'Gurkhas' in the Town: Migration, language, and healing
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Introduction

The *serga pye*[1] recalls how a group of Tamu-mai[2] (Gurung) came upon what is now the ancestral village of Kohla, planted some grain, returned to find that it had produced a high yield, and moved across the Lamjung Himal to settle in the forests above their present villages. Many Tamu-mai consider the move across the Himalaya to be the final stage in their migration, without realizing that they themselves are engaged in an equally historic migration. This article examines the contemporary rural-urban movement of the Tamu-mai, which is intimately tied to the experience of service in the British army, and explores some of the associated social and cultural changes. As people plot new urban geographies, and as the second generation grow up as town-dwellers, a new Tamu social landscape is created and the sense of what it means to be Tamu is shifting. In this new environment, the cultural landscape is being re-drawn. As the map is reformulated, some knowledge and practices have lost their cultural centrality. Language, for example, has been displaced, and few of the second generation speak Tamu Kyui. In contrast, despite a wide choice of alternative options, shamanic healing practices retain their cultural salience.

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[1] This is a chanted shamanic 'oral text' which conveys the deceased to the afterworld on the final day of the three-day *pai laba* death ritual.

[2] 'Tamu' is the singular of 'Tamu-mai', the ethnonym the people better known as 'Gurung' apply to themselves when they speak in their own language, Tamu Kyui. At one level, 'Tamu' can be considered to be an emic and village construction of identity and 'Gurung' to be the corresponding etic and town construction. It is, however, more complicated than this because different social, symbolic, and political meanings are embedded in the terms (for a further discussion of this see Pettigrew 1995). Throughout this article I have chosen to use both terms. There are two reasons for doing this. First, it conveys a sense of shifting and contested identities. Second, it preserves a sense of inclusiveness: there are a large number of urban-dwellers who do not speak Tamu Kyui and therefore always refer to themselves as 'Gurung', just as there are a significant number of ethno-activist town-dwellers who wish to be referred to at all times as 'Tamu'.

The first part of this article focuses on the experiences of migration, army service, and urban relocation and describes the changing social landscape of Tamu/Gurung urban settlement. The second part examines the loss and retention of two cultural 'institutions', language and healing, and explores why it is that language is under threat while the healing traditions continue to flourish.

Gurkha Service and Migration

Until the 1970s, Tamu ex-Gurkha soldiers returned to their villages and their previous farming livelihoods because there was little to attract ex-servicemen to settle in the urban centres. By the 1970s, the developments that had started in the town of Pokhara in the 1950s had begun to provide services and facilities which were increasingly attractive alternatives to the hard life of a hill farmer. Of particular importance to many Tamu families, who hold education in very high regard, was the growing availability of good educational facilities. Today almost all Tamu ex-Gurkha soldiers settle in the town.[3]

Migration statistics recorded for the village of Thak (12 miles north of Pokhara) by Harrison, Gurung, and Gurung (n.d.) provide an interesting illustration of the links between the army, wealth, and urban relocation. In 1969, the 103 households, which included the whole village and nearby surrounding areas, numbered 491 persons. In 1992, although the ethnic composition was somewhat different, the population was 494 persons (excluding migrant workers and children at school in Pokhara). In 1969, there were three Thak households in Pokhara; by 1992 this number had risen to 43 households. This did not include households in which there were Thak women who had 'married out' and migrated to Pokhara with their husbands. Nineteen of the relocated households were 'headed' by men who were ex-British army, nine were ex-Indian army, and the remaining fifteen were 'other'. Thus, in total, the category 'army' accounted for 28 out of 43 migrant households. The dates of migration are also of interest. The first recorded migration is of a British army family in 1961, the first 'other' family migrated in 1975, and the first Indian army family migrated in 1977. Of the 35 families whose dates of resettlement are known, 15 migrated between 1961 and 1981, and 20 migrated between 1982 and 1992. In 1999 there were 156 Thak households, 58 of which were Pokhara-based. The number of British army households in Pokhara is unchanged as no Thak man has been recruited into the Gurkhas since the mid-1970s. The only recent Indian army retiree

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[3] Caplan (1995: 51) notes a similar trend towards urban settlement among ex-Gurkhas in eastern Nepal.

is living in the village, a fact which Harrison *et al.* suspect "is a reflection of the disparity of pay rates between the British and Indian army."

The first wave of Gurung migrants to Pokhara settled in the heavily populated bazaar area and were engaged in a wide variety of occupations including owning shops or teashops, renting rooms or buildings, soldiering, working in the transportation business, driving taxis, doing carpentry, or working in the hotel business (Doherty 1975: 143). As such, they played a significant role in the economic life of Pokhara in the early 1970s. In the ensuing 30 years the demographic picture of Pokhara has changed enormously. The Tamu-mai have now settled in far greater numbers and although there are Tamu-mai involved in the same activities as those that were listed during the 1970s, a much larger proportion are in the army or are ex-servicemen. A high number of these are unemployed, underemployed, or repeat migrants. Despite the fact that Pokhara has developed almost beyond recognition (with a population of 95, 286 in 1994[4] compared with approximately 21,000 in 1972 (Shrestha and Gurung 1973: 36)), employment opportunities for the Tamu-mai have not increased at the same rate.

The normal length of service for a Gurkha soldier is fifteen years, after which he can retire with a pension.[5] Officers, particularly those promoted to the higher ranks, frequently serve for longer, typically upwards of twenty years (less than 10% of Gurkhas hold high-ranking positions in the army) (Gurung 1993: 24). Recruitment takes place in the British camp in Pokhara on an annual basis. Competition for places is very high, and only those who have been successful in preliminary screenings are invited to attend the final selections in the camp. I have watched preliminary selections which involve hundreds of young men competing for only a few places. Following successful recruitment, basic training takes place in the UK.

Periodic training exercises take the soldier to a variety of countries including New Zealand, Canada, Fiji, Cyprus, and Scotland. First leave is usually granted after

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[4] Central Bureau of Statistics, His Majesty's Government of Nepal 1994.

[5] Pensions are not as large as they are believed to be, and the wealth of soldiers is variable, depending on years of service, rank, and the amount of money a soldier has been able to save. The monthly pension of a rifleman in the British Army was increased in April 2000 to 7881.60 Nepalese rupees (there are approximately 107 rupees to the pound). Although they carry out the same tasks, the pay and salaries of Nepali citizens and British citizens in the Gurkhas were unequal until recently. While they have officially gained parity there is a sense among serving soldiers that inequalities still exist as pay is calculated differently and they are not provided with a breakdown. Nepali citizens serving in the Gurkhas remain ineligible (unlike their British colleagues) for a pension after three years of service. As noted above, they must serve for fifteen years before they are eligible for a full pension.

three years and is for a duration of six months.[6] The majority of soldiers get married during their first leave, a decision which may be more about pragmatic choice than ideal preference.[7] Marriage on first leave puts a soldier in line for 'family permission' which allows wives and children to accompany their spouses either to the UK or Brunei for a specified length of time (usually three years). The family members of those above the rank of staff sergeant are permitted extended periods of 'family permission'.

'Family permission' allows families to live together and gives a greater semblance of 'normal life'. When the Gurkha headquarters were based in Hong Kong, Gurung women who joined their husbands spent most of their time with their children, looking after their homes, cooking, or visiting friends. There were few opportunities to work outside the home, although some did manage to get jobs. Following the relocation of the headquarters to the UK at the end of 1996, almost all of the wives who join their husbands work outside the home. Those with very young children who do not seek outside employment often work as paid carers for the children of those who do.

Whether stationed in Brunei or the United Kingdom, army wives and children are exposed to a world that offers a high standard of living, good educational and recreational facilities, and a set of values which is quite different from that of the village. Yet, when 'family permission' ends, spouses and children return abruptly to Nepal where they are expected to pick up the threads of their former lives. There is no facilitation of the resettlement process for family members, and there is considerable concern over reports of maladjusted returned Gurkha children who are involved in crime, hooliganism, and alcohol and drug abuse (Aryal 1991: 19). The

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[6] An essential aspect of returning home on leave is gift-giving which marks the soldier's reintegration into his family and the wider community. Des Chene (1992: 342) estimates that about half of a soldier's pay over a three-year period is brought back in the form of gifts. A further quarter of his pay is contributed to his family's household, the remainder is brought back in gold which is his investment in the future. Gift-giving accrues prestige for both the soldier and his family, compensates for his absence, shows that he still knows how to behave as a 'proper Gurung', and marks his re-entry into the exchange system.

[7] Although most Gurkhas marry Nepali citizens (and are encouraged to do so), a small but increasing number marry non-Nepalis. Those who wish to marry foreigners must request permission from their commanding officer six months before they intend to do so. Only women who are Nepali citizens are allowed to live in the camp with their husbands. Consequently, foreign wives who wish to reside with their husbands must take out Nepali citizenship. Most men who marry foreign women leave the army, although this is beginning to change.

greater opportunity for wives to work outside the home in the UK has led some couples to choose to leave their children in the care of relatives in Nepal. There are increasing concerns regarding the behaviour of some of these children who in the absence of their parents are perceived to be 'out of control'.

The Gurkha Army Ex-Servicemen's Organization (GAESO), which campaigns for improved pensions and welfare benefits, wants the British government to assist in creating educational and training institutions for the children of Gurkhas. GAESO, as quoted in Gould (1999: 389), "maintains that since most Gurkhas are separated from their families for twelve out of fifteen years' service, their children are deprived of a father figure and, as a result of this and of the inevitable disruption of their education through travel to and from the United Kingdom and elsewhere, tend to be 'wayward'."

Unlike the usual picture of rural-urban migration, the Gurkha situation is complex and can be divided into a series of different stages. These include: (1) recruitment into the army followed by a series of overseas migrations; (2) six-month visits back to Nepal every third year; and (3) retirement and the completion of the village-town migratory pattern. In step (2) the shift is made gradually from village living to urban dwelling. Soldiers usually buy land on their first or second leave but may not build a house until after their retirement or on subsequent leaves. Their leave usually consists of periods in the village visiting their parents, and periods in the town staying with relatives and making the first steps towards relocating to the town. The move from village to town thus takes place over a lengthy period of time. Although other migratory patterns bear similarity in terms of length of absence, distance from home, or relocation experiences (see Ballard 1987: 28-9, Gardner 1995, Gmelch 1980), the uniqueness of the Gurkha experience lies in the nature of migration as service in a foreign army, and the attendant social meaning of this particular migratory experience. This has a close bearing on the particularity of the experiences of relocation.

The young man who left his village in his late teens is a very different person to the man who returns after fifteen years of service to become a town-dweller. Many of the classical problems of rural-urban relocation, therefore, do not arise. The returned soldier and his family do not face the normal adjustment problems of finding a place to live, making new friends (they live surrounded by other members of their family who have gone through the same experience, and by their army friends), lack of sophistication, or uncertainty about urban living. They return to Nepal and automatically become members of the most cosmopolitan, sophisticated, competitive, upwardly mobile section of Pokhara.

Homecoming

Many descriptions of Tamu village life are available (Macfarlane and Gurung 1993: 8-14, Messerschmidt 1976: 24-27, Pignède 1993: 46-51), but there is little on life in the towns. A soldier's family usually lives in a one- or two- storey flat-roofed cement urban house in one of the large Tamu settlements within easy reach of the centre of Pokhara, such as Mati Pani, Visapatan, Bagar, or Ram Bazaar.[8] Most families have a small garden in which they grow vegetables. Many keep chickens and some may keep a buffalo. Most have some land, usually at a distance from their house on the outskirts of the town, on which they grow rice and other crops such as maize and millet. Family sizes are usually small—not more than three children—and planned. Although family planning is still relatively rare in the village, it is more widely practised in the town, particularly in army families. The motivation for keeping family sizes small is economic. The cost of living is high and education, particularly private education, which Gurkha parents desire for their children, is extremely expensive. Family planning methods may include the birth control pill or sterilization, commonly (but not necessarily) of the wife following the birth of the last desired child. Family sizes are also kept small by the long periods during which couples are separated.

Inside the family home, the consumer goods and memorabilia of Hong Kong, Singapore, and London are in evidence. On the walls hang souvenirs from London, New Zealand, or Brunei, photographs of the army and the family taken on trips to faraway places. The gas or kerosene stove has replaced the fire, and rice is now cooked in a rice cooker. All homes have electricity and most have televisions.

Gurung urban settlement patterns bear a strong resemblance to their rural settlement patterns. As in the villages, the Pokhara Tamu-mai prefer to live in densely nucleated clusters. As the population has grown, the Tamu-mai have spread out from the bazaar centre to live in the suburban areas of the town, which are frequently near to the roads that lead out to the villages. Urban families usually retain close links with family members and friends who live in the village. Although many town-dwellers rarely visit the village there is a constant movement of villagers to the town to buy and sell, attend hospital, or visit kin.[9] Villagers usually bring with them things that are not available in the town, for example, vegetables from the forest, and bamboo products.

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[8] A three bedroomed one-storey house costs approximately £15-20,000 to build. A larger two-storey house will cost substantially more.

[9] Some urban-dwellers still own land in their village of origin, which is share-cropped.

To a certain degree, the urban Tamu-mai can be considered to be 'urban villagers'. They remain connected to and, to an extent, dependent on their villages. Despite their other incomes they almost always pursue some agricultural activities. Yet, if they are portrayed as 'urban villagers' they are denied the full experience of their urban existence and are seen as being located somewhere 'in-between' the village and the town. In certain respects the urban-dwelling Gurung are liminal, but in other important ways they are not. There is a marked difference between living in a village and living in the town, aside from the obvious material and infrastructural differences. To live in a large Gurung village is to live in a predominantly Gurung world. To live in a town is to live in a predominantly non-Gurung world. Despite the changes that are affecting the villages there is still a significant difference—a gulf across which language, identity, and certain cultural practices do not easily cross and are not readily transferable.

The primary motivation for settling in the town is a desire for an easier life and improved educational opportunities. As has been noted by other writers, Tamu-mai place enormous importance on education (Des Chene 1992: 7, Macfarlane 1989: 180, Ragsdale 1989: 50-3, 83). The long-term esteem in which education is held is related in part to army service. Following World War I the British army required all soldiers in Gurkha regiments to be literate (Ragsdale 1989: 50).[10] Educational training takes up much of the new recruit's first year in the army and the passing of various certificates enhances a soldier's promotion prospects.[11] Education is thus perceived to relate to advancement in army life and, increasingly, to advancement in civilian life as well. As Macfarlane observes:

> People rightly perceive that if Nepal is to join the great world consumer society, to integrate itself with the international world of communications, business and bureaucracy, it cannot avoid education. Since everyone perceives this, a huge amount of Gurung and other resources are funnelled into the competitive spiral. (Macfarlane 1993: 460)

Ex-servicemen's children, some of whom have been born in Hong Kong or Brunei, almost without exception attend 'boarding schools'.[12] The issues raised by education are complex. Aware of their marginalization in wider Nepali society, many Gurung parents feel that their children must receive an education of the highest

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[10] The Tamu-mai have levels of literacy which are much higher than the national average.

[11] Ironically, the qualifications they acquire have little currency in Nepal.

[12] The term 'boarding school' refers to a private English-medium school. Most of these schools are primarily non-residential although they usually have some 'boarders'.

standard if they are to have any hope of penetrating the limited, Brahman- and Newar-dominated urban job market. Although parents are putting inordinate effort into educating their children, there is to date little evidence that education will lead to increased employment opportunities in the near future. Jobs are scarce, and clerical positions in the bureaucracy, towards which Nepali education is geared, remain dominated by Brahmans, Chetris, and Newars. Many students who have received university-level education are unemployed or join the long exodus of those 'going to foreign' in search of work. As migrant workers they are usually employed in unskilled jobs which do not allow them to make use of their educational qualifications.

The enrolment of children in private 'boarding schools' is related not only to educational aspirations but also, just as most outward things are, to status and prestige.[13] The ever-present quest for, and maintenance of, status and prestige underlies and greatly influences the actions, beliefs, and behaviour of the town Gurung and is intimately related to the experiences of service in the army. It is also related to wider urban transformations taking place in Nepal in which consumerism and 'modern' behaviour are part of a "social currency that individuals can and must use in order to successfully claim middle-class status" (Skinner *et al.* 1998: 9). The town provides opportunities for people to draw "from cross-cutting value systems to accrue honor" as "wealth ... become[s] more important than lineage, and education confers esteem" (McHugh 1998: 170).

Most Tamu parents strive to arrange a marriage with a soldier for their daughter, perceiving that such an arrangement will give a woman a stable economic future, a high standard of living, and the opportunity for foreign travel.[14] As marriage is essentially an agreement between two families, the benefits for the family who marry a girl to a soldier are thus a combination of economic advancement and

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[13] I distinguish between the terms 'prestige/honour' (*nanimi* in Tamu Kyui and *ijjat* in Nepali) and 'status' (*mui laba theba mhi* in Tamu Kyui, which can be translated as a person who has become 'big' by money, and *sthān* in Nepali). I agree with McHugh (1998: 158-9) that status has to do with social rank and prestige has to do with moral behaviour. Service in the Gurkhas provides opportunities for improved status on the premise of increased financial resources. Prestige, on the other hand, can only be accrued on the basis of moral behaviour. These concepts are, however, closely inter-related. For example, wealth may not be the foundation for prestige but it makes it easier to maintain. While it is relatively easy to increase social status, the maintenance and achievement of prestige is more complex because behaviour is open to different and shifting interpretations and evaluations.

[14] Today, although a significant number of young people are opting for 'love' marriages and many more aspire to them, the practical issues of timing make such marriages difficult for

increased social status. For a village-dwelling family, the marriage of a daughter to a British soldier widens their social network and provides them with future urban connections. Although there are stresses, the lives of urban women are physically easier than those of their village counterparts. In the town, many of the most demanding jobs such as carrying water and cutting firewood are no longer necessary. Electricity and a water supply inside the home make many household chores less time-consuming and less demanding. Women who marry soldiers and live in the town perceive their lives to be easier and better than those of village women, and feel themselves to be particularly lucky. As one of my informants said of a woman who had divorced a soldier:

> I don't know why she did it. She's poor now and has many children. As for me, I'm rich and live in a big house in the town. I don't have to carry water or cut firewood and I only have two children who are both being educated at good schools.

Des Chene (1991: 258) explains the situation well:

> Young women today see marriage to a Hong Kong *lahore*[15] as a path that leads out of the village. Such a path leads out of the fields, and out of in-laws' homes [where as junior women they often experience considerable hardship, especially in their husband's absence]...Young women imagining such a future for themselves think mainly of the advantages. They picture themselves in saris, perhaps even wearing make-up. Those who have achieved this dream have more mixed emotions. They say, on the one

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a soldier. As one of my informants said, "I would have liked to have had a 'love' marriage but I didn't fall in love with anyone on my first leave." Furthermore, as army connections confer prestige and wealth, parents select a wife for their soldier son very carefully (usually a girl who is educated). For example, a poor family who has a son in the Gurkhas can expect a 'better match' for their soldier son than for their other sons.

[15] The term *lāhore or lāhure is* the name assigned to "any hill-man who sought his fortunes in the armies of states to the west of Nepal" (Pahari 1991: 7). In the absence of a term for 'migrant labourer' the word is applied to any man who works for wages outside Nepal; thus a *lāhure* is not necessarily a soldier. Those who work in Saudi Arabia are 'Arab *lāhures*(s)', those who work in Japan are 'Japan *lāhure*(s)'. Gurkhas are usually referred to as 'Malaya *lāhure*(s)', 'Hong Kong *lāhure*(s)', or 'British' or 'UK *lāhure*(s)'. In each case the location refers to a place that the Gurkhas previously served in or are currently based in. A women married to a *lāhure* or a women who is working overseas is called a *lāhurinī*. When this term is applied, the economic motivations for migration to the army are brought clearly into focus. Service in the Gurkhas is thus just one of the ways—albeit currently the most prestigious and financially lucrative one—to gain a foreign wage.

hand, that they could never again live in the village. They can no longer
walk and work like that. But they harbor a certain nostalgia for village life
too. Like images of town among young women in the village, the village
becomes, from the perspective of town, the site of what is missing in one's
life. Marriage to *lahores,* whether actual or imagined, makes such dreams
and such ambiguities possible.

The life of a retired soldier is frequently one of enforced leisure. Despite the aspira-
tions and outward presentation of a comfortable material life, despite the fact that
the ex-serviceman may travel around town on a flashy motorbike, army pensions
are still relatively small, the cost of living is high, and there are few jobs. While
the ex-soldier may have acquired a trade in the army he often encounters consider-
able difficulty in obtaining a job to match his abilities, and as with his army educa-
tional certificates, his skills certificates are not recognized. There is little industry
in Pokhara, and, as I have noted, jobs in bureaucracy and government are rarely
applied for, and still more rarely obtained, by Tamu-mai. Some ex-Gurkhas do enter
business and open shops, particularly 'fancy stores', which sell imported clothes
from Hong Kong and Thailand. In recent years, several Tamu-owned supermarkets
have opened but none have been particularly successful. One has gone out of busi-
ness and a second has been unable to compete with the more established Newar-
owned enterprises. These failures have wide repercussions because all those who
invest in the venture lose money. I have been told of several soldiers who returned
home on leave to discover that the businesses in which they had invested most
of their savings had failed. An informant lost 9 *lākh*[16] when a restaurant she had
invested in was forced to close. Other financial enterprises the Tamu-mai undertake
with variable success include petrol stations, bus services, and tourist lodges. Sig-
nificant numbers of people become money-lenders. While this enterprise is poten-
tially lucrative as interest rates are high, it carries a considerable risk because it is
not always possible to recoup loans. A small but expanding Gurung professional
elite includes doctors and other healthcare professionals, administrators, teachers,
development experts, and university lecturers.

Tamu-mai enter business in lower numbers than expected and must face very stiff
competition.[17] In general they lack the institutional backing, contacts and business
skills of the established Newar business community, or the Thakalis who have a

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[16] One *lākh* = 100, 000 Nepali rupees.

[17] Ragsdale (1989: 79) notes that a certain degree of financial transaction and trading takes
place in the army (this includes rotating credit associations, *dhiku*). Some ex-servicemen
continue to be involved in these arrangements and in trading which, Ragsdale states, is
operated from shops in Pokhara, and in Bhairawa, near the Indian border.

dominant position in the tourist trade. A significant number succeed as taxi drivers, but for all those who succeed, there are many who fail. A Tamu friend who cannot drive, but who invested in a taxi, explained that he was selling his taxi as it was difficult to get honest drivers and thus much of his profit was lost. Other trends have come and gone. During my first period of fieldwork in the early 1990s small-scale chicken farms were a common income-generating project. Some were successful and expanded, but others were a poor investment as the chickens easily fell prey to the latest fowl disease. The situation is illustrated by Macfarlane and Gurung , who observe:

> Of thirty Thak men who had retired from foreign armies, permanently living in Pokhara, one third were doing nothing in particular, other than living off pensions and invested capital. The rest were engaged in various jobs: farming, army welfare work, and as drivers. What was noticeable by its omission was any involvement in local government and bureaucracy, or in local trade and industry such as shopkeepers, entrepreneurs or small businessmen. (1993: 60-1)

In general, high-ranking officers manage better than lower-ranking soldiers. Not only do they have more money to invest and lend, they also have important networks and contacts, and usually higher levels of education, which widen their employment prospects. Some invest in businesses, some work for foreign companies, others work as agents, recruiting fellow Gurung (and others) for overseas labour. As this involves extensive contacts it appears to be an area that is easier for officers to penetrate. It is difficult to state with any degree of accuracy the number of people who are working as foreign agents, because it is hard to gather information about these ventures. However, I have met several ex-servicemen who operate very lucrative agency businesses and are perceived to be offering a good and reliable service. While they demand the usual monetary deposits from those they hire, they provide the jobs promised, which many agents do not.[18]

Although the army sends all its retired soldiers on resettlement courses, until relatively recently these were aimed mainly at employment in the agricultural sphere, a career that most ex-servicemen have no interest in pursuing. Resettlement courses in commerce are now available and, according to Collett (1994: 104), these have played a role in encouraging ex-soldiers to enter business. Army experiences in

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[18]As the process of securing an overseas job may involve more than one agent, it is difficult for those agents who are honest to ensure that the agent to whom they pass a potential employee will not pocket the deposit and provide no job. Thus, the whole business is viewed with suspicion.

general, however, do not foster the development of entrepreneurial skills that would be useful in a post-retirement context. The scaling down of the British Gurkha forces in the mid-1990s led to a large number of early retirements which encouraged the army to widen the scope of its resettlement services. This included making links with an agency that assists ex-soldiers to obtain work, usually in the security business. Independent agencies which specialize in helping ex-servicemen find work overseas have also opened up in recent years.[19]

The whole issue of resettlement and employment is complicated by the prevalence of an ideology of migrant labour. The Tamu-mai have long depended on earning their living outside Nepal. The existence of foreign employment options has had the effect of dissuading them from searching for other occupational niches. Consequently, there has been little development of a stable economic or business base among the Pokhara Tamu-mai.

To maintain their standard of living and educate their children, most ex-servicemen continue their pattern of migrant labour, leaving Nepal to work as security guards,[20] or as unskilled labour in restaurants or factories in Hong Kong, the UK, Germany, Malaysia, Japan, or the Gulf states. While most go through official employment agencies which arrange legal employment, some pay agents to arrange their illegal entry into a country. While these ventures are economically successful for many, there are always some who return empty-handed. Having failed to enter the country of their choice they lose the large fee they paid to the agent (a fee for an industralized country can be as much as 12 lākhs). The continuing cycle of migrant work serves to prolong the separation of family members. Husbands and fathers who have been away from their families for lengthy periods of time in the army are again separated from their wives and children. While previously the separation would have been spread over fifteen years, except for periods of 'family permission', it is now prolonged to twenty years or more. In the words of one informant:

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[19] Ex-Gurkhas do not receive work permits for the UK following retirement, and this fact is deeply resented by most ex-servicemen. A post-retirement right to work in the UK is one of GAESO's demands.

[20] The majority of ex-Gurkhas who go abroad work as security guards and obtain their jobs via specialized employment agencies. The positions they acquire include security work in shops, factories, offices, embassies, and with private employers. Officers, particularly those with skills such as bomb disposal, obtain more specialist employment in the security field.

> My husband retired from the army two years ago when he was in his mid 30s. He is now working as a security guard in Malaysia. To allow us to educate the children and have a nice life, we have worked out that he will have to stay in Malaysia until he is in his fifties.

While there have always been a large number of young men away in the army, there are now a large number of both young and middle-aged men away.[21] Most ex-soldiers, therefore, only briefly relocate to Pokhara to live in the homes that they have built with their army pay. Although many are reluctant to return overseas, they feel that they have little choice. Some resist going, but often succumb under pressure from their wives and families. For some, re-migration is a natural progression of their army life and of the experience of being a member of a cohort of army friends. Just as the young man enters the army with his friends, endures army life with them and retires with them, he also re-migrates with them. Extended male absence means that women are burdened not only with the prolonged single-handed running of the household, but also the single-handed rearing of children over very long periods of time. The pattern of male-only migration is changing as women are now migrating, in many cases leaving young children behind in the care of relatives.

There is ongoing speculation about which overseas labour markets are accessible, which family members should migrate, and the potential cost of doing so, but the information available is often incomplete, unreliable, and sometimes outdated. People are commonly forced to make important life decisions and commit large amounts of money with limited information and no guarantee of success. The public discourse surrounding migration emphasizes the successful arrival in the chosen country and the forthcoming remittances but rarely attends to the psychological and cultural impact of migration. Migrants, as Helman (2000: 210) notes, have not only

> ... left family, friends and a familiar locality, but many of their assumptions about their world are no longer valid. They are often faced with language

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[21] Women (both single and married) also emigrate in search of work, although they do so in smaller numbers. Single women usually migrate with their friends to a country where they have a network of friends or kin. Married women normally emigrate with their husbands. This is changing as small numbers of married women now migrate alone or in advance of their husbands. Migrant worker husbands may request their wives to join them if they have departed alone. In such a situation it is the woman who makes the decision to go or to stay. One of my informants told me that her husband had asked her to join him but she was not going because she felt that her children were too small to be left behind.

> difficulties, with hostility or indifference from the host population, and with new cultural practices that may be at variance with their ... beliefs ...While some of the migrant's cultural values, such as emphasis on family cohesion, may be protective against stress, the experience of migration is usually a profound psychological transition—analogous in some ways to bereavement or disablement. (Helman 2000: 210)

In their quest for new occupational opportunities an increasing number of people negotiate the complexities, demands, and contradictions of the migrant experience. A young woman who initially migrated to the UK without her husband describes the pressures she experiences and her concerns for her mental health:

> I feel there is a weight on my shoulders all the time. Sometimes I can hardly move because of it. I worry all the time, especially about money. I have to support my children and other family members in the town and my brother's family in the village. They are poor. I am lucky because I have a good job but what if I become sick and can't work: what would happen then? Sometimes I feel that I will go mad because of all these worries—that's all I think about. I am doing all of this for my children so they can have more opportunities than I had. I want them to become doctors and things like that.[22] They are still in Nepal and I really miss them. My relatives are kind to them but I worry that my relationship with them will be weakened as they are growing up without me. In a few years I will try to bring them over to this country.

Attention to the question of migration focuses almost exclusively on the material gains to be acquired by going overseas. Yet the money sent home is often acquired at a very high personal cost. While day-to-day stories of hardship in foreign lands are actively concealed by returned migrants in an attempt to maintain prestige and also to spare worried relatives, an increasing number of tragic stories which are less easy to conceal have entered popular discourse. Many of these stories relate to mistreatment by employers, violence against women, or infringements of human rights. Recently I attempted to assist a very disturbed young man in Kathmandu Airport who, according to his friends, had "gone mad in Arab because something very bad happened to him".[23] For the few stories that enter popular discourse there

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[22] Parental expectations are usually very high. It remains to be seen to what extent they will be fulfilled.

[23] 'Arab' is the colloquial term for Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. As the police quickly removed this young man from the arrivals hall I was unable to uncover any further details.

are many more that never do. My recent research on Tamu migrant workers in the UK and Hong Kong reveals that beneath the endless journeys 'to foreign' are silent narratives of suffering, sacrifice, and discrimination. My preliminary findings suggest that the hidden costs of mobile lifestyles are high levels of stress-related problems many of which result in chronic physical complaints or illness.

Living in the Town

In the 1970s Victor Doherty (1975: 131) outlined four organizing principles of Tamu society which he perceived to be extremely important in terms of their adaptation to urban living. In the following section I review Doherty's model and show how these principles are being modified in the contemporary context. They are:

1. Generation. Primary identification with a generation, and with an age group within it. The direction given by this principle is lateral, towards group orientation.

2. Egalitarian-competitive. There is stratification but it is modified through group participation; and through special arrangements, as for marriage, if it becomes unbalanced. Power and status are scarce and in demand, but they are shared.[24]

3. Inclusion. One's identity is importantly defined by membership in a group, and by participation with equals within this group.

4. Reciprocal-successional. Emphasis on the development of give-and-take situations and on the orderly succession to power. Prestations and counter-prestations are continually offered. Relationships between generations, and generational succession to power, have this pattern.

The emphasis on sharing of resources, a strong sense of reciprocity, and an ideology which favours an orderly succession to power combined with a strong communal orientation allowed the Tamu-mai to form business alliances without difficulty in the 1970s. These characteristics, combined with the ease with which the Gurung who relocated to the town gave up farming,[25] caused Doherty to conclude that

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[24] Although egalitarianism is an ideal, reality does not usually measure up to it. Despite outward appearances, people are very concerned with gaining and maintaining status, and people are more unequal than equal.

[25] This factor would now appear to be having negative ramifications. In the town basic foodstuffs such as rice and other grains are very expensive and many families are not self-sufficient. Had migrants kept their land in the villages, they would now have two possible food sources.

these people have made what can only be considered a very real urban adaptation. Moreover this has been done in a short time, and without the advantages which could have been assumed to have accrued to the Brahmin-Chetris because of their prior settlement in Pokhara; their longer history of education; and their still near monopoly, along with the Newars, of government service and administration. (Doherty 1975: 143)

Do Doherty's organizing principles still hold for Tamu social organization at the beginning of the 21st century? Initial examination suggests that they do, since the Gurung continue to place great emphasis on issues like group inclusion, respect for elders, and the ability to work communally. The picture, however, is complicated. Although life in the village is perceived by town-dwellers to be very difficult, life in the town is equally difficult. The psychological stresses are enormous. The pressures may be different but they are similarly demanding. In an urban context many of the 'traditional' responses are no longer useful, a fact which creates additional stresses. Aside from the economic pressures, which the Tamu-mai have always faced to a greater or lesser extent, town-dwellers face social, psychological, and cultural stresses which are not experienced in the village context.[26]

A combination of life in the rapidly modernizing world of Pokhara and overseas service has created images of a wealthy consumer world, whose benefits are eagerly sought. The fact that the images are selective, and the costs of acquisition very high, are at this point relatively unimportant.[27] Position and status are appropriated primarily on the basis of wealth. The pressure to maintain the appearance of relative affluence is enormous, particularly for the poorer families. As I have noted, there is often a significant gap between outer presentation and inner reality.

In the 1970s Doherty perceived Tamu achievement orientation to be related primarily to group participation. Although group participation remains important, and continues to be highly esteemed as an ideal, it has been undermined in the urban

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[26] The stresses I am referring to here include those to which I have already alluded, and to some which will be addressed later in the article: loss of 'culture', the often negatively experienced encounter with caste society, the ongoing pressures of 'keeping up' with neighbours, kin, etc. in an increasingly consumerist world.

[27] The picture of the world outside Nepal is incomplete and often unrealistic. It is a world that has been presented on television and reinforced by the presence of 'rich' foreigners and tourists. Although the Gurkhas travel widely they see the countries they travel to through the filter of a sheltered, segregated army existence. Thus, what they see is predominantly superficial. While the obvious trappings of wealth are noted, the hidden realities of unemployment, homelessness, poverty, etc. are rarely confronted.

context. In the village, group membership is essential for survival. The completion of agricultural work, the upkeep of the village, and the performance and maintenance of communal ritual and social activities all demand close cooperation and interdependence. The situation in the towns is different. Although people need each other's assistance they are no longer so dependent on each other, especially for work. Reciprocal interdependence in agricultural activities is no longer necessary, and many Pokhara Tamu-mai use hired labour to plant and harvest their crops. The communal agricultural work groups and their related social activities no longer exist. Responsibility for the upkeep and maintenance of neighbourhood facilities is in the hands of the bureaucracy. Neighbourhood committees such as 'mothers' groups' or committees of people who originate from the same village continue to exist and are especially important for the organization of social and ritual activities such as funerals or other types of rituals. Group networks forged in the Gurkhas are important in business and to an extent in obtaining overseas employment.[28] However, there are counteracting forces which discourage group participation and foster a narrowing of allegiances. These include financial inequalities, increased competition, jealousy, and the continual financial demands and expectations that are placed on army families.

The emphasis on 'generation' that Doherty cites as one of the primary reasons for the Gurung success in the army remains a strong force. Shared experiences with age-grade members, such as belonging to the same battalion, are an important basis for friendship and cooperation. However, this tendency, which motivates those concerned to work together for the common good, has a negative side. In the mobile world of the modernizing town, it is a contributing factor to the 'keeping up with the Joneses' ethic that is rampant in Pokhara, where such pressures are unrelenting. 'Keeping up' requires constant evaluation of what others are doing, wearing, and buying, and where they are going. It means constantly adjusting your behaviour so that you too are in line. The town, with its multi-ethnic community and greater integration into the national and international economic order, has the potential to provide many chances for 'getting ahead'. On the other hand, this potentiality is thwarted by the very real lack of opportunities, unemployment, and under-employment. All of this has resulted in increased competitiveness, jealousy, secretiveness, and back-biting.[29] These pressures, added to the less communal nature of urban life,

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[28] An important aspect of getting work overseas is maintaining a network of people who can provide up-to-date information on current job opportunities.

[29] This does not mean that these behaviours are absent from the village—clearly they are not—but rather that they have taken on new dimensions in the town where the potential for material advancement is greater and the need to create a 'modern' identity more acute.

are combining to create a more individualistic ethic. Neighbours, friends, and the members of your own family (particularly those in your own generation) are often viewed primarily as competitors. In the words of a friend:

> Everyone is for themselves these days. It's like everyone is in a competition. Who's got the nicest clothes, whose motorbike is the biggest? You have to be careful, lots of people are jealous.

Writing about consumer culture and identities in Kathmandu, Mark Liechty suggests that:

> By 'keeping up with the Joneses', people are not necessarily trying to outdo each other, but are simply "trying not to be excluded" ... The consumer anxiety that people speak of in Kathmandu is typically less a matter of competition aimed at surpassing others, and more about discursively synchronizing the categories of value within groups who share similar social and material conditions. To "win" in this competition is to maintain social parity within the space of the middle class. To "lose" ... is to be left behind, unable to meet the changing demands for membership as one's social reference group transforms its identity standards. (1998: 15)

In the Tamu case I suggest that both processes are at work. People are very concerned with meeting the changing requirements for membership *and* there is intense competition. This may be accounted for by the fact that numbers within the reference group are relatively small, that the group shares an ethnic identity, and as employees/ex-employees of the same 'organization' people are closely interconnected.

Reciprocity, a strongly valued behaviour, continues to be very important to the Pokhara Tamu-mai but the cost of participation is rising. What is given must be repaid at a later date. This is not problematic if there is relative equivalence between the giver and the receiver, but problematic when there is not. Reciprocity is thus tinged with an extra edge of wariness. At the gift-giving at a recent *pai laba* death ritual I watched as a representative of a large family, most of whose sons are soldiers, gave the deceased's family a very large sum of money that in the words of a friend "might have to be given back at any time" (at a *pai* in the giver's family). My friend continued:

> In one way the system is good because you get money, but in another way it's horrible, you have to worry about giving it back. Nowadays you will probably have to give it back and also give a little extra money.

The demands of giving are compounded by the fact that poorer relatives, particularly those from the village, view the soldier as being "very wealthy" and frequently make demands for assistance. As Des Chene (1992: 6) writes, former soldiers, to maintain their respect, "must be highly skilful in the arts of giving yet retaining". Thus, on the surface, the ex-serviceman may appear wealthier but, unlike his village brother or sister, he may not know where he is going to get the money to support his family in two years' time. In the words of an informant:

> It's so difficult, my husband is the only soldier in his family so we have to help everyone. There are constant requests for money, for help. When relatives come from the village we have to help them with everything, it's not just help with money, they don't know how to do things in the town. I go to the hospital with them, to the court, to government offices.

An informant describes the strategies that a woman, married to a soldier, employed on an outing to a village for a wedding:

> We had to leave before the dancing started, as my friend said that if she stayed she would have to give the dancers a lot of money, which she couldn't afford. On the way back to the town we had to sneak through one village, running from house to house, as my friend had relatives there, who if they saw her would ask for some money.

Increasing demands are matched by an increasing gap between generations. The gap is widened partially by the decline of the Tamu language.

Losing 'Culture': Language in the town

Most Pokhara Gurung above the age of 30 are first-generation town-dwellers. They have been born in a village but have relocated as adults. Many have retained strong emotional links to their villages, which they still visit periodically. Although their world view has expanded to incorporate their army and urban-dwelling experiences, they are *au fait* with, and knowledgeable about, the social, cultural, and historical context of the village and its surroundings. Their rural up-bringing and ability to speak Tamu Kyui provide them with a particular perspective on the social and geographical landscape and a knowledge of the cultural traditions of the village. This is a world view that their children do not share. Few urban Tamu-mai under the age of 20 speak Tamu Kyui with any degree of fluency, and most do not speak it at all. The ability or inability to speak a language is much more than the sum of

its words. Culture-specific concepts do not easily translate and because it does not speak Tamu Kyui there is much that the second generation does not know. One first generation Pokhara resident explains the problem:

> Everything has changed. I speak to my children in Gurung and they answer back in Nepali. The children have no time to learn about Gurung culture. I want my children to speak Tamu Kyui, I try to teach them after school but they have so much homework to do and then they have tuition [private coaching]. After that they want to play and watch television. I want to take my children to visit the village, they don't know anything about Gurung culture. They don't know what is happening when they see a *pai*.

Inability to speak Tamu Kyui also inhibits ease of movement between urban and rural contexts. One sometimes hears young Pokhara Gurung say that they find it difficult to visit the village because they do not speak the language. There is, however, another separation between young urban Gurung and their village cousins. Aware that their parents relocated 'for a better life', and educated in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the 'boarding school', they feel little affinity for the village.

From the perspective of town children, the village may be viewed with a slightly condescending attitude and perceived as an interesting place to visit occasionally, the place where their poorer cousins live, but not a place that bears any direct relationship to their lives.[30] As Mikesell (1993: 32) emphatically writes:

> Classroom discipline, examinations and certification authoritatively determine what is "true knowledge", and devalues the knowledge practices and languages of the villagers ... An immense class of people is presently being schooled in Nepal to despise their own rural background.

For well-educated urban children, the future, however, is more uncertain than that of their country cousins. High expectations, lack of opportunity, the stresses related to Gurkha location and relocation, unemployment, generational tensions, and differences in education and world view are contributing to a growing youth problem.

Although Doherty's organizing principles remain as ideals, circumstances have ensured their modification. Thus, more competition is evident. Inclusion is more narrowly focused on the nuclear family and the individual, and people are by necessity less communally minded. Reciprocity continues to be highly valued but grow-

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[30]One of the ironies of 'boarding school' education is that while children may know a large number of English nursery rhymes, they will not know any Gurung songs.

ing differentiation, constant demands for assistance, and unequal access to a potentially limitless number of resources have created extra stresses. While the images of generosity, reciprocity, hospitality, and the obligations of exchange are maintained, the skilful art of juggling them has become harder. The Tamu-mai in the town have brought their marriage patterns, kinship principles, and death rituals with them, but as they begin to speak less Tamu Kyui, as some of the practices and knowledge of the village become irrelevant, and as the influences of state and town increase, significant numbers of people feel that much of what is perceived to be quintessentially Tamu is no longer evident in the towns.

The issue of loss of 'culture'[31] is complex and has become embroiled in a discourse which is as much about the construction of image as it is about losing 'culture'. Having spent considerable time over the last ten years observing a movement whose stated aim is "to preserve Tamu culture" I have been puzzled by what appears to be a lack of attention to certain dimensions of this problem. While an impressive infrastructure has developed and a shamanic monastery and a museum have been opened, a language school (which would seem to me to require minimal resources) has yet to be established. My confusion led me to make further inquiries. Initially I was told what I had been told before: "It's really bad, our culture is being lost, the young people don't know, we need to teach them." My enquiries finally took a different direction when an exasperated friend said:

> Don't you understand? Of course the young people say that they don't know how to do things and the older generation talk about culture loss, but this is just show. The young people don't want to let on that they know how to do things the village way, because they want to be seen as modern. The older people, who have come from the village can't deny their knowledge, but they also want to show how modern their children are so everyone says 'The young people don't know anything about their culture'. But that's only part of the story. Things have been lost, the young people don't know the language and with it there are many important things they don't know, but there is still lots that they do know. For example, if I died tomorrow my children would know exactly what to do. It's just that when you are thinking about your image you can't let on that you know, but when you have to

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[31] I place the term 'culture' in inverted commas for two reasons. First, I consider the term to be problematic as it gives a false sense of a relatively bounded, clearly defined entity. Second, in the context with which I am concerned 'culture' is a widely used term that has a relatively narrow definition. It refers mainly to those 'traditional' practices and knowledge which have been designated as needing to be 'saved', which is an understanding that I do not endorse.

do it you can.

The distinction made by Borofsky (1994: 335) and Keck (1998: 10) between 'knowl-
edge' and 'knowing' is relevant. "Knowledge", Keck suggests, is "understanding
that is definite and lineated, *what* is known, as an abstract pool of information."
"Knowing", on the other hand, is "understanding that is more fluid and flexible
in character, *how* something is known, knowledge in practice". The difference is
between a declarative type of knowledge and a procedural type of knowledge.
While the second generation have not acquired 'knowledge' they have acquired
'knowing'. The situation is more complex, however. Some of the second generation
have undoubtedly acquired 'knowledge' but in the multi-ethnic upwardly mobile
world of the town this devalued knowledge is actively concealed. Knowledge in
practice—which by its nature is less obvious—is essential at the important junc-
tures of life and in a private Tamu context of suffering.

The ambivalence about addressing language loss is due in part to people's feeling
that their children know what they need to know. They are aware that they have
procedural knowledge: the "hidden, implicit common knowing" (Keck 1998: 11),
the "habituated experiences unconsciously embedded in the body" (Borofsky 1994:
341), the knowledge that is only accessed through performance. They are also
aware that, although there is a substantial loss of declarative knowledge, in the
upwardly mobile town there are trade-offs. Many of the first generation are very
aware that they do not speak fluent Nepali and have placed great emphasis on their
children acquiring the fluency they lack. Fluency in Nepali is not only about edu-
cational and employment opportunities but it is also about 'fitting in' in the town.
While fluency in Nepali (and English) has been emphasized, fluency in Tamu Kyui
has not. Although it might be nice to teach the second-generation the Tamu lan-
guage—and parents are often nostalgic about this—there is a reticence to teach
things that are perceived to have no value in the world that their children inhabit.
The choice is not merely practical, it is also about adopting strategies that lessen
the chance of children being discriminated against as 'hill people' and guarding
against the attendant social and psychological impact of that discrimination.

The ambivalence surrounding the language issue is reflected in the ambivalence
that preservationists have towards opening a language school. When I ask about
plans for a school I am repeatedly told that it has not yet been opened as there is
not enough money to do so. When I point out that a small 'Saturday school' could
be opened without a lot of resources I am told that people don't have enough time
to teach the children and that no one will volunteer. The extensive fund-raising
and development of other facilities contradicts these statements. Rather, I suggest
that the answer lies in the ambivalence that many Pokhara Tamu-mai have towards

their own language. This is partly to do with the problems they faced when initially trying to make their way as Tamu Kyui first-language speakers in a Nepali world, their wish to ensure that this does not happen to their children, and their desire to be seen as 'modern' town-dwellers.

The public/private dichotomy and its relationship to the discourse about modernity can also be extended to the topic of language loss in an intriguing way. While the second generation do not speak Tamu Kyui, they understand it. In the private space of the home they listen and comprehend.

I know only of two-second generation urban Tamu-mai who both understand *and* speak Tamu Kyui. The first is a young boy who spent several years with his family in an isolated and difficult overseas situation during which his parents taught him the language. Although he can speak Tamu Kyui he is reluctant to do so—back in the context of Pokhara it is not an option he wants to choose. The second example is a young woman who worked for me for many years. Kanchi's journey into speaking Tamu Kyui took place gradually. My own Tamu Kyui has always been better than my Nepali, and I frequently arrived back from the village tired and in a Tamu Kyui speaking 'mode of thinking'. Fatigue combined with the challenge of instantly having to re-adjust to both the urban context and the change of language often prompted me to speak to Kanchi in Tamu Kyui. For a long time Kanchi responded only in Nepali. Gradually, however, she began responding in Tamu Kyui and nowadays we always speak to each other in this language. While Kanchi is quite comfortable speaking to me (a 'high-status person') publicly in Tamu Kyui she will not speak to anyone else in this language, reverting instead to a mixed language conversation in the presence of a Tamu Kyui speaker.

While linguistic comprehension is acceptable and even practical (because a certain amount of home conversation, particularly with elderly relatives, takes place in Tamu Kyui), speaking is a different matter. The squirming child of a new Pokhara acquaintance who suffers the indignity of being told off publicly in front of me for not speaking Tamu Kyui is in fact 'playing the right game'. Despite his/her momentary discomfort, to be seen as an educated upwardly mobile young Pokhara-dwelling Tamu requires them not to speak Tamu Kyui. In the private space of the home, however, it is not only acceptable but also necessary to understand Tamu language.

Retaining 'Culture': Healing in the town

Language and shamanic healing practices are considered by many to be markers of things that are quintessentially Tamu, but while language appears to be dispensable, healing has had a different fate. Despite the wide range of healthcare options

available in the town, ranging from the state funded hospital through to private clinics, shamanic healing remains popular. Although the shamans sometimes complain that they are only consulted when all other options have been exhausted, this is only part of the picture. It is clear that shamanic healing has made the transition to the town. Shamans carry out numerous consultations and perform a wide range of curing rituals.

At times of adversity people look to the sources of cultural and psychological support available to them. The continuance of these healing practices perhaps suggests the retention of beliefs about illness causation which are based on a shared notion of personhood. Tamu town-dwellers, irrespective of generation, know that the body, which is made up of a number of *plah* (souls),[32] is vulnerable to soul loss. Shocks, bad experiences, close proximity to death, and strong feelings, among other things, can cause bodily disintegration and illness. Shamans are specialists in retrieving lost souls. In the face of existential suffering, retaining the shamans could be considered to be an important cultural strategy for dealing with misfortune. Undoubtedly it is for some. For others, however, consultation may have more to do with the pragmatics of care-seeking behaviour and less to do with shared belief. Illness is a private world of misfortune, fear, and loss, and decision-making is eminently pragmatic. Shamanic healing is believed to be efficacious for certain problems and, depending on the nature of the illness, it is just one of a range of options that can be used.

While biomedicine offers effective cures for the body, it has nothing to offer those afflicted by spiritual problems. Beliefs in witchcraft and spirit attack coexist with ideas about computer technology and the best way to make money, although town-dwellers are sometimes reluctant to admit to them. Shamans are masters of a mapped cosmic landscape within which the causes and cures of illness coexist. In times of uncertainty ritual healing offers an idiom for understanding and takes the client and their family into a culturally familiar symbolic and performative world. The landscape of shamanic healing—from the form, content, and structure of the ritual through to the cosmic worldview—has deep and enduring meaning. Rituals may decrease the anxiety provoked by illness, provide a route through the territory of suffering, and assist people to integrate their experiences.[33]

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[32] Men are believed to have nine souls and women seven.

[33] It is also possible that a ritual may achieve none of the above. The continuing prevalence of ritual practice among urban Tamu-mai, however, superficially suggests that ritual performance remains important. This topic awaits further attention.

Although efficacy and culturally meaningful practices prompt people to continue to consult shamans, the situation is complex. The continuing practice of the elaborate death rituals appears to support the argument that the Tamu-mai have retained their most central cultural practices. The rituals of death, however, unlike the rituals of healing, have become caught up in a discourse about modernity. The practice of the major mortuary ritual, the *pai laba*, is now contested. The argument concerns animal sacrifice, an integral aspect of this shamanic ritual. Some, mainly town-dwelling, Tamu-mai now commission Buddhist lamas to perform the *pai laba* despite the fact that its cosmic world-view is entirely shamanic.[34] They choose to do so for several reasons, some of which are to do with clan tensions, but overwhelmingly their choice of practitioner is due to their desire to have a ritual without sacrifice. Animal sacrifice, they claim, is an out-dated, embarrassing practice that has no place in a modern world. Shamans point out that sacrifice, which is to do with gift-giving to deities, is essential to the process of enabling a dead person to make the journey to the Afterworld. Without sacrifice the dead neither reach the Afterworld nor become ancestors. Denied this opportunity, the troubled souls exist in a liminal state and cause the living much grief. Despite the implications, however, there are Tamu-mai who are willing to take this risk. The major death ritual, however, is only partly about cosmology.

A *pai laba* is a multi-level ritual and social event that recreates ties based on reciprocity, kinship, fictive kinship, affinity, and friendship. It is enormously expensive to host and is only conducted when the deceased's agnates can afford to host it. There is much at stake for the hosting family who are responsible for the smooth running and organization of an event which, if successful, will bring prestige to their family. As the central communal institution and major domain of transformation in Tamu life, a *pai* is simultaneously concerned with the most intimate and personal aspects of life and death and is a social arena in which to negotiate and construct identity. What is at stake is both personal and ethnic identity: how people

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[34] Almost all Tamu-mai in the main areas of Tamu habitation in Gandaki Zone perform *pai*. The exceptions are small numbers of Christian converts or those particularly influenced by Sanskritization. Without accurate statistics it is difficult to estimate what proportion of Pokhara Tamu-mai use lamas rather than shamans. My informants tentatively suggested that 25 percent use lamas, 25 percent use a combination of lamas and shamans and 50 per cent continue to use shamans. Urban-dwellers from different districts display different patterns. For example, the majority of Tamu-mai from the districts of Kaski and Lamjung use shamans or a combination of shamans and lamas, whereas greater numbers of those who originate from Parbat district use lamas.

are viewed by their own society and how the Tamu-mai are viewed by wider Nepali society.

While the disagreement about sacrifice is long-standing and is part of a larger argument about religious affiliation (Buddhism versus shamanism), it has taken on new dimensions in the town. Whereas it was previously mainly about moral behaviour (the sin of killing), it has now become an arena in which to think about 'modern' behaviour, or rather a particular type of 'modern' behaviour. Specifically, it is about outward public social behaviour—how the Tamu-mai should be seen to behave in the contemporary urban context. It is also about international religious affiliations versus local ones—the desire to belong to a global Buddhism and the respectability it confers as opposed to a shamanic tradition, which, Buddhists claim, 'only exists in the districts of Kaski and Lamjung'. It is, however, not by any means a one-way discourse because the shamans and their supporters (many of whom are high ranking ex-Gurkha soldiers) have launched an increasingly successful counter-movement (for further discussion on this topic see Pettigrew 1995, 1999).

Healing rituals, on the other hand, which are conducted by the shamans and frequently involve sacrifice, have never been a focus of the discussion about how to live a modern life. The answer to this seemingly paradoxical question appears to lie in pragmatic notions of how to deal with adversity, the relatively private experience of illness, and the morally neutral nature of therapeutic decision-making. Although healing rituals are partially public (kin, neighbours, and friends attend) they fall within the private burden of the suffering of the living. Unlike the deceased who, while deeply mourned in the *pai*, have usually been dead for several years, the ill require the best healing options available regardless of the incompatibility of the belief system or the potential connotations for image. Clearly, people do not always believe in what they are doing or act strictly in accordance with their beliefs, which in any case, are not always consistent. As a friend commented:

> You have to adjust your behaviour depending on the problem. It is mainly a practical matter. When someone is ill you are very worried and you try everything you can. You might not use the *pachyus* [shamans] for a *pai* in your family but if they have a good reputation for healing you call them.

The practice of ritual healing appears neither to take from nor to add to the construction of a 'modern' town-dwelling identity, but is simply available as a viable healing option. As an informant commented: "Choosing a healer has nothing to

do with prestige. You won't gain prestige from calling the shaman to heal and you won't lose it either."[35] Not only do the shamans continue to be requested to heal by Tamu-mai who would never call them for a *pai*; they are also frequently consulted by non-Tamu-mai. As a shaman commented: "It is not just Tamu people who call me but also Brahman neighbours, Tailors, Blacksmiths and even lamas." Shamanic healing is an expanding cultural practice, its potentiality limited only by the shortage of apprentice shamans, which is a direct outcome of the effects of urban living.

Despite a widespread belief that indigenous knowledge is being lost, no detailed research has been conducted among the Tamu-mai to ascertain the extent of this loss. Research among the Siberian Yupik, however, presents an interesting comparative case. Like the Tamu-mai the Yupik have a widespread perception of culture loss. Research by Krupnik and Vakhtin (1999: 236-52) on indigenous ecological knowledge, which was based on sixty interviews and focused on declarative knowledge, illustrates that the "volume of cultural heritage people currently share is relatively stable. Significantly less has been lost than the majority of Yupik people themselves thought had been lost from their culture." Of most interest to my work is their finding that "although informants equate the loss of the Yupik language with cultural loss, this is not the case." While there is a clear correlation between the degree of mastery of the language and the extent of culture loss (the young usually speak less well) in the case of the Yupik cultural heritage, there is much less direct correlation with age. Krupnik and Vakhtin argue that change and replacement of indigenous knowledge is not a one-way process. There is actually a far more complicated scenario than a simple generational model built on patterns of language shift would suggest. Instead, the authors argue that what is created is a type of 'mixed culture' wherein certain traditional ideas and beliefs are reinterpreted and reformulated from the perspective of other cultures. For example, remnants of old Yupik beliefs are merged with modern popular ideas about the environment, and expressed in Russian.

While the reformulation of knowledge in new cultural forms is evident to a certain degree in the Gurung case (see Pettigrew 1995), the lack of a correlation between language loss and loss of cultural knowledge is fully supported by my research.

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[35] Although there may not be a relationship between choice of healer and prestige, there is a relationship between healing and prestige. Because prestige is related to moral behaviour it can be damaged if it is believed that adequate interventions were not made on behalf of an ill relative. I had originally thought that prestige could be enhanced by taking a family member to a private clinic in Kathmandu. My informants, however, denied this.

Although the ability of second-generation Tamu urban-dwellers to communicate in Tamu Kyui is limited, clearly they have retained substantial cultural knowledge. Social context, however, deems that it should be concealed and denied until its performance is required.

Conclusion

This article has examined the contemporary rural-urban movement of the Tamu-mai, which is intimately tied to the experience of service in the British army, and has explored some of the associated social and cultural changes. The rural-urban migration of the Gurkhas differs from the usual pattern of urban relocation. The direction is from rural to 'foreign-urban' followed by periodic visits to 'home-urban', followed by a repeat of the latter two movements over a protracted period of time. Although other migratory patterns bear similarity in terms of length of absence, distance from home, and the interlinking of the global and the local, the difference in the Gurkha experience lies in the nature of migration as service in a foreign army, and its attendant social meaning. This has a close bearing on the particularity of the experiences of relocation.

This article explored the manner in which the Gurkha pattern of migration affects the decline and retention of two cultural practices: language and healing. Ex-Gurkhas return to Nepal with the financial means to establish themselves as sophisticated urban-dwellers who can build impressive houses and educate their children in private schools. Their international experience and material wealth, however, has not translated into political power, because the urban bureaucracies remain monopolized by Brahmans, Chetris, and Newars. By choosing to relocate to the town the Tamu-mai continue to confront high-caste Hindu stereotypes in which they are caricatured as 'simple hill people'. These constructions have their parallels in the encounter with British officers where, as Caplan (1995: 147) argues, they are seen as "... boys, playful but simple, needing the firm hand of control and leadership ... because [they are] ... less than fully grown." Ironically, the money earned in the latter relationship enables them to live in a townscape where they encounter the stereotypes of the former. Sensibilities sharpened to the gaze and judgment of others and the reality of ongoing political marginalization make the first generation of urban Tamu-mai especially concerned with constructing an identity in which they distance themselves from the knowledge and practices of the hills. In an attempt to construct 'modern' urban identities, certain cultural practices (including language) have fallen into decline. The picture of language loss is not complete, however, as the pragmatics of communication and a deeply held desire to retain Tamu cultural practices at the major transformations of life require the second generation to reject the language of their parents in public while partially retaining it

in private.

The attempt to escape the 'simple hill farmer' stereotype has ironically led to the development of a new stereotype of the Tamu-mai as being 'too modern'. This caricature builds on real but relatively rare accounts of young Tamu people involved in drug abuse, or on images of young women attired in scant Western clothing. The implications, however, are similar to those addressed in the original stereotype, because yet again the Tamu-mai are reproduced as inferior. The behaviour that was previously judged as 'simple' is now reformulated as 'immoral'.

Healing rituals, unlike death rituals, have never become a focus for the discussion about how to live a modern life. The answer to this seemingly paradoxical question appears to lie in pragmatic notions of how to deal with adversity and the relatively private experience of illness. Although town-dwellers present an outward picture of prosperity and successful urban adaptation, this facade hides an inner reality of financial insecurity, uncertainty about the future, and the impact of ongoing discrimination and marginalization. At a deeper level there is an awareness of the psychological impact of these stresses. The retention of shamanic healing is the retention of a deeply patterned, culturally effective way of coping with the stresses of life, which for the urban Tamu-mai are primarily related to migratory practices.

While the motivation to migrate and serve in foreign armies is a search for a better life, it is not to transform life. In agreement with Des Chene (1992: 7), I believe that migration is undertaken to retain the aesthetics of Tamu life—the complex systems of social and ritual exchange and reciprocity, the presentation of social harmony, the appearance of generosity, the interrelatedness of kin, the ordering of society based on age, gender, and kinship, and what Des Chene calls the "artful innovation" of working these systems. Nevertheless going away inevitably means change—by providing children with better educational opportunities, and an easier life for all—but I argue, again in agreement with Des Chene (ibid.), that reproducing life and guiding its transformation are one and the same thing. Although the outward forms of life may change, effort is directed at maintaining the essence of being Tamu-mai. What is defined as cultural essence, however, is negotiable particularly when it interferes with the construction of a sophisticated town-dwelling identity. Migration is therefore unavoidably transformative. As Gardner (1995: vii) observes:

> … those who step across cultural and geographical boundaries are, in varying degrees, likely to find themselves transformed. As we physically move, so too do our personal and social boundaries shift; in this sense, migration involves a constant process of reinvention and self re-definition.

For urban Tamu-mai the transformations are multiple and circular. Through the process of urban relocation the social boundaries have realigned in such a way that the Tamu-mai confront versions of themselves that require the renegotiation of their identity—a process that in itself is transformative. The effect of this transformation (i.e. loss of 'culture') has led to a movement to revive threatened cultural practices. The attempt to revive the cultural practices of the village in the town further ensures their transformation. While Gurkha migration is ostensibly an economic venture (and is still talked about as such), it has had a profound social, cultural, and ideological impact on the Tamu-mai.

Note on Orthography

Tamu Kyui (Tamu language) is an unwritten Tibeto-Burman language with no standard orthography. I have chosen to use a phonetic approach and render Tamu words in their simplest possible spelling. My choice of spelling is in line with that used by indigenous scholars.

Acknowledgements

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