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ANNOUNCEMENT

EDITORIAL

Issue number 45 of the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* contains two essays based on material from the Northeast Himalayas. Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy's article convincingly argues that opium production in India has been underestimated for years, and gives a rare glimpse into the world of opium production in the foothills of the Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh. Devjyoti Das's article takes a close historical look at the Yimchunger Nagas of Nagaland, also in the foothills of the Himalayas, and how their notions of ethnic identity have changed over time. The third article, by Mitsuru Niwa, discusses Nepalese Protestants' ideas about and uses of the Nepali word *calākh*, or "cunning." In addition to the usual raft of book reviews, this issue also includes the obituaries of two prominent scholars of the Himalayas.

It has now been 24 years – two *yugas* – since the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* first appeared in 1991, under the guidance of the late Professor Richard Burghart. In their introductory editorial Richard Burghart, András Höfer and Martin Gaenzle wrote of their intention to produce the *Bulletin* "over a trial period of two years on the understanding that we would retire with dignity at the end of that period, should the interest and commitment of a sufficient number of scholars prove illusory."

That interest and commitment was certainly forthcoming, and over time it has proven to be anything but illusory. Rotating between the Centre d'Etudes Himalayennes in Paris, the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, and the South Asia Institute in Heidelberg, the *Bulletin* has established itself as a lively and reliable source for the most up-to-date scholarship on the Himalayan region. This is an appropriate place to thank Prof. Michael Hutt and his team at SOAS, who were its last editors, for doing such a superb job. As we now commence the *Bulletin's* *Dwaparayuga*, we at Heidelberg can only hope to maintain this tradition.

Bo Sax

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Mitsuru Niwa is a Ph.D. candidate at Hitotsubashi University in Kunitachi-City, Tokyo, Japan. He has been conducting anthropological fieldwork in Nepal with a focus on Christianity, more specifically Protestantism, since 2008. So far, he has concentrated on the concept and practice of 'belief', repetitive schism in churches, and the mushrooming of various organizations among Nepalese Protestants. His current interests include the response and narrative being constructed by Protestants (and, also, by various other religious groups) to the declaration of multi-party democratization in Nepal, which was declared in 1990, and to the secularization of Nepal, which was declared in 2008.

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy received his PhD from the University of the Sorbonne. A geographer and specialist on illegal drug production and trafficking in Asia, he is currently a research fellow with the Centre national de la recherche scientifique (CNRS) in Paris. He created and edits www.geopium.org.

Illegal Opium Production in the Mishmi Hills of Arunachal Pradesh, India*

Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy¹

Introduction

Illegal opium poppy (*Papaver somniferum* L.) cultivation in India is likely to have been greatly underestimated for years. This is what data on the forced eradication of illegal opium poppy crops in the whole of India tend to show, as the eradication of illegally cultivated areas often surpasses legally cultivated areas. Recent estimates of illegal cultivation in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh also confirm that India's illegal opium production is much larger than is usually acknowledged. The remote and isolated state of Arunachal Pradesh, located in northeast India, on the borders of Bhutan, China (Tibet) and Burma, is now known to be an important source of illegal opium. Illegal poppy cultivation has long existed there, but is likely to have largely increased in the last decade, especially in the northernmost part of the state, in the Anjaw and Lohit districts.

In this article I first look at the absolute and relative importance of India's illegal opium poppy cultivation, which could actually surpass the legal cultivation of opium poppy. The state of Arunachal Pradesh serves as an example of how important illegal opium production is in India and how it is largely ignored. This is all the more important because it shows that India is probably one of the world's major illegal opium producers, even without taking into account the diversion from legal cultivation (which is likely to have been overestimated). It also matters because it shows that, despite what is widely assumed, the diversion from legal cultivation is unlikely to be the main problem faced by India. Last but not least, a better understanding of what is taking place in Arunachal Pradesh also matters because the economic underdevelopment of the state and of some of its poorest inhabitants is one of the causes of illegal opium production in the state. If successful counter-narcotic policies and actions are to be designed

* The author wishes to acknowledge the comments of Ambika Aiyadurai, Romesh Bhattacharji, David Mansfield and Bertil Lintner on earlier drafts of this text.

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and implemented, the history and context of illegal opium production in Arunachal Pradesh must be better understood.

The rather understudied history of opium production in Assam and in Arunachal Pradesh, the state that was carved out of Assam between 1974 and 1987, will then be looked at in the greatest detail possible. We will then be able to address the role played by the Mishmi people in contemporary illegal opium production in Arunachal Pradesh. It must be made clear from the onset that other people than the Mishmi resort to illegal opium production in different areas of Arunachal Pradesh and that this paper only focuses on the Mishmi because the only existing data on opium production is for the districts that are inhabited by the Mishmi (INSA 2010). Explaining the history and economic strategies of the Mishmi is a necessary prerequisite to understanding their increasing resort to illegal opium production. When and why did the Mishmi start producing opium and what are the various drivers of their growing dependency on the illegal opium economy? Those are the questions that are asked in this paper, even if the answers are still limited at this stage.

Arunachal Pradesh has been subject to very little scholarly attention, most Indian scholars regard it as peripheral and very few foreign scholars having been allowed to enter this region². As a consequence, Arunachal Pradesh is one of the least studied states of India and very little is known about the current illegal opium production there and about the history and dynamics of its development. This article is a first attempt to bring light upon this largely ignored phenomenon.

This research was conducted over three years and employed a mixed-methods approach to data collection. The available literature on Arunachal Pradesh and on opium production in this region was consulted: books, academic papers and unpublished reports were resorted to in order to get a better understanding of when, why, where, how and to what extent opium production developed in such a remote corner of Asia. The paucity of data made field research imperative and two field trips were undertaken

2 As explained in greater details by the School of Asian and African Studies (SOAS) on the Web page dedicated to its Arunachal-focused 'Tribal Transitions' programme: <http://www.soas.ac.uk/tribaltransitions/description/> (page retrieved on 10 January 2011). However, there are dozens of books of variable quality that have been published by Indian authors in the last 20 years and a few PhD students were doing some fieldwork in Arunachal in 2012-2014.

during the opium harvesting seasons of January-February 2012 and 2014. A qualitative study was carried out through interviews and unstructured discussions with NGO members, social workers, and opium farmers in the two districts of Arunachal Pradesh where illegal opium poppy cultivation is widespread (Lohit and Anjaw). Visits to opium-producing villages were planned in advance with the help of local contacts who were concerned about the area's growing drug issues (although a few villages were visited on a random basis as opium poppy cultivation is widespread and very noticeable). Villages were selected according to their location (both in the plains and in the hills) and distance from the main roads. Interviews and discussions were carried out in English and, with the help of guides and translators, in Hindi and in Mishmi (mostly in Digaru Mishmi and Miju Mishmi). Questions were asked about the history of opium production and consumption, the cultural and economic importance of opium, the economic drivers and benefits of opium production, the risks of illegally producing opium, poppy cultivation, opium harvesting and production techniques, and also about food security, legal cash crops, non-farm employment, game and other forest products, government aid, corruption, etc. It must be stressed here that, for obvious ethical and security-related reasons, the locations where personal observations were made, and the persons that were interviewed, are not specified in this paper.

The world's only legal opium exporter and a major illegal producer?

At the turn of the twenty-first century, at least ten countries illegally produced opium, while nineteen countries legally grew opium poppies for the pharmaceutical industry under strict state control (Mansfield 2001, INCB 2012: part 3). Afghanistan has been the leading illegal opium producer since at least 1991, when it reportedly surpassed Burma (respectively, according to the UN, with estimates of 1,980 and 1,728 tonnes of opium: see Chouvy (2010) for further developments) and has since produced a record-high estimate of 8,200 tonnes of opium (2007) (UNODC 2007). India, where the opium poppy has been cultivated since at least the tenth century, where opium production developed throughout the northern part of the country in the sixteenth century (under the rule of the Mughal Emperor Akbar), and where the British controlled the production and trade after 1773, is now one of the world's rare legal opium producers and the world's only legal opium exporter. Three countries other than

India (the People's Republic of China, the Democratic Republic of Korea, and Japan) legally produce opium, although only for their own domestic markets and in much smaller quantities than India. All other legal opiates exporters, including Turkey, extract the alkaloids directly from 'poppy straw' (Concentrate of Poppy Straw), that is, from the plant itself, not from opium, which is actually the dried latex obtained from incising the opium poppy's capsules, (Chouvy 2006).

Despite all the precautions taken by the Indian central government, a diversion from the legal to the illegal market, where opium can fetch prices up to four to five times higher than the minimum government price, is clearly taking place. Most observers agree that between 20-30% of the Indian legal opium crop is diverted into illegal channels, a rate that some consider to be very conservative (Charles 2004). According to some authors, the diversion from legal cultivation makes India the world's largest illegal opium producer: 'In contrast to all other illicit producers, India owes the latter distinction not to blatantly illicit cultivation but to diversion from licit cultivation' (Paoli et al. 2009: 159).

The above comment was made after 6,322 hectares of illegally cultivated opium poppies were eradicated in West Bengal alone in 2007, out of a total 8,000 hectares eradicated throughout the country, that is, more than the 5,913 hectares harvested under license in the whole of the country in 2006-2007 (in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh) (GOI 2006: 98, INCSR 2011: India, UNODC 2011a: 59). In 2005, 439 tons of opium (compared to 1,061 in 2004) were legally produced in India and at least 4,620 tons were produced illegally in the world (GOI 2006: 113-114, UNODC 2006: 57). While opiates continue to be used worldwide, legally and illegally, as painkillers or even as panaceas, both by allopathic medicine and by non-allopathic medicines, most of the world's opium is still produced illegally and fuels a thriving illegal drugs industry and market of morphine and heroin.

The Indian Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB, India's counter-narcotics enforcement agency) and the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN, mainly concerned with the supervision over legal opium poppy cultivation) officially conduct eradication operations in the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Manipur, Uttarakhand and West Bengal (NCB 2012). In 2010, when 739 tons of opium were legally produced out of

12,237 hectares (average yield of 60 kg/ha paid between 808 and 1,320 INR/kg to the cultivators), about 3,000 hectares of illegally grown opium poppies were eradicated nationwide, which is much less than in 2007. In fact, eradication efforts seem to vary from year to year since about 5,800 hectares were officially eradicated in 2011 and only 1,250 hectares were reportedly cut down in 2012 (NCB 2012).

Oddly, Indian official estimates of the extent of illegal opium poppy cultivation in India never include the northeastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, where large expanses of opium poppies can be found. In fact, no estimate exists of illegal opium poppy cultivation in the whole of the Northeast, which means that no satisfactory overall estimate of illegal cultivation in India exists. Neither India nor the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which is the UN body supporting illegal drugs surveys in various countries, offer such an estimate. In the end, both the global estimate that is proposed every year by the UNODC, and the whole issue of diversion from legal opium production must be reconsidered.

Forced eradication rarely amounts to more than a small fraction of illegally cultivated areas, most often around 10%. In fact, as shown by the importance of forced eradication in 2007, and by the recent estimate of illegal cultivation in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh, as we will see, illegal opium poppy cultivation in India is likely to have been greatly underestimated for years (Chouvy 2006, 2010). Indeed, the 2012 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report (INCSR) of the US State Department mentions that the 'GOI estimates that half of India's heroin consumption and all of India's opium consumption (70 tons) were met by domestic supply' on a minimum of 7,500 hectares of illegal opium poppy cultivation (US Department of State 2012, UNODC 2011b: 14). It also explains that 'informed observers of the Indian scene downplay the role of diversion of opium from licit production to the illicit domestic market' (US Department of State 2012). What is more, a 2011 UNODC report on Afghanistan states that in India, 'the estimated quantity of licitly produced opium diverted from licit to illicit use is very limited, or maybe even non-existent' and suggests that some fifteen tons of heroin – or three percent of global supply – are illegally produced there (UNODC 2011b: 64-65). Depending on the real scope of its illegal opium production, India could well have become one of the world's largest illegal opium producers with

diversion from legal cultivation being a smaller problem than is often considered. Yet, the fact that legal cultivation largely decreased between the 1990s or early 2000s (32,085 hectares in 2000) and the late 2000s (5,859 hectares in 2012) might explain the increase in illegal opium production. Indeed, the diversion of legal opium to the illegal market is also likely to have decreased and had to be compensated for (NCB 2012, Romesh Bhattacharji, personal communication, 17 July 2014).

Illegal opium production in Arunachal Pradesh has been largely ignored by recent international publications, including the United Nations' annual World Drug Reports. This is despite the fact that illegal poppy cultivation has long existed there and has reportedly largely increased in the last decade. It is puzzling that, while absolutely no opium (and no heroin) was seized in Arunachal Pradesh between April 2010 and March 2013, 180 hectares of opium poppies were eradicated there in 2012, compared to 364 hectares in 2011. However, opium was seized in neighbouring Manipur (107 kilogrammes during 2010-2013) and sizeable opium poppy crops were also eradicated there in 2012 (507 hectares) (NCB 2011, 2012, 2013). While there are no official estimates of opium poppy cultivation in either Arunachal or Manipur, an independent estimate of cultivation was conducted in Arunachal in 2010.

An unpublished report by the Institute of Narcotics Studies and Analysis (INSA), an independent Indian NGO set up and headed by Romesh Bhattacharji, former Narcotics Commissioner of India from July 1996 to December 2006, estimated that 16,441 hectares of opium poppies were illegally cultivated in two districts (Anjaw and Lohit) of eastern Arunachal Pradesh in 2010 (INSA 2010: 8). According to the report, opium poppy cultivation also takes place in four other districts (Upper Siang, East Siang, Changlang, Tirap) that were not surveyed (INSA 2010: 18). This necessarily very rough estimate (since the human and technical means as well as the methodology suffer from several shortcomings) was based on a seven-month field survey carried out by about thirty surveyors who visited 458 villages in the Anjaw and Lohit districts, where it was estimated that 3,460 hectares and 12,981 hectares were cultivated, respectively. Yet no estimate of the opium output was provided in the report.

It is worth noting here that in Arunachal Pradesh almost all of the opium is harvested by using the unusual and rare 'opium cloth method', which complicates yield estimates: poppy capsules are lanced with home-

made tools (one or a few razor blades mounted on a bamboo stick) and the exuding opium is collected on a cloth (personal observations, 2014). The impregnated cloth is then sold as it is. According to the report, about 93% of the surveyed villages resorted to opium poppy cultivation and 92% of these villages had opium addicts. In the mountainous Anjaw district, 82% of the poppy fields were reportedly smaller than 1 hectare, while in the Lohit district, where large river beds allow for larger fields (especially on the Lohit River bed and its many islands), 52% of poppy fields were said to be below one hectare and 43% of a size comprised between one and five hectares (INSA 2010: 43).

History of opium production and trade in former Assam

It is not known when opium production started in Assam and in current Arunachal Pradesh³. Some suggest that the opium poppy was introduced from Yunnan by way of Chinese tribes, as most likely happened in mainland Southeast Asia (Assamese historian S.K. Bhuyan, quoted by Kawal Deep Kour 2012, Chouvy 2010). Such a possibility is substantiated by the Tibetan and Ahom chronicles that mention many tribes from Arunachal, including the Mishmi, and provide great detail about trading networks that long existed between Assam, Tibet, and China (Blackburn 2003, Deep Kour 2012). It is not known if opium production started in the northernmost areas of Assam, in Arunachal Pradesh, or if it first took place farther south in present-day Assam, before it spread north. Yet, the authors of the 1924 Report of the Assam Opium Enquiry Committee seem to imply that both opium consumption and production spread from the Assamese towards the hill tribes in the north when they write that ‘the habit has spread among the hardy and virile races of the Hills of Assam’ (Sharma & Sharma

3 When the Ahom Kingdom (1128-1826), set in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, was overruled by the Burmese in 1821, the threat to the East India Company’s nearby Bengal territories started the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826). The British victory led to the Treaty of Yandabo that gave Assam and Manipur, among other Burmese-held territories, to British India. The Assam state as it is known now has been part of the Bengal Presidency, the Assam and East Bengal Province (1905-1911) and the Assam Province (1912-1947). Assam became a constituent state of independent India in 1947 but was later divided in several states (Nagaland in 1963, Meghalaya in 1972) and Union Territories (Arunachal Pradesh, the former North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA), and Mizoram in 1972). Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram became full-fledged states of the Indian Union in 1987.

2006: 174). They quote the 1919-20 Assam Excise Report according to which 'the opium habit is excessive among the Turaon and Miju Mishmis; and Miris, Khamtis and Singphos are saturated' (Sharma & Sharma 2006: 174).

In any case, according to the Assamese nobleman and former tea cultivator popularly known as Maniram Dewan, opium poppy cultivation was first undertaken at Beltola, near Guwahati, after having been introduced from Bengal during the reign of the Ahom monarch Lakshmi Singha (1769-1780) (Deep Kour 2012). This is a long time before the first British explorer entered the Mishmi Hills (first mentioned in 1825 by Lieutenant Burlton) and the question of when and where the opium poppy was introduced in Arunachal Pradesh still remains as controversial as are the origins and migration routes of the tribes that now inhabit the state. Kawal Deep Kour stresses that 'only conjectures [...] surround the introduction of opium in Assam' and Stuart Blackburn explains that 'no one knows, with any certainty, when or by what route the people of Arunachal Pradesh came to their current homelands', something that has not changed since William Robinson's first attempted history of the region (1841) that refers to the 'dark veil which conceals the origin of the tribes' (Deep Kour 2012: 11, Blackburn 2003: 15, Robinson quoted in Blackburn: 15).

Yet, according to the 1924 Report of the Assam Opium Enquiry Committee, and despite what is often argued⁴, there is no mention in the daily records of the Ahom kings of opium being given as gift between the Mughal ruler of India and the Ahom kings (Sharma & Sharma 2006: 161). Yet, according to some, Rajput soldiers fighting for the Mughals would have initiated the Assamese to opium in the late seventeenth century and 'an account from the *satra* from the period between 1449 and 1568 describes opium eating, smoking and drinking as prohibited, and devotees who indulged subject to punishment' (Wright 2014:82). In any case, the fact that opium was consumed at the Ahom court prior to the British annexation of Assam is made clear by Captain Welsh's description of Ahom king Gaurinath Singha's opium consumption in 1792 (Sharma &

4 'It is said that Rajput General Ram Singh, Raja of Amber, who led Aurangzeb's army into Assam in 1667 gave gifts and introduced Opium to Ahom Kings' (Hussein, 2004: 142). Also: 'Credence to the theory that the Mughal incursions in Assam had facilitated the introduction of opium in Assam is contained in the *Buranjis*, which contains references to gifts from the *Paadshah* (the Mughal Emperor of Delhi) that included *afing* (opium), among other articles' (Deep Kour 2012). See also Sharma & Sharma (2006: 55) for what seems to be Deep Kour's source.

Sharma 2006: 162). Welsh also reported on the 'great quantity of opium' that was then produced and used in Lower Assam (Sharma 2011: 62). What seems to be agreed upon by many is the essential roles that the British and the Marwaris played in developing the opium economy in Assam.

The British fostered the capitalist transformation of Assam by developing tea cultivation, coal and oil production, bringing immigrant workers and merchants into a state where land was plentiful and labour was scarce, and also where there was no trading class of its own. The Marwaris – strictly speaking, a commercial caste from Rajasthan – came to Assam along with the British and 'played a major role in Assam's transition in the nineteenth century from a largely non-monetized economy to a market economy' (Baruah 1999: 61).

Until then, rice had been grown by all and almost only for subsistence. But with the advent of a cash-based economy, peasants needed marketable products and cash crops. Peasants initially turned to producing mustard oil to pay colonial taxes and buy goods. But 'mustard as a marketable crop was speedily overtaken by opium' and 'migrant commodity traders, known as Kayas or Marwaris, aided this changeover by providing cash advances to peasants only if they grew opium' (Sharma 2011: 62). The Marwaris were not only traders but also credit providers to hill and plain villagers, often buying crops and crafts with advances against takings (as is often the case in Afghanistan, Burma and Laos). Opium provided a huge profit, with some Marwaris settling in the hills and mountains of Arunachal Pradesh (Baruah 1999: 61). By 1852, more than 1,200 hectares of opium poppies were cultivated in Nagaon, then the main opium-producing district (Sharma 2011: 63).

While the British colonial system introduced a monetised economy, notably through the colonial revenue policies based on the perception of taxes and duties, the Marwaris, who followed the British in Northeast India, quickly 'monopolized practically the whole trade of the Assam Valley', according to a 1906 government report (quoted in Baruah 1999: 61). In the nineteenth century, the 'Marwaris exchanged rubber, wax, hand-woven clothes, elephant tusks, rhino horns, and medicinal plants for rice, salt, opium, cloth, cotton garments, and so forth with the "tribes" of present-day Arunachal Pradesh' (Baruah 1999: 61).

A crucial factor that can explain why opium consumption and, subsequently, production reached levels unknown anywhere else in India

is the fact that the British did not impose a government monopoly on opium production and sale as they had done in the rest of India after the All-India Opium Act of 1878. As a result, opium production and consumption developed unabated in Assam. Yet when the British government felt the urge to lessen opium production in Assam while at the same time increasing state revenues, it chose not to tax local production for fear of popular resentment. The solution was found with the 'policy of drift': the introduction of higher quality government opium from Bihar (*abkari* – or excise – opium) at a much cheaper price than the lesser quality Assamese opium (*kani*) in order to undersell the indigenous product. Abkari opium was first introduced in Assam in 1844-45 at half to one-third of the kani price, and the system was extended to the whole of Assam in 1850. Opium consumption reached unprecedented heights, but the production and consumption of kani was reportedly left unaffected (Goswami 1987: 52-73). In Ashley Wright's words, 'in Assam, a pragmatic desire to maintain social stability and avoid violence directed at the colonial state proved to be the decisive factor in opium policy decisions' (2014: 81).

Commercial opium production began at the same time as commercial tea cultivation, and many Assamese peasants entered the cash economy by enrolling to work in the tea plantations. The fact that the Assamese were not allowed to own tea gardens most likely helped develop opium production as a cash crop. Hard work and poor wages rendered employment in tea plantations unattractive, and when it became clear that reliable labour was very difficult to obtain, 'British officials increasingly speculated that it was an innate indolence in Assam's people, perhaps a climatic or racial trait, which made laboring work so unpopular' (Sharma 2011: 63).

It was not long before 'the essentialist explanation of local indolence gained scientific and medicinal credence from the peasant's easy access to opium' (Sharma 2011: 63). Having blamed the locals' indolence on their opium consumption, the shortage of tea labourers could now be quickly addressed. Ignoring the economic reasons and the colonial revenue policies that drove peasants to produce opium, British officials, planters and missionaries first thought of raising taxes on local opium production but instead chose in 1861 to ban opium poppy cultivation completely in Assam, mostly in the hope that cash-strapped peasants would turn to tea plantation labour to purchase their much-needed opium (Sharma 2011: 65). After 1861, only abkari opium could be sold in Assam, and its price

had to be kept low so as not to encourage people to resume cultivation. By 1880, imported opium had become the most important contributor to state revenues (Sharma 2011: 158). As Jayeeta Sharma put it, 'opium sales to cash-strapped peasants helped to promote colonialism's two most important commodities, tea and opium' (Sharma 2011: 156). While local opium production never completely disappeared, consumption kept increasing, so that by 1920 the population of Assam, which formed a mere two percent of entire British India, consumed 13 percent of the total quantity of opium retailed through licensed vendors (Goswami 1987: 73).

Anti-opium campaigns by American Baptist missionaries in Assam and by Assamese students slowly developed, but no real prohibitionist policy existed before 1919, when the registration of opium consumers was extended to some frontier areas. The Non-Cooperation Movement of 1921 then materialised in Assam through a strong anti-opium sentiment, with calls for a struggle against the 'Imperialism of Opium'. In 1921 the Assam Legislative Council initiated a system of registration of consumers and strict rationing that was eventually imposed throughout the state in 1927 (Pakyntein 1958: 12-14). Then, on 15 April 1939, the Congress Coalition Government of Assam 'took a decisive and bold step by introducing the scheme of total prohibition of opium in the two sub-divisions of Dibrugarh and Sibsagar, which had the heaviest addiction' (Pakyntein 1958: 13). Yet, during the Second World War, the British reportedly substituted opium for wages and sometimes also for food to pay and feed the conscripted labour needed to construct the Ledo Road from Ledo, in Assam, to Kunming, in China (Guha 1977). Faced with opium trafficking from the rest of India, but also from Nepal, China, Tibet, and Burma, Assam passed its Opium Prohibition Act in 1947. Hopes were high, and the Excise Commissioner of Assam E.H. Pakyntein wrote in 1958 that it was his 'firm belief' that opium in Assam would be 'a thing of the past before long' (Pakyntein 1958: 14). While opium production has now almost completely disappeared from Assam, it has developed amongst some hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, especially since the early 2000s (personal observations, 2012 and 2014).

About the Mishmi

Most of the opium that is now produced in Arunachal Pradesh comes from the Lohit district where the Miju Mishmi are concentrated and predominantly involved in poppy cultivation. It also comes, although in

much smaller volumes, from the more mountainous Anjaw district that is mostly inhabited by the Digaru Mishmi. Opium poppy cultivation is also said to have recently spread into the Dibang Valley district where it is cultivated by Idu Mishmi (interviews with NGO workers, 2014). It must be stressed, though, that other ethnic groups, including the Khamti and the Singpho, resort to commercial opium production in the region (Lohit district) but apparently to a much lesser extent than the Mishmi (personal observations and interviews with opium farmers, 2012).

Almost exclusively found in Arunachal Pradesh (a few hundred are also found in China), the Mishmi are an ethnic group of the Tibeto-Burman stock (Tani subgroup) that comprises mainly three tribes, the Miju Mishmi (also known as Kaman Deng and estimated at 18,000 in India according to the 2001 census), the Idu Mishmi (also known as Idu Lhoba, and Chulikata or crop-haired Mishmi in Assam, and estimated at 11,000 in India), and the Digaru Mishmi (also known as Taraon and Darang Deng and estimated at 8,620 in India). The Mishmi occupy the north-eastern tip of central Arunachal Pradesh in the Dibang Valley and Lower Dibang Valley, and the Lohit and Anjaw districts. The Mishmi reportedly came from Burma. The Idu were the first to settle in present Arunachal Pradesh and are said to have been followed by the ancestors of the Digaru a little over five hundred years ago. Then came the Miju, reportedly from the Kachin country in Burma. The three tribes are ethnically related but are not linguistically similar, the lexical similarity being very low between the three idioms (the Miju Mishmi share a 7% lexical similarity with Idu Mishmi, and 10% with Digaru Mishmi)(Lewis 2009). The Mishmi were first mentioned by the British in 1825 by Lieutenant Burlton who described them as being 'very averse to receive strangers', something that his follower, Lieutenant Wilcox, confirmed when he had to hastily retreat from the Mishmi Hills in 1827 (Choudhury 1978: 45). Partly because, for both physical and political reasons, Arunachal Pradesh is difficult to access, very little has been written on the Mishmi and information about them is still scarce.

The Mishmi are traditionally part hunter-gatherers, part swidden agriculturalists, that is, they partly hunt game and collect plant foods and partly resort to slash and burn shifting cultivation, called *jhum* in northeastern India. The Mishmi traditionally sequence their crops, cultivating their main crops during the first year of a cleared swidden field.

They mostly grow maize, buckwheat, millet, yam, sweet potatoes, aroids, and *ahu* paddy, a local pre-monsoon dry variety of paddy suited to steep slopes. However, they can now cultivate up to nine varieties of paddy, from early maturing varieties (summer) to late maturing varieties (winter) including both rain-fed and irrigated varieties (personal observations and interviews with farmers, 2014). They also grow wheat, barley, soybeans, various pluses, tobacco and, increasingly, opium poppies (Choudhury 1978: 127, Bareh 2001b: 74-75). Some Mishmi, especially the Idu and the Miju, increasingly cultivate wet paddy in the valleys, and most notably on the Lohit River bed, where opium poppy cultivation actually also spreads fast (personal observations, 2012).

One can hypothesise that the economic underdevelopment and lack of opportunity that is said by some to tie villagers to non-timber forest products, especially wildlife hunting (Aiyadurai 2012), also explains the growth of illegal opium production in the region. Both hunting and poppy cultivation are traditional practices (Aiyadurai 2007, Elwin 1959, Fürer-Haimendorf 1962) that most likely offer economic alternatives to otherwise mostly resource-poor populations that are confronted with the monetisation of what used to be a barter economy. Interestingly, both activities have become illegal according to Indian national laws but are still undertaken by the Mishmi who view them as traditional and legitimate practices needed for various ceremonies. This, alongside poverty, greed and corruption, explain why the opium and hunting bans are hardly enforced (interviews with opium farmers and hunters, 2014).

Historically⁵, the Mishmi are not reputed to be skilled agriculturists and they reportedly experience chronic food scarcity, and Mills reported that ‘all early travelers report severe seasonal food shortages’ (1952: 4, cf. Choudhury 1978: 127). Some authors, such as F. Kingdon Ward, even wrote, in 1929, upon coming back from two botanical expeditions in the Mishmi Hills, that the Taroan Mishmi (Digaru Mishmi) ‘are grossly lazy and dislike cooly work’, and that ‘most of them—not all—take opium in excess’. The

5 It must be acknowledged that colonial ethnographers’ descriptions often bordered on being racist. As stressed by Raile Rocky: ‘Granted that such accounts are fairly comprehensive documentation of tribes and are invaluable but their writings in many ways are reflective of their biasness and euro centric valuation of people and societies so much so that it often borders on being racist. One cannot but notice the air of cultural supremacy in many of the colonial writings’ (Rocky 2013: 33).

author stresses the fact that ‘as every village and almost every hut grows its own crop, nothing is gained by carrying opium for payment’ (Ward 1929). Mills wrote that ‘Mishmi agriculture is the most primitive known to me in Assam’, adding that it was ‘not very long since the tribe were food-gatherers’ (Mills 1952: 4). Tarun Bhattacharjee, who studied the Idu Mishmi, wrote that the ‘Idus are a food-gathering tribe and agriculture as an occupation does not appeal to them much’. He explained that although each family has some land under cultivation, it ‘barely meets their requirements’ (quoted in Barih 2001a: 184). Mills describes how, until the mid-twentieth century, maize and buckwheat were the staple crops in the Lohit valley, with barley and wheat in some of the higher valleys, and that very little rice was cultivated, except in the foothills (Mills 1952: 4).

Despite the fact that the tea bushes were reportedly discovered for the first time in India in the present Lohit district by a Singpho chief (Choudhury 1978: 131), the Mishmi are seemingly reluctant to cultivate tea, although they very much like the drink. In fact, black tea is systematically drunk when smoking opium (personal observations, 2012 and 2014). The Mishmi used to have one the largest external trade of the region, thereby supplementing ‘their home-grown food by purchase to an exceptional extent’: pods from the Himalayan musk deer, *Coptis teeta* Wall. (a medicinal herb with antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties, known as *mameera* in India), paper bark and aconite poison were exchanged with the Tibetans for clothing, salt, copper-ware and swords (Mills 1952: 5). However, things have changed and nowadays it is much harder to find *Coptis teeta* than opium, due in part to deforestation, overcollection, and low reproductive success (personal observations and interviews, 2012).

Opium production by the Mishmi

Poppy seeds are broadcast by the Mishmi in late October and November on the well-pulverised soil of new jhum. Opium (*kani* in Assamese, in Mishmi – Idu, Miju, and Digaru – as in most languages of Arunachal Pradesh) is harvested from ripe poppy capsules from February to April, depending on latitude and altitude. Opium is mostly collected by lancing the capsules with razor blades and by scraping the capsules with one’s fingers. Capsules also can be rubbed off with small pieces of cloth (until impregnated with opium) most often made of nettle fiber, most likely from *Villebrunea integrifolia* var. *sylvatica* (Blume) Hook.f., commonly called wild rhea or,

in Assam, *ban rhea* (Hooker 1888: 590, Watt 1893: 238-243). Nettle cloth (called *tachaa* in Digaru) is no longer spun and woven to make clothes,⁶ but only to store and sell opium (personal observations and interview with weaver, 2014). It is impregnated with opium at harvest (and subsequently called *kaning tabe* in Digaru) and then sold as is, either shredded and incorporated into a smoking mixture (depending on the nature of the cloth), or soaked in water so that the opium can be retrieved and mixed with minced young banana leaf (*tekra* in Digaru). A bamboo water pipe of the bong type (*kaning bratyo* in Digaru) is then used to smoke the opium and banana leaf mixture (in nineteenth century Assam betel leaves were preferred), although opium can also be inhaled by mixing it with tea (personal observations and interviews with opium smokers, 2012 and 2014). The cloth processing method, a 'unique method' according to Kawal Deep Kour, most likely originated in Assam, where opium was traditionally inhaled (*kanikhowa*) or smoked (*kanipankhowa*) (Deep Kour 2012: 11). The same techniques are reportedly used in some areas of Burma's Sagaing Division and Kachin State bordering Nagaland and Arunachal, where opium is too wet to be harvested in a normal way (personal communications: Bertil Lintner, 11 March 2014, and Tom Kramer, 17 March 2014). Opium impregnated cloth is probably destined to be consumed locally, since export would likely prove difficult, although at least one case of international trafficking of opium cloth exists⁷. Not all the opium collected in the Mishmi Hills ends up on cloth, some is stored as a paste and allegedly sold to Indian merchants ('Marwaris') for the Burmese market (personal observations and interviews with opium farmers, 2014).

Opium poppy cultivation has long existed among the Mishmi but has increased manifold in the last decades, especially in the last few years. In the 1950s Verrier Elwin noted that opium was distributed in the Lohit area as a 'political present' by British officers on tour, the 'custom of trying to keep the tribesmen happy and content by giving them presents' being very old (Elwin 2009: 69). This is confirmed by many authors, as is shown by

6 The Mishmi are actually renowned for their weaving designs and skills, and traditionally use nettle fiber to make their cloths, along with cotton, wool, and sometimes human hair (Ghosh 1995: 236).

7 Dresses saturated with opium originating from Laos have been seized in June 2011 (and at least one more time since then) at Chicago's O'Hare international airport (ABC7News, 'Clothium' latest fad for drug smugglers, 14 June 2011).

many articles originally published in nineteenth century learned journals and in official reports collected and edited by Elwin (1959). Mills notes that, 'in the old days of clan fights, when physical fitness was important, opium addicts were few, but now the habit is almost universal' (Mills 1952: 4). Elwin seemed to agree with this when he wrote in 1957 that opium addiction was on the increase, mentioning areas where 'the young men have no longer to be alert in the new era of peace' (Elwin 2009: 108). Mills further observes that opium poppies are 'extensively grown' and that 'the crop appears to receive more attention than any other' (Mills 1952: 4). This is also confirmed by Elwin, who described 'the fields of poppy usurping food crops in the jhums and the little opium gardens behind almost every house' in the Patkoi Range (Elwin 2009: 107).

When and how opium was first produced by the Mishmi in Arunachal Pradesh is not known, and neither the existing literature nor the interviews I conducted recently (2012 and 2014) on that topic yielded any reliable information. What is clear is that most of the opium-related vocabulary used by the Mishmi (whether they are Digaru, Idu, or Miju) is Assamese, which could possibly indicate that opium production and consumption were based on Assamese practices. Very few Mishmi, including the elders, seem to know that the word *kani* that they use for opium is actually not a Mishmi word but an Assamese term. Indeed, a specific Mishmi word for opium does not seem to exist, and all the poppy-related vocabulary is constructed on the basis of the Assamese word for opium and on Mishmi words for different plant parts. In Digaru Mishmi, for example, *kaning chei* is the opium sap, *kaning sang* is the opium poppy, *kaning tawrah* is the white poppy, *kaning chalag* is the purple poppy, *kaning tapo* is the poppy capsule, and *kaning shei* is the poppy seed – *kaning* deriving from the Assamese language (interviews with opium farmers, 2014).

There are several reasons for the illegal opium production in Arunachal Pradesh. Heavy and widespread opium consumption and addiction is a clear cause of illegal opium production as 90 to 95% of Lohit and Anjaw districts have opium addicts (11,000) (INSA 2010: 22). While the INSA report does not distinguish between opium users and opium addicts, personal observations and interviews determined, on the basis of the level and frequency of consumption witnessed in every single village visited, that opium addiction is rampant. As a consequence, 74% of Lohit villages and 98% of Anjaw villages engage to some degree in opium production

(INSA 2010: 22). Furthermore, in most villages opium was either sold to the Marwaris or consumed locally (INSA 2010: 40). Opium consumption and addiction are actually a much bigger problem than opium production, and various NGOs, student groups, women's groups, and associations based on the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, conduct awareness building campaigns and set up detoxification camps in a state that otherwise lacks basic treatment facilities (personal observations and interviews, 2012 and 2014).

As is the case in other regions with illegal opium production like Afghanistan, Burma, and Laos, poverty and food insecurity are likely drivers of opium production in Arunachal Pradesh and they are indeed often mentioned by many opium farmers, along with the need for cash crops to pay for schooling, health care, etc. (interviews with opium farmers, 2012 and 2014). Rice (typically three mountain varieties and three paddy varieties) is systematically produced in or around each village, but the yields are rarely high enough to feed an average family (that is, a resource-poor family) for more than six to eight months. As a consequence, and as is often the case in Mainland Southeast Asia, game and other non-timber forest products (NTFP) are gathered from the surrounding forests on a daily basis (personal observations and interviews with farmers and hunters, 2014). Also, in a natural environment where agricultural production is difficult and limited (i.e. with steep slopes, limited flat agricultural land, heavy rainfall, dense forests and quick growth of vegetation) and where non-farm employment is scarce, opium production allows farmers to diversify their productions and their income sources: opium is a sure way to secure family needs, notably when yields from other crops (for example orange or cereal production) are lower than expected. Opium production also makes some off-farm employment available as the opium harvest in Lohit attracts poppy growers (whether Digaru or Miju) from Anjaw, where the opium harvest takes place at a later time (personal observations and interviews, 2014). Beyond wet rice and dry rice, food crops grown in most villages include millet, buckwheat, and mustard, the latter being largely cultivated as a cash crop despite being poorly interesting economically (personal observations and interviews, 2014). Other fast-developing cash crops include cardamom, mostly cultivated in the high lands of Anjaw since it is not ecologically suited to the low lands of Lohit, pineapples and orange orchards (both these are multiplying quickly in the Lohit

and Lower Dibang Valley districts). Such cash crops have been developed recently (notably through a community horticulture farming project initiated by the National Agriculture Bank for Rural Development) and are often cultivated along with opium poppies (especially cardamom and pineapples) in what appear to be clear income diversification strategies (personal observations and interviews, 2014).

Nevertheless, in areas with less opium production, such as in the Lower Dibang Valley district, interviewees tend to dismiss such economic factors and instead blame opium production on greed and corruption. People in the region repeatedly mention specific cases of high-ranking politicians and police officers (many of whom are also opium users) who grow poppies on their own land. In the three districts of the Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit and Anjaw, a clear lack of political will to address the issue of opium production and consumption was repeatedly denounced (interviews with NGO members and opium farmers, 2014). According to Romesh Bhattacharji, the former Narcotics Commissioner of India and one of the authors of the INSA report (Bhattacharji 2010), the fact that opium poppy cultivation had resumed and increased to thousands of hectares in the 2000s and 2010s after having receded in the 1990s was mainly caused by greed, not by need. Still, he stresses that 'poverty is still rampant in the region' (Bhattacharji 2014). Last but not least, several interviewees mentioned exchanges of arms for drugs by insurgent and self-defence groups operating in Assam and in Arunachal Pradesh. Some insurgent groups, especially the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang faction), have reportedly been hired by wealthy opium producers for protection (interviews with NGO members, 2014). Some security sources mention promotions by the Communist Party of India (Maoists), with the help of cadres of the anti-talks factions of the United Liberation Front of Asom (anti-talks or Independent) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (I.K. Songbijit) who are hiding in several places in Arunachal) of opium production in districts of Arunachal neighbouring Assam⁸.

Another reason for opium production is that the area is isolated, not only by its geography, but also isolated from official policies. Long a *terrae*

8 http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/states/assam/terrorist_outfits/ULFA2013.htm (page retrieved on 11 February 2014).

incognita sparsely populated by ostracised hill tribes, the area was placed by the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations (1873) behind what the British authorities called the 'Inner Line'. Typical of the indirect rule system that the British developed in other parts of their empire, the Inner Line demarcated the extent of government control and direct administration: 'Through the creation of backward tracts, excluded areas and partially excluded areas, the colonial administration had drawn an Inner Line, marking the extent of revenue administration beyond which the tribal people of the region were left to manage their own affairs' (Datta 2001). As happened in the similarly indirectly ruled Shan States of Burma, such a policy of isolation⁹ and the opium ban south of the Inner Line may have spurred opium production to the north of it. The fact that this policy of isolation has been in force ever since the Inner Line became the state's southern boundary with Assam, must be considered alongside the deep economic underdevelopment of Arunachal. In fact, the 'economic development of the region followed a specific pattern' with economic activities 'concentrated in select pockets', which means that 'vast areas, therefore, remain inaccessible and backward even to this day' (Datta 2001). As Sreeradha Datta explains, 'one of the important negative fallouts of the Inner Line system has been the perpetuation of the isolationist tendencies in the hilly and mountainous parts of the region. It has kept the people apart and minimised the sobering impact of modernization' (Datta 2001). While it cannot be said that illegal opium production thrived because of the maintained isolation and backwardness of Arunachal Pradesh, it can be safely argued that the Inner Line system and what it implied administratively and economically are factors that made large-scale illegal opium poppy cultivation easier to exist in the state.

9 See Jafa (1999): 'The Inner Line was first defined in 1873 to stop hill tribal raids into the plains. However, within a few years of the British occupation of these hills, restrictions ceased on the movement of hill tribes, and they were allowed to fish, hunt and attend markets freely on both sides of the Line. But the plainsmen were never allowed to enter the hills without a pass. The hill tribals, whose activities had prompted the creation of the Inner Line Regulation, were thus exempted from the application of its provisions. Ironically, the restrictions applied only to the people of the neighbouring plains districts of Bengal and Assam for whose protection the Line was initially defined. In the long run, therefore, the Inner Line was neither designed nor enforced to serve its original purpose.'

Conclusion

As shown by the case of Arunachal Pradesh, the extent of illegal opium production in India is poorly understood, and explanations of the diversion of legal opium production to the illegal domestic market must therefore be considered with utmost caution. What the case of illegal opium in Arunachal Pradesh shows more than anything else is that the overall global volume of illegal opium such as estimated by the UNODC is far from being accurately known, because large-scale illegal opium production is completely unaccounted for. Arunachal Pradesh is just one such example. Nevertheless, more is known about the extent of illegal opium production in Arunachal Pradesh than is known about the extent of illegal opium production anywhere else in India.

India is facing the same issues as Afghanistan, Burma, Laos and other illegal opium-producing countries. Physical and political isolation together with poverty, food insecurity, economic underdevelopment and, of course, opium addiction, make an ideal setting for illegal opium production. In all these countries, forced eradication of the illegal opium poppy crops is hardly feasible (technically and financially) and is likely to be counterproductive as it would worsen poverty, which is one of the main drivers of illegal opium production. Forced eradication is also unadvisable on strict political and strategic grounds, since tribal resentment is not something that the Indian Army wants to experience in a territory that is contested by China¹⁰. In fact, some regional actors, such as Arunachal's Health and Family Welfare Minister, Kalikho Pul, go as far as to warn against the possible unfolding of a 'Kargil-like' situation – i.e. a Chinese intrusion similar to the 1999 Pakistani incursion in Kashmir – if economic development is not more actively promoted in the state's northernmost areas¹¹. As is the case in the other areas of large-scale illegal opium production, economic development is undoubtedly the only viable solution. Here the sequencing of counter-narcotic actions is crucial since coercion, including forced eradication, should not be resorted to before economic alternatives to the opium economy have been implemented.

Opium use and abuse are also serious issues that threaten the com-

10 The 1962 conflict between China and India actually took place in Arunachal Pradesh and Chinese military incursions still reportedly occur from time to time.

11 Business Standard. 'Arunachal minister launches community horti-farming project in Anjaw District'. 3 December 2014.

munities that produce most of Arunachal's opium: many Mishmi stress that opium and heroin consumption threaten their fragile communities and cultures (interviews with NGO members and former opium addicts, 2012 and 2014). Opioid replacement therapies are clearly needed, but are hardly manageable considering the very large number of opium addicts in the Anjaw and Lohit districts alone. The fact that India is one of the very few countries to legally produce opium for the pharmaceutical industry lends weight to Romesh Bhattacharji's call to revive the Opium Registry (2014) according to which opium abusers could obtain prescriptions obtained from licensed outlets maintained by the government. It is obvious that the solution to the opium question in Arunachal Pradesh must address issues of both production and consumption. The state is in dire need of large-scale economic and public health policies to address the issues of opiates addiction and economic development. Only by addressing these questions will it be possible to solve the issue of illegal opium production.

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The Yimchunger Nagas: Local Histories and Changing Identity in Nagaland, Northeast India*

Debojyoti Das

Introduction

Ethnic identity, as Stanley J. Tambiah writes, is above all a collective identity (Tambiah 1989: 335). For example, in northeastern India, we are self-proclaimed Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Mizos, Manipuris and so on. Ethnic identity is a self-conscious and articulated identity that substantialises and naturalises one or more attributes, the conventional ones being skin colour, language, and religion. These attributes are attached to collectivities as being innate to them and as having mythic historical legacy. The central components in this description of identity are ideas of inheritance, ancestry and descent, place or territory of origin, and the sharing of kinship. Any one or combination of these components may be invoked as a claim according to context and calculation of advantages. Such ethnic collectivities are believed to be bounded, self-producing and enduring through time.

Although the actors themselves, whilst invoking these claims, speak as if ethnic boundaries are clear-cut and defined for all time, and think of ethnic collectivities as self-reproducing bounded groups, it is also clear that from a dynamic and processual perspective there are many precedents for changes in identity, for the incorporation and assimilation of new members, and for changing the scale and criteria of a collective identity. Ethnic labels are porous in function. The phenomenon of

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ethnicity embodies two interwoven processes that can be likened to a double helix. One is the substantialisation and reification of qualities and attributes as enduring collective possessions, made realistic by mytho-historical charters and the claims of blood, descent, and race. This results in what has been aptly called pseudo-speciation, that is, the collectivities in a certain socio-political space think of themselves as separate social kinds. The other contrapuntal and complementary process is that the making of ethnic boundaries has always been flexible and volatile, and ethnic groups have assimilated and expanded, or, in the opposite direction, differentiated and segmented, according to historical circumstances and political-economic possibilities. Ethnic identity unites the semantics of primordial and historical claims with the pragmatics of calculated choice and opportunism in contexts of political and economic competition.

The Yimchunger Nagas are one of the most economically backward among the Naga tribes inhabiting the remote Tuensang district of Nagaland bordering Myanmar. This paper examines issues of Yimchunger Naga ethnic identity formation and contestation. The emergence of tribal/sub-tribal consciousness corresponds to policies of state electoral representation and reservation (affirmative action) aimed at creating new constituencies of empowerment and social inclusion. This happens to the extent that these policies identify their intended beneficiaries, whose status is to be uplifted, on the basis of backwardness. The Yimchunger Nagas have been integrated into a statist discourse of development in which they have increasingly come to be identified with the development category of being backward. Equally, in the Yimchunger–Tikhir ethnic identity struggle, a key focus of this paper, identity is at stake in the struggle over rights to territory, land and the new opportunities offered by government reservation policy that aims to integrate the so-called backward Naga communities through positive discrimination policies.¹

1 Access to reservation benefits (employment, education and electoral representation) is determined largely by Scheduled Tribe status. In Nagaland, initially five Scheduled Tribes were recognised under the Constitution Scheduled Tribes Order 1970: Naga, Kuki, Kachari, Mikir, and Garo. Among these five, any 'tribes or tribal communities, or parts of, or groups within, tribes or tribal communities' were deemed to be Scheduled Tribes. In the Census of 1971, 16 Naga tribes/sub-tribes were listed separately for the first time, with a 17th added in 1991. In the 2001 Census, Tikhir and Yimchunger were listed separately and Sema, Konyak, Ao, Lotha, Chakhesang, Angami, Phom, etc., were recognised as major Naga sub-tribes, each having more than one lakh population (<http://>

In this conflict within the Yimchunger ethnic fold, the Tikhir people (a linguistic minority group) have sought to throw off their attributed identity as a Yimchunger sub-tribe and claim a separate disposition for themselves as a distinct major sub-tribe. This is a struggle that has seen extended, bitter and violent hostilities over decades in the Shamatur Sub Division of Nagaland. The success of Yimchungers in electoral representation and reservation benefits on the basis of tribal identity and majority tribe status is a major factor in this intra-ethnic dispute. In examining the Yimchunger–Tikhir identity struggle, this paper takes into account the influence and deployment of representations from the colonial and post-colonial past as well as modern development discourse. Representations of backwardness by outsiders have been mobilised to assert claims for benefits from state schemes, while at the same time Yimchunger villagers present themselves as motivated (hardworking) people trying to improve their standard of living and catch up with the outside world, which is imagined as more developed. Political scientist Sanjib Baruah claims it is part of the Indian state's strategy to mainstream frontier communities by nationalising frontier space through development schemes and programmes that seek to integrate the margins (Baruah 2003).

According to the way our village interlocutors described matters, the new opportunities for employment and education created by the government reservation policy and development grants/subsidies have been instrumental in reframing cultural differences and even cultural alienation. The Yimchunger–Tikhir conflict, I therefore argue, evolved from an earlier sense of subordination and neglect by the wider Pan-Yimchunger community into one of economic and electoral deprivation. The key trigger in intensifying the identity struggle was that Tikhir sub-tribes saw themselves as not benefitting equally from state development programmes. This has led to new waves of violence, distinct from the head-hunting raids carried out by the Nagas during the colonial times.

censusindia.gov.in/Tables_Published/SCST/dh_st_nagaland.pdf). However, these are specified at the level of the individual state, which issues periodic notifications as to district-wide jobs and education reservations and quota percentages assigned to each tribe. Although 16 major tribes are officially recognised in Nagaland, Nagascholars identify much larger numbers of tribes. Yonun Asoso (1974) lists 'about fifty', and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland lists 36 'tribes'.

Yimchunger Oral History and Narratives of the Past

Like most pre-literate societies, the Yimchunger Nagas do not possess a written history. They inherit a rich oral tradition through which knowledge of the past is transmitted to the present. The origin, dispersal and distribution of Yimchungers are embedded in their folklore, myths and songs that constitute their social history. I will discuss their origin history by looking at narratives and stories, and also through documents shared by Yimchunger tribal leaders (consisting of memoranda and resolutions). However, writing a history of Yimchunger is a daunting task. The perils of misrepresentation and misunderstanding are great and access to sources was restricted by the politics of narrative collection and key informants claiming to be true representatives of the community. My informants warned me to be aware of false stories, and to realise that there could be competing stories. Also, Yimchunger oral history has been in decline since their conversion to Christianity (Yim 2010). In my study village, the interviews failed to elicit any narrations of the origin story of Leangkungru itself, because the study village is a relatively new settlement established in the mid-1940s by immigrants from surrounding villages (it was a collection village)². The village itself is only one generation old, but in my interviews I recorded stories of people linked to 17 neighbouring villages, who narrated stories of the villages from which they originally came. There were only few storytellers except the most elderly villagers who were too old to converse coherently, but did pass on valuable information. Younger generation Yimchungers barely knew about their clan history or past warriors, as knowledge is no longer orally transmitted to the younger generation in *Murung* (young men's dormitory) houses.

The methodological problems that I encountered in trying to put together the collection of narratives illustrates the cultural attitudes towards the ownership and guardianship of the past. By this I mean the politics of narration that were embedded in the informant's articulation of their Yimchunger identity as being distinct from their neighbours. Many people were excited about telling the origin history, however, they often contradicted each other. At times there was utter confusion, while at other moments they produced directly conflicting accounts. Also, there

2 Villagers informed me that Leangkungru is a collection village; a village said to have original settlers from different villages.

are individual stories, linked to family and clan history. I soon became convinced that there was no single true version of Yimchunger origin and migration. Aware of such discrepancies, my Yimchunger informants liked to imagine that a unifying canonical text could be pieced together 'if only a few more old men were alive today, those who really knew the history of their forefathers and the village'. When a migration story was played to a neighbouring tribe, they would often question and contest it. On the other hand, similar stories were often told by neighbouring chiefs from surrounding sub-tribes.

Villagers were also curious about how I would use the materials I had collected and even suggested that I should write a Yimchunger history of origin in English, for the world to know about them. They also wished that their share of knowledge about Yimchunger past, as translated to me would be duly acknowledged, and would appear with photographs in my work so that they could show it to their future generations. In my many interactions with Yimchunger villagers I recorded a diversity of voices. I was constantly aware of the individuality of my respondents and the possible consequences of writing an authoritative history that could be potentially disputed and dismissed by others in the community. Equally, one of the overarching institutions that sanctified the Yimchunger history was the Yimchunger Tribal Council. It is nearly impossible to write an independent Yimchunger history without acknowledging or getting due consent to their insights into migration history. Bypassing their consent would have attracted enormous criticism. At the same time, I was highly conscious of the vociferous conflict over Yimchunger-Tikhir identity.

On the ground, people hold to their own narratives, which fashion their identity and struggle for space, territory, history and cultural identity. Local narratives of identity are presented through their origin history. For example, Khonoma village in Kohima district claims to be the cultural capital of the Angamis, based on cultural pride and tradition. In their everyday talk with outsiders, residents describe Khonoma as the oldest village (KTC 2005). Similarly, in my area of study, people expressed cultural differences and history by reference to place and area of origin. Certainly such competing discourses of identity construction shape local history, dispute origins and make the writing of history controversial. Additionally, debates on the origin and diffusion of Naga tribes are politically underpinned by community claims and community patron

interests. These claims need to be contextually understood as cultural resources that are used to make particular claims for cultural identities and struggles in the formation of ethnic identities.

Defining the Past

As noted above, the Yimchunger Tribal Council (YTC) plays a powerful role in defining the sanctioned and authorised version of Yimchunger history. Like other Naga tribal councils, the YTC is a collegium of Yimchunger elders and middle-aged people who hold authority and control over the community. Here I first present the migration history as narrated by the YTC patron, also endorsed by the YBBA (Yimchunger Baptist Buro-Church) and other powerful actors in Yimchunger villages: the Students Union, Citizen Body and the Church. The history that I present here should be read bearing in mind the prevailing circumstances under which it was recorded: it reflects the agency of powerful actors narrating their past.

As I sat on the bamboo sofa I began recording the origin story in a hut of one of the Yimchunger elders. The narrative was quite similar to that which my other Yimchunger friends in the study village had told me – but different from the Tikhir, Chir and Mikori versions. According to my YTC informants, the Yimchunger description of a distinct historical past that has shaped their identity was crucially asserted in 1948 when a resolution was passed by Yimchunger villagers and respected men in Kiussor (Chessore) village, under the leadership of Mr. P. Hopong Yimchunger of Aiponger village. It was at this meeting that the YTC was formed. According to the YTC office bearer, the Yimchunger tribe, like any other Naga tribe, has no written record of its origin or history. However, on the basis of narrated historical accounts handed down from generation to generation, the origin of the Yimchungers is believed to be in Thailand. The present Yimchunger were not known by any particular name as a tribe. They lived a mostly nomadic life, spending one or two generations at any particular place of settlement after which a group of them would move on to another place with land for cultivation, so as to meet the growing need for food and other means of subsistence. At other times, the population of entire villages was compelled to abandon their village and move to a safer place to avoid plague, epidemic diseases or as victims of headhunting.

According to the YBBA members, the route of migration of the

Yimchungers from Thailand lay through Burma (Myanmar), then from Burma to Moru (in India), from Moru to Chiru, from Chiru to Longyang, from Longyang to Thunyim Kiulong (Thunyim literally means 50 and Kiulong means village, thus a village of 50 inhabitants, within the present territory of eastern Nagaland). Thereafter, the route continued from Thunyim Kiulong to Tuphuong Kiulong (near Pokhur Village), from Kemiphu (on the banks of Thrak Kie, now popularly known as the Zungki River) and then from Keimiphu to Tukheakhup village below the present Waphur village on the banks of Zungki river. At each place of settlement only a portion of the population set out in search of a better place, leaving behind the remaining settlers as permanent residents of that village.

The Yimchunger settled for a long period of time at Yimchung Awun, but as the population expanded, a group of able people ventured out to establish a new settlement further north, at a place called Langa, below the present Kuthurr village. The group of Yimchunger who settled at Langa were well-built and were fierce head-hunters who dared to confront natural calamities and forest spirits through the ritual power of their forefathers. As they were brave and fierce warriors, they soon realised that they could not stay together as it constrained their power and their space of recognition as brave souls: they could no longer live in harmony. Thus, they went their separate ways, leaving the village deserted and uninhabited. The remains of Langa village still stand today, bearing testimony to a place that was once inhabited by hardworking and fierce Yimchunger warriors. From Langa the Yimchunger people scattered in almost all directions, even beyond present day Yimchunger settlements. One group moved towards present-day Chang, some towards present-day Sema and some towards the areas of Kheimungen, Sangtham, Konyak and Phom. A bigger band moved back downwards, reportedly along the river course to establish various villages within areas inhabited by Yimchunger in the present day. This is in addition to the residents who chose to stay behind, in areas stretching from Helipong mountain to Mount Saramati and far beyond into present-day Myanmar (Burma), who speak different dialects such as Langa, Tukhi, Mukhok, Chi, Longbva, etc.

In those days, it is said that each village had its own distinct administrative entity, not subject to any other, and each individual village was a sovereign entity under the governance of the *Kiulongthsuru* (meaning founder of the village or village head in Yimchunger language)

an elder of that village. Each village, big or small, was equally respected as far as their rights and privileges were concerned. There was hardly any concept of community as a tribe beyond one's village territory: head-hunting for trophies and glory ruled the land. But, with the coming of Christianity through Baptist missionaries, the idea of living together in harmony came into the lives of these people.

Such was the story as narrated to me by an YBBA elder, one of the learned and respected men of the tribe. He further observed that the Yimchunger as a tribe were unadministered Nagas until 1947, and that the British had political influence but no administrative presence in their territories, which were monitored through annual tours conducted by the Deputy Commissioners and Sub-divisional Officers in the Naga Hills.

Following this, one of the Yimchunger Tribal Council Members pulled out a document and showed me the written evidence that on the 18th January 1948, the Yimchungers came under a common banner with the establishment of Yimchunger Tribal Council (YTC). The YTC was formed by a convention held by Yimchunger village heads, representatives from 61 villages believed to be Yimchunger. The meeting was convened in Kiussor (a corruption of Chessore in Yimchunger dialect) village under the leadership of Mr P. Hopong Yimchunger of Aiponger village. The resolutions adopted on that day articulated Yimchunger identity as a distinct Naga sub-tribe based on their language, origin and migration history. The resolution passed in the gathering adopted Langa as the common language or the Yimchunger dialect common to all. The resolution also contained a strong resolve that any individual or group disruption of the unity of the Yimchunger tribe 'shall be dealt with severe punishment, including the imposition of fine or any other penalty as may deem fit for disobedience'. An influential Yimchunger political party worker passed on the typescript of this document to me.

The Yimchunger are not the only ones to establish their identity so recently in Naga history. The Chekasang (a combination of three sub-tribes Chokri, Khezha and Sangtam) only became a major sub-tribe in 1960s, after they separated from their Angami neighbours. The refashioning of cultural identities based on origin history, myths and cultural exclusiveness has a genealogy of its own that has shaped Naga identities in the twentieth century (Oppitz et al. 2008, Von Stockhausen 2009, 2014). Similarly, writing on Naga identities, B.B. Kumar (2005) makes

a subtle remark: 'The discussion on various tribal identity formations goes on even today. At several points of Naga history since the colonial incursion into Naga Hills, the Naga tribal identity has been constructed and reconstructed and dissolved.'

Conflicting Identities, Contested Tales of Origin

I described above the multiplicity of origin stories from my informants in Leangkangru village and related this to broader methodological issues. There was also an important pattern of differences within my study village, with its mixture of inhabitants. Narratives of origin varied between households. Yimchunger-speaking³ elders referred to Langa as the central site from where they had dispersed, while Tikhir-speaking households pointed to a different site of origin. One Tikhir villager explained, 'We migrated through the Zanki river, unlike the Yimchunger.' When we left his house my Yimchunger assistant told me heatedly that such histories were all constructed and fabricated, and insisted that the Tikhir and Yimchunger had a common origin. Similarly, the Chir- and Mikori-speaking people related their origin to a place across the Saramati Mountains in Burma, rather than Thailand, as in the Yimchunger elder's account.

Curiously, although the villagers spoke Tikhir and Yimchunger dialects in my study village, their dance performances were accompanied by tunes of the Sangthams. It is quite possible that, when the village was being established, some Sangtam villagers migrated there over decades and came to identify themselves as Yimchungers, while the dance forms had been influenced over long periods of contact with the neighbours of the Sangthams.

Yet such cultural forms have now become hotly contested. For a long time, the village pastor has been trying to persuade the Yimchunger GBs (headmen) to change the tunes to which they dance to Yimchunger tunes.

3 The Yimchungers are linguistically divided into four dialect groups: Chir, Mikori, Yimchunger and Tikhir. The shared language between these people is called Langa Yimchunger. If we look at the linguistic map of Nagaland prepared by Robbins Burling (2003), we find these four dialects shown as distinct linguistic sub-groups of the Nagas. However, in his book on Himalayan languages George van Driem (2001) puts them together as one Yimchunger linguistic entity. See George van Driem. 2001. *Languages of the Himalayas: an ethnolinguistic handbook of the greater himalayan region : containing an introduction to the symbiotic theory of language*. Leiden: Brill.

When I interviewed the village pastor, he expressed his fears that the villagers' indifference to his suggestion could cost them in the future, as the Sangtam villagers could easily claim this area as their own, based on the dance form that is being practiced. The fear of such a co-option of identities by stronger neighbours loomed large in the everyday discussions of villagers. One of my Yimchunger informants, a tribal leader, also expressed that some neighbouring tribes had copied the Yimchunger shawl pattern and claimed it to be theirs. Today, these fluid boundaries of identity are being consolidated along linguistic, cultural and historical lines.

Enunciating Identity: Historical Difference and Identity construction

My account in this paper draws on Stuart Hall's concept of articulation, in turn applied by Li in *Articulating Indigenous Identity in Indonesia* (2000). Stuart Hall explains:

An articulation is ... the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'. The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. Thus, a theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects... (Hall 1996:141-2).

The Yimchunger-Tikhir conflict produces a classic non-class tribal identity struggle in the frontiers of India's northeastern borderland.

Tania Li's ethnographic research among the Merut mountaineers of Indonesia shows how Hall's work can be used in the context of tribal identities and identification:

'Hall's formulation offers a framework for addressing both the empirical and the political dimensions In relation to the empirical question of how the *tribal slot* is defined and occupied, the concept of articulation usefully captures the duality of positioning which posits boundaries separating within from without, while simultaneously selecting the constellation of elements that characterize what lies within' (Li 2000: 152-53).

The 'duality of positioning' relates to the fact that, for Hall, articulation has a dual meaning: 'it is the process of rendering a collective identity, position, or set of interests explicit (articulate, comprehensible, distinct, and accessible to an audience), and of conjoining (articulating) that position to definite political subjects (Li 2000: 152). More simply, articulation means both forms of expression (enunciations of identity) and connections with political subjects (the process of identification). 'In relation to the political dimensions of my problem, Hall's argument that identities are always about becoming, as well as being, but are never simply invented' (Li 2000: 152-53), a point that is also relevant to this analysis.

The Yimchunger-Tikhir struggle over identity is shaped by the day-to-day talk, pamphleting, court petitions and direct confrontations through violent outbursts of protest, which are expressed through feuds and revenge killings that have become everyday forms of struggle since the late 1980s. In asserting their claims, the YTC have deployed much of the colonial and postcolonial apparatus and the language of the state to assert their identity, such as written evidence-maps and memorandums. For example, in their writ petition to the *Dobashi* and higher courts (Guwahati High Court), the YTC used census data to validate their claims and to prove Tikhir minority status, i.e. their non-eligibility for major sub-tribal status. Census statistics have long been used as a powerful governmental tool to control people's lives throughout the colonial and post-independence periods (Cohn 1996). In the Yimchunger-Tikhir conflict census statistics have been appropriated by one party to deny the claims of the other party.⁴

4 The 2011 Census preliminary data makes it evident that census statistics are increasingly manipulated by Naga sub-tribes to assert claims for state development benefits allocated under the 'Backward Area Development Fund' and the State Department

The next section discusses the history of Yimchungers as recorded in colonial documents, photographs, memoirs and ethnographic fieldnotes and the technologies that were deployed by colonial administrator-anthropologists for documentation. In the final part of the paper I will return to the question of the articulation of tribal identities and consider how post-independence state policies of development (or the lack of it) were used in the creation of cultural differences, forging identity struggles.

Yimchunger Identity: The Colonial Legacy

Located in what was labelled a Backward Tract through the 1919 Government of India Act, grouped under a pan-identity of 'head hunters-slave takers-land grabbers' and 'naked trans-frontier unadministered Nagas', the Yimchunger are today officially recognised as one of the 17 major tribes identified in the Nagaland census records. The Yimchunger lived beyond the British-administered areas of the Naga Hills District (unadministered tract) and the boundary demarcated by the Dhiku River, grouped as part of the trans-Dhiku/trans-frontier Eastern Naga. Some Yimchunger remained completely outside the influence of any colonial administration. Along with their human-sacrificing kin across the Saramati mountains (Rangpang Nagas) in the present day Saging division of Myanmar, they formed part of the buffer zone between the British administration in Assam and Burma.

While the colonial officials had limited access to villages of the unadministered tracts, feuding and, later, head-taking and slavery provided them with reasons for forays across the frontier. For the colonial administrators, the wild transfrontier Naga tribes were contrasted with the non-raiding, non-head-hunting and non-slave-trading Nagas in the administered regions. Although they remained outside the colonial domain until 1938 (see Map 1 and 2-route of expedition and the final annexation of territory in 1937), when the Political Control Area was extended, they were indirectly administered through frequent punitive tours as news of headhunting concerned the frontier administration. However, it was not

for Underdeveloped Areas, created in 2003. In 2011, for the first time, the Census has projected a negative population growth rate for Nagaland, a decline in density and also a low decadal growth rate that contradicts the results of 2001, 1991, 1981 that projected Nagaland to have the highest decadal population growth rate in India.

until the Second World War that these areas were heavily militarised and administered more closely by British and Allied forces as Upper Burma was occupied by the Japanese army.

In colonial records and various publications by the administrator-anthropologists, the Yimchunger are known by various names – Yimsungr, Yachungr, Yachungre, Yachumi among others⁵. Tours conducted by Woodthorpe (1875, 1881), J.H. Hutton (1929), J.P. Mills (1995), and later by Pawsey and Archer and NEFA administration officials give fragmentary ethnographic descriptions of Yimchunger villages, while Fürer-Haimendorf captured the Yimchunger through his photographic lens during the 1936 Pangsha expedition, providing us with the only visual records of the Yimchunger Nagas (See photograph 1, Yimchunger Nagas drinking homemade beer). Hutton, in his tour to the Yimchunger villages in 1923, gives beautiful illustrations of Yimchunger artifacts such as the log drum with buffalo head carving from his visit to Shipungr village, the Yimtsing women's coiffure observed among Kuthurr women, an open-ended Yimchunger log drum in Sangpurr village and the distinctive Yimchunger Murung that were different from those of any other tribes he had visited so far. Yimchunger tattoo designs also figure in his notes. Fürer-Haimendorf also notes that the 'Yimsungr' outwardly resembled the Chang, but differed from them their 'manner of treating captured heads, and follow the custom which we were to meet again in the pure' (Fürer-Haimendorf 1938a: 207). He also discusses a Yimchunger log drum. However, he observes that 'nothing is known of their social organization.' He further notes, 'Among them as well as among Kalyo Kengyus much work is still to be done' (Fürer-Haimendorf 1938a: 212).

Yimchunger identity was thus characterised through a process of ethnicising and traditionalising, focusing on their material culture and racial typology. The records of Hutton, Mills, and Fürer Haimendorf serve

5 Hutton's 1921 monograph on Angami places Yachumi and K-K in Central Group of tribes (his classification) 'Yachumi (Yachongr). (called Yachumi by Semas, Yamsongrr by Aos, Yamchongrr by Sangtams, Yamsung by Changs). This tribe, calling itself Yachongr and called Yachumiby the Semas, is situated at the head of the Tita Valley and borders on the Changs, the Sangtams (on two sides), and the Semas (on the west). He writes that little is known about the Yachumi.. Yachumi are said to bury their dead beneath the deceased's bed, throwing out the bones of any of ancestors encountered in the process. The Kiungrrclan of the Yachumi is believed to correspond to the Awomi clan of Semas. The Yachumi do not appear to tattoo.' (Hutton 1921: 377).



Photograph 1: Yimchunger Naga drinking beer. Image taken in Kuthurr village by Christopher Von Furer-Haimendorf (1937). Source: SOAS Furer-Haimendorf Digital Archives (JICS), PPMS19_6_NAGA_1070.

to give these areas a common exotic identity as a repository of Naga material culture and as unexplored Naga tribes rich in tradition, customs, ritual practices and body art (tattoo) that produced their identity as people of another time, who were more primitive and traditional than their administered neighbours where missionary evangelism and the colonial modernisation had led to marked changes in native life. Their aim was to ‘rescue-record’ (Lotha 2007: 42-45) their culture by documenting, making still images and collecting Naga artifacts, both as personal mementos and for museums, so as to reconstruct their culture through exhibitions and displays in the colonial metropolis.

In many of the villages that J.H. Hutton visited in 1923, there were mixed groups of Sangtham, Chang and Yimchunger Nagas. He also observes villages of different tribes in the same areas: ‘I was surprised to see a Sema village (Hutami) on the range east of this, and all mixed up with Yimsung villages’ (Hutton 1923: 63). Such observations were not uncommon. Furer-Haimendorf also notes a village of mixed Changs, Kalyo Kengyus and ‘Yimsungrs’ (Furer-Haimendorf 1938: 207). Earlier, the annual administrative report on Assam for 1921-22 records: ‘Mixed up among the trans frontier Sangtam villages, which also extend nearly

to the Manipur border, is the tribe known as the Yachungr or in its Sema form, “Yachumi” (Hutton 1923:9: 90, emphasis added). The course of intermittent feuding and head-hunting forays did not allow the Yimchunger to interact frequently with their neighbours. Yimchunger identity was not consolidated beyond individual villages and clan lines. It was during the later establishment of administrative boundaries that issues of identity became important, especially in the 1970s.

In colonial records the Yimchunger were recorded in the few villages that colonial administrators could visit during their annual tours. At least five prominent villages emerge in the writings of Mills (1937), Hutton (1922), Furer-Haimendorf (1938a, b) as Yimchunger villages. Interestingly Hutton identifies the original home of the Yimchunger as the same place as it is in the account given to me by the Yimchunger elders: ‘On 19th of April on his arrival in ‘Yachungrr’, Hutton writes that, ‘Yachungrr’ is a Sangtham name apparently and the Yachumi themselves call themselves Yimtsung, Yimtsung-Awenrr being the original home of the tribe’ (Hutton 1929: 62).

Post-Independence State Intervention and Identity Creation

Post-colonial interventions during the early years followed similar patterns of the colonial period, violence and military intervention mixed with political patronage along with depictions of backwardness. Post-1947, the tours conducted by circle officers, Assistant Political Officers of NEFA administration give more detailed accounts but they are mostly military notes that talk of the military action in Yimchunger village, the punishments meted out to offenders and rebel leaders. They also offer valuable insights on state schemes of improvement through the popularisation of Wet Terrace Rice cultivation as symbols of development and improvement.

Less prominent than military and punitive actions, the other notable feature of the post-1947 tour diaries is the multiple ways in which Yimchunger Nagas continued to be depicted as backward, an extension of the colonial representation. In fact, the only ethnographic description of the Yimchunger of any significant length appears in the rough notes of an Additional Deputy Commissioner in 1948 which was never published or even rendered in typescript; these are all hand-written scribbles. They describe in some detail Yimchunger farming practices, customs and traditions and Yimchunger dwellings. The tour captures the ADC’s

given by the D.Bs [*Dobashis*]. Their social customs is to be blamed for the spread of V.D, special to so called 'love houses' where young people practiced what amount to free love. It was not even possible to trace the source of the infection. The boys and girls having had relationship with so many that they are unable to tell from whom they got infection. I am asking the doctor to submit a report. It is unfortunate that 'civilization man's' disease has come into this primitive society and their moral and social customs have caused such a wide spread of the disease. Their code of morals is quite different from the accepted code of morals of the civilised man. Not to speak of unmarried people, but even married people both man and women have ultimate freedom of relationships. Husbands will smilingly say that their wives got infection from other man and vice versa. I am afraid that those who have been cured by the Dr. will go back and get infected again as soon as they are cured.⁶

Reflecting colonial scales of morality, the Yimchunger Naga were thus classified as 'immoral-naked, violent, indecent, non law abiding people of the hills', (Furer-Haimendorf 1938, Mills 1995) which, in the postcolonial administrator's mind, was paralleled by their status as 'impoverished and backward' people of the no-man's land (Rai 1956, ADC Report).

The post-independence administration tried hard to cultivate new ideas of improvement. In their official tour diaries, the Additional Deputy Commissioners and Political Officers write about the introduction of new terrace plots for the cultivation of paddy. In the 1951 tour diary of the ADC Tribal Areas–Tuensang, the Additional Deputy Commissioner, on his visit to five Yimchunger villages (Yakkor, Sangpure, Shametonger, Wunpungger and Leangkangru), notes that all these villages had some land available where terrace rice plots could be started, adding the observation that the Agricultural Department should help the villagers to do this.

With the formation of Nagaland state in 1963, these areas were merged with the Naga Hills District and made a formal part of the new state. Missionaries from the Sema and later the Ao areas were among the first to enter these so-called formerly unadministered areas of Yimchunger

6 Tour Diary of A.D.C. Tribal Areas, Tuensang, 1951. Record of Research Reports, Papers and Articles. Arunachal State Archives, Itanagar.

Nagas. The added territory of Tuensang was designated by the new state as backward and underdeveloped as it had been long outside the purview of colonial administration. Laws and rules governing these frontier districts were now reconstituted, with the Yimchungers placed under a new political structure, designated a Free Area.

During this period the state government embarked on a massive rice intensification programme, providing agricultural subsidies, extension and training programme through Village Level Workers (VLW) appointed by the Agricultural Department. The new modernisation scheme for local agriculture had a deep impact, not only on farming but also on social relations, identity formation and political patron building. With the region being classified by planners and state officials as underdeveloped and backward, the Eastern Nagas were also given special central government packages under the Borderland Area Development Programme. Six eastern Naga tribes were designated as backward (including the Yimchunger) and, in order to uplift the status of the backward tribes, the government offered development grants and made special provisions for affirmative action through reservation quotas.

The institution of Range and Area Councils lasted up to the late 1970s, when there was a nationwide shift in rural development policy that called for decentralised rural development. In 1980 the Nagaland state legislature adopted the Village Development Board model rules, which devolved financial power to a village level body for economic development of the village through financial decentralisation. The Village Council (a body of village elders) and prominent men including GBs (*gauh buras*) became the legal managers of the village. The Village Development Board was constituted in each village to devolve development grants. In some Yimchunger villages the devolution of financial powers has led to the demand for separate councils in villages that were dominated by other tribes.

This is the context in which the Tikhir–Yimchunger identity struggle has intensified as in other parts of Nagaland where other less recognised sub-tribes are today claiming their past based on cultural differences expressed in their dance form, music, dialect and customs.

The Tikhir–Yimchunger Identity Struggle: A Brief History

Until the 1970s, the Yimchunger and the Tikhirs lived together, although often with contempt and in-fighting between clans and villages. The

Tikhir were looked down upon by their neighbours as people who were inferior. Their speech was ridiculed, as it was Langa-Yimchunger that was recognised as the link language between Yimchunger dialect speakers. Initially, the Tikhir agitation started with claims about the historical discrimination against them as a belittled sub-group within the Yimchunger fold. The very term Tikhir, as used by the Yimchungers was belittling, as it means dirty people. This state of affairs can be seen as cultural differences and alienation, involving a sense of Tikhir subordination and neglect by the wider Pan-Yimchunger community. The question is, how did these differences lead to a demand for separate tribal status that would lead to one of the bloodiest feuds in post-independence Naga history?

With the coming of new roads, transportation facilities, medical clinics, bazaars, plantation seeds, political parties, elections and the church, things changed in the Yimchunger-Tikhir villages as they did in the rest of the Naga Hills. People's lives became connected to the broader social economy outside their villages and were shaped by government development plans and programmes primarily focused on agrarian improvement and political representation. Today, the Tikhirs complain of their lack of political presence, the lack of government jobs, education and the siphoning of development schemes, grants and projects year earmarked for them by their Yimchunger brothers and other advanced tribes.

Political representation became an issue in 1973, when the first general elections were held all over Nagaland. For the Yimchunger area, from 1973 onwards, the local representative in the State Legislative Assembly (SLA) has been a Yimchunger tribal member, which has irked the Tikhirs. 1973 was also the year in which the new Mon district was carved out of the Tuensang district. The new district boundary led to territorial claims and counterclaims between Chang and Konyak Nagas in Tobu, reaching a climax in the 1980s. Similarly, the Yimchunger villagers informed me that many Yimchunger-dominated villages had become dominated by Chang because of the influence of Chang *Dobashis* over the post-colonial administration. The same holds true of other villages on borders between districts and subdivisions, where identities had been negotiated between the dominant tribes.

However, it was not until the 1980s that identity contestation seriously came to the forefront and major clashes broke out between the Tikhir-

speaking sub-group of the Yimchunger and the rest of the Yimchunger tribe. This is when the Tikhir began to demand major sub-tribal status. The Tikhir accused the Yimchunger of appropriating development grants and reservations designated by the state legislature exclusively for the six Eastern Naga underdeveloped backward tribes. The special central assistance under the Backward Area District Schemes, and later under the Department for Underdeveloped Areas (DUDA), were claimed to have been appropriated by Yimchunger villagers. The Tikhirs also claimed that they had been discriminated in Nagaland Public Service Commission exams. These claims were rejected by the Yimchunger public leaders, *Dobashis* and the YTC.

Against the Tikhir's claim for separate tribal/sub-tribal status my Yimchunger interlocutors argued that, while the Yimchunger were a major tribe, the Tikhir simply did not have the numbers to count as a major tribe, like many other tribes in Nagaland who had recently recreated their identity. What is more, there simply were not very many Tikhir-dominated villages. And – the clinching argument for my Yimchunger informants – Yimchungers and Tikhirs shared a common history of origin that bound them together and fostered their identity as part of the Yimchunger. Some villagers explained to me that the Tikhir counter-arguments included the point that, although Tikhir population was small, the geographical spread of their settlement was large. Rumours were everywhere and each individual constructed and defined his own reality of this ongoing identity struggle. The story of a common origin was strongly disputed. Related to this, questions were raised about the meeting of Yimchunger elders in 1948 and the resolution that created the Pan-Yimchunger identity. How representative was this meeting, in fact? Having seen the typescript of the meeting document myself, I can confirm that the document shows that not all Yimchunger village heads/GBs participated in the historic gathering. However, it does seem that a significant majority of them did participate and pledged for consensus. Thus, it was not clear reading the document whether such memorandums were truly representative.

The dispute intensified in 1984 when the Tikhirs demanded that the Church building at Thonoknyu, which was built by Tikhir-speaking people, should be named after the Tikhirs. The matter was quickly taken to the Dobashi Court of the Deputy Commissioner, Tuensang. Since then the

matter has been *sub judice* under the office of the Deputy Commissioner, Tuensang.

In the 1990s the Tikhirs started protesting openly by spelling out the name Tikhir on their matriculation certificates. This, and the proposal to form a Tikhir Tribal Council, were violently protested against by Yimchunger groups. Violence broke out between villages and travelling between villages became life-threatening. Throughout the 1990s the Yimchungers and Tikhirs accused each other of revenge killings. Organised forms of violence were executed when the Tikhir formed armed groups, and they raised their own guerrilla army called *Limuzung*. They also established their own village armies. The armies ambushed each other, as Yimchunger and Tikhir-dominated villages raided and ransacked one other. The battles cost many lives and severely affected farming over many cropping seasons, as narrated by my interlocutors. The Tikhirs were accused of using *punjis* (poisonous booby traps made of bamboos) and arrows to hurt their neighbours during these conflicts. Tikhirs were also accused of disrupting Yimchunger Student Union meetings in Shamatur headquarters. The villages were now more like conclaves; communication between them was thin.

In 2007, a compromise deed was signed between the YTC Council and the Tikhir tribal elders, mediated by the *Dobashis* and political patrons from both communities. This came after a decade-long feud between the two groups. After this, according to my interlocutors in the study village, most of the Tikhir-dominated villages pledged to live in amity and peace with their Yimchunger neighbours. Since then, there has been relative peace, with only occasional clashes between the two groups.

Overview

Colonial ethnographers played an important role in ethnicising the unadministered Nagas through their monographs and photographs. However, in this process, a new category is established: the trans-frontier or free-land Nagas. With the proliferation of the state administration and the diffusion of development programmes, the Nagas of the formerly unadministered tracts were integrated into the circuits of state power. In these frontier areas where the Naga political structure was amorphous, they set about consolidating people into tribe-like groups under centralised, hierarchical leadership. The narrative of cultural alienation is used by the Tikhirs to identify themselves as different, while Yimchunger

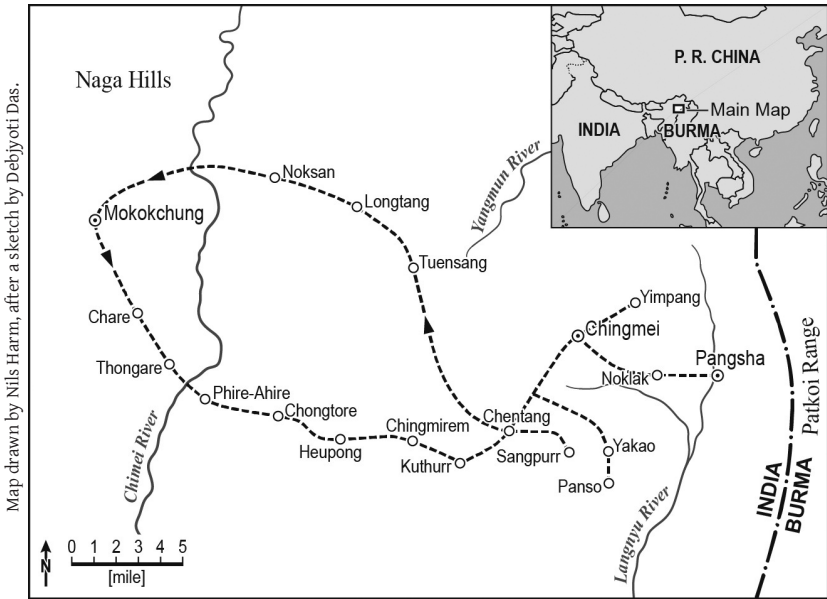
claim to draw reference from their past resolutions and tribal decrees passed in the eve of India's independence to claim their pan-Yimchunger identity. Both the communities are threatened by their public leaders and village elders of the fear to loss of political power and development grants. The Tikhirs point their political absence and resulting lack of development to being a sub-tribe of the Yimchunger, while the Yimchunger feel it as a major political loss of numbers if the Tikhirs would succeed in breaking away from them. The Yimchunger often expressed fears that the creation of new identities would give advantage to surrounding tribes to claim over Yimchunger-Tikhir territory. The unity of the Yimchunger thus was in the interest of the Yimchunger tribe.

As more and more Tikhirs and Yimchungers join the public service and see its benefits; they are no longer against development. Indeed these articulations of identity, I argue, are part of a Tikhir-Yimchunger strategy to improve their chances of being included in state development agendas, which in the absence of their articulation of a distinct ethnic identity will hitherto pass them by. They engage with the state, as Tania Li has argued, 'in a discourse consistent with their knowledge of themselves, their needs and aspiration, and their understanding of what it is ... are possible to demand and expect in this relationship' (Li 2000: 163). The Tikhir claims for a backward status as distinct from the Yimchunger have been brought to light by systematic violence and public vandalism, claimed by the Yimchunger claims to have been unleashed by the Tikhir in towns during public gatherings. Although the Tikhir- Yimchunger battle for authority diffused in recent years, through several compromise deeds and peace treaties, the atmosphere in the area remains tense. During my fieldwork some Tikhir rebels entered a village dominated by Yimchunger and the gun battles were heard as far as my study village. People advised me not to venture into Tikhir-dominated villages.

For their part, the Yimchunger Tribal council have articulated the identity of the pan-Yimchunger uniqueness by reflecting on the resolutions passed by their tribal heads and the status quo maintained by the Deputy Commissioners court and the High Courts. The court stay on the Tikhirs' appeal for a legal resolution of their demand is seen as a blatant denial of an illegitimate demand by the Yimchungers. The Yimchunger use the census count and legal call for the maintenance of status quo in this matter as a major moral victory that justifies their claim

for unity – to stay unified despite the realisation of cultural differences and their ridiculing of the Tikhirs. However, a finer reading reveals many subtleties in these accounts. When these claims and counter-claims are read through the prism of the Yimchunger history, we would come to realize that the Yimchunger had a more discursive history of their own. The Yimchunger men who are busy constructing their historical past are also the first educated men in the village. They hold important positions in the government and have a direct link with the state officials. The Yimchunger were one of the recognised tribes in colonial records. Their articulation of pan-Yimchunger identity adds another edition to identity construction in the Naga Hills based on sub-tribal status. They distinguish themselves from the neighbouring tribes through dress and cultural artifacts. Colonial tours used to collect Naga artifacts and images were a vital instrument in establishing such differences, which come out vividly in the photographic and sketch illustrations of Hutton (1929), Haimendorf (1937, 1938a, 1938b, 1939), Mills (1922, 1926, 1995) and in the tour diaries of the NEFA administrators as highlighted above.

This brings us to the fields of power that shaped the discourse on identity in the newly explored territories. As the colonial knowledge of these tribes grew, the tribes also established distinct identities. When Tuensang district was formed and the boundaries of Tuensang's major tribes were decided, my Yimchunger friends observed that a major section of the Yimchunger bordering villages were remapped as Chang villages by influential Chang *Dobashis* who were involved in demarcating the district and sub-divisions. All over the Eastern Naga territory inter-tribal boundaries are still settled by the powerful tribes. Within the Yimchunger territory the Sema-dominated *Khels* have established their own Village Council, for example Sekur village. Their identity is Sema within the Yimchunger territory. The Tikhirs have used this as a strategy to explore their own position in the struggle for a separate tribal identity that could give them both political representation and make them directly beneficiaries of Backward Areas Development Grants and provide other reservation benefits. Thus, the practice of constructing these identities is based on their historical uniqueness and on questions of distinct origin history, but also fashioned by historical moments of colonial representation of the Naga tribes in ethnographies that have given them a voice towards the making of new identities.



Map 2 Shows the area brought under colonial control after the Pangsha expedition of 1937 (Source: India Office Records and Private papers, British Library, IOR/M3/162)

The Yimchunger history is thus loaded with political meaning. Different narratives of origin emerge and complicate the history of their forefathers. As one Tikhir villager said, 'we migrated through the Zanki river.' When we left his house my Yimchunger assistant exclaimed that these histories were all constructed and fabricated, and that this narration was an exaggerated account of their common origin. The contest over the narration of past origin history has found meaning in contemporary struggles over resources and territories. Many rumours filtered into fieldwork notebooks, one being that the Tikhirs control a vast territory although they are small in number. The recognition of the Tikhir as a major sub-tribe would hamper the pan-Yimchunger identity. According to the Yimchunger Tribal Council, when the Yimchunger elders adopted the resolution of a pan-Yimchunger identity in 1947, on the eve of India's independence, they made sure Langa was upheld as their common dialect. Today in Yimchunger villages, Tikhirs speak their own dialect in the household and among their kin. My Yimchunger friends often cited examples of how Yimchunger terms differed from Tikhir. But the villages

I visited were dominated by Yimchunger households and lineages, where the Tikhirs also identified themselves as Yimchungers for fear of being persecuted for resisting unity. In many of the heated debates regarding the Yimchunger-Tikhir identity, the Yimchungers issued indirect messages that Tikhirs should be aware of their show-off, they had after all merged their identity for a common future. Still, in the few villages where Tikhirs command a majority, there were voices of resentment, frequent reports of violence, gunfire and an aura of fear between the two guerrilla groups formed by the community.

In conclusion, ethnic identity struggles between the Yimchunger and Tikhin Naga tribes illustrate new dimensions of the political and social life of people who were once excluded as hill people of the trans-frontier. Post-independent governments have acknowledged the backwardness and have made provisions for affirmative action through reservation in public employment and through political representation of frontier tribes in the State Legislative Assembly. This has created internal conflict among the tribes/sub-tribes. The politics of identity are thus subsumed in post-independence state politics and the agency of communities they serve to create.

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Deepening and Spreading Suspicion: On the accusation of ‘cunning’ observed among Protestants in the Kathmandu Valley

Mitsuru Niwa

Introduction

The Nepali word *calākh*¹, in English ‘clever, astute’, could be used as a compliment to praise someone else’s ability to think quickly. Nowadays, however, it is rare to hear the word being used in such a positive manner in the Kathmandu Valley. Instead, since *calākh* can also be translated with the English word ‘cunning’, it is typically used to refer to those who cunningly deceive others for their own benefit. This negative connotation of the word *calākh* is frequently used by those who belong to the lower castes to accuse the natures of the two major groups of the high castes in the Nepalese caste system, the Brahman, colloquially called the Bahun², and the Chettri. According to folk narratives and stories, especially those among *Janajatis*, the indigenous people of the lower caste (e.g. Caplan 1970, Holmberg 1989, Tachibana 2009), these groups have traditionally been considered as cunning in various areas across Nepal. Today, it is the negative connotation of the word *calākh* that is most frequently used to refer to and accuse their character in the Kathmandu Valley. While some ethnographers, such as Parish (1996) and Tachibana (2009), have made reference to the word in their respective works, they have not paid much attention to its negative meaning. Thus, in this article, I shall consider the accusation of *calākh*.

It should be noted that the word *calākh* is not the only word which

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- 1 The romanisation of Nepali words, for which conventional romanisations have not yet been established, is predominantly based on *A Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of the Nepali Language* (Turner 1931). For the English translation of Nepali words, I mainly refer to the *ek[a]tā brihat nepali angreji koś* or *Ekta Comprehensive Nepali-English Dictionary* (Lohani and Adhikari 2067 v.s. [2011 or 2012 AD]) in which contemporary meanings are collected.
 - 2 The Brahman are officially divided up into the Brahman Hill who have their origin in the hill area, and the Brahman Tarai who have their origin in the Tarai Plain, the border plain area of Nepal and India. The word Bahun generally denotes the Brahman Hill, but in daily context the differences between the two are not given great importance.

is used to refer to and accuse a cunning character. The word *bāṭho*, for which ‘clever’, ‘cunning’, ‘skilful’, ‘witty’, ‘intelligent’, and ‘wise’ are given as English equivalents, is also sometimes used to refer to and accuse those who are cunning, and is therefore synonymous with *calākh*. In addition to *calākh* and *bāṭho*, there are several other words in the Nepali language that are more directly translatable as cunning, such as *catūr*, *chaṭṭu*, and *dhūrta*. However, of all of these words the most frequently used is *calākh*, followed by *bāṭho*, while the others are rarely heard. The accusation of *calākh* is thus more precisely the accusation of *calākh* or *bāṭho*, but in order to simplify the description, I shall use the word *calākh* except when quoting narratives provided by interviewees.

The accusation of *calākh* is certainly one of the specific manifestations of stereotypes. In his comprehensive commentary, Eriksen writes, ‘[s]tereotypes need not to be true, and they do not necessarily give good descriptions of what people actually do. Therefore, we must reflect on the causes and uses of stereotypes’ (Eriksen 1993: 24). Taking this insight into consideration, this article reflects upon what caused the emergence of the stereotypical accusation of *calākh* – or, more precisely, how its emergence and thus appropriateness are explained – and how it is actually used. I hope it is evident that I do not judge the objective appropriateness of this stereotypical accusation, and therefore do not endorse it³.

This article differs somewhat from preceding theoretical studies of stereotypes because of its focus on Protestantism as one of the arenas in which people actually experience dense relations beyond their caste boundaries. If stereotypes are group-based perceptions of others that can only be achieved by overriding individualities (Oakes et al. 1994), then regular interactions with people who belong to groups that are stereotyped should result in the rejection or, at least, suspension of stereotypes. Even among Protestants who regularly engage with various people beyond their caste boundaries in churches and the wider Protestant community,

3 Taking up Caplan’s work (1970), Dahal (1996), a Nepalese native social scientist, discusses an important point to be mentioned here, that is, in Nepalese studies, foreign anthropologists have involved themselves in making generalisations, including ethnic stereotypes (for a fair interpretation of Caplan’s work and Dahal’s criticism, see Lecomte-Tilouine 2009). Studies on stereotypes are, however, still of importance in the sense that they are actually ‘used in the rhetorical representations of identity and social relations’ (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 24) among local people. Even so, it is necessary to take Dahal’s warning deeply in consideration when dealing with stereotypes.

however, the accusation of *calākh* still circulates widely and deeply. To be clear, this does not necessarily mean that the accusation accurately reflects real world conditions. Rather, it is the stereotypical accusation itself that constitutes interpretations of the world by triggering imagination in people. More specifically, this paper will discuss the following three points: how the accusation of *calākh* binds strongly to whom it is directed, how the accusation is applied to new groups of people, and finally how sometimes objects of the accusation may be freed.

This article is based on fieldwork carried out discontinuously between 2010 and 2012 in the Lalitpur District of the Kathmandu Valley where relatively many churches and Protestant organisations are located. I conducted intensive open-ended interviews where I encouraged each interviewee to talk freely on given topics. I then analysed and compared these interviews for commonalities before raising these common points as topics for discussion in subsequent more focused interviews. In this manner, I was able to determine the appropriateness of specific narratives provided by interviewees. In order to maintain anonymity within this article, all names of the interviewees are pseudonyms and some descriptions of interviewees have intentionally been made ambiguous.

Context of discussion

The Nepalese caste system and suspicion toward high castes

Let me start by introducing the Nepali word *jāt*, which is normally used in daily speech to denote groups of people according to their shared features. *Jāt* has been translated as ‘casta’ in Portuguese and later as ‘caste’ in English and French (Walker 1968, Quigley 1993, Cameron 1998). There is, however, a significant gap between the original word and its translation. Although the word *jāt* certainly implies the conceptual status of people according to the caste system, it is more specifically used to refer to an actual group of people incorporated within this system, namely a tribe or a clan⁴.

4 *Jāt* (or *jāti* in Hindi), is the word that is also used to refer to the distinction between, for example, gender, humans as opposed to non-humans, species or breeds of plants and animals, and gods and goddess. Although the discussion in this article is limited to everyday use of the word among people, for a more detailed and comprehensive commentary on the word see Quigley (1993).

The caste system was introduced in Nepal as a legally endorsed differentiation of people and their hierarchy by the *Muluki Ain*, or the National Law, promulgated in 1854. Often paraphrased as ‘four *varnas* and 36 *jāts*’⁵, its aim was to rank existing *jāts* according to the Hindu *varna* model and to regulate and standardise behaviour of, and relations between, these various *jāts*. For example, such behaviour and relations include enslavement, marriage, and commensality, and it also guaranteed diverse benefits and prerogative roles for the high caste *jāts* of which the Brahman and the Chettri were the principle members (Höfer 2004). The caste system started to take root and to be practised in various regions of Nepal as the government promoted migration of the high caste *jāts* in order to extend state control throughout the country.

Although the Nepalese caste system is said to be constructed according to the Hindu *varna* model, it is in fact unique and complex, as there is regional diversity in its understandings and practices (Bista 1991). Therefore, fieldworkers have tried to elucidate specific appearances of the caste system and inter-*jāt* relationships in different regions of Nepal. Based on these preceding studies, it can be established that the high caste *jāts* have, in general, valued education throughout their history. For example, Caplan (1972) reported in her study of a village in far Western Nepal that, even before the public educational system was established, the high caste *jāts* were committed to educating their offspring through the Sanskrit language and religious texts. Some current literature (Guneratne 2002, Tachibana 2009) suggests that the educational gap⁶ between the high caste *jāts* and the lower caste *jāts* became one of the major reference points of identity construction for both groups, and continued to be regarded as one of the major causes of enduring political, social, and economic dominance by the high caste *jāts* even after the caste system was legally repealed in 1963.

Another important point made by these studies is that, historically, there has been strong distrust and aversion toward the high caste *jāts*

5 There are actually around 70 *jāt* categories identified in the *Muluki Ain* of 1854 (Höfer 2004: 88). The most recent census of 2011 adopted 130 categories when surveying the demography of Nepal (Government of Nepal 2012).

6 According to LeVine (2006: 23), the overwhelming majority of Nepalese children were excluded from modern education in the mid-twentieth century and one of the causes of the exclusion was their low caste status.

among the lower caste jāts. For instance, Tachibana (2009) notes that the Brahman and the Chettri are said to be *chuco* ‘mean’, in a village of the Chepang jāt. According to the Chepang villagers, the Brahman and the Chettri can talk skillfully because they are highly educated, but in reality, they are selfish and do not help others. Moreover, Holmberg (1989: 73) reports that, in a village of the Tamang jāt, Brahmans migrated from areas outside of the village to take roles in the local administration and were seen by the Tamang as corrupt and deceitful. Further, Caplan (1970: 61) records a specific ruse of Brahmans to deceive uneducated, illiterate villagers of the Limbu jāt in order to deprive them of their land, as well as a narrative and a mythical legend among the villagers that specifically denote the greediness and deceitfulness of the Brahman. As shown in these examples, the high caste jāts have been thought of as educated but morally degenerate, or cunning, in various areas of Nepal throughout history.

How are the Brahman and the Chettri thought of nowadays in the Kathmandu Valley, where people of diverse jāts from various regions have migrated and built their lives⁷ and where, in addition to the caste system, secular class distinction has also emerged⁸ (Bista 1991: 44, Liechty 2003)? While it is uncertain if it was brought by migrants or originated in the Kathmandu Valley, the accusation against the Brahman and the Chettri having traditionally been educated in order to take the prerogative roles of priests, governmental officers, and soldiers under the caste system but in a morally degenerate way, has also been observed in the Kathmandu Valley. To denote the character of the Brahman and the Chettri, it is the word *calākh* that is now most often used. For example when we were chatting about his business, a successful business owner of the Tharu jāt, described how he tried to stay away from the Brahman and the Chettri as much as possible because he is afraid of them⁹. According to this business

7 According to *rāṣṭriya janagaṇanā 2058*, or *National Population Research 2058* [2001 or 2002 A.D.], at least one individual of all jāts can be found in the Kathmandu Valley. The major jāts in the Kathmandu Valley are the Newar, the Chettri, the Brahman Hill, the Tamang, and the Magar, composing 35%, 19%, 17%, 9%, and 3% of the population respectively.

8 According to Liechty (2003: 47), wage labour, a new kind of occupational opportunities which is relatively independent of the caste system and also productive of secular class distinction, has emerged and increased as a consequence of the open door policy to foreign countries since 1951.

9 This man of the Tharu told me that, just like the episode that Caplan (1970: 61) reported,

owner, the Brahman and the Chettri could easily take advantage of him without being noticed because they are very *calākh*. During a conversation regarding the character of his students, a teacher of a private educational institute belonging to the Newar *jāt* and a native of the Kathmandu Valley, expressed a similar sentiment by saying he does not want to accept Brahman and Chettri students.

In addition to such conversations demonstrating the accusation of *calākh* against the Brahman and the Chettri, I conducted further focused interviews with individuals¹⁰ from lower caste *jāts* in order to ascertain its circulation in the Kathmandu Valley. In these interviews, I would raise the topic of the *swabhāb* ‘nature’, of the Brahman and the Chettri and in the ensuing discussion, identify the word *calākh* or specific episodes that exemplify the Brahman and the Chettri as *calākh*¹¹. In the few cases where the word *calākh* was not directly expressed by the interviewees, I would introduce the word into the conversation in order to study the response.

All individuals of the lower caste *jāts* who participated in my research were familiar with the accusation. Younger people, such as high school students, are also aware of this accusation, as they have been taught by their parents. Opinions relating to the accusation of *calākh* are varied. Some variations include: that not all individuals of the Brahman and the Chettri are *calākh*; that the Brahman are more *calākh* than the Chettri because the former have received higher education, and that, nowadays, there are *calākh* individuals in all *jāts* in the Kathmandu Valley. However, these various opinions are normally followed by the confirming claim that a significantly high percentage of both the Brahman and the Chettri are noticeably *calākh*. In most cases, people of the lower caste *jāts* seemed

the Brahman and the Chettri deceived and deprived uneducated Tharu villagers of their land in the village he spent his youth.

- 10 In order to see the general appearance of the narrative of *calākh*, I interviewed both Protestants and non-Protestants of various *jāts*, the Newar, the Tamang, the Magar, the Gurung, the Rai, and the Tharu. These interviewees were people whom I became familiar with in teashops, students at a private educational institute, and others introduced by friends.
- 11 For example, interviewees made such comments as ‘the Brahman and the Chettri speak very fast to make you confused, and then deceive you’, and ‘the Brahman and the Chettri speak by insinuation and deceive you’. When I asked them to rephrase these answers, the word *calākh* [bāṭho] came out of their mouths. In turn, when I asked about the specific appearance of the *calākh* character, ‘being adept in speaking’ was one of the major answers.

pleased to explain the accusation of *calākh* toward the Brahman and the Chettri. One participant even praised me after I used the word saying, ‘You know very much about real Nepal’.

It should be noted that the Śreṣṭha, one of the subgroups of the Newar *jāt*, are also occasionally said to be *calākh* since many of them have traditionally engaged in commercial activities through which they have reportedly learned to be *calākh*. That is, they have acquired the skills to take advantage of others.

Terminology and sociopolitical change

The word *calākh* was frequently described by participants in my research to originally have been merely an adjective used to refer to an individual who has the ability to think quickly. According to a significant number of interviewees, it was not until approximately fifteen to twenty years ago that the word began to include the negative connotation of cunning. An explanation provided by one of the interviewees is, while still hypothetical, worth noting because it is not only persuasive, but also reflects fragments of explanations heard from others. According to this interviewee, the success of the democratisation movement in 1990 brought many new opportunities to Nepal, for example to start new businesses or Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or even to enter into politics, and in this context, those who had the ability to think quickly – namely those who were *calākh* – started to deceive others more than ever in order to cash in on these opportunities. This is, according to the interviewee, why the word started to carry its current, negative connotation¹².

Indeed, the success of the democratisation movement in 1990, which brought the partyless Panchayat regime to an end and restored multi-party democracy, offered new opportunities. At the same time, it also triggered the rise of ethnic politics through which the lower caste *jāts*, those who had been marginalised socially and culturally throughout history and were particularly marginalised from the 1960s under the Panchayat regime (Burghart 1993), started to actively demand equality

12 It might be better instead to interpret this explanation as it reflects how the emergence, and thus the appropriateness, of the narrative are understood by those who make use of it, as there was an anthropologist who personally informed me that the negative connotation was already observed around 35 years ago. A missionary who had been working in Nepal for more than 40 years, also agreed with the claim of the anthropologist.

and rights (Whelpton 2005: 178). In this kind of ethnic politics in South Asia, the continued dominance of the high caste *jāts*, *bāhūnbād*, or Brahmanocracy, in various sectors of society has often been taken up as one of the major obstacles against social progress (see Hangen 2010, Malagodi 2013). The change in meaning of the word *calākh* might be a specific manifestation of this emerging hostility toward the high caste *jāts*, as democratic consciousness permeates Nepalese society. While the word *calākh* is now used to demean the high caste *jāts*, the word *sojho*, an antonym of *calākh*, translated as ‘direct, straightforward, simple, honest’, is often used by the lower caste *jāts* to describe themselves with a nuance of pride¹³.

This does not mean, however, that the word *calākh* cannot be used in praise of others. If one can quickly understand the gist of a statement or is able to insert skillful and witty jokes into a conversation, he/she is worth being praised as *calākh*. This positive connotation may only be inferred based on additional clues present in the speech itself, in its context, or on certain close relations between the speaker and the individual being described as *calākh*, such as those between family, friends, or teacher and students. But as previously mentioned, the word tends to be interpreted negatively as ‘cunning’ in most other situations.

In the negative sense, the word *calākh* has an additional nuance that is worth noting. As some ethnographers (Cameron 1998, McHugh 2001, Tachibana 2009) have reported, greediness and selfishness are considered a serious moral vice in various areas of Nepal, and the word *calākh* implies moral criticism in the sense that the individual being *calākh* is not only cunning, but also self-seeking. I shall address this point in the later section of this article.

Protestantism in Nepal

A few years after Nepal was opened to foreigners in 1951, foreign missionaries, Nepalese Indians and those Nepalese who converted outside of Nepal started to bring Protestantism into the country. Although there were a few exceptions, ‘the first Nepali [*sic*] Christians experienced relative freedom in the expression of their faith and planting of the

13 The word *sojho* is also used to simply look down on those who are credulous, for example, when referring to those who live in remote villages (also see Piggs 1996).

church' (Perry 2000: 84). However, in the 1960s, Christianity was made to be the object of not only private but also public persecution. Hindu kingship was established by the Constitution of 1959. Following this, the Panchayat regime, which banned political parties and guaranteed royal dictatorship, was institutionalised by the Constitution of 1962 (Malagodi 2013). And then, in 1963, not only proselytisation but also conversion were made illegal by the *Muluki Ain*, or the Country Code (Rongong 2012a). In such a situation, the number of Protestants increased only gradually.

The success of the democratisation movement in 1990 dramatically lessened public persecution and triggered the expansion of Protestantism (Rongong 2012a, 2012b)¹⁴. The 2011 census shows that the population of Christians reached a mere 1.4 % of the total population of Nepal that year (Government of Nepal 2012). But, according to Fricke's 2008 article, the government has actually acknowledged that there are one million Christians in Nepal, or nearly 4 % of the total population. The majority of these Christians are assumed to be Protestants as there were only 13 Catholic churches in 2007, compared with nearly 2800 Protestant churches across Nepal at this time (Nepal Research and Resource Network 2007).

Protestants recognize each other as Christians beyond their denominational differences and have established interdenominational ties. This likely resulted from early missionaries and local Protestants choosing to reject denominationalism during the initial outset of Christianity in Nepal (Pandey 2003)¹⁵. The majority of churches have been interdenominational or free. While there are currently Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist and also various other denominational churches in Nepal, as long as one believes and practices the true Bible properly, he/she is considered a Christian¹⁶. Moreover, Protestants have established

14 Proselytisation, however, could still be interpreted as being prohibited under the currently enforced 2007 Interim Constitution. In the 'Religious Right' in Part 3 Section 23, it states the following: 'Every person has the right to hold, practice, and protect his/her religion as handed down to him/her from ancient times, to the extent that suits the contemporary norms of the cultural and social tradition. However, nobody has the right to change other's religion or interfere with their religious practice' (Government of Nepal 2063 v.s. [2006 or 2007 A.D.]: 8).

15 In Nepal, pastors occasionally give the name of their mother church or the umbrella organisation that their church belongs to when answering questions regarding their *siddhānta*, 'denomination', suggesting importance is not placed on the denomination.

16 However, when new denominational churches started to come into Nepal from the late 1980s, there was certain antagonism against them from older churches, for example,

various organisations, including para-church organisations, umbrella organisations, and NGOs beyond denominational boundaries. Through such organisations they have coordinated a wide range of activities, such as the foundation of seminaries, social services, missions, and healing sessions¹⁷. While specific interviews relating to the current discussion were conducted with members of only a small number of specific churches in the Lalitpur District of the Kathmandu Valley, Protestants are connected with each other through such organisational or private networks on both interchurch and interdenominational levels, and therefore, share narratives and practices to a certain extent.

Two important aspects of Nepalese Protestantism need to be considered here. One is the fact that the caste system has been strictly prohibited in Nepalese Protestantism from the outset (Hale 1997). Even though the caste system was officially repealed in 1963, caste-based discrimination still remains deeply rooted in broader Nepalese society. Following Christian teachings, however, Protestants reject such discrimination, and in fact inter-jāt commensality and marriage are positively valued¹⁸.

The second important aspect of Nepalese Protestantism is that, in principle, the accusation of calākh should vanish within the community since, based upon Biblical principles, it is strictly prohibited to deceive others. Conversion entails inner moral transformation. When one becomes a Protestant, the act of deceiving is now clearly defined as sinful and those who are calākh must change themselves. Moreover, canonically, Protestants are supposed to live honestly and to cooperate and share with each other.

refusing their involvement in Protestant organisations and labelling them as *jhūṭo siḱṣa* ‘false teaching’.

- 17 There are various organisations established by Protestants ranging from umbrella organisations, such as the National Churches Fellowship of Nepal, the Nepal Christian Society, and the National Council of Churches in Nepal, to those with more specific missions, for example the Nepal Campus Crusade for Christ, which aims to proselytise young students. Nowadays, there are so many Protestant organisations established that even old clergymen cannot list and explain them thoroughly.
- 18 Unfortunately, the jāṭ composition of Nepalese Protestantism is unknown since there are no data. It is often assumed by Hindus that the lower caste jāṭs tend to be drawn to Christianity as a means of escaping the caste system or to receive financial help from foreigners (e.g. Acharya 2002). But this tendency has not been confirmed by my research. According to church leaders, 50 to 70% of believers are first attracted to Protestantism through their own healing experiences or those of family members and friends.

The following anecdote illustrates such moral transformation and also evokes, though I could not discuss it thoroughly in this article, another important topic of study: identity construction of Protestants and their relationship to their old religion. It was Pastor Narayan, one of the most intellectual pastors in Nepalese Protestantism, who first raised my awareness of the accusation of *calākh*. After our first interview about the history of Christianity in Nepal, he suddenly gave me the following advice: ‘Be careful of the Brahman and the Chettri. They are so clever [*calākh*]. They may cheat you’. I later asked Pastor Narayan, who himself is a man of those groups, to explain more of what he meant by the statement, and he described the character of the Brahman and the Chettri and also himself as follows:

The Brahman are the most *calākh* followed by the *Chettri*. It is because they have received higher education. They have studied the religious [Hindu] scriptures. It [to be *calākh*] is learned from Hindu scriptures; Hindu gods deceive each other. [For the Brahman and the Chettri] to deceive others is to prove their ability and therefore is a kind of virtue. It is done for fun and to make a profit. In most cases, it is for profit. Also it is to demean others because of jealousy and for revenge... I had been very *calākh* too, but I had never felt bad in those days... My conscience was dead when I was a Hindu. And when I became a Christian, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, made it alive¹⁹.

In the next section, I will discuss how the accusation of *calākh* binds strongly to whom it is directed, how the accusation is applied to new groups of people, and finally how sometimes objects of the accusation may be freed.

The accusation of *calākh* among Protestants

A circuit of suspicion

Even though the accusation of *calākh* should not exist within the Protestant community based on the Biblical teachings that strictly prohibit the act of

19 Just like Pastor Narayan, Brahman and Chettri Protestants very often explain that they were also *calākh* but learned that it is a sin in Christianity and have since changed.

deceiving, one often hears it from people of the lower caste jāts. What does it mean to be considered calākh among Nepalese Protestants? Pastor Himal, a man of the Magar jāt, is one of those who frequently complained about the calākh character of the *Brahman* and the *Chettri*. For example, when we were chatting about some Protestant organisations that hold up great ideals but, in fact, really do not do anything, Pastor Himal said 'It is because Brahmans and Chettris occupy the high positions in those organisations. They are bātho [calākh] and do not work'. When asked to explain further he gave the following description:

The Bahun [Brahman] and the Chettri are bātho [calākh] and well adept in talking, yet do not work. Nepal has not developed because they remain in the upper strata of politics and the economy. The Bahun [Brahman] and the Chettri are not in Japan, and Japanese work without talking, don't they? That is why Japan developed so well... The Bahun [the Brahman] and the Chettri do not commit themselves to church events either. Even when there is much work to be done, they say they have other work to do and go elsewhere. But when the jobs are finished they say, 'Yes, we have done very well', behaving as if they deserve credit for the work. In fact, they only become active during events at meal time. We do not kick them out of our church. It is God's command to forgive them, but we must remember.

According to Pastor Himal, one of the typical characteristics of the Brahman and the Chettri is that they do not commit themselves to hard work. Instead they are able to talk well and take credit for and benefit from the work done by others. It was Suman, a Chettri man in his youth, whom Pastor Himal referred to as the most calākh member of his church.

Even so, how do the Brahman and the Chettri relate the accusation of calākh, given that they themselves may be its objects? I approached this issue with Suman in the context of discussion about his conversion experience, current activities, his future goal, and, finally, added the question regarding the accusation of calākh. He answered with a smile.

Not all of the Bahun [Brahman] and the Chettri are calākh, but outside of the Christian community about 80 % of them are calākh. I was also

calākh, but learned from Christianity that being calākh is sinful, and so, fearing God, discarded the habit. However, it is a fact that 20% of the Bahun [Brahman] and the Chettri remain calākh even after they become Christians. So they are under suspicion even in churches. At first, it also seemed as if members of my church found it hard to trust me, but they know that I have changed and they are not suspicious of me anymore.

Suman claimed that he was once calākh, but he has now discarded this old habit, and has consequently, successfully freed himself from the accusation. But in fact (as mentioned above), Pastor Himal considers Suman to be the most calākh person in the church.

Suman is not the kind of Chettri described by Pastor Himal who claims credit and benefit without working. Following Biblical teachings, he has dedicated himself to his church, serving as one of the most active members. In addition, he has also been participating in a mission project as a member of a para-church organisation. Yet, according to Pastor Himal, Suman has only actively involved himself in such activities in order to gain a high position and prestige. Moreover, Pastor Himal believes that the main aim of his involvement in the mission project of the para-church organisation was to obtain a salary and, more importantly, opportunities to become acquainted with foreign missionaries for the purposes of future moneymaking. Pastor Himal believes that, while Suman does not look calākh at first glance, he is hiding his real greed and is, therefore, the most calākh member of the church. The positive contributions that Suman has been making to the church and to Protestantism are reinterpreted not only as evidence of the fact that Suman is actually calākh, but are also used as evidence to prove that he is quite skillful in his deceit.

When asked directly about Brahman and Chettri Protestants who say that they were calākh but have changed and discarded these habits, Pastor Himal answered:

No, no. They just say so. By saying that they had been bāṭho [calākh], they just act as though they are honest to make you believe them. Then it becomes easier for them to deceive you sometime later. This is why they are really bāṭho [calākh].

From the narrative above, it is possible to grasp that Pastor Himal reinterprets the message, 'I am not calākh', as further evidence of the fact that the individual is indeed skillfully calākh.

The kind of interpretation Pastor Himal demonstrates is hardly an exception. When I posed the same question to other Protestant interviewees of the lower caste jāts, specifically asking what they think of Brahman and Chettri Protestants who explain themselves as having changed and no longer being calākh, the majority of them showed a similar reaction to that of Pastor Himal. Those Brahman and Chettri Protestants are frequently said to be calākh, and sometime more skillfully so, precisely because they try to show themselves not being so.

By employing the concept of frame coined by Bateson (1972), the above reaction of Pastor Himal and also the other interviewees of the lower caste jāts could be interpreted as rather predictable. At first, they perceived the speech or behaviour of the Brahman and the Chettri within the frame of interpretation that derives from the presumption that 'the Brahman and the Chettri are calākh'. Even when their speech or behaviour contains a message that possibly contradicts this frame, the message is still forced within the confine of the frame. Thus, the message becomes defined as being invalid or not worth trusting.

When a contradiction between a frame and a message occurs, it is also possible for one to discard or modify the frame and, subsequently, the presumption from which the frame originates or to at least suspend judgment by preserving the possibility that the message is still trustworthy. However, the presumption itself – that 'the Brahman and the Chettri are calākh' – not only makes one reluctant to do so, it also tempts one to perceive these groups as being more skillfully calākh because of the implication it carries. It is from this implication, that 'they can understand and think quickly', that the Brahman and the Chettri are now imagined as being able to deceive others easily without being detected. Thus, it is always necessary to carefully monitor them. A Brahman or Chettri may not look calākh at a glance, but they most certainly are, based solely on the very fact that they are Brahman or Chettri.

In this way, the accusation of calākh creates a circuit of suspicion and binds strongly to its existing objects. It seems as if, in principle, objects are never emancipated from this accusation, although there are some

exceptional cases. Before discussing the case of emancipation, I shall focus on how the accusation is applied to new groups of people.

New objects of the accusation

As already mentioned, targets of the accusation of *calākh* include not only the Brahman and the Chettri, as the Śreṣṭha, one of the subgroups of the Newar, are also occasionally said to be *calākh*. While the Brahman and the Chettri have learned to be *calākh* through the education provided to them for their prerogative roles under the caste system, the Śreṣṭha have reportedly learned to be *calākh* through the commercial activities in which they have traditionally engaged. Nowadays, the accusation of *calākh* has been applied to a new group of people in certain sectors of the Protestant community through logic that does not directly derive from history. The accusation of *calākh*, as directed toward this object, is still forming and is not yet widely circulated in the various networks of Nepalese Protestantism. It may or may not circulate in the future or ultimately take root, but this formation demonstrates the imaginative process that allows the accusation to acquire new targets.

It was Sujan, one of the lower caste *jāts* interviewees serving as a deacon in his church, who first drew my attention to the new target. During the interview regarding the Brahman and the Chettri, Sujan added, ‘We say, in our church, that Tamangs have also become *calākh*’. The accusation of *calākh* directed toward the Tamang *jāt* was also observed in the church of Pastor Himal. Unlike the Brahman, the Chettri, and the Śreṣṭha, who have flourished in the religious, political, and economic centers, the Tamang are known as poor, uneducated farmers. Why, then, have some Protestants started to label the Tamang as being *calākh*?

According to Sujan, Himal, and twelve other informants introduced by Sujan and Himal from three different churches (including their own), the fact that the Tamang have become *calākh* is evident because, following the Brahman and the Chettri, they occupy many high posts in the Protestant community, specifically those within churches, para-church organisations, umbrella organisations, and NGOs. This may simply be a natural consequence of the fact that the *Tamang* make up a relatively high portion of the Protestant population²⁰ or may be the result of the positive

20 Even though there is no data, according to experienced clergymen and missionaries,

contributions that they have been making to Nepalese Protestantism²¹. However, explicitly rejecting these other possibilities, Amon, a Magar man who serves as an elder in his church, asserted, 'It is impossible in Nepal to get ahead [to be active in high posts] without being calākh'.

Here, one might pose a fundamental question: what is wrong with getting ahead and becoming active? The answer to this question has already been implied but should be explained in more detail. After the democratisation movement in 1990 succeeded and persecution against Christians lessened, a lot of new missionaries, including freelance missionaries, came into Nepal and started to provide enormous financial support (Rongong 2012b: 484). In such a context, the imagination that one can obtain not only prestige, but also a high salary and numerous additional benefits from obtaining a high post in Protestantism, has arisen. It is thus no surprise that such an image has developed, if one sees that some clergymen of large church groups – especially those who have close relations with foreigners – visit foreign countries, drive cars, and have new computers and mobile phones, or that at least some employees of Protestant organisations earn high salaries. Now, according to Amon, being calākh is a necessary condition to continuously compete and win in order to gain these high posts.

This kind of reasoning is similar to the occult imagination observed in Africa. For example, Geschiere (1998), along with Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), reported that the success of others triggers people's occult imagination. That is, those who succeed are imagined to have done so through occult powers. By the same logic, the fact that the Tamang have been relatively successful is now interpreted as a result of them having become calākh. Through this kind of imagination, the accusation of calākh acquires a new target. It is also not confined strictly to Protestants. Individuals who achieve success often become objects of the accusation of

the Tamang actually showed their interest in Protestantism earlier than the others and have since had a relatively high population among Protestants. In fact, it was one of the living witnesses, an old clergyman, who told me, 'There are relatively many Tamangs in high posts because there are simply many Tamangs in Protestantism'.

21 As I did with Brahman and Chettri Protestants, I conducted questioning with Tamang Protestants about the narrative of calākh directed toward them. As a result, there was not a single Tamang Protestant who defined him/herself and the Tamang in the jāt level as calākh. Rather Tamang Protestants occasionally defined themselves as historically sojho, or simple and honest minded.

calākh regardless of their jāts²². These perceptions have started to target people at the jāt level among some Protestants.

Imagination of this kind not only allows the accusation to obtain a new target, but also functions to endorse the accusation of calākh in general at its very foundation both inside and outside of Protestantism. As previously mentioned, the Brahman, the Chettri, and the Śreṣṭha have generally been considered calākh because of their association with higher education, and prestigious and powerful occupations. However, the fact that they have traditionally received higher education and taken the roles of priests, governmental officers, soldiers, and merchants merely explains the historical context of their calākh character. This fact in itself does not necessarily result in someone actually being calākh. In cases where lower caste interviewees brought up the accusation of calākh, I proceeded to ask how they knew that significant numbers of Brahmans, Chettris, and Śreṣṭhas are really calākh now. Their answers varied. Some talked about episodes or rumors, while others talked about their own experiences of being deceived. Beyond these anecdotal and specific responses, the final and absolute evidence most often presented was the fact that the Brahman, the Chettri, and the Śreṣṭha still occupy dominant positions in various sectors of society even after the caste system was legally abolished in 1963 (Bista 1991, Hangen 2010, Lawoti 2012, Malagodi 2013).

To close the section, let me quote the sorrow Amon expressed while we were talking about the Tamang.

In the past, when Christians were so few, we were in strong unity and trusted each other. Later after the revolution [in 1990], it became easy to be a Christian, and then many Brahmans and Chettris started to convert because they saw business opportunities in Christianity. You see, so many high posts in [Protestant] organisations and NGOs are now occupied by Brahmans and Chettris. Following them, Tamangs also started to seek opportunities²³.

22 When I told one of my friends that I was invited to the house of a successful business owner from the Tharu jāt (generally said to be a sojho 'honest, simple'), he showed serious concern and gave me the following advice: 'Please be very careful. That person is very calākh'. In reply, I asked him, 'Why is he calākh? You have not met him'. He answered 'He is a successful person, therefore he has been deceiving others.'

23 Because there are now very large churches and many Protestant organisations, large and small, active and inactive, conspicuous and inconspicuous, it is extremely difficult

Emancipation from the accusation

In the previous section, I discussed how imagination not only allows the accusation of calākh to be applied to new groups of people, but also how it supports the accusation of calākh in general at its very foundation. In this section, I shall analyse how the objects can sometimes be emancipated from the accusation.

As mentioned earlier, the opinion expressed by the lower caste jāts regarding the character of the Brahman and the Chettri was that even though they are thought to be calākh at the jāt level, not all individuals of the Brahman and the Chettri are indeed calākh. A similar belief was also found among Protestants. According to participants in my research, it is possible to judge if someone is calākh or not through his/her daily speech, behaviour, and commitment. However, the claim that it requires a considerable amount of time and close, careful observation to appropriately judge the character of a Brahman or Chettri individual since he/she could pretend to be honest, merely presenting him/herself as not calākh, was occasionally added.

Additionally, among the Protestant interviewees, Bimal, one of the well-known clergymen of a large church group, has been frequently referred to as an example of an honest Brahman – an exception to the accusation of calākh. When his name did not come up in interviews, I would mention his name, yet there were never any negative reports regarding his character. In reality though, none of the informants have ever had close relationships with him. Most of them have never even talked with him. How then did they judge Bimal's character? Judgment of his character was based on widely circulated and positive gossip about him being an honest man. Gossip seems to be regarded as trustworthy in the sense that it is the accumulation of the experiences of many others, and it is therefore assumed to have already been assessed appropriately.

But according to Amon, it is impossible to get ahead (to be active in high positions) in Nepal without being calākh. If this is indeed so, how could Bimal have been serving as a clergyman of a large church group? In response to such questions, Amon used the adjective sojho, an antonym

to identify precisely which posts are actually taken as high posts, and therefore, the jāt composition of such posts is unknown. The participants seemed to think that many high posts are occupied by the Brahman, the Chettri, and the Tamang, because of their obvious presence in various events, newspapers, and magazines.

of the word *calākh*, and referred to Bimal as being *sojho calākh*. Bimal is certainly *calākh* because he is a Brahman and has actively served as a clergyman, but he has not abused this ability for his own greed. Rather he has employed it for the common good of Nepalese Protestantism. In addition to *sojho calākh*, by the same logic, the expression *rāmro calākh*, formed by adding the adjective *rāmro* ‘good, well, lovely, suitable, fair’, was also used in reference to Bimal by other informants.

When interviews reach the point of reflexive reconsideration of the word *calākh*, its positive meaning frequently appears. For example, Bahadur, a Gurung man of in his fifties, serving as an elder in the same church as Sujan, initially replied, ‘Definitely evil’²⁴, to the question of whether being *calākh* is good or bad. As the interview progressed and some issues about church management or negotiation with outside communities were broached, the word became an object for reassessment. According to Bahadur, what distinguishes being *calākh* in the positive from the conventional negative sense is the purpose for which one employs the ability to think quickly. If one uses the ability for their own *lobh* ‘greed’, then they are certainly *calākh* in the negative sense, but, as also implied by Amon, Bimal has not used his *calākh* ability for his own greed. Instead, he has committed himself to Nepalese Protestantism, while keeping his private life simple. In sum, there is no moral vice in being *calākh*, but rather in the abuse of the ability; if one uses the ability appropriately, being *calākh* can also be a virtue.

As mentioned in the first sentence of this article, it is possible for the word *calākh* to still be used as a compliment to praise another’s ability to think quickly. Yet, as also stated above, it tends to be interpreted negatively by default. Thus, the word *calākh* and even those expressions, *sojho calākh* or *rāmro calāk*, are hardly ever used to praise others among Protestants in the contexts in which misunderstandings must be avoided, especially when talking about somebody powerful or admirable. For this reason, other words, such as the word *buddhimānī*, translated as ‘wisdom’ or ‘wise thought or act’, are normally chosen to praise others for having the ability to think quickly. This seems to be the same outside of Protestantism.

24 The word used by Sujan was *duṣṭa*, which appears as one of the equivalents of the word for evil in the Nepali Bible (Nepal Bible Society 1997).

Conclusion

In this article I have discussed the stereotypical accusation of *calākh* and its dynamics as observed among Protestants. Firstly, I discussed the case of Suman to show the accusation of *calākh* binds strongly to whom it is directed, and secondly, I showed how the accusation is applied to new groups of people, such as in the case of the Tamang. Finally, I reported how sometimes objects of the accusation may be freed, showing that even though being *calākh* is conventionally understood as a moral vice, it can also be understood as a virtue, as in the case of Bimal. This evaluation depends on how one uses the ability to think quickly, and as a result, the use of the word *calākh* tends to be avoided. It is necessary to do so because people in the Kathmandu Valley are sensitive to the word *calākh*, and, therefore, it could easily be misinterpreted.

Let me repeat and emphasize some of my theoretical findings. The accusation of *calākh* is self-reinforcing. The imagination that the accusation produces, that 'One looks honest at a glance, but he/she could still be deceptive', is able to feed even upon messages that negate the narrative itself, and consequently reinforce it. Therefore, once a target is captured by the accusation, it is difficult to be freed. Actions a target takes to deny that they are *calākh* – honest and contributory actions following the Bible – are interpreted and experienced as the very actions that one employs in pursuit of personal benefit. It seems as though dense inter-jāt relationships do not simply weaken, but rather endorse and reinforce the accusation. Once one is made the object of the accusation of *calākh*, it is difficult to escape it.

The accusation of *calākh* is applied to new groups of people through reasoning similar to the occult imagination observed in Africa by Geschiere (1998) and Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), whereby those who succeed are imagined to have done so through occult powers. Using this type of logic, the fact that the Tamang have been relatively successful is interpreted as being the result of them having become *calākh*. This logic not only allows the accusation of *calākh* to acquire a new target, it simultaneously endorses the validity of the fundamental elements of the stereotypical accusation both inside and outside of Protestantism.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Review of Kathmandu by Thomas Bell

by Thomas Bell. Delhi: Penguin Random House, India, 2014, 496 pp., ISBN 978-8-18-400578-3, Indian Rs. 599

Reviewed by David Seddon

Its Saturday night after the book launch of Thomas Bell's *Kathmandu* at the City Museum. I am at a Newari restaurant in Patan with three Nepalese friends, talking about, among other things, the risk of a major earthquake in Kathmandu¹ and the contradictory tendencies in Newa culture – the erosion of the language as Nepali takes over and the growing recognition of the distinctive Newari cuisine as a major cultural phenomenon². I am also urging them to read this extraordinary book about their city (the author refers to Patan and Kathmandu – originally separate and distinct city states – as now ‘a single conurbation with two ancient cores, like an egg with two yokes’). I hope they do, for it will surely surprise and delight them.

Thomas Bell came to Kathmandu in May 2002, rather by chance and strangely via Kew (Bernstein 1970); he became a journalist, married Subina Shrestha (they now have two children and numerous Newari relatives) and (apart from a brief period in Bangkok) settled in Nepal where he has now lived for over a decade. His vision and experience of Kathmandu are the result of his willingness to explore the nooks and crannies of the city and to embark on numerous encounters with its diverse inhabitants, some of whom, like old Dhana Lakshmi Shrestha (his ‘informant on the traditions of the city’), see and comprehend it very differently. He has also been prepared at various times over the last ten years to leave the city to make sense of events taking place elsewhere in the country, notably the Maoist insurgency, which in the early 2000s was already spreading

1 Thomas Bell shares this concern: “often, in fact obsessively, when I’m walking in a narrow gully I look up and wonder where I’ll be when the earthquake comes and the walls open up like curtains of bricks. I look at the people who are walking around me and I think, ‘Which of us is going to make it?’” (p. 399).

2 One of the few significant characteristics of the city that remains unexamined in Kathmandu is the food culture, and particularly complex interwoven calendar of Newari feasts and festivals.

through the countryside and coming into conflict with the armed police and the Royal Nepalese Army.

Like the city itself, and indeed arguably Nepal as a whole, the book's texture and format is deceptively fluid and anarchic, its deep structure enduring yet surprisingly resilient. Episodic and shifting constantly in perspective and tone, as well as in time and place, *Kathmandu* is divided into three parts and 24 sections³, each of which comprises up to a dozen often only barely related topics, which like a kaleidoscope obliges/allows readers to see/make their own way through the text.

The first part of the book (The Beginnings) explores the city as mandala or microcosm, in part through the attempts of successive (mainly Western) scholars to 'unpeel' the history and pre-history of the ancient Malla kingdoms, and in part through visits by the author himself to parts of the city where the past still permeates the present, as in the case of the structure and layout of the buildings, the narrow lanes and *chowks*, the temples and the monasteries - the ancient trade routes, he remarks, are still visible in the street plans of Kathmandu and Patan. 'The mandala', he says, 'is more than a map of the city. It is a social and political ideology, a description of the order of the universe, which is repeated in a well-ordered city here on earth' (p. 54). Interestingly, the British anthropologist Declan Quigley, when interviewed by Pratyoush Onta (Onta 2004: 55), recalled a 'long chat' with Robert Levy, author of *Mesocosm* (1990) - a study of Bhaktapur - who said: 'it was as if the Newars had planned their social organisation after reading *The Ancient City* (1864) by the great French historian Fustel de Coulanges.

But this 'archaeological' enterprise - which continues throughout the book - is permeated by other more immediate concerns, including the Maoist insurgency: several sections include visits to talk with the Maoists - in Baglung (section 2), Surkhet (section 6) and Dolpa (section 9) - something few journalists, let alone foreigners were prepared to do while the conflict was at its height (between 2002 and 2005). For Bell's Kathmandu is part of the wider Nepalese political economy and while his central pre-occupation is with the city itself he does not confine himself to the city. Nor is he only concerned with buildings and structures; he is, after all, a journalist and his main source of information is conversations.

3 Is it just a coincidence that Bell was 24 when he arrived in Nepal?

He talks with all and sundry, and listens to what they say – he has conversations with Maoists in the field, with politicians, with members of the army and the police, and even with expatriates; but most of all with the ordinary and extraordinary citizens of Kathmandu, who speak often with great authority and insight.

The second section (The Revolutions), like the first, has ten chapters. It deals with the many invasions, wars and revolutions that have transformed the ancient city structures over two and a half centuries, from the conquest of the Kathmandu Valley towards the end of the 18th century by Prithivi Narayan Shah who sought to ‘unify’ Nepal as a Hindu monarchy, to the People’s War, launched two centuries later towards the end of the 20th century by ‘Prachandra’ and his fellow Maoists who sought to ‘re-structure’ Nepal as a federal socialist republic. This section, like the first, has a general chronological momentum, and ends with the overthrow of the king in 2006; but again there are countervailing forces in the structure of the text, which link the past with the present and with previous efforts to understand the city, and the country.

The book ends with a coda of four chapters; after an interval in Bangkok, the author returns to the city in the ‘post-insurgency’ period, which saw the rise of ‘ethnic/caste identity politics’, the Madhes movement, the elections for a Constituent Assembly, and the departure of the king. He gets married. In this part of the book, he has a, largely justified, rant at the corruption and ineffectiveness of the foreign ‘aid industry’ and develops his walnut theory – that ‘the international community and the state are bound together as tightly as two halves of the same walnut’ while ‘the fruit is stuck inside’.

This is followed by the ‘revelation’ that the British, like the Americans, supported the king and his authoritarian regime to the hilt throughout ‘the conflict’, only abandoning their efforts to help crush the Maoist insurgency and popular democracy in Nepal after it became clear that the people of Nepal, and equally importantly the Indian establishment, wanted something different and were not prepared to accept a ‘conservative and limited democracy with a constitutional monarch’. British complicity in war crimes is more than implied.

This final section is not encouraging: the rise and unresolved issue of ethnic/caste identity politics and the apparently associated but contentious issue of federalism; the failure to move beyond the political-

legal 'stasis' (Bell talks of 'sub-optimal equilibrium') of the last six years since the election of the first Constituent Assembly and to agree on a new constitution; the rule of an oligarchy, which now seems to include the Maoist leadership; and the refusal of this oligarchy to accept some responsibility for the atrocities committed during the insurgency and thereafter.

'There must be some things that have got better', suggests the author to old Dhana Lakshmi; 'people know how to eat', she replies, 'but now women have started showing their ass, and that I don't like at all'. 'What will Kathmandu be like in the future?' he asks; 'its impossible to figure out', she says.

I have re-read the book now myself several times and continue to discover or re-discover fresh insights as I do so. I warmly recommend it to all those who live in Nepal, as well as those who visit, and who find the city as familiar and as strange, as deeply and endlessly appealing, as does the author, and as do I.

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Living Between Juniper and Palm: Nature, Culture, and Power in the Himalayas

by Ben Campbell. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, India, 2013, 390 pp., 17 black and white photos, ISBN 978-0-19-807852-4, £ 32.50

Reviewed by Brigitte Steinmann

Ben Campbell's *Living Between Juniper and Palm. Nature, Culture, and Power in the Himalayas* is a highly innovative study in conservation and environmental anthropology. The book makes a major contribution to ecology-based, political and reflexive anthropology that is succinctly expressed by the statement that 'what matters to a given set of people' is more important 'than to suggest that the kinds of literate and verbalized knowledge that comparative scholarship depends on are inherently superior' (p. 30). Rethinking the grand assumptions of Western Anthropology regarding the polarized conceptualizations of subjectivity versus objectivity and the binarism supposedly underlying nature and culture, Campbell employs the relational epistemology of 'perspectivism'. First developed by anthropologists of the Amerindian world (de Castro 2009, Descola 2005), this approach helps him think about and defend the shared perspectives of the marginalized Tamang populations that inhabit the forested and mountainous areas of Central Nepal. Formerly agropastoralists, Tamang communities in the western part of the Kathmandu Valley are now compelled to survive at the core of national parks and 'natural reserved areas' that are managed by the Hindu State (research for the book, it may be recalled, took place in monarchic Nepal), which forces them to conform to strict law-regulation systems which rob them of their livelihood and of their ancient shifting locales.

Campbell aims to unsettle the ecological pretext used to divest Tamangs of their rights, according to which 'barbarian indigenous populations' were threatening nature and forests since they are incapable of evaluating their ecological heritage. Starting with a strong rejection of a dichotomy between physical and social realities, in other terms, of ideas on 'cultures' that were remodelled through the legacy of two hundred years of colonialism and globalization (the very effect of Modernity, according to Bruno Latour), the author presents the results of extensive

fieldwork through both analytical and empathic methods of enquiry that are based on several lengthy investigations conducted between 1989 and 1998. The work also appears as a plea to convince administrators and ecologists who count these 'natural resources' to take native conceptions of local sovereignty and relations between human and non-human worlds seriously. The richly documented argumentation is developed in a text replete with brilliant anthropological and literary qualities that captivate the reader from start to finish. The author criticizes perceptions of 'Environmentalism' and Scientific Ecology as unitary concepts. From its origins in the 19th century, Scientific Ecology raised the problem of whether human beings should be included in the ebb and flow of the living world conceived as a whole (Deléage 1991). Environmental Anthropology today has expanded this question to ask whether we should not also include the 'non-human' in the living world thought up by man. Campbell claims it is necessary to go further and oppose both Environmentalism *and* the scientific protocols of sustainable development. He does not, however, adhere to the various ways of reasoning defined by the anthropological school of Descola because he considers that 'animistic and analogical modes of reasoning' are in fact joined in Tamang conceptions. More than a manifesto for 'perspectivism', the work is an innovative criticism that opens new points of view for 'research-action' in anthropology, which is understood as a complete interaction with the observable worlds, including non-human agents.

In the mountains surrounding the small village of Tengu in the northern part of the Park of Langtang, the fundamental question during the first period of fieldwork was: 'how should one translate the term "environment" to local populations?' Campbell addresses this in a delicious mixture of anecdotes and critical reflexive questions on the pseudo-naivety of the ethnologist. The author displays a fine anthropological rhetoric about the position of the ethnologist, who is foreign to the world he approaches. He reaches the conclusion that while people do not understand what the ethnologist wants them to say, they do provide him with a perfect demonstration of their own understanding of the world they inhabit. Having integrated the regulations of the Park of Langtang, which forbids them to cut wood and to stock up as they previously had, it is through breaches, activities hidden from sight that they demonstrate little by little the strategies of survival in- and local understandings of their biotope.

Through three parts and nine perfectly ordered chapters, the author draws from the most varied registers – colonial narratives, botanical descriptions, impromptu meetings, mythologies, tales, pilgrimages and administrative documents – to produce an ethnographical description devoid of stereotypes and the customary reifications peculiar to ‘cultural’ descriptions and categories exogenous to local forms of knowledge. He thus delivers, to the great happiness of the reader, through the hazards of his transhumant travels with the agro-pastoralists he accompanied from mountain tops to low-lying valleys their ideas of enchanted bestiaries, their ways to speak and to act in the Tamang language, and their evocations of the exploits of shamans and ancestors. Small paintings or vignettes follow one another, the author recounting impromptu meetings or the fantastic adventures of hunting between men and animals, without ever abandoning the principles that he had decided on at first. He thus avoids ‘enculturation’ (Strathern 1980), the simplifications and the arbitrary descriptions that result from the distance between the observer and the observed, as well as the pitfalls of Functionalism and Utilitarianism, in order to persuasively call for a radical reorientation of environmental policies enacted through ‘nature conservation’ and ‘sustainable development’. In this case, the empathy is as much a spontaneous position of the author as an argued theoretical principle. Campbell’s mastery of local languages and close unravelling of traditional paths facilitates his untangling of the complex hank of ‘networks of knowledge and shared lives’ of the Tamang of Rasuwa District.

Campbell opens his study with a characterisation of the lifestyle of the Tamang, who still practised pastoral and agrarian transhumance (rotations of cultures) in an ecosystem qualified as ‘vertical’ in the 1990s. Rather than going through geographical definitions and agronomic points of view, Campbell starts with a radical ‘shift’, a ‘delinearisation’ (Ingold 2007) of the inhabited and domesticated space, through an anthropology that is itself conceived as a radical movement of ‘decentralisation’ from one’s own ideas and behaviours. The biodiversity met with in this environment is described from the stage where subtropical palm trees grow to the pastures where reigns the juniper. It consists of all human and non-human beings (animals, plant worlds, cosmic and telluric forces, visible and invisible presences of all kinds) that share a common ontology and that are of the same biotope. Just as the genesis of the Tamang clans can only be understood through

the sharing of meat-based or vegetable substances and their transmission within asymmetric kinship lineages, so the unity between domestic worlds and worlds of the forest must be reconstructed and negotiated ritually with the powers which inhabit the place. Campbell explains 'power' as a mediatory term between 'Nature' and 'Culture', a force that should be restored to the people who live in interaction with plants, animals and their own invisible worlds, rather than a reference to the political power of local statesmen (p. 99-103). The *mukhiyas*, upholders of the former political system of Panchayat, saw these powers disappearing as they were delegated to a foreign and absent urban bureaucracy. In this political microcosm, which includes human and non-human beings, *mukhiyas* helped people stand their own in face of the State. Campbell considers that these former chieftainships constituted in a way the middle terms of this revisited set of 'nature-culture', with the shamans acting as direct intermediaries in the strategies of alliance between the powers of the soil and those of the heavens. It is here that one of the weaknesses of this analysis of Tamang social reality lies, since the Buddhist priests are nearly absent from it (except as translators for the ethnologist in elucidating archaic elements of the Tamang language). As the guardians of the oldest forms of Tamang Buddhism and the upholders of scriptural and religious laws, *lamas* had long participated in caring for the laws of the visible and invisible worlds, and would have thus also wielded 'power' over the population and a certain amount of leverage in dealings with peripheral administrations. Through his cognitive approach of the field, it is not in terms of a reproduction of power based on conflicts of class and caste that Campbell bases his argumentation; he should have rather explained better how Buddhist *lamas* (at least in the eastern regions of Tamang territory), participated more than once in the imposition of administrative control by the State. One could also reproach Campbell with his implicit belief in Tamang society as more in harmony with non-human reality than any other. The author might have explained better, from a strictly ecological point of view, how humankind cannot escape the laws of a global ecosystem (J. Lovelock 2007). For anthropologists like Descola, depending on V. de Castro, there remains a fundamental ambiguity about the definition of 'non-human'. On one side, there is the invisible and unimaginable world reconstructed by Physics, on the other, the unlimited fantasies of all societies, which never cease to be primitive (Latour 1991). Campbell concentrates rather on the arrival of

scientific ecological politics, with the creation of zones of experimentation for new forms of management through experimental cultures and projects of micro-sustainable development, which sounded the knell for local Tamang autonomy as well as for many other indigenous populations.

In his conclusion, the author notes the endangerment and the degradation of life of these Himalayan populations dominated by the world of Indo-Nepalese castes and the Hindu codes of law, which, following the revolution of the political parties of opposition in the 1990s and the rise in claims for identity and territorial federalism, have joined the cohort of indigenous populations (*janjati*) that are today caught between the will to invent their own modernity and the temptation to adopt Hindu governmental policies. The Nepalese politics of sustainable development succeed, according to Campbell, in the neglect and in the marginalization of communities that presented the most original forms of life, the most deserving of appearing in a new 'anthropocene' (Crutzen 2006) freed from alienating and depreciating classifications. We can no longer afford to dither on the question of the durability of the resources in the world, from hypothetical arrangements of the last plots of land to inhabited forest spaces today, without appealing to the knowledge of the populations which still have some powers of coexistence and exchange with the non-human, which is a fundamental condition for the survival of the people and of the planet at large. The global ecological crisis must be urgently thought of in political terms: 'The answer is not to create enclaves of nature, but to nurture a more thoroughgoing reflexive environmental culture: one that already understands humanity as flexibly adapted to the circumstances for living in ecologies of difference' (p. 357).

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Eloquent Hills: Essays on Nepali Literature

by Michael Hutt. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari, 2012, 193 pp.,
ISBN 978-9937-594-00-4, Rs. 500

Reviewed by Rémi Bordes

Michael Hutt is undoubtedly the one and only English-speaking scholar outside Nepal who has dedicated a large amount of his research to the Nepali Language and its literature. Nearly twenty-five years after an invaluable collection of translations (Hutt 1991), and more than a decade after his classic manual of footnoted original texts (Hutt 1997), which remains the vade mecum for students of Nepali the world over, he now offers a collection of nine essays in literary history and criticism, of which eight have already been published. Written between 1989 and 2007, most of those chapters, dedicated to prominent writers or works, were scattered in many out-of-print journals and collective works that are today hardly available. Now, to the relief of many a zealous reader, they are finally gathered in the fine and affordable edition of Martin Chautari, who instigated this publication. The book is named after a verse of Devkota from the famous poem *Pagal* ('The Lunatic'): 'you say that the hills are deaf and dumb / I say that they are eloquent' (Devkota, 1956: 67, translated by Hutt, 2007: 155)

The chapters, which have not been re-written, are presented in chronological order according to their original dates of publication. Though this choice may arouse a feeling of disorder, recurrent concerns and themes clearly emerge. Thus, chapters 1 and 6 deal with two complementary aspects of Nepali dependence: Gurkha soldiers and long-term migration to India. Hutt shows that whereas Gurkhas are generally considered to be a consensual item of patriotic pride, they are depicted much more ambiguously by novelists and poets. Besides, summoning various stories fraught with social realism, he shows how fiction on departure to 'Mugalan' (India) reflect the injustices that urge the deprived to leave in the first place, as well as the uncertainties of all 'Nepalis outside Nepal' concerning their identity. Literary representations of the country are the focus of chapters 5 and 8. The idyllic perceptions of Nepal that Western foreigners frequently display are counterbalanced

by the bitterness of its insiders, which is summarized in S. Lamichane's striking story, in which the appearance of a crippled child abruptly puts an end to Westerners' dreams. Nevertheless, the nation of course also has its own elegies, be they romantic or revolutionary, and Hutt shows some of their patterns. Chapters 2 and 3 stress the strong link between Nepal's political history and its literature. In particular, the pages on Mohan Koirala offer a powerful analysis of the complex reasons why certain writers emerge not simply as authors, but as a *voice* within a generation. Aesthetic factors mingle with contextual ones: in particular, the pressure of state censorship and its gradual upliftment have always circumscribed expressive possibilities and shaped their evolution. Two of the chapters are devoted to single works: Devkota's *Muna-Madan* (chapter 4), *the* classic of Nepali literature if there should be one, and B.P. Koirala's famous *Sumnima* (chapter 7), the story of a Bahun male's union with a Janajati female, which has fathered controversies that are finely analysed by the author. In spite of many differences, both works are emblematic love stories that display the typical texture of Nepali romances. The last chapter, dedicated to the complex and multi-faceted writer Bhupi Serchan, is a preliminary to a book-length study that Hutt was later to publish (Hutt 2010). Gathering little known biographical fragments, it is the first attempt to draw a coherent intellectual portrait of this figure throughout the mishaps and paradoxes of his life journey.

Hutt's studies stand between two perfectly watertight worlds of analysis. On the one hand, as regularly pointed, the Nepalese critics' approach to literature is exclusively formal and textual, reluctant to contextualise, and most of the time very partisan. On the other hand, Western research on Nepal generally ignores local intellectual production; in particular, any mention or even a vague knowledge of literature is conspicuously absent, which is of course 'regrettable and extraordinary' (p. 154) (could anyone imagine a historian of England ignoring Shakespeare or Dickens, or a social scientist working on France disregarding Rousseau or Proust?). This scholarly setting renders the task of analysing Nepali literature from the outside all the more laudable.

The tools of a pioneer need to be sturdy and, understandably, *classical*, which is probably the most appropriate word to characterize Hutt's technique of analysis. He thus mostly selects well-known and established authors, such as B.P. Koirala, Devkota or Mohan Koirala, which is indeed

unavoidable at this stage. His method for addressing these authors is predominantly biographical, historical and contextual; the formal, aesthetic and linguistic aspects of texts are rarely discussed. Hutt's stance can also be branded 'classical' in the sense that it does not deny the centrality of a Social Sciences-oriented approach to Nepal's reality, which is a reflection of the state of Western scholarship on the region: it is implicit in many pages that the interest of literature produced in Nepal is primarily to provide *documents* to the understanding of its social and historical world, and not to lead to more philosophical discussions where their 'Nepaliness' would be of minor importance. Texts are seen as mirrors of a society that require a solid apparatus of cultural and historical comments in order to become *accessible*, rather than as pieces of art that are to be made *palatable* to foreign readers. This anti-formal approach gradually reaches maturity toward the end of the book, where it becomes more convincing in its formulation as a coherent *project*: an '[...] *attempt to suggest [...] that Nepal has and has always had its own sphere of literary discourse, populated by remarkable individuals, and that the link between that sphere of discourse and others within Nepali society could be strengthened and made more multi-dimensional than it currently is*' (p. 161). The task of critics (and translators) is to make the treasures of national literature participate in larger cultural and political debates, thus contributing to '*a Nepal in which Nepali literature is also considered and discussed outside a purely literary frame of reference, so that Nepali writer's representations, analyses, criticisms and articulations of Nepali realities inform not only foreigners' perceptions of Nepal, but also Nepal's perceptions of itself*' (ibid.). It seems Hutt considers Bhupi Serchan to best incarnate the kind of literature fit to serve this agenda, as his writing on Serchan exhales a distinctive tone of enthusiasm and support that is elsewhere absent.

Surely, Hutt's agenda is particularly relevant in the democratic ferment of post-war Nepal, and this collection of literary studies is a significant contribution in that direction. They represent nothing less than the touchstone of a new field in South Asian studies, and a decisive bridge on the gap between Nepal seen by insiders and all sympathetic outsiders.

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The Paper Road: Archive and Experience in the Botanical Exploration of West China and Tibet

by Erik Mueggler. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press. 2011, 361 pp., 45 black and white photos, ISBN 978-520-26903-3, \$ 29.95/ £ 19.95.

Reviewed by Franklin Ginn and Mark Watson

It is not often that a scholarly book has the power to move you, but *The Paper Road* flows with such empathy, melancholy, anger, admiration, disgust, longing, and wonder that it is hard not to be drawn in. This is a supreme work, full of critical fidelity to a place, its people and their archival traces. At times, Erik Mueggler writes so deftly that you cannot but become emotionally caught up in the trials and tribulations of the lead characters, as they struggle to conduct research and even stay alive in challenging landscapes.

The Paper Road opens with a provocation. Mueggler begins by labelling a Nazi botanist from Yunnan, in southwest China, 'likely the most prolific Western botanic explorer of the early twentieth century' (p. 8). Zhao Chengzhang and his assistants from the Naxi village of Nvlvk'ö collected and despatched tens of thousands of specimens of plants to the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh, the Arnold Arboretum and elsewhere. Mueggler calls Zhao 'Western' to at once expose the paradigmatic erasure of the non-European from botanical science and at the same time signal the deep, yet fraught, bond between the man and his employer/patron, Edinburgh botanist George Forrest. Both Zhao and Forrest shared a passion not just for knowing plants, but for turning the diffuse and prolific flora of Yunnan into an equally prolific, if more orderly, series of paper traces.

The Paper Road is a thematic account of life, land and archive in southwest China in the first half of the twentieth century, centred on two botanists but necessarily involving many other people. The first is Forrest, 'an excellent, industrious and steady' man (according to his patron, Isaac Bailey Balfour of the Royal Edinburgh Botanic Garden); the second is the altogether more flamboyant Austrian-American Joseph Rock. *The Paper Road* is not overtly biographical, focusing instead on relationships, particularly between the botanists and the two successive generations

of Naxi explorers to whom they were allied. But yet *The Paper Road* is biographical, attuning us to the ways that these relationships brought the Earth its filth, mountains and flora into social being, and helping us get to know quite intimately Forrest, and especially Rock: a troubled, contradictory, difficult character. Indeed, this book brings refreshingly new perspectives on both Forrest and Rock, introducing new materials, providing insightful commentary and colour which are generally missing in published botanically-orientated biographies.

Forrest and Rock were central characters in the exploration of the botanical treasures in SW China – an area referred to as the ‘Mother of Gardens’ by fellow plant hunter Ernest ‘Chinese’ Wilson. Forrest is widely recognised as one of the most successful of all plant hunters in China, as over 28 years he made seven long expeditions and accumulated extensive collections of seeds, plants and dried specimens – especially *Primula* and *Rhododendron*. Although it was known that Forrest made extensive use of native collectors (to such an extent that they would today be seen as ‘parataxonomists’) Mueggler exposes the true extent of their contribution to Forrest’s success and the huge debt Forrest owed them. Unlike many plant hunters, Forrest and his men returned to the same areas time and again at different seasons, giving them a far better understanding of the plants, lands and people. Consequently the paper archive Forrest built up has an unmatched depth and richness. Rock spent much longer in China, living in the southwest for most of the time in the years between 1922 and 1949. Rock divided his attentions between natural history, geography, photography and linguistics, and had far better language skills than Forrest, who always had problems with communication. Rock was also able to administer medical treatment during his travels, and so he had much stronger personal connections with the Chinese people than Forrest. Rock’s paper archive of the flora is more extensive than Forrest’s, with estimates ranging from 50,000 to 80,000 herbarium specimens, and so his scientific impact has been greater. In contrast, Rock only collected seeds of about 1000 species and his legacy of living collections in Western gardens is considerably less than Forrest’s.

Part one stages a series of encounters between two archives. The first, the imperial botanic archive, is well known – precise, obsessive, scientific, moving specimens to centres of botanical calculation in the West. The second is one of ritual and memory: the Dongba cult, a pictographic set

of codified rituals, performances performed in Naxi culture, and unique in Sino-Tibetan languages. Both archival regimes moved plant to text, both were comprised of great chains of translation from experience to archive, and back again from archive to experience. They came together most overtly in Forrest's quest for the evolutionary heartland of the genus *Rhododendron* – a horticultural Mecca, the search for which Forrest became increasingly obsessed. Even after 13 years of intermittent collecting across Yunnan, Forrest still discounted any plant lore of his Naxi botanists that could not be translated into Linnaean terms. Yet his hunger to find the origin of *Rhododendron* found Forrest mirroring the Dongba archive, for to travel North and West – the direction Forrest's search took him – was to travel in the direction where Naxi ancestors first came down from the mountains, and to where departed souls returned: somewhere up there was the threshold where the dead left behind their worldly being. The two archival regimes shared the same orienting horizon, towards a place of transcendence.

Where Forrest took succour from dreams of social climbing and domestic life back home in Scotland, Joseph Rock had no such fall-back. Part two lacks the singular focus of part one, but we sense that this reflects the character of Rock more than anything else. Rock's life, the author shows, was caught between the 'timid rigidity' of his guiding formulae, like the opposition between filth ('it is difficult to show just how central mucus was to Rock's diaries', p. 164) and purity, or his ever-present racial hierarchies, on the one hand, and his capacity to take gambles with extreme courage on the other hand. Rock had more intimate relations with the earth and its archive than with fellow humans. For Rock, 'names of places and plants were bits of the earth he could hold onto; they were stepping stones through that fluid outpouring of revulsion and disgust which was so often his experience of the world' (p. 234).

The book is a beautiful rejoinder to Eurocentric histories of plant explorers. Far from journeying into the wild unknown, Forrest and Rock travelled, for the most part, over landscapes suffused with sociality, places already archived in Naxi ritual and ancestral lore. Both botanists relied systematically on Naxi botanical expertise and were utterly dependent on the dedication and loyalty of their Naxi workforce. Zhao Chengzhang and his Naxi team thought nothing of a month's walk across Yunnan to meet Forrest in Burma, and while Forrest was not in China they

continued to collect and dispatch plants, receiving their salaries via the China Inland Mission. There remains more work to be done to show how Western science was seldom about writing the Earth for the first time – it was, instead, in a long lineage of ‘using bodies and their technological extensions to generate words, images, lines, and texts from the earth; of folding them back into the earth; of making them part of the shape of the earth that is experienced by other bodies, eyes and cameras, ears and pens’ (p. 290).

What is missing? We find it strange, as a geographer and botanist interested in the ways that nature and culture collide, that Mueggler pays so little attention to plants, to their distribution, morphology, and beauty. Such things were the obsession of Forrest, Zhao and Rock, but receive little airing in the book. There are many fascinating stories that could have been told of particular plants collected, their impact on the horticultural and scientific world, and the scientific legacy that both men left behind. To natural historians this might detract from the depth of the book, but one must remember that Mueggler’s concerns are anthropological, not primarily botanical.

The Paper Road deserves a wide readership. The breadth of research, care and love that has gone into this book is, as the advertising on the back cover says, absolutely breath-taking. In unfolding archival traces of life, movement and care back out into the world once more, Mueggler’s book becomes more than a mere collection of paper and ink: it transforms into something quite magical, a text that itself hovers between archive, experience and the Earth.

From Monarchy to Republic: Essays in Changing Nepal

by Gérard Toffin. Kathmandu: Vajra Books. 2013, 280 pp.,
ISBN 978-9937-623-07-0, US\$ 15

Reviewed by Chiara Latizia

This book deals with the sweeping changes that Nepal experienced between 1950 and 2012. Gérard Toffin, drawing on the research he has been conducting in Nepal since the 1970s, reflects on the transformations he witnessed and wrote about over the last four decades. He offers a collection of eight essays (supplemented with three appendices), written between 1976 and 2013, most of which have been already published in academic journals and partially updated for the present volume. Only two essays concerning western Tamangs – originally published in 1986 and 1976 – are presented in their original form as chapters 7 and 8. They show that some changes (like the growing importance of migration or the effects of new economic trends on traditional forms of agriculture) were already noticeable in the 1980s.

In his introduction, the author stresses that the volume is not a political history and does not just concern Nepal, but endeavours to reach both a more profound level and a broader scope of study through anthropological and sociological analysis. It proposes to explore the ideas and values on which political systems and new trends in contemporary Nepal are built, to draw ‘a sort of mental cartography of the country, the ideas behind the political arena’ (p. 12) so as to research the ‘underlying determining structural factors in action’ (p. 13), and to focus on the ‘ideological elements that sustain the democracy and the republic in the South Asian context today’ (p. 17). In the process, the volume compares Nepal’s recent political history with that of India and Western countries. Given space limitations, I elected to focus on the first five chapters, trusting that this will suffice to give the reader a good measure of the book.

The first essay introduces the main theme of the book by way of a broad reflection on the fabric of social change in Nepal and beyond. Toffin traces a panoramic history of political changes from king Mahendra’s rule (1955-1972) to the proclamation of a republic in 2008, and shows how the paradigms of anthropological studies have changed accordingly, adopting

a global and dynamic approach that takes history into account from the 1980s onwards. Toffin compares the events of 2008 with the French revolution and, inspired by Tocqueville's lesson that a major alteration in the political system does not automatically imply a change in society, he affirms that the new republic of Nepal has not experienced a radical transformation in its social structure or religious practices. Taking up a theme already emphasized by Anne de Sales (2011), Toffin points to the dialectics between continuity and rupture, where transformation in one sector dissimulates permanence in other fields, and affirms that, in the end, the main structural elements of the social system were reproduced (also by Maoist leaders themselves). While acknowledging the emergence of new voices, values and social forms, particularly among the young and urban educated classes, Toffin notes the prevalence of old legacies, and shares his perception that a sense of cultural loss and demoralisation in the face of changes induced by globalisation and modernisation constitute a prevailing theme in present day-Nepali society. In my view, another prevailing theme is the sense of frustration about the change that did *not* happen, a reversal of the strong hope for change that pervaded the country in 2006. The interesting discussion of this chapter could have engaged with the reflections of Anne de Sales on the methodological difficulties in identifying on-going changes and more specifically on the inherently subjective dimension of the notion of change and on change as a value (embedded in human action) at the centre of revolutionary ideology (de Sales 2011: 112).

The second essay traces the historical dimensions of the politics of Hinduism, which have defined key features and issues of secularism in Nepal. Toffin shows that historically two models of statecraft, each in their own way, have construed Hinduism, its relation with kingship and with other religions: the Mallas of the Kathmandu Valley and the Caubise kingdoms of the Central hills. The Gorkha conquest and unification of Nepal lead to the supremacy of the second model and its religious values and symbols, which the modern state later adopted. Thus, they played a major role in Nepal's identity as a Hindu state. Toffin traces the changes that occurred from 1951 onwards (including modernisation and gradual democratisation, challenges to the Hindu state in the 1990s, and the declaration of a secular state in May 2006), mentioning some of the issues that came up after the proclamation of the republic in 2008. Toffin remarks

that these events have not diminished the prevalence of Hinduism and of religion at large, which is still present in all aspects of life.

Chapter 3 deals with the rise of Janajati movements in the 1990s: it provides a history of the movement and insists on the distance between the self-representations of these minorities and their social realities, with a view to deconstruct the rewriting of history and the myths (like the myth of autochthony) on which political and ethnic claims are based. The chapter offers a critical reflection on the essentialist conceptions of groups as self contained and unchanged entities and points to the paradox of ethnic issues 'being brought in the foreground by Nepalese sociology and anthropology' (not further specified by the author, p. 92) even as western academics are stressing the hybridity and the fluidity of ethnic boundaries. The essay also considers the impact of the ideas of Janajati ideology on democracy and argues against the adoption of a federalism based on ethnic lines that would endanger the country.

Chapter 4 discusses the dialectics of equality and hierarchy in the Nepali (and South Asian) context to depict a broad portrait of caste in contemporary Nepal. It argues that equalitarianism is not just a foreign concept, but that it also has roots in Nepal and India, as expressed in the egalitarian values promoted by Hindu reformist movements and in the 'casteless ideology existing within the orb of most Nepali tribal groups' (p. 102). Toffin explains how – despite the growing calls for social inclusion, the equality of all citizens affirmed in the Constitution, the abolition of untouchability, and the pressures of modernisation and globalisation – caste persists as a fundamental social fact and continues to regulate large sectors of social life, as even affirmative action measures tend to end up reinforcing caste consciousness. Toffin observes also the persistence of discrimination against Dalits despite the Caste Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2068 (2011), and he affirms that the language of purity and impurity is reproduced in the daily practices of Dalits groups themselves who are divided into hierarchically ranked castes and do not accept cooked rice from lower castes (p. 106, no reference is provided). The author also points at important shifts, such as current processes of substantialisation and essentialisation of caste, and a reluctance of lower castes to fulfil their traditional role.

The fifth essay presents interesting data on the proliferation of new religious movements (most of them of Indian origin, but some of them

from the West and one being autochthonous) among middle and upper class youth. The author considers these NRMs as an expression of the individualisation and internalisation of religion, and links them with the new liberal and democratic *ethos* that has been reigning in the country since the 1990s. Toffin shows that shared ideas can be observed amidst the diversity of these religious movements, which fit within the process of modernization and globalization of Nepali society (to name a few, the lack of puja and sacrifice, the practice of yoga and meditation, and these groups inclusiveness, irrespective of caste, ethnic or religious belonging). The new beliefs and practices, with their individualistic and universalist, transcendental values, coexist with traditional religion with its social and ritualistic features. Finally, among the appendices, I found particular interest in the transcript of an interview with lawyer and activist Sapana Malla (previously published in EBHR 39), which discusses various issues in connection with women's rights, equality, laws and political change, and thus echoes many themes presented in the book.

To sum up without doing justice to all the essays, this volume is, in the author's own words, a general reflection on the theme of change and 'a general account of what change actually is in the present-day Nepal' (p. 23). Obviously it cannot cover all aspects of transformation in Nepal, and as the author himself admits, key factors of change at play over the past decades are absent or barely mentioned in the essays. Notably, the political movement led by the Maoists, the Madheshi movement and politics, the changes in education (the proliferation of English boarding schools, for example), the economic and social changes due to the migration of Nepali workers to the Gulf (for example, the effect of remittances), the tremendous development of media, etc. Toffin's long familiarity with the subject clearly appears in this volume, and one may easily forgive the occasional lack of bibliographical precision, which seems to derive from the assumption that the reader already knows them (e.g., 'My Pyangaon book, as well as some of my subsequent studies...', p. 34) or to 'the work of well-known anthropologists Michael Oppitz and Anne de Sales' (p. 32). On the whole, given the panoramic nature of some of the discussions, I feel that more references to the work of other scholars throughout the volume would have been helpful for the reader interested in investigating further the subjects touched upon by the author. The bibliography of chapter 3, in particular, could have been updated in the process of republication.

Despite these minor limitations, the juxtaposition of these essays on key areas of change, and the approach of the author, who has always emphasized the importance of including historical analysis in the explanation of present-day facts, highlights some major elements of the change process and contributes to a wider understanding of the complex situation of contemporary Nepal, and its dialectic between rupture and continuity.

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OBITUARIES

Robert Webster Ford (1923-2013) – known to Tibetans as “Phodo Kusho” – Ford Esq.

Roger Croston

Career diplomat and one-time resident radio officer in Tibet and the last of the few Europeans who travelled to Lhasa, before the Chinese annexation of 1950. He was captured by the Red Army and imprisoned in China for almost five years, surviving severe brainwashing.

Robert Webster Ford, who has died aged 90, was a career diplomat who, as a young RAF radio officer was posted to Tibet and was later recruited by the Tibetan Government. Captured on the Tibet-China border in 1950 by the invading Chinese People’s Liberation Army, he was imprisoned for nearly five years undergoing “re-education” and “thought reform.” He was one of only 78 westerners to reach Lhasa between the British Foreign Office invasion of 1904 and 1950 when China annexed Tibet. After retirement from the Foreign Office he again took up the cause of the Tibetan people by whom he was revered as “Phodo Kusho” – “Ford Esquire.” He became a close friend of the Dalai Lama from whom, for his support of the Tibetans, he received the “Light of Truth Award” in April 2013.

Robert Ford, an only child, was brought up in Rolleston-on-Dove, Derbyshire, England. His father was an engine mechanic at the Ind Coope brewery at nearby Burton-on-Trent. From the village school he won a scholarship and attended Alleyne’s Grammar School, Uttoxeter. In 1939, aged 16, he took an RAF entrance exam to become a radio technician. “Radio was unusual; I wanted to explore a growing science about which I knew nothing. I enlisted because I wanted to see the world and foresaw the coming war.” His three-year course at Cranwell, beginning in September 1939, was shortened to 18 months because of war. His first commission was with the ‘No.1 Polish Flying Training School’ at RAF Hucknall, near Nottingham. “They were all officers and NCOs who had escaped and I had to do the work – not many privates had escaped. They were anti-Russian, who had taken over half of Poland; in my naïvety I said, “they are our allies” and we had long political discussions. This was very formative and changed my outlook on the world.”

In 1943, Ford was posted to India, sailing in convoy from Liverpool to

Durban, South Africa. *"We spent three weeks in Durban. The South Africans gave us fantastic hospitality; we couldn't move without being invited out. A lady met every troopship, singing a welcome through a loudspeaker which we quite appreciated."*

With two officers plus three other rankers, he established the 'No.1 Indian Air Force Signals School' based at Drigh Road, *"a huge remote aerodrome near Lahore originally built strategically against Russian invasion. Even though there were no aircraft, we set up the radio school from scratch. There was no equipment. Instruction was in English for volunteers of all castes from all India. It exposed me to a different culture."* The unit relocated to an airbase at Secunderabad where Ford was promoted to Sergeant.

Finding instructing repetitively dull, Ford wanted more action. When the opportunity arose just after VE Day in June 1945 to go to Lhasa, Tibet, and, although still in the RAF, become "Mr Ford", he grasped it. For three months, he relieved the resident radio operator at the British Mission, Mr Reginald Fox. Ford's Commanding Officer gave him a ticket to travel to The Bengal Club, Calcutta, with instructions to report to Mr Arthur Hopkinson, the incoming Political Officer Sikkim, Bhutan and Tibet. *"His first question was, 'what clothes have you got? You are going to a cold country.' He gave me money with which I bought two sets of unmarked RAF battle dress."* It was the warmest clothing available in Calcutta and served him well. On arrival at the British Residency, Gangtok, Sikkim, he was informed by Mohammed Khan, major-domo to Sir Basil Gould, the retiring Political Officer, that *"dinner is served at 7.30. We dress for dinner."* The battle dress was all he had as formal wear, even in Lhasa when he called officially with the British Mission on the then child Dalai Lama, *"the others were in political dress uniform and the doctor in his military uniform, all the Tibetans were in magnificent coloured silks. Gould was very knowledgeable about Tibet to where he was devoted. His parting words were, 'do your job and be helpful to the Tibetans.' This epitomised his attitude and was my first introduction to diplomacy."*

Ford later recalled his first impressions of Tibet, *"travelling by pony up a hot and sticky valley to above the leech line at Karponang with thinning vegetation. The undulating, craggy path was a botanist's dream. Crossing the Natu La pass from Sikkim at 14,300 feet, I got a view into Tibet. At the top the sky cleared and I saw the incredibly beautiful peak of Chomolhari towering to 24,000 feet and the plateau of Tibet above the village of Phari; after five minutes the view was gone."* He could only agree with the locals as, when they reached such a high

pass, they invariably cried, *“The Gods are with us”* as they threw stones onto the pass’s cairn. Dropping down to Yatung in the Chumbi valley, Ford’s pony tripped and threw him over its neck. The party climbed up to the Tibetan plateau and traversed through Phari township, *“described by all visitors as dirt, dirt, dirt and dirt; but I have heard other terms used!”*

“As a young man there was so much to see and absorb, it was very exciting; there were monasteries, flora and fauna - we reached the turquoise lake of Yamdrok Tso, full of fish, so tame you could pick them up in your hands. Approaching Lhasa, the valley had spines of mountains reaching to the river and after the last one, I saw the Potala Palace- a remarkable sight, white and red, still half a day’s journey away. I thought, ‘now I’ve arrived’, but did not realise then that it was the start of a lifelong attachment to Tibet.”

Two miles outside the city, the party was officially greeted by representatives of the Tibetan government. *“We ritually exchanged white ‘khata’ scarves; I was unused to formality, tradition and service - it was very moving. We had another welcome by the staff at the British Mission’s Residency, the Dekyi Lingka, the aptly named ‘Garden of Happiness’. It had a stream and was filled with flowers; Reginald Fox had his radio station in a little house to the side. Everyone proudly wore national dress and never aped Westerners apart from Homburg hats. I never wore Tibetan clothing other than a thick chuba coat when it was very cold.”*

Fox left within 48 hours and Ford had only a brief introduction as to how everything worked. Coded diplomatic reports were transmitted twice daily to the External Affairs Department, India. Until then there were only two transmitting radios in the entire country, the other being at the Chinese Mission which the British wanted to counterbalance. Immediately the world war ended, amateur ‘Ham’ radio was again permitted and a radio contact with Tibet was the most sought after in the world. *“We were our own licensing authority and I gave myself the call sign AC4RF.”* [AC4 the radio country code for Tibet; RF for Robert Ford].

During his sojourn in the capital city, Ford attended many social functions thrown by the Tibetans who were intensely fond of picnics, partying, drinking, singing and dancing; a keen dancer himself, Ford introduced the ‘samba’ to Lhasa.

After three months, Fox came back and Ford returned to the Political Mission, Sikkim, where he discovered that fellow radio operator Henry Baker, Royal Signals, was due to be demobbed and was leaving. The

Political Officer offered Ford the post and he spent 1945 to 1947 in Sikkim on loan from the RAF. He would later recall two notable events whilst there. Firstly, in 1946, he accompanied an official Tibetan Goodwill Mission to Delhi, sent to congratulate the Allies on victory. Secondly, he uniquely recorded that one day an unknown European was seen sitting on a roadside in Sikkim and he was sent to investigate. He found Dmitri Nedbailof, a White Russian, who, incredibly, had fled across Siberia to China and thence walked to India where he was interned during the war. He had escaped to Tibet but was turned back to Sikkim. Later, under the patronage of a Tibetan noble, he was employed in Lhasa for his electrical skills where Ford would meet him again.

Upon Indian independence the Political Office reverted to India and Ford, harbouring thoughts of returning to Tibet, was offered employment by the Tibetan government to install the country's first ever broadcasting station "Radio Lhasa" and develop a radio network throughout Tibet and to train operators for it. Ford recalled, "*worldly wise Tibetans such as the Foreign Minister who were clever and astute were behind it*". Ford accepted, the job provided he had a written contract, was paid in local currency, provided with housing and had the ability to import items such as sugar, cigarettes and Indian tea.

From 1947 to 1950, Ford was Radio Officer to the Foreign Affairs Bureau of the Tibetan Government. He was the first of five foreigners to be formally employed by the Tibetans (the others were Fox, Harrer, Aufschnaiter and Nedbailoff). He was given the official fifth rank of Letsampa. After a year in Lhasa, having on one occasion been blessed by the 14 year-old Dalai Lama who laid both hands on his head – an honour normally reserved for the highest ranking officials – he was requested to go to Chamdo, 100 miles from the Chinese border, to improve internal political and trade communications which otherwise took weeks along a narrow track. Taking four Indo-Tibetan radio trainees, he travelled in a large caravan of 100 animals, 40 porters and 12 soldiers along a route previously only traversed by two westerners. [Huc and Gabet in 1846/7]. "*What worried me most was the Tibetan's habit of stacking cans containing a total of 400 gallons of petrol for the radio generators, as wind breaks next to their camp fires.*"

By the time he arrived in Chamdo, at 10,500 feet above sea level, Ford was sporting a red beard which he shaved off with the consequence that next day rumour had it that two Englishmen had arrived and people were

looking for the other one. "*The whole town had turned out to look at my blue eyes and long nose.*" He lived on the upper floor of the former Summer Palace of the Governor General of the province, Lhalu Shapé, for several months. One day while searching amateur radio wavebands he made a 'contact' with a Mr Jeffries who by chance lived in his home town of Burton-on-Trent; and soon, to their mutual joy, he was in weekly conversation with his parents by radio-telephone.

The idyll of life in Chamdo, filled with lavish summer parties, was soon disrupted by threats of Chinese invasion, broadcast by Radio Peking in January 1950. Instead of fleeing, Ford promised to stay provided the Tibetans did not capitulate, as he felt committed to the country and greatly enjoyed living there. One day a high ranking official of the Chinese communist government arrived en-route to Lhasa to negotiate Tibet's incorporation into China, he was Geda Rinpoche, a Khamba from Sikang and an eminent, highly respected Buddhist incarnate lama. He was accompanied by three pretty servant Khamba girls who were reported to go to his room every evening to sing for him; although Ford never heard any singing, he refrained from making bawdy remarks. After several days in Chamdo, during which Geda once visited Ford to listen to Radio Peking, he fell ill and died. He was thought to have been murdered, a fact which later had very serious consequences for Ford.

By mid October 1950, the Red Army was on the doorstep of Chamdo and panic ensued. Ford was on the radio to Lhasa all hours, but to his amazement no announcement was made to the world about the ensuing invasion. The new provincial Governor, Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, fled westwards towards Lhasa. Ford having removed the crystals from his radios to make them useless, planned to escape south to India but all mountain tracks had been obliterated by a catastrophic earthquake, so he followed in the Governor's wake. However, the route had been cut by advancing Chinese and Ngapoi and Ford were captured at a monastery near Lamda.

Ford was ordered to sit on the ground as he heard the click of a rifle bolt at his back. Taken back to Chamdo he was interrogated and accused of being a British spy, spreading anti-communist propaganda and causing the death of Geda by poisoning. Further interrogations became increasingly aggressive, more cunning and malicious; he was urged to confess to many more charges. Things progressively worsened as he was not allowed to

wash for five months and was confined to solitary confinement in rat infested cells, at times being forced to sit rigidly still for 16 hours a day. He was not starved and, *"I was never struck a single blow, but mentally it was no holds barred. I thought I would go mad."* At times, he was threatened with a loaded gun, on others *"left to rot"*. After three years of intense interrogation; "re-education" and "thought reform" brainwashing; learning to read and write Mandarin and *"to translate ordinary words into communist jargon"*, the only way out, he realised, although fearing conversion, was self-degrading lies. Eventually he signed a false confession – the charge of killing Geda having been withdrawn – in which he had not only to admit his guilt, but deeply, sincerely, believe and prove he had done wrong and see his crimes from the correct political standpoint. In May 1954, he was permitted to write to his parents who had not heard from him since his capture. He was tried in December and sentenced to ten years imprisonment without appeal; then told he would be 'immediately' deported – a long drawn out process of further psychological pressure which took six months.

On May 27th, 1950, he was deported to Hong Kong with six HK dollars in his pocket. *"I had to walk 50 yards across a rickety wooden railway bridge - I didn't know whether I would get a bullet in my back."* He was greeted by a British police officer whose first words, *"seemed almost irreverently casual. Five years of Communist conditioning could not be discarded in five minutes and I knew I had other bridges to cross before my spirit could follow my body into freedom."*

After reluctantly giving a press conference in Hong Kong in which he said as little as possible, he was flown to London where he was joyfully reunited with his parents.

Since Ford's death, a Chinese commentator has reported that he had been framed for the murder of Geda Rinpoche. Geda had suffered a stomach complaint and had overdosed on Tibetan medicine containing an excess of minerals, causing internal bleeding and death. Whatever Ford knew about the incident, he never revealed, other than in his book: *"I have good reasons for believing that Geda was murdered, and I think I know who killed him. I hope he will never be found out."*

After release, *"as a guest of Mao"* he had to find a new way to earn a living. The transistor had meanwhile been invented and radio technology had completely changed. Despite this, he was offered a job as Marconi's representative in Asia but decided instead to recuperate for ten months

and write a book *"Captured in Tibet"* (1957) about his experiences. There were many requests for broadcast interviews including "In Town Tonight" and for lecturing, much of it unpaid and for writing articles for, amongst others, the Daily Mail, but Ford still needed a regular income.

With his command of Mandarin, the BBC offered Ford a job in the Chinese Service and he made a couple of broadcasts, *"but it was not for me, the prospects were poor."* However, by good fortune, another opportunity arose. Ford had been debriefed by Lord John Hope - son of Lord Linlithgow the former Viceroy of India - a minister at the Foreign Office. Hope asked Ford to join the Foreign Office. Signing the Official Secrets Act, Ford not fancying his prospects, accepted a temporary job in June 1956 to analyse Chinese propaganda in a covert department. He was twice sent to Saigon, Vietnam; then to Laos and Cambodia. He then returned to the UK to successfully sit a Foreign Office exam for a permanent job in Diplomatic Service.

During his first visit to Saigon, part of the American Information Service Library was blown up by Viet Kong as he drove by, *"I foolishly went to see if anyone was in, but the Americans had been warned and the building was empty. News got into the Daily Telegraph that a British Diplomat had narrowly escaped death. My wife, due to have a baby, read it in England and was distressed. There were no 'phones then, there was no line, although the Embassy had radio contact with London."* In 1959, Ford was transferred as senior branch information officer to Jakarta, Indonesia, *"where trouble followed me again. Two air force pilots attacked the Presidential Palace; our Embassy was next door and they strafed the road outside. I was holed up for two days."* The work involved promoting Britain and making connections with local Chinese to get a feel of what was going on as the Chinese were being expelled from Indonesia. *"It was very tough, there was nothing in the shops."*

From 1960 to 1962, Ford was posted as First Secretary to the British Embassy, Washington, where amongst many duties, with his own experience, he was involved in refuting the idea of "Better Red than Dead". Here he met many American journalists who later became bureau chiefs in London. His time in Washington broke his China speciality and he began to forget Mandarin as his career prospects widened. Between 1962 and 1967, Ford was in London in charge of an information programme to the USA. He was appointed Consul General to Tangier, responsible for north Morocco, from 1967 to 1970. *"At the time of the hippies and I had to*

keep them out of prison." After this, he was promoted Councillor and Consul General, Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe, where he remained for four years. *"The Portuguese were keen to let foreigners know that they were [still] in control. "I did all kinds of exciting things there and once went on the Benguela Railway to the Zaire border, when to stay safe, the train pushed a mine blower 100 yards in front of the locomotive."*

The next four years were more comfortable as Consul General, Bordeaux, covering all of southwest France. *"I got to know all about the wines as we were invited, wined and dined by all the large chateaux/s, and when inviting them back, we served guests their own wine of a good year - with the purse to pay for it!"* His next posting, 1978 to 1980 in Gothenburg, Sweden, he found less congenial, unlike his final posting before retirement in March 1983 as Consul General Geneva. *"A very enjoyable post with good skiing and walking."*

As a diplomat, he had to reflect the policy of British government. *"Being a Consul General did not just project image, it was much wider; reporting, assisting distressed British subjects and so on... a fascinating life. It was not just cocktail parties, you are on duty 24 hours a day and not for your own amusement; it was hard work with no private life."*

Retiring to London, he returned to his interest in Tibet, which until then as a diplomat he had been unable to do. This resulted in renewed contact with the Dalai Lama with whom he met whenever the opportunities arose. At His Holiness's request, he undertook a five-week lecture tour of India in 1991 accompanied by his wife. He spoke at many venues, including the Indian Military Academy, the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Parliament. On their way to Dharamsala, the Dalai Lama's residence in exile, the Fords were put under house arrest without warning by *"a very officious District Commissioner."* Eventually, the British High Commissioner managed to get them freed to return home. China had again intervened in his life; the reason for arrest was a coincidental visit to India by the Chinese Prime Minister.

When questioned recently whether he bore the Chinese a grudge, particularly about the hardships of imprisonment, he replied, *"no, not at all, although it is not a pleasant memory. Once I had got out, after the first year and having got married, I had a new life and new challenges. Of course it coloured my thinking. I am not rabidly against the Chinese - Tibet is more in the back of my mind than China."*

In 1996, he organised the first meeting between the Dalai Lama and

the British Royal Family when he introduced His Holiness to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother.

In March 2013, The Office of Tibet in London organised a reception for Ford's 90th birthday. He had earlier joked that he had not received his back pay, so he was presented with the last of his salary, a photographic enlargement of a 100 Srang Tibetan bank note with apologies for the delay "due to extenuating circumstances." The respect shown to him by the Tibetan community in exile on this occasion moved him deeply.

He received the International Campaign for Tibet's "Light of Truth Award" presented on 13th April 2013 by the Dalai Lama in Switzerland, in acknowledgement of his tireless advocacy on behalf of Tibet. Ford commented, *"I spent some of the happiest days of my life in Tibet. It was an independent country with its own government, language, customs and way of life...The Tibetans are devoted to their religion...They valued their self imposed isolation...and simply wished to be left alone to run their own affairs in the way they thought best."*

As one of the last foreigners who had experienced an independent Tibet, Ford's memories were regarded as important and accordingly he was interviewed in June 2013, by the BBC. Three days after his death the World Service broadcast this interview on its "Witness" programme, and two hours later his experiences were broadcast along with those of others on BBC Radio Four's "Tibet Remembered".

Ford was awarded the CBE in 1982 for Services to the British Crown. He continued to ski until the age of 86; was a founder member of The Tibet Society of the UK and a vice president for life.

In June 1956 Ford married Monica Tebbett, whom he had known since school. They had met again in 1955 after Ford's release when she was on leave from work at the United Nations, New York in the office of Dag Hammarskjold, the Secretary General. She predeceased him by one year. They are survived by two sons.

On hearing of "Phodo Kusho's" passing, the Dalai Lama sent condolences to his family, noting that Robert Ford, had occupied a special place in the history of Tibet".

Born 27th March 1923, Burton-on-Trent.

Died 20th September 2013, London.

“Geshe” Su-Zhi Hsing (1916-2014)

Roger Croston

‘Master’ Su-Zhi Hsing, also known as Po You Hsing, Ven Bi-Song and in Tibetan as Losang Zhengzhu, whose death at 97 has just been made known, was one of only two Han Chinese to gain a “Geshe” Buddhist doctorate in Lhasa, Tibet. He spent eight years in Tibet and was in Lhasa in 1940 when the Dalai Lama was enthroned. On several occasions he was instrumental in diffusing serious tensions between Tibetans and Chinese. He once survived ‘barbarians’ armed with poison arrows on a great pilgrimage. Turning to a secular life, he was a successful headmaster of a primary school in Lhasa and made friendships with key Tibetan officials, lamas, aristocrats and the Dalai Lama’s family. His richly illustrated book published in 2003 in China, took scholars of Tibet by surprise as he had been in retreat late in life, almost forgotten. His recollections and photographs form a unique record of a Han Chinese who had great insight, sympathy and dedication to the final days of a still culturally mediæval Tibet in the mid 20th century.

Hsing was born into a Buddhist family in Gao-You County, near Nanking, Jiangsu Province, where his uncle was Abbot of Fa-Jing Monastery and his elder brother was Abbot of Chao-An Monastery in Zhenjiang. Aged 9, he was ordained as Ven Bi-Song in Yangzhou and began learning the “Confucian Four Books” and poetry, plus major and minor tenets and insight meditations of Buddhist traditions under the tutelage of leading Chinese ‘Master’ scholar-monks. A speech by the 13th Dalai Lama, related by an influential teacher, that the Tibetan “Middle Way” was worthy, gave Hsing an interest in Tibet. His encounter with Vajrayana teaching led him on a great westward journey in pursuit of ever-greater knowledge. In 1934, Hsing was accepted by the Han-Tibetan Institute of Buddhist Studies, Chungking, where he learned to speak Tibetan and a little English. His exceptional talent was quickly recognised and so he was ‘crammed’ in language studies, following which he began translating the deeper meanings of important Tibetan texts into Mandarin, of which some were widely published.

In 1937, Hsing was sponsored by the Chinese government to study in Tibet. His journey there was interrupted due to the premature death of

the 9th Panchen Lama in 1937. *“A great lama donated 5,000 Chinese dollars to me, so I bought a camera and prepared for my long journey. I needed a horse and yaks to transport my books and myself, but none were available, as, many months after the prelate’s passing, all had been drafted into a caravan to return his body to Tashilhunpo, his monastery, west of Lhasa. However, I got lucky in Kantze where a series of chance meetings led to a military officer accompanying the Panchen’s body, giving me animals.”* In Kantze, Hsing, with his translation skills, diplomacy and Buddhist knowledge, brokered a peace deal in a dispute that had become a protracted expensive burden to both Chinese and Tibetan sides. Travelling to Chamdo, he was well received by the Governor General, Surkhang [Surkhang senior, not to be confused with his son, also Surkhang, who became a government minister] who provided important letters of introduction (Chinese having been prohibited to travel to Tibet proper), and Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, then a Tibetan military supply officer who, in 1950 as Governor of Kham, was instrumental in Tibet’s capitulation to the Red Army. *“In Chamdo, in summer, government officials held a great picnic banquet which lasted days. We played Mah-jong and listened to gramophones and I greatly enjoyed noodles made from refined Indian flour – much better than Tibetan stone-ground, which was full of sand.”*

After stopping in Derge for ten months to learn 200 empowerments and secret teachings, he crossed the Jinsha river into Tibet, spending two months on the northern trail to Lhasa, crossing high mountain tracts, deeply dissected by the headwaters of great Asian rivers, accompanied by two students. He arrived in the capital in August 1938, being admitted to Drepung monastery – ‘The Rice Heap’ – one of three great monasteries in Lhasa, under the name of Losang Zhengzhu. *“I needed a sponsor. The 13th Dalai Lama when visiting the Emperor in Peking had seen an orphaned boy from Lanzhou whom he took as a servant to Lhasa. He, Ngawang Gyaltzen Lama was now very senior and was my guarantor. Normally you had to make a large donation to the monastery to avoid heavy daily chores such as serving tea to hundreds of monks, I had little money, but he only requested a pot of yoghurt.”* Hsing’s teachers were masters of Buddhist learning and included Ling Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama’s senior tutor whom Hsing met once a week in the Potala Palace. There were great annual inter-college debates in Drepung, where Hsing’s deep knowledge of sacred texts often settled doctrinal disputes.

The child incarnate 14th Dalai Lama arrived at a special camp at Rigya, two miles east of Lhasa on 6th October 1939, to be greeted with

great ceremony by delegations from the Tibetan government and representatives from China, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Kashmir and Great Britain. On the third, final day of the camp, Hsing took a photograph of His Holiness seated on a dais after a "Pandita's Hat" had been placed on his head, with a camera hidden up the broad sleeve of his monk's robe, which was published in *The Times* [London] on 5th March 1940 [page 12]. The new Dalai Lama was enthroned on 22nd February 1940, [Hsing was not at the ceremony]. Over time, Hsing came to know the Dalai Lama's family and also made friends at the British Mission at the Dekyi Lingkha when they invited Chinese officials to tennis parties.

In 1944, Hsing made a pilgrimage to the great monasteries at Tashilhunpo and Sakya. *"I had no money, but was taken there by a noble in exchange for Buddhist teaching."* That year he became only the second Han known to have passed examination in the doctorate 'Lharamgpa Geshe' degree. Later in 1944, Hsing undertook a once in 12 years extreme pilgrimage - held in the 12 year cycle of the Year of the Monkey - to the sacred "Pure Crystal Mountain" of Dakpa Sheri (18,815 feet) in the Tsari district of southwest Tibet. The 94 mile, dangerous, life-threatening, clockwise circumambulation of the "Landscape Mandala of Guru Rinpoche Padmasambhava" - if survived - was reputed to absolve all sins, including murder; lasted longer than 20 days. During it, the more than 20,000 pilgrims were attacked by the Loba 'barbarian' aboriginal people, armed with swords and poison arrows, at whose hands scores perished. Hsing survived being lost for days in bamboo jungle, *"we could not even see the sky"*, low, rotting food supplies, water shortages, biting insects, drenching rainstorms and tropical disease. He was the only Han Chinese ever to have survived the pilgrimage's rigours. *"The semi-naked tribes had no writing, no high culture, I was curious about them. They had to be paid big tributes in exchange to open a specially built 'symbolic ceremonial door' and for oaths not to attack us, but they cheated. At first, we had no fear, if we died, we gained great merit for the next incarnation. Nevertheless, I was still young and even though a Buddhist, I carried a revolver for protection because the more the tribesmen could kill, the more merit they would gain in their religious belief. Moreover, they were avenging wrongs and two deaths from 12 years earlier. The trail ran single-file through deep sub-tropical forested ravines - coming from cold mountains we were not used to the heat. Huge queues built up crossing narrow rickety bamboo bridges - some fell into the fast-flowing rivers and were swept away. We scrambled*

up slippery log ladders and slithered up slimy cliffs, often while Loba tribesmen would shoot poison arrows or roll boulders down at us. My Mongolian student got an arrow in the head, luckily not poisoned. I led a group of a hundred people and if I saw Loba hiding behind a tree, I would shoot into the air. I took a photograph of dozens of dead pilgrims lying in a river below me who had been knocked off a precarious ledge along which we scrambled, by the barbarians above us. Once, I passed a pilgrim still alive, whose four limbs had been hacked off. At night, they came to kill us, even killing families hiding in rivers. We saw the dead from both sides every day. Our 250 Khampa soldier bodyguards had rushed ahead and could not help anybody behind on that narrow trail. After ten days, we had no food and our clothes rotted; we had nowhere to sleep. It was 'a once and only' total ritual of a lifetime. Never so bad a place. No more! No more!"

After two months' recuperation in Lhasa, Hsing travelled with a bandit merchant's group for four months, south-west to Kunning, Yunnan, travelling 25 miles a day between pack animals' pastures. "We went slowly, crossing many high snowy mountains and every day, overhead, could see American warplanes flying "The Hump" from India. We crossed a major river, the Lantsang (Rdza Chu), sliding across on a long bamboo rope. It sometimes fatally broke - I had to drink wine to get enough courage! One day a group of 16 men armed with knives and guns lay in wait to kill the bandit trader who had murdered several of their friends. He was very scared and sent the servants another way, but asked me to go ahead because I was a Gelugpa Yellow Hat Buddhist which would protect me. If I did not go, he said I would be a Chinese with a small heart. This was very dangerous. Luckily, they mistook me for a "Rinpoche" - a high incarnate lama - and asked who was following. I said, "my servant". They failed to recognise him and slaughtered a yak for a feast. He said I saved his life that day. True!"

Hsing was en route to Chunking with a personal gift and letter from the Taktra Regent of Tibet to General Chiang-Kai-Shek who granted him an interview. In a desire to promote good relationships between China and Tibet, Chiang-Kai-Shek appointed Hsing headmaster of the new National Chinese Elementary School, Lhasa, and to a representative position in the Commission of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs (re-established in Lhasa, 22nd March 1940, on the remnants of General Huang's mission of 1934 which was now represented only by a lone radio officer), as one of seven staff and the only fluent speaker of Tibetan. Under such circumstances, Hsing disrobed from holy orders, returning to Tibet in 1948. "The school had 300 pupils, funded by 100,000 Chinese dollars a year. Everyone sent their children

to me; it was so successful that the British school run by Mr Parker soon had no pupils and closed! Running the primary school were the happiest days of my life. I now had a salary which meant life was much better.” Having visited India for medical treatment in 1947, Hsing was invited by the Government of Nepal to view schools in Kathmandu, which much impressed him, which he hoped to replicate.

Before returning to Lhasa, as he was no longer a monk, his mother arranged his marriage to a neighbour, who was a poor orphan, “it worked out very well. We had four children - the first of whom I had to deliver in Lhasa as there was no doctor. They later grew up in America and made good professional careers. We were married 20 years, but she had had a divination of a short life, and died aged 37, in 1965. With my family, I had the Buddha’s blessing.” Later in America, after his children had left home, he took a second wife – a Chinese herbal doctor – as a companion.

In July 1949, with the threat of a Communist take over in China, the Tibetan Kashag government, falsely fearing possible embedded Communist agents, set a deadline for the expulsion of all Chinese officials and their families from Lhasa under the threat of force. Hsing was able to defuse the tension and negotiated a calm, safe, dignified exit, under Tibetan military protection to the Indian border. “I was just a monk, so all would listen to me. I asked the Tibetan Foreign Service to provide for safe passage to India or east to China. I knew for certain from my last visit to China that Communists would take over, but I had to keep quiet to allow a smooth exit for all of us.”

Having sojourned in Sikkim awhile, Hsing moved to Hong Kong in 1950 where he lived for ten years teaching and translating Tibetan Buddhist works, including “Graded Stages of the Path” by Tsongkhapa, which was widely published in China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. To support his family, he took to trading truck tyres and quality British woollen cloth. “I liked Hong Kong because everyone was free and there were no taxes. I did not return to Mainland China because I knew nothing about Communism and I saw that my contemporaries from the Commission, fully loyal to China, who did return, suffered severely. I did not go to Taiwan as I would have had to compete with so many for a government job.”

Next, he was recruited by Dr T.V. Wylie, Dean of Eastern Languages at the University of Washington, Seattle, in 1959, to teach Tibetan and to work for the State Department as a special advisor on Tibetan Affairs. Hsing again met the Dalai Lama on the latter’s first visit to the USA in New Jersey, where he presented him with a copy of his translation of Tsongkhapa.

In 1987, he was invited by the Chinese government to an International Tibetology Conference in Peking, *“they wanted me to go to Lhasa, this was very important for them, but on reaching Chengdu I did not want to be exploited, so turned back to visit my family in Shanghai whom I had not seen since 1948.”* He also met Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, whom he had known many years earlier. Later, in 1993 however, he did visit Lhasa, *“I liked the old fashioned Tibet, the Chinese had changed so much, I felt no good, so I stayed only two days.”*

In 2003, his memoir *“To Seek Buddhist Dharma in the Snow Land. An Oral History by a Han Chinese Lama.”* was published in Peking, in which he vividly describes his experiences as a Buddhist scholar and documents the historical, geographical and ethnographic events of his long journey. The book is an invaluable, neutral account of Chinese – Tibetan relationships of the 1930s and 40s, yet to be translated into English. *“I saw things from both sides, I wanted to take the stable Buddhist ‘middle way’ view. In the old Tibet everyone was only looking for money, both the monasteries and the nobles; nobody was caring for the country, nobody was much interested in politics. It was backward and nearly everyone was poor, the easterners were over-taxed and there was need of reform. However, the departure of the British who were great benefactors to Tibet, upon India’s independence in 1947 and the take over by the Chinese Communists in 1950, turned Tibet upside-down; otherwise, Tibet would be totally different today. Historically the Chinese have always wanted to be Tibet’s best patron, but too often they do things the wrong way.”*

Late in life he retreated to focus on religious practices, but still found time to translate Dharma texts and teach disciples into his late 90s and was working on accounts of his time in Sikkim and his pilgrimage to Tsari at the time of his death. His lifelong modesty and humility were constant as he applied himself to teaching the need of compassion to the benefit of all. Only with reluctance and reserve late in life did he grant a few interviews about his unique experiences on The Roof of the World. There was a minor earthquake near his home on the day of his passing.

Geshe Su-Zhi Hsing is survived by four children from his first marriage, his second wife and a stepdaughter, together with several dedicated disciples.

Born 19th November, 1916, Nanking, China.

Died 6th March 2014, aged 97, Rowland Heights, California, USA.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The European Society for Studies of Central Asia and Himalayan Regions (SEECHAC) and the Cluster 'Asia and Europe' jointly organize the Fourth International SEECHAC Colloquium. The event, entitled 'Religious Revivals and Artistic Renaissance in Central Asia and the Himalayan Region – past and present' will take place at the Internationales Wissenschaftsforum Heidelberg from November 16 to 18, 2015 (Hauptstrasse 242, 69115 Heidelberg).

The colloquium will focus on various forms of religious revivals or artistic renaissances in the Himalayas and Central Asia, including Northern India, Northern Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet, Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics, from the viewpoint of a variety of discipline and fields of study (in particular archaeology, art history, numismatics, philology, social anthropology, religious studies).

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