

Unadmitted Histories: The lives of Dalchan and Garjaman Gurung

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

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

¹ My thanks to the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Board for funding research trips to the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal in February-March 1995, November-December 1999 and June-July 2000. I am indebted to many Bhutanese men and women in Nepal, whose names I prefer not to reveal in this context, for their help, advice, and willingness to allow me to draw my own conclusions.

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

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

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

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

D.B. Gurung's Memoir

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

greater seriousness:

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

Eventually the Paro Penlop sends a report to Śrī Pāñch the Dharmaraja at Thimphu,⁷ and as a result a freehold lease (*jamīdārī paṭṭā*) is issued in the names of Dalchand and Garjaman, the father and son... in Nepali Sambat 1944, or the English year 1887.⁸ After receiving the lease as a result of the labours of Garjaman Gurung, Nepali subjects (*raitis*) began to settle in the border areas of southern Bhutan, forming a natural boundary.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using the Legend

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Questions of historicity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

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

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Appendix

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

Nepali text:

svasti śrī hāmrajāmin basnyā camārci ilākābhitra basnyā sardār dālcan guruṅsaṅga basnyā duniyā graiha basti abadekhi uprānta pachi partta (?) sardār dālcan nepā-lilāi mohor garidiñye jagā purva bālāduvār tursā nadideṣi pasi ucunpato kholā deṣi purva yetibhitrakā jamin jagā sardār dālcan guruṅ garjamān guruṅ duī bābu chorālāi diyāko cha. aba uprānta tyo jagā diyāko artha lāi choṭā baḍā kohi kasaile kehi garna paumdaina bhanyā yo paṭṭā sardār bābu chorā duiko nāmmā diñyā yasbhitra choṭā baḍā kasaile pani jagā thicomico gari ujur garnu pāumdaina bhani bhararājā rimphurājāle paṭṭā dastakhat garidinyā īti sambat 1944 bhadau mahinā.

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

Translation:

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

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

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

Tibetan text:

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

Translation:

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

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

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

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

