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Relations between Britain and Nepal

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Guest Editorial

As part of the events commemorating the 200th anniversary in 2016 of the Treaty of Sugauli, which established permanent diplomatic relations between Britain and Nepal, the Britain Nepal Academic Council, with David Gellner as lead organizer, held a one-day history workshop at SOAS on 23 March 2016, with funding kindly provided by Oxford University's All Souls' College. This special issue of EBHR brings together revised versions of six of the papers presented, together with a BNAC lecture, which was delivered the same day though not formally part of the workshop.

The commemoration of the anniversary was itself the subject of some controversy for two reasons. First, some argued that the Treaty of Sugauli was not the real starting point of the relationship between the two countries because there had been extensive diplomatic contact between the two sides beforehand – most significantly during Knox's few months as resident in Kathmandu in 1802-3. Second, the celebratory tone of the commemorative events jarred somewhat with the fact that Sugauli was not only an agreement to establish 'peace and perpetual friendship' but also an acknowledgement of Nepal's military defeat and loss of one third of her pre-war territory. There was even some uncertainty on how precisely to date the treaty. The document was actually signed in December 1815, after Ochterloney's success against Amar Singh Thapa in what is now the Indian state of Uttarakhand, but the ratification was only delivered on 4 March 2016, after a further round of fighting had put the British within striking distance of Kathmandu. Choosing the March anniversary did, however, make sense as it marked the actual end of hostilities, and also allowed a clear separation from the 2015 celebration of 200 years of Gurkha service with the army of the East India Company and then under the British Crown.

The workshop presentations did not focus specifically on the Treaty of Sugauli itself or the arguments which some Nepalis have recently raised about its validity under national law, but covered many aspects of the Nepal-Britain relationship, including both conflict and co-operation. They attracted an enthusiastic audience including not only Nepal

specialists but also a number from outside academia, including members of the UK's Nepali community, which now stands at around 100,000.

Tom Bell's paper examines the East India Company's unsuccessful attempt in 1767 to come to the aid of the Newar kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley and sees Kinloch's failure as due mainly to adverse weather and inadequate grain supplies. He suggests that had a second attempt been made, as Kinloch himself urged, it might well have succeeded. The survey of the historiography of the episode that concludes the essay shows how both officialdom and the history profession largely forgot about it until pioneering work by Indian researchers in the mid-20th century. There is a partial similarity here with treatment of the 1814-16 conflict which in recent decades has been the focus of great attention but which the British once wanted to forget (Pemble 2009).

Bernardo Michael focuses on the territorial dispute leading to the 1814-1816 war, the topic of his monograph *Statemaking and Territory*, which is the most thorough examination of the issue yet published. He emphasizes the complexity of tenurial arrangements along the frontier and how a major factor was the East India Company's desire for a clear line of demarcation, in contrast to the more fluid arrangement that indigenous states were used to. Also highlighted is the role of local landholders who rendered the region less 'legible' by registering their claims with more than one authority. Michael concludes with a brief account of 'spatial anxiety' in another part of South Asia: the frontier between India and Bangladesh, where the many mini-enclaves are only now being eliminated by exchanges of territory.

In Krishna Prasad Adhikari's paper, the focus switches from war to peace with his investigation into Moti Lal Singh, the crossing sweeper taken into Jang Bahadur Rana's employment whilst he was in London as ambassador to Britain in 1850. As the first known Nepali resident in the UK, and also the first to have had a substantial piece of writing in English published under his name, Moti Lal is of particular significance for the UK's present-day Nepali community. He is also something of a puzzle because of discrepancies between his own account and other sources on the embassy and also because we are uncertain how far his article in the *New Monthly Magazine* was his own work rather than that of one or more literary collaborators.

Jang Bahadur Rana is again part of the story in Sanjeev Uprety's discussion of the models of masculinity he and a later Rana prime minister, Chandra Shamsheer, presented to foreign and domestic audiences. Within Nepal, the loss of caste status, against which those who travelled abroad had to guard carefully, would also entail a loss of masculinity, reminding us, perhaps, of the saying that 'a woman has no caste.' For the British, an 'exotic', traditional South Asian ruler could be seen as masculine in contrast to the supposedly effeminate Indian 'baboo' but with the uncontrolled, irrational masculinity which upper-class Britons ascribed both to their own working class and to Gurkha soldiers. Chandra's own use of European and especially military dress brought him more into line with 'rational' upper-class British masculinity, but had to be carefully balanced with strict observance of Hindu norms.

The need for different performances for different audiences is also brought out in Bryony Whitmarsh's examination of the meanings of the Narayanhiti Royal Palace, which King Mahendra commissioned in the 1960s. Mahendra wanted to project a contrast between the Shah dynasty as representative of authentic Nepali tradition and the Ranas' excessive imitation of western models, yet was building a palace with an American architect and interior design by a British company. The contradiction could partly be escaped as the palace interior was meant in the first place to impress foreign visitors and by the royal regime's near total domination of public space in this period, but Mahendra's own seeming loss of enthusiasm for the place project during the construction period might perhaps reflect discomfort with the dilemma.

Ian Harper and Jeevan Sharma examine the history of British aid to Nepal from the 1950s to the present. Their account brings out how the various projects were in theory meant simply as apolitical assistance whilst political concerns and controversies were inescapable. Especially during the early Panchayat period, they reflected Britain's wish to be supportive of the royal regime. During the 'People's War' there was pressure both to support a friendly government against the insurgency but also to come into line with the international aid community's emphasis on human rights and on holding the security forces accountable. In the post-conflict period, early support for the main *janajati* association had to be ended when those less enthusiastic about

ethnic assertiveness saw it as political interference. The accusation that foreigners deliberately foster fissiparous tendencies in the country remains a live one in Nepal's political discourse.¹

My own piece is an attempt to identify parallels in the complex processes behind the creation of political identities in Britain and Ireland and in Nepal. As such, it ranges over a much longer time-frame than the other papers. One workshop participant congratulated me at the end of the lecture for a valiant attempt to compare the non-comparable, and my closing appeal to transcend both ethnic and national and ethnic identities may seem Quixotic in the aftermath of Britain's decision to leave the European Union, and the election of Donald Trump. Nevertheless, it will, I hope, at least give people something to think about. The paper also acknowledges, albeit rather unsympathetically, the call to undo the Treaty of Sugauli alluded to above.

Finally, I would like to thank all the authors involved for their hard work and also David Gellner and Michael Hutt for organising the event and William Sax and his Heidelberg colleagues for hosting the end product and sorting out the maps.

– John Whelpton

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¹ For a recent example of this line of thinking, see the introduction to Saurav and Mainali 2017, a collection of extracts from foreign writers on Nepal supposedly illustrating their biases, and the interview with one of the authors at <http://www.nepalipatra.com/news/trend/interview/16980>

What Happened to Captain Kinloch's Expedition to Nepal?¹

Thomas Bell

In the early summer of 1767 Prithvinarayan Shah appeared to be about to conquer Kathmandu. This event has come to be seen as inevitable and as the decisive moment in Prithvinarayan Shah's creation of the modern Nepali state. At the same time, in the hope of reopening trade with Nepal, Tibet, and western China beyond, the British prepared to dispatch a force under Captain George Kinloch into the Nepali hills in an attempt to relieve the city. Kinloch's diary, which was recently unearthed and published by Yogesh Raj, shows that the fate of Kinloch's expedition, in immediate practical terms, has often been represented by historians in ways which can be seen to be partly inaccurate or distorted. On the basis of the diary, the Select Committee records, and other British sources, as well as the less detailed Nepali sources, this article provides a revised analysis of the combination of factors – military, logistical and intelligence-based – which combined to ensure Kinloch's defeat. The most important factors among these relate to the precise timing of the expedition, the weather, and want of provisions, and could plausibly have been different, – had they been so it is possible that Kinloch would have successfully relieved Kathmandu. The British considered launching a second attempt a few months later, which, had they done so, would have stood a better chance. It thus appears that at this decisive moment in Nepali history, relatively arbitrary factors, especially in the decision-making processes of the British and of King Jayaprakash Malla of Kathmandu, played a large part in how the larger patterns of British and Gorkhali imperial expansion and consolidation played out. The Gorkhali state would never again be as vulnerable to external intervention as it was on the eve of its formation in 1767-8.

This article analyses the positions taken by the key British actors, which led to the Bengal government's decisions, as well as their failure to recognise the extent to which Gorkhali arms were a factor in

¹ I am grateful to Yogesh Raj and Ramesh Dhungel for their advice on sources.

Kinloch's defeat. In contrast, from a very early date, Nepali memory celebrated Gorkhali arms as being the sole factor in repulsing Kinloch's force. This article also briefly places the very first British attempt at formulating a Nepal policy in the context of the East India Company's policy towards Nepal in the following decades, when reopening Himalayan trade, ultimately with Tibet, remained their primary goal in the region, and the Company's attempts to do so vacillated between diplomatic and military means. By the time of the 1814–16 war the primary dispute between the two powers was no longer over trade, but rather about territory. Finally, this article draws attention to the fact that while Nepali historiography celebrated Kinloch's defeat as a famous victory, it more or less disappeared from the historical memory of the British in India. As described below, the two most complete accounts based on British sources were both written in the mid-twentieth century, by Indian authors.

How Kinloch's invasion came about

British power in Bengal had expanded rapidly in the decade prior to Kinloch's expedition, following the battle of Plassey in 1757. The principal conqueror of modern Nepal, Prithvinarayan Shah of Gorkha, began his campaign to encircle and capture the Kathmandu Valley by taking Nuwakot in 1744, directing his military strategy at controlling the trade routes that linked India to Tibet through the Valley. Lying to the south of Kathmandu, Makwanpur was overrun by Gorkhali forces in 1762. The Gorkhali conquest of Makwanpur led to a clash with Bengal, then governed by Mir Kasim, the nawab who had been installed by the British in 1760, and who was later defeated and toppled at Buxar. This encounter may have come about partly for reasons such as Mir Kasim's Armenian commander's wish to test his artillery, as well as his 'lust for Nepalese gold' (Pradhan 1991: 105). The small Bengali force was defeated by the Gorkhalis at Makwanpur in January 1763, the same year that Prithvinarayan imposed a blockade on the Kathmandu Valley, severing trade with Tibet. The Battle of Buxar in 1764 extended and strengthened the East India Company's grip on India and added Bettiah in Bihar, adjacent to Makwanpur, to its possessions; so that for the first time the Company was an immediate neighbour to what, meanwhile, was in the process of becoming modern Nepal.

In April 1767 Jayaprakash Malla, the last Malla king of Kathmandu, sought the intervention of the Company's forces to lift the siege of his city. Although the hills were in many ways a world apart from the plains, there were commercial networks and pilgrimage routes, as well as particular family and caste networks, through which ties existed and information passed between the two regions (Bayly 1996: 100). It was by these means that Jayaprakash acted, by sending his *vakil* Muktananda (called Muktan Unda in the British documents), and the Faquir Ram Das (Ramdoss) as messengers. It has often been inferred by historians that either of these men may have belonged to mendicant Hindu orders, whose members moved between the hills and plains and, in the case of the Gosains, controlled a large share of the trans-Himalayan trade.² On 20 April 1767 Thomas Rumbold, who was the Company's agent at Patna, wrote to the Select Committee at Calcutta to say that 'a vakeel' from Kathmandu was imminent, and to ask whether he could 'give him any Encouragement'.

Rumbold's letter shows that this approach did not come as a surprise. Rather, he already had an inclination to intervene before realising that there were two significant members in Jayaprakash's delegation. The excerpt from his letter recorded by the Select Committee begins:

I believe Sir, you have before been acquainted with the situation in Nepaul which has long been besieged by the Goorcully Rajah. The inhabitants are now drove [sic] to the utmost extremities repeated solicitations have been made for our assistance, and I am informed a Vakeel is now on his way hither. I enclose to you a copy of a letter received from Mr. Golding [the Company agent] at Betteah on the subject ... The trade with Nepaul which formerly was very considerable has been entirely stopped by these troubles, a small Force I am assured would be sufficient not only to raise the Siege, but entirely to reduce the Goorcully Rajah to obedience. The latter is so very apprehensive of our assisting the Nepaul Rajah, that I had

² Jayaprakash's letter, and subsequent letters in which he agreed to send forces to meet Kinloch at Sindhuli, have not survived. However, according to Kinloch's diary (Raj 2012: 45) his original approach was addressed to Sir Richard Barker who, being posted in Oudh, was not in fact the appropriate official to seek contact with.

a letter from him the other day, desiring that he might be allowed to visit me at Patna, and that protection might be afforded him.³

Rumbold's inference reflects an underestimation of Prithvinarayan, whose decision to send a letter at this point has been more plausibly interpreted by Baburam Acharya as a calculated ploy to forestall British intervention. He wrote a similar letter, apparently with the same intention, while annexing Morang in the final year of his life (Pradhan 1991: 121). The timing of Prithvinarayan's letter, which arrived before Jayaprakash's, shows the strength of his intelligence.⁴

On 30 April the Select Committee replied to Rumbold that the trade through Nepal should be reopened, but that it would rather do this by mediation than force of arms. It instructed Rumbold to reply to Prithvinarayan, identifying Jayaprakash as a friend of the British, and issuing an ultimatum to lift the siege. At the same time Captain George Kinloch should come to Patna and prepare for a military expedition to relieve Kathmandu.

Both Kinloch and Rumbold interviewed Muktananda and Ram Das at Patna and the results were forwarded to the Select Committee, which next took up the subject on 21 July. In Kinloch's summary of the *vakils'* account, he wrote of how those living under siege in Kathmandu would soon be forced by hunger to open their gates. The 'Goorkwallah' commanded an army of about 50,000 men, most of them employed in defence or, at this time of year, in planting, and the men were armed with bows and arrows, swords, and matchlocks. Jayaprakash's messengers offered a 'Pledge to carry the [British] Party safe to Nepaul [by] a Road where neither Hills nor Rivers will obstruct them'. In fact, the march would become more difficult 'towards the End of the Monsoon, as the Rains cause an immense Growth of Jungle which almost chokes up the Road', and if the expedition was postponed that long Kathmandu would inevitably have fallen anyway, because only the hope of British intervention was sustaining the defenders. Finally, altogether

³ Rumbold's letter of 20 April 1767, Select Committee proceedings 30 April 1767.

⁴ See Acharya 1966, and its English translation (Acharya 1972: 22).

sixty thousand families in the Valley were at risk of famine due to the siege.⁵

Jayaprakash's case, then, was that his situation was desperate and that there must be no delay, but that if relief was sent immediately the march would be easy, and victory over the Gorkhals guaranteed. Kinloch included a sketched map (now lost) based on a description by Muktananda and Ram Das, 'by which the terrible Situation of Jay Percass may be easily seen notwithstanding the Rudeness of the Work', and set out an itinerary of 11 stages from Patna to Panauti (a settlement just east of the Kathmandu Valley), reckoned to be a total distance of 96 kos (1 kos = c. 4,000 yards). 'There are no Rivers to be crossed, nor any Hills to be passed', Kinloch wrote.⁶ Rumbold forwarded these materials to the committee, providing an assurance that Muktananda and Ram Das had given him the exact same description, and added further materials of his own, which were not itemised or preserved. It is likely that these materials included information from the Italian Capuchin missionaries who lived at Patan, to whom Rumbold would later refer in a letter of 19 December as Jesuits who had corroborated the *vakil's* account, who apparently believed that Kathmandu would fall by October.⁷ On the basis of this information, and since Prithvinarayan had not yet replied to Rumbold's letter, the committee resolved on 21 July to write to Rumbold ordering that the expedition be launched.

Although formal authority lay with the Select Committee at Fort William, in this affair the committee generally followed the line put forward by Thomas Rumbold in Patna. He was the primary proponent and architect of Kinloch's expedition. Rumbold had been Robert Clive's aide-de-camp at Plassey, was a member of the Bengal Council, and as chief of the British factory at Patna since 1763 he held a highly valuable and coveted position. He was also a close associate of Harry Verelst, the Governor of Bengal and Chairman of the Select Committee, with whom

⁵ Kinloch's submission to the committee, Select Committee proceedings 21 July 1767.

⁶ This claim, presumably made by Muktananda and Ram Das, is true in a sense: the route from the Terai by Sindhuli to Panauti does not cross any major rivers or ridges, although the seasonal torrents and steep terrain were far beyond what the British had anticipated.

⁷ Rumbold to Select Committee 19 December, Select Committee proceedings 12 January 1768. In this letter Rumbold also says that he received a letter from Jayaprakash sent to him via 'the padres' asking him to accept Muktananda as his genuine representative.

he shared a shipping business in Chittagong. Returning to Britain in 1769 Rumbold would become an East India Company Director, then return to India to be Governor of Madras and 'one of the period's most notorious nabobs', finally facing, like Clive before him and Warren Hastings afterwards, a failed prosecution in parliament, charged with corruption and provoking a war in the Carnatic (Kuiters 2008). Obviously his policy towards Nepal was partly motivated by hope for personal profit. A cartoon by James Gillray of 1783, entitled *The Nabob Rumbled*, depicts him spewing gold coins into a pot.

Captain George Kinloch is more obscure, but appears to be a similarly motivated character. His family held a baronetcy in Perthshire, in Scotland, and his brother was also a Bengal Infantry officer (Hodson 1927). He seems to have distinguished himself by suppressing opposition to the Company at Tripura, from where he was directed by the Committee to Patna, to prepare for the Nepal expedition. His diary and few surviving official letters show him to have been an adventurous and ambitious soldier, who enthusiastically advanced Jayaprakash's envoys' case for the rapid launch of an expedition, took what proved to be excessive risks in the pursuit of its success, showed great determination in his leadership as things went wrong, and, following the expedition's failure, occupied a part of the Tarai and argued for a second attempt. In his letters to the committee Rumbold was a strong advocate on Kinloch's behalf.⁸ Rumbold endorsed and added supporting evidence to Kinloch's assessment of the *vakils'* information, and would later persuade the Select Committee that Kinloch was not to blame for the failure of the expedition. The two men finally made a joint case to the committee for a second attempt and almost won the argument.

Kinloch's date of birth is not known. In April 1767, when the affair began, Rumbold was 31 years old and Verelst, the president of the Select Committee, was 33.

⁸ Yogesh Raj writes (2012: 4, 13-14) that Rumbold initially blamed Kinloch for the expedition's failure, before turning to his support. However, I have not been able to corroborate this claim. Also, the passage cited by Raj (2012: 14) in which Kinloch is blamed for 'a too hasty and imprudent progress when in want of Provisions', is not from Rumbold's letter to the Committee, as stated by Raj, but is actually from the Select Committee's order to Rumbold of 12 January.

A gossipy letter written by a civilian named Richard Barwell to his father in Britain in February 1768, after the expedition's failure, shows how Kinloch was perceived by some in Calcutta. According to Barwell, who himself was seeking a profitable appointment, the expedition was produced by 'the spirit of enterprise which has existed for ten years past in Bengal', but compromised by the fact that 'through Captain Kinloch's influence the [number of] officers were reduced to the lowest number possible, and that number all Scotch and all possessed with the idea of making their fortunes in the course of the expedition'.⁹ In the surviving documents, Kinloch often refers to himself as coming to the assistance of the Kathmandu raja, which was the standard formulation used by the British for the immediate objective of his expedition. But it may also be revealing that in a letter of December 1767, when advocating a second attempt, he refers to the mooted expedition as a conquest of Nepal.¹⁰

In its order to launch the expedition, the committee gave its own reasons for doing so.

In the present declining State of Commerce and Scarcity of current Species [i.e. bullion from which to mint coins], we the more readily embrace a Measure, which promises to open new Sources of Trade and Stores of Money to replace those annual Drains of Treasury we are directed to make for supplying the China Investment.¹¹

This reasoning by the committee reflected a common misapprehension at the time, which is that the gold and silver seen to emanate from Nepal had been mined there, whereas in fact it came to Nepal via Tibet under the arrangement by which Nepal minted Tibet's coins. It was also unknown to the Company that this arrangement was coming to an end due to the Mallas' debasement of Tibet's coinage (Rose 1971: 26). The Company hoped that trade via Nepal with the little known regions of Tibet and western China would open markets to British products. In fact, while the Company was correct that valuable trans-Himalayan

⁹ Richard Barwell to his father, 26 February 1768 (Barwell 1915: 28–29).

¹⁰ Kinloch to Rumbold 23 December 1767, Select Committee proceedings 12 January 1768.

¹¹ Select Committee to Rumbold, 21 July 1767. The China Investment mentioned here apparently involved a diversion of resources to pursue the Company's objectives in China.

trade had existed, it had been disrupted just when the Company became established in the region. At the time of Kinloch's expedition no detailed information on this trade was cited.¹² These issues would remain paramount in the Company's attitude towards Nepal and the Himalaya in decades to come.

In its letter authorising the expedition, the committee went on to tell Rumbold that, being so far from the scene, the committee was obliged to put its faith in Rumbold's judgement, and that he should only proceed if he was convinced of success, since defeat would bring 'Dishonour upon our Arms and deeply reflect on the Conduct of this Committee'. In what was no doubt due caution, and maybe also a measure to exculpate themselves in advance should things go wrong, the committee directed that Kinloch should withdraw if he met 'unexpected difficulties'. Finally, if he did relieve the Kathmandu raja, then he should take care that the Company was reimbursed its costs, but there must be no pillaging, and every effort should be made to 'engage the Affections and Confidence of the Rajah by every Tie of Gratitude and Esteem'.¹³

The progress of the expedition according to Kinloch's *Journal*

Kinloch's recently rediscovered diary makes it much clearer how his expedition failed, notwithstanding the fact that he himself did not always understand what was happening to him. His force of 2,400 Indian sepoy with British and 'black' officers (this figure is according to Barwell's letter), plus camp followers, set out from Patna at the height of the monsoon, around 26 August (the day his diary begins). They immediately found progress unexpectedly difficult, especially due to the problems of moving artillery across rivers and swampy ground. Heavy rains continued from this point onwards, until the expedition's final failure in mid-October. On Rumbold's recommendation, Kinloch had

¹² A letter of 25 August 1769 by James Logan to Verelst, who was still Governor of Bengal, cites the merchants of Patna describing the trade: 'The chief exports of Patna ... were coarse woollen cloths called Parpeteens, Coral, Salt, Betelnut, Cotton cloaths, Patna chintzes, Nutmegs etc. The imports Gold ingots, Gold dust, Borax, Musk, Cow tails, Chirris etc.' He correctly states that Nepali gold 'is chiefly brought there from Tibett' (Chatterji 1939: 40).

¹³ Select Committee to Rumbold, 21 July 1767.

given the contract to provide the army with grain to one Dondao Chudhary (afterwards referred to as 'the Chaudhari, etc.), who had supplied Company armies before, and had first been contacted three months in advance (Raj 2012: 45). Although Kinloch maintained some hope during his long-running and vexed communications with the Chaudhari, most of the repeatedly promised shipments never arrived, and despite occasional captures of small stores of grain along the route, hunger, culminating in famine, would mark most of the expedition.

With promises that the grain would soon be delivered, Kinloch pressed on to Janakpur, which he reached on 14 September. Kinloch described Janakpur as a village, which had been abandoned as he approached. 'There is a small mud fort, in which there is a Pagoda built something in the Chinese manner dedicated to Rajah Jannick Jee' (Raj 2012: 51-52). On 17 September, still without receiving the promised grain, Kinloch set out for Sindhuli (Sidley), now struggling to bring his guns through scarcely inhabited jungle. On the night of the 18th some gunpowder and provisions were lost, and four men drowned, when a flood swept through a dry riverbed where the force had camped. On 19 September he sent an advance party to capture Sindhuli. By 20 September food was already so scarce that Kinloch himself had not eaten for thirty hours. On 22 September Kinloch reached Sindhuli, where the advance party had already fought a skirmish with the Gorkhali garrison. On 23 September the fort of Sindhuli was captured relatively easily, with the loss of three of Kinloch's men and 137 wounded. Eight dead and one mortally wounded defender were found inside (Raj 2012: 72).

From here onwards, though, the army's intended route to Kathmandu via Panauti (roughly corresponding to the route of the current B.P. Highway) was barred. On 24 September an advance party consisting of one officer and two companies of sepoy was sent ahead to secure the route to Carcoat (presumably Khurkot, now also called Bhimeshwar), but on the 25th it was repulsed with 'great Loss' by the enemy, which had erected 'strong works' just beyond and above a hilltop that Kinloch called Dummann, itself in the area of Sindhuli. A second attempt, this time involving four companies, again failed on 27 September, again with 'Considerable Loss', largely inflicted by 'Showers of Stones' from above. Kinloch himself surveyed the defences, which

were on very steep terrain and consisted of ditches, a wooden fence and felled trees (Raj 2012: 79–80). Kinloch believed he could have easily swept them away if he could have brought a cannon onto the opposite hill, but this he wasn't able to do (Raj 2012: 80). Given the already weakened condition of his force Kinloch decided not to risk a third assault. One of Kinloch's officers, Ensign Hardy, told him that 'upon his [Hardy's] first arrival' (i.e. presumably 24 September) he had seen 'a Body of Troops Clouth'd in a kind of blue Uniform and arm'd with match-Locks arrived from Nepaul' (Raj 2012: 80),¹⁴ which Kinloch inferred to have been reinforcements sent too late from the siege of Kathmandu for the defence of Sindhuli.

Kinloch remonstrated with his guide Ram Das that he had not been warned of these defences, to which Ram Das replied that they had not existed three months earlier, and that Prithvinarayan had had ample warning of the British approach from his 'many Correspondents' in Patna, besides the British having written to him themselves, to issue an ultimatum before invading (Raj 2012: 81).

This setback forced Kinloch to attempt a different route, deliberating before turning west instead of north, to march via Hariharpur, which lies on the western edge of modern Sindhuli district by the Bagmati river. He set off as quickly as he could, again sending an advance force to secure the route. On 1 October he received a note from Hogan (who commanded the advance force) that he had captured the abandoned fort at Hariharpur (it was assumed that the defenders had been redeployed to secure the original route), and on 2 October Kinloch reached Hariharpur himself.

There was an elaborate building at Hariharpur which Kinloch described as follows:

[a] square built of excellent Brick ... In the inside is a large brick House, formerly the residence of the Muckwan Rajah, it is built after the Hindos manner and Consists of long inconvenient Galleries and

¹⁴ The Capuchin Father Giuseppe, in his account of the events in the Kathmandu Valley, records that one night the forces besieging Lalitpur 'all' left 'to pursue the English army, which, under the command of Captain Kinloch, had already taken *Siduli*'. However, with Kinloch 'not being able to penetrate the hills', they later returned to resume the siege (Giuseppe 1799: 320).

small Rooms, but not without much elegance in their taste. On the West side is a kind of an Altar dedicated I believe to Beem Sing, it is of Ivory Carv'd in Dwarfs Dragons and emblematical Figures, and supported by Pillars of the same, partly Guilded. (Raj 2012: 87)

On 3 October the army's provisions were completely exhausted, but their onward progress was prevented by a swollen river, which was obviously the Bagmati. During these days Kinloch attempted to communicate with Jayaprakash, whom he hoped would send a force to meet him, but the Gorkhalis had too tight a grip on the intervening hills for messages to pass easily and, besides, Jayaprakash was unable to help.¹⁵ On 11 October, according to Kinloch's diary, the British force managed to build a bridge across the river, but the force was now too weak to advance. On the 12th Kinloch himself fell ill. On the 13th desertions began, and disease and famine ravaged the army. On the 14th Kinloch recorded stragglers from his force being cut down in attacks by 'Junglee people', and noted his belief that they were stranded only 11 kos from the Kathmandu Valley.¹⁶ If not for the continuous rain, he thought, the march could be completed in two days. On the 15th there was intelligence that a pass on his route, which he called Mahabul, had been strongly defended. On 17 October he made his last known diary entry, recording that a mutiny had broken out in his camp at two o'clock in the morning. In the surviving diary manuscript the final entry stops mid-sentence.

Kinloch's defeat – the Nepali and British assessments

In Nepali historical memory, the Kinloch expedition is typically noted for three things: as a great feat of Gorkhali arms; as evidence of the threat to the proto-Nepali state from the British to the south; and – in its defeat – as sealing the fate of Jayaprakash and the other Malla kings. While I was working on this essay, a recently retired general told me that (along with the defeat of the Chinese army at Nuwakot in 1792) the

¹⁵ After various failed attempts, Ram Das eventually claimed to have got through and met Jayaprakash in Kathmandu, returning to Kinloch without a written letter but with the verbal message that it was impossible to send a force to meet the British (Raj 2012: 90–91).

¹⁶ The route from Hariharpur to Kathmandu as described by Brian Hodgson is 28.5 kos.

defeat of Kinloch at Sindhuli was one of the 'classic' battles in the Nepal Army's early history, and that his own ancestor, Vamsha Raj Pande, had been directly involved in repulsing the British. Although Kinloch's diary contradicts the popular impression that he was decisively defeated 'at the battle of Sindhuli Gadhi',¹⁷ this rendition can be traced back to the earliest references.

In his *Dibya Upadesh*, purportedly dictated before his death in 1775, Prithvinarayan dedicates two short sentences to the episode: 'Hardy Sahib came to attack Sindhuli Gadhi with three or four companies. I defeated him and also took his flintlocks' (Stiller 1968: 46). The loss of '100 stand of our Arms' is also mentioned by Kinloch in a letter of 23 December, during what he described as 'the unhappy affair of Siddley'.¹⁸ Since this event does not appear in the surviving pages of Kinloch's diary it may have occurred during the course of the retreat. According to a later chronicle cited by Baburam Acharya, these weapons allowed Prithvinarayan to create the Subaj and Old Gorkha battalions of the Nepali army. The same chronicle records that Kinloch captured Sindhuli, and states that the Nepali defence was mounted nearby at 'the Fort at Pauva' [Pauvagadhi] where a battle 'raged the whole day'.¹⁹ Other early Nepali references also emphasise the Company's defeat in battle. There is a one-line reference in the inscription in Nasalchowk, at Basantapur, made in 1769.²⁰ A chronicle reproduced by Hasrat as the *Thapa Vamshavali*, states, in the midst of an extremely garbled chronology of Prithvinarayan's campaigns, that 'the Englishman [Kinloch] was killed' (Hasrat 1970: 148). The *Bhasa Vamshavali* states that a Gorkhali force was briefly diverted from the siege of Lalitpur to defeat the invaders, and that 'Hadi [Hardy] Saheb' was injured and 'Kaptan Kinlakh' fled (Pradhan 1991: 111).

¹⁷ See for example Chapter 17 in Gyawali 1962, and its English translation (Gyawali 1974: 192–210).

¹⁸ Kinloch to Rumbold 23 December, Select Committee proceedings 12 January 1768. This is the letter reproduced by Raj (2012: Appendix E), dated 25 December 1767.

¹⁹ For the text of the relevant passage of Kharidar Buddhiman Simha's chronicle, see Raj (2012: 24–25).

²⁰ According to Pradhan (1991: 251, note 65) the relevant passage, which is the second line of the second verse of the Nasalchowk inscription runs '*matta kshanamapi na rane sththumishah Firangi*'.

Baburam Acharya's description is probably the most thorough modern Nepali account, and it is the telling upon which many others are based.²¹ According to Acharya, Jayaprakash's approach to the Company came following a meeting of all three Malla kings held at the Guhyeshwari Temple, at Pashupati near Kathmandu. Acharya describes the Select Committee's correspondence prior to launching the invasion.²² Acharya states that after receiving Rumbold's threatening ultimatum, Prithvarinarayan 'ordered Birbhadra Upadhyaya, protector of Sindhuligadhi to remain vigilant. He then sent troops to Sindhuli under the command of Vamsha Raj Pande, while he himself stayed in Kirtipur'.²³ Acharya published two letters, which are the only two exactly contemporary relevant Nepali documents that I am aware of, purportedly written by Prithvinarayan Shah at Kirtipur, in which he directed his lieutenants in confronting the British. The first is dated 25 September, on the basis of which Acharya calculated that the fighting near Sindhuli occurred around 10–12 September, whereas the diary shows Sindhuli was actually captured on 23 September 1767.²⁴ The second letter, written in October, states that news of the British retreat had reached Kathmandu, which cast Jayaprakash into a state of mourning, and it gives instructions to harry the withdrawing force:

Do not let the English escape now. Intrude ten-fifteen spies among the English troops ... You may kill their leader. If not you will certainly catch some of the exhausted ones. You will also get some valuables and arms. But make sure you have someone on standby in Hariharpur. (Raj 2012: 22)

Acharya's account appears to concede that Kinloch captured Sindhuligadhi. He describes the main defence as being made at a pass across the Mahabharat range somewhere slightly beyond Sindhuli, on the hill of Pauvagadhi. In the encounter at this pass, 1000 invaders and

²¹ See Chapter 4 in Acharya 1966, and its English translation (Acharya 1972: 221–225).

²² This material is evidently based on Chaudhari (1960).

²³ Acharya 1966: 223.

²⁴ See Raj (2012:19–22), citing Acharya's Sri 5 *Badamaharajadhiraj Prithvi Narayan Sahako Jivani*.

300 Gorkhalis are said to have been killed.²⁵ Acharya and others make much of stirred-up hornets' nests being used as a defensive weapon, but Kinloch does not mention this tactic at all. Yet, if some allowance is made for confusion over place names (i.e. if Acharya's Pauvagadhi is taken to be the same as Kinloch's Dunmanna), the two versions roughly correspond, the main difference being Acharya's seemingly exaggerated death toll.²⁶

Anyway, Kinloch was unable to proceed in the direction he intended, and in Acharya's rendition he fled west pursued by a Gorkhali force led by Birbhadra Upadhyaya. With his soldiers dying of malaria, Kinloch reached the Bagmati, and even succeeded in building a bridge across it, but it was swept away by floods. This destruction of the bridge, of which Acharya may have learned from the Select Committee's post-mortem of the operation, does not appear in the diary. Finally, Kinloch 'crossed the Bagmati in the plains area, passed by Rautahat, and established a camp at a secure place in Bara district'.²⁷

Neither Kinloch's diary, nor the correspondence following his defeat, in which he advocated a second attempt, has a great deal to say about the Gorkhali army. Indeed, except at the defences at Pauvagadhi/Dunmanna, he had little direct contact with his enemy in the period covered by the diary. The nearest thing to a description is a few lines in the diary following the taking of Sindhuli, in which he expresses his general astonishment at the country and people ('it is impossible to conceive a greater contrast between the Plains of Bengal and the Country we are now in...'), but his description of the 'Savages' he encountered, with their bows and arrows and curved weapons tucked in their cummerbunds, seems to merge enemy soldiers with his impression of the (also hostile) civilian population, of whom he believed, 'the Goorka Rajah... keeps them under' (Raj 2012: 76). He was as much in the dark about the people of Nepal as he was about the geography. In his letter of 19 December explaining the expedition's failure, Rumbold

²⁵ Acharya (1966: 224).

²⁶ Kinloch records 'Considerable Loss' of life in his diary, yet does not dwell on the numbers, but rather on how he will press on. This more likely refers to casualties in the double figures, or perhaps even exceeding one hundred, than to almost half of his force being wiped out in a single encounter.

²⁷ Acharya (1966: 224).

dismissed the Gorkhalis as poorly armed and lacking spirit. Richard Barwell's remark, in his letter to his father, seems relevant, that 'one cause [of the expedition's failure] was too great confidence of overcoming difficulties ... grounded on a mean opinion of the courage of the nations to which our arms are opposed'. According to Barwell, of the force of 2,400 that entered the Nepal hills, only 800 returned. Rumbold attributed the losses primarily to starvation and disease, as well as harassment during the retreat.

The first and ultimate reason for Kinloch's failure clearly was a lack of intelligence about the terrain and his enemy. Alternatively, Prithvinarayan, despite facing strategic challenges across the wide area from Lamjung to Sindhuli at this time, was forewarned and had tactical mastery in the hills. He was able to harass and constrain the British, inflicting casualties and cutting off their preferred route. Presumably Prithvinarayan also had a hand in Kinloch's failure to procure adequate supplies of grain, although the British don't seem to have paid attention to this possibility, and Nepali writers have dwelt only on the Gorkhalis' supposed superiority in battle.²⁸

Within this context there were more proximate or contingent problems which the British blamed for the expedition's fate, and which the British seem to have experienced partly as a matter of chance. These problems were laid out by Rumbold in his letter of 19 December 1767, which was read by the Select Committee on 12 January 1768. Firstly, Ram Das, on Jayaprakash Malla's behalf, had convinced the British to march during the monsoon. Since Kathmandu had not fallen by the winter (and would not fall until the following summer) this misjudgement may seem to have cost Jayaprakash his kingdom. Nevertheless, Rumbold sought to justify the sense of urgency felt by both himself and Kinloch, recalling that it was corroborated by the European missionaries, and argued that the 'extremely bad' roads could have been overcome with sufficient provisions. Rumbold's analysis came down to the 'remarkably unfavourable' weather, and the want of provisions. Finally, the flood which washed away the bridge built by

²⁸ In his letter of 19 December 1767 Rumbold referred to 'the Hill People' attacking 'stragglers... in the rear of the detachment' which caused panic among those supposed to be supplying grain to the army, but Rumbold does not indicate that he believed the attackers were enemy soldiers.

Kinloch at Hariharpur was the 'event [to which] we may ascribe the failure of the expedition'. This flood is not mentioned in the diary up to the mutiny at which point the surviving manuscript ends (Raj 2012: 103).²⁹ But a reading of Kinloch's diary does make Rumbold's broader judgement seem plausible in immediate terms, although it does not take the wider context into account. He believed that Kinloch was unfortunate to be defeated by a combination of adverse circumstances. Had the British brought adequate grain, or had there been a lighter or earlier monsoon, it seems quite possible they could have reached Kathmandu. In this interpretation, it appears that although the expedition was almost literally a shot in the dark, failure was not inevitable. Rumbold wrote that, 'At a more favourable season I am convinced the same force would with ease open the communication with Nepal'.³⁰

Recriminations and a second attempt

One might expect that there would be repercussions for the proponents of such a military disaster. On 11 December the Select Committee, which in July had warned that defeat would bring 'Dishonour upon our Arms and deeply reflect on the Conduct of this Committee', wrote to Rumbold expressing dismay at the outcome, which it believed could only have come about by Kinloch's misconduct, or if the *vakil's* letters were forgeries.³¹ In his reply of 19 December, Rumbold sought to exculpate himself and Kinloch. He began by justifying his own misjudgement in launching the expedition during the monsoon. In the same letter he also wrote that Kinloch 'acted for the best' in attempting to advance rapidly, showing uncommon 'fortitude and resolution of a good officer'. He continued in the next line that the expenses are 'trifling' and 'I have been careful to have the utmost economy observed'. On 3 January 1768

²⁹ Neither Kinloch nor Rumbold wrote of a major mutiny in their later correspondence, Rumbold instead identified a flood as the final disaster. Rumbold even defended the sepoys' discipline in his letter to the Select Committee of 12 January 1768.

³⁰ Rumbold to Select Committee 19 December 1767. Read by the Committee 12 January 1768.

³¹ Richard Barwell also believed that the expedition's failure was an important matter, telling his father that it was 'pernicious to our influence in these parts and ruinous to ourselves'.

Rumbold wrote again to the Committee, to emphasise that Kinloch had captured a tract of land in the Tarai (of which the Committee was already aware), including two 'very strong' forts at Bara and Rautahat, all of which he believed was worth a lakh of rupees a year to the Gorkha raja.

The Committee drew a different conclusion from the facts laid out by Rumbold in Kinloch's defence, and responded on 12 January 1768 by ordering that Kinloch should be relieved of his command and face a court of enquiry because 'a too hasty and imprudent progress when in want of Provisions' (in deviation from his instructions) had caused the failure of the expedition. In the same decision the Committee ruled out making a second attempt.

Sometime during this period Rumbold travelled to Calcutta, and was presumably personally involved in lobbying. He wrote again on 28 January 1768, from Calcutta, again justifying Kinloch's decisions, arguing that Kinloch was 'more unfortunate than culpable', and that he had conducted himself with 'becoming Spirit'. He went on to argue that Kinloch should be entrusted with leading a second attempt, that the changed season rendered a 'probability of success' and that he would this time 'undoubtedly be able to effect the relief of that country'.³² The order to launch such an expedition 'can not be too soon given'. An attached letter from Kinloch to Rumbold dated 23 December 1768 argues that 'The two great evils by which I suffered, rain and want of grain, will now be removed'.

There were other reasons for Kinloch and Rumbold to believe that a second attempt would succeed. Firstly, they believed that, by occupying land in the Parsa-Bara-Rautahat area, Kinloch had struck a considerable blow against Prithvinarayan, and had secured a source of grain. Kinloch called this 'the finest country I have seen' (worth ten lakh a year, he claimed, with suitable improvements),³³ and Rumbold argued that this loss must have 'destroyed' the Gourcha Rajah, and that he would now be

³² Rumbold to Select Committee 28 January 1768, Select Committee proceedings 10 February 1768.

³³ Kinloch to Rumbold 27 December 1767, read by Select Committee 12 January 1768.

anxious to come to terms.³⁴ (These arguments were not enough to appease the Committee at its 12 January 1768 meeting, when it ordered action against Kinloch.)

Secondly, a number of hill rajas came forward to offer their support for a second attempt. In Calcutta on 28 January 1768, Rumbold wrote, 'several of the neighbouring Rajahs have desir'd to join us and assist in forwarding the [second] Expedition'. This statement was supported by attached letters from Kinloch, and from Golding at Bettiah. Jit Bikram Singh, the king of Tanahau, had contacted Golding with an offer 'of conducting our Troops thro' his own Country', also proposing that at the same time a second force should advance through Parsa.³⁵ Golding believed other rajas would follow, and was pressing for timely guidance on how to respond to them. Meanwhile Karna Sen, the last Sen ruler of Vijaypur in eastern Nepal, had made repeated overtures to Kinloch. According to Kinloch, Karna Sen and other rajas, who were 'all his [Prithvinarayan's] enemies from interest' were 'likely' to join him. This would solve his problem in securing grain.³⁶ Finally, both Kinloch and Rumbold made the case that if Prithvinarayan was not defeated now, he would be sure to pose a military threat to Company interests in the plains in future.

The Committee now reversed its positions, writing to Rumbold on 10 February 1768 that 'as you have given us such positive Assurances that a Variety of unavoidable Occurrences Alone occasioned the Miscarriage of that Enterprise we shall remain satisfied with regards to Captain Kinloch's Conduct'. The earlier order against Kinloch was revoked, and since Rumbold was best placed to judge, the Committee asked him to inform them how many troops would be needed, and what other measures he recommended, to give a second attempt the best chance of success. On 16 February 1768 the Committee read a letter from Rumbold, dated the previous day, in which he wrote that he personally had

³⁴ Rumbold to Select Committee, 3 January 1768, Select Committee proceedings 12 January 1768.

³⁵ Letter from Golding to Rumbold 25 December 1767, Select Committee proceedings 10 February 1768.

³⁶ Kinloch to Rumbold 23 December 1767, Select Committee proceedings 10 February 1768. (Appendix E in Raj 2012, under 25 December 1767.) Rumbold did not forward Kinloch's letters to himself to the Committee in the same order as they had been sent.

presented to Verelst the route-plans for a second invasion, which Kinloch had produced.³⁷

Presumably intending to put the outcome beyond doubt the second time around, Rumbold proposed a force of one complete battalion plus 'five or six companies' and some extra artillerymen. Supplies, he said, would be procured from Bara, and the force should set out 'immediately'.³⁸ The meeting of 16 February 1768, however, laid the matter to rest. Verelst and his colleagues wrote to Rumbold that they 'had been in the hope of making a second attempt', but since he had requested a 'considerable additional force', and since the Secret Committee at Madras was also making persistent requests for reinforcements from Bengal, it would be imprudent to proceed. Finally, for this reason, there would be no second expedition. Kinloch died of illness at Patna on 10 May 1768, and Kathmandu fell to Prithvinarayan Shah in September.

Indeed, there were more important issues on the Select Committee's agenda. In the September letter by which Kinloch's expedition was announced to the Court of Directors in London, the news was relegated to the ninth paragraph.³⁹ Again, in December, when the Select Committee informed London of the failure of the expedition, and its suspicion of Kinloch's misconduct, this news was relegated to the ninth paragraph, the preceding text reassuring the Directors that little had changed in the civil, military or political affairs of Bengal, which remained prosperous and stable.⁴⁰ At the same time, the Bengal government was fielding an army twice the size of Kinloch's force against Hyder Ali, the ruler of Mysore, who was then opposing the Company in the area of the Madras Presidency, in what became known as the First Anglo-Mysore War.

³⁷ Rumbold to Select Committee, 15 February 1768.

³⁸ Rumbold to Select Committee 15 February 1768, Select Committee proceedings 16 February 1768.

³⁹ Select Committee to Court of Directors 25 September 1767.

⁴⁰ Select Committee to Court of Directors 16 December 1767.

The expedition's place in Anglo-Nepal relations

The following paragraphs seek to offer a brief consideration of Kinloch's expedition in the context of later events, at least to the extent of showing that opening trans-Himalayan trade remained the Company's major concern in the region for many years to come, and that the Company intermittently considered launching another similar military action. In the early nineteenth century the context changed. At the time of the 1814–16 war, the Marquis of Hastings wrote to the Court of Directors that one of the disputes occasioning the war 'owes its remote origin to the consequences of Captain Kinloch's expedition' (Hasrat 1970: 249), but little reference was made to his experience in the planning of that war. Kinloch would largely disappear from later British writings on Nepal.

In the years after Kinloch's failure the Court of Directors repeatedly directed the government in Bengal to attempt to open trans-Himalayan trade.⁴¹ In 1769 Dr James Logan, who appears in Kinloch's diary as the zealous and aggressive surgeon on that expedition, put himself forward as an expert on the region, who could accomplish this by his own initiative. His preferred means was to track down Jayaprakash Malla, who he believed was hiding in the mountains somewhere, and restore him to power, but as an alternative he suggested cultivating Prithvinarayan instead. The Company, clearly realising that it had backed the wrong side in 1767, preferred the latter approach and wrote a letter to Prithvinarayan endorsing Logan as its representative, flattering Prithvinarayan, and disavowing their former support for Jayaprakash as a mistake and misunderstanding.⁴² The last that is heard of Logan appears to be in a letter from Prithvinarayan to the Panchen Lama, relayed in turn to George Bogle, in which Prithvinarayan stated that a *firingi* had come to him and that he intended to send him out of the country (Markham 1876: 158).

Another attempt to cultivate Prithvinarayan Shah was made in 1771, when the lands in the Tarai captured by Kinloch were returned to Nepal (for four years Nepal had been paying an annual tribute for their use).

⁴¹ Letter of 16 March 1768, *Fort-William India House Correspondence* 5: 81.

⁴² Letter of 13 November 1769, *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* 2: 431.

These lands had proved much less valuable than the Company initially hoped, and unhealthy for the occupying troops.

The military situation in eastern Nepal, Darjeeling, Sikkim and Bhutan was fluid in the early 1770s, as Prithvinarayan extended his territories up to Darjeeling, and Bhutan, with which he was allied, attempted to expand to the west.⁴³ Warren Hastings, who became governor of Bengal in 1773, passed up an invitation from Karna Sen to intervene militarily against Prithvinarayan when he annexed Morang in 1774, but the Company did intervene militarily to replace the ruler of Bhutan that year after it attacked Cooch Behar, in the hope of bypassing Nepal by opening a trade route to the east. In this context George Bogle was dispatched as an envoy to Tibet and Bhutan in 1774, and continued to attempt to negotiate trade with Tibet and the Chinese until his death 1781. Samuel Turner made a similar mission to Tibet in 1783. Two brief documents among Warren Hastings' papers in the British Library, though undated, indicate that military intervention against Nepal was considered during the 1770s.⁴⁴ These are entitled 'A Sketch of a Plan for the Attack of a Mountainous Country in India' and 'Plan for an Attack on the Nepaul Raja to Oblige him to quit Morang and reduce him or bring him to such terms as the Government may think necessary'.

One of Prithvinarayan's first acts after capturing Kathmandu had been to send a delegation to Tibet in an attempt to reopen trade to the north, and his subsequent campaigns in the east were aimed at controlling the alternative route through Sikkim. Yet his *Dibya Upadesh* also reveals isolationism and a suspicion of commerce, warning that buying Indian imports would sap the national strength (Stiller 1968: 43).⁴⁵ Kinloch's expedition can only have deepened the Gorkhals' anxieties towards British power, commercial or otherwise, but how far it was responsible for this tendency is questionable. The *Dibya Upadesh*, which mentions the expedition very briefly (and in a triumphalist context, rather than as a warning), does not make any connection between the expedition and the ambivalence towards trade. What's more, and unknown to the British – at least initially – Prithvinarayan's

⁴³ On this intricate series of events, see Chapter 6 in Pradhan 1991.

⁴⁴ I am grateful to Sam Ellis for bringing these to my attention.

⁴⁵ On Prithvinarayan's dispute with Tibet see Rose (1971: 25–26).

dispute with Tibet over the debased coinage that was supplied to Tibet by the Mallas was an insurmountable obstacle to restarting the Maller trade. In this dispute Tibet insisted Prithvinarayan buy back the coinage at its nominal rather than its metallurgical value, about double what the Gorkhals thought it was worth. Prithvinarayan's negotiations with Lhasa failed on this point. When at length the Company was able to wring a commercial treaty from Kathmandu in 1792, it was due to the fact that Nepal was at war with Tibet (and China), largely over the issue of currency, and briefly seeking an alliance in the south.

In short, even leaving the British aside, Nepal-Tibet relations made trans-Himalayan trade through Nepal all but impossible. The 1792 treaty went unimplemented. The Company took advantage of political divisions in Kathmandu to press for a second treaty, intended to implement the first, in 1801, but Gorkhali hostility to connections with the British (especially the presence of a British resident in Kathmandu), caused this agreement to break down within a year.

Kirkpatrick (1811), whose visit was associated with the 1792 treaty, makes only passing references to Kinloch, mistaking the year and which Malla king had invited him. Hamilton (1819), whose visit was associated with the 1801 treaty, does not mention him at all. However, both authors took note of military and geographic information that was intended to be useful to a future invading force.

In 1814 the *casus belli* was a dispute over the location, or more precisely the nature, of the frontier in the Butwal area, further west, but a secondary issue concerned 22 villages in the sector briefly occupied by Kinloch, around Rautahat (Michael 2009). Nevertheless, perhaps surprisingly, there seem to be only two references to Kinloch's rather relevant experiences in the collection of Company letters documenting the planning and conduct of the 1814–16 war, published in 1824 by J.L. Cox as *Papers regarding the administration of the Marquis of Hastings in India*. This may partly reflect the fact that since the record of Kinloch's campaign (by now well beyond the personal memory of anyone involved) was in the Company's archive in Calcutta, there was little reason for the planners to write to its dispersed informants about it.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Kinloch's diary came to the British Library as part of a collection of personal papers, rather than as India Office records, so may not have been available to officials.

As far as planning is concerned, it appears that the only reference to Kinloch comes in a letter of 21 July 1814 from the Adjutant General Lt. Col. Fagan to Charles Crawford, who had been the surveyor on the 1801 mission, in which he sought to clear up a discrepancy between his map and the sketch map left by Kinloch. Further discussions of the Sindhuli/Hariharpur route do not even mention Kinloch.⁴⁷ Moreover, in general, it is clear that British knowledge of Nepal's geography had progressed only a little since Kinloch's time.

A second reference among these papers comes in December 1814, when the Company officer Major Bradshaw was holding the Nepali envoy Chandra Shekhar Upadhyaya captive whilst carrying on a written negotiation with Kathmandu. Among the documents belonging to Chandra Shekhar that entered the British record one is entitled *A Statement of Everything that has passed between the Nepaul Government and the English from first to last* (Cox 1824: 378–382). This represents Kinloch's expedition as a dispute over Makwanpur land rights, which was amicably settled after a few years during which Nepal paid the traditional tribute of one elephant a year. It continues by recalling the co-operative relations between the two powers cultivated by Dinanath Upadhyaya, a Nepali envoy to Calcutta at the late 1760s and during the 1770s. On the basis of these references, Kathmandu's institutional memory of Kinloch's expedition seems to have been at least as good as that of Calcutta, albeit that Kathmandu framed the episode in terms that were useful to its own diplomacy in 1814.

In a residency document entitled *Sketch of the Relations between the British Government and Nepal from their commencement down to AD 1834*, which was purportedly based on available authentic documents, the surgeon and assistant resident Archibald Campbell recalled Kinloch's expedition in much the same way that Rumbold and Kinloch had seen it, stating that the expedition was turned back from Hariharpur by the unhealthy conditions in the Tarai and lower hills. In remarks that are hostile to the Gorkhali state, Campbell laments that Kinloch did not reach the 'lovely valley', because if he had he would have 'perpetuated it in the hands of a civilised, lettered, industrious and commercially

⁴⁷ Lt. Col. Fagan to Crawford, 21 July 1814. For further discussions of this route see the facsimile edition, *Military History of Nepal* (Cox 1824: 61, 82–83).

disposed people', rather than the 'rude, cruel and war thirsty' Gorkhas (Hasrat 1970: 173). Kinloch's failure, he writes, led to the missions of Bogle and Turner to Tibet.

Campbell's *Sketch* may well be almost the last discussion of these events by a British author. Daniel Wright, Campbell's successor as residency surgeon four decades later, included two passing references in his *History of Nepal*, which do not betray any real knowledge of the episode (Wright 1877: 51, 283). Passing references aside, by the time that Perceval Landon described the history of Nepal it is likely that he had no access to any British account of Kinloch, and he made only a brief, somewhat garbled mention, apparently based on information acquired in Kathmandu, noting, 'This probably refers to the advance of an English detachment at the request of Nepal' (Landon 1928: 62–63). The 1929 *Cambridge History of India* specifically omits Kinloch, stating that 'The only serious effort to check their [the Gorkhalis'] progress was made by the Nawab of Bengal in 1762 ... In 1768 they conquered the Nepal valley' (Dodwell 1929: 377).

Kinloch's expedition had been remembered in texts such as the *Dibya Upadesh*, the Nepali vamshavalis, and in the traditions of the Nepali army, at least to the extent that Perceval Landon was reminded of it during his visit to Kathmandu. The expedition was excavated from the Company records by two Bengali historians; Nandalal Chatterji, whose *Verelst's Rule in India* was published in 1939, and K.C. Chaudhuri, whose *Anglo-Nepalese Relations* was published in 1960. As Chatterji wrote, 'The first English expedition to Nepal has been ignored by historians so far, and has consequently been one of the least known episodes in the annals of British India' (1960: 21). Nationalist historians of Nepal such as Baburam Acharya and Ludwig Stiller would add Chaudhuri and Chatterji's discoveries to the Nepali sources.

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States and territories: the Anglo-Gorkha War as a diagnostic event

Bernardo Michael

The Anglo-Gorkha war has been the subject of much historical writing. Many writers have tried to explain the war in terms of its immediate causes, conduct, and consequences, from the vantage point of their own loyalties. Nepali nationalist historians claimed that a combination of factors from the preservation of Gorkha's territorial sovereignty, to British expansionism and the quest for trading routes and markets resulted in the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-1816 (Pradhan 2012, Rana 1970, Regmi 1975: 291, Shaha 1990, Sharma 1973).¹ Others have tried to provide event histories of the war, consisting of profiles of the main engagements, military tactics, personalized accounts of fighting garnished with tales of bravery, courage and honour (Gould 1999, Khanduri 1997, Pemble 1971). Historian Ludwig F. Stiller attributed the war to the felt needs of the British to rationalize their administration and of the Gorkhalis to control the agrarian and forest resources of the tarai (Stiller 1976, Whelpton 1991).² On quite another front, a number of scholars have examined the war from a wider diplomatic perspective, that of unfolding Anglo-Nepal relations. In these accounts, Anglo-Gorkha relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are viewed in terms of sequences of wars, embassies, treaties, and military expeditions (Chaudhari 1960, Husain 1970, Mojumdar 1973, Rose & Fisher 1970, Rose & Scholz 1980, Sanwal 1965). While these representations of the war are not entirely irrelevant, they are largely event-based accounts of military action, diplomatic manoeuvrings, and nationalist sentiment.

¹ Rana (1970:26-40) assigns as many as 14 causes that led to the war. Among Nepali works see Pant (2021 BS), who cites the effect of British propaganda as an important reason for weakening the will of Gorkhali officials (such as Bam Shah on the Gorkha Kumaon frontier). Maheshraj Pant has written a number of articles on the Anglo-Gorkha war, published in early issues of *Purnima*, the mouthpiece of the Samshodan Mandal group of historians.

² Stiller, however, is deeply committed to writing a nationalist history when he notes that one of the consequences of the war was that it gave the Nepalis a 'psychic shock' (1976: 26), and the 'silent years' (from the end of the war in 1816 to Gorkhali Prime Minister Bhim Sen Thapa's death in 1839) were a period of anguish where the cry of village Nepal and the needs of the nation went unheard.

This paper pushes for a new line of inquiry. It argues that there were deeper forces at work in the circumstances leading to the Anglo-Gorkha war. These forces, which were ecological and political, provide valuable clues about how territories were constituted along the shared frontier of these two states. Previous studies on the war have more often than not ignored this line of inquiry. Exceptions to this trend can be found in the writing of scholars such as the historian Ludwig Stiller and the anthropologist Mary Des Chene. Stiller points to the conflicted notion of boundaries the two states grappled with prior to the outbreak of war in 1814 (Stiller 1973: 240-247, 1974: 4-21 and 1976: 216-227), while Des Chene, in her sensitive cultural history of the Gurkhas, insightfully notes that '(n)either the idea of connected territory nor the concept of a "line of frontier" entered into the Gorkhali understanding of possessions' (Des Chene 1991: 30, also 25-33). Taking their suggestions seriously holds considerable promise for broadening and deepening our understanding of the Anglo-Gorkha war.

For this reason, it might be useful to treat events such as the Anglo-Gorkha war as the product of a complex palimpsest of forces. This approach argues that events are diagnostic of deeper forces that are layered, the product of contingencies, contradictions, ambiguities, and unintended consequences. The territorial disputes surrounding the Anglo-Gorkha war are diagnostic of deeper forces at work that have not been explored by previous studies on the war, studies which have been overwhelmingly generative of straightforward narratives of cause and effect. The work of anthropologist Sally Falk Moore is a useful reminder about the diagnostic value of certain events. Moore explains:

'An event is not necessarily best understood as the exemplifications of an extant symbolic or social order. Events may equally be evidence of the ongoing dismantling of structures or of attempts to create new ones ... the kind of event that should be privileged is one that reveals ongoing contests and conflicts and competitions and the efforts to prevent, suppress or repress these ... there are certain kinds of incidents, one might call them 'diagnostic events,' which have a strong likelihood of exposing such information ... This circumstance is the justification for arguing that certain kinds of events are particularly important forms of diagnostic data. Within their content

they display multiple meanings in *combination* ... the juxtaposition in events of competing and contrary ideas, and of actions having contradictory consequences, is the circumstance that requires inspection and analysis' (Moore 1987: 729-30).³

Identifying an event as diagnostic is one way of identifying disruptions in social settings where historical structures are revealed to be undergoing change. Consequently, events are not merely reflections of localized processes but can be part of emerging transformations taking place on a wider scale. That is, the situatedness, contextuality, relationality, and the culturally composite character of the event is emphasized. Such an attempt at situational analysis is what helps to unpack the diagnostic quality of an event. It is a reminder that events such as the Anglo-Gorkha War unfolded within a context of change as the only constant, and where the ebb and flow of historical production, reproduction, and transformation were seamlessly intertwined. The Anglo-Gorkha territorial disputes that revolved around 22 villages and the *tappa* of Sheoraj lying along their joint frontier were diagnostic of deeper conflicts over the geographical construction of the state at a moment of colonial encounter. The war itself provides a unique opportunity to explore questions relating to the territorial constitution of states in precolonial South Asia. Because both states conducted serious investigations into these disputes, detailed documentation of them is available.

The deeper significance of the war cannot be gleaned by merely examining the conflicting claims of the contestants. Company officials, when discussing the causes of the war would often claim that it was the predatory character of the Gorkhali state, manifested in a system of gradual encroachment (into the Company's territories), that finally culminated in the killing of the Company's police officials in the Gorakhpur *tarai*.⁴ Gorkhali officials on the other hand would bemoan the

³ Moore's work covered the process of social change within the context of changing relations of property in Tanzania. Her approach has since been used to understand market dynamics and modern nationalism. See for instance Ouma (2015), Elyachar (2005) and Lee (2006). For an alternative scientific view that seeks to discern broad underlying, almost genetic similarities between disparate events see Roehner & Syme (2002).

⁴ See the 'Proclamation of opening of hostilities made on November 1, 1814 by the Governor-General', FS Consl. 20 December 1814, no. 3, National Archives of India (hereafter NAI). In later communications, Company officials would emphasize the killing of the Company's

long history of friendship between the two states was being sacrificed by the British to serve the trifling disputes engineered by zamindars located on the Company's common frontier with Gorkha.⁵ Gorkhali claims to territories would be justified on the grounds of long established traditions of conquest. What is fascinating about these discourses is that they are diagnostic of the shared phenomenon both grappled with, but represented to themselves, and each other in different ways. My attempt is to see through these cultural perceptions and engage that larger phenomenon they were indirectly referring to—an ensemble of spatial practices having to do with the organisation and knowledge of territory along their common frontiers.

In making such moves to understand the production of territory, I also seek to participate in wider issues, debates, and theoretical concerns that animate scholarship exploring the intersections of statemaking, space, frontiers, and borderlands.⁶ Here, and more specifically, I attempt to suture the two significant but often disconnected approaches of agrarian history and critical cartography. By adding the variable of space to the study of agrarian entitlements, land-use patterns, and the constitution of political authority, I am able to explore hitherto unexplored questions pertaining to the geography of the state.⁷ While such questions have received scant attention in the agrarian histories of South Asia, they could potentially shed new light on the history of cartography. For instance, connecting the dots between agrarian history and surveying and mapmaking takes us beyond the traditional histories of cartography that have remained focused on the work of surveying

Police officials as being the immediate cause for the outbreak of the war: 'I have noticed the continual misconception when the Goorkah authority affect as the cause of the war. As it is impossible they can be really ignorant that the British Government has taken up arms to avenge the murder of our Thannadars and not to settle a boundary dispute ...' (John Adam, Secretary to Government to Edward Colebrook, Agent of the Governor-General in the Ceded and Conquered Provinces, FS Procs. 4 April 1815, no. 30, NAI).

⁵ Or 'inconsiderate zamindars and evil disposed persons', as Gorkhali Raja Girbana Juddha Bikram Shah put it. See the letter from the Raja of Nepal to A. Brooke, Agent to the Governor General in Banaras, FS Consl. 18 April 1815, no. 16A, NAI.

⁶ For examples of writings on states, state making, and space see Scott (2010), Sivaramakrishnan (1999), Winichakul (1993). On frontiers, see Baud & van Schendel (1997), Eaton (1993), Gommans (1998), Richards (2001), Tagliacozzo (2005).

⁷ Inspiration for undertaking this new theoretical move comes from Agrawal & Sivaramakrishnan (2000) and Scott & Bhatt (2001). For more on the agrarian history of South Asia, see Ludden (1999).

institutions or the representational effects of mapmaking. Here, my efforts to connect the dots between agrarian and cartographic histories through a spatially sensitive portrayal of territorial production involving both elite and subaltern actors build on the pioneering work of scholars like Arthur Robinson, David Woodward, and John Brian Harley who argued that maps are not the mere products of technical skill, but are also awash with the forces of culture, power, and history.⁸ The study of the spatial history of agrarian entitlements places cartographic agency within a wider set of relationships that, for long, have been ignored in the historiography surrounding the Anglo-Gorkha War. The war was diagnostic of a more widespread concern shared by East India Company officials, for the establishment of linear boundaries that encapsulated contiguous and non-overlapping territories, as the natural geographical template of the state. However, when confronted by the continued persistence of fuzzy boundaries and patchy territorial mosaics, arising out of a complex and shifting structure of agrarian entitlements, colonial officials took recourse to modern surveys and mapmaking as a scientific solution to the problem of space in South Asia.⁹ They also introduced seemingly innocuous revisions to administrative routines that would codify these spatial rearrangements.¹⁰

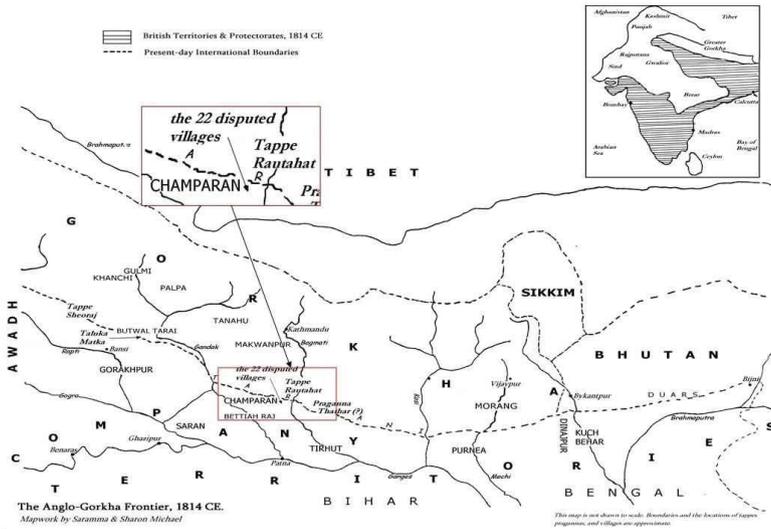
In the correspondence documenting the territorial disputes along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier, frequent references are made to the environment, tribute, taxation, and tenure (see Map 1). I argue that these variables played an important, and oft neglected, role in the territorial constitution, not just of Gorkha, but of the Company state as well. At stake were questions relating to the spatial construction of states. That is, put

⁸ The literature on the study of cartography calling for its moorings in culture, power, and history is vast. See for example the oft cited work of J.B. Harley (1992). A collection of J.B. Harley's work can be found in Laxton (2002), and a critical assessment of Harley's work 25 years after the publication of his classic *Deconstructing the Map* can be found in a special issue of *Cartographica* (Rose-Redwood 2015). Here, I am also very grateful to Matthew H. Edney for conversations over the years that have helped to clarify my thoughts. Among his many writings, too numerous to cite here, see for example Edney (2005: 14-29).

⁹ Recent work on the history of cartography in South Asia includes Barrow (2003), Chester (2009), Edney (1997), and Mishra (2016). I pursue these questions in *Statemaking and Territory: Lessons from the Anglo-Gorkha war (1814-1816)* (Michael 2012) and in a more recent article (Michael 2016).

¹⁰ I explore this in greater detail in Michael (2016).

Map 1. The Anglo-Gorkha Frontier in 1814 CE. With the Champaran-Tarriani section in the box.



together, these variables stitched together a distinct territorial design that was discontinuous, overlapping with fuzzy and shifting boundaries. This served to heighten the spatial anxieties of British officials especially during the early decades of the Company’s rule when they stumbled through this context of territorial dynamism as it manifested itself in the territories it had inherited from the Mughals. It points in the direction of colonial responses to create a new territorially exclusive geographical template for the state —with linear boundaries and occupying a continuous portion of the earth’s surface. The remainder of this paper will explore the varied contexts that produced the spatial signatures that were distinctive of territorial production along the Champaran-Tarriani section of the Anglo-Gorkha frontier. The Champaran-Tarriani section was formed by the northern reaches of *sarkar* Champaran (in the Company’s territories) and Gorkha’s Eastern Tarai Districts. Here the *pargana* of (Gadh) Simraon along with its two constituent *tappas* of

Nannor and Rautahat, straddled the Anglo-Gorkha frontier.¹¹ In 1812, the Gorkhals and the East India Company were embroiled in a dispute involving twenty-two villages lying along this section of the Anglo-Gorkha frontier. After exploring some of the dynamics of territorial formation along this frontier, I will conclude with some reflections on the colonial response to this.

Forest-Field-Wastes on the Champaran-Tarriani frontier

Historians studying the Anglo-Gorkha War have yet to trace the connections between the Tarai environment, shortages of labour, the ubiquitous presence of wastelands, and the production of agrarian territory. The agrarian environments that made up the Champaran-Tarriani section of the frontier were marked by the presence of dense malarial forests that carpeted the foothills and plains—the region being known as the *tarriani*. This shared frontier formed an intersection for ecological, agrarian, social and political regimes whose extent, though often overlapping, was never constant. Interactions between human beings and their environment shaped the cultures of governance on this frontier in important ways —to produce fluctuating histories of land control that reshaped the bodies of administrative divisions such as *parganas* and *tappas* along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier (see Map 2).

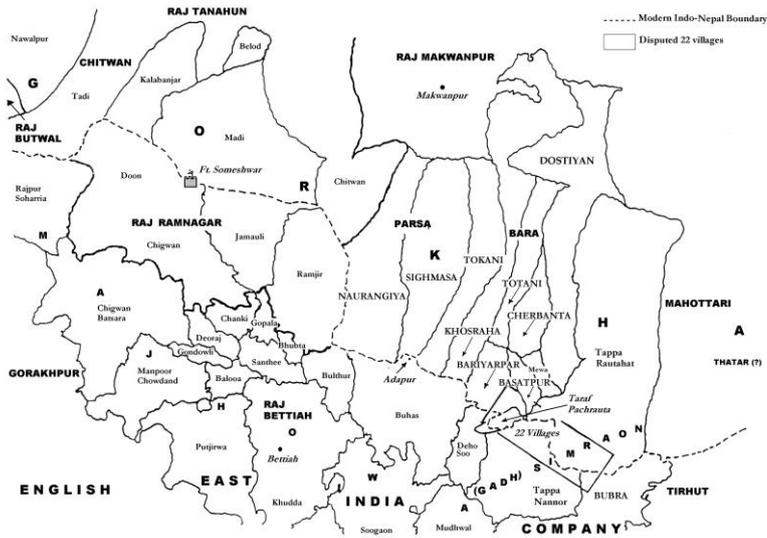
The presence of malaria (*aul*) created a paucity of labour and restricted the activities of agrarian managers, local magnates, and government officials to the few months of the cold season (November to March). Consequently, authorities at Kathmandu frequently issued clear instructions to their eastern Tarai officials to do everything in their power to attract cultivators, even if it meant giving generous concessions to lure them from the *moglan*.¹² For instance, in 1810, *Sardar* Gaj Singh Khatri was ordered to procure respectable persons (*bhala manis*) and cultivators (*ryots*) from the *moglan* to retain and settle cultivable forest lands (*kalabanjar*) in Morung.¹³ However, these practices could turn

¹¹ Historically, this frontier belonged to the Mughal *subah* of Bihar which was further subdivided into *sarkars*, *parganas*, and *tappas*, normally, though not always, in descending order. On the ground, the boundaries of these administrative divisions were not always clear.

¹² With the term *moglan*, the hill people would broadly refer to the plains (*madesh*) of north India.

¹³ A *sardar* was a high-ranking civil and military official, below the rank of *kaji*. See the 'royal order to *sardar* Gaj Singh Khatri', RRS 16 (May 1984): 78. Similar orders were given to *gosain*

Map 2. A Closer View of the Champaran-Tarriani Frontier, 1814.



This map is not drawn to scale. The location, layout, and boundaries of divisions may vary.

counter-productive for authorities at Kathmandu. For instance, in AD 1805 (1862 BS) *jaqirdars* and *birtadars* of Bara and Saptari districts (in Gorkha's Tarai) were warned against attracting peasants from India who would replace local revenue paying peasantry on *kalabanjar* (uncultivated forest lands) lands.¹⁴ Political instability also caused cultivators to migrate frequently. For instance, in 1762, Gorkha's conquest of

Baburiya Das regarding reclamation of lands in Saptari (ibid., pp. 78-79). See the following documents for additional evidence: 'Land Tax assessment rates in Mahottari'; 'arrangements for reclamation of wastelands by tenants from India, 1793 AD', RRC 36: 26; 'Sardar Gaj Singh Khatri ordered to issue *pattas* to tenants procured from India for settlement of wastelands in Morung, 1810 AD', RRC 39: 230; 'Tenants emigrated to India invited back to Morung'; 'assurance of resolution of grievances by *subba* Anup Singh Adhikari and Dhokal Khawas, 1813 AD', RRC 39: 561. See also the 'royal order granting *chautharis* of Chitwan the authority to invite settlers from India to reclaim wastelands, 1818 AD', RRC 42: 321.

¹⁴ Such practices must have caused a loss of revenue to the state. Though warnings of severe punishment were issued to such landholders by Kathmandu, it seems unlikely that such threats were actually carried out. See RRC 5: 537, no. 181, National Archives of Nepal (hereafter NAN).

Map 3. A view of the Forest-Field-Waste Mosaics along the Champaran-Tarriani Frontier, 1816.



Note that the *taraf* of Pachrauta appears cut off from the main body of *tappa* Rautahat by an intervening stretch of territory formed by the *pargana* of Bariyarpar. (Source: *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, Acc. No. 1801-20-63-2, National Archives of India, Delhi).

Makwanpur induced many Tharus to flee the eastern Tarai regions to the safety of Champaran. Later the authorities at Kathmandu recalled them on the promise of restoration of their former holdings.¹⁵ In this fashion, the agrarian landscape pulsed in sync with the flows of labour—that is, patches of land fell in and out of cultivation depending on the availability of labour.

The considerable presence of wastelands along the Champaran-Tarriani section of the frontier contributed another sources of dynamism to the constitution of territories. For example, over half the area of *tappas*

¹⁵ See Panjiar (1993). See especially the *lal mohar* (royal document bearing the red seal of the king of Gorkha) to Hem Choudhari, grandson (*nati*) of Ranpal Choudhari, p. 25 & plate 2.

Rajpur Soharria, Jamauli, Chigwan Batsara, and Manpur Chowdand were covered with forests, grasslands, and uncultivated wasteland.¹⁶ In fact, the entire northern reaches of the Raj Ramnagar were covered by grassland.¹⁷ In 1815, Lt. Col. Paris Bradshaw, the Company's political agent to Nepal noted that the areas east of Bara Garhi (twelve forts) and *pargana* Simraon, that had become the subject of dispute with Gorkha, were 'surprisingly' barren.¹⁸ Colonial officials missed out the crucial role these lands played in the constitution of the agrarian landscapes of the region. A variety of land-use patterns can be discerned within the category of waste.¹⁹ Such wastelands and even grazing runs could, over a period of time, become a complex composite of various types of cultivable wastes (fallow lands that could be forest fallows or grass fallows) unculturable wastes, forest lands (cultivable/uncultivable), and common lands. In other words, waste was not a permanent condition for lands to lie in. So, the generic category of wastelands could in reality enclose lands that for various reasons (transhumance, warfare, and famine) shifted back and forth between cultivation, fallow, and waste.

Such fluctuating land-use patterns meant that patches of territory would shift back and forth between cultivation and waste, and at times between different sources of political authority (Gorkhali, the Company, and little kingdoms and powerful landed magnates) along the frontier. Consequently, administrative districts such as *parganas* and *tappas* were never constant in their layout or boundaries. They tended to possess

¹⁶ There is ample evidence to support this statement. In 1788, Archibald Montgomerie, Collector of Saran district noted that *sarkar* Champaran contained an 'immense' quantity of waste lands that were fit for cultivation, which for the most part lay along the border of the 'Nipal' territories, as cited in Stevenson-Moore's 'Final Report', p. 29.

¹⁷ The Raj Ramnagar, or the little kingdom of Ramnagar lay on the northern frontier of Champaran and was made up of the three *tappas* of Chigwan, Jamauli and Ramgir. In 1814, it was administered by members of the former ruling family of Tanahu. It originally formed a part of the Tanahu raj whose main territories lay to the north in the hills. When the Tanahu raj fell to Gorkha in the late eighteenth century, its ousted rulers fled down to Ramnagar and established their authority there. For further details about the Tanahu raj, see Adhikari (1998).

¹⁸ Letter from Paris Bradshaw to J.R. Eliot, Mgst. of Saran, 2nd April 1815, in KRR, microfilm reel no. IOR 2, IOR 5/1/2, Part 2, pp. 354-361, NAN. It might be appropriate to reiterate that *pargana* Simraon was made up of two *tappas*, Nannor and Rautahat. In this observation, Bradshaw is probably referring to *tappa* Nannor. Rautahat as a newly acquired territory was granted to Gorkha by the British, in 1783. In between 1783 and 1814 the Gorkhals strengthened their presence by conferring a large number of land grants in *tappa* Rautahat.

¹⁹ For an analysis of the colonial state's use of such classificatory categories see Stein (1983).

Map 4. A close-up view of the Forest-Field-Waste Mosaics along the Champaran-Tarriani Frontier, 1816 CE.



(Source: *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, Acc. No. 1801-20-63-(A), National Archives of India, Delhi.)

shifting contours with intermixed bodies and fuzzy boundaries. Company reports of this period, and ultimately historians of the Anglo-Gorkha war failed to connect the dots between the shifting patterns of land-use, the complicated multi-cornered disputes over land and labour, and the structure of territory. The dynamics of such forest-field-waste mosaics rendered fluid the organisation, layout, and boundaries of territorial divisions such as *parganas* and *tappas* that lay along the Champaran-Tarriani frontier. No doubt such spatial dynamics were at work in the lands that would become the subject of territorial dispute between the English and the Gorkhals in 1814.

The space of *Pargana* (Gadh) Simraon. States, little kingdoms, landed magnates and the question of *tappa* Rautahat

The *pargana* of (Gadh) Simraon was made up of two subdivisions or *tappas*—Rautahat and Nannor, which were constituted out of a complex and shifting web of entitlements concerning agrarian tenures and taxation

rights.²⁰ The *tappa* of Rautahat and its detached but dependant *taraf* of Pachrauta became the subject of a dispute involving Bir Kishor Singh, the raja of the neighbouring little kingdom of Bettiah and subject of the East India Company, a local landed magnate by the name of Mirza Abdulla Beg, and the raja of Gorkha (see Maps 3 and 5).²¹ While Bir Kishor argued that *tappa* Rautahat was an integral part of his kingdom, the Mirza claimed the *tappa* on the basis of a *birta* grant (i.e. land that is inheritable and tax free) given to his ancestors in 1743 CE by the erstwhile kings of Makwanpur.²² When Gorkha conquered Makwanpur in 1762, it claimed its territories including the *tappa* of Rautahat. To complicate matters further, Mirza Abdullah Beg had his rights to *tappa* Rautahat confirmed by the rajas of Bettiah and his new Gorkhali overlord, and possibly even by an official of the East India Company. It appears that this process of (re)confirmation changed the character of the grant. Both the raja of Bettiah and Gorkhali officials would allege that this grant was not a *birta* grant, but a *jagir* grant (land granted on a non-inheritable basis in lieu of a cash salary), and therefore open to resumption.²³ All this makes it clear that the conferral and renewal of land grants needs to be understood within a fluid context of shifting meanings. Land grants cannot be treated as occasions frozen in time and meaning. Rather, they are reconstituted within specific historical contexts. Such reconstitutions had spatial effects as well, because such divisions could become detached from one kingdom or overlord (the kingdom of Makwanpur) and attached to another (or more than one) source of authority (i.e. Bettiah and Gorkha). Spatially, this

²⁰ Both the Company state and Gorkhali rulers retained the older (usually Mughal) administrative divisions of *parganas* and *tappas* when organizing their territorial possessions in the *tarai*. Company records use the nomenclature *pargana* Simraon, while Gorkhali records use the term *praganna* Gadh Simraon. Simraon was a very old *pargana* and finds mention in the sixteenth century work of Abul Fazl, the *Ain-i-Akbari* (Jarrett 1949: 167).

²¹ A *taraf* is a fiscal subdivision belonging to a *pargana* or *tappa* and includes several villages.

²² See *arzi* (petition) of the Bettiah raja, Bir Kishor Singh to Lt. Colonel Paris Bradshaw dated 24 August, 1816 in F.S. Procs. August 24 1816, no. 18, NAI.

²³ Details about the original grant inscribed in copper and an English translation of the same can be found in 'Procs. of the Governor-General-in-Council in Bengal' (hereafter PGGCB), 28 September 1781, Consl. 1-3, WBSA. Further details can be found in 'Series of letters and Papers with Persian Secretary John Monckton's report on them relating to the Nepal-British Border Disputes in Champaran', in FP, Procs. 4 March 1814, Consl. 53-65, pp. 195-434, NAI (hereafter Monckton Report). See also the 'Report of Jonathan Duncan, Preparer of Reports in the Revenue Department', dated 6 October, 1783, in PGGCB (Revenue Department), 11 November 1783, no. 55, pp. 2350-2363, WBSA (Hereafter Duncan Report). See also Press List Index, vol. 9, 6 March-18 December 1781, pp. 111-112, WBSA.

meant that lands could move back and forth among two or more kingdoms, or even straddle their borders. And given the frequency with which the Mirza Beg family got their claims processed from various authorities—at least seven times between the years 1743-83, the amount of semantic, spatial and social rearranging that must have followed from this entire corpus of practices would have rendered the fiscal space of the *tappa* of Rautahat and its dependent *taraf* of Pachrauta extremely illegible—shot through with disputed claims and difficult for central authorities (both Gorkhali and British) to govern. Clearly, Abdulla Beg was seeking to manoeuvre himself into a favourable position—either as an independent landholder or as a dependant of a patron who would offer him maximum benefits. And, he sought to do this at a time of political uncertainty, the region being buffeted by many powerful political forces, from within and beyond.

Other examples of such territorial dynamics can be found in the history of this section of the frontier. In the late eighteenth century, the political authorities in charge of *pargana* Thathar (originally the kings of Makwanpur and later Gorkha) paid an annual *peshkash* or tribute in elephants to officials south of the frontier, in what eventually became East India Company territories. This payment of tribute in elephants continued until 1801, after which the practice was discontinued under the terms of a commercial treaty of 1801 signed between Gorkha and the Company. *Pargana* Thathar was probably constituted out of a number of dispersed villages close to *tappa* Rautahat, and the payment of tribute meant that sovereignty over it was shared between political authorities in the hills and those in the plains below them. *In other words, pargana Thathar straddled the space of multiple kingdoms/states.* Over time, the East India Company would become averse to such overlapping territorial arrangements and discourage them whenever they came to light. Eventually, the Thathar *parganas* would disappear from the historical record with its constituent lands being absorbed into the political territories of Gorkha and the English East India Company.²⁴

²⁴ For information on the Thathar *parganas* see Raja Shitab Roy's 'Account of Pergunnah Tauter Belonging to Sirkar Tirhut of Bihar Province', 30 July, 1771, Proceedings of the Comptrolling Council of Revenue at Patna (hereafter CCRP), vol. 1, 1 January, 1771 to 30 July, 1771, WBSA; 'Letter of J. Kieghly, Collector of Tirhut to the CCRP', 14 February, 1772, in Procs. CCRP, vol. 3, p. 79 (with translation of a letter from Prithvinarayan Shah enclosed), WBSA;

Map 5. Suggested location of *Pargana Thathar* along the Anglo-Gorkha Frontier



Note: The dotted lines represent the present-day boundary between India and Nepal.

But let us return to the case of Mirza Abdulla Beg. In 1765, his family rented ten villages in *tappa* Nannor from Jugal Kishor Singh, the raja of Bettiah. In 1767, following Jugal Kishor's expulsion from the region by British forces, Beg's family quietly added these ten villages to the *tappa* of Rautahat.²⁵ Such practices of sequestering villages from one *tappa* to another have spatial implications, especially if the villages concerned are

Ahmad (1958: 17-26); Pradhan (1990: 72-83) and Regmi (1975: 183, 186, 193, 195, 197, 249-250).

²⁵ List of the villages in the Tuppeh of Nunnour, Purgunnah Simraon, Surcar Chumparun as taken from a document under the seal of Cazeer Noorulhuk, 1173 Fuslee, being 48 years old, as reported by Paris Bradshaw, Political Agent on the Nepal Frontier, FP, Procs. 25 March 1814, pp. 625-631, NAI. Bradshaw gives the names of only 9 villages leaving the 10th one unknown.

not contiguous with each other. When such non-contiguous villages were added to the fiscal resources of a division, then the contours of that division could be rendered spatially discontinuous on the ground (or on a map, as the case might be). British officials would frequently describe this phenomenon as intermixture. And such spatial discontinuity or intermixture must have been exacerbated by the presence of a new source of authority, such as the Gorkhalis or the East India Company who were advancing into the area as overlords. Consequently, in 1783, when the British conceded Gorkhali claims to the *tappa* Rautahat, the 10 villages also fell into Gorkhali hands. This not only left the territories of Nannor and Rautahat intertwined along their edges but also sowed the seeds of further conflict between the kingdoms of Bettiah and Gorkha.²⁶

The situation took a new twist when Mirza Abdulla claimed that, since Rautahat was a rent-free (*maafi*) grant with no tax obligations, it had been struck off (*kharij*) the accounts of the kingdom of Makwanpur as well as the province of Bihar.²⁷ This merits further comment because of its spatial implications. In contemporary revenue discourse, terms such as *kharij* were commonly used to indicate that some item had been struck off from the account registers containing details of revenue yielding (*mal*) lands that were organized around territorial divisions such as *mahals*, *parganas* or their sub-divisions. Spatially, this meant that patches of land could move in and out of account registers following the vagaries of the history of a particular land grant. In particular, the Beg's arguments suggest that rent-free lands when excluded from the taxation rolls of the state became little islands of perceived personal autonomy.²⁸ Such islands could pepper the territory of a kingdom without any consideration being

²⁶ For the Gorkhalis the three main issues that needed to be resolved with the East India Company were Gorkha's claims over the dependant *tappas* (Jamauli, Ramgir and Chigwan) of the Fort of Someshwar, Rautahat and Pachrauta and the surrender of the Makwani Prince living in the Company's territories. See the 'Letter from Raja Ran Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah, January 1782', Historical Letters, Kausi Tosakhana Collection, no. 91, NAN; 'Letter from Ran Bahadur Shah to Bahadur Shah, March 1783', Historical Letters, Kausi Tosakhana Collection, no. 86, NAN.

²⁷ PGGCB (Revenue Department), Procs. 3 June, 1783, nos. 1-7, WBSA.

²⁸ Burghart too makes a similar point about how rent free and religious grants of land were usually seen by their recipients as being completely outside the revenue system of a state (Burghart 1987: 259).

given to the coherence and continuity of the territorial divisions that British officials were insistent on preserving.

Processes of state making on the Champaran-Tarriani frontier unfolded precisely at the sites of such complex negotiations between multiple actors located at many levels. In October 1783, Governor-General Warren Hastings concluded, without any understanding of the territorial complexities of the case, that the *tappa* of Rautahat did not belong to the East India Company and therefore it would be unable to support Mirz Abdulla Beg's claims.²⁹ Hastings' inability to recognize this subtle point and its spatial ramifications—namely the Company's failure to generate coherent and compact territories—seems to reflect the confusion and ambiguity its officials displayed in their attempts to understand the production of precolonial administrative divisions. In any case, Hastings' decision concerning Rautahat in 1783 only provided a temporary resolution to these spatial dilemmas. They would continue to simmer on the Champaran-Tarriani frontier, and resurfaced in the first decade of the nineteenth century.

By 1814 the two states were confronted with a new set of conflicts, this time pertaining to their rights to 22 villages that straddled the common boundary of *tappas* Rautahat and Nannor (see Map 5). Gorkhali officials would maintain that these 22 villages belonged to *tappa* Rautahat, while the Bettiah raja Bir Kishor Singh and his agents would argue that they belonged to the neighbouring *tappa* of Nannor.³⁰ Company officials were drawn into this dispute, since the raja of Bettiah was a Company subject. In 1811, the disputes took a violent turn when Laxman Giri, the Gorkhali *subba* of Rautahat, was allegedly attacked and killed by the

²⁹ PGGCB (Revenue Department), 11 November 1783, no. 56, WBSA, emphasis mine. See also the 'Papers Respecting the Nepal War' (hereafter PRNW) 2: 371; Naraharinath 2022 BS [1966 AD], p. 10.

³⁰ Letter from W. Leycester, Magst. of Saran to J. Adam, Secretary to Government, 5 January 1816, FS Consl. 3 February, 1816, no. 21, NAI. Two witnesses also claimed that the twenty-two villages had originally been forest, cultivated by the Bettiah raja Bir Kishor Singh since 1790. See the depositions of Bassun Raut and Sheikh Ziauddin, Monckton Report, 1814.

supporters of the Bettiah raja.³¹ Between 1813-1814, this dispute became the subject of a number of official investigations on both sides.³²

Gorkhali witnesses in particular were insistent that the rights to collect revenue from these twenty-two villages constantly fluctuated between various parties, and were never the sole monopoly of a single authority. The depositions of witnesses such as Bikha Chaudhari, Bassun Raut and Girdhari Lal clearly reveal that different parties collected revenues from these villages. And these collecting agents could be Gorkhali officials (1766-1770; 1782-1785), Mirza Abdulla Beg (1770-1782), or Bir Kishor Singh, the raja of Bettiah (from 1790 onwards).³³ Given such frequent shifts in arrangements for the collection of revenue, all that mattered to headmen like Bassun Raut was paying revenue to the concerned authority when the time arrived. A *gosain* named Hait Giri also testified to the existence of such tussles.³⁴ Once again, such shifting and contested claims to land rights and tax collection paid little attention to the spatial integrity of the administrative units to which they belonged (*mauzas*, *tappas*, and *parganas*). Consequently, administrative divisions such as *parganas* and *tappas* (either in whole or in part) could shift back and forth between different collecting authorities, leaving their bodies

³¹ Details about Laxman Giri's appointment as *ijaradar* (revenue contractor) and activities in the *tarai* can be found in RRC 40: 54-58, & 194. He was killed on 19 June, 1811. See also the Monckton Report.

³² 'Report on the enquiry into the disputes between the Nepaulese and the raja of Bettiah concerning the lands on the frontier of Zillah Sarun in the dominions of the Honourable Company', FS Procs. 26 March 1813, Consl. no. 36, NAI (hereafter Young Report); See also the series of dispatches between Lt. Col. Paris Bradshaw and Government, FP Procs. 25 March 1814, no. 25-34, pp. 547-635, NAI (hereafter Bradshaw Report); and Monckton Report, 1814. On the Gorkhali side see for example the following — '*subbas* and other officials of Bara-Parsa and Rautahat directed to provide necessary help to Ramjit Bhandari and Mir Munshi Raza Khan in settling Border Disputes, 1810 AD', RRC 39: 165; '*guru* (Ranganath Pandit) authorized to demarcate Nepal-India border with *amil* (*amin?*) from India, in Butwal and elsewhere, 1813 AD', RRC 39: 557. Earlier, the death of *subba* Laxman Giri had resulted in a Gorkhali investigation of the affair, which was led by *sardar* Ranjang Bania, *subba* Bala Bhanjan Pande, *guru* Ranganath Pandit, *kazi* Ranoddip Singh and *sardar* Parshuram Thapa, see the deposition of Gorkhali witness Durga Chaudhari, in the Monckton Report, 1814. See also the letter from Ranganath Pandit to Girbana Juddha Bikram Shah, December 1812, giving details about Young's arrival on the frontier (Narharinath 2022 BS [1966 AD]: 69).

³³ The dates are as given by Bikha Chaudhari, and even though they might be speculative, they do clearly show that between 1743-1814, the collection of revenue on the Champaran-Tarriani frontier was never resolved in favour of one party for any length of time. See the depositions of Bikha Chaudhari, Bassun Raut and Girdhari Lal, in the Monckton Report, 1814.

³⁴ See 'Evidence provided by Hait Giri, former zamindar of Ghewra', 6 July 1814, in FP Procs., 26 July 1814, no. 69-70, pp. 508-18, NAI (Hereafter Hait Giri's Account).

discontinuous, dispersed, and intermixed at many places. This kind of dispersal of land, taxation, and tribute collection rights was widespread all along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier. The study of the complicated and multi-cornered disputes that took place along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier is diagnostic of the conception of a state where power does not flow neatly outwards from the centre. Rather, the central influence is consistently blunted by shifting patterns of local agency. Thus, patches of land belonging to administrative units along the Anglo-Gorkha frontier could come under the extractive levies of local magnates or petty chiefs in one year, lie waste in another, and revert to cultivation in the third, only this time in the hands of some new political authority. Such lands would be recorded in the account books of an administrative division (such as a *pargana* or *tappa*), only to be left out the next year and attached to the accounts of another separate division. Depending on the vagaries of political forces organizing cultivation and their allegiances, these administrative divisions could belong to one state (such as Gorkha) in any one year, only to be attached to the revenue record of the Company the following year. Viewed in this way, the state becomes a nexus of shifting relationships empowered by the presence of interested local agents who provided a critical ingredient for state making, a situation which would produce the entangled territories of Gorkha and the East India Company. The institutional arrangements established by both states to administer the collection of revenue would be left fluid by such local initiatives. And as central authorities became increasingly drawn into the dynamics of these local conflicts, these disputes were rearticulated in the form of formal inter-state disputes.³⁵

Conclusion

The intricacies and complexities of such territorial dynamics have never been explored against the background of the Anglo-Gorkha War. No attention has been paid to the inter-state politics of the little kingdoms along this frontier either, nor has any recognition been given to the formative role that was played by local forces such as cultivating groups, chieftains and landed magnates, and petty officials as they manoeuvred

³⁵ See the Young Report, Monckton Report, Bradshaw Report, and Hait Giri's Account. For a map of *pargana* Simraon that helps in locating the disputed villages, see Alex Wyatt's 1847 *Map of pargana Semrown, District Sarun*.

to gain access to various agrarian resources, collect taxes, and levy tribute. Analyzing these details and their connections to questions of spatiality provides a valuable window to the territorial dynamics that unfolded along this frontier. This approach opens up the possibility of writing a historical geography of the mobile state spaces that made up the Anglo-Gorkha frontier.

The story of colonial efforts to mark and demarcate space continued in the years following the war. For the next decade, the Company's officials traversed the length and breadth of the Anglo-Gorkha frontier in order to demarcate a linear boundary to separate the two states. Every effort was made to keep the line straight and to preserve its integrity in years to come. The Company's officials would increasingly pursue this vision of territorial sovereignty and were averse to admitting any competing territorial claims that violated this notion. They were suspicious of distinctions between rent free and tax yielding lands and considered both as being subject to their authority. Indigenous landholders on their part felt that such distinctions were critical and could not be anchored to the preservation of territorial continuity and boundaries, because they were legitimate entitlements derived out of older arrangements. The boundaries of these entitlements made up the boundaries of the state, irrespective of their meandering, overlapping, and discontinuous disposition. Following the Anglo-Gorkha war the Company would increasingly turn to modern cartography and mapmaking as the vehicle for displaying its vision of territorial sovereignty. Ultimately, it was the Revenue Surveys of the nineteenth century that gave colonial officials their first glimpse of the disjointed bodies and discontinuous boundaries of precolonial administrative divisions such as the *pargana*. The maps produced by these Revenue Surveys provided the basis on which subsequent colonial territorial (re)arrangements would take place.³⁶ Ultimately, the goal was to create a new geographical template for the state —occupying a definite portion of the earth's surface and divided into non-overlapping divisions and subdivisions. The Company would bolster these efforts by drawing up law codes, establishing bureaucratic routines, redirecting of tax flows and the redefining of tenurial rights. The Gorkhali state would not undertake

³⁶ For more on these revenue surveys see Michael (2007).

similar surveys and territorial rearrangements until much later, in the twentieth century, through the work of its Bureau of Census and Statistics.³⁷ However, the colonial efforts to create neatly ordered state spaces remained a largely incomplete project. The continued presence of enclaves, dispersed territories, straggling corridors of imperial control and shared sovereignty were a reminder of the flipside of the neat lines, order, and rationality that have traditionally been viewed as the hallmarks of Empire.³⁸ In some instances, such as the Chit Mahals (made up of over 197 enclaves and exclaves) that lie dispersed along the contemporary Indo-Bangladesh boundary, intermixture has persisted to this day (see Map 6).³⁹ In the years 2015 to 2016 the governments of India and Bangladesh would eliminate these enclaves and transfer populations in order to put an end to the territorial discontinuities reminding us of the world that existed at the time of the Anglo-Gorkha War.

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³⁷ For details see *Nepalko Naksa (thum/pragannama vibhajit janganna jillaharu)* (Kathmandu: Department of Statistics, [2015 BS], 1958 AD) and *Interim Report of the Census of Nepal (Kathmandu: Department of Statistics, 1955)*. I am grateful to Thir Bahadur Rajimajhi and Nara Kanta Adhikari, former officials from the Census department, for providing valuable information on these matters in summer 2005.

³⁸ For detailed explorations of this theme see Benton (2010), Sen (2002) and Stoler (2006). For a timely study of the English East India Company set against the evolving backdrop of the transition from early-modern to modern forms of state, sovereignty and political power see Stern (2011).

³⁹ See van Schendel (2002).

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The First Nepali in England: Motilal Singh and PM Jang Bahadur Rana

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Introduction

Migration of Nepalis in the UK is a relatively recent phenomenon.¹ Yet, today Nepalis are already a well-established ethnic minority group with a population estimated at around 100,000 people. This is especially thanks to settlement rights granted to the Gurkhas in the 2000s, 190 years after their first recruitment into the British Army.

Until recently, it was assumed that the first people from Nepal to set foot in the British Isles were Nepal's Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana and the members of his mission to the UK in 1850. However, a recent discovery of events that happened in London in May 1850 falsifies that assumption. An unprecedented event took place in the street of London in late May 1850. In a surprising turn of events, the Nepali Embassy got unexpected news about a Nepali, who turned out to be a former soldier, living in London. Soon after, he was rescued from London's St Paul's Churchyard, where for years he had been living a pathetic life as a crossing-sweeper. He served as a private interpreter to Jang Bahadur during his stay in Britain, and accompanied him to Paris and presumably back home to India and Nepal. This man was Motilal Singh, who left behind a historical article entitled 'Some Account of the Nepalese in London', published in the July issue of the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*.²

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² It was Biswo Poudel who first discovered the article, and published a short piece about it in *Himal Khabar Patrika* in September 2010. The substantial 18-page article, divided into six parts and published in the July issue of the magazine, provides detailed information, some of it new, on Jang Bahadur's visit to the UK. The first and the most important section introduces Motilal himself, revealing his identity as a Nepali and the circumstances that landed him in England. The second section relates much of what is already known about the arrival and the manner of reception of Jang Bahadur's team in Southampton. The third

This paper primarily aims to introduce Motilal Singh and his life in London. I have undertaken further research into Motilal Singh since my earlier Nepali publication on him (Adhikari 2013), which came out as the by-product of a larger work on Nepali migration in the United Kingdom (Adhikari 2012).³ This paper is based on research into Motilal's article and other relevant materials, such as online historical archives, including newspapers and magazines published around 1850, and other published secondary sources.

The growth of Nepali migration to Britain has naturally given rise to interest among both academics and ordinary people about the place of these migrants in British society. Though information about the current situation is readily available, information about historical matters is extremely limited. In this context, the discovery of this new material makes an important contribution both to the study of history of Nepali migration and the history of the Britain-Nepal relationships. Specifically, it helps us to understand more about the activities and encounters of the Nepali mission during their stay in Britain. We already know much about the late 18th and 19th-century Nepal through the work of British visitors and diplomats. Motilal's work reciprocates to some extent by broadening our understanding of lives in Victorian England through the eyes of Nepali visitors in the 19th century.

Motilal Singh had previously been unknown to Nepali historians, as several other known publications of that time do not mention him. Since his original article only covers activities for about a month beyond meeting the Nepali party, and nothing further was published by him beyond June 1850, his fate remained a mystery. There are also

section explains two important aspects: Motilal's perspective on the local people and witty and metaphoric descriptions of the railway. The fourth section describes four events in particular: Jang Bahadur's visit to a French play (including a humorous description of the French), attending a review of the Lifeguards (including romantic encounters), sightseeing in London, and enjoying an evening party organised at Leadenhall Street by the East India Company Office. The fifth section describes the Nepali team's visit to the Derby horse race, highlighting the perceived English craze for racing, Jang Bahadur's deep knowledge about horses, the gypsy Andhra women, as well as the incident with the horse dealers. The final section describes Lumley's fête.

³ The Centre for Nepal Studies UK conducted a large scale survey of Nepalis in the UK in 2008, and the research continued until 2011. In 2012 an edited book entitled *Nepalis in the United Kingdom: An overview* was published.

competing and puzzling identity issues that add to the mystery. Through further research I have discovered a piece published in *Punch* magazine which answers some questions about Motilal's return, and shows that as anticipated, Motilal Singh did in fact accompany Jang Bahadur's party to Paris on their way back home.

Recent research findings suggest that given his multi-dimensional relevance to Britain-Nepal relations and Nepali migration to the UK, Motilal was an important historical figure: he was a Gorkha soldier who participated in the Anglo-Nepal war of 1814-1816; he is also among the first group of Nepalis (prisoners of war) to join the army of the British East India Company. He is, so far as is known, the first Nepali to visit and live in the UK, and the first Nepali known to date to write and publish in English.

The remaining part of the paper is organised into four sections: general information on Jang Bahadur's party in England, some information about the life of Motilal Singh, some mysterious and puzzling aspects of his story, and some of the highlights of his essay. The paper ends with a short conclusion.

The first ever high-level visit to the UK from South Asia?

Until about 10 years before the bicentenary of Gurkha recruitment to the British Army (initially the army of the East India Company), Gurkha soldiers themselves did not have any direct experience of the territory of the country known as Britain. Initially, Gurkha recruitment was not formally recognised by the government of Nepal, but once the government formally acknowledged it and began to cooperate with the recruitment process (particularly from the time of Bir Shamsheer), the system was to recruit Gurkhas in Nepal and to retire them in Nepal (Gould 2000, Nepal Government 1947). Despite serving in several parts of the world in the colonies of the British Empire, Gurkhas were not allowed to come and live in Britain. The numerous books written about Gurkhas (mainly by ex-Gurkha officers) remain silent on the question of Nepali migration to the UK.

When the Nepali Prime Minister Jang Bahadur Rana visited London in 1850, he was believed to be the first Nepali to visit Britain. At the time, several British papers carried and reported news with some importance about his visit. A detailed report of his visit was seemingly prepared by

one or more members of his entourage, and a version of this was collected and published by Kamal Dixit under the title *Jang Bahadurko Belait Yatra* (Dixit 2058 BS). According to this report and other sources, the 25 people from Nepal in the tour included two brothers of Jang Bahadur, Col. Jagat Shamsheer Rana and Col. Dhir⁴ Shamsheer Rana, plus Sr. Capt. Ranmehar Adhikari, Kaji Karbir Khatri, Kaji Hemdal Singh Thapa, Kaji Dilli Singh Basnyat, Lt. Lal Singh Khatri, Lt. Karbir Khatri, Lt. Bhimsingh Rana, Subba Siddhimansingh Rajbhandari, Subba Sivnar Singh, Kharidar Prithvidhar Padhya, Kharidar Hari(jyu), doctor Chakrapani, Newar artist Bhajuman, four chefs and domestic servants, and other army personnel (*huddasipāhi*) (Whelpton 2016, Dixit 2058 BS, Cavenagh 1884; Oldfield 1880, The Indian News 1850).⁵

Given that none of these documents mention any interaction with Nepalis in Britain, Jang Bahadur and his team were regarded as the first Nepalis to set foot in the British Isles, informally known as *Belait* in Nepali. The *Belait Yatra* report claims: ‘... So far, nobody from Hindustan (India) has been to London *Belait* ...’ (Dixit 2058 BS: 1). While this claim is not correct as there had been visits from India before (Fisher 2004), it is true that high profile political leaders had not visited before, out of fear of losing caste after crossing the black water (*kalapani*) (Whelpton 2016). Hence the comment of the British Indian officials quoted in the report that, ‘So far no sovereign, nawabs, kings or noblemen had shown interest in travelling to *Belait*’ is likely to be true (Dixit 2058 BS: 3).

The report also quotes high ranking British officers who confirm this, by telling Jang Bahadur: ‘... Nobody from Hindustan of your stature has ever come here. Seeing your greatness, the people of all classes have a high impression of Gurkhas’ (Dixit 2058 BS: 18). *The Economist* of 1 June 1850 (p. 602) concurs, ‘He is the first Hindoo of so high a caste who has ever been presented to the Queen.’ For all these reasons, it was generally thought that Jang Bahadur and his party were the first people

⁴ I have modernized and anglicized the orthography of the sources (i.e. ‘Bir’ for ‘Beer’) and omitted diacritics.

⁵ Chakrapani, Bhajuman and Hari (*jyu*) are not mentioned in the *Belait Yatra* edited by Kamal Dixit or other sources of that time. According to Whelpton (2016: 118), a biography of Jang Bahadur prepared by his son Padma Jung Bahadur Rana (1909) contains the name of the physician (Chakrapani) and artisan (Bhajuman). Whelpton (2016: 112) cites a facsimile published in 2008 which mentions Kharidar Hari (*jyu*) as someone who accompanied Jang Bahadur and wrote the *Belait Yatra*.

from Nepal to come to the UK. However, one article about Jang Bahadur published at the time in the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist* did reveal that they were preceded in Britain by another Nepali.

Motilal: The first Nepali in Britain and his life

The article ‘Some Account of the Nepalese in London’, published under the name of Motilal Singh in July 1850, provides important information about Jang Bahadur’s Nepali party in Britain and, more importantly, about Motilal himself.

The article suggests that Motilal Singh was the first Nepali to reach the British Isles. The possibility of other Nepalis arriving there before him is slim, though it cannot be totally ruled out. Motilal mentions that the language of gypsies he encountered at the race course sounded reminiscent of Nepali. These people came to Britain several centuries earlier, and may well have been of Indian descent (Motilal refers to them as being from Andhra). Unless we find further evidence, we should regard Motilal Singh as the first Nepali to come to and live in Britain.

Born in Bhadgaon (Bhaktapur) in the Kathmandu valley, Motilal Singh was a Gorkha warrior who fought in the war between Nepal and the British East India Company. At the outbreak of conflict in 1814 he was 19 years old and he was thus about 55 years old when he met Jang Bahadur in 1850. A piece in 1850 in *Punch*, a magazine published from London, described him (without giving his name) as a young man, but Motilal’s own account suggests that he was not young. Following the defeat of Nepal in that war, he was imprisoned and eventually joined the newly formed battalion (perhaps in 1815), where he learnt English and further military skills. We do not have any information on how long he served in the Army although he mentions settling in Calcutta after peace.

After migrating to Calcutta (Kolkata) city at a young age and working with the English there, he seems to have adopted local English spellings and anglicized his name as Mutty Loll Sing. His 18-page article in English is the first substantial piece ever published in English in the name of a Nepali. Even though Kamal Dixit suggested that Lt. Lal Singh Khatri, a member of Jang Bahadur’s entourage, was the first Nepali to study English (Dixit 2058 BS), Khatri did not publish enough to qualify as a real author. Whilst in England, Khatri simply wrote a short letter to the *Illustrated News London*, published on 27 July 1850, in which he

complained about the wrong demarcation of the northern border on maps of Nepal, and he had them rectify the error. Subsequently, he participated in a meeting of the Geographical Society and answered questions about the northern Himalayan frontier.

So, can we regard Motilal Singh as the first Nepali to publish in English? Did he in fact know English well enough to be able to write a memoir of Jang Bahadur's visit to Britain in a sophisticated literary style? Had there been some form of ghostwriting? It is highly likely that there was a lot of help from the editor, Harrison Ainsworth, whose ability was praised by an observer in *Athenaeum* of 6 July 1850, but Ainsworth certainly could not have written the article on his own. The regular metaphors from Hindu scriptures and the Indian sub-continent context suggest that Motilal might have had substantial support from one or more Nepalis. There is also evidence to suggest that Motilal did have good English. *The Indian News* (1850) (which referred to him as Buxoo, see below) describes him as, 'being proficient in English as well as Hindostanee, and having led a roving "Life in London" for some years past...' (The Indian News 1850: 281, footnote). Similarly, further evidence is the piece published in *Punch* (1850: 11, postscript), 'P.S. The Nepaulese Ambassador reads Punch. It is translated for him, MOUSER tells me, with his morning's curry, by the young man who, for the last two or three years, swept the Cheapside crossing.' Motilal also presents several references to his own competence in English. He claims: 'The excellent minister finds that I am skilled in the tongue of the English and clever in all their ways. For great occasions the Interpreter-Sahib will be employed, but behind his excellency is always Mutty Loll Sing (myself)' (Sing 1850: 277). In describing his attendance at the Derby race he speaks of the reaction of an Englishman, '... On which he stares to hear his own language so well spoken.' (Sing 1850: 283). It needs to be acknowledged that since Motilal was part of a team during the writing and publication of the article, he might have had some support from other parties such as Captain Cavenagh (political/liaison officer) and David Macleod (personal secretary) who were also attached to the mission.⁶

⁶Motilal's statement, 'To get rid of them, we buy what none of us are able to read', in the context of purchasing a race card at the Derby from insistent sellers, does not imply that none of the party were able to read English. Cavenagh, the British liaison officer, and

Motilal came to England lured by the prospect of becoming wealthy (he uses the phrase ‘temptation of gold’), but was very unhappy with his life there. Already retired from the Army before he came to England, he was old enough to leave behind a wife and several children in Calcutta, but young enough to still want to travel. This suggests the possibility that by 1850 he had already lived in London for about 10-20 years.⁷ As he himself makes clear (Sing 1850: 272), when he came to England, his living conditions became miserable. He lost all his money, and these circumstances resulted in a very hard life. There were already some Bengalis in London (Fisher 2004), but Motilal does not write anything about them. No other figures of high stature from the Indian sub-continent had visited this land before 1850, and seeing the Prime Minister and his team (whom he calls ‘my noble countrymen’) in London caused him ‘astonishment’.⁸ When Motilal was engaged in the war against the British East India Company, Jang Bahadur had not even been born. However, meeting an ex-Gorkhali soldier, who was well-versed in the language and familiar with local customs, in the streets of London, was equally unthinkable for Jang Bahadur and his team. What makes all this even more surprising is that the whole incident was not covered in the *Belait Yatra*, or in the memoirs of the liaison officer, Cavenagh.

Notwithstanding his skills, knowledge and abilities, Motilal had to work as a crossing-sweeper (a beggar who received gratuities for cleaning roads) to make a living. During Victorian times, there were numerous beggars in the street of London, even including children. It appeared a more respectable option to seek gratuities from passers-by in return for clearing their path across the road, as opposed to simply

secretary Macleod were certainly able to. Among the other Nepalis, Lt. Lal Singh Khatri was also literate in the language. The statement probably simply means that they were unable to make sense of the cards detailing horses, owners, etc. because they were unfamiliar with the format.

⁷ Motilal’s statement that he hoped his wife was still living and waiting for him also suggests that it was some years since they separated (Sing 1850: 272).

⁸ Motilal most likely met Jang’s party on 27 May, the day after their own arrival in London, since he says that he accompanied Jang to St. James Theatre the same evening and we know from Cavenagh’s account that Jang was at that theatre on 27 May. In any case, the initial meeting must have been before 29 May, when Motilal went with Jang to the Derby. Motilal writes he himself believed that the Nepalis were returning from the East India Company’s office in Leadenhall Street when he appealed for help but he must be mistaken as their first visit there was not till 30 May.

begging. Nevertheless, being in such an occupation was a necessity rather than a choice for Motilal. *Punch* states he had been in the job for two to three years but other sources suggest a longer period (for example, *The Indian News* 1850: 281, footnote).

Motilal positively displays his wealth of Eastern knowledge and philosophy in his writing.⁹ He had a good deal of knowledge of *Nītiśāstra* and *Dharmāśāstra*, and he was a great follower of them. Given his strict observance of Brahmanical Hindu mores – what he calls preserving his ‘Brahma’ – the hardship of his stay must have been even greater. In simple words, despite being married to a Sudra woman, his compliance might imply that he did not eat any food deemed impure, particularly meat (not to mention beef) or consume alcoholic drinks. However, because of his financial situation he almost certainly had to make compromises. His own claims, as well as those in other reports, about the excessive efforts of Jang Bahadur’s team to maintain ritual purity in Europe epitomise the strictness of Nepali society at that time, as was evident in the civil code (*Muluki Ain*) promulgated four years later in Nepal. The very fact that several newspapers referred to Motilal as a Hindu equally testify to their observations of his Hindu lifestyle. Desperate to return and meet his family, Motilal holds his country in high esteem. While praising the skills displayed during the Derby horse race, he says, ‘it is the same that we see in our own country, from whence all knowledge goes forth’ (Sing 1850: 284).

Despite all these details about Motilal Singh, there are a few things that are not equally clear or fully resolved about his life which warrant some discussion. These are dealt with in the next section.

Mysterious appearance and disappearance of Motilal

There are several surprising facts and even mysteries about the life of Motilal, the two main ones being his identity (name), and what happened to him after a month of accompanying Jang Bahadur’s party.

Let us first deal with the identity question. Four names appear in conflicting ways in different sources – Motilal, Buxoo, Abdul Rahman,

⁹ As described above it must have been a huge come-down for him, a high-caste (presumably Thakuri) man to earn his living as a sweeper. We also can assume that he might have inputs in the writing from the member of the Jang Bahadur’s party. See fn11-15 for details.

and Mohamad Ali Khan— as elaborated below, yet their exclusion from the *Belait Yatra* and reports related to the visit of Jang Bahadur make the matter of Motilal's identity complicated. Most surprising is the fact that the reports published at the time (with a couple of minor exceptions), and none of the later works dedicated to Jang Bahadur's visit to Europe mention Motilal at all. Therefore, it is important to discuss each of these names and ascertain whether they were likely to accompany Jang Bahadur's entourage, and whether they may or may not refer to Motilal himself.

Until we discovered Motilal's own article, there was little basis to suppose that the rescued crossing-sweeper at the St. Paul's Churchyard was Motilal himself. Several contemporary morning and evening papers in London (e.g. *The Economist*, 1 June 1850) carried the same piece of news about the incident of a crossing-sweeper being rescued without naming him, under the title 'vicissitude of fortune':

Everyone who has passed through St. Paul's Churchyard to Cheapside on a rainy day, when birch brooms are very much in requisition, must have noticed the well-known Hindoo crossing-sweeper, who has for years past regularly stationed himself at the north-east angle of the Cathedral. A day or two ago he was at his post as usual, when the attention of the Nepaulese Ambassador, who was passing at the time, was attracted towards him. His Excellency ordered the carriage to stop, and entered into conversation with him, the result of which was that he threw his broom with desperate eagerness over the railing of the burial-ground, and then scrambled into the carriage and took his seat by the side of his Excellency, who immediately drove off with his singularly-acquired companion. We understand that our ex-crossing-sweeper is engaged during his Excellency's stay in this country, which will probably be about two months, to act as interpreter to him and his suite. He now appears in the carriage of his Excellency every morning arrayed in a new and superb Hindoo costume, and is not too proud to recognise his old acquaintances and friends of the broom (*The Economist* 1850: 627).

These papers identified him only as a Hindu crossing-sweeper. However, on the 17th of June 1850, the fortnightly *Indian News and Chronicle of Eastern Affairs* corrected the above report, identifying the crossing-sweeper as Buxoo. It said,

‘Buxoo’ was picked up by a portion of the Embassy in St. Paul’s Church-yard; but his highness the Ambassador was *not* in the carriage at the time, the act of national sympathy having been evinced by some members of his suite. The ex-sweeper, moreover, is not, of course, enlisted as an interpreter to the Ambassador. The oriental world knows full well that Mr. Macleod has accompanied the mission from India in that capacity, and that Captain Cavenagh, also in political charge of the Embassy, is an able Oriental linguist. Buxoo, being proficient in English as well as Hindostanee, and having led a roving ‘life in London’ for some years past, may prove an invaluable adjunct to the *attendants* of the Ambassador in their bewildering rambles; but he has not quite jumped, as alleged by our contemporaries, from the lowly besom to the exalted position of dragoman, *par excellence*, to a Royal Ambassador (The Indian News 1850: 281).

The surprising absence of Motilal’s name in newspapers, yet at the same time the inclusion of other names such as Buxoo, is confusing. The identification of Buxoo in *The Indian News* and Motilal’s self-description point to the same person: a Hindu crossing-sweeper rescued from outside St. Paul’s Church by the Nepali Embassy. It seems that the English newspapers did not bother to find out his name. Several newspaper articles refer to him, as he himself claims to have been known by many people, only as a Hindu. Some even listed him simply as a black man. For example, William Makepeace Thackeray writing in the *Proser* magazine of 29 June 1850 calls him ‘the black gentleman in St. Paul’s Churchyard’ (Saintsbury 1908: 372). Either *The Indian News* arbitrarily called him Buxoo as this was a common Indian name, or possibly he had nicknamed himself to conceal his true identity and to hide that he was a high-caste man in a degrading occupation.

What is most surprising is the fact that Joseph Salter (1873) and many others following him (e.g. Fisher 2004) identify the crossing-

sweeper as Abdul Rahman, who came from Surat India in 1840s as a lascar (Indian seaman). According to Fisher, Abdul used his money, earned from the Nepali Ambassador, to open two lodging-houses for lascars at Blue Gate Fields, Limehouse, London (Fisher 2004: 390). About 20 years later, he is reported to have sold his properties and returned to India. As we know now, this claim is at least partly unfounded. Motilal's own account and the information provided by several other papers also do not support the story about Abdul Rahman.

Another puzzling name comes through Forbes-Mitchell (1894), who claims that Jang Bahadur had appointed a British-educated and experienced former engineer named Mohamad Ali Khan from Rohilkhand (Rohilcund) in India as his personal secretary. Again, none of the writings on Jang Bahadur mention Mohamad Ali Khan. Could Motilal in his article be calling Khan Ram Bux¹⁰ (using a Hindu name for a Muslim!) or could he (Khan) be the supposedly Anglo-Indian Donald Macleod, Jang Bahadur's personal secretary during his mission to Europe? In fact, to this day, there are still a few people in Jang Bahadur's entourage who are not yet identified, and many junior officers in Jang's party did not find themselves mentioned in the list of guests or in the India Directory. Whelpton (2016) suggests that part of or all of Mohamad Ali Khan's story could be fabricated.

In his 1853 book, Charles Manby Smith quotes the incident of the crossing-sweeper being rescued and explains that 'Hindus, Lascars, or Orientals of some sort' worked as occasional crossing-sweepers. This suggests the presence of more than one crossing-sweeper with a similar background, which may have led Salter into error. In fact, Abdul's story was written down more than two decades after the 1850 event. As stated above and quoted by many, even *The Indian News* mentions Buxoo as having the national sympathy of the *Nepali* team. Motilal's first-hand account published after a month of the London incident helps us to

¹⁰ Ram Bux is mentioned in Motilal's own article but not in other reports. Motilal has clearly presented this person as the close confidant and treasurer of Jang Bahadur (Sing 1850: 279). In any case, like Motilal, Ram Bux is himself a mystery because he is not mentioned in any other publications related to Jang Bahadur. Could Ram Bux be another name for Jang Bahadur's secretary Donald Macleod? This is very unlikely, as Motilal only refers to the latter as Secretary-Sahib and clearly regards the treasurer, Ram Bux, as a separate person.

unravel the knot, so that now we can definitely state that he was a Nepali.

In contrast to the story of Abdul, the end of Motilal's life is shrouded in mystery. The chance meeting with Jang Bahadur the day after his arrival in London was indeed a big turning point in Motilal's life. This gave him an opportunity of returning home and re-joining his family. He was unaware of his family's state due to a complete breakdown in communication. However, he had not given up hope that his wife was still alive (Sing 1850: 273). Motilal was so eager to go home that it is inconceivable that he would have waited another 20 years to do so.

The second puzzling question is whether was Motilal successful in returning home. Recently, there has been a small yet important finding which actually reveals that Motilal accompanied Jang Bahadur to Paris. A piece that appeared in *Punch* (1850: 101) under the title 'What's in a Name?' includes these words: 'The Nepaulese Ambassador (who has just left us for Paris, which is so crowded that RUM JUGGUR could hardly find a bed, and SHERE Muttty- *ce chère* MUTTY, as the French call him – was compelled to sleep in a cockloft)...'. The paper spells Motilal's first name exactly the way it appeared in his article in the *New Monthly Magazine*. This suggests that Motilal did indeed return home.

So far we have not found any evidence to suggest that, as was humorously claimed in his article, a sketch of Motilal was made at the Derby and published in a newspaper, so it is unlikely that a portrait of him will ever be found. There should, however, be descendants of Motilal's relatives currently living in Nepal. Since he claimed to have had several children in Calcutta, there should be a number of descendants. But would they know anything about their forefather? There is no full certainty about his caste status; he may well have been a Chhetri or Thakuri (as many of the military commanders in the Jang Bahadur's team), but Singh is also a very common surname, used by other caste groups including Newars (although Newars were not normally enlisted in the army).

Motilal's essay

As stated at the beginning of this paper, Motilal's article is comprehensive and covers activities and impressions related to Jang Bahadur's visit until the end of June. The conspicuous omission of all

three meetings (and more activities) with Queen Victoria in the article is largely due to Motilal's exclusion from those meetings, as he was merely an informal interpreter and personal assistant. In fact only Jang Bahadur, his two minister brothers, and Cavenagh, the liaison officer who also acted as interpreter, visited the Queen and attended the programme at her official residence. Similarly, Motilal's article also does not cover visits to places outside London, such as Plymouth, Coventry, and Edinburgh. Because the article was published towards the end of June or early July (and written before 29 June, as the contents were published in the *Athenaeum* of 29 June 1850), and the Nepali party left for Paris after mid-August, it does not include events that took place after June. Moreover, Motilal notes that covering everything that happened within the described period would not have been possible, when he states: '... were I to tell all that has caused them to lift the eyebrows of astonishment during their stay in London, many volumes would not contain it' (Sing 1850: 289).

Thanks to Motilal's deep knowledge of the local language, customs and environment, as well as commendable work by the editors of the magazine (and perhaps support from the members of the mission), his article is much clearer and transparent in presenting information than the *Belait Yatra*, the Nepali account written by a member (or perhaps members) of Jang Bahadur's entourage. For example, the main report calls Southampton 'Sautānghāt', Richmond Terrace 'Rijwant Carriage', and renders 'Hooray Hooray' as 'Barray Barray', and 'Lumley' as 'Lamadi'.

Motilal's article also reports interesting sociological detail in the context of racial identification, with the local people referring to Nepalis as black. For instance, a man complimented Jang Bahadur with the remark 'Bravo Blackee' after the latter's short impressive speech following the Derby horse race, which a horse that Jang Bahadur had backed had won (Sing 1850: 283). One magazine of the time, *Punch*, even published an article about him entitled, 'The Black Prince' (Punch 1850: 23). When Jang Bahadur and party went to review the Life Guards at Hyde Park, the crowd cheered them with 'Here come the blacks' (Sing 1850: 278). Generally, even today, Nepalis in racial classification, are regarded in the UK commonly as dark (or black) though most people in the UK use the word "black" to refer to people of African or Afro-

Caribbean descent and “asian” for South Asians. It could be just a sign of the time, indicating how people reacted when they saw people from other cultures and races, rather than racism *per se*. No further information is given whether the Nepali party faced racial prejudice, or how they reacted when they heard themselves being called “black.”

Some papers of the time called Jang Bahadur the Lion of London city, because of the huge crowds he attracted, the precious jewelry he wore, and his presence in a number of high-level parties in the town, as well as his habit of trying to buy, pay, or give tips for anything and everything he liked. In a joke about the difficulty in pronouncing the words ‘Nepalese Ambassador’, a cartoon published in the *Punch* showed two Londoners referring to Jang as ‘The New Police Ambassador’ (*Punch* 1850: 61).

In fact even Motilal himself tried to use skin colour to describe people, and employs the phrases “red face,” or “faces scarlet,” to refer to white men, comparing the East India Company’s directors’ heads to cauliflowers. Often he uses the term “rose-faced: to indicate beautiful young women. The French are compared to monkeys to describe their ability to imitate and act in plays. As in the *Belait Yatra* report of another member of the Nepali team, Motilal also spent significant time and space describing the beauty of young women. He highlights, implicitly, the romance between the young ambassador, Jang Bahadur (then in his early 30s), and Laura Bell.

In order to exoticise the account but also to fit the purpose of the *New Monthly Magazine and Humorist*, some of the events and facts in Motilal’s article are deliberately exaggerated. For example, it reads, ‘... each of these Life Guards is twelve feet high, ... he rides upon a horse, black as the darkest night, whose belly is forty feet from the ground ...’ (*Sing* 1850: 278). And,

[t]he vats that hold the porter are of such enormous dimensions that a thousand persons might swim in one with ease, and men are drowned in them daily by scores. This is thought nothing of here, except by these accidents the porter is said to be improved in flavor (*Sing* 1850: 279).

How would Nepalis, who had no impression of what a train was like, have reacted to a description of it with the metaphor of an 'unseen monster as a slave' (Sing 1850: 275)? The railway system was not widely developed at that time, and the underground system in London was just being built. The use of the term demon to describe a train could equally well reflect the widespread fear that anyone unfamiliar with these modes of transport might have had about dark-smoke-emitting trains.

In the 29 June 1850 issue of *Proser*, William Makepeace Thackeray indirectly referred to Motilal's article as a travelogue. He writes that the foreign writers are like mirrors and that he cannot wait to read their experience of Britain. 'If the black gentleman of the St. Paul Churchyard, who was called away from his broom the other day, and lifted up into the Nepalese General's carriage in the quality of interpreter, write his account of London life, its crossing and sweepings, I have no doubt we shall all read it, ...' In the same year, on 6th July, *The Athenaeum* refers to the article of Motilal Singh and highly praises the editorial ability of Harrison Ainsworth. It states that some of the paragraphs of the paper are reminiscent of the letters by a Chinese traveller published in Oliver Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, and that it is 'full of sly humour.'

Written in a literary and humorous style in nineteenth-century English, the article makes extensive use of old metaphors from the Indian subcontinent and quotations from the Hindu *Dharmāshāstras* and *Panchatantra*. The article altogether invokes 17 gods and goddesses.¹¹ The *Panchatantra* (an example of the genre of *Nītiśāstra* writing on moral principles) composed by Vishnu Sharma is invoked with quotes in at least three places¹². Manusmriti (the classical source of religious

¹¹ These include: Ganesh (the elephant god), Ganga (holy river, wife of Shiva), Indra (king of heaven), Isvara (the collective name of the gods or the supreme god), Kali (the dark-faced goddess of power and destruction), Kartikeya (Kumar, son of Shiva), Krishna (the eighth incarnation of lord Vishnu), Radha (the consort of Krishna), Rama (the ninth incarnation of lord Vishnu and King of Ayodhya), Saraswati (the goddess of wisdom and knowledge), Shiva (one of the Hindu trinity, the destroyer), Skanda (the god of fire arms), the sun god, Varun (god of the oceans), Vishnu (the preserver) and Yamaraj (the god of death).

¹² These three quotes are: 'He is a man of real worth, from whose presence neither they who ask alms, nor they who seek protection, depart hopeless or unsuccessful.' (Sing 1850: 277); 'An honest man is delighted with an honest man, but the base take not delight in the just; as the bee approaches the lotus with a soft murmur, not the frog who stays fixed in one spot.' (Sing 1850: 277); '...Exclaiming in the words of Vishnusarman, "If the king were not to punish the guilty, the stronger would roast the weaker like fish on a spit; the crow

codes and guidelines) is quoted in three places, and invoked five times.¹³ Names of sacred places, objects, titles and phrases are used in at least 18 places including two Hindu terms (*gooroos* and *yogis*) employed to describe Christian priests and devotees.¹⁴ The article also makes a point of highlighting the superior eastern culture, with appropriate metaphors in four places.¹⁵

Despite being uncertain whether his fellow countrymen would ever be able to access and read his piece, Motilal seems to be keeping them in mind as he says, 'Let my distant countrymen know...' (Sing 1850: 278). Shall we call it destiny or perhaps a coincidence that a century and a half later, his compatriots not only read his work, but also admire his contribution to history.

To conclude, despite some remaining puzzles, this paper demonstrates that the recently discovered information about Motilal Singh is a significant contribution to Nepali history, particularly in the context of the Nepal-Britain relationships and Nepali migration to Britain. It is an account of the tumultuous and mysterious life of a

would peck the consecrated rice; the dog would lick the clarified butter; ownership would remain with none; the lowest would overset the highest.'" (Sing 1850: 287). According to Whelpton (2016: 107), these quotes are taken from Sir William Jones' translations of various Hindu scriptures.

¹³ These three quotes are: 'The twice-born man who intentionally eats a mushroom, the flesh of a tame hog or a town cock, a leak or an onion, or garlic, is degraded immediately.' (Sing 1850: 274); 'Meat must be swallowed only for the purpose of sacrifice; and he who eats flesh - not in urgent distress- unobservant of this law, will be devoured, in the next world, by those animals whose flesh he has thus illegally swallowed.' (Sing 1850: 274); 'Whatever women eat the flesh of male cattle, those women shall the animals here slain torment in the mansions of Yama (ruler of the lower world), and, like slaughtering giants, having cleaved their limbs with axes, shall quaff their blood' (Sing 1850: 281).

¹⁴ Even though there seems to have been a lot of help in the writing of this article by other people (including member(s) of the Nepali party), it was not fully ghostwritten by an Englishman, who would not have borrowed Hindu terms to describe local Christian phenomena. Among the names, places, titles and phrases with religious associations included are: 'holy cow', 'oh night daughter of heaven', 'gooroos', 'yogis', 'Apsara,' 'innocent Brahman,' 'Sudra', 'pure Brahma,' 'rites of ablution', 'the law of unenlightened English enjoins them not to keep them pure the flesh of forbidden animals and polluted vegetables', 'Chakavacra,' 'Saurya chariot,' 'Cuśa grass,' 'like the gale scented with sandal,' 'pen of truth,' 'prayers and penance'.

¹⁵ These eastern allusions or references include: 'As the eye of the faithful worshipper rests always on the blue image of Nārāyan in the great reservoir of Khātmāndū...' (Sing 1850: 276); 'On the card of invitation it is notified that the festival is given in honour of a poet famous as Bherat (the inventor of dramas), and of a musician skilful as Callināth (the maker of harmony).' (Sing 1850: 287); and 'The dark half of the moon Bhādra had twenty times been turned towards the earth...' (Sing 1850: 272).

common man with historical significance. This multi-faceted personality has multiple relevance: he is the first Nepali in the UK, a potential icon of the Nepali diaspora; he is a Gorkhali soldier-turned-Gurkha soldier; and he is the first Nepali under whose name an article in English has been published in a prestigious London magazine.

The discovery of Motilal through his writing is significant for the study of the history of Nepal and Nepali migration. From the point of view of recent Nepali migration, Motilal is both an ancestor and icon to inspire Nepali migrants and UK-Nepalis for generations to come. On the occasion of the 200th anniversary of formal UK-Nepal relationships, the Centre for Nepal Studies UK established a research scholarship for Nepali students studying in Nepal in Motilal's name in order to commemorate his contribution.

Perhaps surprisingly for our current sensitivities, Motilal's difficult circumstances in Victorian Britain were in no way helped by his being a Gurkha. Today the context is very different – Gurkhas, and thus Nepalis, are held in high esteem – and yet the lives of ex-Gurkhas in Britain are not without problems. Former Gurkhas continue to fight for equal pensions, family visas and other welfare entitlements, and continue to face occasional racial prejudice. A greater appreciation of the long history of Gurkhas living in the UK, going as far back to, and perhaps beyond, Motilal Singh, could help to address some of these issues.

Motilal invokes the goddess Saraswati to end his article. Following his example, I too would like to end this piece by invoking the goddess of wisdom and knowledge, for her blessing upon the pens that write and share knowledge.

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Masculinities of Jang Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher: British and Nepali representations.¹

Sanjeev Uprety

Introduction

In this paper, I study the constructions of the masculinities of two of the most powerful and influential Rana prime ministers —Jung Bahadur Rana (1817-1877) and his 20th-century successor Chandra Shumsher Rana (1863-1929), who visited England in 1850 and 1908 respectively— and I compare such constructions with representations of Gurkha soldiers, Indian Maharajas and Shah kings of Nepal. Arguing that the oriental masculinity of Jung Bahadur and the anglicized masculinity of Chandra Shumsher were defined against the effeminacy of the Indians and the Shah kings of Nepal (as also the boy scout young adult masculinities of the Gurkha soldiers), I contend that an analysis of the representations of these Rana rulers allows us to understand the constructions of Nepali masculinities in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, I analyse the representations of Jung Bahadur’s masculinity in the 1982 English translation of *Jang Bahadur ko Belait Yatra* (Jung Bahadur’s Travel to Europe) by John Whelpton, a text that also includes mid-nineteenth century portrayals of Jung and his entourage from a number of European newspapers.² In addition, I consider

¹ The title of an earlier version of this essay was *Masculinity and Mimicry: Ranas and Gurkhas* (Uprety 2011). The term mimicry or imitation has been used extensively by postcolonial critics such as Homi Bhabha, using Lacanian psychoanalysis to study the subjective experiences of identity and alienation felt by colonial subjects during cultural encounter. In the current essay I have used the term cultural adaptation instead of mimicry for the reason that my focus is not on the personal, subjective experiences of social subjects (including Ranas and Gurkhas), but rather on the way in which their usage of foreign, especially western garments and cultural styles was interpreted by British and Nepali historians and newspaper contributors. There is, however a definite overlap between the semantic connotations of mimicry and adoption (see Homi Bhabha’s ‘Of Mimicry and Men’ in Bhabha (1994) for a discussion of how contradictory subjective experiences of identification and alienation work at the heart of identity formation within the frame of colonialism. Also see Jacques Lacan’s essay ‘Mirror stage as formative of the I function as revealed in psychoanalytical experience’ (Lacan 2006).

² These included newspapers such as *The Morning Post*, *The Times*, *The Illustrated London News*, and *Midland Counties Herald*.

Perceval Landon's two-volume account of Nepal's history - written under the patronage of Chandra Shumsher and first published in 1928 - which describes, among other things, the contrasting masculinities of Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher Rana.³

Nepal and British India: Political context

The first military conflict between Nepal and British India occurred in 1767, when the British East India Company dispatched a military expedition to Nepal under the leadership of George Kinloch to assist King Jayaprakash Malla of Kathmandu against the forces of Prithivi Narayan Shah, the founder of modern Nepal (see Bell, this issue). After the Kinloch expedition was repulsed, Prithivi Narayan Shah continued his war against the three Malla kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley and the western principalities known as the *baise* and *chaubaise* Kingdoms, finally completing the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769.⁴

In March 1792, a treaty of commerce was signed between Nepal and the East India Company, and in 1793 the Company sent a mission to Nepal headed by Colonel William Kirkpatrick, a diplomatic effort that paved the way for the 1801 treaty between the government of Nepal and the East India Company. The treaty was followed by the establishment of a British residency in Kathmandu Valley in 1802, and W.O. Knox took up residence as the first British representative in Nepal in April 1802. A continuing escalation of animosity between the British East India Company and the Nepali rulers in Kathmandu led to war between the British East India Company and Nepal in 1814. After hard fighting on both sides, the war ended with the ratification of the Treaty of Sugauli between the two governments in March 1816. The treaty ended Nepal's further territorial ambitions and circumscribed its national borders, as Nepal was forced to surrender areas like Kumaun, Garhwal, and large

³ A number of masculinities studies scholars including Michael Kimmel (2008), George L. Moss (2010) and R.W. Connell (1995) have argued that masculinity should be understood in plural, rather than singular terms. From such a perspective, there might be as many masculinities in this world as there are men. At the same time, social discourses deny the existence of such plural masculinities to create certain stereotypes, resulting in singular descriptions such as Gorkha masculinity, middle class English masculinity, oriental masculinity and so on. There is an obvious slippage and overlap between the singular and plural versions of the term, also reflected in my use of both versions in this essay.

⁴ Prithivi Narayan Shah was the King of Gorkha, one of the *baise* kingdoms to the west of Kathmandu Valley.

areas of what is now Himachal Pradesh in the west, as well as Sikkim and other hill areas in the east, including Darjeeling, to the British.⁵

While the treaty of 1815 allowed Nepal to retain its status as a sovereign nation outside the yoke of the British Empire, it also made it possible for the British to consider the Nepalis as native allies, like the princely states of India: an alliance that was used by the British to put down a number of uprisings in India, including the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857.⁶ At the same time, Nepal's national sovereignty was severely compromised, as it was deprived of its claim to and connection with the countries lying to the west of the river Kali (Shah 1996a: 146). As a politico-cultural response to this humiliation, the Nepali government pursued a strict policy of isolating its native subjects from foreign contact. The upshot of all this was that Nepal—unlike India in the nineteenth century—remained not only outside the direct political control of the British, but also outside the sphere of British cultural and economic influence. While India followed Thomas Macaulay's famous *Minute on Indian Education* by establishing cultural and educational institutions to produce brown men with white cultural masks, the Nepali rulers, in an attempt to maintain national sovereignty, rejected the adoptions of western cultural models that would have facilitated Nepal's access to the institutions and practices of Western modernity.⁷

There were, however, two classes of people whose cultural and political situation led them to cross cultural borders and achieve close contact with the British: the Gorkhali soldiers and the members of the aristocracy - especially the family of the *shree teen* (thrice illustrious) Rana prime ministers, who wielded actual political power in Nepal for a

⁵ See Rishikesh Shaha (1996a). The treaty deprived Nepal of one-third of its territory and forced Nepal to accept British arbitration in the event of any dispute with Sikkim.

⁶ The treaty was finally ratified by Nepal on March 4, 1816 at Makwanpur after more fighting.

⁷ Following the formula laid down by Macaulay (1964), a system of educational and cultural training was perfected in various parts of the Empire including India, Nigeria, and Kenya to produce a class of mimic men who would imitate the cultural and social values of the colonizer. As Bhabha (1994) argued, the imitations of the native mimic men challenged the constructions of Englishness by pointing to the fact that Englishness itself was a performance. What Bhabha does not adequately discuss, however, is how, as pointed out by Chow (2002), elite native subjects were not only expected to mime the English but also to perform their stereotypical ethnic identities: a simultaneous performance that asserted the irreducible otherness of the native subjects while at the same time indicating the degree of sameness they had acquired through their mimicry.

period of nearly 107 years, following the rise of Jung Bahadur Rana in the 1840s.⁸

After his visit to Britain in 1851, Jung Bahadur developed a policy of maintaining friendly relations with the British, whilst resisting the expansion of British cultural and political influence in Nepal. Like his successors, Jung Bahadur's foreign policy was determined by a double politico-cultural imperative. Thus, by helping the British during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, Jung Bahadur protected Nepal's sovereignty as an independent nation against British territorial ambitions.⁹ At the same time, however, he followed the isolationist policy of Prithivi Narayan Shah and his successors, keeping Nepal distant from British cultural and economic influences, a cultural and political strategy that rejected the adoption of British models at both institutional and local levels. Rathaur writes that even after returning from his trip to Britain in 1851, Jung Bahadur 'nourished a very stiff nationalistic attitude towards the free movement of Europeans and their commercial intercourse' (Rathaur 1987: 45). For example, while Jung Bahadur allowed Gurkha soldiers to join the British Army, at the same time he declared that he would disallow 'a single Gurkha sipahee in the British service to enter Nepal unless he had first taken discharge' (Rathaur 1987: 46). When the British pressured Jung Bahadur to revise his attitude towards Nepali soldiers serving in the British Army, he agreed to let them back into Nepal if they returned wearing civil Nepali dress rather than British uniforms. It is likely that while Jung tolerated the enlistment of Gurkha soldiers in the British ranks to win favour with the military and political leaders of British India, he simultaneously read the cultural adaptations of Nepali soldiers wearing British uniforms as a representation of Western cultural and political influence, an influence against which it was necessary to close the nation's borders. While Nepal, as a subordinate power, needed to be on the side of British India, especially during the

⁸ Following the Kot Massacre of September 14-15, 1846 real political power in Nepal passed to the Rana family, though the Shah descendants of Prithivi Narayan continued to rule as kings. Jung Bahadur Rana came to power as prime minister after having most of his political rivals - including other important courtiers belonging to Pandey, Thapa, and Chautara families - killed during the bloody massacre of 1846 or driven into exile.

⁹ By helping the British, Jung Bahadur also managed to regain for Nepal a portion of the land that it had lost during the war of 1814.

Sepoy Mutiny and the anticolonial nationalist movements in India that began later in the nineteenth century, fears of being overrun by British political and economic influence might have forced rulers like Jung Bahadur to resist British cultural influence and mercantile trade in Nepal (as was suggested by both Landon and later Nepali historians like Rishikesh Shah and Prem Uprety). This resistance often found its expression in their rejection of British cultural models. Jung Bahadur, for example, resolutely refused to bring English models of education and culture into Nepal. His policy was not only influenced by a fear of British cultural invasion, but also by a desire to keep the doors of modern Western influence closed to most of his countrymen, who, if they had been allowed the benefit of Western education, might have revolted against the autocratic Rana rule.

Jung Bahadur is of particular interest from the perspective of the present study, not only because his royal body was gazed at by the British as a symbol of oriental martial masculinity, but also because he was suspected by some of his countrymen of having compromised his royal Kshatriya masculinity by succumbing to the temptations of adopting European models, as both Whelpton and Landon suggest. Jung Bahadur's body functioned as a complex cultural artefact in representations such as Whelpton's *Jung Bahadur in Europe* and in Landon's *Nepal*.¹⁰ Richard Burghart argued persuasively that the entire political system in nineteenth-century Nepal was considered as a singular body politic, with the King as its mind and the subjects as its limbs. Jang Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher, though not kings themselves, acquired the aura of kings, especially with their designations as *shree teen(s)*. In this context, it is interesting to observe that the royal body of Jung Bahadur, partaking of the aura of the divine body of the King, or the mind of the overall body politic of the nation,

¹⁰ A number of theorists including Butler (1993) and Silverman (1992) tend to consider human body as fragmented and malleable, rather than uniform and coherent. While informed by such notions concerning the body, however, my focus is not on interior subjectivities of specific historical agents; subjectivities that are sometimes thought of as shaped by the shifting, malleable processes of the body. What interests me more is the way in which visible, exterior surfaces of the body—that of Jang Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher for instance—is read or interpreted by particular British and Nepali historians and writers within specific historical and political contexts.

was imagined as both rational and oriental.¹¹ Jung's body was traced both by the issues surrounding the embattled mid-nineteenth century nationalism of Nepal and the constructions of ruling class Kshatriya masculinities of the times. For this reason, it seems instructive to compare the way in which Jung Bahadur's attitude towards cultural adoptions was represented in the British press in the mid-nineteenth century with the way in which the adoptions of a later Rana prime minister, Chandra Shumsher were described in Landon's historical study of 1928. Both sources offer modes of interpretation that sought to gauge the relative modernization and masculinities of these Rana rulers in relation to their adoptions of British models. In some instances the Rana rulers rejected the British ways of clothing and eating, whereas at other times (as in the case of Chandra Shumsher) they alternated between British and native customs and cultural styles to display hybridized cultural forms.

Young adult Gurkhas and effeminate Indians

The Gorkhals were not a homogenous group of people, and the Gorkhali soldiers in the British Indian and Nepali armies came from a variety of castes and classes including non-Hindu hill tribes of Magars and Gurungs; Rais and Limbus from eastern Nepal; those from low castes like Danuars and Sarkis; Khas, or those born out of the cultural exchange and intermarriage between high-caste Hindus like Brahmins and Kshatriyas and Mongoloid native hill people; and finally economically poor Brahmins and Kshatriyas. Despite such heterogeneity, however, the class, caste, and clan differences were subsumed into sameness, as Gurkhas were constructed as a homogenous race within the military imagination of the British. As Lionel Caplan argued convincingly, 'Gurkhas exist in the context of the military imagination, and are thereby products of the officers who command and write about them; outside that setting, it can be argued that there are no Gurkhas, only Nepalis' (Caplan 1995: 10-11).¹² Certain stereotypes about Gurkhas

¹¹ For a discussion of the body politic of Nepal see Burghart (1987).

¹² Caplan writes that there are four kinds of writings about Gurkhas: regimental histories, personal memoirs and autobiographies written by the officers who commanded them, coffee table picture books 'with splendid photographs of Gurkhas in various settings,' and finally books that "attempt to tell the Gurkha story in a general and popular way" (Caplan 1995: 4-5).

circulated through the ethnographic texts, military records, travelogues, and memoirs written about them. Gurkhas were seen as exotic and romantic and were often compared favourably to their Indian counterparts who to European writers represented ‘otherness in the most negative sense of violating the values and sensibility of the West’ (Caplan 1995: 4). What distinguished Gurkhas from their Indian counterparts was their martial masculinity, which differentiated them from the so-called effeminate races of India, like Bengalis and south Indians, as well as classes of people who engaged in trade or entered the administrative service of British India as clerks. While some of the people of India, like Marathas and Rajputs, were seen as both martial and masculine, other Indian subjects were perceived by the British as effeminate. George MacMunn, for example, wrote that ‘merchant and town dwellers’ of India lacked guts, and its ‘intelligentsia were timid’ (Caplan 1995: 102). Bengalis were especially seen as feminine and described as ‘soft’ or ‘languid or enervated’, and ‘superficially cultivated and effeminate’ (Caplan 1995: 102). In 1932, for instance, MacMunn described the *baboos*—a term that was first used to describe Bengali men and then later extended to include all Indians—as a clerky worky class that lacked the true virtues of masculinity (ibid:102). What remains constant in these descriptions is the association of mimesis with feminine qualities.¹³ Baboos entered administrative posts in British India by virtue of their training as urbanized mimic men; however, their superficially cultivated exterior—a consequence of the faulty mimicry of Englishness—made them seem effeminate.¹⁴ Mrinalini Sinha argued similarly that within the frame of colonial discourse Bengali men were

¹³ While mimicry is often denigrated as facile and sometimes imperfect imitation, cultural adoptions are not stigmatized in similar manner. Despite this, cross cultural adoptions can be read as signs of facile mimicry and stigmatized in certain contexts, as the suspicions concerning Jang Bahadur’s loss of caste status and attendant masculinity following his return from Europe, as well as anti-Rana critiques of Chandra Shumsher’s masculinity amply reveal.

¹⁴ Caplan argues that such a denigration of Bengalis can be read as an ideological assault aimed especially at that section of the Indian Bengali population—high caste, increasingly educated and urbanized—which had provided the anti-colonial leadership after the Mutiny. It was in Bengal that the swadeshi movement was launched in 1905 leading to a number of bomb attacks on Britons.

described as effeminate, contrary to masculine Englishmen.¹⁵ Like English writers such as Forster and Ackerley, Mohandas Gandhi also describes Indian Maharajas as effeminate.¹⁶ For example, he writes of his disappointment at seeing Indian Maharajahs ‘bedecked like women –silk pyjamas and silk achkan, pearl necklaces round their necks, bracelets on their wrists, peal and diamond tassels on their turbans and, besides all this, swords with golden hilts hanging from their waist bands’ (1993: 230).

In contrast to such effeminate creatures, supposedly products of mimesis and co-optation, Gurkhas were seen as hard, masculine people who were outside the theatre of mimicry. Moreover, in British representations, Nepal came to be constructed as ‘a military state in which a military outlook pervaded every section of the society’ (Caplan 1995: 103). Brian Hodgson, for example, wrote in 1833 of the warlike enthusiasm of the people and also described the ‘exclusive military and aggressive genius of Gurkha institutions, habits and sentiments’ (ibid: 104).¹⁷ Caplan concludes his analysis of the Gurkhas by writing that the British considered Gurkhas as ‘gentlemen warriors’,

a quintessential martial race that was an exotic, oriental mirror image of the British officers who managed them. They were imbued by such characteristics as ‘courtesy, a sense of fair play, good humour, skill in games and good sportsmanship’, while lacking the rational control and moral purpose of their English officers (ibid: XX).

In other words, the Gurkhas were perceived as young gentlemen, and their masculinity was conceived as reflecting the emergent manhood of English public-school boys with whom they were often compared. While

¹⁵ See Mrinalini Sinha’s *The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali*. New York, St Martin’s Press, 1995. For details concerning Gandhi’s perspective on the subject see Sanjeev Uprety (2009).

¹⁶ See E.M. Forster (1977) and J.R. Ackerley (1983) for colonial descriptions of Indian Maharajas. Also see Gandhi’s portrayal of the Maharajas in his *An Autobiography: The story of my experiments with truth*.

¹⁷ Ludwig Stiller wrote that Hodgson’s view that Nepal was a nation of soldiers was an erroneous one since ‘the military accounted for a small percent of the Nation’s population’ and that ‘Nepal was then, as it is now,’ a nation of farmers’ (Caplan 1995: 104).

the masculinities of the British soldiers were associated with their moral courage and their desire to fight for a noble cause, the Gurkhas' display of physical courage was seen as based on emotion rather than intellect, and thus was described as reflecting the masculinities of English boys rather than that of middle class English adults. While Caplan's work makes a persuasive study of the constructions of Gurkha masculinity, I suggest that an essential point needs to be noted in the study of the constructions of English masculinities towards the turn of the last century: like the country's young adults, the lower classes in Britain were seen as lacking the moral, rational control that characterized the masculinities of middle and upper class Britons. Ashis Nandy, for instance, pointed to a difference that traced the social construction of masculinities in nineteenth century Victorian England. Thus while 'the lower classes were expected to act out their manliness by demonstrating their sexual powers', the people belonging to the middle classes 'were expected to affirm their masculinity through sexual distance, abstinence and self control' (Nandy 1983: 10). Philip Dodd (1987) similarly argued that while the working class was constructed as masculine, the manliness of working class subjects was often exclusively associated with their physicality.¹⁸

The masculinity of Gurkha soldiers was thus related to both the emerging manhood of young public-school boys and the physical masculinity of working class Britons. From this perspective it is instructive to note the differing representations of Jung Bahadur's masculinity during his 1850 visit to England: Jung not only presented himself to the British imagination as a hyper-masculine oriental ruler, but also, by fusing the signifiers of his Kshatriya masculinity and his royal masculinity as a *shree teen*, he almost, though not quite, succeeded in exceeding the constructions of lower class or young adult masculinity that were deployed to label or classify the rest of his countrymen.

Jung Bahadur's oriental royal masculinity

John Whelpton's *Jang Bahadur in Europe*, a translation of the anonymously written travelogue *Jang Bahadur ko Belait Yatra*, includes as part of its background introduction to the text, stories surrounding Jung

¹⁸ See Dodd and Colls (1987) for a description of various British masculinities.

Bahadur's hyper-masculine courage.¹⁹ What is particularly valuable about Whelpton's 1983 version is that apart from the lengthy background introduction to explain to Western readers the historical context of Jung's visit, it also includes depictions of Jung's visit in British and French newspapers including *The Morning Post*, *The Times*, *The Illustrated London News*, *Midland County Herald*, *L'illustration*, *Le Constitutional*, and *L'Assemblée National*. These additions make Whelpton's text a composite one, combining elements of travelogue, history, and journalism.

In his background introduction, Whelpton shows that the narratives of Jung's oriental physical courage accompanied him during his trip and were amply circulated through the European press. These stories included the tales of how he tamed wild animals and battled natural elements like flooded rivers and fires.²⁰ Similarly, he was credited with accomplishing manly actions such as subduing a buffalo that had escaped from a fighting arena on 9 April 1840,²¹ rescuing a family in Kathmandu from a fire on 1 August, and taming a wild elephant on 13 November of the same year (Rana 1909: 21-4; Whelpton 1983: 67-148). Though some of these stories seem far-fetched, Whelpton argues that they contributed to creating an image of Jung Bahadur as an exotic oriental prince who was an extreme example of physical, hyper-masculine Gorkhali manhood.

Nepali representations of Jung Bahadur —which often draw heavily from Perceval Landon's 1928 study and Jung's English-trained son's

¹⁹ Whelpton quotes a number of sources in reconstructing the political and textual background of Jung's visit. The text of *Jung Bahadur Ko Belait Yatra* was first published by Kamal Dixit in Nepali in 1957 after he discovered a version of the text 'in an old exercise book in the Kathmandu house of Rudravikram Rana', who was a relative of Jung (Whelpton 1983 :135).

²⁰ In a number of historical portrayals Jung Bahadur is described as taming a wild horse and then subduing a serpent at the age of eight, including the one written by his son: 'About the same time while playing in his father's garden at Thapathali he saw a snake under a tree near a temple. Well knowing the dangerous character of the venomous reptile, he ... boldly caught the head of the serpent tightly in one of his hands, and ran to his father to show the valuable capture he had made' (Rana 1909: 13). Also see Whelpton's background introduction to *Jung Bahadur in Europe* (Whelpton 1983).

²¹ Padma Jung Rana writes that 'buffalo fights in Nepal are akin to the famous bull fights of the Spaniards' (Rana 1909: 21). On this particular day a buffalo escaped during a fight in the courtyard of the royal palace at Basantpur. Jung Bahadur 'with a rope in one hand and a blanket in another ... succeeded in cleverly blindfolding the beast and driving him out by twisting his tail from behind' (Rana 1909: 21). Also see Whelpton (1983).

Pudma Jung Rana's biography of his father— similarly mention that Jung's courage was repeatedly tested in the 1840s by the then crown prince of Nepal, Surendra Bikram Shah, often considered an effeminate man and a possible homosexual who lacked the masculine courage of Jung Bahadur (Rana 1909: 24). In February of 1842, for example, King Surendra ordered Jung to leap on horseback from the bridge into the waters of Trishuli. Though Jung Bahadur miraculously came out alive after the dangerous jump, the capricious prince tested his manhood again by asking Jung to leap down into a well, popularly known as the Twelve Years Well, in Kathmandu on 22 April 1841. Jung Bahadur actually jumped into it on 23 April and survived, though he received severe cuts in his right ankle. Though the wound healed, Jung Bahadur 'suffered from inflammation and pain in this joint for a month or so every year' (ibid: 31). In another popular account, Jung Bahadur was supposed to have jumped down from Bhimsen's column, or Dharahara, the tower that stood in the middle of Kathmandu city till the 2015 earthquake, following orders from the crown prince Surendra. Pudma Jung Rana, however, writes that Jung avoided a certain death by telling the prince that he would jump from the top of the column with the help of two parachutes, the construction of which would take some 15 or 20 days. Rana further writes that prince Surendra, whether he forgot the incident or changed his mind about it, never brought up the subject again and Jung's life was consequently saved (ibid: 30).

Tales of Jung's hyper-masculinity were often magnified in the British press during his European visit of 1851.²² *The Times* of 6 August 1851, for instance, reports of Jung's great physical courage and describes how,

[on] 'his way down to Calcutta in the steamer, passing through the jungly shores of the Sonderbunds, some object of game attracting his attention, regardless of the tigers and the alligators, and to the great alarm of his followers, he jumped overboard into the water or

²² Jung Bahadur's English experience began on 25 May 1850 at Southampton where he faced trouble when the local customs personnel wanted to open his baggage. Feeling insulted, Jung Bahadur 'threatened to take the next steamer back to Alexandria', and had to spend 'a day or two in the Peninsular Shipping Company's Southampton offices before the local customs authorities obtained instructions from London to clear his baggage' (Shaha 1996: 228).

mud, but returned equally safe and unsuccessful' (Whelpton 1983: 259-60).

In a similar vein, *The Atlas* of 24 July 1851 reports of wonderful rumours of Jung's 'prowess as a warrior and an intrigant' that 'buzzed about in the salons, the clubs, and the gossipy alleys of the operas' (ibid: 264). Such rumours associated Jung's exotic otherness with his physical masculinity, which was in sharp contrast to the supposed feminized mimic men of India, those clerky baboos who were forever miming the English in an imperfect manner.

Within such British constructions, Jung Bahadur is portrayed as an oriental ruler whose masculinity made him seem to approximate the model of English masculinity, but who at the same time fell short of that model because he was perceived as lacking the moral rationality of the upper class English. While the faulty mimicry of the baboos made them effeminate even as they tried to emulate the modes of British manhood, Jung Bahadur's performance of exotic otherness was seen as turning him into a hyper-masculine figure of romance. Extracts from the European press show that the press and the public, highly impressed by the expensive oriental costumes and jewels Jung and his brothers wore, represent him as a figure of oriental romance and exoticism, as can also be seen in this extract from *The Illustrated London News*:

What if they bear signets carved with the token of Solomon, and giving them power over the King of Genii! What if Peris and Fays flutter invisibly about them! What if they have a retinue of African musicians and eat cream tarts and lambs stuffed with pistachio nuts. For myself I have an inward comfort in believing that all the jewels displayed by their oriental Highnesses were found sticking to the pieces of flesh carried by the eagles out of Valley of Diamonds, and it would be difficult to divorce me from the creed that the gentlemen in question are near relatives to Prince Camaralzaman, King Beder, Nouredin and the fair Persian – to say nothing of Aladdin, Ali Baba, Sindbad, and that 'cute' fisherman, who did the

genie in such magnificent style when the latter was fool enough to re-pack himself in the copper vessel (ibid: 231).²³

Rishikesh Shaha, for example, writes of the ‘magnificent costumes of Chinese silk and brocade embroidered with threads of gold and silver’ that Jung Bahadur and his brothers wore, along with their ‘picturesque headgear inlaid with glittering gems and precious stones and peaked with the white bird of paradise plumes’ (Shaha 1996a: 231). *The Atlas* of 24 July 1850 describes the rich oriental appearance of Jung and his brothers in a similar manner and interprets their visible bodies as figures of fantasy:

They came, they were seen and forthwith they conquered. To look at the luster of their retinue, to count the diamonds which sparkled on their brown skins, to mark the gemmed turbans, the jeweled aigrets, the white bird of paradise plumes – who would not have been forgiven for believing that the whole party might be an incarnation from the Arabian night whisked thither from Baghdad or a city of Cathay, attended by the fiery Pari Banou, with Solomon’s seal in the carpet bags and journeying with passports covered with hieroglyphics and stars, the genuine autographs of the King of Genii (ibid: 231).²⁴

The Illustrated London News of 15 June 1850 interprets the otherness of Jung and his brothers’ dress in a similar fashion:

²³ *The Atlas* of 24 July interprets the ‘glittering oriental figures’ of Jung and his companions in a similar vein and reports that by ‘coming in this guise, lavishing diamonds and gold, enshrined in a halo of oriental mystery, the Nepaul Embassy became at once the talk of the town’ (Whelpton 1983: 264).

²⁴ *The Indian News* of 1 August 1850 describes the impression the royal guests left upon the minds of upper class English society in a similar manner: ‘Our Nepali guests have abundantly partaken of the national hospitality, they have been lionized in private and public, armies have been paraded before them and royalty itself has been their cicerone’ (Shaha 1996a: 232). In a similar vein, Jung Bahadur’s appearance is described in *The Morning Post* of 28 May 1850: ‘The general made his appearance on deck about half past seven. His dress consisted of a black satin cloak, profusely embroidered with gold of elegant workmanship. His head-dress was a cap nearly covered with large emeralds, diamonds and other precious stones’ (Whelpton 1983: 225).

People look at these glittering personages and begin to have doubts as to the 'Arabian Nights' being a work of fiction. What if they have arrived here flying through the air on a magic carpet! What if they have a tent packed up in a turban big enough to cover a regiment (ibid: 231).

Such British representations show that, unlike the Indian Maharajahs who were seen as feminized not only by the Britons like E.M. Forster and J.R. Ackerley but also by Gandhi, Jung Bahadur and his brothers were represented as properly masculine in the European press. Their masculinities - based upon a rejection of the mimesis of British models - were seen as both royal and oriental, and hence different from the modern, rational middle class British masculinity.

Cultural Adoptions, Masculinity and Strategy

Nepali critics like Abhi Subedi have argued that Jung Bahadur's adoption of glittering royal dress during his visit to England was a strategy calculated to draw attention to himself by deliberately appearing exotic.

The encounter of awe of the colonial locus and the conscious projection of the exoticism of one's own self make Jung a unique character in this journey to the center of colonial power . . . He very carefully kept on projecting his image as an actor on the English stage. He kept projecting his image as an actor in a play that he himself had written and silently performed . . . (Subedi 2002: 18).

Subedi goes on to argue that since the British government did not treat the rulers of Indian princely states on an equal level and often ignored their claims to be recognized as sovereign rulers, Jung Bahadur - the prime minister of a small country like Nepal, which occupied a marginal position in the theatre of colonization - deliberately made himself seem exotic in order to get the required attention from Britain's rulers and its public. While it is impossible to know what Jung Bahadur actually thought about his royal attire with pearls and precious stones, Subedi is right in pointing out that Jung Bahadur's body in royal garments functioned as a cultural strategy in relation to the gaze of the British, who saw Jung's oriental royalty as proof of his hyper-masculinity,

especially when compared to the subservient femininity of Indian princes.²⁵ Texts like Whelpton's *Jung Bahadur in Europe* represent Jung as deliberately performing the stereotypical role of oriental prince for a certain political gain.²⁶

From the Nepali perspective, Jung's 1850 visit to England and France was highly successful.²⁷ A later member of the Rana family, Purushottam Shumsher Rana, wrote that his visit to Europe was 'a great achievement for Nepal and Nepalese, since Nepal's had only been known in Europe till then as a martial Gorkhali race south of the Himalaya. Jung Bahadur was able to underline Nepal's sovereign independent status in European minds' (Rana 1998: 70-1). Against such a political backdrop, Jung's visit to England as an ambassador of Nepal was read as a diplomatic coup in Kathmandu, and it was not surprising that he was welcomed as a returning hero after he reached the Valley following the purification rites at Rameshwaram, rituals that were supposed to free him from the threat of cultural contamination.

Jang Bahadur was received with great outbursts of public joy. The route taken by him was lined with troops on both sides; the principal civil and military officers of the Kingdom went out to meet him on the banks of the Bagmati river; immense crowds thronged the streets and collected on every possible standing ground, as if the whole country had come out to welcome him; people from the remotest provinces had gathered to see him as though he were inhabitant of another planet . . . Dressed in a

²⁵ Rishikesh Shaha writes that at the time of Jung's 1850 visit, the British government was unsure about his status as an ambassador of the king of Nepal, especially since in the mid- and late-nineteenth century no emissaries from the princely Indian states were recognized as full-fledged ambassadors. This created a problem for the British since Jung Bahadur was given the official status of an ambassador before the visit and it was necessary to treat him as such.

²⁶ Judith Butler (1993) made a persuasive study of how gender is not only historically and politically constructed but also a matter of performance. It is an effect that is produced when men and women reiterate the codes, rituals, and conventions of masculinity or femininity through their everyday performances of gender.

²⁷ Tony Gould writes that Jung Bahadur's visit to England was a success from the British perspective, too, for they 'made sure Jung was shown enough of the industrial might and military muscle of the country to come away with a healthy respect for it' (Gould 1990: 90). Shaha argues that the visit might have influenced Jung's decision to support the British during the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 (Shaha 1996a: 242).

magnificent robe of white silk, which set off his slim figure to great advantage, and bowing as he approached the pavilion, he looked truly the hero who had braved perils both on land and water, to visit one of the greatest countries on earth. Decked with a coronet of brightest silver, studded with a galaxy of pearls, diamonds and emeralds, and with the sword presented by Napoleon III hanging at his side, he drew all eyes upon him as he advanced to the seat of honour in the middle of the pavilion' (Rana 1909: 154).

Such reconstructions of Jung Bahadur's homecoming - represented in Landon's *Nepal* and in the texts of Pudma Jung Rana and Purushottam Shumsher Rana - describe how the people from the whole country, including those from the remotest provinces gathered in Kathmandu to welcome a national hero who had braved all to make a case for Nepal's sovereign status in Europe. In such texts, Jung is represented as a national hero, a royal leader who was able to achieve his goal without compromising either his masculinity or his caste status as a Kshatriya. His royal robes at the occasion of his homecoming are depicted as suggesting a triumphal return of a native Nepali prince rather than some member of a westernized native elite. Moreover, the sword presented by Napoleon functioned as symbolic proof that Jung Bahadur's masculinity was approved by the West, without him having to revert to an imitation of the British models to prove his manhood.

It is important to note that Jung needed to be on his guard during his 1850 trip because his 'decision to visit Europe had already made him suspect in many orthodox eyes,' and for this reason he needed to reject cultural adoptions of Englishness in order to "show that he remained a good Hindu in other respects' (Whelpton 1983: 156). Such a perspective coincides with the depictions of Jung Bahadur in the European press in which he was represented as a possible agent of Western modernity. In other words, Jung Bahadur was seen not merely as an ordinary Gurkha soldier but in, for example, *The Times* of 6 August 1850, as a tactful, well-mannered native ruler through whose medium Western civilization might enter Nepal. Such a portrayal of Jung Bahadur as a rational oriental prince made him exceed the constructions of Gurkha masculinities that were merely physical. The contributor to *The Times*, thus, goes on to evoke the bloody history of the Kot Massacre through

which Jung Bahadur came to power after killing his opponents and goes on to warn his readers that the Nepalese ambassador should not be judged according to Christian standards or values:

I should be sorry, that is to prejudice his reputation amongst any who, ignorant of the elements of Asiatic character, or Asiatic education, mind, morals, doctrines and opinions, might regard him as a sort of George Barnwell, or ordinary cutthroat. On the contrary his manners, his ability, his tact, and energy have alike confirmed him in the goodwill of the Nepalese army and people; and I look upon his visit to England as one of the many gradual but sure measures and steps by which the Almighty is paving Asia with civilization (ibid: 261).

In other words, Jung Bahadur was seen both as a hyper-masculine oriental prince and as a person who could be reclaimed as an agent of Western modernity. This is to say that Jung's masculinity was constructed within a space of cultural slippage. While his national origin tied him to the brave but irrational masculinity of the young adult Gurkhas, the gem-and-pearl-covered glossy surfaces of oriental exotic royalty made him exceed that lower-order masculinity. Furthermore, this led to a situation where he was seen as almost rational and modern; a modernized oriental ruler through whom Western ideals could be spread.

In the context of Jung's westernization, his position as a royal Kshatriya male became an embattled one. Thus, it must be remembered that if Jung offered his body to the gaze of the British as a cultural and political strategy, his royal body was also gazed at by his own native subjects, both by those who had accompanied him during the journey and by the rest of his countrymen (especially its reading public, including the powerful courtiers), who were obviously the intended readers of *Belait Yatra*, which was privately circulated in Kathmandu in the nineteenth century.²⁸ In this context it is crucial to note that English

²⁸Subedi rightly points out that the travelogue created 'a halo around a historical and real Jung Bahadur' and projected a 'Nepali sense of independence and uniqueness', while contributing towards a valorization of Jung's actions 'so much so that after his return the press he brought, the techniques of the painters learned and the approaches he made to

newspapers, despite the rumours of Jung's preferences for English lifestyle and cultural practices, described him as rejecting adoptions of Englishness in public. Rather, they represented him as following the caste rules that formed a symbolic circle around him, protecting him from the contamination of Englishness.

The Morning Post, for example, describes the extraordinary ablutions of the Nepalese guests, a ceremony performed not only for cleanliness but with the aim of preserving the purity of their caste from cultural contamination:

Not only the Hindoo servants, but some of the chiefs were in the back-yard, washing themselves almost perpetually. They stripped with the exception of a slight cloth around their loins, and they would wash themselves all over with about a half pint of water (ibid: 229).

The Illustrated London News of July 6 similarly reports how the Nepalese party created a symbolic border between themselves and their guests during a gathering 'at which all artistic and aristocratic London were present' (ibid: p). *The Illustrated London News* further describes how the Nepalese

were not only ensconced in a closed room with trusty sentinels at the door, but the carpet of the apartment in which they sat, and which was of the same piece as that which covered the floor of the adjoining chamber, was at their request, severed at the threshold, and rolled back on either side, so as to destroy the idea of any immediate connection or communication between themselves and the neighbouring infidels (ibid: 243-44).

In a similar vein, *The Morning Post* of May 28 reports the 'strict notions' of Jung and his brothers concerning 'their religion, diet and ablutions' and of their 'dread of having their food, or the vessels which contain it, touched by Christians' (ibid: 224). In other words, a fear of

courtesans all went down to the folk level. The traditional troubadours even started singing his intimate relationship with the British Queen to a humorous proportion' (Subedi 2002: 19).

contamination led the Nepalese entourage to engage 'the whole of the forecabins and saloons of the Ripon, in which they fitted up a cooking apparatus, which was constructed out of a large square box made of planks and paddle-floats, filled with mud and sand' (similarly: 224). *The Morning Post* describes further how Jung refused to go to any hotel of Southampton due to

religious scruples, lest any food prepared for Christians should be mixed with his own' and that the entire entourage 'appeared to observe utmost secrecy in dressing and eating their food, and were much alarmed lest any of the blacks and other persons belonging to the Peninsular company should observe them' (ibid: 227).

These personal habits of the Nepalis, particularly their practice of bathing in the open with a loin cloth tied with a string round their waist, attracted public notice and comments in the newspapers. So, too, did the Nepalis' refusal to eat cooked food of any kind at the functions they were invited to or to eat at the same table with any Europeans (ibid: 239). In other words, Jung and his brothers drew a symbolic circle of un-touchability around them, and strictly followed the dietary restrictions that forbade them to eat with the foreigners, a practice that evoked curiosity among the British public.

John Whelpton argues that while Jung and his brothers did not really mind alcohol, English food, and visits to the dancing girls in London and Paris, it was necessary for them to keep up appearances: 'They were afraid not that they would jeopardize their chances of securing a favorable reincarnation or attaining nirvana, but that they might be thought to have 'lost caste,' with all that this entailed for their social and political status' (ibid: 120).²⁹ What Whelpton fails to mention, however, is that a loss of caste in the Hindu society is also linked to a loss of masculinity. While upper-caste Brahmins and Kshatriyas, by the virtue of their mastery of certain knowledge and martial virtues

²⁹It was especially important for Jung to be careful since the Nepali party included Kazi Karbir Khatri, 'a venerable looking old man, bigoted to an excess, and thoroughly disgusted with his trip to the land of beef eaters' (Whelpton 1983: 229). It was the same Kazi who raised a storm on board during the 'long tailed sheep' controversy by insisting that his countrymen should act 'in accordance with their religious tenets' (ibid: 19).

respectively, could claim proper forms of masculinity, a loss of caste could make a Brahmin or Kshatriya masculinity deviant, even effeminate. From this perspective, it is interesting to note that despite the triumphal return of Jung and his brothers, certain nagging doubts followed their homecoming, evoking fear that perhaps they had lost their high caste status as Kshatriyas, and their attendant masculinities, by falling into the ways of the British.

While Jung Bahadur had taken the precaution of making a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram, a holy site at the tip of the Indian peninsula, to undertake a religious ceremony of purification, which was supposed to free him from the impurities of cultural contamination, rumours concerning his newly acquired imperial pose and Englishness had followed him back to Nepal. Gould, for example, writes how Jung had dismissed an Indian prince on his way back to Nepal from England, assuming an imperial posture to address the latter as a native. Gould describes the incident as Jung's capacity to flatter Europeans through a mimicry of authoritative pose vis-à-vis the natives:

Thus saying, he politely rose and let the *rajah* in the most graceful manner to the front door, which was no sooner closed behind him than he returned, rubbing his hands with great glee, as he knowingly remarked, "That is the way to get over an interview with these natives" (1999: 92).

Oliphant similarly observed that following Jung's return there were rumours in Kathmandu Durbar that the European visit had turned Jung's head, and had transformed him into a foreigner:

He has become a *Feringee* (foreigner) – "He wants to introduce their barbarous customs among us" – "He brings visitors, and is making friends with the English, in order to betray us to them". This is said by his enemies at the court; and while they watch his every action, esteem him a traitor who, if they did not know it, is the best friend of their country (Gould 1999: 92).

Captain Francis Egerton similarly wrote of a priest who maintained that Jung was still contaminated by his European journey (ibid:92). Henry

Oldfield, the residency's doctor at Kathmandu likewise pointed to Jung Bahadur's 'supposed partiality for the English, and his alleged violation of caste, etc. in England, by drinking wine, eating meat, and flirting extensively with English ladies' (ibid: 93).

As Landon points out, the rumours of Jung Bahadur's supposed anglicization were used by his political rivals, including his brothers Bam Bahadur and Badri Narsingh, to instigate a failed plot to assassinate him, a conspiracy that was partially based upon the testimony of Kazi Karbir Khatri— a 'venerable, old gentleman' in Jung's entourage— who had propagated the rumours that Jung had 'partaken of meals offered by British and French high officials, as well as water and food from the hands of Christians, which was frowned on by Hindu rules and regulations' (Rana 1998: p).³⁰ According to some of such rumours Jung Bahadur had paid 'one hundred and fifty thousand pounds for spending a night with London's most prominent prostitute of the time Laura Bell', though the records of the Indian office indicate that the total English money Jung Bahadur had at his disposal during his trip to England was only thirty thousand sterling pounds (Shaha 1996a: 232). Both Landon and Rishikesh Shaha argue that such rumours were read by Jung's political opponents as evidence of his moral failing, and also as a sign of a masculinity that was threatened by social stigma (ibid: 275). Jung's adoption of the English postures and practices, as well as the rumours concerning his sexual relationships with the European women, was used by his political opponents to argue that Jung's Kshatriya masculinity was tainted during his European sojourn. This argument was used to garner support for the assassination of Jung. While the plot was foiled and the guilty (including the old Kazi Karbir Khatri and Jung's brother Badri Narsingh) were punished after Bam Bahadur lost his nerve and confessed to Jung at the last moment, the representations of the event in Landon's *Nepal* and subsequent native historical studies show how Jung's supposed anglicization could be seen as a proof of a loss of his high-caste Kshatriya manhood, and used by his political opponents to plot his fall.

³⁰ Purushottam Rana writes that the 'conspirators were also giving out that Jung had had sexual relations with European ladies, giving their names as Laura Bell, Lora Montez and Fanny Cerito among others' (Rana 1998: 74).

Chandra Shumsher's politico-cultural predicaments

By the time Chandra Shumsher Rana —Jung's nephew, the son of Dhir Shumsher, who had accompanied his brother during his 1851 visit to England— became the prime minister of Nepal by dispossessing his brother Dev Shumsher in a coup on June 27 1901, the cultural and political situation of Nepal in relation to the British had dramatically changed. Probably the most influential Rana Prime minister after Jung, Chandra not only consolidated his family's rule in Nepal through an affiliation with the British, but also opened Nepal's closed borders to Western influence in a tactical manner, one that consisted of a selective imitation of Western cultural and political forms.³¹ A study of the foreign policy of Chandra Shumsher in the first three decades of the twentieth century shows that while the same double imperative still worked at the heart of Nepali foreign policy —consisting of a combination of military and political alliances with the British and a simultaneous discouragement of trade and cultural commerce with them— Nepal and its rulers had increasingly come under the dominating sway of British political and cultural presence by the turn of the last century.³² Thus, it is instructive to note that Chandra Shumsher was not only the first Rana prime minister to receive English education and, unlike Jung, was often seen in public in English clothes, but he went out of his way to help the British during the First World War.³³ On 21

³¹ Chandra Shumsher's image as a rational, modern ruler of Nepal is constructed largely through the two volume representation of Nepali history by Perceval Landon, a British citizen, who was commissioned by Chandra for the job. Later, Nepali historians including Rishikesh Shaha and Prem Uprety made extensive use of Landon's work in articulating their own studies of the Rana regime. Landon's 1928 study of Chandra is important not only because it shows how Chandra Shumsher wanted to be remembered by the British, but also because it allows us to understand how Landon constructed Chandra's image for British readers.

³² During his twenty-nine-year rule as prime minister, Chandra Shumsher continued the Rana policy of cooperating with the British on military and diplomatic matters, while keeping his countrymen free from British cultural influence. Both Landon and Shaha, for instance write of the role Chandra played in facilitating the Young husband military mission, first with the 8th Gorkha rifles included, crossed the Sikkim-Tibet border and captured first Gyantse and later Lhasa by 3 August 1904. Shaha (1996b) argues that while Chandra's help to the British obtained for him the title of Grand Commander of the Star of India, it actually harmed Nepal's trade interests in the long run.

³³ On the eve of the First World War, Chandra Shumsher offered his help to the British even before it was requested. Gorkhali soldiers directly recruited for the British Indian regiments fought in the battlefields of France, Palestine, Mesopotamia, and Salonica. Shaha

December 1923 Chandra concluded a fresh treaty with Britain. The treaty was heralded in Nepal as increasing Nepal's prestige as a sovereign nation that, unlike the princely states of India, was independent from Britain.³⁴ In practice, however, as Rishikesh Shaha and Prem Uprety argue, Nepal's foreign policy continued to be conducted through British India's headquarters at New Delhi, and Nepal's status as an independent, sovereign nation remained severely compromised.

By 1900, Gurkha soldiers returning from their battalions had brought back to Nepal the knowledge of Western cultures, rituals, and institutions. Some of them stayed in India to instigate the anti-Rana movement and to protest against the Rana policy of closing the national borders.³⁵ It was simply not possible to reject mimicry at the institutional level towards the beginning of the twentieth century, and Western modernity continued to enter Nepal through cross-cultural mimicry. Thus, while Chandra Shumsher rightly thought that an influx of Western ideas would hurt the long-term interests of his family, unlike Jung Bahadur he was not able to keep Nepal entirely isolated from the rest of the world. Despite his iron rule as an autocratic Rana prime minister, Chandra also put into effect a number of reforms that modernized the nation somewhat in the early decades of the century, including the abolition of slavery and the practice of Sati, or widow self-immolation. Other modernizations included the imitation of Western cultural and educational institutions, as well as English training for individual Nepali citizens in India and in Nepal. Chandra soon realized

writes that 'Nepal lost more soldiers than any one of the warring countries in proportion to its total population which was about five million at the time' (Shaha 1996b: 49).

³⁴Shaha argues that the Rana regime in Nepal falsely interpreted the signing of the 1923 treaty as a major achievement in order to increase the prestige of Chandra Shumsher: The signing of the treaty was considered as an event of national importance to create the misleading impression inside and outside Nepal that Chandra Shumsher had brought independence to the country, as if it had not been independent before his time. A two-day public holiday was announced in Kathmandu and a general remission of three months was granted to prisoners other than those held for life. Food and clothes were distributed among the poor and there was illumination in Kathmandu for several days in celebration of the occasion (Shaha 1996b: 57).

³⁵Chandra Shumsher's inauguration of the Tri-Chandra college in 1918 —which till the abolition of Rana rule in 1951 remained the only college in Nepal— along with his attempts at social reform and limited development of bureaucratic and administrative infrastructure, can be seen as a response to these protests.

however, that these reforms could prove to be dangerous to the Ranas' autocratic rule. As had been the case in India, the leaders of the movement that sought to overthrow the Ranas' internal colonization of the nation often came from the group of people who were engaged in cultural adoptions of western models, either due to their education or because of their exposure to English culture during their tenure in the British Army. As a response, Chandra Shumsher not only imposed strict limitations on the recruitment of Gorkhas for the Indian army, but also tried to float the idea that the Gorkha soldiers, as a consequence of their imitation of British manners and eating habits, had lost their caste status. Rishikesh Shaha, for example writes that Chandra Shumsher asked 'the British authorities not to promote Nepali soldiers beyond the rank of a non-commissioned officer, and also insisted on the strict observance by Nepali soldiers of *pani patiya*, the rites of religious purification on their return home' (Shaha 1996b: 65). Chandra's attitude towards the Nepali soldiers in the British Army is representative of a strategic double standard: while Chandra strengthened his own cultural power by adopting British models, he discouraged similar adoptions of Englishness by common Gurkha soldiers, whom he saw as a possible threat to the rule of his family.

Despite Rana attempts to keep Nepal closed to Western influences, Western cultural, economic, and educational conventions had spread to various parts of Nepal by 1900. The second volume of Landon's *Nepal* shows that in the context of such an altered cultural landscape, adoptions of Englishness at the everyday level of clothing and eating no longer unambiguously signified social stigma, or proved a loss of caste status (and manhood) by the native Nepalese. While Jung's cultural adoptions towards the mid-nineteenth century are shown by Landon and Whelpton to have been interpreted by Nepali subjects as possible proof of his deviant masculinity and loss of caste status, Chandra Shumsher's adoptions of European models might have been a deliberate tactic by which he enhanced not only his cultural and political power but also the fictions of his manliness.

Chandra Shumsher's rational masculinity

Unlike in the case of Jung Bahadur Rana, there are no hyperbolic tales describing Chandra Shumsher's masculinity. Shaha writes that unlike

his brother Dev, whom he deposed through a bloodless coup, 'Chandra did not indulge in drinking or womanizing vices' (Shaha 1996b: 37). He was, however, 'a born conspirator and a past master in the art of intrigue,' who knew 'how to exercise authority to his own advantage and purpose' (ibid: 37). A number of historians including Shaha, Landon, and Uprety speak of the manly courage and rational decision-making ability of Chandra Shumsher. Landon, for example, argues that it was Chandra who masterminded the massacre of 1885 that brought power to the family of seventeen Shumsher brothers who were the sons of Jung Bahadur Rana's brother Dhir Shumsher.³⁶ Shaha argues further that during his 1904 visit to England, the English-trained Chandra did not excite the imagination of the Europeans in the same manner as Jung Bahadur:

'Chandra Shumsher thus merely served as an object of curiosity to the British press and public, whereas his predecessor Jung Bahadur, even without any knowledge of English, had made a great impact on both the British and French press and public as his country's true ambassador. The newspaper reports and editorials in the English press at the time of Chandra's visit were not even half as complimentary and colorful ...' (ibid: 44).

Landon, on the other hand, suggests that Chandra's visit provoked an interest that was not matched by some of the Indian princes who were visiting England at the same time.³⁷ He describes, for example, how 'public interest concentrated upon the jeweled head dress' that Chandra wore, and many observers commented favourably upon his royal dress by comparing it with the garments of the visiting Indian princes: 'The gorgeous jewels in the turbans of the Indian princes ... were as nothing to the diamonds worn by the maharaja' (ibid: 122).

³⁶ It was a massacre during which Jung Bahadur's sons, including Jagat Jung, were killed by their Shumsher cousins, thus leading to a shift of power within the Rana family.

³⁷ Though Chandra was given a salute of 19 guns, two more than the Nizam of Hyderabad, he was not accepted as an ambassador of an independent nation like his nineteenth-century uncle Jung Bahadur. Before the visit, Manners-Smith, the British resident in Nepal, had suggested to the Indian office that Chandra should be treated 'on the same footing as Sardar Nasrulla Khan, the Prime minister of Afghanistan' rather than as a ruler of one of the Indian princely states (ibid: 44).

It is important to note, however, that while Chandra Shumsher occasionally wore oriental royal dress during his trip to Britain, he is also depicted in Landon's *Nepal* wearing English clothes, including the garments of high ranking military officers, to evoke a model of masculinity that was different from the one suggested by the self-exoticizing dresses of Jung. In other words, while Chandra followed Jung's example by allowing himself to be seen as a hyper-masculine oriental ruler in exotic garments, he combined that exotic model of oriental manliness with the model of British masculinity. By wearing his exotic gems and royal clothes, Chandra evoked the image of an oriental prince who demanded to be seen as a leader of a sovereign, independent nation. At the same time, by dressing in British clothes and military uniforms, Chandra was not only able to project himself before the English as a modern ally of the Empire, but also succeeded in presenting a model of masculinity that was closer to the prototype of rational, middle-class English masculinity, a masculinity that was different from the supposed physical, impulsive masculinity of its young adults and working class subjects.

Landon writes that Chandra 'attended the picturesque ceremony of trooping the colours on the Horse Guards Parade' dressed in the uniform of a major-general of the British Army and that he also visited Edinburgh, Sussex, and Glasgow 'wearing British suit and boots' (Landon 1928b: 124). He also describes further how Chandra Shumsher visited Oxford during the commemoration week and received the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law from the chancellor of the university. It is important to take note of the manner in which Chandra's visit was later represented in *The Oxford Chronicle*:

The Prime Minister of Nepal . . . had also been in his time a student and had successfully passed the examinations in the university of Calcutta, of which Lord Curzon was chancellor during the six years of his viceroyalty. The King and the Queen had already received their distinguished guest with a welcome due to a friend and ally, and the university now willingly added its need of recognition (ibid: 124).

Unlike the physical, oriental masculinity of Jung, Chandra's restrained, rational manhood was seen in such representations as inextricably associated with his English education.³⁸ While this perception reduced Chandra's exotic otherness, making him a less colourful personality than his nineteenth-century predecessor, it also made him appear a much more reliable ally of the Empire, one who could be counted on to support British India in its hour of need.

No other text points to the rational modernity of Chandra more than his famous *Appeal to the People of Nepal for the Emancipation of Slaves And Abolition of Slavery in the Country*, a prose tract that was produced in both Nepali and English. It is an extraordinary document in which Chandra draws from both Hindu Vedic sources and the discourse of Western civilization to support his argument. He speaks, for example, of how the Sanskrit scriptures including *Yagna Valka*, *Smriti*, *Markendeya*, *Linga*, and *Bhavisyottara* puranas 'contain many injunctions' against the practice of slavery, and also how, according to these ancient sources, someone selling slaves in this life is sure to be born as a *vyadha* or a low-caste hunter in the next life (Shumsher 1925: 52-53). At the same time, speaking from a modern perspective, Chandra argues that Nepal should change its outdated customs that are perceived as a mark of stigma by the more civilized nations:

'But customs generally keep our nationalism intact and when they become effete are either discarded or yield place to others more vigorous. There are some which may have possessed a temporary utility but have continued when that is passed until attention is drawn to them through change of circumstances' (ibid: 4).

³⁸ It is, of course, impossible to be sure whether Chandra Shumsher's rationality was due to his western education, or if this was merely a spurious correlation. What is more important for the purpose of this essay is the way social subjects, both British and Nepali, interpreted and made sense of Chandra's so-called rationality and attendant masculinity (in so far as rationality is considered to be one of the crucial markers of masculinity). Analysis of the available British and Nepali responses shows that, unlike in the case of Jang whose rationality was considered as different from the established norms of western rationality, Chandra's rationality was often considered as being tied to his English education.

It is important to note the choice of words here: while *The Appeal* describes the traditional native customs as effete, it welcomes the arrival of more vigorous, and therefore manly, customs of the West as inevitable. *The Appeal* reproduces the orientalist perception that the ancient cultures of the Indian subcontinent had lost their masculine vigour and degenerated into a dead set of effeminate customs, and so needed to be replaced by the manly, vigorous cultures of the West. Furthermore, speaking simultaneously from a traditional and a modern perspective, *The Appeal* criticizes both the changing circumstances in which the upper caste Brahmins have to find employment as porters and *doli* bearers, while at the same time noting that such a change is inevitable due to the arrival of Western modernity. It states:

The enlightened opinion of the civilized world with whom we are coming into more and more intimate contact now is pressing us with all its moral force in every matter and we are compelled to move in these matters also to be abreast of times' (ibid: 44-45).

Texts like *The Appeal* and Landon's *Nepal* present the image of Chandra Shumsher as an enlightened ruler who, though an upholder of tradition, was simultaneously a modern, rational man. In other words, while by wearing native regal clothes Chandra could make a claim to royal Kshatriya masculinity, his imitated Englishness reduced the pre-modern barbarism of his royal garments, making him modern and masculine at the same.³⁹

Anti-Rana Nepali nationalism and Chandra Shumsher's effeminacy

As early as 1907 a number of Nepalese living in India —influenced by the anti-colonial *swadeshi* Indian nationalist movement— were attacking the

³⁹While in the case of Gandhi an evocation of spiritual power was linked to the rejection of a secular, politico-cultural power, in the case of the Rana and Shah rulers, both spiritual and political power were united in the body of the *Shree Teen* and *Shree Panch* respectively. Thus, while Gandhi's imitation of the lower-class subaltern Indian subjects was represented as displacing the model of Kshatriya masculinity with that of the androgynous Brahmanical one, a model of manhood that functioned as the cornerstone of Indian nationalism, the texts of Landon, Whelpton and Rishikesh Shah among others conversely represent the Rana rulers as exalting the model of Kshatriya masculinity above its Brahmanical counterpart.

policies of Chandra Shumsher through newspapers like *Gorkha Sathi*. Prem Upreti argued convincingly that the anti-colonial Rana movement in Nepal was initiated by those native Nepalese subjects who had entered the space of westernization or modernization, and that ‘like their counterparts in India, the Nepali intelligentsia was a product of the “westernization” process that had picked up its momentum in the first half of the twentieth century’ (1992: 27). Such westernized Nepali subjects in India, however, had passed through the detour of Gandhism in the early decades of the twentieth century and often espoused Gandhi’s cultural principles, which included an advocacy of simple lifestyle and a rejection of European dress and rituals.

Prem Upreti writes of the splendid dresses, living quarters, and lifestyles of the Ranas that separated them from the common people, thus constituting a class of native rulers that appeared as different from the common folk as the white rulers of India did from their native populace:

The bright complexion of the Ranas was further enhanced by the colorful silky, satin garments they wore, the sparks of precious gems that decked their headdress and the spacious stately mansions they lived in. Here they lived like proud divinities in sharp contrast to the poor earthy brethren who surrounded them (ibid: 11).

It is interesting to see how the Ranas absorbed the rituals of Englishness within the system of their own royal rituals to strengthen the cultural gap between themselves and their fellow countrymen. The photographs of the eminent Ranas —like Bir Shumsher, Chandra Shumsher, Krishna Shumsher, and Kaisher Shumsher— in their English shooting outfits often show them posing majestically in front of slain tigers during the Terai hunting trips. These Terai hunts often functioned as occasions for the members of the British ruling class and the Rana rulers of Nepal to come together to make a common assertion of mutual mastery and masculinity. The photographs of King George V’s hunt in the Terai in December 1911 —like the prints of the Prince of Wales’s hunt in Chitwan from 14 to 21 December 1921— for example, show the Rana rulers in their English shooting dress, including hunting shoes, breeches, and coats, standing frozen in imperial manly poses alongside the Britons in

front of the slain tigers, while the Nepali soldiers and other subaltern locals, who were often employed to round up the tigers, are pictured as undifferentiated figures in the background, unable to emerge out of the constructions of young adult manhood to which they were assigned in British representations.

The early anti-Rana writings in Nepal often tend to read the anglicization of the Rana ministers as a symptom of their moral degeneration. In a satirical tract titled *Makai ko Kheti* (Cultivation of maize), for example, Krishna Lal Adhikari made a symbolic attack upon Chandra Shumsher through 'a comparative analysis of the utility of a dog of an English breed and a native dog' (Uprety 1992: 26-27). Ganesh Bhandari argued that Adhikari's tract was intended to satirize the anglicization of the Ranas by comparing the native dog that fights to its last to protect the crop of maize from the thieves, to the English dog with its improved appearance that does nothing to fight the intruders.⁴⁰ N. Sharma similarly argued that *Makai ko Kheti* criticized the westernization of Chandra and his high officials by deploying symbolic methods:

[T]he book also dealt with the various insects and termites that could destroy a maize crop and, in doing so had used the term 'red headed pests' and 'black headed pests'. Those terms were somehow interpreted as being directed not towards the insects in a technical sense but towards the high echelon of Rana officialdom that wore caps bearing these colours as parts of their respective official attire' (Sharma 2045 BS: 78).

Prem Uprety reads Adhikari's allegory as a political satire on the pro-British policies of Premier Chandra Shumsher, who had developed an attachment to foreigners, along with his contempt for Nepali forms (1992: 26). He goes on to discuss how Chandra himself 'symbolized the ease and comfort' of the English dog, while the 'ill clothed, ill fed and

⁴⁰Bhuphari Paudel (2045 BS) argues that the real author of the book was a certain Bhojraj Kafle, who, like Adhikari, was an official in the Rana administration. Following the controversy after the publication of the book, however, all the blame was placed upon Adhikari, who was sentenced to prison for nine years by Chandra. After serving only three years of punishment, Adhikari died of tuberculosis in prison in 1980 BS. In Nepali history the incident is known as *Makai Parba*.

poverty stricken Nepali people represented the *bhote kukur* (native dog)' (ibid: 27). Such an interpretation makes sense when we consider that Tara Nath Ghimire, himself a writer and a contemporary of Adhikari, had contrasted 'the native dog which sleeps in the open air and feeds on the corn-meal musk and wild vegetable stew' with the 'pampered English dog, which only eats rice pudding and sleeps and snores in sofas and couches of the rich and nobility' (ibid: 27). While Chandra Shumsher's alterations between his royal Kshatriya garments and English dress is represented by Landon as fusing two different signifiers of power upon his publicly visible body, the English trained anti-Rana Nepali intelligentsia, following the example of Gandhi, not only refused a mimicry of Englishness but also attacked the Rana prime minister for adopting British cultural styles. Within the context of such a critique, the signifier of the honest though uncultivated native dog was linked with the values of true Nepali martial masculinity, whereas the pampered English dog was seen as sign of a Rana aristocracy that had become feeble and hence effeminate.

In addition to the challenge of the anti-Rana nationalists, as both Rishikesh Shaha and Prem Upreti argue, Chandra Shumsher's imitation of the British models was also looked at critically by those members of his own Rana clan whom he had placed among the C class, removing them effectively from the roll of succession. Upreti maintains that the Ranas belonging to C class were often resentful of the acquired Englishness of Chandra and associated adoption of British dresses and manners with his thin, degenerating body affected by tuberculosis, a body no longer capable of ruling the nation (ibid: 275).

It is probable that Chandra used the cultural strategy of alternating between the royal clothes of a ruling class Kshatriya and the clothes of upper-class Englishmen in order to deal with such a possible challenge to his masculinity and political authority. Landon, for example, writes of the way in which Chandra Shumsher's daily rituals and manners of dressing reflected the complex cultural background that led him both to imitate the British models, and, at the same time, reject them strategically:

In general he dresses quietly in a kind of undress frock-coated uniform, and does not, except on greatest occasions, use the

magnificent diamond head-dress or the other insignia of his high office . . . but on rare occasions when he appears in public he is generally dressed in a plain double breasted European suit of dark blue, wearing the triple emerald necklace, a crescent of huge stones on his breast, and a jewelled badge on his cap (Landon 1928b: 91).

Trained in English language and culture, unlike Jung Bahadur, Chandra did not shun adoptions of Western clothes in public; at the same time, however, he followed the caste rituals scrupulously as part of his everyday routine, rejecting the Western influence that shaped him:

He goes to his first bath of obligation where soap is used that is of ceremonial purity. After being anointed by purified pastes, he enters a new bath into which a few spoonfuls of the sacred Ganges water have been poured. He then goes to the room set aside for his spiritual observances and there makes his daily symbolic offering to the Brahmans of five rupees and eight annas . . . (ibid: 93).

While Chandra's English clothes fused with his royal gems and stones to function as signifiers of cultural and political power to reaffirm his mastery and masculinity, his strict observance of caste rules protected him from the charges, similar to the ones encountered by Jang after his return from Europe, that his masculinity was compromised due to his imitation of the English. Landon thus presents Chandra Shumsher as occupying a mobile, shifting position, at the intersection of middle and upper class British masculinity at the one hand, and royal Kshatriya masculinity on the other, in the cultural economy of the early twentieth century Nepal. Evoking Burghart's discussion concerning the body politic of Nepal once again, one might say that the mind of the body politic of Nepal became somewhat westernized in the early decades of the twentieth century, even though it needed to guard itself against the charges of degeneration and effeminacy and unpatriotic behaviour, often posed by those who formed the limbs of the same body politic.

Conclusion

In British and Nepali historiography, the masculinities of Common Gurkha soldiers are represented as being similar to the masculinities of

lower-class Britons, whereas the masculinities of Rana rulers such as Jung Bahadur and Chandra Shumsher are portrayed as being closer to the masculinities of middle and upper-class Britons, imagined as different from both young British boys and effeminate Indians. Jung Bahadur might have been forced to hide the signs of his anglicization in mid-nineteenth century Nepal for the fear that such acquired Englishness might be read as a sign of his degenerate masculinity, and used by his opponents to plot his fall, as the events following his return from Europe also showed. By contrast, Chandra Shumsher chose the option of alternating performances, of upper class British and royal Kshatriya masculinities, in the early decades of twentieth century, fusing both western and native Kshatriya signifiers of masculinity in his royal body. By passing in and out of the intersecting circuits of royal Kshatriya and British masculinities he took on multiple cultural avatars; performing alternating cultural identities in relation to the social gazes that sought to read his body as a contested site that was cut across by the discourses of the Hindu caste system, Nepali nationalism, and Western modernity.

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The Narayanhiti Royal Palace, Kathmandu - a view from the interior

Bryony Whitmarsh

Introduction

The Narayanhiti Palace was built in Kathmandu, Nepal between 1961 and 1970 as a ‘tangible rallying point’ for the nation (Polk 1985: 94), an external symbol of a political memory designed to be transmitted to last (Assmann 2008: 55). It is intimately connected with the Nepalese institution of monarchy, specifically with the king. It stood as a symbol of the nation until 28 May 2008, when at the first meeting of the Constituent Assembly, the 239-year-old Shah monarchy was ended and the palace simultaneously turned into a museum. Now open to visitors as the Narayanhiti Palace Museum, the building holds an ambiguous position in the city and nation (Subedi 2009), embodying the paradox between the need to sever the royal past from the republican present, yet maintain a sense of connection with the culture from which the nation’s identity has been derived. In this paper, I look back to the construction of a new royal memory in 1960s Nepal. This was a time when the monarchy held most of the state’s executive powers, and Mahendra Shah was actively forging the nation in order to legitimize the new structures of his Panchayat system (Burghart 1993: 2). I ask how and why this palace building, designed by Californian architect Benjamin Polk, with state interiors by British firm Asprey & Company, was used to shape the politics of time and space in 1960s Nepal, and to make the Shah monarchy both conceivable and possible.

Between 1847 and 1951, Nepal was ruled de-facto by the Rana family of Prime Ministers (with support from the British) with the Shah kings kept as ‘palace-bound figureheads’ (Hutt 2014: 421). In 1950 Tribhuvan de-legitimized the Rana Prime Ministers who ostensibly ruled on behalf of the Shah monarch (Rose and Fisher 1970: 37), by leaving for Delhi with the support of the Nehru government in India. He returned to Nepal on 18 February 1951 to lead an embryonic democratic political structure that restored the legal authority of the king (Joshi and Rose 1966: 126). Mahendra inherited the throne in 1955 and immediately began to ‘assert

... the palace as the supreme authority of the country' (Dangol 1999: 67). On 15 December 1960, he implemented a bloodless coup and placed himself as the executive head of government. Two years later he gifted a new constitution to the nation (Burghart 1993: 13) and introduced his system of partyless Panchayat democracy. The implementation of the Panchayat system came hand in hand with a series of measures that actively suppressed opposition and promoted his vision. His reinvention of the monarchy as 'the definer of nationalism, the protector of Nepal's sovereignty and the bringer of development' (Mocko 2012: 88) required the monarchy to appeal both to tradition and modernity: He was simultaneously a Hindu king who protected and guided his country and a modern political leader concerned with the development and progress of a nation state.

As an objective manifestation of this new royal memory the new Narayanhiti Palace was both representative and constitutive of Mahendra's role in constructing the Panchayat system (Malagodi 2015: 75). It was cultivated as a symbol to highlight his appeal to both tradition and modernity, presented as a modern form of a pre-existing concern (HMG 1976). The palace physically orchestrated the city-space around it, through its dominant position at the head of a new axis. Mahendra expressed his aim "to constitute political relations so that they were in harmony with the traditional order" (Burghart 1993: 1). The palace was an object around which he narrated a selected past and through this process he developed a stable image and identity for the monarchy for the future. This is evident through the ways in which Mahendra turned to Nepalese (specifically Newar) forms, in direct contrast to the neoclassical buildings of the Ranas, in order to emphasize the internally generated authenticity of Nepal and to legitimize his rule. Therefore, contemporary official narratives¹ emphasized the Nepali-ness of its design: the hipped pagoda roof with the pinnacle modelled on the Shah palace at Nuwakot, the temple tower, the vast doors decorated in bronze plate and designed by Nepali artist Balkrishna Sama, and the use of brick as a facing material, even though the Narayanhiti palace was a steel-

¹ For example the official palace guide, 1976. The Chinese brick and tile factory was inaugurated on 11 March 1969, so this could be argued to simultaneously be a symbol of modernity.

frame, concrete building² designed by the Californian architect, Benjamin Polk.

This paper presents findings from my doctoral research, in which I have identified the particular intersections of social relations that made up the identities of the space of the palace during its construction in the 1960s and the first few years of its operation. Influenced by the work of architectural historian Kim Dovey (1999), I have approached my research through consideration of the discursive bases of the Palace design (representation), the processes of its creation (practice) and its use as a theatrical backdrop to state events (experience). The 2016 workshop from which this paper developed, focused on a critical examination of relationships between Britain and Nepal over the past 200 years. I adopt the interior as a mode of spatial enquiry in an effort to disrupt the official narratives inscribed around the palace during the 1960s and 1970s. In so doing, this paper reveals continuities in practice with the identity-building practices of the Rana prime ministers whose rule relied on a progressively closer political alignment with Britain (Whelpton 2005: 50).

When considering built form, dominant models of history have granted privileges to the visual, and to structures of enclosure and containment. In a particular challenge to this mode of presenting architectural history, set within the discourse of an emerging profession of interior design (e.g. Gigli *et al.* 2007), Attiwill argued that the interior is not limited to the inside of a built form (2004: 1). The experiential nature of the interior as “a platform in which to project lifestyle; a place to benchmark fashionable social mores, to test patterns of behaviour and ritual” (Hollis *et al.* 2007: xi), suggests a need to consider additional patterns of use and inhabitation. Adopting an inside out point of view, starting from the interior space of the palace, the first thing we see are state rituals taking place within an arrangement of European chandeliers, British furniture, carpets and wall-coverings.³ What, therefore, is the relationship between the interior space of the palace, and the official national narratives inscribed around the palace, that played up

² It used steel from India and cement from Britain that arrived in steel drums (Shanker Nath Rimal, *personal communication*, Kathmandu, 6 April 2012).

³ These continuities also challenge the usual periodization of architecture in Kathmandu, that is aligned with political events, e.g. Malla period, post-Gorkha conquest, Rana, post 1951, etc.

traditionalism and were defined by its exterior? Nepal no longer has a Hindu king, and the current de- and re-construction of the narratives used by the Nepali elite to define, construct, promote and legitimize a distinctive Nepali national identity make it particularly pertinent to continue to re-visit these construction mechanisms.

The Panchayat system was at its height when the palace was constructed, but then became progressively delegitimized and ended in 1990. From 1990 to 2006, Nepal experienced multiparty democracy, violent insurgency, royal massacre, royal coup and the abolition of the monarchy. Since the 2006 comprehensive peace agreement and subsequent elections in 2008 and 2013, Nepal has been undergoing yet another transition as a secular republic in the midst of negotiating the implementation of a new constitution (2015-17). This changing landscape places us in a unique position to question the social and historical frameworks that have dictated how we perceive the palace and the processes and ideologies that have given it meaning.

Despite the prominent location of the Narayanhiti Palace in Kathmandu, it remains absent from all architectural discourse relating to Nepal. The detail of the design process outlined in this article was not published at the time of the construction of the palace and to date no in-depth study has been undertaken into the design process, the design itself or any contemporary interpretation of this palace.⁴ I rely therefore, on the written word of the designers, archival research and semi-structured interviews with those involved in the design process. As I develop in some detail below, this absence can be explained by two key factors; first, the codes of deference and secrecy put in place by the monarchy (Hutt 2006), and second, the conditioning force of Nepal's semi-colonial experience (Nelson 2011).

The silent complicity of the palace

Mahendra's system of Panchayat democracy had a pyramidal structure with direct elections only taking place at the most local level. The king claimed it was restorative, 'rooted in the life of the people' (Gupta 1993: 255) and that it would strengthen their voice. But by banning all political

⁴ Except for an article published by Sushmita Ranjit in SPACES Magazine in late 2009, after the Monarchy was abolished and the king had left the palace.

parties, strictly controlling the public sphere (including the media) and offering just a semblance of representation, it had the opposite effect (Burghart 1993). The king stood above the constitution (Gupta 1993: 261) at the centre of a royally-ordained political order (Hutt 2014: 422).

Mahendra revealed his intention to build a new palace in 1959 and commissioned designs soon after. The construction of the new palace building would have been a major affair, involving the demolition not only of a large part of the earlier (Rana) Narayanhiti Palace, but several other Rana palaces as well, in order to create a major North-South axis (now known as *Darbar Marg* or King's Way). Many people in Kathmandu would have experienced the disruption of this physical imposition of power in this prominent part of the city, yet it is almost impossible to find contemporary references to either the construction work or the inauguration in use of the new building.⁵ Bourdieu argues that 'The most successful ideological effects are those that have no words, and ask no more than complicitous silence' (1977: 188). The physical pulling apart and reconstruction of a significant part of the city contrasts with this relegation to the unquestioned frame of events. The "things that should not be said" (Hutt 2006: 360) about the palace in public space illustrate the complicity of the architecture of the palace with social order, specifically the role of the monarch who had complete control of the public sphere.

Bourdieu's concept of the *habitus* can explain how the palace's physical location within grounds bounded by high walls impacts on its apparent invisibility. The *habitus* explains the embodied dispositions we have towards everyday social practice, including the division of the space of the city. Comprising forms of habit and habitat, *habitus* is a term borrowed from architecture and is seen by Bourdieu as a way of unconsciously, bodily knowing the world (1990: 210). The *habitus* is a form of ideology in the sense that what is perceived as natural, is in fact

⁵ In contrast to this: when the British Queen, Elizabeth the Second visited Kathmandu in 1961, several articles in *The Rising Nepal* (English language version of state owned daily Gorkhapatra) discussed the new road built to connect the airport to the palace. Published volumes of King Mahendra's speeches include those given at the inauguration of contemporary buildings such as the Supreme Court and the Royal Nepal Army Headquarters (all demonstrating the king's service to the nation - *desa-seva*) but not the palace (which would draw attention to his position at the top of the political order). See for example Tuladhar (1968).

a socially constructed vision, in this case through the physical framing of space and the restriction of access through the imposition of high walls around the perimeter of the palace that continue to be manned by army personnel. For Bourdieu, space frames social practice and the social divisions and hierarchies created and shaped by this perimeter boundary have been sustained and reproduced since the mid-nineteenth century, when the Ranas jealously guarded access to goods, electricity, education within the ranks of the palace – an aristocratic inside (*bhitra*) space, conceived of as separate from outside (*bahira*), and delineated by the walls of the palace compound (Rana 1986: 90, Weiler 2009: 137). During the Rana period, neighbourhoods and streets were carefully controlled and the space around the perimeter of the palace was one of fear (Bajracharya 2008: 42-44). The separation between ruler and ruled continued during the Panchayat with the result that generations of Nepalis were prevented from crossing through the palace compound, or even viewing the palace interior. Everyday life in present-day Kathmandu continues to be framed by the boundary walls that control access to the palace compound: Kathmandu residents move around the perimeter of the palace, taking the walls for granted and this is the palace's silent complicity. In application of Bourdieu's habitus to architectural theory, the architectural historian Kim Dovey argued that "the more that structures and representations of social practice can be embedded in the framework of everyday life, the less questionable they become and the more effectively they work" (2002: 291). I contend that the construction of the new palace building behind the walls of the palace compound contributed to the lack of public scrutiny of its design.⁶ According to Bourdieu, the complicitous silence of the palace may ultimately be the source of its deepest power (1977: 188).

Playing up tradition

Although Nepal avoided direct colonization, its experience was intimately connected with British colonial power in the subcontinent. Following British victory, the 1816 British-Nepal Sagauli treaty granted Nepal internal autonomy, in exchange for imperial control over trade and

⁶ Planning and curation of the memorials' contents continue in private and under the direct auspices of the office of the Prime Minister (Interview Macha Kaji Maharjan, DUDBC, July 2015).

foreign policy. Nepal's southern borders became fixed and the British appointed a permanent representative in Kathmandu. It is now widely accepted that the country's experience is semi-colonial (e.g. Seddon *et al.* 1979, Des Chene 2007) and hence also in part postcolonial (Harrison 2009). Nelson argues that this conditioning force made certain practices and logics of the state and monarchy possible, including the quest for a homogenous Nepali national identity (2011: 4). Foreignness as a dynamic in Nepali political history has been used 'as the basis for a contrastive awareness vis-à-vis other regions and powers, and as a resource for constructing identities and social distinction' (Leichty 1997: 9). For example, Newar castes have long tried to establish their status by claiming royal Indian lineages (Gellner and Pradhan 1991: 161). The Rana Prime Ministers appropriated European goods and adopted European cultural practices in order to reposition and distinguish themselves from ordinary Nepalis and align themselves to the British. In contrast, King Mahendra emphasized the use of Newari architectural forms for key occasions of state ritual. For example, the coronation platform upon which he and Ratna were crowned king and queen in 1956 (*mandapa*) was crowned with two tiered roofs, upon which the coronation book commented: 'It looks just like a pagoda. This indicates that the Royal sovereigns are the objects of worship next to God' (Rajbhandari 1956: xxi).

For the king to have legitimacy, the nation had to remain Hindu and Mahendra claimed to uncover the natural alignment of ruler, realm, and subject (an indivisible body politic) that had been the nation's inheritance since Prithvinarayan Shah.⁷ He asserted this to be a contiguity usurped by the Ranas and sullied by the political parties and in this context, the use of the pagoda form was claimed to be restorative.⁸ The coronation was attended by representatives from countries all over the world, and use of the pagoda form was intended to emphasize his role as the world's only Hindu king, along with Nepal's national independence.

⁷ Speech given on 15 December 1961 (Tuladhar 1968: 20).

⁸ Photographs of the Mandapa used by Tribhuvan in 1913 show a simple hipped roof, e.g. Madhan Puruskar Pustakalaya https://www.flickr.com/photos/mpp_flr/albums/72157629626130677, accessed 23 August 2017.

Contemporary writers referred to Nepali architecture, and the Newari architecture of the Kathmandu Valley, interchangeably. For example, in *The Nepalese Perspective*, directed at an English-speaking audience, Sharma states that “[i]t is this architecture that is unlike anything [an outsider] would get to see in India or anywhere else” (1972: 20). Also in *The Nepalese Perspective*, Manandhar writes that the pagoda form “preserves [Nepal’s] own special position in the cultural history of the world” and that it has “acquainted the outside world with us” (1969: 11).⁹ The architectural discourse of style in Nepal is often articulated through the rhetoric of modern and traditional, a dichotomy that is mapped onto the spatial categories of foreign and native (Grieve 2006: 34). This differentiation is associated with colonial ways of seeing and representation and is essentially political (Hosagrahar 2005, Chattophadyay 2006). The decision to use an augmented Newari pagoda roof for the coronation *mandapa* represented an attempt to create a temporal distance from the Rana regime and their use of foreign forms. In doing so it perpetuated a foreign mode of looking at Kathmandu buildings that gave preference to traditional forms.

The official decision to play up the traditional elements of the Narayanhiti palace design in order to give it a traditional guise (Malagodi 2015: 75) can be understood therefore, in response to the narrative of the destruction of the traditional and native form by modern and foreign forces that was born out of the ending of the Rana regime.¹⁰ According to this narrative, “the ancestral buildings like ... the south western front of the Hanuman Dhoka Darbar can only be found in the Valley of Kathmandu”, whereas the Narayanhiti Palace was part of a growing “unenviable wilderness of reinforced concrete buildings” (Malla 1967:

⁹ When Mahendra’s son, Birendra was crowned in 1975, a similar, but much more elaborate platform was constructed, later dismantled and transferred to the Botanical Garden in Godavari. The proportions of the tiered roofs and carved decoration were enlarged and mark a deliberate exaggeration of anything dating back to the Malla era (12th–18th century rulers of the cities of the Kathmandu Valley), which was seen as the golden era of Nepali architecture, (see Gutschow 2011a).

¹⁰ As Liechty (1997: 6) concluded, ‘stories of Nepal’s relationship with foreign goods and cultural practices before 1951 have been – like the Rana palaces and the foreign objects themselves – at best neglected as irrelevant, and at worst actively reviled as instances of cultural contamination’.

8).¹¹ That this model persists, is shown by Nelson who, in the following quotation, evaluates the Narayanhiti Palace in relation to western notions of modernity:

At the time of its inauguration in 1969, Narayanhiti Palace was intended to signal a modern and forward-looking architecture. Looking back, Narayanhiti stands not as a beacon of modernity, but rather as a symbol of the failure of Nepali architecture to establish a modern style (2009: 60).

Such aesthetic judgments have led to the neglect of Narayanhiti Palace by architectural historians, foreign and Nepali alike, and the palace continues to prompt ambivalent readings and reactions.¹² Rather than perpetuate what Nelson describes as the tragedy of Nepali architecture by focusing on questions of style and authenticity, I suggest the adoption of a contextual approach (Hosagrahar 2005: 7). Acceptance of the socially constructed identities of the palace enables the exploration of what have been presented as formal contradictions and a lack of coherence, i.e. the adoption of dominant European concepts into the design of a Nepali royal palace.

The Narayanhiti Palace as a modern administrative centre

The Narayanhiti Palace was built as a public statement that spoke loudly of the character of the Nepali state, as Mahendra wished it to be perceived at a time when nation-states were imagined as being integrally related to bounded space. Yet its ability to act as a representation of the nation goes beyond its physical appearance and is deeply rooted to the Shah dynasty's unitary conception of kingship, in which king, throne and palace are all representations of the entire kingdom (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 198). This section offers a brief historical perspective on the political and spatial context in 1959, within which Mahendra commissioned the designs for the new palace building at Narayanhiti.

¹¹ In Kathmandu, this model is enacted through the projects of UNESCO and foreign governments which have, since 1963, entered Nepal with the objective of preserving the country's architectural heritage, e.g. Pruscha 1975.

¹² For example, 'overall the palace is eclectic and surreal' (Ranjit 2009: 43), a 'towering pink folly' and 'Versailles in Green Nylon' (Anonymous 2009.).

King Prithvi Bir Bikram Shah (1875-1911) was moved to the Narayanhiti Palace in the 1880s by the then Rana Prime Minister, Ranoddip Singh Kunwar Rana (1825-1885), deliberately disassociating him from the palaces from within which he drew his authority.¹³ Rana family sources state that Ranoddip's successor, Bir Shamsher, later extended the building and made it into a permanent royal palace (Rana, P-S 1978: 78-91, Sever 1993: 208).¹⁴ The Narayanhiti Palace was described by Perceval Landon as 'a fine building based upon Government House in Calcutta' (1928, volume 2: 79). It was one of 41 palace buildings built by the Rana family that shifted the centre of control outside the ritually defined borders of the town, towards the Bagmati river, and contrasted in appearance and scale with the existing buildings to create an imposing landscape.¹⁵

Shah kingship was anchored in space, "associated with the person of the sovereign and the place of his coronation, a summit or a stone, and . . . reinforced by the presence of the family goddess" (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 198). The move to Narayanhiti separated the body of the king for the first time in the recorded history of the Shah dynasty from the location of his coronation, the ritually significant Hanuman Dhoka Palace.¹⁶ Since 1768 this had been the central canctuary of Nepal (Rajbhandari, 1956: 7), where the location of the temple of the tutelary goddess of the Malla kings enabled the king to socially construct his position in the kingdom since its unification.¹⁷ The move also dislocated

¹³ Further research is required to identify the exact date of this move, though it seems certain that it was instigated by the Rana Prime Minster. According to Lecomte-Tilouine (2009) the anchoring of Shah kingship in space is reinforced by the presence of the Shah's tutelary deity *Kalika*. I have found no evidence to suggest that *Kalika* was ever moved to the palace at Narayanhiti.

¹⁴ From archival sources, photographs of the building as well as historical accounts of events, architectural historian Eric Theophile concludes that the palace was probably extended in 1888 upon the marriage of two of Bir Shamsher's daughters to king Prithvi Bir. He refers to royal decrees which claim land at the site in 1886 and the extension of roads in 1890. These marriages between the Rana and Shah families were an important part of policy.

¹⁵ See Weiler (2009) for an overview of the Rana Palaces. See Leichty (1997) for analysis of how these new strategies of visual distinction prioritised seeing and being seen; they enabled the Ranas to increasingly secularize authority and position themselves as those with the right to rule.

¹⁶ Except for the seasonal moves discussed by Burghart 1996: 243

¹⁷ When Prithvinarayan Shah (1723-1775) conquered the three affluent and prestigious kingdoms of the Kathmandu Valley in 1768-69, he appropriated the palace of the deposed

the king from the source of his divine power,¹⁸ the Shah dynasty's tutelary goddess in the palace-cum-temple at Gorkha that served as a mountain shrine to the origins of the Shah dynasty.¹⁹ This careful disaggregation of the core elements of Shah kingship that had developed as the basis of their right to rule was more than symbolic: It had the very real effect of preventing the Shah kings from regaining control of the country for many years. Activities relating to the active governance of the country no longer took place in the palace where the king resided, and the Singha Darbar built by the prime minister Chandra Shamsher Rana in 1903 became the nerve centre of government.

When the Narayanhiti Palace became the active seat of governance after the end of Rana rule and King Tribhuvan's triumphant return from India in 1951,²⁰ official rhetoric linked the purity and distinctiveness of the Nepali nation-state to the monarch (Bajracharya 2008: 53) and this re-invention of the monarchy was critical to how the nation's identity was actively re-conceived.²¹ Although Mahendra claimed the Panchayat system to be restorative, he was clearly creating a political culture (Burghart 1993: 2). He adopted the notion of self-determination that many were using to de-legitimate colonial rule through the concept of

Malla king of Kathmandu, and received the blessing of the living incarnation of the Malla's tutelary deity, the *Kumari* on the evening of Indra Jatra in order to legitimize his sovereignty (*Padmagiri Vamshavali* in Hasrat) by positioning the Shah monarchy as the rightful, Hindu kings at the centre of a 'ritually core territory' (Whelpton 2005: 56).

¹⁸ In 1893, when he came of age, in a test of his strength against the Rana Prime Minister (then Bir Shamsher), Prithvi Bir packed up all his possessions and moved back to the Hanuman Dhoka Palace (Sever 1993: 209). This situation is said to have lasted for about a month after which the king returned to the Narayanhiti Palace. Whether this is true or apocryphal, it marks out the Narayanhiti Palace as somewhere the king did not choose to be.

¹⁹ See Gutschow 2011: 167. It was visited by Shah kings as part of their pre-coronation rites (Witzel 1987: 437) and annually as part of the sovereign affirming festival of *Dasain* (Mocko 2012: 422).

²⁰ In discussions with ex-princess Ketaki Chester, she stated as a matter of fact that King Tribhuvan never considered going back to Hanuman Dhoka, for reasons perhaps best expressed by Emily Polk in the context of King Mahendra's similar decision to remain at Narayanhiti (see page 10). By this time army troops were also positioned at the Narayanhiti Palace.

²¹ In contrast to this, the Rana regime was portrayed as an autocratic blip which created an artificial separation between the Shah and Rana dynasties (members of the Rana family were made to leave their palaces, which stood empty as symbols of the evacuation of their occupants).

nation-building (*desa banaune*). In this case the nation (and the monarch) was held as the source of legitimacy for the state, but to do this, the state had to first forge the nation. For the first time, the 1962 constitution defined the nation, national flag, national anthem, national language and even a national flower, colour, animal and bird. Every Nepali had to wear a *topi* (parbatiya hat) on entering Singha Darbar (the general secretariat) as a symbol of personal identification with the nation (Borgstrom 1976: 16). This emphasis on Nepali traditions was a key part of the official rhetoric of the Panchayat system that was heavily promoted through propaganda and schooling. The new palace, Mahendra's administrative centre, was to be a symbol of the Nepali nation,²² created by the king – 'the first focus for the pride and culture of modern Nepal' (Polk 1985: 94).²³

Little is known about the chronology of the palace buildings at Narayanhiti.²⁴ A large earthquake in 1934 caused serious structural damage to the main Rana palace building, though it was subsequently restored, adapted and continued in use. There were several residences within the walls of the compound: Tribhuvan lived in a smaller property to the north of, and adjoining the main palace building,²⁵ and as Crown Prince, Mahendra had his own residence in the palace grounds (Leuchtag 1958: 168).²⁶ The official palace building then served as a symbol, used not as a residence, but for official activities.²⁷

²² The term Nepal did not refer to the nation-state of Nepal until the 1920s when the British used it in reference to the entire country, previously known as Gorkha. The national language, too, changed in title at this time from Gorkhali to Nepali (see Burghart 1996: 253 and Whelpton, 2005: 85).

²³ The official 1976 guide to the palace states that the palace at Gorkha was for sanctuary and defence, and the palace at Hanuman Dhoka for ritual.

²⁴ Jang Bahadur Rana possibly built the original buildings for his fourth brother Ranodip Singh (1825-1885) in 1847, though this date is questioned by Theophile (1992) based on an analysis of stylistic details. This in turn can be shown to follow the location of the British Residency.

²⁵ Known now as Tribhuvan Sadhan, part of which was recently demolished following the massacre of 1 June 2001 of the then king and queen.

²⁶ Erika Leuchtag describes Mahendra and his wife showing their palace, probably a wing of the old official palace building (1958: 168). Later, Mahendra Manjil was constructed just inside the south gate to the north of the Narayan temple complex.

²⁷ After Mahendra became king he is credited with the demolition of the South wing of the palace building, an action Purushottam Rana, perhaps unsurprisingly, attributes to his *purkheli sanak* (ancestral anger) and his desire to break with the recent past (2007: 36).

Mahendra does not appear to have considered re-locating back to the Hanuman Dhoka palace for reasons expressed here by Emily Polk, wife of the palace's architect:

'The king has several palaces, but they are in the old part of Katmandu [sic], and they are very ancient. They are 600 to 1,000 years old and, of course, absolutely filthy dirty. They could never be cleaned. Everything is just saturated with ancientness. It was not an administrative core. There was no administrative section and no place for him to live... He decided he was a modern king, he was going to have this whole new thing'²⁸

Designing the exterior

Mahendra invited several foreign architects to propose designs for his new palace.²⁹ It is not clear if these invitations were overlapping (an informal competition), or if each relationship was struck up in turn.³⁰ Comparison of a sketch plan by Robert Weise with that of the existing building suggests a level of clarity of the functional requirements of the palace as both show a similar division of space between guest, state and private functions. A second comparison, this time between the concept sketch by Robert Weise and the final design by Polk, reveals a clear symbolic break from the neoclassical Rana past.³¹ The Ranas used the neoclassical style to distinguish themselves from their population and symbolically strive towards equality with the British (Weiler 2009). When seen side by side, the designs of Robert Weise and Benjamin Polk suggest that the form of the palace exterior (of a modern Hindu monarch) was required to draw upon traditional (Newar) forms, as both are defined by their adoption of a tiered pagoda roof as a dominant aspect of the design.

²⁸ Polk, E. 1994. Oral history transcript deposited in the archives at the Society of Women Geographers in NYC.

²⁹ Engineer Shankar Nath Rimal (personal communication, Kathmandu, 6 April 2012). The architects were Minoru Yamasaki, Emery Roth & Sons (World Trade Centre), Martin Burn, Robert Weise and Benjamin Polk. pp.190-191.

³⁰ Kai Weise (Robert Weise's son) recalls that his father's project (February 1960) fell through due to a misunderstanding with the royal aid-de-camp (personal communication, Kathmandu, 8 July 2013).

³¹ This narrative was dominant at the time, which is emphasized in the writing of both Benjamin Polk and the recollections of Emily Polk.

The designs by Benjamin Polk (1916-2001), a Californian with a commercially successful joint practice in Calcutta (1957-1964) were accepted in 1961 after Polk had paid a personal visit to the king.³² Polk professed his purpose in designing the palace as “to feel why the ancient buildings were as they were, to understand the people and to work freshly” (Polk 1993a: 9).³³ This emphasis on understanding the spirit of the place was popular in the 1960s and considers one of the primary functions of buildings as being to orient us, to tell us where we are. It suggests questions of authenticity and of course authority, with regard to who decides what is authentic:

The Palace with its high central throne room and its even higher temple spire to the right would be a recollection – about which might cohere visually once again a Nepali purpose – a will that is needed to solve today’s long-term problems and to maintain independence from its two giant neighbours (ibid: 8).

Polk emphasized the palace as a tool for reconciling the past and the present and his writings show him to have been aware of the Panchayat rhetoric and King Mahendra’s theory of monarchy. However, he entered Nepal for business meetings only and in his search for the authentic, he seems to have not strayed far outside the Kathmandu Valley.³⁴ He and his wife Emily returned to the USA in 1964, leaving a government engineer Shankar Nath Rimal, to oversee the construction of the palace.³⁵ Although Polk writes that he offered continuity, it is more accurate to view his role as one of re-arranging fragments of an existing world into an imagined one, using what he had to hand, and directed by the words of the king.

³² Polk was no stranger to the use of design to support the construction of national identity, as he also designed India’s first national memorial, the *Jallianwalabagh* in Amritsar in 1961. The king had heard about his design for the Tripikata Buddhist library and research centre in Rangoon, a project funded by the Ford Foundation (Polk 1985: 94).

³³ Polk was invited to travel to Pagan to examine the architecture there, an experience that was to heavily influence his design methodology in Nepal. In discussing his work in Nepal, he suggests studying the past intently and then dismissing it from your conscious mind.

³⁴ This is confirmed by Isaacson *et al.* (2001).

³⁵ Interview with Shankar Nath Rimal (Kathmandu, 6 April 2012). According to Emily, Benjamin Polk planned to set up a new office in New York and she had a fever (Polk 1994: 243). Significantly, within the palace community Rimal is known as the architect of the palace.

Construction began in 1964 and was overseen by a committee chaired by Prince Gyanendra.³⁶ Benjamin Polk's discussions regarding the design of the palace were mediated through the committee via Shankar Nath Rimal, a process Polk found frustrating.³⁷ The committee approved such design changes as, the use of brick (associated with tradition) rather than marble as a facing material, and the commissioning of artist Bal Krishna Sama (an anti-Rana nationalist) to design the ceremonial entrance doorway to the main reception room.³⁸

Benjamin Polk expected to be involved in designing the interior furnishings of the new palace, and whilst he remained in India (1985, 93-94), his wife Emily Polk resided in Kathmandu from 1962 to 1963 and began work on designs based on what she described as 'indigenous idioms' she found depicted in the paintings at the Ajanta caves in Maharashtra State, India, in an attempt to re-connect the Shah royal family with their Hindu roots (Polk 1994: 237).³⁹ Her drawings suggest an intention to use expensive materials such as ebony and animal skin and I have not found any evidence that her designs were presented to the king.⁴⁰ In 1968, the London firm Asprey & Company, who had long associations with the British monarchy⁴¹ and who were familiar to the king,⁴² were offered the contract to design the state interiors of the palace.

Designing the interior

The Narayanhiti Palace commission enabled Algernon Asprey to establish a successful business model, that saw him win successive royal

³⁶ Personal communication with Ketaki Chester who remembers receiving regular progress reports.

³⁷ Interviews with both Edward Asprey (4 January 2013) and S.N. Rimal (Kathmandu, 5 July 2013).

³⁸ Interview with S.N. Rimal, Kathmandu, 6 April 2012. Balkrishna Sama (previously Shamsheer) was one of the contributors to an edited volume, published in India, celebrating the life and work of Nepali poet Bhanubhakta in 1940 (to mark the 70th anniversary of his death) and therefore in developing what Onta describes as a *bir* history of Nepal (Onta 1996).

³⁹ Oral history transcript deposited at the Society of Women Geographers, New York.

⁴⁰ Held at National Womens Museum of Art, NYC.

⁴¹ They held royal warrants at the time as jewellers and silversmiths (1940).

⁴² Interview with Edward Asprey (4 January 2013) confirmed the long-standing family connection that continues to this day .

commissions for huge palaces across the Middle East.⁴³ In the late 1960s, he also designed the interiors for the Nassaria Guest Palace in Riyadh.⁴⁴ I consider the particular business practices that made this possible, before giving a brief account of the design process for the interior of the palace.

Asprey was founded in 1781 as an ironmongery. The company was run by different members of the family with varying degrees of success. Through the manufacture of high quality goods and a series of shrewd take-overs, the company made ever more grandiose products, which by the 1920s included custom-made commissions for patrons such as Indian Maharajas.⁴⁵ From the middle of the nineteenth century, as exhibitions became both a product and tool of Empire, the firm used their setting to create a reputation for itself in Britain as a practitioner of good design and offering a quintessentially British product. In 1851, Charles Asprey described the role his merchandise was intended to play in upholding the identity-creation of his clientele, as purveyors of superior taste, as follows: “[A]rticles of exclusive design and high quality, whether for personal adornment or personal accompaniment and to endow with richness and beauty the tables and homes of people of refinement and discernment” (Hillier 1981: 115).

This process reached its epitome when in 1862, Asprey’s won a gold medal for excellence in dressing cases and took first place among the exhibitors of their class (ibid: 36).

Unlike other British luxury houses that opened showrooms in British India, particularly Calcutta, Asprey’s only showroom was on London’s Bond Street.⁴⁶ Their business opened up overseas following the Second World War, through the establishment of both antique furniture and interior decoration departments led by Algernon Asprey.⁴⁷ Despite the

⁴³ He established his own business in Bruton Street in 1971. See also Asprey, A. 1975. *In Bruton Street*. London: Algernon Asprey, in the collections of the National Art Library, London TL.ASP2.11.

⁴⁴ By 1976 he was working on his seventh.

⁴⁵ Maharajas of Patiala and Cooch Behar, the Gaekwar of Baroda and the Sultan of Lahore. The biggest commission came in 1930 when the princes stayed in London hotels for the Round Table Conference on India.

⁴⁶ Interview with Edward Asprey, 4 January 2013.

⁴⁷ Whilst this business was modest at first, it built momentum on the basis of the patronage of the Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who visited the shop when he was exiled in London during the war. He built a good relationship with Algernon Asprey, and Aspreys in fact paid

size of his commissions (from 1.5 to 2 million British pounds) and the fact that they involved exporting British craftsmanship worldwide,⁴⁸ Algernon Asprey's work received little public recognition in Britain.⁴⁹ I suggest that this can be in part explained by the nature of the goods produced by Asprey for his royal clients, which were both representative in nature, and utilized cheaper, exotic materials that gave the impression of wealth. Writing about the challenges and constraints that stemmed from working with royal clients, Asprey reflected on the role of the latter:

[T]he client is himself an object, fulfilling a symbolic function within the context of his country's history. Consequently, the objects he commissions ... not only have to embody certain symbolic devices, but must be seen to enhance the dignity of the patron and stand up to the passage of time when passed on from one generation to another (Artley 1980: 7).

Designing for royalty is usually associated with the use of precious or fine materials, and with exquisite craftsmanship. Whether they had the available funds, or not, Algernon Asprey's foreign royal clients, including Mahendra Shah, appear to have preferred appearance to substance. The goods produced by Asprey met 'the shrunken budget with leather, macassar ebony and gold tooling in place of real gold and diamonds' (Hughes 1976 in Artley 1980: 14), and used easily recognizable symbolic elements – such as 'Arabian flavoured doorknobs and fittings' (Hughes 1976 in Artley 1980: 14).⁵⁰ Algernon's business practice during this period of large-scale team projects, relying as it did upon a certain amount of

his hotel bill – something he did not forget. In the 1960s Algernon Asprey was invited to decorate Haile Selassie's palace in Addis Ababa. This palace is credited with opening access to new networks and connections. Unfortunately, following the sale of the family firm in the 1990s, many archives were destroyed and it is not possible to detect the beginning of Asprey's association with the Nepali monarchy – though he is known to have completed work for Tribhuvan.

⁴⁸ He himself owned a series of small firms, including Percy Bass, curtain makers and upholsterers

⁴⁹ The official Asprey history (Hillier 1981) does not cover this period, at least partly due to a family dispute at the time of publication.

⁵⁰ This text is not critical in itself, but the mention of these points suggests criticism from other quarters of the design community. Edward Asprey pointed to his father's use of sycamore, a wood that can be stained any colour (in the case of Mahendra's official desk – stained black to look like ebony).

standardization, contrasted with the accepted (western) understanding of luxury, which valued individual craftsmanship and placed emphasis on the exclusive and the unique.

Algernon Asprey was responsible for designing the complete set of state interiors inside the Narayanhiti Palace.⁵¹ The project took about 18 months and during this period, Asprey stayed in Kathmandu for weeks at a time. He developed each of his designs following meetings with the king to discuss design requirements for particular spaces. After each meeting, he would return to his room in the Soaltee Hotel and quickly produce perspective sketches that, once approved, would form the design drawing for the team on site (Artley 1980: 7).⁵² The majority of pieces were especially commissioned from a range of small manufacturers across the UK and Europe, produced and flown in (on a Britannia aircraft), making this a complex team project. This included everything from the fibrous plaster mouldings for the decoration of the Lamjung dining room ceiling to the 50-foot chandelier in the Gorkha (throne) room designed by Harry Rath of Lobmeyer, Vienna in conjunction with Algernon Asprey (Artley 1980: 46), the office desk used in the king's official office, the Gulmi Room designed by Gordon Russell of Broadway, Worcestershire and landscape paintings lining the *Bajura* room by Asprey's chief artist and designer James Porteous Wood.⁵³

Asprey wrote that when designing for royalty it was necessary for the designed object or interior to provide a vehicle for the display of fine indigenous craftsmanship, for example the wooden staircase connecting the main reception room *kaski baithak* to the throne room on the second floor (*gorkha*) (Artley 1980: 7). Workshops had been established within the palace grounds before 1968 and Newar craftsmen were called upon to assist the team from London. On Mahendra's request, the most senior of craftsmen were issued with certificates recording their work on the project. Several established their own businesses on the basis of their

⁵¹ This was possibly the largest contract of its kind being handled by a UK private firm at the time. Algernon Asprey Exhibition, Goldsmiths Hall, 1976. V&A NK.94.0125.

⁵² Shankar-Nath Rimal remembers him sketching in front of him (Kathmandu, 05 July 2013).

⁵³ For example, office desk by Gordon Russell. Design number: X9765-71. Gordon Russell Museum.

work on the palace interiors with Asprey.⁵⁴ The guidebook that was published after the palace was in use juxtaposed photographs of the palace and its interiors, with text that emphasized the indigenous character of the design (Anonymous 1976). For example, images of each of the state interiors are paired with captions that highlight their symbolic aspects; the rhododendron pattern in a pair of curtains, the wood carving of Nepalese craftsmen, or the use of local materials such as marble from Godavari. The guide does not mention Asprey of London, and omits any mention of the origin and design of the building, but picks out those aspects contributed to by Nepali craftsmen and artists. This highlights multiple identity-making practices at play and parallels the process of representing the exterior.

The palace as a symbol of office

Drawing parallels between the Nepal's 1962 constitution and the design of the royal palace, Malagodi concluded that both articulated "the *raison d'être* of the Panchayat regime: a modern political endeavour cloaked in a traditionalist guise" (2015: 75). Adopting the metaphor of the cloak, in order to conceptualize the inter-relationship between interior and exterior. I highlight the way in which Mahendra deliberately brought the palace into play as a symbol of office, by and through the inscription of an official national narrative around the exterior of the building that served to conceal its interior.

By 1962, in order to create a distance between the Shah monarchy and the Rana regime, Mahendra had constructed Rana rule, and the luxury associated with the vast Rana palace buildings and their lavish state rooms overflowing with British and European paintings, décor and furnishings, as practices that expressed indulgence in built form. These practices were portrayed as immoral, deemed distasteful, and the palaces were left to decay, a narrative that still informs the treatment of these buildings today (Weise 2012). Yet, Asprey's designs were commissioned by the king, I suggest, precisely because they were inextricably tied to their identity as goods representative of modern luxury. The way in which the palace was brought into service as a symbol of office does not

⁵⁴ For example, woodcarver Motiram Tamrakar. engineer Shankar Nath Rimal (Kathmandu, 06 April 2012).

demonstrate the continuity between Rana and Shah regimes, but rather that such continuities were politically unpalatable.

The palace building itself was a luxury, a large-scale, expensive⁵⁵ project that physically manifested the power of the monarch, through large-scale destruction in the heart of the city, and in a very real way mediated the space around it. The king's complete control over the public sphere makes it almost impossible to track down any contemporary criticism of the palace, though oblique references can be found. For example, Benjamin Polk referred to the possibility of such opinions when he stated, "I make no apology to those who think these expensive public symbols are out of place when people are in poverty" (1985: 94), and Edward Asprey recalled the king's response to criticism of the palace being completed to a lavish standard:

[W]hether he wanted to appear less extravagant or this was forced upon him by circumstance, I can't be sure. But there is no doubt in my mind that Mahendra was disillusioned [with the palace], wasn't wild about living there and felt it had gone slightly over the top.⁵⁶

Shanker Nath Rimal, who worked in close proximity to king Mahendra during the construction process, remembers his change of heart part-way through the project. Rimal recalled a conversation with Mahendra about the facing material for the building (a choice between marble – as specified by Polk, which would have had to come from the Carrara quarry outside Rome – or brick). Mahendra is said to have stated wearily, "Even if I build the Tajmahal, the Nepalese people might not appreciate my work."⁵⁷ The king selected so-called Chinese brick and his choice of a traditional material in this context could have been intended to provide the building (and its apparently lavish interiors) with a cloak of modesty.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Shanker Nath Rimal recalled the overall budget to have been of the value of 8-9 crore rupees (excluding the interiors). S.N. Rimal, Kathmandu, 6 April 2012.

⁵⁶ Interview with Edward Asprey, 4 January 2013.

⁵⁷ Shanker Nath Rimal, Kathmandu, 6 April 2012.

⁵⁸ The meaning of these bricks is nuanced, as they came from modern brick factories. They were known as Chinese, after the first modern kiln established with Chinese support in Harisiddhi in the mid-1960s.

The wedding rituals of the then Crown Prince Birendra and Aishwarya both began and ended at the palace, signifying its launch as a representation of the nation and the official home of the Shah king.⁵⁹ In spite of the explicit identification of the kingship with the nation discussed above,⁶⁰ Mahendra realised the danger of projecting the nation as belonging to the monarch, and Burghart's analysis of Mahendra's speeches given across the country during the 1960s reveal the application of the *vaishnavite* concept of service to one's deity to national service (*desa seva*) (1996: 256-8).⁶¹ Mahendra projected himself as working alongside the state in the service of the nation, and his actions in the late 1960s and early 1970s suggest a deliberate (re-)positioning of the palace to enable it to be brought into service as an effective symbol of office, rather than a luxurious royal home.⁶²

The rooms in the palace were named after the 75 districts of Nepal, making it a three-dimensional map of the nation-state over which Mahendra reigned. Mahendra is also said to have sold the palace to the people in 1972. By portraying the building as the property of the people gifted by the king, and as a representation of a unified nation, against a reality of both resistance and ethnic diversity, Mahendra was able to position himself with the people as a devotee of the nation-state and to

⁵⁹ The building was also the official home of the royal family on the occasion of various religious rituals connected to the monarch's role as head of state, for example the giving of *tika* to various high-ranking officials in the *Dhanusha* room on the occasion of Vijaya Dashami, the sacred thread ceremony of the crown prince, and the wedding of Princess Shruti. See Mocko (2012: 409 onwards) for a detailed discussion of the royal *Dasain* rituals.

⁶⁰ In certain aspects of administrative organisation from 1951. As an example, he gives the position held by the Shah kings and later the Rana prime ministers at the apex of the tenurial hierarchy which meant that the ruler as recipient of all state revenue could decide how to disburse funds, either for governmental or personal expenditure. After 1951, a fiscal policy was introduced that predicted the annual costs of government and adjusted taxation accordingly. The king and the royal family received a salary from the state and unlike during the pre-1950 period, any surplus was now accrued to the state rather than the king (Burghart 1996: 256).

⁶¹ Burghart argues that in the application of the concept of service to one's deity to national service (*desa seva*), Mahendra utilised concepts from Vaishnavite devotional religion in order to translate the values and ideas of nation-building into the Nepali political arena.

⁶² According to Shanker Nath Rimal, Mahendra publicly distanced himself from the palace by deciding to reside elsewhere; this was reflected in his request to change the layout of the private rooms on the south-side, reducing the size of the bedroom. This was echoed by Edward Asprey who recalled that his father was disappointed that it the palace was not used more, that Mahendra was not comfortable there and that he resided in his own villa.

legitimize his position. The palace became officially interpreted as a symbol of office alongside the crown and sceptre, and its form served to naturalize the position of the monarchy at the head of the political order with its “ultimate Nepaleseness” (Onta 1996) designed to promote a national culture.

The palace as an instrument of foreign policy

“A modern form of His Majesty’s concern for the welfare of his subjects and international friendship. Perhaps this is the best message and most fitting symbolism of the Narayanhiti Palace” (Anonymous 1976: 14). This quotation from the official English language palace guidebook to the palace reveals that the official interpretation of the palace as a symbol of office was also intended for use internationally. Mahendra, as absolute monarch, positioned himself as the bridge between the traditional world of Nepal and the modern west (Lakier 2009: 212). The country was opening up for the first time, seeking international recognition as an independent state as well as support through aid packages.⁶³ The Narayanhiti Palace was designed for receiving foreign royal and diplomatic guests. Nepal established political relations with a large number of countries including the US, USSR and China, all of whom set up embassies in Kathmandu between 1958 and 1960.⁶⁴ State guests resided in the palace and each state visit followed a set programme, which involved a significant number of events within the space of the palace, including the exchange of speeches between the king and the visiting Head of State; official receptions; the signing of the visitors book; and receiving the credentials of foreign diplomats. The design of the palace interiors by a British firm can also be explored in the context of this international audience.

The Panchayat regime was concerned with the appearance of order and unity, and though the interiors of the palace were publicized, this

⁶³ Acharya shows a steady increase in foreign aid as a percentage of development expenditure from the first Five-Year Plan (1956-1961) through the Fourth Plan (1970-1975) (Acharya 1992: 9). This then increased exponentially from the mid 1970s to 1990, and by 1997 more than half of the government’s budget came from foreign aid.

⁶⁴ Official photographs on display in the Palace Museum reveal 20 official state visits by heads of state between 1971 and 2001.

was done in an official English-language guidebook to the Palace, clearly intended for foreign guests to the building:⁶⁵

In a fine clear morning in autumn, with the never-ending play of sunlight over the snow-peaks, and the silhouette of the mists still lingering over the hills, it looks as though the Palace had stood there for an age. Its beauty, however, is new and fresh” (Anonymous 1976: 5).

The decision to describe the Palace in the context of Nepal’s unique topography emphasizes that continuity was intended to highlight Nepal’s individuality and pride. The Nepali historian Pratyoush Onta’s discussion of the Panchayat manipulation of historical consciousness is demonstrative of how this history was intended to cultivate a national culture and create an independent land on which development (*bikas*) could be enacted (1996: 232). The use of tradition as a way of restoring Nepal’s international reputation reveals an awareness within the palace of Nepal’s marginal position on the global stage.

Architecture is a way of scripting a performance, and the Narayanhiti Palace can be viewed as a staging-ground in which each room formed the stage for a specific activity. As a symbol of office, I suggest the entire building was conceptualized as public space and was therefore called upon in pursuit of international recognition. Foreign guests were intended to come away with an impression of simultaneously seeing the value in offering support to a country with a distinctive national identity, and having confidence in the monarchy’s ability to bring development to the country, i.e. at the king’s official home, to experience a luxurious (modern) environment with which they were familiar. In this sense, the palace interiors formed an active part of Mahendra’s foreign policy. An account by M. Casey (the wife of a former Australian Governor-General) on the occasion of the wedding of King Birendra to Aishwarya in 1970 offers us the chance to experience a performance in action:

⁶⁵ References are to the third edition of 1976. Images in the front of the booklet show the palace alongside other symbols of office.

The King's banquet, the last of the official ceremonies, was held in the new palace. You entered from the road up a long long flight of wide stone steps carpeted in red or more adroitly by means of an Otis lift near a side entrance. For an hour and a half the many guests stood on a honey-coloured marble floor. . . Finally we moved into the banqueting hall, another long high narrow room made lively by mirrors, candelabra, armchairs of crystal with seats of gentian blue, and by jewelled women. At the far end rose a mural of the impeccable peak of Everest, the summit of the world... How can one assess the impressions taken away from this visit by the many disparate guests? It was an opportunity for informal talks; you could see unexpected fish swimming towards each other . . .⁶⁶

The official guide to the events of the wedding includes photographs of the tents set up in the palace grounds to host the official guests, including various heads of states and foreign diplomats (Simha 1971-2). Interestingly, Casey's account does not privilege representation nor spatial structure, they operate together. She picks out particular material items of note, the lift as an example of modern technology which she was perhaps surprised to see in Nepal, the marble floor of the *Kaski Baithak* and the painting of Everest at the far end of the *Lamjung* dining room, as well as the way in which the informal arrangement of the dining room facilitated the discussion of politicians (the unexpected fish mentioned by Casey) from all countries in support of Mahendra's policy of non-alignment.

The palace interior

The Rana palace complex at Narayanhiti was built as a small citadel, surrounded by walls designed to create separation between the rulers and the ruled. As stated above, for those living and working within the palace, the space inside the walls was described as *bhitra* (inside), a feudal concept of space that offered "security, authority and protection" (Rana 1986: 90). This separation continued after 1951 and access to the main

⁶⁶ Casey, M. 1970. 'An Auspicious Occasion: 25th February to 4th March 1970'. Unpublished Manuscript. Kent History Centre ref: CKS-U951/Z81/5.

palace building was extremely restricted, even to palace staff.⁶⁷ Selected members of the public were granted the opportunity to enter the palace grounds to receive *tika* from the king at the annual festival of *dasain*, but did not enter the main building. Politicians, civil leaders, and on occasion foreign diplomats were usually granted audiences with the king in a separate one-story building to the south west of the main palace called *mangal sadhan*.⁶⁸ Therefore, whilst the main reception room (*kaski baithak*) was familiar to literate Nepalis in a mediated form – via photographs distributed through the state-sponsored press to commemorate visits by foreign Heads of State, the conferring of medals on other members of the royal family, and the swearing in of government officials by the king – very few people entered the interior of the palace, and those who did were either foreign guests or members of the Nepali educated elite.

The Rana rulers dressed in British clothes, drove British motorcars, and built neoclassical palaces illuminated with electric light.⁶⁹ A series of sumptuary laws tightly controlled access to these imported goods⁷⁰ and the architectural landscape around the palaces, with rules dictating the specific types of housing each caste could construct (Gellner 1995). Leichty argues that “‘Nepal’ was not dependent on the British, but the Rana regime was’ (1997: 133). Using strategies manifested in material terms they used British goods in order to position themselves as those with the right to rule. Mahendra’s use of British designs and material goods within the palace reveals notions of identity creation that maintained a direct link to Britain as the source of political modernisation and legitimation in a continuation of the identity

⁶⁷ As was emphasized by my interviews with ex-members of palace staff, who all recall their first entrance into the building – often surreptitiously, or post-2008 when the king had already left. Members of staff would carry passes, which enabled various levels of access. The highest level granted access to the private wing of the main palace building as emphasized by the unofficial guidebook to the Palace Museum written by former palace official Buddhi Bahadur Gurung.

⁶⁸ Official meetings sometimes took place in designated rooms on the ground floor of the main palace building.

⁶⁹ A number of photos extant of porters carrying cars later became potent images of the exploitative nature of the Rana regime.

⁷⁰ To the extent that a non-Rana could be severely punished for owning a radio (Koirala 2008: 32–33).

practices of the Ranas.⁷¹ With this reading, Mahendra's adoption of British material culture itself becomes a signal of political allegiance, literally transcribed here as designs by a British firm for some of the most important interior spaces in the country.

Whereas the Ranas used British goods as part of a series of strategies of visual distinction (Leichty 1997) that prioritized being seen, the interiors of the Narayanhiti Palace were not intended to be seen by the majority of the population of Nepal. They were designed to be seen and experienced only by the Nepali elite attending state events staged in the palace, together with foreign guests. Alongside the complete control of state media, it was precisely the inaccessibility of the palace interiors that made it possible for Mahendra to commission British designs at a time when official rhetoric required the Rana palaces to be reviled for their ostentatious display of wealth and foreignness. The make-up of the Nepali political elite changed little with the transition from Rana to Shah rule in 1951, hence Mahendra's concern for those Nepalis attending state events at the palace, would have been less the re-invention of tradition, as in the official guidebook, but rather to uphold the prestige requirement of the Shah royal family. These visitors to the palace were influenced by the tastes of the Rana (Leichty 2003: 44-45) and the British-designed interiors would have been understood by them as both modern and luxurious.

Conclusion

By considering the palace at a particular moment during its construction in the 1960s and the first few years of its operation, this paper has shown the complexities of the plurality of meanings of the palace at the time of its construction and launch, meanings that were under constant renegotiation.⁷² The palace was the centre of political authority at the time of its construction. As such, all traces of the Rana legacy had to be

⁷¹ Mahendra followed in a line of Nepali rulers who emulated foreign elites in order to uphold their position (see Gellner 1999: 7-9). The early Shah kings, who inhabited Malla palaces and attempted to distance themselves from the British and Mughals, were in this sense the exception to the rule of imitating foreign rulers.

⁷² The legitimization of these multiple interpretations is important because it highlights the importance of understanding the palace within its local context and challenges the culturally constructed oppositions of modern and traditional that have thus far framed the way the palace has been understood.

seen to be erased. An official narrative was inscribed around the exterior of the palace that played up tradition in order to legitimize the political authority and nationalist stature of the monarchy to a local audience. In this way, Mahendra called the new palace into service as a new symbol of office. The traditional elements of the form of the palace's exterior and its materiality were also emphasized to signal the country's uniqueness and independence, and to dress a stage upon which international relations were played out. The palace's state interiors on the other hand, drew upon British and European designs and were intended to simultaneously uphold the position of the royal family within the ruling Nepali elite, and to indicate the country's ability to enact development to foreign guests.

The official narrative inscribed around the exterior of the palace, has been explored using the metaphor of a cloak. This metaphor was invoked by Malagodi to encapsulate an apparent contradiction between the steel frame and concrete building that reclaimed Newar architectural forms, and it was claimed as a mode by which to explore the relationship between interior and exterior of the palace (2015: 75). Firstly, the cloak did not envelop the interior through the architectural use of Newar architectural forms per se. Rather, its coverage was determined through the way in which its intended meaning was projected (or not) and access to the palace was controlled. It attempted to define how Nepalis were to coalesce around a single Nepalese identity, i.e. how they were to view the palace from the outside, in direct contrast to the Rana palaces. The adoption of a view from the aristocratic inside (*bhitra*) has enabled us to see through the weft and the weave of this cloak to reveal a continuation of the identity-building practices of the Rana regime. Practices that at the very least demonstrate a continuation of the meaning of British and European goods between the Rana and Shah, and that when pushed suggest that the make-up of the state apparatus was little changed in its elite nature.⁷³ In order to uphold his rule, Mahendra publicly constructed the Rana regime as exploitative and as a result the display of foreign

⁷³ In the peer review of this article, it was pointed out that Hem Narayan Agrawal's *Nepal. A study in constitutional change* identified much in common between Mahendra's 1962 constitution had and the first written constitutional attempt under Padma Shamsheer Rana in 1948. For a consideration of the relationship between Nepal's constitutions and the architecture of power, see Malagodi (201).

goods became associated with the abuse of power. The fact that Mahendra chose to use a British firm to design the palace interiors reveals the cloak as a carefully woven reality that thinly veiled a relatively unchanged Nepali elite, for whom legitimate authority remained linked to an image of foreignness – read Britishness.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the Narayanhiti Palace was actively used to construct patterns of self-interpretation, legitimized by the past. These patterns differed according to whether the audience experienced the interior of the palace through their participation in key ceremonies, or not and according to their nationality and status. The palace was used by Mahendra to seek legitimacy through the will of the people of Nepal, yet its bounded compound, simultaneously excluded all but the elite from the inner workings of the government. This exclusion was challenged in 1990, again in 2006 and finally ended in 2009, when the palace was opened to the public as a national museum.

Final note

This paper formed part of the bicentenary workshop of Nepal–Britain relations organised by the Britain–Nepal Academic Council on 23 March 2015. After presenting my paper, Mark Watson from the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh was kind enough to share with me an image of a map drawn by Major Charles Crawford, in the collection at the Linnean Society. This map arguably locates the position of the British residency in the early 1800s at Narayanhiti. Therefore, one can argue that the first Rana residences were constructed there in order to be in close proximity to the British. The location of the British residency was possibly the ultimate reason why the Nepali monarch in the 1960s was to construct his palace at this particular site.

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Britain-Nepal relations through the prism of aid

Jeevan Raj Sharma and Ian Harper

Introduction

In this paper we view Britain-Nepal relations through the prism of aid. Along with the recruitment of Gurkhas into the British Army, aid to Nepal has been one of the principal elements in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. For example, in 2015/2016, the budget for Nepal of the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) stood at £101.5 million.¹ Whilst the origins of aid can be traced back to financial support to colonial governments from the mid-late 19th century (Overseas Development Institute 1964), in this historical trawl through Britain-Nepal aid relations we focus on the period from 1952 to the present. We start with some methodological caveats – what we have focused on, what we have left out, and why we have approached this subject in the way we have – and then we divide the paper up to reflect aid in relation to Nepal's most significant political eras and transformations. This represents our initial scoping of the terrain, and limited by length, and the breadth of the subject, the paper omits details of specifics, and deals with the subject matter with broad brush strokes. We conclude with observations on emerging analytical issues and the need for a political history of aid.

What constitutes aid to Nepal?

While deliberating how to approach this paper, we first had to consider what constitutes aid from Britain, as well as the diversity of these entanglements. Aid from Britain has supported projects such as road building, drinking water, community mobilisation for community forestry, delivery of health and education services in the middle hills, and has expanded in the last two decades to include other sectors such as strengthening civil society, governance, health systems, human rights, state-society relations, conflict, security, the peace process, political transition, climate change and natural disasters.

¹ <https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/NP>, accessed 10 August 2017.

There are official channels: Britain's Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Nepal is mainly channelled through DFID². This aid is channelled directly, through Britain's bilateral projects or more indirectly, with its support of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), and through Britain's contributions to multilateral agencies, and global Public Private Partnerships (PPP) such as the Global Fund. Some of this aid is also delivered through the Ministry of Defence (MoD) - especially for Gurkha Welfare Support (GWS) Projects - and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to carry out political analysis.

In addition to ODA, several Non-Governmental Organisations provide development and humanitarian assistance. These are faith-based missionary organisations such as United Mission to Nepal (UMN), with significant British input, and International Nepal Fellowship (INF); other UK based International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) such as Save the Children UK, Oxfam GB and ActionAid; and INGOs with a specific Nepal focus such as the Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT). There are Universities involved in research collaborations- such as University College London, Liverpool, Oxford and Edinburgh, amongst others - that channel resources from the research funding bodies such as Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Medical Research Council (MRC), Nuffield Foundation and the Wellcome Trust. In addition to these, there are aid flows building on longstanding personal, professional and diasporic networks, and various forms of people-to-people aid from Britain to Nepal.

These aid channels are influenced by changing patterns in aid flows informed by global trends such as neoliberal reforms, and the focus on security concerns post 9/11. Significant shifts also occur with changes in domestic politics and governments in Britain. Major critical events, such as the recent earthquakes in Nepal also have profound impacts on resource flows. In this paper, however, we attempt to read aid from Britain to Nepal primarily through the perspective of significant political changes in Nepal since the 1950s and link these to the context of shifting discourses on aid globally. Aid from Britain to Nepal reflects Nepal's

² DFID was established in 1997. Prior to that there have been several shifts in institutions responsible for management of British aid, reflecting political changes in the UK.

political specificity in addition to being shaped by shifting global parameters on aid. Accordingly, this paper is organized around the timeline of Nepal's political history: pre-1951, 1952-1960, 1960-1990, 1990-1996, 1996-2006 and 2006 onwards. We also focus primarily on official development assistance.

Sources and methodological caveats

Researching aid from Britain to Nepal is methodologically challenging. While there is plenty of writing on foreign aid in Nepal, there is very little specific detail on aid from Britain to Nepal.³ There are passing references made on aid from Britain to Nepal in a number of published texts, but with little specific detail (Bell 2014, Fujikura 2013, Harper 2014, Justice 1989, Khadka 1991, Mihaly 2002, Pandey 1999, Shrestha 1998, Whelpton 2005). We also note that in this survey paper, we have not developed a critical theoretical position, be that post-structuralist, neo-Marxist or another.

While it is relatively easy to find information on Britain's ODA flows and brief information on institutional shifts, unlike USAID there has been no systematic documenting of the work of ODA over the last six decades, and there is almost no documentation on British aid to Nepal. In addition to archiving its reports and making them accessible to the public through its dedicated website (<https://dec.usaid.gov/dec>), USAID has published documentation of its work in the form of a book (Isaacson *et al.* 2001). Outside of ODA, some organisations such as Britain Nepal Medical Trust (BNMT) and United Mission to Nepal (UMN) that are conscious of their institutional history have documented their work in Nepal. British INGOs active in Nepal such as Save the Children UK, Oxfam GB and ActionAid amongst others have not documented their history. Aside from mainly missionary memoirs – of which there are a number – we are unaware of accounts of experiences of British aid workers and expatriates working in Nepal.⁴ The aid efforts based on long-standing personal, professional and diasporic networks are dispersed and can only be documented through oral and life histories of individuals.

³The working paper written by Nickson (1992) is a very useful source of information on British aid to Nepal. We draw on this document extensively in this paper.

⁴ See for example Cundy (1997) and Dickinson (2016).

In writing this paper we have relied largely on British sources and those that are written in English. This is primarily because we have not come across any written documents in Nepali (except for annual reports from the Ministry of Finance and Social Welfare Council in Nepal, which record information on the volume of aid from different bilateral and multilateral donors - including British ODA - and offer limited information on the listing of activities of INGOs and missionaries). Some information on British official assistance is available in the UK National Archives, with limited data on specific projects available from a website managed by DFID, called devtracker (<http://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/countries/NP/>). According to this portal, so far there have been 74 projects set up since DFID was established in 1997, with 27 projects active as of 1 March 2015. There are also a few public documents including DFID's evaluation of its Nepal Country Programme (2001-06), Country Assistance Plan (2004), DFID Nepal Operational Plan published in 2014 and a Parliamentary Committee report on DFID's bilateral aid programme (2015) amongst others. Thus, it is the voice of the provider of ODA, which is easily accessible to any researcher.

We try to address this lacuna in the lack of documentation on British aid to Nepal by drawing on the mapping of activities of different British development organisations active in Nepal in addition to reviewing various documents and grey literature on aid from Britain to Nepal. This paper is also informed by our ESRC-DFID research on the mapping of external development assistance into Maternal Child Health programmes.⁵

Pre-1951

The origins of British aid can be traced back to the financial support provided to British colonies, beginning with grants-in-aid to colonial governments in the 1870s. Support was more formally instituted by the Colonial Development Act 1929, which made loans and grants available for projects such as infrastructural investment (White 1998). The subsequent 1940 Colonial Welfare and Development Act (and its successor in 1945) made more funds available and expanded the support to include

⁵ For details, please see <http://gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=ES%2FL005565%2F1>, accessed 10 August 2017.

education and social services as necessary to support economic development (ODI 1964). British aid did not make it into Nepal under these laws.

When the Ranas were overthrown through a nationalist movement with India's support in 1950, the country opened up to foreign aid, modernisation and development. Since then, Nepal's development trajectory has been shaped by successive aid regimes. Foreign aid made its official debut into Nepal with the signing of the Four Point agreement with the United States on 23 January 1951, followed by aid from India and China (Mihaly 2002).

Early beginning: 1954- 1960

Aid began to pour into Nepal as the US, India and China competed for geopolitical influence in Nepal. While the primary motivation for the US assistance was aimed at strengthening countries and governments vulnerable to the threat of communism, India and China focused aid in strategic sectors such as road building and airport construction. The first two major projects undertaken by India were an airport in Kathmandu and a road linking Kathmandu and the Indian border town of Raxaul (Adhikari 2014).

British aid did not feature in these geo-political strategies. During this period, Britain maintained very close relationships with the monarchy, as it was fearful that the democratic government could put restrictions on the recruitment of Gurkhas (Nickson 1992). Its limited support included fellowships for Nepalis under the Colombo Plan,⁶ and providing motorcycles for the Nepalese army in 1958. Britain helped set up a 70-bed British Military Hospital at the Gurkha recruitment centre in Dharan in 1957, primarily to service the medical needs of Gurkha soldiers serving in the British army and their families. An important form of aid from Britain to Nepal by missionaries started in 1954, with the Church of Scotland

⁶ As stated on its website, 'The Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic and Social Development in Asia and the Pacific was conceived at the Commonwealth Conference on Foreign Affairs held in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in January 1950 and was launched on 1 July 1951 as a cooperative venture for the economic and social advancement of the peoples of South and Southeast Asia.' Source: <http://www.colombo-plan.org/index.php/about-cps/history/>, accessed 10 August 2017.

being one of the founders of the inter-denominational UMN in 1954 (UMN 1999).

Consolidation of Panchayat system: 1960–1990

Britain became active in providing aid to Nepal following King Mahendra's takeover in 1960 and the introduction of the Panchayat system in 1962. Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) began to work in Nepal in 1964. Throughout the next three decades, British aid helped to consolidate the Panchayat system in Nepal. It provided machinery, presses and other printing equipment to the Ministry of Information and to the state-controlled newspaper *Gorkhapatra*, which were key instruments through which the Panchayat regime promoted its version of nationalism (Nickson 1992). Britain also gave aid to Radio Nepal in the form of studio equipment, with a 100 KW medium wave and a 100 KW short wave transmitter. It also helped set up Buddhanilkantha School, an elite school in the outskirts of Kathmandu, as a part of its nation-building project. Despite the deteriorating economic situation and aspirations for democracy in the 1980s, the British government provided staunch support to the Panchayat system. During this decade, Nepal received three separate visits from British ministers responsible for aid and a visit by the Queen in February 1986. In her speech the Queen said, 'It gives me great pleasure to be able to congratulate Your Majesty on the recent 25th anniversary of your Panchayat system of government' (ibid: 6).

For a land-locked country with limited road networks, British assistance focused on connectivity through road building. In the east, Britain funded road projects linking the Indian border town of Jogbini to Dharan, which was later extended to Dhankuta, Hille and Basantapur in the hills. It supported a part of King Mahendra's East-West highway project between Narayangadh and Butwal, and also supported the upgrading of the Mugling-Malekhu section of the road connecting Kathmandu to Pokhara and Narayangath.

Road building and its impact were thus of major interest to Britain. In the 1970s, ODA also financed major research into this topic. The Overseas Development Group at the University of East Anglia was contracted to investigate the impact of the Siddhartha highway, which connected the Nepal-India border town of Sunauli to Pokhara and of its feeder roads. The resulting report, later published as the book *Nepal in Crisis*, concluded

that the road network did little to promote economic development or reduce inequalities (Blaikie *et al.* 1980). On the contrary, the authors argued that road construction had deepened market forces, which made people more vulnerable to poverty. A re-examination of the same region after 20 years, however, gave a slightly more optimistic picture, because labour out-migration had not resulted in impoverishment as migrant remittance had contributed to the maintenance of living standards (Blaikie *et al.* 2002).

Aid was given for the establishment of agricultural extension work in the Lumle area near Pokhara in 1968 and at Pakhrebas in the Dhankuta area in 1972. British aid also supported the Koshi Hills Area Development Programme, a major integrated rural development programme in four districts in the eastern hills (Sankhuwasabha, Dhankuta, Terhathum and Bhojpur) and also a drinking water programme in Eastern Nepal (the Eastern Region Water Supply Project).⁷ The nature of British official aid in this period, including its geographical concentration, was shaped by British interest in the recruitment of Gurkhas. British support focused on the middle hills of Nepal, in areas where former Gurkhas came from or went back to settle after completing their service. The British Government made an attempt to train the former Gurkha soldiers of the British Army as health and veterinary workers in Nepal, which was not successful (Stevenson 1976).⁸ Thus, the focus of British aid was particularly concentrated in and around the Pokhara and Dharan/Dhankuta areas. In this sense, the aid programmes could be seen as a form of compensation or reparation for the loss of their labour from the hills. Thus, part of British aid can be considered as a form of social protection offered to former Gurkhas and their families.

A number of British NGOs began to work in Nepal during this period. BNMT started in 1967; Save the Children UK in 1976; ActionAid in 1982. Oxfam and Care also opened their Nepal offices. These INGOs delivered services in the fields of health, education, literacy, social development

⁷ Both these projects have been severely criticized for their limited impact. It was alleged that the contractors for the latter absorbed funds without significant results being shown for this - the allegation, for example, that taps installed by the program were only a few meters away from those installed by UNICEF (Nickson 1992).

⁸ Many of the service users (who were also neighbours or relatives) did not pay these health workers or veterinary workers for their services, and the government did not put forward a programme to integrate them into the health system.

etc. but their geographical focus and visibility was limited. During the Panchayat period, the government did not allow programmes that had explicit political messages or that supported political activities. It was really only after the 1990 political and constitutional changes that these INGOs became more visible and expanded their programmes, boosted by increased funding from the UK government.

Democratisation and expansion of civil society: 1990–1996

The political changes of 1990 had a significant effect on British aid to Nepal. The fall of the Panchayat system was met with rising aspirations for development and the growth of NGOs, civil society and the public sphere in general. A number of British INGOs began to expand their work in Nepal in collaboration or partnership with the growing number of Nepali NGOs and expanding civil society organisations. British aid increasingly focused on human rights work and several civil society organisations as a part of Nepal's democratisation and the expansion of the public sphere.

Official British Development Assistance continued to support integrated rural development projects under the banner of the Koshi Hills Development Project in eastern Nepal until 1993. In 1993, a major Nepal-UK forestry project began which included the four districts of Koshi and additional districts in the Dhaulagiri region. This project was a part of Nepal's community forestry programme, which involved handing over the management of forests to community groups.

In the health sector, the Dharan hospital was handed over to the government and became the Eastern Regional Hospital. In 1994 ODA sent a mission to the country to identify challenges in the health sector, and this led to the start of the Nepal Safe Motherhood Program (NSMP) aimed at tackling maternal mortality through a number of activities in 1997. ODA's support to research programmes continued with funding to the UCL-MIRA collaboration on women's groups and maternal health in Makwanpur district.

Conflict and security: 1996–2006

The 1998 Country Strategy Paper (CSP) presaged the opening of a local office in 1999, and planned a programme of £16 million per year increasing to £21 million by 2001-02 (Chapman 2007). DFID constructed

and opened its new office in Kathmandu in April 1999. The CSP stressed the need to address poverty and to introduce new aid modalities such as Sector Wide Approaches (SWAp).⁹ The CSP was in line with the Nepal government's Ninth Development Plan. While the CSP gave increased attention to governance and to meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),¹⁰ it also shared the failure of the government's plan to address the emerging Maoist and ethnic conflict or its underlying causes.

Britain continued to support a number of social development initiatives in Nepal in health, water, forestry, and road construction in addition to its support for governance, and human rights. It provided important support for safe motherhood, the decentralisation of health services and governance reform through its Enabling State Programme (ESP).¹¹ It went on to play a lead role in health Sector Wide Approaches (SWAps) in 2004, and has since been providing technical assistance for the implementation of the Nepal Health Sector Programme (NHSP). However, the Maoist insurgency and its agenda of social and political transformation and the fact that it emerged from age-old structural inequalities came as a major surprise to the aid community, including DFID (Donini and Sharma 2014). Despite providing aid to Nepal for over four decades, British official aid had not framed its assistance around inequality in Nepali society and politics (see Department for International Development 1998).

Although British aid was never a direct target of the Maoists, there was a heightened focus on security issues amongst the British aid officials and their projects. DFID took a lead in the introduction of Basic Operating Guidelines (BOGs) to protect aid projects and personnel from overt manipulation and to ensure space for development and humanitarian work in the midst of conflict (Donini and Sharma 2014). An example of accommodation in Maoist-controlled areas is provided by the DFID-supported Livelihoods and Forestry Programme (LFP) that developed

⁹ A SWAp is a process in which funding from different financing sources for a particular sector supports a single policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, and adopting common approaches across the sector.

¹⁰ MDGs were eight global development goals with clear measurable targets with the target achievement date of 2015. For details see:

<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/index.htm>, accessed 10 August 2017.

¹¹<https://devtracker.dfid.gov.uk/projects/GB-1-108572/>, accessed 20 February 2017.

ways to continue working effectively through Forestry User Groups (FUGs) in rural communities affected by the conflict. During the conflict, community FUGs experienced many difficulties, yet despite these, they withstood much of the pressure and continued to operate effectively. A study conducted by Andrea Nightingale and Jeevan Raj Sharma found that a ‘conflict-sensitive approach’¹² contributed to the ability of the programme to continue to work during the conflict period. Because the programme was grounded in the communities, neither the state nor the Maoists were able to manipulate it to their advantage (Nightingale and Sharma 2014).

9/11 was a critical event in changing the perspective of the British aid programme. The British government at first saw the Maoist insurgency through the lens of security, and this view converged with the Government of Nepal’s attempts to fight the Maoists. Like other bilateral donors, DFID was initially reluctant to define the situation in Nepal as a conflict-related humanitarian emergency, as this would have contradicted the government’s portrayal of it as law and order problem (Donini and Sharma 2014). DFID also feared this would imply an implicit recognition of the Maoists as a legitimate interlocutor with whom issues of access for humanitarian actors would need to be discussed. It is for this reason that DFID introduced the concept of development-oriented emergency aid, linking relief to medium-term and long-term development efforts (Donini and Sharma 2014). In other words, in a conflict environment development programmes were deemed to be relevant, if not more appropriate than large-scale humanitarian programmes. This view is expressed in a DFID-commissioned multi-year Country Programme evaluation:

In Nepal, DFID demonstrated that development programmes could address the consequences of conflict on poor communities as opposed to large-scale humanitarian action. This was achieved by the adoption by development programmes (outside of Government structures) of a semi-humanitarian approach, i.e. targeted, quick delivery, and tangible outputs (Chapman *et al.* 2007: 69–70).

¹² To minimize the effect of armed conflict in development, many development partners and INGOs, including DFID, adopted conflict sensitive approaches such as Safe and Effective Development in Conflict (SEDC) and Do No Harm policies.

While attempting to resolve inequalities and grievances had not really been the focus of British aid to Nepal, the need to reconsider aid in the context of Nepal's emerging conflict played a role in shifting priorities. While initially DFID accepted the government narrative that the Maoist insurgency was primarily a security problem to be addressed with force, in 2002, the agency was able to challenge the government's narrative and raised concerns over human rights abuses, as it began to see Nepal as a 'fragile state' (Chapman *et al.* 2007). DFID undertook conflict analysis and began to share analysis on the causes of conflict (Goodhand 2000). It opened a Risk Management Office (together with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit [GIZ]) in 2002 (Chapman *et al.* 2007).

Britain also provided support to the UN Human Rights Office to monitor and protect human rights in Nepal. It supported a human rights advisor position that played a key role in the overall monitoring of the situation, and also supported human rights NGOs in monitoring and documenting human rights abuses, which were central to putting pressure on the government over its excessive use of force. Overall, therefore, DFID made an important contribution towards keeping Nepal's conflict on the international agenda. This included organising three London conferences in this regard (in 2002, 2005 and 2007) (Chapman *et al.* 2007).

There was a gradual recognition that the grievances caused by widespread inequalities had contributed to increase support for the Maoist insurgency (Chapman *et al.* 2007). In this context, the 2004 Country Assistance Plan (CAP) reoriented DFID to respond to the causes of conflict. The new direction, which took two years to prepare, introduced peace-building and social inclusion as strategic pillars. DFID and the World Bank undertook a major research exercise entitled the 'Nepal Gender and Social Exclusion Assessment', which resulted in an influential publication *Unequal Citizens* (Department for International Development and World Bank 2005), which contributed to pushing the issue of exclusion up the donor agenda. Against this background, the European donors (such as DFID, Danida and the Norwegian Embassy) had begun to channel significant funding to work on the issue of gender, caste and ethnicity through the lens of inclusion and empowerment of these groups. Britain provided aid to the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)

for the Janajati Empowerment Project, which attracted some criticism from within Nepal for its specific focus on ethnicity- driven politics (Sharma 2012).¹³

The political situation changed dramatically in 2005-2006 with the royal take-over followed by the people's movement, which resulted in the overthrow of the monarchy and signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 21 November 2006. Finally, in 2006, with the reinstatement of parliament, aid from Britain had focused on post-conflict political transition, elections for Constitutional Assembly and wider issues of political settlement.

Post-conflict transition: 2006–present

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was a critical event in Nepal's political history as it paved the road for a political settlement based on the principles of equality, inclusion and the restructuring of Nepal into a secular, republican and a federal state.

Throughout the transition phase, Britain continued to support human rights documentation and protection work in addition to supporting the implementation of the peace process, the two elections for the Constitutional Assembly and security sector reform. Focussing on the peace process and the aim of an inclusive political settlement, funding followed for a series of conflict assessments and for UN offices, organisations of politically marginal groups such as *dalits*, *janajatis* and *madhesis* and INGOs such as the International Crisis Group, Carter Centre, Saferworld and Search for Common Ground. In the wake of growing public criticisms against DFID's funding for the Janajati Empowerment Programme (JEP) and NEFIN's decision to call for *banda* (a general strike), DFID ended its support to JEP saying that it did not support political activities (Sharma 2015). This was an awkward response for DFID as its support had, of course, in many senses always been political.

DFID's support to the health sector, mainly focused around the Sector Wide Approach, continued through its technical assistance office in the Ministry of Health with outsourcing to private contractors such as the London-based Options Private Limited (Options) and North Carolina-

¹³ Also see <http://www.newbusinessage.com/MagazineArticles/view/166>, accessed 8 March 2016.

based Research Triangle International (RTI). This eventually led to the introduction of the Aama Programme (officially known as Aama Surakchya Karyakram) in Nepal in 2009. The DFID-funded safe motherhood project that initially started in 1997 had successfully used the tactic of lobbying to achieve the legalisation of abortion and also to introduce financial incentives for institutional delivery in Nepal as a way to reach MDG targets (Ensor *et al.* 2008).

DFID also continued with its major bilateral service delivery programme called the Community Support Programme (CSP), a local governance programme called the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) and the Rural Access Programme (RAP) amongst others. Its support for LGCDP was controversial because there was no local government to begin with, and the consequent lack of accountability allegedly escalated corruption (ICAI 2014). DFID also supported various programmes for strengthening security and justice, and more recently for building resilience and adaptation to climate change and disaster risk reduction. It supported the International Crisis Group (ICG) to carry out political analysis, and worked with Adam Smith International (ASI) to foster inclusive economic growth. Its work on economic growth has also focused on technical support to facilitate power development agreements to build on Nepal's hydro resources and attract foreign direct investment, although there is very little information available on the fate of such support.

We finish with the Nepal Earthquake of April 2015. While DFID has been providing assistance in building resilience and disaster risk reduction, these have been limited to small-scale initiatives.¹⁴ In the aftermath of the Earthquake, Britain initially pledged to provide £5 million aid in humanitarian assistance to Nepal, which was later increased to more than £70 million. Through the British Disasters Emergency Commission (DEC) the UK public donated a further £85 million. Much of this aid was distributed via British INGOs. Nepal rejected the British offer of Chinook helicopters for humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath. According to newspaper reports, the British helicopters reached as far as Delhi airport in India, but Nepali authorities

¹⁴ <http://www.spotlightnepal.com/News/Article/Our-development-assistance-is-being-utilised-well->, accessed 4 March 2016.

turned down the British offer, reportedly because of the anger among the Nepal Army over Colonel Lama's arrest and trial under universal jurisdiction in the UK.¹⁵ Despite the initial outpouring of assistance, the full implications of the evolving bilateral relations in the aftermath are still unknown.

Conclusion

We conclude this paper with the following broad observations:

With the decline in the recruitment of Gurkhas in the British Army, aid from Nepal has come to occupy one of the principal elements in the bilateral relationship between the two countries. ODA is one of the few areas of British public expenditure not to have been cut in recent times, and official development assistance from Britain to Nepal has increased over the years.

British aid to Nepal reflects political changes in Nepal. While British aid helped consolidate the Nepali political regime during the Panchayat system, it has more recently supported a variety of more politically contentious sectors such as human rights, governance and civil society in the early 1990s, conflict and security since the Maoist insurgency, and issues around state restructuring, post-conflict, peace and humanitarian assistance since 2006. Despite significant impact, this aid is not insulated from patronage networks and has been subject to allegations of corruption (Bell 2014). More recently, aid from Britain has been challenged and subjected to more nationalistic and sovereignty-based critique within Nepal. Such discourse led to Nepal's rejection of British helicopters for humanitarian assistance in the aftermath of Nepal's Earthquake, for example.

While the UK government does provide budget support to the Sector Wide Approach in the health and education sectors, a major part of its development and humanitarian assistance is delivered through UK-based INGOs, Universities and research consortia. Increasingly, this involves

¹⁵ See <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nepal-earthquake-british-chinooks-banned-from-delivering-aid-in-case-they-blow-roofs-off-10246876.html> and <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3101650/1m-wasted-Nepal-Chinooks-Helicopters-set-return-Britain-diplomatic-wrangling-meant-sat-doing-month.html>, accessed 30 June 2017.

private contractors whose roles range from procurement and providing technical advice, to managing and delivering programmes themselves. This practice results in a large part of aid being consumed by intermediaries as transactional costs to pay for British expatriates and staff based in the UK, and it leaves very little space for local organisations to build their own capacity.

Finally, there is a need for further empirical documentation of British aid to Nepal that takes into account the experiences and insights of those involved in the process. In addition, it would be valuable to further map all the other forms of aid from Britain. Most importantly, there is a definite need for a political history that would take into account the views and perspectives of both the recipients and intermediaries, and that would further supplement our understanding of Britain Nepal relations.

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The Limits of Nationalism: Political Identity in Nepal and the British Isles

John Whelpton

There are many definitions of the term 'nation' and it is not my intention in this paper to enumerate and discuss them. I will start, however, with one highlighted by Karl Deutsch: 'A Nation... is a group of persons united by a common error about their ancestry and a common dislike of their neighbors' (Deutsch 1969: 3).¹ I am going to outline what we think we know about the origins of the inhabitants of Nepal and of the British Isles and then examine the way in which they have developed a sense of common identity, based on how they themselves see their origins and on a sense, if not of shared hatred, at least of shared difference from their neighbours. I will conclude with some reflections on how both societies could best manage the issues of identity confronting them.

Obviously this topic is a politically fraught one and it is impossible for anyone to escape totally from their own pre-existing biases. This was demonstrated anew during the semi-blockade of Nepal, and particularly the Nepal Valley, instituted by the Madhesi protestors from August 2015 to February 2016 with a disputed amount of covert assistance from the Indian government. Monitoring postings on Facebook probably ranks with conversations with taxi-drivers as a temptingly easy but not entirely reliable means of assessing opinions. However, it must mean something that the great majority of those commenting on social media during that period took the line that one would expect from their Pahadi or Madhesi surnames. Foreign observers equally have biases of their own, possibly reflecting arrangements in their home countries, but perhaps even more often resulting from identification with the people they have lived among or studied. Anthropologists who have studied a particular Janajati group are often sympathetic to that group's claims, whilst historians who have focused on the Nepal state and the view

¹ The author introduces this formula as 'a rueful European saying', implying that it had been in existence for some time and its original author was unknown.

from the centre can end up championing a general Nepali identity. In my own case, allowances must therefore be made for my own British nationality and birth in England and for my Nepal connections being predominantly with members of the hill elite, though offset by a few months working in the Tarai many years ago. An additional factor is probably my seeing the Indian Union as a successor state to the British Empire and thus something to which as a Briton, I have a special connection.

Origins: Nepal²

It is generally accepted that anatomically modern human beings emerged from Africa about 100,000 years ago and subsequently spread gradually through Eurasia and then to the Americas and Oceania so, strictly speaking, all ethnic groups inhabiting what is now Nepal are descended from immigrants.³ However, the widely prevalent discourse of indigeneity seeks to distinguish those who first arrived in a particular territory with later incomers who often managed to gain political supremacy over them. In some cases this produces a fairly clear, binary division: for example the First Nations of the Americas crossed a land bridge over the Bering Straits some between 11,000 and 30,000 years ago, whilst the history of European settlement goes back only five hundred years. Nepal is a more complex case, with successive influxes over several thousand years, and modern historians skeptical of many of the claims to recent arrival by high-caste groups, claims which were once seen as legitimizing a claim to higher status but, ironically, now often argued to imply the reverse.

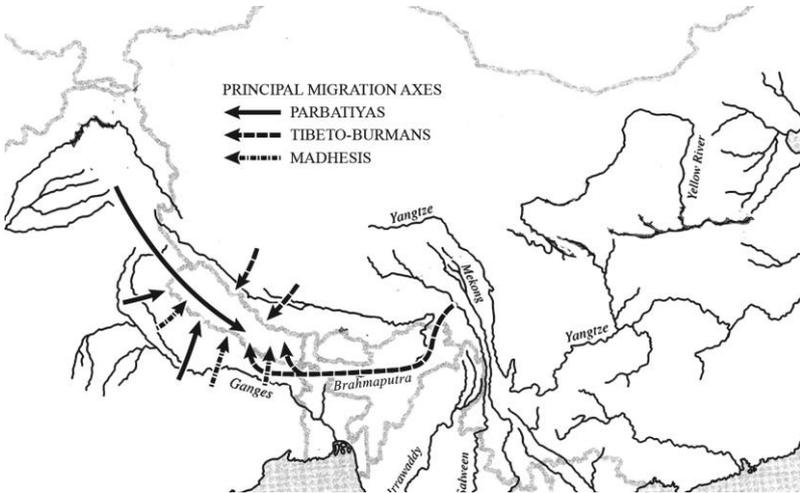
With the exception of small groups like the Kusunda and the Raute and also of the much more numerous Tharus, the bulk of Nepal's present population can be divided into three broad categories: the original speakers of the Parbatiya or Nepali language, those who traditionally spoke Tibeto-Burman languages and the Madhesi of the Tarai whose languages are identical with those spoken across the border

² Much of the material in this section has been adapted from chapter 1 of Whelpton (2005).

³ There is some evidence for a dispersal out of Africa as recently as 60,000 years ago but recent investigations suggest a date between 80,000 and 125,000 years ago. See 'Fossil teeth place humans in Asia "20,000 years early"', <http://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-34531861>, accessed 27/2/2016.

in India. In most cases, we have no hard evidence of when they arrived in what is now Nepal but possible migration trajectories are shown in the map below:

Map 1: Probable migration routes (based on linguistic data; boundaries and waterways after van Driem 2001; re-drawn by Nils Harm 2017).



Though the Sherpas arrived from Tibet less than five centuries ago (Oppitz 1974), it is generally accepted that most of the Tibeto-Burman speaking peoples arrived in what is now Nepal before the Parbatiyas. If the Kiranti of eastern Nepal (Rai, Limbu, Sunuwar, Chepangs), whose myths show acknowledgement of a common origin, can be equated with the Kirata of the *vamsavalis*, Tibeto-Burmans were established in the Kathmandu Valley before the rise of the Indianised Licchavis early in the first millennium AD, whilst the common ancestors of the Gurungs, Tamangs and Thakalis perhaps arrived a little later.⁴ We are probably on

⁴ The split between these three groups has been dated on rather speculative linguistic grounds to the 4th century AD (Kansakar 1981: 11) and the Gurungs may have moved south through the Himalayas around 500 AD (Tamu & Tamu 1993). See van Driem (2001: 423-5) for further speculation about the earlier history of the common ancestors of these Nepali groups and the Tibetans and Whelpton (2004) for a summary of van Driem's views in 2001 on language and prehistory in the Himalaya generally. See van Driem (2016) for his latest thinking on this topic.

surer ground with the evidence of river names suggesting that both Rai and Magar dialects were once spoken in areas of western Nepal that are now exclusively Nepali-speaking (Witzel 1993) and there are also oral traditions among some Rai groups of migration from the Karnali basin.

Although the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley speak a Tibeto-Burman language they are usually treated separately from the various hill groups because of their long tradition of urbanisation and because, like the Parbatiyas, they have a caste system. Linguists argue whether their language is more closely related to Kiranti or to Gurung-Tamang-Thakali and while most scholars see Newar society as a continuation of that of the Kiratas who once dominated the Valley, the Newars, like many other groups, are an amalgamation of different peoples. The largest Newar caste, the Maharjan agriculturalists, nowadays regard themselves as indigenous but many other castes have traditions of migration, some of which will be genuine. The word Newar itself is related to the Newari *Nepa* and the Sanskrit *Nepala*, which originally designated just the Kathmandu Valley (Malla 1981). The Newars were thus simply the ‘people of the valley’, wherever they originally come from.

The Khasa, who are the principal ancestors of those castes now speaking Nepali (originally Khasa Kura) as their native language, were part of the Indo-European influx into the sub-continent and entered what is now Nepal by moving eastwards through the foothills (see Map 2).⁵ They probably first penetrated the Himalayas west of Nepal around 1000 BC and moved through the hills to reach the Karnali basin early in the first millennium AD, displacing or assimilating the existing population.⁶ In the centuries after 1000 AD, they were joined by a small number of Rajputs, ruling clans from Rajasthan in western India, who fled into the hills to escape the Muslim invaders. It is uncertain what percentage of the Thakuri caste who claim descent from these refugees

⁵ Some Indian scholars have argued that the Indo-European language family developed in India itself before expanding into western Asia and Europe rather than vice-versa. However, most linguists accept an origin for Indo-European in the Caspian-Pontic region and there is genetic evidence for migration from there into India, though earlier inhabitants of the sub-continent made a greater genetic contribution to its present-day population. See Chandrasekar and Rao (2010: 15-25).

⁶ For the establishment of the Khasa in Kumaon and Gadhwal (Uttarakhand), see Shrivastava (1966: 188).

do really have such an origin and how many are descended from local Khas or Tibeto-Burman rulers dominant in a particular area who had simply provided themselves with a suitably prestigious genealogy. Similar uncertainty surrounds Brahman claims to plains ancestry and also the Dalits or Doms as they are known in western Nepal and in the Indian Himalayas across the border.⁷ In both cases an answer may eventually be found through genetic studies but in the meantime it is safe to assume that, taking the Parbatiyas as a whole, the older stratum is the more important one. Those Khas who did not reinvent themselves as Thakuris or Brahmans evolved into the present-day Chhetri caste or, in the far west, remain closer to their roots as *matwali* (alcohol-drinking) Khas.

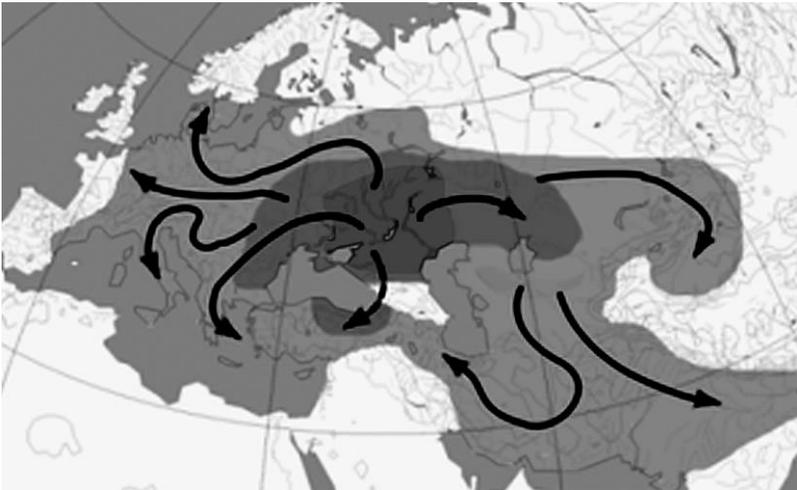
The boundary between the Parbatiyas and particularly the Magars continued to be a fluid one until at least the 18th century, not only because the offspring of high-caste Parbatiya males and Tibeto-Burman were accepted as members of the Chhetri caste but also because of the promotion to this status both of Khas and of Magars. This situation led Kirkpatrick, writing after his 1793 visit to Kathmandu, to refer to 'Khus and Mungur tribes of the Chetree class' (Kirkpatrick 1811: 123) and Hamilton a few years later to endorse the forecast that the Magars would eventually become just another Parbatiya caste (Hamilton 1986 [1819]: 26).

The third major population category is the Madhesis, whose relationship with a still Pahadi-dominated state is now Nepal's principal political fault line. The term is reserved for those whose ancestors have long lived in the Tarai and who share language and culture with those living south of the Indian border, thus excluding the hill Nepalis who have settled in large numbers in the Tarai in recent decades. Although the Madhesis are often regarded by the Pahadis as a single group, the Tarai has traditionally been home to caste Hindus, to a substantial Muslim minority (especially in the western districts) and to various ethnic groups (tribes). The largest of the latter, the Tharus, are of particularly diverse origin and probably had no sense of collective identity till very recently. They were regarded as a single group by

⁷ See Dollfus et al. (2001) for the argument that regional variation in plough design is evidence for south-north migration of Doms in association with Rajputs.

outsiders because of their association with the Tarai jungles and particularly because of their immunity to the *awl*, a virulent form of malaria prevalent there until the 1950s and often preventing year-round settlement by other groups.

Map 2: Dispersal of Indo-European languages c. 4000 to 1000 BC according to the Kurgan hypothesis, which places the original homeland in the Eastern European steppe-land.



(Source: Dbachmann, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurgan_hypothesis, accessed 27/9/17; re-drawn by Nils Harm, 2017)

The Indo-Aryan dialects spoken by the Madhesis were brought into north India from the north-west. The main wave of migration down the Ganges Valley commenced probably towards the end of the 2nd millennium BC and one of the principal routes lay along the base of the hills on the northern edge of the Tarai, probably because it was easier to clear forest for agriculture there than nearer the Ganges itself. The Tarai became less important later on as the focus moved nearer to the Ganges itself but an increase in population seems to have begun in the 18th century. There is a widespread oral tradition amongst both Hindus and Muslims living there today that their ancestors began moving into the area about 200 years ago, which was around the time of the Gorkha

conquest of the Kathmandu Valley (Gaborieau 1977: 25, Gaige 2009: 61). The population was, of course, boosted by the deliberate policy of the Rana regime to bring in cultivators from the south to clear some of the forest and boost revenue and there has been a continuing flow across the border since the 1950s. The extent of this, and of the number of those without citizenship certificates who are recent arrivals, is a hotly disputed issue.

Although many in Nepal still like to claim that the Licchavi rulers of the Kathmandu valley ruled an area as extensive as present-day Nepal, the incorporation of all these peoples into one political unit dates, of course, only from the establishment of the modern Nepalese state by Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors in the period from 1743 to 1814.⁸ A forerunner of the Gorkha achievement had been the Sen dynasty's establishment of a state including Palpa, Makwanpur and much of the eastern Tarai, but this soon split into separate kingdoms, and a similar state of disunion characterized the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley from 1482. However, despite the extreme fragmentation, many of these mini-states included an ethnically diverse population.

Origins: The British Isles⁹

The British Isles are divided politically into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Their population history is a little clearer than that of Nepal because we now have some genetic evidence and because we know that the earliest ancestors of the present population arrived after the end of the last Ice Age, about 14,000 years ago, probably moving northwards from what is now the Basque region of Spain whilst the islands were still joined to the continent by a land bridge (Oppenheimer 2000, Sykes 2006, Wade 2007).

⁸ For a discussion of the extent of the Licchavi state, see Whelpton (2000).

⁹ This name for the islands off the coast of NW Europe remains the most commonly used, although objections to it have been made on political grounds, particularly by the Irish. As a geographical term, *Brettanike/Britannia* is found in Graeco-Roman times, long before the establishment of the modern British state and the geographer Ptolemy (2nd century AD) referred to Britain as *megale* (big) *Brettania* and Ireland as *mikre* (little) *Brettania* respectively as well as using the plural *Brettanikai nēsoi* (see [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britain_\(place_name\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britain_(place_name)), accessed 28/2/16).

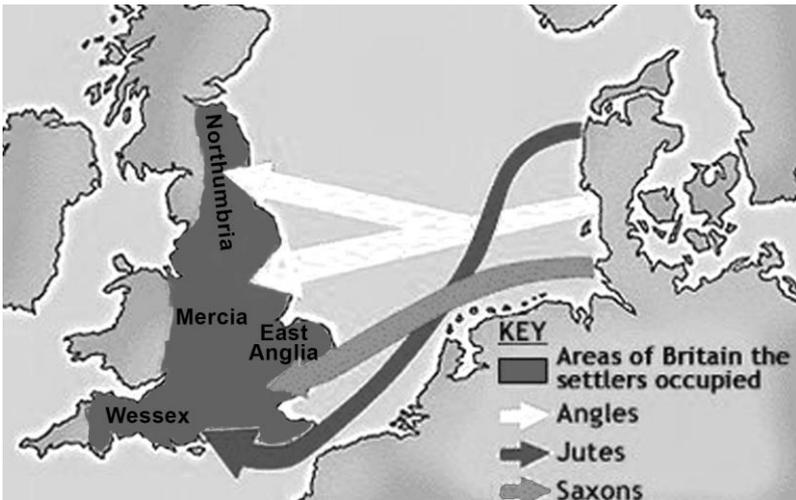
There is no doubt that the Roman occupation from 43 to 410 AD and the Norman conquest of 1066 involved the superimposition of a ruling elite rather than a mass replacement of population, and that the Norse settlement of the 9th century AD, whilst making a greater contribution than those, was small in proportion to the pre-existing population. There is less certainty about the Celts and the Anglo-Saxons, whose languages, though both Indo-European, were very different. Estimates for the date of dispersal of Indo-European speaking peoples – whether from the steppes north of the Black sea or from Anatolia – range from 7000 to 4000 BC (Renfrew 1987, Mallory 1989), well after the initial post-Ice Age settlement. As both Britain and Ireland were Celtic speaking until the Germanic invasions of the mid-1st millennium AD, the Celts had either displaced the original population or spread their own language amongst them. Similarly, the Anglo-Saxons whose language became English must have either displaced the Celtic-speaking population of England and southern Scotland or assimilated them.

The transition from Celtic to Germanic, for which some written evidence is available, has been the most intensely studied. In the 19th century it was generally assumed that the invaders had killed or driven out most of the existing population. This theory meshed with the belief that England's success was the result of her Teutonic origins and there appeared to be some evidence for it, in particular the relatively small number of Celtic words adopted into English and the evidence for a drastic decline in population after the end of Roman rule, with the virtual abandonment of towns and the disappearance of the potter's wheel. This view has been increasingly challenged both by conventional historical studies looking at plausible population transfer levels and also by genetic studies. The results of the latter have not been uniform but they seem to indicate replacement rates well under 50%. Two of the best-known studies, Oppenheimer (2006) and Sykes (2006) have argued that the present population is predominantly descended from the post-Ice Age settlers, which implies large-scale switching to English by the Celts in the Dark Ages and, much earlier, to Celtic itself from a language or languages unknown.¹⁰ If, as seems likely, the revisionist case is

¹⁰ A recent genetic survey (Schiffels et al. 2016) has suggested that just under 40% of the ancestry of the population of eastern England is of Anglo-Saxon ancestry with a lesser proportion elsewhere, whilst Mariano et al. (2016) put the Anglo-Saxon component in the

correct, then probably it was the British Celtic elite (whose sentiments are, of course, reflected in the literary sources) that fled to the west whilst a substantial proportion – perhaps the majority – of their humbler fellow-Celts remained behind and slowly became English.

Map 3: Germanic settlement c. 440-600 BC. Although early accounts record the Angles, Jutes and Saxons as distinct peoples, the labels Angle, Saxon and (later) Anglo-Saxon all came to be applied to the newcomers collectively.



(Source: <http://conquestsofthebritishisles.weebly.com/the-anglo-saxon-conquest.html>, accessed 27/9/2017, re-drawn by Nils Harm 2017)

Although individuals of Germanic origin had certainly served in the Roman army in Britain, the traditional account places the beginning of the main influx in the mid-5th century AD. After the Roman withdrawal,

ancestry of white British at 30%. Nora Chadwick (1963) and Bryan Ward-Perkins (2000) argue on general historical grounds for language-switching rather than population replacement but such ideas appear to have been gaining ground even before the end of the 19th century (for example, Beddoe 1885). Peter Forster's theory, accepted by Oppenheimer, that Germanic was already spoken widely in Britain in pre-Roman times so that neither population nor language replacement would be involved, has not been generally accepted (see the critique in Sampson 2016).

Germanic mercenaries were supposedly called in by a Celtic chieftain to assist in defence against the Picts of northern Britain who had been raiding into what is now England. According to the traditional account, the Saxons soon turned against their employers, settling initially in the eastern part of England but pushing steadily westwards. Their advance was checked for a generation after a native victory at Mount Badon (c. 500 AD), where the British forces were possibly led by a chieftain subsequently transformed into the King Arthur of later Celtic and then general European myth. By the end of the 6th century the newcomers had regained the upper hand and taken control of most of modern England, excepting Cornwall. The invaders were divided into several competing kingdoms, one of which, Wessex, with its capital at Winchester, was to play an analogous role to that of Gorkha in Nepal. It was the only kingdom to avoid conquest by the Danes or Vikings, Scandinavians who had commenced raiding in the 8th century and afterwards came to settle. The unification of England took place in the 10th century when the West Saxons conquered the northern region from the Danes. The Danish language, which was itself Germanic, contributed important elements to the evolving English language and a Scandinavian dynasty – including the Canute who failed to command the waves – briefly controlled the newly united realm, but the country remained predominantly Anglo-Saxon in culture. In 1066, the one date which virtually everyone brought up in Britain remembers from their school history lessons, the Normans, Scandinavians who had settled in north-western France and switched to speaking French, took control of England. There followed a period of elite bilingualism, with the ruling class retaining the use of French but also acquiring English, whilst, as before the conquest, Latin, the link language for Western Europe as a whole, was important in the church and for international relations. Inter-marriage between Normans and Saxons was common and the English language, though virtually ceasing for some time to be a vehicle for literature, re-asserted itself: the historian Ordericus Vitalis, born less than 10 years after the conquest to a Norman father and English mother, found himself unable to understand the language when he went to France to study at the age of ten (McCrum et al. 1986: 76). By the 14th

century, French had ceased to be a naturally acquired language in England.¹¹

During the consolidation of England as a united kingdom, Wales remained a patchwork of Celtic statelets whilst Celtic also long survived in Cornwall.¹² In addition, though what is now south-east Scotland was part of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria, Celtic maintained its position for some time to the west in Strathclyde, where the earliest surviving Welsh poetry appears to have been written. The ethnic mix in Scotland was further complicated by the arrival from Ireland in the second half of the first millennium AD of the eponymous Scotti, who spoke a variety of Celtic, not mutually comprehensible with British/Welsh. To the north there were also the Picts, whose language was probably closely related to that of the more southerly Britons. The first ruler of a united Scotland, Kenneth Macalpine, was a Scot who had gained control over Pictish territory. The English monarchy brought Wales under its control in 1282 but attempts to annex Scotland failed decisively at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314. Nevertheless, because the southern lowlands, and particularly Edinburgh, emerged as politically and culturally dominant, it was not any variety of Celtic but the Germanic dialect now known as Scots or Lowlans, bearing a similar relationship to what is now standard English as Norwegian does to Swedish, that became Scotland's most important language. Pictish and Strathclyde Welsh went extinct and the Highlands and Western Isles now spoke Gaelic, the Irish dialect which the Scotti had brought with them.

As happened on a smaller scale with the Newar kingdoms of the Kathmandu valley, Scotland and England were both bitter rivals and intimately connected. James IV of Scotland, whose invasion of England in 1513 in support of his French allies led to a disastrous defeat at Flodden, was the brother-in-law of his English adversary, Henry VIII. When Queen Elizabeth I of England died childless in 1603, the throne

¹¹ The replacement of French by English as a medium of instruction was hastened by the effects of the Black Death which reduced the population drastically in the 14th century.

¹² Welsh remained the predominant language of Welsh people till the 19th century and is still spoken natively by around half a million out of a total population of 2.5 million. The language is now a compulsory subject of study in all Welsh schools. Cornish had virtually died out by the end of the 18th century but a revivalist movement starting at the beginning of the 20th century has had some limited success (Ellis 1974).

was offered to James IV's grandson, James VI of Scotland, who thus became also James I of England. James himself used the name Great Britain for his combined kingdoms but this had no official validity and England (in which Wales was legally included) and Scotland remained separate countries with separate parliaments.¹³ His powers in each country were roughly equivalent to those of the US president vis-à-vis Congress today so the monarchy, though subject to some legal restraints, was not the ceremonial institution it has now become.

The formal merger of England and Scotland came only in 1707. This was achieved by vote of the Scottish parliament to dissolve itself, a decision reached under pressure as the English parliament insisted on full union as the price for access to England's growing markets. Both parliaments were elected on a very restricted franchise and a more representative body in Scotland would very likely have rejected the merger. The Act of Union allowed Scotland to retain its own legal system which differed in important aspects from that of England in what now became officially the United Kingdom of Great Britain. A strong sense of Scottish identity remained but a powerful separatist movement, which led to the re-establishment of a Scottish parliament in 1999 and a referendum on independence in 2015, did not develop until the last third of the 20th century: the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745, though using a Scottish base and Scottish manpower, aimed at restoring the Stuart dynasty to the British throne rather than undoing the union.

Religion had early on become a component of political identity in Britain when Wessex used the shared bond of Christianity to rally the English and even some of the Celts, against the pagan Danes. It became a crucial factor again with the Reformation, when England became overwhelmingly Protestant, and Scotland mostly so and the perception of Catholicism as a common threat made the union of the English and Scottish thrones more acceptable in both countries.

The situation was very different in Ireland, which had been brought under English control in the 12th century though the English monarch only officially took the title King of Ireland in 1534. The Irish people

¹³ The term Great Britain had been used over a century earlier in negotiation between Scotland and England and was coined to contrast with lesser Britain, the Brittany peninsula in north-west France which had been settled during the Dark Ages by British Celts fleeing the Saxon advance.

remained Catholic and the religious difference was a major factor in conflicts in the 17th century. These triggered a deliberate policy of planting north-east Ireland with Protestant Scottish colonists, who took over land confiscated from the original inhabitants. A rebellion in 1793, inspired by the French Revolution and with some support from radicals among the Ulster Protestant population, led the government in London to decide on the abolition of Ireland's status as a separate kingdom. The Act of Union of 1801, establishing the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, was formally approved by the exclusively Protestant Irish parliament but, in contrast to the Scottish case, it faced strong opposition from the start and the Irish Question, as it was known, became the most dangerously divisive issue in British politics. In 1914, the final passage of a Home Rule bill by a British government dependent on Irish Nationalist support was bitterly contested by the Ulster Protestants, who established an armed militia to oppose it, prompting a similar mobilisation by nationalists in the south. The eventual outcome, following the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin and an insurgency in the South after the First World War, was the partitioning of Ireland with the establishment in 1922 of the Irish Free State comprising most of the country. The north-east portion of the island, comprising most of the historic province of Ulster, remained part of what was now renamed the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland but with its own devolved government. Conflict between Catholics and Protestants within Northern Ireland led eventually to the establishment of the present system of power-sharing.

Parallels

After that historical summary, I propose now to compare Nepalese experience to five aspects of developments in the British Isles: the replacement of Celtic by Germanic languages, the emergence of English national identity, the emergence of a similar identity in Scotland, the creation of a useful past and the current challenges which reveal the limits of nationalism referred to in the title of this paper.

I – Language-shift v. Population-shift

There are some obvious similarities between the Celtic/Germanic and the Tibeto-Burman/Indo-Aryan interfaces, with speakers of the first in

each pair having been to some extent marginalized by those of the second, and the language shift and physical displacement involved in both cases. In both Nepal and Britain it was nevertheless the earlier language that provides the modern name for the countries: Britain (Welsh *Prydain*) probably derives from Welsh *pryd* (shape, form), while Nepal most plausibly can be connected with the Tibeto-Burman roots *nhet* (herd) and *pa* (man) (Oxford English Dictionary s.v., Malla 1981), though this is not uncontested.

In both cases, too, there is controversy over how far the population speaking the more recent language is a continuation of one which spoke the older. The genetic evidence referred to above indicates that the present-day English are probably descended predominantly from Celtic speakers. Detailed genetic studies on Nepal's great variety of ethnic groups are still awaited but the element of genetic continuity is probably rather less. However, the fluidity of the boundary between Magar and Khas, also discussed above, means that many present-day Chhetris are of Magar descent. For both post-Roman Britain and pre-unification Nepal there is also some evidence of assimilation at the highest level. Two apparently Celtic names occur in the genealogy of the royal house of Wessex, whilst a recent study (Green 2012) has suggested that the Anglo-Saxon principality of Lindissi was a continuation of the Romano-British statelet of Lindes (Lincoln). There are two names in the traditional genealogy of the Shah kings of Gorkha which may possibly be Magar (Kancha and Micha) and both Prithvi Narayan Shah and Mukunda Sen of Palpa are sometimes referred to in contemporary sources as Magars. To this can be added Dor Bahadur Bista's argument that the role of Magars as guardians of the clan deities of Thakuri rulers shows the latter's non-Rajput origins (Bista 1991: 37-8).

It is possible, of course, to discount some of the Nepalese evidence at elite level – for example, by pointing out that Prithvi Narayan Shah's political opponents might have denied his Rajput status simply to lower his prestige in the eyes of other caste Hindus. Nevertheless, there is clear enough evidence for the fluidity of ethnic boundaries even where those involved are committed in theory to a racist or caste ideology based on keeping people separate. This is seen particularly in the ease with which people adopt a new ethnic label if it associated them with a powerful or prestigious group or abandon an old one if it does the

reverse. In Nepal, the Danwar, considered a major group by 19th century British authors, are now vanishing whilst in the USA the German-Americans ceased to assert a special identity after their failure to keep the country neutral in World War I. The Goths, Vandals and others who invaded the Roman Empire in the 4th century AD swelled in numbers whilst successful (Smith 1986) and Nepalese in India have generally been happy to adopt the Gorkha name which originally applied to only a very small segment of people in Nepal itself.

This is not, however, to deny that inter-ethnic relations both in the Himalayas and North-West Europe frequently involved extreme hostility. The description of alleged atrocities by the Gorkhali armies against the Limbus and the apparent flight of much of Jumla's population after the kingdom's conquest (Whelpton 2013) are paralleled by the bitterness of many British Celts against the invaders: other European peoples noted how the former refused to socialize with Anglo-Saxons when visiting Rome, whilst a 10th century Welsh poem gleefully prophesies the slaughter in great numbers of the Germanic settlers and the flight of the remainder back to mainland Europe (Ward-Perkins 2000). It is also significant that *wealha*, the Old English term from which the term Welsh derives, meant slave as well as foreigner.

In both Nepal and Dark-Age Britain where assimilation took place, deliberate state action, rather than mere imitation of high-prestige neighbours, played a role. The granting of the sacred thread to those previously without it was noted above and although in Hodgson's classic account, the Brahmins were the agents of this, it seems to have been the rulers who made the crucial decision. There is also one piece of evidence that even in the pre-modern period linguistic uniformity, the drive for which is normally thought of as a modern phenomenon, could be encouraged from above. Marie Lecomte-Tilouine reports the belief in one Magar area of their ancestors being instructed by a *chaubisi* ruler to switch to speaking Nepali (Lecomte-Tilouine 1993: 31-32). This will have been one of the factors promoting the language-shift observed by Hamilton, who writes of Parbatiya (Nepali) as 'rapidly extinguishing the aboriginal dialects of the mountains' (Hamilton 1986 [1819]: 26). In the British case, pressure to switch to English was increased by the law code of King Ine of Wessex, compiled towards the end of the 7th century, which sets out the *wergild* or blood money payable after the murder of

individuals of different status and puts less value on the life of a *weala* than that of an English-speaker (Ward-Perkins 2000).

II- Early-England and Nepal

A second parallel to explore is between the unification of England in the 10th century and of Nepal in the late 18th and early 19th century. The interesting question here in each case is whether unification or conquest is the better word. How far was it simply a question of military force, how far of people with a pre-existing sense of common identity being willing to come together, and how far did the unifiers themselves manipulate common symbols that could potentially provide such an identity?

In the English case, although some Anglo-Saxon kings had made a claim to pre-eminence amongst rulers throughout Britain, no one before the 10th century had actually controlled all of present-day England. The son and grandson of King Alfred, the ruler who had halted the Danish advance, achieved this by overthrowing a Danish ruling elite which had conveniently eliminated all rival centres of English power. There was, however, already a considerable amount in common between the inhabitants of the areas conquered. First, there was a fairly close similarity between the different English dialects, particularly when contrasted with Celtic. Danish settlers were, of course, excluded from this, but their own language was also Germanic, even though of the Northern rather than the Western variety, and this facilitated later assimilation. Secondly, the West Germanic settlers, though originally divided into Angles, Saxons and Jutes, were by now all equally willing to accept either the Angle or Saxon labels. It was the term Angle which survived in England, transformed into the modern word English but the Celts preferred Saxon – Englishman is today still *Saes* in Welsh and *Sassenach* in Gaelic. Thirdly, for at least two hundred years before a single English state was created, there had existed Latin words for the English church (*ecclesia anglicana*) and English people (*gens anglicana*).

The rulers of Wessex, in particular Alfred himself, realized the propaganda value of an appeal both to linguistic identity and to religion. Alfred organized a programme of translation of religious and other works from Latin into English, perhaps actually coined the word

Angelcynn, the forerunner of *Engalond* as a name for the country of the English, and he projected himself as a champion of Christianity.¹⁴

In Nepal, somewhat similar factors aided the work of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his successors. Along much of the Himalayas, there were a chain of closely related Parbatiya dialects and also a broadly similar brand of Hinduism, especially in the areas east of the Mahakali where the subordination of Khasa Chhetris to supposed Rajput immigrants was less stark than further west. There was also a common sense of Pahadi identity vis-à-vis the north Indian plain – brought out by the words of the ruler of Parbat, who told him in India that when on the plains they were all just hillmen together (Pradhan 1982: 16). In his famous political testament, the *Dibya Upadesh*, Prithvi Narayan does not refer to a shared language, but he does stress both his own commitment to Hindu values and (in his warning against enriching Indian merchants) the sense of separation from the plains.

Parallels break down, however, because people of Celtic ancestry within England had already largely been assimilated into general English society whereas in Nepal the line between Parbatiyas and the Tibeto-Burman groups remained strong, particularly in eastern Nepal. There is also another important difference. In England, the campaign of conquest was from the start presented as one of liberation from foreign domination. Although many in Nepal would argue that Prithvi Narayan's campaigns were planned as a pre-emption of the foreign denomination threatened by the East India Company's expansion, it is unlikely that this was part of Prithvi Narayan's initial thinking, even if it did become a consideration for him after the 1767 Kinloch intervention on behalf of the Newar kingdoms and perhaps even as early as the Battle of Plessey (1757) which established British control over Bengal.¹⁵

III - Nepal and early Scotland

A third parallel is with the evolution of the kingdom of Scotland. Here there is an important internal divide between the lowlands (speaking, as

¹⁴ On the earlier term see Foot (1996). Alfred, or some of his circle, extended this claim even beyond England. The title page of the biography by his Welsh collaborator, Bishop Asser, describes him as 'Governor of all the Christians of Britain' as well as 'King of the West Saxons'.

¹⁵ For a discussion of this issue see Stiller (1974).

has been seen, the Scots dialect of English) and the highlands which remained largely Gaelic-speaking into the 19th century. Accordingly, the term Sassenach (i.e. Saxon), which now refers specifically to the English, originally denoted all speakers of English – the lowland Scots as much as the inhabitants of England proper. The linguistic cleavage was reinforced when much of the highlands remained Catholic whilst the lowlands switched quickly to Protestantism. There are analogies to both hills /Tarai and Tibeto-Burman/Parbatiya divides in Nepal.

The Scottish kingdom was established by Gaels but the kings soon came under heavy English cultural influence and the culture of the English-speaking lowlands became politically dominant. There was an intermittent English claim to some kind of loose hegemony over Scotland from the 10th century onwards but no real clash until Edward I's attempt to impose full control at the end of the 13th century. As already seen, the Scots successfully resisted this and as one blow in the propaganda battle to gain support from the Pope in Rome, Scottish leaders in 1320 issued a document known as the Declaration of Arbroath. This asserted that Scotland had always been an independent nation, praised their king for preserving that independence but also served him a warning:

...if this prince shall leave these principles and consent that we or our kingdom be subjected to the king and people of England we will make another king who will defend our liberties. For so long as there shall but one hundred of us remain alive we will never agree to submit ourselves to the dominion of the English. For it is not glory, it is not riches, neither is it honours, but it is liberty alone that we fight and contend for, which no honest man will lose but with his life.¹⁶

Stirring language, that has echoed down the centuries. The last sentence, originally used by a Roman historian in the 1st century BC,¹⁷ was reportedly seen written on a wall in Hong Kong during demonstrations in support of the Beijing students' movement in 1989.

¹⁶ Declaration of Arbroath, translation adapted from that of Donaldson (1970: 55-57).

¹⁷ Sallust, *Catalinae Coniuratio* 33.4 (Kurfess 1968).

Scots are justifiably proud of the document but it is not quite the contemporary nationalist manifesto that it seems. The grandees involved were, like King Robert himself, mostly feudal magnates of Norman descent, members of a ruling elite that had connections on both sides of the border with England. Though they appropriated the Gaelic name Scot, the Gaels themselves would not have understood the English (and possibly French) the elite spoke amongst themselves and certainly not the Latin in which the document was written. That said, however, it is important for the assertion that the political community of Scotland – however narrowly defined – has ultimate control over the actions of its monarch. It thus both looks back to Celtic traditions of an elective monarchy and also forward to modern nationalism which extends the political community to the whole population of the national territory.

The Nepalese parallel here is with the collective role of the *bharadari* as it appeared to Kirkpatrick in 1793:

The leading members of this body, whether actually employed or not, appear to possess such a high authority in the state, as renders it nearly impossible for the executive government, in whatever hands that might be, to pursue any measures of an important nature, in opposition to their advice. I have even been assured that the throne of the prince himself would no longer be secure should the principal thurghurs [an older term for the principal *bharadars*] concurred in thinking that his general conduct tended to endanger the sovereignty, which they [consider] themselves bound, as far as rests with them, to transmit unimpaired to the distant posterity of its founder. (p. 24)

The Nepali case is not quite so far along the road to nationalism in the modern sense, since they view their ultimate responsibility to the dynasty as a whole rather than to the country itself but Nepal was arguably approaching that with the concept of *dhunga*, a word apparently referring to the state itself in contrast to the individual(s) controlling it (Regmi 1978).

Returning to Scottish developments, continuing confrontation with England helped strengthen a distinct sense of identity but highland-

lowland tensions remained and in the 16th century the Scottish parliament passed a law for the suppression of the 'Irish language,' as Scottish Gaelic was referred to.

The eventual union with England in 1707 was very different from the cases of Ireland and Wales, which had involved outright conquest. Scotland and England merged under agreed terms, on lines which had actually been first proposed by the 16th century Scottish scholar, John Major (Prebble 1973). However, the union was, as noted above, in some ways made under duress and initially very unpopular with much of the population. One agent of the government in London reported crowds on the streets of Edinburgh shouting 'English dogs! No union!' (ibid). There were accusations of bribery and Scotland's national bard, Robert Burns, penned in protest a famous poem ending: 'We're bought and sold for English gold/What a parcel o' rogues in a nation'. Nevertheless, when the grandson of the last Catholic Stuart king tried to lead a rebellion against the London government in 1745, although he was able to attract considerable support in the Highlands, the lowlands generally waited on events. After the suppression of the rebellion, there was an onslaught against the traditional Gaelic culture of the highlands including a ban on wearing the tartan kilt – with the exception of soldiers serving in British regiments raised in the highlands. The highlanders, once seen as a major threat by London and Scottish lowlander alike came gradually to be seen as a military asset and Scotland still contributes a disproportionately large number of recruits to the British army.

When the ban on the kilt was lifted, ordinary highlanders did not take it up again and the Highlands continued to suffer through the 19th century with the clearance of small farmers to allow for sheep farming. The problem of the hills was only solved by emigration on a massive scale. Paradoxically the symbol the ordinary highlander now did without became popular with many lowlanders – no longer feeling threatened by the highlanders they could come to feel a romantic attachment to their cultural icons. In some ways a more unified sense of Scottishness coexisted with increasing commitment to the Union, from which the lowlands at least drew substantial economic benefits. From the late 18th century onwards Scots also played a prominent role in the ranks of empire builders – David Ochterlony, Amar Singh Thapa's opponent in the Anglo-Gorkha War and Archibald Campbell, Brian

Hodgson's assistant in Kathmandu and later superintendent of Darjeeling are just two examples.

Here, of course, parallels with Nepal break down – except for the common factors of pressure on, and exodus from the hills. For an analagous trajectory you would have to envisage the centre of political power in Nepal shifting from the hills to the Tarai, the country merging into India and the Madhesis prizing the topi as a symbol of Nepal's remaining distinctiveness within the larger political unit.

IV: Uses of the Past

If we are seeking to use history to illuminate the present, it is frequently not so much the actual events of Nepalese or British history but their interpretation by later generations for their own purposes that is most important. This can be seen most clearly if we consider first the figures of Alfred and of Prithvi Narayan Shah and the way they have been pressed into the service to fulfill the political agendas of later generations.

Alfred's reputation always remained high in England and he is the only British monarch conventionally styled 'the Great' (like Alexander of Macedon, or Peter of Russia). The origins of his cult can be found in the immediate post-Reformation period when Protestant England wanted to stress its continuity with the church of Anglo-Saxon times, before the Norman Conquest strengthened the link with the papacy (MacDougall 1982). However, Alfred's prominence in the English historical imagination reached its zenith in the Victorian period and the statue shown in the illustration below was actually erected in 1901 at his old capital of Winchester in Hampshire, a project conceived as part of the commemoration of the thousandth anniversary of his death in 899. This meshed with the strong emphasis in the 19th century on the Germanic roots of English society. Relations with Germany itself, which was unified under the Prussian monarchy in 1870, though beginning to deteriorate by the end of the century, had generally been good and the ruling British dynasty (and more recently, Victoria's consort, Prince Albert) had come from Germany. In addition, tensions over Irish nationalism and a prevailing essentialist view of the characteristics of ethnic groups led many people to celebrate the Germanic contribution and minimize the Celtic role in the development of the nation. Add to

this Alfred's attraction as a warrior, Christian prince and pioneer of education and he became an ideal figure to be taken up in an age of empire, reform and militant Christianity.

He is rather less important in the present day, though the image remains a defining one – I remember first seeing it as an illustration in the children's encyclopedia my parents bought for me when I was about ten, and then the overwhelming familiarity of the sight when, never previously realising where the picture came from, I turned a corner in Winchester and saw the actual statue in front of me. There has been revisionist work on Alfred's period and it is recognized that there was a certain amount of spin both in his own writings and those of his circle – for example, the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, whose production he probably himself initiated, most likely exaggerates the extent of the danger he was in before the Battle of Edington, in order to magnify the importance of his recovery and eventual victory. Similarly he overstates, in the preface to one of his translations, the decline of learning in England prior to his own programme for cultural recovery. However, I have yet to see a study which does not paint on balance a favourable portrait of Alfred – he has not yet been subject to the kind of demolition that Lytton Strachey (2009 [1918]) undertook for some of his *Eminent Victorians*.¹⁸

Prithvi Narayan Shah was, at least until the end of the monarchy, considerably more of a looming presence in Nepal than Alfred is now in Britain. He has also since the rise of Janajati assertiveness been a much more controversial one. Looking back over Nepalese history, his reputation stood immensely high from his death until at least the mid-19th century. In 1847, when Jang Bahadur Rana got the *bharadars* to write a letter formally rejecting Rajendra's attempt to regain the throne, their main charge against him was that his policies would have led 'to the ruin of the kingdom of Prithvi Narayan Shah', a sentiment which chimes

¹⁸ For possible exaggeration in the Chronicle, see R.H.C. Davies (1971). Smyth, who rejects much of the traditional picture of Alfred, nevertheless gives a very positive overall assessment: 'He possesses that rare temperament which combined the reflective with the ability for organization and action ... qualities of moderation which were indicative of his great humanity' (Smyth 1995: 600). Similarly Robin Fleming, whose volume in the *Penguin History of Britain* deliberately downplays dynastic history to focus on the conditions of everyday life, highlights the story of Alfred and his descendants' fight back against the Danes as one 'every British schoolchild should know' (Fleming 2010: 221).

in well with the Kirkpatrick quote above on the role of the *bharadari* as he understood it in 1793. During the Rana regime, however, the Shah dynasty as a whole was essentially converted into a remote religious symbol and it was Jang Bahadur himself, rather than Prithvi Narayan, who became the major figure in popular memory.¹⁹ Prithvi's restoration as the chief icon of Nepalese history was partly dictated by the political needs of his descendants from 1951 onwards but it may also be, as Pratyoush Onta has argued, that Surya Bikram Gyawali's biography of Prithvi paved the way for this revival (Onta 1996). The biography itself, like much of the work of Gyawali and his Darjeeling associates, stemmed probably, as Onta has also suggested, from the felt need of ethnic Nepalese within India to raise the prestige of their own group in Indian society.

The tendency in Janajati circles to see 'unification' as simple conquest and domination, exemplified in Kumar Pradhan's *The Gorkha Conquests* (1991), and, most importantly, the end of the monarchy, have now undermined Prithvi's status as the key icon of Nepalese nationalism and the celebration of his birthday (Prithvijayanti) was discontinued after the formal declaration of a republic in 2008. However the conventional positive interpretation of Prithvi, best represented for an international audience by Ludwig Stiller's *Rise of the House of Gorkha* (1973), remains a powerful one and even the Maoists have intermittently worshipped at his shrine, if only because of his opposition to economic or political domination from the Indian plains. There is now a campaign for the reinstatement of a holiday on 27 Paus, to be called Rastriya Ekta Diwas, with the Rastriya Prajatantra Party predictably in the vanguard but some support from other parts of the political spectrum.²⁰

Finally let us return to the issue of descent with which we started. The readiness of the English in the 19th century to see themselves as purely the continuation of Germanic settlers was not compelled by the

¹⁹ The legends surrounding Jang Bahadur are discussed in Whelpton (1987).

²⁰ At a press conference held by the Prithvinarayan Shah Smriti Pratishthan in December 2014, speakers included historians Ramesh Dhungel and Surendra K.C., who are generally seen as sympathetic to the Nepali Congress and the UML respectively. See <http://kantipur.ekantipur.com/news/2014-12-18/400521.html>, accessed 6/3/16. This campaign has to be seen in association with the mobilisation of the Parbatia upper castes analysed by Adhikari and Gellner (2016).

evidence but rested on the enthusiasm for things German which I have already referred to in the context of Alfred's cult and which led to the blatantly racist formulations highlighted by Hugh McDougall (1982: 89-103). There has been a major reaction against this way of thinking, both because Germany was transformed into an enemy country throughout much of the last century and then because the consequences of racist ideology, in Germany and elsewhere, became so appallingly clear.

We can parallel this with the past determination of many in Nepal – and not always just at elite level – to trace their descent to plains *kshatriyas*, particularly the Ranas of Mewar. There has been a major reaction against this also, sparked in large part by the Janajati movement. Stories of plains origin are denied for Tibeto-Burman groups (reasonably enough) but the claims by the Parbatiya upper castes are accepted, with a rejection of the notion that such an origin is prestigious and the implication that those castes are not true sons of the soil. Whatever political uses the various origin stories are put to, they are belied by the complexity and fluidity of ethnicity and its interaction with political processes both in the Himalayas and off the coast of north-west Europe.

V: Future challenges

Different as Nepal and the United Kingdom are in their history and socio-economic structure they both face the task of having to negotiate different levels of identity. Leaving aside the special complexities of Northern Ireland, the inhabitants of the UK can be regarded at base level as English, Scottish or Welsh (regional identities within those three generally not having anything like the emotional salience of the larger unit), then they are British citizens and finally they are Europeans. For Nepal, things are rather more complex, with a caste or ethnic identity as the lowest level, then the status of Pahadi or Madhesi, next a shared Nepali citizenship and finally their identity as South Asians. Individuals in both countries differ in how important the different levels are to them and may indeed reject a particular level completely: disillusionment with SAARC and, as the Brexit vote conclusively demonstrated, with the more strongly supra-national European Union, is widespread. In addition, relationships of part to whole within the United Kingdom and Nepal are deeply contested. The Catholic

community within Northern Ireland has always wanted to join the Irish Republic, whilst the Scottish vote to remain within the union could easily have gone the other way and may well do so the second time round. Nepal does not at present have any strong secessionist movement but the continuing impasse over federal structure underlines the clear danger that the Madhes independence campaign headed by C.K. Raut could in future gather more support.

The Madhes issue highlights a problem for nation-states world-wide. Building a nation involves emphasizing, and to a certain extent actually constructing shared symbols and values, and these are often those associated with the core territory around which the nation was constructed. Regions outside the core which still retain a sense of identity of their own may thus see their inclusion in the larger unit as subordination. Inclusion in the old Soviet Union was experienced by many as domination by Russia and many Mongols and Tibetans feel similarly about their position vis-à-vis the Han Chinese in the People's Republic of China.²¹ Britain is an acute example of this problem because of England being by far the largest component within the unit and London serving as capital both for England and for the UK as a whole. This has resulted in the English generally using the terms English and British interchangeably and, at least till recently, brandishing the Union Jack – the flag designed precisely to *combine* emblems of England, Scotland and Ireland – in support of the English team in sporting events. With the English themselves confounding what should be two separate levels of identity, foreigners cannot be blamed for doing the same; J.F. Kennedy's analysis of Britain's failure to respond early enough to the threat posed by Hitler's Germany was entitled *Why England Slept* whilst the regular Chinese term for Britain is *Ying Guo*, combining the first syllable of England with the Chinese for country.²² The upshot of this has been that separate identities as English, Scottish and Welsh have remained the most emotionally salient and are re-asserting themselves

²¹ Individual Tibetans and Mongolians certainly differ in how far they accept or reject a pan-Chinese identity in addition to their ethnic one but there are reports of tension with Han Chinese in interaction and great virulence in sentiments sometimes expressed outside China. Across the border in Mongolia graffiti calling for violence against the Chinese are commonplace (Billé 2013).

²² For England in the narrower and more accurate sense, Chinese (at least in Hong Kong) also has the transliteration Ying-ga-lan.

now that the bonds of Protestantism and a shared role in empire are gone (Colley 1992, N. Davies 2000).

In the Nepal case, the equivalent of England in the UK is clearly *pahad*, the hills, even though this is not recognized as a legally distinct unit, within the state. As explained above and discussed more fully in Whelpton (1997), a cluster of shared characteristics have produced a distinct *pahadi* identity, especially but not exclusively for the upper castes. C.K. Lal's 2012 essay uses the term *Nepalipan* for this cultural assemblage and rightly sees the Nepali language as a major part of it, though he seems to think Nepali's predominance stems from the choice by the British of Gurkhali rather than Hindustani as working language for the Brigade of Gurkhas. In fact the expansion of Khas Kura, as Nepali was originally known, was part of a long-time trend starting much earlier and, despite appearances to the contrary in post-1990 censuses, continuing today.²³ Both the Nepal language and *Nepalipan* in general would be a reasonable basis for national identity if we were dealing with the hills alone.

This model does not, however, fit those who term themselves Madhesi, because they are not only non-Pahadi but also part of the Other against which *pahadi* identity is defined. Being Nepali in the traditional sense is to a large degree a matter of not being Indian, just as being (southern) Irish is not being British and being (western) Ukrainian is not being Russian. Hostility to Madhesi in general – whichever side of the border they come from – is a recurrent theme in Nepalese history, exemplified by soldiers in the 1840s using the phrase 'vile madesiahs' when they complained about Brian Hodgson's protection of Indian traders, by the cries of 'Dhotiwala murdabad' in protests against the merger of Sikkim into India in 1974 and by the ugly scenes on the streets of Kathmandu in the December 2000 riots over Hritik Roshan's alleged anti-Indian remarks:

One of the most worrisome aspects of these violent days was that some Indians, including tourists . . . Nepalis, especially from the Terai, who looked like Indians, and Marwaris were beaten up and

²³ For the argument that mother-tongue data in the census frequently represents an assertion of ethnic identity rather than a description of actual language use, see Whelpton (1997).

their property damaged . . . Even the vendors who push bicycles laden with baskets of fresh fruit and vegetable from door to door in residential areas, and who are believed to be Biharis, were attacked and beaten, their bicycle tyres punctured and their produce ruined (Hawley 2015: II, 1115-1116).²⁴

This episode is particularly significant because of C.K. Raut's statement in a recent interview that this was what turned him "from a Nepali into a Madhesi" (Prashant Jha 2016). And, of course, the largely Pahadi security forces were frequently accused of using racial taunts against demonstrators during the recent Madhes Andolan.

Even when outright aggression is not involved it is often difficult for Pahadis to see Madhesis as truly Nepali. The choice of a Birgunj street scene as cover illustration for my own *History of Nepal* was condemned by prominent Kathmandu intellectual K.P. Malla as it "seems to have nothing to do . . . with Nepal – ancient, modern or in the making" (2006). This is in fact true on Malla's own understanding of what being Nepali entails but a sense of shared identity that embraced all the communities within the present state of Nepal would require a new understanding, something which C.K. Lal was trying to promote with his contrast between Nepali in the old sense and a new Nepalese (*Nepaliya*) identity.²⁵

There are in fact two theoretical alternatives to developing a new concept of Nepaliness. One would be simply to allow the southern portion of the Tarai to secede (or more likely join India), an outcome which nobody, other than Raut and his followers, is seriously proposing at the moment.²⁶ The other would be to compel the Madhesi population

²⁴ The problem of Madhesi Nepalis being mistaken for non-Nepalis because of their appearance is paralleled by the experience of Indians from the North-Eastern state assumed in Delhi to be Chinese or Nepali (see Wooters and Subba 2013).

²⁵ The original Nepali version of Lal's 'think paper', entitled *Nepaliya hunalai* has been published, along with reactions to it from over 40 commentators as Parajuli (2013). An English translation of the essay alone was published as Lal (2012).

²⁶ At the end of the 1960s, Leo Rose (1971: 291) wrote that "it has been suggested that Nepal's likely future is a division of the state under which the plains area ... would be absorbed by India and the hills by China." Although Indian intelligence chief R.N. Kao supposedly toyed with the idea of absorbing the Tarai into India in response to perceived increase in Chinese influence in the region (Yadav 2014: 263), neither China nor India appears at present to have designs on Nepalese territory. They are, though, both seeking influence even if at the moment China recognises that India's stake in Nepal is the more

to accept something like the old model but this is simply beyond the capacity of the Nepalese state.

Any new understanding would have to involve a much diluted form of nationalism compared with the classic model that King Mahendra embraced and which assumes all members of the nation share cultural characteristics and political allegiance completely distinct from that of neighbouring states.

It would mean fully accepting that Madhesi Nepalis legitimately also form part of communities which span the border. It would also require both India and Nepal to lay aside some of their current emotional baggage. On the Indian side there needs to be full acceptance of the fact that Nepal, whilst culturally and economically deeply entwined with India, is politically independent and that Nepalis in general cannot be expected to behave “like good, patriotic Indians” in any confrontation with China (Rose 1971: 290). Pahadi Nepalis have to abandon the wishful thinking that India’s present predominance could somehow disappear or even that India itself is an illegitimate entity as it is the creation of British imperialism rather than internal South Asian dynamics.²⁷ A recent example of this approach is Buddhinarayan Shrestha’s (2005) fantasy of negating the Sugauli treaty whose 200th anniversary we are now commemorating. Even if one accepted his arguments that the document was not properly signed on the Nepali side or that it lapsed with Indian independence (a parallel claim to that made by some Sikkimese nationalists about the gifting of Darjeeling to British India), the parallel offered with the return of Hong Kong to China ignores completely the power equation: Hong Kong was taken because the Chinese in the 19th century lacked the power to resist and it was returned in 1997 because by then the Chinese did have the power to insist, not because the British were convinced by the ‘unequal treaty’ argument. Can one realistically imagine a scenario where Nepal could insist that India hand over Uttarakhand?

important one and some analysts (e.g. Garver 2001, Upadhyaya 2012) doubt China will be as willing long-term to accept Indian predominance in South Asia as Leo Rose envisaged.

²⁷ It was an argument of many of the imperialists themselves that India was only held together by the British presence. One British Indian administrator forecast in the 1930s that, should India ever become totally independent, it could fall victim to Nepali expansionism (Kennion 1932).

Aside from the question of boundaries between one nation and another and the need for the psychological ones to remain fuzzy, what might be the common symbols around which British and Nepali identities could be constructed to meet changed needs? For Britain, candidates are the simple fact of sharing an island and possessing a common language (or rather speaking a global language with distinct pronunciation),²⁸ the Celtic roots of the word Britain itself and a historical understanding that emphasizes the mingling of people rather than empire-building. For Nepal, C.K. Lal suggests as well as the highly distinctive current flag, acceptance of ethnic variety, secularism and a new selection of heroes - though the latter could be a tricky exercise because the choice of some of the Maoist combatants from the 'People's War', which Lal appears to recommend, would serve to divide rather than unite. A rather more plausible proposal would be highlighting the Maithili element in the royal culture of the Kathmandu Valley, as suggested by one of Lal's commentators (Subedi 2013) but, at the end of the day, there is very little Madhesis have culturally in common with Pahadis that they do not also have in common with South Asia as a whole.

Britain's decision to leave the European Union and the rising tide of atavistic nationalism in many other countries might make it seem a forlorn hope, but, long-term, might not the way forward for South Asia be to put less emphasis on national identity itself and more on membership of that wider region? The open border between Nepal and India, sometimes seen as a problem, should be seen rather as a model towards which India, Pakistan and Bangladesh should aspire. Inter-state problems would continue but they should be seen as struggles between power centres rather than nations. Protestors opposing the government of India's policies should, for example, be careful to denounce Delhi and specific Indian politicians rather than India, a tactic likely to maximize their support within India itself.

This paper began discussing the complexity of the term British Isles, which was in use as a geographical term long before a British state centred on London came into existence. This is even more true of India,

²⁸ Language is a difficult criterion because the definition of what constitutes a distinct language is itself political. Cantonese and Mandarin, for example, are as distinct as Nepali and Hindi but classified as dialects because of China being a single country.

a name which had meant the same as South Asia does today before it was adopted as the official English name of the state centred on Delhi which came into being on 1 August 1947.²⁹ The empowering of the Indian state's component units, plus the acceptance of greater cross-border ties across the region, would mean India itself becoming more like the European Union, though still with a stronger centre. This would reduce tensions within the Indian Union and between India and the other South Asian states. For Nepal, emphasis on the South Asian dimension would chime with its dependence on labour migration and with the fact that China cannot, except at astronomical cost, replace India as Nepal's main link to the outside world.

For Nepal in South Asia as for Britain in Europe less emphasis is needed on the maintenance of barriers, whether, physical or social, and more acceptance of migration flows and the consequent mingling and modification of national cultures. The politics of nationalism and ethnicity have indeed been recently moving things in the opposite direction. One thinks, for example, of the partial revival of old ethnic divisions in Darjeeling driven by competition for reserved quotas and well reflected in the statement recorded by Mark Turin and Sara Shneiderman (2006): "We must become more tribal." There is also the proliferation of separate caste or ethnic organisations amongst Nepalese who have settled in Britain,³⁰ a trend paralleled in Hong Kong. In British politics, both the United Kingdom Independence Party's successful campaign for Brexit and the rise of separatism in Scotland have shown the strength of resistance to the building of wider identities. Nonetheless, in both our regions the real need today is surely to put greater emphasis on the larger units – to be less tribal and also less national.

²⁹ As pointed out by Kanak Dixit (2013). It is also significant that Jinnah wanted India to retain its original meaning and have Pakistan's neighbour call itself Hindustan but although the latter term continues to be widely used its formal adoption was impossible because of its sectarian overtones.

³⁰ See Pariyar (2011), who links this development to the wish to build wider networks for arranging (intra-caste) marriages.

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OBITUARY

Dina Bangdel (*1963-2017)

– Christiane Brosius

Dina Bangdel is no more, at least not on this earth. She died on 25 July 2017 in a US-American hospital. With her early and tragic demise, we pay farewell not only to a remarkable scholar and energetic colleague, but also to a passionate teacher, facilitator and curator of art in Nepal, both in Nepal and beyond. She was closely connected to scholars at the South Asia Institute and the Heidelberg Centre for Transcultural Studies.

With most of her higher education undertaken in the USA, she received her PhD from Ohio State University. For several years, she was director of the Art History Program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Doha, Qatar. She was also on the Board of Directors of the Nepal Art Council, among other positions of patronage and expertise.

At the time Dina fell ill, she was involved in many different activities, mostly in collaboration with different scholars and institutions, both in Nepal and internationally. She had several exhibitions in the planning: one exhibition was a retrospective on the work of her belated father Lain Singh Bangdel, a famous ‘pioneer’ of Nepal’s modern art. Another exhibition on Buddhist art was planned with the Musée Guimet, a precious Paris museum concentrating on Asian art. In March 2017, she curated an exhibition in the context of the Kathmandu Triennale 2017, entitled *Built / Unbuilt : Home/City*, involving artists based in Doha and artists from Kathmandu. One of her goals was to enable respectful dialogue, not only between ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’, but also between Nepali and international art worlds. She brought Qatari art history students to India, to visit the Kochi Biennale and the India Art Fair in Delhi (2015), and she also invited Doha-based artists to Nepal, to learn



more about art from Nepal and from each other. She often underlined the cosmopolitan character of Newar Buddhist art, and the exquisite quality of the works. But also vice versa: Dina took a selection of artists from Nepal to the Art Fair in Delhi, brought them to Doha, and was in the process of writing a book about Nepali contemporary art. During her years at Virginia Commonwealth University, Doha Campus, she made sure that she could contribute to conversations between Nepal and Qatar, whilst not ignoring conditions of inequality and exploitation. Her passion for the arts, her professional attitude and humanist spirit gained her much admiration in the Nepali art world and beyond, and created a wave of energy. This became evident particularly in the context of her engagement with art/ivism in the aftermath of the great earthquake of 2015. Dina followed closely the restoration work at the Swayambhunath Stupa in Kathmandu, but also the relief work practiced by young artists and art teachers at various places, such as the town of Bungamati and the neighbourhood of Thulo Byasi in Bhaktapur. Her interest in art activism was published in “Breaking Views”, a book I compiled with Sanjeev Maharjan in 2017, on artists’ responses to the earthquake (Himal Books, Social Science Baha).



Photo: Artree Nepal 2017

Dina Bangdel's exhibitions and publications highlight her deep and elaborate commitment to art from Nepal, without 'branding' it as national or ethno-religious products, or as 'marketable fashion'. She curated *Circle of Bliss: Buddhist Meditational Art* (2003, finalist for the Alfred Barr Award for best exhibition catalogue, co-authored with John Huntington, with Serinda Publications) at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; *Pilgrimage and Faith: Buddhism, Christianity and Islam* (2010) at the Rubin Museum, New York; and *Prakriti Speaks: Contemporary Nepali Art* (2011) in Mumbai. She published the book *Embodied Enlightenment*. Kathmandu: Bodhisattva Gallery 2016) on contemporary Newar Paubha painting, and her contributions to edited volumes range from "Contemporary Nepali Art: Narratives of Modernity and Visuality" (Nepal: Nostalgia and Modernity. Mumbai: Marg Publications, 2011) to "Visual Histories of Svayambhu Mahacaitya: The Mandala Iconography of the Great Stupa," in *Light of the Valley: Renewing the Sacred Art and Traditions of Svayambhu*, edited by Tsering Gellek and Padma Maitland (Berkeley, California: Dharma Publishing, 2011),

A void is left by Dina Bangdel's demise. But also, the recognition that what she believed in and worked for will remain with us, as a source of energy.

BOOK REVIEWS

Becoming Religious in a Secular Age by Mark Elmore: Oakland, University of California Press, 292 pp., ISBN 978-05-20-29053-2, 25 plates, US\$75

Reviewed by William Sax

Becoming Religious in a Secular Age is meant to be an analysis of what happened when the modern concept of a “religion” made its way to the Indian federal Indian state of Himachal Pradesh in the Western Himalaya. In other words, it addresses the problems encountered in the attempt to apply the term “religion” to what we call “Hinduism”. Such problems are by now quite familiar, and have become a kind of staple of scholarly writing about religion. Moreover, they are especially acute these days, when the boundaries between the so-called “religions” become ever more rigid, leading to distrust, anger, and even violence. The greatest virtue of Elmore’s book is that in addressing such issues, he brings some new and relevant sources into the discussion.

Elmore regards the concept of “religion” as a discursive product of complex colonial and post-colonial processes. Thus for Himachalis, “dharm” has come to mean “religion”, partly because of the weight of the English language and the colonial experience. These are persuasive claims, and interesting ones too, not only because they confirm what one hears when speaking with Indians in their own languages from all walks of life – that is, the way they often equate “dharm” with “religion” – but more importantly because they illustrate how historical processes manage to alter the semantic field of the word “dharm” (Skt. *dharma*) which originally was so very different to that of “religion.” (But then, the meaning of “religion” in European languages has also changed radically over time, as persuasively shown by Smith [1962]).

Nevertheless, Elmore accords much more weight to a very different claim about how the concept of “religion” is translated into local Himachali language. At the beginning of the book (p. 10), he mentions an early encounter with a young boy who said, “This is our *devidevata sanskriti*.” Elmore returns again and again this incident, and he writes that he “became increasingly convinced that (he) would not know anything until he could understand the power” of it. Now, it is certainly true that

people in the Western Himalaya use the Hindi phrase *devidevata (ki) sanskriti* in a self-descriptive way: It means something like “our culture of gods and goddesses” (literally “our goddess-and-god culture”). To me, this common phrase points to the degree to which local people have internalized and reified the concept of “culture” (Cf. Sartori 2008), but Elmore translates the phrase *devidevata (ki) sanskriti* as “religion,” which undermines his own argument, since a fundamental goal of the book is to show that the modern concept of “religion” is a discursive product, alien and constructed. By attributing the meaning “religion” to a phrase that literally uses the word “culture,” Elmore engages in precisely the kind of epistemological colonialism he seeks to criticize.

Much of the problem is due to a rather narrow historical focus. Elmore claims that “religion made its entrance in the Western Himalayas as an implicit product of the quest for statehood and the land reforms of the 1950s” (p. 16), and while this may be true in a very limited sense, the fact remains that with respect to local gods and goddesses, and to personal experiences of extraordinary power - that is, with respect to beliefs, practices, and experiences that correspond to what most native English speakers think of as “religion” - the “culture of gods and goddesses” is absolutely fundamental in the Western Himalayan region, and utterly typical of it. This “culture” (or “religion” as Elmore calls it) has historical roots stretching back centuries before the achievement of statehood in the 1950s.

In fact, *Becoming Religious in a Secular Age* is chock-full full of clues pointing to the previous existence, and the continuing relevance, of the pre-colonial polity, in which local territorial units were ruled by gods from their temples, so that “religion” and “government” were indistinguishable. Sutherland (2004: 82) has aptly characterized it as *devta ka raj* or “government by deity,” and I have shown that it was characteristic of the entire region (Sax 2003). But although Elmore is familiar neither with Sutherland’s work, nor with Alam’s (2008), nor with mine, nor with Moran’s (2007, 2013), his text is nevertheless replete with clues that might have led to a fruitful (and for his thesis, highly relevant) discussion of this pre-colonial religious polity, and the multiple ways in which it still informs “religious” belief and practice in the Western Himalaya. He notes for example that at the time of the post-independence land reforms, local deities were the biggest landowners, he

quotes Jogishwar's Singh's fascinating (1989) thesis on the economic dominance of the gods of Kinnaur, he discusses the unifying function of the Shivaratri festival in Mandi, where regional gods arrive in palanquins to show obeisance to the paramount god (much as in the more famous Kullu Dasehra), and he even notices something that other scholars have missed; namely, the significance of the of the local temples-cum-fortresses-cum palaces (*kothi*). But he does not follow up on this local evidence, which clearly points to a pervasive pre-colonial polity that formed the basis of subsequent historical developments. Instead, he supports the 19th century colonial administrator Barnes' assertion that mountain villages, unlike those of the plains, lacked political unity, and rejects the much more plausible arguments of the eminent environmental anthropologist Guha, who argued that there was much more private landownership in "traditional" West Himalayan states than in the adjacent regions of the plains, and that this contributed to the political solidarity of the people. Similarly, Elmore fails to understand the "Indralok Yatra" (p. 150-53) because he remains unaware of the pre-colonial system of "government by deity" that continues to inform rituals like this one.

Elmore is more at home in the post-independence period, and I was delighted to see that much of the section on "Knowledge" was devoted to the old Indian Census "7b" volumes, which focused on the "fairs and festivals" of various Indian states. These volumes are a rich source of ethnographic information, and I remember spending many hours with them during my undergraduate days, trying to gain some idea of "religion" as practiced (rather than as written or imagined) before going to the Western Himalaya for the first time. Elmore begins this section with an interesting claim, viz., that

the writers, filmmakers, and photographers involved in this field [Himachal's cultural history] are providing the material for the creation of a new person, that they themselves are exemplars of this person, and that their works are fast becoming the center of a canon on Himachali religion (93).

He argues that Indian Census volumes on fairs and festivals were part of a process that led to the production of what he calls "ethnomedia,"

including the village ethnographies that were also supported by the state. He sees all of this as part of a process of identity formation that as more or less required as a consequence of statehood (see Sax 2003 for a remarkably similar argument). All of this is quite persuasive, and useful for an ethnographer or historian writing about the region, except for the fact that Elmore writes as if the social and cultural change documented in these publications is merely an artifact of the genre, rather than something that actually occurred. He focuses on the creation of what he calls a “canon” of Himachal religiosity and culture, according to which it

is the land of the gods; that it has an uncannily peaceful past and present; that its theistic traditions are tied to the natural landscape; that its religious practices and myths are radically different from those of the plains peoples; that these practices and myths are unchanged from aboriginal time; and that the unique character of hill people allows them to simultaneously embrace the past and the future, thereby making them superior not only to the inhabitants of other regions in India but also to those in “modern” societies in general (116).

The next chapter begins with a very long and detailed description of how Elmore once met Virbhadr Singh, the former Chief Minister of Himachal. (I cannot see what this has to do with the book’s leading theses). Elmore goes on to write about processes of cultural management, about the fact that for many local people, religion and culture are equivalent, and about the difficulties and controversies associated with the common practice of animal sacrifice. Following Cohn and Dirks, he argues (p. 141) that “knowledge production in Himachal . . . came about in relation to the specific demands of governance.” The claim is hardly new; however Elmore’s argument that processes of social and religious change were not brought about by one particular group (colonialists, Brahmans, nationalists) but are better seen as the complex and “unauthored” results of multiple historical processes seems a timely corrective to various “conspiracy theories” in Indian cultural history.

Elmore is well acquainted with the human oracle of one of the local gods, and this friendship allows him to provide a fascinating account of the man’s life, and his ideas about his occupation. He convincingly shows

that although he lived at some geographical distance from the center of state power and had rejected its trappings by joining and then leaving the military at an early age, still his discourse was full of state-related imagery, e.g. he describes himself (using the English terms) as the “personal secretary” of the deity.

Elmore begins Chapter 5 by justifying, at considerable length, his interest in urban religion. This chapter, he says, is “the heart” of the book, and perhaps this explains why he makes such an abstract (and rather unclear) argument to the effect that because of mediatization,

religion is recognized as the secret sinew stitching Himachalis together . . . Across the mediascape, religion is given an awesome power even as its materiality dissolves, its spaces of practice are systematized and resignified, its gods are transformed into abstractions, and its activities are replaced with intentions.

As he develops this thesis, Elmore mixes it with a criticism of neoliberalism, taking his evidence from CDs available in Himachal’s markets and shops. He takes pains to avoid reifying religion, and this leads him to formulate some rather unusual arguments; e.g.; most major festivals are filmed; these films are widely circulated in the form of CDs; the films have much transgressive content since they document real and not idealized practices and therefore involve obscenity, symbolic human sacrifice, etc.; but the transgressive episodes remain un-interpreted. Elmore says this is evidence for the fact that for the villagers, religion is not distinct from other parts of social life (e.g. economy and politics). While I agree with the conclusion, I don't see how or why it follows from the “non-interpretation” of the transgressive content of CDs. Similarly, Elmore illustrates his argument that for Himachalis, “dharm” has come to mean “religion” with the example of a successful photographer who has removed all images of animal sacrifice and other transgressive acts from his gallery because, as the photographer says, these are examples of “superstition” and not “religion.” Again, I don't see how the conclusion follows from the evidence. Other urban and influential people say similar things: could we not simply apply Occam's razor, and argue that urbanites have a different idea of “religion” than peasants do?

Elmore describes a goddess temple in the upper Kullu that is

apparently served only by “priestesses” – an unusual fact upon which he, unfortunately, does not comment. But although this temple was once associated with a major center, it has more recently been bypassed by the road and thus become less popular. This is in contrast to a nearby temple that has a road connection, and has therefore profited from national and international pilgrimage and tourism, resulting in rapid sanskritization and touristification, the identification of its goddess with a mainstream Hindu goddess, the elimination of animal sacrifice, etc. There are countless examples of similar processes throughout India: Why has Elmore devoted so much time to this one? Because he wants to tell us that although some in Himachal have profited from tourism, others have not. He wishes to argue that “(d)evlopment and modernization are not unilinear progressive forces. They move in fits and starts along different and often conflicting paths.” But didn't we already know this?

In general the book is well-produced and there are only a few errors of spelling and/or fact (the word “rath” is mistransliterated as raath on page 189; the goddess Mahishasura Mardini is mistakenly referred to as “Mahisasura”; Jaunsar Bawar - a vague term for a region commonly associated with “backward” practices like polyandry - is falsely characterized as a “regional power”; and the eminent environmental anthropologist Ramachandra Guha is mistakenly cited as “Gupta”). More troubling is the author's habit of instructing the reader, in very precise and detailed ways, how to interpret the book, rather than allowing him/her to reach his/her own conclusions. Indeed, the book concludes with precisely a passage of precisely this sort: a somewhat tedious reflection about why Elmore wrote it and what it means.

Elmore returns to animal sacrifice in the final pages of the book. He claims that those who oppose it have a completely new, modern understanding of religion (an inner relationship to a transcendent god) as opposed to the more traditional peasants, for whom animal sacrifice is a pragmatic exchange with the god. But such tensions between internal” and “external” religion are as old as the Nirguna philosophers and saints (from the 12th century), the “Sant” poets including Kabir (15th century; see Vaudeville 1964) and Nanak (16th century) – one could even stretch the point and argue that they are as old as Buddhism’s challenge to Vedic Hinduism. In many north Indian languages, these movements are called “paths,” and are not thought of as mutually exclusive. In this way, they

do not correspond to a certain contemporary understanding of “religion” as an exclusive community of belief. But unlike Elmore, I would not hesitate to call them religions. Why not? Because they have to do with the performance of rituals, with the ultimate purposes of life, with soteriology, and with extraordinary experiences and powers - concerns that I take to correspond with a contemporary definition of “religion.”

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Kailas Histories: Renunciate Traditions and the Construction of Himalayan Sacred Geography

by Alex McKay Leiden 2015 Brill's Tibetan Studies Library Volume 38 2015
452 pages with maps and illustrations, excluding bibliography and index
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Reviewed by Vasudha Pande

The book under review is remarkable for its range and depth of research about Kailas. Based on a variety of sources and intensive fieldwork it deals not only with Hindu and Buddhist narratives, but also includes Bon. The book is a must read for all scholars particularly those engaged with the Himalayas and trans- Himalayas.

Alex McKay surveys the entire historical record about Kailas Mountain as a sacred site of pilgrimage. The author notes that the idea of mountains as sacred is found not only in Indic traditions but also in other early Pan-Asian landscapes. In Chinese and Persian traditions, mountain worship required an esoteric group of ritualists and renunciates. In the Indic world too, it was Vedic rsis /sages who practiced rituals in Himvatah (Himalayas), a tradition of renunciant practice that continued till the modern period. Vedic and later Vedic texts venerate mountains as fathers and rivers as mothers, but reveal only a vague understanding of Himalayan geography. Even later, after temple worship and pilgrimage were systematized, the Himalayas remained out of bounds for lay persons. Gold was known to come from the mountains, but the specific places were not identified. Even in the Epics, the Himalayan Mountains as the play garden of the gods was a heavenly space for a privileged few with special spiritual powers. References to the Himalayas multiply in Puranic traditions, and the Kailas of Kalidas's *Meghaduta* became legendary; a metaphor that invokes a divine mountain as a central conceptual device and symbol. A Sanskritic and classical image of Kailas continued to resonate in the Indic imagination, but a growing interest in Tantric rituals motivated renunciant Siddhas and Naths to explore the Himalayas for alchemical products. From the thirteenth century onwards, peripatetic Naths knit different regions of the Himalayas into trade networks. Later around the sixteenth century another sect of

renunciants, the Dasnami Sanyasis- the Giris in particular - established networks of exchange that connected the trans-Himalaya and the Himalaya to the North Indian plains. Certain Himalayan sites were now declared sacred *pithas*, or “seats of power.” This probably fostered a greater awareness of the whereabouts of the actual (trans -Himalayan) Kailas, but the mountain itself was not considered a *pitha* and remained outside Hindu sacred geography. The last chapter in this section, entitled “Kailas on the Edge of Modernity,” is important because it argues that two important texts that sanctify Kailas as a sacred site of great antiquity, the *Manaskhand* (supposedly a section of the *Skanda Purana*) and the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, are the product of interactions between local informants and British administrators. According to McKay, their claims to antiquity are fraudulent and both texts are clearly on the cusp of the modern. We would agree but suggest that the composition of the texts may have been a response to power struggles in the seventeenth century. Interestingly, they testify to the long relationship between the trans-Himalaya and Upper Himalaya that is attested by archaeological excavations.

Once Kailas as a heavenly mountain became a part of the Indic imaginary, local/ regional circuits claimed the toponym “Kailas” for their region. The second section is devoted to the various traditions of Kailas - -Kaplas and Manimahesh Kailas, Kinnaur Kailas and Adi Kailas. It also includes a chapter on the discovery of the source of the Ganges river in the nineteenth century and its implications for the understanding of Kailas as the source of four major rivers. The last chapter in this section is entitled “Kailas Epic Prototype.”

The third section, entitled “Tibetan Histories,” provides information about Tise (the Tibetan name for Kailas). Although evidence is scanty, a general veneration of mountains may be assumed, but it is difficult to arrive at any conclusions about Tise in particular. It appears that the lake Mapham, where the Nagas resided, was considered sacred prior to the establishment of the Tibetan Empire. A Dunhuang text of 965 or 977 CE (post Empire) provides information about a renunciant who performed religious rites at the lake. Like Buddhists and Hindus, Bon ritualists also claimed Tise Mapham before Buddhist cosmology appropriated it. After the breakup of the Tibetan Empire, the establishment of a kingdom in Western Tibet in the eleventh century aligned to the Buddhist faith

ushered in religious change. A gathering of Buddhist masters at Tholing in 1076 CE followed an attack on Bon ritualists and Tantric practitioners. Subsequently, Master Milarepa's visit to Tise became legendary and formalized the subjugation of Bon. Gradually the Kargyu constructed a mandala about the sacred landscape of Tise. The transformation from a local focus on the lake to a regional focus on the mountain clearly involved a major restructuring, the Buddhacisation of Tise. Its later incorporation into the larger landscape of Tibet and the hierarchy of and fluid relationship of deities to places and peoples (necessary for pastoral groups and changing power configurations) is described in great detail. The contestation for Tise in the eleventh century had important spinoffs and the author suggests that the idea of a mandala with a sacred deity at the centre was also deployed in other contexts as in Manimahesh Kailas. We would like to suggest that the idea of Siva as the central deity is found in the *Manaskhand* (Pande 1989) a text probably composed in the seventeenth century with an anti-clockwise circumambulation that may reflect an affinity with Bon. Studies of western and central Himalayan polities also reveal the shifting relationship between deities and peoples as power equations changed. In this context, the identification of Bon and Zhang Zhung with Tibet needs to be interrogated because traces of Bon are to be found in many Himalayan cultures and this may explain the centrality of Kailas for local Himalayan histories as well.

The last two chapters explicate the main argument of the book: that Kailas as we know it today is a modern phenomenon constructed primarily by European administrators and cartographers of the nineteenth century. Sherring in particular (1906), created the understanding of Kailas as the supreme pilgrimage for Hindus and Buddhists. This articulation eventually "removed the site from its Indo-Tibetan cultural context and transformed it into a globalized mountain for a globalizing world" (p.425).

The argument is persuasive and the Tibetan-cum-Himalayan context is historicized in great detail. The significance of the book lies in its ability to extricate the pre-British history of the Central Himalayas, Western Himalayas, Western Tibet and Far Western Nepal from the clutch of state-oriented narratives. All these regions were not only contiguous, but also shared an articulation that British historical writing obscured through construction of borders and categories of place (identifying a culture with

a region, not recognizing mobility as an integral part of habitation in the Himalayas), race (Mongoloid and Aryan), and language (Tibeto -Burman and Indo-Aryan).

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