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Autumn 2009-Spring 2010

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OF HIMALAYAN RESEARCH**

Special double issue: Nepalese migrations

European Bulletin of Himalayan Research

The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research (EBHR) was founded by the late Richard Burghart in 1991 and has appeared twice yearly ever since. It is the result of a partnership between France (CNRS), Germany (South Asia Institute) and the UK (SOAS) and is edited according to a rota system. Since January 2006 the French editorship has been run as a joint effort, currently including Pascale Dollfus, András Höfer, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, Boyd Michailowsky, Philippe Ramirez, Blandine Ripert, and Anne de Sales. We take the Himalayas to mean, the Karakoram, Hindukush, Ladakh, southern Tibet, Kashmir, north-west India, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan and northeast India. The subjects we cover range from geography and economics to anthropology, sociology, philology, history, art history, and the history of religions. In addition to academic articles, we publish book reviews, reports on research projects, information on Himalayan archives, news of forthcoming conferences, and funding opportunities. The manuscripts submitted are subject to a process of peer-review.

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EDITORIAL

The *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* is presenting a special issue on migrations from and within Nepal. Over the last years we have seen a growing number of special issues either centered on specific topics (“Music”, “Local histories”), areas (“Western Himalayas”, “North-East India”) or both (“Revolutionary Nepal”). Beyond the obvious scientific benefit of offering simultaneous point of view on a single object, thematic issues prove to be particularly stimulating both for the authors and the editors. Nevertheless, we would once again like to encourage scholars and advanced students to submit articles on the Himalayas in any field of the humanities and social sciences. Contributions may also take the form of commentaries on previously published articles, as well as announcements, reports on ongoing research, and of course book reviews, which are particularly welcome considering the growing number of publications on the Himalayan region.

This is the last issue to be coordinated from France, so the EBHR will now cross the Channel for a three-year stay with our colleagues and friends in the UK. I would like to personally thank Pascale Dollfus, András Höfer, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine and Bernadette Sellers for their work on editing the Bulletin over the last four years.

Philippe Ramirez

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IN MEMORIAM

Lucette BOULNOIS (1931-2009)

by Sushila Manandhar and Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

Lucette Boulnois, both parents of whom enrolled in the French army, travelled extensively during her childhood and developed a taste for foreign languages at an early age. She later devoted her time to studying Russian and Chinese at the *Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales*, Paris, where she passed her degree in 1953. She first worked as a librarian at the Documentation Centre on Contemporary China at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* and she entered the CNRS in 1963 as a research engineer. In 1965, she joined the documentation centre at the new “RCP Népal” team (headed by J. Millot), housed at the *Musée de l’Homme*. As Corneille Jest recalls, one of the founding members of this team, “at the time the centre only housed a few books taken from the museum’s main library”. From its inception, Lucette Boulnois therefore supervised the design and organisation of the Centre for Nepalese studies (later: Centre for Himalayan Studies). She managed it remarkably well for nearly thirty years, helping to make it one of the most important centres in the world in this field at the time of her retirement in 1992. Lucette Boulnois not only carefully catalogued all the documentation she was responsible for, but also indexed a whole set of older publications related to Nepal in a near exhaustive manner and identified the places where they were available in France and abroad. This work, the importance of which cannot be stressed enough, has benefited researchers and students using the Centre for Himalayan Studies at the CNRS, in the form of a file (which unfortunately has not yet been computerized as far as the references of publications not owned by the centre are concerned), but also the entire international community, through the publication of *La Bibliographie du Népal*. Organized thematically, the first volume of this bibliography is devoted to the humanities. Published by the *Editions du CNRS* in 1969, it lists all the references related to Nepal in European languages that were published up to 1966. Lucette Boulnois added to this volume in 1977 with a large supplement covering the period 1967-73. In Tome 1 of Volume 3 of the *Bibliography of Nepal*, published in 1973, Lucette Boulnois provided another valuable tool that is worth mentioning: an index of all the maps of Nepal kept in libraries in both Paris and London. It is worthwhile noting here that Lucette Boulnois’s interest in cartography led her to make an important contribution to our knowledge of the war between Nepal and Tibet (“Chinese maps and prints on the Tibet-Gorkha war of 1788-92”, *Kailash*, 1989, vol.15, No 1/2, p.83-112).

Thanks to her hard work, Lucette Boulnois offered specialists of Nepal a real search engine well ahead of its time, and she organized disciplines by classifying and indexing them using keywords. She pursued this line of work in a more comprehensive way over subsequent years by publishing numerous articles in English on literature related to the Himalayan area and on French research conducted in this region (several of these articles, written by her or in collaboration with others, were published in this journal, see *EBHR* 1981, vol.1, No. 3, p.23-33, 1986, vol.6, No.1, p.51-75, 1992, No. 3, p.23-39, 1992, No. 4, p.22-31, 1996, No. 11, p.77-80).

Lucette Boulnois was not only an outstanding librarian and research assistant, but she also juggled with a remarkable career as a researcher. In her free time, during her holidays and week-ends, but also, as mentioned by Katia Buffetrille, every morning before going to work, she spared some time for her own research. Her first book, *La Route de la soie* (The Silk Road), was published by Arthaud in 1963. Twice reissued, and completely revised in its edition published by Olizane (*La Route de la soie : Dieux, guerriers et marchands*, Genève : Olizane, 2001, 558p), the book has been translated into nine languages (English, German, Spanish, Polish, Hungarian, Portuguese, Italian, Japanese and Chinese). She explained the genesis of this book in an interview to A360: “It is not the revelation of any old travel book that drew me to these regions, but reading Soviet newspapers on a regular basis. Out of family loyalty maybe —with respect to my remote Russian ancestors, and also because they made me read the great writers of the nineteenth century— I had learned Russian at the *Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales*. In the 1950s, I regularly went through the press from the five Soviet Republics of Central Asia; more than literature, reading newspapers gives a vivid picture of countries and their people. I also frequented good Russian bookstores in Paris, including the *Maison du livre étranger*, rue de l’Eperon. One day, carrying a book I wanted to translate, I introduced myself to Sylvain Contou of *Editions Arthaud*. He declined my offer to translate the book, but made another offer: he planned to publish a book on the Silk Road in the series “Signes des temps”. It was an adventurous idea, since the areas in question were closed to foreigners because of the Cold War. The image Westerners had was closer to legend than reality: like children who, when reading Jack London, imagine the great north teeming with trappers, we had an image of these countries similar to *A Thousand and One Nights* ... I myself was drawn to the East and the Far East. Having spent two years in Hanoi, I had been enthralled by the fascination and the dominance of Chinese civilization. I can tell you that I accepted this offer and immediately set to work.”

La route de la soie revealed Soviet and Chinese Central Asia to the French readership, as her friend and colleague, Jacqueline Thevenet recalls.

In 1972, Lucette Boulnois completed a thesis at EPHE in Paris on the trade route between Nepal and China and its socio-economic consequences on Nepal since 1950 (“Les échanges entre le Népal et la Chine et leurs implications socio-économiques au Népal depuis 1950”).

All in all, Lucette Boulnois’s contribution to the study of Tibet has been just as remarkable. Rémi Chaix, who is pursuing certain avenues of research initially explored by Lucette Boulnois, offers this assessment, which underlines their importance and relevance:

“Lucette Boulnois’s contribution to Tibetan studies is characterized by her unique approach to economic facts in the Himalayan world. The quantitative approach to the economic history of this region remains an area totally neglected in Tibetology. The work of L. Boulnois has still not had as much exposure as it deserves, both insofar as the use of the data she so meticulously collected and interpreted and the methodological approach she adopted are concerned. Her research, based on Chinese, Nepalese and Western sources, related to gold powder and silver coins in Tibet (published as *Poudre d’or et monnaies d’argent au Tibet*, Paris, CNRS, 1983) is a call for Tibetologists to pursue their collection and use of data in Tibetan, now punctuated by the brilliant demonstration made by L. Boulnois of the communications networks and exchange of goods, as well as for their production and their uses.”

The list of publications by Lucette Boulnois is available in the catalogue of the documentation centre she created and managed:

<http://www.vjf.cnrs.fr/clt/html/doc/catalogue.htm>.

All members of the team “Milieux, Sociétés et Culture en Himalaya”, with whom she worked for almost 30 years, wish to express their gratitude to her here.

Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

Lucette BOULNOIS: A Major Contributor to Oriental Studies and Research

Sushila MANANDHAR (Fischer)
Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies

On 26th July 2009, I lost one of my friends who was the person closest to me at the Research Unit *UPR 299 Milieux, Sociétés et Cultures en Himalaya* within the CNRS (National Centre for Scientific Research). She was an intelligent lady who lived a strict and disciplined life, with great moral values and courage. She contributed greatly to oriental studies in various ways. She carried out some remarkable research on the history and geography of oriental countries.

She used to work as an *Ingénieur de Recherche* whose role was to help researchers.



Mme. BOULNOIS in her office, 1989 (Courtesy of Prof. Nirmal Tuladhar)

To devote herself fully to her academic activities, she resigned from her post at the CNRS at the end of 1992. Since then she had been concentrating full-time on her research. She pursued her intellectual life till the very end and enjoyed sharing her knowledge either in written form or by expressing her views at conferences.

I was greatly saddened to lose my friend who had been a modest and well-known academic, as well as a disciplined, responsible and courageous

person, always ready to help students and researchers who came to the research unit in search of information.

Her memory, knowledge and dedication were incredible. I doubt whether any (French or foreign) student or researcher could forget her name or her contributions to maps, bibliographies, the history of relationships, commerce, material and technical exchanges, means of transport and communication, East-West link routes, etc. I am in fact one of those researchers and students who benefited from her contributions.

I first met her on 2nd January 1991 when I arrived in her office as an associate member of UPR 299 *Milieus Sociétés et Cultures en Himalaya* and thereafter we became very good friends. Neither the geographical distance nor the barriers of countries' frontiers, nor the age difference became an obstacle to our friendship.

She had a good command of various languages, for instance: she was fluent in Russian and Chinese, she could read and analyse documents written in Latin, English, Italian or German. All those qualities made her an independent or "autonomous" researcher in history and geography. Her publications gained popularity. Her book *La route de la soie (The Silk Road)*, met with a huge success, and she was recognized as a celebrated author in the field of commercial events. *The Silk Road* was published three times in French (1963 Arthaud: Paris/1986 Olizane/1992 Olizane: Geneva), and was translated into nine different languages: German (1964), English (1966), Spanish (1967), Polish (1968), Hungarian (1972), Japanese (1980), Chinese (1982), Italian (1993), Portuguese (1999).

She has left various manuscripts which are in publishable form. I hope that any editors interested in publishing her finished manuscripts, will indeed take the decision to publish them.

Once published, this store of knowledge would benefit many people, while at the same time it would be a lovely way of honoring her contribution. Therefore, I would like to urge all those concerned, her family, her friends and her colleagues, to try to preserve her manuscripts and have them published. I hope that we will thus all be able to pay real tribute to her by our actions, not merely by pronouncing a few words and respecting two minutes' silence.

NEPALESE MIGRATIONS

Nepalese migrations: Introduction

Tristan Bruslé

“Jahan pani alu paincha, Nepali paincha”
(Where there are potatoes, there are Nepalese)

This saying is now truer than ever. Permanent migrations to the Tarai and to urban areas have constantly been on the rise since the 1970s so that the once mountainous Nepalese population is today mostly made up of plain-dwellers. In 2009, every day 700 to 800 Nepalese workers headed for foreign countries, other than India. Not a single day goes by without news of some Nepalese worker stranded in some faraway place. Even though it is impossible to find out exactly how many Nepalese work abroad, there are an estimated 4 to 6.5 million people working permanently or temporarily outside their country.¹

The myth according to which “peasantry is immobile and migration on a large scale really began with industrialization and urbanization”, as discussed by Skeldon (1990: 1) about population mobility in developing countries also applies to Nepal. “Sedentarist visions” (Sheller and Urry 2006) have often been the trademark of research on Nepalese hill societies. Mobility and migration are still considered, by development agencies in particular, as residual or as something to remedy, a pathology (Sharma 2008). Yet, as often mentioned in scientific works, mobility is nothing new in Nepal (See Subedi 1999). Not only highlanders, but also people from the hills and from the Tarai have long managed to earn their livelihood by supplementing their income with jobs in different places. Today still, mobility pervades the life of almost every Nepalese. That is why it has been considered necessary to devote a whole EBHR issue to migrations in Nepal, where for the past decades there has been a complete reversal of population distribution, from the hills to Tarai, and a geographically broader range of labour destinations.

New mobility paradigms affect Nepal, which has been actively involved in the globalisation of manpower at least since the first Gurkha recruitments at the beginning of the nineteenth century. However, as Skeldon (2008) emphasises at a global level, the scale of international migration must not conceal the importance of internal movements. Moreover, this author states that “we need to integrate internal and international population movements within a single framework” (*Ibid.*:

¹ Thieme (2006) states that there are between 1 to 3 million Nepalese migrants in India, whereas Bruslé (this issue) reports that 1.3 to 2.6 million migrants work in the Gulf. Four thousand of them are said to live in Malaysia.

29). In the case of Nepal, this has just started (see Bohra and Massey 2009), and further research should be encouraged. Recent research reports, such as the Nepal Migration Book (NIDS 2008) or the one by Hollema *et al.* (2008), give a complete overview of migration, from forced to labour or study migration, at both internal and international level. In an integrative view of South Asian population movements, Sinha (2009) associates the study of Nepalis of Indian origin with that of Indians of Nepali origin, and considers the many points they have in common to be worth studying together.² Studies about remittances (Central Bureau of Statistics 2003; Gurung 2003 among others) also suppose that incomes earned outside one's "usual" residency combine internal and international sources. Yet any connection between the different kinds of mobility still needs to be assessed. For example, the various ways people in a same household tackle permanent migration to the Tarai and contract-based migration to the Gulf, with seasonal labour in the Uttarakhand hills, should be studied in a livelihood perspective but also with regard to patterns of mobility.

I will quickly review some of the main themes that stand out in the articles making up this special issue.

Migration processes

When talking about migration processes, education is a major incentive to leave one's home and this phenomenon is on the rise. Whether it is the hope of a better education for their children in the Tarai or in Kathmandu (Aubriot) or for the migrants themselves abroad (Adhikari), it would appear that attempts to improve one's standard of education reflect a change in Nepalese society, undoubtedly linked to the spread of middle-class values (See Liechty 2002). As shown by Adhikari, education can be used as a reason to travel and work abroad, with private education institutes thus taking a share of the manpower agencies' business. Ghimire adds that access to a better education is definitely a reason for forced migrants to stay in urban areas, thus thwarting government plans for a return to the villages.

With reference to the government, its role as an actor of migration (Graner) is ineffective, or rather it would seem that liberal policies govern migration policies. It tends to be inundated with private, individual and sometimes collective initiatives. Despite existing bans and controls on some forms of migration (women to the Gulf countries or families to urban areas or to the Tarai), migrants find strategies to sidestep legislation. As for international labour migration, Adhikari as well as Bruslé show that the weakness of Nepalese state policies is detrimental to

² A review of *The Indian Nepalis, Issues and Perspectives* (2009) is available in this issue.

migrants, who have to mostly rely on short-term profit based private companies. The numerous cases of fraud can be attributed to such limited government actions. Other actors associated with migration have emerged in the Nepalese public sphere. These are urban associations which deal with newcomers and long time settlers (Berardi Tadié) or transnational activists who, despite being far from Nepal, are determined to carry weight on the political scene (Sijapati). In the case of women migrants, new forms of financial self-help associations are brought to light by Thieme and Müller-Böker.

In migration studies, networks have long been investigated in order to grasp how migration is organised. We can see in the subsequent articles that the strength of networks indeed explains the perpetuation of migration, in Delhi (Thieme and Müller-Böker), in Hastings (Adhikari), in Pokhara (Berardi Tadié) and in Qatar (Bruslé). Village- or caste-based networks play an important role in explaining a choice of destination.

Migrations on different scales

The links between different types of migration have been the focus of many articles. Ghimire and Aubriot underline links between conflict-induced migration and urbanisation, though in different contexts. As Ghimire notes, the town where migrants have been forced to settle becomes the primary place for earning one's living, whereas the village slowly becomes a place reserved for rituals and family memories. The process of breaking away from one ancestors' village can in fact be quite a rapid one. A reversal of values is now under way, with the younger generation shunning the village.

Yet what is striking, according to Shrestha, is that permanent migration to the Tarai, described by the Nepalese as a quest for an easier life, also leads to more seasonal migration to India. This is corroborated by Aubriot. The links between internal and international migration are also emphasised by Graner when she explains that some contractors (*thekkadar*) in the carpet industry now run recruitment agencies. Skills initially learnt for recruitment at national level are used for sending migrants abroad. In Qatar, some migrants admit that they first went to Kathmandu to work in the carpet industry and then, when there was a slump in the sector, they ventured on to Qatar. The first experience of migration acquired in the Nepalese capital therefore helped them cross the border —Kathmandu being a stepping stone— to ultimately land in Doha.

Life abroad

All the articles stress the fact that living abroad, considered as something that has not really been consciously chosen (Thieme and Müller-Böker about Delhi), is associated with much disillusion and renunciation. Accounts by migrants insist on the “grass is greener on the other side” aspect which is often described and idealised before departure. Sijapati insists on the loneliness and discrimination Nepalese workers face in New York. Adhikari very accurately shows how the passage of time is important for nurses to get used to their new, difficult life in England. Even for internal, yet forced migration, the theme of pain (*dukh*) and indignity (*beijat*) emerges when people are forced to buy food, instead of eating their own production (Ghimire). It is important to compare this discourse about *dukh* with the pervasive official discourse whereby migration is the solution for the country’s future, notwithstanding the painful experiences endured by migrants, notably at work.

Gender aspects

In 2008, 4.2% of international migrants (*i.e.* not including India) were women (NIDS 2008), though specific studies about them are still scarce. Some research focuses on women left behind in the villages (Kaspar 2005) or about women returning from the Gulf countries (O’Neill 2007), but hardly any studies exist about women’s experience of migration (Thieme), even though the carpet business has traditionally been a woman’s niche (Graner). If we consider that being away from one’s family and village could help generate new affirmative behaviour, migration could be seen as a form of liberation. This very question of women’s emancipation is raised by Thieme who asserts that migrants’ wives who stay behind in the villages “do not gain more independence” while those with their husbands in Delhi have slightly more autonomy but are more or less trapped in their dwelling-place even if they work in the daytime. Aubriot confirms the fact that women’s power to decide within the household only marginally increases when their husband is abroad. By contrast, O’Neill (2007: 301) states that women’s experiences in the Gulf have “served to increase their sense of autonomy and agency”. Being a migrant’s wife is described as painful in Pokhara though women’s associations there are supportive of those left behind (Berardi Tadié), whereas women who arrive forcibly in towns are “caught between the wishes of their husband and the aspirations of their children” (Ghimire).

Future issues

Apart from what has been studied both here and in other articles, I would like to suggest a few research proposals for the years to come. I am of the opinion that research on Nepalese migrations definitely requires more input from case studies in order to benefit from both a comparative and comprehensive perspective. As a developing country sending large numbers of migrants and receiving vast amounts in remittances, Nepal certainly has a lot to teach anyone interested in migration and “incipient diasporas” (Sheffer 1995).

Studying the culture of migration (See Cohen 2004, Kandel and Massey 2002, Massey *et al.* 1993) could be a promising field of research where attempts could be made to go beyond the “push and pull” factors or other theories to explain migration. Macfarlane (1976) had already talked about it regarding the Gurungs and the fact that Gurkha migration was considered a norm for youngsters. Adhikari and Seddon (2002) focus on some Lahure songs and writings from Pokhara, which are part of a culture of migration defined as “those ideas, practices and cultural artefacts that reinforce the celebration of migration and migrants” (Ali 2007: 39). Studying all aspects of these migration cultures would not only enable us to better understand migration itself but also social changes in Nepal.

Focusing on the places where migrants venture –home, villages of origin, places of transit and of destination– would help understand how territory and migration are linked. Migration leads to the creation of new territories and places. New lives span from Tarai villages and towns to ancestral homes in the hills; household members are scattered over various places on a global scale. How do places inhabited by migrants and their families evolve? One must also bear in mind the new places which become part of migrant’s lives: airports, rooms in labour camps which are considered to be intimate territories, informal meeting points abroad.³ How are they integrated in the migrant’s territory? Another question, in this context, is about how the new generation relates to agriculture: can new kinds of relationships to land be observed?

Lastly, migration studies’ attention which for a decade has been focused on links between migration and development⁴ should now turn to

³ These *Nepali chowk*, as temporary places, exist in central Doha (Bruslé this issue), in Paris (in a park near La Chapelle subway station), in London (at West Hounslow station) or at the Dongdaemun station in Seoul (http://saladtv.kr/?document_srl=81450).

⁴ For an introduction, see Taylor (2006) or De Haas (2008).

the Nepalese example.⁵ Studies at local level should be favoured in order to understand how migration affects social transformations among migrant and non-migrant households, but also how development itself leads to further migrations (See Bohra and Massey 2009). Adopting the hypothesis that migration is one of the factors that changes Nepalese society, the role of economic and social remittances (Levitt 1998) in the changing social and spatial Nepalese landscape should be researched, bearing in mind the spatial and social bias of access to migration.

For all these goals to be attained, research needs to focus at the same time on structures and individual agency (Castles 2007), that is migrants and their potentiality as “agents of modernity” (Osella and Osella 2006: 571), hometown associations (Vertovec 2004), migration intermediaries and state migration policies.

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⁵ Aubriot (this issue) studies the impact of migration on village agriculture and land tenure. See also Khanal, N.R. and T. Watanabe (2006) about migration and agricultural changes.

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Leaving Hills and Plains. Migration and Remittances in Nepal

Elvira Graner

Introduction

Back in 1983, Goldstein and his colleagues in their analysis of the 1981 Population Census data concluded that Nepal was experiencing a transformation from a hill-rural to a “plains-urban society” (*ibid.* 61). Indeed, by 2001 the Population Census showed that, for the first time ever, the population residing in Nepal’s southern belt, the Tarai, exceeded the hill and mountain population. Thus, at a first glance, these population changes indicate that part of their predictions have come true. On the other hand, even today Nepal remains a predominantly rural country. It has one of the lowest rates of urbanisation in the world, particularly in comparison to other South Asian countries (see Sharma 2003, Gutschow and Kreutzmann 2002). Urbanisation rates increased enormously and rapidly from about 2% during the 1950s to nearly 10% in 1991 to stand at about 16% in 2001 (HMG/NPC/CBS and UNFPA 2002, Sharma 2003). Yet, when compared to 29% in India (18% in the early 1960s) or even to Pakistan (22 and now 38%, based on UNDP 2007) these figures indicate that Nepal is far from becoming an “urban” society.

At the same time, this “ruralness” is often understood to imply that until today the Nepalese economy has remained an agricultural one. A classic quotation is one pointing out the “overwhelming importance” of agriculture (NESAC 1998: 99; see also Gill 2003). Official data still put the agricultural labour force at 75-90% (HMG/ NPC/CBS 1993, see also HMG/ NPC/CBS and UNFPA 2003, Dahal 2004: 20). Similarly, the important role attributed to the Agricultural Perspective Plan in the mid-1990s supports this view. International sources tend to quote these figures, as does NESAC in their Human Development Report for UNDP (*ibid.* 1998). Indeed, Nepal’s physical space still is, by and large, an agricultural one. On the other hand, quite a number of scholars have pointed out that the importance of agriculture for the overall economy needs to be drastically revised. Seddon and his Nepalese colleagues have even argued that the “overwhelming concentration on the role of agriculture has blinded researchers and policy makers alike” (*ibid.* 2001: 20; see also Graner and Seddon 2004).

Indeed, this pre-occupation overlooks one of the most salient features of the Nepalese economy today, namely the predominant role of labour migration (Seddon *et al.* 1998, 2001; Graner and Seddon 2004, Dahal 2004, Graner 2008, Bruslé 2008). This has two major implications. At local and household level, this sector massively contributes to “subsidising”

agricultural households. As a logical consequence, we have argued that it is largely inappropriate to refer to these households as agricultural ones (Graner and Karmacharya 2001; Graner and Seddon 2004). Secondly, at national level, labour migration and remittances guarantee a massive influx of foreign currency earnings, exceeding that from other major sources, even taken together. At the same time, labour migration is not a new phenomenon. It was addressed as a matter of concern back in the 1920s (see below).

This article aims at shedding some light on several important aspects, the most crucial one being the changing patterns in the choice of destinations. India was the top destination until the early/mid-1990s and its western regions remained so until recently. At the same time, internal labour migration to the (semi-)industrial sector, mainly to work for carpet manufactories in the Kathmandu Valley, surged during the early and mid-1990s. Thirdly, more recent developments in migration to the Gulf region and to Malaysia are about to dwarf the importance of any other type of migration. Methodologically speaking, this article is based on a critical (re-)assessment of several studies that have been conducted over the past decade, such as the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS; HMG/NPC/CBS 1997a and 2004a) and the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008 (GON/NPC/ CBS 2009). In addition to NLSS publications, the files from the original database (HMG/NPC/CBS 1997b, 2004b) have been further analysed by the author, particularly in terms of regional disaggregations. Assessments on the part of various scholars, particularly David Seddon, Ganesh Gurung and Jagannath Adhikari, and the (re-) assessments made in joint articles with two of these authors (Graner and Gurung 2003, Graner and Seddon 2004) constitute another major secondary source.

For primary data, this article is based on the findings of two interrelated studies on labour migration. The first one focused on migrants working for carpet manufactories in the Kathmandu Valley and was carried out by the author between 1997 and 2006, (partly) funded by the German Research Council (DFG). This is based on a quantitative survey (n=1780) as well as on village-level household surveys in Jhapa district, the eastern Tarai (n = 250). The quantitative part includes demographic data regarding migrant workers (age, gender, education, family composition and district of origin) as well as working histories (year of migration and of starting work) and access networks. In addition, household surveys include detailed information on all family members and a comprehensive investigation into all places of work, income, reasons for change, expenses and remittances sent to the household of origin. This second type of survey also includes migrants choosing other destinations, which extends the study to international migration. Remittances from all these migrants support the notion that Nepal is undergoing a transition from an

agricultural society to one based on labour migration, as encompassed by the term “remittance economy” (Seddon *et al.* 2001).

(Labour) Migration - theoretical approaches and implications

Studies on migration can be undertaken from a variety of theoretical angles. For demography and demographic geographers, it is a classic field of research, following up on ideas from Ravenstein’s “Laws of Migration” published back in 1885. One particular type of these are so-called “gravitational models”, that largely draw on Lee’s “push & pull” theories (1966; for Nepal see Kansakar 1973/74 and 1982 or H. Gurung 1989). Other possible theoretical approaches are the ones from (neo-classical) economists, focusing on incomes and wage differentials or analyses based on DFID’s livelihood framework. Many other studies apply a combination of these approaches, in a more or less convincing line of argumentation. A rather outspoken criticism about these types of migration studies is made by Bolaria (and Elling Bolaria 1997). Their main argument is that “the focus on migration as movements of people distracts attention from the economic role migrants play in the receiving country” (*ibid.*). In addition, it is of no less importance to investigate labour relations in the country of origin (see Graner 2007, 2008).

One rather promising theoretical approach, I would argue, is institutional theory. This aims at combining Giddens’ theory of structuration and approaches generally classified as “new institutional economics” (North 1990 and 1995; Hodgson 1988, 2002). North makes a major contribution to clearly distinguishing between institutions, namely “the rules of the game” on the one hand, and organisations, namely the players who define the rules, on the other. His main argument is that institutional changes usually occur when some “players”, in the form of individuals and/or organisations, have a vested interest in changing the rules of the game (*ibid.* 1990: 5ff). In a later article, he adds that “institutions are not necessarily or even usually created to be socially efficient; rather they [...] are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to create new rules” (*ibid.* 1995: 18). In addition, Hodgson pointed out the need to replace methodological individualism by an institutional analysis, as documented in his chapter on a “farewell to the economic man” (*ibid.* 1988: 51ff; see also 2002: xvi; for details see Graner 2007: chapter 2.1 ff).

Analysing migration from this vantage point aims at identifying particular “agents” involved in promoting and/or modifying migration processes. Among these “agents” the State with its government and administration need to be attributed a core position. With regard to (labour) migration within and from Nepal, the two most relevant policies

and pieces of legislations are the resettlement policies dating back to the 1960s and the Foreign Employment Act (HMG/ML&J 1985). Yet, many other rules have had an indirect but decisive impact, as for instance tax regulations for agriculture or the policies promoting (carpet) industries. In addition, many more institutional regulations are rooted in the social and economic history at particular locations. For foreign labour migration, other agents may also be found in the private sector economy, as for instance manpower agencies or the banking sector that massively influence the “flow” of migrants, to use this inaccurate and inappropriate naturalistic metaphor.

Crucial Features of the Nepalese Political Economy: Agriculture and Labour Migration

For Nepal, the changes in population distribution referred to by Goldstein document government policies for economic development implemented from the 1960s onwards. As demographic pressure and low productivity in the hills were perceived as major obstacles to economic development, resettlement schemes were designed for several Tarai districts, following the projects to eradicate malaria during the 1950s. In terms of research, in-migration to the Tarai has been the major focus of most of these migration studies, hence the southern region has always been depicted from this angle (see Paudel 1983, Kansakar 1979 and 1982, Gurung 1989, Shrestha 1985). At the same time, until recently, the notion of out-migration received very little attention.

The process of “temporary” labour migration from the hills dates back at least to the early 19th century, when so-called “Gurkhas” were first recruited into the British Indian army (for details see Seddon *et al.* 1998, 2001; see also Bruslé 2008). At the same time, army recruitment was heavily regulated by ethnicity criteria and also partly according to one’s education, thus privileging a few ethnic groups in the mid-Western and Eastern regions, such as the Gurung, Magar, Rai and some Limbu. At the same time, many other Nepalese groups were left with much less attractive labour markets, such as manual labour in India. An early reference to the latter type can be found in a source dating back to the 1920s. When Collier, a British forest official, was asked to design a new forest policy for Nepal his report also pointed out the urgent need for the intensification of agriculture. This was “to lessen or completely stop the contemporary drain of the country’s menhood to India” (*ibid.* 1928: 252; quoted in Graner 1997: 36/37).

Similarly negative notions were common until quite recently in Dixit’s article on “Lowly Labour in the Lowlands” (1997), Khadka’s “Passport to Misery” (1998), or Poudel’s article on “Migration. Boon or Bane” (2003). All

of these vividly indicate the ambivalence or even rejection regarding the way how (many) academics and journalists address migration. On the other hand, labour migration and remittances are increasingly upheld as an important contribution to diversifying and thus securing household incomes. One major single piece of research that has significantly changed our understanding of labour migration was a study undertaken by Seddon and his Nepalese colleagues Ganesh Gurung and Jagannath Adhikari (1998, 2001, 2002). By characterising the Nepalese economy as a “remittance economy” (*ibid.*) they set in motion a series of research studies addressing and even focusing on labour migration (for example Dahal 2004; Shrestha 2004, Thieme 2006, Shahi 2005, Bruslé 2008, NIDS 2007 and 2008).

At a time when contemporary data set annual remittances at somewhere between four and 12 billion Nepalese rupees (NRB 1999 and NLSS 1995/96, respectively), Seddon *et al.* came up with a “guestimation” that their total value ranged between 40-55 billion Nepalese rupees (see Figure 1). They above all allowed for massive scope in upwardly re-assessing them, stating that they “may well add up to 69 billion” (*ibid.* 2001: 34ff). As a result, this largely and long disregarded aspect of the Nepalese economy suddenly became a most vibrant issue, discussed by politicians and academics alike. While their study was a thorough point-in-time analysis, it must be pointed out that this sector, at the same time, is undergoing quite significant changes both in terms of values and destinations.

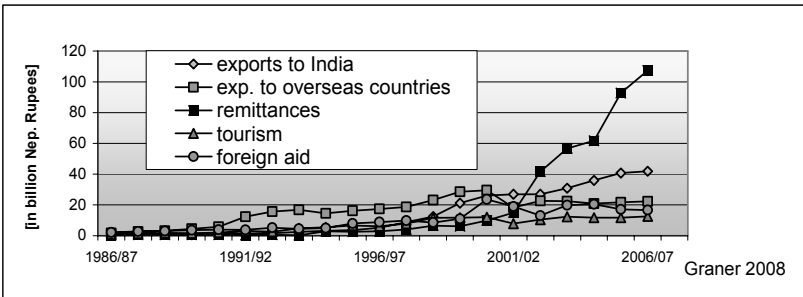


Figure 1: **Foreign currency earnings by the Nepalese National Bank NRB (1990)**

First of all, there have been substantial increases in remittances. This can be shown by analysing more recent data about foreign currency earnings from the Nepal Rastra Bank (2004 onwards; see Figures 1 and 2). While exports (mainly carpets) to overseas countries flourished during the mid-1980s and 1990s (see below), remittances increased tremendously over the past decade. From 2002/03 onwards, remittances have even been

the single largest source of foreign currency earnings. By 2005/06 total values exceeded 100 billion Nepalese rupees (i.e. 1 billion euros) and reached about 160 billion rupees (i.e. 1.6 billion euros) by 2008. Thus, they exceed the four other major sources (exports to India, exports to overseas countries, tourism and foreign aid), even when combined (see Figure 2).

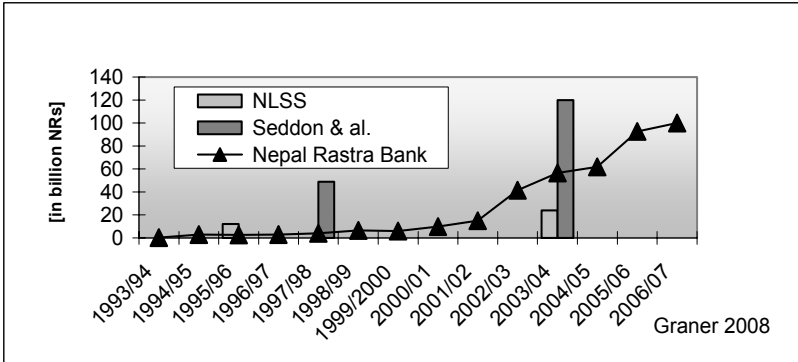


Figure 2: **Assessments for remittances from various sources**

These tremendous increases can also be substantiated by the two Nepal Living Standards Surveys (NLSS). First of all, the share of households receiving remittances has increased, from 22% to about 31.9%. At the same time, average amounts have also increased quite significantly, from about 15,000 Nepalese rupees annually to nearly 35,000 Nepalese rupees (i.e. about 260 and 470 US dollars; *ibid.* 1997a: 63 and 2004a: 74/77). By 2008 average amounts again more than doubled to about 80,000 Nepalese rupees (i.e. 800 euros; GON/NPC/CBS 2009: 165). Interestingly, the first NLSS did not extrapolate the sample households to national level. When done so by the author(s) for an earlier publication, we estimated total remittances at 15.795 billion Nepalese rupees (Graner and Karmacharya 2001; see also Graner and Gurung 2003). Yet, the NLSS 2003/04 puts the total value of remittances in the first NLSS at only 12.957 billion Nepalese rupees (*ibid.*). The NLSS also reveals that many of the persons and households classified as agricultural have in fact incomes from diverse sources, including wage labour either locally or elsewhere, i.e. are involved in labour migration.

Another important feature is that there have been substantial changes in terms of regional origin. India and a few South Asian countries (mainly Hongkong) were the main countries of origin back in 1995/96. This issue has been extensively covered in various articles (Dixit 1997; Müller-Böker 2007) and field studies, such as Kansakar (1982), Adhikari (1995), Basnet

(1997), Ghimire (1997) and more recently Shahi (2005), Kaspar (2005), Wyss (2004), Thieme (2006), and Bruslé (2008). At the same time, it must be pointed out that of all the remittance estimations the Indian data are the most controversial and contested ones. Besides, the importance of India as a destination has dramatically declined over the last decade (for details see Graner and Seddon 2004).

At the same time, the Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have experienced a rather significant increase in labour migration from Nepal. While remittances from India have increased by about 220% within this eight-year period (1995/96 to 2003/05), those from the Gulf countries have increased by about 3,000% (see Figure 3). As a result, the Gulf countries and Malaysia have emerged as the most prominent destinations over the past decade (see NIDS 2007, Graner and Seddon 2004, Graner 2008). A third series of the NLSS is to be carried out in 2009/10 and its data will certainly contribute to a better understanding of current patterns of labour migration. In addition, the recently released Nepal Labour Force Survey also supports the findings from the last NLSS. While remittances from India account for only 13.4%, Qatar and Saudi Arabia alone account for 36.2%, and Malaysia for another 19.2% (GON/NPC/CBS 2009: 165).

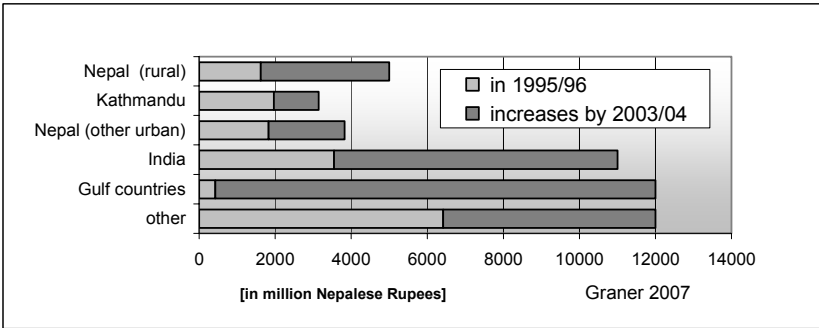


Figure 3: Remittances from (foreign) labour migrants (NLSS 1995/96 and 2003/04)

Yet another essential feature, and one that is difficult to clearly identify, is migration due to political instability during Nepal’s past decade of civil war (see also Gill 2003: 26ff). Thus, villagers who were harassed by both the Maoists or/and security forces left their parental homes for a better or at least safer future at either nearby urban areas or in the Kathmandu valley. Methodologically, it is difficult to identify refugees crossing into India or those staying in Nepal (internally displaced people; IDPs) from other (e)migrants forced to leave their homes. Besides, politically speaking, these figures are highly sensitive and are likely to be instrumentalised by various parties. Accordingly, figures vary from less

than 10,000 persons (HMG/Home Ministry in 2003/i) to 400,000 (CSWC 2004/i; UNFPA 2005/xi) or even 300,000 to 600,000, as suggested by the Nepalese Ministry of Finance (2005/v; all quoted from NIDS 2007: 34). Yet, even if the latter figure is correct, the number of households involved amounts to about 100,000 to 200,000. By contrast, the number of labour migrants is generally estimated to be about 1.5 to 2 million (NIDS 2006: 20).

Nepal's modest industrialisation - internal labour migration to work for carpet manufactories

While migration to India dates back a long way, labour migration to “industrial” centres within Nepal is a relatively recent phenomenon. This situation changed suddenly when the production of carpets for the international market proved to be an enormous labour market. When compared to labour migration to India, figures are much lower. Yet, I would argue that it brought about the first ever “industrial” labour force in the country, accounting for about half of the entire labour force in manufacturing. All in all, most publications estimate that the sector includes about 300,000 persons (CWIN 1993, Shrestha 1991). However, based on an in-depth study I would revise this figure to about 150,000 to 200,000, even for the peak years during the mid-1980s and mid-1990s.

In terms of the labour force, four aspects are of vital importance. One is that carpet manufacturing was the first significant labour market for women, who constitute about half of the labour force. Secondly, the labour force mainly comprises teenagers and young adults. Thirdly, this demand was met almost exclusively by labourers originating from hill and Tarai districts, bringing about a massive process of migration to the Kathmandu Valley, linking the local rural labour force to the global economy. Fourthly, the labour force includes many workers with a low standard of education and from poor backgrounds. From this perspective, their earnings and remittances have been, and partly still are, vital components in securing rural livelihoods.

As argued above, in order to analyse labour markets and labour migration, institutional theory is a major approach. From this vantage point, the carpet industry has a number of core agents who need to be identified. During the initial stage, Tibetan refugees and international agencies, such as the International Red Cross and then the Swiss Development Corporation, were instrumental (for details see Hagen 1975; Gombo 1985: 98ff; CCIA 2003). Gradual increases in demand and production during the 1970s and 1980s brought about the opening of further factories, located in and around Kathmandu, established by businessmen of Tibetan as well as Nepalese origin. (see also O'Neill 1997).

These were strongly encouraged by the Nepalese government who heavily subsidised production and international advertising. By doing so, they gradually promoted carpet production from a niche industry to Nepal's number one employment sector.

Thus, production grew rapidly, at annual growth rates of about 20 to 90% between 1980 and 1994 (TPC 1973 onwards). At the same time, there was a constant need to train and integrate new labourers. In terms of business economics, there was a strong concentration among trade partners from Germany, who accounted for up to 85% of all exports. This lack of diversification brought about a situation where German traders held a virtual monopsony when bargaining, or rather pressuring, for lower rates (see below). Thus, the integration of Nepal into the "global" economy was merely an episodic phenomenon, where the "rules of the game" were largely regulated by foreign, i.e., German, businesspeople (for a detailed account see Graner 2007: Chapter 4.1ff).

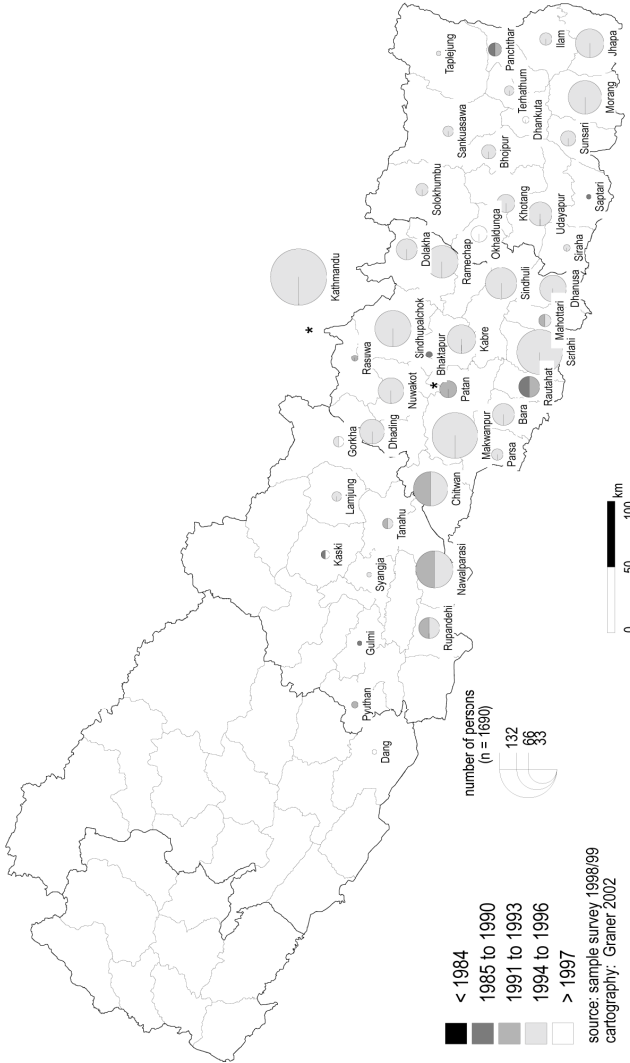
With regard to the labour force, one core issue when considering institutional theory is the process of recruiting labour. Though in the first years, middlemen and contractors (*thekkadar*) made an important contribution, this changed later on. Comprehensive networks of village friends and family members were soon to evolve. Yet, *thekkadar* maintained their positions of power by regulating access to on-the-job training periods. This was documented when interviewing labourers during the late 1990s. Nearly all of them (n= 1,780) reported a training period of 2 to 5 months organised by a *thekkadar*. While they merely received food and lodging, the carpets produced during their training period were sold at nominally reduced rates. Workers are mainly from rural districts around the Kathmandu valley, as well as other districts in the eastern and sometimes western region (see Figure 4). Regarding age composition, it appears that the option to take up work at carpet manufactories was, and is, predominantly chosen by 16-25 year olds, i.e., "adolescent youths" (79 %) rather than children (for details see Graner 2001 and 2007; see also CPS/Rugmark 1999, Rai 1994).

Nevertheless, child labour was publicly discussed as a severe threat to the credibility of the industry. Malpractices had been exposed by journalists as well as by NGOs, most prominently by Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN). In their booklet "Misery behind the Looms" (1993), they claimed that children make up 50% of the labour force. Above all, it was a team of rather misinformed TV journalists from Germany who felt the need, and competent enough, to address this issue in front of a German audience. In their documentary, broadcast as part of a TV series called Panorama, they claimed that child labour accounted for 90%. Generally speaking, this piece of (mis)information was held responsible for the rapidly declining rates that were still officially at 54 US\$/m².

At the same time, it must be pointed out that rates had started to decline much earlier. One of the most important changes in the production process had been installing carpet washing facilities in Nepal from the late 1980s onwards. This had a positive implication, namely that rates for carpets could be increased because they could be marketed as a “finished product”, rather than only a semi-finished one. On the other hand, within a few years rates rapidly declined and, above all, a massive trend for over-producing had set in (for a detailed account, see Graner 2007: Chapter 4.7ff). In addition to gradually saturating the markets in Europe, there was increasingly often a visible drop in quality. Furthermore, later on German importers instrumentalised the debates, or rather discourses, about child labour, in order to (re-)bargain and drastically reduce the latest rates, often below the legally regulated rates.

Needless to say, this loss of export earnings affected both entrepreneurs and workers in a hard way. During the recession, the labour market declined dramatically to about half (see Graner 2001). Thus, the situation of a permanent labour shortage within a short period of time completely changed to one where the number of labourers outnumbered demand by far. This implied a constant fear of losing one’s work due to uncertain and declining orders and to continuous closures of small- and medium-scale manufactories (see Graner 1999). The bargaining positions of both entrepreneurs and workers declined substantially because of this, reducing both wages and remittances (see below). Attempts on the part of the workers to (again) improve their wages and working conditions brought yet another crucial agent on stage, namely trade unions. Yet, vis-a-vis the “global” recession their demands had little impact (NICWU 1996; for details see Graner 1999: 213). Besides, Manandhar’s oxymoron of “divided unions” (2001) is a vital metaphor which sums up nicely their internal bickering.

Figure 4: Labour migration to carpet manufactories in the Kathmandu valley during the 1990s



International labour migration - heading 'overseas' (*bidesh*)

When considering the current pattern of labour migration, the massive increases in labour contracts for the Gulf countries and Malaysia are altogether certainly the most vibrant aspect of the Nepalese economy. This is confirmed by various sources. In addition to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (see Figure 3) and the Nepal Labour Force Survey 2008, data from the Dept. of Labour at the Labour Ministry document annual increases in labour permits for overseas countries at double-digit rates, of about 25-85% over the past decade (*ibid.*). Increases have been particularly marked from 2001/02 onwards. While annual departures were usually at less than 10,000 (official) permits, there are now about 100,000, and at times even more.

Similarly, data available at the Administrative Offices at each of Nepal's 75 districts where passports are issued show impressive growth rates. In Jhapa, one of the country's most dynamic districts for labour migration, these have increased about four- to fivefold within the past decade (for details see Graner 2007: Chapter 6.3 ff). At rates of 5,000 Nepalese rupees per passport (i.e. about 50 euros) costs are rather high, equivalent to an average monthly wage for many workers or their annual savings. Thus, "purchasing" a passport can be seen as a proxy indicator for taking up overseas employment. Until recently, passports were only valid for five years and thus labour migrants needed to obtain a new passport for each contract. Now passports are valid for ten years, allowing for more than one migration period.

In order to analyse changes in labour migration, the Nepalese government needs to be seen as a decisive agent. The current institutional framework of foreign labour migration dates back to the Foreign Employment Act of 1985. This includes two vital regulations. First of all, only registered manpower agencies are allowed to arrange for working contracts in countries other than India. Secondly, these manpower agencies can only operate in countries where governments have signed bi-lateral Memorandums of Understanding with the Nepalese State. These MoUs also usually need to include regulations that respect international labour laws, as for instance compliance with national minimum wages. Yet, the latter are not always respected. One further vital issue is that the Nepalese government sometimes prohibits particular forms of working contracts. This includes domestic work for women, since there have been a number of serious incidents. At the same time, this may encourage "undocumented" migration (see Gurung 2003, NIDS 2008) where permits are arranged via "informal" channels and/or Indian agencies.

These institutional arrangements are also manifest when analysing the changing pattern of the choice of destination. During the mid-1990s

permits for Saudi Arabia accounted for about 60-70% of all labour permits to overseas countries. From the late 1990s onwards, other destinations have gained momentum. Most recently, Qatar has evolved as the single largest destination, while during the mid-2000s it was Malaysia, accounting for nearly 40% in 2006. For the government and for the banking sector, the latter destination has been of particular interest as remittances are usually sent through the official banking system, and thus to the coffers of the State (see Graner and Seddon 2004, based on NLSS 2003/04). This also reveals the crucial role of the banking sector, a research field that has so far been vastly neglected.

At the same time, the massive value of remittances from the Gulf region needs to be re-assessed for previous years. As argued before, Seddon *et al.* have grossly underestimated the contribution of these countries during the late 1990s (at about 36,000 Nepalese rupees per person and at a total volume of 1.5 billion Nepalese rupees; *ibid.* 2001: 52/53, i.e. about 22.2 million US dollars). This figure has been revised in a series of articles and found to be at least triple that amount (Graner and Gurung 2003; Graner and Seddon 2004). Due to the recent increases in labour migration, remittances have increased to at least 12-15 billion Nepalese rupees (i.e. about 120-150 million euros). For 2008, the NLFS documents remittances of about 42 billion Nepalese rupees (i.e. 420 million euros) from Saudi Arabia and Qatar alone (GON/NPC/CBS: 165). When based on data from the Nepal Rastra Bank, this amount is likely to range somewhere between 60 and 90 billion Nepalese rupees.

In contradistinction to labour migrants at carpet manufactories, the western and eastern regions are strong suppliers. While migrants from the western region originate from both the hills and the Tarai, those from the eastern (and central) regions are usually mainly from the Tarai. This could be interpreted as an indication of the much higher attractivity of the latter destinations. Interestingly, labour migration from districts in the eastern and central Tarai has increased quite significantly within this decade. By 2008, eight eastern Tarai districts alone (Sarlahi to Jhapa) account for more than 30% of all labour migrants who obtained permits from the Department of Foreign Employment during the past two years (see Figure 5). Back in the year 2000, many migrants came from the western region, mainly hill districts (like Syangja, Kaski, Parbat, and Baglung), although even then Jhapa was the single largest provider (for details see Graner and Gurung 2003: 308 ff).

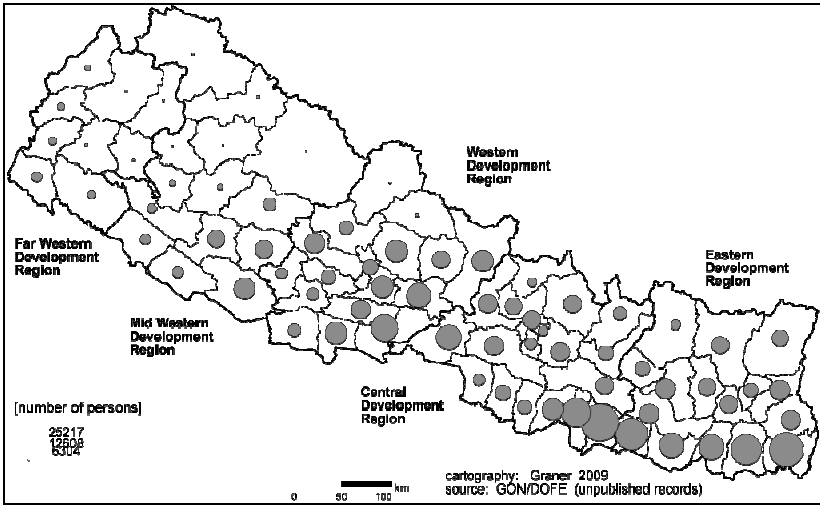


Figure 5: Districts of origin of labour migrants to the Gulf countries or Malaysia (2006-08)

This change in destination is also well documented by a village study about migrants from Jhapa during the period 1999-2006 ($n=250$ households). During the late 1980s and early 1990s there had been a virtual exodus of young people to carpet manufactories in the Kathmandu Valley. When income declined from the mid-1990s onwards, migration was re-“oriented” to the Gulf countries. In addition to workers from carpet manufactories, many men who had previously worked in India also re-routed their destinations, due to better pay opportunities. At the same time, younger women continued to work for carpet manufactories. Those who had married and whose husbands moved to the Gulf usually stayed at home, either with their husband’s family or at the maternal home (*maiti*; for a detailed account see Graner 2007: Chapter 6.2 ff).

These changing destinations have major implications for the village economy. Access to carpet manufactories could be easily gained, at a nominal cost. In contradistinction, access to labour markets in the Gulf region (and Malaysia) is almost exclusively regulated via manpower agencies, i.e., via “commodified” networks. Fees range between about 60,000-90,000 Nepalese rupees, which for a worker corresponds to two to three years’ salary. As a consequence, informal credit systems in rural areas have seen a tremendous revival. Credit is often given by those who have migrated earlier on, at rates ranging between 25 and 36%. These investment loans can usually be paid off within the first year of employment. If so, then the second year’s income is usually re-invested

either for expenses for other family members or to provide loans to other villagers. In terms of institutional arrangements, it is also noteworthy that many of those who had worked as *thekkadar* at carpet manufactories now render formal or at least informal services for manpower agencies. In many cases, this also includes the provision of loans. While there has been a lot said about banks needing to provide such loans, there has been little follow-up.

Besides the need for high-interest loans, some of the contracts do not even comply with national minimum wages in the country of destination. Thus, there are many cases when Nepalese workers have to agree to wages that are lower than those agreed upon in the labour contract. So under such circumstances, their bargaining position is practically nil, having handed in their passports upon arrival and being barred from any activity that might even vaguely relate to “trade unionism”. In addition, the current global recession has also added a new risk dimension. During the boom years of labour migration to the Gulf region, credit was a fairly safe investment for all parties concerned. Yet, this is no longer the case. When labour contracts are terminated earlier, debts can present a most serious threat. Above all, the termination of contracts is often expressed in rather euphemistic terminology, such as “temporarily suspended”. If so, then there is no form of guarantee, not even from the government support schemes. Besides, not even the Nepalese government has any influence upon layoffs.

Labour Migration - a Critical Assessment

Over the past decade, the Nepalese economy has undergone a major shift from an agricultural to a remittance economy. While demographers and some economists hail labour migration as an important income strategy, migration also involves quite a number of critical issues. Conceptually, institutional theory is a worthwhile and promising approach for analysing agents who change the “rules of the game”. Thus, investigations into the social, economic and political (re-)negotiation processes at both the place of origin and destination are crucial.

From this vantage point, I would argue that it is not a mere coincidence that the Nepalese government and manpower agencies stepped up their search for foreign labour markets during the early and mid-1990s. This search was actually fuelled by the rapidly declining income from the carpet industry’s foreign currency earnings. At the same time, most “partner” countries have a more or less long history of engaging foreign labourers, particularly the Gulf countries (see Appleyard 1998). As a consequence, there is a distinctive hierarchy in terms of the type of work and the wages that are offered to particular countries. Nepal

is one of the most recent countries where migrants have an extremely low standard of education (see Graner 2006). As a consequence, workers from Nepal are essentially taken on only as “semi-skilled” or even unskilled workers.

All in all, labour migration often implies the (constant) need to search for new labour markets where (income) conditions are still (more) favourable. However, at foreign destinations conditions for being monitored by external bodies, such as the Nepalese government or trade unions, are next to impossible. A positive impact of these various types of migration and remittances is that most migrants with younger siblings contribute indirectly to productive investments. In these cases, the workers’ younger brothers and sisters are usually allowed to attend school significantly longer than their elder brothers/sisters had done (for a detailed account, see Graner 2008: 392 ff). As education on the whole is vital for accessing better-paying labour markets, this comes as a most promising piece of information from current research.

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International and national migrations from a village in Western Nepal: Changes and impact on local life

Olivia Aubriot

Today the scale of migratory phenomena in Nepal is such that migrations are part of Nepalese people's social landscape: every family has a relative who has migrated, either abroad temporarily or permanently to the Terai; a young hill man has a good chance of having to leave his native village at some point in his life, contrary to his ancestors who, for the most part, stayed there from birth to the end of their lives.

However, to fully grasp the extent of the migratory phenomena, precise quantitative data are needed. Here, based on such data collected at a fifteen-year interval in an irrigated village in Western Nepal, I analyse both how migratory phenomena have developed in this village, as well as the local impact these migrations have in the field of social organisation, farming and land tenure. The hamlet studied, Aslewacaur, is located in Gulmi, one of the most densely populated districts in the Nepalese hills (258 pers/km² in 2001) and one of the most affected by temporary labour migrations (ICIMOD *et al.* 2003): the study therefore reflects the strategic adaptation of the population when there is a marked imbalance in the carrying capacity of an area – the carrying capacity is a concept describing the interrelations between population, labour supply, natural resources and technology (Schroll 2001: 129).

Change and scale of migrations

Over the period 1992-94 when I carried out my PhD fieldwork, the number of migrants leaving Aslewacaur had already reached a high and these were of two main types: temporary (ranging from 3 to 15-20 years) migrants working in India and permanent emigrants settling in the Terai (Aubriot 1997). Since then, a further rise in migratory phenomena can be observed.

Quantitative data

Our findings regarding temporary migrations (Table 1) are based: firstly on individual household interviews about family composition held within large-scale surveys carried out in 1992 (for 1974 and 1992 data) and in 2008; secondly, on the list of irrigators for the main canal supplying 35 ha of rice fields,¹ but also on the land register dating from the beginning of the 20th century when fields started to be transformed into paddy fields, on life stories and on various comments from villagers about the changes.

¹ 1974 is the first complete irrigator list from the canal chief's archives.

Table 1: **Figures for 'temporary' absentees from Aslewacaur (Gulmi) from detailed survey carried out in 1992 and 2008.**

	1974	1992	2008
Number of households in the survey sample [% of the total number of households in the hamlet]	35 [32%]	97 [66%]	82 [55%]
Number of people living in village (in the sample)	199	568	414
International labour migrants	11	77	80
Migrants to KTM (with family in village)		2	6
Including women			5
Number of students	0	7	23
Total population (of sample)	210	652	523
Estimation of total masculine workforce*	52	153	128
% of houses affected by temporary migrations	26%	60%	67%
Number of emigrants per household for households affected by migrations	1.2	1.3	1.55
Globally, mean number of migrants per household	0,3	0,8	1,04
Population abroad		11,5%	15,3%
Masculine workforce as temporary migrant (abroad and in KTM)	21%	50%	63 %
Masculine workforce absent from village (temporary migrants + students)	21%	55%	78 %

* In Gulmi, according to census data, the masculine workforce (ranging from 15 to 59 years of age) was 47% of the total population in 1991 and 49% in 2001. The figure of 50% was taken for 1971.

Only the heads of households are mentioned in the irrigator lists, whereas surveys reveal that family compositions vary greatly from a single woman to multiple family households with five conjugal units. These detailed surveys thus inform the researcher about the resident population, temporary migrants and students. Information regarding emigration to the Terai is based mainly on the complete genealogy (back 8 generations) of the Brahman clan which makes up 85% of the hamlet, since this genealogy mentions migrants to the Terai and the organisation of lineage groups. It was completed with a series of interviews with a well-informed person from each lineage group, and with villagers settled in the Terai. The remaining 15% of the village population includes Brahmans from other clans, Newars, Magars and Kamis.

In spite of our surprising results—78% of the masculine workforce absent from the village on a temporary basis, and more than one third of households² having definitively migrated to the Terai within the last 40 years—we certify our data statistically representative of the migratory phenomena in the village since they are very precise and refer to a large sample: two thirds of the hamlet households in 1992 and half in 2008. One of the reasons for our seemingly exaggerated results is the fact that labour migration data are seldom presented as such in censuses or literature, but rather as part of the total population, which masks their significance.

In addition, the proportion of temporary migrants abroad is practically the same as in the district (56% of the masculine workforce in 1991, 62% in 2001,³ 15% of the population). Given that there is an uneven distribution of temporary migrations from one region to the next (ICIMOD 2003: 63), comparisons need to be made using data from neighbouring districts, rather than national data. The village can be considered representative of the migratory phenomena for the low mountains of Western Nepal.

Nevertheless, the hamlet represents a particular case regarding its agricultural features since 90% of fields are irrigated (versus 13% in the district, Central Bureau of Statistics 2004: 14), most villagers are irrigators, and population density is far greater than elsewhere in the region (twice that of the district). Village figures also differ from district figures for demographic growth: while the district records an increase of 1.1% between 1991 and 2001, our data reveal a freeze in the number of households over the last 15 years, and even a slight decrease in the total population, since, according to our samples, the size of the household dropped from 6.8 to 6.4 over the same period. This decline in the number of households is not reflected in the irrigator list: on the contrary, the number of irrigators reflects an increase, with 109, 147 and 155 irrigators in 1974, 1992 and 2008 respectively.

This increase in the number of irrigators in Aslewacaur over the recent period is not due to a rise in the number of households, but to new irrigators settled in neighbouring hamlets or in the village. The reasons why these new irrigators were only recently accepted will be explained later. Nonetheless, it seems that the village has reached a maximum population capacity and has balanced its demography thanks to permanent migration, with the remaining population depending on the

² For a sample of 120 households still in the village, representing 225 men of the same generation, 70 nuclear families have left for the Terai.

³ Calculated from the census data: masculine workforce is equal to 24.5% of the total enumerated population and absentees to 15% of the total enumerated population (*District demographic...* 2002).

remittances from labour migration to compensate for their small property (on average, 1/3 of a hectare of irrigated land).

Apart from emigrations to settle in the Terai, migrations can be divided into international labour migrations, migrations to Kathmandu and migrations to pursue studies. Since all these migrations present various characteristics or refer to a different dynamic, they are presented separately below.

International labour migrations

Though Aslewacaur's peasant population appears to have been settled and well established in this village for more than three centuries, migratory movements, however, are not new to them. Indeed, despite an intensification of the agricultural production system, not all inhabitants were able to satisfy their needs with their own agricultural production or labour force. Thus, for decades migrations have proved to be one way of relieving pressure on land. The phenomenon was bound to increase with the post-1950s demographic boom, as a strong correlation exists between temporary emigration and population pressure on land (Gurung 1989: 72-73).

For Sagant (1978: 22-25), demographic pressure and land saturation are not the causes of migratory movements, but merely aggravating factors. The main reason is British colonial rule needing manpower, in Northern India (*ibid.* 22-24) circa 1820. In Aslewacaur, the local surnames of some kinship groups, such as Barmeli and Lahure,⁴ which had taken root by the end of the 19th century, reveal that these migrations took place during this period at the latest. Men went into exile for at least five years and sometimes up to twenty or thirty years. The first destinations were mainly Burma and Assam where civil jobs were available up to the Independence of India and the separatist movements of these two States.

From then on, migrants from Aslewacaur sought jobs in regions such as Gujarat, and in 1992 they were mainly to be found in Bombay and Delhi, cities that welcome this cheap and unqualified labour. In India, the Nepalese have the reputation of being trustworthy and are often employed as gatekeepers. However, few of them seem to have a gratifying job because, on returning to their village for festivals, they never dwell on the type of work they do, save a few of them, proud to say that they are a cook in a grand hotel in Delhi, or secretary at Delhi University or chauffeur for a Bombay industrialist. Very few men from Aslewacaur have ever enrolled in the army contrary to the district's Magar population. As

⁴ The 'Barmeli' went to Burma; the 'Lahure' migrated, their nickname deriving from the first Nepalese migrants leaving for Lahore in the early 19th century to join the army of the Sikh ruler (Seddon *et al.* 2001: xx).

Gaborieau (1978: 144-148) noted in the district of Tanahun, variations in the migratory rate depend on socio-economic status, land owning and caste hierarchy: among landowners, the migration rate was down while land ownership was up; among craftsmen, this depended on how well paid their job was. Similar conclusions have been drawn by Macfarlane (1976) or Schroll (2001), with the latter questioning the common idea that migrants are from the poorer layer of society, and showing that people owning hardly any land are not necessarily likely to migrate (*ibid.* 131). Adhikari (2001) also shows that most wealthier households hold off-farm jobs while most of the 20% poorer households stay in the village, working in other people's fields (*ibid.* 253-254).

Since Aslewacaur's population is made up mainly of one caste, the caste hierarchy does not come into play though other factors do. Thus, in 1992, the lineage group from the traditionally locally influential kinship group was the first to see its members migrate to the Terai (see below). In the village the remaining members of this lineage became bigger landowners (about 5,000 m² per irrigator on average versus 2,000 m² for other groups), moneylenders and were less affected by labour migration.⁵ The temporary migration rate is thus certainly affected by land owning and the socio-economic level, possibly dependent on a factor I did not cover, namely the economy related to moneylenders' loans.

The main feature of labour migrations is the extent to which they have grown: from a few men at the beginning of the 20th century to 50% and 63% of the village's male workforce in 1992 and 2008 respectively. Save this increase, the main differences between these two dates are the destinations, modes of recruitment and feminization of migrations. Indeed, though most migrations are still towards India⁶ (58%), recent migrations concern more distant destinations: Gulf countries, Korea, Malaysia and London (see also Seddon *et al.* 2001). These migrations call for the services of recruitment agencies in Kathmandu or Delhi, a passport (whereas an identity card is sufficient for India), and sometimes a rudimentary knowledge of a foreign language. In addition, the jobs are mostly physical. For women, emigration is a very recent phenomenon (2005-2006), with eight having already left unaccompanied for Israel or Japan, some as maids in private houses.

⁵ In 2008, too few interviews were held with this lineage group to establish reliable statistics.

⁶ Comparison with district data (93%, ICIMOD 2003) is difficult because of the lapse of time between the census and our survey (2001 and 2008), during which many changes may have taken place.

Though the rise in the labour migration rate is impressive, the most striking changes in these international migrations over the last fifteen years are their new destinations and their feminization.

Permanent migrations to the Terai

With the British withdrawal from India, the closure of Burma and the changes in migration flows in Sikkim, Bhutan and Assam in the mid-20th century, the Nepalese authorities had to propose solutions for temporary migrants: the colonisation of the Nepalese Terai (Sagant 1978: 25). Various measures were taken to encourage settlement in this plain: eradication of malaria, reduction in land tax, land reforms, construction of roads (Gurung 1989, Ojha 1983). Settlements rapidly took on a spontaneous character and the Terai population grew rapidly from the 1960s onwards. The main sector to attract migrants was agriculture, with the possibility of acquiring land while land pressure was high in the hills. Improved living conditions are also often mentioned among the advantages of living in the plain: easy access to drinking water, to numerous services (hospitals, markets, etc.) thanks to roads and the flat relief, and private schools boasting a better reputation.

The majority of emigrants from Aslewacaur retain their peasant status. They sell their land in the hills, buy another in the Terai and build a house. Before migrating, some had already invested in the Terai, either in farmland or in land close to Butwal or along the highway with a view to setting up house later. Some have also seized the opportunity to open a business in town (petrol station, hotel, shop). A detailed study according to kinship groups shows that the migration process is not quite the same for all lineages. It clearly emerges that members of the lineage that has wielded local power for generations migrated earlier and in bigger proportions than members of other lineages. This is probably due to their privileged relationship with the local administration, providing them with access to information about such opportunities, since landowning is an important factor of socio-economic differentiation. Interestingly, nobody from Aslewacaur's neighbouring village, populated by the Jogi Kunwar caste, has ever settled in the Terai. Migrants from Aslewacaur live in the districts of Kapilbastu, Rupandehi and Nawalparasi, the three Terai districts the most easily accessible from Aslewacaur. Generally speaking, Terai immigrants from the hills originate from neighbouring districts and in the aforementioned districts they represent 80% of the population (Gurung 1998: 29-30).

Most emigrants from Aslewacaur leave for the Terai with their nuclear family, yet since the 1990s some young women have also married men already settled in the Terai. A new phenomenon can also be observed: the

wives of temporary migrants go to live with their children in the Terai at a relative's house or they send their children to school there.

Another interesting fact is that migrants settled in the Terai – among those living in villages no further than 30-40 km apart - band together and set up a new place for lineage worship in one of the migrants' villages, where they gather once a year. They have thus severed the link with the hill village, where they return only very occasionally (once every 3-5 years, or never even). Nevertheless, they still receive news from the village, and hill village people also receive regular news from the migrants: migrants visiting Aslewacaur or villagers visiting their siblings in the Terai always exchange the latest news about villagers and Terai migrants.

Compared to the previous 20-year period, permanent emigration to the Terai from Aslewacaur has slightly waned these last 15 years: about 40 versus 25 households (from the genealogy representing 80% of villagers) have emigrated, hence an average of 2 and 1.6 departures per year for the 1970-1992 and 1992- 2008 periods respectively. Thus, despite high land pressure in the plain (330 pers/km², 2001 census), then Terai's attraction is such that the emigration from Aslewacaur to the Terai has been non-stop.

International labour migration also affects people from the Terai—"in recent times, non-farm income [meaning remittances] is becoming considerably important in Terai" (Seddon *et al.* 2001: 124)—but to a lesser extent (3% of the population in the Terai districts bordering Gulmi, versus 15% in Gulmi- ICIMOD 2003). Nevertheless they are a frequent subject of discussion.

Migrations to Kathmandu

Migrations to Kathmandu are a relatively recent phenomenon. In some cases, these migrations have some characteristics of labour migrations to India: men migrate alone and come back regularly to the village. They nevertheless have one distinguishing feature: the men often leave to study, and get a job either at the same time or later in accordance with their qualifications. On the other hand, other men migrate with their whole family: these migrations differ from migrations to the Terai as migrants seldom own their lodgings and are systematically employed in a non-agricultural job. These migrations are *a priori* permanent (especially as urban facilities and climate are highly appreciated), yet they may be on a temporary basis, since all families (bar one) still own some land in the village (these families are not included in Table 1). Finally, another type of migrant in Kathmandu is the one who waits to go abroad.

Kathmandu has recently seen a large influx of migrants due to the civil war: young people have fled from villages, families have taken refuge in

the capital, notably the richest landowner and moneylender whose land was cultivated by the Maoists (he came back with his family in 2007 to work his land). In 2008, there were five men and one girl living in Kathmandu as temporary migrants, as well as about ten students and six families. All these Aslewacaur emigrants reside in the same area of Kathmandu (*Kalo Pul*) with other families from the same Village Development Committee. They have formed an association that organises get-togethers to help them keep in touch, proposes loans to newcomers, and intends to help villagers who have stayed in the hills. As Seddon remarks in his comment (p.120) on Macfarlane's paper (2001), people of the hills "now clearly inhabit a space larger than that of the village", referring notably to people settled in town and to migrants abroad.

Studies as a springboard towards temporary or permanent migration within Nepal
Many families, even migrant ones, finance their children's studies in Tansen, Butwal or Kathmandu, including their girls' education in the case of the wealthiest families. It is generally acknowledged that a high standard of education guarantees a good job. If in 1992, only members of the traditionally locally powerful lineage paid for their children's studies, today this is the case for all kinship groups. There is a general desire to provide children with a good standard of education in the hope that they will get a well-paid job in Nepal or abroad and thus support their parents in later life. Paying for these studies represents a future investment.

To sum up, the changes in temporary absenteeism from Aslewacaur over the last fifteen years are characterised, along with the extraordinary increase in their number, by the current diversification of migrations, including departure for study and national labour migration, migration to Kathmandu being either permanent or temporary.

Impact of temporary migrations on local social changes

Thanks to the remittances of migrants, various technical changes, such as metal roofs, houses built of concrete, the telephone, television, plastic chairs, etc., are all visible when walking through a village and are a sign of modern housing. In addition, various significant social transformations, especially resulting from the absence of the male workforce, accompany these migratory phenomena.

Family and village composition

As migrants are mainly men, the sex ratio in the village is particularly uneven (5:1 among working people). This has two major consequences that impact the organisation of agricultural work (see below): first of all, there is a shortage of manpower, even in a densely populated area, and secondly in many houses, women live alone with children. Among the

nuclear and extended families (type *a* and *b* in Fig.1) of our sample, 44% are headed by women only (Table 2). Save four cases, temporary migrants regularly send their remittances as well as their latest news (recently by phone).

A question that often arises is the compatibility of multiple family households with the modern economy and especially the rise in the number of migrants: how long will migrants, who send remittances to their joint family, accept to share their earnings? At some point in time they may want to invest for their own benefit, to ask to 'be split' from their brothers and eventually parents, and to receive their part of the inheritance. Such a scenario, brought about by sibling rivalry, would introduce a trend towards more nuclear families. There is indeed a balance of forces within a joint family that tends both to break up the domestic group (tension among brothers and weakness of horizontal links) and to guarantee its cohesion (strength of vertical links) (Ramirez 1993: 62), the latter being expressed by Shrestha *et al.* (2001: 162): "in most extended families the parents are the glue that holds siblings together". Parry who worked in Kangra, North-West India, recalls that controversies about this subject go back to the 1950s (1979: 150-155). Having analysed the constraints and the different stages in the cycle of family development, he concludes that "outside employment and the extension of the cash economy have introduced an obvious and unambiguous measure of the contribution of each brother. This may have exacerbated the problem but these sorts of conflict are built into the structure of the joint household, even in a subsistence economy" (*ibid.* 177-178). Our data corroborate Parry's analysis, since it is not possible to detect any variation in the proportion of the different types of household between the 1974 and 1992 family compositions: migrations have not led to more nuclear families, meaning more divisions among multiple family households.

Interestingly enough, the difference between 1992 and 2008 is a reduction in the number of nuclear families and an increase in the number of extended families with one couple, with these results challenging preconceived ideas. This can be explained as follows: when brothers split up, their parents stay in Aslewacaur with one brother (type *b* or *c.1* in Fig.1), while others leave for the Terai with their nuclear family. Another hypothesis is that because of the many temporary migrations, members of families prefer to stay in a joint family rather than to split into nuclear families which would lead to more households being run only by one woman and the difficulties this involves (see below).

Figure1: Various types of households, with reference to the head of the household

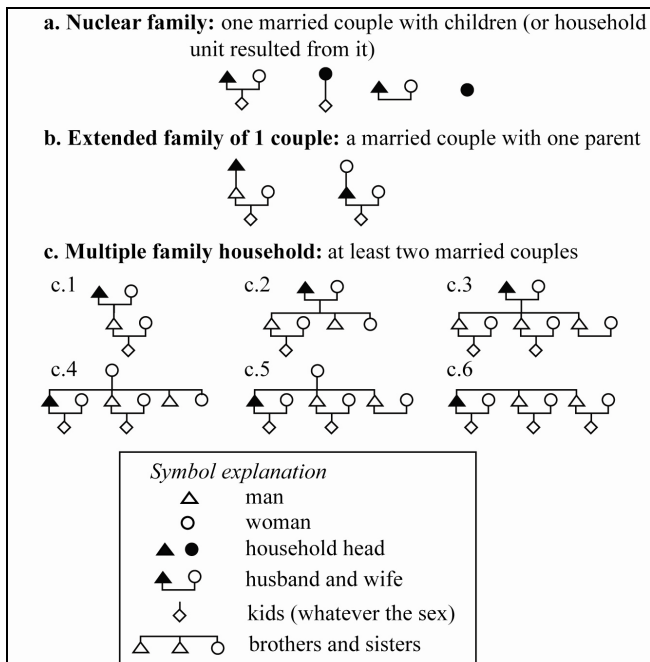


Table 2: Migration and type of household (sample of 97 and 82 households out of a total of 150 in 1992 and 2008 respectively)

	Nuclear family		Extended family		Multiple family household	
	1992	2008	1992	2008	1992	2008
Number of houses	54	31	15	21	28	29
% of houses of this type	56%	38%	15%	26%	29%	36%
% of houses of the type where there are emigrants	57%	58%	13%	76%	79%	86%
Number of houses run only by women [and % from the type of house]	24 [44%]	14 [45%]	1 [6%]	9 [43%]	0 [0%]	2 [7%]

Organisation of agricultural work

Work paid in cash

The impact of temporary migrations is particularly reflected in the local economy, with cash as the main means of payment in exchanges and services since the 1970-80s.⁷ One element revealing the importance of migrant income in the local economy is the common use of the Indian rupee – which it is theoretically forbidden to bring out of the Indian territory – and its exchange rate, frozen for many years and known to everyone. There is a noted increase in monetization in the four types of service: work requiring a specialist (blacksmith, tailor, goldsmith, potter, priest, etc.); ploughing which is religiously proscribed for Brahmins; work that can be done by each and every one; specifically masculine work.

Not having investigated the relationship between patron and specialist (case of priests and artisans) in 2008, I will not linger on this subject. It should be mentioned, however, that traditional *jajmani*-type relations characterised by a tacit agreement renewed yearly between the house-owner and the specialist, payment in grain, still existed in 1992. Nonetheless, some services were paid in cash.

For ploughing, which Brahmins are not allowed to do themselves, they call upon a man from another group. In 1992, eleven households still had their 'attached ploughman' (*hali*) who worked according to a long-term interdependent relationship, often based on a system of debt: ploughing is a way of reimbursing it. However, a very particular relationship existed between both families, preferential work versus protection, with the ploughman settling in the village's surrounding area. Apart from these eleven houses, others had to pay the ploughman in cash. Today, these attached ploughmen no longer exist because of the Maoist ban on this type of patronage relationship: all ploughing is done for cash only. Brahmin landowners still call upon men from other groups (blacksmiths, Magars (especially former *hali*) or Jogi Kunwars from the neighbouring hamlet) except for a few villagers who do not abide by the traditional religious ban and plough themselves. The changes affecting this type of work are associated with political changes, rather than temporary migrations. However, migrations provide villagers with the opportunity of obtaining ready cash.

General farm work is usually done through mutual aid (*parma*) between members of houses with similar needs. Households owning more land pay

⁷ Hitchcock (cited by Adhikari 2001) had already mentioned an increase in monetisation in the Magar hills south of Pokhara in the 1960s, with cash being provided by army remittances and pensions, and interests from moneylending.

people from the village or from neighbouring hamlets⁸. Up until 25 years ago, this work was mostly done in exchange for payment in grain (wheat or rice) and it was not unusual for a credit-debit relationship between employer and worker to be transformed into a working relation with the aim of reimbursing the interest rates. With the development of market places and of migratory phenomena, debts are no longer paid in kind—by labour—but in cash. Moreover, workers prefer to negotiate their debt and supply of grain with local market traders rather than landowners, and to work in fields for cash rather than the reimbursement of their debt. Work in Aslewacaur paid in grain has become work paid in cash *and* grain paid in cash.

As for specifically male work (irrigation of plots, ploughing, threshing of paddy, bringing the cow to the bull, etc.), this is carried out by a few men, either from the village or from the neighbouring hamlets. Households run by women have to pay them using the remittances sent by their migrant husbands. This circulation of a cash income between ethnic groups and between migrants and non-migrants households has also been highlighted by Adhikari (2001) in Kaski district.

Women as heads of households

As the male workforce now works away from the village, many households (31%) are run by women, who are thus *de facto* temporarily heads of households. Nonetheless, men are not completely excluded from decisions to be made regarding farm issues: they give advice before leaving, they ask and even pay a brother, a cousin or a worker to help their wife with the men's work. Nevertheless, women on their own have to manage all the daily activities and decisions, which represents quite a burden as far as their subsistence and care of the young and the elderly are concerned (Macfarlane *et al.* 1990), not to mention the responsibility of making alone the right decision (Kaspar 2005: 65 & 119), or the tormenting experience of being physically separated from their husbands, and not knowing how long this separation will last (Shrestha *et al.* 2001: 156-158).

Since migrations are temporary, so is the status of women as heads of households, yet this is not even recognised by local society (see also Zwarteveen (1997) for the implication of the non-recognition of women as farmers). The only women mentioned in the irrigators list are widows, but even they do not irrigate themselves, as irrigation is still a male activity in this village. Even if women's autonomy in decision-making is growing because of their husbands' absence, especially regarding operational

⁸ For a long time the Magars from Thulolumpek have been the workforce at the service of the wealthiest farmers in Aslewacaur, since farm production in this Magar village shows on average an annual four and half month food shortage (Panter-Brick *et al.* 1997: 190).

decisions in daily life, it is rare for women to call themselves heads of households.⁹

At village level, with decisions being taken mainly by men (regarding irrigation, common land or temple committees), many houses have no representative, and therefore a handful of men make decisions for the entire hamlet. Even if two women (out of 11 members) now sit on the irrigation committee—a rule imposed by funding agencies should the village apply for funding—and if they are well accepted by male members, they nevertheless rarely impose their point of view. Is this due to the fact they are Brahmins, as Kaspar observes in a village located further to the North, in Kaski district, that Dalit and Brahmin men practise gender discrimination at meetings (contrary to the Gurungs) and that these women doubt that their opinions are taken into account when decisions are taken (*ibid.*113)?

A relatively recent phenomenon (also noted by Kaspar 2005: 84-86), due to the better pay of husbands working in the Gulf countries, is that some women do not work in their own fields: they either lease the land (see below) or, with their husbands calling down the phone “don’t work too hard”, pay workers.

Another change in the gender dynamics can be seen from the dual-wage earning families (when husband and wife are migrants). Such a couple exists in Aslewacaur with the husband in Kathmandu, the wife in Israel and their children either at boarding school in Tansen or in the village with grand-parents. Although the wife is not the head of the household, she is identified as a wage earner, which means changing relationships within the household. As Yamanaka (2005: 354) says, “future research will be required to fully document and understand the shifting gender dynamics and family relations that have resulted in increasing women’s participation in international migration”.

Feminization of tasks

The uneven sex-ratio has led to a feminization of some tasks, notably since the 1980s concerning the maintenance and repairs of the main irrigation channel, which were purely masculine (water distribution still is). In 1992, some men had still not accepted women’s part in the tasks, as revealed by a remark made by one of them: “women have won, since they work henceforth on repairing the channel”. These men explain that repair work takes longer and is therefore more expensive, because women do not work as hard as men. Furthermore, they do not accept that the fine—imposed on households not doing their share of work—might amount to more than the cost of the female workforce: this excuse based on the

⁹ This point is also observed by Kaspar (2005: 93), even though the title of her book does not suggest it.

women's contribution is a way of preventing any increase in the fine, which is, nonetheless, one way of forcing irrigators to contribute to channel repair work. For Baker (1997), who compares about forty irrigation networks in the Indian Himalayas, emigration and the possibility of non-farm employment are the main reasons for the decline in local authority and in the legitimacy of local rules, for mounting conflict and for dwindling joint participation in maintenance and repairs. Women's participation, the consequence of male labour migration, is indeed one of the changes irrigation systems have to face.

Reduction of paddy cultivation during spring

One of the consequences of the aforementioned shortage of labour is the reduction of the surface area cultivated with paddy during spring (April-July): the crop itself requires a certain amount of labour, and irrigating it is also labour consuming. Nonetheless, a more detailed study would have to be carried out in order to fully understand the increase in vegetable cultivation – which also calls for intense labour. Indeed, there has been a spectacular shift from very little cultivation of vegetables in the 1990s to plots cropping up next to each house, and even the sale of vegetables.

Concentrating farming activities around the house

The reduction of the area taken up by farming activities and its concentration around the house is a process that took place over the 20th century in the middle mountains of Nepal: in Aslewacaur, with the construction of irrigation canals that helped intensify the cropping pattern, villagers based in Aslewacaur stopped cropping fields that were more than 3-4 km away, and instead a member of the family went to settle near the fields; cows stopped being put out to graze and were permanently stalled (Aubriot 2004); with the rarefaction of trees and the closure of forests, farmers started to plant trees in their field, thus bringing the resource closer to home (Bruslé *et al.* 2009; Smadja 1995: 196-197). In many places, the restructuring of used space leads to the scattering of houses over the mountainside, a concentration of resources near houses (trees, water—with some tanks—cows, fields, etc.), while migrations send people further and further away (Smadja 2007).

In Aslewacaur, this ongoing process of concentrating farming activities around the house is being achieved via three phenomena. A first solution involves households that suffer from a shortage of labour: only fields near the house will be worked and land considered too far away (from 500 m to 3 km, according to families) will be rented out. A second solution is chosen by some men who have decided to stay on in the village: they crop vegetables in fields near their houses, and sell them; this constitutes an important value-added activity that is new to Aslewacaur, and thanks to road developments, the vegetables are despatched by truck to remote areas. A

third solution is to reduce the time needed to collect firewood and water, hence make life easier for women: gas stoves are now sometimes used for cooking and plastic water tanks have been set up near houses, which are automatically filled by a plastic pipe running from the collective water tap (thus making use of the difference in altitude).

The situation is certainly not the one described by Khanal *et al.* (2006) in Kaski district where half of irrigated fields have been abandoned – though the trend in Aslewacaur regarding the few rainfed fields seems to be towards abandoning them. The difference with the example studied by these authors might be that there land is situated on rather steep slopes, far from the house whereas in Aslewacaur land is situated near the house, hence it is a relatively easy area to work since it is flat (a high alluvial terrace), and rural density is much higher (x 2.5) in Gulmi than in Kaski. Furthermore, Aslewacaur does not match the description given by Marcfarlane (2001) again for Kaski district, which appears to be affected by a rural exodus and the pauperization of the village population. On the contrary, in Aslewacaur, a number of material improvements have been achieved, private initiatives can be observed and villagers are involved in the proper functioning of village institutions (both formal and informal, such as committees devoted to school, health post, common land, irrigation canal issues), in spite of the civil war which has induced a lack of enthusiasm for decision-making in collective affairs. Is this due to the fact that in Aslewacaur farmers are not dependent on pensions,¹⁰ that they are relatively far from any town and that irrigation and roads offer the possibility of growing and selling cash crops? Most probably. Since migration differs in history and type between these two districts, its local impact is also quite distinct.

Land tenure

Concentrating farming activities near the house can be seen in the land lease process previously described, but also in the sale of slightly out-of-the-way land. For example, an area of 4 ha of rice fields situated 1 km upstream from the hamlet and which only belonged to the people of Aslewacaur, has now been entirely cultivated by or sold to the Kunwars, since their hamlet is closer. This leasing and selling of land is plainly presented by villagers as a consequence of the shortage of manpower due to men migrating. Among 57 households interviewed in 2008 about their land tenure, 20% lease out land compared to nearly none in 1992. And

¹⁰ Adhikari (2001: 250) may have misinterpreted the impact of ‘out-earning’ in the village studied: it may not be access to outside earnings that reduces the Gurungs’ dependence on agriculture, but the type of job (army which offers pension). In Aslewacaur, migrants do not benefit from a pension scheme and are still dependent on agriculture even on returning from migration.

contrary to what one would expect, this does not generally concern farms managed by women alone, but farms where the head of the household is the only man present (the young generation having left). The importance of such a practice reflects the impact of international migration on the change in mentality regarding agriculture, the food supply and the monetization of exchanges: nowadays farmers agree to buy rice from the shop instead of producing it, to have fields cultivated by somebody else for cash or grain, which was inconceivable fifteen years ago.

However, small landholders rent land on lease and tenant farmers represent 24% of the households interviewed. Interestingly, among them 42% are run exclusively by women. A detailed economic study would have to be carried out if we are to understand the weight of factors such as the land owning area, current labour force, and amount of remittance in this leasing process.

Another indirect impact of permanent and temporary migrations is the purchase of land by neighbouring villagers. Initially, on construction of the irrigation canal (end of the 19th century), people who were not Brahman could not acquire water rights. For example, Newar land located on the boundary of what became the irrigation network was not included and the Newars were not at first granted water rights. Some blacksmiths, who had land in the area were excluded, with old land records attesting to this (this exclusion does not figure in the collective memory). Irrigation has progressively evolved from elitist and exclusive rules to include other groups as water right holders. Nowadays, the informal rules on selling land, preferably within the lineage group or the clan, are less rigid. More Kunwar people (from 2 in 1992 to 9 in 2008), from the neighbouring hamlet, have bought irrigated land in Aslewacaur with their remittances. Thanks mostly to the Maoist movement, some Magars (former *hali*) and Kamis, settled in the hamlet, might now have access to rice fields (7 v 1 in 1992).

Following Adhikari's example regarding his study in a village in Kaski district (2001: 248), we can conclude that the creation of land-leasing and labour employment opportunities within the village help to sustain the livelihoods of marginal farmers and landless labourers.

Conclusion

The amazing rate of national and international migrations from Aslewacaur is undoubtedly a consequence of demographic growth in a densely populated area, with the village being incapable of feeding its inhabitants.¹¹ Moreover, the migration rate has most probably increased

¹¹ In 1992, rice production covered less than 80% of village needs (Aubriot 2004: 41).

over the last 15 years because of the civil war which has caused young people to flee. The other changes in temporary migrations are the diversification of destinations (abroad and to Kathmandu), their feminization and the general desire to study. Permanent migrations to the Terai are still ongoing because of its very strong pull (easier life, schooling, hospitals) despite growing land pressure in the region.

On the whole, labour migration has resulted in the monetization of services and the decline and even death of traditional service jobs and relations, as well as a sex-ratio imbalance due to the ensuing labour shortage. This has led to the feminization of some tasks and responsibilities (one-third of houses are run by women only), the lease of land, especially parcels further away, and conversely, the purchase of land by farmers from neighbouring villages. The land tenure movement and resource management dynamics are part of a more general process dating back to the beginning of the 20th century, namely the concentration of farming activities around the house prompted by the labour shortage.

However, two findings are quite unexpected in this context where a village is affected by migratory phenomena: the first is related to the proportion of joint and nuclear families, the latter being lower in 2008 than in 1992 and previous years. The incredible percentage of male workers now absent may have led to preventing a split into nuclear families that would otherwise have been headed by women only. The second is that among farms taking out a lease on land, many are run by women, whereas this process of leasing land is quite recent (within the last 15 years) and is due, according to villagers, to the shortage of manpower. A more detailed study taking into account the cultivated land area, remittances and the workforce on the farm would have to be carried out in order to understand the choice between intensive or extensive agricultural work, between taking out a lease on land or leasing out land.

It remains to be seen whether the current trend towards international migrations follows the same pattern as previous Nepalese migrations, where migrants have invested their earnings in the farm, or whether it is linked to a social context favouring schooling and a reduction in the value of manual labour. According to this last hypothesis, one consequence of this could be young people's lack of interest in farming activities already observed in the plains of the Terai and in India. Will the densely populated Nepalese mountains be spared this tendency or will they follow the same process and in a few years' time be inhabited only by elderly farmers or by people with very little schooling? It is difficult to make any estimation at the moment since the young generation is living away from the village, in migration.

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Migration from Jumla to the Southern Plain

Satya Shrestha-Schipper

Migration is not a recent phenomenon in Jumla, it has been a part of the livelihood strategies of the inhabitants of Jumla (called Jumli) for generations. It provides them with a new possibility of improving their existing economic condition. Migration in this region has been taking place in at 'seasonal' and 'temporary' form to the Tarai and India. The latter category of migrants leaves for longer periods to work as guards (*chaukidar*), labourers, generally on construction sites mainly in Northern India. Dahal, *et al.* (1977: 68) define this type of migration as 'long-term labour migration': "labour done outside the villages of origin for a period which keeps the migrant out of the village for at least one entire yearly agricultural cycle", and they "regularly send back cash to their families and bring back food and cloth when they return on leave" (*ibid*: 69). Besides, seasonal migration takes place in winter and between the months of December-January (*Push*) and February-March (*Phāgun*) is the slack season in agricultural work; the need of farm labour is minimal, so men have plenty of leisure time. They thus go to the south on a seasonal trip. Most of these seasonal migrants work as peddlers in India and in Nepalese plains and cities. Occasionally, they find temporary employment, mainly in the agricultural sector as labourers. They usually return home in spring to begin a new agricultural season. However, since the early 1970s, a different migration pattern has emerged among Jumlis, in particular among the inhabitants of the Sinja valley. Besides their traditional seasonal and temporary migration, some families and family members have opted for permanent emigration to the Tarai. They mainly settle in Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Surkhet districts in Western and Far Western Nepal. The creation of Rara National Park in 1976 in Jumla (now in Mugu district) had forced the inhabitants of two villages situated within the National Park perimeter to move out; however, they were resettled by the government in the recently cleared forestland in Bardia district. A decade long Maoist insurgency has generated another category of migrants in this region that can be called 'conflict migrants'; most of them have settled in cities and district headquarters where security is well managed. Except for the involuntary migrants from the perimeter of Rara National Park and 'conflict migrants', for Jumlis whether rich or poor, migration remains part of the livelihood strategies for generation rather than a simple survival strategy in times of hardship; it is, therefore, carefully planned. This article first discusses the historical context of migration to demonstrate that migration is indeed not a recent phenomenon and is deeply rooted in the socio-economic context of the region. It then looks

into migration patterns and processes of permanent migration. Moving to the Tarai permanently is not a drastic move, it is rather a gradual process, with seasonal migration followed by permanent migration in the course of time. This article is based on several years of field observation in Jumla.

The Setting

Jumla is one of the five districts of Karnali Zone in Mid-Western Nepal that lies above 2,300 m in altitude. The district is divided into 30 VDCs (Village Development Committees) which are mainly located in three valleys: Tila River (*kholā*), Chaudhabisa River and Sinja or Hima River. The district headquarter is situated in Khalanga and is also known as Jumla Bazar.

This district has recently been linked by the Karnali highway. It is more of a wider trail than a proper road. Despite its precarious and dangerous state, small trucks, tractors, and jeeps brave the road. This road link has brought some relief to the local inhabitants of this district and its neighbouring districts. It has not only provided easy access to the outside world, but has also drastically down the price of basic necessities and increased their availability. In the past, goods had to be brought in either by plane, helicopter or on mule or horseback, thereby increasing transportation costs.

Most Jumlis are by and large Hindu: Matwali Chetris (the Chetris who consumes alcohol), high caste (Brahman, Thakuri) and artisan groups: tailor-musician (Damāī), shoemaker (Sārki) and carpenter (Kāmī). Nevertheless, they do not live in the same area; they occupy different ecological niches. Matwali Chetris reside in the hill areas, whereas, high caste (Brahman Thakuri) and artisan groups live in the valley. Some Mugal Bhotias and Newars are also found in the district headquarter, Jumla Bazar. Newars are said to have arrived in Jumla more than a hundred years ago from Kathmandu, whereas Mughals arrived in Jumla only a few years ago from Mugu district.

The economy of Jumla is primarily based on agriculture and animal husbandry. Brahman, Thakuri and artisan groups cultivate paddy on irrigated land called *gyūlā* in the valley, whereas Matwali Chetris own large herds of sheep and goats and grow dry crops mainly on un-irrigated land called *pākho* or *bhuwā*. Agricultural production and animal husbandry alone are not sufficient to sustain their subsistence; thus, Jumli people supplement their economy through seasonal and temporary migration. Temporary migrants do not choose a particular month to migrate, they can leave at any time of the year. However, seasonal migration takes place in winter when there is no major agriculture work that requires the presence of the male workforce. Most men, regardless of their economic status, leave in November-December (*Mangsir*) for their seasonal trip to

the south (India and Nepal), returning in March-April (*Cait*) to begin the new agricultural cycle. During these periods, villages are mainly inhabited by women, children and elderly men. In Jumla, only men take part in migration whether it is seasonal or temporary migration, while women stay behind to deal with farm work, livestock, household work, children, etc.

Historical context of trade and seasonal migration

Inter-, intra-regional migration and trade have been a part of the livelihood strategy of the Jumlis for centuries. Without this type of temporary migration and trade, Jumlis are not able to acquire household necessities, such as, salt, iron, tea, spices, sugar, clothing, etc., that are either not available or not produced in the region

Trading between north (Tibet) and the south had become well established as early as the twelfth century when the powerful Malla Kingdom, whose capital was situated in Jumla district (Lamathada in the Sinja valley), ruled the whole of western Nepal and part of Tibet (Guge and Purung), and controlled the Himalayan trading route running north to south (Bishop 1990: 300). According to Bishop, wool and other indispensable goods of Tibetan and Chinese origin flowed southward, and grains and other necessities of Indian and Nepalese origin went to the north (*ibid*). People from western Nepal, particularly from Jumla, not only controlled the trading route between the north and south, but also enjoyed trading with India. Nepalese falcons are said to have been very popular among *Navāb* in India for their hunting technique. Birds were usually captured in Jumla and its surrounding areas by Jumli traders during the period of July-August (*Sāun*) and October-November (*Kārtik*) (Singh 1971: 234-265). Then the birds were trained before being taken to Rajapur and Golaghat for sale. Muslim *Navābs* from Lucknow, Kanpur, Delhi, Kashmir and Andrapradesh came there to buy the birds; however, this trade is said to have plummeted since 1946 and to have completely disappeared since 1950 (*ibid*: 167).

Migration pattern in the past and at present

Although migration has been a main feature of the Jumlis' livelihood system, the migration pattern differs according to geographical distribution and ethnic/caste groups. It can first be divided into two broad categories based on the geographical division: between the inhabitants of the Sinja Valley and the rest of the population of Jumla district.

Most men from Jumla, except for the inhabitants of the Sinja Valley are mainly temporary migrants to northern India: Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh, where construction work can be found in abundance.

By contrast, the Sinjals are mainly involved in trading. They are traditionally known to be good traders, and they are also known for their shrewdness. The following saying commonly used by Jumlis themselves to illustrate the Sinjals' shrewdness: "Seven Rakals one Sinjal and seven Sinjals one Mugal (*sāt Rakāl ek Sinjāl, sat Sinjāl ek Muḡāl*)". Even though, Sinjals are collectively known for their business instinct, their migration pattern can be split according to their ethnic belonging: high caste and Matwali Chetri.

Singh (1971: 226-227) explains a complex migration pattern followed by the high caste Sinjals between the north and south until 1950; according to the author, the Sinjals' main trading destinations to the north were border-trading centres with Tibet (China): Taklakot, Cepkalung, Hariyacaur and Tanke. Among the four centres, Sinjals preferred to trade in Taklakot because it was open throughout the year. However, most business took place during a five-month period: July-August (*Sāun*) and November-December (*Mangsir*), whereas, the other three border trading centres were open only for three months during the periods: July-August (*Sāun*) and September-October (*Asoj*). The Sinjals did not speak the local language so they hired an interpreter who could speak the Nepali and Tibetan languages to communicate with the local people. The interpreter's work was not only to interpret the language between locals and the Sinjals but also to solve the border court cases. An interpreter for Taklakot was locally hired and was paid 15 rupees per month. For Cepkalung, the interpreter was from Limi (Humla district). For Hariyacaur, the interpreter was hired in Dojam, while the interpreter for Tanke was from Nepka. Since the annexation of Tibet by China in 1959, the traditional trading system with Tibet has declined or totally stopped.

However, the high caste Sinjals continued to travel between the north in summer and the south in winter. They went northwards to Mugu and Humla, to buy or to barter local products, such as, herbs, wool and woollen products, yak tails and musk mainly for Indian clothes. Local products from the north would then be sold in southern Nepal and India during their winter trip. Some Sinjals sold these products in Nepalgunj and carried the money to India, and some of them carried the products to different cities in India: Kanpur, Delhi, Lukhnow, Ludhiyana, Amritsar, Nainital, Kolkata, etc., to get a better price. With the money they earned by trading in different cities, they bought readymade garments at auctions, coral (*muḡā*), and bracelets (*kaka*) these were sold in the Tarai and in the hills, particularly in Mugu and Humla districts (*ibid*: 234).

Horses from Jumla have been known throughout western Nepal for their strength and stamina, and the demand is very high in lower part of the hills. They are mainly sold in Dang Valley, Rajapur, Joljibi, Nepalgunj, Mahendranagar, Tribeni and Butwol (Bishop 1990: 249). Among those

places, Joljibi (border market between Nepal and India is located in Darchula district, far western Nepal) is the most popular destination for horse-trading. Once a year Sinjals from the Sinja Valley leave with horses that were bought or bartered from Humla, Mugu districts and the Sinja Valley to Joljibi to sell on the market. This trade takes place over eight days once a year between October-November (*Kārtik*) and November-December (*Mangsir*). According to Singh (1971: 232), horse-trading is a generations old tradition among Sinjals, whereas Shrestha explains (1993: 100) that it is a recent phenomenon among Sinjals. According to the latter author, Sinjals learnt this trade from the Byansis (an ethnic group from Darchula district) who came to the Sinja Valley to buy horses. Three generations ago, a Sinjal from Diyargaon decided to follow the Byansis and, ever since, the locals themselves travel to the market. Nevertheless, horse-trading remains a lucrative business and is very popular among high caste Sinjals who have the courage and the means to continue this type of trading regardless of the risks involved on their way to the market. Travelling to Joljibi takes 15 to 20 days on foot with horses, and the horses can die of sickness or can be stolen on the way to the market.

Until the 1970s Matwali Chetris, like their high caste neighbours from the valley, also migrated to the north in summer and to the south in winter. Their trade was more localised and focused on upper Mugu in the north. They travelled to Mugu village (*gāon*), the last Nepalese village with its checkpoint entering to Tibet. Matwali Chetris took grain packed on the back of sheep to upper Mugu; the goods were bartered for wool and Tibetan salt with Mugal Bhotias. Matwali Chetris took Tibetan salt exchanged with Mugal Bhotias and woollen carpets called *raḥī*, *liu* to regions in the south, particularly to Bajura, Acham, Jajarkot, Dailekh and Surkhet, on their winter grazing trip. They bartered Tibetan salt and woollen carpet for grain and Indian salt. The latter would be exchanged in the Sinja Valley for grain, and the grain would later be taken to upper Mugu to be exchanged for wool and Tibetan salt. There is a strong demand for Tibetan salt in Jumla as well as in southern regions; villagers believe that Tibetan salt is best for animals despite the availability of Indian salt, and it is sought after even to this day.

While the affluent high castes and Matwali Chetris were engaged in a complex migratory trading system between the north and south, other villagers in the Sinja Valley, including artisans groups, were more involved in seasonal and temporary labour migration that did not call for more cash. Temporary migrants have worked on construction sites, on apple farms, as porters and sometimes as guards (*caukidār*); most of the seasonal migrants have worked as peddlers in India and in Nepal. Some of the artisan groups, such as tailor-musicians (*Damāīs*) have been lucky to be able to carry on their traditional work, tailoring, in southern Nepal,

while other artisan groups have to move on to northern India to work as labourers.

Change in (trade) migration pattern

The trading tradition of the Sinjals from the Sinja Valley whose trade to the north was affected due to the closing of the northern border with Tibet suffered another setback due to government intervention in the region. The government expanded Nepal Airlines (a state-owned airline, formally known as Royal Nepal Airlines) network to Humla in the 1970s. The airline connection with Humla has made it easier for Humlis (inhabitants of Humla) to travel outside the region and also made it easier for local traders to import basic necessities by air. However, the airline network has put an end to the trading tradition that high caste Sinjals enjoyed in Humla for many generations. They were not able to compete with imported goods due to the high cost involved in portage from the southern border to Humla. According to Shrestha, only one trader from Diyargaon was still regularly going to Mugu and Humla to sell cloth during the period of the author's research (1993: 101-102). Since then this trader has also put an end to his trading trip to Humla. The affluent high castes of the Sinja Valley have turned to horse breeding, as it brings in more money. Most high caste Sinjals rear horses in view of selling them to horse traders. The price of a horse varies from twenty thousand Rupees to fifty/sixty thousand Rupees; in some cases it costs even more. Some Sinjas are involved in trading dry wild mushrooms (*Himalayan morel*). They are known to be an aphrodisiac and are said to have other medicinal properties. They grow in the months of April-May (*Baisākh*) and May-June (*Jetha*) in the Sinja Valley. Mushroom traders buy the mushrooms from the local villagers paying them one to two Rupees for one mushroom. After drying the mushrooms, the traders take them to Delhi to sell them. In the early 1990s, a kilo of dry *morel* mushroom was said to be worth five thousand Nepalese Rupees in Delhi. Due to the profit margin, more and more people became attracted to this trade, and as a result the price went down. Villagers nowadays say that mushroom trading is not as lucrative as it used to be. They have consequently stopped going to Delhi themselves to sell the mushrooms. The latest business venture among high-caste Sinjals is *yarsagumba* (*Cordyceps sinensis*), also known as 'Himalayan Viagra' that grows above 4,000m altitude in spring and summer. It is a very lucrative industry with one kilo of *yarsagumba* believed to be worth around eight hundred thousand Nepalese Rupees on the international market in 2008. Given the large amount of money to be made, some Sinjals have ventured to Dolpa district (which is a few days' walk from Jumla) in

the hope of collecting yarsagumba. So far the quest for new found gold has not been met with any success.

In 1976, the government set up Rara Nation Park in Jumla district (now in Mugu district) to protect fauna and flora and also to develop tourism in the region. Since its creation, any exploitation within the National Park and along its perimeter has been prohibited. This prohibition has severely affected Matwali Chetris who depended on the Park for grazing their livestock. Most of the good pastureland was to be found within the National Park's perimeter, but the locals were forbidden to graze their animals there. Due to the lack of sufficient pastures for their herd, villagers were forced to reduce their number of ovine. This reduction in ovine seriously affected the salt-grain trade between the north and south. The Matwali Chetris who used to travel to upper Mugu for trade no longer travel. The Matwali Chetris pattern of travelling to Mugu has somewhat changed. Nowadays some Mugals Bhotias from Mugu district travel to Sinja to exchange salt with grain, but on a smaller scale. Mugal Bhotias make the trip with salt whenever they need grain, though more and more they buy grain from the Sinjals in cash. Since traditional salt trading between the north and south has stopped, Matwali Chetris have changed their trade route to the south. They now particularly travel to Dailekh with kidney beans to exchange them for rice. Nowadays, more and more villagers use mules to carry kidney beans and rice to and from Dailekh. Sheep are rarely used to transport grain. However, transhumance is still practised by villagers who do not have enough pasture to keep their herd of sheep in the village throughout the winter; for example, this is the case of the Budals (inhabitants of Budu village in the Sinja Valley). They therefore take their flock to Acham for three months every winter. They leave in the month of October-November (*Kārtik*) and return to their village in the month of January-February (*Māgh*) or February-March (*Fāgun*). During the trip the Budals sell homemade woollen blankets and with the earnings generated from the sale they bring rice with them when they return home.

An important factor that restricted trading with the southern region was the police posts that were set up on the trail to Surkhet in the 1980s. The police at these checkpoints were known to be notorious for harassing Jumlis who went southwards for winter migration. They prevented the Jumlis from taking medicinal herbs that were not even on the list of banned herbs for export. If a migrant was caught with any herb even for personal use, he would be arrested. If the person arrested paid a hefty sum to the policemen at the check post, he would be allowed to proceed with his journey. Otherwise, he would be held back at the checkpoint thus delaying his trip. One anecdote I might recount: in 1996 I accompanied one of the migrant groups from Botan village in Sinja valley. After having

gone through other checkpoints, we arrived at the famous checkpoint situated in Ghumaune, in Byauli; it was under the jurisdiction of Dailekh district. We were all held up at the check post, and our belongings thoroughly checked; but they could not find anything illegal. However, they found some walnuts from two of our group members, which they had brought to eat on the way. They were not on the list of banned medicinal herbs; nonetheless, the policemen took the two into custody for possessing walnuts. Members of the group told me that because of my presence, the policemen could not ask for a bribe. They therefore took the two persons into custody as a reprisal. The two culprits were taken to the police station at the Dailekh district headquarter. The walnuts were all eaten by the accompanying policemen on the way to the police station. The two arrested were retained for two days at Dailekh police station, then released. However, they were told to appear in court in Dailekh headquarter when they return from their winter migration.

To avoid any harassment at checkpoints, villagers do not carry any local produce, which mostly consisted of herbs, for trade. In the past, they used to take some of these products to peddle them in India and in Nepal, which gave a good return. Nowadays, they set out with money if they have any; if not, they just carry enough to get to Nepalgunj where they borrow money from a *baniyāñs* (shopkeeper). All Sinjals know one or two such *baniyāñs* in Nepalgunj from whom they regularly borrow money for their winter trip to India and in Nepal. Some *baniyāñs* even provide free accommodation for Sinjals. The arrangement is that *baniyāñs* loan money to Sinjals interest free; when they return from their seasonal migration, they must return the borrowed money to the *baniyāñs* and buy any necessary clothing in their shops.

With the borrowed money, the migrants buy readymade garments in India and peddle them in Indian villages. They also buy asafoetida in India, and use artful tactic to sell it in the same country (for details, see Shrestha, 1993: 103-104).

The major changes in the Jumlis' migration pattern occurred in the 1960s with opening of the Tarai for settlement. Since then some seasonal and temporary migrants from Jumla have settled permanently in this newly opened region.

Permanent Migration to the Tarai

The migration process from the hills to the Tarai, including Surkhet, began as early as the 1910s during the Rana reign, yet the resettlement programme in the Tarai was not as successful as the government had hoped. At the time people were afraid to move to the Tarai because of it being a malaria-infested area, thus presenting a deadly threat (J.P. Elder *et*

al., 1976: 11). The king of Dullu had said to have given the land in Surkhet Valley as a *birtā* to the Thanis (tax collectors). Sher Bahadur Mall, an ex-colonel from Dailekh came with soldiers and farmers to the valley to clear the land (H. Buchmann *et al.*, 1973: 35). In addition, farmers from Dailekh, Baglung, Sallyan and Gorkha also came to cultivate the valley, but for fear of catching malaria they avoided spending a night on the spot; they set up residence in the nearby hills to avoid catching the illness (*ibid.*). Permanent settlement in the Tarai, including Surkhet Valley, only started after malaria had been eradicated in the 1960s. Prior to that, the region was inhabited by Tharus and Rajis (indigenous people) who were immune to malaria. Most of the Tharus found in Sukhet valley today are said to have come from Dang Valley in the 1920s (*ibid.*).

After the eradication of malaria from the Tarai region, the government opened the land for settlement in the 1960s. The government had not only encouraged the hill people to migrate to the Tarai, but also set up settlement offices called Punarvas Company Office in different parts of the Tarai to facilitate the settlement process (J W. Elder *et al.*, 1976: 12-17). At the beginning of settlement process, the State-owned Punarvas Company seemed to have maintained the ethnic identity and geographical division of the migrants. In 1970, G.P. Sharma, the general manager of Punarvas Company wrote that “In the new settlement villages, the grouping are being made primarily of those who come from the same district or region and secondarily of the family of the same origin”, to maintain the traditional community links so that new ideas would easily be introduced into the community through their own community leaders (cited in J.B Elder *et al.*, 1976: 35). Sometimes later, the Company changed this policy, and efforts were made to intermix the different ethnic groups from different regions, settling them in the same area in order to reduce the regional and ethnical division and to encourage the settlers to think of themselves all as Nepalese (*ibid.*).

Since the opening of the Tarai in the 1960s, some people from Jumla district, particularly from the Sinja Valley, have turned their seasonal and temporary migration into permanent migration to the Tarai. According to the findings of my fieldwork, Matwali Chetris from the Sinja Valley started to migrate to Surkhet in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Their decision to migrate and resettle permanently in the Tarai was carefully planned, and the selection of a place for migration was heavily influenced by ethnicity, social networks and prior knowledge of the place.

Most Matwali Chetris from the Sinja Valley who migrated to the Tarai in the late 1960s and early 1970s were subsistent farmers. They chose to settle in the surrounding areas of the Surkhet Valley rather than in the district headquarters, Birendra Nagar (a planned city). Their choice of the area or village was influenced by their familiarity with the place, ethnic

homogeneity and their social network. They often settled in villages closer to forests where one of their kin members had already settled. For example, Kalapani village in Surkhet Valley is located an hour's drive away from Birendra Nagar and is known as Lumal (inhabitants of Luma village located in the Sinja Valley) village. Most of the inhabitants of this village are Matwali Chetris who migrated from Luma village. To reach the village one has to walk for an hour on leaving the main road. It is surrounded by forest and pastures. The physical features of Kalapani are very similar to those of Luma village except for its location; it is situated at a lower altitude. It is said that Lumals were attracted to the place because of the aspects similar to their village; in addition, most of them could continue their traditional line of work. Most Lumals in Sinja, by tradition, were shepherds and they have remained shepherds at their new destination. The following example illustrates the importance of close relationships of ethnicity and social network. During my recent trip (September 2009) to the Sinja Valley, I met a family who was all set on moving to Surkhet, Kalapani, where one of their kin members has been living for a number of years; the latter facilitated the Lumal family's migration to Kalapani. The family has already sold all their belongings in Lumal village, their land, house and their herd, and has bought land in Kalapani. The eldest son of the family has already moved to the new village. His wife and children, his brother, sister and parents were planning on joining him before the winter. Furthermore, they planned to breed goats as a living in the new village, Kalapani.

Similarly, this ethnic division is maintained not only in Surkhet, but also in other regions by Sinjal migrants. Matwali Chetris and Thakuris from the Sinja Valley, who migrated to Kailali district, live in different villages. Not all inhabitants of a village in Kailali come from a single village, but most of them belong to the same caste. I was told that ethnic homogeneity helps villagers to maintain their social cohesion.

Furthermore, although the trend of migrating to the Tarai is very popular among Matwali Chetris and high castes, very few artisan groups have migrated here. The lack of capital to buy land in the Tarai made artisans groups less mobile than their high caste and Matwali Chetri neighbours. I only got to know one artisan family, Damāī, who moved to India several years ago; since then the family has never returned to the village. Although artisan groups are poor and do not have enough capital to buy land in the Tarai, they refuse to become Sukumbasi (landless people) upon migrating. However, a Matwali Chetri family from Botan (the Sinja Valley) migrated to the Tarai to become Sukumbasi a few years ago. The family is not poor; they own property in the village.

Despite migrating to the Tarai, migrant families remain closely related to their village of origin. Even after permanently migrating to the Tarai,

some family members keep their part of the share in the village. The house is usually entrusted to the brothers or kin members still in the village along with the land they cultivate until the families decide to sell them both. But, a long time goes by before a migrant family decides to sell or give the land away officially. For example, a Botal who migrated to Kailali in the early 1970s, returned to the village twenty years later to sell his property. Whether migrant families own property in their village of origin or not, they remain religiously attached to the village. Their lineage god remains in the village of origin. They have to come back to their lineage god's main shrine now and then. There is no rule as to when a migrant should return to the main shrine to perform a ritual; however, after major events, such as marriage, birth of a son, etc., family members usually come back to offer a ritual to their lineage god.

Moreover, the newly acquired house in the Tarai would be used by kin brothers as a safe house or a transit house during their seasonal migration to India. Permanent settlers continue to join their kin brothers who have come from their native village during the seasonal migration. Permanent migration to the Tarai does not put an end to Jumlis' seasonal migration to India and Nepalese cities. Some migrants' families do not have enough land in Tarai to be able to feed the family members throughout the year, and they are therefore forced to make trips to India. Land in the Tarai is less labour intensive; therefore, men have plenty of leisure time, and India is closer. They do not wait for the seasonal migration period to leave for India; they make trips to India throughout the year.

Conclusion

Population movements in Jumla, particularly in the Sinja Valley, have been the norm rather than an exception regardless of their ethnicity and caste. Although some populations are forced to migrate for lack of food and money without which they would not be able to buy daily basic necessities, such as, clothing, shoes, iron, etc., the population as a whole has been mobile for centuries. Although migration has been crucial to their livelihood and an integral part of the local economy, the type of migration the Jumlis are involved in does not necessarily enable family members to better their economic status substantially. It only helps to sustain their livelihood. Even if a migrant is able to save substantial amounts of money, this is rarely invested. For example, one of the inhabitants of Botan village in the Sinja Valley told me during my field trip in 2007 that a few years ago, he had made 60,000 Nepalese rupees even after spending money on consumer goods to bring back to the village; this indeed represented exceptional earnings. Generally speaking, a seasonal migrant brings home 2,000 to 5,000 (in some cases 10,000) Nepalese rupees

after buying basic necessities to bring home. Instead of investing the money, the inhabitant of Botan village lent the money to one of his relatives who was in need. This was an interest-free loan. He explained that in this way not only did he help his relative who needed money, but his money also remained safe, since he could ask for it whenever he needed to.

Geopolitical change in Tibet and government interventions in the region have forced Sinjals to change their traditional migration pattern and adopt new ones. This has encouraged Sinjals to be innovative. In addition, it has also provided them with an opportunity of transforming their seasonal and temporary migration into permanent migration to the Tarai. Many Sinjals, particularly Matwali Chetris, have seized this opportunity and have settled down in the Tarai region, as a way of diversifying their economy. However, they continue to migrate to India. This proximity to India has provided them with the opportunity of making several trips a year to India. Therefore, migration is not only a simple survival strategy to cope with a food shortage and a lack of money, but it is an integral part of the livelihood strategy of villagers regardless of their wealth. It is deeply rooted in their socio-economic culture.

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Migration and Urban Associations: Notes on social networks in Pokhara, Nepal

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This paper focuses on the dynamics of migration, social re-organization and associational activities observable in a fast-growing urban area in Nepal: the city of Pokhara, characterized by a heterogeneous and fluctuating population, by massive migration and by a segmentation of the traditional social organisation. It aims in particular at identifying some causal and functional relationships between migration and voluntary organizations in this emerging urban context.

To this end, I will first briefly describe the setting of my fieldwork, the city of Pokhara, sketching the main migration patterns affecting the city (§ 1). I will then give an overview of the multifaceted interaction between migration and voluntary urban associations, and of some of the roles played by associational networks in this context of internal and international mobility (§ 2). In order to show the complex ways in which two voluntary associations operate in this setting, I will, finally, present two ethnographic examples focusing on the rural/urban/rural circulation of ritual specialists and traditions (§ 3).

As I will try to suggest, an analysis of the urban associational network may shed light on social interaction and re-organisation strategies in the city, as well as on some of the consequences of migration and urbanisation in Nepal. It can also help to understand how rural and international migrations are continuously shaping the city and creating multiple ties linking it to its national and international environment.

The data discussed below, unless otherwise specified, are the result of fieldwork conducted in Pokhara from October, 2006, till June, 2007, as part of a research project on civil society networks in that city.

Migration patterns in Pokhara

Pokhara, a small bazaar in the Sixties, with a population of 20,611 inhabitants in 1971, is today the main city of the Western Development Region, with 156,312 inhabitants according to the 2001 census. Its expansion has been extremely rapid, even when compared with the high rates of urban growth which generally characterize developing countries, and is largely due to massive migration over the last two decades.

Internal migration has led to substantial changes in the social composition of the city: the census report of 2001 records eighty-one ethnic and caste groups, while in the early Fifties “there were at most ten to fifteen, mainly caste groups” (Adhikari 2007: 32). The largest groups

(2001) are Bahun (22.8%), Gurung (21.6%), Chetri (15.3%), Newar (10.5%), Dalit (8.7%) and Magar (8.2%).

Migratory trajectories follow three main patterns:

1) 'Classical' migration to the city from rural areas or other minor towns, which dates back to the end of the Seventies, when seasonal migration became permanent (Adhikari and Seddon 2002).

2) 'Triangular' mobility and settlement, where Pokhara does not constitute the working destination of migrants, but their final settlement destination, on returning from abroad. This pattern, particularly widespread in Pokhara, is related to the high percentage of overseas migration characterizing the Western Development Region, which represents 43.68 percent of the country's overall labour migration outside South Asia (Seddon *et al.*, 2002: 23; Wyss 2004: 9). Once back in Nepal, most of these migrants tend to settle in Pokhara rather than in their villages of origin, mainly because of the infrastructures, health and education facilities which the city offers as opposed to the rural areas. This is the typical migratory pattern of Gurkha soldiers (Pettigrew 2000: 8-9), who constitute an important portion of Pokhara immigrants and a strong component of the associational network.

3) 'Temporary migration', which includes those categories of transient migrants passing through the city to travel elsewhere, or living there temporarily (e.g. businessmen, students) without aiming to settle permanently, or regularly commuting between the city and the countryside (see also Adhikari forthcoming). Because of its volatility and fluctuations, this pattern is particularly difficult to document, and data on the subject are scarce.

Thus, Pokhara can be perceived, from the specific perspective of each trajectory, as a point of departure, of arrival, or of transit. As we will see, these migration patterns are connected to voluntary organizations in different ways, and the latter often originate (not surprisingly in such a fast-growing urban contest) in migrant communities. Indeed many associations, both because of their structures and their objectives, constitute a kind of connective fabric with, and between, different categories of migrants, whether older migrants or more recent ones, transient migrants or overseas ones.

Migration and voluntary organisations in Pokhara

The first evidence emerging from my fieldwork is the striking number of voluntary associations in the city: in 2007, there were 433 associations inside the urban area officially registered in the Nagarpalika (City Hall), to which one should add many unregistered organizations, as well as *tol*

(neighbourhood) associations and *ama samuha* (mothers' groups, which are very widespread), which probably double the overall figure.

This network is heterogeneous and includes many different types of associations: cultural, political, religious (e.g. temple membership or faith-based) and ethnic associations, caste and *dalit* associations, activist organizations (i.e. advocacy groups, environmentalists, etc.), organizations providing social services (*samaj sewa*), foundations, clubs (especially youth clubs), groups (e.g. the *ama samuha*), committees (e.g. the *tol samiti*, neighbourhood committees), professional corporations, federations, cooperatives, trade-unions, radio stations. Most associations are community-based, i.e., neighbourhood, grassroots, non-profit associations that seek to address community needs, and whose members usually come from the communities they serve. In most cases, these groups pre-date formal funding opportunities.

In general, there are many variations in terms of size and organizational structure within these organizations. Some are formally incorporated, with a written constitution and a board of members, while others are much smaller and informal. Their distribution, both in the social fabric and on the urban territory, is widespread: from the large ethnic organizations which number thousands of people, to the micro-groups of mothers formed only by four or five individuals, there is virtually no sector of society which is not involved in their network. The same can be observed at territorial level, since all urban areas are concerned, from the central or tourist wards, where organizations literally swarm, to the peripheral areas or the slums, where some groups (i.e. the *ama samuha*, religious organizations or *samaj sewa* associations) are very active (on associations working with *sukumbasi* [squatters], see Yamamoto 2007: 151-154). Such a large number, though in line with a more general trend in Nepal and Nepal's urban areas, is particularly noticeable in Pokhara (see also Adhikari 2007: 19).

Several factors should be taken into consideration if we are to understand this proliferation, such as: 1) the political instability of the country and the consequent weakness of the public administration, which foster the creation of alternative systems of service delivery and group-based mutual aid mechanisms; 2) the century-old associational tradition of many communities living in Pokhara; 3) the input of international donors, whose policy is to enhance the diffusion of Western-type NGOs; and 4) the large percentage of migrants in the urban population. This last point is particularly important in our context, because, as has often been observed in fast-growing urban areas, the creation of voluntary organizations is a typical response of migrants to urban conditions (see, among others, Little 1965). In Pokhara as well, urban migration is at the origin of many organizations, as clearly appears, for instance, in the case of the

associations of the ethnic minorities of Nepal known as *janajati*. In general, the very process of *formally* organizing local *janajati* communities began with the growth of their population in the urban areas, as William F. Fisher has noted in the case of the Thakalis in Pokhara, where their first formal organization (Thakali Samaj Sudhar Sangh) was established (Fisher 2001: 138). In Pokhara, the first ethnic associations were initially created in order to strengthen solidarity among migrants in town and to cope with the difficulties encountered in the urban context. The principal difficulty was ritual practice, since migrants, far from their families, could no longer perform the rituals and ceremonies requiring the participation of the family/clanic/village network.

The main *raison d'être* of the first ethnic associations established in Pokhara was therefore to provide a substitute for the family/lineage/clan/village network of newly-arrived individuals or nuclear families when performing certain life-cycle ceremonies. They also supplied ritual specialists from their communities, logistic support and a physical space needed for major rituals (temples, monasteries, cremation facilities, hall for festivals and so on). With the surge in migration to the city, these organizations mushroomed and often developed into networks made up of complementary structures at local, national and (to a certain extent and especially for certain communities) international levels. The example of the Gurung associational network illustrates this development.

The Gurung associational network

Over the last four decades, Gurungs (or Tamu) have developed a wide and extremely active network of associations in Pokhara. This network revolves around two main levels in the urban context: the local, neighbourhood level, and the central, headquarters level.

The local level is characterized by small (*tol*, i.e., neighbourhood) organisations, whose main activities include ritual cooperation to support Gurung migrants at the time of certain life-cycle ceremonies and mutual aid among Gurungs in town. These neighbourhood associations act as self-help and contact groups in order to assist newly-arrived migrants in Pokhara, as well as Gurung split households where the majority of their active members have migrated abroad, leaving women, older relatives and children behind (see also Adhikari 2007: 19).

At the central level, with a catchment area covering the whole Pokhara Valley, we find the district headquarters of the national (and international) Gurung organizations, like the Tamu Dhin, the Baudha Argaun Sadan, Tamu Chojja Dhin and the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh, whose general mission consists in implementing cultural, social and religious activities and services targeting the whole urban Gurung community (what is primarily always referred to, in the rhetoric of the activists, as the

“protection” and “promotion” of Gurung tradition). Specific objectives of these central organizations include: 1) developing revivalist initiatives in order to preserve Gurung culture and traditions in the urban context; 2) ensuring a stronger community voice in the political arena; 3) coordinating all the neighbourhood associations, through management of the local network capable, when necessary, of gathering and mobilizing most of the members of the community in town; 4) providing cremation facilities and religious specialists.

The revivalist outlook is a central feature of these associations, and their mission of cultural preservation is continuously stressed, as in this extract from an interview (2007) with the general secretary of Tamu Dhin:

The organization was founded in 2042 BS (1985 A.D.), at a time when the Gurung population in Pokhara was starting to increase. Gurungs coming into the city didn't come alone, but brought their own culture with them. However, interaction and mixing with such multicasite and multicultural environment risked weakening our traditional way of life; for this reason, many Gurung migrants felt the need to protect their own culture, and in order to preserve our traditions [...] we created Tamu Dhin, which now has 37 local, national and international branches.

Tamu Dhin and Tamu Chojja Dhin are mainly concerned with social and cultural activities, while Baudha Argaun Sadan and Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh focus on the ritual sector. Most neighbourhood Gurung associations I surveyed have links with the Tamu Dhin, which works in close coordination with Baudha Argaun Sadan. In fact, the latter constitutes the religious counterpart of Tamu Dhin, providing ritual specialists and funerary rites facilities for those members of the Gurung community resorting to Buddhist lamas for their ceremonies. The other religious organization, the Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh, poses as guardian of the Gurung shamanic tradition, and therefore represents the referral religious institution for those Gurungs who also rely on *poju* and *ghyabre* (shamans) for their rites.

These associations are divided into different committees: Tamu Dhin, for instance, is subdivided into smaller organizations in charge of specific sectors of the Gurung community, like the Women's Committee, the Youth Forum, the Students' Union, and has a network of ethnic *ama samuha* (whose members belong exclusively to the Gurung community).

Relationships among these organizations are rather complex, shifting between centrifugal tendencies of political and religious rivalry and centripetal coalitions around common interests and goals, resulting in a multifaceted pattern of competition and cooperation, alliances and scissions.

These central organizations are integrated in the national Gurung network, under the common umbrella of the Tamu Coordination Council (founded in 2000), and have international branches which function in coordination with national branches and involve Gurungs who have migrated abroad. The latter not only maintain contacts with their community and traditions through these international branches, but they are often founders and sponsors of the local/national branches. In particular, retired Gurkha servicemen, who constitute a large percentage of Gurungs residing abroad, have often been the founders of Gurung associations in Nepal. With the necessary social and financial capital, as well as spare time at their disposal, they have played an important role in the development of the Gurung associational network.

Overseas migrants may also actively participate, through the international branches, in the activities of the local/national associations, providing funding and/or expertise for specific initiatives.

But ethnic associations are not the only ones related to rural-urban and international mobility. Other types of urban associations, such as the *samparka samiti*, can also be considered as a direct offshoot of internal migration.

The samparka samiti network

Samparka samiti are “contact committees” in charge of the coordination of migrants coming from the same geographical area. Heterogeneity and the large percentage of transient population characterizing urban demography may account for the dissemination of this type of association, which singles out geographical origin and territorial solidarity as fundamental associative criteria, temporarily bypassing ethnic or caste boundaries (see Adhikari forthcoming). This does not imply that their members neglect other identity affiliations, but rather that in the urban context, and within certain specific situations, geographic origin can play a major role, singling out territorial solidarity as focal point for collective action, rather than ethnicity, caste, religion or gender.

As has been pointed out (Adhikari forthcoming), the mobility of transient populations, building multiple links between the city and their places of origin, is slowly closing the gap between the city and the countryside. Borders are being displaced, fragmented, re-shaped at different micro-levels. In the urban context, *samparka samiti* represent important vectors of convergence and physical places of contact, coordination and interaction among transient migrants and between the latter and older settlers. This convergence has far-reaching consequences: taking into consideration the political level, Adhikari observes that it has resulted in a transfer of the rural political agenda into the urban area of Pokhara, which explains the strategic role that these associations, capable

of mobilizing a large number of people at short notice for the rallies, played during the Jana Andolan in April, 2006.

Nevertheless, despite their weight in the urban fabric, *samparka samiti* remain volatile: during my fieldwork many of them were not active, since their representatives were away from town. The available data would suggest that these associations, like the population they have emerged from, are somehow transient: because their activists do not live in Pokhara on a permanent basis and because of their structural flexibility, they seem to have an intermittent mode of functioning.

If geographical organizations, like the above-mentioned ethnic associations, are directly linked to migration, other associational categories making up the urban network are also—in a less direct way—linked to this phenomenon. As an example, one can mention the *ama samuha*, a widespread type of association in Nepal.

The ama samuha network

In Pokhara, *Ama samuha* are numerous, with about 130 associations distributed over the 19 wards of the city. Such a network is even more remarkable given that these associations are of relatively recent origin: although the *ama samuha* started to develop at national level only during the 1980s, they are nowadays so rooted in the social fabric that they are perceived as “traditional” (see Biggs et al. 2004). The urban network of *ama samuha* is generally constituted on a neighbourhood basis, even if caste or community affiliations often emerge as associational criteria ultimately determining the groups’ composition. The average *ama samuha* is composed of ten to twenty married women, who form a group in order to implement social services (*samaj sewa*) on behalf of their community (neighbourhood or caste/ethnic community, which often overlap).

In Pokhara, where there are no major constraints to accessing health/education facilities, and where the burden of women’s daily activities is reduced by easily-available services (running water, electricity, gas, etc.), *ama samuha* are mainly concerned with social problems arising from migration (splitting up of households, lack of integration, isolation), unemployment and social misconduct (drug and alcohol abuse, prostitution, small-scale delinquency).

For urban *ama samuha* migration is a central issue. As neighbourhood groups they are instrumental in prompting encounters and enhancing solidarity among migrants inhabiting the same area, and between the latter and older settlers. Indeed, this is one of the reasons more often evoked to explain the creation of the groups:

Q. “Why did you create this association?”

A. “Before, we were living in the village, but then we came to live in the city [...]. Now people from everywhere, from the east, from the west,

from everywhere in Nepal come to live in Pokhara [...]; people who have money always come to live in the city, but [here] they don't know each other, they can't get to know each other, so I thought: 'if we have a group of mothers [...] we will get to know each other [...] and if there is a problem and *ama samuha* is there, we can help each other'.

In this sense, urban *ama samuha* create spaces of communication and mutual aid among people inhabiting the same area. The aspect of mutual aid is especially mentioned in relation to the fragmentation of families that the migratory process usually entails, and its negative impact on the most vulnerable members of the household, starting with the elderly:

It's very good to have *ama samuha* [...]; if there are *samuha* then [people] can always get help. For instance, now I live alone with my husband here because my children are abroad. We are already a little old and if we need help, if we get sick or if we have to do anything, like any sort of work or ritual, we cannot do it alone; so if we have a *samuha*, the members of the group always come to help us; also, if there is a wedding or any other kind of ceremony we always gather together and help each other, and we don't have to pay for that; so for this kind of help we really need *samuha*.

Another need frequently evoked during interviews with the founders of these women's groups, when asked about the reasons behind the creation of their associations, was "to get women out of the house". This answer, which is significantly frequent in groups with a majority of recently-arrived members, suggests that the latter often perceive isolation, uprootedness and dislocation as a major concern, especially as they are often separated both from their extended family and from their husbands living abroad. In this context, *ama samuha* also reflect a female response to the psychological difficulties arising from the fact of being a migrant and/or a member of a split household.

Interestingly, the opposition between "inside" and "outside" emerges as a central feature of these women's migratory experience, and associations are considered an effective means of empowerment, of obtaining "strength" in order to "come out" in an urban environment that is often perceived as hostile and dangerous for isolated women. Indeed, the "strength" and "courage" that associations can provide is a leading theme in the narratives emerging from the interviews. This "strength" is acquired not only by being together, but also by learning new skills necessary in the urban setting. The first and most basic of these skills is literacy, especially for senior women, and in effect literacy classes for adult women are one of the most common activities provided by *ama samuha*.

Beside literacy classes, the groups attempt to provide women with a wide range of informal or vocational training courses in order to give them more ready access to employment. Unemployment is often seen as one of the major problems for women in the city, where competition is stronger, access to employment restricted, and the skills developed in rural areas are of little use. Thus, a major aim of these women's groups is to provide new employment opportunities and a source of income. They attempt to do so mainly through vocational training and rotating credit groups. The latter have become extremely popular in Pokhara and often constitute a partial source of funding for international migration.

Vocational training aims at increasing the opportunities of finding a job in the city and, sometimes, abroad. For example, this is the case with vocational training for housekeepers, in which "international" standards are explained and taught to women who apply for international migration because, even if Nepalese international migration is still male-dominated, more and more women are now opting for this choice (see, among others, Yamanaka 2005).

Ethnic associations and the migration of traditions

The Pun Magar association and the kul puja 'Instructions for Use'

Migration to the city often results in a fragmentation of the social organization as well as in the individual's temporary or permanent exclusion from her/his social (family/lineage/clan/tribe) network. This social and geographical estrangement may prevent migrants from celebrating rituals requiring the participation of their village network, or which are intimately linked to ancestral geography, requiring their physical presence in their places of origin. This is particularly true of certain life-cycle ceremonies and of the cult of ancestors and of the lineage's tutelary deities. It is therefore not surprising that many community associations have been created to overcome the difficulties in performing these rituals, especially as failure to celebrate them could lead to unpleasant consequences.

Let us consider the following example, which I witnessed in 2007, during my fieldwork in Pokhara. B., a Pun Magar lady, was complaining about recurrent health problems, difficulties and conflicts inside her family, and persistent bad luck affecting her household. After several months and numerous visits to the local hospitals, she told me she believed that this was because her nuclear family, now living in Pokhara and in the UK, had failed for some time now to perform *kul puja*, the ritual centring on the cult of the lineage's tutelary deities. It was not the first time that migrants in Pokhara gave me this explanation regarding health problems or adversities, since—theoretically—*kul puja* belongs to that

category of ritual that must be celebrated in the place of origin. For this reason, many of them were unable to perform it. I was therefore rather surprised to learn of B.'s decision to perform a *kul puja* in Pokhara. She explained that it was actually possible on condition that one own the land where the ritual was to be officiated, which was the case for her. However, certain difficulties emerged during the preparation of the ceremony. *Kul puja* is a complex ritual, involving animal sacrifices and the participation of different actors, including a *jhankri* (shaman). The latter is supposed, among other things, to sing the *Karpakeliko Jiwan Gatha* (the story of the life of Karpakeli), a corpus of shamanic songs that constitutes part of the Pun Magars' myths of origin.

However, among those involved in the ceremony, there were disagreements as to the exact procedure to follow and none of the urban-dwelling Pun Magar *jhankris* contacted by the family seemed to master this corpus of myths. Help came through Lamachaure Pun Magar Samaj (a local Magar association), which had published in 2004 a booklet containing a version of the *Karpakeliko Jiwan Gatha*, together with instructions for the ritual, regarding the propitious time to perform it, the preparation and conservation of the liquor (*jaad rākhne*) needed for the ceremony and the list of required materials.

Lamachaure Pun Magar Samaj is an ethnic organization set up in Pokhara in 2001 and belongs to a network of neighbourhood associations, *ama samuha*, and youth clubs. The booklet's foreword is particularly interesting and illustrates certain dynamics informing these urban migrants' groups:

We, Pun Magars, moved from many different rural places to Pokhara where we are scattered over various wards; some of us are now living in Pokhara Lamachaure; I realized that we had many Magar families here, but we were not able to be integrated into a group, and we felt the need to create one [...]. For this reason, I thought that it would have been helpful to create a *parivar samaj samiti* [Lamachaure Pun Magar Samaj]. [Later on], following suggestions by intellectuals and other people from our community, we agreed to create a *mitra samaj* [friends' association]. So, the *mitra samaj* was created in 2058 [2001 AD], as a neighbourhood association made up of Lamachaure Samaj and Bataulechaure Samaj. Puns, Thapas and Ranas, all together created this association. [...]. Nine *ama samuha* [all Pun] are also part of the association [names], and sports *samiti* were created within the Samaj.

The text highlights the causal relationship between the process of migrating to the city, the consequent need to be "integrated into a group", the creation of the Pun association and its participation, as suggested by

“intellectuals and others”, in the *mitra samaj*. It also evokes the systemic dimension of the ideal network of this latter kind of ethnic organization, which should act as a connective fabric between various groups of Magar migrants in the city, coordinating (inter-Magar) neighbourhood associations, youth clubs, and *ama samuha*. The inter-Magar dimension remains somewhat theoretical, however, because in practice, as far as I was able to observe at this neighbourhood level, divisions between different Magar clans tend to reassert themselves, and associations are often made up of only one clan, as is the case of Lamachaure Pun Magar Samaj. This is particularly true of the Pun Magars, for whom the focal point for collective action seems to be the clan (and the geographical origin of migrants) more than the Magar community at large.

The publication of the *Karpakeliko* in 2004 echoed revivalist concerns for the protection of culture and its transmission to the younger generation, which implies a written codification of cultural practices. The explanation given by the author is particularly eloquent in this respect:

Till now, our Pun *jāt* did not have any written history: many scholars/intellectuals are now trying to research this subject, and some books have already been published on Himali culture [...]. I would like to say a few words about the holy gift of the history of ancestors (*purkheuli dan*). This has been offered to the younger generations. Because I respect our forefathers, ancestors and elder generations, I have collected and published this history of Karpakeli's life. I hope that this book will pass on knowledge to many readers and will inspire and encourage coming generations so that they can explore their own culture.

Apart from cultural preservation, we see that the author explicitly mentions the function of “passing on knowledge” to (urban) readers, including the necessary capacities for performing the ritual. Indeed, the pamphlet started to circulate and be discussed among the Pun Magars involved in the preparation of the *puja* at B.'s house (members of the household, neighbours, friends, as well as certain Pun *jhankris* living in the city and summoned for this purpose). However, the support provided by the book and by the local Pun community, including *jhankris*, was apparently not totally satisfying, as B. resolved to call for her native village *jhankri*, who was asked to come and perform the ceremony in Pokhara. The village *jhankri* performed the *puja* and left for the village again as soon as the ritual was over, but not without having first revised the original text, making his own corrections to the version of the *Karpakeliko* and to other parts of the pamphlet.

This example suggests that such associations operate at different levels in the context of rural-urban migration: 1) at individual micro-level, by

providing guidelines for rituals and recalling the myths of the group; 2) at group level, by emphasising the main themes of revivalism, such as the strengthening or re-creation of the community and the protection and transmission of its culture. It is worth noting that this process entails shifting from an oral to a written tradition, with all the implications that such a shift involves (especially the selection and written crystallization of only one version of the myth, which affects the fluidity and semantic polyvalence that characterizes oral traditions). We have also seen that the association initiated this shift by mobilizing different actors in this process, including the village shaman who revised the text and thus took part in making the book.

In this case, religious specialists and religious traditions still seem to circulate from the countryside to the urban migrant community; but we will see, in our next example, that a much older ethnic organization is actually attempting to invert this direction.

Boudha Arghaun Sadan: urban-rural transfers

Boudha Arghaun Sadan (BAS) is a large, 'historical' Gurung organization, probably the most ancient Gurung association in Pokhara. Officially established in 2035 BS (1978), it has actually been in existence since 2027 BS (1970), coinciding with the beginning of the Gurung migration to the city. Boudha Arghaun Sadan ("Council of Buddhist Funerary Rites") refers both to the association and to the *gumbā* (monastery) it founded and manages. The association today counts 800 life members and a staff of sixty people (eleven board committees plus fifty other members), while the *gumbā*, which is the first and main one for Buddhist-affiliated Gurungs in the region, has a catchment area covering the whole Pokhara Valley. At the time of data collection in 2007, forty Gurung monks were present in the *gumbā*, following the teachings of the Mahayana (Vajirayana) Nyingma sect.

The history of this association is an interesting illustration of the pattern of Gurung migration to town, of the role ex-Gurkha soldiers played in it, and of the multiple links connecting migration and ethnic associations. The following account is taken from the *Smarika* ("Record") published in 2059 B.S. [2002 A.D.] by the association itself on the occasion of its 25th anniversary:

Five decades ago, Pokhara Valley was not a developed city as it is today. People from the neighbouring hills had not migrated there yet. However, Pokhara was an essential stop for Gurkha soldiers serving in the Indian and British Armies. [...] After World War II [...] to assist the retired Gurkha soldiers, a Post War Reconstruction Fund (PWRF) was established. [...] In 2013 B.S. [1956 A.D.], the Gurkhas with that fund founded the District Soldiers Board Hospital in Pokhara. [...]

later [...] renamed [...] Western Regional Hospital. The PWRF fund also helped to open the District Soldiers' Board High School in Pokhara [...]. In 1960 A.D., the Indian Government opened its permanent pension camp in Pokhara. These developments created an environment for migration to Pokhara valley. Many ex-servicemen families, especially the Gurungs, started migrating to Pokhara.

People also began bringing their sick family members from the villages to Pokhara for treatment. People in those days did not come to the hospital unless it was a dire necessity. Most of these patients died in the hospital. The Gurung custom requires a lama, pachu, ghyabri, Aashyon and son-in-law to perform the final rites. A few other things are also required to cremate the dead body. The hospital usually required the families to claim the dead body immediately. It was very difficult for the Gurungs to perform the final rites since they did not have a cremation place of their own or a religious organization in Pokhara. That situation gave birth to the concept of Boudha Arghun Sadan.

In 2027 B.S., three ex-soldiers [...] founded an informal committee. This committee collected small donations of fifty paisa, one rupee, and five rupees from the pensioners visiting Pokhara to collect their pensions. With the collected donations, they helped others to cremate their dead relatives. In 2030 B.S., the committee had requested the Pokhara "Nagar Panchayat" (municipality) for a piece of land that the Gurungs could use for cremating their dead ones. [...] The Arghun Sadan that had such a modest beginning is now a well-established and respected Tamu institution. It has served the entire Gurung community of Pokhara and surrounding hills for 25 years.

This account highlights the part played by urban health and education facilities in creating "an environment for migration", as well as the strong presence of ex-soldiers among Gurung migrants in Pokhara, the recurrence—among the latter—of the triangular pattern of migration, the role ex-soldiers had in funding and establishing this kind of Gurung organization and their financial impact on the development of urban infrastructures. It also shows that migrants' ritual needs lie at the very root of this association, which, as we have seen, is often the case with ethnic associations in Pokhara.

The lack of Gurung ritual specialists in Pokhara was listed by the *Smarika* among the main reasons for founding the association. But today, after thirty years of Gurung migration to Pokhara, this situation appears paradoxically reversed. As the BAS board members I interviewed in 2007 pointed out, it is now harder to find lamas to perform funerary rites in rural areas:

The problem right now is that all the *lamas* have come to town [because in remote areas the population] has shrunk so much: all

those who can afford it come to town. So *lamas* don't have anybody to sustain them, and in their search for society [*sangh*] they have to come down to town. [...].

This change of situation has brought about a corresponding shift in the association's main objectives. For this reason, BAS is now training 40 monks to be sent to remote villages:

[As a result], if someone dies in the villages they cannot find a *lama* there [for funerary rites], they have to come down to town; so we can send some *lamas* to the villages, [like] a kind of Christian missionary [...] to provide ritual service, lama services to the remote areas, to keep *dharma* going.

Once these *lamas* are qualified [trained], they will be more like missionaries; they will be backed by the association [BAS]. We will back them up, the basic things they know [...], they have to go and stay there, [supported] by the association [BAS] and spread Buddhism.

We can follow the progress of Gurung immigration in town through the shift in the association's objectives, from its initial aim of providing Gurung ritual specialists in the city to the current effort of training *lamas* to be sent into rural areas. This shift reverses (or at least is attempting to reverse) the circulation of religious specialists typical of rural-urban migration, inverting, at the same time, the circulation of religious traditions.

In this respect, it is important to bear in mind that what is exported to the villages represents a specific urban interpretation of Gurung Buddhism (see Tamblyn 2002 on this point) and that, unlike other forms of Gurung Buddhism, it tends to reject cooperation with *paju* and *gyābre* (Gurung shamanic priests) during mortuary rituals. This rejection is motivated by opposition to animal sacrifice that shamans perform on those occasions. And indeed the refusal of animal sacrifice is the main argument put forward by Buddhist-affiliated Gurungs in Pokhara against the shamanic tradition. Interestingly enough, besides the theological remark that "red offering" or "cutting" (i.e. killing animals) is against Buddha's teachings, the main argument against sacrifice, according to the Buddhist exponents of the Gurung organizations I interviewed, was that it was "archaic", anti-modern (see also, for this vision of sacrifice in Pokhara, Pettigrew 2000: 31). Indeed, all the arguments made by Buddhist Gurungs against shamanic practices are centred on the issue of modernity: Buddhism is a "modern" religion, present everywhere and in line with a globalized world, while shamanism (with its ritual constraints, local specificities, ethnic uniqueness, and, especially, its emphasis on sacrifice) is not. In this sense, they establish a clear connection between Buddhism and migration: Buddhism (and the rejection of sacrifice that it entails) is

seen as the most appropriate religion for modern, migrant Gurungs, able to travel and to live anywhere in the world. As the chairman of the BAS pointed out to me: “Try to sacrifice a ram in your apartment in London, and you’ll see that not only does it happen to be very impractical, but you also risk ending up in jail as you probably don’t own a butcher’s licence...”.

Conclusion

In recent years, there has been a tremendous surge in voluntary associations in Pokhara, a city lying at the very centre of the rural and international migration movements affecting the Western Development Region of Nepal. Not surprisingly in such a fast-growing urban contest, many voluntary associations are related—to varying degrees—to migrant populations, whether older migrants or more recent ones, transient migrants or overseas ones, or with members of households left behind.

Certain associational networks can be considered as direct offshoots of migration, to the extent that they constitute the response by migrants to urban conditions. This is especially true for some ethnic associations, which intervene—from the micro-level of the individual to the macro-level of the community—in the social and ritual reorganization of migrants in the city. In certain cases, these associations have developed into complex networks linking—in what may be called meta-spaces – the rural, urban and international levels.

In these new meta-spaces, associational networks are the driving force behind the circulation of ideas and traditions; they act as mediator between migrants and their own cultures and communities, they constitute the focal point for collective action and, sometimes, crystallize conflicts inside groups. Globally speaking, the expansion and the growing importance of migrant associational networks at local and transnational levels (not only ethnic networks but also inter-ethnic ones, now very prominent) seems to indicate that they will continue to play a more and more central role in Nepalese society, both at home and abroad.

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Caught between two worlds: Internal displacement induced dilemma in Nepal

Anita Ghimire

Introduction

The Maoist conflict that was officially declared an armed insurgency on 13th February 1996, reached a peaceful conclusion with the signing of the “Comprehensive Peace Agreement” on 21st November 2006. Over the ten-year period, it was assumed that the armed conflict had displaced an estimated 600,000 people (Aditya *et al.*, 2006). It is estimated that 250,000 of them are still living in the country, while the others are thought to have left for India. Those who live in the country are called Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) according to the definition of the United Nation’s Guiding Principle on Internal Displacement (GPID) and the Nepal’s new policy on IDPs—the “National IDP Policy—2007”. The status of IDP *Bistaphit* (in the local Nepali language) is granted by the Ministry of Peace and Reconstruction (MoPR) and the Ministry for Home Affairs (MoHA). A person is given the status of IDP if he registers at the host community’s District Administration Office (DAO) as an IDP. However, verification has to be made by the Displaced Person Identification Committee to ascertain that he is indeed an IDP. This committee consists of members of the Local Peace Council, Chief District Officer, District Police Office and other government staff. A person is identified as an IDP if they have left their place of permanent residence due to the seizure of their house, land or property by parties at war, or if they are displaced due to threats, fear, and intimidation, physical and mental torture or due to problems associated with their livelihood. After being successfully identified as an IDP, the person receives an identity card. Those registered in this way obtain a relief package from the government, though only if they intend to return to their place of origin. In order to be able to claim the package, the IDP has to declare that he will return to the MoPR’s IDP cell or to the host community’s DAO. Thereupon the IDP is entitled to a transport allowance, a lump sum of Rs. 300-1000 (USD 3.89-13) per person and to incidental expenses amounting to Rs. 500 (USD 6.49) per person in the host community.

There is severe controversy about the government’s definition, identification process and response. For example, most IDPs displaced by the Maoists are of the opinion that in their home district a committee made up of seven political parties has to verify that they are IDPs, yet the Maoists still refuse to recognize them as IDPs. Says Mr D. L., an IDP who has been living in Kathmandu for the last six years, “When I went to claim

my allowance as a displaced person in the village, the Maoists said, 'Yes, we sealed his house and seized his property, but we did not tell him to leave the village, so he's not an IDP.' Hence I get no help. My house and land is in the Maoists' hands. How can I ever return?" There are many IDPs who face the same problem because of this controversial arrangement. According to the policy, only the district programme coordination committee includes representatives of the political parties that are represented in Parliament. This committee is entrusted with implementing IDP programmes at district level. However, in the relief package assistance programme, it is the seven-party committee headed by the chief district officer that identifies the IDPs at local level. However, as mentioned in the policy, the provision is different for registration. Yet for IDPs, since the relief package is what matters the most, they have to be identified by the seven-party-member committee.

However, what is most controversial is that the government proposes a return home as the only possible solution. The government considers that all IDPs want to return to their place of origin. This understanding comes with a political dimension. Most non-Maoist political leaders whose voices are heard in the government are unable to go back to their villages due to threats made by the Maoists. As such, other political parties see their base activities weaken at crucial times, during an election campaign. This involves the categories of people who would like to return and resume their political status. Coincidentally, at local level, these are the ones who make up the socio-economically and politically elite group, who have access to and negotiate with local government. Negotiations are mostly centred on their return and property issues, since the property of these groups has largely been seized by the Maoists. Thus at both central and local level, the voice of elite groups, who demand to be able to return home, have reached the ears of the government. For the latter, sending them back to their place of origin would lessen the strain on services and infrastructures in urban areas. Internationally, as a return is perceived to be the most commonly practised form of response, the international community also supports the government's move.

However, our research in the field over the last three years presents a rather different picture. It finds that an unplanned move to the urban area to escape the conflict was painful, made the IDPs vulnerable and posed problems that well planned migration would have inflicted to a lesser extent. Under other circumstances, a migrant would have taken the time to plan his migration, by choosing his destination and making living and work arrangements beforehand. However, in these conditions, a person had to flee suddenly, sometimes taking with him women and children, with no proper food, shelter and work provided for in the host area. In most cases, IDPs depend on their extended families, kin, relatives, friends

or fellow neighbours to put them up as *Pahuna* until they can fend for themselves. Yet, living in an urban area for quite sometime has provided those opportunities, aspirations and networks – dimensions that influence the IDP's decision to return home, but which are often ignored in discussions concerning IDPs. The State has instituted a return home as the sole solution, which is not what a majority of IDPs choose. The study reveals that all members, even within a same family, make different choices regarding their return home. This aspect plays a crucial part in the success of the government's present response. According to the MoPR (2009), the government targets a return of 50,000 IDPs, earmarking for this a total budget of Rs 371,600,000 (USD 4,933,333) (MoPR, 2009). However, most IDPs with access to the relief package are taking the money but not returning home. The government's own data show that despite the considerable lapse of time, only 1,466 IDPs (250 wishing to rebuild and 1,216 wishing to make repairs) have accepted the assistance that is offered in their native village. Furthermore, the above-mentioned data regarding beneficiaries is based on government registration which does not take into account whether all those who benefited from assistance returned home or were able to stay home permanently once they got there. Our research shows that, those who return home and claim the daily subsistence allowance and education allowance are also claiming money in their village and going back to urban areas. This paper explains why to expect multi-local livelihoods despite a definitive return by these people.

This paper is based on doctorate research on the livelihood of conflict-induced IDPs in Nepal. Fieldwork for the research was done during the period 2006-2009 in the urban areas of five districts in Nepal: Dang, Banke, Kathmandu, Lalitpur and Bhaktapur which are among the places with the highest concentration of IDPs (IDMC 2006). A total of 270 (150 male, 120 female) IDPs were interviewed. Research was done using standard qualitative methods which involved in-depth interviews, focus groups, formal and informal discussions with IDPs, members of host communities and State and non-State actors, as well as observations and information from secondary sources. The study used snowball sampling methods to have access to IDPs. It revealed that it was highly likely that the non-IDPs who have access to the government offices and non-government organizations also register themselves as IDPs. This even applies to some ministers who register in their local districts as IDPs and claim compensation and relief assistance. Similarly, the study also found that in attempting to increase the number of cadres to strengthen their ranks, different IDP-related and conflict victim associations have registered many people who are not really conflict victims or IDPs at all.

Multi-local livelihoods or definitive return: an analysis of IDP livelihoods in the host area

The displacement of people during the Maoist conflict followed a relatively organized trend. The conflict started in rural areas and intensified there. Thus, people who had been internally displaced from rural villages in Nepal came to live in the district headquarters, area headquarters, small cities and towns, larger urban centres and the capital, Kathmandu. Their destination coincides with the general rural-urban migration routes and most IDPs chose places where they already knew someone within their social network or places previously known to them through business connections, health services, education or work.

Despite a common pattern of IDPs belonging to a single vulnerable category, the study found that, based on their livelihoods in an urban area, IDPs can be categorized into three broad groups as follows. Among the 270 respondents interviewed in the study, 5.5% belonged to the elite groups (the first category) in terms of their socio-economic and political access both in their place of origin and in the host community, 56.7% were professionals (second category), such as journalists, teachers and youths who prospered in urban centres, while the last 37.8% included the poorest (the third category) IDPs. Their livelihoods and decisions regarding their return home are also based on the attributes of these categories.

The first category: “The elite”

The first category of IDPs primarily includes those who were displaced by the Maoists as “enemies of the people – *Samanti* of the villages. They are wealthy landowners from villages, rich people who lend money on interest, influential people of other political parties, such as local representatives of political parties, local mayors and chairmen of Village Development Committees. They used to have important social economic and political status in the village and to wield influence over a significant section of the local population. Thus, their whole family was displaced. For example, Mr K. S. (aged 69) was displaced from Kalikot in December, 1999. He came from the family of “Jimmuwal”— an administrative hierarchy of Nepal which ranked third after the King, when Kalikot was a separate kingdom. He has his own share of the vast ancestral land (204 hectares worth 300 *Ropani*) which accounts for one-fifth of the family’s property. He had been the *Pradhan Pancha* (village headman) four times under the Panchayat system and was VDC Chairman for seven years representing the Nepal Congress Party during the post-democracy period. He had had a school built for the village on his own land and at his own expense, and contributed part of his land to build the road network. He headed various committees, such as forest users groups, irrigation management group,

etc., in the local village. At first, the Maoists tried to persuade him to join their party, knowing that a majority of villagers would follow his example. But when he was not to be convinced, he was issued a death warrant along with his son. He ran away with his son with the help of the Nepalese Army. Later, his wife and daughters were abducted and their property was confiscated. The wife and daughter managed to escape, with the help of a fellow villager who was one of the abductors. They now live in the Rajhena camp in Nepalgunj.

Most of the IDPs in the first category have a similar story to tell. These people already owned houses, land or some form of business in urban areas. For example, Mr K. S. had three houses in the district headquarters, Khalanga bazar, which were rented to the Nepalese Army. Since they could afford it, most of their children and extended family members were already living in urban centres either to pursue their studies or with a well established means of livelihood. It was mostly the elderly members of families, who held prestigious positions who had stayed in the villages.

Our research finds that, in the host area, these people have been able to support themselves with their own resources. They are well aware of the government's programme and policies and have registered with the government. Most of them have been able to obtain regular support from the government thanks to their political ties. Like IDPs, these people have access to non-government organizations. Most of them have houses in the residential area of the urban centres, but very few are rentiers.

Regarding their relationship with the people of the host community, these people are no different from them because of their IDP status. Says Mr P. K, a lawyer who was displaced from Salyan and now runs an NGO that negotiates housing to shelter IDPs: "I don't need to tell people that I am an IDP. I have my own house here and I am like any other community member. My neighbours know that my property has been confiscated by the Maoists. But they do not regard me as an IDP. My sons and daughters were already living here. So, I am only registered as an IDP as far as the government is concerned". He has so far helped around 250 households settle on land belonging to the District Forest Office of Nepalgunj by negotiating with the latter.

With a house in the host area, the first category of IDPs attends community meetings, "Tole meetings" of the area, and work towards developing their community. They are involved in its social and cultural activities and are accepted as any fellow neighbours. They assume responsibilities within their respective political parties in the place where they now live, and sometimes represent their districts in Kathmandu. Some have started their own businesses or have helped their sons in this undertaking, while others have set up their own NGOs. Their major source of income comes from business and services.

However, among all IDPs, this group includes the highest number of people wishing to return to their place of origin. This is because most of their property including land and houses has been confiscated by the Maoists in their home villages. What they have in the urban area is just a very small proportion. Their chief concern is their return home to recover their property. Due to the pressure they are putting on the government, the latter has held negotiations on several occasions with the Maoists for the return of property. However, these people have more openings in local politics than in central politics. They are candidates for local political representations and have the responsibility of carrying out party activities at village and district level. Thus, they were much more active in their villages than they are now in urban areas, district headquarters and the capital. They are destined to become VDC chairman, mayor and CA members from the districts, whereas they have fewer opportunities in central politics. The Maoists have informally categorised IDPs according to their previous characteristics. These people cannot go back because for the Maoists they are primarily ranked as “Group A” (list of criminals and wrongdoers). According to the IDPs, those in group ‘A’ are forbidden from returning home because the Maoists believe that such people have committed serious wrongdoings, such as extorting heavy interests from poor people, and oppressing the poor or spying for the government.

As their property, including land, has been confiscated, they cannot cultivate, lease or sell it. Therefore, while in the urban area, they receive no crops or cash from their property. They are not allowed to visit their village. However, they maintain links with the village by exchanging information with their family members and villagers, and through visits by the latter. They learn about the local political scene and news about the villages. Due to their influential positions, villagers, relatives and people who know them from other networks of the village *afna mancheharu* visit them when they are in town, which keeps them in touch with village activities even when they themselves cannot go there. At times, some of these people even go to their district headquarters and urban areas near their villages.

However, for these families, there is an interesting contradiction in the idea of returning home. While the elderly generation see their village as their home, the younger generation who have grown up here, see it as their village home (*gau ko ghar*). For them it is more a question of retrieving their land and property in order to sell it rather than simply settling down again. The study reveals that they are still tied to their village only because their extended kin live there and the village house (*gau ko ghar*) is a place where most people go to celebrate major festivals.

Thus this sub-group finds city life more appealing. Mr S.M. (19 years old), who came to Kathmandu from Sindhuli, says that in Kathmandu he

finds he can go to private college which is much better than the college in Sindhuli. Furthermore, he is free to choose management studies (his chosen field), while he discovers an interest in computer-based education, all of which was lacking in his hometown college. In addition, he is working as a junior clerk in a business. He has friends from different parts of the country and though they know his property in his native village has been seized by the Maoists, they do not regard him as an IDP - *bisthaphit*. He says: “neither my friends are interested, nor am I interested in knowing who is *bistaphi* or who is not”.

This new generation has also readily adapted to the ways of the city in terms of daily life. For example, in Nepalgunj, elderly women spend their time worrying about the difference in the dress code, the hot weather, the lack of fruit trees and the idea of having to buy a few kilos of rice (they are not used to buying food in the village, since they believe that only the poor have to buy food), while the younger generation are not affected by this. One elderly woman even tried to abandon traditional dress (*Faria cholo*) - sari and blouse for city attire (*Kurta Suruwal*). However, after comments from her brother-in-law, she felt so self-conscious she went back to wearing her traditional dress. Mr S.M., who says he often wore cotton trousers in Sindhuli, now only wears jeans. When asked “why”? He says, “so that my friends here don’t treat me differently”.

However, the elderly generation also realizes that it would be a hard life back in the villages. “Those people who worked for us for wages are living in our houses now. They have taken over our land, they use our utensils and have become masters. If we return, they would have to leave, so they would not let us return. Relationships with these people and other relatives and kin (*nata kutumaba*) would not be the same again. But still it is where my ancestors lived (*bau baje baseko thau*), so I’d like to return there.” This is how Mr K.S. perceives his life after his return home. Yet he is in a quandary as to whether to let his children and grandchildren seize the opportunities available (in cities).

However, women are essentially caught between their husbands’ wishes and their children’s aspirations. Interestingly enough, a large majority of women wanted to stay in urban areas, their children’s education being the first reason and access to health facilities the second. Says Mrs D.S. (wife of the above-mentioned, Mr K.S.), “I want to go back to sell all my property in Kalikot, then build a house in Nepalgunj. My children want to stay here. They get a better education here. If they are sick, I can take them to good hospitals here. In Kalikot, we only have a health post and no proper treatment is available. We have to wait for days for a flight so that we can take the sick children to Nepalgunj. I have to consider a better future for my children. But my husband wants to go back.”

The second category: professionals and youths

The second category of IDPs includes professionals (army, police, civil servants, journalists, teachers, health workers) and their family members. They were targeted by the Maoists due to their profession or affiliations with the perceived enemies—the government forces. This group also includes youths who were caught between the atrocities caused by the warring sides. The youths were afraid of being abducted and forced to enrol into the Maoist army (for a detailed explanation of strategy, see Ghimire and Upreti 2008) and were equally harassed by the security forces who suspected them of being Maoists. The latter forced able youths to join their war, abducted them and, if they met any resistance, tortured them. The security forces from the government were suspicious of such youths and harassed them. Thus parents would try to send their young children away from the villages to the safety of urban centres.

However, interviews with people who pursued their college education in their native village reveal that they would have preferred to have stayed in urban areas. The war drove them to urban areas. This unprepared arrival to escape the conflict was painful, made them vulnerable and posed serious problems. They mainly relied on their friends and relatives when choosing which destination to migrate to and when sustaining their livelihood in the first period of their stay in the host community. However, after spending some time in an urban area, they now prefer because of the education and employment opportunities it offers and the lifestyle. They have lost any interest in agricultural work after achieving a significant standard of education and learning skills in the urban area. For example, Mr R. B., an IDP from Jumla, said that when his friend came to Surkhet after passing his School Leaving Certificate (tenth grade), he wanted to settle in Surkhet. However, he could not leave his elderly parents or afford to move. Without a job in Jumla, he was helping his family on the farm. He did not like this type of work. According to him, it does not provide anyone with a proper income. He wanted to get a job in an office, where he could earn money, but there were no opportunities in Jumla. He therefore studied science as far as the tenth grade, but could not continue because the college did not offer any science courses. However, after “shoes *abhiyan*” in Jumla, he left for Nepalgunj with another friend. He now studies science at the state college in the morning and works as a teacher in a private school during the day. He is very happy with his work and enjoys his studies. On graduating, he would like to work in an NGO.

After being displaced, these people have been able to support themselves by virtue of their physical and human assets (like skills, ability to do physical labour), activities and knowledge base, though a significant

number of them have resorted to menial jobs on the competitive urban labour market. Despite these difficulties, they perceive urban areas to hold more hope for the future. Consequently, they have invested in their children's education, in improving their academic and professional qualifications and in building their savings. Young people in this group are able to significantly increase their human capital, such as their education and skills, in the urban setting and have therefore become important contributors to the family.

With regard to their socio-economic activities, the majority are teachers, employees in private and government organizations, and businesses or they have their own small business. They do not encounter any significant integration problems on the labour market due to their IDP status. Most of them have found work via social networks in areas where other migrants work. For example, in Kathmandu Valley a significant number of young people have learnt to drive and now work as taxi or microbus drivers, which they usually find with the help of friends or relatives working in the same sector. Others have become computer-literate and now have a relevant job. In Dang and Nepalgunj, young people are involved in running small shops, working for large shop owners or in schools and other services.

Another important advantage of living in the host community is the possibility of being affiliated with political and non-political organizations. This involves working in political associations related to home districts, organizations for war victims, organizations for landless and homeless people (*Sukumbashi*). Organizations such as the Maoist Victim Association (MVA) have a large number of young cadres in their youth wing. These youths go through physical and ideological training which is provided by the associations. They are then made representatives of their relative districts and mobilized on occasion to recruit more war-affected youths into the party as well as to demonstrate against the Maoists and the government. The MVA also pays for the youths' food and accommodation if necessary. The youths feel that the association has become a platform for social networks, providing a sense of security, purpose and a home to them. They now get together and play games and become involved in other recreational activities. Thus they do not feel segregated and alone. The same support is given to other people who are members of the associations. Their membership in the organizations has provided them with both physical and emotional support in urban areas. They sometimes hold important positions in such organizations, mostly in the decision implementing level, while the first category of IDPs makes the decisions.

Similarly, in places like the Patu settlement of Dang, (Picture 1), Ektanagar in Nepalgunj, and the Manahara slum settlement in Kathmandu

valley, IDPs along with other migrants have developed their own community. Here people from a specific area, live in close proximity with each other, though embedded in the larger new community. So, for example in the Patu settlement (a large community), one would find a cluster of *Rolpalis*—people from Rolpa living in a neighbourhood with a cluster of *Salyanis*—people from Salyan. When a new member arrives, it is easy to identify where people from his district live within the settlement. When IDPs from here migrate to India (which is common practice), the relationship is maintained at both ends. A Salyani who comes home from India, brings money and goods sent by his neighbour for the latter's family, and takes things (usually foodstuff, pickles, etc.) from the neighbour's wife back to him in India. Thus they create their own networks in both places.



Picture 1: An organised community of IDPs and other migrants in the Patu riverside settlement of Dang. Source: Anita Ghimire, 2007.

In these new communities, IDPs along with other migrants have built roads, established communities, set up schools for their children and arranged for running water and electricity (Picture 2) on their own initiative. Up until 2008, except in Kathmandu, these communities had no support from either the government or any NGOs. Yet IDPs actively participate in all the community activities. They have invested money and work into establishing the new community where they have their new home. They do not have much to go back to. Most of their land and other

property has either been given to their extended family, such as their separated brothers or their parents, or put out on lease. Some managed to sell all their property after they became displaced. According to the Maoists, such people come under category “B”—people who will be allowed to return after fulfilling certain criteria imposed by the Maoists. However, till the end of 2008, these people were in no way prevented by either side from travelling back to their native villages.



Picture 2: **Self management of electricity by the community in Manahara settlement in Kathmandu. Source: Anita Ghimire, 2007.**

Women in this category have come up against a paradox in experiencing both a difficult but empowering time both within and outside the family. Though women’s employment in cash-income generating jobs has brought about a change and has been a strain on women, for many families it has come to be a major and well-accepted strategy. The immediate and visible contribution made by cash income in contrast to the modest, intermittent income in rural areas has given women the power to negotiate their place within the family. They represent the family at community meetings. For example, in families where the men have gone to work in India, women take part in community meetings and contribute to community work. An increase in social and political affiliations such as mother groups, microcredit associations, associations aimed at different forms of victims of the Maoist war has increased their socio-economic space and has empowered them. This trend is particularly marked in major urban areas, like the Kathmandu Valley, but also in Dang and Nepalgunj. Thus the proximity to the politically central and economically dynamic areas provided by the

urban structure has positively influenced the agency of the displaced women in midst of a difficult situation. Through microcredit and mother groups, women have been able to find seed money for small investments in businesses and livestock. They have negotiated access to the community forest and have set up a home in the new environment. Via these associations, they approach various NGOs which provide them with information on health issues, their rights as citizens, and voice their concerns. One such example is the work of two organizations, Lumanti and Rudec, with IDP women from Rajhena camp and Ektanagar

The women in this group were mainly interested in education and health opportunities for their children. They feel that they have a lot less to go back to. Similarly, the relative flexibility as far as culture and tradition are concerned due to nuclear families and the growing socio-economic space has made women's lives easier in urban areas. In cases where families have split up due to their displacement, women find themselves with more responsibility as wage-earners but also greater freedom to live their lives as they choose. As new financial contributors, they have more room, even in conventional joint families, to negotiate their own wants. The women in this category like those of the first category, do not want to return to the village.

Thus most of these groups are not set on returning for good, i.e., they wish to stay in an urban setting, to have access to education, employment and health services, while maintaining links with their place of origin. These links are maintained via extended family members, parents and their ancestral home, during visits, festivals and rituals. However, they receive no food or crops from their place of origin. For those whose land has been returned, the land is cultivated by their extended family, e.g., brothers, parents or it is sold or leased out. They say that they have left their ancestral property to their parents and brothers and are trying to make a living here in town. For unmarried youths, land is a joint possession: so family members, such as brothers and parents, who have remained in the villages look after it. For example, Mr H. D. (26 years old) came to Kathmandu from Rammechapp in 2003. He was abducted by the Maoist from his college, but managed to escape. He now works in a publishing house during the day and goes to college in the morning. Back in his native village, his parents and his elder brother look after the house and land. Nothing stops him from returning on a permanent basis. However, he now only goes to his village occasionally. As he now earns his living in Kathmandu, his parents and brothers come to Kathmandu for medical treatment and for visits. He plans to bring his younger brother with him to Kathmandu for his college education in a year's time.

The third category: the poorest

According to the Maoist category, these people are allowed to return freely and unconditionally. However, all third-category IDPs were not displaced solely because of the Maoists. Some were displaced as a direct consequence of the conflict, others indirectly. Both parties at war, the Maoists and the government security forces, posed a threat to them, although most third-category IDPs were in fact displaced by the security forces after the situation worsened from 2001 onwards. This category consists of poor people, irrelative of their caste, who worked as agricultural labourers, tenants, blacksmiths, players of traditional musical instruments (*Gaine*) and priests. Most of them have a nuclear family in the urban area.

However, in the host area, this category of people is the most vulnerable. They have none of the required skills or schooling for a well-paid job or any money or jewellery to invest in business. Most of them now living in Kathmandu are daily wage labourers, working as porters on building sites. In Dang and Nepalgunj they quarry stones, collect sand from the river to sell, sell firewood or work as dishwashers in hotels. Others work as maids or agricultural labourers, run small a *nanglo pasal* (bamboo plate shop) or find other forms of daily wage labour. They live in temporary housing in the slum or rent a single room with inadequate basic facilities which they share with the whole family. Due to living in such insalubrious conditions, they are exposed to environmental and other health hazards. Studies on IDPs' living conditions (IDP Working Group, 2009; Tamang and Fedrick 2006; Caritas 2005; Rai, 2005) have shown that these groups face difficulties in providing themselves with the basic necessities in urban areas. As in rural areas, men and women are equally involved in money-making activities. In order to cope financially, most families find their children various jobs.

They are very little aware of their status as IDPs and the government relief programmes. While the first two IDP categories are for the most part registered at government offices as IDPs and receive regular support, the third category is rarely registered and therefore receives no government support. In addition, they have no contact with organizations of any kind, and thus have very little social and financial capital that might benefit them in times of trouble. These people believe that as they have to work to earn their living they have less time and interest in integrating the host community. According to Mrs S. Karki, an IDP from Sindhupalanchowk, "If we don't work during the day, we stay hungry at night, so I don't have time to chat with the neighbours or attend community meetings". They are rarely involved in community activities as they are busy providing for their own everyday needs. This greatly limits their socio-economic space

in the host area. However, they feel that in their workplace all their fellow workers are poor like them. According to Mr R. Thapa, an IDP from Dhading, “no one cares why anyone came to the city, we do not need to say that we are IDPs, and even if our friends know, they don’t care. We are all poor and in the same boat”.

They do not suffer any direct harassment due to their IDP status, yet they are aware of some discrimination against them by the neighbouring residential community that categorises them as slum settlers and poor. Nevertheless, the latter admit that in the slum where there are all sorts of migrants, they have never encountered any problem related to their IDP status. Although urban areas have seen a significant increase in their slum population, there are no figures for the slum population or for IDPs living there. However, slum settlements house all forms of migrants, and sometimes rich locals (even members of parliaments) settle there purely to occupy the land. There are no figures for the ratio of the IDP population in slums. Slums shelter rural-urban migrants, IDPs, farmers from nearby Kathmandu, who rear pigs, migrants from the Terai and sometimes wealthy landowners. Providing land for slum settlers as advocated by political organizations (mostly during election campaigns) and by some NGOs, such as Lumanti, has catalysed this process of occupying land in the slums.

Nothing prevents these people from freely returning to their native village. However, they had little land of their own; they worked the landowners’ land according to different types of arrangement or lease. Since they no longer work in their place of origin, they receive no food or other items from the village. However, some of them go back to their village to work during festivals and the planting and harvesting seasons.

They have very little incentive to return permanently since they have a limited means of livelihood in the rural area and they make no financial losses by leaving their native village. What attracts them to urban areas are the cash income opportunities and brighter prospects for their children. A number of elderly people wish to return as they feel that urban areas are too much a contrast to their place of origin. However, they were indeed aware of the opportunities that urban areas held for their younger family members. On the other hand, young people are reluctant to return; just like the youths in the other two categories, they feel the “pull” of the urban community. Hence these groups are less willing to go back permanently to the villages.

The present government instability makes it even more unlikely that the State will be able to satisfy these needs or to provide better opportunities or incentives to returning to rural areas. Once in urban areas, as described above, most families share their lives between rural

areas as their ancestral place and urban areas for all the positive prospects it holds, rather than returning to the village with the whole family.

Conclusion

While urban areas have always attracted people because of their “pull”, achieving an end to internal displacement is often measured by I/NGOs, governments, etc., in terms of the number of IDPs returning home. Consequently, the Nepalese government has promoted “return” as a solution for IDPs. When examining their livelihood in urban areas, our study reveals that although the lives of IDPs are fraught with difficulties, these difficulties are largely outweighed by the perceived opportunities offered by the urban environment. From a livelihood perspective, the factors that influence their return are based on the differences between the possibilities of improving their living standards in the host area and in their place of origin. The study highlights the fact that, though these populations were initially forced to move to urban areas, all of them have in some way benefited from the valuable opportunities available. Nevertheless, the prevailing plight of individuals upon being displaced differs. Consequently, instead of opting for a definitive return, IDPs prefer to share their lives between rural areas and urban areas: making their lives multi-local.

Contrary to the IDPs’ wishes, the government has initiated a return programme as the sole response to the IDPs’ predicament, since the government sees it as the least expensive solution. Within an internationally recognised scheme for addressing internal displacement, there are three solutions: a return to one’s place of origin, settling where IDPs now live after having been displaced (host community) and resettling in a place of the IDP’s choice within the country. This means that if an alternative to returning home is chosen, the government has to provide for the IDPs’ basic needs, employment and make the environment propitious for them to integrate the host population. Under the circumstances, returning IDPs to their place of origin where they own property is the easiest alternative, since the government only has to make arrangements for their return and to provide compensation for lost property. Thus in order to solve the problem, the government is keen to send people back in the most cost effective way. However, the government does not realize that for a fully successful return, a suitable environment for a return home and the IDPs’ wishes need to be taken into account. It is very unlikely that IDPs will opt for a definitive return. Though this case emerged in Nepal, it is highly likely that similar phenomena exist in other instances of displacement to urban areas. If the

natural migration trend continues, urban areas will continue to retain IDPs even if they initially arrive by force.

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Social networks and migration: Women's livelihoods between Far West Nepal and Delhi

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Introduction

Poverty, unemployment, a scarcity of natural resources, and the only recently ended Maoist insurgency are major reasons why international labour migration has become an increasingly important source of income for Nepal. For younger people it is also a way to experience the wider world and a “rite of passage” for young men (Brusle 2008). The latest census in 2001 (CBS *et al.* 2002) indicates that 3.3% or 762,181 people are living abroad. Of total migrants, 12% are female and 77% have gone to India. The major destinations of the remaining 23% are the Gulf States, Malaysia, Japan, and South Korea. The more recent Nepal Living Standard Survey states that 24.4% of all households (approximately 1,120,846) receive remittances from abroad (see CBS *et al.* 2004: 74), and that 4.63% of all inhabitants were absent in 2003 (Kollmair *et al.* 2006). Nationally, the most valid estimate of the total inflow of remittances is NRs 44 billion in 2003, equivalent to approximately USD 604 million (Graner and Seddon 2004). This sum is nearly double the total multilateral and bilateral foreign aid grants and loans to Nepal (NRs 23.7 billion) for the same year.

Although migrants to neighbouring India send less than 20% of the total amount of remittances (Kollmair *et al.* 2006), India remains the most popular destination and labour migration to India helps many people to secure their livelihoods in many different ways. The majority of migrants from Far West Nepal go to India—and in our case study to Delhi. Although migration potentially generates remittances and entrepreneurial activities, it raises a series of crucial issues such as a reduction in available village labour and the extra responsibilities it imposes in particular on women, the living conditions of the migrants in alien environments, and the need to go back and forth between two or more places. In Nepal in general and particularly in the villages we investigated, it is common for men to seek work abroad and leave their families behind. However, in some cases women also come to India for shorter periods of time, especially for medical treatment and to give birth. But some women also stay for longer and find new dimensions to life. Although migration from Nepal has increasingly been the subject of research since the 1990s (e.g. Kansakar 1973-74; Gurung 1987; Subedi 1993; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2001; Seddon *et al.* 2001; Upreti 2002; Thieme 2006; Bruslé 2008; Sharma 2008), there are very few publications about gender and migration in Nepal. Shrestha and Conway (2001) describe ‘the shadow life of a migrant’s wife’.

Molesworth (2001), Brown (2003) and Kaspar (2005) look at the effects of migration on the women who remain in the villages. Two publications cover the situation of women as migrants (HMG *et al.* 2003; Sancharika Samuha and UNIFEM 2003). The paucity of research on women's migration in Nepal might be linked to the fact that migration is predominantly a male practice. For example, in 1998, the Government of Nepal officially banned female migration to the Gulf States in response to cases of physical abuse of Nepalese women in the Middle East. This ban was controversial and was lifted and reimposed several times. Following the latest amendment at the beginning of 2009, women are not allowed to migrate for domestic work to the Gulf States and Malaysia. We want to contribute to fill this research gap by presenting a case study of women's livelihoods in the context of labour migration, both as migrants themselves and as women who remain in the villages. The migrants originate from Bajura district of the Far Western Development Region, where migration to India has been a common occurrence for several generations and the economy can be described as "agri-migratory" (Bruslé 2008: 241). The analysis sheds light on women's individual aspirations as well as their position within their families and communities. It also explores how kinship networks and social capital shape women's lives and whether migration facilitates social change. We therefore use Bourdieu's capital theory and the transnational migration approach as an analytical starting point, and structure the article as follows. First, we introduce the theoretical and methodological framework. Secondly, we provide a brief overview of recent patterns of labour migration from the case study area. In the main body of the article, we outline the life of women who do not migrate, as well as the working and living conditions and ways of saving money of women in Delhi. We emphasize how kinship networks shape women's lives in Delhi and in their place of origin, and how these two places are interlinked. Taking both places into consideration also explains better the extent to which women challenge traditional structures through migration to their own benefit, but also the related risks with which they have to cope. Since in our cases women never migrate alone but come with their husbands, we will also spend some time describing the situation of their husbands.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The theoretical framework for the analysis of the everyday practices of labour migrants and the role of social capital is provided by Bourdieu's capital theory and the concept of transnational migration. Bourdieu distinguishes between economic, cultural, symbolic and social capital (Bourdieu 1986). All forms of capital are dynamic and can be transformed into one another. The extent of social capital available to individuals

depends on the extent of the social relationships that can be mobilised in a given context and the amount of other kinds of capital, such as economic or cultural capital, that members of networks can muster (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital is not a community but an individual asset. There tends to be an unequal distribution of power and the potential for inequality to be reproduced. In the same way, social capital not only advances but also constrains individual action. To grasp the dynamics of spatial mobility and the linkages between place of origin and new place of work we rely on the transnational migration approach (cf. Pries 1999). Migrants do not uproot themselves but instead move back and forth, often but not always crossing international borders as they do so (Thieme 2008). Migration affects both those family members who do not migrate and those who do. They all have to renegotiate their positions and needs; this can open up new opportunities, but it can also reinforce or create new power imbalances. Here, the contrast between the remote rural area of origin and the megacity of Delhi is of particular importance. Delhi not only provides access to work, but also a social environment in which traditional rules can be challenged. The fieldwork for this study was carried out in Far West Nepal and Delhi between 1999 and 2004. At first, a quantitative household survey and qualitative interviews were conducted in several villages of the districts Bajura and Bajhang in the Far Western Development Region (Müller 2001; Kollmair 2003; Müller-Böker 2003). Two meetings were held with the members of local women (ama)-group with a particular focus on women. Women performed their traditional dances and songs, which are customarily performed while visiting their own family home (*maiti ghar*) for us. In addition, we were able to conduct 15 interviews with women and without any men being present.

The research in Far West Nepal had to be interrupted due to security problems and has only recently resumed in late 2008. Nevertheless, from 2004 and 2008, we were able to observe the developments in Nepal closely through regular visits to the country. Between 2002 and 2004, fieldwork was conducted in Delhi, where we approached migrants from the study villages in Far West Nepal (Thieme 2006). In this article, we focus on young and middle-aged married women from two villages in the Bajura District of Far West Nepal, whose husbands stayed in Delhi or they themselves did. A total of about 110 persons from both villages were in Delhi during our research there. Thirty-one people were interviewed in depth, many of them three times over a period of two years. Out of the total number of interviewees, five were women. Four of the interviewed women had already been living in Delhi for a longer period and one woman only came for medical treatment. During the periods of fieldwork, seven village-based financial self-help groups (called *societies*) were in existence; six of them only had male members and one exclusively female members. We

attended several society meetings and obtained data from observation and group discussions.

Bajura District - the place of origin

The Bajura district has one of the lowest human development and gender equity indices within Nepal (UNDP 2002), exemplified by the level of education. Despite a noticeable improvement in recent years, the male literacy rate of 65.3 % is in line with the national average of 64.5%, but the 27.4% literacy rate among women is still significantly lower than the already low national average of 33.8% (CBS *et al.* 2004). Also, agricultural output for key products like rice, maize and wheat is 20% below the average (HMG and MOA 2005). Compared to other regions of the country, Far West Nepal still lacks adequate basic infrastructure such as electricity, schools and medical facilities. Depending on weather conditions, the nearest road is a minimum one-day walk away. The vast majority of inhabitants belongs to the so-called 'hill castes', which form the largest group in Nepal (Bista 2004). The majority of the population (79%) belongs to the 'pure' high Hindu castes, which are distinctly separate from the 'impure' or occupational castes such as tailors or blacksmiths. The traditional patron-client system plays an important role (Cameron 1998) and it has existed between high-caste and occupational-caste households for generations. The family system in Far West Nepal is patrilineal and patrilocal, which adds an extra dimension to the migration context. After the arranged marriage, the wife leaves the native home (*maiti*) and moves into her parents-in-law's house (*ghar*), where she bears the main responsibility for domestic and agricultural work (Müller-Böker 2003). In summary, the population is embedded in a tight network of caste and relational structures, which can be supportive but also constricting.

Migration from Far West Nepal

Impoverishment, food shortages, indebtedness, social discrimination, and a lack of infrastructure have been causing large-scale labour migration to India for generations. The political instability of recent years has exacerbated this migration. The longstanding history of labour migration and the free border movement between Nepal and India has led to transnational social networks, by which people sustain contacts between families in Nepal and migrants in India. People generally migrate to the same places as previous migrants. In the case study, Delhi was the main destination, but other urban centres such as Mumbai, Bangalore or Uttarakhand are also popular destinations (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2001; Brusle 2008, Sharma 2008). The two villages we focused on have 600 people altogether, and 9% of them were absent in 2000, meaning that at least one

person in nearly every household works in India. Most of them were staying in Delhi for a duration of between a few months and several years. Usually men migrate for labour and women stay in Far West Nepal. However, 17% of absent migrants were female (Müller 2001).

Women who do not migrate

The majority of migrants are male, and women stay in the villages with their parents-in-law. An impressive event in woman's life takes place at certain festivals, when married women are allowed to visit their parents' homes. They dance, sing and complain in their songs about how men always gamble, drink and leave the village for work, the tyranny of the mother-in-law and about their very hard daily work. Indeed, as interviews in Bajura and Delhi have shown, gambling seems to be common practice among men. "Most of the men are gambling, mostly for money or loans, sometimes also for land or jewelry—also what we are wearing—or even for kitchenware" (45-year-old woman).

Women have—in the setting we have described above—controversial wishes and needs. Emotionally they are bound to their family of origin as well as to their daughters. But from a strategic point of view they have to invest in the patrilineal group of relatives, last but not least because they and their children depend on the social networks of their husband's family.

For example, in the villages, the mother groups provide brief midwife training to selected women. The female group members themselves exclude unmarried women: "After all, training unmarried women does not benefit the village" (ca. 80-year-old women). In the same line of argumentation, we heard several statements by women concerning girl's education: they regard it as a mistaken investment.

The migration of husbands changes the wives' possibilities to move within the given setting only marginally and might even reduce it. Because women do not have their own relatives, a husband's absence increases their dependency on their husband's family and can increase a wife's isolation within the household and the village. Their bargaining power within the family does not usually increase. It is the next oldest male household member who becomes head of the household in the husband's absence. The majority of women we interviewed did not express any explicit criticism; some even argued in favour of this power imbalance. For example, one girl answered the question as to which household member carries the key of the moneybox by saying: "The oldest man carries it, because the key should be with the most educated person who is able to count and add up" (17-year-old girl).

Additionally, women have to manage a higher workload as other studies have also confirmed (Niraula & Morgan 2000; Molesworth 2001; Brown 2003). Women are heavily involved in domestic work, caring, agricultural work, collecting firewood, water and fodder, and the illegal gathering of products from nearby Khaptad National Park. Women frequently referred to this unbalanced workload: “We work much more than men. Men are gambling, drinking and hanging around” (ca. 80-year-old woman) or: “They (men) only do some of the work in the field, that’s not a lot. They only do the ploughing” (about 30-year-old woman).

Nevertheless, women depend on mutual help from male household members if their husbands are away in Delhi. At the same time, they also depend on the remittances from Delhi, although they do not necessarily receive these on a regular basis. In some cases, the only relief for the family is to feed one person less (also Pfaff 1995). However, the occasional visits by men from Delhi are a ritual and are celebrated by the whole village. To show their success, the migrants are expected to bring expensive consumer goods. They dress in urban style, and bring new saris for the women and radios. Many women also perceive these short visits by their husband as a burden. “They come and visit all their friends and relatives; they command and upbraid us, and then they leave again,” one woman stated.

Access to working and housing in Delhi

Male and female migrants rely on village-based networks to establish themselves in the urban environment and to get work, accommodation and medical care. During fieldwork, male relatives arrived to look for a job in Delhi, or else family members came for medical treatment. In such cases, relatives and friends in Delhi are obliged to provide them with support and shelter. Newcomers live with their kin, which reduces the already congested spaces even more. Because it is mostly men who arrive, women have to cope with the male-dominated environment and care for the extended household. Women particularly mentioned the lack of support networks among women. Women as well as men complained about their limited physical space and privacy, said they missed trees, greenery and the clean air they have in the village. Women have limited spatial mobility. They live with their families in single huts (*jhuggis*) in the middle of the quarter where their husbands work as watchmen. Their workplace is in walking distance of their shelter: shopping, fetching water, meeting other women – all these activities take place within walking distance. Their children could also walk to school. Nevertheless, women also confirmed that their husbands do not want their wives travelling long distances alone because they fear for their safety. This limited spatial

mobility is not necessarily different to men's mobility. While some men knew Delhi quite well and sometimes travelled longer distances to visit friends or relatives, other men clearly stated that they had never left the quarter where they live. If the women have come for medical treatment, they are often too weak to leave anyway, and their husbands accompany them to more distant hospitals.

The labour market for unskilled migrants is highly gender-segregated. Regardless of caste, the vast majority of the male and mainly unskilled migrants interviewed work as night watchmen and clean cars in the early morning, having taken over those jobs from friends and co-villagers. None of the women in Nepal and in Delhi interviewed mentioned that the primary motive to go to Delhi was for work. All of them came either in a very bad state of health or when pregnant with the purpose of seeking medical treatment and perinatal care in Delhi. Later on, they had stayed in Delhi to raise their children in Delhi or had brought them from Nepal, if they had stayed behind.

Women in particular make use of the social networks of their husbands or male kin, who organise jobs for them, and it is the men who accompany their women to negotiate with their employers. Women prefer to work for only one household, yet many women work for up to six, one to two hours per day for each household (cp. also Neetha 2003). They therefore have to acquaint themselves with the different requirements of each of the employers. They receive about IRs 100-300 per household per month, working one to two hours per day for each household. The average salary among the women was IRs 1,067. However, it includes women who worked only for one household two hours per day for IRs 300 per month, as well as one woman who worked full-time and was paid IRs 2,000. Women argued that their income is necessary because men do not earn enough and the children's education is costly. As a mother of two children stated: "My children's education is quite expensive. They need a good education. They go to government schools but they are not very good and crowded. I pay for an extra teacher, which costs IRs 250 per month for each child" (August, 2003, Delhi).

Women's household chores, changing workplaces and time schedules for the different houses where they work add to the high pressure of daily life. A day starts at 5 am with cooking and the household routine. From 6 till 11 am, she carries out her paid domestic work. From 11 am till 3 pm, she prepares lunch, cares for the house and the children. From 4 till 6 pm or sometimes 8 pm, she goes out to work again. Afterwards she returns home, cooks, and takes care of the children and the home. The husband usually works from 7 pm till 10 am. The family members have different time schedules: because of night duty, men generally sleep during the day and if the woman is at work as well, the children stay at home unattended.

Watchmen's wives are left alone during the night in their neglected housing quarters, where they are scared of being attacked.

Access to savings and credit possibilities

Migrants often need more money than they earn per month, first as seed capital to establish themselves in Delhi and to pay their predecessor for the job, and later on to support their families back home and to repay their debts. Drinking and gambling are also reasons why men need money. To obtain loans, migrants often rely on loans from financial self-help organisation. Different kinds exist, but here we focus on 'societies' (Thieme & Müller-Böcker 2004, Thieme, 2006). In these organisations, migrants once more rely on interpersonal ties to ensure creditworthiness and trust, which is a characteristic of social capital. Along with saving and lending money, they also form social networks, providing jobs and support in Delhi. Men dominate these societies, although women are generally allowed to participate. The obvious reason for this is that the majority of migrants in Delhi are male. Another reason is that men see themselves as representing the whole family and women leave "money matters" to their husbands.

We came across with one society in Delhi that was run by 41 women from different villages in the Bajura district. The members of the women's society were from the high Chhetri caste (thar/clan lineage: Rawal) as well as the occupational castes Kami (thar: Luhar) and Damai (thar: Dholi). However the relations are based on the kinship and patron-client network in the husband's village and its neighbourhood. The society was led by a Chhetri woman. Members of the society emphasised that it would be impossible to have a society of such different castes in the traditional village setting.

Three of the women initially interviewed took part in this women's society. The society was established in May 2002 and is—as far as the women knew—unique among migrants from Bajura. They got the idea of establishing a society from their husbands, who were all involved in other societies, and they ran it in a similar way to the men's society. The women had not been organised in Nepal before. All of them had been living in Delhi for quite a long time already. As long-term residents, they are busy all day and do not have much time for socialising. Therefore, these women wanted to form their exclusively female social space, as one woman stated: "We did not want men in our society because we do not want to witness how our husbands sit together and drink. And many wives are too shy in the presence of their husbands." (August, 2003 in Delhi)

The society meeting is held once a month on a set date and at a fixed time in a public garden. It is always a very special day for the women and

they dress in their best saris. The members initially contributed one payment of IRs 100 each. Members can draw loans from this amount, at an interest rate of 5% per month. Due to interest repayments, the volume of the society account increases. As a result, members have a better chance of borrowing larger sums of money and the value of the member's savings also increases. Another major reason was to save money and to spend it primarily on their children's education. At the beginning, there were only 11 women. Over the course of time, more women became members and children did too. Children do not borrow money, but their mothers have more shares in the society, because they pay in IRs 100 for each child. In August 2003, the society had 41 members, including 28 children. Women took loans of between IRs 1,000 and 5,000. The money was spent on a broad range of family needs and to cover debts. For example, the chairwoman had once taken out an IRs 2,000 loan because her brother-in-law was visiting Delhi and had asked for money to repay debts for his daily needs in Far West Nepal. Women also contribute to life-cycle events such as weddings and funerals. However, women frequently highlighted that their highest priority is expenditure on better food, health and education for their children. Because it is money they have saved up themselves, they also felt greater independence due to the fact that men often waste their money on gambling and alcohol.

The reproduction and challenge of social relations through migration

Migration from Far West Nepal is often referred to as "eating out" (also Pfaff-Czarnecka 2001). Each person less reduces a household's total food consumption. At the same time, the non-migrating household members receive remittances, which in 2004 ranged from €17 to €520 and were on average €88 per year (Thieme 2006). In rural communities with little cash income, even small transfers of cash can be highly valuable and help to reduce the risks of seasonal variation, harvest failure and food shortage, as other case studies in the neighbouring Bajhang district have confirmed (Pfaff-Czarnecka 2001). In Delhi, one society run by men even reduced food shortages for the whole village in Bajura by investing in a food storehouse and also building a school and paying a teacher. The women in Delhi, who established their society to save for individual purposes, in particular for their children's education, jointly contributed IRs 1,500 to a school project in Bajura District to fund infrastructure back home, although their own children lived with them in Delhi. Dense networks between Delhi and Nepal make migration less risky for individuals by circulating information among potential migrants and providing access to jobs. Having family members in India assures access to medical treatment and schooling in India, and migrants cover these expenditures rather than

sending money to Nepal (Thieme 2006). In Delhi, migrants have to structure a part of their life-paths afresh; some institutions remain, others change. If women come along and stay for a long period, men are a source of both financial and social capital. Even in Delhi, women depend on the traditional patrilineal and patrilocal family networks in which normative expectations such as kinship obligations are reinforced. Nonetheless, in keeping these patterns, they gain a new economic independency, by earning their own money and—in one case—managing a society. Medical treatment is also a positive factor that improves women's lives in Delhi. However, the opportunity women most frequently cited was their children's education (boys and girls) in the hope that their children would have a better life. Equal investment in the education of boys and girls is especially remarkable given that the education of women in Far West Nepal is much lower than for men.

The migration ties between the villages and Delhi are inter-generational and reproduce social structures. At the same time, they do transform traditional structures. While traditional elder high caste males are the dominating decision makers in their villages, people who were formerly excluded can also participate or even take a lead in Delhi-based organisations. Working in the same job irrespective of caste or mixed caste membership of credit associations are another example of the dissolution of traditionally practised caste barriers. Also the members of the women's society were from both high and occupational castes. Although relations are based on kinship and patron-client networks, women said that it would be impossible to have a society with the same caste composition in the traditional setting of the village. If parents-in-law come to Delhi for a visit, they always argue about this caste interaction and—as one woman said—“want to show that they are ‘pure’ Chhetris” (August 2003 in Delhi). She labelled these disagreements a typical generation conflict. However, the society only meets in public places such as gardens, because traditionally Chhetris do not allow occupational castes to enter their houses. The women claimed that so far they had never faced any problems due to the different castes, last but not least because “we do not consume alcohol and do not fight”, as one society member put it (2003, Delhi). In spite of this slight erosion of the caste system, being from a specific locality, i.e., a related village in Nepal remained a precondition for membership, even if people have lived in Delhi for over a decade. Spatial distance is another major reason why not all women and men with a common place of origin necessarily have contact with each other in Delhi. Women only meet if they live within walking distance of each other. This is due to security reasons, time constraints, and having children in the house.

Risks and limitations of migration

Although migrants are not the poorest of the poor, all of them are vulnerable and seem to live on the edge. It is only a small step from being able to survive and thrive, and suddenly losing this ability. What the majority lacks is bridging social capital as well as sufficient cultural and economic capital. With their work as watchmen and car cleaners, and their existing financial self-help groups, men have managed to find an economic niche in Delhi. But migrants have to cope daily with poor working and living conditions, bribes, and the lack of redress for abuses by employers. Their informal work, lack of bridging social capital and poor education all contribute to this. Women, for example frequently mentioned how problematic it would be that they were illiterate. Of the women interviewed, only one could read and write. It makes women even more vulnerable and exposes them to the daily routine of shopping, helping their children with schoolwork and negotiating with their employers. As one woman put it: "Other better—educated women can speak better with them and bargain, but I am illiterate—I can't" (2003, Delhi). Life in Delhi was considered as hard as life in Nepal, but the physical work assessed as less hard than in the mountains. Male migrants frequently reported that their societies had collapsed due to the lack of reliable members, but women saw alcohol and the resulting violence as the major reason for this. According to the women, men's drinking and gambling habits get worse in Delhi and place an additional financial burden on the whole family. The more men are exposed to alcohol and gambling and the greater their prospects of earning money, the more they feel they will be able to manage their debts, providing a false sense of security. Because of high interest rates of 3-10% per month, indebtedness is not only a risk for the migrant, but also for the migrant's family who have stayed behind in the village. If the migrant cannot repay debts, the family stands to lose their land, livestock and other belongings. People borrow from one source to repay the other and are tied into an expanding network of credit dependency with their family and kin, forcing them to stay in Delhi and work. Women also use their society to repay family debts. However, the chairwoman and other members frequently emphasized that the women's society is distinct from many societies run by men, because they are confident that they have their debts much more under control and that they only spend money on necessities.

Regardless of whether they migrate seasonally or spend the majority of the year in Delhi, most migrants have their families in Nepal. The migrants felt forced to go to Delhi and they do not feel 'at home' in Delhi. All of them dream of going back to Nepal. Because they want to return, they have to maintain their village-based networks. These networks

enable them to migrate, but also constrain them. Social networks are essential to a person's survival in a village and agricultural community cooperation and in patron-client dependencies (cp. also Bista 1999). It is risky—both in Nepal and in India—to disregard an existing circle of networks unless migrants have the option of entering a new circle. The aspects of life in the migrant's place of origin are perceived as being complementary to those in the current workplace. This "illusion of return" is also often one reason why men do not plan for the longer term and do not bring their wives and children to Delhi. Other reasons are that men do not feel able to finance their family in Delhi and do not want their wives to work. Certainly, with a family in Delhi, men would be much more under the control of their wives.

Conclusion

The longstanding history of labour migration between Nepal and India has led to transnational social networks through which contacts between families in Nepal and migrants in India are sustained. Relations and customs can change over time and from one generation to the next, and migration can be a supportive vehicle for this. The networks are primarily based on kin or neighbouring villages, and dominated by men. For the women, men are a source of both financial and social capital but also reinforce normative expectations such as kinship obligations. The outcome of the migration process takes many different forms. Debt seems to be a tool or panacea to manage livelihoods and ensures that they remain migrants for their whole lives. Women are trapped in this cycle by their family and kinship structures. Various material and normative constraints (prevalent in Nepal as well as in Delhi) hamper Nepalese women's transnational practices. Their ability to move and build their own life-worlds is highly limited or framed by culturally gendered rules that permeate their transnational social fields. In this way, we conclude that gender inequality is magnified for the majority of women who remain in Far West Nepal, but challenged by women live in Delhi for longer. Women who remain in Far West Nepal do not gain more independence or bargaining power within the household. Their workload increases and they are dependent on remittances from their husbands. Many women who come to Delhi for the first time or even simply stay for a short while for medical reasons find their sense of self is challenged. They are not used to the urban environment and do not have much time to adapt, especially if they arrive in bad health. But women who stay for longer find new dimensions to life, not all of which they perceive as constraints. Some structures also enable them to do things they were not able to do before. Although women depend more on their male kin while they settle down in

Delhi, they nevertheless have the advantage of better medical treatment and education for their children. It is an opportunity for them to begin to challenge traditional structures by earning their own money, little though it is, and forming their own societies. Having a society offers them the possibility to use their own money for productive purposes and to get greater control over expenses and investments. Furthermore, the traditionally severe constraints exerted by the rules of caste interaction are loosened.

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The “dream-trap”: Brokering, “study abroad” and nurse migration from Nepal to the UK.

Radha Adhikari

Introduction

As you wander through Kathmandu, past the “Democracy Wall”, towards Putali Sadak in Bagbazaar, through the crowds and traffic you may be struck by the spectacular billboards advertising study abroad (Figure 1). On this short, bustling road I counted over 100 hoardings for the education consultancy business targeting young educated people who want to work and study abroad. These boards are also seen in similar numbers in other areas of Kathmandu, indicating the huge demand for these services. In this paper I explore the rise of these institutions in the context of nurse training and the migration of nurses from Nepal, particularly to the UK.

International nurse migration from Nepal started mainly in the new millennium, and within less than a decade the number of Nepalese nurses working abroad has increased significantly. By the end of 2008, there were between 800 to 1,000 Nepalese nurses working in the UK. Similar numbers have migrated to the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Nurses are thus an increasingly important group of young educated Nepalese migrating from Nepal to a range of countries to fulfil their dreams of working and studying abroad. In the context of Nepal only women can currently train as nurses, so this phenomenon is very gender specific.

However, the practicalities of migrating are complex. It requires detailed knowledge of the opportunities available. Most importantly, migrants need to know how to negotiate the bureaucratic and regulatory hurdles. For this, many turn to International Education Consultancies (IECs) or, amongst nurses, “agents” or brokers who manage all the practicalities. These agents have mushroomed in the last decade; now over a thousand such organisations are to be found in Kathmandu, with branches in major cities in Nepal. It is their billboards that clutter the sides of buildings in the streets as mentioned above. They facilitate young and aspiring Nepalese people’s departure abroad; they help them to prepare official documents for visa application, such as course/job acceptance letters from a foreign university/employer; they assist in the preparation of bank statements; they offer visa and interview preparation courses, English language preparation, and they prepare Chartered Accountant’s (CA) and police reports. In short, they manage all the practical issues, subject to an exorbitant service charge.



Figure 1: IEC Business complex: Bagbazar (August 2008)

In order to review this education brokering business and its link to international nurse migration, the paper is divided into two main sections. Firstly, I look at the growth and expansion of professional nurse training in Nepal and its links with Nepalese nurse migration to the UK. Secondly, I examine the emergence of IECs and their “study abroad” programmes. Here I analyse how IECs have become increasingly involved in the nursing profession, starting from pre-training entrance exam preparation through to post-training international migration. I present case studies of individual nurses and their experiences of being “brokered”. As these migrants are open to exploitation, I argue for greater regulation of these brokers, and that nurses must be more aware of the frequently false promises made by them.

Research methods

This paper is based on extensive multi-sited ethnographic style research I conducted in Britain and Nepal during the period 2006-2008. In the UK I met with over 150 Nepalese nurses, and interviewed 21 at great length, with countless follow-up conversations. Nearly all had used one or more of the Nepal-based IECs, first to prepare for the nursing entrance exam and later to come to the UK and settle. I followed this up by visiting six IECs in Kathmandu. I formally interviewed three directors, and four office staff. I also visited 18 nursing colleges in Nepal, the Nepal Nursing Council, the Centre for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), the

Ministry of Health, four public teaching hospitals, and three private hospitals to gain better insight into the nursing training business. I also tracked down national newspaper adverts, and attended an “education fair” organised by some of these IECs. As a professional nurse, trained in Nepal with over ten years’ experience working in the UK, I have witnessed the plight of many nurses who were brokered to Britain. I thus contribute my personal observations of some aspects of IEC business development and changes within professional nursing in Nepal since the 1990s.

Nurse migration from Nepal to the UK: an overview

Globally, nurses have been migrating since colonial times so this is not a new phenomenon (Choy 2003; Kingma 2006). However, with the increasing speed of recent economic globalisation, skilled professionals—including nurses—from a growing number of source countries are on the move to the affluent West, with almost no country remaining unaffected by the phenomenon (Kingma 2006). Nepal has also recently become involved. By 2007/2008 Nepal ranked fifth in the hierarchy of “source countries” of nurses coming to Britain (NMC 2009), and I estimate that there are between 800-1,000 Nepalese nurses living and working in Britain. A review of records from the Nepal Nursing Council (NNC—a professional regulatory body for nurses in Nepal) and various nursing colleges in Nepal revealed that a similar number of nurses have migrated to other major destinations, particularly the USA, Australia and New Zealand. Although nurse migration makes up a small percentage of the total number of people migrating from Nepal every year, it has a serious impact on Nepal’s health sector, as the total pool of senior qualified staff nurses in Nepal is relatively small. Nepal has only just over 10,000 staff nurses (end of April 2008) and this research suggests that between 20-30% of the total nursing workforce trained in Nepal is already working abroad.

With regard to Nepalese nurses migrating to the UK, the trend started in about the year 2000, as a direct consequence of the National Health Service (NHS) in Britain facing severe nursing shortages. At this time in the UK there was immense political pressure to recruit more nurses quickly to staff NHS hospitals. This led some of the NHS trusts in England to recruit directly from foreign countries to fill nursing vacancies. Nurses were actively recruited from the Philippines, India, Spain, Australia and South Africa (Kingma 2006; Winkleman-Gleed 2006). This recruitment drive did not reach Nepal directly, but through a combination of this news circulating through Diaspora networks and the rising use of internet facilities in Kathmandu. A few nurses were already living and working in the UK.

One nurse in particular, based in Hastings, who was already working within the UK health care system, saw an opportunity for Nepalese nurses to come and work here. She was central to the early facilitation process, managing adaptation training or supervised placements and helping nurses with work permits and jobs. As word of this opportunity spread, a few very experienced nurses made their way to the UK. News of them reached Nepal, and within a few years many more nurses started to make enquiries about opportunities in Britain. In these early years their move to the UK was made easier, since the vacancy situation facilitated access to British jobs. The number of overseas nurses joining the Nursing and Midwifery Council (UK) Register peaked during the period 2001-2002. Then, by 2004-2005 entry to the UK health system became increasingly difficult. Paradoxically, for the Nepalese, the migration flow continued to increase. Further personal networks developed, and the IECs moved in to seize this opportunity. Of an estimated total of 800-1,000 Nepalese nurses in the UK by the end of 2008, only 77 were trained through the Hastings' network, and the remainder were brokered by newer IECs. It is this link, between nursing and IECs, that I will examine next.

IECs in Nepal: their growth and development

First set up just over a decade ago, this business rapidly grew, and is currently thriving. In the early 1990s there were only a few computer and English language training centres, mainly in Kathmandu, and IECs seem to have evolved, developed and expanded from these. As such they have a relatively short history.

The first English language and computer training institutes seem to have only been set up in the late 1980s, with rapid growth over the 1990s. Good English and computer skills figure amongst the most desired skills on the job market, post-1990 *Jana Andolan*, particularly in the non-government and development sectors. Computers were then new and exotic, relatively expensive and not widely available like today. Very few Nepalese could afford to have a personal computer at home. However, as English language courses and computer training became increasingly available on the market for young and middle-class aspirants, those who could afford the tuition fees started to attend classes. As the demand for computer and English Language training started to grow, market competition also started to rise.

By the late 1990s this business had expanded throughout the country. Personal computers became more widely available on the market, and were more accessible and affordable, allowing a greater number of members of the middle class to purchase them. The number of computer-literate and English language graduates increased, but not all graduates

were able to access the lucrative well paid—mainly development sector—jobs because the job market did not grow to absorb this new aspirant workforce. Consequently, business in the computer training and English language course sector started to slacken. New markets had to be found, and some of today's IECs actually emerged at that time. Business strategies changed, and some IECs found new scope for business, targeting the international education and migration market. While there is no exact record of how many IECs there are in this business, the general secretary of the Educational Consultancy Association of Nepal (ECAN) estimates that there are over a thousand such consultancies operating at the present time. The majority of them are based in Kathmandu, with branches in bigger towns such as Biratnagar, Dharan, Birjunj, Pokhara, Butwal and Chitwan.

With the surge in the number of institutes, three organisational networks recently emerged to coordinate them: Educational Consultancies Association of Nepal (ECAN), National Educational Consultancies Association (NECA) and Nepal Association of Australian Educational Representatives (NAAER). Many IECs are registered with all three, with ECAN having over 300 members, and NECA 111 members. As registration is not compulsory, there are many others that operate with no affiliation.

Since the mid-1990s, IECs have also been closely associated with professional nursing in Nepal. In the next section I will explore how the shift in status from private English language training and computer centres to IECs became linked to professional nursing.

Professional nursing – market penetration

Professional nursing training in Nepal started in the mid-1950s and has always targeted women. It did not initially attract many people because parents often felt that it was not safe for their daughters to move away from their homes to train. Also at the time, the female literacy rate was extremely low, only 0.7%, so finding women educated enough to take up nursing was a challenge to the training authorities. Nursing instructors had to personally go around encouraging parents to send their daughter into nursing (Maxwell with Sinha 2004; Adhikari 2008).

By the 1970s, the number of young women passing the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) had increased and more women, encouraged by their families, showed an interest in nursing. The few training programmes in existence began receiving more highly educated candidates, and therefore had a better selection from which to choose. There were a number of reasons for the increasing attractiveness of nursing. In 1972, the education system in Nepal was modernised. Nursing training acquired the status of a university degree course run by Tribhuvan University (TU), which came

under the auspices of the Ministry of Education (Maxwell with Sinha 2004; NAN 2002). Until then, nursing training had been run by the Ministry of Health. The degree is still known today as the Proficiency Certificate Level (PCL)/Staff Nurse, and nursing has thus become not just a vocational training, but a university-level professional course. In addition to this, a significant event occurred in the mid-1970s when HRH Princess Prekchhaya enrolled as a nurse. For many people, the fact that nursing could be considered a profession fit for the royal family was a further incentive and good advertising.

In the early 1980s, there were only two Staff Nurse (SN) and five Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) training programmes, all publicly run under the TU. With the introduction of hospital and primary health care across the country as part of Nepal's development programme, the health services in Nepal continued to expand due to a growing need for qualified nurses. By the late 1980s, four of the ANM extension campuses were upgraded and started running staff nursing programmes to meet this growing need. In the 1990s, professional nursing continued to attract more candidates. Nursing campuses begin to receive increasing numbers of applicants with higher secondary school achievements. For example, in the 1980s, the majority of nursing students had second division SLC pass scores, but by the 1990s there were more applicants with first division SLC scores. The numbers of secondary schools had also increased, in line with National Development Plans. Many nursing candidates were also increasingly educated in private schools, with better overall SLC results in English, Maths and Science. In order to select higher achieving students, TU introduced an entrance exam in 1993 and this is now a requirement in all nurse training programmes.

In the late 1980s, there was another shift in nursing education and indeed in all technical education. The idea was to liberalise health workers' training and increase the private sector's involvement. The Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT), a semi-autonomous body, was established in 1989 to act as an umbrella body and to prompt the private sector to provide technical education. From then on, many ANM colleges were set up in the private sector and, within a decade, the number of ANM colleges in this sector had reached 40. This number has remained stable. However, from the early 2000s the private training of staff nurses started to expand rapidly. Bir Hospital started its own Academy of Medical Science and also started training staff nurses. By the end of 2007, there was a total of 39 Staff Nursing Colleges in the country run under TU, the CTEVT, and Bir Hospital. All these nursing colleges adopted entrance examinations to select staff nurse candidates. This exam was designed to test candidates' knowledge in three areas: English, Maths and General Health Science. As the entry requirements

became tougher, students started to prepare more seriously for the entrance exam. The English language tuition business, already in existence in Kathmandu, targeted this as a potential market. Some Computer and English Language Tuition Institutes reacted quickly and adapted their courses accordingly; they started designing and offering entrance exam preparation courses focusing on these new entrance exam requirements. Within a few years of the introduction of the new entrance requirements there were dozens of institutes catering for this market. Many smaller local entrance examination preparation centres/educational consultancies, located around nursing colleges have also sprung up across the country.

The Intel Institute is one such example. Located in Bag Bazaar in Kathmandu, the institute was set up in 1995 and, as well as specialising in nursing entrance examination preparation, it offers tuition over a range of other subjects. Their website announces: "So far, more than 1,800 students from Intel have been able to clear the entrance test conducted by well-known nursing colleges. Today many of these students are established nurses in Nepal and abroad".

Intel Institute is now one of the oldest consultancies, and has been offering staff nurse entrance preparation courses for over a decade. It has an impressive website with up-to-date information about the number of nursing training programmes available in Nepal, including the date of entrance examinations for particular nursing programmes, the total intake and entrance examination/admission criteria and other related issues. In fact, the Intel website offers the most comprehensive picture of nursing training programmes in Nepal. It also publishes the most up-to-date brochures on nursing training programmes. These show glossy photographs of young, successful-looking and modern nurses on the front cover. They include photographs of all of their successful candidates. In addition, posters are pasted to electricity posts on major street corners in Kathmandu. The Intel staff member I interviewed in autumn 2008 confirmed that business was thriving.

There was a further shift in university education in Nepal in the 1990s. Three new universities opened: Kathmandu University in 1991, Purwanchal University in 1995 and Pokhara University in 1997. Since the 2004-2005 academic year, these universities have been offering BSc Nursing courses; so yet another business opportunity has emerged for these tuition institutions. Ever reactive, Intel Institute started running their BSc nursing entrance preparation courses from 2006 onwards.

Once students have enrolled in nursing training, the training usually lasts three years for a Staff Nurse and four years for a BSc Nurse. When nurses complete their training, some of these same consultancies become involved in nurses' career orientation, since they offer services for

migrating onto the international market. Some IECs, such as Intel, offer services both for pre-training entrance preparation and post-training migration. Others, such as Versatile Educational Centre, Real Dream, UK/US Council, Complete Management System (CMS), only offer post-training nurse migration services. It is at this point that finding a job abroad sometimes coincides closely with finding nursing education or training abroad. Nurses who have already completed their initial training in Nepal sometimes find it easier to follow some other nursing or health-related training courses in the country to which they migrate. Some IECs, for example, have been involved in sending qualified Nepalese nurses for Dental Nursing or National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training in the UK. I will look into these IECs next.

Nurse migration to the UK: some specialist agents and their market strategies

In this section I discuss the IECs mentioned most often by the nurses interviewed and who have successfully brokered nurses to the UK, namely the Versatile Education Centre, Real Dream, UK/US Council and CMS. I will present their marketing strategies first.

Principally they use the media and newspapers. For example, Versatile Education Centre, Putalisadak, Kathmandu has offered “Free Counselling: Spot Admission” to study a wide range of subjects at London Thames College, London. An advert in *Kantipur*, Nepal’s daily national newspaper, dated 9th November 2008 reads:

*Do you want to make your guardians free from financial burden
of your education?*

If your answer is YES, join LONDON THAMES COLLEGE.

We GUARANTEE PAID PLACEMENT on selected courses.

On the top of the course list comes NVQs Health and Social Care, and Dental Nursing. On the same page of *Kantipur* there are many other similar adverts. Interestingly enough, even in the Nepalese press, these adverts are usually in English, making them more attractive to those with a good level of education.

Additionally, these consultancies organise fairs. AlfaBeta Institute Private Limited, for example, advertises about consultants from the UK and other overseas institutions coming to various towns throughout Nepal for its “3rd Grand World Education Exhibition 2008” (Figure 2).

Similar fairs have been organised in 2009. Their advertisements can also be found on the ECAN and NECA website.

As mentioned above, the four IECs I discuss here developed their focus on the nursing migration business from 2000 onwards, because Nepalese

nurses started finding jobs in the UK. They charge between £3,000- £7,000 per nurse for helping to prepare all the necessary documents required for visa application, to liaise with their agents in the UK, and to help nurses find a job or training course. Between them, they have successfully brokered hundreds of nurses from Nepal to the UK. While the exact numbers are not known, when I visited Versatile's office in Putalisadak in 2008, I was told that they have helped over 300 Nepalese nurses to come to the UK. Similarly, Real Dream, UK/US Council and CMS have brokered many nurses. The nurses I met in the UK who had called upon Real Dream for assistance estimate that probably over 100 nurses are there thanks to this consultancy. The numbers for the UK/US Council and CMS are not known.



Figure 2: AlfaBeta advertisement in Kantipur (9th November 2008)

These institutes are rather opportunistic. They open and close as they become the object of public scrutiny and anger. Two of these institutions—Real Dream and UK/US Council—recently closed their offices in Nepal, although nurses still migrate informally through the networks they have developed. Three of the institutes have been linked to a certain degree of controversy and some public outrage in Nepal. Real Dream and UK/US Council agents were asked to refund money to nurses' relatives in Kathmandu, and they later closed their offices and disappeared. There has

been media exposure of some discrepancies in the nurse brokering business in Nepal. In particular, the Australian and the US Embassy have reacted to rising public concern and have released statements to this effect. In his statement, the Australian Ambassador, Mr Lade, advised Nepalese students to collect information about visa regulations, and courses and universities in Australia, and not to trust brokers. He said very diplomatically that some of the messages given to the public by the agencies seemed “too good to be true”.

The same article in the Himalayan Times stated that nursing was the fifth most popular course for Nepalese students wishing to study in Australia, and that student numbers have grown by 110% since the previous year. In effect, what is emerging is a combination of nurses being brokered abroad to work officially as nurses and nurses obtaining student visas, documents for college courses, etc., but with the intention of finding work by any possible means. As nurses try to leave Nepal to work by any means available, legal or otherwise, by exploiting gaps in the regulations, this makes them vulnerable to exploitation and thus later deeply resentful; their desire is often so strong that they are prey to unscrupulous practices. To understand better how this situation has come about, I will now address Nepalese nurses' migration experience in the UK.

Nurses' experiences in the UK

In the UK, overseas trained nurses from outside the European Union (EU) member countries have to go through additional training to be registered to work here, called an “adaptation course” or, as it was renamed in 2006, an Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP). Upon successful completion of this programme, they obtain Nursing Midwifery Council (NMC) UK registration. However, these adaptation courses have become increasingly difficult to find as an increasing number of foreign nurses have flooded to the UK. The concomitant training capacity has not expanded according to the number of nurses. At one point in 2005-2006 there was a backlog of 37,000 overseas nurses waiting for proper training and assessment for full registration (Smith and Mackintosh 2007). This backlog meant that prospective nurses increasingly shifted to the private sector (particularly nursing homes) and consequently these places linked up with international nurse recruiting agents to further exploit the situation. Promises of placements became associated with hefty fees for their services. Many Nepalese nurses were part of this backlog. In the next section I will present some Nepalese nurses' migration experiences during this period of change, and what it is like to be brokered to the UK through these agencies. I present these narratives anonymously because a number of those interviewed were being threatened by IEC agents/brokers at this

end of the migration process. Under full media scrutiny, these brokers, worried about their business, cashed in on the very vulnerability they exploited by threatening nurses with being deported.

Ms X. completed her nursing training from a reputable nursing college in Kathmandu in the late 1980s. She worked as a staff nurse at a large teaching hospital in Kathmandu, and a few years later she had the opportunity to advance her career by studying for a Bachelor Degree in Nursing (BN). After completing her degree, she worked as Lecturer at a nursing college and then worked as a field officer for a large Non-Government Organisation (NGO), where she held a respectable and relatively well-paid position. By this time, she was married and had a child. As many of her friends started making inquiries about work abroad, and some had already left Nepal, she also started to seek the same opportunities. Some of her friends obtained a visa for the US, and she became increasingly tempted to follow in their footsteps, echoing many others' desires: "It all seemed so exciting and I also wanted to go to the US to work as a nurse as it seemed like the land of opportunity".

She had all the necessary documents ready and applied for an American visa twice through an IEC, but was refused both times. She says that she was very upset and disheartened by this. A friend suggested that she use a different consultancy and try Britain this time, if she still really wanted to go abroad. She turned to the UK/US Council. After discussing the matter with Ms X, the agent suggested she apply for an NVQ level-three student visa to go to Britain, as this seemed like an easy visa option. She had a week-long visa interview training session, where she was trained on how to answer questions at a visa interview, and completed her visa application. This time she was granted a UK visa. At every step in her preparation she was guided by the agent. She paid all the requested fees for the service, as agreed, and she expected that the agent would find her a job when she arrived in the UK. She had no intention of doing the NVQ training and only wanted to work as a nurse, but was able to get an 18-month student visa as a consequence. The agent had also told her that somebody would pick her up from Heathrow airport and take her to pre-booked accommodation. She had paid £370 for a month's rent and another £50 for somebody to take her to the accommodation arranged by the agent before she left Nepal. When she landed in Heathrow there was nobody to meet her at the airport. That was when all her problems started: "...fortunately I had a friend's number, so I rang her; this friend sent me a taxi to the airport to take me to her place in East London. I arrived there by two that afternoon. I stayed there for a few days, but I had to move out as there was not enough room for so many people. Later I contacted the agent again. The accommodation they arranged for me was very expensive. Another friend of mine was living in the Wembley area. I

went there and stayed there for about two weeks. While I was there, I started looking for a job or placement, anything really. Luckily, I found this place in Hastings [through her tireless efforts]. I spoke with the matron of this Nursing Home, and the matron said that she could put me on a waiting list for adaptation. But in the meantime I could start working as a carer. I lost the month's rent I had paid to the agent in Kathmandu; I got nothing back, not even a cup of tea". She had left her husband and son in Nepal and was missing her family badly. She did not find a proper nursing job for over a year, but had to stay in the country as she had borrowed so much money to pay the agent. She had to endure this situation until she completed her adaptation course. Finally she received her NMC Professional Identification Number (PIN) in early 2006, which allowed her to start practising as a nurse in the UK.

Others described similar problems upon their arrival regarding their accommodation and sense of being exploited. Another nurse I met in Hastings recalls her experience of visiting the UK/US Council when she was told by her agent that "...there are many opportunities waiting for you in the UK". She was totally convinced of this. Many of her friends had already gone to Britain, so she decided to go ahead with this agent. She paid £5,000 in service charges and NVQ training fees but, when she arrived in Britain, nothing had been arranged for her. Yet another nurse named Ms S. had obtained an adaptation student visa, a visa directly related to nursing conversion-adaptation training. She had paid all the agency fees to Real Dream in Nepal for them to find her accommodation and an adaptation placement. When I met her in Buckinghamshire in 2007, she had been living in various parts of Britain over a one-year period undergoing many difficulties and had finally got a place on an adaptation course in a nursing home there. Her accommodation which had been arranged by her agent was very cramped and in a sorry state. The rent was at a negotiated rate, but she had to share one room with no curtains at the windows. Now in London herself, she said that she could not believe that people in London lived like that, in such miserable conditions. As no adaptation course had been arranged for these migrants, they had to stay in London for weeks. The money they had brought with them from Nepal was about to dry up, and the future was very uncertain. She was very stressed, and explained how her mind (*dimag*) almost "cracked". Many nurses I interviewed referred to the increased "tension" and "mental torture" associated with migration and relocation.

There are many similar stories of Nepalese nurses being exploited by these IEC agents. The majority of nurses seem to have used one or more agents, and have had rather negative experiences. Upon their arrival in London, many were treated as any migrants are, as "disposable persons" (Shelley 2007). Upon reflection, the promises agents had made in Nepal

seemed empty but, as they had been blinded by the desire to migrate, they had not realised this at the time. I was told by some nurses of being threatened by their agents with deportation back to Nepal if they denounced them, so they had to keep quiet. Obtaining a UK visa and landing in Britain is one thing, getting a proper nursing job and benefiting from the opportunities available for professional advancement is another. A nurse I met in Hastings summed it up: "It is nothing like what the brokers say in Kathmandu; they say go ahead, there are lots of opportunities waiting for you". But when she arrived in the UK, she had to cross many hurdles and endure a number of disappointments. She already had a Bachelor's Degree in Hospital Nursing (BN) from Nepal, with many years of management and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Nursing experience, but when she actually started looking for a nursing job, all her experience was worthless. She struggled for several years until she found a full-time job and a work permit, but she now feels that she has not yet furthered her career. Nevertheless, she, like others, feels that she cannot simply return to Nepal because of *bejjat* (shame) of not having achieved what she came to Britain for. Before she arrived, Britain was like a big "dream", but after several years in the country, it has become a "trap".

Highly experienced and qualified nurses have been forced to take any kind of nursing or care job. Those I interviewed felt that they have been "deskilled" in Britain. Before leaving Nepal, some had worked in specialist units in hospitals and others had been managing health care programmes, yet their past experience and specialist skills are not valued in the UK. Many have been very disappointed in their jobs, and their social and professional situations. Many have experienced racial harassment and discrimination at work. Despite all these challenges and unpleasant experiences, there is no sign of these nurses returning home.

One issue that the interviews reveal is the importance of *ijjat* (honour, status or prestige, in the sense of maintaining one's reputation and family name), in that there is a profound sense of failure if one returns without tangible achievements in the UK. The term used is *bejjat* (as in the loss of *ijjat*); after spending so much money, time and effort to come to the UK, there is nothing to show for it. I found that nurses do not want to go back to Nepal without a sense of social pride or a guarantee that they are either in a permanent job with a long-term work permit, or have permanent residency status in the UK. Without this, returning home could be seen as a failure by family and neighbours. For example, some nurses who entered the country as students have returned to Nepal to change their visa status after they have found a job that allows them to work full-time with a work permit. Even this visit was hard and very embarrassing for them. When people ask why they have come back, their shame of not being able to show anything for it, or express what they have achieved, is a huge issue

and places them in an extremely uncomfortable position. I cannot emphasise enough how strong this sentiment is in its power to keep nurses in the UK, even though they feel exploited.

Nurse X told me about her experiences. She went to Nepal in 2007 to change her visa status from an NVQ student visa to a work permit holder visa. She says it took her a long time to sort this out in Kathmandu. She was staying with her family, but her neighbours and others kept asking her the same questions: how long are you here for and when are you going back? She found this very hard to answer. She said: "...it's so embarrassing when people asked me what I was doing in Nepal, why I was there for so long. I told my immediate family about my problem with the visa but I couldn't tell anybody else. After that entire struggle to come to Britain, all that emotional and financial investment, we need to achieve something before we go, at least an NMC PIN and a permanent job. I could not even tell my grandmother... It was very difficult to tell people what my problem was".

Even if the urge to return home is so strong, the nurses I spoke to feel they have to wait. They do not want to go without being able to show something of what they have achieved. As another nurse told me, she is desperate to go home after almost two years, but she cannot just yet, as she has to wait until she completes her ONP and receives her NMC PIN. Otherwise she would have already gone back to Nepal like the wind (*tufan*), but it would all have to wait till after completion of her training, in the hope of having some positive news to share with her friends and family in Nepal.

Concluding remarks: Brokering migrants at the borders of education and work

My research has highlighted an area where the boundaries between migration for education and for work abroad have become more blurred. The term "Education" has been increasingly used in Nepal as a mechanism to broker young Nepalese nurses to migrate to the affluent West. The brokering of nurses to the UK, under the banner of "International Education Consultancies" and "Study Abroad Programmes" is hugely profitable, and has been a response to changes in the UK visa situation for nurses. A new business trend has emerged with increasing numbers of higher education colleges from developed countries travelling abroad to recruit students for their courses and attract international students in particular. Some universities and colleges take part in educational fairs organised by local educational consultants in Nepal. The whole process has not only been seen as a profitable business for migration agents but also a good source of income for Western universities and colleges.

However, stories are circulating in Nepal whereby some of these brokering agencies have set up bogus colleges in the UK as a front in order to bring migrants into the country on student visas. It is hard, when still in Kathmandu, to be able to differentiate between genuine education and migration possibilities and outright fraud.

An increasing number of nurses trained in Nepal's growing number of colleges have a strong desire to migrate, study and work abroad. These routes abroad have been developed and adapted in response to the need for a foreign nursing workforce and nursing registration policy in the UK and elsewhere, and as a result of tighter immigration and border controls in Western countries. As border controls are tightened, people seek alternative ways to migrate, which is evident from the discussions above. Migration brokers emerge, business strategies are designed, new ways are discovered and existing agencies change their status or merge with other businesses. This is but one example: as it has become harder for Nepalese nurses to obtain UK work permit visas and or adaptation student visas, brokers have started selling "NVQ level three" and "dental nursing" "health and social care" training. As student visa requirements have become tighter, brokers have started to establish a direct link with higher education colleges, and some have even set up their own colleges in the UK and elsewhere. A common term for these colleges which circulates in Nepal and in the UK is "Hajariya College" or "Visa College" (Thousand Pounds College), and yet they have only been set up to help students renew their student visas—by charging a thousand pounds a year—to forge documents so that a one-year student visa could be renewed, and therefore the migrant could continue to stay and work in the UK.

Twenty years ago, few nurses in Nepal had global aspirations and plans to migrate and settle in the West. This has all completely changed in less than one generation. Now a new generation of nurses in Nepal is choosing nursing as a vehicle to migrate to the West, and fulfil their modern aspirations. Due to an apparent lack of government regulations regarding the new market in Nepal, IECs are exploiting education as business. They are brokering young and talented, educated, skilled (and unskilled) people abroad under the banner of "Study Abroad". Furthermore, they charge hefty fees. Once their prey has been ensnared, then these students or professionals are 'dumped' like disposable people, as illustrated by the nurses' stories I have reproduced here.

International nurse migration has emerged as a major global issue since the late 1990s. Nurse migration from a developing country like Nepal to developed countries like the UK has been labelled a "Brain Drain". As well as a brain drain, nurse migration has been seen as "Care Drain". An increasing number of women from developing countries are migrating to the developed West. They leave their family and loved ones behind to look

after young children, the sick and elderly and young children for people in affluent countries (Zimmerman *et al.* 2006). However, international migration has created a thriving market globally; much of the IEC market in Nepal thrives on international migration for education, or for jobs, or both. Many nurses have not found what they expected or dreamed about in Britain; instead the whole experience has been almost like falling into a trap. They do not want to go back without achieving something tangible. So they are further trapped.

However, the global movement of people in the 21st century is not going to slow down or stop due to tighter border controls. Instead the IEC business/international brokering practice needs to be addressed. This is not merely a question of picking out IECs in Nepal, but all stakeholders involved in this practice globally. Some of the IECs currently operating in Kathmandu to help nurses to migrate are very similar to the “gang-masters” involved in smuggling people into Europe (Shelley 2007). There is an urgent need to evaluate their ‘services’ and better understand their ethical and moral positions, and the political economy from which they emerge.

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Nepali Transmigrants: An Examination of Transnational Ties Among Nepali Immigrants in the United States

Bandita Sijapati

One of my research participants, who has now added me as a “friend” on Facebook, the internet-based social networking site, recently posted a video clip from his son’s pasni. In the film, taken in his New York apartment, is Ravi, a Nepali who had come to the US to study and currently holds a well-paid job in New York City; his wife, a national of Eastern Europe; the baby whose surname hyphenates Ravi’s and his wife’s last names; an Indian priest who had been called to perform the “Nepali” rituals; and a mixed groups of friends—whites, South Asians, African-Americans, East Asians, and Nepalis. The video came with the caption: “For Buwa and Ama”—Ravi’s parents in Nepal.

Ravi’s attempt at transcontinental communication not only epitomizes the onset of globalization facilitated by the advancement in communication technology, but also speaks of the ties that Nepali immigrants to the United States have sustained and nurtured across boundaries. However sporadic and trivial these ties might be in the larger context of socio-political relationships between nation-states, they carry significant meanings in the everyday lives of people who experience and enact these ties—in this instance, Ravi being able to allow his parents to “participate” vicariously in the ceremony despite the geographical distance between Nepal and the US.

Drawing from this anecdote, this paper, which is part of a larger study on Nepali students who have come to the United States to pursue higher education, seeks to map the ways in which Nepali youths as well as the larger community of Nepali transmigrants have become participants in transnational practices that mark the current world order. These transnational ties, I argue, not only affect their daily lives and experiences but also family structures, community ties, socio-economic relations, and political structures both in the US and Nepal.

From Nepal to the USA: Exploring Nepali Transnational Fields

The number of Nepali immigrants in the United States is still relatively small compared to the total immigrant population in the US as well as to the numbers leaving Nepal as laborers to India, the Gulf States or countries in East and Southeast Asia (Dhungel 1999, Tamot 2008). The US Census figures for the year 2000 reported the total number of people born in Nepal and residing in the US at 11,715 individuals though informal estimates, particularly those made by Non-Resident Nepali (NRNs)

associations, now place the figure at between 80,000 and 150,000 individuals (Udas 2004, Sharma 2007). Undoubtedly, the number reported in the 2000 census would have increased rapidly since then with greater numbers of Nepalis entering the US, especially through the Diversity Visa scheme.

But the greater significance, though less documented, of the Nepali population in the US lies in the number of Nepali youths arriving for higher education in the US. According to the Institute of International Education, in the academic year 2007/08, a total of 8,936 Nepalis were enrolled in colleges and universities in the United States. This is an increase of 15.2% compared to the previous year, making Nepal the eleventh leading place of origin for students entering the United States (IIE 2008).

In this paper, I will map the multiple relationships and networks that these Nepali youths in the US have maintained in Nepal through a series of fluid concentric circles. For heuristic purposes, I will focus primarily on three layers of networks—family and kinship ties; immigrant organizational networks; and more diffuse public domain networks that spread across the boundaries of the home and host countries, thus forming a significant part of the “transnational social field” that the Nepali community, including the youths, are embedded in (Figure 1).

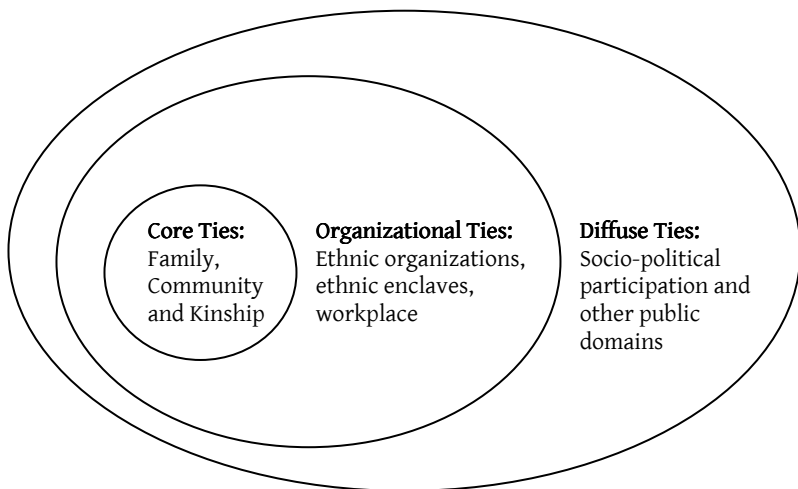


Figure 1: An Exploratory Framework for Understanding Transnational Networks and Ties

Before looking into the specifics of this framework, it is important to note that these circles are “fluid” in nature since the relationships bounded in one circle also percolate to the next at times and influence the relations contained therein. Similarly, not all Nepali youths participate equally in all these networks; instead, there are ties, such as “core ties”, constituted by family, kinship and friends that are frequented more regularly than the ties that are institutionalized or “political” in nature. The significance of these ties nevertheless stems from the fact that they present the youths with many different avenues for remaining active in their home country.

Core Transnationalism: Families, Communities and Kinship

One of the strongest transnational ties that persist among Nepali immigrants in the United States is that of family and kinship ties in Nepal. Benefiting tremendously from advances in communications such as telephones, the internet, and air transportation, Nepali immigrants talk on the phone and/or send emails to family members as well as close friends on a regular basis, and those who can afford it (for many, airfares remain rather expensive), make occasional trips to Nepal (generally, once a year or every two years) whenever “time and money” permits.

The relationships enacted over the telephone, internet, etc, are not limited to casual exchanges of greetings between family members and friends as would have happened in the past. On the contrary, mediated by modern technology, members of the family, despite the geographical distance, continue with their prescribed roles and responsibilities. For instance, during the course of the study, Nepali youths, especially males, indicated that they continue to partake in household decisions—family members in Nepal often seek their advice on matters ranging from the education of their siblings and managing household finances to broader issues about political changes and which party the parents should support. As Subir mentioned: “I am the eldest son in the family, so I have the responsibility to take care of my family and also look out for my siblings. I send money home regularly for household expenses. Even though I am doing odd jobs here, my siblings have been able to attend good schools in India and in Nepal...Earlier, it was not like this. My parents have now started to treat me like an adult and they ask for my opinion in every decision they make... I am happy that even though I am far away from home, I have not discarded my responsibilities as the eldest son of the family...”

DeSipio (2000: 25) notes that “remitting...reflects the migrant’s underlying notions of who he or she is and where his or her responsibilities lie”, which, in the case of Nepali immigrants, means

contributing to families' financial and social needs and assuming the responsibilities, i.e., of a son, particularly, the eldest one as was the case of Subir. This is, however, not to say that all Nepali youths are involved in remitting money. On the contrary, several of the participants in my research, especially full-time students or youths, who are paying for their education while holding a full-time job, mentioned, "life in America is difficult and being able to support one's family back home is simply out of the question." But most of these youths also expressed their desire to at least be able to contribute to their family once they are "financially able" and if there is a "need in the family."

In addition to helping families back home, core ties are also of major significance to the immigrants as they lead their daily lives in the US. Confirming Basch *et al.*'s (1994: 239-240) assertion, many participants in the study admitted that family relationships and support in Nepal had served as a "symbolic and at times actual security net" during their transition to the US. Nirmala's narrative is a case in point: "...the US, especially a place like New York, is so crowded with so many people but yet in the crowd, I feel alone. There are people I hang out with in college and outside every now and then, but I would not call them my 'friends'—they are only acquaintances, just passers-by... The only way I make myself feel better is by talking to my family and friends back home at least once a week. This serves as a reminder about who I am and why it is that I am in the US but, more importantly, it helps me realize that I have others who care about me."

Thus, locating support, especially the "security net" back in Nepal becomes one of the ways in which these immigrants reconstitute family and friendship ties over time and space on a daily basis. Furthermore, to fill the void created by isolation, and, in some cases, even marginalization from mainstream America, Nepali immigrants seek to re-create their homeland in their homes, dorm rooms, offices, etc, in the United States. While visiting migrant youths, whether in their rented homes or college dormitories, I spotted Nepali paraphernalia such as pictures, Nepali flags, decorative ornaments, etc, that these individuals had "imported" from Nepal either themselves or through others who had later joined them. Sarup (1994: 94) has described this phenomenon, as an act of turning their homes into "private museums" which help migrants "create a shield from the world they had entered through migration" (see also Werbner 2002, Naficy 1991). Bimala's account helps elucidate this point further: "My husband works in an Indian restaurant, while I work as a domestic helper for an Indian family. I find it quite amusing that I don't remember uttering a single word of English for a few months now, I just haven't had to since I talk with my employers in Hindi and with my room-mates and husband in Nepali. The way my husband and I live our lives is very Nepali as well—we

have decorated our apartment in the same way that we used to in Nepal; we follow Nepali rituals and customs; we eat Nepali food; I fast during *teej*; I savor the Nepali delicacies people bring from Nepal...When I enter my apartment, it does not even feel like I am in America, but then given that I have been in the US for almost three years now, I cannot deny that I am not in America either..."

For many like Bimala who remain in the US with little or no access to "mainstream" American life, there are contradictions and ambiguities that affect their construction of their selves. On the one hand, there is a deep sense of desire to be part of mainstream society, and yet, because they are removed and isolated from that aspect of American life, the only way they can continue with their daily routine in the US, as well as achieve some coherence in their lives, is by ensuring some continuity with their customs and practices carried over from Nepal.

Organizational Ties: Enclaves, Workplaces and Networks

Over time, with the increase in the number of Nepalis living in the US, the informal networks discussed in the previous section have grown and become what Appadurai (1996) aptly calls "ethnoscapes." These "ethnoscapes," though at incipient stages of development in the case of Nepali immigrants, include small ethnic enclaves, professions that have been "ethnicized," and formal organizations and associations. Since Nepali immigrants are scattered throughout the United States and comprise a relatively small and young immigrant community, extensive and thriving ethnic enclaves like "Little India" in Jackson Heights in Queens, New York City, or "Chinatown" in Los Angeles do not exist. But, along with other smaller immigrant groups, Nepalis are gradually carving out their own territorial spaces within the larger immigrant enclaves. For example, there are apartment buildings in localities like Jackson Heights and Ridgewood in New York City that are exclusively occupied by Nepali immigrants. In Jackson Heights, Nepali youths congregate at weekends in Nepali as well as Indian restaurants and shops to touch base with each other. As Saroj, a 28-year-old taxi driver, mentioned: "I live with eight other Nepalis [in a one-bedroom apartment] but because we all work for about 16 hours a day, we hardly get to see each other. As a ritual, we have decided to take a day off on Saturdays. So, we all go to Jackson Heights around 11 a.m., have our lunch there and go hang out in the Nepali video store or Indian restaurants just sipping tea. We end up meeting so many of our Nepali friends and acquaintances that we spend the whole day sipping tea after tea and just chit-chatting about many things ranging from politics, to families back home, to which Nepali girl is the hottest

[laughs]...It is just like what youths in Nepal do and what we used to do when we were back home.”

This process of giving continuity to practices from the home country is facilitated by the fact that the first point of contact for most of these individuals when they first arrive from Nepal are the networks of kinship, family contacts, friendships, neighborhood ties, organizational affiliations, etc, formed amongst the Nepali immigrant community already in the US. As network theorists have observed, these networks serve as a form of social capital that recent arrivals draw upon to receive assistance, including in finding housing, gaining access to employment, understanding the ins and outs of life in America, etc. (Massey 1990, Massey *et al.* 1993, Mora and Taylor 2006). To cite an example, participants who had gone to Budhanilkantha School in Kathmandu invariably mentioned their seniors or contemporaries from the same school as being one of their first points of contact when they arrived in the US. Kapil, who recently graduated from a top liberal arts college in the US and is currently working in San Francisco, told me: “During weekdays, I hardly find any time to do anything in terms of social activities. However, weekends are there to hang out with friends. There are so many Budha [Budhanilkantha] guys here that it is really nice. It is really nice, you know, to be in a group with like-minded people. Basically, people who grew up in the same way as you did and people who share the same background as yourself. We talk, we drink, we discuss the stock market, we ruminate on current developments in Nepal, we sing Nepali songs and we usually end up making momos [dumplings]. Very Nepali, right?”

Despite their small numbers, Nepalis have also begun to create a niche for themselves in certain professions. For instance, in New York City, when they first arrive, most Nepali youths who have to self-finance their studies engage in entry-level jobs as bus boys in restaurants or at cash registers, primarily in the Jackson Heights area. In addition to being able to find jobs close to their place of residence, working in the South Asian ethnic enclave provides these immigrants with the option of speaking in Hindi, especially when they have little confidence in speaking English. After having saved enough money (and, mostly, dropped out of college/university), men generally start working as cab drivers while women tend to move to “nail parlors,” which have, by and large, made these professions a niche for Nepalis in New York City. Similarly, in Northern Virginia, many Nepali women are employed as baby-sitters in day-care centers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that in the DC metropolitan area, in a well-renowned chain of 14 daycare centers owned by a Polish woman, almost 95 percent of the care-givers are Nepali women.

Finally, despite their small and scattered nature, there has been a considerable proliferation of Nepali associations and organizations that

have played a significant role in strengthening transnational ties between immigrants in the US and Nepal. While a reliable record of the total number of Nepali organizations does not exist, a quick internet search revealed more than 80 different Nepali organizations and associations in the US itself. Broadly speaking, these organizations can be grouped into six categories: (i) student organizations housed in different colleges and universities with a large Nepali student population; (ii) political and rights-based groups like the Alliance for Human Rights and Democracy in Nepal, Nepalese Democratic Youth Council, etc; (iii) group-based organizations that cater to specific Nepali ethnic groups, gender or localities in Nepal; (iv) regional organizations of Nepalis, such as the Association of Nepalis in Midwest America; (v) professional associations such as Nepali Entrepreneurs in North America; and (vi) broader Nepali organizations such as the Association of the Nepalis in the Americas (ANA).

While some of these organizations and associations still operate as “informal” groups, others are registered as non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code of the US government. Registered formally as charitable or educational organizations, these associations usually claim to have been established to help the Nepali immigrant community or preserve the identity and culture of the Nepalis in the US. As such, most of these organizations have included “America” or regions of America in their names such as the Association of the Nepalis in the Americas, Nepalis Living in Texas, etc, to reflect their being in America and helping the Nepali immigrant population. However, the Nepali component of their organizational mandate is equally, if not more, significant than the American part. This is because most of these organizations offer the Nepali community in the US many different avenues to remain active in Nepal, despite the long distance (see Levitt 2001a, Levitt 2001b for a similar phenomenon amongst the Dominicans in the US).

In terms of activities, these networks of Nepali organizations periodically organize social and cultural events such as picnics, conferences, Dasain parties, Nepali New Year celebrations, etc, that are of cultural significance and also bring the Nepali immigrant community together. For example, by 2008, the Association of the Nepalis in the Americas (ANA), the oldest and perhaps the largest Nepali organization in the US, that aims “to promote preservation of Nepali identity and culture in the Americas,” had organized 26 annual conventions in various cities throughout the US and Canada. In addition, ANA has purchased a 3.4-acre property in Maryland to establish the Nepal Education and Cultural Center that serves as a “window to Nepal, Nepali art, music, crafts” as well as functioning as a center for Nepali religious activities, though most of their

activities have been exclusively based on Hindu traditions with sporadic intervals of Buddhist ones, such as the celebration of Buddha Jayanti. In addition, despite being a relatively young community in the US, Nepalis have also brought out their own publications as well as produced radio and television programs. These include the ANA newsletter, web-based journals like *Antardrishti*, news magazines like *Nepali Post*, *Nepali Awaz* and *Nepal Abroad*, and Nepali radio stations in North America like *Radio Dovan*, *Everest Radio* and *Sagarmatha Television* (see also Sharma 2007).

To illustrate how these organizations have been “creating new possibilities of membership across boundaries” (Levitt 2001a: 202), I will use the case of the United Sherpa Association (Sherpa Kyidug). In its by-laws, the Kyidug has mentioned the following as its objectives:

- A) To provide the necessary means of bringing all Sherpas together as one family.
- B) To organize social, cultural, and religious events for the enjoyment of members.
- C) To look after the members who are in need of any kind of help.
- D) To preserve Sherpa culture and the Buddhist religion.
- E) To help less fortunate Sherpas in Nepal at the right time

These objectives indicate that the Sherpa Kyidug aspires to promote not only a sense of common culture, history and identity as “Sherpas” living in the US but also seeks to extend support to other Sherpas in Nepal. As one of the members of the Sherpa Kyidug mentioned: “We face what you might call double discrimination—on the one hand, we are discriminated against by American society for being immigrants or foreigners in their land. And on the other hand, the stereotype of Sherpas as porters has also sustained discrimination against us by the larger Nepali immigrant community in the US...We need to tell everyone, including our own community, that while Sherpas might have served as porters in the past, there are Sherpas who have been to top institutions like Harvard, Columbia, Stanford, etc, and also those who work for institutions like Lehman Brothers, the World Bank, Goldman Sachs, etc...Coming together through the [Sherpa] Kyidug helps us bond together as Sherpas and overcome the stereotypes and discrimination targeted at us.”

In many cases, like that of the Sherpas, strengthening of ethnic identification through immigrant networks has helped individuals moderate the experiences of discrimination they face as “foreigners” while also developing a deeper sense of connectedness amongst each

other as an ethnic minority within the broader Nepali immigrant community.

For many Nepali immigrants, immigrant networks also serve as a vehicle to obtain and reinforce their social position. During the course of my fieldwork, it was quite evident that “illegal immigrants” in the US invariably introduced themselves as an office-holder of an organization based in the US followed by the positions they held in Nepal prior to emigrating. To cite an example, the president of one of the Nepali organizations in New York introduced himself as a member of the Nepal Students’ Union and a journalist for a leading newspaper in Nepal. When I asked him what his current profession was, he hesitated and said that he does “things here and there for fun.” It was only during the later part of the interview that he admitted that he was a cab driver in New York and has been in the profession for almost six years. Evidently, as pointed by Basch *et al.* (1994: 249), joining, and even more significantly, leading, these organizations and associations provide migrants with a chance for “public validation and recognition.” Such status validation is of significant importance particularly to immigrants who were well positioned in Nepal but are engaged in jobs conferring significantly lower social status.

This is, however, not to suggest that only those in marginal positions are predisposed to joining these immigrant organizations. On the contrary, very successful individuals are active members in these organizations and are often sought after to take up advisory roles if they refuse active membership. As a lawyer who serves on the advisory board of one such organization said: “I have a well-paying job. I don’t have to worry about my visa status since I have already acquired American citizenship. So, I feel that this is the time for me to do something for Nepal and also for the Nepali community here in the United States.”

This example negates the widely held view which equates acquisition of American citizenship to severing ties with the home country. Instead, since these “successful” individuals, particularly those who have acquired American citizenship by virtue of their legal status and security in the US, are equally predisposed to supporting and volunteering in these transnational associations and organizations so as to “do something for their homeland.”

Diffuse Ties, Public Domains and (Un)institutionalized Transnationalism

The third layer of transnational ties comprises of diffuse ties which are sporadic and uninstitutionalized, especially as they relate to broader socio-political issues in Nepal. These ties generally extend beyond the immediate networks of kin and family, and sometimes even ethnic organizations, to evolve as “transnational social fields” which involve

public spheres that “traverse the boundaries of home and host countries” (Basch *et al.*, 1994).

In the case of Nepali immigrants, one of the significant ways in which these diffuse ties have manifested themselves is through the electronic mass media. During the course of the fieldwork, Nepali immigrants almost exclusively said that it had become a habit for them to regularly skim through Nepali news sites, such as nepalnews.com or ekantipur.com. The immediacy afforded by electronic transmission not only helps immigrants keep abreast with developments in Nepal but also to react to them instantaneously despite the geographic distance. To give one example, following the news of an attempt to vandalize the former king’s vehicle while he was making a trip to Pashupati Temple in February 2007, within a week members of a Nepali religious group in New York put out an appeal, claiming that such behavior was unwarranted and inexcusable.

The internet has also become a site for political engagement among Nepalis living abroad. In addition to formal organizations like the ones discussed above, immigrants have developed discussion groups like liberaldemocracynepal.org, sajha.com, demrepubnepal.blogspot.com, samudaya.org, etc, that allow them to engage with as well as participate in social and political discussions related to Nepal. For instance, Prem, who spends much of his time as a blogger in the US, told me that he would like to consider himself a “virtual activist—an activist who is striving to bring about social and political change in Nepal by creating awareness among both Nepalis and non-Nepalis through the internet.”

In addition to these “virtual spaces,” Nepalis living in the US have also organized themselves in multifarious ways to bring about socio-political changes in Nepal. For instance, in the aftermath of the royal takeover on 1 February 2005 by King Gyanendra, organizations such as Liberal Democracy Nepal, Alliance for Democracy and Human Rights and Nepalese Democratic Youth Council, declared its support for the anti-monarchy movement in Nepal. Cognizant of the fact that calls for democracy would resonate with western political discourse, these organizations also sent letters to the then US President George W. Bush, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and Jose Manuel Barroso, president of the European Union, requesting them to put pressure on the King’s regime to release all political prisoners and restore democracy in Nepal. Similarly, some from the Nepali community in the US also staged rallies in front of the State Department and the White House in Washington DC, and at the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza Park in front of the UN in New York, to protest against the royal takeover and to draw the attention of world leaders to the political crisis in Nepal. As Sushil, one of the organizers of these protest events, explained,

The main purpose of organizing and mobilizing the Nepali community here in the US is to draw attention of world leaders to the political crisis in Nepal. And what better venue to organize these demonstrations than in New York where the United Nations is located and Washington DC where the American government is seated? The access that we [Nepali diaspora] have to the international community is unmatched to the one in Nepal.

Pro-democracy activists among the diaspora, like Sushil, claim that events like George Bush's pointed snub to King Gyanendra by not inviting him to a reception on the occasion of the opening of the 60th General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2005, and the subsequent reinstatement of the dissolved parliament in April 2006, were a direct result of their lobbying efforts. While it cannot be ascertained whether the Nepali diaspora in the US was ultimately responsible for this outcome, the significance of the campaigns in the US against the King's takeover provides evidence of the "globalization of domestic politics" (Koslowski 2007; Basch *et al.*, 1994, See also Tamot 2008) in that it shows how the Nepali immigrant community, while geographically distant, was able to organize and stage protest rallies to push for political change in Nepal.

Political transnationalism amongst the diaspora is also strengthened by the fact that while on official visits to the US, Nepali dignitaries also spend time with the Nepali diaspora, briefing them on current affairs. Usually, such gatherings are organized by Nepali organizations and sometimes held in conference halls of "prestigious universities" that Nepali students attending the universities are able to secure for the occasion. After these formal events, the Nepali hosts of the events often invite the delegates to their place for dinner and/or overnight stays, thus strengthening the ties between the immigrant community and the Nepali political leadership. Full of heated discussions, these encounters, both formal and informal, become sites of political and ideological contestations and in the process open up channels for migrants and their associations to exercise political influence on home country politics and society.

In addition to political engagement, diffuse ties also consist of a variety of projects and charities "back home" that the Nepal immigrant network is engaged in. For example, the America-Nepal Medical Foundation, an organization which aims to support the advancement of medical training and practice in Nepal has supported 40 health-related projects in Nepal. Similarly, HelpNepal Network, with the philosophy "Nepalis for Nepal," has helped build several schools, run health camps, set up shelters for children affected by the Maoist conflict, and established electronic libraries in village schools. Smaller and more disparate efforts include fund-raising events organized to help the families of "martyrs"—people

killed during the April 2006 pro-democracy movement in Nepal. Evidently, these charities are small and intermittent especially when compared to the type of demands the Nepali diaspora has been making on the Nepali State. Nevertheless, they do speak of the Nepali diaspora's interest in engaging more in both political and socio-economic developments in the home country.

Long-distance political participation by Nepali immigrants has also been facilitated by political interest in Nepal acknowledging, directly or otherwise, the Nepali diaspora in the US, as well as in other countries, as being a vital part of Nepal's body politic. The public call by the then finance minister, Baburam Bhattarai, to the Nepali diaspora, "Let's return and do something good for the country...Our inner soul will haunt us if we do not return to the country," is a case in point. Similarly, the Nepali Congress Party has established, Nepali Janasamparka Samiti, America (also known as Nepali Public Relations Committee, America) to serve as the party's platform in the US. The Nepali diaspora is also recognized through various means such as granting some of its members the opportunity to meet top political leaders during their visits to Nepal. For example, in October 2008 after the celebration of "NRN Day," some of the NRN representatives were given the chance to meet the President, the Prime Minister and others, who, in addition to appreciating the role played by the Nepali diaspora, also asked them to "come forth to build a new Nepal." Other such recent efforts acknowledging the role played by the diaspora include the "Send Home a Friend" campaign launched by the Ministry of Tourism in an attempt to involve the diaspora in developing the country's tourism sector. In addition, the Nepali diaspora has also established the NRN Constitution Suggestion Committee to submit their recommendations to the Constituent Assembly, and a "Coalition Advancing the Rights of Marginalized Peoples of Nepal," to advance the concerns of marginalized communities in the constitution-making process of Nepal.

This, however, is not to suggest that the Nepali State has always been sympathetic to its diaspora, including Nepalis in the US. On the contrary, it was only after years of consistent lobbying that the government finally promulgated the Non-Resident Nepali Act in August 2007. While the Act does indeed address some of the demands of the NRN such as allowing them to possess a certain amount of property and exercise the same privileges as foreign investors in terms of repatriation of deposits and assets, the Act remains silent on the core demand of NRNs, that of granting them dual citizenship status. The fact that the issue of dual citizenship remains unresolved is hardly surprising since the concept of the NRN itself is contested and vague given the nature of the types of exodus from Nepal. During the course of my fieldwork itself, Nepalis were

unsure about who should be granted dual citizenship even if the Nepali government were to support such an initiative. Should it be provided to all Nepalis, including those living in India? Can the millions of Nepalis working in the Gulf countries as laborers qualify for it? Or, should it be only limited to those living in the “West”, as some of the interviewees suggested. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to elaborate on the discussions of dual citizenship, let it suffice to say here that the discourse on dual citizenship is perhaps one of the central issues that divides the Nepali diaspora living in various parts of the world, especially along class and caste lines, with privileged members of the diaspora calling for a selective administration of dual citizenship distribution.

In the same vein, despite numerous lobbying efforts, the government of Nepal also rejected the diaspora’s demand for a provision to allow NRNs to vote during the Constituent Assembly. As Ashutosh, the chairperson of one of the political organizations in New York, mentioned: “I will give it to the government for not honoring some of NRN’s demands immediately...like the issue of dual citizenship. But not giving voting rights to Nepalis is simply not acceptable. There are countries throughout the world that have set up voting booths in their embassies in the US and we need to have the same privileges here...people who are willing to pay airfare or whatever it takes to go to the US embassy in DC or consular office in New York should be able to come and cast their votes...”

The appeal from the Nepali Americas Council to choose one member from the NRN community among the 26 that were to be nominated by the government to the Constituent Assembly received the same fate. Based on the divergence between the demands of the diaspora and the unresponsive attitude of the Nepali State’s towards it, Tamot (2008: 301) has pointed out that while Nepali immigrants are interested in “thickening” their membership in the Nepali nation-state, the government is only interested in institutionalizing a “weak and ‘thin’ form of Diasporic membership for Nepali nationals living abroad.”

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to provide an exploratory framework for mapping the experiences of transmigrants who simultaneously traverse geographical boundaries between home and host countries at multiple levels—familial, community, economic, political, religious and organizational. By envisioning these transnational ties and practices as a series of fluid concentric circles with the inner-most circle constituting the “core” relationships, practices and ties, which nevertheless gets more diffuse as one crosses the layers of circles away from the core, I have

mapped the social fields that Nepali transmigrants in the United States are embedded in.

The case of Nepalis in the United States also shows that despite being a relatively small, scattered and young community, they have been successful in nourishing multiple ties between the host and home countries. These transnational linkages that the Nepali diaspora has maintained, transformed and reconstituted as they tread between two nation-states have, as a result, created new possibilities for political and social membership across borders.

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Who's in a labour camp? A socio-economic analysis of Nepalese migrants in Qatar.

Tristan Bruslé

Investigations into Nepalese international migration have mainly focused on the mechanisms of migration, remittances and the social aspects of migration in Nepal and in India. According to the Department of Foreign Employment, between 1.3 and 2.6 million Nepalese migrants work in the Gulf (khadi) countries whereas in 2008, 206,572 Nepalese migrant workers headed for this region out of a total of 266,666 people who ventured abroad (NIDS 2008). Although the Gulf countries have emerged as one of the major destinations (after India) since the year 2000, scientific studies about Nepalese migrants in the Middle East are non-existent. As Nepalese workers face a brand new reality compared to their familiar world in Nepal or in India, Gulf countries are no doubt a privileged arena for understanding new migration dynamics and new social phenomena back home. Anyone arriving in Qatar is struck by the large number of Nepalese men in the Doha streets and shops, all of which reflects the craving youngsters have to travel abroad, which is so palpable in Nepal. A rapid overview of the migrants' environment in Qatar raises the question of how migrants handle their lives abroad. The apparent diversity of migrants, compared to the official discourse which states that all migrants come from the same socio-economic background, needs to be evaluated. Yet acquiring detailed data about Nepalese migrants in the receiving regions is always difficult, whether because no official data exist as is the case in India or these exist but are not made public, as in the Gulf countries. As far as Nepal is concerned, no large-scale study of migrants has ever been undertaken. Therefore the only way of forming an idea of who is in Qatar is to go there in person and collect data directly where the migrants themselves live. With this in mind, I spent five weeks in Qatar, between 2006 and 2008. Fieldwork was done among Nepalese migrants in a labour camp which, from now on, I will call Al Mihinat camp. A set of data was collected for nearly all 203 workers living in the camp: name, district of origin, caste, age, date of arrival, marital status, standard of education, how they came to Qatar, kind of job, second job and earnings. Apart from quantitative data, a series of interviews was also held with migrants. Analysis of the data has enabled me to acquire an in-depth look into the socio-economic characteristics of migrants and to understand the way in which they are representative of Nepalese folk. I will therefore try to provide an answer to the question: what do we learn about Nepalese migration from the study of migrants in a *labour camp*?

The term *labour camp* stands for a labourer's dwelling-place in all the Gulf countries. As migrants are grouped together in such a closed area, where they spend most of their free time, the researcher has the opportunity of interacting with migrants as much as possible during his/her stay in the camp. Whether the particular *labour camp* where I spent some time is actually representative cannot be asserted, since no statistical data exist about *labour camps* in Qatar. To my knowledge, no article has been specifically written about these camps in the Middle East, except for Marsden (2008) and Gardner (2005:128-132). Both printed and electronic media, from the region and from elsewhere, regularly emphasize the horrendous conditions the migrants live in. Gulf countries are indeed notorious for the indecent treatment of foreign migrants or "temporary workers", as local authorities prefer to call them. The Human Rights Watch and other international agencies regularly attempt to raise public awareness about the conditions the migrants live in (HRW 2006), often evoking slavery-like conditions due to the sponsorship system (Longva 1999). Needless to say, migrants themselves are fully aware of their low status in the society, often depicting themselves as slaves (*gulam*).

Nepal and Qatar, a "migratory couple"

People from the Non Resident Nepali Association in Doha explain that the first Nepalese migrants to Qatar were Muslims from the Tarai, who could read and write in Arabic, and who found employment at the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Others at the Nepalese Embassy told me that in the 1980s a Muslim from the Tarai found employment in the Qatari police. Apart from these very sketchy stories, more research needs to be done to trace the history of Nepalese migration to Qatar. The Nepalese Embassy opened in Doha in 2000, since the number of Nepalese workers increased steadily from the mid-90s onwards. Embassy staff now only number nine.

A labour agreement was signed between Qatar and Nepal in March 2005. Each year, there is a joint committee meeting but no decision is made as far as basic salaries are concerned. As there is no legal minimum wage in Qatar, the Nepalese embassy issues a ruling on this: in 2008 it was 600 Qatari Riyals, that is 108 euros. On the Nepalese embassy website the cheap labour is indeed a strong argument: "Nepalese workers are comparatively cost effective and their hiring cost is lower as compared to other labour exporting countries". That is precisely what workers criticize in their embassy's politics: "they do not protect us, they are weak compared to the Indian Embassy" said some workers I met in Doha. However the embassy has a minimum social policy: it inspects *labour camps* if called upon by workers and shelters a few of the thirty to forty

workers who come to complain every day about their work or housing conditions and who are in desperate need of food and a place to stay.

The majority of Nepalese workers arrived in Qatar from the year 2000 onwards, due in particular to the growing demand in the building sector. The number of Nepalese migrants was about 400 in 1994 , 30,000 in 1999 , 100,000 in 2005 , 157,000 in July 2006, 177,000 in October 2006, 266,000 in February 2008 and at least 300,000 in 2009. According to the Nepalese Department of Foreign Employment (DoFE), Qatar hired 34% of all Nepalese migrants in 2008 (NIDS 2008): 250 workers arrived daily at Doha airport! Among these, only 2-3% are women: the Nepalese authorities allow them to come and work in the “legal organised sector”, though many of them arrive illegally through India to work as housemaids and find themselves completely unprotected (*ibid.*). According to diplomatic sources, though more than 95% of the Nepalese manpower consists of unskilled and semi-skilled workers, there are also about one hundred engineers, a few entrepreneurs and an indeterminable number of men from the middle classes. Most of these migrants are “geographical bachelors”, whereas there were about 80 Nepalese families in Doha in 2008. According to the same sources, at least 15,000 Nepalese males stay in Qatar illegally: some have quit their jobs or were fired and have stayed in the country with no visa. In February 2008, about 800 illegal Nepalese migrants were being held at the Qatari deportation centre where they often wait for many long months before their family sends them money for a return ticket. Other problems faced by migrants are the non-payment, underpayment or delay in paying salaries, physical harassment, frightful living conditions and health hazards. Although every worker should benefit from free medical treatment by their company, it is seldom the case except for serious accidents. Just as the Nepalese population in Qatar has risen gradually, so has the number of dead: 139 men died in 2006, 151 in 2007 and 209 in 2008: “54 percent of them died due to heart attack, which Nepali migrant workers call ‘death in sleep’”.

Even if Nepalese cultural life is less developed than in other communities, there are some regular music and dance venues which draw thousands of workers. In 2008, there were at least five Nepalese restaurants in the centre of Doha and at least one in Al Khor and Doha Industrial Areas. Their names most definitely emphasize their nepaliness: Nepali Bhansa Ghar, Sagarmatha, Himalayan Restaurant, Samsara, Nepali Chowk. They are particularly frequented on Fridays when thousands of Nepalese migrants flock to the centre of Doha to a place which “is known up to the corners of Nepal” as the Nepali chowk. There, Qatari versions of Kantipur and Rajdhani are for sale, as well as the latest Nepalese films and songs. Finally, the 65 Nepalese associations headed by the Non Resident

Nepali Association, form a basis for acts of solidarity and to give migrants a sense of belonging.

The setting: a typical Qatari labour camp

I persist in using the term *labour camp* because it is the local term used in the Gulf region to talk about a worker's dwelling-place. A better way to describe them would be to talk about labourers' camps because the *labour camp* denotes an exclusively dwelling function. Due to the negative image it conveys, new terms have been coined: "luxury labour camps", "labour villages" or "operative villages". Nevertheless, for a migrant, a *labour camp*, usually shortened to *camp*, is a dwelling place where he spends most of his time outside work. Companies usually rent camps out to other companies who run them and deal with all aspects of workers' life outside work. Camps embody spatial segregation, a major characteristic of Qatar town planning, where people live in different places according to their nationality and qualification (Nagy 2006). As workers, a majority of Nepalese live in *labour camps* (although no precise figures are available) where the conditions greatly depend on the willingness of their employer to provide them with proper conditions. If the employer is not a large company, workers share rooms in some derelict buildings in the centre of the town.

Al Mihinat *labour camp* is situated in a vast area called the industrial area, where there are only *labour camps*, parking lots and factories. Compared to other *labour camps*, it is of average size and only shelters 203 labourers. It is 45 by 60 metres long and consists of several one floor buildings lying adjacent to each other. Two mobile homes were recently installed to lodge more workers. Between 8 and 12 workers live in one room, which is 20 square meters on average and contains double bunk beds. The supervisor, Hemant Thapa, and the two "camp bosses" live in a separate room. Two toilet and shower blocks are at the workers' disposal. A small dining room is also available but seldom used by the men who prefer to eat their dinner in their rooms. Another room is used by a group of men who gather from time to time to rehearse dance programmes. Outside, next to the parking lot where cars and buses park, there is a recreational area which is sometimes used for volleyball. By and large, conditions in the camp are reasonable and, in my opinion, are middle-of-the-range regarding camp standards.

Social characteristics of workers in the camp

Contrary to what I was used to in Northern India where I met Nepalese migrants (Bruslé 2007, Bruslé 2008), the geographical origin and caste-wise diversity of workers in the camps struck me. My first impression was

that the entire Nepalese male society was represented. Of course, this proved to be wrong. Their district of origin, caste and standard of education definitely distinguish migrants from their fellow countrymen in Nepal. The data analysed below are based on a few questions asked individually or indirectly to all camp-dwellers. For lack of time, no economic data other than wages have been collected.

Geographical origin of migrants

The 2001 Nepal Population Census showed that migrants' destinations are highly dependent on their district of origin. At that time almost all migrants from Mid-Western and Far-Western regions headed for India, whereas in the rest of the country (See Graner and Gurung 2003), the situation was more diverse. An unequal access to migration was also observed in Al Mihinat camp.

Table 1: Al Mihinat camp population per development and ecological zone of Nepal (in %) compared to the distribution of the Nepalese population.

	East.	Cent.	West.	Mid-West.	Far-West.	Hills and Mountains	Tarai
Camp	51,5	8,4	38,6	1,5	0	58	42
Nepal*	23,1	34,7	19,7	13	9,5	51,6	48,4

* Source: Population Census 2001.

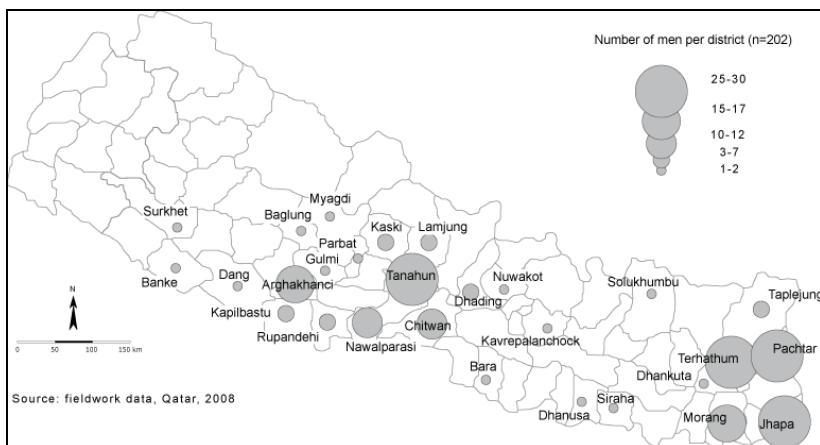


Figure 1: District of origin of migrants in Al Mihinat labour camp

Figure 1 and Table 1 clearly show the spatial dimension of migration. Proportionally more migrants come from the Nepalese hills and

mountains than from the Tarai; thus this does not reflect the actual distribution of the population. There are two broad sending regions in Nepal represented within Al Mihinat camp. The Far East (mainly the four districts of Terhathum, Pachtar, Morang and Jhapa) and the Middle West (Tanahun, Arghakhanci and Nawalparasi districts) are the two main “gulf pockets” in the camp. It is worthwhile noting that this broadly corresponds to the main sending regions towards the Gulf countries as shown by the 2001 Census. Yet, if we compare this map with the one produced by Graner (this issue), with records from the Department of Foreign Employment, one has to admit that the Al Mihinat camp is not strictly representative of the migration dynamics recorded from 2006 to April 2008. However, the propensity to go abroad for men from Eastern districts and for those from the Western ones, as seen in this Qatari *labour camp*, is particularly high. The concentration of migrants from particular areas is illustrated by the fact that 74% of all Al Mihinat migrants come from seven districts, four in the Eastern Development Region, and three from the Western one. On the contrary, the camp population reflects the weakness of migration to the Gulf from Mid- and Far Western Nepal, and to a lesser extent from Central Nepal. Wherever I went through the *labour camp* area or in Doha, whenever I looked for people from faraway western regions, I could never find any. The over-representation of some districts will be explained below by the strength of networks based on manpower agencies and individual relations.

Over-representation of higher castes

In terms of diversity, seventeen castes and ethnic groups live together, which is remarkable (Table 2). Yet this diversity is hampered by the over-representation of high castes (Bahun, Chetri, and Thakuri) that represent 66.5% of the camp population but only 31.2% of the population of the ten major sending districts and 30% of Nepal’s population. Their proportion is therefore more than double what we might expect. It reflects the dominant position of higher castes in Nepal’s economic and social spheres, a domination which translates as access to foreign employment. Although Newars traditionally enjoy a high status in the economic sector, their proportion is far lower than the one in the districts of origin. This could be attributed to their higher standard of education and their business skills. It is frequent in Doha to meet Newars at hotel receptions or stores.

Table 2: Comparison of caste and ethnic composition of Al Mihinat camp and Nepalese society (in raw numbers and % of the total population)*

	Bahun	Chettri	Thakuri	Magar	Tamang	Kami	Limbu	Gurung	Newar
Camp (number)	71	57	7	21	11	8	7	4	4
Camp (%)	35	28,1	3,4	10,3	5,4	3,9	3,4	2	2
Major districts (%)**	19,4	11,1	0,7	7,4	2,5	3,7	4,7	4,3	3,6
Nepal***	12,7	15,8	1,5	7,1	5,6	3,9	1,6	2,4	5,5

* Only caste and ethnic groups of more than three people have been taken into account. Other groups representing one to three people are: Muslims, Rai, Majhi, Damai, Tharu, Sarki, Sherpa and Sunar.

** Here statistics are for the 10 districts from which there are 5 men or more in the camp.

*** Source: Population Census 2001.

Apart from Magars, who are proportionally in greater numbers than in Nepal, so-called martial races are scarce in this *labour camp*. This might simply point to a particular bias in this camp, since they are in fact present in large numbers throughout Qatar, according to Amrit Gurung, president of the Qatar branch of Nepal Adivasi Janajati Mahasangh. This could also be explained by the fact that working as a labourer in a Gulf country is less valued than more qualified jobs, not to mention being a Gurkha. With the exception of Kamis, lower Hindu castes, Muslims, Yadav (only two members) and Tharus are also under-represented. Despite the fact that the latter account for 12.7% and 16.5% of the total population of Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts respectively, only one member of this tribe, from Kapilbastu, is present in the camp.

Given the over-representation of high castes and since money spent to go abroad represents a substantial sum of money, from 800 to 1,500 euros, the hypothesis may be put forward that there is a correlation between caste, wealth and migration to Gulf countries. However, as the economic background of each migrant is not known, this cannot be asserted. However, if we consider that the amount of capital necessary to come to Qatar is more than what is needed for India, an explanation in economic terms must be taken into account to understand why some caste/ethnic

groups migrate and others do not. As one migrant explained to me: “the poor in our village do not travel abroad. In order to take out a loan, the money-lender asks for land as a mortgage. If you do not have any land, then it is difficult to go abroad”. Access to migration is definitely hampered by limited access to money, and to the informal source of money the money-lender (*sahu*) represents, to the detriment of migrants who pay high interest rates (up to 3% per month).

At national level as well as in Al Mihinat camp, regions of origin as well as caste membership show us how migration is neither a ubiquitous phenomenon nor a phenomenon equally accessible to all kinds of people.

Age, age upon arrival and wedding age

It comes as no surprise to note that the proportion of young males is high in the camp. Sixty per cent of them are aged 20 to 29, whereas this proportion is 15.5% in Nepal. Seventy per cent of the men are aged between 18 and 30, whereas only 7.8% are above 40, the maximum age being 44. Migration and household livelihood strategies depend on the younger generation. The mean arrival age in Qatar is 25 and the median 22, though 57% of the camp population arrived between the ages of 17 and 23. Even though since 1995, when the first men arrived, the mean arrival age has been different every year (24 in 2000 and 2001; 27 in 2005 and 2006), there is no visible trend.

In Nepal, 47.8% of the male population aged between 20 and 24 are married (Population Census 2001), whereas the proportion in the camp is only of 26%. At an older age, the proportion of married men from the camp tends to be the same as in Nepal, even though it remains a little lower. It may therefore be said that long-distance migration postpones marriage for men. This concurs with what young men say about their plans to get married only once they have settled down. There are many cases of young migrants getting married in the few weeks they are on holiday, between two contracts. The newly married woman will get to see her husband a few years later, while fathers are forever complaining about not seeing their children grow up.

A higher standard of education than the average Nepalese

Contrary to widespread allegations about Nepalese workers, migrants in Al Mihinat camp have a higher standard of education than the male Nepalese population. Fifty one per cent of men in the camp reached class 10, whereas the proportion of people who passed the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) is almost triple the national rate (Table 3).

Table 3: **Standard of education (in % of total male population above six years old)**

	No schooling	Primary (1-5)	Secondary (6-10)	SLC and above
Camp	7	16	48	29
Nepal*	5,5	25,7	20,1	13,3

*Population Census 2001.

The high standard of education can be linked to the large number of Bahuns and Chetris, who are usually more educated than others. Sixty per cent of Bahun men reach class 10, whereas the percentage is as much as 80% for Chetri men. Eighty-five per cent of men who pass the SLC exam belong to higher castes (Bahun, Chetri, Thakuri). There is no doubt therefore that the caste characteristics of Al Mihinat *labour camp* greatly influence the standard of education of the men living in the camp. Should statistics exist regarding the standard of education among Nepalese migrants in India, I believe that they would show that migrants are less educated in India than in Qatar.

Access to migration is dependent on caste, education, region of origin: these factors constitute economic and social barriers which prevent the lower sections of society from going abroad. It is nothing new in migration literature to say that the poor and uneducated do not move. Social and economic capital is needed to migrate to the Gulf. This statement is even more accurate if we compare migration to the Gulf and migration to India, which is much less demanding in terms of money, but often no less in terms of networks. The official view of the Nepalese authorities (newspapers, embassy staff, members of associations) whereby the Nepalese who come to Qatar are poor and uneducated, is questionable. However, we shall see that the standard of education in Nepal does not translate into skilled jobs in Qatar, due in particular to the fact that the Nepalese, compared to other nationalities, are perceived as workers and as such fill the labourer niches. Just as for Nepalese nurses in England (Adhikari, this issue), for a large number of men, migration to Qatar also is a degrading experience.

“We’re here to work”: Recruitment, Job and Income

I will not go into detail about the actual reasons migrants come to Qatar. In short, one can say that migration is definitely a livelihood strategy, just as it is for temporary migration to India (See Thieme 2006). Yet a large number of young men also admit that they are here not because their father told them to go and earn money for the whole family, but out of personal choice to live a life of their own. A desire to lead a different life

from their parents' drives them to a land where they hope to be able to attain higher goals. Without further elaborating, I would say that the longing to go abroad, to earn what can be viewed in Nepal as "easy money" in a modern world and to imitate one's neighbour also prompts young Nepalese people to come to Qatar. The "culture of migration" (Massey *et al.* 1993), in which migration is a "rite of passage" needs to be investigated further in order to better understand what is at stake in migration processes and in order to go beyond the classic "push and pull" factors. Household strategies, like the choice of destination among brothers, should also be studied. Nonetheless, the basic aim that migrants are forever stressing is that "they are here to work" because they cannot earn any money in Nepal.

Date of arrival and duration of stay

It was not possible to collect data about all the flows of people who came to Al Mihinat camp and returned to Nepal. I can only give a general picture of the camp at a given period. In February 2008, the mean duration of stay in the camp was four years, which corresponds to two two-year contracts. Fifty-eight per cent of the men arrived between 2004 and 2008, while the ones who had arrived before 2000 only represented 5%. This broadly corresponds to the waves of recruitment of Nepalese migrants in Qatar, which surged from the years 2003-2004 onwards. The arrival of a group of workers in the camp depends on the recruitment policy implemented by the firm employing the migrants and the country, and less so on the supply of Nepalese manpower, which seems to be endless.

The strength of networks explains the destination

As most Nepalese newspaper articles about foreign employment emphasise the fact that recruitment agencies represent the "dark side" of the migration system, with the agent (dalal) being its "dark angel", data from Al Mihinat Camp reveal that only 25% of the migrants come via manpower agencies, whereas 75% relied on their personal relations. This was already the case among Indian migrants in Kuwait at the end of the 1990s (Shah and Menon 1999).

The hiring process in Al Mihinat camp has been a two-stage one: at the beginning, pioneer migrants called upon manpower agencies to get into the country, then other workers came over thanks to these men who had already laid the foundations. Personal networks have become a major factor in the perpetuation of migration. One recruitment company, Efficient Manpower, is for instance responsible for having brought to Qatar all the very first newcomers from 1995 to 2001. Today they still account for the arrival of 18% of migrants. Among these, a man named Man Bahadur Chetri, whom I have never met, became supervisor. The supervisor is in charge of all the workers and deals with them within the

company; he dispatches them to different posts, replaces them when they fall sick, makes decisions regarding their holidays, etc. Thanks to his position as an intermediary, he has access both to company management and to the workers. If he is trustworthy, the company entrusts him with the task of hiring (and sometimes firing) new employees. This grants him a certain power since he can send visas, i.e. working permit, job contract and residence permit, to anyone in Nepal who is interested. Twenty-one per cent of the men in Al Mihinat camp are there thanks to Man Bahadur Chetri. He is now ironically known as Man Bahadur Overseas or Chetrimanpower. It is a way for him to turn his position in the company to his economic advantage since he takes commission when acting as an intermediary. His successor, Hemant Thapa, in his post since 2005, also takes advantage of this privileged position: 10% of the migrants in the camp have come through him. Where a two-year working visa, to which a residence permit is associated, costs around 1,500 Qatari Riyals (€275), Hemant Thapa “sells” it for at least 3,500-4,000 Riyals (€640-730). For the migrant, acting through a supervisor has various advantages. The cost is at least half of what he would have paid to a recruitment company, the uncertainty factor is low and the risk factor practically zero. Buying a visa, directly or indirectly, from the camp supervisor, is a much safer way of going abroad, given that thanks to these network ties, the conditions in the receiving region can be known in advance.

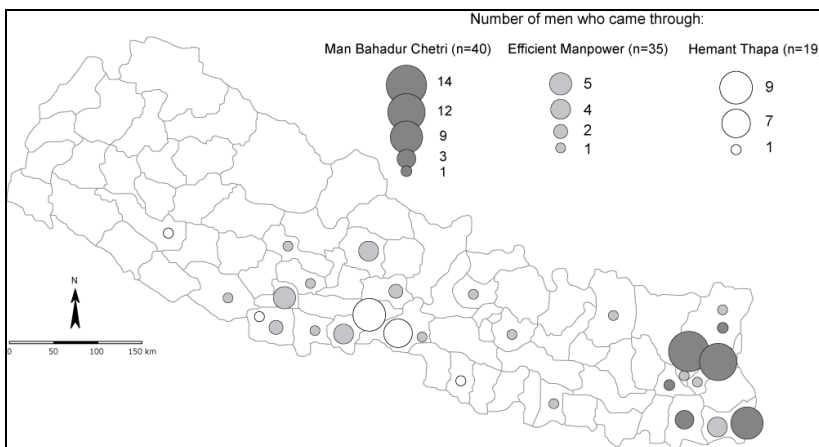


Figure 2: Spatial dimensions of recruiting networks

The recruitment process partly explains the caste and geographical origins of the migrants. As Efficient Manpower was located in Sundhara,

Kathmandu, the 35 people who came through it belong to different districts scattered over Nepal (See Figure 2). Different spatial characteristics emerge in the case of those recruited by Man Bahadur Chetri, who is from Terhathum. The 40 men he brought over, and who were in the camp in February 2008, hail from Terhathum (14), Pachtar (12), Jhapa (9), Morang (3), Taplejung (1) and Dhankuta (1). The same goes for the people brought over by Hemant Thapa, who lives in Nawalparasi near the Chitwan border: 85% of the 19 people he brought over are from his own and neighbouring district. These two cases stress the importance of word-of-mouth communication in spreading information about the possibility of migrating. The intermediaries' notoriety contributes to creating networks that fan out along village and castes lines. As far as the relationship between caste and networks is concerned, one could speak of caste networks. Among the 40 people Man Bahadur Chetri brought over, only three are from Sarki and Majhi groups; the others belong to Bahun and Chetri groups. It is worth noting that other Far Eastern Nepal workers from different communities (Limbu, Tamang, Rai, Sherpa) did not come through him. Apart from caste, location is an important factor explaining why migrants from the same districts are concentrated in the camp: a large majority of the workers stated that they came thanks to a villager. The nature of networks, depending on strong kinship or village ties, helps understand the origin of the workers.

However, networks built thanks to supervisors or recruitment companies do not explain everything: the case of Tanahun district, which groups together 13% of men from the camp, cannot be explained by the strength of one particular network. Indeed, men from Tanahun came either through a recruitment company, or with the help of a villager or relative. Apart from established networks, it also happens that a migrant who is on good terms with his manager and who can speak to him in English can also recruit workers from time to time. On the whole, 45% of migrants in the camp came through personal contacts who only sent a few men, contrary to the case of the supervisors mentioned above.

Salary, second job and income

Workers from Al Mihinat camp are mainly employed as cleaners, "tea boys", "offices boys" or waiters in offices and in gated communities. Most of them work in offices and thus do not correspond to the typical worker in the Persian Gulf toiling under the hot sun on a building site. Most of them readily admit that the work itself is not difficult. The legal working hours in Qatar are eight hours a day, six days a week. Workers from Al Mihinat camp also have the possibility of working overtime ("OT") and some even manage to get a second job pending the acceptance of their sponsor. However, wages are not high and it is usually only after the first

or second year that migrants can save money for themselves after having reimbursed the loan they took out to come over in the first place. This also explains why migrants renew their contract at least once.

Basic salary

When they reach Qatar, many workers realise that the salary due is not the one on their contract that was signed in Nepal. They nonetheless have little or no power to bargain and have to take what they get. In actual fact, both the gross and net salary must be taken into account. Even if the salary is 600 QR, accordingly to Nepalese Embassy rulings, 150 QR is deducted for food and lodging. That is why the basic net salary at Al Mihinat camp is 450 QR (€78 in February 2008) (See Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of monthly wage in euros in Al Mihinat Camp (February 2008).

Monthly wage in euros	Average wage in this category (€)	Number of workers	% of workers in this category	Cumulated %
78	78	128	64,7	64,7
79 to 156	130	29	14,7	79,4
157 to 260	217	26	13,1	92,5
261 to 416	320	9	4,5	97
417 to 607	580	5	2,5	99,5
1,386	1,386	1	0,5	100

Table 4 shows the very high concentration of wages at the bottom of the wage hierarchy. Whereas the average wage is 137 euros, 65% of the workforce in the camp, cleaners and tea-boys, earn a basic salary of 78 euros a month. There is little chance of securing a higher salary in the company and this seems to be related to the time spent in Qatar. The forty-four migrants who arrived between 1995 and 2000 earn an average wage of 272 euros, whereas migrants who arrived over the following period (2001-2008) only earn 107 euros. In fact, it seems that the most senior workers stay in Qatar because they manage to get better paid jobs. Poorly qualified at the outset, rare are the men who manage to learn a few skills (typing, speaking English, using a computer) to move up the ladder. They usually arrive as cleaners and stay as such. They have no prospect of getting a more qualified job, contrary to others who, with better credentials, can start straightaway as “photocopy boy”, clerk or driver. However, some men do manage to change jobs to earn better money. This

is the case of a young boy who arrived as a cleaner. He saved some money to take his driving licence (more than six months' salary) and now, as a driver, he is earning more than twice what other cleaners earn.

Finally, getting a better job depends on the willingness of the supervisor, who, according to many workers, privileges his own people (*aphno manche*), that is the ones who came through him or are related to him. Yet overall, there is a correlation between a migrant's level of responsibility, rank in the company hierarchy and salary. Being capable of speaking a little English and demonstrating a few basic intellectual capacities is definitely vital to ensuring a better paid job.

Table 5: **A better education means a better salary (n=187)**

Standard of education	Number	Mean salary (in euros)
Class 0	14	103
Class 1 to 5	28	126
Class 6 to 10	92	121
School Leaving Certificate	37	155
Class 12 to BA	16	326

As opportunities to climb the career ladder are rare, difficult to achieve, and reserved for the more educated, another way of earning a better salary is to have a second job.

Holding down a "part-time" job

Among 198 men for whom I have information, 45% have a second job. Among the other 55%, most of them cannot find a "part-time" job anyway, others already earn a good salary or they are simply not interested in working more hours. Having a second job definitely makes a change to the pyramid of earnings, as Table 6 proves.

The "part-time" job consists in doing housework in private houses and in cleaning cars. This is done in a gated community located not far from the Al Mihinat *labour camp* where some of the Nepalese work. Contrary to most Nepalese construction workers, men from this camp have the opportunity to do extra work because in the course of their "official" work, they come into contact with some high-level managers who live not far from them. These managers, who know the Nepalese workers, call on them to do additional work, usually paid on a monthly basis. These second jobs are highly sought after. It was thought that research would show that due to their large numbers and traditional solidarity, Bahun and Chetri would benefit more than average from a second job. On the contrary, only 41% of all Brahman men have a second job, whereas this is the case for

53% of all Chetris. On the whole, there is no apparent connection between caste and a second job. Investigations should be more oriented towards links between a second job and the length of service. But here, once again, the expected higher rate of second jobs among men who have been in Qatar for a long time compared to newcomers does not prove to be the case. Even 40% of the forty men who arrived in 2007 found a second job. However, there is definitely a link between the length of service in part-time jobs and the money earned through this second job. Those who have held down a second job for a few years enjoy incomes of up to 150 euros a month, whereas those who just starting out in a job earn between 50 to 80 euros. The 91 men with a second job have a lower average salary than the others, but thanks to this extra work they manage overall to bring in a higher level of income compared to the others (See table 6). For many of the men with an extra job, this work becomes their prime concern and the main attraction of their stay.

Table 6: **Average income in euros according to the number of jobs workers hold down in Al Mihinat Camp (February 2008).**

Workers with two jobs (n=91)			Workers with only the company job (n=107)	All workers (n=198)	
Average company wage	Average part-time income	Average total income	Average total income	Average company wage	Average total income
106	104	210	154	137	180

Finally, one should note that some workers find other ways of earning money, by burning CDs and DVDs and selling them to co-workers in other camps in the Industrial Areas or on Fridays at Nepali Chowk. For two men in the camp, this has become real second job which occupies almost all of their free time.

On the whole, thanks to the informal job, the longer people stay in the camp, the more overall income they have.

Al Mihinat labour camp epitomizes Nepalese inequalities and hopes

This paper has shown that the *labour camp*, as a vernacular category in Qatar, is a valuable place to study migration. As a closed space, the camp can be seen as a small world where a social world is built under

institutional and economical constraints. Even though Al Mihinat camp does not represent the whole of Nepalese male society, we can still draw some conclusions about Nepalese migrants in Qatar. The over-representation of high castes and the concentration of men from particular districts mean that migration, in this case, does not contribute to equally distributing income among different population groups and throughout every region of Nepal. Moreover, it is striking that even for so-called unskilled migrants, education is a major factor in boosting one's income. International migration is definitely a highly selective, non-egalitarian and inequality-making social phenomenon.

This article should be considered as a preliminary report on a Qatari *labour camp* occupied by Nepalese labourers. As a particular case study, Al Mihinat camp cannot be taken as representative of all Nepalese *labour camps*. Though it gives some insight into a new phenomenon, other *labour camp* studies should be undertaken in order to provide a comparative view. Even if quantitative data are vital in accounting for who actually lives in the *labour camp*, studies should also be completed by qualitative research. Observing migrants in a camp is an extremely valuable experience and themes such as the pain (*dukh*) of exile, separation from the family, ways of handling this trauma, remittances, relationships among migrants and with fellow workers and transnational lives should be highlighted.

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BOOK REVIEWS

***Nepalis Inside and Outside Nepal*, Edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner, Katsuo Nawa. *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia*, vol. 1. New Delhi: Manohar Publishers. 2007, 543 p. ISBN 8173046999.**

Reviewed by Martin Gaenszle

These two books on “Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia” are the result of two international workshops in Tokyo, which were attended by Japanese, Nepalese, British, Irish and American scholars. As the editors point out in the preface to the first volume, the aim was to encourage the comparative study of social change in an area (the northern part of South Asia) which is made up of several nation-states, yet has many cultural traits in common. This is a welcome departure from previous approaches in which the regional focus is often bounded by national outlooks. Apart from this, the publication provides valuable insight into the barely known work of a new generation of Japanese scholars, whose monographs are often only available in Japanese. (The volumes are published as Nos 6 and 7 of “Japanese Studies on South Asia” which was created in order to make Japanese studies accessible).

The first volume focuses on the Nepalese and transnational linkages. Over the last two decades Nepal has undergone tremendous changes, most visibly in the political field, as epitomized in the abolishment of the monarchy. How this has had repercussions on daily life, the social organisation and social structure is less self-evident. Due to the violent conflict that began in the late nineties, carrying out anthropological fieldwork became more and more difficult, and it seemed for a while that social scientists channelled their efforts almost exclusively into the Maoist armed insurgency. That “classical” anthropological research continued nevertheless, both taking account of the war and bearing in mind the larger picture of less dramatic changes, is shown in the detailed case studies in this volume. In the introduction the editors highlight the issue of ethnic identity and the long-standing debate about the differentiation between ‘tribes’ and ‘castes’, stressing that the Nepali use of the terms *jāt* and *jāti* has changed over time, particularly in the context of ethnic activism. Similar historical changes in social categories are underlined in several of the contributions.

The papers in the first part of the volume (“Urbanization, ethnicity, and occupation”) all deal with Pokhara – thus providing a multi-faceted portrait of a small town and “government-declared urban centre”, which is somewhere in between the “real” centre (the Kathmandu Valley) and

the hill villages. Jagannath Adhikari's account of the urbanization process, which is based on a wide range of hard data, as well as a long-standing acquaintance with his home town, shows a gradual shift in the distribution of power among the communities. This study is complemented by Yuji Yamamoto's vivid study of squatter settlements in Pokhara. It describes the development cycle of such *sukumbāsi* settlements from initially spontaneous and improvised appropriations led by a charismatic leader to the well-organized and increasingly legalized structure of a new urban quarter. The author analyses this as a "from *communitas* to *community*" process. Similar processes have been described in other parts of northern South Asia, such as the development of "slums" (a term the author seems keen to avoid). The other two papers in this section discuss the changing situation of lower castes, or Dalits: Jalari, Kumal, and Kami, Damai, Sarki (Ram Chetri), and the Gaine (Biswo K. Parajuli). Both of these case studies confirm the general trend of weakening client-patron relationships and the loss of traditional occupational skills. While in the case of hard manual work (such as that of blacksmiths) this shift to other forms of labour may be seen as progress, the situation is more ambivalent in the case of the Gaine who as bards have had a rich oral tradition. Though in decline, this traditional occupation still seems to survive in some marginal form; it is left to future research to explore these changes within the tradition.

The topic of part two is "Marriage, kinship, and transformation of intimacy". As pointed out by the editors, kinship studies, though once central to the discipline, have become a much neglected field in anthropology, and the time has come to rethink issues such as marriage practices and gender roles under contemporary conditions. Hayami Yasuno's paper on "Abduction, elopement, and incest in Khas society" takes up some classical topics in Himalayan kinship studies: divorce through marriage by capture and elopement, negotiations of compensation, dealings with incest, etc. The well-researched paper shows that these practices are still very much an issue in north-western Nepal, even though the way they are dealt with has undergone a change due to the increasing presence of the State. The chapter contributes to a much needed ethnography of legal practices in the Himalayas. Seiko Sato's chapter raises the issue of women's agency among Yolmos and wonders in what respect structural constraints are binding for the individual. Through case studies Sato provides insight into the conflicts of young self-confident Yolmo women who want to go their own way (proudly proclaiming that they "do not mind being a woman") but nevertheless have to find a compromise with tradition. Sarah Levine looks at the changes in marriage practices among Newars (in Patan) and Bahun-Chetris (Godavari). Clearly, arranged marriages are still the norm, though

“love marriages” are increasingly considered a viable option. While this is often seen as a threat from outside (“she has been getting all these ideas from TV”), it has become more acceptable as long as all sides are involved in the negotiation and a joint decision is made. Similarly inter-caste marriages, though still scandalous, are rejected outright far less than before. Using alternative forms of ritual, socially ostracized marriages are nevertheless condoned. The comparison between rural Parbatiya and urban Newar is interesting in its contrasts, but it is not always clear which features are due to cultural norms and which are class-specific. That love marriages nevertheless come with their own problems becomes evident in the chapter on domestic violence, or gender-based violence, by Makiko Habazaki. This study on a neglected aspect of kinship realities in Nepal is based on cases recorded through an NGO (“Saathi”) and comes to the conclusion that there is widespread “sociocultural violence” which is not simply spontaneous but follows certain cultural patterns. The chapter on drug users in Dharan by Khusiyali Subba also draws attention to a phenomenon that has hardly been studied at the margins of contemporary society, raising the question of what this can tell us about the social consequences of ethnic and historical marginalisation. Judith Pettigrew’s major study of the ‘culture of terror’ during the Maoist insurgency and its effect on the children growing up during this period fills a gap, showing that the political upheaval has left deep scars at a psychological level, less visible but perhaps more enduring. These last two papers indicate that the absence of fathers (due to labour migration, or soldiering) has become an important factor in the transformation of familial intimacy, leading to fundamental changes in the mental landscape.

The third part deals with transnational links inside and outside Nepal. Izumi Morimoto describes the development of Thamel as a tourist area, a “translocality” with a multi-ethnic entrepreneurship which cashes in on the myth of Shangrila. The chapter by Taeko Uesugi deals with the transnationalism of the Gurkhas, which is a unique mixture of both Nepalese nationalism and loyalty to the British Crown. This double allegiance has been maintained through a pseudo-ethnic Gurkha identity which has continued to flourish in an increasingly globalized context. However, it is not without its contradictions (e.g. the call for English education for children), and tensions and conflicts with the States involved are bound to erupt. Similarly, Nepalese migrants in Japan, who are the subject of Keiko Yamanaka’s contribution, act in a transnational sphere. The study shows how social networks are valuable as social capital. The Nepalese stick together in difficult times, but more recently ethnic divisions have led to increasing fragmentation. In such a situation religion can become an important cohesive factor. As Makito Minami

points out in his chapter on Magar ethnic associations outside Nepal, Buddhism has become important in the newly defined diasporic identities, largely for political reasons. What kind of Buddhism will emerge still seems to be an open question.

In his concluding observations, Gerald Berreman brings us back to a comparative perspective. He discusses a number of questions concerning the differences and similarities in the Indian and the Nepalese Himalayas. For example, he explains the occurrence of an armed insurgency in Nepal based on the coincidence of class and ethnicity conflicts. (Berreman does not refer to Maoist insurgencies in India, however, which could have further added to his argument). He also reflects on the local response to Western research in social science and the problem of scholarly misrepresentation. This book, however, is a good example of going beyond such a divide, as it is the result of a true East-West collaboration. It is a landmark volume as far as it represents a state-of-the-art view of an international Himalayan social anthropology which has come to include a wide range of relatively “new” topics, such as recent urban developments, changing gender-relations, and the fall-out of globalized mobility. Considering the ambitions voiced in the preface, the comparative perspective on Northern South Asia may still be a bit sketchy in this first volume (the focus largely remains a Himalayanist one), but the collection of high-quality essays is a valuable guideline and inspiration for further such studies.

Political and Social Transformations in North India and Nepal.
Edited by Hiroshi Ishii, David N. Gellner, Katsuo Nawa. *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia. Vol. 2.* New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2007, 520 p. ISBN 8173047294.

Reviewed by Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

The second volume of *Social Dynamics in Northern South Asia* is devoted to political and social change. It is made up of three parts.

Part 1 explores the changes in various Indian and Nepalese social and political contexts under the effect of modernisation, which includes more specifically: access to education, land reform, and the professionalization of services. The two chapters by Surinder S. Jodkha on Punjab and by Krishna Hachhethu on the town of Bhaktapur in Nepal are remarkable. They both offer a very clear overview of society and an astute interpretation of its evolution. Both chapters ascertain that the

importance of caste is now mainly to be found in the political sphere, while it has dwindled in daily life and in the organisation of work. We should note, however, that these authors have not fully addressed the ritual domain. A chapter by Hiroshi Ishii explores the contradiction between Louis Dumont's various statements, which are taken out of their context of enunciation and regarded as axioms; the author discusses whether or not, for Dumont, the notion of substantialisation involves a process, without considering that its ending in "–isation" readily provides the answer. He then draws a sketch of the social changes in a Newar locality and relativizes their importance. Akio Tanabe also deals with caste organization, in the context of Orissa, and provides a rich review of its different sociological approaches. He suggests adding another component to its two main modelizations (i.e. the Dumontian linear hierarchy and the neo-Hocartian concentric model around the source of power), that of "ontological equality". Yet the only example he has selected to illustrate it, that of a community with the headman in the forefront bowing low upon the goddess's arrival, rather seems to display a model of pyramidal hierarchy. A greater focus on local exegesis would add to the strength of the analysis in this case. In the same manner, the author's interpretation of the sacrifice as a substitution between the sacrificer and the victim needs to be substantiated, since it is far from being systematically conceived as such in other Hindu contexts. Still, it is a very rich chapter and deserves attention.

The second part of the book focuses on religious identities and practices. It addresses various topics such as the development of Theravada Buddhism in the Kathmandu Valley (Keshav L. Maharjan), the transformation of death rituals among the Byansi of Darchula, Nepal (Katsuo Nawa), or the Hindus' perception of the Muslims in Gujarat (Lancy Lobo and Biswaroop Das). Subtle as the latter chapter is, it is unfortunate that the Muslims' reciprocal perception of the Hindus has not been addressed.

The most interesting chapter in this second part is by Minoru Mio on the new urban festivals in Udaipur. The author shows how these festivals organized by Youth associations are "the best means of acquiring leadership", while evading "criticism by conventional elders".

The third part of the volume is devoted to "secular activism", yet it opens with a chapter on the rehabilitation of Bengali refugees in Delhi by Tetsuya Nakatani, who shows that this group has not created an exclusive colony because their rehabilitation took place twenty years after Partition. Tatsuro Fujikura then retraces the Freedom movement among the bonded agricultural labourers in the southern part of western Nepal. He provides a very detailed history of the main organization that led the movement (BASE), but does not refer to its different versions or points of

view. Mrigendra B. Karki and David Gellner's sociological approach to activism in Nepal includes important data on the way Marxist ideas penetrated Nepal's educated elite during the Panchayat era. Indeed, the influence wielded by Gorky's *Mother* needed to be stressed. In the next chapter, Joanna Pfaff evaluates our knowledge of the violation of human rights as being very selective, and she underlines the fragmentation of protest movements when faced with the construction of dams in India and Nepal. Finally, Kioko Ogura's chapter on various villages in western Nepal under Maoist rule provides detailed information on this key-period in Nepalese history. Few scholars ventured into these regions during the People's War and Ogura's data are thus extremely precious. In her conclusion, the author suggests that one of the main causes of the conflict was "antipathy towards the State".

The volume ends with Jonathan Parry's eloquent discussion on the changes observed in caste organisation, in which he explores its two possible evolutions and/or interpretations: a tendency towards a merging of castes or an emphasis on their differences.

I personally regret that the discussion on caste, which forms the most coherent ensemble in the volume, is mainly based on urban cases, and, especially, as far as Nepal is concerned, on Newar society. Still, it is a very thought-provoking volume and it is impossible to do justice to the very rich ethnography and the many discussions contained within the span of only a few lines. To conclude, I would add that the volume is of further interest in presenting us with recent research carried out by our Japanese colleagues, which is not always readily accessible. We certainly recommend it to all social scientists working on the Indian sub-continent.

Indian Nepalis. Issues and Perspectives. 2009. Edited by Subba T.B., Sinha A.C., Nepal G.S., Nepal D.R., New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 398 p. ISBN 9788180694462

Reviewed by Tristan Bruslé

This book, a publication of part of a research seminar held in Gangtok in April 2006, may be seen as a sequel to *The Nepalis in Northeast India* (2003), yet from a broader perspective. After having focused on the identity of Nepalis in North-East India in the latter book, Indian of Nepali origin (INO) researchers, Indians of non Nepali origin and two Westerners raise certain "issues and perspectives" about Indian Nepalis. As for the "5 to 10 million" INOs (Sinha: 18), identity issues are still at the forefront of their demands,

and as recent events in West Bengal prove, the identity and sense of belonging of INOs are a subject of debate. Therefore, identity issues remain central to the book.

The book is divided into five parts: 1) Conceptual and theoretical issues 2) Search for an Indian identity 3) Regional identities of Indian Nepalis 4) Nepali sub-cultures: youth, women, food and medicine 5) India-Nepal links: history, literature and people. There is an index at the end of the volume.

Many authors recall that Nepalis in India are the product of colonial state politics, when it was easy to travel around South Asia, even for Nepalis who did not belong to the British Raj. They show the diversity of the migrants who came “as soldiers, graziers, farmers, porters, traders, sawyers, *chowkidars*, etc.” (Passah: 238). Bidhan Golay writes a challenging article about the formation of the Gorkha identity in British India, at a “time of modernity” when “the hill-man was turned into a reified commodity” (Golay: 83). According to this author, the Gorkha identity must indeed be studied within the framework of the colonial discourse on ‘martial races’: “colonialism violently disrupted the social-conceptual world of the Gorkhas, taking away his freedom by permanently colonising his body. The gorkha subject was dislocated by stripping off his past and relocated him back again a deterritorialised subject of ‘History’” (Golay: 79). As such, the history of the Gurkhas should be re-written: “there is a need to reconstitute the Gorkhas as a historical character, rehabilitate their consciousness and agency in history” (*ibid.*: 87). When studying the willingness of Indians of Nepali Origin to assert themselves, Chalmers describes the formation of a group consciousness, in a very documented article about the “emergent Nepali public sphere” at the beginning of the twentieth century in Banaras and Darjeeling, at a time when the former lost its influence over the Nepali community in India for the latter’s benefit. In Darjeeling, a process of language unification accompanied the idea of creating a society turned towards Western-oriented progress (*unnati*) through education. Chalmers dates the beginning of the creation of *nepaliness* to this period, when elites realised that “the promotion of Nepali education was only one front in a broader struggle for cultural recognition and community representation” (p.116). The means to achieve these goals were the circulation of printed books through the creation of libraries (the first ‘Gorkha library’ opened in Kurseong in 1918), the standardisation of the Nepali language and its official teaching in schools, which was instituted in 1926 in Bengal. In 1924, the first guide to Nepali literature for second-grade students was published. The importance of literary associations and of journals was stressed by the Nepali elite at the time as a way to elevate their community not on the base of their birth but according to “formal education skills” (Chalmers: 128). This

accompanied a shift towards a new society “from a traditional model to a more open model” (*Ibid.*). The making of an Indian Nepali culture is perfectly reflected in Upadhyaya’s article about how, from the end of the 1920s to 1980s, Nepalese novels “captured the social, economic, political, educational and cultural problems of the Nepalis in Northeast India” (Upadhyaya: 204).

Going through the articles in the volume, one realises that history is always written in relation to identity and belonging issues. Gurung (from p.259 onwards) describes how indentured labour from Eastern Nepal was used by colonial companies to exploit coal mines in Assam. Here again, the author shows how the racial discourse about particular races being adapted to strenuous work benefited the Nepalese. The commoditization of the Gurkhas as a martial race is illustrated by the fact that “their recruitment in the coal mines was [considered] a gross wastage of valuable natural resources” (Gurung p.269). In the 1920s, as the mine recruitment process in Gorakhpur competed with recruitment for the Gurkha regiments, it was finally forbidden to recruit martial races in the mines.

Despite asserting their belonging to India, Indians of Nepali origin still have not found their rightful place in the Indian political landscape. The problem of their assimilation with Nepalese citizens still hampers their vows to appear as a distinct community. Their colonial identity as “the sahibs’ faithful boys” (Sinha: 12) is pervasive among non Nepali Indians: the quest for a non derogatory identity was launched decades ago, but no solution has yet been found. It has been further aggravated by the fact that Nepalis stand divided (Sinha: introduction). As a result, INOs are “puzzled” (Sinha: 4) and their children are even qualified as IBCNs or India-Born Confused Nepali¹⁷ (Sharma: 277). Hutt sees manifestations of an identity crisis in the study of literature where both the pride and the pain of being Nepali are depicted. The need to build an Indian Nepali nationalism within India is somewhat contradicted by cultural bonds with Nepal “that could neither be severed nor denied” (Hutt: 39). The question of the compulsory distance *vis-à-vis* Nepal and the Nepalese lies between the lines of all the articles.

Issues of belonging find expression in the recurrent debate about names: “the very nomenclature of the community creates confusion even among them and their neighbours” (Sinha: 3). Nepalis referring to themselves sometimes as Bhargoli, Bharpali, Nepamul Bharatiya, INOs (favoured in the 2003 book) or Gorkhas have to put up with sometimes derogatory names given by non-Nepalis, such as *Daju*, *Bahadur* or *Kancha*. For Subba, the issue of names remains crucial since it is vital for INOs to

¹⁷ This refers to ABC (American Born Chinese) out of which ABCD (American Born Confused Desi) was coined by Non-Resident Indians.

not be considered foreigners or as “second class citizens of India” (p.385). By coining a new name, the goal is indeed to widen the gap between themselves and Nepalese migrants who “leave leaving behind a mess for Indian Nepalis to clean up” (p.385). Subba proposes “Sakhaa” (friend) as “Indian Nepalis need a de-territorialised and de-ethnicised identity for they are not only de-territorialised in India but also have frequently experienced ethnic anger of the locally dominant communities” (p.392). A few authors focus on the regional identities of Nepalis, and especially on the history of their arrival in North-East India, that is Mizoram, Meghalaya and Assam. The role of the Gurkhas to attract their countrymen in a chain migration type of movement is emphasised and the different niches where Nepalis are employed are recalled in the same way as in the 2003 book. Yet these articles merely seem to hint at research which in fact needs go into more depth. The overall portrayal of INOs, in Assam, in Mizoram or elsewhere shows them as still inhabited by uncertainty and the fear of being evicted as they were from Bhutan or from Meghalaya. This fear translates into pain (*dukha*): “this sense of ancestral *dukha* underpins much of the experience of being Nepali in India, and characterises much Indian Nepali literature” (Hutt: 32). This “sense of historical *dukha*” (Hutt: 34) could be one of the things that binds all INOs together. Except for a common history and language, what are the other factors? The book does not really provide any answers.

Sinha, in a new research proposal, compares the fate and situation of INOs and Nepalese of Indian Origin (NIO), both “invisible, yet exploited” (p.372) communities. They have numerous points in common, like being rarely studied by academics and politically under-represented in their own country, whereas they have both fought for the sake of their country, against the Ranas on the one hand and in the freedom movement on the other. Their treatment as “non-existent citizens” (p.379) or as a threat to national unity must be understood, as Sinha says, within the ongoing context of nation-building exercises in South Asia.

In order to find a solution to their identity crisis, INOs also have to go beyond their differences so that a “strong ethnic solidarity” (Sinha: 13) emerges among them. That is also the problem with a new name: it is easy to find one but difficult to have it adopted by so many different Nepali communities. Subba thinks the future of the “Sakhaas” goes through a more detailed writing of their history, a focus on language and the abrogation of the 1950 India-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship.

Despite bringing new themes about Nepali Indians to the forefront and evoking in-depth analysis of identity issues from a strong historical perspective, which is of great benefit to anyone interested in Nepal or India, the book does have its limits. First, it often oscillates between a manifesto written by INOs for the sake of their own community and a

more classical academic book, with a disparate quality between each article. Some authors tend to say “we” when speaking about INOs. As confirmed by Subba (p.26), this book may provide some guidance to the Nepali youth, intellectuals and opinion makers. However, for the non INO reader, the impression may be confusing. Secondly, it is regrettable that studies of Indian Nepalīs still concentrate on North-East India. This is understandable, as it is where the greater concentration of Nepalīs are located, but it would be of great interest to learn about the numerous Indian Nepali communities who live in big cities like Delhi or Mumbai. The Gorkha community from Derhadun is, for example, completely absent from the book and, to my knowledge, no study has ever been made of it. The need to differentiate between the different INO communities would clarify things and highlight the bonds between them. As Golay (p.75) says, there is no “comprehensive study of the contributions of social and cultural movements in Darjeeling and elsewhere towards the formation of a distinct Gorkha identity”. Thirdly, except for general statements about the INOs and their occupation, and two articles about food (Tamang: 296) and herbal medicine (Chhetri: 311), anthropological, religious or cultural studies should really be enhanced in order to understand practices and the world view of INOs. Grass-root data about INOs are lacking for the community to be fully understood. Overall, the assumption that what unites Indian Nepalīs is a common language, a common origin and history has not been totally checked at local level. The question is raised in the introduction, but there are very few hints as to its answer. The reader is given no information about the links between scattered communities, though some study of them would have been of great interest. And finally, the term diaspora, seldom used, is not really re-appraised. The question remains: are Indian Nepalīs part of a diaspora, whether south Asian or global, or are they just another Indian ethnic group?

Nomads of Eastern Tibet. Social Organization and Economy of a Pastoral Estate in the Kingdom of Dege, by RINZIN THARGYAL. Edited by Toni HUBER. Leiden: Brill, Brill’s Tibetan Studies Library 15. xii + 222 p. ISBN 978 90 04 15813 9.

Rewieived by Pascale Dollfus

Nomads of Eastern Tibet is a monograph of a pastoralist community from the Kham region in Eastern Tibet during the mid-20th century. This small and mutually dependent community, known as Zilphukhog, was located in the Kingdom of Dege whose prestige and power at the time was quashed

by repeated acts of rivalry and intrigues. The pastoral community itself ceased to exist after 1958 due to the Chinese occupation. In fact, the research itself was not conducted “on the field” but in the Kathmandu Valley in Nepal between September 1982 and February 1983 among Tibetan Refugees who had been living in exile for the last two decades and, especially, among ten informants representing nine different households. At the time of Rinzin Thargyal’s fieldwork the youngest informant was aged 54, and since then some of them have passed away. The author is one of the first Western-trained native Tibetan anthropologists. He did an M.A. in Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo in 1985, and now teaches the Tibetan language and works for the Network for University Co-operation Tibet-Norway. Though born in Tibet, he had to flee his homeland when he was 10 years old, leaving his family behind under the Chinese administration. He himself was not a nomad but belonged to the lower ranks of the aristocracy of the agricultural region of Meshe, one of 25 traditional “districts” comprising the kingdom of Dege.

Rinzin Thargyal documents the life of pastoralists in detail in this book. Having recounted how the Zilphukhog was founded and evolved, the author briefly examines the structural features of the Dege polity. He then discusses the nature of labour service as it manifested itself locally among the three groups of dependents – nomadic pastoralists, peasants and monastic households describing the corvée labour service, along with the costs and benefits of the system for the lord and his dependents. Since nomadic pastoralist households were numerically dominant and had a preponderant impact in the region, he introduces us to animal husbandry, giving the local taxonomy for animals according to sex and age categories, describing the methods of slaughtering yaks and sheep, of milking, tanning and weaving. The author subsequently deals with trade and peripheral incomes (such as gold mining, butchering animals for wealthy households, hunting and gathering) which supplemented these pastoral resources, and he examines the economic and strategic exploitation of the pastures, the pattern of movement or migrations back and forth between a winter tent encampment and summer pastures. Having described the household economy at some length, Rinzin Thargyal devotes three chapters to the social organization of the community, starting with the spatial and ritual organization of the household, and the tent as a social place, then marriage patterns and kinship, and ending with birth and death.

Concerning polyandry (p.167) for example, he points out the diversity of this practice among Tibetan pastoralists even within a small community, showing that this form of marriage is practised only by those who own their own animals and who have well established households.

“When there is a head a tail is needed. If there is not head a tail is not needed.” However, the central focus of this work is the lord/dependent relationship. In this way, Rinzin Thargyal convincingly contributes to a crucial and controversial issue in pre-modern Tibetan societies, namely the debate about feudalism or serfdom. Based on case-studies, he offers a new and nuanced analysis of the dyadic relationship between a local “lord” (*dpon*) and his “dependents” (*’khor pa*), both peasant and nomadic pastoralists, as well as monastic dependents, who were obliged to perform corvée service. According to the author, this relationship was more hierarchical in the Dege Kingdom during the 17th-19th centuries than it was during the mid-20th century when the weakening of the State and the effects of various political upheavals “gave dependents an unprecedented bargaining power vis-à-vis their lords or leaders. To put it metaphorically, in a sea of political fluidity and fluctuation, one could swim almost in any direction one chose given that one was prepared to take the risk of drowning” (p.184).

This descriptive portrait of a pre-modern pastoralist society in Eastern Tibet is introduced by a comprehensive essay by Toni Huber, a specialist of the anthropology and cultural history of Tibetan and Tibetan-influenced Societies in Central Tibet, Amdo, Changthang, but also Himachal Pradesh and Arunachal Pradesh in India. He points out how the modern anthropology of Tibet has been circumscribed by the difficulty or impossibility to freely conduct research on the Tibetan plateau, leading researchers to “work at distance” either among Tibetans settled outside the Tibetan Plateau or in Tibetan speaking populations located in the Himalayan highlands. He also places Rinzin Thargyal’s work in its context and highlights its uniqueness – working with pastoralists rather than agriculturalists in Khams, a complex region which remains largely unknown – then he sketches a brief biography of Rinzin’s life.

Besides this introductory essay, Toni Huber also edits the entire text. As he notes himself in his Preface, he provides “footnotes for clarification, and also to direct readers to literature and debates about certain topics which have appeared since Rinzin undertook his research; standardizing the phonetic equivalents used for Tibetan words, and their Romanization; redrafting Rinzin’s original hand-drawn figures and providing several new maps; adding black and white photographs from the relevant historical period and geographical area [by Josef Vanis and Albert L. Shelton]; and compiling an index”. This extensive editorial task is indeed much appreciated. As such, Toni Huber and Rinzin Thargyal’s book is altogether an important contribution to our knowledge of Tibetan nomadic societies, which once again are endangered by Chinese policies of rangeland privatization and the forcible relocation of herders in new Chinese-built

villages, which leaves them with no livestock and drastically curtails their livelihood.¹⁸

As is always the case with Brill's Tibetan Studies Library series, the layout and the presentation of this book which includes an index, 9 figures and 11 photographs are of a high standard.

***Through the Eye of Time – Photographs of Arunachal Pradesh 1859-2006*: by Michael Aram Tarr and Stuart Blackburn. coll. Tribal Cultures in the Eastern Himalayas , vol. 1. Leiden/Boston: Brill. (Brill's Tibetan Studies Library Volume 16/1). 2008. 217 pages, 220 pictures, 2 maps. ISBN 978-90-04-16522-9.**

Reviewed by Marion Wettstein, University of Zurich

The region today referred to as Northeast-India has since British-colonial times fascinated anthropologists. Among the areas most researched were the Naga Hills and what is today the Indian Union state of Arunachal Pradesh. After Indian Independence these areas have become largely inaccessible, though never forgotten. Since a few years they are partly open to visitors and researchers again and the recent flow of publications shows that this corner of India has not lost its importance for anthropology. Unlike in the 1920s and 30s, today the medium of photography rather than writing seems to be the means to portrait and present the region. Many of the publications on Northeast India of the last years – scientific or popular – are photo-books emphasizing contemporary pictures.

The work of Michael Tarr and Stuart Blackburn, which was realized in the context of the Tribal Transitions project (2002- 2007), gives a new viewpoint to the corpus of photographic publications on Northeast India. The authors have collected the earliest photographs known from

¹⁸ On these policies implemented since 1999 – fencing off pastureland, resettlement and livestock limitation affecting Tibetan herders which are presented as a necessary response to an environmental crisis of pasture degradation and overgrazing, see among others Human Rights Watch, 2007, 19 (8) “No One Has the Liberty to Refuse”. Tibetan Herders Forcibly Relocated in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region; Zukosky Michael L. 2007. Making pastoral settlement visible in China. *Nomadic Peoples*, 11 (2). pp.107-133. Robin, Françoise. 2009. “Les nouveaux villages socialistes’ en Région Autonome du Tibet: remodeler le paysage rural, contrôler les populations”. *Perspectives Chinoises* (3). Hong Kong. pp.60-69.

Arunachal Pradesh and its inhabitants and followed the visual representations through time, completed by contemporary ethnographic views by Michael Aram Tarr. Historical and contemporary photographs have an equal share and stand where ever possible in relation or in completion to each other. After a short introduction by Stuart Blackburn the main part of the book follows, namely the plates, which make out nearly 200 pages. Historical photographs are commented by the original captions of the photographers whenever known and by additional short explanations by the authors. The contemporary photographs are commented by the photographer Michael Aram Tarr himself.

The aim of the book is to compare, by the means of photographs, historical periods, change and continuity in a “corner of the world tucked away between Assam, Tibet, Bhutan, and Burma” (p. 1), little known to neither an anthropological, scientific audience, nor to an interested general audience. In the genre of “ethnological” photo-books, introductions to the “land and people” and to their customs are still commonplace today. But Stuart Blackburn’s introduction is different. He is mainly interested in embedding the photographs in the context of their time, especially focusing on the photographers as persons, their function in the colonial setting, and their motivations. And with this focus – and not only by the introduction, but also by Michael Aram Tarr’s own photographs, his choice of the historical photographs, their captions and layout – the book clearly distances itself successfully from the coffee-table books and photo books published en masse about “foreign cultures”. Such books are usually structured in chapters with short in-between introductions to each chapter focusing on different features of the “life of the XY-people”. The structure of Blackburn’s and Tarr’s book, however, more resembles the genre of a photographers-book: a short introduction speaks about the photographer and his work, after which the plates follow as a corpus.

In his introduction, Blackburn remarks that even if in the beginning of colonial contacts the camera did indeed follow the gun, the camera soon started to capture the complexity of colonial context rather than solely supporting its aims. Here he relativizes a dominant discourse on photography in India (and elsewhere), which tends to focus on photography as an instrument of colonial dominance. Blackburn starts his portrait of photographers with the 19th century surgeon Sir Benjamin Simpson, who had captured many of the early studio-portraits of the Arunachal hill peoples. Following the theory of the time, these portraits were aimed at classifying people and were often staged with attributes and ornaments considered characteristic of a certain ethnic group. The purpose of the photographs was large photo exhibitions in India and Britain. The Tribal Transitions project, too, was designed with the same

intention in cooperation with the British Museum where the photographs of the project are currently exhibited together with ethnographic objects (Between Tibet and Assam: cultural diversity in the eastern Himalayas, British Museum, 23 October 2008 – 19 April 2009). But the debut-exhibitions were held in Northeast India itself and one of the overall aims of the book and the whole project – so is the authors' hope – is that through the photographs “the people of Arunachal Pradesh are gaining new perspectives on the past 150 years of their history” (p. 19). That photographs indeed, as stated by the authors, are locally used in today's constructions of and debates about tradition I could witness myself in neighbouring Nagaland.

After the first contact with the hill tribes the British colonial administration started expeditions to the hills of Arunachal in the early 20th century. Also for this historical period the photographers are introduced in detail. A few chosen pictures are commented by diary entries of the photographers themselves and short stories surrounding them. By these short descriptions, we can but guess how much in depth context a single photograph can potentially concentrate on itself. The detailed contextualisation of each and every photograph in the book – let alone of the total of all collections gathered in the Tribal Transitions project given as nearly 8000 photographs – would fill hundreds of pages. In this part of the introduction one can estimate the decision of the author: Does he attempt to introduce the “photography of Arunachal Pradesh” as a whole, as a corpus, or should he choose some single examples to illustrate the potential of “a photograph of the Arunachal Pradesh”? Already Roland Barthes complained about the mere impossibility to describe “photography” as such, its essence, and decided, that the only possibility to describe and analyse photography is by the single chosen picture (Barthes 1980). Blackburn obviously came to a similar conclusion and so the spectator of the more than 200 photographs is left with just about enough information to trigger his interest to start his own investigations.

With the difficulty of describing photography as such in mind it is not amazing that, as Blackburn remarks, not much is known about the role of photography in Northeast India in the middle of the 20th century despite the huge collections that were produced especially in the 1940s and 50s (p. 13) by scholars like Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, C.R. Stonor, Ursula Betts (Graham-Bower), or Verrier Elwin. He observes that compared to the preceding decades, the photographers stayed much longer in the region and thus were able to visualize processes lasting over days or even weeks, for example rituals. This is surely a result of the new style of anthropology during the first half of the 20th century: the ideal of long participant observation emphasized by Malinowski whose lectures Haimendorf for

example had attended (Macfarlane and Turin 1996). The new photographic technology of the 35mm camera with short shutter speed made it possible to freeze people in motion and the telephoto lens enabled close-up views of emotional faces without the photographed necessarily noticing it. This technical precondition soon would determine the aesthetic style of the photography in the time, as can be seen explicitly in the photographs of Furer-Haimendorf or Elwin. All photographers of mid-20th century share another feature in common: most of them (Elwin is an exception) had spent long time in the Naga Hills and had started their photographic endeavour there. One could say that the Naga Hills had been the visual pathfinder for Arunachal Pradesh.

The plates make out the bigger part of the book. They are structured along ethnic groups of the area, which, in the order of their appearance, are the Adi (specially mentioned are the Gallong, Abor Adi, Palibo and Tangam), the Idu Mishmi, the Digaro and Miju Mishmi, the Khanti, the Singpho, the Wancho, the Hill Miri, the Apatani, the Nyishi (and Dafla), the Aka, the Miji and Bugun and the Monpa (specially mentioned are the Sherdukpen). The Apatani make out the largest part, placed in the last third of the book with 37 pages containing 43 photographs. A similar volume of pictures we find for the Adi at the beginning of the book with 28 pages containing 30 photographs and the Monpa at the end of the book with 25 pages containing 30 photographs. Only very few pictures can be found for the Singpho, the Aka, the Wancho and the Miji and Bugun, who are covered with two to eight pictures each only. The Idu Mishmi, Digaro, Khanti, Hill Miri and Nyishi are presented with an average of twelve to 18 pictures each. If we compare the order of ethnic groups with the maps given on p. 2 we realize that it roughly follows the three cultural zones shortly mentioned in the introduction: It groups together the people around the Subansiri, Siyom, Siang and Dibang rivers (zone 2), the people of Tirap and around the Lohit river (zone 3) and the people around the Kameng river (zone 1). Unfortunately neither the table of contents nor a clear signalling of "chapters" indicates this overall structure, which makes orientation in the plates a little complicated. Besides the ethnic groups, the assembling of narrative strings is a second element of structuring the plates. Always within the framework of the tribal groups, stories are told as often as possible by the sequence of pictures. Most obvious they are when festivals or rituals are documented, but also other sequences are arranged as narratives, like the murder of Noel Williams and its consequences or the raid on the Nyishi village Kirum. The rhetoric of the photograph gets its content through this embedding into the narrative structure and by it operates as part of an argumentation line.

The photographs selected for the book are mainly single or group portraits and ritual processes. Very seldom one encounters landscapes or

architecture, scenes of everyday life in agriculture and household or crafts. So the focus is on people and the way they look. Many portraits show smiling faces and underline the dignity and natural self-esteem of the subject. In many of the pictures one can feel the respect of the photographers, historical or contemporary, for the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. In this context one can of course agree with Solomon-Godeau that photographs (and their published compilations) serve the ratification of a complex ideological setting, which in a certain historical moment is perceived as reality (2003: 59). In the case of Blackburn's and Tarr's book we can identify one of these anthropological ideologies of our time as what I would call the understood perception of "the other" on eye-level and with high esteem as a prerequisite.

For the presentation of the photographs of each ethnic group, two approaches can be made out: Either the plates start with the oldest photograph and move on chronologically in time – this proceeding is usually used when only a few pictures of the specific group are available –, or they start with the oldest one or two photographs and further on juxtapose photographs of the middle of the 20th century with contemporary ones. The juxtapositions show that changes have occurred especially in ornaments and clothing. In the choice of plates of Blackburn's and Tarr's book there is actually only one pair of photographs, which shows nearly identical dress and ornament today (2005) and 60 years ago: The attire of the Apatani priest during the Murung festival (pp. 144-145). As the authors also state the rituals and festivals have changed but little. On the series taken by Michael Aram Tarr in the last years we see many people in "modern" trousers and jumpers, most of them engaged in some animal offering, sports game or other ritual. This stands in sharp contrast to the situation in the neighbouring Naga Hills today, where the ritual context has been lost largely and dress and ornament being displayed at tourist events have seen standardization on the one hand and elaboration towards modern dress cut on the other. Compared to the Naga Hills, my own research region, it seems indeed that Arunachal has not changed as sharply. In the photographs we do not encounter any urban settings; tin roofs and concrete walls seem only to start to replace wood and thatch in architecture; and missionaries seem not to have invaded the country (as yet).

Beside ethnographic and historical diversity, a main criterion in the choice of photographs in the book – according to the authors – is aesthetics (p. 1). The authors do not specify what defines aesthetics in their eyes, but in looking at the photographs intensely, one is pleased once more by the fact, that they free themselves from certain visual conventions. Blurred, damaged or spotted historical images are not ruled out and many of the contemporary photographs show a very specific

colour spectrum. One is tempted to judge that they are just badly printed. Most of them have a strong yellow shade and the magenta is often exaggerated. An extreme example is the picture of a mithun offering (p. 84), where the blood of the meat is as pink as the waistcoats of the sacrificers. Whether the colour balance is due to the printing or indeed intended by the photographer, the effect is an interesting one in any case: It gives the very recent photographs the air of time. They feel “old”. Without reading the captions, one might easily be misled to date them somewhere in the 1970s. By this aesthetic, which is noticeable throughout most of Michael Aram Tarr’s colour photographs in the book, they decidedly distance themselves from the high-sharp, glossy photographs of today’s ordinary coffee-table books and don’t run the risk to be mistaken for this category. The play with time is also visible in the few black and white photographs by Michael Aram Tarr. At first sight they blend in perfectly with the historical black and white pictures and if one doesn’t pay attention to the dating in the caption, one can easily mistake them for “historical” photographs. In the context of documentary photographs it seems a visual convention to perceive black and white photographs as “old”, while colour photographs suggest modernity, present or at least recent past. Christoph von FÜRER-Haimendorf, already among the Naga in the 1930s, experimented with the just invented colour film for 35mm cameras (Oppitz et al. 2008: Frontispiece). It would not astonish if he and his colleagues would also have done so in Arunachal a decade later. However, in the book all of the photographs of the 1940s and 1950s are black and white. A further element which distinguishes the book from other ethno-documentary photo-books is its layout. As a rule, there is one photograph shown at each page with original captions and a short comment by the authors. From time to time longer series of events are shown – usually rituals or festivals – which are often denser in pictures, three to four on a double page. Very seldom we find a seamless picture and the framing white borders add style and dignity to the photographs.

In the publisher’s announcement this book is described as a “visual history of Arunachal Pradesh”. I would agree and add that visual histories in the form of photo-books with little written text are rather rare in anthropology. Even though visual anthropology as a discipline is now over a decade old, and despite the fact that drawings and photographs have been an important part of scientific argumentation in anthropology since the 19th century, the methods of producing (rather than analyzing) visual books as scientific publications are still in an experimental phase and are not yet fully acknowledged by the scientific community. Stuart Blackburn and Michael Aram Tarr have herewith given a good guideline for the substance, structure and style of an anthropological visual history book.

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***Himalayan Tribal Tales. Oral Tradition and Culture in the Apatani Valley.* by Stuart Blackburn. coll. Tribal Cultures in the Eastern Himalayas, vol. 2. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008. xviii + 298 p. ISBN 978 90 04 17133 6**

reviewed by Pascal Bouchery, University of Poitiers

It is a pleasure to note the recent appearance of several in-depth studies of oral literature of societies in Arunachal Pradesh, at a time when many of them, along with the languages from which they emanate, appear to be on the decline. Following Verrier Elwin's pioneering works in this field (*Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*, 1958; *A New Book of Tribal Fiction*, 1970) and subsequent attempts to cover more or less all ethnic groups of the State, such as *Folk songs of Arunachal Pradesh* (Pandey, 1997) or *Myths and beliefs on creation of universe among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh* (Duarah, 1999), the current research trend appears to focus more on extensive studies relating to specific ethnic groups. O. Tayeng published a *Folk Tales of the Adis* in 2003, followed by a voluminous *Mishmi Folk Tales of Lohit Valley* (2007). It is now the Apatanis' turn to unveil their rich oral literature to a larger audience, as written about by the folklorist S. Blackburn.

Hemmed in by the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, the tiny Apatani valley and its seven villages attracted a lot of attention from the first

Western observers as it had remained very isolated until the middle of the last century. There was practically no direct contact between the Apatanis and the Tibetans towards the North, while a difficult six-day journey on foot had to be undertaken southward to reach the Assam plains. Travel was always possible, yet up until 1950 safe-conduct had to be procured from the neighbouring Nyishis with whom conflicts were recurrent. The anthropologist C. von Fürer-Haimendorf was among the first outsiders to visit the valley. He spent two years in 1944-45 as an Assistant Political Officer of the then North East Frontier Agency, and he later published various books and papers devoted to the Apatani social organization and religious system between 1946 and 1980. On the basis of his ethnographical accounts it has become customary to label the Apatanis a “well-documented group”. However, as remarkable as this contribution might be, it overlooked many cultural aspects, including the study of oral literature. Fragments of longer stories have been collected, though rather randomly, by various authors (Abraham, 1985; Bower, 1953; Duarah, 1999; Elwin, 1958, 1970; Ghosh & Ghosh, 1998; Hage, 2006). More recently a few Apatani intellectuals or scholars also started to translate and publish parts of it, such as C. Kalung’s *Nitin Hormin. A Compilation of Popular Apatani Proverbs* (1998), and P. Hage’s collection of 24 tales entitled *Ranth-Pigeh. Short story. Part 1* (2004). Yet never has there been any attempt to combine both a collection of tales and their analysis into a separate book. In this respect, S. Blackburn’s contribution is a welcome change.

As the author explains, his intention was not to limit himself to a mere description of tales, myths and histories, but to place them in a cultural context which render them meaningful, and more generally to explore the relationship between the stories and the culture. For that reason, only half of the book is comprised of the narrations themselves, the rest being devoted to historical or sociological aspects, or comparative analysis. The book also includes a glossary, a well-documented bibliography and an index. Several conclusions can be drawn from this study: firstly, no understanding of oral literature can obviously be reached without a thorough examination of the context of utterance and its relationship to the sociological background; secondly, Apatani oral tradition owes little to Indic or Tibetan traditions; and thirdly, numerous mythological parallels are to be found between the cultures of Central Arunachal Pradesh and beyond, and those of South-western China and mainland Southeast Asia.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The author introduces each of these, as he does for the tales themselves, with rich descriptive background information on the Apatani world and the narrative context. Chapter one mostly contains an introduction to the general objectives and methodology, as well as a clear and concise classification of Apatani oral genres (pp. 18-22). Oral literature may be broadly classified into two

categories, ritual and non-ritual. Ritual oral literature (*miji*) is restricted to recitation (or more often chanting) for ritualistic purposes by male priests (*nyibu*). It uses a specific or “ritual” speech which is known only to them and often requires interpretation. Non-ritual oral literature (*migung*) can be narrated by any knowledgeable person outside of a ritualistic context, in a prose identical or closer to day-to-day speech. However, there is no clear-cut division, since the same stories can be chanted or narrated alternatively in ritual and non-ritual contexts, though not usually by the same kind of people. In terms of comprehensibility, there appears to be a *continuum* between the various non ritual forms of oral literature, the level of discourse varying according to the genre, the context of recitation, the narrator’s emotional state, and his perception of the listeners’ state of mind. Altogether, *miji-migung* constitutes the dominant genre on which this study focuses almost exclusively.

The second chapter offers a detailed and learned sketch of the population of the valley and its history. This is a solid piece of work containing a good deal of valuable information, as well as a lucid presentation of some issues central to present-day society, such as status differentiation or religious changes. The author discusses them in an open, discerning style with no oversimplification. Indeed, I often found my own observations regarding Apatani society to be very much in line with the author’s views. Many topics raised in this chapter provide those interested in India’s north-eastern region with useful, more global information: population trends, land ownership imbalances, the effects of urbanization, the distribution of power between natives and outsiders at local and regional levels, and the spread of literacy or the minority rights issue. With regard to education, indeed a “success story” over past decades, the author prompts readers to examine the determining influence of the type of residence, proximity to urban centres, and the fact that all villages have easy access to schools.

The main section of the book, as shown in the title, concerns Apatani oral literature, more specifically *miji-migung*. Chapter Three (pp. 55-105) contains twelve stories or tales belonging to the non-ritual *migung* category, and Chapter Five some fragments of *miji* ritual texts (pp. 165-212). The non ritual collection has not gone entirely unpublished as partial translations into English have already figured, for at least about half of them, in previous publications: the story of *Baro Piicha* (Abraham, 1985, given along with the Apatani transcription), the Tallest Tree (Hage, 2004), the eviction of *buru* mythical aquatic creatures (Izzard, 1951; Bower, 1953), the migration stories (Bower, 1953, Fürer-Haimendorf, 1962, 1980), *Kar Siimii* the “Blinding Lake” (Hage, 2004). Still we are left with a substantial corpus of newly collected and published folktales, and for the first time great care is taken to provide biographical information about informants.

Most texts are written in a polished, literary, at times more ethnographic (due to the fact that Blackburn's informants themselves often felt the need to supplement the narration with ethnographical material) style, frequently complemented and enlivened by the author's own comments regarding the narrator or the conditions in which data were collected. Only very few inaccuracies are to be found from an anthropological point of view: married women, for example, do not "*retain their clan name or first name*", as stated in a footnote p. 95. They change their surname upon marriage from birth name to their husband's clan name which becomes their family name. My only regret is that, for a book specifically devoted to the Apatani oral literature, the stories are confined to their English translations, and that the transcription of the Apatani texts and their English counterpart do not appear side by side (only one tale is given with a full translation in Appendix 1). Not only would this have given scope for the reader to point to possible approximations or mistakes in translation, but valuable information would also have been provided for anthropologists and historians. In a sentence such as "*The people made Pala Talo king and gave him the title of 'Master'*" (p. 83), the vernacular terms for both 'king' and 'master' are of particular interest regarding a society which never had any form of centralized power prior to the advent of the modern State. Here again we have no means of knowing the rhythm or pace of live performances, nor of the features of discourse in the two major oral forms. This is particularly unfortunate for ritual texts, given that they are recited or chanted to a fixed rhythm. Considering the importance of ritual speech (*miji agung*), as well as the fact that hardly anything is known, let alone published about it, it would have been interesting for the reader to have at least an overview of this language in order to glimpse its specificity. As the author is preparing another book specifically dedicated to one "*Shaman Chant*", this will hopefully be corrected in the forthcoming publication. Last but not least, Apatani original texts would have provided valuable information on the way the various forms of oral literature are interrelated. Among the Galos, who are the Apatani's neighbours and speak a language of the same "Tani" group, Mark Post recently highlighted the fact that, even though most of the words in the classical language (*gorḱù*) are not etymologically related to their counterparts in the conversational form, *gorḱù* not only appears in ritual contexts "*but presents a rich and culturally significant "parallel lexicon to the ordinary Galo speaker which may be employed to great effect in orations, village councils, and storytelling"*" (2007: 45). This statement also seems to hold for the Apatanis. One example of this permeability within oral forms is given by the fact that classical words often surface in conversational language through several structural devices or features of discourse, such as these "*noun-pairs*" (labelled as such and rightly pointed out by the

author himself p. 159) which are so typical of Apatani formal discourse *outside* ritual context, as they also are in Galo. Another example is provided by Apatani proverbs (*nitin-hormin*), another popular genre. Though the vocabulary is basically from conversational Apatani, they are typically arranged in two-line couplets and use a contracted form not readily understandable to all which consequently requires some interpretation. In addition, each line of a couplet very often begins with one component of a given noun-pair. Thus, elements of oral discourse such as rhyming features, idioms, schemes of thought, also permeate the conversational language or today's modern songs. Even intellectuals who publish pamphlets on *Meder Nello*, the Apatani local form of "Donyi-Poloism", in an attempt to elevate traditional religion to the rank of a religious philosophy appear to use a great deal of vocabulary related to (or alluding to) oral literature, through which their texts seem to gain legitimacy. How traditional forms adapt to popular culture, modern media and take an active part in the process of "*reinventing religions*" might have been another possible entry to explore the dynamic relationship between oral literature and culture.

Several stories make up what can be regarded as an Apatani cosmogony, even though there is no central tale or story that can be labelled as such. The author rightly identifies two major features, each of which has a broader resonance in the region: first the origin of the universe that is conceived as an emergence, rather than a creation, and operates basically through a gradual differentiation process. This general framework not only belongs to a "*regional tradition in central Arunachal Pradesh*" (p. 215), but also fits into a more general pattern widespread in the Himalayas, including its enlarged Chinese extensions. It basically depicts various phases of gradual differentiation of an as yet undifferentiated, undetermined, undivided, most often watery single entity. The specificity of these cosmogonies is to bind the physical evolution, the sociocultural development, and the geographical migration, and set them in a progressive dynamic that moves from undivision, disorder and non-culture to a conclusion of separation, order and the establishment of cultural norms. A first step in this process is marked by the appearance of a two-fold (Sky-Earth) or three-fold division (Sky-Earth-Water/Underground). This is followed by the separation of man from spirits, often accompanied by establishing distinct boundaries between them, the separation between humans and animals, and later the separation of various ethnic groups whose male progenitors are generally regarded as siblings. In the Apatani story it is concomitant with the acquisition by each group of distinctive natural and agricultural resources (p. 114). Here the author could also have invoked the motif of the river boundary illustrating the split of the bulk of migrating ancestors into two

sections: one group following another loses the other's tracks after crossing a river because the marks left by the preceding group are no longer visible; thus the migrants left behind either decide to turn back or to settle on the other bank of the river (p. 115). It is a typical motif of widespread resonance often resorted to for explaining ethnic distinctions between close neighbours who are nevertheless regarded as having genealogical or close cultural ties¹⁹.

Another major trait rightly pointed out by S. Blackburn is the fact that the migration epic, being conceived as a spatio-temporal path, is not a mere story but also a ritual instrument. Again, as already noted by the author in a previous publication (2003/4: 50 n57), this immediately evokes a larger area stretching from the Western Himalayas to Southern China and mainland Southeast Asia where several important rituals such as funerals require the ancestral journey to be, to quote Höfer, "*walked back in words*" (1999: 226-227). Among the Hani of Yunnan for example, the complete recitation of individual ancestral genealogies, upward and downward over fifty to sixty generations, by the reciter priest (*pima*) is a necessary step to ensure access to ancestor status (Bouchery, forthcoming). The journey evoked in the chant retraces the migration route to escort the dead to their ancestors' abode. As pointed out by M. Gaenzle, one specificity of these ritual journeys in the Greater Himalayan region as compared to other parts of the world is that they are not only mythical but take place through the real landscape "*and thus combine cosmological notions with the known geography*"²⁰.

More problematic is the author's statement that "*these eleven stories [migung] represent almost the entire repertoire of Apatani folktales*" (p. 231). It is hard to agree with him on this point, as there are obviously more stories than those in his book. It may be true that a lot of them can be ultimately connected to one or another major event or figure or the Apatani mythology, such as Abo Tani or the migratory epic. Still, not only do many of these stories seemingly stand on their own in various contexts, but the author himself acknowledges that "*Apatani mythology is not a formal system, and accounts are diverse, inconsistent and often vague*", which is indeed a typical feature of many, if not all mythologies in this region. The story of

¹⁹ A few autonyms of this region, such as "Aorr" (literally "those who crossed" in Ao Naga language) derive directly from this motif, and evoke an ancestral relationship with neighbouring groups nowadays established east of the Dikhu River (Mills, 1926). The marks usually become invisible due to natural causes, not due to human intervention. They are expressed through a limited number of stereotypes found throughout the Himalayas and mainland Southeast Asia.

²⁰ 1999: 137

Dimper Manu, that of *Poper Lali* who twice sold his cock, the story of *Tapu* and *Kupu*, the story of the separation of Man and the mithun, who were originally brothers, the story of the hero *Pengu miilyobo*, that of the Giant Hunter and the Jungle Pigmy, the story relating the origin of the burial practice, the story of *Abo Tani* and *Yapung*, the story explaining the origin of village sacred groves, the story of *Ato* and his dog, the story of the boy and the Tigress, etc. are some examples of stories missing from Blackburn's book. Comparison with previously published oral material also reveals that there is a wide range of individual variation within the limitations established for specific genres, as well as many divergent versions of the same story²¹.

In Chapter Five we are offered a glimpse of Apatani ritual texts (*miji*), though still a small part of the entire repertoire. The chapter begins with an insightful discussion on the functions of the main religious specialist (*nyibu*), who combines the features of a shaman, reciter, diviner and religious practitioner performing various rituals for his clan, but not those of a village priest (pp. 160-161). Each chant is introduced by rich anthropological background information on the ritual to which it applies, as well as the context of utterance. Among them are extracts of *Subu Heniin*, the longest and most prestigious chant, and we are informed that a full version will be the subject of a forthcoming volume. As with other similar forms of oral literature of this region, repetitions frequently occur in *miji* in order to underscore the notion of completeness, or highlight culturally salient categories. This section also contains two samples of *ayu*, chants performed in contexts of verbal competition or antiphonal singing.

The last chapter, entitled: "*Comparisons: Apatani stories in the wider world*" (pp. 214-21, summarized in Appendix 3), is an attempt by the author to enlarge the scope of analysis of the Apatani corpus of myths and insert it in a wider regional context. He first identifies a core group corresponding basically to the "Tani"-speaking people of Arunachal Pradesh (i.e. Apatanis, various Adi and Nyishi groups, Galos, Tagins, Hill Miris and Misings) and he rightly identifies this group as being comprised of societies which are collectively bound by both a genealogical and mythical reference to the central figure of apical ancestor Abo Tani. Starting from this Central Arunachal cultural cluster he then moves eastward, leaving Arunachal and entering China and mainland Southeast Asia. This choice is motivated by the author's argument that the oral tradition of Central Arunachal has little connection with Tibet, Assam or mainland India, compared to what he defines as the "*Extended Eastern Himalayas*", a somewhat discontinuous area mapped out on p. 220

²¹ Fürer-Haimendorf, for example, reports two versions of the origin of Abo Tani (1962: 134; 134n).

encompassing Arunachal Pradesh, the hills of the India-Burma border, plus a vast tract of mountains and hills in Southwest China and adjoining countries, the limits of which however are not clearly defined:

Taken all together, these parallels for the stories of the Sun-Moon, lost writing and journey of the soul show that Apatani oral tradition is linked to traditions in three regions: central Arunachal Pradesh, the India-Burma order; upland Southeast Asia/southwest China. Equally significant, these stories appear to be found only in these three regions –with no close parallel in Assam or Tibet. (p. 219).

Such converging evidence leads the author to address the unresolved question about the origin and migration routes of the present-day Tani-speaking people. He argues that the continuity of oral literature within the extended Eastern Himalayan region is suggestive of a historical continuity through generational transmission, thus pointing to an eastern origin and east-west migration route, rather than a northern Tibetan nidus, as indicated by the stories themselves. This part of the analysis is less convincing, partly because his comparative material is incomplete, also partly because some reservations can be expressed from a methodological point of view. Blackburn's limits of the culture area appear to be loosely defined and at the same time rely on somewhat arbitrary criteria: it is in fact confined to upland, stateless (or "tribal") societies who live east (but not west) of the Apatanis and, for the most part, speak languages of the Tibeto-Burmese family. That is not to say that his suggestion of some Himalayan mythological continuity between North-East India and China – invoking an unbounded geographical transmission of cultural material – is not grounded. But what appears to be questionable is the relevance of the limits assigned by him to these "*Extended Eastern Himalayas*" which he further regards as forming a distinct culture area (p. 230).

First of all, there is some ambiguity as to the area and the people actually covered by this concept. The Khasis and Garos, for example, appear in the comparative profile given in Appendix 3, but their habitat, the Meghalayan plateau, is shown as being external to it in the map given on p. 220. It is also most surprising to see the author exclude from his comparison –therefore from the culture area itself– all societies of the Brahmaputra Valley, apart from the Misings. Can it be seriously asserted, on the basis of a single study (as Blackburn does on p. 227, by quoting Datta *et al.*, 1994) that "*no stories [are] common to Assam and Arunachal Pradesh*"?. This is obviously not tenable given the complexity of the ethnic, linguistic and cultural matrix of this region. All the more so because the Brahmaputra Valley has always been – at least since the 13th century – a major corridor connecting mainland India with East and Southeast Asia, as

well as a major linguistic contact zone. Hence we can expect extensive cultural interaction within the valley itself and with the surrounding hills. Of course, the oral literature of the 600,000 or so Misings, though influenced to some extent by Hinduism, manifests the presence of Blackburn's Central Arunachal "core group" right in the heart of the Brahmaputra Valley. No doubt the Karbis, Dimasas and Lalung-Tiwas of Assam, among others, would have made equally good candidates as the Khasis and Garos for comparative study, had only their oral tradition been thoroughly studied. And what about the Noctes inhabiting the Patkai Hills separating India from Burma? The Ahom influence so strongly pervades their mythology and migration stories that chiefly families, like the ancient Ahom ruling aristocracy, locate their ultimate origin in the former Mogaung Shan State of Northern Burma, relate their genealogies to those of the Ahom rulers and, like them, invoke Indra as their progenitor and claim that their ancestors descended from the sky by a golden or iron ladder (Dutta, 1978; Bouchery, 2007). On this point, Gait's statement, quoted by the author on p. 228, that the plain's influence on upland people's oral literature is limited to the immediate border with Assam, is outdated, just as the dualistic separation between the hills and plains in the India-Burma region has become outdated since Leach's major contribution (1954) highlighting the cultural interactions between the Kachins and the Shans.

The same thing can be said regarding Tibet. The author argues that he has found "*no significant parallel in Tibet*" (p. 228). It is true that very few stories are found to be similar or share the same narrative structure, and that a central trickster figure comparable to Abo Tani appears to be absent in Tibet. Yet this difference should not be overemphasized, for there are many cosmogonic parallels between Tibet and what can be called a Greater Assam including both the Brahmaputra Valley and the surrounding hilly areas. The "birth out of eggs laid by birds" motif is a recurring theme in various Himalayan and sub-himalayan cosmogonies (Tibetan, Tamang, Karbi, Meitei, among many others). The Heavenly Rope (tib. *mu*) or the Heavenly ladder one motif, commonly related to royal genealogies in societies having centralized political systems such as the Tibetans, the Ahoms and the Kachins *gumsa* – but not in stateless societies – is another example illustrating the mythological continuity of this region. It has several resonances elsewhere, among the Thado Kukis for example, for whom the celestial ropes take the form of a tall ever-growing creeper that touches the skies and leads to the other world, and further east among the non-Buddhist Tai of the Indochinese peninsula where it is represented as a cane bridge. Yet among Apatanis we also find the theme of connecting earth and sky by some means, at least in one version of the *buru* episode collected by Elwin: *Doje-Karanga*, who dwells in the sky, and

Buru-Gudu who dwells in water, both decide to marry the other's daughter, and build a path connecting the sky to the earth in order to be able to visit their respective spouses (1958: 80). The underlying idea that prosperity results from the union between sky and earth is of course a common theme of representational systems of the entire sinicized world, including Tibet. It is also surprising that the author does not consider the creative dismemberment as a central motif of the Apatani cosmogony. For this theme seems to be no less significant than the "Sun Moon" or the "Lost writing" on which he bases his definition of the shape of his "extended East Himalayan region". All the more so as there are two occurrences of this theme in his own corpus (pp. 84; 109; 214): the stories relating how the primeval spirit *Niikun* formed the earth out of her body parts, and how the malevolent spirit *Arii* created a parallel world by transforming parts of her body into the main elements of the universe, both closely parallel the Tibetan myth in which the universe is created through a dismemberment from the actual body of a primordial goddess (*klu*). In these three cases the spirit is a female entity, and her body parts are used to map a macrocosm. In another Apatani story, a giant stone owned by a mythical hero, *Pengu miilyobo*, is destroyed by lightning and its fragments dispersed in places corresponding to the seven villages of origin, each associated with a particular organ. Apart from the creative dismemberment theme, this tale strongly evokes another constant mythical motif of the Tibetan world, the marriage of a deity to a rock or mountain, which is always seen as a territorial deity²².

Furthermore, questions may be raised about the eastern limit of the author's proposed culture area. That the myths of North-East India have close affinities with those of the northern part of mainland Southeast Asian, especially Burma, is a well known fact, and indeed ethnic groups such as the Lisus, Adis, Mishmis, Kachins, Tangsas, Noctes and northern Tai's inhabit both sides of the borders separating Arunachal from Northern Burma on the one hand, and North-Western Yunnan or South-Eastern Tibet on the other. Yet there is certainly no reason to exclude mainland China from the scope of the comparative study, nor does it make much sense to restrict the comparison to upland South-East Asian societies (p. 261). H. Maspero demonstrated, as long ago as 1924, that striking parallels exist between the Ancient Chinese mythology contained in the *Shujing* and the cosmogonies of the non-Buddhist Tai's inhabiting the valleys of erstwhile Tonkin. Further research since then has established that the same motifs are shared by most, if not all upland Southeast Asian societies. A few examples will suffice here: the motif of the creation of the

²² On the extension of the theme of the creative dismemberment in the Himalayan region, see Macdonald, 1980.

universe through the dismemberment of a primeval god or beast is not only shared by Tibetans and various Himalayan cultures, but also has strong resonance in the Chinese myth of *Pangu*, to which the motif “mankind generated from an egg” is associated. Parts of the dead body of *Pangu* turn into the various elements of the celestial and terrestrial landscapes: stars, mountains, water, fertile lands, trees, flowers, etc. The myth of *Pangu* is shared by various cultures of the sinicized world, as far as the Lis of Hainan Island whose language belongs to the Tai-Kadai family. The motif of the Heavenly Rope runs through the *Shujing*, where the link is said to have been cut to prevent gods from descending to earth (Maspero, 1924, p. 46). Regarding the “*Sun Moon*” motif, which the author considers as particularly significant for his comparison, a culture hero (usually an archer) shoots down the superfluous suns and moons who pose a direct threat to human life. It is true, as the author says, that it is a recurrent motif of various non-Han ethnic groups of Southwestern China, but the comparison certainly does not end here. It is found all over Central, East and Southeast Asia, from Mongolia and Siberia to Borneo, and appears to be quite old. In China, first mention is made in one chapter of the *Shujing*, presumably written between the 9th and 7th centuries B. C. The number of celestial bodies varies (10 for the Ancient Chinese, 9 for the Hanis of Yunnan, 7 for the Kachins, 3 for the Golds of Amur region, 2 for the Lepchas of Sikkim, etc.) as well as the throwing weapon (bow, crossbow, spear and blowpipe). Outside Eastern Asia it appears in several Amerindian mythologies of North and Central America, and the theme of the plurality of the sun and moons also exists in Central India (Ho, 1964).

As a matter of fact, a number of parallels exist between the mythologies of the “*extended Eastern Himalayas*”, Tibet and mainland China. Yet we must take into account the fact that in both Tibetan and Chinese mythology, stories and tales are characterized by a large degree of syncretism as well as processes of both mutual influence and external influences from India, Central Asia and even, in the case of Tibet, from Persia. Moreover, in much the same way that Han historiographers from the Zhou and Han dynasties historicized their ancient mythology and historians and philosophers introduced fragmentary passages of mythic stories into their works to give authority to their statements, Tibetan historiographers, Tibetan monks or lay scribes incorporated mythological frameworks and mythological figures in historical, religious or philosophical records, making the comparative study more complex, thus requiring rather different methods of approach. However, at least regarding China, the converging works of the palaeographer N. Barnard (1973) and sinologist S. Allan (1991) cogently demonstrated that a true cosmogony existed during the Shang dynasty that had significant parallels

with those of contemporary peripheral societies of the sinicized world. That is to say, S. Blackburn's concept of an "extended Eastern Himalayas" culture area restricted mostly to Tibeto-Burman speaking, tribal upland societies remains ill-defined, unless we accept to consider it regardless of the wider cultural and historical resonances that may be imputed to it.

The author concludes the book in a most accomplished way by pointing out an underlying structural element of these oral accounts – set of exchanges and alliances – to avoid or to solve conflicts, certainly the most pervasive and recurrent theme contained in stories of Central Arunachal as already stressed by Ramirez (1989). As the author notes, the necessity to conclude (either political or matrimonial) alliance often arises from the differentiation process itself (pp. 111, 235).

The above remarks regarding the last chapter and the relevance of the author's definition of an extended Eastern Himalayan culture area do not obscure the basic value of the book. The general reader wishing to peruse a truly "representative" corpus of Apatani stories in an English translation and learn about the condition in which they are produced or reproduced will find S. Blackburn's book a major contribution. This rich and interesting account of an extraordinary culture should prove to be of particular interest to any student or scholar concerned with the relationship between anthropology and folklore studies.

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***Rulers on the Celestial Plain. Ecclesiastic and Secular Hegemony in Medieval Tibet. A Study of Tshal Gung-thang* by Per K. Sørensen and Guntram Hazod (in Collaboration with Tsering Gyalbo). Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 2007. (Öst. Akd. d. Wiss., Philos.-hist. Klasse, Denkschriften, 361. Band) 2 Vols., ix, 347 pp.; vii and pp. 349-1011, incl. numerous illustrations (photos, maps, drawings) and 50 pp. facsimile editions of two Tibetan texts. ISBN 978-3-7001-3828-0.**

Reviewed by Rudolf Kaschewsky, Bonn

The work under review constitutes in a sense a continuation of two earlier books by the same authors which were published in a similar fashion: *Civilisations at the foot of Mount Sham-po* (2000), dealing with sources for the post-dynastic history of Tibet, and *Thundering Falcon* (2005), a detailed historical and philological study of Khra-'brug, probably the oldest temple of Tibet; see *EBHR* vol. 20/21 (2001): 239-241, and 29/30 (2006): 184-189. All

three publications are characterized by a very special methodology by combining textual analyses and historical research with anthropological fieldwork and geographical investigations.

The Tshal Gung-thang (Chin. Cai gongtang) complex is a well-known location, situated some seven kilometres south-east of the centre of Lhasa and intimately linked with the famous Zhang Bla-ma, alias Zhang Rin-po-che (A.D. 1123-1193) (see Ferrari: *Mk'yen Brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, Rome 1958: pp. 105-106, note 105; Wylie: *The Geography of Tibet according to the 'Dzam-gling-rgyas-bshad*, Rome 1962: 84, 162). Administratively it belongs to Lhasa City (and not to sTag-rtse County, as Dorje: *Tibet Handbook*, 1996: 202 seems to suggest), and consists of the Tshal village and the Gung-thang-Temple (along with some other shrines), "a few kilometres further south-east" (p. 27). For short descriptions cf. also Chan: *Tibet Handbook*, Chico 1994: 198-199; Everding: *Tibet*, Cologne 1999: 188. The word *gung* (usually 'middle', Skt. *madhyama*) is understood by the authors as 'heaven', which has led them to give their work the title "Celestial Plain" (p. 7) (*thang* 'plain').

Part I of the book presents a richly annotated translation of the *Gung thang dkar chag*, a pilgrim's handbook similar to many other texts belonging to the *dkar chag* genre; it was written (or compiled) in 1782 by Ngag-dbang bstan-'dzin 'phrin-las rnam-rgyal (p. 13), the xylographic Tibetan text of which is presented in Part II. That *Gung thang dkar chag* has also been the subject of an exhaustive and very reliable study by Karl-Heinz Everding: *Der Gung thang dkar chag. Die Geschichte des tibetischen Herrschergeschlechts von Tshal Gung Thang und der Tshal pa Bka' brgyud pa-Schule*, Bonn 2000, second edition Halle 2005 (Monumenta Tibetica Historica, Abt. I, Bd. 5). This study was the first edition and translation of one of the most important texts shedding light on the history of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud pa school of Tibetan Buddhism and the mighty Tshal principality. To the present reviewer it seems rather unusual that a few years after such a thorough study another research project is carried out on exactly the same subject. Nevertheless, Sørensen and Hazod declare that their work "forms the first major Tshal-pa study in which all the relevant sources (...) have been taken into account", because the previous work, namely Everding 2000, "did not include any in-depth study in his publication" (pp. 9, 10). This remark appears at least a bit too hasty, as the authors did not take into account Everding's second edition which, consequently, is not included in their bibliography.

In the "Table of Contents" some corrections are to be made: From section 4.1 onwards all page numbers should be increased by 1 (25 > 26 etc.); for "40" read "42", for "46" read "48". From chap. I of part I (p. 72) onwards the pagination is correct. As for part II, in the tables of contents the page number "281" should be read as "381". On p. vi, second part of

section 3.2 “Bum thang, Tshal[-thang] Bye-ma-can, [Ngan-lam] Tsha-ba-gru and rTa-mo-ra” should be renumbered 3.2.1, and the next section “3.2.1 Wandering Toponyms...” likewise renumbered 3.2.3. On p. vii, after “7. The gNyos Clan...”, it should be inserted: “7.1 The gNyos lineage”, page number “672”; for “688” read “689”.

The Introduction (pp. 7 to 65) presents a (mainly historical) survey of the Gung-thang area, discussing the “clan-supported monasticism” and the “proliferation of religious institutions”, which, as the authors rightly emphasize, “was not unlike the situation in the Europe of the Middle Age” (p. 10). One section is dedicated to the “charismatic ruler” Gung-thang Bla-ma Zhang. The virulent changes in hegemony and strategy of the relevant political and ecclesiastic forces are elaborated in a very detailed manner, which is especially perceptible in the list of different “phases” within the “lHa-sa valley and in the middle section of sKyid-shod” from the 1350s until the mid-1640s (p. 49). The structure of the introduction is in part intransparent: Between a section on “political hegemony and strategy” and another one on a “key district of Northern Central Tibet” we find surprisingly an outline of the main text (*Gung thang dkar chag*) and an overview of the “structure of the present book” (pp. 13-17). The historical sequence in section 5.1 “11th and 12th centuries”, in section 8. “13th and 14th centuries” and in section 9. “15th and 16th centuries”, is repeatedly interrupted by (in fact very valuable) insertions on certain personages, special geographical areas and monastic affiliations. This renders it difficult (at least for the non-specialist) to follow the main flow of events. So the reader appreciates the “Short Chronology of the History of Tshal Gung-thang” which is found on pages 775 and 776 of vol. II, where not everybody would expect it. Beside the historical outset, the authors pursue the fate of the Tshal Gung-thang area up to the present time, mentioning the connection of the famous Khri-byang rin-po-che, junior tutor of the XIVth Dalai Lama, with Gung-thang (p. 62). They also delve into the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, the activity of the 6th Gung-thang-tshang incarnate ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i dbang-phyug (1926–2000) and the (not much advanced) restoration of the damaged buildings, which stand today “as silent, almost forgotten witnesses to their past greatness” (p. 65).

What follows is a “detailed outline and translation of the Tibetan text”, i. e. the *Gung thang dkar chag*, consisting of five chapters: a short “introductory history of Buddhism in Tibet” (corresponding to fol. 1–6a of the Tibetan facsimile text, to be found on the pages following p. 772 of vol. II), the “biography of the Tshal-pa founder and his disciples and the split of the School” (fol. 6a–42a), a “description of the temple and its monastic complex” (fol. 42a–65b), “sacred objects of veneration” (fol. 65b–71b) and “virtuous benefits accruing from visiting the objects” (fol. 71b–76b). The

system of square brackets used throughout the translation seems not to be fully consistent: in some cases, passages within square brackets are quasi-commenting insertions, in other cases, literal translations are also given in square brackets. It would have been helpful, if only those passages would have been placed between square brackets, which are *not* found in the text itself (i. e. insertions made by the translator[s]).

When, in the notes, the authors refer to sources listed in the bibliography, the indication is in some cases ambiguous: For example, p. 110, end of note 162, and p. 207, note 538: “Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar” – which of the two *bTsong* [sic] *kha pa'i rnam thars* is meant? Except for literal quotation, one should not fluctuate between the spellings *Tsong-kha-pa* (not so listed in the Index) and *bTsong-kha-pa*. Similarly, p. 130, end of note 280: “Everding 2006” – which of the two works of Everding 2006 is meant? Or, p. 635: “Thang ston [recte: stong] rnam thar” – which of the three biographies mentioned on p. 848 is “TN”?

The last fifty pages of vol. I consist of “maps and photographs”, the aim of which is to illustrate the locations mentioned in the texts. This is a laudable attempt (that one also encounters in earlier publications of the authors). However, with one exception, the maps do *not* have a scale indication, and thus, the distances between certain locations are difficult to estimate. The maps are mostly based on satellite maps with inserted place names. There are two traditional drawings (p. 313) showing the location of Tshal and Gung-thang; one of these is a “detail from the *srin mo gan rkyal du nyal ba*”, i. e. the famous demoness covering the whole of Tibet, with temples/monasteries situated on different parts of her body. Very impressive are the photographs of the region, taken in the 1920s. Other illustrations are modern photographs of the relevant landscape (some of them from Google Earth), of buildings and of interior works of art.

Vol. II consists of six appendices of rather uneven importance with bearing to the main topic, viz. the history of Tshal Gung-thang. App. I (“Icons of lHa-sa Rulers”) expounds the interrelationship between religious power and thangka illustration, one important example being the “kesi tapestry” of Bla-ma Zhang. In connection with the (stylistic and historical) type of the relevant kesi masterpieces the authors provide a plausible explanation of the surprising affinity of “wholly Tibetan or Indo-Tibetan icons” to those of Tangut origin, touching, incidentally, also on the (hitherto seldom mentioned) close relationship between the Tangut people (Xiao) and Tibet, especially the Sa-skya (pp. 367–378). In depicting the odyssey of that thangka from its “initial haven” (Tshal Gung-thang) to several intermediate locations, among them even Beijing, and finally to the Potala palace (where it returned after having been stored in the new Tibet Museum) (pp. 378–380), the authors lucidly explain the

interconnection between power and its symbols in a seemingly marginal short note. There is (pp. 393-397) an impressive series of portraits of the Bla-ma Zhang, taken from very different sources, which illustrate the “ambiguous” faces of that Rin-po-che.

In what looks rather like a preface to the description of a “gNyo Patriarch Icon” we are informed “about the overwhelming importance” and influence of “being the authoritative holder of esoteric teachings” – a fact that is well-known from many biographies and religious chronicles, but has seldom been so clearly underlined as in the book under review: Possessing (and authoritatively teaching and explaining) the *Guhyasamāja tantra*, for example, is a guarantee of standing in highest esteem, also among powerful worldly figures (pp. 381-385).

App. II (more than 150 pages) deals with “geo-political schemes” and the “ideological battlefield” under the heading “Control over the lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone”. In a very clear (but somehow hidden) note (p. 453, n. 93) the authors justify this expression by explaining the “mandalaic” structure of that most central part of Tibet, where the Ra-sa ‘phrul-snang as the “epicentric or cosmocentric navel” lies, and which in local sources is spelled *dkyil ’khor sdings* or the like. A connection with the well-known “Nepālmaṇḍala scheme” seems “not entirely unfounded” – and thus we would have a good example of “sacred geography” *in situ*. (The reader only wonders why this explanation is not presented right at the beginning of the appendix some 90 pages further above!) A table listing “the toponyms of the lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone” is given in Guntram Hazod’s contribution on p. 576.

After the “break-down” of the old Tibetan kingdom from the middle of the 9th century onward, there were rather chaotic struggles for hegemony in Central Tibet, above all for the supremacy over “Tibet’s true *sanctum sanctorum*”, the Ra-sa ‘Phrul-snang (pp. 401ff.). (An interesting parallel or continuation of this struggle is found even in the claim of the dGe-lugs-pas, arguing that their “privileged, if not exclusive, access to, and maintenance of, the *sanctum*” is based on the fact that the prosperity of the region is owed to the blessed activity of Tsong-kha-pa [p. 497]). Here (pp. 405-408) the reader obtains, incidentally, valuable information about the famous disciple of Atiśa, rNgog Legs-pa’i shes-rab, whom the authors regard as “the father of Tibetan scholasticism” (p. 688, note 3), and – again incidentally – about the origin of “ancestral and spiritual genealogies” connected with king Srong-btsan sgam-po and the Avalokiteśvara Cult (pp. 463-471). The authors then turn to the concrete or “reality-based” impact of that “lHa-sa Maṇḍala Zone” (pp. 471-483), namely the question of how to protect the holy region against flood disasters (namely by “taming the Nāga” and by building embankments and dikes). Here one finds interesting details on bSod-nams rgya-mtsho of

'Bras-spungs, being styled "the master over the waters und architect of alliances" (pp. 526–529). Added is a short but impressive passage on the "drama behind the Dalai Lama Succession", discussing the background of the finding of the new 4th Dalai Lama (pp. 530–532) as a "politically motivated recognition" (p. 533).

App. III is entitled "The Tshal-pa Myriarchy" and starts with a concise survey of the "Mongol conquest" of Tibet, reducing the latter to a "vassal under the great Mongol empire". (On p. 196 the authors mention the institution of a "Mongolian Resident Commis[s]ioner" [Mong. *daruyāčī*], a position, which was, according to some sources, also held by Tsong-kha-pa's father! See, e. g., Kaschewsky: *Leben des Tsongkhapa*, 1971: 72, 245.) The close connection of the Tshal pa clergy with the Mongols is mentioned in the preceding appendix (p. 485f.). The Tshal pas were, quite cunningly, able to convince the Imperial court that their Gung-thang complex contained a private temple or a "local bastion" of Qubilai Qan, whom his mighty brother Möngke had placed "in charge of the territory of Tibet" (p. 555). The result was a massive support from Qubilai and his successors. App. III deal with the method of the Mongols to divide the subdued population "into administrative units of ten, hundred, thousand and ten-thousand" (p. 554), that gave rise to the formation of the (thirteen) "myriarchies" (*khri skor*), one of the most important of them being Tshal pa (pp. 557ff.).

App. IV (authored by Guntram Hazod alone) discusses the intimate interrelationship between history and the tradition of religious cults so typical for Tibet as a whole, and also inherent in quite particular situations. Thus, the question arises whether, according to Tradition, the great fire of Gung-thang (in the year 1546, see p. 627f.) was a result of the ongoing discrepancy between the Bla-ma Zhang and the divine protector of Tshal, Pe-har (p. 571f.); a statue *Gung-thang me-shor*, commemorating that fire disaster, is even kept in the Jo-khang temple of Lhasa (p. 631). There is also a description of the region of Grib (pp. 573–596) where the "hero" dPal-gyi rdo-rje "disappeared", after having killed the sinful king Glang-dar-ma (p. 579). This prompts the author to give an account of the annual three-day flower festival that articulates the "alliance between Grib and Tshal" (pp. 585–593, with a photographic documentation made in 2001). Immediately after this interlude, there follows a "brief description" of the Tshal Gung-thang District and the related toponyms (pp. 596–610). Here again the reader is puzzled why this fundamental information is not presented at the beginning of such a bulky work on Tshal Gung-thang!

When dealing with the "divine patrons" (pp. 615ff.), the author relates the cycle connected with the "white mare" (pp. 619ff.), the expression he has chosen as the heading of the appendix. The "white mare" is a protectress of the Tshal, and Hazod discusses the possibility that this

divine animal might have something to do with the old toponym of Tshal, namely rTa-mo-ra (*rta mo* ‘mare’) (pp. 622–624).

Appendix V consists of thirteen tables listing different “throne holders”. Table 1 and 2: Religious and secular rulers of Tshal-pa, starting with Śākya ye-shes (12th century), up to the 17th century, with their family- or “clan-affiliations” (p. 637f.); very impressive are the lists of the branches of the Tshal-pa-School, showing the three regions sMad-Tshal, Bar-Tshal and sTod-Tshal (p. 639) and the succession of their “lineages” (pp. 640–642). Table 3 lists the principals of the (three) colleges of Tshal Gung-thang. Tables 4 and 5 contain lists of teachers and disciples of Bla-ma Zhang with ample notes on each person, as well as illustrative portraits (pp. 647–658). Table 6 enumerates the religious settlements of the early period of the second propagation of Buddhism (*phyi dar*) in dBus, and Table 7 informs about the gNyo clan of Central Tibet and the “Abbatial succession” of the Gye-re lha-khang.

Tables 8 and 10–11 contain “Abbatial successions” of important monastic seats, including gSang-phu and sKyor-mo-lung, rGya-ma rin-chen-sgang, ‘Bri-gung and sTag-lung, whose abbots are listed up to the 20th century. Table 9 is devoted to the *bzhi-sde* institution of the lHa-sa Ra-mo-che, “one of the oldest and most celebrated in the inner lHa-sa area” (704); their succession (*gdan rabs*) is listed from the 12th to the 15th century. Table 12 contains a scheme of the genealogy of the Phag-mo grup-a ruling lords, the “effective regional rulers” up to the mid-17th century. This appendix concludes with the “short chronology” already mentioned above.

Appendix VI offers the Tibetan texts of the *Gung thang dkar chag* (a fairly legible facsimile of the block print, 76 fol.) and of *sMon lam rdo rje rnam thar* (manuscript, 69 fol.); added is a list of the titles of sMon-lam rdo-rje’s collected works.

The Bibliography (pp. 833–914) lists Tibetan primary sources (more than 400 titles), Tibetan secondary sources (books authored by contemporary Tibetan researchers) and European language sources, including a few works by Chinese and Japanese authors. In the biographies, the names are given at times in the genitive case, at times without: see, e. g., *Karma ... rdo rje’i rnam thar* vs. *Kun dga’ rdo rje rnam thar* (p. 833). The immense wealth of personal names and place names, including most of the place names occurring on the maps, is listed in a Tibetan index containing several thousand entries, as well as in (very short) Sanskrit, Chinese and Mongolian indices. The Chinese names are not given in Chinese characters.

Given the abundance of names, minor discrepancies in the alphabetical order are unavoidable. To mention only a few: *mKhyen* should be listed before *’Khon*, *Bla brang* before *Bla ma*, *sBa bzhed* after *’Brug*, *’Bum* and *’Bri*

after *dBang*, *Lo sems* after *Ri-dbang*, *Ngag-dbang dbang-mo* after *Ngag-dbang blo-bzang*, *Sang rdor*, *-'bum* and *-rin-pa* after *Sangs-rgyas*. In some cases, a certain name is listed twice or three times without specification, e. g., *Grag-pa rgyal-mtshan* (pp. 753, 119, 764) – one and the same person? Or *Josras* (pp. 642, 690, 99) – one and the same person? The name *dNgos-grub rgya-mtsho* (p. 930) is borne by two persons: one is a *slob dpon*, the other one the 16th *Tshal pa dpon chen*. – Among the European language authors, names beginning with Y should be listed before Z.

The spelling of some Sanskrit names should be corrected: *Dharaśrī* > *Dharmaśrī*, *Kalācakra* > *Kālacakra*, *Tathagāta* > *Tathāgata*, *Dīpaṃkāra°* > *Dīpaṃkara°*, *Mahākāruāikā* > *Mahākāruṇika*, *Vimālagupta* > *Vimalagupta*, *Smṛtijñāna* > *Smṛtijñāna*. – The Mongolian *Sayin-eka* (pp. 150, 775 and 1011) should be spelled *Sayin-eke*.

The book under review is an exhaustive and very reliable encyclopaedia of the religious and political medieval history of Central Tibet. The question is whether that treasure house of extremely detailed information has been made accessible enough to the reader. Still, those who will work with this book – not only Tibetologists, but also historians, researchers interested in historical geography and the interdependence of religious and political trends and strategies – will doubtless obtain well-established and elaborate results. Those who might be fascinated by the wealth and depth of Tibetan Buddhism, its ideals of compassion and mystical experience will in this book become confronted with never-ending political struggles between clans and monasteries, saints and rulers, and even between human and divine powers – in short, with a wholesome adjustment against uncritical fancies, even if such was probably not the intention of the authors.

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Miller, M.L. 1989. “A comprehensive rebuttal of G. Sakya”. *Kailash* 6 (2): 121-83.

Smith, B.C. 1992. “Looking for ostriches”. In *Research Methodologies for the Himalayas*, edited by J. Pande, pp. 110-145. Shimla: Mountain Publishers.

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