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EDITORIAL

This issue of the *Bulletin* provides a good example of the breadth and depth of topics that we regularly cover. Kamal Adhikari's essay *Perception or reality? A case study of corrupt practices in the forestry sector in Nepal* provides a close look at how corruption actually operates in an important sector of the economy, and should be required reading for anyone who wishes to help achieve transparency and clean governance, anywhere in South Asia. Richard Axelby's essay *Hermit Village or Zomian Republic? An update on the political socio-economy of a remote Himalayan community* provides a detailed re-analysis of a forgotten anthropological classic – Colin Rosser's work on "A Hermit Village in Kullu" – and relates it to the lively, ongoing debate about whether certain Himalayan communities should be considered part of "Zomia." Alaka Atreya Chudal's article *Rahul Sankrityayan and the Buddhism of Nepal* gathers together a number of little-known sources to give us new and valuable information about this famous scholar and his relationship to both Nepal and Tibet. Marion Wettstein's essay *A Pioneer of Comparative Himalayan Mythology* gives us new insights into the important work of Nicholas Allen and its continuing relevance. There are also book reviews on tribal architecture, children and work, and Old Tibetan Studies, and a touching obituary for Philippe Sagant and his "passion for ethnology." All in all, a scholarly feast for Himalayan specialists. I wish all of you good reading!

William Sax, Editor
European Bulletin of Himalayan Studies

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Kamal Adhikari is an ethnobotanist from Nepal. He completed his PhD at the University of Aberdeen in August 2014 on Plants, People and the Politics of Ethnobotanical Knowledge in Nepal. His current research interest focuses on the issues of climate change, biodiversity conservation and sustainability, and the way these influence the use of ethnobotanical resources in Nepal. Based in Nepal, he is affiliated to the Department of Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen as an honorary research fellow.

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Marion Wettstein is an anthropologist with a regional focus on the eastern Himalayas, especially Nepal and Northeast India. She completed her doctoral thesis on the design, meaning, and contemporary transformations of Naga textiles at the University of Zürich. Currently she is working on ritual dance and performative traditions amongst the Rai of Eastern Nepal in a research project hosted at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, University of Vienna. Besides ritual studies, mythology, material culture, anthropology of dance, theatre, and performance, her thematic interests also include visual anthropology with an emphasis on ethnographic drawing.

Perception or reality? A case study of corrupt practices in the forestry sector in Nepal

Kamal Adhikari

Summary

Corrupt practices are endemic in the forestry sector in Nepal. Corruption features prominently in the transfer and promotion of forest officials where large sums of money are paid to secure transfers to the more profitable of the range posts. The issuing of collection and transport permits for forest products is a rich source of extra money for officials as payments are demanded from traders under an established 'system' to speed and smooth the process. For those involved, such transactions are perceived to be corrupt only when additional money is paid on top of the already established rate. Money is also made from the preparation of reports such as environmental impact assessments. Training programmes organised by the governmental and non-governmental organisations are another source of illicit income. As forest products are transported from the collection sites to their destinations large sums have to be paid to forest officials, and many others. These conclusions are based on evidence provided by semi-structured interviews of a wide selection of forest officials, traders and others in a district administrative centre in central Nepal. This article concludes that although this level of corruption contradicts Agenda 21's demand for good and honest administration it may nevertheless be a positive factor in development as a lubricant for an as yet incomplete and imperfectly functioning state bureaucracy.

Keywords: Corrupt practices, Forest management, Agenda 21 and Nepal

Introduction

Much of the general scholarly and political discussion of corruption starts with the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) prepared by Transparency International (TI). TI is an international civil society organisation which is devoted to monitoring and publishing corporate and political corruption and which has played a major role in a global campaign mounted against corruption. It has been trying to build a coalition between the major

international donor institutions, the international business community and local politicians with the aim of improving governance in corrupt societies (Sampson 2005). Its CPI measures perceptions rather than actual corrupt practices. It is a composite of the opinions of a range of officials, management executives, business experts and US-resident country experts and, according to one of its originators Fredrik Galtung, it “relies on an imprecise, yet narrow, definition of corruption, focuses only on the takers and not the givers, and draws its information from often ignorant sources” (Harrison 2007: 674).

The CPI perceived a high level of public sector corruption in developing countries. Nepal ranked 154th out of the 183 countries listed in 2011, scoring 2.2 for public sector corruption on a scale of 0-10, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt and 10 means that a country is perceived as very ‘clean’ (TI 2011). In 2014, Nepal’s position had improved marginally and it now ranked 126th out of the 175 countries then listed and scored 2.9 for public sector corruption (TI 2014).

The results produced by TI in its CPI need to be taken with a pinch of salt. Elizabeth Harrison warns us that a strong anti-corruption lobby has developed in the western world which adopts a simplistic definition of corruption and underplays the very different meanings and contexts of the transactions involved. It provides an all too neat explanation for the ills of the giver and taker countries and continents, and attaches moral culpability entirely to the supposedly corrupt (Harrison 2007).

The CPI has encouraged the prevailing negative view of corruption. Jennifer Hasty (2005) argues that corruption has become a matter of central concern with the development of the global neoliberal order. The widespread failure of neoliberal development models is explained by the corrosive influence of corruption. As early as the 1970s, it was normal to perceive corruption as a consequence of “Third World instability” and a lack of social discipline. However, after a series of scandals involving private-sector firms, such as Enron and the global telecoms giant WorldCom in the USA, it became apparent that corruption was not confined to public sector officials in defective state bureaucracies or to developing as opposed to developed societies (Shore and Haller 2005).

Akhil Gupta defines corruption as “a violation of norms and standards of conduct”. In his examination of the discourses of corruption in contemporary India, he argues that a discourse of accountability is the

other face of a discourse of corruption (Gupta 1995: 388). Rather than treating corruption as a dysfunctional aspect of state organisations, he sees it as a mechanism through which the state itself is discursively constituted. Quoting Herzfeld (1992) he argues that standards of accountability and norms of conduct of state officials come from social groups as well as from the state, and often diverge. Consequently, assessments differ as to whether a particular action is corrupt or not. Not just subjects but also state officials are involved since they too are “multiply positioned within different regimes of power: in consequence, they simultaneously employ, and are subject to, quite varying discourses of accountability” (Gupta 1995: 388). There are variations in the discourse of corruption within regions and between different historical periods. Corruption is a transnational problem transcending individuals and even individual countries. It “is always relational, mutually implicating, and boundary crossing” (Hasty 2005: 280).

Gupta argues that the analysis of corruption as a social phenomenon is inherently complex. It cannot be grasped in separation from narratives of corruption. The experience of corruption by all the parties involved in such acts is reiterated by each and every one of them. This enables participants to make sense of their actions. Crucial insight into corruption may be gained from the stories produced by state officials, who are “essential cogs in the machine greased by corruption” (Gupta 2005: 176).

Shore and Haller have argued that corruption eases the transition to modernity and has a positive function in development “because it ‘fills the gap’ left by partial bureaucratization and the incomplete penetration of the state” (2005: 3). This is not a view shared by international bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF). After a World Bank report of 1989 had blamed Africa’s development problems on a crisis of governance, the IMF made good governance a condition of aid and insisted that the many financial and other reforms which it demanded were core components of this. Its macroeconomic policies were sacrosanct and were maintained even when they did not lead to the expected outcomes (Mkandawire 2007).

Following the line adopted by the IMF, Agenda 21 stressed the importance of good and honest administration. This agenda for the 21st century was negotiated in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro at the inter-governmental United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It called for increased efforts to “eradicate mismanagement of public

and private affairs, including corruption". This was seen to be essential for sustainable and broadly based development and sound economic performance (UNCED 1992: 25). The Nepali government has officially committed itself to Agenda 21 and its goals including the eradication of corruption and the sustainable use of forest resources. However, corrupt practices continue to operate in the forestry sector and make the achievement of these goals problematic (Adhikari 2014).

Corrupt practices in the forestry sector are not confined to Nepal. They have increasingly been recognised as a global phenomenon (Callister 1999). Various types of corrupt practices in general and specifically in the forestry sector have been identified in India (Hill 2000). Current publications on forestry in Nepal largely concern themselves with governance. There is often a specific focus on community forestry (for instance Nightingale and Ojha 2012, Ojha, Cameron and Kumar 2009, Nightingale 2005, and Varughese and Ostrom 2001). Climate change has also attracted much attention and specifically the implementation of REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) (for example Paudel *et al.* 2013 and Larson 2011). However, there have as yet been no in-depth academic studies published on corrupt practices in the forestry sector in Nepal, although this issue has been addressed in passing in articles on Nepal's forests and forest products (Paudel, Khanal and Branney 2011, Satyal-Pravat 2006, Larsen, Olsen and Boon 2000). By contrast, the subject has received much attention in popular journalism and the media. This article is an attempt to address this research gap.

The article is based on a case study of a District Forest Office (DFO) in central Nepal and shows how corrupt practices are described and viewed by the wide range of participants involved. It shows the situation to be more complex and nuanced than outsiders perhaps realise. It considers two broad questions: 1) What is perceived as corrupt practice by the people involved in the exploitation and management of plants? and 2) How do these practices operate in the management and trade in forest products? It illustrates the various ways through which people linked with the exploitation and management of plant resources are making extra money. These include the appointment and transfer of forest officials, the issuing and obtaining of permits, keeping records and writing reports, the implementation of district Five Year Work Plans, and the transportation as well as the smuggling of forest products. These operate through the

'system', an English word which is frequently used by Nepali people to refer to an established tradition in bureaucratic institutions. The 'system' is an unwritten but very powerful working mechanism under which unofficial payments on a clearly understood and accepted scale are made to speed or accomplish passage over particular bureaucratic hurdles.

Forestry in Nepal

Forests cover 39.6% of Nepal's land area (Nepal Government 2014). It has been estimated that Nepal's forestry sector contributes about 15% towards Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (ERI 2011), although the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) made an estimate of only 3.5% in 2000 (FAO 2009). Nepal's forests were nationalised in 1957 following the demise of the previous Rana regime in 1951 (Gilmour and Fisher 1991). A formal bureaucratic structure for forest administration was established which operates throughout the country at the central, district and local levels. The Department of Forests (DOF) has offices in the regional administrative centres of each of the five development regions into which Nepal is politically divided. These regions are sub-divided in turn into a total of 75 districts; in each of these, DOF has a DFO with the exception of the Himalayan district of Mustang, the forested areas of which fall under the Annapurna Conservation Area Project (ACAP). Further subordinate forest offices have been set up; the number of these in each district depends on the size of its forested area. Each subordinate forest office is again sub-divided into a number of range posts, each commanded by a ranger in charge of a few forest guards. Each range post looks after two to three villages. The function of the forest officials is to supervise and enforce the law and regulations to protect the forest, to deal with forest fires, to provide training programmes and to supervise the Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUGs).

The DFO is the main body responsible for the implementation of the policies of the DOF and for the management of the forest in its catchment area. Each DFO has to produce a Five Year Work Plan. This work plan may be produced by the DFO's own experts or by experts hired by them. In either case, the plan has to be ratified by the DOF. This work plan governs all the activities of the DFO. It specifies exactly which projects, which Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Initial Environmental Examinations (IEEs), and which training programmes are to be carried

out. It includes how many Community Forests (CFs) and nurseries are to be established and how much barren land is to be planted. It provides a general framework to cover all the activities of the DFO. Nothing may be initiated unless included in it.

Methods

This article builds on a qualitative research project that lasted from September 2010 to June 2011 and mainly used interviewing, ethnographic fieldwork and textual analysis. Data were collected, for example, through observation, documentary and conversation analysis, whilst other data were generated through individual interviews and group discussions (Ritchie 2003). All interviews were open-ended and semi-structured. An open-ended purposive qualitative sampling technique (Briggs 1986, Bernard 2006) was used while conducting interviews. Interviews were conducted with 45 key-informants, including forest officials, researchers, conservation workers, herbal plant traders, journalists and members of the Federation of Community Forestry Users' Groups Nepal (FECOFUN). This article also draws upon the author's previous experience of working as a consultant botanist in different parts of Nepal from 2003 to 2007.

The administrative structure of Nepal made it necessary to work at the central level in Kathmandu and at the district administrative level as well as at the local level in a village. Interviews were conducted with forest officials and others at all three levels. A DFO in central Nepal was chosen for this research because it was accessible by foot from Kathmandu, an important consideration because of the unstable political situation and frequency of general strikes in Nepal at that time. The DOF classifies the district chosen for this study as one of the top 10 in terms of the popular pressure on its forest resources and its vulnerability in conservation issues (Nepal Government 2014). This DFO had three subordinate forest offices, each of which had five range posts. These 15 range posts covered all the forests in the district. There were about 180 forest officials in all, who worked either in a range post or the subordinate forest offices or, in a few cases, the central district office.

The next section considers the five main ways of making extra money in the forestry sector.

Corrupt practices in the forestry sector

Transfer and promotion

The Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MOFSC) and the DOF deal with the transfer and promotion (*saruwā badhuwā*) of senior forest officials. However, the internal transfer of lower level forest officials and their yearly evaluations are conducted by the District Forest Officer. Corruption is commonly believed to feature prominently in the transfer and promotion of government officials in Nepal (Dangal 2005, Upreti 2004). My research in central Nepal concludes that this is true of the forestry sector. Forest officials generally want a transfer from one place to another after serving in one location for a certain period of time. Typically, they opt for a transfer to the cities from the remote rural areas because they wish their children to grow up in a better place and to go to schools with a better reputation. In the cities there is better provision of infrastructure and services. They also want to transfer in order to make more money, as some posts are more profitable than others. This holds true for those located in more densely forested areas which provide more money-making opportunities. Honest officials in real need of a transfer always tend to lose out, while those who wish to transfer in order to make money, and are prepared to offer a bribe, tend to take priority.

One forest officer asserted that junior officials have to be loyal to their seniors because their work performance is evaluated at the end of the year by seniors in a process which takes only a couple of minutes. This assessment is the key component for their promotion. The evaluation is perceived as often being influenced by bribery, serving and appeasing bosses or by political connections. Again, other genuine and hardworking officials who are not involved in any corruption tend to lose out. The forest officer mentioned was certain that the evaluation system in the forestry sector is influenced by corruption. He stated that while officials may have secured good marks in the written examination, i.e. in the open competition route to promotion, others with lower marks may still be appointed ahead of them through *file badhuwā*, or 'internal promotion', based on the yearly appraisal of government employees. Corruption does not always prevail and talented candidates are still sometimes successful through the open competition route.

Another forest officer said that there was no encouragement from

the government to take the evaluation of forest officials' achievement seriously nor was there any scientific mechanism to punish or reward them. He added: "One ranger's monthly household expenses equals another ranger's pee" (Interview, 6 May 2011). By this he meant that the amount of money one better placed ranger spends in a day in a pub for his drink could be more than enough for another less well placed ranger to pay his monthly household expenses. This wry comment indicated how great the variation in profitability might be between one range post and another.

Only the key officials amongst those who are appointed internally to the profitable range posts within the district can make such large sums of money. The term *mili bhagat* is used to describe an unethical financial deal between these officials and traders, which the former saw as one of the main ways of making money for themselves. For example, a trader who had received a permit from the DFO to cut and transport five tonnes of timber could secretly pay the key official to turn a blind eye when he took two or three times as much. This movement of timber should be recorded and checked off on a register by subordinate officials at check points. The key officials would appoint to these check points only people from their staff who were reliable, obedient and loyal to them, and would wave the illicit timber through without recording it on the register. Those who are less well trusted are appointed to places where there are either less forest resources available to sell or which are located far from the district administrative centre or which are not accessible by road.

Some forest officials were said to have paid a huge amount of money to be transferred to a district, and to be appointed to the better range posts inside the district. They had expected to make a profit on their investment. This, however, had not been possible because of the government's decision to impose a complete ban on trade in timber in 2010. Officials are mostly appointed for a two year term which is not automatically renewed, least of all in the most profitable areas. Even if the government decided to lift its ban, they had less than a year remaining to make their money. One of the forest officials, who had denied making any payment for his transfer, said that a number of forest officials were 'ill' at that time because they were running out of time to recoup their investment and make the expected profit. According to him:

Normally a forest officer stays in one district for two years and then gets transferred to another district unless he has a strong political or any other network. He comes with the mentality of making money. He explores which district has a large number of trees, who is his boss, whether he can strike up a good relationship with his boss or not; if he can make a good relationship, he then makes a plan to sell that many trees and to make that amount of money and so on. When a forest official comes with this mentality, how can he be bothered to protect forests? He thinks “I am here for two years. I will be transferred somewhere else after two years. This is not my district either. I do not care whether these streams and rivers are dried up or landslides occur in the forests”. That is the mentality of most of the forest officials (Interview, 9 May 2011).

In the past, one officer had mostly worked in the hilly districts of Nepal which were not regarded as good places for making money. He had then been transferred to a new district, which was considered as one of the best in Nepal for that purpose, just at the time when the government had imposed its complete ban. However, in the end he had anyway been appointed as an in-charge of a range post which was not considered to be a good one in terms of “making money”. He explained that the main person in the DFO through whom bargains were struck for internal transfers within the district was a mediator entrusted by the District Forest Officer to carry out negotiations on his behalf with the staff. He had been asked to pay 50,000 rupees through the mediator to secure a transfer to the better post where he could have made a good amount of money. He stated:

I was not sure whether to pay the 50,000 rupees or not. However, my plan was to pay if I had transferred and started making money. What happened? They thought I was not clear and did not have enough money to pay them quickly. They [the District Forest Officer and the mediator] believed I had no money as I had not made money in the past. As a result, they appointed another person to that good range post (Interview, 12 May 2011).

Payments may also be made to stay in a profitable post. One forest officer recalled the words of his senior at a briefing meeting to staff at the DFO:

I have just come back from Kathmandu where I distributed one million rupees to some senior officials at the DOF and MOFSC. What am I to do? If we do not pay up, nothing will happen. And here as well, we have paid 10 rupees per cubic foot to the journalists in the district. Do not take any stress. Work smoothly and carefully (Interview, 12 May 2011).

Information gathered from several sources makes clear the scale of financial gain to be expected under the existing 'system'. For each cubic foot of timber harvested the District Forest Officer would receive 100 rupees. 50 to 60 would go to the administration section of the DFO, 15 to 20 rupees to the sub-district forest office involved and the same amount to the range post. If it is all added up, and given that there are 300,000 cubic feet of annually harvestable timber in the district, the District Forest Officer would make thirty million rupees in a year.

These interviews indicate how wide ranging the 'system' is. It not only brought money to some officials at the DFO from the traders, but also enriched some of the key senior officials at the DOF and MOFSC in Kathmandu. These key senior officials have the power to transfer their staff from one district to another. Juniors may well therefore consider it to be worth their while to make such payments.

Rumours were also heard that payments were made to facilitate appointments at senior or even ministerial level. An interviewee said that a District Forest Officer had paid four million rupees to the Forest Minister to get a transfer. These rumours cannot be substantiated although the then Forest Minister Dipak Bohara was investigated by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) for involvement in taking bribes when transferring District Forest Officers to better districts (Miya 2010: 2). The minister himself was alleged by the interviewee to have paid ten million rupees to his party to get a ministerial position in the government.

Issuing and obtaining permits

The issuing of collection and transport permits for forest products provides further opportunities to forest officials to gain a significant amount of extra money. Traders pay extra to obtain their permits, based on the established 'system' in the DFO, as one experienced forest officer described:

It is different from district to district. One district has one system. A second district has another system. It is quite interesting. When ... an official goes to a new district ... while he goes on working, he automatically receives 'speed money' or whatever you call it. There is a system. He receives another type of money if he follows the advice of his fellow officials and this involves corruption. The level of corruption depends on the extent to which this new official follows his experienced fellow worker. If he only follows the legal documents while performing his duties, he receives less money based on the established 'system'. This is not identical in all districts and the amount varies from district to district and person to person. Not all clients agree with the existing 'system', and so they do not want to pay. But there are those who are willing to pay more, this could mean that they are trying to corrupt more [by taking even more timber than the allocated amount] (Interview, 3 June 2011).

Legally the traders are not required to pay any more than the fixed government tax but if they do not want to pay a supplement, the process of receiving their collection and transport permit can be delayed. 'Speed money', based on the 'system', can speed the process of receiving the necessary documents from the DFOs. This 'speed money' has not generally been perceived as corruption. However, a person who pays more than the going rate would be perceived as corrupt, and in such cases both givers and takers are considered to be corrupt. 'UT' money is different from 'speed money'. It refers to money passed under the table as a bribe to an official, a procedure which is clearly regarded as corrupt. On one occasion, a freelance botanist said that some smugglers had been detained because they had not provided UT. People normally pay up and so avoid arrest.

How it is seen from the point of view of the trader was explained clearly to me by a herbal plant trader. In his words:

There is a 'system'. They [the forest officials] do not have to ask for a bribe. The 'system' has been running for ages. It applies to all forest products, including timber. The Minister and the Secretary for Forests and senior officials at the Department of Forests are all taking bribes. There is not a fixed rate. It could start from one and two rupees. It

depends on how expensive the material is. If it is expensive, it could be four to five rupees per kilogram. This is compulsory (Interview, 5 May 2011).

Another entrepreneur, who runs an incense factory, told me that the fragrant bay tree bark used in his factory would not cost more than 50 rupees per kilogram if they did not have to pay on average an additional 20 rupees per kilogram to forest officials and other groups. The conversation with him was really important because I was interviewing him in a room at the DFO at his suggestion, but this location did not stop him talking loudly about corruption among forest officials.

A herbal plant trader related how the District Forest Officer had demanded a bribe when he went to see him to renew his transport permit. The District Forest Officer asked him to pay one to two rupees for each kilogram of fragrant bay tree bark. He said that he refused to pay the bribe, so the District Forest Officer took his truck filled with the fragrant bay tree bark. They weighed it but found that it in fact was 250 kilograms lighter than the permitted amount. He later received his goods back as the District Forest Officer could not succeed in finding any faults. But he admitted paying sometimes 50, and on other occasions 100 or even up to 200 rupees as *chiyā kharcha*, or 'tea expenses', to forest officials during the loading of herbal plants.

A timber trader specified the rate per cubic foot of timber to be paid to forest officials under the current 'system' was 100 rupees on top of the market price and its value added tax. He continued:

We do not [legally] have to pay any money [to the DFO] except the 13% VAT [value added tax]. On top of that we have to pay 100 rupees and still we have to suffer their rudeness. The District Forest Officer does not take the extra money directly. He takes it through an intermediary, a junior staff member. No work is done without paying them money. ... They even ask 200 rupees per cubic foot of timber from the community forests. When forest officials go to the forest to verify the amount of timber, they again ask 1,000 to 2,000 rupees per visit. We have to arrange a vehicle and food for them. Recently, I spent 30,000 rupees but I am not sure whether I will make 30,000 profit or not this time (Interview, 13 May 2011).

Another trader gave a few more reasons for giving bribes to forest officials:

Why do businessmen give *ghus* [bribes] to government officials? It is because they ask us to submit this and that document within a specific time. We have to rush to register our application but they do not work quickly. If we do not act ourselves, they may take more than 15 days to perform that task. Sometimes, they also pass our ideas to their own friends and relatives and create an environment of competitive bargaining with them. ... We altogether pay 1,300 rupees per cubic foot for catechu wood. What is included here? A 150 rupee bribe goes directly to the District Forest Officer. It is compulsory. If we do not pay, they do not work. It is crystal clear that everyone knows about this. But that is not written in the government policy. They are paid their salary by the government (Interview, 5 June 2011).

The same trader told a story to illustrate how a District Forest Officer had made his work difficult. Once, he had gone to a DFO in western Nepal to get a transport permit to transport his resin up to his factory at Nepalganj. The District Forest Officer was angry with him as one of his staff had not organised a jeep for him in the past. After having waited for 15 days, he passed a certain amount of money to the District Forest Officer to speed up the process and obtain his transport permit. He asked: "When I was compelled, what should I do? Do I need to give him the 'speed money' or not?" He was not only paying the government officials but also the senior members of the FECOFUN in the guise of supporting their institutions, for instance by several times buying computers and furniture for their offices, buying air tickets for their travel, paying their hotel bills and filling up their vehicles with petrol.

Bribes, already established as a 'system' in the DFOs in various districts, are perceived as legal money by both business entrepreneurs and forest officials. One of the traders said that the extra money which they give to the forest officials is based on the established 'system'. They clearly said that such money was legal and also claimed that they had not been involved in illegal trade. Here again, corruption was perceived as being when people paid additional money on top of the already established rate. They said that business entrepreneurs were sometimes asked, through

the mediator, to host senior government officials and even ministers when they visited their districts.

Preparing reports: EIAs and IEEs

Money can also be made from the preparation of reports such as EIAs and IEEs in those districts which have forest resources to be exploited. These reports are prepared according to a set formula. The research team is the same; the pine forests are similar; as is the process of writing the EIA reports and of obtaining approval from the ministry concerned. In theory, these reports should be prepared by experts after they have made a full assessment based on field research. However, in some cases they are prepared by modifying someone else's work. There have been some allegations that some researchers stay in Kathmandu and write their report by raiding other people's work.

On one occasion, a team was asked to conduct an IEE and to write a Five Year Work Plan for one of the DFOs in western Nepal. Each project was allocated 70,000 rupees, after tax. For the most part, existing data available at the DFO were used; some information was taken from earlier reports from other districts; and the rest was artificially made up and calculated by the research team. Two reports were made and submitted to the DFO for their approval. Once they were approved, the research team requested the release of their consultancy fee. To secure this release, an accountant at the DFO took 5,000 rupees and the District Forest Officer took around 10,000 rupees. Their signature was required; it was part of their job for which they were being paid a salary. Nevertheless, they expected something extra. An entrepreneur who was one of the top three investors in a rosin and turpentine company said that he had paid 40,000 rupees to the same District Forest Officer to ensure that provision was made in the Five Year Work Plan for his company to be allowed to tap the amount of resin that he had requested. This was nominally a contribution towards the expenses involved in preparing these reports.

A freelance botanist had also sometimes been involved in making reports for the government, based on the use of already existing data, simply to use up the allocated funds. He said that he was soon going to make a report for one of the DFOs. He said that 70,000 rupees had been allocated for the completion of this project. In a verbal agreement, 3% of the total had to be paid to an accountant, 10% to the District Forest

Officer, and the remainder was for him as payment for writing the report. Although the report should in theory have been based on new research, it in reality recycled existing data. He admitted that he had been doing this type of work to keep the wolf from the door¹.

The government had made an EIA or an IEE compulsory for the extraction of forest products, based on the amount requested to be harvested. A few big forest-based companies conducted EIAs and were granted exploitation rights over specific forests. The next step in the procedure was to check that the forest products were being exploited in a sustainable manner according to the rules. Although the environmental act provides for environmental inspectors, the ministry of environment had only one office based in Kathmandu and in practice had no environmental inspectors in post. As a result, authority was given to the District Forest Officer to check the sustainable tapping of resin from the pine trees. The District Forest Officer monitors irregularities but does not have the authority to file a case against offenders. By contrast, an environmental inspector does have the authority, but no one had yet been appointed. This loophole in the policy was used by business entrepreneurs and the District Forest Officer to exploit the forest resources.

The company involved was supposed itself to hire the research team preparing the EIA report and submit the report directly to the relevant ministry. In practice, however, current and retired senior forest officials were involved in the preparation of these reports. The companies were charged a certain amount for the preparation of EIA reports. Although the company theoretically formed the research team, it was in reality assembled by these officials. Through their contacts the officials were able to underpay experts from Kathmandu who had no bargaining power over wages because of the high unemployment rate among educated people². They were therefore able to make a significant profit out of their deal with the company. A few forest officials also made a substantial amount of money from moonlighting as consultants in the preparation of these

1 More generally in the international context, Chambers (1997: 86) observes that research and consultancy reports are often self-censored, and their findings interpreted in a light favourable to their commissioners, as their authors do not wish to bite the hand that feeds them.

2 This comment is based on my personal experience of the hiring process as a consultant botanist.

reports. The forest officials used their contacts to make sure that these EIAs were approved speedily and without any hitches. The big forest-based companies therefore did not complain. The money they had handed over to officials meant that they could then heavily exploit the pine forests and thereby make a huge profit.

These companies also had direct links with senior members of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and paid a certain percentage of their income as a levy to them. One entrepreneur said: “Maoists used to take 30 million rupees per year” (Interview, 5 June 2011). The Maoists controlled large sections of the countryside during their ‘People’s War’ which meant that no government officer could go to these areas to conduct inspections. These companies were left free to over-exploit the forest resources as much as they wanted. The companies and the government officials involved profited from this process (Adhikari and Dhungana 2010), as did the Maoists.

During my field work in 2011, I interviewed two of the entrepreneurs involved in the exploitation of forest-based products. I found their extreme anger to be against the bureaucrats rather than the politicians, even though they were still able to make a good profit from their business. They believed that these bureaucrats were the key figures in corruption, dragging politicians in and showing the entrepreneurs how to cheat. They said that when they go to the government offices, they are perceived as smugglers by the bureaucrats. One of them said:

We are businessmen and we are in business to make a profit. We invest money in our business but these bureaucrats and politicians keep their money in sacks. We expand our business if we make a profit but these people either put their money in sacks or deposit it in foreign banks (Interview, 5 June 2011).

Another added: “We are one of the top tax payers in the country but we are insulted when we go to the government offices”. They said that government officials also taught people how to evade tax and involved business entrepreneurs and politicians in corruption.

Traditionally there was a 10 year agreement between the companies and the government once an EIA had been successfully prepared. During my research period in 2010 to 2011, the government was proposing to

introduce an auction method for the extraction of resin. These traders said that this new proposal was a way for forest officials to make money from the businessmen and a means to encourage corruption rather than the sustainable use of pine trees. They argued that if specific pine forests were to be allocated to particular companies for a longer period of time, these companies would have a vested interest in sustainable management of those pine forests for their long-term benefit.

A small scale businessman said that the government's demand for an EIA and IEE before allowing the extraction of forest resources was only possible for the big companies and not for small traders like him. He did not have enough money to make an EIA or an IEE report. He said that he had received support neither from the DFO nor from the DOF but he continued to tap resin on a small scale from the pine forests which were owned by the CFUGs. In that case an EIA and IEE report was not legally required. His complaint was against the government for making policy only for the rich people. He said that he was also harassed by the sister organisations of the main political parties, and in particular by the Youth Force, an affiliated sister organisation of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

Awareness training programmes

Money can also be made on the side from the training programmes organised by the government, NGOs and INGOs. This section focuses on training programmes organised by the DFO itself on the cultivation of herbal plants as listed in its district Five Year Work Plan, and on nurseries and plantation programmes.

A hotel owner gave an example of how this money was made in practice. As all funds allocated to a particular programme had to be used up, the training programme organisers sometimes asked him to make out a bill for 1,000 rupees per person, even though less than 500 rupees had actually been spent on the lunch in his hotel. Some forest officials openly stated that all the money allocated to conduct these training programmes could not be spent. Such unspent sums were pocketed by the forest officials. The final reports from these awareness training programmes seem fantastic on paper. However, only a few participants really benefit from these projects although most participants enjoy their daily allowance and the lunch provided in the programmes. People are ultimately encouraged to

become more corrupt than before as one successful corrupt deed leads to another.

In the case of forest officials, this type of money making activity extends beyond training programmes to the establishment of nurseries and plantation programmes. This again may involve the submission of inflated estimates. One story of making a fake estimate was heard by a forest official in his working area where he was the range post in-charge. He reports about a colleague who had prepared an estimate of 300,000 rupees to establish a nursery in one CF. After this money had been released from the DFO, the District Forest Officer took half of it, the officer who had made the fake estimate received around 20,000 rupees, the other officials who were involved also received their share and the rest of the money was taken by the chairperson of the CFUG.

Opinions varied on the effectiveness of these programmes. The hotel owner, as an outside observer, doubted that the training programmes on awareness of herbal plants and their cultivation had had any positive impact on the participants. He believed that the information about important natural resources could be disseminated to a wider audience if it was included in school text books in the school curriculum.

One day I was walking towards a village along with a forest official from the DFO. An old man from that village told me that not even a single seedling of a few species of fodder plants had survived in the nursery established by DFO officials. He said that the sowing and transplanting had been done without consulting the local people, at the wrong time and in the wrong place. Many forest officials had been involved in and had conducted awareness training programmes even though they had no vested or emotional interest in the conservation of plant resources. These helped to justify their existence and at least to utilise the allocated funds.

A freelance researcher gave a more positive evaluation. He accepted that the awareness training programmes, for all their association with corrupt practices, had had some positive impact on the conservation and utilisation of plant resources by increasing knowledge of their importance and possible uses. For instance, some farmers had begun to grow herbal plants from which essential oils could be extracted for sale on the international market.

The amount of money involved in individual acts of petty corruption

may be small but when petty corruption is widespread the cumulative total becomes significant.

Transportation of forest products

The transportation of forest products from the collection sites to their destinations also provides significant opportunities for making money on the side. Large sums are paid to forest officials and also to various other groups, including policemen, the army, political parties and their sister organisations, youth clubs, women's groups and *chulthe mundre*.³ They have all been seen to be actively involved in asking for bribes and donations from herbal traders. Interestingly, a herbal plant trader mentioned that the local people also ask for money by saying 'we protect this forest and you are taking'. Here money seems to be a powerful agent to seal the villagers' mouths.

This contention was supported by an incense factory owner who mentioned that the youth clubs in the villages, *chulthe mundre*, women's groups in the villages and sometimes even individuals demand a huge amount of money to let the bark through on its way from the collection point to the factory. He added: "Although these herbal plants were collected legally, these groups would not let us take herbal plants out if we did not pay money as per their demand". He further quoted the warning given by the groups: "We do not care about the paper work. You are a businessman. You have to pay otherwise you won't take these herbal plants out". Most of the herbal plant traders had a similar experience of paying extra money to these groups even though a few traders denied paying more money than the government tax and the money based on the already established 'system'.

A big herbal plant trader was very precise in describing his experiences and explaining how extensive, intrusive and expensive the 'system' is from his point of view:

3 *Chulthe mundre* is a term for those people with long hair and wear earrings, and are morally considered to be a group of bad people. Usually, they do not go to study or work, but are involved in stealing, bullying, and misbehaving in society. They are often employed by the tax collectors appointed by the DDCs to scare drivers into paying their road tax. In some cases, drivers try to cheat on their road tax if these *chulthe mundre* are not employed by the contractors.

Policemen take [money] anyway. If we do not pay them, there is no chance to escape. We can't win even if we discuss the matter. They threaten our truck drivers and helpers, and get some money. ... Forest officials have to sign our release order and we need their stamp on it. They ask for money at that time. They often give us trouble even if they are paid extra money. They ask for money while we are transporting rice, salt and even while carrying chickens. ... The District Development Committees [DDCs] appoint contractors to collect tax from goods which are transported from one district to other. They also give us trouble. They harass us and say "this document is not correct, this word is not correct and that word is not correct". And they ask for money unnecessarily. Oh my god! When will our country's situation improve? (Interview, 4 December 2010).

Another herbal plant trader said that he had been cutting back on his herbal plant business. When I asked him the reasons behind that, he said:

First of all, there is less resource [herbal plants] available than before. Tension arises from ten sides. On the one hand, policemen, and all the other people, including forest guards, started looking at the herbal plants as a source of extra income. They did not care whether a kilogram of herbal plants costs five rupees or not, they demanded 50 rupees per kilogram as a donation [bribe]. On the other hand, the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal went to the jungle. They began to demand not a thousand rupees; their demand was up to a million, two million and sometimes five million rupees. That business became loss-making instead of making a profit. That's why I asked myself, why should I do this business? Then I decided to give up (Interview, 23 April 2011).

A middleman detailed the purchase price, other expenses, the selling price and his profits from the herbal plant trade. Even though he had been made aware that the conversation was being recorded and though it was being conducted in the presence of the current range post head, he carried on regardless and specified the rate which had to be paid to forest officials. He said:

I used to buy fragrant bay tree bark for 13 rupees per kilogram. Two rupees per kilogram was for the ranger, some was for the Maoist communist party, the village development committee tax, the local clubs, the government tax and transportation. Total expenditure added up to 34 rupees per kilogram and I sold it for 37. I did not make much profit. If I include my time, I was operating at a loss. ... At that time, I paid altogether 40,000 to 50,000 rupees to the Maoists (Interview, 6 January 2011).

A freelance botanist said that some of the forest officials had themselves been involved in the over-exploitation of plant resources by recording on the relevant permits a lesser amount of plant materials than that which had actually been exported. He recalled:

In one conversation, a herbal plant trader told me the story of how he had managed to export 1,000 kilograms of herbal plants even though he only had an export permit for 300 kilograms. He had paid tax to the government for just these 300 kilograms. He had paid an equivalent amount of money to the ranger as a bribe, and so had managed to pocket the amount due in tax on the remaining 400 kilograms (Interview, 27 May 2011).

Some forest officials accepted these allegations. One forest officer mentioned that there was some possibility of irregularities in the behaviour of both the forest officials and the traders. He said that the irregularities also depend on peoples' morality. On the one hand, some morally corrupt forest officials could provide a release order to the trader for a smaller amount of goods than what was actually being taken, so that the trader could save some money by paying less tax. On the other hand, some clever traders could also cheat forest officials by hiding the real amount. This was possible, in contrast to the firewood and timber trade, because there was no requirement for herbal plants to be properly sealed by the forest officials.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to elucidate how corrupt practices operate in forest management and trade in forest resources in Nepal. The English word

'system' was widely used by my informants when describing unauthorised extra payments and bribes which are regarded as routine and a normal part of life at the DFO. Traders encounter the unwritten 'system' as they have to make payments to officials to receive a wide range of permits and certificates and to pass check points. This is only considered to be corrupt when more than the going rate is paid or demanded. Those who disregard it soon find that forest and other officials have ways of putting obstacles in their path. Officials benefit from it as they receive this additional income above their normal salary. Journalists may receive money not to report the unsavoury aspects of this process. It also comes into play in transfers and promotions. It has become routine to make payments to secure transfers to the more lucrative posts. Heavily forested districts have more resources to be exploited as a source of additional income. Promotions are also facilitated by payments to relevant superiors. False invoices and fake estimates enable rich extra pickings to be made from the commissioning of reports and the organisation of training programmes. It is therefore not surprising that ordinary people are suspicious of officials and tend to regard them as corrupt.

The objectives of Agenda 21 are undermined by these corrupt practices not least because some forest officials work primarily just for personal benefit and lack the motivation to work for the conservation and management of forest products. Their career path moves them from district to district. The frequent changes of location do not allow the development of emotional attachment to the area for which they are responsible at any given moment. Pride of place is given to making money through operation of the 'system', to compensate them for the inadequacy of their salaries.

Agenda 21 specifies good and honest administration as an essential element of sustainable development. However, the evidence produced in this article tends to support the argument of many scholars that corruption can in fact ease the transition to modernity and have a positive function in development, filling the gap left by incomplete bureaucratization (Shore and Haller 2005). This article documents a whole series of corrupt practices in the forestry sector in Nepal which flourish in the absence of a properly functioning and complete state bureaucracy. Nevertheless, the widespread acceptance of the 'system' acts as a substitute and produces a set of rules which are clearly understood and in general accepted by the

actors involved. The interests of development are thereby served, albeit imperfectly.

At its current stage of development, Nepal has a state bureaucracy but one that is as yet imperfectly formed and not fully functional. The existing cultural practices, the current educational system, the unstable political situation, international influences and demand, and the porous border are further destabilising factors. In these circumstances corruption, to use the terminology adopted by Gupta (2005), becomes the grease lubricating the machine in which state officials are 'essential cogs' and makes it function. Although this level of corruption contradicts Agenda 21's demand for good and honest administration for sustainable development it nevertheless helps to keep the forest administration functioning under informal rules understood by the participants. Rampant over-exploitation is checked but sustainability has at best been only partially achieved.

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Hermit Village or Zomian Republic? An update on the political socio-economy of a remote Himalayan community

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ABSTRACT

Hidden in a remote valley in Himachal Pradesh, the Village of Malana appears as a self-governing egalitarian community cosmologically committed to evading external influence. With its own system of village government and its own court for settling disputes, Malana enjoys a measure of village autonomy under its powerful tutelary deity, Jamlu. This article asks whether James Scott's concept of 'non-state space' can be extended to this isolated corner of the Indian Himalaya. Might Malana be a surviving example of what Pierre Clastres termed 'a society against the state'? Why would the people of Malana opt for self-imposed isolation and how have they been able to maintain it?

This paper follows the attempt made by Colin Rosser in the early 1950s to undertake ethnographic fieldwork in 'the hermit village of Malana'. Reviewing Rosser's efforts to solve the mystery of Malana's physical, social and economic isolation, this paper considers changes in the society and economy of rural India and also in the ways in which anthropology as a discipline has approached these topics. Updating the story to the present permits a re-evaluation of Rosser's finding as we consider how change has come to Malana village¹.

An Anthropologist in the Valley of the Gods

The Kullu valley possesses many striking examples of *shikara* style temples built in stone. Managed by a special class of hereditary priests, a large number of these temples are to be found in the former capitals of the

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Kullu Rajas at Jagatsukh and Naggar. The most important temple is to be found in the district capital of Kullu town (formerly known as Sultanpur) which was the seat of the Kullu Rajas until 1847. The Raghunathji Temple houses the ruling deity of the valley of whom the Raja was considered the earthly representative. To the ordinary Kullui these imposing temples represent the imported religion of the Rajas and the Brahmins. Though these 'new' gods are respected, the feeling persists that the real gods of Kullu are to be found in the villages².

Each Kullu village, or group of neighbouring villages, has its own tutelary deity known as the *devta* or *devi*. These village gods are anthropomorphised so as to personify each village and share a common identity with the land and people. The substantial relations between the *devtas* and *devis* reflect the past and existing social relationships between the villages of which they are the supernatural personifications. These deities are believed to be related as siblings, or as father and son, mother and daughter, or husband and wife.

The centre-piece of the ritual calendar in Kullu is the great annual Dussehra festival³. Carrying their associated deity on a palanquin, villagers from throughout the valley join a parade of over 200 gods on the Dhalpur maidan in Kullu town. Held in honour of Raghunathji, at Dussehra the people of Kullu pay homage to the Kullu Raja. This reading extends to suggest assimilation into a greater Hindusim as the indigenous *devtas* and *devis* bow down before the imported god of the Rajas (Berti 2006: 61).

At the great Dussehra festival however one god stands apart. Jamlu, the god of Malana village, does not enter Kullu town but instead maintains a detached position on the far bank of the river Beas.

Kullui tradition places Jamlu's origins somewhere to the north of the Himalayan range. The god wandered through the mountains until, after many years, he reached the Hampta Pass which looks down into Kullu. The Kullu gods didn't want Jamlu to settle in their valley so, as Jamlu crossed

2 'In contrast with Raghunath, whom oral stories present as an outsider brought to Kullu by a seventeenth-century Raja, village deities are mostly depicted as 'autochthonous' of the region, or at least as being already there before the beginning and the consolidation of the royal dynasty' (Berti 2006: 45).

3 See Luchesi 2006 for an extended description of the Kullu Dussehra festival and the relationship between Lord Raghunath and the village deities.

a swing bridge in a basket, the Kullu gods administered a collective kick to the basket which, with Jamlu in it, soared into the air and over the mountains, finally landing in the Malana glen. This legend explains why, in relation to the other deities that reside in Kullu, Jamlu occupies an independent and, in some respects, hostile position.

Jamlu's refusal to attend the Dushera fair is a mythological reflection of the relationship that exists between the people of Malana village and the wider world - they, like Jamlu, occupy an independent and, in some respects, hostile position. But, in the words of Colin Rosser who conducted fieldwork in Malana in the early 1950s: 'Jamlu's mythological exclusion from Kullu does not result in his exclusion from the Kullu pantheon... Indeed he is widely and commonly referred to by Kullu villagers as "the most powerful" of all Kullu gods' (1956: 63-64).

This article follows the attempt made by the Welsh Anthropologist Colin Rosser to undertake ethnographic fieldwork in 'the hermit village of Malana'. Rosser found there a self-governing egalitarian community cosmologically committed to evading external influence. Here I compare Rosser's depiction of Malana against recent academic thinking on stateless societies; in particular James C. Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed* (2009). Scott's argument is that people in upland Southeast Asia can only be understood in relation to larger and more powerful political entities. To Scott *all* aspects of hill communities can be seen as predicated on resisting forms of state intrusion and control. In order to escape the projects of organized state societies - slavery, taxation, conscription - Scott describes the disparate people of Zomia as having created a variety of stateless societies. Drawing on Rosser's work on Malana I ask whether Scott's concept of 'non-state space' should be extended to this isolated corner of the Indian Himalaya. Might Malana be a surviving example of what Pierre Clastres (1989) identified as 'a society against the state'? Why would the people of Malana opt for self-imposed isolation and how have they been able to maintain it?

My argument proceeds in three parts. First I outline Rosser's fieldwork and his initial account of Malana (1952)⁴ and draw a number of comparisons with James C. Scott's recent writings on stateless societies. The second section contrasts Rosser's 1952 article against his PhD thesis (1956) in

4 Also printed in Srinivas's edited collection *India's Villages* (1955).

which he sought to solve the mystery of Malana's economic, social and political isolation. Finally by updating the story to the present we are able to re-evaluate Rosser's finding to consider how change has come to Malana village. Here Rosser's accounts aid an appreciation of Malana's political engagement with wider polities, the workings of transnational economies and how identity and ethnicity might be used to manage both engagement and separation.

The 'wild and jungli' hermit village of Malana

In an article published in *The Economic Weekly* Colin Rosser describes the villages of the Kullu⁵ valley as sharing underlying uniformities of social life 'such that no villager need feel uncomfortable or out of place should he visit one of the villages in the neighbouring valleys. He may feel a stranger but not an alien'. There is though one exception to this rule for he adds that these remarks do not apply to the village of Malana which, 'though located administratively in Kullu *tahsil*, is unique in Kullu' (1952: 477).

A day's walk from its closest neighbour, Rosser found Malana 'perched, at an altitude of just under 9000 feet above sea level, on a narrow shelf high on one side of a wild and isolated glen surrounded by formidable mountain ranges' (1956: 1):

High pastures, dense forests, jagged rock outcrops forming sheer cliff faces, numerous small streams plunging over high waterfalls down to the main Malana torrent, precipitous slopes, and finally an eight-mile long gorge closing the exit – these are the chief characteristics of the terrain inhabited by the Malanis (ibid: 89).

The extreme physical isolation of Malana is stressed by Rosser because of its great consequences when considering the social organisation of its inhabitants. Malana could not be called a typical Kullu village. Though the Malanis⁶ spoke Kulluhi⁷ in their dealings with outsiders, within the village

5 To maintain consistency I have rendered Rosser's spelling of 'Kulu' to the contemporary 'Kullu'.

6 Following Rosser I have used 'Malanis' as the collective term for the people of Malana village.

7 A Western Pahari language.

they used their own language called Kanashi. Kanashi is not spoken or understood by any Kullu villager other than the Malanis: 'it automatically marks all non-Malanis as alien' (Rosser 1952: 477).

Rosser also found the Malanis' kinship organisation to be fundamentally different from that found in the typical Kullu village. Elsewhere in Kullu, Rosser describes a 'fundamental cleavage' between the clean castes [*bhitarka* or *handarka* meaning of the inner circle] on the one hand and the unclean castes [*baharka* meaning outsiders] on the other (1956: 14-15). For the most part this cleavage did not exist within the village of Malana for 'the Malanis do not bother very much about the finer distinctions of caste differentiation'. Rather the people of Malana 'regulate their behaviour towards all Kullu villagers outside their own glen in terms of this *bhitarka* / *baharka* groupings of castes' (ibid: 16). Thus, when visiting other villages in Kullu and when receiving visitors in their own village, the people of Malana 'appear to act as if they belonged to a caste apart from all others' (ibid: 48). This division also determined marriage practices: through the practice of village endogamy they further insulated themselves against social contacts from the outside.

Perhaps most strikingly, the Malanis saw physical contact with all outsiders as highly polluting. Visitors to Malana, including Rosser, were forbidden from touching people, possessions or buildings; they were not allowed to bring leather items into the village; nor were they permitted to walk on certain village footpaths⁸. Any transgression of these rules was punishable by a stiff fine. 'Malana stands alone: independent, autonomous, "different" in the eyes of Kullu people, and certainly in the Malanis' own estimation' (Rosser 1952: 477)

The result of this physical, linguistic and social isolation was that Malana 'has been left more or less to govern itself' (Rosser 1956: 33). The Rajas of Kullu avoided interfering in the affairs of Malana and recognised it as a place of sanctuary for criminals and offenders bent on escaping punishment. This continued to be the case during the period of British rule: 'the village has been largely ignored by the Government and is rarely visited by Government officials from Kullu' (Rosser 1952: 477). Enjoying a kind of *de facto* independence, Malana 'has its own system of village government, its own court for settling disputes, and a measure of village

8 This last rule was relaxed in Rosser's case after the first few months (Rosser 1956: 49).

autonomy quite distinct from that of other Kullu villages which have all been drawn into the official administrative system of Government departments and courts' (ibid: 477).

Having spent several months in the Kullu valley prior to proceeding to Malana, Rosser had collected accounts of how the people of this isolated settlement were viewed by their neighbours.

It is certainly true to say that the Kullu villagers regard the Malanis as a group which stands outside the main stream of social life in Kullu; a group which is strange, foreign even, and without parallel in other Kullu villages however remote.The Malanis are regarded as wild and uncanny by their Kullu neighbours.... In many of their customs they appear backward and 'jungli' to the much more sophisticated Kullu villager (Rosser 1956: 45).

An example of this wild or 'jungli' behaviour was provided by the Malani insistence on barter. When engaging in trade, 'they will never accept money for wool, and often not for *ghi*, but go from village to village in the hope of getting their customary barter rates for these articles'. This 'obsessional adherence to tradition' according to Rosser led to behaviour which was often glaringly 'uneconomic' and encouraged the view among 'the more sophisticated Kullu villagers' that the Malanis were excessively backward and primitive' (ibid: 112). Malana was regarded as a throwback to an earlier more primitive age that existed before the rise of regional states and prior to the possibilities of market exchange.

Though Rosser describes the Malanis' 'excessive primitiveness' as being the cause of much amusement in the village of Kullu, he caught in this laughter a hollow note (1952: 482):

Garbled, exaggerated accounts of some of the more dramatic and esoteric aspects of Malani culture are a frequent feature of Kullu conversation whenever the enigma of Malana is under discussion. It is apparent that the attitudes of Kullu villagers towards the Malanis are a mixture of humour and mocker[y] (because of their "backwardness") and awe and even fear (because of their close association with a powerful god, their strange customs, and their almost uncanny group solidarity) (Rosser 1956: 45-46).

Throughout Kullu, Malana was (and remains) known as ‘the home of “a different kind of people”’ (Rosser 1952: 477).

If the people of Kullu saw the inhabitants of Malana as distinct from the main stream of social life, the feeling was undoubtedly shared by the Malanis themselves. Topographically, culturally and politically, Kullu represents for Malana its external environment; Rosser wrote of the term ‘Kullu’ being used by the Malanis to refer to the world beyond their valley:

The people of Malana have developed an almost fanatical sense of difference, of village cohesion and of intense group loyalty. All who do not “belong” are treated with virulent suspicion and even contempt. There is not the least doubt that on reaching Malana from Kullu, one enters a cultural “atmosphere” quite distinct from, and sharply contrasted with, that of Kullu. This distinction can perhaps be best conveyed by stating that with Malana, though it consists only of one village, one is dealing with a self-contained tribal society as opposed to the village or folk society of Kullu (1956: 50, emphasis in original).

This was the Malana that Colin Rosser sought permission to enter. The reasons for wanting to visit were obvious for: ‘as a unit of study for the anthropologist it emerges from its background with singular clarity’ (ibid: 49-50). But, singular clarity or not, it was a unit that was resistant to being subjected to ethnographic study.

Knowing it was impossible to obtain the use of a Malani house, Rosser had devised a plan to build a small hut on the edge of the village. After negotiation with the Malani council lasting nearly three months, Rosser succeeded in obtaining a plot of land. This site was levelled and three trees cut down and turned into planks. At this point, the more conservative faction within Malana decisively denied him permission to reside within the village⁹. Realising that any attempt to settle in Malana could only succeed ‘at the cost of alienating at least half the village’ (ibid: 457-458), Rosser spent the worst of the winter in neighbouring Jari. He wrote: ‘The

9 Visiting Malana in September 2013 I was told that a group of Malana people had deliberately destroyed Rosser’s half-built hut.

failure of the plan cost me a good deal of time, effort and money – but taught me much about the way the political system works in practice’ (ibid: 455).

From his wintry tent at the foot of the Malana glen Rosser was able to reflect on what he had learned in his first six months in Kullu. The resulting account was submitted for publication in *The Economic Weekly*. In it he writes of the intense solidarity and isolation of the people of Malana reflected in feelings of equality and similarity. His census of the 119 households in Malana recorded 116 families organized into eight patrilineal clans (these defined the exogamous units for marriage). Significantly all these clans intermingled quite freely and considered themselves equal. Rosser suggested two factors contributed to this feeling of village egalitarianism: first because of the closely connected ties of kinship (village endogamy meant that everyone was related to each other in multiple ways), and second because of the lack of economic differentiation (all households practiced a combination of agriculture and pastoralism). It was this caste and economic homogeneity that allowed the village to function as a ritual and political unit (Rosser 1955: 72).

The isolation, independence and egalitarianism of Malana were personified in the powerful tutelary deity of the village: Jamlu.

Jamlu... dominates and pervades the whole village. In his worship, the unity and solidarity of the village are strikingly and elaborately expressed. Jamlu is the ultimate authority, and the source of power, in the political, judicial, and religious spheres... To an important extent, Jamlu can be regarded as the deification of the village, and as the apotheosis of the villagers (Rosser 1952: 479).

While the caste divisions found elsewhere in Kullu were not present in Malana, there did exist a complex social system that divided the village territorially into two separate areas of habitation: Dhara Behr and Sara Behr. Of these two it was the more conservative Sara Behr that had objected to Rosser’s attempt to reside in the village. Between the two *behrs* was a neutral area known as the *harchar*: ‘this central area is of the utmost importance since it is the territorial hub of the village upon which turns the whole political and judicial organization’ (ibid: 477). At one end of the *harchar* was the main temple of the village; in the centre of the square a

sacred stone represented Jamlu; and at the far end of this main temple square the village council met.

Rosser's 1952 article in *The Economic Weekly* provides a detailed description of the village council. Decisions over village matters were made by three permanent hereditary post-holders (collectively known as the *mundie*) and eight elected elders (called *jestas*). Following discussion all decisions would be put before an assembly of all the household heads (*chakars*) who could express their approval or disapproval. With decisions needing to be unanimous Rosser was witness to a good deal of 'procrastination, compromise and modification'. Where unanimity was not reached the case was either dropped, shelved or when urgent, the council agreed 'to put the problem directly to Jamlu himself through a particular procedure involving an ordeal by poison, a goat being substituted for each party to the dispute' (Rosser 1956: 320)

Though from the outside Malana might appear strongly unified, Rosser identifies a constant internal struggle for power between the *Karmisht*, *Pujara* and *Gur*¹⁰ based on the dual territorial division between the two *behrs* (1952: 482). Rosser theorised that the major motive force of the Malani system of government was to achieve and maintain equilibrium between structurally equivalent segments: 'the Malanis have evolved a political system characterised by a strong centralised authority inseparably associated with an arrangement of balances between homogenous, structurally equivalent segments' (1956: i).

This egalitarianism is functionally related to the subordination to Jamlu. In so far as the god is seen as possessing a monopoly of power - which is delegated to human office-holders - the struggle for power is severely limited and restricted. It expresses itself rather as a struggle to maintain equality. In essence, this is what happens in Malana. Integration is achieved, as it were, through putting political power beyond the reach of individuals and groups. None can dominate because all are dominated [by Jamlu] (ibid: 513-514).

Stressing the extreme homogeneity of Malana and its separation from

10 Rosser describes these three positions as being, respectively, that of Jamlu's estate agent, priest and oracle (1956: 342).

the wider world, Rosser describes not a village but a traditional 'self-contained tribal society' (ibid: 50). In emphasizing the tribe above the village, mechanical over organic solidarity, Rosser stood apart from the intellectual and geographical concerns of the new wave of sociologists and anthropologists studying India's villages in the 1950s. While his contemporaries were interested in social transformations demonstrated through the interaction of caste and class, Rosser's account is unconcerned with the kinds of changes brought about by incorporation into wider economic and political systems. While Rosser detailed the mechanical solidarity of 'tradition', others were exploring new approaches to a rural India that was rapidly becoming 'modern'. With its clear structural definition, economic self-sufficiency, political solidarity, and strong sense of ritual integrity, Malana appears as a prime example of the 'little communities' of rural India that Marriott identified as disappearing in the face of foreign and urban influence (1955: 172). Some might see the people of Malana as existing on one side of a great divide: their insistence on barter marked them out as economically primitive; their tradition of village governance an unsophisticated throwback. The account forwarded by Rosser however may be read another way. Somewhat unfashionable compared to the fast-moving inter-connected circles of 1950s ethnography, Rosser's depiction of Malana now seems to locate it squarely within the kind of stateless space that has more recently been most prominently charted by Willem van Schendel and James C. Scott.

As a critique of 'classical' area studies and a way to draw attention to the neglected areas and societies that exist on the periphery of states and civilization, the concept of Zomia was placed firmly on the map by Williem van Schendel (2002). Outlining a new framing for Asian studies, van Schendel's Zomia extended from the highlands of Vietnam across the South-East Asian massif and into the Himalayas as far as Afghanistan. 'Borderland societies' in Zomia and elsewhere are characterised as being socioculturally, linguistically, economically and politically distinctive; 'borderland people', according to Baud and van Schendel, feel 'ethnically and emotionally part of another, nonstate entity' (1997: 227 and 233).

Of the wave of borderlands studies inspired by this rethinking of state and non-state space perhaps the best known is the 'anarchist history' of upland South-East Asia forwarded in Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Scott argues that hill peoples cannot be understood in isolation but only

relationally and positionally with respect to larger and more powerful political entities (2009: 32). He describes Zomia as a splinter zone made up of peoples who have fled from oppressive regimes of state control and created a variety of stateless societies. While Scott's Zomia extends no further than the highlands of South-East Asia, Malana seems very similar to its independent and egalitarian communities residing in 'non-state space'¹¹.

To Scott *all* aspects of 'tribal' communities can be seen as predicated on resisting forms of state intrusion and control. Highlighting the history of 'deliberate and reactive statelessness' in South East Asia, Scott reverses conventional narratives of incorporation into regional, national and international economic and political systems. Following Pierre Clastres (1974), he argues that 'stateless peoples' are not unaware or without contact but rather have made a decision to remain separate from forms of political organization beyond the level of the immediate community. Anarchic and acephalous, these communities practice forms of 'escape agriculture' whose slipperiness offers little purchase to the grasping hands of state power with its regimes of tax- and slave-collection. From this perspective tribal communities are not leftovers from a primitive past but have made a political decision to actively rebuff a state they view as predatory and extractive. In exploring these dynamics, Scott has rescued hill peoples from assumptions of stasis, primitivism, essentialism, and isolation and given them 'voice, agency, and rationality' (Lieberman 2010: 336).

Could Malana's unique culture be understood as an example of ethnogenesis, a collective identity deliberately engineered in response to a particular political problem? Maintaining and emphasising a separate and bounded tribal identity against efforts to force them to assimilate, the Malanis would appear to be, to use Scott's term, 'barbarians by design' (2009: 8). Given their egalitarianism and their explicit rejection of the logic of the state and the market, could Malana be another example of the kinds of anarchistic societies identified by Graeber (2004: 23-29)? A closer examination of Malana does not bear out some of these stronger claims about 'anarchistic' borderlanders, but the village and its inhabitants can indeed contribute to broader understanding of the complexity of

11 Pointing to the area as a haven for refugees from oppressive states Shneiderman (2010) asks whether Zomia might be extended into the Central Himalayas. Extending this point the contributors to David Gellner's 2013 edited collection look specifically at borderland lives in the new sub-region of 'Northern South Asia'.

the politics of geographical and social spaces which the state finds hard to reach. Borderlands, according to Baud and van Schendel, are not a simple zone where 'us' stops and 'them' starts. They can also be a space of agency, the realization of which can have 'unintended and subversive consequences' (1997:212). There is more to Malana than meets the eye, as Rosser was to discover.

A Himalayan Mystery

Like many of his contemporaries Colin Rosser submitted an initial account of his research for publication in *The Economic Weekly*. 'A Hermit Village in Kullu' was first published in 1952 and, three years later was gathered with other similar accounts in M.N. Srinivas' edited survey of *India's Villages* (1955).

In his introduction to *India's Villages* Srinivas makes clear that some of the articles contained within 'are tentative in the extreme' often being 'written...while the field-work was still in progress' (1960: 1). Later findings, cautions Srinivas, may 'modify, and even occasionally contradict' the information collected earlier (1960: 1). It becomes clear, reading Rosser's 1956 doctoral thesis, that his initial account (and only published one) was based on only a very limited acquaintance with the village. Rosser arrived in Kullu in 1951; his attempt to build a hut on the outskirts of Malana failed in the autumn of that year. As the piece in *The Economic Weekly* was published in May of 1952 it could scarcely contain any information gathered by Rosser while actually residing in Malana. Absent from the collection brought together by Srinivas, an introductory note from the Editor of *The Economic Weekly* makes it clear that, though 'the author [Rosser] spent the past year in carrying out a field study in Kullu' he was yet to commence his planned 'intensive analysis of the village about which he writes' (i.e. Malana). Instead the 1952 account that made its way into *India's Villages* via *The Economic Weekly* is based on Rosser's negotiations with the Malanis, on archival and official accounts and, in particular, on the views of the Kulluis' among whom Rosser lived before moving to Malana. In short, Rosser's 1952 account of the hermit village of Malana was produced at a distance and drew largely on the opinions of people living elsewhere in Kullu. There are direct parallels here with some of the key criticisms of Scott's work on the 'anarchist' highland communities of South East Asia, namely that it doesn't direct significant

attention to the views of the actual people it discusses (Lieberman 2010: 336; Karlsson 2013: 323). If there is an absence of Malani voices in Rosser's initial account, his 1956 doctoral thesis more than compensates.

Having had his initial request rejected, Rosser persevered in his efforts to reside in Malana. Abandoning the attempt to construct a wooden house, Rosser petitioned the assembly to be allowed to return after the winter and live in a tent. Eventually, in the spring of 1952, the Sara Behr faction relented and Rosser finally gained permission to pitch his tent on the edge of the village. As we shall see, the months of actual residence in Malana caused Rosser to reassess his earlier depiction of the Malanis as economically isolated and politically separate. Reading Rosser's doctoral thesis it becomes clear that there was more to Malana than he revealed in the article in *The Economic Weekly*. While the 1952 account describes how outsiders viewed the people of Malana, his 1956 thesis outlines why it suited the Malanis to be viewed that way.

In the opening chapter of his thesis Rosser provides a geographic description of Kullu which divides cultivation in the valley into three zones each associated with particular types of village:

- a) The *bal* or low-lying lands of the Beas valley which contains irrigated land suitable for rice cultivation. Although it is rare to find villages of more than 100 households, still, villages of up to 150 households are sometimes found in this zone.
- b) The *manjhat* or 'mid-zone' in which two crops are produced annually usually of wheat and barley. Villages are smaller than in the *bal* but larger than those in the *gahar*.
- c) The *gahar* or 'highland zone': 'The smallest villages of Kullu – mere hamlets of 10-15 households – are found perched high on the ridges... at altitudes of up to 9000 feet. Here land is scarce, poor in quality, difficult to till because of the steep slopes, and the altitude permits only one crop annually – and even this is imperilled by the possibility of late snow during severe winters. In these difficult conditions, it is not unnatural that these high villages should be extremely small in size' (1956: 9).

Herein lies the mystery that Rosser sets out to solve. At 9000 feet Malana is one of the highest Kullu villages and would be expected to reflect the same difficult ecological conditions experienced by the upper villages

of the *gahar*. Yet with the 112 households¹², Malana compared very well in size with the most favoured villages situated on the fertile *bal* land. The solution to the riddle of Malana's elevated existence, unmentioned in Rosser's *Economic Weekly* paper, is solved in his doctoral thesis. Here Malana is revealed to be considerably less self-sufficient and more outwardly turned than its image might suggest.

In feudal times the various Rajas of Kullu would make gifts of *muafi* or revenue estates to those who they wished to reward or appease. Alongside the nobles of the Kullu Rajas' court, these gifts might be extended to village gods. The more powerful a god, the more the Rajas would seek to buy his or her favour. Noting this system in his Settlement Report of 1874, J.B. Lyall wrote that by granting these lands as endowments, the Raja 'divested himself of his lordship and proprietorship. The cultivators thenceforward paid rent and did service in respect of such lands to the shrine and not to the Raja' (1874: 157). Since the deity of Malana village was believed throughout Kullu to be particularly powerful (and exceedingly vengeful when angered) it made sense that 'all the lands in the Malana glen were granted to Jamlu by the Rajas' (ibid: 34-35). Furthermore Jamlu was made overlord of a very considerable quantity of different types of land in villages scattered in the main Beas valley and in Wazeeri Rupi to the south (Rosser 1956: 77). The grant having been made, the Malanis were entitled to collect revenue on behalf of Jamlu. Known as *kar*, a share of the rice and barley¹³ grown in the tributary villages would be carried back to the god's treasury at Malana. Rosser immediately recognised this as 'a vital contribution to the Malani economy... and is a partial explanation of [how] though one of the highest villages in Kullu, Malana is also one of the largest' (ibid: 84).

The Malanis were well aware that without this *kar* and the accompanying 'offerings' they would be faced with a profound economic and social crisis.

The economic necessity to the Malanis of this external food supply serves to reinforce in their minds their almost fanatical belief in

12 The 116 households of the 1952 survey had, by now, been revised down: Rosser (1956: 48) records a total of 112 households of which 109 were Kanet, 1 Julahas (weavers) and 2 Lohars (ironsmiths)

13 Rosser estimates the total *kar* to be worth in the region of Indian Rupees (INR) 4256 at Kullu market weights.

the power of the god, to magnify their dependence on him, and to confirm their conviction that they are the only real devotees of Jamlu, enduring under his divine protection.... The Malani obsession with the god, their complete submission to what they believe to be his will, and their fear of, and dependence on, his power are facts which are unquestionably fundamental to an analysis of the Malani social system. This fervent religiosity is woven into the whole fabric of Malani society. The study of Malana is essentially the study of the cult of Jamlu: they are one (ibid: 85).

The major revelation of Rosser's doctoral thesis was his detailed description of the kinds of elaborate practices that ensured the collection of rent on Jamlu's *muafi* land:

Twice a year, the Malanis descend in force from their mountain stronghold to collect the *kar* or rent due from the tenants. The strong force of Malanis, some 60-80 in number, is greatly feared by the villagers concerned who have come to dread these bi-annual visitations. The Malanis,.... invade – this is scarcely too strong a term – the village, intimidate the villagers, insist on being supplied with free meals for several days.... and also, and this is the significant point, demand that the *kar* due shall be measured in a special *basaju* which they bring with them (ibid: 78-79).

Significantly this *basaju* was twice the normal size; this allowed the Malanis to extract double the amount that was owed to them.

The arrival of a large party of wild-looking Malanis, jabbering in a foreign tongue, the envoys of “the most powerful” of all the Kullu *devtas*, is a somewhat awe-inspiring event for the small Kullu village which may consist of only fifteen to twenty households. The villagers undoubtedly consider the Malanis as being wild, uncanny and often dangerously mad (a fiction which the Malanis appear to encourage as it aids them in the collection of the maximum rent) (ibid: 80).

It seems that in the 1950s (and indeed for a long time prior) Malana was not isolated or self-sufficient but depended on a very particular form

of engagement with the wider world. Recognising Malana's isolation as 'a fiction', Rosser establishes its dependence on an extended set of cosmological and economic relationships. Paradoxically the successful management of these relations required the projection of a collective image as fearsome, dangerous and different. Jamlu both symbolised Malana's separation and made it possible.

While there is much of value and interest in Clastres' and Scott's approaches, they arguably exaggerate the extent and form of separation of communities that place themselves outside of state control. Olivier de Sardan (2005: 79) reminds us to be wary of stereotypes of uncaptured, restive and rebellious peasants, their resistance to external authority and their supposed refusal to enter modern markets. At the core of Scott's analysis is the binary distinction between the valley and the hills. This division largely corresponds to the delineation between state and nonstate spaces. Scott's major revelation in *The Art of Not Being Governed* is that highland and lowland are not separate zones but zones that are defined and produced by their opposite. On initial viewing it might appear that, like all good Zomians, the economic and social institutions of the Malanis were premised on a desire to keep the state away. However, it is inadequate to define Malana in Clastres' terms as a 'society against the state'. Read against the evidence of Rosser's second account it becomes clear that the relationships that hill people develop with lowland state societies are more complex and ambiguous than Scott or Clastres allow. Forsyth and Michaud argue for a more refined reflection and a more dynamic understanding of the relationships between (marginal) local subjects, (global) market forces, and (national) states: 'people on the margins do not just get onboard and accept... modernity, but, rather, use their agency to maintain direction over their lives and livelihoods' (2011: 3). To Scott the entire societal design of hill populations can be understood as an act of resistance aimed at keeping oppressive lowland states at a distance. Another way to look at Malana (which is interconnected with but distinct from the hill populations described by Scott) is that the entire social and cosmological structure of the village was designed to facilitate the extraction of tribute from neighbouring villages. Strong social boundaries allowed the people of Malana to engage to their advantage economically and politically with the wider society.

What is clear is that the Malana that was opened up to Rosser in 1952 had a record of success in managing its relations with the pre-colonial, colonial and immediately post-colonial state. However, the system through which the Malanis had maintained their separation was vulnerable to the sorts of changes occurring in India after Independence. Already in 1950s questions about the legality of collecting *muafi* were being raised. Rosser considers how change would affect Malana.

The Malanis are obviously well alive to the crucial part played by this external food supply in their whole economy, and are intensely afraid that if the exact details [of the extraction] of this *kar* reached the ears of the Government in Kullu town, measures might be taken.... which would be extremely damaging to the Malani economy (Rosser 1956: 82).

There is no doubt that the abolition of Jamlu's *muafi* would [also] have the most severe and far-reaching effects on the social system of Malana and might well initiate a major process of social change. The economy would suffer a damaging blow, but probably equally important would be the effect on the deep-seated beliefs in the power of the god (ibid: 86-87).

What Rosser chose to do with the information he had gained about such a vital component of the Malani economy would seem to more than justify the initial suspicions held by the people of Malana:

Just before I left Kullu in December 1952 I discussed this subject with the sub-Divisional Officer in charge there. He explained that it was the Government view that the very large loss of revenue resulting from the alienation of lands to temples could not be justified. The view was that the expenses of a particular cult should be borne by the devotees concerned, and not by the Government as was the present case where revenues which should be collected in the normal way now was paid into the cult treasury, there to be used for the expenses of ceremonies and the remuneration of services. I was told that it was the Government's intention to abolish all *muafis* "in the near future", to confirm the present tenants in their occupancy, and to collect from

them the normal land revenue according to the current assessment (ibid: 86).

In *The Art of Not Being Governed* Scott specifies a time limit for statelessness.

Since 1945, and in some cases before then, the power of the state to deploy distance-demolishing technologies – railroads, all-weather roads, telephone, telegraphy, airpower, helicopters, and now information technology – so changed the strategic balance of power between self-governing peoples and nation-states, so diminished the friction of terrain, that my analysis largely ceases to be useful. On the contrary, the sovereign nation-state is now busy projecting its power to its outermost territorial borders and mopping up zones of weak or no sovereignty (2009: xii).

In newly independent India, state-promoted development would be expected to transform their political, economic and social isolation and assimilate Malana notionally into a national mainstream. Rosser arrived in Malana precisely when this very hinge in its history was being opened. The situation he described is one where a degree of separation from the state was still possible. The next section updates the story and asks how this cohesive and fiercely independent community reacted to new systems of government and how the dynamics of Zomia are challenged by new technologies of control.

Hermits or hippies? The economics of fictive isolation.

In 1995 a batch of Malana Cream entered into Amsterdam's prestigious Cannabis Cup was adjudged to be one of the two finest hashish smokes in the world¹⁴. 'Bush Doctor' in his *Smokers Guide to Amsterdam* describes Malana Cream as boasting 'an unusually soft and smooth inhale, with flavors like a chocolate biscuit' that yield 'an excellent body high, without dopey feelings,' and leaving 'a bit of a numb feeling on the back of the

14 <http://www.thctalk.com/cannabis-forum/showthread.php?3987-High-Times-Cannabis-Cup-Winners-1988-2007&s=2467d3ba6d82c763fd0e5ef044696175> and http://www.therealseedcompany.com/products.php?product_id=15, both accessed 2nd August 2015.

throat that has you reaching for a cool bevie from the juicebar'¹⁵. It would seem that the village of Malana was, by the mid-1990s, operating as part of the global economy. It is noticeable that in his thorough review of agricultural production in 1950s Malana at no point does Rosser mention cannabis (1956: 89-92).

Over the last sixty or seventy years return visits and fresh studies of sites first described in the 1950s have provided long-term perspectives on political, social and economic changes in Indian village life. Offering often critical insights into anthropologists' methodological approaches, suggesting how these contribute to particular understandings, and how they have changed over time, such studies open windows into the intellectual and disciplinary history of Indian anthropology and sociology. Rosser and his depiction of Malana seems a good way to explore and examine ideas about tradition and modernity both in rural India and in the discipline of anthropology. The remainder of this article offers not to study this particular village again but to revisit Rosser's work in order to reflect on the nature of change experienced in Malana and the capacity of the people of Malana to respond to change.

In September 2013 I approached Malana village by the same route that Rosser covered on foot over sixty years previously. It is no longer necessary to make a day's walk from Jari to reach the village; a jeep-able road carved into the walls of the Malana valley comes within an easy stroll to it. The road was built to support a series of hydro-power projects that tame the waters of the Malana River. To reach Malana I had to pass through a check-point stationed outside the offices of the Forest Department, and a police post.

Today's visitors do not need to request permission to enter Malana, nor are they required to remove leather shoes and belts at the edge of the village. However the strict pollution taboos remain in evidence: a series of signs posted on the Harchar and the Temple warns that attempting to touch or photograph the building will result in an IRS 2500 fine. Physically touching the residents of Malana or any of their possessions is similarly to be avoided.

The basic layout of the village is still apparent, with the Harchar and

15 <http://www.outsideonline.com/adventure-travel/asia/india/Bad-Trip.html> accessed 2nd August 2015.

temple square separating the Sara Behr and Dhara Behr sections. However, the appearance of the village has altered since the 1950s: many of the old wooden houses¹⁶ apparent in Rosser's photographs have been replaced by concrete structures, slate roofs are now tin and satellite dishes hang from the eaves of several houses. There is a government school, and the large red building in the centre of the village had been built by Malana's Pradhan¹⁷. A series of seven guesthouses now ring the village, which seems significant given the difficulties Rosser had when wanting to live there. These cheap hotels cater to backpackers who are drawn to Malana by the mountain scenery and the air of exotic mystery that pervades the village. And, of course, there is the added attraction of a cheap and plentiful supply of high quality hash.¹⁸

The commercial cultivation of cannabis was adopted by the people of Malana at some point in the late 1970s. The climate of the southern foothills of the Himalayas is well suited to growing cannabis and that produced in the Pin Parbati valley is of particularly high quality. Malani accounts tell of an Italian by the name of 'Glenu'¹⁹ who took up residence²⁰ in the village and taught them how to make *charas* using the 'hand-rubbed' technique to draw resin from the plant by massaging each flowering leaf between the palm and fingers. While some of this cash crop is sold directly to tourists much is exported across India and overseas.²¹

Societies without a state are commonly classed as societies based on subsistence economies (Clastres 1989: 190). Involvement in international trade may thus seem contrary to Malana's reported earlier self-sufficiency

16 In November 2008 a devastating fire tore through the Sara Behr half of the village consuming the central temple and the Pujara's house.

17 The Panchayat and the Pradhan are part of the modern state's system of village government and operate quite separately from the village council, the Harchar and the Munde.

18 I am grateful to Chappe Negi (of Negi's Himalayan Adventures) and Lars Brodholt (University of Bergen) for their observations on contemporary Malana.

19 'Glenu' has offered his own account of the introduction of cannabis cultivation to Malana: Galeno 1998. *Pensiere Grotteschi: riproduzione totale o parziale vietata*. See also: <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/italian-suspect-in-drug-trade-arrested-near-malana/706920/>. Accessed 2nd August 2015.

20 The Malani people's rejection of outside authority and long tradition of providing sanctuary to criminals explains why foreigners such as 'Glenu' were able to remain undetected in Malana for such a long period.

21 http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-08-26/chandigarh/41454552_1_malana-cream-seeds-charas. Accessed 2nd August 2015.

and rejection of money as a medium of exchange. However, it need not necessarily be so. Parry and Bloch describe a tendency to postulate a fundamental division between non-monetary and monetary economies: 'this opposition gets elided with a series of other dichotomies – 'traditional' and 'modern', pre-capitalist and capitalist, gift economies and commodity economies, production for use and production for exchange – with money acting as a major catalyst of the 'great transformation' between them, or at least as a telling index of it' (1989: 7). This tendency is apparent in the way that Malana has been viewed by the people of Kullu, by the state in colonial and independent India, and by trekkers and tourists attracted to Malana by tales of this independent, isolated and mysterious village republic. In this view Malana's adoption of cash cropping might suggest a dramatic transformation from a relatively isolated 'tribal' community into the starting point of an international commodity chain. Against this, and accepting Scott's view of deliberate separation as a political choice, might an alternative explanation of economic change in Malana be forwarded?

Rather than viewing them as romantic isolated entities Scott recognizes that 'peripheral peoples had always been firmly linked economically to the lowlands and to world trade' (2009: 4). However, borrowing from Clastres, he saw their ability to take advantage of agro-ecological niches in trading with nearby states was accompanied by, even dependent upon, the ability to avoid subordination as subjects of the state (Scott 2009: 334. 24). I argue that although Malana's cannabis based economy has a global extension, it remains firmly rooted in key aspects of Malani culture and social organisation that would be immediately familiar to Rosser. Parry and Block are critical of the commonly held notion that money has 'an intrinsically revolutionary power which inexorably subverts the moral economy of "traditional" societies' (1989: 12). Certainly this does not seem to have been the case in Malana.

Anthropological approaches to exchange relations question the assumed divide between market (characterized by anonymous, short-term exchanges) and community (characterized by long-term associations and solidarities both real and imagined). Stephen Gudeman suggests that instead of a binary divide we should recognize the mutual constitution of overlapping realms of community and market, the up-close and the far-distant. 'In one guise, economy is local and specific, constituted through social relationships and contextually defined values. In the other, it is

impersonal, even global, and abstracted from social context'. Arguing that both of these realms are ever-present 'even the most market-driven actor – the national or global corporation – mixes the two realms and relies on the presence of communal relations and resources for its successes' (2001: 1-2). Earlier, based on Rosser's account, I described how the Malanis were able to engage with the state in particular ways. By maintaining an image of separation and backwardness they sought out advantage in negotiations. Might something similar be happening in the economic sphere?

Malana's cannabis economy is, of course, illegal²². The police post on the road down from the village is supposed to prevent the sale and transportation of cannabis resin. There is a widespread rumour throughout Kullu District that the people of Malana give bribes to corrupt officials in order to reduce disruption to the export of Malana's key cash crop. Even so, in the run-up to the harvest season each September, teams of police officers arrive in Malana and attempt to destroy standing fields of cannabis plants. I arrived in the village the day after one such raid had taken place. The response was that such police actions would not deter the villagers from continuing to engage in their illicit but lucrative trade. I was told that because everybody in Malana cultivated cannabis there was no possibility that the police would be able to destroy the entire harvest. Those families unlucky enough to have been targeted would have their losses compensated by others in the village. Most significantly - from the point of view of this article - was the belief among people in Malana that the police were afraid to attack the village because of the power of Jamlu²³. During visits police officers would be verbally threatened and such abuse might, on occasion, extend to physical violence. While recognising that such disruption might not halt an ongoing raid it was thought it would reduce the likelihood of future police interference. Police attacks on the cannabis crop were 'only for show' and not a serious attempt to disrupt production. That Malana continues to be recognised as 'different' and 'special' would seem to be confirmed by a senior district official's

22 The Indian government's 1985 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act prohibits the production, manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transportation, warehousing, concealment, use or consumption of *charas* (*cannabis resin*).

23 Rosser himself offers an oral account of a punitive expedition by the British which sees the invaders driven off by a swarm of angry bees sent by Jamlu (1956: 36).

description of the village as ‘India’s first independent village republic’²⁴ which was best regulated with a light touch. Malana’s egalitarianism, its hostile image and collective ritual and cultural unity under Jamlu persist in ways that underpin its economic system even today.

The continued existence of a communal and collective dimension in Malana’s economy suggests a successful integration of supposedly ‘traditional’ practices and ideologies into international systems of marketing and exchange. In the past the Malana’s economy depended on the extraction of *kar* from other villages around the Parbati and Kullu valleys. Now, though the direction of the raids is reversed, resistance to interference and hostility to external authority all work to sideline the state and allow cannabis to be cultivated. So too does the sharing of risk offered by widespread production and pooled compensation. Looking beyond ecological suitability, we might see cannabis cultivation as a niche activity made possible by the existence of a unified political collective able to establish and defend the space in which individual economic transactions take place. Though part of an international system of trade, in its illegality cannabis production belongs to an ‘alternative’ economy that fits well with Malana’s ‘alternative’ polity.

As we have seen, rather than isolated and remote, it is more plausible to view Malana as squarely located within wider social, religious and economic structures²⁵. Whether through the extraction of *kar* or the cultivation of cannabis, Malana’s prosperity was and is dependent on a selective engagement with certain external elements and a rejection of others. The suggestion of rejection of the wider (mainstream) culture paradoxically allows the people of Malana to function as an inalienable part of it. Malana’s counter *culture* is reflected in a counter *economy*, now as in the past. Rosser would not have known the term, but the Malani people might better be characterised as hippies than as hermits.

24 Personal communication. 16th September 2013.

25 Shneiderman makes a similar point about the Thangmi of Nepal who simultaneously situate themselves to make strategic and political claims on the state while remaining deeply committed to the ‘ungoverned aspects of their identity in cultural and psychological terms (2010: 292)

Searching for Utopia in Zomia

Arjun Appadurai identifies one of the most problematic legacies of western social science is its sense of a single moment that marks a dramatic and unprecedented break between the past and the present. It is a view that has been shown to 'distort the meaning of change and the politics of pastness' (1996: 3). While Scott questions the characteristics attributed to 'the traditional' highland society and 'the modern' lowland state to recognise the agency of the former, he does so in ways that arguably reinforce the binary between the two. Updating Rosser's work to take account of the altered context of the 21st century allows us to move beyond simple evolutionary notions of progress to see the culture of Malana not as an isolated leftover but a dynamic product of involvement with the wider world. The Malanis retention of their distinctive 'tribal' community identity should not be understood as static timeless tradition; but nor is it located simply in geographical space, whether state or non-state. Here we see that 'globalization is itself a deeply historical, uneven, and even localizing process' (ibid: 17).

Though Scott specified a time limit on the survival of Zomia, his own earlier works on infrapolitics and everyday resistance strongly suggest that the modernization process might be proceeding less effectively than its proponents forecast (Michaud 2010: 214). The Malana people's social distinctiveness has been reconfigured rather than effaced by change. The way the Malanis represent themselves to the outside world shows a sophisticated understanding of the symbolism of tradition, isolation and separateness. They deploy and strategically manipulate their image to encourage certain aspects of engagement but ward off threats of assimilation or the assertion of government control. Isolation is here not a social fact but rather a political strategy that appears to have changed little over time. As such, to borrow a phrase from Formoso (2010), the people of Malana are neither Zomian – in the sense of being uncompromising rebels – but zombies, unable to adapt. Whether through tourism or the trade in cannabis, Malana's engagement with modernity continues to be a communal and a creative process.

If the Malanis are not the pure Zomians of Scott's imagination, then what insights might Malana offer for understandings of the state - especially in its 'mature' form - that came into being after the Second World War? Does Scott's pessimistic view that new forms of governance

have finally allowed the state to penetrate Zomia ring true in Malana? In contemporary borderland regions it remains difficult to think of the nation state as the natural context and container for all social and political processes. Farrelly (2013) questions the need of states to project the technologies of control over 'unimportant hamlets, by the sides of little creeks, on lonely mountain passes' (ibid: 200). Against Scott's geographically uniform technologies of control he instead recognises a series of nodes of state power: '[I]n the political systems of contemporary Zomia there is a process of hardening the state in places that matter and withdrawing from places that do not' (ibid). To date, the contemporary state has, for whatever reason, opted not to impose its disciplinary power onto all aspects of Malani life all of the time. On the other hand at different times and with different motivations, the people of Malana have both accepted and rejected state interventions, made demands on the state and also sought to evade its discipline. In the upper Malana valley, as elsewhere, the dynamics of state society relations remain temporally and spatially variable.

Scott borrowed the term Zomia from the Dutch historian Willem van Schendel but applied it in a rather different way. While Scott's work draws attention to the culture of non-state societies existing in montaigne Southeast Asia, van Schendel used the notion of Zomia to explore how areas are imagined and structured with centres and peripheries. In doing so Van Schendel promoted a reconsideration of the inter-relationships of borderlands as part of dynamic processes that span local, regional and global levels. This article updates Rosser's description of a 'hermit village' to move Malana away from Scott's utopian vision of a non-state space to a more van Schendelian recognition of how the people of Malana negotiate multiple cultural, political and economic zones. Rosser's work shows the existence of a border between state and society to be a fiction that suited both the Malanis and the authorities in Kullu town. The temporal border suggested by Scott which placed a time limit on Zomia's existence is in fact highly permeable so that degrees of statelessness existed in the past and continue into the present day. However they do not necessarily exist in the same form. It seems highly likely that Scott's Zomians have been changed by contemporary connections beyond 'the border'. It is possible, however, that such engagements actually sustain rather than undermine the existence of non-state space.

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Rahul Sankrityayan and the Buddhism of Nepal¹

Alaka Atreya Chudal

Introductory Remarks

Mahāpaṇḍit Rahul Sankrityayan (1893–1963) is a well-known figure in the field of Buddhist studies and Hindi literature, and is perhaps best known for his adventurous journeys to Tibet in search of lost original Buddhist texts. Born a *sanātānī* Brahman², he lived variously the life of a sadhu, an Arya Samajist, a Buddhist monk, a lay Buddhist, a secularist, a wanderer, a progressive writer and a scholar who eventually embraced Marxist socialism. He was also a political activist, and was arrested and even jailed several times for such activities as delivering anti-British speeches (1922 and 1923–25), participation in the *kisān* ('peasant') satyagraha campaign in Bihar (1939), and involvement in the banned Communist Party of India (1940–42).³ Sankrityayan was such a frequent traveller that he came to be known as *ghumakkar-rāj* ('king of wanderers'). His wanderlust never died, and given his frequent journeys and other pursuits in life, it is amazing that he found time to write such a large number of books (often at the same time).

Nepal was Sankrityayan's second home. Though it was a different country with a different polity, he never thought of Nepal as a *videś* ('foreign country'). One clear reason for this was that he understood that the country was an important place on the Indian subcontinent where his works were being read. These propagated his ideas there with the same force as they did in India. During his creative period, India was in conflict with the British over the question of sovereignty, while the Nepalese for their part were struggling against the Ranas. Every work was censored by the Rana government, so that there was no question of the legal import of Sankrityayan's popular political works in Hindi. His Tibet travelogue, too, faced censorship. Therefore, he had to tone down the passages relating

1 This article is based on my PhD thesis 'A Freethinking Cultural Nationalist: Rahul Sankrityayan's Narrated Self in the Context of His Age' submitted to the University of Vienna in 2014.

2 A Brahman who attempts to observe Hinduism in an orthodox manner.

3 The years in brackets here indicate the period of Sankrityayan's imprisonment.

to Nepal in it in order to ensure that his other, non-political works were legally accessible to Nepalese readers. Nepal would also be the transit station that led on to Tibet in search of lost Indian heritage later in life. It was a land too, significantly, where few distinctions were made between Buddhism and Hinduism - where, for instance, Vishnu was worshipped as a form of Lokeshvara. This article is about Sankrityayan's relationship with Nepal and Nepalese. His connections with Nepalese were from different walks of life - scholars, merchants, politicians, writers, and others. However, this article will limit its focus to Sankrityayan's relation with the Nepalese Buddhists and his relationship with *rājgurū* Hemraj Sharma which developed in the course of his search for Buddhist manuscripts.

I will explore Sankrityayan's initial endeavours relating to Buddhism and his relationship with Nepal from different perspectives: firstly, the extent to which this relationship was built up around Buddhism will be examined, particularly as regards his Tibet trips and his relations with members of the Theravada movement in Nepal; secondly, to characterize the relationship between India and Nepal, and more specifically between Sankrityayan and Nepal, I shall coin the term "one cultural soul" and shall attempt to justify it as the reason why Sankrityayan looked upon Nepal as a familiar foreign land. The years during which Sankrityayan visited Nepal overlapped with the Theravada movement taking place there at the time; I will thus explore his connection with prominent figures active in it. Given the cultural similarity between India and Nepal, the Nepalese readily welcomed Sankrityayan into their cultural community, so that Sankrityayan never really felt as if he were in a foreign land.

My article has drawn its main strength from the familiarity I have gained with his works and with his relationship with individual Nepalese. The majority of primary sources include Sankrityayan's autobiography, biographies, letters, articles, and speeches. The interviews I conducted between 2007 and 2009 during my fieldwork⁴ are also considered as primary sources.

4 In Kathmandu, I visited the families of Hemraj Sharma, Dharmaratna Yami, Dharmaman Sahu, Mandas Tuladhar, Citta Harsha Bajracharya, and Janaklāl Śarmā and interviewed them. I also visited places in Kathmandu mentioned in *Merī jīvan yātrā*, such as libraries (Hemraj Sharma's collection, now part of the National Library, in Lalitpur, and Keshar Library in Keshar Mahal.), Buddhist viharas, and Dharmaman Sahu's and Dharmaratna Yami's houses, where Sankrityayan had stayed. I met and interviewed people who had met, talked to, or just seen Sankrityayan in their youth.

Sankrityayan's Initial Endeavours Relating to Buddhism

Sri Lanka, a Theravada Buddhist country, was where Sankrityayan first seriously studied Buddhism and was initiated as a Buddhist monk. Much earlier Anagarika Dharmapala (whose worldly name was Don David Hewawitarana), a Sri Lankan, had set out on a pilgrimage to sacred Buddhist sites in northern India that took him, quite naturally, to Bodh Gaya. There he felt the power of the Bodhi tree, supposedly an offshoot of the one under which Prince Shakyamuni had gained enlightenment, so enlightenment that everything else that he had experienced up till then paled in comparison. After the destruction of the north Indian Buddhist monasteries by Muslim invaders, the disappearance of Buddhism in India, and the occupation of the Maha Bodhi temple by a Hindu Saiva mahant,⁵ Bodh Gaya became a holy place exclusively for Hindus.

On his return to Colombo from Bodh Gaya, Dharmapala founded the Maha Bodhi Society. Its main objectives were getting the Maha Bodhi temple restored to Buddhist control, reviving Buddhism in India, promoting Buddhism in Ceylon and in the rest of the world, establishing educational institutions, printing literature related to Buddhism, and training *dhammadūtas* - monks and lay workers - to propagate the Buddhist religion and culture.⁶ That same year Dharmapala moved the society's headquarters to Calcutta in order to further the campaign to return the temple from Hindu to Buddhist control (Levine & Gellner 2008: 5-7).

In 1922 Sankrityayan, having recently entered politics, prepared a proposal to restore the Maha Bodhi temple⁷ to Buddhist control for debate by the regional Congress committee of Chapra. After a heated discussion, the committee agreed to forward the proposal to the annual national meeting of the Congress Party scheduled to be held in Gaya later that year. Anagarika Dharmapala sent Bhikshu Shri Nivasa and Bhikshu Dharmapala, joined by a number of Burmese bhikkhus, to the congress. A large meeting was organized in the tent of the Arya Samaj, and Sankrityayan and many other Buddhists and Hindus spoke on the topic. Sankrityayan

5 The temple was abandoned by Buddhists after the eradication of Buddhism under the Muslim invaders sometime in the 14th century. In 1590 a Hindu Saiva mahant, Gosain Ghamandi Giri, stumbled upon it and decided that he would make the secluded and peaceful place his permanent abode. See Ahir 2010: 15-16 for detailed information.

6 Sankrityayan visited Europe as a *dhammadūta* of the Maha Bodhi Society in 1932-33.

7 For details on the Maha Bodhi temple see Ahir 2010: 12-21.

also translated many speeches by foreign Buddhist guests from English, Sanskrit, and Pali into Hindi. But the larger issues being thrashed out between the status-quoists and the party of change overshadowed the proposal regarding the Maha Bodhi temple. Nonetheless, the whole affair brought Sankrityayan closer to Buddhism and the Buddhist community (MJY-1: 269–270). He remained regularly involved in politics after the Gaya congress, taking time out for a break in the form of a one-and-a-half-month trip to Kathmandu (during those days the capital was known as Nepal) in March–April 1923 to participate in the Śivarātri festival.

After his unsuccessful bid during the district board elections in 1929 Sankrityayan retired from Congress politics, feeling it had nothing new to attract him. He went to Sarnath and there met Bhikkhu Sri Nivasa, whom he knew from the Gaya congress and who had represented Anagarika Dharmapala in it. Bhikkhu Sri Nivasa⁸ was impressed by Sankrityayan's interest in Buddhism and suggested that he go to Sri Lanka, since the Vidyālaṅkāra Pariveṇa was looking for a Sanskrit teacher (MJY-1: 311). He went so far as to write a personal recommendation for him to Bhikkhu Naravil Dharma Ratna in the Maha Bodhi Society headquarters in Calcutta. Bhikkhu Naravil, who had been a student of Vidyālaṅkāra Pariveṇa and was now working for the re-establishment of Buddhism in India, sent off a telegram, and money to cover Sankrityayan's travel costs arrived within two or three days (MJY-2: 15). Sankrityayan reached Vidyālaṅkāra Pariveṇa on 16 May 1927.

Sankrityayan's close affiliation to Buddhism starts from his years in Sri Lanka, where he learnt Pali and studied the Tripitaka, earning himself the title of *tripīṭakācārya* ('master of the Tripitaka') before leaving Sri Lanka for Tibet in 1928 to collect lost Buddhist texts in Sanskrit. He was convinced that such a trip was obligatory if he was to gain a full knowledge of Buddhism, and in particular of the history of Indian Buddhism. He did not want to become a monk right off, for that would have meant scratching

8 Bhikkhu Sri Nivasa (1894–1968) was born in Sri Lanka and went to India at the request of Anagarika Dharmapala, who later appointed him secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society Sarnath branch. After residing for about 15 years in Sarnath, Sri Nivasa built a *viśrāmasālā* ('rest-house') in Nautanva (on the Nepal-India border) for pilgrims visiting Lumbini in Nepal, the place of the Buddha's birth. Called the Lumbini *viśrāmasālā*, it would later, in July 1944, provide shelter for five Buddhist monks exiled by the Rana government. (The *viśrāmasālā* was sold in 1956.) Sri Nivasa visited Nepal many times and helped to promote Theravada Buddhism there (Śākya 2000).

his travel plans. Entering Tibet was no easy thing for Indians at that time. After going over maps, he realized that he could only enter Tibet via Nepal, and penetrating Nepal up to Kathmandu was only possible for Indians during the *Śivarātri festival*. He left Sri Lanka on 1 December 1928 with the aim of utilizing the three months before *Śivarātri* by making pilgrimages in India to a number of historical places associated with the Buddha.

Sankrityayan's Visit to Nepal as a Buddhist

As early as 1920, when Sankrityayan was still in the Arya Samaj and not yet involved in politics or practising Buddhism, his thoughts turned to Nepal and Tibet. In that year, as planned, he did indeed enter the Terai, Nepal's plains, on the other side of the Nepal-India border and there visited Lumbini (the birthplace of the Buddha) and Kapilavastu (the capital of King Shuddhodana). He ventured further north, but became afraid of being caught by the police, and so cut short the journey. His disguise as a sadhu had helped him to gain accommodation, food, and transportation. Back on the border, in the neighbouring towns of Raxaul (India) and Birgunj (Nepal), he tried to obtain permission to visit Nepal (Kathmandu) but without success, and thus had to wait for a later *Śivarātri festival* to obtain one.

Again disguised as a sadhu, Sankrityayan visited Kathmandu Valley in February 1923 during the festival. On that occasion, visas were easily granted to Indian sadhus and pilgrims to visit the Paśupatināth temple. Sadhus were provided with accommodation and food by the government according to their status. Food, tobacco, and firewood were obtained free of cost from the Mahārājā (the Rana prime minister) (TMSV: 56).

The visits to Nepal in 1920 and 1923 do not really reveal any clear aims other than the journey itself. Later, however, it would be his interest in Buddhism and Buddhist studies that drew Sankrityayan back. He wrote of his first Kathmandu visit in 1923 that it was meant as "a rest from the pressure of political work" and in fulfilment of a long cherished desire (JMK: 136).

Whatever else Sankrityayan gained from his 1923 visit, it did pave the way for his excellent working relationship with Hemraj Sharma. He stayed in a *math* in the Thapathali quarter of Kathmandu, and it was there, in the evening of 15 February, that he first met the *rājgurū* ('chief royal priest') and an advisor to to Nepal's governing family, the Ranas as well

as a scholar, bibliophile, and a collector of manuscripts Pandit Hemraj Sharma (1935–2010 V.S.) of the Ranas. He was immediately impressed with Sharma's scholarship but had no idea how much wealth he had and how much power he wielded in Nepalese politics (MJY-1: 272). On the very day of Śivarātri, Mahārājā Chandra Shamsher visited the Thapathali *maṭh* and was curious to learn what Sankrityayan had to say about the political situation in India. The latter proved rather incommunicative, wishing to hide his identity as a political activist (MJY-1: 273). One of the religious fraternities of the Thapathali math had known Sankrityayan as an Arya Samajist speaker (having seen him at the Gaya Congress when he translated the speeches of Buddhist monks in the Arya Samaj tent) and as a student of many languages. This information, passed on, made access to rations easy: instead of having to stand in a queue, Sankrityayan now found his rations being directly delivered to his room, and in larger than normal quantities (MJY-1: 272).

The police in Nepal were preparing to send pilgrims back after the festival, but Sankrityayan wanted to stay in Kathmandu for several more days, so he went to a village, Shikhar Narayan, in the south of the Valley near the Dakṣiṅkāli temple and remained for two weeks. Then he turned his attention to searching for Buddhist texts, and towards this end visited some Buddhists in Patan. There he found out about the existence of some valuable Buddhist texts in the library of Hemraj Sharma, to whose house he directed himself. When he arrived, Sharma was busy with colleagues preparing for an upcoming debate on animal sacrifice with the famous Indian Swami, Sacchidanda. Sharma, being a śākta, believed in animal sacrifice. After Sankrityayan had given him some ideas about how to present the argument in favour of animal sacrifice, he was impressed and asked him to speak against the swami. Sankrityayan refused to participate because he was still a supporter of the Arya Samaj, and was in fact still a supporter of the swami's position (JMK: 137).⁹

Hemraj Sharma later forgot about having met Sankrityayan at his home and Thapathali, but Sankrityayan never did, having been very much impressed with his scholarship and personality. During the stopover when returning from Tibet in 1934, he went on to develop a very good

9 This scholarly debate was organized in Singha Darbar (the palace of Chandra Shamsher Rana) for twelve hours over two days. Many of the members were in favour of animal sacrifice, but the debate ended with neither side convincing the other. (Sama 2026 V.S.).

personal relationship with the man. Sankrityayan would meet *rājgurū* Sharma every time he visited Kathmandu thereafter.

During his studies in Sri Lanka, Sankrityayan determined to visit Tibet in the future to witness the practice of Buddhism in the most extreme form history had endowed it with. He realized that, as he had been jailed twice and involved in the non-cooperation movement, the English government would be unlikely to let him cross the Indian border. Furthermore, he knew that some Indians had misused the hospitality of Tibetans to the point where Tibetans tended to be suspicious of them. Thus the only realistic way left to go to Tibet was via Nepal, as a Nepalese. But permission to enter Tibet via Nepal would not be easy to obtain from the Nepalese government either, because Sankrityayan was a foreigner, while his activities in the non-cooperation movement could again raise the suspicions of the Ranas. Moreover, entering the Kathmandu Valley (which was then still called Nepal) was not always possible for Indian citizens. With this in mind, Sankrityayan successfully planned a trip to the Kathmandu Valley for Śivarātri in 1929, determined to travel on from there to Tibet (JMK: 137).

Sankrityayan entered the Kathmandu Valley as a Hindu pilgrim sadhu on 6 March 1929. He learned from other Buddhist scholars in Patan that indeed the easiest way to get into Tibet was with the help of the Dukpa Lama.¹⁰ The very next day after the high point of the festival Sankrityayan went underground in Bauddha, hoping that the Dukpa Lama would help him to gain access to Tibet. Afraid of being identified by anyone as an Indian, he did not go out frequently. He started studying Tibetan with the help of Henderson's Tibetan Manual and asked the Dukpa Lama to take him to Tibet as a member of his travelling party, saying he wished to go there because "[n]ot all books on Buddhism are available in Sri Lanka, and so I want to go to Tibet to study them. I want to propagate Buddhism in India."¹¹ The Dukpa Lama agreed. There he remained for two months disguised as a Tibetan, before hazarding the onward journey to Tibet under the alias Khunnū Chevañ.

Newar Buddhists in Patan, hearing Sankrityayan talk of himself as a Buddhist, were surprised that a Brahmin should have abandoned his caste

10 The highest lama of the Dukpa sect (ḍukpā sampradāya) MJY-2: 31–32.

11 MJY-2: 32.

(Sankrityayan 1990 V.S.: 60).¹² As a consequence, many people started visiting him in Baudhdha, wishing to meet the Brahmin from Banaras. This naturally caused him some nervousness. He did not see any possibility of going to Tibet with the Dukpa Lama anytime soon, since the latter had no immediate plans to do so. Sankrityayan began looking around for other ways and eventually stumbled upon the Nepalese Buddhist merchant Dharmaman Sahu (1861–1937). His aim of visiting Tibet was widely known among the Buddhist community there. Within it Dharmaman Sahu was the person who most helped him to achieve that aim. Besides being the richest and best-known Nepalese Newar merchant in Lhasa, with a *koṭhī* ('business house') of his own, he was a devout Buddhist and committed to helping Buddhist monks. When Dharmaman learned about Sankrityayan, he invited him to his house at Ason, Kathmandu, and introduced him to fellow merchant, Dasaratan Sahu, whom he requested to do what he could for his guest.

Sankrityayan stayed at Dharmaman Sahu's house for two days and moved into the newly renovated Kindol Vihara.¹³ The full renovation of Kindol Vihara was undertaken by friends of Dharmaditya Dharmacarya.¹⁴ Sankrityayan did not feel safe there because the vihara was always crowded, and he asked Dasaratan Sahu, one of the members of the vihara renovating group, to lodge him in a more secluded place. He was afraid that he might be identified because of his involvement in the Indian freedom movement and knew that if he were he would instantly become a persona non grata. Dasaratan Sahu took him to an uninhabited house out of public view. In Sankrityayan's (MJY-2: 34) words: "Dasaratan Sahu was a great devotee [of Buddhism], and he also understood my problems well. He did not let anyone come to this house."

Born in the Ason quarter of Kathmandu, Dasaratan Tuladhar (1891–1977) grew up to become a tradesman who did business in Lhasa and taught Buddhism on the side as a layman. Once Sankrityayan finally realized that there was not any possibility of entering Tibet with a Tibetan lama,

12 Though the Buddha is revered by Hindus in Nepal, they generally do not renounce Hinduism for Buddhism.

13 Sankrityayan TMSV: 76

14 These included Siddhi Ratna Tamrakar (Gvara Sahu), Buddha Ratna Sahu, Siddhiharsa (Babukaji Guruju), Bekharatna, Kulbahadur Manandhar, Lokratna Tuladhar (Upasak), Dasaratan Sahu (later Bhikṣu Dharmalok) and Lakshminani Tuladhar (later Anagarika Dharmacari) (Śākya 1994: 150).

he asked Dasaratan Sahu to take him to Yolmo (Helambu). Sahu agreed, and they both undertook the trek in Nepalese dress. Sankrityayan was now happy to be out of reach of the Nepalese government. Dasaratan Sahu took him to a friend's house, and from there Sankrityayan went to Tibet in Tibetan clothing. They met again by chance in Kalimpong when Sankrityayan was going to Tibet for the second time in March 1934, but by this time the latter had become Bhikkhu Dharmalok, a Buddhist monk, and they proceeded together towards Tibet. Dasaratan Sahu's son, too, would become an important bhikkhu, Anirudha, after he was sent to Sri Lanka to study Buddhism at the urging of Sankrityayan (Lewis & Tuladhar 2007: xlv).

In Lhasa, Sankrityayan resided at Dharmaman Sahu's *kothi*. Dharmaman Sahu wrote a letter to his sons in Lhasa asking them to accommodate Sankrityayan there. Sankrityayan stayed in Dharmaman's own house in Ason during his visits in 1929, 1934, and 1936 - hospitality acknowledged in the following words: "sāhū-jī arranged my stay in his five-storey house. The house of Sahu Dharmaman was always open for guests. Every time I visited the house, there was always a lama or other sojourners" (YKP: 11).

The close relations with Dharmaman and his three sons, Triratnaman¹⁵, Gyanaman, and Purnaman, shielded Sankrityayan from suspicion that he might be a spy of the English in Tibet rather than a Buddhist scholar (JMK: 187). His last meeting with Dharmaman Sahu was in 1936, before he left the Ason house after staying there for two months for his third journey to Tibet with Gyanaman. Dharmaman was 74 at that time and was suffering from asthma.

Dharmaman Sahu and his sons had several branch offices, in India, Nepal, and Tibet. Sankrityayan wrote: "The Nepalese were the Marvāḍīs (a well-known and highly successful trading caste) of Lhasa. Every *kothi* ('business house') has millions in wealth" (MJY-2: 59). He tells of what happened when he visited Ladakh in 1933 after coming back from his journey to Europe: "I was running out of money, but a branch of the Nepalese merchant Dharmaman had already been established there. Mahila Sahu ['the second son' of Dharmaman, Gyanaman] was there; therefore, there was no problem in getting money" (MJY-2: 127).

The Nepalese *kothi* provided accommodation also during Sankrityayan's

15 Triratnaman Tuladhar was the treasurer of the Nepal Buddhopasak Sangh ('Nepal Association of Buddhist Laymen') (see upcoming Section).

second and third visits to Tibet. The business houses of Dharmaman Sahu in Gyantse and Lhasa were home to him, and Sahu's family provided most of the help he received during his visits to Tibet (YKP: 11). Sankrityayan expresses his gratitude to the Newar and his sons in many places in his Tibet travelogue.

Sankrityayan was not the first person to enter Tibet disguised as a Nepalese (and later as a Tibetan with the name Khunnū Chevañ). A Japanese Buddhist monk, Ekai Kawaguchi, had easily crossed the border in the 1890s, since he resembled a Nepalese (Subedi 1999: 6).¹⁶ Later, when Sankrityayan visited Tibet via India as an Indian with a permit, he took an Indian friend of his named Rajnath disguised as a Nepalese citizen. "Short in stature, Rajnath wore a Nepalese topi and pyjamas, and that appearance served instead of a visa" (MJY-2: 151). Sankrityayan wrote: "Rajnath was going on ahead with the other Nepalese. No one had asked him anything, but as I passed through, the policeman ran after and shouted at me to show my pass. Doing so, I asked, 'Why do you ask only me?' He replied, 'We do not ask Nepalese for passes'. I smiled within – Rajnath had become a perfect Nepalese" (MJY-2: 152).

Although Nepalese law was very strict, then, it was possible for people to get around it. Many non-Nepalese, such as Kawaguchi,¹⁷ Sankrityayan, and Rajnath, entered Tibet pretending to be Nepalese. Since Nepal is a land of many ethnic castes and cultures, its people display many different facial features, whether Mongolian, Dravidian, or Aryan. Śivarātri was a particularly suitable occasion to enter Kathmandu incognito, not only for foreigners but also for exiled Nepalese. One exiled Buddhist monk, for instance, Prem Bahadur Shrestha, later known as Mahāprajñā, visited the Kathmandu Valley during Śivarātri in 1930 (Śākya 1993: 25).¹⁸

16 Sankrityayan had read Kawaguchi's and Alexandra David-Neel's accounts of their visits to Tibet and garnered useful information from them (TMSV: 2-3).

17 Ekai Kawaguchi had left Japan in 1897 in order "... to go in search of the authentic texts to Nepal and Tibet where they were taken by those fleeing the Muslim invasion in India, and preserved carefully" (Subedi 1999:15). "Kawaguchi read that manuscripts were safely preserved in Tibet. He also learned that Brian Hodgson, the British official in Nepal, had also collected Sanskrit texts in Nepal" (ibid.: 17). Sankrityayan had the same purpose in mind as these predecessors when he travelled to Nepal and Tibet. He would later (1935) meet Kawaguchi in Tokyo (MJY-2: 204).

18 Some years later, however, when Shrestha visited Bhojpur, he was arrested while lecturing (on 14 January 1937) and was imprisoned for four months (three months in Bhojpur and one month in Dhankuta) and again exiled back to India (Śākya 1993: 35).

As a devoted Buddhist scholar, Sankrityayan naturally was able to enjoy good relations with many Nepalese Buddhists. The Theravada movement was on the rise in Nepal during the period in which he was most active, and it will first of all be fruitful to explore the extent to which Sankrityayan cultivated relations with this movement and its supporters.

Sankrityayan and the Theravada Movement in Nepal

Sarah Levine and David N. Gellner (2008) carried out a study dealing with the Theravada movement in 20th-century Nepal, resulting in their book *Rebuilding Buddhism*. They do not record any active involvement on Sankrityayan's part in this movement, but it is worth discussing the significance of it for him and of him for it during the period of his visits to Tibet and Nepal, which took place at the time when the Theravada movement was at its peak in Nepal. It is surprising to discover that Sankrityayan was not actively involved in the movement, and this study has concluded that although he was not so, he must certainly have supported it morally. The following pages will attempt to define more precisely Sankrityayan's links to it.

During the 20th century the Ranas determined to seal off Nepal, to block the infiltration of foreign influence into the country, but this did not come about as they had wished. Their desire to obtain Western luxuries required the development of trading networks with India. Furthermore, education stood in the way. The acknowledged need for well-trained bureaucrats in the government and Sanskrit-literate priests served to keep the door of the country somewhat open. A number of Newar merchants set up permanent establishments in Calcutta, which paved the way for contact with the Maha Bodhi Society. Students who went to study in India developed good relations with the freedom fighters and leaders there, thus heightening their own political awareness.

Jagatman Vaidya (1902–1963) was the son of an Ayurvedic *vaidya* ('traditional physician'), Vrishaman Vaidya, an employee at the palace of Juddha Shamsher Rana. He was sent to India for further studies on a scholarship from the Nepalese government. Sometime after reaching Calcutta in 1921, he met Anagarika Dharmapala and fell under his spell, seeing the reflection of the Buddha in him (Śākya 1994: 144–145). Dharmapala in turn saw in Vaidya a promising advocate of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal (Levine & Gellner 2008: 27). He suggested changing

his name to Dharmaditya Dharmacharya (Śākya 1994: 146). In the summer break of 1923 the student returned to Nepal with some books published by the Maha Bodhi Society, along with issues of the Society's journal, *The Maha-Bodhi*. He shared them with his friends in Kathmandu and told them of his desire to establish what he planned to call the Nepal Buddhopasak Sangha ('Association of Nepalese Lay Buddhists') to propagate Theravada Buddhism in Nepal. At a meeting in the house of Dharma Narayan Tuladhar¹⁹, his efforts eventually bore fruit.²⁰ Members of the Sangha translated Buddhist texts from English and Pali into *nepāl bhāṣā* (Newari) and made carbon copies of their results, which served as the basis for their later publication in Dharmapala's journal *Buddha-dharma* in Calcutta. *Buddha-dharma* was the first periodical ever brought out in *nepāl bhāṣā* (Levine & Gellner 2008: 28).

Though it was difficult during the Rana regime to do such things, three weeks after the male association was established, Dharmaditya Dharmacharya established the Nepal Buddhopasika Sangh ('Association of Nepalese Female Lay Buddhists') in Patan under Hiramaya Upasika and Dhanamaya Upasika (Śākya 1994: 149).

Dharmaditya Dharmacharya also proposed, in 1923, that a renovation of Kindol Mahavihara in Swayambhu be undertaken. He discussed this with Dharmaman Sahu and wrote a request to the same effect to the Rana prime minister, Chandra Shamsher. Later, in the journal *Bauddha Bhārat*, he notes that "one śiṣya ['disciple', namely Dharmaman Sahu] donated 1,500 Nepalese rupees and Prime Minister Chandra Shamsher Janga Bahadur Rana donated 1,500 Nepalese rupees."²¹

When Sankrityayan was hiding in Kathmandu in 1929, he met Dharmaman Sahu at the same house in Ason where the Nepal Buddhopasak Sangha had been established six years before. His desire to visit Tibet to

19 He was also known as Dhamma Sahu, Dharmaman Sahu, or Dharma Sahu. Sankrityayan wrote a short biographical sketch of him under the title "Dharmā saḥū" in JMK.

20 The executive committee of the Sangha was as follows:

- a) The main propagator and manager: Dharmaditya Dharmacharya
- b) Administrator: Khadga Raj Tuladhar
- c) Treasurer: Triratna Man Tuladhar (son of Dharmaman Tuladhar)
- d) Business co-coordinator: Chittadhar Tuladhar 'Hridaya'
- e) Assistant for other works: Kuldip Upasak
- f) Member: Buddhi Ratna

21 Cited in Śākya (1994: 150)

study Buddhist texts and, upon returning, promote Buddhism met with a promise to help him on the part of Dharmaman Sahu. Sankrityayan was grateful to him for his help, since his political activities back home threatened to undermine his plans:

With great insistence he put me up in his house from 1 April to 2 April. The poor man was very simple. He was not even afraid that, no matter how pure my plans and motives were, the Nepalese government, were it to find out about them, could create trouble for him.

Sankrityayan (TMSV: 69)

On 1 December 1934, during Sankrityayan's visit to Kathmandu on his way back to India from his second visit to Tibet, Dharmaman Sahu introduced him to General Mohan Shamsheer, having been instructed to do the same with every Buddhist monk or guest who visited his house. They had a short talk and Sankrityayan later wrote that Mohan Shamsheer was surprised to learn that Buddhists were atheists (MJY-2: 187).²²

The Ranas had prohibited the public use of non-Nepali languages and banned the printing of religious texts and literary works in them, and in Newari in particular. However, a strong feeling of ethnic identity persisted among most Newars, and this was channelled into cultural activity, which led, as soon as the Rana regime was over, to the establishment of

22 In Nepal, Newars practise both the Newar variant of Vajrayana Buddhism and Theravada Buddhism. Many Buddhist groups in Nepal are also influenced by Hinduism. Buddhists have long felt the strong influence of Hinduism owing to their close contacts with the Hindu castes and because they themselves were integrated into the caste system. Many of them eventually adopted Hinduism. What is called Newar Buddhism is the form of Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhism (mainly) practiced in the Newar ethnic community of the Kathmandu Valley. The intertwinedness of Hinduism and Buddhism in Nepal resulted in the Buddha being declared the ninth avatar of Vishnu. As the king was regarded as an incarnate form of Vishnu, the Nepalese monarchy had the strong support of Hindus, while the status attributed to the Buddha at least served to keep Buddhists loyal to it. Nepal's rulers, in short, treated Buddhists and Hindus, who shared many festivals and much iconography, largely on equal terms.

Bhattachan (2005) rejects the Hindu appropriation of the Buddha as the ninth avatar of Vishnu. His article accuses Hindus of annexing Buddhism to Hinduism, mindless of the fact that Nepalese Buddhists hold many views diametrically opposed to their own. For example, he criticizes the Hindu worship of a supremely powerful deity while subordinating others, and their worship of certain animals while at the same time slaughtering others. For details on Newar Buddhism, see Gellner 1992.

organizations such as *Cwasa Pasa* ('Friends of the pen')²³ and the *Nepāl-bhāṣā Pariṣad* ('Newari language council').²⁴

The Rana government of Nepal eventually made good on its threat, arresting a number of Newars who wrote in Newari, Cittadhar "Hridaya" (born Tuladhar) (1906–1982) being among the most prominent.²⁵ Fatte Bahadur Singh had compiled and published *Nepāli vihāra*, a collection of classical and modern poems in Newari in 1940 and was imprisoned for doing so. Cittadhar Hridaya was imprisoned alongside him because he had published a poem (whose title translates as "Mother") in that collection (Lewis & Tuladhar 2007: xix). Whilst in prison, Cittadhar Hridaya wrote his best-known work, *Sugata Saurabha*, a poetic retelling of the life of the Buddha. Sankrityayan's books on the Buddha and Buddhism were consulted as reference sources for it, Sankrityayan having made friends with the Tuladhar family while in Kathmandu. In the words of Hridaya (Lewis & Tuladhar 2007: xlv):

Sometime later, everyone had some religious books brought into the jail for them after we made a plea that we needed them for prayer. My sister first brought the *Dhammapada* for me, and this inspired me to start my own poem, a wish I could not suppress ... Later on, the *Buddhacarriya* by Mr. Rahul [Sanskrityayan] (sic) also came in as a prayer book. When this book came in, it helped me a lot. Or else I would have ... been dependent on what I had studied in my

23 *Cwasa Pasa* was established on Vaiśākh Purṇimā, V.S. 2007 in Calcutta (Śākya 1994: 156). See also Whelpton 2011: 182.

24 The Nepāl Bhāṣā Pariṣad was established on 3 March 1951 (Śākya 1994:156).

25 Sankrityayan describes the imprisonment of Chittadhar Hridaya and Dharmaratna Yami in his book *Dharma Ratna 'Yami'* (1963).

childhood from the *Lalitvistara*²⁶ by Shri Nishtānanda.²⁷

Hridaya (Lewis & Tuladhar 2007: xlv)

One of the main exponents of Theravada Buddhism in Nepal, Amritananda Mahanayaka Thera (Lal Kaji Shakya), was also particularly influenced by the books of Sankrityayan (Ahir 1993: 190-195). Amritananda, along with four other monks, was expelled from Nepal in 1924 for having converted to Buddhism. The Rana prime minister at the time, Chandra Shamsher, had invoked the previously mentioned law according to which no conversion from one religion to another was permissible. The overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950–51 was understandably most welcomed by Nepalese Buddhists, and also because the previously self-exiled and now newly reinstated King Tribhuvan took a keen interest in Buddhism and the affairs of his Buddhist subjects. In November 1956, Nepal hosted the Fourth General Conference of the World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) organized by the Dharmodaya Sabha ('Council for the advancement of the Dharma', also known as the Buddhist Society of Nepal) under the presidency of Amritananda.²⁸ The conference, in which Sankrityayan also participated, received generous financial assistance from the government of Nepal. One of the participants, Bhadanta Ānand Kauśalyāyan, later

26 Bhikkhu Mahapragya (Prem Bahadur Shrestha) had translated Sankrityayan's *Buddha caryā* into Newari under the title *Lalitavistara* and published an edition of 80 copies in 1997 V.S. (Śākya 1993: 38). This, as we have seen, has nothing to do with the classical Sanskrit work of the same name upon which Nishtananda's Newari translation, published in 1914, is based. See Lewis & Tuladhar 2007: xliii.

This latter translation was apparently well known. The Newar merchant Dalchini Manandhar had years earlier told Prem Bahadur Shrestha that "bhajans are being sung only of Ram, Kriṣṇa, Hari, and Hara (i.e. Shiva) in our country; no one sings bhajans for the Buddha. You can compose bhajans and [other] songs, so please compose a couple of bhajans." Manandhar gave him the *Lalitvistara* written by Pandit Niṣṭhānanda Bajrācārya. After reading it, Prem Bahadur Shrestha composed a collection of bhajans. He had worked in the palace of Kathmandu as a member of the entertainment group (acting in dramas, singing, playing musical instruments, etc.) for some time until 1982 V.S. (Śākya 1993: 2–5).

27 A separate study of the writings mentioned would be worthwhile to see exactly where the influence of Sankrityayan's work lay.

28 The Dharmodaya Sabha had been founded in Sarnath by Amritananda and his fellow monks on 30 November 1944 while in exile. Sankrityayan's friend Ānand Kauśalyāyan was the first vice-president, and Amritananda the first secretary. The Dharmodaya Sabha's first order of business was to appeal to Buddhists in India and in other countries to protest against the government of Nepal regarding the expulsion of the monks.

wrote that “the two personalities, Ambedkar and Sankrityayan, were the cynosure in the conference” (Kauśalyāyan 1992: 4).

Thus it is clear that Sankrityayan had close relations with many members of the Theravada movement in Nepal. He himself, though, was neither active in it nor did he ever write anything relating to it directly or on its behalf. Two causes may be supposed for this. The first reason Sankrityayan did not accept Anagarika Dharmapala’s request to engage in promoting Theravada Buddhism may have been because his own priorities lay in researching Buddhist texts and pursuing other scholarly activities. Secondly, he wanted to keep on good terms with the government of Nepal lest they stood in his way to visiting Tibet. He had already refused to propagate Buddhism as a religion in India and other parts of the world, and he had all the more reason not to do so in Nepal, where the Theravada movement was illegal. The main persons behind the Theravada movement (Dharmaman Sahu, Bhikkhu Amritananda, Cittadhar Hridaya and Bhikkhu Dharmalok) were all Sankrityayan’s good friends, and had he written in support of the movement, it would only have created problems for them. Furthermore, his own Buddhist writings would have stood no chance of being sanctioned in Nepal, his political works having already been banned by the Rana government. Still, even though he kept to the background, he followed events closely and offered encouragement where he could, for he realized that Nepal had played a key role in the history of Buddhism:

Nepal: At a very early time Buddhism was introduced into Nepal. When after the Mohamadan conquest of India, Buddhism disappeared from there; it still prevailed in that country. Most of the Buddhist canonical works on philosophy and written in Sanskrit were found there, though the whole of the last century was a period of slothfulness and inactivities on the part of the Buddhism there, that state has now changed and the young Buddhist Nepalese are awakening.

(Sankrityayan 1984: 134)

One Cultural Soul: Sankrityayan’s relationship with Nepalese

The central idea underlying Sankrityayan’s (and, in his eyes, India’s) relationship with Nepal is what I term the “one cultural soul”²⁹ shared by

29 The expression “cultural soul” was used during the *ekātmatāyajiña* (translated by van der Veer as “sacrifice for unity”), a large-scale ritual procession in 1983 organized by

both parties. Sankrityayan repeatedly presents himself as being areligious. Even as he regarded Buddhism in terms of the wider Indian culture, so too his relationship with Nepal, while outwardly tied to religion, had, according to him, a wider cultural foundation. Though he never professed a conventional faith in any religion, his relationship with Nepal was based in part on the conventional trappings of religion: the ritual, the beliefs, and the cultural accessories. He had visited Nepal as a sadhu during Śivrātri and participated in Nepal's grandest religious festival; however, this was not the main aim of his visit. Whether he assumed the robes of a sadhu or of a Buddhist monk, or else enrolled as a Brahmin in the study of Buddhism, mattered less to him than the fact that he was thereby granted membership in a brotherhood. Nepal and India share many cultural roots that go back far in time, and these still serve to make both peoples feel at home in the other's country.

As noted by van der Veer (1994: 84), religions and the particular ways of practising them each give rise to particular ways of imagining the world. He argues that ritual takes pride of place when it comes to communicating most compellingly such imaginative ideas of religious community. Hindu and Buddhist religious customs, both of which Sankrityayan had at one time or another followed, both created a sense of fellowship. His pilgrimage as a sadhu during Śivarātri, the hospitality he received at the house of a Nepalese Buddhist family, his visits to Tibet in the robes of a Buddhist monk, and his time spent searching for, studying, and editing Buddhist texts there are examples of activities that bonded the areligious Sankrityayan with Buddhist believers beyond India's borders.

Sankrityayan's relationship with Nepal's royal priest tells the same story in Hindu terms. He was a Brahmin Sanskrit scholar looked upon as one of the most senior religious authorities in Nepal, and exercised temporal power through his association with the ministerial court. Sankrityayan visited his house as a guest and received gifts, as if from

the Vishwa Hindu Parishad ('World Hindu council'), to play up the cultural similarities shared by Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, and India. For details, see van der Veer 1984: 124-126. The sentence from the statement issued on that occasion, as quoted by him (*Ibid.*:126), reads: "It proved that Nepal, Bhutan and Burma may be politically separate from Bharat [India] but the cultural soul of all these countries is one within." From this I have developed the expression to read "one cultural soul" so as to better convey the underlying idea.

a fellow “twice-born one.” Sharma, an orthodox Hindu, would not have cultivated such close relations with Sankrityayan had he thought of him as an areligious person, that is, as someone other than a Hindu Brahmin or a Buddhist. The normal way he treated others has been described as follows:

[...] his (i.e. Sharma’s) house was in Dhoka Tole – called Bharati Bhavan, the “House of Learning” – in the heart of Kathmandu [...]

In the first quarter of the century, not only Nepal but also Hem Raj’s house was closed to foreigners. Lévi wrote in 1925 that twice a week he had an academic meeting with Hem Raj at the Government Library, but he would have not been allowed to enter the Raj Guru’s house since people would have been scandalized to see a *mleccha* (‘barbarian’) profane the residence of such a sacred person.

(Grazilli 2001: 118–120)

But the door of Bharati Bhavan was always open for Sankrityayan, because in the eyes of the Nepalese he was either an Indian Hindu or Buddhist and born into a Brahmin family.

After Sankrityayan had met many European scholars, his interest in collecting manuscripts and working on them increased. He became aware that European scholars were also working on them,³⁰ and that they were keen, in particular, on finding manuscripts of Dharmakirti’s *Pramāṇavārttika*.³¹ During his second visit to Tibet, then, he tried to locate a copy of it. He had heard that Hemraj Sharma had an old copy of it in Kathmandu, and so he returned via Kathmandu to meet him³² to see if he could borrow it.³³ This time

30 “There were many educated middle class population in Germany who liked Buddha. Many great scholars of Sanskrit and Pali were also born in Germany. They edited and translated thousands of books.” MJY-2: 113.

31 Sankrityayan says that his interest in the *Pramāṇavārttika* was sparked after his first visit to Tibet, presumably first and foremost during his conversations with European scholars MJY-2:186.

32 Not only Sankrityayan but also many other scholars, including Sylvain Lévi, Giuseppe Tucci, Jayachandra Vidyānkara, and Kashi Prasad Jayasawal, received help from him when doing research on manuscripts (Nepāl 2057 V.S.: 2).

33 Sankrityayan received this information from Jayacandra Vidyānkara. Vidyānkara

he let himself be introduced to Sharma as an Indian intellectual.

Although they had met before under in other circumstances, this time he presented himself to Sharma as an Indian scholar. Sankrityayan learned there that the Italian scholar Giuseppe Tucci had already taken the manuscript of the *Pramāṇavārttika*. Still, although the original was not available, he was able to obtain a photographic copy of it, of which ten pages were missing, presumably from the bound volume that was produced from the photos.

Nepal (2057 V.S.: 233) has mentioned that Sharma had borrowed the *Pramāṇavārttika* from a *gubhāju*³⁴ of the Ghantaghar quarter but never returned it. The reason he could not was because Tucci never returned it to him. He was later criticized in Nepal for having made gifts of the country's treasures to foreigners.

For his third journey to Tibet, in 1936, aimed specifically at finding a complete Sanskrit manuscript of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, which he succeeded in doing and published his commentary on it.³⁵ Sankrityayan again chose to travel via Nepal. During this stay his friendship with Rājguru Sharma remained very close, with the latter providing him the use of his own car, horses, and porters. By travelling in such style, Sankrityayan was able to receive special courtesies at the customs offices along the way (YKP: 21).

The correspondence between Sharma and Sankrityayan shows Sharma's own great interest in collecting books and manuscripts. It also shows that Sankrityayan sent copies of his printed books to Sharma, or else handwritten drafts of works in progress. The letters tell us, for instance, that Chitta Harsha Bajracharya³⁶ copied Sankrityayan's Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary (compiled in 1930, unpublished) for Sharma.

Hemraj Sharma noted salient parts of Sankrityayan's visit to Nepal

had visited Nepal at the beginning of 1932 and met Hemraj Sharma (Nepāl 2057 V.S.: 219).

One may note here that *Tibbat mē savā varṣ* was published by Sharada Mandir, headed by Jayacandra Vidyalkankara. Later Sharma requested Sankrityayan to soften his statements about the Ranās in the book.

34 A Newar Buddhist chief priest

35 Sankrityayan 1943

36 I was able to meet Chitta Harsha Bajracharya's son Purna Harsha Bajracharya (82) in Kathmandu in 2008. He said that his father had been a teacher of children who had difficulty in getting admission to Darbar High School and that Sankrityayan had visited their house in the Ghantaghar quarter.

in 1953 in his diary.³⁷ At one gathering, for example, where Sankrityayan argued strongly for the non-existence of God, Sharma spoke against this, but the entry bears no sign of hostility. Indeed, both often expressed in writing their appreciation for the other (Nepal 2057 V.S.: 238). It may be noted that Sankrityayan and Hemraj Sharma shared their family name, Paṇḍe, although neither used it publicly.

Similarly, Sahu Dharmaman would not have let Sankrityayan come to or stay at his house in Kathmandu and Lhasa, or have helped him journey to Tibet, if he did not have what seemed to be genuine Buddhist credentials. The fact that Dharmaman and others were already secretly active in the Theravada movement only meant that they even more open-heartedly welcomed Sankrityayan, someone who was devoted to the same cause in India as they were in Nepal. Both Sharma and Dharmaman, then, viewed Sankrityayan as belonging to their community.

Concluding Remarks

This article has sought to explore Sankrityayan's relation with Nepalese Buddhists and what journeys to Nepal meant for him. Although he was ordained as a monk in Sri Lanka, his objective in life was not mainly to propagate and practise Buddhism as the religion leading to nirvana.

Sankrityayan felt Nepal to be his second home, a view grounded in the notions of "one cultural soul". He developed intimate ties with Nepal and the Nepalese through his devotion to Buddhism and Buddhist studies. In the context of this study's examination of Sankrityayan's relationship with Nepal, his speech at the Fourth World Buddhist Conference held in Kathmandu in December 1956 is worth quoting. In front of a large gathering on the parade grounds of Tundikhel, where all the guests and King Mahendra Shah were assembled, he gave a spontaneous response in Hindi to the welcoming speech:

37 Not all the diaries of Sharma are available. Those that are have been edited and published by Jñānmaṇi Nepāl (2057 V.S.). Prakash A. Raj, the grandson of Sharma, kindly provided me copies of the original diaries along with a diary of his own written when he was nine years old, in which he tells of Sankrityayan's visit to his home. This entry latter shows that by that time Sankrityayan was a household name in Nepal. Similarly, I have come across another diary entry - made by Rocak Ghimire on 13 March 1958, during Sankrityayan's visit to Nepal with his family.

I do not think that we have arrived in a foreign land.³⁸ Nepal and India have one culture. ... The guests who have come here from faraway countries are our common guests. We need to act in concert so that they will truly become acquainted with the *janmbhūmi* ('birthplace', i.e. Nepal) and *karmbhūmi* ('field of action', i.e. India) of the Buddha.

(in Miśrā 1993: 2)

This statement is clearly emblematic of Sankrityayan's vision of India-Nepal relations and why he regarded both countries as historically bound one to the other. In his opinion, their common culture (their one cultural soul) had united both countries. The common link between India and Nepal through Buddhism goes deeper, in that they witnessed the birth of the religion, but their links go far beyond even Buddhism.

This was a state of affairs that Sankrityayan believed transcended, too, the politics of the day. The Rana government may have expelled Buddhist monks newly converted to Theravada, but Sankrityayan, who was himself a relatively new convert to Buddhism, was able to enter and sojourn in Nepal with apparent ease. One obvious reason for this, this study has shown, was his seemingly chameleon-like identity, his ability to shift from political activist, to Buddhist, to Brahmin, to communist, to scholar, to sadhu, to Arya Samajist - something that could easily have thrown anyone with suspicions off their guard. On his early visits to Nepal, Sankrityayan travelled without official permission, incognito. Later he re-emerged as a scholar of Buddhism of such obvious talent as to impress other serious scholars working in the field, especially the Rājguru Hemraj Sharma, and this made entry into Nepal easier. But just when Sankrityayan was beginning to enjoy this new-found freedom, a number of his books were banned in Nepal. His books on the Buddha and Buddhism, to be sure, were still available there, but readers no longer had ready access to his political writings. By very reason of their illegal status, his communist-inspired literature enjoyed great popularity in Nepal, which became an important print-market for all his works.

The Nepalese Newar monk Mahanam visited Darjeeling on 6 April

38 "[...] He felt at home here. The love he received from friends and acquaintances remained valuable throughout his life."

1963 to attend Sankrityayan's 70th birthday and also participated in his funeral. On 14 April 1963, at the age of 70, Sankrityayan breathed his last at his Darjeeling house. Political struggle, writing, and *ghumakkaṛī* wandering had been synonyms for him of life's meaning, but it was such relentless activity that at the same time steadily undermined the physical foundations of his life. On the day of the obsequies, 15 April, a question arose as to which ritual to follow. Sankrityayan's youngest brother Shyamlal wished to follow the Hindu ritual, whereas Bhikkhu Mahanam favoured the Buddhist one, reasoning that Sankrityayan had never renounced Buddhism after taking vows. The dispute was finally resolved with the decision to perform both. The news of Sankrityayan's death spread very fast in and outside India. The Nepali national daily *Gorkhapatra*³⁹ published the news on its front page.

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³⁹ *Gorkhapatra*, 15 April 1963.

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Review Essay: A Pioneer of Comparative Himalayan Mythology (a review of *Miyapma: Traditional Narratives of the Thulung Rai*, by N.J. Allen)

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Traditional Narratives of the Thulung Rai, by N.J. Allen. Kathmandu: Vajra Publication. 2012, 264 pp., 20 black and white photos, ISBN 978-9937-506-82-3, price 25\$ / 1600 NPR.

Miyapma is the revised version of Nicholas Allen's unpublished 1976 doctoral thesis *Studies in the myths and oral traditions of the Thulung Rai of Eastern Nepal*. 'Revised' means here that Allen merely improved readability while refraining from any larger changes or revision of the original, as he states. Amongst other things, he justifies this in his preface by the articles that he had published over subsequent years which were based on the thesis, and declares his own book to be a 'historical document' that does not include any consideration of many of the works that have meanwhile been published on the oral traditions and mythology of the Rai or on comparative Himalayan mythology. The only major difference between the original thesis and *Miyapma* is the substantial shortening of the Thulung language transcriptions of the myths in the appendix of the published version, for which he refers to an online archive.

Allen's original thesis was hitherto known to only a small circle of scholars working among the Kirat, or on mythology and narratives in the Himalayas, most of whom obtained a copy directly from the author. In Nepal itself a copy was available at CNAS (Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, Tribhuvan University) and known to a handful of linguists working on Kiranti languages, while local folklorists seem to have had no access to it, as may be gathered from local publications on Kirat folktales.¹ Which means a large academic community working on Nepal and a wide culturally interested local public will benefit greatly from its publication. As Charles

1 Personal communication from Martin Gaenzle. While in linguist circles the designation 'Kiranti' prevails, anthropologists and local cultural activists have begun to employ the designation 'Kirat' as an umbrella term to describe a superordinate entity who encompasses the local groups of the Rai, Limbu, Yakkha and Sunuwar in eastern Nepal.

Ramble rightly states in his foreword, anthropological studies on Nepal have in the last decades mainly focused on themes of development and politics. Therefore, for a whole new generation of anthropologists and other Himalayan researchers, *Miyapma* presents one of the pioneering and fundamental works in the anthropology of Nepal.

In the following, I would like to give a short overview of the contents of the book and its objectives, before briefly discussing the academic reception of the original thesis (and some of its offshoot articles) in the past.

Contents and Objectives

The book has two self-declared aims, first to follow what the author considers the traditional purpose of ethnography, “to record for posterity the ideas and creations of societies that do not produce their own written documents” (p. 19), in his case the Thulung Rai who live in the middle hills of Eastern Nepal. Second, to launch a larger project of comparative mythology of the ‘Bodic’ speaking peoples, in the tradition of Georges Dumézil. For this he suggests drawing comparisons between the Rai and the pre-Buddhist and pre-Bon traditions of the Tibetan Plateau – provided such traditions can be teased apart at the sources. At the end of his analysis (p. 227 ff.), Allen feels justified in forwarding a thesis which assumes that Tibetan narratives, which over time have been ‘affected’ by the Bon and Buddhist religions, have a stronger resemblance to the Thulung tradition the further back one goes back in time. Formulated very carefully by the author, his conclusions convey that Thulung mythology and narrative traditions, and as a consequence Thulung society, could be close to what Tibetan tradition once may have been before the advent of Bon and Buddhism.

In the *Introduction* (Chapter 1) Allen introduces the Rai in general; his field research setting; the ritual specialists and an initial notion of the concept of *diluma* (religion / custom / tradition / ancestral knowledge), which he takes as justifying his focus on mythology and narratives; some ritual contexts (especially the *bhume* rites); and his comparative project. In the last two chapters, *Further Analysis and Explorations* (Chapter 6) and *Concluding Remarks* (Chapter 7) he returns once again to the concept of *diluma*, the important role of the ancestors, and the general comparison with Tibet. In the intervening chapters he presents the narratives of the Thulung, first giving an English translation of the respective narratives

in different variations, as transcribed from his audio-records, followed by an annotation and interpretation of local concepts and, where available, a comparison with closer neighbouring groups and with wider Tibetan sources. He divides these narratives into four chapters:

The Creation (Chapter 2) contains variations of myths concerned with the 'creatrix', who among the Thulung is known as Miyapma, hence the title of the book. Episodes include the origin of the world, the origin of Miyapma herself, and how she became pregnant and gave birth to the species of which man was the last or youngest, a circumstance that is of increasing significance in the author's later comparisons. Four of the brothers are subsequently of relevance: the tiger, the bear, the monkey and 'Mini', the first man. They quarrel and go their separate ways after tiger kills his mother. Allen compares these narratives with several Tibetan narratives of 'the first man' and 'the first king', a comparison that Ramble in his foreword sees as fruitful, where he provides a further example and thus confirms "Allen's concluding argument that the Thulung and Tibetan cases share a common heritage prior to the rise of Bon and Buddhism" (p. xiv). One finding that Allen emphasises in this chapter is "that whereas Thulungs emphasise the creative activity of females, Tibetans emphasise that of males" (p. 59), which he interprets though as a recent feature of Tibetan mythology. He suggests that the relation between the nature of ancient Tibetan goddesses and Miyapma needs further systematic research, also among the surrounding peoples such as the Naxi in South China.

The Jaw-khliw Cycle (Chapter 3) deals with variations of the myths of a group of culture heroes: the sisters Jaw and Khliw, their little brother Khakcilik, and his wife Wayelungma. The sisters kill their brother, who resurrects. The sisters, not knowing that he is again alive, go their ways, the younger gets killed by an uncle and revived by her older sister and they settle down and invent weaving. Meanwhile the little brother, who has survived by hunting and fishing, fishes a stone that turns into a beautiful woman who becomes his wife. She teaches him how to build a house, cultivate grain, and brew beer. The family is reunited in a large ceremony in which the sisters present gifts. Allen's main unsolved puzzle piece in this chapter is the final ceremony, which reads like a marriage feast. But who is marrying whom? Judging by the gifts that are exchanged, which are in effect equivalent to the Thulung bride price, he assumes an incestuous

relation between brother and sisters, a motive which turns out to be quite common in Rai mythology, as later research shows (e.g. Gaenszle 1991). Allen focuses his comparison of Tibetan and other Nepalese local groups on the motives of the captured wife, the sacrifice while building a house, and the shift in character in Kacilik's wife Wayelungma once he accepts her as a bride. Again, he finds that cultural invention in the written Tibetan myths is accredited to the male side, while in the oral tradition among the Thulung it is accredited to the female side. Roughly speaking, she [Wayelungma] is responsible for the Neolithic Revolution. Furthermore, she was clairvoyant and knew everything (p.99).

In *Migrations of the ancestors* (Chapter 4) Allen turns to myths that he considers "move closer to the realities of geography and history" (p.101). We read how the ancestors emerged from the primal lake through three hearth stones, and how they made a blood offering so as to be able to exit the door to the world. The brothers were the progenitors of different Rai groups of which Thulung was the youngest, but they split following a territorial dispute. Several accounts tell of a journey eastwards and an expansion to the north, more precisely Khumbu, until the main village of the Thulung, Mukli, was founded. Allen's main discussion here is concerned with the migration routes, and he identifies a mismatch between the journey in the narratives and in death rituals, which he assumes takes the reverse route of the migration. In this chapter a comparison with the wider Tibetan surroundings understandably makes no sense, because the myths Allen deals with are of an essentially local nature, but Allen emphasizes that in this 'later' phase of the mythological past, just as in the Tibetan case, women have completely disappeared from the picture and men have taken over.

The *Later Legends* (Chapter 5) are a group of myths that do not fit anywhere else but also do not form a corpus or cycle by themselves. Nonetheless Allen considers these myths or legends to be more consistent than might appear at first glance. A great number of them deal with difficult marriages with 'outsiders' and their consequences, others explain the dispersal of the different Rai groups, the foundation of villages, or the implementation of ritual places (*bhume* rites). Of major importance for the comparison with the Tibetan myths are the legends of the slug-eating wife among the Thulung, which are compared structurally to the myths of the frog-eaters in Tibetan versions, and to the Thulung creation myth.

Academic reception of the original thesis

Among researchers working specifically on the Rai, Allen's thesis figured as a pioneering work long before its publication as *Miyapma*. It is referred to under its original title in most of the monographs on the Rai (Schlemmer 2004; Gaenzsle 1991, 2002; Nicoletti 2006; Hardman 2000). Likewise in the ongoing research projects revolving round Kirat Studies at the University of Vienna undertaken by Martin Gaenzsle, Alban von Stockhausen and myself,² Allen's material has proved invaluable for comparisons. Scholars of Kirat studies, along with many other Nepal scholars, have responded to Allen's hope that his study "will be sufficiently interesting to encourage others (...) to collect and record similar samples of the rich cultural heritage of the Himalayan peoples" (p.233). Similarly, linguists working on Kiranti languages have worked with the original Thulung text transcriptions, most intensely Ebert (2008: 131ff.), who has published a new annotated interlinear translation of the original texts, which is where the passages omitted in *Miyapma* may be found. However, Allen is better known at present in the academic community for his other works, namely his *Sketch of Thulung Grammar* (1975) – the first grammar of a Kiranti language – and some of his later articles on kinship terminologies.

Scholars who are long familiar with the thesis refer to the Thulung narratives themselves as examples to illustrate their own work, and sometimes Allen's interpretations of the local terms and concepts are also discussed. A few scholars working on other groups in Nepal have used the thesis as a reference resource for single myths, as for instance Michael Oppitz, who has himself worked comparatively on Himalayan mythology (for instance 1993, 2013). The most detailed discussion of Allen's interpretation of local concepts based on his narrative examples can be found in Gaenzsle (1991: Chapter 3). While agreeing with many of Allen's ideas, Gaenzsle does not agree that the myths can be regarded as half-forgotten simply because they were recorded in fragments (1991: 247), and thinks that Allen has underestimated the overall interconnectedness of the mythological episodes (1991: 249). He questions Allen's idea that the quadripartite structure of the myth of the four brothers (tiger, bear, monkey, man) relates to a societal quadripartite structure (kings, their

2 Research project "Ritual, Space, Mimesis: Performative Traditions and Ethnic Identity among the Rai of Eastern Nepal" at the Department of South Asian, Tibetan and Buddhist Studies, Vienna University, funded by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF, 2011-2015).

ministers, priests, their assistants, p. 46, also reinforced by other of Allen's articles (1972, 1978) and suggests instead a dual model.

It is remarkable however that not many of the works that have used Allen's thesis as a resource explicitly refer to his proposal for a Trans-Himalayan-Tibetan comparative project as such. He emphasised this project again in an article published in 1980. But this article was noticed more for the specific myths it contained (e.g. in Huber 2010 and de Sales 1991), rather than for its call for a comparative approach. There are a few exceptions, however: Anne de Sales was one of the most explicit in acknowledging that Nicholas Allen had "prepared the ground for 'a comparative mythology of the Bodic speakers'" (1994:682). Likewise Stuart Blackburn specifically refers to Allen's comparative approach (for instance 2007: 421), while conceptually and geographically rooting his own approach elsewhere,³ and we find marginal mentions of it in Bickel (2000: 694). One reason why Allen's comparative concept has not been pursued more widely might be due to the Tibetan examples he chose and the Dumézilian tradition that has interested him until today, even though it has long been out of fashion in studies of Himalayan comparative mythology and elsewhere. One of the problems with Allen's source area and examples for comparison is addressed by Gaenszle, who considers it much more convincing to draw comparisons with Northeast India rather than with the Tibetan plateau (1991: 281). And this is also what we find has recently been put into practice by scholars of comparative Himalayan mythology (as for instance Blackburn 2007, 2010, Huber 2010, Huber and Blackburn 2012).

A brief prospect

Among Tibetologists it seems that Ramble in his foreword to "Miyapma" is one of the first to openly acknowledge, in published form, Allen's status as one of the pioneers of a comparative Himalayan mythology that includes the Tibetan plateau. However, even if not directly stated in publications, Allen's hope that "the study may [also] be helpful or suggestive to Tibetologists" (p.233), has found an open ear among many researchers working elsewhere in the Himalayas, beyond Kirat or Nepalese mythology. Comparing Himalayan traditions as a whole,

3 That is on Northeast India and the 'Boasian heritage'.

scholars such as Toni Huber have taken inspiration from Allen, with major publications to follow in the near future. They have “embarked on the ship of comparative mythology where, besides Nick Allen, Rolf A. Stein was the great helmsman” – to use Michael Oppitz’ words (personal communication), with which I am sure Allen would agree.⁴ In keeping with the greater vision of comparative mythology extending also beyond the mountains of the Himalayas, and stepping over linguistic borders just as the stories themselves do, it can be hoped that the publication of *Miyapma* will be an inspiration for the next generation of scholars to work comparatively on the Himalayas and Tibet.

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4 Many thanks go to Michael Oppitz, Charles Ramble, Martin Gaenszle, Anne de Sales and Toni Huber for sharing their views and considerations of Allen’s work in preparation of this review.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Tribal Architecture in Northeast India

by René Kolkman and Stuart Blackburn. Leiden/Boston : Brill. 2014, 249 pages, 201 B&W Photos, 103 Drawings, ISBN 97890 04255968, price €130, \$169.

Reviewed by Emilie Arrago-Boruah

Since the pioneering work of Morgan Lewis Henry who, in 1842, started collecting documents on the architecture of the Native North Americans, the notion of 'houses' has enhanced the study of kinship. The primary focus of this notion is the conceptual dimension of the house, not its materials. In the 1970s, the concept of space and place appeared in several works where, following the example of language, they became founding categories of a given culture. But for Stuart Blackburn, a researcher in South Asian studies who wrote the introduction as well as the concluding chapter of this book, the gap between the documents of anthropological and architectural nature still exists. Hence the key question: Is the house an environmental adaptation or a cultural construct? This book proposes to answer this question as the retired architect from Amsterdam, René Kolkman, has placed before us the fruits of his long investigation in northeast India, a complex region known for its tribal houses since S.E. Peal's 1882 publication, *Note on Platform Dwellings in Assam*.

After three sojourns, between 1996 and 1999, among 37 tribes scattered throughout northeast India, René Kolkamn presents an attentive and well-documented study of traditional tribal houses by examining their materials and social functions. The author's drawings, photographs and map undoubtedly enhance the book's value. It is divided into three sections, focusing respectively on Meghalaya, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The sections are further subdivided into several chapters, each of which concentrates on a particular tribe. As the book's numerous examples indicate, there seems to be a much greater range of traditional housing styles in Arunachal Pradesh than most other regions in South Asia.

The state's luxuriant flora is handy for constructing houses suitable for the wet climate, as well as for its geographical conditions. As William Robinson noted in 1841 in his chapter on Botany (p. 52) the varieties of

bamboo that constitute the primary construction material for dwellings are almost uncountable. To these should be added the various kinds of cane, grasses and palm leaves used to make joints and thatched roofs. Depending on its location – on a sloping hill, on the bank of a river or at the foot of Himalayas – each tribe possesses characteristic “models for” houses. Although the architecture may still allow each group to differentiate itself from the others, a simple affirmation like ‘Yes, we are Karbis’ no longer identifies the culture of a group, reflecting the extent to which regional identities have become changeable nowadays (Ramirez, 2014: 61-98). Moreover, each construction is connected to social organization and to diverse systems of faith. Since the works of Verrier Elwin, tribal dormitories have constituted a subject of fascination for scholars. These central constructions, mostly for males, are associated with sexual education and the separation of genders. Kolman’s journey into the heart of local houses also gives us an ‘inside’ view of the old practice of headhunting, once prevalent among certain tribes. Kolman’s main accomplishment is to move us closer to these categories through the eye of an architect. The hundred sketches he drew in the field intrigue inhabitants while his writing, filled with anecdotes, resembles the work of an ethnologist. The book opens with a description of a Garo village hosting a dance festival where girls dance around boys whom they wish to marry. All the houses are ordered around a courtyard where the dance is performed, adjoining which is a communal house (where the villagers come to talk) and the young boys’ dormitory that is ‘protected’ by a flowery enclosure.

The main achievement of this book is to show the essential link between architecture and culture, the deficits of one weakening the other, and vice versa. The most striking example concerns the Khasi and Jaintia tribes. The only remaining monuments to their ancient culture are two traditional house replicas. The first one reproduces the Jaintia household in central Jowai, a small modern city, and the second one, in Smit, serves as the setting for the last Khasi festival associated with a local king. The Khasis and, to a lesser extent the Jaintias, are now Christian. In addition to the issue of the conversion of values, the author helps us see a different notion of architecture. In fact, it is not a shift in housing materials that destroys a culture, but rather the way houses are conceived. In most of the tribes, they are not simply an assemblage of materials, but rather

living bodies that age and catch diseases, forcing for example the Dimasa cacharis to change their foundations regularly (p. 53). Houses also have souls: for the Hill Tiwa people, spirits can shift from an ancient style to a modern one (p. 48). It comes as no surprise that the Mising did not readily understand the author's question when he asked them the number of people living in their 60-metre longhouses. In fact, the inhabitants do not believe that they live in the house, but the house allows them to live by providing a gathering place to eat and to sleep. Sometimes, longhouses are so big that they constitute a village, accommodating 60 people as among the Nyishis (p. 129).

The last part, on Architecture in Arunachal Pradesh, is the most voluminous, and for good reason. Located on the Tibetan border in the north and bordering Myanmar in the south, the population is extremely diverse. In the north are Monpa and Sherdukpen, two Buddhist communities considered "tribal", whose houses contain rooms dedicated to worship. They are designed for a nuclear family and made with materials meant to last for more than a hundred years. In the centre of the state, between the hills and the plains, the architecture points to the once-prevalent practice of slavery among the hill tribes, described in Assamese novels such as *Miri-Jiyari* (Bordoloi, 1894). In conclusion, the author pays homage to the Noctes and the Wanchos located near Nagaland. They perpetuate the artistic tradition of tribal houses decorated with buffalo and human skulls and anthropomorphic straw sculptures on a vegetal roof. This is followed by another example of how architecture is linked to culture: separate dormitories exist for both sexes, and the polygamy of the Wanchos appears in the layout of their houses.

Throughout the book, the author emphasizes the empirical reality of tribal houses as relational structures. This is particularly true of the question of sexuality, which the study takes beyond the notion of gendered space. The absence of a dormitory, for example, does not mean that sexual discipline does not exist. A separation of the house into male and female sides leaves a central space open to sexuality, such as in Karbi houses, where that room is called *kam* (p. 39). The author could have pointed that *kāma* means 'love' in Sanskrit and Assamese. Throughout the book in fact, the author provides insufficient translations of local terminologies. For instance, the notion of *khel* used by the Wanchos to denote a particular 'quarter' of a village (p. 237) also means the village council in Assamese

villages. An index of botanic names of the materials would have also been useful. Nevertheless, this is a very important and daring work, gathering first-hand data on places very difficult to reach. René Kolkman has done the scholarly community an enormous service in producing excellent drawings and photographs of what will soon become the sole vestiges of a housing environment that is already beginning to disappear.

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Working Childhoods: Youth, Agency and the Environment in India

by Jane Dyson. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 2014, 171 pp., ISBN 978-1-107-05838-5, price £50.

Reviewed by Ina Zharkevich

Set in one of the remote Himalayan villages in the Indian state of Uttarakhand, *Working Childhoods* explores children's work and its role in shaping their subjectivities, sociality and gender identities. By emplacing children's work and lives in a distinct space - the Himalayan hills, forests and agricultural fields - the book demonstrates how children's selves and social relations are constituted through their engagement with a distinct natural environment. The book does more than what might be evident from its title. Apart from providing a lucid account of children's work in the Himalayan village of Benmi, *Working Childhoods* presents a textured account quite rare in contemporary anthropological writing of a rural economy based on agro-pastoralism. In approaching children's work as a 'dance and improvisations' whose rhythms are dictated by the seasonality of the local agricultural calendar and schooling, the ethnography captures the extent to which children's lifeworlds are constituted not only by schooling - a leitmotif of many recent writings on childhoods around the world - but also by work and by the distinct natural environment in which they grow up.

One of the major contributions of *Working Childhoods* to the burgeoning literature on child labour is that it provides a grounded counter-narrative to the international discourse on children's rights that approaches children as rights-bearers possessing individual agency. By demonstrating how children in Benmi constitute their agency through performing a distinct set of responsibilities in relation to their families, by fulfilling parental expectations and abiding by a set of norms, *Working Childhoods* stresses the interdependent and relational nature of children's agency. The author coins the term 'active quiescence' to refer to children's agency in Benmi (Chapter 7: 137). Extending this vein of thought, the book also draws attention to the inter-connectedness and interdependence between generations - a stance that differs considerably from much current

literature on youth in developing country contexts, which tends to focus on inter-generational conflict.

Working Childhoods is also important in documenting the contribution of children to the agrarian economy - a perspective that has been lacking not only in earlier classical anthropological writings but also in the works of feminist anthropologists who have largely ignored the centrality of children's productive and reproductive work for the household economy. However, the value of the book lies not only in its meticulous documentation of the scale of child work (accomplished through the use of time-use diaries and the author's engagement in work on par with children), but even more in demonstrating that for children, work embodies not so much an economic but rather a social and learning activity. It is through work that children in Benmi form friendships (Chapter 5), learn local social norms (Chapters 4, 5, and 6) and have fun (Chapter 4). It is due to work in the distant space of the jungle that girls escape the social constraints of the village environment and engage in joking and playful behaviour that would be considered transgressive in the village: playing and rolling in snow, the talking about such tabooed themes as romantic relationships, or simply sitting down to rest when one should be working (Chapter 5; Chapter 6: p. 122-125).

By tracing the work of children of different ages, genders, castes and classes, the book illustrates the ways in which these categories mediate childrens' experience and reproduce social hierarchies based upon them. Thus, in addition to the now commonly accepted wisdom that schooling is an important site for the reproduction of inequalities, *Working Childhoods* demonstrates that other spaces and activities - such as the allegedly neutral, 'natural' space of the forest or children's working groups - can become sites of exclusion and reproduction of social hierarchies. Suffice it to say that children from both lower and upper castes in Benmi work in strictly separate groups (Chapters 4, 5, and 6); that poorer children embark on longer and more dangerous trips for harvesting a local jungle 'cash crops' (Chapter 6); and that for the performance of a separate children's herding ritual, children distributed tasks on the basis of seniority, making the youngest children do the most difficult tasks (Chapter 4: p. 81-86).

By shifting the focus from schooling to the role of work in children's lifeworlds, *Working Childhoods* provides a powerful account of the centrality of work in children's 'social becoming'. Building on the work of

cultural historians, the book demonstrates that children's work is often inseparable from play and that it is through work-play that children learn to be members of a distinct culture and internalise dominant social norms. Rather than showing that children's work in Benmi is gendered - a fairly commonsensical point - *Working Childhoods* demonstrates how children learn gender and start performing it, reproducing the dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity already by the age of 16. Thus, while girls and boys do herding in mixed-gender groups until the age of 10-11, girls of post-pubescent age can no longer herd livestock with boys or on their own in far-away hills (Chapter 4). Instead, they have to guard their reputation, earning it through performing distinct kinds of work, such as leaf collection. A basket full of leaves might earn girls 'good reputations', therefore they are quite serious about the process of leaf collection (Chapter 5). However, for boys the collection of leaves is nowhere as important as the harvesting of the local jungle 'cash crop', lichen. By gathering a lot of lichen, boys are able to earn money and thus prove their masculinity and their ability to be future breadwinners. In short, by engaging in distinct kinds of work and doing it well, boys and girls do not only perform labour but also gender: boys earn respectability through participation in the cash economy which proves their capacity to be future breadwinners, whereas girls 'earn reputation' through unpaid work central to the household economy and for their future roles as wives (Chapter 6).

While one of the main theoretical points of the book is to demonstrate how the natural environment serves as a 'site of social activity and cultural production', it appears that our understanding of children's selves and social relations would benefit from a stronger engagement with sites of socio-cultural production other than the forest, hills or fields. *Working Childhood* stresses that children's work does not clash with their schooling. However, the paucity of information on children's schooling - even for the major protagonists of the book - does not allow the reader to fully envision the lifeworlds of children and the interrelationship between the two crucial components of children's lives (school and work). Another minor point of criticism is that the title of the book seems to encompass the focus both on childhood and youth - something that is not entirely apparent from the ethnography. While appreciating that youth and childhood in Benmi are culturally constructed and might not

conform to the international definitions of childhood and youth, most of the protagonists of the book fall into the category of children given their unmarried status, their enrolment in school and their dependence on parents. The question of definitions might have important implications for theorising agency: from being acquiescent in childhood, children's agency might acquire more oppositional elements as children turn into youths, especially should they migrate from the village and become part of a different physical (urban) and socio-cultural environment.

Working Childhoods makes a valuable contribution to the anthropology of childhood and to the international policy debates on child labour, showing the centrality of context for an accurate understanding of the nature and meaning of children's work. The book also serves as an excellent example of how a rich ethnography might help us rethink the grand theoretical debates in anthropology and broader social theory - the nature of agency and human-environment interactions being the major cases in point.

Sucāruvādadeśika: A Festschrift Honoring Professor Theodore Riccardi

by Todd Lewis & Bruce McCoy Owens (eds), published for the Social Science Baha by Himal Books, Kathmandu, 2014, pp. xii+398, ISBN 978-9937-597-13-5, price US\$ 27

Reviewed by Diana Cousens

This festschrift celebrates the life and work of Ted Riccardi, Professor of Indian and Himalayan Studies at Columbia University. Near the end of the book, editor Todd Lewis gives a worthwhile reflection on the importance of a Western education that goes beyond the classics of the Western tradition:

Students lacking in a solid grounding in the lives of “others” will be imprisoned by the nonsense of old clichés, unfounded projections, or media stereotypes. For them to be significant moral actors in this world, for them to become informed world citizens, liberal arts colleges need to continue enriching their core curricula by expanding its inclusion of cultural traditions from the Islamic, African, Latin American, South Asian, and East Asian worlds. ... This global perspective cannot be merely an afterthought or adding an ‘exotic’ case study, but needs to become the basis for re-centering many humanities courses and even shifting conceptual paradigms (Lewis 2014: 224).

The translation of non-Western cultures into Western academia is the challenging work that Professor Riccardi and his students and colleagues have undertaken. These 30 contributions span languages, disciplines and perspectives. The fact that these contributors have all had a close relationship with Riccardi is evidence of his significant influence. The range of topics and ideas, the diversity of specialists, and the substantial nature of the work is a worthy testament to a life committed to the study of the region.

The book is divided into five sections focusing on love songs, history, identity, translation, and ‘beyond’ Asia. Some very important work has

been saved for this last section, particularly George Saliba's description of his library research in Hyderabad that led to the discovery of previously unknown mediaeval Islamic astronomical manuscripts. In the Asafia and Osmania libraries Saliba found unique Tunisian and Spanish manuscripts that have formed the basis for subsequent studies by himself and others. The chapter is about the journey of discovery and how Riccardi acted as a mentor who 'twisted the arm of Fate'.

Also in this final section is a description of the Digital Himalaya Project by Mark Turin, which seeks to retrieve and archive one-hundred years of materials accumulated by Western anthropologists and researchers in the region. The project is co-located at Cambridge University in the UK and at Yale in the USA, and tackles the complicated task of preserving many different kinds of materials, including paper, photographs, film, video and sound recordings, and managing issues such as the ethics of consent. Any 'informed consent' provided in earlier decades did not take into account the potential for the mass distribution of images and information now possible in the digital age.

A significant contribution is a chapter by Collett Cox on approximately 18 early Indian Buddhist exegetical texts written in Gāndhārī in the Kharoṣṭhi script and dateable to as early as the first century C.E. These document the pre-history of the Yogācāra school. The texts appear to be teaching tools and include early sources for a number of key issues and ideas that became central in Sarvāstivāda doctrine. These include ideas of intrinsic (Skt. *svabhāva*), determined (Skt. *pariṇiṣpanna*) and established (Skt. *abhiṇiṣpanna*) nature. The birch bark scrolls on which they are written were found in a clay pot, probably in Afghanistan, and appear to have been originally composed in Gāndhārī and are thus not translations. They include references to local historical figures and do not have parallels in other Buddhist collections. One of the most interesting conclusions to be drawn from this collection is its challenge to traditional models of Buddhist textual transmission. The conventional view has been that the earliest texts transmit a common teaching core from a limited or single source. What we have here, on the other hand, argues, 'for an alternative model of divergent transmission traditions centred within regional monasteries, each of which is shaped by the constant input of living and changing teaching' (p. 43). Individual texts do not, therefore, preserve a single common core, but single instances of teaching reflecting local

contexts, perspectives, languages and so on. The Gāndhārī manuscripts undercut the idea of an early standardised canon in Buddhist literature. Scholars of Buddhist textual history will need to take these findings into account.

Another notable contribution to early Buddhist studies is Lobzang Jamspal's presentation of the 115 verse *Śiṣyalekha* by the sixth century scholar Candragomin, which he produces in the original Sanskrit alongside a new Tibetan translation. Charles Ramble presents an insightful study into the privatisation of tax collection in a region of nineteenth century Mustang, and into ideas of political resistance amongst these remote villagers. Christian Wedermeyer considers the role of religious reformers and revises the widely and long held perception of the eleventh century lama and contemporary of Atiśa, 'Gos Lo tsā ba, as an anti-Nyingma partisan. Instead, it is proposed that 'Gos be seen as a thinker comfortable with an Indian Tantrism that utilised violent magic in defence of the faith and whose influence extended for a thousand years.

Apart from its many original contributions, the charm of the book is in the personal stories that tie each contribution to Ted Riccardi. He appears here as a friend and especially a mentor, whose inexhaustible breadth of scholarship enables each different writer to grasp the field that is most suitably their own. His larger contribution is in enabling such openness and in demonstrating the value of a liberal arts education that has a global outlook.

Old Tibetan Studies Dedicated to the Memory of R.E. Emmerick

edited by Cristina Scherrer-Schaub. Leiden: Brill. 2012, 254 pp., ISBN978-90-04-15517-6. € 101.

Scribes, Texts and Rituals in Early Tibet and Dunhuang

edited by Brandon Dotson, Kazushi Iwao and Tsuguhito Takeuchi. Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag. 2013, 156 pp., 19 colour plates, ISBN 978-38-95-00938-9. € 98.

Reviewed by George FitzHerbert

Old Tibetan Studies refers to the study of the textual and archaeological evidence concerning Tibetan civilization prior to the 11th century, and particularly between the 7th and 10th centuries. It is a discrete field within Tibetan studies because of the linguistic and referential peculiarity and obscurity of much of the written evidence from this period (most notably the ‘Dunhuang documents’ and the extant inscriptions), which is in contrast to the writings from the 11th century onwards. Works from the 11th century are much more accessible to the scholar of ‘classical’ literary Tibetan, and it was from this time that the familiar mythology of Tibet’s conversion to Buddhism appears to have become entrenched in Tibetan literary and popular imaginations.

Old Tibetan Studies occupies a hallowed place in the study of Tibetan culture and religion, since for textual historical scholarship – and particularly for the allied field of philological enquiry – many questions concerning Tibetan terms, beliefs and cultural notions, inevitably lead the scholar back to this formative period when Tibetan first started to be written down and when Tibet’s momentous ‘assimilation of Buddhism’ began. It was also of course the period of Tibet’s greatest geopolitical presence in Asia in which the militaristic Yarlung Pugyal (Yar-[k]lung spu[r]-rgyal) Dynasty united the entirety of the Tibetan Plateau under its dominion between the 7th and 9th centuries CE, and exercised intermittent dominance over the Inner Asian ‘silk routes’ linking China to the west and its supply of horses. It is a period that no Tibetanist can ignore. Fittingly, it is a field that continues to attract the attention of many fine Tibetanist scholars.

The two volumes under review here are both proceedings of the Old Tibetan panel of the Seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies (IATS) – of the 2003 (Oxford) and 2010 (Vancouver) seminars respectively.

The former volume is dedicated to the memory of the pioneering scholar of Khotanese Ronald Emmerick, and among its most useful contents is a full bibliography of Emmerick's extensive published works, found on pages 11-20.

Although there is little by way of thematic thread to the articles, there are many useful contributions in this volume for political and religious historians, and for philologists.

The editor Scherrer-Schaub's contribution, 'An Archaeology of the Written', centres on the much-debated question concerning the origins of the Tibetan scripts. After an erudite survey of the scholarly debate on this question since the 19th century, the author edges towards a conclusion favouring intermediate Brahmi- derived scripts in use in the Gilgit region in the 7th century, as the source of the Tibetan script. She also provides a reflective excursus on the judicial significance of the introduction of script during the Tibetan imperial period: The 'power of the written to organize and control the world'. Palaeography of the extant documentation from this period, she argues, reveals a sophisticated imperial chancery at work. There are documents oriented towards structuring society (civil and penal codes); for regulating evil influences (rites of protection, divination, thaumaturgy, medicine etc); for exerting political authority and conducting foreign affairs (decrees etc); and for administering the state (trade, mail service etc). Each kind of transaction, she suggests, 'produces a *particular type* of document, makes use of particular *formulaic expressions*, is displayed according to *precise rules*, and in some cases, is written on specific material support'. The prodigious quantity of the extant documents from this period allows us to see 'the complexity of the state machine laid down at an epoch when Tibet was at the pinnacle of its political and military glory'. Her own contribution (in this article) is a brief examination of Imperial judicial procedure concerning rights of succession, based on the analysis of a passage from the Old Tibetan Chronicle (PT1287), and supported by similar patterns evidenced in the Old Tibetan Inscription on the Zhol pillar at Lhasa.

In keeping with the volume's dedication to Ronald Emmerick, an

article by Bielmeier provides a footnote to Emmerick's large body of work exposing the cultural and historical contacts between Khotan and Tibet. The article is a philological examination of the various words for 'ginger' used in Old Tibetan and in modern Tibetan dialects. The author observes that the Khotanese word for ginger, *ttumgare*, which was borrowed into Old Tibetan as *dong gra*, is a term still in use today in the Purik-Tibetan dialects spoken in Lower Ladakh between Leh and Kargil, and that the same term that was also borrowed from Khotanese into Tocharian.

Helga Uebach's piece on Tibetan officials in the south-eastern part of the Tibetan empire (today's Yunnan province) in the 8th century provides evidence of Tibetan rule in a part of the Tibetan empire which has hitherto remained quite obscure. Kazushi Iwao provides clarifications concerning the organisational structures and nomenclature of Tibetan rule in Dunhuang, particularly over the city's Chinese inhabitants. Yoshiro Imaeda offers a re-examination of the Imperial-era inscription of lDan-ma-brag in eastern Tibet, first published in Tibetan in 1988. The inscription relates to the elevation of the monk-official Bran-ka Yon-tan – later assassinated in the coup which would spell the end of the dynasty – to the High Council, an event which Imaeda dates to 804.

Not all the contributions relate to the Tibetan imperial period itself. Several also address the post-dynastic period, when it is known that Tibetan language and script continued to be used in the oasis city of Dunhuang by non-Tibetans for some decades after the demise of centralized Tibetan dominion. Tsuguhito Takeuchi offers a useful survey of those old Tibetan texts housed in the British Library which he says, on palaeographic grounds, should be dated to the post-Imperial period. Bianca Horlemann continues her excellent research on the history of north-eastern Tibet (A-mdo) with a survey of extant Buddhist sites from the 8th to 14th centuries in this region.

For those with a broad interest in early Tibetan cultural history probably the most engaging article in this volume is that by Brandon Dotson, concerning how the unification of regional principalities under the Tibetan empire was symbolised in an early post-dynastic source called the *Lo-rgyus chen-mo* (a text no longer extant but cited by several prominent post-dynastic historians including lDe'u Jo-sras, Mkhas-pa lDe'u and later dPa'-bo gTsug-lag phreng-ba). The alliance of the principalities is there presented as an alliance of mountain deities rallying

around the mountain deity of the Yarlung kings. And the re-fragmentation of the empire with the outbreak of the Revolt in 904 is symbolized as a devolution into regional powers again at the behest of the mountain. Dotson's article adds further confirmation to the work of Karmay (e.g., Karmay 1998) and others in suggesting that in old Tibetan political theory, (in Dotson's words) 'political territory was delimited as the domain of a mountain deity'. His article is based on post-imperial historiography, but he makes a plausible attempt to reconstruct the probable archaic core shared between these sources, and his article is interesting not only for its reconstruction of a hypothetical political geography of the early post-imperial period (including tables of 'regional principalities') but also for its reflections on the problematic nature of disentangling political history from formulaic poetic constructions.

In other articles, Amy Heller looks at aspects of economic and material culture in Old Tibet – an area of enquiry obscured by the preponderance of research materials for this period coming from the Inner Asian oases of Dunhuang and Turfan, rather than from central Tibet. The contribution by Siglinde Dietz presents a palaeographical and philological analysis of an Old Tibetan manuscript of the *bShes-pa phrin-yig* (Skt: *Suḥr̥llekha*) by the great Mādhyamika philosopher Nāgārjuna.

The second volume, *Scribes Texts and Rituals in Early Tibetan and Dunhuang*, is a slim but very handsomely bound volume which compares favourably to the shiny mustard yellow of the former volume.

The highlight of this second volume is again the article by Brandon Dotson, by now well established as a leading voice among the new generation of Old Tibetan scholars. His article here, 'The Princess and the Yak: the Hunt as a Narrative Trope, and Historical Reality in Early Tibet', deserves to be widely read. In it the author revisits the famous story from the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* in which the Tibetan emperor Srong-btsan's sister Sad-mar-kar, who is unhappily wed to the king of Zhang-zhung, plots with her brother for her husband's overthrow, thus bringing the Zhang-zhung kingdom – the fabled home of the Tibetan Bon religion – within the Tibetan imperium. What Dotson brings to the analysis of this story is a reflection on its nature as oral-traditional poetry. This is particularly pertinent, for although the story of princess Sad-mar-kar is no longer part of common Tibetan folklore and is only familiar to scholars, the narrative trope it embodies – namely the rival king being overthrown due to the treachery

of the wife who favours the Tibetan hero – is one of the core constitutive narrative tropes of the wildly popular Tibetan Gesar Epic which remains very much part of Tibetan popular folklore. Dotson's analysis looks particularly at the theme of the wild-yak hunt within the narrative, and explores it not just as a literary trope, but also as a reflection of the historic importance of the imperial 'enclosure hunt' (*lings*) to Tibetan court life. The article showcases Dotson's artful combination of literary, philological, archaeological and historical methodologies to illuminate the content embedded in the Old Tibetan manuscript corpus.

But Dotson's is not the only treat included in this volume. Amy Heller's article on the painted coffin panels recently excavated in Qinghai notably expands the archaeological and art-historical evidence for the early Tibetan period, depicting a hunt among other things. The paintings are reproduced in high-quality colour photographic plates at the back of the volume. It is to be lamented that so many of these important new excavation sites on the Tibetan plateau continue to be looted, with their findings making their way into the international art market.

Cantwell and Mayer's contribution on the Bon *Black Pillar Tantra* (*Ka-ba nag-po man-ngag rtsa-ba'i rgyud*) offers a brief comparison between this Bon *phur pa* tantra (said to have been revealed by Khu-tsha zla-'od in the 11th-12th century) and the early Tibetan Buddhist *phur pa* tantra texts found at Dunhuang. They observe a high degree of similarity between the two systems, but the complete absence of *verbatim* replication. The rival traditions thus constitute independent self-sufficient tantric traditions which nevertheless display complete doctrinal convergence. Also in this volume one also finds a range of contributions on the administrative history of the Tibetan empire: Gertraud Taenzer's analysis of the taxation system imposed by the Tibetan empire on the region of 'A-zha during the 8th and 9th century; Zhu Lisheng's survey of administrative divisions of Tibetan-ruled Khotan; and Takeuchi's exploration and analysis of the material culture of books, paper and writing boards among Chinese scribes employed in Tibetan-ruled Dunhuang. There is also a short contribution by Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim on the foreign names of *material medica* in the early Tibetan medical texts from Dunhuang, suggestive of central Asian influences on the early evolution of the tradition. There is also a very useful contribution by Sam van Schaik proposing a Palaeographic Method for Dating Early Tibetan Manuscripts. The method is based on the distinct

'writing styles' observed in the manuscripts which may be grouped into six distinct imperial-period styles (which reflect the different functions of texts – monastic and administrative for example) and two post-imperial writing styles. The system he proposes will be of use to many as a point of reference and as a tool for pedagogy.

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OBITUARY

Philippe SAGANT, A Passion for Ethnology

A Tribute coordinated by Katia Buffetrille and Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

Philippe Sagant was born on May 8, 1936 and passed away on January 10, 2015, after a long and painful illness. Here we have traced the milestones of his career and of his intellectual life, before moving on to some short tributes from his colleagues and students.

After studying at the EPHE, in 1973 Philippe Sagant defended his doctoral thesis, entitled *Le paysan limbu, sa maison et ses champs* (“The Limbu peasant, his house, and his fields”) at the University of Paris VII, under the supervision of Lucien Bernot (EHESS). Assigned to the Museum d’Histoire Naturelle/Musée de l’Homme in 1965, he joined the CNRS in 1966 as a Research Associate in Anthropology, was promoted to the position of Research Fellow in 1974, and ended his career as Director of research at the CNRS.

A member of the Centre d’études de l’Inde et de l’Asie du Sud from 1966, Philippe Sagant taught at the University of Haute-Bretagne, Rennes, from 1978 to 1983, and at the University of Paris X, Nanterre, in Alexander Macdonald’s seminar “The Himalayan Area” for Masters students, and at INALCO, where he lectured on Nepalese Civilization from 1981 to 1993.

At the outset, Philippe Sagant conducted fieldwork in the Aubrac region of France. He then decided to specialize on Nepal and made several trips there between 1966 and 1986. He chose to study a small Tibeto-Burman language speaking group located at the eastern border of the country: the Limbu. The major part of his work is based on ethnographic data that he gathered in the “Limbu Country,” with, first of all, his doctoral thesis, which formed the basis of his reference book: *Le paysan limbu, sa maison et ses champs* (Mouton, 1976). We will let Alexander Macdonald, his friend and colleague, highlight the exceptional qualities of this work:

Here we have the most accurate and living picture of peasant life from the hills of Eastern Nepal. [...] P. Sagant [...] notes “the emergence of a society with class tendencies which is based on caste and ethnic divisions” (p. 273), and which is subject to the administrative authority of Kathmandu. He explains this social upheaval by the

profound transformation of the technical environment: implements, dominated by the plough, are currently the same for all people of the hills and everywhere the same agriculture is practised. [...] [H]e makes us understand in exciting ways “the struggle for land” and the challenge of the competition for land [...]. P. Sagant has given us a definitive work on the Limbu house and Limbu agriculture. I hope he will not mind me suggesting that he has also given us an essential book for understanding the political Hinduization of Eastern Nepal.¹

Starting from the study of agriculture, tools and land, Philippe Sagant would soon become an accomplished anthropologist in the domains of religion and politics. His intimate knowledge of the village context led him to differentiate himself radically from studies previously conducted on shamanism, showing that a performance should not be understood in isolation, but must be situated as part of a life course in which the collective interpretation of events takes precedence. In this area, where local chiefs ruled over small territories literally as local kings, he took pains to understand the origins of this fragmentation and how it worked, as well as the role of the Assembly of Chiefs. He also investigated the nature of the authority of the leader in this composite environment between animist shamanism and Hinduism. He highlighted the role of hunting and of the vital force, as well as the importance of the mountain gods and the local forms of the goddess.

These themes led him quite naturally to turn to Tibet, and he chose to present his ideas to a remarkable informant: Samten Karmay. The two then decided to write a book together. In 1986-87, Philippe wished to complete his investigation by ethnographic observation, and went to Samten's village, in Tibet, along with Katia Buffettrille. He wanted to meet the people, see the villages and temples, and to immerse himself in the landscape and atmosphere of these places that he knew only through the words of Samten. Working in close cooperation on the theme of traditional authority in Tibet, they showed “convincingly that in a number of areas the chief derived his authority and legitimacy from the territorial gods” (Ramble 2008, p. 6)².

1 Alexander W. Macdonald, compte-rendu de P. Sagant “Le paysan limbu, sa maison et ses champs”, *L'Homme*, 1979, vol. 19, n° 1, pp. 156-157.

2 Charles Ramble 2008 *The Navel of the Demoness* (New York, Oxford University Press).

Following his stay in Tibet, Philippe Sagant continued his field investigation in Nepal, in the district of Manang, which was to become his last ethnographic field, and had been the source of a masterly article in which he highlighted the relationship between the worship of sacred mountains and political organization.

Lastly, some of Philippe Sagant's works were made accessible to a larger number of readers thanks to the publication, by Oxford University Press in 1996, of a collection of his articles translated into English by Nora B. Scott, under the title of one of his best essays: *The Dozing Shaman*. One can only hope that his entire œuvre, which appears below in the bibliography, will soon be published in English.



Philippe Sagant with Limbu friends in Libang. Date unknown

The thekka thiti system aimed at isolating the Limbu chiefs from each other, at breaking their political relationships, and at placing them under the direct and exclusive control of the regional court (adalat) and the land revenue office (mal adda). But instead of that, they managed, by their function as judges, to constitute a close network of personal and hierarchical relationships throughout the entire country: i.e. a feudal system. They could probably have held out for a long time. However, measures providing for the integration

*of immigrants onto the land of the clan segment opened the way to Nepali penetration deep into the Limbu country. Precipitating the transformation of the technical and economic environment, it was these measures, in the end, that allowed the Gurkha state to put a stop to the Limbu resistance.*³

According to Sagant, the role of the anthropologist was to show how a society understands itself, then to transmit this understanding to others. He liked to establish personal relationships both in the field and in everyday life, and many were marked by his teaching and his friendship. Some of them were keen to express it.



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*In the field, all the work of the anthropologist is to make sense of what he sees, not the sense that he, as Westerner, believes he can discern, but the one attributed by the autochtones themselves. Only then, perhaps, the real issues appear.*⁴

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- 3 Philippe Sagant, 1978 Les pouvoirs des chefs limbu au Népal oriental, *L'Homme*, tome 18 n°1-2, pp. 106-107.
- 4 S.G. Karmay and P. Sagant, *Les Neuf Forces de l'Homme. Récits des confins du Tibet*. Nanterre, Société d'ethnologie. 1998 : 74.

Tributes from Friends and Colleagues:

My acquaintance with Philippe Sagant dates back to the year 1964 when we were both attending a class given by the unforgettable Lucien Bernot, held in the *sous-sol* of a building in rue Monsieur le Prince in Paris. Mutual sympathy and a common dilemma soon brought us closer together. We had both started specialising in the ethnology of Mainland Southeast Asia and were at the same time fully aware of the impossibility of carrying out fieldwork among any of the ethnic minorities in the then-restricted areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh or Burma.

One day, while we were having a drink in one of the cafés of boulevard Saint Michel, Philippe revealed to me, out of the blue, his decision to relinquish his aspirations regarding Southeast Asia and try research in Nepal instead. He also suggested that I should join him in a course of colloquial Nepali that was taking place on the top floor of the Musée de l'Homme and run by a *maître de recherche* by the name of Macdonald. That's how I came to embark on Nepal studies.

A few years later, I bumped into Philippe in Kathmandu. I had just come back from the hills, and our long, cheerful conversation inevitably pivoted around our practical experiences “out there” in our respective fields. At a certain point, I somehow felt compelled to give our talk a – perhaps rather unbecoming – academic twist by broaching the question of what exactly his current fieldwork in Limbu country was aiming at. I still recall, more or less literally, the wording of the reply Philippe gave me. He said, “Well, you know, I frequently withdraw into a nearby forest with a couple of villagers in my company; there we sit down, drink plenty of millet spirit, and I listen to the stories of the people. I'm interested in those *micro-détails* [a favourite term of Lucien Bernot] contained in their narrations.” I resisted the temptation to demand more. Inasmuch as Philippe's modesty, tinted with subtle self-irony, was notorious, I had no reason not to suspect something promising behind his understatement. And yet, who would have thought at that time that all these *détails* were already maturing like grains of sand to pearls and would a little later gather momentum to reappear in surprisingly telling contexts in his studies, such as, say, “Le chamane assoupi” or “Le paysan limbu, sa maison et ses champs”, all so well-founded and unique in their approach?

— András Höfer

The dozing ethnographer

If I remember correctly, I first met Philippe through Rolf Stein and Sandy Macdonald. Stein had given a course on the *phurbu*, which we both attended, at the Collège de France. Whenever we strolled along the streets of Paris—which must have been quite a number of times—we talked about our constant brooding concerning form: how to write ethnography. Philippe had found it for his book on the Limbu peasant. For me his descriptions of village life as determined by the seasonal changes from month to month were just perfect. Another topic of our talk was loneliness in the field. We both confessed that we had been reading trashy novels (Malinowski) to combat it—I had devoured Joyce's *Ulysses* on the porch of a Nyingmapa monastery in Rolwaling; Philippe had been distracted by Flaubert up in Libang. And we both confessed that rituals could at times be so tiresome that not only the village audience and some of the main protagonists would fall asleep, but also the most avid ethnographer. Was it this experience that gave rise to Philippe's most famous title?

— Michael Oppitz

My friendship with Philippe Sagant dates back to 1965. That year, Jacques Millot, director of the Musée de l'Homme, and Corneille Jest, researcher at CNRS, built up a Nepal research team. Philippe Sagant and I were among the first young researchers integrated into it, which allowed our recruitment to the CNRS. Philippe then went to Nepal to do his first long-duration fieldwork among the Limbu. He stayed at my place in Kathmandu in the fall of 1966 to prepare for his departure to the field, and in the summer of 1967 on his way back. During these weeks of enforced stay in Kathmandu, our friendship was forged and our discussions addressed our diverging conceptions of ethnology, which finally converged. We then had the opportunity to work together at the EHESS, as members of the "Village" team within the Centre for India and South Asia Studies (CEIAS), from 1974 to 1978, which led to two collective publications. In the first (*L'Homme* XVIII 1-2, 1978, 109-134), Philippe Sagant gave a masterly analysis of the "powers of the Limbu chiefs in eastern Nepal." He then assumed the editorial responsibility of a special issue on "Migration in Southeast Asia", *L'Ethnographie* (1978 II: 77-78). Finally, he presented an intriguing paper on "The dozing shaman" at the

South Asia conference⁵. Our paths then separated, but I keep the memory of an original ethnologist who was influential in the direction of my research and remained a faithful friend on whom one could rely.

— Marc Gaborieau

I am a reader of texts: Sanskrit texts, mostly composed twenty-five centuries ago by Brahmins, and for Brahmins. However, it is true that since my first steps in Indian studies I have met or worked alongside men and women who saw India from a very different angle: ethnologists, who studied closely-circumscribed communities, determined by their immediate environment; living communities whose lives they shared for extended periods of fieldwork. It also happened that most of these researchers were not studying India proper but—even more exotic for me—its Himalayan borderlands. Among them was Philippe Sagant. I participated with him in various meetings and gatherings, especially juries, at the Ethnology Laboratory in the University of Paris X Nanterre in the 1970s. These circumstances were not conducive to one-to-one conversations, but our discussions helped me to discover in Philippe Sagant, in addition to a rigorous and original researcher, a truly humane man, constantly concerned with the livelihoods and working conditions of students that we had certainly to guide and evaluate, but also to encourage and support. But above all the memories I have of Philippe Sagant are entirely marked by gratitude: in the issue of the journal *Purusartha* that I edited and which is devoted to “debt” in the Indian world (No. 4, 1980), is an article that Philippe Sagant kindly contributed. Altogether wide-ranging, accurate and deep, it includes a typology of debt that results from an analysis of debt modes in the Limbu country, itself linked to the history of Hinduization in these mountains, and therefore to the introduction of the caste system. It was a way of situating and setting in perspective, in time and space, the idea of “debt” that I had tried to highlight in the largely normative texts of Brahmanic India. Now that he has left us, I am eager to recall my own enduring debt to Philippe Sagant.

— Charles Malamoud

In 1976, I sought advice from Philippe Sagant for an investigation of the

5 Le chamane assoupi, in M. Gaborieau, A. Thorner (éds) *Asie du Sud : Traditions et changements* (Paris, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), pp. 243-247.

Limbu language, and he generously gave me the name of the village, Libang, where he had worked: "I give you one name, 'Motta ' - Harka Jit. Go see him!" We spent two months at his home in the midst of the monsoon, and collected the stories in Limbu language that are currently available on the Pangloss website. One of these texts inspired Philippe to write a wonderful article on malevolent death, which he made me co-sign, in 1992.

What I remember of Philippe is his kindness, and the pleasure we had to receive the friendly little words, hand written, which he used to send by mail.

— Boyd Michailovsky



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Because I was curious about the game he was hunting, Tendar led us onto the terrace of his house. All kinds of trophies were gathered in his attic. From the top of a ladder, Dargyé was taking them out one by one; it was endless: wild sheep heads

*with gigantic horns, deer trophies with large antlers, huge stuffed bear heads, remains of wild sheep and goats I'd be hard pressed to identify*⁶

The academic milieu can seem like a mildly threatening environment at the best of times, but especially so for anyone who has been out of touch with it for a while. When, after several years of absence, I began to make faltering steps at reintegration, it was in France in the early 1990s. Among the people who convinced me that the effort would be worthwhile was Philippe Sagant. At this time he was becoming increasingly interested in trans- and cis-Himalayan comparisons, but although he had clearly read very widely and had developed numerous ideas on the subject, he made no attempt to set me on any theoretical or methodological tramlines. Over the course of coffees and lunches he just got me to talk about what I had seen and done in Tibet and the Himalaya. Talking about ethnography is not the same thing as writing it; but it does mean that you have to think about it, and, in thinking about it, subject it to a first round of organisation. There is nothing more encouraging than talking to someone who is interested in what you have to say. It makes everything more real. Spending time with Sagant made me realise that listening to stories is not just a passive exercise but, when intelligently done, has a reciprocal effect on both the story and the narrator. Philippe Sagant was an original thinker and a fine writer, but he was also an exceptionally constructive listener.

— Charles Ramble

Philippe Sagant deeply marked the generation of Himalayanists to which I belong. Above all, by the style of his writings. He managed to portray the complexity of social realities in an incisive style with great sobriety, as if telling a story. Then it was through the force of his ideas—the result of a subtle alchemy between Granet, Hocart and Marx—that Philippe Sagant compelled admiration. Asia appeared to him as a whole, within the diverse societies of which, he hunted the presence of recurring themes (such as the life force, divine election, dual power, rank, ritual hunts and games). It seemed to him that they tended to form systems, and for this reason were conducive to revealing similar social logics. Finally, Philippe

6 S.G. Karmay and P. Sagant 1998 *Ibid.*: 38.

Sagant was an outstanding ethnographer, especially meticulous about making sketches and drawings. His thoughts and often brilliant intuitions will continue to inspire us for a long time.

— Pascal Bouchery

Philippe Sagant loved stories, listening to them and telling them. He recalls in his introduction to the English edition of his essays, *The Dozing Shaman*, that it was by listening to the daily narratives by which Limbus related to the events of their lives that he felt he had access to the image they had of themselves, their institutions and the world around them. He was very attentive to the narrative quality of individuals' experience. So before I left for my first spell of fieldwork among the Kham Magar, he gave me piece of advice for which I shall always be indebted to him: "When you get to the village, tell yourself that you have to stay a month, that's all. And that after the first month, you'll be able to reconsider the case." Without this advice I would immediately have run away, unable to stand the loneliness to which the initially mistrustful and inhospitable villagers had reduced me. But a month, I thought I could stand. By telling me the beginning of my story before I lived it, Philippe had set me on the path.

— Anne de Sales

Some late afternoon around 1985-86, a café in Montparnasse, two half-pints, two Philippes face to face: debriefing. A terrorized Philippe, waiting for the verdict on two pages of rough draft on the subject of the vendetta. The other Philippe calm, holding out eight pages of comments and starting to speak, probably as shy, but with that little smile of his and all kindness. And immediately the passion, the passion for trust and vision, for connections, for comparisons, for "ethno" - as he called it respectfully. At the café, in Nanterre, or in Langues'O, you would return doggedly to the treasure you had found over there: "Shame can kill. You have to make a name for yourself". You made a great name for yourself, and you made it quietly. Cheers Prof; cheers Philippe.

— Philippe Ramirez



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The hearth (thab ka) is a monumental construction that stands at the foot of the west wall and occupies all the space up to middle of the room, to the point of invading it. Its “three stones” are actually packed earth constructions that elevate the hearth itself and enable the hostess to cook while standing. They are arranged in a star shape and compartmentalize the kitchen into three distinct spaces.⁷

I think of Philippe’s extraordinary generosity towards his students, even complete beginners; of the time and energy he devoted to them, and how he meticulously read everything they wrote. He had the gift of detecting in the work of each of them “ideas” that often were still very embryonic even for the author. When articulated by him, they became clear, bright and intelligent. But he would never have taken the credit for them.

Like many students he trained and supported, his advice and his words still accompany me today when I write.

— Pascale Dollfus

⁷ S. Karmay and P. Sagant La place du rang dans la maison sharwa (Amdo ancien), in D. Blamont and G. Toffin (éds) *Architecture, milieu et société en Himalaya*. Paris, Éditions du CNRS. 1987 : 238.

Philippe Sagant used to arrive to his class cheerful, hands in pockets, and to launch passionately into the evocation of a world which he knew how to make wonderful: that of the Limbus of eastern Nepal. What bliss to receive both knowledge and pleasure instead of the usual boredom that prevailed in teaching sessions! The pleasure of lively narration, but also of a stimulating thought whose specific charm came from a blend of simplicity and depth, from being anchored in the careful observation of everyday life at the service of great anthropological questions, such as the symbolic foundations of power, the spatial expression of social organization, the collective construction of individual trajectories, the conditions of the colonization of indigenous peoples and its consequences. Like his teachings, Philippe Sagant's writings did not bother with the sad academic conventions of the time and have not aged at all. They possess that rare quality of transfiguring even the arid areas of Marxist anthropology to which he long subscribed.

Philippe Sagant's enthusiasm and generosity aroused in his students a huge desire to make progress. The fact that he would take their babbling seriously and would respond with a flood of ideas elicited their respect in turn. His humanity, and the excellence of his ethnographic material, sustained by sparkling writing, as well as the freedom of his thought, made Philippe Sagant a living presence amid the shadows of the academic world, now as much as ever in the past.

— Marie Lecomte-Tilouine

I met Philippe Sagant for the first time at the University of Paris X-Nanterre in 1992 while I was a Masters student in ethnology and he was lecturing on the Himalaya. From the beginning, we got along very well and he very kindly agreed to supervise my thesis. His help and encouragement were very important to me. He spent a lot of time not just correcting the content of my text but also editing my French. After that, he continued to supervise my Phd research until he fell ill. For a long time I refused to change my supervisor, in the hope that he would come back.

— Satya Shrestha-Schipper



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Mowing was done during the month of the snake, the ninth month according to the Lhasa calendar, that is in November. It was a big job and people had to help each other to get it done. A group would first go to the field, then cut the grass with a sickle and leave it on the ground behind them to dry. Then, people had to make long bales/fodder bundles by twisting the cut grass with a kind of turnstile. They loaded the bales on yakback to take them down to the village ...⁸

One of the Nine Forces of Man

Philippe Sagant's great intellectual influence on my anthropological approach is all the more remarkable as I knew him very little. My acquaintance extends to attending his seminar on the Himalayan area in Nanterre the year before his terrible accident. During his seminar, we would momentarily leave the abstract structures of thought and the

⁸ S.G. Karmay and P. Sagant, 1998 *Ibid.* 118.

formal analysis of kinship systems to join the company of Yakthumba shamans, look for lost souls at the crossroads of the four directions in the other world, or ride with Sharwas and the great caravans across the high Tibetan plateau, fearing an attack by the fearsome Goloks. Philippe Sagant was a storyteller, and the enthusiasm he put into his words would spread to his audience. Yet, if these stories were sufficient in themselves to attract attention, they were not intended to be merely illustrative. They were not only anecdotes to flesh out abstract theory. They also revealed how, in those societies that are not informed by a legal code or a body of theoreticians, discourses are made and things are done, and how words and actions are built in the process of their realization. More than a narrative technique, more than a method, it was a whole approach to the field and a vision of anthropology that Philippe Sagant's narration revealed. And that was just one of the many "forces of the man."

— Grégoire Schlemmer

Philippe Sagant's communicative passion for ethnology was the mark of a teaching that was able to encourage vocations. Philippe Sagant introduced me to ethnology and to questions that were new for me then. As a supervisor, he had that rare and precious ability to transmit an analysis of his own through sensitive, detailed and challenging remarks, yet as if he had only revealed a potential in the work of his students. He was thus making them participate in the emergence of a reflection. His concern for ethnographic detail and for what he called the "narrativization of how ideas are lived" were, and continue to be, a model and an inspiration. When I later contributed to the ordering of his records, I realized even better the extent of his work and the scope of his intellectual ambition, invested in the pursuit of major ideas which he imagined as a dip into the mists of time and supporting many cultural monuments about to disappear.

— Stéphane Gros

Finding a long letter from Philippe, dated simply "Wednesday", of which I cannot fix the date. Four long pages in a firm and elegant hand, without any crossings-out. Four detailed pages on the "curse" as an institution, on rituals of plowing and sowing, their aims and the place occupied in them by Limbu clan leaders. Ethnography is alive, we are in it, with the witnesses

of that time: “It is said that seeds twitch when the force penetrates them. Children stand there goggle-eyed”. But after such a long time, the most extraordinary thing for me is that I cannot remember the questions (no doubt very brief) I could have asked that elicited such a response, the substance of a real article. Yet the opening sentence appears: “Your letter takes me far back in time in the use of the Limbu material. *It makes me see it through other eyes.*” This speaks for his generosity towards the younger people he trained, the full attention he would give you, to the point of making you, as a beginner, believe in the value of your weaknesses.

— Gisèle Krauskopff



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*Among the Sharwa, men wore coats, chuba, made of sheepskin, fleece inside, in contact with the body, the neck ornamented with leopard fur ... When one saw a man with a lambskin chuba, one knew he was rich, and that he was going in winter with the great caravan.*⁹

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9 S.G. Karmay and P. Sagant, 1998 *Ibid.* 189.

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