

remaining in the village to do agricultural work, or migrating elsewhere in search of employment, with India and the Gulf states being the most notable destinations. Since school did not serve as a vehicle for social mobility for the majority of Nepali youth, when the conflict broke out many of them chose another path of moving forward in life – that of joining the Maoist Movement.

In this context, it should come as no surprise that rural schools became major recruitment grounds for Maoist guerrillas. The vast majority of my interviewees got to know Maoist ideology at school, in the Student Union.⁵ The typical story runs as follows: Maoist district committee members would come to the school, speak with the director, and then go and speak to students, encourage them to form a Maoist Student Union and organise informal classes for the study of Maoist theory. While this politicisation of schools might seem to be associated with the advent of the ‘People’s War’, the Maoists actually followed a tradition of politicisation of schools in Nepal, where school grounds have been used as an avenue of political campaigning at least since the collapse of the Panchayat regime in 1990.

Furthermore, school teachers were among the key agents spreading Maoist ideology in rural Nepal, especially in those areas which came to be known as the Maoist heartland (Ogura 2007: 464–566). In a detailed discussion of the issue, Ogura shows that teachers from Rolpa comprised a considerable percentage of the leadership of the Maoist Movement (*ibid*). This situation is not at all peculiar to Nepal. The strong presence of school teachers in Peru among the Maoist rank and file led Angel (1982) to call them ‘classroom Maoists’. Furthermore, comparing Sierra Leone’s RUF with Peru’s Shining Path, Richards (1998: 27) notes that despite all the differences between their ideologies, the structural conditions that gave birth to these movements were starkly similar: an ‘educated but embittered leadership’, mostly comprised of pedagogues, and a ‘large pool of modernised rural based youth with few prospects of continuing education or progressive employment’ (Richards 1998: 28). The case of Nepal was not much different: teachers were in the vanguard of the Maoist Movement,

5 For those whose parents were communists, it was the family environment that was a key factor in socialising children into the Maoist ideology. In Rolpa, the Children’s Organisation replaced the Student Union as the first stage of youth engagement in the Maoist Movement.

Zharkevich

and youth, often from disadvantaged class and/or caste backgrounds, were following the example of the teachers:

Most of the teachers in my school were communist. I was a good pupil and therefore had good relations with teachers...my teachers would tell me about their time in the student union, about the time spent in jail, that there was no food there, about how the Army and the police beat them. And it made me revolutionary [Sahash].

It is important to note that in societies where schooling is a recent phenomenon, the figure of an educated person, a teacher, is accorded special reverence. Even now, in Nepali villages, teachers are considered 'big people' and are respectfully addressed as 'sir'. In the absence of the mass media, teachers have a unique power to mould the worldview of students. In several cases, prolonged daily communication with teachers established not a formal but a deeply personal attachment, more akin to traditional systems of learning wherein the master-pupil relationship is crucial for the transmission of knowledge and shapes the moral qualities of a student:

There was a neighbour with whom we would meet on a daily basis because we would do some activities together, such as cutting grass. He was a teacher and he would say to me that I should sacrifice for the country and would encourage me indirectly to participate in the Movement and tell that it is possible to live after death [Bhim].

I suggest that we cannot attribute the mobilisation successes of the Nepali Maoists simply to their formal recruitment techniques and indoctrination campaigns. While the importance of their mobilisation efforts and political training programmes have been analysed elsewhere in detail (Eck 2007), the emphasis has been largely on the agency of the rebel group, i.e. the Maoist indoctrination campaigns, in the luring of Nepali youth towards the revolutionary movement. However, it is well known that from the thousands of children who attended such programmes only a few went on into the rank and file of the PLA, especially during the first years of the war. There were more subtle mechanisms and channels – such as relationships with teachers, kinship networks, and personal histories of

suffering, such as the killing of the family members – which made some youth, but not others, join the movement. Furthermore, if we look at the mobilisation process through the eyes of young people, the whole process will no longer look like a purely instrumental Maoist strategy of recruiting rebels for the needs of war. Instead, the process will acquire the intrinsic value of being conducive to learning, and acquiring skills and a new personal identity.

Literacy practices in the Maoist Movement

Rosen has argued (2005:7) that the socialisation of youth into military life has always taken the form of apprenticeship. Similar to other radical movements around the world, the Maoists in Nepal placed special emphasis on discipline and the training of the cadreship. Before joining the PLA, for instance, each novice had to undergo a process of training to test his or her physical and moral abilities.⁶ The training usually lasted for 15 days to one month. The daily routine was structured in a way that left almost no free time for the soon-to-be soldiers: after dawn, the recruits would do two-hour sessions of physical exercise, which would be followed by a meal succeeded by talks from senior leaders, then another two-hour session of exercise. This is how one of the former Maoist fighters remembers the military side of the training;

There are different types of armies...the training in the village and in town is different. We would learn how to disguise ourselves, how to act against the enemies, how to survive during the bombing, how to use the weapons, how to kill enemies and how to make the situation safe for ordinary people so that they don't lose their lives, how to walk on the rope, how to jump up to 12-15 feet, how to creep and jump over the walls. We had to take the training within a short span of time, up to 15 days [Bhim].

Ideological lectures were an equally important component of the Maoist training programmes. As one of the former fighters put it, 'Army is not only the armed force but political as well. If you are not politically aware

6 One of my informants whose dream was to become a fighter was deemed not to be fit enough. The Party diverted him to the medical brigades.

you can't work for the people. Training yourself blindly physically for the war can do nothing. We can achieve nothing in this way (Narendra).'⁷ Thus, the learning process that Maoists were undergoing was not limited to military practice or narrowly defined ideological training. It also included time for self-study, which was spent on activities such as reading, writing and discussion groups. When one of the interviewees noted that he managed to get a 'plus two', i.e. a higher school education, during the war whilst being a full-timer in the PLA, I wondered how this was at all possible. How could a person study and wage a war at the same time? He explained to me that there were at least two hours of compulsory self-study per day in the Maoist camps: this was built into the daily routine of Maoist guerrillas.

While this kind of structured routine might appear in significant, I argue that it reflects a broader educational ethos of the Maoist Movement of Nepal and that this ethos was central to instilling a culture of reading and writing amongst Maoist youth. Its manifestation is starkly evident in the abundance of Maoist memoir literature by the former guerrilla youth that emerged in the wake of the war (see Hutt 2012). The emergence of this body of literature is not just of literary but also of social significance. It shows that writing and publishing stopped being the prerogative of a small circle of a highly educated elite or intellectuals, and became a much more democratic practice in which rural youth, often with poor and marginalised backgrounds, could take full part.

The importance of reading and writing within the Maoist Movement struck me when I heard from some interviewees that Maoist fighters were carrying books in their backpacks, that the Maoist leaders were procuring books for the fighters, and that the award given to one of my interviewees for a successful implementation of their first military task was the book *Mother* by Gorky (1954), which describes the revolutionary struggle in 19th century Russia.⁷ These literacy practices within the Maoist Movement are in line with a strong tradition of reading among members of communist parties around the world (MacRae 1961). The mastering of communist literature and communist vocabulary has always been central to the process of creating committed revolutionaries (MacRae 1961:188). In the

7 For a discussion of the influence of Gorky's *Mother* on earlier generations of Nepali communists, see Gellner and Karki (2007: 385–388).

context of Nepal, however, the literacy practices in the Maoist Movement, while performing the short-term goal of creating committed revolutionaries, achieved a longer-term goal: that of spreading and democratising the practices of reading and writing, which are fundamental to a semi-literate society, such as Nepal was at the beginning of the war.

Books as a Symbol of Belonging

Within the Maoist communities of practice, books were more than objects valued for the knowledge contained in them. For a young Maoist, reading was not just an enjoyable pastime; it was a process of delving into the lore of Maoism, shared by other comrades, and participating in a shared clandestine activity. Books became emblematic of the danger involved in being a Maoist and became expressive of the pathos of revolutionary struggle. The books that had been read by someone could place this person on one side of the barricades, and could become a sign of being underground and a reason for being arrested as a suspect guerrilla. Several youths told me how much care was taken to hide books and war-time diaries in secret places such as caves or cow-sheds high up in the hills:

At that time it was difficult to keep books at home. Police could come at any time and they could check the books...We hid the books in the storing drums... I had two drums and kept them under the ground, and when I needed a book I would go and dig it out [Kedar].

In 2002-2003, my friend's uncle was detained by the policeman... we had to evacuate all materials from his home. I took the books to my mother's-in-law home. In front of that house another Maoist was arrested with a pressure-cooker bomb. I got really scared because I had half a sack of books that were stamped by the Party [Mahendra].

Books were crucial in reproducing the Maoist Movement and in ensuring the creation of an imaginary network of committed individuals: the mere act of reading certain books could make a person take part in the underground reality. When discussing literacy practices in Nepal, Ahearn (2001: 189) shows that reading and writing are socially embedded activities and that one should therefore 'note various contexts in which these practices take place'. Indeed, rather than the contents of the books, it was

the context of the Maoist insurgency that transformed communist books into a sign of rebellion and of being underground. Being in possession of communist books could pose a threat to a person's life. This made the act of reading and keeping communist books into a powerful symbol of resistance, of 'belonging to the elect' (Aron 2001: 323) and being 'part of conspiracy' (MacRae 1961:190).

The social practices surrounding communist literature during the war are reminiscent of the circulation of goods between people, but in this instance, the goods, i.e. books, acquired a non-monetary value. Buying books played only a minor role in spreading communist literature: informal exchange became the primary route of gaining access to books. Whereas getting books in Kathmandu was relatively easy, because the shops that sold communist literature were well-known to earlier generations of Nepali communists (Gellner & Karki 2007: 383), in the rural and remote parts of Nepal and within the Maoist Movement itself, informal exchange was the common way of acquiring books. However, getting hold of communist books, transporting and exchanging them, and giving advice about what to read, went beyond the mere logistics of buying and distributing books. It also established networks of personal communication between the members:

When the war began, our home was a shelter for travelling Maoists: many members of the Party would stay overnight and bring banned books. In the market it was very difficult to find books. People would bring books and exchange them but it was very dangerous... There were two secret channels of supplying books...Members of the Party would bring books from Pyuthan. A small amount would come from India. [Kedar].

Maoist literacy practices were part of a wider context in which any activity associated with the Movement was considered illegal – from holding informal classes to distributing communist pamphlets. Therefore, it is not surprising that most of the literacy practices occurred informally, through personal networks or kin relationships. In addition to informal classes organised by Maoists, literacy practices would often take place in informal settings such as the houses of teachers. One of my interviewees had vivid childhood memories of visiting the house of his teacher, where

his teacher would play the song 'Our Red Flag is flying over Peru' and talk about the importance of the Russian revolution. As shown by de Sales (2003), several years before the start of the war it was not uncommon to listen to revolutionary songs in mid-Western parts of Nepal. The influence of such songs on youth was often profound: in the words of one of my informants: 'whenever we would hear the song, we would go to the teacher's place' (Saroj). Another youth, Manoj, recalled that the informal settings of the homes of teachers and personal interaction with the teachers were vital to learning within the Maoist Movement:

I was invited by leaders of the party and visited them quite a lot. I would learn from them, I would often go to their homes. You can't do a lot and learn a lot during the Maoist programmes, you learn a lot in leader's homes. I could use their library... Not everyone can use the library of the leaders and have access to them. I was lucky [Manoj].

It is unsurprising that some of the informants who were well-versed in communist theory came from families with comparatively rich personal libraries where children had easy access to books. 'My father [a teacher] distributed communist books. He kept them in the suitcase in the house. I would steal them to read and then return them and put them in their right places so that my father would not notice it' (Kiran). Unintentionally, the houses of communist families turned into spaces where children would participate in informal literacy practices, such as discovering books on Mao and overhearing discussions between party members during meetings held at people's homes. Their acquaintance with communist ideas would thus take a form of learning which developed from being close to the world of adult communists, 'stealing books', overhearing conversations and talking to family friends. This learning took place despite the fact that parents often expressed reluctance to teach their children about communist ideology, wishing to protect them from the dangers involved in being part of the 'underground' world.

Books as an inspiration for political work

It is hard to deny that Maoist intellectual training was highly political, and aimed at converting youth into Maoist supporters. There was much emphasis on learning communist theory, especially during the later

stages of involvement with the Movement. The *Communist Manifesto* was by far the most frequently mentioned theoretical source:

I spoke with my uncle who used to tell me about the proletarian movement and we talked a lot about the Communist Manifesto. My uncle would speak about the unity of workers and the 'world to win': 'Workers of the world, get united, there is a burden for you to lose, and the world for you to win.' Though I haven't read the Manifesto itself, these words impressed me a lot. I thought: what can I lose? The identity of the oppressed, of a Dalit? What if I leave this identity and recreate it completely? [Sahash]

Marx's *Capital* was only mentioned by a few informants who remarked that this work was only for well-educated comrades. While theoretical books were central to mastering the communist vocabulary and ideology, many of my interviewees were much more interested in speaking about other types of books, such as biographies of world communist leaders ranging from Mao and Lenin to CheGuevara, and fiction novels, such as *The Bright Red Star* by Li Xintian and *Nayā Ghar (New Home)* by Ahuti, which describe revolutionary events in China (Long March in the 1930s) and Nepal (the transition to the multiparty system in 1990 and the popular movement associated with it). These novels and biographies clearly had a far stronger impact on my interlocutors and appear to have been more important in shaping their worldviews than the complex treatises on communist theory.

Reading books and rendering them to people who could not read or did not have access to books was an important part of the work of Maoist political motivators. The ideas contained in the books were used by Maoist youth to establish personal connections with the villagers: 'I learned how to make conscious-raising campaigns by reading novels and books, such as *Naya Ghar*, Mao's *Little Red Book*' (Binai). Quite a few of my informants, members of political motivation teams, stressed the importance of the novel *Naya Ghar*, citing it as a source of learning about how to talk to villagers and conduct conscious-raising campaigns:

Naya Ghar by Ahuti is my favourite novel. I was crying when I was reading it. It is about a communist movement in Nepal. It describes

the movement of 1990. The main character has to struggle throughout his life, though he faces a lot of deception and difficulties before becoming free...

Q. How would you convince the people to become Maoists?

I would speak with people and tell them that they are exploited, that they are controlled. I would tell them, "There is no right of the fed to represent the hungry. You have to fight for yourself". It is from *Naya Ghar* that I took these phrases [Saroj].

It would be an exaggeration to say that reading communist books turned people into Maoists. Only in a few cases, for instance in a family in which the father was a committed communist teacher, did extensive reading at an early age precede entering the party. The majority of cases followed the line of gradual acquaintance with the literature in the course of an individual's progression along the Maoist career path. As many interviewees noted, becoming a Party member obliged them to read and even participate in reading competitions:

The first book I read was *The Bright Red Star*. Then I read *Naya Ghar* and *Red Rock (Rato Chatan)*...these two are the most impressive books for me. I wanted to join the party as a school-student and after I joined the party I read more. And the more books I read, the more I felt my decision was right [Narendra].

Writing diaries, letters and notebooks: unpublished testimonies of war

It is important to stress that writing as well as reading was a widespread activity among members of the Nepali Maoist Movement. The upsurge in different kinds of Maoist writings is quite spectacular: they range from memoirs and diaries to poems and songs (for an analysis of Maoist memoirs see Hutt (2012); for Maoist poetry see Lecomte-Tilouine (2006)). During the war, many of these written sources were published in the Maoist press, whereas after the war they were published as separate books. I suggest that there is a large corpus of wartime documents which have received little scholarly attention yet, such as the letters and diaries of Maoist fighters. Because the war was waged at a time when the mobile network was not present in most parts of Nepal, letters were the only means of communication between guerrillas and their kin. However, even

though diaries and letters were plentiful during the war, many of them were lost or destroyed during the conflict. Several of my interviewees, who are former PLA members, said that they kept their diaries but had to hide them in remote cow-sheds for fear that the police or Army might get hold of them during raids in the village. In several cases, diaries could not be retrieved after the war because they were either destroyed by the Army or simply got lost. Similarly, the letters sent by Maoist fighters were lost, or to be more specific, burned during the war. The villagers told me that after having read the letters they would immediately destroy them. If the police or the Army found such letters, they could cost a life.

Apart from letters and diaries, wartime notebooks, such as those I saw during my last visit to one of the villages in Rolpa, serve as a testimony of the active learning process that was occurring within the Maoist Movement. The notebooks belonged to one of the former Maoist cultural workers, who migrated for wage labour to the Gulf states after the end of the war. The copybooks were full of songs and poems composed by cultural workers. They also contained lecture notes from political training sessions with detailed descriptions of the biographies of Lenin and Mao and the Marxist five-stage model of historical development. After the war, sadly, the notebooks were kept in the backroom of the village house, serving as the living testament to an impressive educational endeavour and creativity that was present in the midst of war, and to the fading of this spirit in its aftermath.

During the conflict, these notebooks served not only as a repository of theoretical knowledge, aimed at self-education or passing exams, but rather as an inspirational guide and an instrument for transforming society, for working with people and changing 'mass consciousness'. Indeed, while young people in Nepal have been analysed as objects of political indoctrination (Eck 2007), less has been said about young people as subjects who played the role of agents of change and transmitters of a new ideology during the war. From young people's narratives, it becomes clear that Maoist activists considered that exerting an influence on people's worldview to be one of their most important goals. Thus, one member of a political motivation team remembered how cultural and political workers quarrelled about 'who would win the hearts of people, who would help them and get to know them in every possible way, who would be able to connect to them more' (Sahash). The learning of Maoist youth, thus,

reflected the Marxist notion of knowledge, which is rooted in practice and in the active endeavour to change the social world.

Cultural groups and political motivation teams: learning through practice

According to Freire (2003), any true revolutionary process, in contrast to a change of power, involves a conscientisation process and a transformation of people from objects into subjects. Echoing many revolutionary movements throughout the world, the Maoists put special emphasis on working at grass-roots level by organising campaigns similar to the pre-revolutionary Russian movement known as ‘going to the people’ (Field 1987), the Ethiopian *zemecha* campaigns (Donham 1999: 29) and the Socialist Education Movement in China (Madsen 1984). In Nepal, a similar educational movement took the form of Maoist consciousness-raising campaigns, which were often referred to by Maoists as attempts to develop or change the consciousness of peasants (*chhetana bikas pariwartan*). As with other strategies, such as cultural performances or torchlight processions, Maoists followed in the footsteps of an already existing tradition. Nepal has a long history of attempts by various actors to raise the awareness of the rural population, from the earlier generation of communists (Shneiderman 2003; 2010) to development workers who based their programmes on Freire’s critical pedagogy (Leve 2009).

The Maoist political motivators were given the task of building up the party organisation in places where it was weak or non-existent. This task was done not only by summoning villagers to attend various sessions in the jungle, but also by conducting research, similar to the research political parties in some parts of India would do before elections:

While going to various places we would gather information notes on class, caste, majority and minority groups: after that we would send the data to the higher level of the Party... We would try to calculate how many people support us, what type of people could support us... (Mishra).

While being distinctly different in form, cultural groups in Nepal performed a function similar to the function of political motivation teams. Used by Maoists to tell villagers about the injustices of the existing order, cultural performances continued the tradition in Nepal of expressing grievances

and protest through songs and theatre (Shneiderman 2003; Skinner & Holland 1996). Describing Maoist cultural groups in China, Snow (1972: 119) wrote that

There is no more powerful weapon of propaganda in the Communist movement than the Reds' dramatic troupes...When the Reds occupy new areas, too, it is the Red Theatre which calms the fears of the people, gives them rudimentary ideas of the Red Programme, dispenses great quantities of revolutionary ideas, and counter-propaganda, to win the people's confidence.

Similarly, in Nepal cultural groups were one of the first Maoist divisions that started preparing the ground for the 'People's War', largely through the so-called Sijacampaign of 1995 (see Ogura 2007: 436). This might be regarded as a clever move, since cultural performances were much more popular among the villagers than political sessions. For many people, the cultural programmes were not only political performances but also a substitute for festivals, the majority of which were banned by the Maoists during the war.

Particularly during the early years of the insurgency, cultural groups became a major entry point into the Maoist Movement for dozens of young people. As early as 1995, cadres of the first cultural groups started passing on their skills to inexperienced youth who would take up the places of their teachers, most of whom would join the ranks of the PLA in the early stages of the war. Whereas for some youths, cultural groups were a transit point on the route to the PLA, for others they became a major community of practice which opened doors to the worlds of politics and art, and turned dancing and singing into work aimed at the transformation of society. This is how a young Dalit woman, Asha, recalls being persuaded to join the local cultural group by the local Maoist village in-charge:

You will learn there, learn there to dance and sing, learn the behaviour you might be lacking now; you will get a change from your life, you will be able to walk and travel freely, you will forget your sorrows; if there is only sorrow in one's mind, it is not good; after you walk with the cultural group, you will get to experience some happy days in your life.

Asha's mother died when she was a child, and she was raised by her father. Being the eldest daughter in the family, Asha spent her childhood taking care of her siblings and the household and did not go to school. Hence the insistence of the local in-charge that Asha would get some relief from her hard life in the cultural group. The emphasis in the recruitment speech as remembered by Asha is on learning the skills and mores within the Maoist Movement, something that many rural youths dreamt of. Another former Maoist girl, a Dalit from Rukum, stressed in her account that by being associated with the Maoist Movement she had become more educated (*padheko*), more travelled (*ghumekeo*) and more knowledgeable (*bujheko*) than the village youths who stayed 'behind' in the village.

In Nepal, the notion of knowledge is closely linked to the practice of spatial mobility – in other words, the opportunity to leave the boundaries of one's own valley, often encircled by high hills. Therefore, when referring to knowledgeable persons, people sometimes used the term *sghumekeo* (literally 'one who has travelled') or *hideko* ('one who has walked') – which are applied not only to people who travel beyond the place where they were born, but also to the ones who know. It is not surprising that travelling to different parts of the country – which was a common routine for both cultural workers and political motivation teams – was valued by the Maoist youth as an important part of the educational experience. As in other countries, travelling to new places constitutes a valuable form of learning and an opportunity to discover the world for young people in Nepal. My interviewees told me of their dreams to travel and they had 'a great desire to see the world' (Puran). 'I enjoyed my work in the PLA. I would visit Jumla and other districts. I would never have had a chance to visit all these places if I were not part of the Maoist Movement' (Kedar). For many young people the Maoist Movement became a window into the social worlds beyond their birth villages, especially so for girls, since the notion of *ghumekeo* is highly gendered in the Nepali context.

Through travelling, performing and living together, young people formed strong bonds of friendship and a distinct sense of identity. According to Lave and Wenger (1991: 53), learning in any community of practice is inseparable from identity building and becoming a certain kind of person, 'a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by different systems of relations'. Whilst narrating their wartime experiences, cultural performers placed special emphasis on the nature

of relationships within the Maoist Movement, 'It was giving identity, we were practising every day. This routine gave strength...We had very good relations – we were very close' [Bahadur].

The feeling of belonging to a distinct social group, egalitarian relationships forged with fellow-members⁸ and a new sense of identity were no less important in the processes of learning than the more formal Maoist training. Far from being an exception, this appears to be a general rule within communist groups throughout the world. Leftist movements and their cells have been described as 'a microcosm of a classless society' (MacRae 1961: 190) where all caste, class and gender distinctions are erased. Karuna, a Kham Magar woman in her early 30s, was a performer in a Maoist cultural group during the war. She joined the group at the age of 16, partially influenced by her maternal uncle. Now that the war is over, and the Maoist wartime unions are no longer in operation, what Karuna misses most is the community of friends and the wartime communion with the villagers. In other words, what she remembers most are the relationships forged during the war:

How do you remember the experience of being in the cultural group?
I was very happy then because I could sing the sorrows which befell me, I could be with ordinary people, and I could express my feelings [in songs]. And telling these stories to other people, I felt I could influence the people...

Were there many people during performances?

A lot [with emotion]. And therefore singing and dancing in front of so many people was so enjoyable. From the time I left the work in the cultural group my life turned dark (*andhyaro*) – I was left alone, and this is what I came to realise: walking with friends and enjoying (*ramaune*), going among the people and singing, this is all gone forever.

The narrative makes it clear that the relationships and attachments that were valued by Maoists spanned not only personal ties within the Maoist communities of practice, but also the ties forged with so-called 'ordinary people'. Maoist youth, many of whom left their birth families behind, found

8 See Donner (2009) for a similar observation about the importance of friendship among older generation of Naxalites in India.

a substitute for kin in the Maoist Movement and in the villages where they worked. Bhim, a Dalit political motivator, who had to spend several months in one village in Sindhupalchowk, recalled that the ‘villagers were like a family for me’. This new kind of allegiance stemmed not only from an emotional attachment to the fictive kin but from what MacRae refers to as a feeling of ‘unity with the oppressed’ (1961: 190). Arguably, this gave meaning to the youth’s activity and their struggles, and provided them with moral justification for the many possibilities for transgression inherent to the transformative measures of any revolutionary movement.

Finally, establishing warm relations with the villagers and ‘winning the hearts of the people’ was part of the Maoists’ strategy of ensuring continuing support for their cause among the rural inhabitants of Nepal. ‘We had 25-26 items [which could be anything from poetry to dances] to practise every day. Since our main goal and motivation was to influence people, we felt that much depended on us. We would train very hard every day...’ [Mishra]. The learning processes at war were, thus, closely linked with the revolutionary praxis and with the process of *acting* in the world. One could argue that young people were so receptive to learning, training and acquiring skills because they felt that these were *needed* in the here and no wand that these activities had immediate *practical* value, not only for their own sake but also for the greater mission of which they were a part.

Conclusion

This article has argued that a guerrilla movement, an institution which is often regarded as hostile to the notions of creative work and education, can become a site of learning, of developing competencies and informal literacy practices. Similar to other communist movements around the world, the Maoist Movement in Nepal was self-consciously pedagogical, even if it was pursuing a goal opposite to that of formal schooling, i.e. creating committed revolutionaries. Arguably, in the context of war, and with a lack of opportunities for social mobility, a guerrilla movement can attract young people as an alternative provision for learning and a vehicle for social mobility. The case of Nepal’s Maoist Movement provides an example of how the apparently unfavourable socio-political environment of conflict can foster particular literacy practices, such as reading communist literature, organising discussion groups and holding consciousness-raising campaigns.

While one might claim that these war-time literacy practices were highly ideological and instrumental in character because they were aimed at the creation of a network of committed cadres, I would argue that in the context of Nepal, where books remain scarce in many rural areas, these literacy practices were pivotal in the instilment and democratisation of the culture of reading and writing. This is especially important if we recall that Nepal was a semi-literate society at the start of the war.

The article has also stressed that the educational experience of Maoist youth was not limited to ideological or military training. Situated learning, which happened through increased participation in the Maoist communities of practice, constituted an important part of the learning experience of young people. By living in closely-knit 'underground' communities, by travelling together and actively interacting with the rural population of Nepal, the Maoist youth gained hands-on experience of a world in which social activity, practice and human relationships all served as an important source of knowledge.

Whilst the Maoist vision of learning, with its strong emphasis on practice, worked well during a time of protracted guerrilla warfare, it is questionable whether this vision of learning still holds in a post-conflict environment. One could easily dismiss the war-time learning processes within the Movement as being useless in the aftermath of the conflict. It is especially tempting to do so now that significant numbers of former Maoist guerrillas claim to regret having joined the revolutionary forces, and to have forsaken formal education without gaining much in return. However, one should keep in mind that these statements are made with the hindsight of five years and that in Nepal formal educational degrees also often turn out to be utterly useless.

If we regard education as having only intrinsic and not instrumental value, it would be hard to deny that in many cases the Maoist Movement had a deep impact not only on the skills and practices of youth, such as reading and writing, but also on the value they attached to education. When I visited one of the Maoist cantonments in 2011, I was impressed by the discipline of the former PLA members, who used the wealth of time that was available to them not merely for 'time-pass' but also to get a formal education, which many of them had not been able to complete due to the war. They attended different courses, ranging from computer use to first aid, they revised for exams and, as was the case with the girls with

whom I was stationed, they simply read before going to bed. To me, all of these activities appear to be remarkable signs of how radical political movements can foster a culture of learning rather than violence amongst young people.

Finally, there is a clear indication that the members of some of the Maoist communities of practice which are not discussed in this paper, such as the medical brigades, are much better positioned to use the knowledge and skills they gained during the war in the post-conflict environment (Devkota & Van Teijlingen 2010). In 2011, I met at least five former 'barefoot doctors', all of whom were engaged in the medical trade after the war, either by running medical shops or by working as health-assistants in the village, and in some cases by continuing their medical education at a higher level. However, the situation is not so bright for the former cultural or political workers. In the wake of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, all of the former cultural and political workers were disbanded, except for the cultural team at the central level. Unlike the skills of medical workers, their skills were not easily transferable in the post-conflict context. While most of the female former cultural group members got married and started raising families (the usual lot of revolutionary women after a war), some of the male cultural workers migrated to the Gulf States or became peasant farmers. Yet, I would argue that the situated and intellectual learning of which young people partook during the war has intrinsic value, even when it is not directly relevant or beneficial to their present circumstances. It has changed their personalities forever and forms an important part of their new subjectivities and post-war lives.

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Annex 1: Background of Interviewees

Name (coded)	Age (in 2008)	Age at entry	Caste/Ethnicity	Formal Educn.	District	Community of Practice
Asha	30	14	Dalit	n/a	Rolpa	Cultural Group (CG)
Bhim	26	15	Dalit	Masters	Baglung	Militia, PLA
Karuna	31	16	Magar	n/a	Rolpa	CG, Women's Union
Kedar	23	11	Magar	10cl	Rolpa	<i>Balsanghatan</i> , militia, PLA (medical brigade), YCL
Kiran	28	14	Magar	10cl	Rolpa	YCL, ANNISU-R
Manoj	30	15	Chettri	Masters	Lamjung	ANNISU-R
Mishra	31	17	Magar	10cl	Rolpa	CG, political motivator
Narendra	26	14	Bahun	SLC+2	Nuwakot	ANNISU-R, political motivator, PLA, YCL
Puran	22	12	Magar	BA	Rolpa	<i>Balsangathan</i>
Sahash	26	15	Dalit	Masters	-	ANNISU-R, political motivator
Saroj	26	13	NewarBa-hun	Masters	Tanahu	ANNISU-R, political motivator

Key

Balsanghatan: Children's Organisation

YCL: Young Communist League

ANNISU-R: All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Communist Party Maoist).

CONFERENCE REPORTS

The 13th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, 2013

Fiona McConnell

The Thirteenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS) was held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia on 21-27 July 2013. The Seminar was convened by the Mongolian Academy of Sciences with organisational assistance from Dr Hildegard Diemberger and her team at the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, Cambridge, and was hosted at the National University of Mongolia. This was one of the largest international academic conferences to be held in Mongolia and by far the biggest gathering of Tibet scholars to date. 730 paper abstracts were received for the conference, and just under 500 scholars attended and participated from over 30 countries. A number of senior Tibet scholars noted how unimaginable the scale, diversity and location of this year's event would have been at the first IATS Seminar at the University of Oxford in 1979. Whilst it was encouraging to see strong attendance from scholars from Mongolia and Russia, to the frustration of everyone involved last minute travel restrictions were imposed by the Chinese authorities on many scholars coming from Tibet and China.

Only the second IATS conference to be held in Asia (the first was the 5th Seminar held in Narita, Japan in 1989), it was particularly fitting that Mongolia be the venue in 2013, exactly 100 years after the signing of the Tibeto-Mongol Treaty in 1913. The strong cultural, religious and political connection between Tibet and Mongolia over the centuries was highlighted in the opening plenary speeches, and was a running theme through a number of the panels. These covered topics including Mongolian Buddhist art, connections between Amdo and the Mongols, medicine and astrology in Tibet and Mongolia, and the implications of increasing urbanisation in both regions. A number of papers also reflected on the resurgence of Buddhism within Mongolia in the last two decades. The seminar provided an unprecedented opportunity to strengthen networks between Tibet scholars in Mongolia and across the world, and to forge new institutional and personal connections.

The seminar's opening and closing ceremonies were held at the

imposing Independence Palace, just off Sukhbaatar Square in central Ulaanbaatar. Speakers at the opening plenary session included: Academician B Enkhtuvshin, President of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences; Professor A Galtbayar, Acting President of the National University of Mongolia; His Eminence Khamba Lama Gabju D. Chojiamts, Abbot of Gandan Tegchenling Monastery; and the outgoing IATS President, Professor Charles Ramble. The seminar also saw the launch of the Mongolian Association for Tibetan Studies, and the election of the new IATS President. Professor Tsering Shakya, Canada Research Chair in Religion and Contemporary Society in Asia at the University of British Columbia was elected by IATS members during the closing event, and will serve for a six-year term.

The Mongolian convenors organised a wide range of cultural programmes for the participants including a fantastic series of performances by the Mongolian National Song and Dance Academic Ensemble with throat singing, traditional and contemporary dance, 'long songs' and the impressive National Orchestra of Mongolia. Visits to Gandan monastery and the Bogd Kahn palace museum were also arranged and there were plenty of opportunities for networking and socialising and in city's restaurants and bars in the evenings. Many participants also took the opportunity to travel beyond Ulaanbaatar before or after the conference.

The 63 panels held over six days covered a huge diversity of topics and reflected the current vibrancy of Tibet studies. IATS has a long tradition of providing a forum at which both established and aspiring scholars can present original academic research, and it was particularly encouraging to see large numbers of young scholars attend an IATS seminar for the first time. A key feature of the 13th Seminar was a series of memorial sessions held to honour and celebrate leading Tibetologists who had passed away in recent years. These included: a tribute to André Alexander's contributions to the study of Tibetan architecture, architectural preservation and Tibetan cultural heritage (convened under the aegis of the Committee for the Study of Historic Tibetan Architecture), a memorial session on Luciano Petech's impressive and diverse work on Tibetan history, and a series of sessions celebrating Gene Smith's invaluable work on Tibetan digital texts. The latter was a particularly strong theme in the conference, with sessions on Tibet information technology bringing together both technical specialists and those who use such technologies

'on the ground' within the region. Recurrent across the six days were packed out classrooms in the National University of Mongolia's impressive buildings in central Ulaanbaatar, with participants filling every space to hear paper presentations and contribute to lively discussion. Particularly popular panels included Holly Gayley and Nicole Willock's session on 'The Secular in Tibet', Matthew Kapstein's workshop on Tibetan manuscripts and a series of sessions on 'Post-revolutionary narratives – early Tibetan encounters with the Chinese Communists' organised by Benno Weiner, Françoise Robin, Robert Barnett, with insightful discussant comments from Uradyn Bulag.

As well as featuring panels on research pertaining to Amdo and Kham, and on the Bon tradition, Sakya studies and Nyingma studies, the conference also reflected wider understandings of 'Tibet' as a region with thought-provoking panels on Bhutan and Sikkim, transnational Tibetan identities, and the idea of 'greater Tibet' itself. A series of panels addressed aspects of culture and the arts, from ritual dance and musical traditions to new research on Tibetan folk literature and on the Gesar epic. An emerging theme at this year's event was also a focus on environmental issues, with panels on changing livelihoods on the Tibetan plateau and on nomadic religious traditions, as well as a day-long series of sessions on changing climate in the region which featured anthropologists, religious scholars, ecologists and geographers. Indeed, this reflected the widening range of disciplines engaging with the Tibetan region, diversifying the field beyond its traditional focus on religion, history, linguistics and art. Whilst a number of the panels with participants from Tibet/ China ended up having many gaps in their programmes, for those who were able to travel and participate, the event was a rare opportunity for Tibetan scholars from both sides of the Himalaya to meet and exchange ideas. This exchange was fostered by a number of sessions being conducted entirely in Tibetan.

The success of the seminar was an important reflection of the strength of Tibet studies as a dynamic and growing field of research which is contributing in important ways to a range of broader theoretical and empirical concerns. The event was possible thanks to co-sponsorship in Mongolia from the Centre of Mongolian Buddhists, the National Library, the National Museum of Mongolian History, the National Archives and Gandantegchinlen Monastery. Generous support was also received from

Ev-K2-CNR, Italy, the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit, Cambridge, the Network for University Co-operation Tibet-Norway, the Sigrid Rausing Scholarly Exchange, Cambridge, The Shelley & Donald Rubin Foundation, New York and The Trace Foundation, New York. Bids are currently being considered for the 14th IATS Seminar, to be held in summer 2016. Panel and paper titles can be viewed here: <http://www.iats.info/panels-and-sessions/> and paper abstracts will be available on the IATS website in the future (www.iats.info).

History in Nepalese Chronicles: Report on a Workshop in Nepal (9-22 March 2013)

Astrid Zotter

This workshop, which was made possible by funding from the Excellence Cluster 'Asia and Europe in a Global Context' and the Collaborative Research Centre 'Ritual Dynamics' (both at Heidelberg University), was related to a research project on the so-called 'Wright-chronicle' or *Naipalika-bhupa-vamshavali* (hereafter, 'Vamshavali') currently being carried out at the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg. The workshop was initiated and organised by the members of this project: Manik Bajracharya, Niels Gutschow and Axel Michaels.

In order to develop new approaches to the understanding of South Asian historiography, and especially to the Nepalese chronicles (*vamshavalis*) written in the 19th century, an interdisciplinary study group (in addition to the project staff consisting of the historians Madeleine Herren-Oesch, Bernd Schneidmüller and Gerald Schwedler and the Indologists Jörg Gengnagel and Astrid Zotter) went to Nepal. In eight working sessions, each with a special thematic focus, various places within and around the Kathmandu Valley were jointly visited. Each of these visits went along with a close reading of related text passages from the Vamshavali, which were made available by the above-mentioned project as an edited Nepali text and a new translation. This fieldwork experience was judged especially fruitful by the participants as a way of understanding the textual vision of the valley as a sacred landscape inhabited by gods and humans and making sense of the many textual references to concrete spaces and places, and even buildings and inscriptions.

The tour around the valley started in Patan, where Buddhist monasteries and institutions whose legends figure prominently in the Vamshavali were visited. The Buddhist character of this particular text is most obvious in its opening account of the creation and origin of 'Nepal', i.e. the Kathmandu Valley, as an inhabited space. Locations relevant for the vision of a sacred topography as attested to by this text were inspected in a tour to the Svayambhunath stupa and the Jamacva hill, one of the four mountains surrounding the Valley. Myths about and temples around

Pashupatinath formed the topic of a session at Deopatan. The textual depiction of Pratapa Malla as a paradigmatic king of the late Malla dynasty was discussed during a day in the old city of Kathmandu. At Bhaktapur, some of the many inscriptions quoted verbatim in the Vamshavali were inspected *in situ*. In the text, Mahamandapa, a hill east of Bhaktapur, which was explored on the last of the thematic walks, is associated in the text with the legend of Manjushri.

The final two-day working session at Nagarkot reconsidered the insights gathered at the various places visited and resumed discussions among the participants. The combination of the re-reading of the text, field research in Nepal, and methodological considerations led us to identify points that seemed most relevant for approaching both the Vamshavali under consideration and other South Asian historiographical texts. Methodological thoughts pertaining to the process of editing and translating included the issue of how a new critical edition might enable faithful access to the text for both Nepali and English speaking readers. Regarding the content of the text, it was asked what kind of narrativity we faced in the text and how its alternative concepts of time and space can be adequately understood and mediated in Western academic discourse, in spite of prejudices against non-Western forms of telling the past that still loom large. How does the text and its depiction of Nepalese history relate to earlier works produced in the Kathmandu Valley? Furthermore, the circumstances under which the text came into being were reflected upon. What roles did the different persons involved, such as Munshi Shiv Shankar Singh, Pandit Gunananda, and Daniel Wright play in producing the text, translating it into English and popularising it in the West? What other actors were involved in this project, but remained unacknowledged? How did the so-called 'Wright-chronicle' become the most often reprinted and thus one of the most influential texts on Nepalese history and how does a transcultural approach help us to understand this process? The results of the workshop will be published in a collaboratively written article in due course.

Himalayan Connections: Disciplines, Geographies, Trajectories

Austin Lord, Andrew Quintman and Sara Shneiderman

A workshop on 'Himalayan Connections: Disciplines, Geographies, Trajectories' was held from 9-10 March 2013 at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. The workshop was convened by Andrew Quintman (Religious Studies) and Sara Shneiderman (Anthropology), both Yale faculty members. It brought together a diverse group of researchers and practitioners to consider the interdisciplinary connections that might shape new approaches to Himalayan Studies; to recognise the diversity of perspectives that characterises Himalayan scholarship; to consider the processes of change that affect ideas about the Himalaya; and to initiate dialogue towards future collaboration.

The event began with a series of interrelated questions: How do we as scholars committed to the production of knowledge in and about the Himalayan region see the same spaces differently? How might dialogic and interdisciplinary approaches contribute to the de-centering necessary for new forms of scholarship? Is it possible to reformulate a contemporary Himalayan Studies that elaborates and improves upon past efforts? When does the spatial and temporal scale of study shift – why and what for? How can we best understand the issues that Himalayan peoples face?

'The Himalaya' has been invoked as an analytical category by a range of actors over time, from scientific, social scientific, humanities, and applied backgrounds. A 'Himalayan' framing has long served as a valuable heuristic for understanding the sweep of histories, societies, and environments that connect the region. Yet that same framing has recently emerged as a problematic of scale: focusing on commonalities obscures difference, and thus diversity; focusing on difference obscures commonalities, and thus region-wide affinities. Does using 'Himalaya' as a broad regional signifier invoke an ecological or cultural determinism that de-emphasises the specificity of political history? Or does it legitimately recognise the webs of ecological, economic and cultural connectivity that have bound together complex entities over time? New Himalayan scholarship, oriented toward connectivity and inclusion, empowered by

new collaborations and analytical tools, might learn from its past legacy and ultimately move beyond it. How can new voices thus be included to express greater diversity in Himalayan Studies?

Himalayan Connections considered the nature of these transformations through six themed panels: Disciplinary Trajectories; Scales of Connectivity; Identities; Everyday Religion and the Environment; Visual and Literary Representations; and States and Borders. Each panel consisted of three or four speakers and a discussant. Presenters were invited to respond to a set of framing questions, drawing upon the empirical content of their research in and about the Himalaya, as well as their personal reflections on the experience of conducting it over time. Guiding questions included: How has the study of the Himalaya been guided by disciplinary concerns; how have those concerns changed over time? How has the Himalaya been mapped across disciplines and over time? How has the notion of 'Himalayan identity,' broadly defined, been understood across the disciplines? What do the Himalaya and its people teach us about the study of everyday or lived religion? What do we see when we look at the Himalaya? What kinds of strategies and techniques have people in the Himalaya used over time to represent themselves, their aspirations, beliefs, identities, etc? How have different disciplines recognised, or not recognised, the importance of political histories for understanding dynamics of change across the Himalaya? Is there value in considering an unbounded trans-regional Himalaya as a unit of analysis; what is gained or lost?

Responses to these questions were as diverse as the participants, who came from a broad range of disciplinary backgrounds, including Anthropology, Art History, Conservation Biology, Demography, Environmental Studies, Geography, History, Literature, Political Science, and Religious Studies. They have worked in equally varied corners of the Himalayan region, ranging across Pakistan, China, India, Nepal and Bhutan, as well as the Tibetan cultural and historical worlds that traverse these contemporary nation-states.

The workshop was punctuated by a keynote panel that brought together Charles Ramble (EPHE-Paris) and James Scott (Yale University) to reflect on the links between studies of the Himalaya and Asian Studies writ large. Both speakers emphasised that the scope of Himalayan Studies is defined by the questions asked, rather than any political or biophysical

boundaries. The co-evolution of borders and border crossings is an extremely important set of processes within the Himalayan region, and careful empirical attention to these dynamics in the Himalaya can yield important insights for broader discussions of state formation, boundary dynamics, and the ritual production of power in Asian Studies and beyond.

The conference built upon Yale University's historical connections and trajectories in the Himalayan region. These begin with personal relationships to the Kings of Nepal and Sikkim through Yale alumni on official business in the region in the 1940s and 50s, and through the development of Himalayan materials in the libraries and archives across Yale. Established in 2011, the Yale Himalaya Initiative has built upon this legacy, forging connections between faculty working across the university, the disciplines, and various subregions of the Himalaya. Yale's engagement in the Himalayan world continues to expand through contemporary partnerships between units such as the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, the School of Public Health, and the departments of Anthropology and Religious Studies, with colleagues and institutions in the region. Such connections have been fostered by a series of summer workshops held in the Himalaya (Dehradun, India in 2011; Kathmandu, Nepal in 2012; and Thimphu, Bhutan in 2013), which have generated a set of ongoing conversations and collaborations that complement those emerging from the Himalayan Connections workshop at Yale.

A full conference report and the video proceedings of the event will be published online at: <http://himalayanconnections2013.common.yale.edu/>.

For further information about the Yale Himalaya Initiative see: himalaya.yale.edu

Himalayan Connections workshop: List of participants

Elizabeth Allison	California Institute of Integral Studies
Ken Bauer	Dartmouth College
Robert Barnett	Columbia University
Kamal Bawa	University of Massachusetts, Boston
Gunnel Cederlof	Uppsala University
Geoff Childs	Washington University, St Louis
Anil Chitrakar	Himalayan Climate Initiative
Gina Drew	The New School
Paul Draghi	Yale University

David Germano	University of Virginia
David Holmberg	Cornell University
Shafqat Hussain	Trinity College
Michael Hutt	School of Oriental and African Studies
Mahendra Lama	Jawaharlal Nehru University
Mahendra Lawoti	Western Michigan University
Todd Lewis	College of the Holy Cross
Rob Linrothe	Northwestern University
Kathryn March	Cornell University
Saul Mullard	EPHE, Sorbonne
Peter Perdue	Yale University
Andrew Quintman	Yale University
Charles Ramble	EPHE, Sorbonne
Geoffrey Samuel	Cardiff University
William (Bo) Sax	Heidelberg University
Kurtis Schaeffer	University of Virginia
James Scott	Yale University
Tsering Shakya	University of British Columbia
Eklabya Sharma	ICIMOD
Sara Shneiderman	Yale University
Kalyanakrishnan 'Shivi'	Yale University
Sivaramakrishnan	
Joëlle Smadja	CNRS, Paris
Jeremey Spoon	Portland State University
Mark Turin	Yale University
Chris Vasantkumar	Hamilton College
Mimi Yiengpruksawan	Yale University
David Zurick	Eastern Kentucky University

The 16th Conference of the International Association for Ladakh Studies

Martijn van Beek

About sixty scholars from around the world met at the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg from 17-20 April to discuss recent research on Ladakh. The conference was organised by the Department of Geography at the SAI, the Heidelberg Center for Environment (HCE) and the International Association for Ladakh Studies (IALS). With a broad overarching theme, 'Society and Environment in Ladakh: Historical perspectives and recent dynamics', papers presented at the conference covered a wide range of topics, including history, political developments, cultural and climate change, public health, identity, the history of art and architecture, Buddhist studies, water management and livelihoods. The Ladakhi participants included representatives from local NGOs, the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Council (LAHDC) Leh, and the Sonam Norbu Memorial (SNM) Hospital, as well as independent scholars. A particularly encouraging sign was the participation by a number of Ladakhi research students from Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) and Jammu University.

After a welcome address by Prof. Dr. Hans Harder, the Executive Director of the South Asia Institute at Heidelberg University, the IALS President John Bray and Dr Juliane Dame from the local organising committee gave introductory speeches. The sessions on the first day focused on urban development, climate change and water management, political change in a borderland region and livelihood strategies. Prof. Dr. Marcus Nüsser, head of the Department of Geography at SAI, then concluded the day's programme with a keynote presentation entitled 'Landscape Changes on a Himalayan Scale'. The day concluded with a reception at the South Asia Institute.

Day Two included sessions on Buddhist studies, historical perspectives, cultural change, identity and belonging, and ended with a visit to Heidelberg and its surroundings, including a local ecological micro-brewery, Klosterhof Neuburg. Here participants received a short introduction to the art of brewing and had the opportunity to taste the local brew before eating dinner at the brewery's restaurant.

Day Three comprised sessions on historical perspectives, history of art and architecture, and Ladakh and its neighbouring mountain regions. The Biennial General Meeting of the Association took place after the final session, and the day concluded with a conference buffet dinner at the SAI.

Sessions on Day Four included cultural change and contemporary society, health and society, and language and culture, as well as a closing ceremony and group photo opportunity.

Given the very wide range of topics and the diverse disciplinary and professional backgrounds of the more than eighty registered participants, it is difficult to draw any simple conclusions or discern any clear trend in Ladakh studies as a whole. The emergence of younger Ladakhi scholars, such as Konchok Paldan (JNU), Stanzin Namgail (Jammu University), Sumera Shafi (JNU) and Dr Padma Dolma (SNM Hospital), is arguably among the most important developments, especially as they include talented researchers pursuing higher degrees in the humanities and social sciences who are conducting research on issues that are vigorously debated in Ladakh itself.

Among the presentations that generated the most vigorous debate was one in the context of the second of two exceptionally rich sessions on the history of art and architecture. Rosario Rizzi presented on the radical reconstruction work by the organization Stupa Onlus on historical religious structures in Ladakh, such as the so-called Kanishka chorten in Zangskar. Images of the result of the work done on this chorten and elsewhere in collaboration with local people provoked strong reactions from some participants, particularly those with a professional interest in art history and archaeology. As one would expect, discussions did not lead to agreement, but they helped bring out some of the profound difficulties involved in working in this field.

Presentations by Andrea Butcher on the contemporary use of ritual strategies to prevent natural disasters, and by Elizabeth Williams-Ørberg and Sumera Shafi on Buddhism and Islam, respectively, as lived religions among Ladakhi students based outside Ladakh, illustrated the complexities of religious identity and practice among Ladakhis. Although it is a well-worn cliché that Ladakh is undergoing rapid change, papers by Radhika Gupta on marriage strategies in Kargil, and the panel on health and society, which included presentations on perceptions of health care quality by Jennifer Aengst, on suicide by Dr. Iqbal Ahmad, on obstetrics

and neonatal care at the Leh hospital by Kim Gutschow and Dr Padma Dolma, and on changing perceptions of disability in Ladakh by Karola Woods, illustrated in different ways the depth and pace of change and its profound impact on everyday lives in Ladakh.

Overall, the quality of papers and the research they reported was encouragingly high, discussions were characterised by openness and, at times, strong opinions. Once again the IALS, now into its fourth decade, has proved itself to be a relevant network that can bring together high-quality scholarship from the sciences and humanities, passionate engagement, and a shared concern about what is going on in the Western Himalaya. The IALS hopes to hold its 17th conference in Kargil in 2015.

The full programme and abstracts of papers presented at the 16th IALS Conference can be found at the website of the IALS: www.ladakhstudies.org

Development Challenges in Bhutan

Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt and Line Kikkenborg

In many respects Bhutan is a showcase in South Asia. It is the only South Asian country which enjoys a sustained high level of economic growth, at an average of 8.7% per year, and its level of social service delivery is admired all over the developing world. Despite these positive factors, this small country remains vulnerable, with growing inequality and unemployment.

To address some of these challenges, Aalborg University hosted an international workshop in Copenhagen on 29-30 May 2013. The intention was to highlight some of the key challenges Bhutan is facing, including issues related to policy-making in education and learning, health promotion, Gross National Happiness (GNH), e-learning (ICT), democracy and refugee issues. The aim was to create an interdisciplinary and critical debate involving both Danish and Bhutanese researchers. It was co-financed by the Danish development agency, Danida, and linked to a 10 million Danish Kroner ODA project which aspires to create a critical mass of Bhutanese doctoral candidates and to link researchers in a variety of collaborative research projects.

Danida has been one of the main donors in Bhutan for a number of years. It has provided aid for the social sector and has been a crucial partner in Bhutan's achievements in the fields of education and health. Dr. Bjørn Melgaard explained the background of Danida's ODA activities under the heading 'Danish development Assistance to Bhutan: the early years and how it developed'. He noted that Bhutan's development trajectory is unique as it is overtaking many other developing countries regarding health improvement. He furthermore mentioned that the introduction of democracy in Bhutan is new but also uncertain which direction it may take. Development challenges in Bhutan are becoming more alike to those in other countries, like youth unemployment and growing inequality.

The keynote was delivered by Michael Hutt of SOAS, University of London, with the title: 'Sociocultural and political developments in Bhutan since 1990: reflections from a distance'. The presentation gave a

comparative perspective on the historical and contemporary experiences of Bhutan and Nepal, noting that both governments have had to deal with similar problems, including domestic political opposition and relationships with neighbouring countries. He noted the existence of a consensus in Bhutan regarding a single national identity, but argued that there was a direct causal link between national redefinition and the flight of refugees, and also with democracy and GNH. Professor Hutt stressed that the government would not have been able to begin a democratization project if the demographic had not first been changed, and that many scholars working within Bhutan were still silently avoiding contentious subjects; he noted this as one of the major differences between scholarship on Bhutan and Nepal.

The rest of the programme dwelled on a number of topics. In his presentation on 'Ethno-nationalism, education and health policy in Bhutan', Johannes Dragsbaek Schmidt spoke about a number of contradictions within Bhutan's development model: dependency through self-reliance; a conservative top-down policy-making approach; an absence of civil society; and a lack of links between horizontal and vertical policy. He noted that many countries have a universal right to health and education enshrined in their constitutions, but that this is often not implemented. However, in Bhutan it could not have been realised to such an impressive degree without a dependency on aid. This came first and foremost from India, which regards Bhutan as a strategic asset on its border with China.

Karma Utha and Kurt D. Keller gave a presentation titled 'Continuous assessment in Bhutan: status and challenges'. The term 'continuous assessment' is used very loosely in Bhutan. One of the purposes of introducing continuous assessment was to bring changes and enhance student orientation. The preliminary findings from their research show that there is minimal practice of formative assessment; practice of peer-assessment is not well developed; practices of self-assessment are missing; and feedback in the form of comments is questionable.

Starting with an assertion that the educational sector must be regarded as a key institution for the maintenance and development of GNH, Nandu Giri and Kurt D. Keller's paper, 'Quality of education in the perspective of happiness', concentrated on the notion of happiness in Buddhism and western philosophy and related this to school pedagogics and politics in Bhutan. Yezer and Johannes D. Schmidt's presentation

'Free education in Bhutan: is it sustainable?' discussed the concept of free education, the paradox of promoting private schools and the need for a sustainable financial plan for the funding of free education.

The rest of the programme included presentations on 'Action research as an asset within development strategy for universities, with special reference to Bhutan' (Søren Willert), 'Meaningful integration of ICT for good governance in Bhutan' (Devi Bhakta Suberi), 'Media ecologies in rural Bhutan: where do the community information centres come in?' (Norbert Wildermuth), 'Educating towards happiness' (Signe Ravn Højgaard), 'Lifelong learning and Gross National Happiness - a shared vision?' (Tara S. Adler), 'Exploring health-promotion and policy synergies in education in Bhutan' (Yeze, Johannes D. Schmidt and Line K. Christensen), 'A User-centered Approach to redesigning teaching and learning with ICT in Samtse College of Education, Bhutan' (Kinley, M. Georgsen and P.-O. Zander), 'Pedagogical discourse in Bhutanese school system' (Karma Utha and Hanne D. Keller), and 'Structural model of primary and community school for efficient utilization of resources in Bhutan' (Sonam Wangmo and Tashi Dorji).

Report on the Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya 2013

Shaileshwori Sharma

The second edition of the Annual Kathmandu Conference on Nepal and the Himalaya was held in Kathmandu from 24 to 26 July 2013. Co-hosted by Social Science Baha (SSB), the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies (ANHS) and Britain-Nepal Academic Council (BNAC), the conference saw 21 papers presented in eight panels over three days, two keynote presentations and a panel discussion.

The first day of the conference began with opening remarks from the Chair of Social Science Baha, Nirmal Man Tuladhar. The inaugural panel discussed the historical epochs in Nepal and their impact on various aspects of development. The first paper, by Sudhindra Sharma (Interdisciplinary Analysts) and Bandana Gyawali Gautam (University of Helsinki), looked into development during the Rana period, especially in terms of forestry management and domestic water supply. Lok Ranjan Parajuli's (Martin Chautari) paper also explored the Rana regime's 'policy turnaround' with the introduction of what was called Basic Education, which itself was replaced by 'modern education' with the 1951 political change. The third paper, by Thomas Robertson (Worcester Polytechnic Institute), examined, first, the epidemiology, entomology, ecology and geography of malaria, and then the impact of malaria on Nepal's history in addition to the ways in which Nepalis influenced the disease before efforts to eradicate malaria began in the 1950s.

The second panel had an exclusive focus on Nepali youth. Andrea Kölbl (University of Oxford) looked at the level of involvement of educated Nepali youth in civic activities. Shrochis Karki (University of Oxford) gave an overview of a school in the outskirts of Lalitpur district with an exemplary record in the SLC examination and outlined the possible reasons behind the success. Finally, Amanda Snellinger (University of Oxford) analysed the process leading to the formulation of Nepal's National Youth Policy in 2010. The third panel of the day had two papers focusing loosely on the issue of labour. Christie Lai Ming Lam (Osaka University) inspected changes in gender relations among Rana Tharus of Far-Western Nepal in

the context of the migration of male members for labour and its impact on the status of women. The paper by Sanjay Sharma (Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility) looked more at the political economy of migration by examining the causes for migration vis-à-vis 'Rational Choice Theory'.

The first day concluded with a keynote presentation by Michael Hutt (SOAS) on 'Five Nepali Novels'. He analysed five Nepali novels published between 2005 and 2010: Narayan Wagle's *Palpasa Café*, Narayan Dhakal's *Pretakalpa*, and Krishna Dharabasi's *Radha*, Yug Pathak's *Urgenko Ghoda* and Buddhisagar Chapagain's *Karnali Blues*. The presentation, moderated by Abhi Subedi (Tribhuvan University), briefly summarised the aforementioned books, charted the trajectory of the political conflict through social changes as reflected in the writings, and finally questioned if, through its expanded readership, Nepali literature had finally become 'popular'.

The second day began with a panel examining the community. Sudeep Jana Thing (Curtin University) and Christopher Butler (University of California Santa Cruz) looked at the impacts on a community in terms of usage of natural resources while Soma Kumari Rana and Shiva Kumar Shrestha's (SSMP/HELVETAS) paper touched upon the opportunities and challenges of community mobilisation in the field of agriculture. The next panel focused on Nepali culture. Gerard Toffin's (CNRS) paper provided a macro perspective of changes in the caste system in post-conflict Nepal. The second paper by Kanako Nakagawa (Kwansei Gakuin University) focused on a sub-caste of the Newars, the Khadgis, and examined their lifestyle in connection to their traditional occupations as butchers. Ajaya N. Mali (Nepā School of Social Sciences and Humanities) looked at modern life in Kathmandu using Henri Lefebvre's interpretation of alienation and the festival. The final panel of the day picked on diverse characteristics of conflict. Khem R. Shreesh and Sudhindra Sharma's (Interdisciplinary Analysts) paper examined various facets of Nepal's post-conflict political economy, including demographic characteristics, foreign employment and remittance, foreign trade and GDP, in relation to Paul Collier's concept of conflict traps. The second presentation, by Sujeet K. Karn (University of Hull), took on the paradigm of grief resulting from death and bereavement as a direct result of the decade-long civil conflict in Nepal.

The second keynote of the conference was by Mahendra Lawoti (Western Michigan University) on 'Democracy in Trouble? Political Elite's Attitude and Behaviour and Regime Instability in Nepal' and moderated

by Hira Vishwakarma (well-known Dalit activist). The lecture investigated the attitudes of the Nepali elite with regard to the consolidation of democracy in Nepal. Based on structured interviews with 101 (out of 265) legislators conducted in 2000, the presentation also looked at the variables that could have an impact upon tolerance, and, subsequently, the sustenance of democracy in Nepal.

The first panel on the third day centred on the theme of collective identity in the varied contexts of ethnicity, with Pauline Limbu placing kipat within the Limbuwan movement, and Gregory Pierce's (Lund University) paper examining the meanings of being a Dolpo resident. The last panel of the conference looked at diverse women's issues. Joanna Morrison (University College London), Aman Sen and Rita Thapa (Mother and Infant Research Activities) took up women's role in improving neonatal health of the mother and the new-born in Dhanusha and Makwanpur districts. Vikas Paudel (Mother and Infant Research Activities) looked at the impact of nutritional behaviour on women's health in Dhanusha, and, finally, Dhruva B. Khatri (Prithvi Narayan Campus) presented a Pokhara-based case study about violence against women. Michael Hutt, Chair of the Britain-Nepal Academic Council, provided the concluding remarks on behalf of the organisers.

The last event of the conference was a panel discussion on the 'Strategic Plan for the Proposed Social Science Research Council in Nepal' by Pitamber Sharma, Bal Gopal Baidya and Dwarika Nath Dhungel. The lead author of the report, Pitamber Sharma, made a presentation summarising the report, which consisted of a brief overview of the status of social sciences in Nepal, the overall context for the need for such a council, and a comparative analysis based on practices and lessons learnt from other countries around the world. Sharma then elaborated on the various facets of the strategic plan for the formation of this 'apex institution devoted to the promotion and support of quality research in the social sciences'. The commentators, Kathryn S. March (Columbia University) and Pratyoush Onta (Martin Chautari), spoke along the lines for the proposed SSRC to limit token political participation, and explore possibilities of delegating to and/or collaborating with existing institutions. David Gellner (University of Oxford) moderated the discussions that followed.

Overall, the conference brought together a mix of national and international scholars, working on various themes connected to Nepal. This

Conference Reports

annual event is gradually providing a crucial platform for not just the dissemination of research papers but also in creating an understanding of the issues that are currently relevant and being investigated by various researchers.

Panel, paper titles and abstracts from the conference can be viewed at: soscbaha.org/conference-2013/kac2013.html

OBITUARY

George Patterson (1920-2012)

Roger Croston

George Neilson Patterson, who has died aged 92, was a Scottish medical missionary who crossed the Himalaya in 1949 to warn the outside world of China's intention to invade Tibet. Unable to return after the Chinese takeover, Patterson became a special correspondent for the British newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*. During the first ten years of the Chinese occupation, 'Patterson of Tibet', as he became known, did more than any other to keep the world informed of the repression inflicted on the Tibetans, and he was indefatigable in trying to encourage international support for their cause.

One of three children of a strongly socialist coal miner, Patterson was born in Redding, Falkirk, Scotland on 19 August 1920 and raised in nearby Laurieston as a member of the strict Plymouth Brethren. In his memoir, *God's Fool* (1956), he recalled how, at the age of 17 when he was seriously ill, he had felt confronted by a Dostoyevskian choice between God and Marx. He decided to dedicate himself to God and to obey commands which, Patterson believed, God had revealed directly to him.

After leaving school aged 13, Patterson was apprenticed to the local Carron Engineering Co. where he worked on weapons production throughout World War Two. At war's end, when reading Sven Hedin's book *Trans-Himalaya*, he felt God instructing him to go to Tibet. Penniless, because he had donated all his savings to charity, he studied at the Missionary School of Medicine, London. In 1946 he and Geoffrey Bull, a fellow member of the Brethren, travelled to Shanghai, and then to the Sino-Tibetan border town of Tatsienlu (Kangting), whence they trekked westwards for a month with their belongings on 24 mules, to Poteu, in the Kham province of Tibet. There they decided to build a hospital and mission station. The province at the time was a no-man's land likened by Patterson to the Wild West. Here he chanced on a Khampa chieftain and merchant, born of Lhasa nobility, Topgyay Pangdatshang, a man surprisingly well versed in Karl Marx's dialectical materialism. He ran his own army and had done his utmost to wrench a measure of independence from the corrupt Kuomintang government.

Patterson mastered the Khampa language and customs and was befriended by Topgyay. At this time, Topgyay was planning a second major revolt, following a failed attempt in 1934, to overthrow the feudal central Tibetan government in Lhasa and replace it with a modernising, socialist secular regime, which would retain the Dalai Lama as religious but not temporal head.

Nobody, meanwhile, had anticipated the massing of the People's Liberation Army on the Sino-Tibetan border. When the communists demanded co-operation, in late 1949, Topgyay, who was determined to resist invasion, asked Patterson to make a perilous winter journey to India to seek military aid, supplies and international protection; a journey he intended making anyway in order to replenish his medical supplies for the Khampas' planned rebellious march on Lhasa. Furthermore, when 'the voice of God' told him that he should do what he could to help, Patterson felt he had no choice.

Although it was winter, he chose a route to Sadiyah, in northern Assam, a route along which no Westerner had travelled before and one that even Tibetans feared to cross. Leaving Geoffrey Bull behind in Poteu, he and three Tibetan soldiers made the three-month, 400-mile journey on horseback. Eventually arriving in Calcutta in March 1950, Patterson went to the British High Commission to relate his story, only to be met with blank stares and sniggers. He persisted and finally managed to meet the First Secretary who, taking him seriously, introduced him to intelligence officials from Britain, America and India; but at the height of the Korean War the requests for help from Topgyay (whom the British mistrusted anyway) were turned down.

Patterson decided to return to eastern Tibet, but a devastating earthquake, illness and the early arrival of the monsoon kept him in India while the communist invasion began in October. Instead, Patterson settled near to Tibet's southern border with India, where he travelled between the Indian hill stations of Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Before long he started sending regular reports to the *Daily Telegraph* of terrible events taking place in Tibet, as related by the refugees fleeing into India.

Meanwhile, Bull was captured and imprisoned as a suspected spy. Held in solitary confinement he underwent 're-education' and 'thought reform'. His faith in God, however, kept him from breakdown, and three

years later he was released to the British authorities in Hong Kong. He published his story in *When Iron Gates Yield* in 1955.

In 1951, Patterson was asked by Topgyay's brother, Yangpel Pangdatshang, (Tibet's Minister of Trade), and the Dalai Lama's family, to help plot the Dalai Lama's escape into exile from southern Tibet. (The fact that Yangpel's two equally powerful brothers, Topgyay and Rapga, were plotting the overthrow of his government in Lhasa indicates the intricate complexity of Tibetan politics at that time). The Dalai Lama, only 16 years old, intended to flee but yielded to entreaties that he should consult the state oracle, who twice told him to return to Lhasa; thus, the planned escape was aborted. Four years later, however, Patterson helped the Dalai Lama's elder brother, Thubten Norbu, to escape to America.

During the 1950s, Patterson acted as a covert, unpaid messenger between the American administration and representatives of the Dalai Lama, whom the Americans were prepared to recognise as head of an 'autonomous Tibet'. Patterson warned the American negotiators that the Tibetan language made no distinction between the concepts of 'autonomy' and 'independence'. Consequentially, after the Dalai Lama actually fled in 1959, following a massive rebellion in Lhasa, there was widespread disappointment among Tibetan exiles when it became clear that western promises of support meant little in practice.

In his reports for the *Telegraph* and other publications, Patterson described the 'sullen, uncooperative, still rebellious populace and a ruthless Chinese occupation army determined to wipe out the Tibetan race by mass killings, transportation to forced labour camps, removal of thousands of children to China and confiscation of all wealth and property'. He was the first to tell the world about the abortive Lhasa uprising of 1959 and he chronicled the subsequent period of ruthless suppression by the Chinese, which was met by reckless acts of defiance by individual Tibetans.

On 17 March 1959, the Indian Government warned that it would be 'constrained to interdict his residence' if he did not stop sending 'misleading and exaggerated' reports. Nehru accused him of accepting 'bazaar rumours' as facts and stated 'there is no violence in Tibet.' Later that day, however, there was pandemonium in the Indian Parliament when Nehru was forced to announce that 'fighting had broken out in Lhasa and the Indian consulate was damaged by shelling.' Patterson's reports, in 1959

and 1960, of a build-up of Chinese troops along the Indian border were a factor that led to India hardening her stance towards China.

In 1961, Patterson returned to Britain, where he had a BBC radio programme series 'Asian Affairs in The British Press', and worked as a commentator and book reviewer. He became a Liberal candidate for the Edinburgh (West) constituency for the Westminster Parliament, but resigned without contesting an election. With David Astor, editor of the *Observer*, and others, he helped establish and became the first director of the 'International Committee for The Study of Group Rights', now 'Minority Rights Group International' (MRG), an organisation working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious, linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples.

In 1953, Patterson married a surgeon, Margaret 'Meg' Ingram, a member of The Church of Scotland and medical missionary to whom he had been introduced in Kalimpong. In 1964, they moved to Hong Kong where she was appointed surgeon-in-charge at Tung Wah Hospital. For the next nine years, Patterson used Hong Kong as a base for travelling throughout Asia, writing and broadcasting for regional and international media.

In 1964, Patterson, the British documentary film-maker Adrian Cowell and the cameraman Chris Menges, became the first Westerners to cross the border between Nepal and Tibet with the Khampa armed resistance. Claiming that they wanted to film scenes of Buddhist life, Patterson bluffed the team's way into the remote Dzum valley, a restricted area in northern Nepal where a small detachment of the guerrilla force was based. They travelled over a 20,000 foot pass into Tibet where they captured dramatic footage of a Khampa guerrilla attack on a Chinese convoy. Word got back to the CIA, who, furious at the lapse in security, sent orders that they be intercepted and relieved of their film before they could leave Nepal. However, Patterson was one step ahead and by the time the Nepalese police caught them, the film had already been sent on: all the authorities seized was a recording of a Himalayan cuckoo. Cowell's documentary 'Raid into Tibet' caused a sensation when it was shown on British television in 1966, winning the *Prix Italia* and providing Western audiences with the first glimpse of the continuing violent resistance to the Chinese occupation.

While in Hong Kong, Patterson worked for Radio Hong Kong and Rediffusion Television, scriptwriting and presenting current affairs

programmes. In 1966, he helped create and edit the commercial journal *Enterprise* for the Hong Kong Trade Development Corporation.

Patterson's wife, meanwhile, had discovered that electro-acupuncture analgesia (as applied for post-surgical pain control), could also significantly ameliorate the symptoms of opiate withdrawal. In 1973, the Pattersons returned to London so that she could pursue clinical and scientific investigation into the technique. Together, based at her clinic in Harley Street, they developed Neuro Electric Therapy (NET), into an internationally recognised drug treatment programme, publishing numerous articles and books. During the 1970s and 1980s, Meg Patterson undertook much research in the USA, where her family lived (George at this time acting as house keeper) and was credited with helping rock stars such as Eric Clapton, Keith Moon and Pete Townsend come off drugs. The Pattersons argued that psychiatrists failed to resolve the drug problem because they could not address spiritual factors involved in addiction, while ecclesiastics failed because they could not tackle political and social factors. Alongside the physical treatment, therefore, they offered spiritual counselling.

Patterson was the author of thirty books covering the story of Tibet and his own involvement with its liberation struggle, the purposes of God and the problem of drug addiction. Titles include *Tibetan Journey* (1954), *Gods Fool* (1956), *Up and Down Asia* (1958), *Tragic Destiny* (1959), *Tibet in Revolt* (1960), *Peking versus Delhi* (1963), *The Unquiet Frontier: Border tensions in the Sino-Soviet conflict* (1966), *Christianity in Communist China* (1969), *A Fool at Forty* (1970), *The China Paradox: Christ versus Marx* (1990), *Requiem for Tibet* (1990).

He returned once to Tibet, visiting Lhasa for the first time in 1987, as an adviser to a proposed Hollywood film about himself. However, to his disappointment, this metamorphosed into 'Seven Years in Tibet' – the story of Heinrich Harrer.

In 1999, Meg Patterson suffered a debilitating stroke and in 2001 she and George returned to Scotland and settled in the Auchlochan Trust, a retirement community for clergy and associates, in Lesmahagow near Glasgow. Meg died there in 2002. George continued to promote and take interest in her Neuro Electric Therapy until his life's end.

In recent years Patterson was pleased to see major reforms in China and the efforts made throughout Tibet to restore and preserve the country's

ancient culture. In 2007, he met Chinese academics from Beijing and spent three days with them talking about his role in Tibetan affairs. The discussions pleased him because of their frank, open and friendly honesty.

In 2011, aged 90, Patterson, 'the bearded Khamba' was presented with the Light of Truth Award by the International Campaign for Tibet (earlier recipients included Desmond Tutu and Vaclav Havel). On hearing that he had died, the Dalai Lama sent a personal message to Patterson's family expressing his sadness and gratitude for his work to raise awareness of the plight of the Tibetan people. George Patterson is survived by two sons and a daughter.

BOOK REVIEWS

Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture. Proceedings of the Golden Jubilee Conference of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok, 2008

edited by Alex McKay and Anna Balikci-Denjongpa.

Gangtok: Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, 2011.

Volume I: Tibet and the Himalaya, 343 pages, 43 colour photos;

Volume II: The Sikkim Papers, 322 pages, 28 black & white photos, 57 colour photos.

ISBN 97 881 922261 0 1; ISBN 978 81 922261 1 8. Rs. 1000.

Reviewed by Guntram Hazod and Mélanie Vandenhelsken

These two volumes are the proceedings of the conference *Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture* that was held in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (NIT) in Gangtok in October 2008. More than seventy scholars from Asia and from the West participated in this international meeting, which was convened by Alex McKay and presided over by the late Gene Smith.

The programme of the NIT, which was initially conceived to unite research and the preservation of cultural heritage, has been significantly enhanced in the last ten years, as the focus on Buddhist and Tibetan Studies increasingly came to include regional research on Sikkim. The institution thus also reflects the state's historical position as an important cultural crossover within the Himalayan region. In this sense, one may see the conference's overall title, 'Buddhist Himalaya', as being somewhat restrictive, since it does not cover the factor of religious variety, which (together with ethnic and linguistic plurality) distinguishes Sikkim and the Himalaya in general. In fact, a number of contributions (not only in the 'Sikkim Papers' volume) deal with the realities of a non-Buddhist Himalaya.

It is a little confusing that the preface and acknowledgments of volume I mention three volumes whereas actually only two exist. Of the seventy conference papers originally presented, 46 were accepted as contributions for the present publication. The volumes include an introduction by the editors and a list of the authors, complete with biographical details, research focus and recent publications. Apart from a few typos, there are

some formal inconsistencies, such as the unusual, although acceptable, choice of leaving the rendering of Sanskrit and Tibetan words (either phonetically or transliterated) up to individual authors. However, it should have at least been ensured that the articles are internally consistent in this respect, which is not always the case, including in the introduction (e.g., Vol I, p. 6; pp. 151-155).

The first volume contains 23 articles dealing with aspects of Tibetan history and culture that relate to Himalayan border regions in varying degrees. In his introduction, Alex McKay offers a good overview of the individual papers, which are thematically, regionally and chronologically widely spread. These are, in order of appearance: David Germano with a discourse on issues concerning academic engagement with Tibet; Karma Phuntsho on the significance of the medium of the 'book' in the context of traditional Tibetan Buddhist identity construction. This is followed by five Bhutan-related contributions, which focus on linguistics, anthropology, art and material culture and contemporary political issues (authored respectively by Lungtaen Gyatso, Yongten Dargye, Ngawang Jamtsho, Akiko Ueda and Françoise Pommaret). Susanne von der Heide offers a report about her and the late Dzongsar Ngari Thingo Rinpoche's investigations of the remarkable Buddhist cave temple sites of Mentsün Lhakhang and Dagrangjang in Upper Mustang; this is followed by Theresia Hofer's biographical account of a twentieth century female Tibetan medical doctor, a study connected with (the still little observed) topic of gender in the context of Tibetan medical traditions.

The ecology-related contribution of Rhyddhi Chakraborty and Chandra Chakraborty compares the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra with the Deep Ecology platform of Norwegian philosopher Arne Naes to propose an environmental approach to the fragile eco-system of the Himalaya, a conception that is linked to a philosophically postulated non-duality between humans and their environment. In our opinion, this study lacks a closer examination of the theoretical background and feasibility of such an approach, which could be improved by recourse to current anthropological debates on the links between culture and the environment. Ronald Davidson's contribution points to the influence of regional environments in the formation of Tantric Buddhism in the Himalayan regions, and the biogeographical model he introduces in this connection is helpful in explaining the diversity of Tantric traditions. Cakrasamvara and Syncretism in

the religious landscapes of the Western Himalayas is the subject of Andrea Loseries' contribution. Her claim that the NW Himalaya and West Tibet in general constitute 'a whirlpool of spiritual layers going back far into prehistoric times, where Shaivite traditions, Bon and Svastika Bon as well as Buddhist Tantra were and are practised in symbiosis' (p. 153) seems somewhat anachronistic. In the case of Svastika Bon, for example, it has been established that it is not an invention of prehistoric times; if Bon (in 'Bon and Svastika Bon') is intended here as the name of a religion that predates the appearance of Buddhism in Tibet, it would be an assumption that is rather questionable. Indeed, experts such as Henk Blazer see no real evidence for this; his paper in this volume (an analysis of the narratives round the shifting realm of Miyül Kyithing (*Miyi yul Skyi(d) mthing*)) is part of a series of systematic investigations of the narrative construction of the historical identity of Bon. He concludes that the formative phase of Bon religion in the 10-11th centuries saw the acquisition of narrative elements from the 'Tibetan heartland' (the 'heartland of Bon', as he calls it; i.e. *Miyi yul Skyi mthing*), the earliest textual evidence of which usually appears to be closely associated with the pre-Buddhist (esp. mortuary) 'rituals of *gshen* and *bon*'. Both the origin of the archetypical *miyül* (*myi yul*) and that of the Bon religion point to Central Tibet, and the traditional claim of Bon provenance in the West (Zhangzhung, or Tazig) thus represents a later projection. We are curious how these new (and in some respects controversial) insights on Bon (but also on questions such as what is Zhangzhung?) will continue to develop in the author's future works.

The volume continues with David Holmberg's insightful article on non-monastic Buddhism and identity in contemporary western Tamang areas. No one else has provided more systematic historical text-based studies on Tibetan clans in recent years than Roberto Vitali, whose paper on the ancestral lineage of Rigdzin Gödemcen represents yet another important contribution. Laxman Thakur offers significant supplementary data from folk songs in Kinnaur to the textually transmitted accounts of the biography of the Lochen Rinchensangpo. In a lengthy introduction, he expounds the value of oral traditions in the field of historical research, to which we only wish to add (and reassure) that no contemporary researcher of Tibetan history would object; there are enough good examples in recent studies that make its value obvious. It just depends on what one does with it, and how the data obtained from collective memory are contextualised

Book Reviews

against textual sources. The paper by Hildegard Diemberger – a presentation of central aspects of her long-standing research on the Samding Dorjephagmo tradition – is followed by two contributions that offer new data on the early and late (violent) phases of the Ganden Phodang state's expansion into the South-Eastern Highlands and the Eastern Himalaya: the contribution by Peter Schwieger (with the telling title 'The Long arm of the Fifth Dalai Lama') and Toni Huber's article, 'Pushing South', which analyses the economic and profit-oriented motives behind the incursions of the Tibetan state into the uncivilised regions between Tawang and Pemakö in the first half of the twentieth century. The last articles in this volume are studies by Patrick Booz on the political history of tea in Tibet in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Todd Lewis' discussion of a recent Newari version of the Buddha's life story, a biographical account of the remarkable Russian Roerich family by Malgorzata Gdok-Klafkowska, and Kumkum Roy's study of 20th century travel accounts by Indian visitors to the Kailas-Manasarovar region.

Anna Balikci-Denjongpa's introduction to volume II opens with an overview of the 'Sikkim Papers' and proceeds to inform us about the present state of Sikkim research and its relation to the NIT. The first two articles in the 'Sikkim Papers' would fit well with the first volume, as both address realities of Tibetan history: John Ardussi's work on Sikkim and Bhutan in the cross-currents of seventeenth and eighteenth-century Tibetan history, and Elliot Sperling's historical analysis of the Minyang origin of the Sikkim Chögyel dynasty. In connection with this, we wish to refer to John Ardussi and Per K. Sørensen's forthcoming annotated edition of Kazi Dawa Samdup's unpublished translation of the Royal Chronicle of Sikkim (*Bras ljongs rgyal rabs*), where Sperling's valuable paper in the present volume will be further discussed.

Saul Mullard presents seventeenth-century events as per contemporary Tibetan sources, which were concealed or forgotten in the 'religiously inspired national narrative' of the nineteenth century in order to legitimate the existence of Sikkim as a nation, which was then threatened by British colonisation. Pema Wangchuk Dorje questions the uncritical reliance on colonial accounts in Sikkim, providing several precise examples of their incompleteness or inconsistency. Sonam B. Wangyal's parallel between the Bhutanese Zhabdrung Nawang Namgyal and Ögödei Khan enables him to explore the hypothesis of the Bhutanese troops'

withdrawal from Sikkim in 1706 resulting from the public announcement of the Zhabdrung's death. John Bray examines Captain Barré Latter's role in the establishment of diplomatic relations between the East India Company and Sikkim in the aftermath of the 1814-16 war with Nepal. Tirtha Prasad Mishra revisits the history of the Kotapa rebellion, but problematically avoids a more complex analysis of the relations between Bhutias and Lepchas in Sikkim, the two communities being interwoven at the level of the ruling elite and the Sikkimese kings' rule having been often destabilised by power struggles through history. Nawang Tsering Shaksपो describes relations and similarities between Sikkim and Ladakh, highlighting the importance of genealogies and historical lineages among the aristocracies of the Himalaya. Mark Turin presents significant results from the linguistic survey of Sikkim that he directed between 2005 and 2006; his analysis focuses on the role of heritage given to language in Sikkim. Piotr Klafkowski presents manuscripts written (except for one) by Athing Joseph Rongong (1900-1975), a Christian Lepcha writer of Kalimpong; these manuscripts focus on Lepcha lexicography, the Lepcha tale of Tashe Thing, the translation of the New Testament and the memoirs of Athing Joseph Rongong. Sonam Dhondup Tshering presents religious data per ethnic community from the 2005-06 Sikkim socio-economic census that was organised by the department where he is posted as Director General, and discusses the socio-economic and political factors of recent religious changes in the state. Charisma Lepcha and Jenny Bentley's articles on changes in the Lepcha community (in the Kalimpong area and in North Sikkim), reach similar conclusions, arguing that new elements introduced into Lepcha communities (Christianity, inter-ethnic marriages, formal education, etc.) have played a part in 'eroding' Lepcha culture on the one hand, and in giving Lepchas the means to protect their culture, primarily through cultural organisations, on the other. Isrun Engelhardt describes events that were witnessed and people that were encountered (mainly in Gangtok) by the members of the Ernst Schäfer expedition (1938-1939) in Sikkim. Bal Gopal Shrestha examines imaginative and innovative aspects of Newar religion and rituals in Sikkim in comparison with Nepal by discussing rituals performed at the temple of Svayambhū Bhimākālī in Gangtok. Majulika Ghosh draws parallels between Buddhist teachings and Sikkimese Buddhist monks' struggles for the protection of nature and Arne Naess' concept of Deep Ecology (see

the contribution by Chakrobarty above). Swati Akshay Sachdeva describes practices and rituals of Sikkimese Bhutia marriages. Brigitte Steinmann analyses Sikkimese and Nepalese Nyingmapa rituals of the crossed threads Dö (*mdos*) genre. Michael Oppitz provides an impressive insight into the geographical distribution of the various forms of Buddhist and Shamanic drums (*nga* and *dhyāngro*) in Nepal and Western Sikkim. Heleen Plaisier examines Lepcha practices and tales related to millet beer (*cí* in Lepcha). Usha Lachungpa proposes measures for the conservation of the ‘survival strategies’ of the Drokpas (North Sikkim nomads) and for that of their local environment. Reaching similar conclusions, Sophie Sabatier-Bourdet examines the socio-economic organisation of the Lachenpas (North Sikkim), and the changes that external pressures have triggered amongst them.

The great diversity of themes in the second volume reflects the nascent state of Sikkim studies, of which NIT is the main supporter. We can only hope that each of these themes will be developed in its own space in the future. In closing, apart from a few editorial imperfections and minor faults in some of the papers (none of which are substantial), these two volumes are testimony to what was evidently a very successful conference, with contributions providing a significant enhancement of our knowledge of the history and cultures of the Buddhist Himalaya and of Sikkim.

Statemaking and Territory in South Asia: Lessons from the Anglo-Gorkha War (1814-1816)

by Bernardo A. Michael.

London and New York: Anthem Press, 2012, 232 pages, ISBN 13-978-0-85728-519-5, price £60/\$99.

Reviewed by Saul Mullard

Colonial state making, boundary formation, cultures of governance and territorial organisation are the key themes in Bernardo Michael's book on the history of territory construction on the frontier of the British East India Company and the Gorkha kingdom. At the outset Michael grounds his book in a context which seeks to identify the multi-faceted processes and the roles of culture, power, space, history and social forces that contributed to state formation in South Asia. Thus, Michael highlights the complex patterns that contributed to the history of state and boundary formation on the Indo-Nepal frontier, the contested cultures of space, territory and governance and the culmination of that history and cultural contestation in the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-16. Whilst this book can be regarded as an historical inquiry into state making along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier—grounded as it is in the history of the British acquisition of Indian territory (Bengal and Bihar) and Gorkha expansion in the late eighteenth century—to state that it is limited to history would be inaccurate. Indeed, this work draws upon ideas from several fields such as human geography and cultural anthropology as well as history, which ultimately allows Michael to make a number of more general, and therefore significant observations on the construction of territory and state making in South Asia.

The potential complexities of the entire Anglo-Gorkha frontier have been carefully and expertly negotiated by Michael, who draws his readers' attention to two particular points along the Anglo-Gorkha borderland: the Champaran-Tarriani and the Gorakhpur-Butwal sections. The use of these two case studies, rather than limiting the scope of the book, actually aids the reader in engaging with the key themes and ideas, without the presence of too much distracting and complex detail that would have to be included in a full analysis of the whole frontier region. As a result, the

book is, for the most part, accessible and well structured. In certain places, however, it could have benefitted from some more detailed explorations, as is the case with chapter five on disjointed territories. The only other criticism that could be levelled against this work would be the reproduction quality of the maps, such as the map of Mukwanpoor (sic) on page 13, which has been reproduced at such a size as to make it almost useless. Fortunately, the content of the book is so captivating and authoritative that the minor inconvenience of poor maps does not detract from the quality of the book as a whole.

The book is divided into seven chapters, including its introduction and conclusion. Each chapter elucidates important themes relevant to the main focus of the book, beginning in earnest with chapter two. That chapter addresses the relationships between land, labour, and agrarian activities that defined territory along the frontier, which the British (through the acquisition of tax rights in Bengal and Bihar) inherited from the Mughals and the Gorkha state also inherited through its expansion during the late eighteenth century. In chapters three and four, Michael turns his attention to the economic entitlements (such as land tenures, taxation and tribute relationships) which had the effect of producing non-contiguous and overlapping borderlands in the territories that ultimately fell under the East India Company's control. Chapter five then broadens the scope of the book by exploring the various forms of knowledge and practice that developed into the fluid boundaries and disjointed spaces of South Asian states, and the colonial obsessions with attempts to codify and reorganise those spaces into 'coherent' units. Chapter six develops this idea further by studying the construction and reorganisation of territory through cartography. The final chapter draws the two strands of analysis in this book together; showing how traditional patterns of entitlements, land usage, taxation and tribute formed a complex and confusing pattern of territorial organisation and gave rise to the Anglo-Gorkha War; and, secondly, how colonial notions of territory as contiguous with linear boundaries contributed to a vision of territory which suppressed older patterns of organisation.

This thoroughly researched book, which makes use of archival materials from Britain, India and Nepal, is a unique and timely study of territoriality and state formation in South Asia borne out of the causes of the Anglo-Gorkha War. Unlike the numerous other authors on this topic

of South Asian history, Michael avoids a more classical study of the political, military and diplomatic elements of this conflict; instead he has accomplished something more useful: an analytical study of the contested notions of territory and governance which precipitated the war and ultimately caused the restructuring of physical territory and the theoretical understanding of what territory is. As such, this work develops an historical context for ideas that are currently popular in trans-border studies and critiques of the nation-state model: that the definition of a state is ultimately conditioned upon an acceptance of the Weberian definition of a territorially defined political space. Instead, Michael has shown very clearly that this idea of territoriality was imposed upon pre-existing modes of organisation by colonial actors in the state-making project of South Asia. The thorough investigation of the history of this construction that Michael has offered us will undoubtedly affect our understanding of contemporary problems of contested territory in South Asia, such as the Madhesi movement for self-determination.

Imagining the Good Life: Negotiating Culture and Development in Nepal Himalaya

by Francis Khék Gee Lim.

Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008, 234 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-16787-2, price €89, \$115

Reviewed by Martin Saxer

Francis Lim's monograph on the Langtang valley in northern Nepal brings together a Tibetan Studies perspective with the Anthropology of Development. While the former tends to approach the valleys along the southern flanks of the Himalaya as realms of Tibetan Buddhist culture, the latter is concerned with the effects of development projects, conservation efforts, and tourism. Lim explores the nexus of these two conversations – a nexus he identifies as crucial for the ways in which the people of Langtang imagine and pursue a 'good life'.

Conversations about the good life centre around two notions: *kipu* (*skyid po*), the Tibetan word for happiness, ease, pleasure, or comfort; and *bikas*, the Nepali term for development. The friction between these two notions shapes dreams and aspirations, conditions local politics and informs ethical reasoning. In this sense, 'imagining the good life' means 'negotiating culture and development', as the book's title suggests. The title, however, also has a deeper meaning. Lim notes that the people of Langtang tell the settlement history of the valley in terms of immigrants in search of a better life; 'In local mythology, it is a hidden sanctuary where an ideal Tibetan society is sustained' (p. 25) – a *beyul* (*sbas yul*) that provides refuge but also demands virtue.

The book's argument is structured in an introduction (chapter 1), six main chapters, and a conclusion (chapter 8). In chapter 2 Lim argues that the notion of *beyul* remains intrinsically linked to the social and political organisation of Langtang; it fostered a ritual hierarchy, the rise of one particular clan (the Domari) and a system of land rights in the valley that continues to be relevant until the present day. Langtang, like other Himalayan valleys close to the Tibetan border, underwent radical economic transformations in the 20th century. Chapter 3 traces these transformations from the decline of the trans-Himalayan salt and grain trade

to the arrival of foreign aid, the advent of trekking tourism and the establishment of the Langtang National Park. Lim describes the latter as particularly important. Gazetting the National Park outlawed the collection of medicinal herbs and introduced much tighter state control and discipline, a process that Lim calls 'putting the Langtangpa in place' (p. 80). Delimiting the valley as a conservation area, however, also paved the way to the boom of trekking tourism, as Lim shows.

The making of Langtang as a conservation area and trekking destination carried the promise of a 'better life' but also created tensions. Lim analyses how these tensions manifest in the ritual life of Langtang (chapter 4), and describes how the notion of *bikas* became materially embedded in daily life in the valley (chapter 5). The hotel, he argues, has emerged as the main site where this embedding takes place. Lim's description of the design and construction of hotels as well as their prestige and socio-political role is highly informative.

In chapter 6 Lim brings another perspective into play, which he calls the 'tourist gaze', following Urry (2002). Lim describes how imaginaries of the happy (*kipu*) hidden valley (*beyul*) clash with the pragmatic business logic of the very real pursuit for a better life in Langtang. Meanwhile, the Langtangpa embrace an equally romanticised gaze of the imagined world of the Western tourists they encounter.

The multiple layers of morality at work in the pursuit of a better life are the theme of Chapter 7. Lim notes how misfortune, be it a severe storm or declining potato harvests, is explained in social and moral terms. Land conflicts and loans are the two areas where moral conflicts are most evident. Lim's fascinating ethnographic account of the ethical reasoning and the micro-politics involved make for one of the strongest parts of the book.

In the conclusion, Lim reiterates that the notion of *bikas* has not replaced *kipu* in the pursuit of a better life. Community autonomy and social unity, both important values associated with *kipu*, have been 'severely compromised by the imposition of restrictions by powerful agencies, all in the name of *bikas*' (p. 211). Lim advocates a truly bottom-up approach that takes the cultural notions and their changes into account.

The argument as a whole is well sustained. However, there are a few details I find problematic. Based on the narratives of his conversation partners, Lim initially paints a dark picture of the hardship of life in Langtang

before the arrival of tourism. In the conclusion, however, he notes that it is 'precisely this new experience of Langtang as a developmentalist/tourist space that has enabled them [the Langtangpa] to interpret their pre-tourism history as one marked by poverty' (p. 201). This qualification seems highly pertinent to the overall theme and argument of the book, yet it is only added as an afterthought.

In a similar vein, describing the ecological constraints of high altitude farming, Lim argues:

Rather than saying that the Langtangpa and other similar peoples are 'natural' traders, it would be more accurate to describe the situation as 'enforced trading', for they almost have no choice but to trade in order to survive. (p. 63)

Given the wealth and prestige historically derived from trans-Himalayan trade, this raises more questions than it answers. Why would people choose to settle on land that does not guarantee subsistence needs were it not, at least in part, for the prospect of a good life based on other sources of income?

Finally, there is an unfortunate error in the calculation of the dollar amount of the costs of building a hotel. The NRS 4-8 lakhs are equalled to USD 530 – 1,100 instead of USD 5,300 – 11,000. This typo may let readers less familiar with Nepal underestimate the scope of local enterprise and give a false impression about the stakes involved. Such details, however, do not question the importance of the book – both as a monograph on contemporary Langtang and as an effort to fuse, ethnographically and conceptually, Tibetan Studies with the Anthropology of Development.

Reference

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The Navel of the Demoness: Tibetan Buddhism and Civil Religion in Highland Nepal

by Charles Ramble

New York: Oxford University Press., 2008., 394 pages + iv., ISBN: 9780195154146. £55.

Reviewed by Mark Turin

While Himalayan studies aspires to be interdisciplinary and transregional, much of our scholarship is still rendered through our discrete analytical frames just as our sites of field research so often remain constrained by political borders. Conventional intellectual output is largely comprised of volumes on the anthropology of Nepal, the religions of Tibet, the histories of the Indian northeast and the ecological transformations of Uttarakhand. As a scholarly community, most of us still study disciplines rather than problems, and genuine interdisciplinarity is hard to achieve.

All of this serves to explain why *The Navel of the Demoness* makes such an important contribution to our understanding of the region. Much anticipated and beautifully crafted, Charles Ramble's distinctive narrative enriches our appreciation of the cultural strategies of Himalayan communities while at once showcasing the sophistication of the civil institutions that shape (but do not entirely govern) people's lives.

In an understated yet ultimately persuasive way, this monograph is also deeply humanist. The people of Te are neither shackled by their Buddhist faith (and the word 'faith' itself is so loaded and problematic) nor do they publicly subvert it. Their civil religion is dynamic, adaptive and modern. As Ramble writes, early on:

Neither Buddhism nor paganism could serve as the vantage point for an understanding of religion in Te. Both were relatively peripheral when seen from the perspective of this mysterious entity known as "the community" (p. 11)

After an introduction that blends the pithy with the personal, the first chapter introduces the people of Mustang and their history. Drawing on local sources, Western writings and oral history, Ramble explodes common

misconceptions (and misnomers) without appearing to scold. Rather, he is effective in instructing the reader through anecdotes, allusions and the recollection of historical events.

The second chapter on the five Seke-speaking communities of Baragaon, 'Inside the Shöyul', generously demonstrates Ramble's interdisciplinary edge. Drawing on sources as diverse as architecture and archaeology, irrigation and Tibetan texts, the author unpicks the complexities of village decision-making and strategies of cooperation to show how solidarity and secrecy are integral to the formation of local political relationships. Over time, confederations of autonomous principalities that existed in 17th century Shöyul lead to consolidation in the 19th (p. 63), and the author teases out the manner by which these five villages collaborated to secure a revision of the tax law that impinged on them so severely.

Ramble avoids the standard traps of historicisation, and is at pains to point out that lasting political alliances between settlements were designed to be pragmatic—at times even opportunistic—agreements in the common interest based on 'shared obligations to the regional administration' and their 'ethnic distinctiveness' (p. 71), and were not nostalgic expressions of symbolic harmony. His narrative, then, lays the foundation for a meticulous appreciation of the socio-political tensions in the village of Te, the focus of his narrative.

The scene now set, in Chapter Three the curtain is pulled back on the implications of these allegiances of expedience, through a crash course on political decision-making and structural anthropology:

The rhetoric of solidarity that pervades the documents concerning the alliance creates a misleading impression of spontaneous amity among the five. The alliance was, rather, an evil necessity in which the five [villages] were obliged to participate in order to protect themselves from a more general menace (p. 72)

Ramble argues that the insular 'tightness' of Te, an intimacy so difficult for outsiders (let alone anthropologists) to penetrate, manifests itself not only in a unique internal administrative and civic system, but more impressively, in the 'near-elimination from the community of what conventionally passes for religion' (p. 72). This extraordinary

development, both its very occurrence and the implications that follow from it, serves as an intellectual backdrop to much of the book. During the fourth chapter, the reader is rewarded with an explanation of how the ideal of community in Te was neither predetermined nor accidental, but consciously crafted and developed at the expense of other forms of social organisation, principally patricians.

But Te is no secular backwater, as is apparent from the fact that the village is home to Molha Chutsen Nyenpo, a fallen star who landed by the river bank and is now revered as the mother-goddess of the entire settlement. What could be the role of a mother goddess in a village free of organised, traditional religion, and how do conventional beliefs penetrate it? As Ramble makes clear throughout the text, but in a particularly powerful section in Chapter Five:

Buddhism does not enter a community as an abstract ideology that is intellectually appraised, weighed, and accepted or rejected. It is mediated by institutions.... (p. 149)

Whether civil or religious, social life in Te is as much about alliance as it is about belief. An example would be local marriage practices, long the object of study across the Himalayan range on account of their regional specificity and social intricacy, to which Te is no exception. Whether as a teaching resource or as a trove of comparative detail, Ramble's three pages on marriage in Te are elegantly written and insightful (pages 113-115), exploding the idea that weddings are transactions between clans or other corporate groups. In Te, we learn, a marriage is simply a 'private affair between two households'.

On a related note, in a charmingly entitled section on the 'Acquisition of Priestcraft', it becomes clear that training is far more important than descent for the Te priesthood. Both the priests and their patrons are shown to be practically oriented, focusing less on the 'abstract preoccupations that are generally associated with Buddhist endeavour' and far more interested in matters that have a 'palpable bearing on their immediate environment' (p. 174). Ramble paints a convincing picture of business-like lamas and commonsensical clients who function in a socio-religious climate in which concession and compromise are valued. In Te, men of the cloth were free to 'devote their energies to the prosperity of

the household, either working on the land or trading' (p. 184). This humanising narrative, which situates the collection of activities conventionally referred to as religion firmly within the boundaries of everyday life rather than outside of it, is one of the outstanding achievements of Ramble's text.

While the pacification of a pagan landscape by encroaching Buddhist forces has been an enduring theme in scholarly literature on Tibet, the degree to which this Buddhicisation / Buddhification was 'piecemeal and haphazard' (p. 188) in Te remains truly surprising. Certainly, there has been replacement of local practices as a consequence of the advance of the dharma, but this process of displacement is neither complete, permanent nor is it uncontested. All of which may explain why villagers in Te continue to look to their deities and religious leaders less for blessings and benefaction, and rather more for 'straightforward civility' (p. 194) and real-world guidance.

In Te, as in other locations across Mustang and the alpine stretches of borderland Nepal, the landscape is studded with territorial gods. These place-bound and highly specific deities have 'position but no substance' (p. 202). They are from Te, of Te and in some ways, they are Te, and the villagers remain adept at reconfiguring space in order to bring the divine closer to hand. Buddhism and paganism (although we must be wary of -ism-ising local practices) do not exist in complementary distribution, but neither have they morphed into a new hybrid in this Mustang village.

Ramble is damning about the use of the 'lazy sobriquet of syncretism', an easy phrase that leaves 'unexplored the principles underlying the selection of elements from Buddhism and their integration—or confrontation—with pagan interests' (p. 215). The documents that Ramble unearths and explores in Chapter Seven intrigue the reader precisely because of their ambiguity, offering occasional insights into the complex world of civil and religious action. And if a clash exists at the conceptual level between Te's local territorial cult and the 'soteriological creed' that is Buddhism, this is not manifested in the minds of the villagers. The ends-justify-the-means approach to the buffet of religious, moral and customary life choices in Te displays no signs of confusion or competition for its industrious inhabitants (cf. p. 232).

Not only is Buddhism 'kept at arm's length' by the inhabitants of Te, but—more dramatically still—'tenets that are seen as inimical to village tradition are rejected' (p. 233). As a working hypothesis, Ramble proposes

that as priestly and monastic institutions receded, the performances of the laity grew ‘into the resulting gaps’ and developed ‘a form independent of its original ritual structure’ (p. 249). The image of a civil, pagan ‘ivy’ growing out of the cracked brickwork of Buddhist infrastructure is searing. One can only imagine the profound challenge that this would have posed to any itinerant proselytising lama hoping to convert this village of functionalists. As Chapter Eight comes to a close, Ramble documents the complex, historical processes by which a ‘doctrinal framework has been replaced by an exhibition of the structure of the community itself’ (p. 258). Even in Mustang, it seems that Durkheim is never far away.

Yet Te’s richly woven civil fabric is of course made up of independent people with specific needs, and the author now turns his attention to individual estates as the focus of ‘affective and economic interest’ (p. 267). While certain public events encourage villagers to think about ‘how the community might best be sustained and protected’, these are blessedly infrequent and short, after which they can ‘stop worrying about the village as a whole and bring their attention back to the problems of their own estates’ (p. 304). What is good for individuals, then, is good for society, and the constitution of the village remains a far more important and effective ‘nomic edifice’ than either Buddhism or the local territorial cults of the area.

General readers should not be put off by the apparently esoteric nature of this important work. In Chapter Ten, the last substantive section of the book, Ramble focuses on the ceremony by which headmen are appointed. Given the prolonged nature of Nepal’s post-conflict political transition, Kathmandu might take note of Te’s civil society, which, based on the idea of monarchy, is a ‘true democracy that legitimises itself in the idiom of make-believe kingship’ (p. 264). With a powerful and well-wrought conclusion that brings this book to a close, this excellent monograph can be read in its entirety or as a series of discrete lectures on the civil, religious and psychological frames that shape Tibetan culture.

Replete with valuable insights and charming asides—the reason that all farmers should fear excess alcohol consumption is because ‘careless talk costs pastures’ (p. 89), or ‘most history is ... the history of war, and peace goes largely unrecorded’ (p. 149)—the *Navel of the Demoness* is also a testament to the importance of building advanced linguistic aptitude in a number of regional languages in order to engage in deep analysis. In this

case, the author is well versed in Nepali, standard written Tibetan and the local spoken variety of Tibetan used along Nepal's northern frontier. On the topic of language, echoing his earlier work, Ramble reminds us that when speaking collectively of the 'people of the north Nepal borderland ... we are obliged to use language as a metonym for ethnicity' (p. 29).

It is the singular achievement of this skilled ethnographer to extrapolate from a village of forty-eight houses in Mustang a narrative that speaks to wider, theoretical issues (much as he had done for the even smaller village of Lubra during his formative doctoral research years before). The prism that Ramble uses is the complex articulation between individuals and their social order, with each shaping the other in its likeness. This is a masterful book, and one that is beautifully written; engaging in its detail and sweeping in its implications. And for those readers eager to learn precisely what and where the Navel of the Demoness is, they will be rewarded for their patience on page 190.

Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas by Sanjeev Uprety.

Kathmandu: Social Science Baha Books (*Baha Occasional Papers 5*), 2011, 48 pages, 2 black and white photos, ISBN 978-9937-8421-7-4 (paperback), US\$ 8.

Reviewed by Matthew William Maycock

Masculinity studies as a discipline within social science has seen a marked proliferation and diversification over recent years. However, there is a very limited literature on masculinities in relation to Nepal, which in turn reflects wider limitations of literature on masculinities in South Asia. Within this context, Sanjeev Uprety's book represents a significant contribution to what is an emerging area of scholarship in the Nepali academic context. The short 48 page-book reviewed here corresponds to a seminar held at Social Science Baha in 2008.

Uprety's book sets out to examine and compare British colonial representations of Gurkha soldier masculinity with representations of the contrasting masculinities of the Rana prime ministers Jung Bahadur Rana and Chandra Shumsher Rana. The visits both Rana prime ministers made to England are further considered.

The central argument made in the book is that through considering the masculinities of these two prime ministers, one can better understand masculinities more generally in the first half of 20th century-Nepal. Uprety approaches this by developing and then contrasting the masculine performances of the two prime ministers, particularly in relation to the representation of effeminate Indian rulers, Shah kings and Gurkha soldiers.

Methodologically, Uprety analyses the representations of both Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher in a wide range of sources, including European newspapers of the time. The analysis of these sources successfully illustrates the differences between the masculinities of the two men.

Initially, Uprety provides a political context focusing on the various interactions (including conflict) between Nepal and British India. Second, he considers the ways in which Gurkha valour and fighting skills resulted in these soldiers being recruited into the British army. This was in a context in which the British imagined a homogenised Gurkha identity

of 'Gentlemen Warriors' (Caplan, 1995). British representations of Indian men are then outlined, with a focus on the mimesis of femininity within this group (in contrast to the Gurkhas, who were detached from such forms of mimicry). Uprety also teases out some of the different representations of British masculinities in relation to class.

Uprety then moves on to consider the construction of what he calls Jung Bahadur's 'oriental, royal masculinity', through a convincing exploration of John Whelpton's (1983) *Jung Bahadur in Europe* and a range of Nepali and English sources of the time. Subsequently, Chandra Shumsher is considered, through a focus on various political-cultural considerations. This leads to Uprety presenting Chandra Shumsher's masculinity as both imperial and 'rational' in contrast to Jung Bahadur's oriental masculinity that was explored previously. Uprety moves on to examine anti-Rana Nepali nationalism that resulted in effeminate representations of Chandra Shumsher.

Uprety discusses the importance of clothing (royal, military, western, etc.) in relation to the constructions of the masculinity of the two prime ministers quite often in the text. Uprety points towards other influences (such as education) on changing constructions of masculinity between the two prime ministers, but other facets influencing masculinity might have been considered (for example, embodiment). Furthermore, while the book is historically orientated, it might have been interesting to explore the legacy of these performances of masculinity and mimicry in contemporary Nepal. How do the constructions of masculinity that Uprety skilfully explores resonate in contemporary Nepal?

Although Connell (2005) reminds us that masculinities are multiple and contested, this book only focuses on Rana and Gurkha masculinities. It would have been illuminating for the author to consider other, less obviously 'hegemonic' performances of masculinity at this time in Nepal, and how these were represented. The author outlines this in relation to British masculinities (where class is identified as a key determinant), but not in the Nepali examples. Therefore, a consideration of the importance of caste (caste and masculinity are mentioned on p. 25, but only briefly), sexuality, ethnicity and religion in shaping Nepali masculinities would have been informative.

Given the short length of the book it is perhaps understandable that masculinity theory is not more fully elaborated in it. For example,

the theoretical distinctions between ‘masculine’, and ‘hyper-masculine’ might have been illustrated more clearly. Considering masculinity theory in more detail, and in relation to two very interesting and contrasting performances of masculinity, would have also created a space to explore any potential issue in applying theories of gender that have been developed in locations outside of Nepal and South Asia.

Overall, Uprety’s book excels in examining the masculinities of two important figures in Nepali history, but leaves the reader wanting more on a number of levels, principally due to the brevity of the book and the limitations this places on the text in relation to theory and context. This reader hopes that the book reviewed is a starting place for a longer and more complete account of the masculinities that are explored, which would provide a unique insight into a significant time in Nepal’s history as well as a contribution to masculinity studies in Nepal and South Asia.

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A Grammar of the Thangmi Language

by Mark Turin

Leiden: Brill, 2012, 2 Vols, 958 pages, ISBN 978-90-04-15526-8, price 169 €.

Reviewed by Heleen Plaisier

The grammar of the Thangmi language is now documented by Mark Turin in a monograph that serves as a true monument to the Thangmi language and culture. Linguists will greatly appreciate Turin's exemplary linguistic description, but this remarkable book is not merely of interest to those specialist colleagues. Turin's expertise combines anthropology and descriptive linguistics, and in this treasure trove of new information on the Thangmi, Turin offers us the best of these two fields. The monograph includes comprehensive discussions of many aspects of Thangmi life and culture, so that much of this book will appeal to anyone who is interested in the cultural and linguistic diversity of Nepal.

Thangmi is an endangered Tibeto-Burman language, which is spoken in Dolakhā and Sindupālchok districts in Nepal, and in Darjeeling district in India. Overall, the Thangmi are represented by more than 40,000 people, but it is estimated that just 20,000 people speak the Thangmi language. The Thangmi people designate themselves as Thangmi, though their shamans call the group Thani, and in Nepali they are referred to as Thami. The monograph is based on Turin's doctoral dissertation, for which he undertook a series of fieldtrips between 1997 and 2004 to Dāmārān in Dolakhā and Cokaṭī in Sindhupālcok of Bagmatī zone in Nepal and to Darjeeling district in India.

The first volume of this monograph starts out with a straightforward discussion of the genetic affinity and linguistic classification of Thangmi, which is followed by a discussion of the Thangmi ethnolinguistic context. This part gives ample attention to the distribution of Thangmi speakers, language status, dialects and multilingualism, the Thangmi mythological world, religious beliefs, indigenous ethnonyms and place names and an overview of the few previous studies on Thangmi. This chapter also discusses the complex details of the Thangmi clan and kinship system, which can be regarded as reflections of the intricate nature of Thangmi socio-cultural life. This ethnolinguistic chapter stands out by being much more

exhaustive than the cursory introductions found in most grammatical descriptions.

The chapters that follow present Turin's linguistic description. Thangmi has thirty-two consonants and six vowels and does not distinguish vowel length. There are also seven diphthongs, which are particularly common in loans from Nepali. Turin carefully describes and discusses Thangmi phonology and some morphophonological regularities, giving minimal pairs and further examples, including any possible influence of Nepali. The nominal morphology includes comprehensive descriptions of nouns, adjectives, pronouns and numerals. The grammatical cases distinguished in this grammar are absolutive, ergative, instrumental, genitive, locative, comitative, ablative and direct or indirect object markers. The native Thangmi numeral system, which is losing ground in favour of the Nepali numeral system, displays some intriguing features that include numeral classifiers. The verbal morphology of Thangmi is extremely complicated, as it codes verbal agreement for agent or subject and object. Turin's analysis of this intricate system in Thangmi is followed by descriptions of verbal constructions and morphosyntax.

Turin's detailed description of the complex verbal agreement system of Thangmi elucidates the linguistic position of Thangmi within the Tibeto-Burman languages. Thangmi is now convincingly shown to be closely related to Barām, which is spoken in Gorkha district in central Nepal, and both languages should be placed close to Newar. Thangmi is also related to the complex-pronominalising Kiranti languages, which together with Newar have been referred to as the Mahākirāntī group. Turin's description shows that Thangmi is not canonically Kiranti. For example, in striking contrast to many Kiranti languages, Thangmi verbs on the whole show no paradigmatic stem alternations. Verbal agreement morphemes are never superfluous and may not be dropped. Thangmi also exhibits a pattern of split ergativity, which is similar but essentially different to that of the Kiranti type.

The second volume contains translations and analyses of forty-five Thangmi texts, which add up to an impressive three hundred pages. These texts were recorded by Turin himself during his fieldwork and represent a variety of speech styles, ranging from shamanic narratives and monologues to spontaneous colloquial conversations between Thangmi speakers. The texts are followed by an extensive Thangmi-English-Nepali

dictionary, which includes example sentences and phrases. The second volume concludes with appendices, a bibliography and an index to both volumes.

Turin recognises two dialects in Thangmi, one spoken in Dolakhā and another in Sindhupālcok. He focuses on the dialect of Dolakhā, but frequently indicates differences between the two dialects. The Dolakhā dialect exhibits a verbal agreement system that appears to be more complete and archaic than the verbal morphology of the Sindhupālcok dialect. In terms of nominal morphology, the Sindhupālcok dialect seems more complex, preserving a range of locative case suffixes and numeral classifiers that are not present in the Dolakhā dialect. Turin also discusses how little socio-economic interaction there is between the two dialect groups and how Thangmi speakers place great emphasis on the dialectal differences between the two groups.

Throughout the book, sample sentences are used to elucidate and contextualise analyses, and the texts and dictionary that are provided furnish the reader with further information. If there were one small criticism to make, it would be that not all parts of this monograph are evenly balanced, as some sections go into considerably more detail than others. Also, it would be interesting to read more on the different parts of speech, types of nominalisation and tense in Thangmi. These are only minor points that do not diminish the magnitude of this work. Turin's style is clear and comprehensive, and his analyses are transparent and convincing. This monograph documents and describes previously undescribed aspects of the Thangmi language, clarifies earlier linguistic discussions and contains new manifestations of the Thangmi language, which makes it an immensely valuable storehouse of information on Thangmi. Mark Turin's wide interests and extensive research have resulted in a magnificent grammar that should serve as a compelling model for future descriptive linguists and should be treasured by all those interested in the various linguistic and cultural traditions of Nepal.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

3rd ANHS Himalayan Studies Conference

<hsc2014.commonsw.yale.edu>

The Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies (ANHS) is pleased to announce that its 3rd annual conference will be held at Yale University in New Haven, CT, Friday 14 – Sunday 16 March, 2014. The conference is hosted by the Yale Himalaya Initiative and convened by Dr Mark Turin.

The 2014 Himalayan Studies Conference at Yale (HSC3) has been made possible thanks to generous support from the Yale Himalaya Initiative; the South Asian Studies Council at Yale; Council on East Asian Studies at Yale University; the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies; the Edward J. and Dorothy Clarke Kempf Memorial Fund and the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale.

Conference Theme

As a central theme, the 3rd Himalayan Studies Conference will address the idea of Communities, broadly conceived. This includes issues relating to communities within and across the Himalaya; ongoing partnerships between scholars, governments and citizens in the region; as well as communities of practice that support Himalayan Studies as an emerging field of interdisciplinary scholarship and practice.

While the Organizing Committee does not require participants to explicitly address this year's theme in their papers and discussions, presenters are strongly encouraged to consider the role of communities writ large at the 2014 conference.

The Organizing Committee invites proposals for panels, roundtables and individual papers. Interdisciplinary panels that allow for audience participation and discussion are particularly encouraged.

Keynote Speakers

The Organizing Committee is delighted to announce the following keynote speakers:

Melvyn C. Goldstein (John Reynolds Harkness Professor in Anthropology, Co-Director, Center for Research on Tibet); Françoise Robin (Maître de conférence at l INALCO and Member of Le Centre de recherche sur les civilisations de l Asie orientale); and Kesang Tseten (Filmmaker and writer).

Important Dates

Deadline for panel & roundtable proposals, and individual paper abstracts:
30 September 2013

Notification of panel, roundtable & individual paper acceptance: 31 October 2013

Deadline for abstracts by panel & roundtable presenters: 30 November 2013

Conference registration closes: 14 February 2014

Conference dates: 14-16 March 2014

Please visit us online at <hsc2014.commonsonline.yale.edu>

Or contact us <himalaya.conference@yale.edu>

