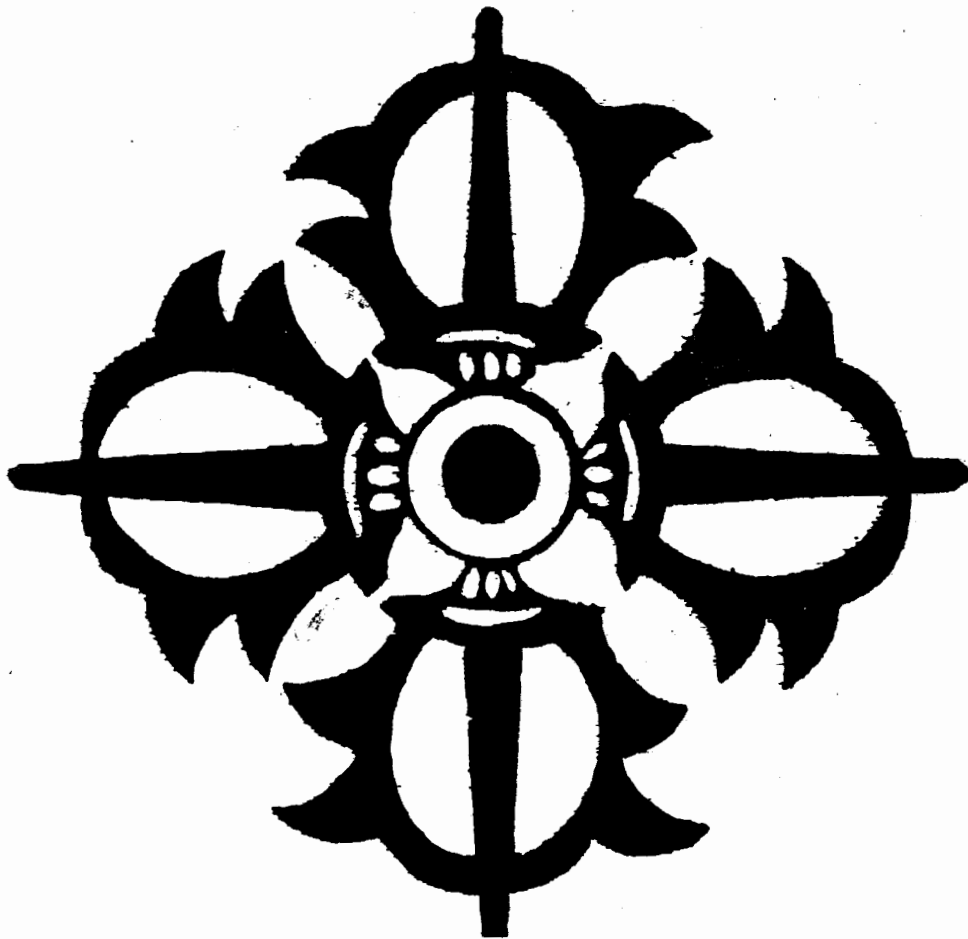


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BLOOD AND TERRITORY AS IDIOMS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY IN HIMALAYAN STATES¹

GRAHAM E. CLARKE

Oxford

Introduction

This is an account of the formation of modern ethnic and national identities in the Himalaya. These can be seen as a result of the successive interplay of two principles of association in civil society, namely 'blood' or kinship, and 'territory'. These factors have long been recognised in anthropology as key features of political association in local communities, such as with local lineages and villages. The progression set in force by the colonial encounter elevated these two themes largely as idioms of nation and state. From one side this is the history of contact with the British Raj and the overall imperial relations between China, Britain and Russia from the late eighteenth century onwards. On the other side it is also an account of a transition of local socio-cultural forms in a more traditional Asian religious hierarchy, with a change to more modern territorial forms of imperial integration. This, in turn, has led to a more modern political segmentation and state formation.

The ideas introduced reflect more general principles. Put simply, at one extreme might be found the model of Empire, with an expanding integration of all within the ambit of its territorial control into a wide hierarchic social order;

¹ An earlier version of this article, entitled "Blood, Territory and National Identity in Himalayan States" is currently in press, in Stein Tønneson and Hans Antlöv, eds, *Asian Forms of Nation*, NIAS/ Curzon Press, 1996.

at the other extreme the model would be a fundamental nationalism in which all within the fixed bounds of the territory have to be the same in kind, and those deemed to be of different blood are, one way or another, removed. Somewhere in between we find the particular compromise of the 'nation-state'. Historical changes in identity can be seen as the swing of a pendulum back-and-forth between the primacy of these two forms of civil political association, played out at different levels.

There is an irony in this supposed progression. The power of the British Empire to control this area was a pre-condition for the transfer of the ideological model of the nation-state. Through the colonial imposition of these 'state-nations' there arose an 'imagined community', projected not only outwards in space but also backwards in time in the guise of nation-states. This gave rise to segmentary, modern, nationalist movements that were consciously extended out from the capitals within the colonially-secured bounds of those newly-formed borders.

The Himalayan Region

The geographical limits of the region to be considered extend in the west from the Hindu Kush and modern Afghanistan to the Hengduan range north of Upper Burma. For reasons of space only one Himalayan case is considered in some depth, that is Nepal which, though in formal terms sovereign and independent of the British Raj, had its future closely defined by that imperial contact. There is also illustrative comparative material from Afghanistan, Baltistan, and Ladakh.

There is at least one important difference between the Himalaya and elsewhere in Asia where traditional states have been incorporated into modern empires, and then give rise to their own states in a western image. In the Himalaya, any such clear progression as detailed above is constrained by the mountain topography, and there is a continual tendency to drop back into more local relations. The progression is not inevitable and Nepal, as it was once remarked apocryphally, may be entering the nineteenth century from both ends travelling in both directions simultaneously. In the Himalaya, the extremes of integration that we may see elsewhere in the full swing from blood, through territory and back to blood again, have not managed to pass as freely or as fully through the Himalaya as in the plains societies to their south. The mountains act as moderators, physical baffles to the full and lasting

incursion of fundamental social changes, whether these are the forces of religion, the economic market, or of nationalism. The isolating topography promotes great diversity, and wider social movements that in the lowlands might carry all before them, in the Himalaya have to adapt to this diversity to gain more than a temporary or nominal extension.

Traditionally, separate local 'social strata' were differentiated on the ground by their location above and below each other, but this was not the outcome of extreme localised isolation *per se*. Rather it was part of a local hierarchy in which these groups were linked by their exchange in a political and symbolic economy of complementary agrarian goods and ritual services, up and down the mountainside. Status could be specified by reference to a local territory, often through a village name; status was also often specified through kinship, that is through common descent or blood which reproduced itself from generation to generation, whose members usually thought of themselves in some wider sense all as 'the same' in natural type, that is as 'kin'. Overall, the picture evoked is that of a territorial area made up of small village enclaves, each integrated with others in the locality by relations of kinship, economic exchange and political authority, each local cluster of enclaves existing as a variation within a broader set of such possible cultural and political contexts. The patterns of these territories were variously elaborated according to wider history and natural circumstances, with a progressive change along these dimensions from one area to another across the Himalaya.

At the present day there is still a large local degree of heterogeneity, which gives the overall appearance of a variegated social and ecological 'patchwork', that is an extreme localised segmentation giving rise to patterns that progressively vary. In this structure each local group can be characterised along a range of possible natural, socio-cultural and economic dimensions; each occupies one possible set of positions across these various dimensions, along which they are related to others both historically and structurally, with clusters of larger groups forming as sets of variations on related groups of themes. It follows that scientifically, the Himalaya is important as a natural laboratory of human social and historical variation. Compared to many other mountain areas it is densely populated; but this is not a uniformly distributed or homogenous population. A contorted maze of ridges and rivers has created a territorial and social mosaic, and has laid out separate, terraced enclaves along the convoluted slopes and side-valleys of the High Himalaya. These mountain enclaves cluster together along valley systems like so many buds on the branch of a tree, often with their own, separate and tortuous access.

Despite the high profile of development programmes the topography still acts centripetally, and restricts communication to maintain as separate entities valley systems which may be no more than small, spatial, clusters of enclaves. These clusters have linkages and relations with others beyond their local territory; but the degree of routine separation is such that many have developed apart, giving rise to varied histories within a local area. Today, though the narrow strip of the southern plains has an increasingly large percentage of the population, some 90% of the territory of Nepal is mountainous: in 1985, only some 8% of the population inhabited urban areas of Nepal; in 1989, some 70% per cent of the population of Nepal was still more than one day's round-trip by foot from a road, and of the 71 districts 21 had no motorised roads (World Bank 1989, vol. 1, Table 2.5; 1990, vols. 1 and 2).

Adjacent territory, that is occupying sequential positions in the same two-dimensional space, is one way of ascribing a wider common identity in relation to the state as a whole. In mountain areas there is a further ready way of sorting local groups together, in terms of 'upland' and 'lowland', that is in terms of a third, vertical, spatial dimension. In the Himalaya there is a recognised correlation between being Tibetan Buddhist, upland and pastoral, and being Hindu, lowland and agricultural, with so-termed 'tribals' between various kinds of dependent relations. To a degree this is an accurate empirical description; at the same time it also is a symbolic statement on the status of people's status relative to each other, of a hierarchy of 'above' and 'below', and so acts prescriptively as a stereotype to reinforce a social order.² For example, the 'tribals' who are defined as a residual category are as a veritable black-box of backwardness from both the viewpoints of western and eastern literate civilisations, and so in populist terms are ranked in a subordinate place in the social order. Such a hierarchic conception is both an aspect of the local order and is important in following how regional groups become incorporated into nations within the fixed, territorial, borders of a dominant state, and more widely into empires.

In such a configuration local ethnic groups do not exist as sub-types of an absolute, higher-order, ethnic identity, but rather represent a particular set of positions within this wider multidimensional framework. For example, there is no real 'Sherpa' cultural prototype but only a cluster of related Sherpa ideals and social forms linked by various cultural and other roots, as set out by these

² For an account of the application of hierarchy in highland Nepal see Clarke 1985:193-209.

dimensions of difference. Hence, with the exception of a total separation, the question is not whether or not a group 'really' is or is not Sherpa, but in what ways is it similar or linked to other groups who are also termed Sherpa. The wider groups of peoples and nations singled out in the modern Himalayan states have a particular historical and political importance. However, analytically, these categories are just one such dimension in terms of which local groups may be so placed together for consideration. When viewed from a more modern consciousness of nation and state, some communities represent what elsewhere appears to exist only as a bygone stage in a historical process. This phenomenon of the contact of the pre-modern with the modern, of different ages co-existing at one point in time, can be seen today at virtually any road or terminus in Nepal, where buses seem to collect people from different times as much as places. People, clothed in homespun carrying wickerwork baskets and walking along the road within eyeshot of the capital, Kathmandu, can still state that they 'are going to Nepal'. In using the term 'Nepal' in this way they follow the general pre-modern use for the Kathmandu Valley as a sacred space of the three royal cities, and not for the entire region within the boundaries of the modern state of Nepal.

The co-existence of these different ages and spaces is maintained by the isolation and topography of the Himalaya. This has an additional effect beyond social heterogeneity as it 'hard-wires' in local territorial divisions as social divisions. Common territory is one important aspect of identity in the Himalaya, and to the outsider such a collection of village enclaves and their local river-valley system may well appear as a single unit. Yet within the local territory other factors of status and identity, as defined by kinship, caste and economic position will often cross-cut these divisions. Locally, these will serve to differentiate one group from another. Yet these local lines of difference are also wider lines of incorporation beyond the local territory, and at times *any* such factor may extend outwards in a unifying manner and become important to a consideration of national identity in Nepal, or elsewhere. It is along these lines that other, wider, social activities, such as traditional pilgrimage, the visit of a high religious dignitary, military conquest, and now modern electoral campaigns and migration, can be mobilised. Historically, what were formerly only such *local* features may progress to stand for wider wholes, such as ethnic and national identity in the context of the state; at the same time, the problems of communication and transport which still exist today across an extreme mountainous terrain imply a continual tendency for routine relations to drop back into the local space, and to be encapsulated in *local* relations of territory and kinship.

One may come from a certain place, let us say 'Gorkha', and therefore in that territorial sense one *is* a Gorkha. Yet within that local territory, the routine social baggage of differences is likely to make any such common place a fact of little diacritical importance. A feeling of commonality between people who come from the same place may be more important away from the home area than in the original area itself. Such a contextually segmentary basis to identity was first proposed in the anthropological literature for Nilotic Africa, and also for peoples to the north-west of the Himalaya in Afghanistan and Pakistan.³ In the capital city, in the national army, trading in India, in the civil service, in metropolitan areas a common local origin may indicate a presumed historical and cultural 'sameness'. Overall, a set of identities defined by a common territorial space may come to make up a greater political whole in an urban or metropolitan setting.

New interactions in modern urban contexts are one of the main factors in the creation of country-wide identities, whether for sub-groups such as 'the Sherpa' or for overall 'national' identity. In Kathmandu, people from the same local areas but of differing Hindu and Tibetan cultural backgrounds live in close quarters where they associate together routinely in ways they would not back in their home area itself. When people from a local area are brought together with others from wider afield in novel institutions located in urban areas, it is socially functional to co-operate and forget what were locally salient differences. The focus is the territory, which acts as a symbol of common culture and identity. That modern ethnic identities tend to appear first at the time of the creation of the state was first established for Nilotic Africa,⁴ and more recently has been termed 'ethnicisation' in accounts of state-local relations in South-East Asia (see Salemink 1995). The ways in which putative territorial and kin identifications have become key features for modern, ethnic-like, national identities in the Himalaya is a point to be developed here.

In anthropological theory such grouping by kinship, especially in the assumption of a common descent, and grouping by contiguity within a local area, have long been seen as two main ways of forming a local political community. The classic distinction was put forward by Henry Maine in the mid-nineteenth century and can be paraphrased as that between the two

³ On segmentary identity see Evans-Pritchard 1940; Barth 1959.

⁴ On Nilotic ethnicities see Southall 1970:28-50.

principles of 'Blood' and 'Territory'.⁵ Though Maine saw kinship or 'blood' as the earlier institution, he also referred to the historical process by which the basis of a community which originally might have been formed through territorial association subsequently was likely to become recast or re-interpreted in terms of blood relations (Maine 1912: 137, 225). The general salience of these two principles of land and blood for the processes specifying the identity of Himalayan peoples is suggested by two ethnographic facts: first, that the names of local lineages often are taken from the name of the place of origin of an earlier ancestor; second, that settlement and intermarriage in a village commonly come to be regarded in subsequent generations as descent through the collateral line, that is as a 'blood' relation of kinship.

Though he did not develop this point into a theory of nationalism, Maine also thought of this distinction as applying at a higher political level, that is for national identity at the level of the overall state. He illustrated this idea as the difference between 'Britain' as the area occupied by the British people, and 'the British people' as constituting those who variously occupy the territory of Britain. A penetrating illustration of the widespread significance of these two differing types of formulation is articulated in modern British politics, between nationalist and loyalist politicians in Northern Ireland: the one party holds that all born within the territory of Ireland are 'Irish'; the other party holds that the territory of Britain extends to wheresoever the 'English' live. In subsequent theoretical writing in political anthropology, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard made the well-known and parallel distinction between states as acephalous kin groups, and states as centralised polities (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). Political historians follow a similar argument in the debate on the historical primacy of nation or state, that is whether modern states reflect the model of the 'state-nation' or that of the 'nation-state'.⁶ Here I follow the modern work of Benedict Anderson in giving historical fact through the colonial experience to the 'state-nation', and ideological primacy in a modern state to the myth of the 'nation-state', projected back into the past (Anderson 1983). Whether considered at a national or local level the logic here is the

⁵ In Europe in the twentieth century, the expression 'Blood and Soil' has been overly-identified with Nazi ideology and the mass 'back to the land' agricultural movement instigated by the National Socialist Party of the 1930s in Germany. See Bramwell 1985.

⁶ On the difference between these views of the primacy of 'nation' or 'state', and their respective association with German and French historians, see the resumé of Meinecke given in Snyder 1968:58.

same: arguments on the historical primacy of principles of kin or territorial factors in specifying ethnic identity, and on the historical primacy of nation in producing state or of state for producing a nation, follow the same logical form. The area occupied by people originally considered 'the same' in blood may define the territory; or control of the territory may prescribe who will be thought of as 'the same' in blood.

Yet the one underlying feature even today distinguishes the Himalayan region from others in South Asia and elsewhere. This is the topography with its localised extremes of altitude and problems of communication and transport which in turn support great biological, as well as cultural and social, diversity. This topography still gives economic if not technological limits to the formation of a wider, homogenous identities, both national and regional, and so has helped to maintain the more traditional social integration of difference within localised hierarchies. The larger national identities that exist today do not, then, appear to be homogeneous and exclusive in the manner we may associate with a developed nationalism in the West. One is not Nepalese in the sense that one is French. Like the state borders to the plains in the south of the Himalaya, nations have been only half-formed out of local community and empire, and the modern Himalayan citizen often can appear more as an individual than as the representative of a nation. In having avoided the European model of the nation-state, a Nepalese at the same time may be both traditional and post-modern.

The Traditional State

Up until the late eighteenth century the polities that covered the land of present-day Nepal were referred to as the 'twenty-four' and 'eighteen' kingdoms. Each such small principality covered a territory approximately twice the size of the present-day districts of Nepal; further to the west, the small kingdoms of the north-west Himalaya such as Ladakh, Balte (or Baltistan), Hunza and Kabul were essentially similar, as were those to the east of Sikkim or that made up modern Bhutan. The overall political system was constituted by the interacting set of such parallel, local, political units.

Typically, these would have their centres at northern hill or southern valley locations, points critical for control of north-south trade across the Himalaya. Their authority was associated with these urban foci, which prototypically were also cultural centres, with vertical linkages at once

political, economic and religious: as blessing and legitimacy radiated out and downwards, so goods and statements of fealty flowed inwards and upwards. Materially, they were supported by their control over the local agrarian surplus and inter-regional trade.

Beyond these local political units there were fluctuating wider political alliances. These could be expressed in marriage, war, and in common dedication and offering to the same religious shrines, but at a popular level there was an absence of any general, wider, solidary political sentiment. Instead of the modern notion of a homogenous nation there was instead the idea of a multitude of different 'kinds' (*jāt*),⁷ related by degrees of sameness and difference, rather like the European medieval religious model of the 'Great Chain of Being' (Lovejoy 1936). In practice, intermarriage between similar peoples across the Himalayan chain was one form of wider integration. These groups would have an analogous positions in their local political structures and both gross cultural similarities. Conceptually, this exchange required a recognition of sharing, or of unity of basic substance. Here, notions of shared 'blood' are supplemented by those of 'air' and 'water', and so from the idea of a local regional 'climate' or territory, as together constituting a local fact to which a person has to adapt.⁸ Traditionally, adaptation would be religious, consisting of offering during and repurification on return from pilgrimage, and dedication to local kin and territorial deities on taking up new residence. These local forms were often subsumed within values expressed in the Great Religions of Hinduism and Buddhism in codified form, commonality here being a basis for wider exchange and communication beyond the local limits of political influence of any principality.

In this pre-colonial period the history of Himalayan polities can be depicted as the fluctuating political fortunes of noble families at court imposed on top of a local economy that, like the wider religions, was fixed. The continuity was taken for granted as a normal fact as elsewhere in the pre-industrial world. The political cycle was one of external conquest and unification, followed in subsequent generations by internal conflict, fission,

⁷ *Jāt* can be translated as 'species', but also has a looser non-technical use as 'type' or 'kind' in everyday speech in Nepal.

⁸ *Hāvāpānī* today sometimes is glossed as environment, but it conveys 'climate' in the literal sense of 'air and water'; 'earth' and 'fire' would also be expected to underlie basic human identity in terms of an Ayurvedic specification of elements; there are also other Tibetan and Hindu models of bodily substance.

disintegration, and flight and exile by the vanquished; later there might again be conquest and unification, possibly from an adjacent, regional, political centre from where the vanquished and usurped party returned.⁹ And so fortunes would rise and fall along the lines of conflict between noble families. The mythology of the Himalaya contains many such examples, often depicted as conflict between 'sons' as rightful rulers and 'wicked uncles' as usurping regents of the land. As well as a sign of the perceived importance of the dynastic conflicts, these stories also indicate the central place of kinship, that is in the terms used here of 'blood', as the key popular conceptual idiom for social solidarity and identity.

What we know today as the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal contains three such minor polities or royal cities; occasionally and most latterly under Kathmandu, these were united into one kingdom. In these royal cities the body of the king symbolically acted itself to purify and integrate the kingdom, acted quite literally as the 'kingpin' to the state. This was illustrated in ritual, and in annual ceremonies at temples in each of the four quadrants of the 'Nepal Valley' by the King.¹⁰ More recently this ceremonial integration was illustrated in the Coronation of 1974, at which the King was anointed with basic organic substances representing the different types of people of his realm.¹¹ The person of the 'God-King' and the city was identified with such politico-religious authority, the land and the people.¹² The closer to the sacred centre, the higher up the hierarchy, the greater the religious purity and

⁹ This cycle has been termed 'fission' and 'fusion' (e.g. Dupree 1973); however, 'fission' can indicate either collapse or expansion, depending on political dominance and migration. An analogous set of models of political historical cycles for the peoples of the northern Gangetic plain is given in Fox 1971.

¹⁰ In the case of Mongolia this court with all its symbolic connotation as a sacred axis was fully mobile, and followed an annual nomadic pattern.

¹¹ On the architectural and iconographic representation of the symbolism of the four quadrants in the Nepal Valley see Slusser 1982; Hamilton 1819:192; Toffin 1986.

¹² The *axis mundi* model also corresponds to other cultural complexes, including the model of the *devarāja* propounded by Coedès (1947) for the 'Hindu-Buddhist' kingpins of South-east Asia. Clearly it is a suitable cultural vehicle for any high culture with 'tantric' or 'shamanic' linkages, associated with this Himalayan area which would equate self, divinity and kingdom in ceremony. This notion of the 'god-king' as *axis mundi* has subsequently become referred to as the 'Theatre State' or the 'exemplary centre' in South-east Asian literature (see Geertz 1980).

material benefits. Some such centres were more important than others, but even the Islamic west of the region was not without this regal courtly manipulation of space in which time spent in the proximity of the ruler was itself viewed as a blessing.¹³

At least in its secular expression this account has many of the traits of a pre-industrial Europe, that is of the myriad of principalities under the Holy Roman Empire and the 'City State' which consisted of isolated urban foci of civilisation and order set at key locations in a more rustic, agrarian fabric. Their political authority, too, sometimes extended more in principle than in practice.¹⁴ The more recent western notion of the state as an exclusive sovereign and dominion body, with control of a fixed, absolute, territory, as powerful in the periphery as the centre, did not form part of this model.

North of the Nepal Valley there were few political spaces demarcated unambiguously as bounded spatial units, and many areas without land-titles.¹⁵ In the highland Himalayan region of Tibetan culture due north of the Nepal Valley, the early land-titles are from the Nepal Valley, dating from the early eighteenth century onwards;¹⁶ these appear to imply that this location, well within the current northern border of Nepal, is immediately 'south of the Lama's land'. The reverse was also true, and kingdoms, lords and priests at various political levels in Nepal had authority over various shrines and their associated fiefs further abroad, such as the Kyirong area in Tibet (Schuh 1988), as they did over Nepalese shrines and temples at Benares in India.

¹³ This process carries over into modern political activity in South Asia in the institution of *darsan*.

¹⁴ One difference between Europe and Asia was the relative lack of separation between state and church in the Asian as contrasted to the European model (see Dumont 1980:225).

¹⁵ For Nepal Richard Burghart has argued for variously differentiated indigenous notions of territory and political status: he separates the idea of *des* variously as 'polity', 'realm' and 'country', the first linked to revenue and the last to 'nation' (Burghart 1984). A contextual ambiguity, overlap and fluctuation in the sense of terms with a single ideal order behind is more likely than such an early systematic elaboration of a popular secular category.

¹⁶ For a consideration of the history of political authority in the Tibetan-Nepal borderlands based on indigenous orthography, see Clarke 1983; Clarke and Manandhar 1988. Burghart (*op. cit.*) argues a similar point on the basis of those articles.

Sacred locations within the Kathmandu Valley, such as shrines at Swayambhunāth and Bodnāth, could be under the authority of people of Tibetan culture who, whatever their authority from the courts in Nepal, were also dependents of monasteries in central Tibet and who enjoyed that wider religious authority and material protection.

Pilgrimage gives a good example of the operation of this broad political order, which was based on culture rather than exclusive secular rights. As one travelled north from Kathmandu and the Nepal Valley there never was any particular point at which one left a wider country named 'Nepal' to enter another country named 'Tibet'. One crossed the boundaries of the central court, the royal city and the topographical threshold of the Nepal Valley in succession; each would be treated as a conceptually related ritual boundary at which there would be an offering in the same ceremonial form. These same ceremonies would be carried out crossing any such threshold, the top of a mountain pass, a river, and when entering the next, smaller, centre of Nuwakot, where one would also make offerings at the local temple to the local gods. And so pilgrimage and more generally travel would move onwards from one temple and resting-place to another, each of which, if only a cairn or water-spring by a tree, was imbued with the same type of sacredness.

As one cut across local areas with allegiances variously to Kathmandu, Bhaktapur, and Lalitpur (Patan), or even to Shigatse in Tibet, there was none of the *angst* that modern man would associate with rapid border crossings or a 'no-man's-land'. In travelling a path northwards across the Himalaya from India to Tibet safety relied on a common cultural vision of order, one that included respect for the sacred, not immediately on secular authority.¹⁷ Secular authority was based on inheritance of sites and the relative status and lineage of those who encountered each other. Overall integration was symbolic and idealised, that is to say viewed as a sacred or religious hierarchy imposed with the mind's eye on fluctuating empirical manifestations.¹⁸ One

¹⁷ Even today pilgrims cross state boundaries from Nepal to India (and at times still from Tibet) undisturbed, without state documentation. For Islamic people, especially those from the Near and Middle East, the status of being on pilgrimage to Mecca also can represent a religious and cultural unity above secular politics and nation.

¹⁸ This reflects the mandala model and the model of the 'exemplary centre' introduced above. At least in indigenous conception (as in tantra) there is an

made offerings to local gods and paid respect to local authority, these being local manifestations of the greater, cultural order, idealised in religious form. Ceremonial precedence and rank as perceived through shared cultural conventions, rather than a particular political chain of command, tended to define authority. Politics was encompassed by the social of which it was seen as a particular manifestation.¹⁹

To a traditional world-view, the modern notion of national or state-wide territorial exclusivity in all aspects of legitimate authority would appear as profoundly odd and 'other'. Varying conceptions can persist locally today, and here the term 'impression management' has been used to characterise transHimalayan traders of border regions of west Nepal. They appear to try to change their national identity as they move south and north, from one area to another, presenting themselves as Tibetan to Tibetans and as Nepalese to Nepalese people (Fisher 1986; Manzardo 1978). The term suggests that they 'really are', in an absolute sense, either Tibetan (Chinese?) or Nepalese nationals: in point of fact a full assimilation as modern nationals of Nepal seems not to have occurred.²⁰ In the case of these poor traders in salt, wool and grain, it is not so much a modern entrepreneurial development in which they consciously manipulate cultural tools to present themselves to advantage, as in a 'transactionalism' of the west, but a cultural residue of a pre-modern world view in the Himalaya. There are modern examples of linkage of loyalty to more than one state which we will discuss presently.

In a traditional, Asian state, the focus was not on peripheral borders but on the pomp, ceremony and the sacred architecture of the symbolic centre. Remoter places, which for some implied the entire Himalaya and the 'north-west frontier' or 'tribal' areas, were naturally associated with disorder,

idealist basis to this idea which does not necessarily stand or fall as a model on the empirical existence of only one historical *axis mundi*.

¹⁹ The notion of encompassment presented here, necessarily briefly, comes from Durkheimian sociology and the notion of traditional or rather 'primitive' classification, as developed by Louis Dumont (1986:227). See also Clarke 1985:202.

²⁰ The trans-Himalayan regions of Manang, Mustang, Dolpo, Mugu and the reaches of the upper Arun would be areas which in modern times thought of themselves as separate from the rest of Nepal.

wildness, and powers of nature and tribes.²¹ Even around urban locations state power did not imply an exclusivity of authority; there was rather a loose interpenetration of control over territories, held by princedoms or churches in various states of alliances, a secular and hence imperfect order that fluctuated according to political fortune.²² Especially in these peripheries, authority changed and overlapped, and to come under the authority of more than one lord was a normal fact of political life.²³ Local areas could have double or no secular status in wider political systems, at times could play one lord off against the other and *de facto* would act independently.²⁴

Such freedom mirrors the attempted actions of the Himalayan states themselves, squeezed between the imperial might of Britain and China. It also reflects the phenomenon of extremely localised territorial power in the Himalaya, which has limited the spread of modern nationalist movements, both of which are points we will return to below. Historically, it was precisely this point of responsibility for the actions of those at such junctures on the map on which the colonial and traditional model of the activity of the state differed. Frontier disturbance over presumed 'borders' was to provide the immediate justification for the Raj's invasion towards the Nepal Valley, as for the invasion to the Court of Pagan in lowland Burma.

21 See Douglas 1966 for a general analysis of this theme of symbolic power and boundary areas.

22 This interpenetration of territory in some ways appears similar to that held under the notion of the 'extra-territoriality' enjoyed by Western powers in some coastal parts of China in the nineteenth century, a concept that also raises a contradiction to the idea of state sovereignty.

23 In the northern Gangetic plain, such ambiguity between the authority of the Nepal Valley and the British Raj resulted in villages being subject to double taxation (Stiller 1976). By contrast, in the mountain highlands isolation was such that these peripheral areas often were taxed by no one. See Clarke and Manandhar (*op. cit.*).

24 The demarcation of northern borders between the British Raj and China in the 'McMahon Line' of 1914 was not ratified by the Chinese Court. The implications continue today for the territory of the north-eastern Himalaya where there is an overlapping sovereignty between China (Medog and Zayog Counties), Burma (Northern Hills) and India (Arunachal Pradesh).

The Colonial Encounter

Although Nepal in common with many other parts of the Himalayan region was never directly colonised, from the eighteenth century onwards the political history of all states in the Himalayan region is a product of a colonial encounter. From within the Nepal Valley that early imperial contact, whether to British India or to China, was at first viewed much as a continuation of normal factional intrigue: that is, it was presumed to be with a protagonist of roughly the same scale and broadly similar in ways, but with slightly differing cultural traits and with a competing interest. The British monarchy like the Nepalese was presumed to symbolise divinity: for example, Queen Victoria could be regarded as a 'White Tara', a Buddhist Himalayan tantric aspect of Shiva. In this equation conflict was seen as a temporary stage of a cyclic process, a passing point that would be accommodated to and recast through the dynastic welter of Himalayan court politics. For example, there were enquiries from Nepal (as there were at this period from elsewhere in princely India) whether the monarch of England would give, or take, a daughter in marriage as a sign of political alliance. This was a mistaken assessment of the nature of the British state and presence in India.

From the turn of the nineteenth century onwards, the history of contact by the Empires of Manchu China and British India was itself to lead to a change in conception of the state within the region. From the late seventeenth century onwards the Manchu Kingdom had been expanding its authority westwards, and by 1720 had reached Tibet and Lhasa; the British Raj had been expanding westwards from Bengal across the Gangetic plain of India at the same time. These imperial movements began to fix the borders of the Himalayan states, and as the actual power of Manchu China began to wane with its own troubles later in the nineteenth Century, the idea of Russian expansion south-eastwards, the idea of the 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia on the north-west Frontier and in Tibet, became a further stimulus for a clear definition of authority in this area.

Behind the intrigue and interests of many, two aspects of Britain's strategy thread their way through the history of the north-west frontier. One was the need for security on India's borders, the other to ensure not being dragged into a global confrontation with another empire by chance contact on the remote frontier. Britain's action here had regional political effects. First, it halted processes of expansion from within the region which if left unchecked might have turned a local state into a competing Empire. Second, it tended to

fix territorially smaller states within the region as lesser order constructs, the 'Princely States' and 'Himalayan Kingdoms'. The Sikh Court of the Punjab was one such expanding and competing state that was destroyed; the Gorkha Kingdom was similarly involved in expansion out from the Nepal Valley, but was more peripheral and was constrained into a territorial form.

The conquest of the three royal cities of the Nepal Valley around 1769 by the House of Gorkha is often regarded as a key feature of the establishment of modern Nepal. Some modern accounts then stress from that date onwards a process of 'unification' within the territory of Nepal as it exists today, as if a modern territorial Nepal had always existed as such in some natural state awaiting discovery. Though there were some innovations in the Gorkha manner of rule, it is mainly the timing of their presence in relation to Britain in India that gave permanence to their state. More correctly, the period that follows on from 1769 is one of a wider process of territorial expansion, a local Empire in the making outwards east and west along the Himalaya from the new-found centre of the Nepal Valley. The colonial encounter both brought this expansion to a halt, and held static what it left.

The expansion of the House of Gorkha had reached its zenith in 1789, at which time it stretched along the Himalayan chain from present day Garhwal (that is almost from Kashmir) in the west, across to Sikkim in the east. It even temporarily took in Shelkar (Tingri) from Shigatse, that is an area on the high plains way to the *north* of the Himalayan chain. Shigatse, a town on the main Tsangpo river of central Tibet, also was such a local kingdom, with alliances and rights in Kathmandu as well as Lhasa.²⁵ This possibility of further expansion northwards towards Shigatse on the Tibet plateau was stopped by China's military support of Tibet. In 1791, a Chinese army passed from Tibet southwards through the Himalaya along the Trisuli river-valley towards the seat of the Kingdom of Gorkha at Kathmandu. For a number of months in 1792 they stayed within half a day's march of the Nepal Valley. Their military success resulted in tribute through traditional bi-annual missions from the Kathmandu Court to the Manchu Court of Beijing, but this victory had no permanent territorial implications. Possibly it was a traditional incursion, or possibly the power of the Manchu Empire was already on the wane. Much of the Nepal Valley Kingdoms' authority northwards to the

²⁵ One main structural difference between Shigatse and Ladakh and the normal kingdoms of the Himalaya was that succession was directed by religious principles of succession, as well as by descent (Clarke 1983a).

Himalaya was re-established after the subsequent Nepal-Tibet war of 1855-6.²⁶

After the second war landholders who earlier had helped Shigatse and Lhasa, that is who had been disloyal to the House of Gorkha, had their land-titles confiscated by Kathmandu, even those dedicated to religious deities. For example, the land-grant of a noble Lhasa lineage (Lha-lung) to the north of Kathmandu was resumed and then reconfirmed (along with a grant of land close to the Court in the Nepal Valley) to a Chinese Envoy who arrived after that War in 1856.²⁷ Presumably this was with an eye to trying to establish the latter's loyalty, and in this case the tactic of establishing allegiance through alliance in marriage and then blood to the House of Gorkha succeeded.²⁸ The general point is that any perceived difference in nationality was not salient in these changes: there was still no sense of 'Nepalese' versus 'Tibetan' or 'Chinese' in a general sense of primary, wider, nationality, only of kinship and a more contingent political allegiance within a wider cultural milieu.

The British Raj was closer to hand than China and in material terms increasingly powerful: from that time onwards secular facts of military and material power became of increasing importance in South Asia. The Raj cut back the expansion of the House of Gorkha to the west and east along the Himalayan chain, and to the Gangetic plain in the south, through various military engagements in the Nepal-Britain War of 1814-1816.²⁹ At its end some two-thirds of the territory of the House of Gorkha remained from its peak, now clearly bounded and isolated east, west and south by directly controlled British territory.

²⁶ The border finally established between China through Tibet and Nepal as states follows roughly the areas of influence established militarily in 1856. This was only fixed on the ground and ratified by a Nepal-China Boundary Commission in the 1950s.

²⁷ Nepalese language sources as listed in Helambu Documents (Clarke 1980).

²⁸ His grandson, the infamous Chinese or 'Cini Lama' of Kathmandu of the 1960s, was educated in Benares by a Scottish nanny shortly after the First World War. He had over fifty grandchildren through Nepalese wives.

²⁹ In the south, Britain later returned the western plains area which was a grain-basket for the Court of Nepal, in return for the military assistance of the House of Gorkha during the 'Indian Mutiny' of 1857.

Britain's policy fixed the territorial integrity of Nepal and so promoted the power of the existing local rulers. The cycle of dynastic growth, fission, and conquest from the outside, which in the normal course of events could have been expected to have split the House and Kingdom of Gorkha within a few generations, was halted. Hence political units, the integrity of which formerly had been based on the coherence and continuity of elite families, now became maintained behind fixed borders, and the basis of the political structure of the state began to shift from kinship to the western, spatial model, that is in the terms presented here from 'blood' to 'territory'.³⁰

There are other historical examples of such colonially driven change in the Himalaya on the northern and north-west frontier of British India from the nineteenth century onwards. Indirect control over Kashmir as a princely state was to lead to the extension of that territory. This first was northwards, through Johnson's expedition from Ladakh along the route to central Asia to Chinese controlled Turkestan which produced a map with political borders that still is significant in the modern Sino-Indian boundary dispute in the north-western Himalaya.³¹ This second was north-westwards, beyond the Indus at Bunji which was the actual limit to the Valley of Kashmir's normal authority, to take in Chilas, Yasin, and above all Gilgit to control the pass through Hunza north-westwards to central Asia. In this way Britain, at first indirectly, acquired control over access to the Pamir where Chinese influence was contracting and Russian expanding. This expansion became part of the 'Great Game' between Britain and Russia, with intrigue between local rulers and representatives of the Russian and British Empires over the wide arc from Herat (in present-day western Afghanistan), northwards and east to Khotan (in present-day Xinjiang). On the Pamir north of Hunza in 1889 these clashes brought Gorkha soldiers in the service of the Indian Army face to face with Cossacks under the command of the Imperial Russian Army, as recorded in a photograph of the encounter in which their two commanding officers, Younghusband and Grombtchevsky, pose for a group photograph at the front

³⁰ In the case of Nepal this transition is said to have occurred during the rule of Bhimsen Thapa, who spent a number of years living in the Raj at Benares and is credited as being the first ruler of Nepal with an understanding of the British fixed territorial model (Stiller 1976:220ff.).

³¹ On the Johnson map that resulted from the expedition of 1865 see Lamb 1973:113.

of their troops, like two sports teams before the 'off'.³² Britain later established firmer military control over the critical north-western Hunza route, but also followed through on the policy for the maintenance of a nominally neutral but well-disposed buffer in the frontier region,³³ and came to an understanding with Russia over borders.³⁴

In the north-west, Russia kept the Pamir and Britain kept Hunza; further to the west, Britain maintained its lines of communications and a resident in Kabul, and the Russian limits of influence were located a decent distance away, not far beyond the south-eastern railhead from Russia west of Herat.³⁵ In the space in between, which included a thin corridor around the northern edge of Hunza, the state of 'Afghanistan' was interposed as a buffer between these two Empires. The spatial borders on the 'north-west frontier' had become important when they became an issue for the British and Russian Empires, and the authority of a kin-based court was buttressed by an imperial power over a territory it had delimited.

In these nineteenth century imperial moves in the north-west Himalaya, as with Nepal, the Raj pencilled in the boundaries of future Himalayan states, and so set the ground for future debates on ethnic identity and for state-wide processes of nationalism. The Kabul Court attempted to extend and consolidate its influence over the various peoples under its new-found authority.³⁶ It subsumed the power of Herat and the whole swathe of land to the north-east, the Hindu Kush and Wakhan Corridor, and in so doing ensured that the Russian and British Empires did not come into direct contact.³⁷

32 The considerably shorter Younghusband stood on a box, so that the standing of the British Empire should not be diminished.

33 The Simla Convention of 1839 under Lord Auckland is normally regarded as the beginning of this policy which focused on the Court of Kabul.

34 Normally referred to as the 1893 Durand Line and the 1895 Anglo-Russian Pamirs agreement, an account of which is given in Lamb 1991.

35 The Durand Convention of 1893, also known as the Kabul Convention, established most of the frontiers of Afghanistan.

36 On this history see Leitner 1896; Dupree 1973; Schuyler-Jones 1974.

37 This includes the narrow Wakhan corridor north of Hunza occupied by small group of formerly Kirghiz nomads, who after incorporation in the twentieth century were cut off from their other grazing lands, and others of their culture, to their north in the then Soviet Union.

Up until the turn of the twentieth century the name Afghanistan was not generally used for any part of this area: in the north, the areas, if referred to generally at all were called Russian or Chinese Turkestan; further to the west there was a 'Zabulistan' that focused on Herat; the principality that lay between the Hindu Kush and the Indus, centred on the city and valley of Kabul, was usually referred to as 'Kabulistan'. Up until 1880, the term Afghan was used mainly as a collective name for the various tribal, that is kin-based, groups in that Kabul area. Political authority, as in the case of the discussion of Nepal, focused on the urban centre and the authority of the ruling dynasty at court, and it was allegiance and factionalism in terms of kin and blood rather than spatial boundaries in terms of territory, that were the important social factors. Political agents such as Biddulph in Gilgit well understood the focus on kinship implicit in the politic use of the term 'tribe'.³⁸

The close presence of and developing links to the institutions of British Empire allowed new conceptions to be communicated to elites through a number of cultural strands. Britain put the technology of the age in place, first as a telegraph from Rawalpindi to Gilgit; this communication progressed to a point where in the Hunza of the late 1930s the Anglophile Mir was a figure dressed in sports jacket and trilby, who kept an English diary, and who daily overviewed his kingdom by calling up and down the line by telephone.

There was one strong transfer which may now appear as defunct in the face of Western economic individualism and egalitarianism, that is the communication of the wider idea of empire itself. This is empire not as a temporary wider alliance of blood but as control over a fixed territorial whole, a spatial hierarchy in which each statelet has its fixed and exclusive region or space, laid out on a map next to others within the wider imperial territory. This model further differs from the Asian model of hierarchy in that it is not in principle tied to religious revelation, but to empirical discovery and reason.

Knowledge of these territories and peoples had until that time come mainly from classical Greek sources, elaborated by myth and travellers' tale. These now could be interpreted by the discoveries of western science and scholarship, based on the direct contact of explorers and envoys with the peoples and locality. In practice there were flaws in this logic which derived not so much from discovery as a scientific revelation. Theory was tied to historical

³⁸ For example, Biddulph 1880. These peoples were usually organised according to a segmentary kinship model.

speculation, and common form was to be explained by common origin, with all projected back to Ancient Greece and Egypt which were regarded as the fount of all civilization. Links tended to be forged from local peoples back to those mentioned in the texts of Classical Antiquity, and anthropological speculation on the region to the north of the Gangetic plain moved in endless circular speculation of who a people *really were* in origin and race, with the idea that it was from such prototypes, at least in fallen form, that they were to be primarily understood at the time (see Clarke 1977).

Particular common items and parallels were noted; but though this literature contains excellent accounts of particular ceremonies and events, these are not accounts of people in the round. In the age of discovery reference to variety fitted well. Yet, despite the evolutionary dressing of the language of race this was not a natural history, that is an application of the comparative method to a knowledge of the region. Systematic comparative analyses of Himalayan social and cultural variation comparable to those made for natural species were simply not a possibility at that time. The empirical complexity of society and culture in the Himalaya is such that much basic linguistic and textual work needed first to be carried out, before abstractions could sensibly be pursued. The typologies of peoples and frameworks of social change and evolution applied at the time were monolithic, classic-bound, and forced in application, and did not result in any systematic gains in knowledge.

The accounts of natural resources and economic products continued, as they had in the earlier period of contact through the East India Company when they had been justified by advantage in trade; writings of the late nineteenth century gave a shift in perspective away from commercial inventories to pseudo-scientific accounts of peoples from the viewpoint of a civilising mission, of the needs of government, of the correctness of imperial order. These accounts had a direct effect as the work was not carried out solely by and for academics, but largely by scholars who were also administrators and political agents of Empire. Hence these accounts of peoples and lands were fed back into the government of these newly-created territorial states. They acted as a 'self-fulfilling prophecies' and in cases came to prescribe the very definition and naming of the peoples of the area.³⁹

³⁹ This term 'self-fulfilling prophecy' derives from the work of Daniel Joseph Boorstin.

From the first half of the nineteenth century onwards the pages of *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* contain articles which give structured lists of names for presumed peoples of north-western Himalaya and Karakoram, and also for the north-eastern Himalaya and Nepal. There is a recognition of local fluctuation or 'corruption' of ethnonyms in translation and usage, and some note that the same name is used by different groups, and that the same local group can use more than one name; yet in peoples so being presented as representatives of underlying taxonomies, these articles imply that they have known historical and scientific links to other such peoples in those orders. The literature became directed towards discovering and so to promoting a fixed, substantive, classification. Such hierarchic classifications of territorial segments came to replace the earlier, more localised and fluid formations of 'kind'. The copious late-nineteenth century Gazetteers of the northern regions of India, such as Sikkim and Kashmir, illustrate this typologising tendency, that is they try to place peoples as 'tribes' and 'castes' with an absolute and fixed position in various regionally defined territorial segments, a spatial expression of an ideal pyramidal hierarchy that leads back to the centre.⁴⁰ Such accounts helped redirect and legitimate the political future of the region and its peoples, as a people's status no longer depended on local factors of fortune, interpretation and power, but on a more static and centrally prescribed ascription by an imperial expertise.

The discovered 'types' of people could be thought of as 'ideal types' that stood behind the empirical order. In these terms, what was observed on the ground was not so much a naturally occurring variation as a 'mixture' of sub-types, imperfect exemplars of supposed underlying ideal racial types and evolutionary stages. In this logic, the 'Balti' and the 'Ladakhi' could be thought of as a mix made up from various proportions of more basic 'Dardic' and 'Tibetan' elements, which themselves were thought of as particular manifestations of the more ideal 'Aryan' and 'Tartar, or 'Turanian' (Mongoloid) forms (Clarke 1977). Hence a pseudo-scholarship created taxonomic analogies to family, genera, and species, in which the ethnic labels followed the names of the new local territories that had been bounded and named by the colonial encounter. In this the new territorial states would be peopled by a 'nation' made up of various 'tribes' with further subordinate 'tribal divisions'. Groups were recognised in terms of the gross physical characteristics of physical appearance and language, even dress. Yet away from gross differences such as

⁴⁰ See Atkinson 1882-1886; Bates 1873. A number of these Gazetteers have now begun to be reprinted today in India.

between the Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman and Burushaski groups for language, spoken language and physical appearance were rarely discontinuous. In practice, the name of the territorial area and the presumed racial identity as one people often was taken as definitional of the language, and the name of the territorial area and presumption of a common language as presumption of ethnic unity, in a circular logic justifying peoples in terms of language groups and *vice versa*, and which established the use of newly-promoted territorial labels.

There were various devices and patterns by which such labels were acquired and extended as nations. One progression was for the name of the main town of an area to become applied to the local state, then the language, and then as a 'national' name, the variety being constituted by the various local 'caste' and 'tribal' divisions. For example, up until the mid-nineteenth century in Western writing on the north-western Himalaya the area now known as Baltistan was known generally as 'Little Tibet', and the area now known as Ladakh was known generally as 'Lesser Tibet', 'Greater Tibet' or 'Western Tibet'. It is only subsequently that 'Baltistan' appears in the literature, following on from references to the central town as 'Balte';⁴¹ similarly, the Indian state of 'Ladakh' also follows on from the name of the main urban centre which then was generally given as Lha-dakh rather than Leh. This modern movement contains three linguistic shifts.⁴² First, as the names of the former urban cultural centres 'Balte' and 'Lha-dakh' have moved to cover the territory as a whole so other terms, Skardu and Leh, have come to be applied exclusively to the old capital cities. Second, by naming them in this recast political form as territories without the epithet Tibet, the place and the people have been cut away from Central Asia and Tibet, and been anchored politically in South Asia. Third, through this act of social inclusion by taxonomy there is an ethnogenesis: so extended as territorial labels these terms then become available as higher order ethnonyms for the people within those territories, and general reference to 'The Balti' and 'The Ladakhi' appears.

In the case of Afghanistan there was a broadly related progression, only the original term so-extended was not the name of the capital city, but a generally used and recognised name of the people who lived there. Hence as

⁴¹ This ascription as *sBal-te* is in Tibetan. In Western, and possibly in Islamic sources, the capital town is known as Skardu or Iskardu.

⁴² Similarly, *La-dwags* is the Tibetan name of the capital.

the local state extended from Kabul outwards from 1893 onwards, there came a corresponding casual extension by Western commentators of the term 'Afghani' to cover *all* who had previously been known either by their own local particular name, or who had been known under the more general epithet of 'the north-west frontier tribes'. The ruler of Afghanistan still referred to his land by yet a different and descriptive name, that is as 'Yaghistan' the 'Land of the Unruly'. It was only in this century that 'Afghani' came to be no longer just the name of a dominant tribal people of the Kingdom of Kabul, but was successfully projected as a higher order, national, classification of local peoples or tribes.

There is a more curious example in the north-west frontier region, that is the case of 'Dardistan', a model of kin extended to a state that never was. This term was coined by one inspired Western 'observer' to cover much of the north-western area between Kabul and Kashmir, including Gilgit, Yasin, Chilas and Chitral, and which had no centre. The term 'Dard' itself appears to derive from a Persian root for the word 'fierce', that is a generic type rather than proper name. The would-be creator of that Himalayan state *himself* stated that no such local people recognised it as applying to themselves, and that he used it specifically for the purpose of connecting them to classical antiquity. In so incorporating much of the land in a broad band from Kabul to Kashmir, a putative Dardistan would both have encroached on territory allowed by Britain to both those states, and been constituted by heads too petty and independent to act as a secure buffer between Russian and British interests. Once Britain had decided on the need for more direct control north from Gilgit a 'Dardistan' was an unsuitable vehicle for the policy of the British Raj.

The term fell into disuse, other than that is than by its eccentric inventor in the polemical attacks on his Government through letters to 'The Times' of his dotage.⁴³ The terms 'Dard' and 'Dardic' lacked any wider territorial legitimation, and remained used only in scientific circles to refer to 'tribal' and then to supposed linguistic types of the area. This second act of naming was based on the assumption that the people of the area were, in at least some anthropological sense, to be considered as 'Dards'. It is ironic that the logic of

⁴³ This is Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner, with his supplement to the *Hunza and Nagyr Handbook* of 1890 entitled *Dardistan*, and the mosque he subsequently constructed in Woking, and more. See Clarke 1977, also as summarised in Keay 1979.

subsequent writing of the 1950s on peoples of this region turned full-circle, grouping people together as 'Dards' and positing an underlying 'Dardic Ethnos', based on these self-same earlier linguistic distinctions (see for example Jettmar 1961).

Nepal corresponds totally neither to one nor the other of these second sets of processes, but in a number of ways represents a kind of halfway-house or variation between the two. It also illustrates how the western encounter can play a penetrating role in cultural processes that have come to define nationalism. The visit of the ruler of Nepal, Jung Bahadur, to England and to France in 1850 is credited as a voyage across the sea to impure lands, a voyage that questioned the absoluteness of the religious ideals of Nepal. The adoption of European military apparel, aristocratic dress and recreations at Court, the stucco palaces of Kathmandu built as conscious echoes of Versailles and Palladian style, communicated a new model at court. Images derived from European secular power stood alongside the ceremonies of the Great Religions to define a new image of state, with ambiguous representations of royalty and power. Their existence implied the end of cultural absolutes, the possibility that change was other than heresy, and gave rise to a questioning if not re-orientation of World View. These symbols of the elites were copied by those intent on upward mobility, and so in turn extended outwards, as in the small-town vernacular for the lesser houses of the Valley and houses of elites in rural Nepal.

There are two names, 'Nepal' and 'Gorkha', both latterly geographical loci, which have come to be used as wider national labels for people within the fixed territory of Nepal. The term 'Gorkha' has been used in two ways: first, as the name for the ruling House of Gorkha, which is now situated at Kathmandu rather than Gorkha and which contains high-caste Hindus; second: as the generic name for martial castes or 'tribes' recruited from within the Kingdom of that ruling House of Gorkha, often spelt as 'Gurkha'. Books that referred to the language spoken in the territory as 'Gorkhali' and the 'martial castes' were fully-developed by the turn of the century.⁴⁴ This double-specification produced the British image of 'Gorkha' both as the proper name of the wider Hindu state, and of the war-like tribes of Nepal.

⁴⁴ Also 'Gurkhali'. See, for example, Meerendonck 1949, which in Lesson Two has such value laden phrases for translation as 'A Gurkha eats rice' and 'The rifle is dirty'.

The general acceptance of the natural military genius of Nepalese or Gorkha tribes of Nepal came through British experience on the field of combat during the British-Nepal war of 1814-16. The recruitment of some individuals from this area of the Himalaya into the Army of the East India Company dates from before that time, and specific, local, 'martial castes' from within the territory of the Kingdom of Gorkha already had been named as such, in the eighteenth century. Lists of these peoples were made by the early official visitors to the area, who were scholars as well as political representatives, and were elaborated by those who followed, both for science and as a practical measure to assist in selection in recruitment (Hamilton 1819; various articles of Hodgson including 1933). It was only later, after the support of the Gorkha State for Britain in the India 'Mutiny' of 1857 and subsequent understandings established by exchanges of letters towards the close of the nineteenth century, that soldiers were more openly recruited by Britain from within the Gorkha state itself, and that the people came to be referred to widely as 'Gorkhas'.

In those documents there were four such main groups of names. In the west of Nepal, the labels Gurung and Magyr (later spelled Magar), and in east Nepal the labels Rai and Limbu, were elevated as the names of the presumed martial tribes, with further named sub-divisions. These two sets of two were singled out from the myriad of varying local names in the middle hills of the region of Nepal under the control of the Kingdom of Gorkha as the 'tribes' with the supposed military qualities recommended to be recruited as 'Gorkhas'. In these cases, as with the colonial experience of East Africa, the higher-order named units of local 'tribes' and the corresponding 'peoples' and 'nations' that were so listed or created within these territories, usually were in scientific terms abstractions at the wrong analytical level.⁴⁵ They were to be distinguished from the higher Hindu priestly and lower untouchable groups, identified mainly with lower-living, valley, populations, and who were seen as not so hardy and less suitable for military recruitment. In general terms, a gross distinction between a tougher 'hill' and more soft-living 'plains' population of the northern Gangetic plain is a useful first criterion for selection for soldiers, as is the avoidance of those whose 'twice-born' Hindu caste position would make for prohibitions in social contact. The analytical error is in elevating a useful tool as a fixed absolute classification, and in taking such a set of ethnonyms as a 'once and for all' indicator of those needed qualities. From that time onwards, these terms take on the nature of a 'self-fulfilling

⁴⁵ This point was first made in 1970 in the seminal article by Southall, 'The illusion of tribe'.

prophecy' as those who wished to be recruited learnt to present themselves in such ethnic terms. Combined with the normal tendency for sons and co-villagers to take on the same professions, this helped give territorial expression to these 'tribes' as collections of local groups.

Such points and the progression has been reported of Magar and other peoples who wished to be recruited to the British army. For example, the Magars of Tichurong are known collectively as Magar because the term is convenient, both for them and for the ethnographer.⁴⁶ The term Tamang is occasionally used by Magar, Gurung and Thakali, for themselves in their own language, and Gurung as well as a people in the west of Nepal also can appear as a subdivision of Lama or Tamang, in East Nepal. Tamang itself was not used as a 'tribal' or ethnic label in the early nineteenth century, and is not recognised as a martial caste in the lists; nor are Sherpa or Lama. People from Sindhu Palchok who in the 1970s would normally present themselves as 'Tamang', 'Lama' and 'Sherpa' in wider society, were then presenting themselves as Gurung, Rai or Limbu for recruitment in the British Army. Of the eastern set, Limbu may be a local corruption of another Tibeto-Burman word;⁴⁷ 'rai' was a term used among non-Hindus in the eastern hills for a headman, and so was a prime candidate as an ethnonym for upwardly-mobile people of that region.⁴⁸ The disparity between the peoples classified together under labels such as Rai, and today Sherpa, Lama or Tamang, outside of a local area, is such that a serious ethnography of the Nepal Himalaya always is prefixed with a highly localised area, e.g. *The Sherpa of Kumbu*, *The Thulung Rai*.

Such state-wide lists with fixed ascriptions of the 'martial castes' and other 'castes' and 'tribals' as used by the British Raj were both a prototype for,

⁴⁶ On this aspect of the Magar of Tichurong see Fisher 1978; see also Hitchcock 1966.

⁴⁷ On the eastern hills of Nepal see, for example, Campbell (undated); see also Levine 1987:74.

⁴⁸ The Nepalese term *rāi*, which is the normal root for the Rai is related to the Sanskrit term for King (*rāja*), and so to 'gentleman' or 'lord'; the adjective *rais* or *rahis* also means noble, and has a sense of chiefly (Turner 1931). In modern times, there have occurred similar processes in Central Northern Nepal, by which the names of occupational elites have become nominal vehicles for ethnicity, in the ethnogenesis of the 'Lama People' from the dominant local group of intermarried 'Tibetan' and 'Tamang'. See Clarke 1980.

and a legitimation of this nascent Himalayan state. This extension of central authority and symbolic value was occurring in other areas: for example, early land-grants in outlying areas for the upkeep of temples were now reconfirmed in written certificates sealed by the Gorkha state, some of which listed re-interpreted festivals for Buddhist and local deities as Hindu and specifically Gorkha, lineage, deities.⁴⁹

A state-wide caste hierarchy was formulated by the House of Gorkha which brought together various local caste hierarchies, including the Tibetans and other 'tribals' of the Tibeto-Burman culture, and hence was given currency as an overall model by the state. This *Legal Code of Nepal* of 1854 was a fixed, prescriptive, taxonomy of the peoples of the territory, and from the viewpoint of the dominant centre now established in Kathmandu, it laid out in principled form who should eat with whom, who should marry whom, who should carry out what occupation, and how groups were to be differently punished. This taxonomy, imposed on top of the pre-existing, local, definitions of relative political status, and the segmented political hierarchies across the country, helped to create the current ethnic map of Nepal (Höfer 1979). As an ideal the hierarchy was seen as a codification of custom, something in itself fixed, timeless, and to be projected back into antiquity.

The purpose of such a hierarchy within the kingdom was not an account of history or social process; it was, as before, the restatement of an ideal or divine order beyond empirical fluctuation, expressed through the institution of the kingship, but now extended beyond the Valley of Kathmandu throughout a fixed and bounded territory. In practice, social relations still were fluid, social climbing was well understood, taken for granted, and commonly used for redefinition, with the upwardly mobile seeking to differentiate themselves in name from their equals and those below, and take on the identity of those above them.⁵⁰

49 In the Tibetan Buddhist area of Helambu a local Tibetan Buddhist purification ceremony is textually re-interpreted in state records for Gorakhnāth, the patron saint of the Gorkha lineage, (untitled Tarkhyeghyang entry, Guthi Lagat Records Office, Bhadrakali, Kathmandu, Nepal, Records No 56 and Rakimi Kitab Datta, record No 5/14). Dasai is a key such 'nationalist' Nepalese festival.

50 More than the plains of South Asia, Himalayan social history stresses individual and familial than an overall group or 'caste' mobility. See Fürer-Haimendorf 1966. For all its stereotyping of other groups this essay illustrates

The political change of emphasis away from sacred centres to borders was largely in place by the close of the nineteenth century colonial encounter with Britain in the Himalaya. Adoption of new models was to set the stage for a wider integration, that is the extension of a national identity communicated outwards throughout the territory from the old centre. If we apply Maine's example given earlier on Britain and the British to Nepal, we will see the change in perspective. In this case the idea that the local territories listed as the possessions of the House of Gorkha should be recognised as a single entity, that is Nepal (or perhaps more correctly at that point perhaps as a 'Gorkhalistan') started to shift to the idea that those encapsulated within the territory of Nepal, including its rulers the House of Gorkha itself, should be considered as Nepalese.

The use of the terms Nepal and Nepalese also begins to change from being just one way that people who came from the Royal Cities of the 'Nepal Valley' could be identified, to becoming a superordinate national label for the various 'Peoples of Nepal', including those from what now increasingly was known as 'The Kathmandu Valley'. Within Nepal, it was only in the 1930s that the Court themselves began to refer to the country as the 'Kingdom of Nepal', rather than as 'the entire possessions of the King of Gorkha' (Burghart 1984:119).

The above cases indicate a general shift from a political identity through fluctuating local and kinship allegiance, through a wider imperial dynasty, to political identity as fixed, exclusive and based on residence within a wider bounded territory. This shift was brought about in a colonial encounter in which the primacy of territory and political linkage of peoples within such a space was assumed to be the norm, and imposed by the imperial power. In the terms used here, this represents a shift from 'blood' to 'territory'.

This is not a modern national integration as we are familiar with in the west, that is a mythical social contract with equal rights of citizenship for all individuals within the state. It again had much in common with the traditional hierarchy, still a divine order but given fixed form as combined lists of peoples within the new territorial borders of the state. This order may well have been understood by earlier, pre-enlightenment, Kings of Europe, that is

these processes of change quite clearly for this Hindu group; also Levine 1987 gives an excellent account of changes in local identities as a result of overall political features.

as an all-encompassing hierarchy, an attempt to apply a sacred metaphor of integration of ranked difference and complementarity oriented through the Court and Kingship firmly throughout the territory. The intention in so creating such a 'nation' was to promulgate unity and order within all the territory of the Kingdom of Gorkha. The imperial model had become a microcosm of the Nepalese state, an echo created and perpetuated on a model of territorial inclusiveness and common nationhood.

Such colonizing, taxonomic, tendencies and the propensity to erect large, fixed absolute typologies centring on the symbolism of a sacred centre and kingship, may be a general ideological feature of many Asian empires.⁵¹ One sees the same 'Oriental' tendency in the British Empire itself, with its own ceremonial surviving well after the political control and power which it first accurately conveyed had passed its height.⁵² The capital architecture of Empire, as much in New Delhi designed by Lutyens as in the centre of London at the period, and events such as Great Durbar of the Jubilee of 1937, in which tribal rulers from even as far afield as Hunza had their allotted positions, variously distant from the representative of the British throne, indicate just such a symbolic understanding of the integrative use of sacred space and ceremony.

In this wider conception, the extreme local Himalayan social diversity now was encapsulated territorially within a fixed, higher, taxonomic, hierarchy. These were not scholarly abstractions at a distance, but features of elite ideology imposed on local peoples as administrative facts. In this process their own names become logical sub-types to the new, national, identity, imposed from above. These names and lists became political instruments that directed the ethnic and national futures of the region in the manner of a 'self-fulfilling prophecy'.

The general historical argument has been that in earlier traditional Himalayan states local definitions of status, both kin and territorial, were predominant, and that prior to western contact such local politics were played

⁵¹ It may be no coincidence that current Chinese scientific writing possesses precisely this same, taxonomic, tendency. For example, many publications on natural habitat on the Tibetan Plateau focus on naming and typologies using territorial and Sinicised names, rather than descriptions and accounts of process.

⁵² As did that of the Manchu Court in the twentieth century.

out against a more-or-less common and static cultural backdrop of the 'Great Religions' of the region in which against the first order phenomenon was the 'sacred-centre' borders and territories in social terms were second order, fluctuating, entities. At first, the exchange with the British Empire was built on the traditional pattern, and necessarily hierarchical and integrative, in the manner of contact with oriental empires such as that of Manchu China. Though sometimes much of the Himalaya was coloured uniformly red on the map, the circulation of elites was the political norm, and at that time there was little local change through incorporation at the bottom of a new imperial hierarchy. Yet the colonial encounter with the west, in particular the British Raj in India, and to a lesser degree with the Russian Empire, was eventually to result in the imposition of a Western spatial model of statehood with larger state units defined by fixed territorial borders. The countries formed were nascent state-nations, and the central courts they legitimated took on the model of national identity espoused by the colonial power, with a territorial taxonomic model which was communicated down through the metropolis and capitals almost as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Post-Colonial State and Modernity

I have suggested a further aspect to the progression from state to nation in the Himalaya, namely the extension of the name of the dominant kin group or of the main urban centre outwards to the newly-fixed boundaries, at first as a name for the entire territory, and then subsequently as a national identity for all peoples within it. Their own names are taken as logical sub-types to the new, superordinate, national, identity. The pendulum having swung fully towards control and inclusion of peoples within the entire territory under Empire, in the modern nation-state it then moves back again to specify a greater homogeneity of nation, of one people, within the state. In the terms used here this is a move from 'territory' back to 'blood' again, but at a different level that sets the stage for a modern nationalism, and also for extreme forms of fundamentalism.

There is more than one irony in the progression here. First, the western ideas that allowed local elites to extend nationalism outwards from their courts to the colonially-defined and secure spatial boundaries of their states, also transmitted the idea of 'other' or 'foreign': this resulted in a triggering of political segmentation and a disintegration of the overall chain of Empire. Second, the very the idea of different descent that had helped integrate local

groups hierarchically in the traditional small-scale society, when taken to an extreme in a modern, egalitarian nation-state becomes a justification for exclusion, and bloodshed.

This modern national unity has developed in various ways. First, it can come from the imposition of a classification of peoples and languages to be considered as local 'tribal' or 'caste' sub-divisions of a newly-discovered nation, erected across the entire territory of the state. This is a first stage of a move away from an imperial order based on difference. Second, following on from this equation longer-term processes of physical assimilation may be set in place through upward individual and family mobility, economic or social plurality, or integration, with attendant intermarriage. Such changes of identity have often been accompanied by rural-urban migration. Third, there is also a more fundamentalist approach to the creation of nation, one which uses physical threats, violence, and massacre to enforce migration or physically exterminate those deemed as different by blood. From reclassification, through intermarriage, to pogrom, all is directed towards producing 'one people', which then can become a nation projected backwards into the past on the territory of the modern state. These processes can be seen to various degrees today in the Himalaya and South Asia. Before 1947 and the end of the British Raj, the most extreme of these forms of nationalism as populist ethnic violence were unknown, though soon they were to arise in India on partition. They are rarer in the Himalaya than in the plains, though now they appear in Kashmir and Bhutan; even here these more fundamentalist forms of nationalist integration are as much state-directed as expressions of popular sentiment. Nepal does not, at least yet, tend to this modern extreme of fundamentalism.

This overall process of separation and consolidation as nation-states continues today within the states of the Himalaya, but it has not taken place equally and fully. Some of the reasons are external and linked to the partition of the sub-continent in 1947-8, which in itself in part was a result of an increased populist nationalism.⁵³ For example, the north-west Himalayan

⁵³ The key features to this external history are the creation of an identity of 'Pakistani' with a Muslim religious identity out of a truncated Imperial India that, despite the size of the remaining Muslim population (the third or fourth largest in the world), had a Hindu religious identity. The point was reinforced by the wars between Pakistan and India in 1947-48 and 1965, which for all their causes in terms of the control of territory, also helped to create a sense of national awareness as being 'Indian' and 'Pakistani', tied to religious

territorial partition, with the conflict and stand-off between Pakistan and India in Kashmir, has resulted in the maintenance of the older, smaller-scale, local names and identities, that is Chilas, Yasin, Hunza, Nagyr, Baltistan and Ladakh. Neither Pakistan nor India thought of the 'northern territories' or Kashmir as complete as they stood, and in comparison to other modern Himalayan states the identities at these administrative levels above them are muted.

Other reasons are internal, particular features of the Himalayan states that ultimately derive from topography. Even the first stage outlined above, that is the notion that people within the state are in some sense 'the same nation' applies only in part and unevenly, as would be expected given the 'patchwork' heterogeneity of the Himalaya. Some illustrations have already been given, such as the current usage by some people of the term 'Nepal' to refer still only to the central Kathmandu Valley, and the fluctuating identity of 'impression management' in the remoter border regions. A similar illustration of the weakness of identification with the state comes from a broad-based development project that was carried out with assistance from a foreign state in a rural mountainous area, in the mid 1970s. When asked about the project, villagers volunteered the information that they far preferred being under the authority of that foreign government to Nepal; they had no feeling of any contradiction in terms of sovereignty, or necessary loyalty to Nepal and a Nepalese identity (Clarke 1983). There are many other examples of the absence of a highly developed idea of state allegiance from the ready ease with which Nepalese enter into long-term contract and loyal service with people from beyond their state borders: there is the 'Gorkha' soldier in the service of Britain, Brunei, India, or Singapore; the 'Sherpa' mountain guide as a member of a foreign expedition; the administrator or expert in the service of international organisations in the capital (or in large numbers elsewhere in the world). In all these examples there is little to signal that one party is 'Nepalese' and that the other is 'foreign', and that links of nationality and the state provide a proper superordinate context for consideration of allegiance and loyalty.

affiliation. The modern paraphernalia of the bureaucratic state which each took over from the Raj encapsulated a national statement in a ceremonial form, with India itself taking over the metropolitan fabric of New Delhi itself. In 1971 Pakistan, a state in two halves without territorial integrity, split between the newly-formed Muslim Bangladesh in the East, and the residual Muslim West Pakistan, the latter of which took on the name of the whole as Pakistan.

In a sense, this lack of national allegiance is a modern characteristic, akin to the internationalism of some elite circles in the west, as well as being a traditional, pre-modern, trait. In Nepal the traditional and the newly-modern and highly-individuated world view appear to reinforce each other, with the normally intervening period of nationalism having been altogether missed out. Yet along with linkages of kin, language, culture and political movements across the southern border, much of the traditional former hierarchy, rather than a political segmentation of territory, remains. In the same way that the topography limits full control of the territory, so it limits the full extension of a modern nationalism. A homogenising, cultural, nationalist, integration has had a partial impact within the Nepalese Himalaya.

In its political history Nepal has been able to play-off India against China and maintain international recognition with a certain degree of success, and in so doing has preserved some qualified political autonomy to its south. A cultural contrast of a Nepalese to an Indian identity is an important component of this. A modern state with a broad-based technical specialisation and administrative infrastructure requires a measure of integration for management of a territory. Daily bureaucratic interaction, greater geographic mobility across the territory, the radio, and national political events such as elections, actively extend and superimpose 'Nepalese' down over local identities as an integrative 'national identity' within the territory. The state has tried to encourage cultural uniformities of Nepalese language, education and dress, and encouraged more distinctive hill peoples to relocate on the southern border with India, to mark this boundary.

The modern image of Nepal pursued by the state and the capital also has emphasised relations to the west and the 'exotic'. In the 1960s it was possible to fulfil this by presenting Nepal as the *only* Hindu Kingdom, which in occidental terms contrasted it as an apparently exotic, timeless, and traditional land to a secularising, industrial, India. Given the current resurgence of Hindu fundamentalism as a cultural feature of Indian national identity, this is no longer a viable strategy.

The presence of the world's highest mountain is a major such differentiating feature from India, especially when referred to by the internationally known name (Mt. Everest after the then English Head of the Imperial Map Service), rather than by the existing Sanskritic or Tibetan linguistic ascriptions. It is symbolic of the distinction between the mountains

or 'hills' versus plains, as the general contrast associated with the difference between Nepal and India. Within the region empirically this idea generates problems: it holds true only in relation to the hills of Nepal and the plains of India itself, and not to India as whole which incorporates similar hill peoples, nor to the strip of plains in Nepal which incorporates similar plains people. It also raises the image of a resurgent Gorkha nationalism in contrast to modern India, and is not a practical political image for the modern Nepalese state within the region.

The wider, imperial model, with links of Nepal to the outside and in particular Britain, was and is still preserved after 1947. Many modern functions such as tourism and development assistance pass through the political centre from the West, following on from the older order of hierarchical patronage. Popularly, the disbursement outwards of these benefits is regarded as a gift from above in return for political allegiance (Clarke in press). Traditional imperial linkages, such as history of the 'Gorkha' as the Nepalese 'martial tribes' recruited into the British army, still continue.⁵⁴ The conquest of Everest by a New Zealander and a Nepalese as members of a *British Expedition*, news of which was publicised in Britain alongside that of the Coronation of a new Queen of Britain and the British Empire, was a continued imperial feature in 1951. These more modern linkages have helped shift the wider image of Nepal away from war. The term 'Sherpa' in the Western world has acquired a generic sense of loyal, high-altitude, porter, clearly separate from the warlike Gurkhas; Mt. Everest acts more as a symbolic world-centre, a 'battlefield' against pollution for nature and the environment, than it is a military battlefield.⁵⁵ The penetration of more recent western cultural features also is an important feature to this newly-constructed modern Nepalese identity. Whereas in India the image of cultural 'Englishness' has tended to carry over a solid echo from the 1940s into modern times, that presented in Nepal is more modern and fragmentary, a combination of a hangover of deference to Empire with the individualism of the 1960s. The pilgrimage of Western youth in the 1960's quest to Kathmandu, and more generally of tourism, large in relation

⁵⁴ The name Gorkha still has a generic sense, now written as 'Gurkha', as a Nepalese soldier; but the other meaning as the House of Gorkha, an epithet for the kingdom and the place where the present lineage of kings originated, is now seen largely as a fact of history.

⁵⁵ It is curious that the conflict between India and Pakistan in northern Kashmir has made for a move in the other direction, with the high and remote Sziachen Glacier of the Karakoram as the main military theatre.

to the scale of the capital, raised a new image in the west of Nepal as peaceful, and spiritual, as well as exotic, mountainous and warlike. The positive reception for western youth culture in Kathmandu was in part a result of the desire for recognition in terms of international modernity by an isolated Nepal. There was no necessity in such a cultural equation in an Asian country; for example, in Vietnam the same contemporary popular Western culture had come to stand not for progress, but for neo-colonial subservience to an imperial power.

The English normally spoken in Nepal is not the Indian English of the sub-continent, which is almost its own idiolect, but is closer to modern English. Some of the current elite had to relearn, or rather learn, the Nepalese language after return from an Oxbridge education, and the English language as in India is the technical and an intellectual working language of the higher elite, much as was French in Russia in the nineteenth century.⁵⁶ It is of course here, in the continued historical parallels with the experience of India, that the long-term political contradictions for independence are found.

Language is an important such feature, and differentiation here in the first place consists of the exclusion of Hindi, and the promotion of 'the Nepalese Language' for nationalist integration. At a conference in the capital of Nepal in the 1970s it was possible for Nepalese to refer to all languages spoken within the territory as 'dialects of Nepalese'; this is despite the scientific knowledge that all the northern languages belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family and not the Indo-Aryan grouping to which Nepalese, along with Hindi and Bengali, belongs.⁵⁷ References to the need to study the documents and literate religious tradition of the Tibetan-speaking peoples of northern Nepal were phrased in terms of the need to study the 'Sherpa dialects' of Nepal, rather than as the need to study the Tibetan language. Similarly, to the south, discussion of the close similarity of dialects on the border to Hindi, rather than to Nepali, was until recently marked only by its absence in Nepal. The current attempts to introduce Hindi as an official language and 'dialect of Nepalese' would appear to be primarily a political Trojan Horse. Clearly, such taxonomies have political rather than scientific agendas, directed towards the creation and extension of Nepalese national identity.

⁵⁶ It was thought proper to consult resident Western experts in Hindu ritual on the classical form of the Hindu coronation ceremony of 1974.

⁵⁷ In technical linguistic terms any Indo-Aryan language is closer to English than to a Tibeto-Burman language.

The persistence and extension of the notion of 'being Nepalese' is in turn projected not just forwards into the future, but also back into an imagined community of the past (see Andersen 1993). For example, in the 1960s in Kathmandu the sole national newspaper carried articles, no doubt read tongue in cheek by some educated Nepalese, arguing that since Lumbini, the birthplace of the historical Buddha (Gautama), was located some few miles north of the current southern border of Nepal with India, that Buddha was therefore Nepalese and not Indian. In this modern nationalist conception, Nepal is the land where the Nepalese live and have always lived, and so a 'natural' modern legitimation exists for Nepal's current separateness as a nation-state, rather than leaving Nepal as a contingent state-nation in political relation to India. This reversal of sequence and causality between state and nation moves beyond the fictions of the founding of a modern Nepal in the eighteenth century. The backward projection through time of the Nepalese nation prior to the formation of the Nepalese state frees Nepal from what now is seen as ignoble, a state whose sovereignty depends on colonial historical circumstance.

Such arguments further promote the idea of independence and permanence of Nepal but are not taken into Indian conceptions. One retired civil servant from south of the border commented that Indians see the State of Nepal as a junior member of a family: 'For India Nepal is like a child, a younger brother: you indulge him, and enjoy seeing him grow and become strong; but if he steps out of line too far and becomes a nuisance, then you administer a sharp smack!' The idiom used by this civil servant was one of kinship, of common blood.⁵⁸

To the north-west, in Ladakh, political circumstance and hierarchy has led to the expression of continuity and contrast in a different way. Ladakh is now clearly a part of Indian Kashmir rather than a 'Western Tibet', from which now at a first level there follows a cultural assimilation through schooling and education to the Indian languages and plains circumstance, rather than to the Tibetan language, culture, and conditions of the highland plateau. At the second level, the Tibetan Buddhist population is dominated in terms of wider market and institutional access by the Muslim majority of the

⁵⁸ In classifications of ethnic groups with the People's Republic of China today, the 'minorities' or 'minority nationalities' (*min-zu*) are included as national elements within a higher order state-wide 'family of nations' (*min-zu da-jia-ting*) in which the Han are the senior and Beijing is the paternal focus.

State of Kashmir which now settles into their area. The main line of upward mobility is for young people from Ladakh who renounce their own culture, move to town, and who advance economically within that part of the Indian model that contains western, material, individualistic values. These factors promote an assimilation and orientation with focus back to Delhi (Norberg-Hodge 1992).

In the case of Afghanistan, control over Kabul is now only in part emblematic of control of the whole territory. The tendency among these people, always described as segmentary in the extreme, is for fission, that is to split into the older statelets, one around Kabul and the south-east, one to the north, the other to the west. It is only to the degree that rival groups from within the whole territory compete for control of the centre of Kabul, rather than accept the more smaller, traditional, centres over which they have actual control, that the notion of Afghanistan survives as a wide territorial state.

To the south, on the plains of India, the pendulum may have swung more extremely up to territory in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and then more recently fully back the other way, towards a blood-based integration, with the rise of extreme fundamentalist movements. In the northern Gangetic plain, in the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar each as large as Nepal, there has been a rise of populist imagery in the terminology of 'Blood' rather than 'Territory'. Ideas of 'nation' and 'one people' are now used to express a countervailing, disintegrative, political tendency. The expressions of inter-communal violence, such as have been experienced there or in Sri Lanka, appear as the imperial residue of hierarchy dissolves and the model of 'one nation' extends more fully within their entire territory.

In extreme developments, ethnic and national affiliations no longer serve to integrate into a hierarchy of ranked and complementary difference, but become identified with political conflict between groups that compete for control of economic resources within the same territory. They are visible in fundamentalist expressions of separation and independence, used in wider competitive interaction to lay exclusive claims to the entire territory of the new state. This is carried out in the name of the nation defined by common descent, and not alliance by marriage, economic integration, or common citizenship within a state. Such national movements project their claims as

'one people', the original people of the land, back into a mythological past, and so are underpinned by ideologies of purity of 'blood'.⁵⁹

There are pressures for the adoption of the more exclusive model of national identity in the Himalaya; In Nepal, 'pan-Hindu' or 'pan-Aryan' political movements of the Gangetic plain have local branches in main urban centres. There are nascent 'pan-Mongoloid' fundamentalist movements, with links beyond Nepal and to a degree across the region in highland areas. To the east of Nepal, extending into Sikkim and Bhutan, there also are pressures from those who speak Nepalese for the establishment of a 'Greater Land of Gorkha', using political imagery that plays on the historical empire of Nepal which extended east and west along the Himalaya in the late 18th century until enclosed by British India.⁶⁰

Groups that existed in rural areas largely in balanced, complementary, relations, or in relative isolation from each other, now may compete for economic position and favour in Himalayan cities. However, overall in the Himalaya these divisions have not yet been acted out in terms of the underlying populist conflict, whether urban and rural, whether ethnic or national. In the Himalaya, fundamentalism usually tended to be constrained by the mountain topography itself. In Indian Kashmir, the protest has been of the people against the national order of the state; in Nepal, these forces have been expressed largely in civil protests against a traditional political order that in cities was seen as undemocratic and corrupt: in neither case has there been fundamentalist violence. Bhutan is the exception; but even here violence has been very much the prerogative of the state. Political protest seems to rely on the state rather than represent an unassisted populism, and to a degree be catered for in traditional mountain warfare against the city-state, or modern political protest, rather than fundamentalist movements.

The natural model of change in the Himalaya, whether through warfare or economics, is of highland people descending and taking over the towns of the plains, rather than in any systemic change taking place in the highland

⁵⁹ The world-wide commonness of the possibility of this extreme may reflect a widespread or universal human psychological tendency.

⁶⁰ In the part of the north-west Himalaya that lies between Baltistan and Ladakh, that is close to the ceasefire line between Pakistan and India, there even have been reports of a Dardic 'ethnic' movement among peoples of that frontier.

regions themselves. The twentieth century has seen qualitative changes from markets, roads and new technology in some areas; but these have not yet made a systemic penetration into the mountain valley enclaves of the Himalaya. Rather, economic and demographic growth have resulted in emigration from these highland regions, with growth and change crystallising out in the burgeoning towns of the main valleys, and the narrow plains area of the south. These are the arenas for future competition.

Traditionally, the topographical separation of parallel valley systems, together with the different economic bases at different altitudes of the mountainsides, have acted quite literally as a baffle against the internal territorial spread of any such conflict.⁶¹ The lack of spread of plains fundamentalism into the Himalaya itself depends on the lack of regional integration, that is the topographical constraint on interaction that raises the *local* territory, the valley-system, which has by definition a variegated productive base and ethnicity, over and above wider notions of unity through blood as the basis for identity. Mountains hinder communication, and promote enclaves with their own local identities that cut across the wider 'tribal' or 'caste' divisions of kin that appear to fuel fundamentalist conflict that can develop from a modern, exclusive, form of nationalism. The only wider form of integration is a hierarchy that itself follows the form of the territory, from enclave up through centres to the capital.

Within its own highland territory, the Himalayan chain still continues to act as a barrier to integration by any such overall, nationalist, movements as have been seen in the northern Gangetic plain. Ultimately, this topographically-induced separation in the Himalaya is a constraint that modern technology has not transcended. While migrants from the Himalaya may well fuel fundamentalist conflict in the plains and themselves experience local disturbance, overall the Himalaya themselves may still be a traditional refuge, a half-way house, between the extreme swings of 'Blood' and 'Territory'.

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DISMEMBERING THE BODY POLITIC: CONTESTATIONS OF LEGITIMACY IN TAMANG CELEBRATIONS OF *DASA*¹

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Introduction

Dasa has often been interpreted as the primary ritual of political integration of village Nepal with central authority (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1993; Ramirez 1993). Buffaloes and other animals are sacrificed, and village leaders give *tika*, reproducing the same role as the king at the heart of the nation. Its popularity has been suggested to be linked to local elites' use of the rite as a strategic political resource (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1993: 270). Recognition of the diversity of practice encountered in celebrations of *dasa* has been interpreted as an indication of the vibrant adoption of central ideas, forms and relationships in particular local contexts.

After the 'revolution' of 1990 reports began to come in of *dasa* being rejected by certain 'ethnic' communities as an instrument of Hindu Gorkha cultural hegemony. This paper considers the experience of *dasa* in a Tamang-speaking village. Here the future of *dasa* suddenly appeared to be imperilled in 1992, after the effects of one general and one local election under the new

¹ This article was originally given as a paper for the September 1995 meeting of the South Asia Anthropologists Group, held at the London School of Economics.

order of multiparty democracy. However, it was far from an explicit rejection of a symbolic instrument of an unpopular system of government that brought about this festive dilemma. It was precisely the effectiveness of the festival's political symbology (as interpreted in and transformed by distinctive local meanings), to bring out issues of legitimate authority in the new atmosphere of contested power, that threatened the continued celebration of *dasa* as a party-less, collective rite of community solidarity.

Both the structure of ritual sequence, and the conflict over rights to symbolically marked parts of the animal, reveal *dasa* to contain deeply contradictory meanings, and to provide also an occasion for local conflicts to coalesce around contesting symbols of power and authority in the community.

This paper presents, to start with, a synthetic outline of the formal sequence of events over the *dasa* period, giving background information to explain some of the contextual significances of the festival's basic elements. With this structure in place, I then present accounts of actual events which occurred at *dasa* over three years, culminating in a dramatic showdown between village factions.

The Basic Elements of *Dasa* in Tengu

The Search for Buffaloes and Festive Finances

Before the work of manipulating centrally derived political symbols even begins, the process of provisioning villages with sacrificial buffaloes activates fundamental channels of regional and national integration. The village of Tengu, Rasuwa District, at 2,000 m is about the upper limit for keeping these clumsy, belligerent, but productive creatures. Nevertheless, *dasa* buffaloes are sought from mixed caste Parbatiya villages to the south,² where they can be obtained for a cheaper price. Tamangs from villages further up the valley themselves come through Tengu looking for animals. If they are unsuccessful in finding a buffalo at the right price in Tengu, they often enlist the help of people they know as kin or affines in Tengu to assist them in looking for animals in

² For the more Hindu population, male buffaloes are required for *dasa*. For Tamang speakers, buffalo gender is irrelevant.

other villages close by. Overlapping social networks facilitate a relaying of buffaloes in a movement through progressively higher communities.³

The buffalo is indeed the classic animal of Hindu iconography depicted as being subdued by Durga, which in Sanskritic terms is what this festival is all about. It will come as no great surprise that Tamang speakers are not much interested in Hindu mythology, though "nau Durga, nau Bhowani, nau tika" can be heard in some of the shamanic chanting associated with *dasa*, but the Tamang's preference for buffaloes at *dasa* needs to be explained, as prior to the festival many hundred Tamangs are involved with a perhaps surprising counter-directional journey to the one taking buffaloes uphill. From the new moon of the month of Aswin (Tam. *Asauda*) flocks of Tibetan sheep and goats are brought down from Kyirong, down the Trisuli valley, and these days are often taken the last leg of the journey to Kathmandu by truck. The popularity of these animals to the inhabitants of Kathmandu is not only the superior quality (reflected in price) of the meat, and the acceptability of goat to most Bahun families, but the fact that one animal can be killed and shared in what is conducted primarily in the framework of a domestic ritual. In Tengu, by contrast, the whole business of the division of the meat is to do with the symbolism of intra-community functional specialisation, for which the larger carcass of a buffalo is well suited.⁴

The demand for sacrificial animals obtained from outside the sacrificing communities has more than a symbolic value of national integration. Many of the Tamang and other Nepali rural elite whose authority is highlighted at *dasa* have historically been important livestock traders. To anticipate some of the themes developed further on, my suggestion is that control over the movement of livestock is a continually present dimension to issues of local power connected with *dasa* for these agro-pastoral people. The festival marks the mid-point of the transhumant oscillation between summer and winter pasturing (*yartsa-martsa*), with village sheep and goats grazing around the edges of the settlement at this moment. In terms of residential sociality, it constitutes a periodic convergence of neighbourhood ideal and practice, as most other times of year the village is more than half empty, because the demands of agro-pastoral transhumance allow few occasions for village residence. Till

³ A similarly economically integrative relay process in the opposite direction is the search for seed potatoes always from higher communities.

⁴ All inhabitants of Tengu eat buffalo meat except the few members of the Gyalsum Ghale, and Ploen Tamang clans.

the early 1970s it was the headmen (*mukhiya* in Rana times, then *adhyaksa*) who coordinated the collective movement of livestock onto different areas of pasture, in particular onto the harvested maize fields prior to *dasa* (this coordinating role has subsequently been undermined by the effects of national park regulations). *Dasa* is the centripetal fulcrum, the 'Return to Go' of the village's transhumant agro-pastoral calendar, with animals brought close to the settlement nucleus, and house rafters hanging with the maize harvest. When this village-level convergence is considered in conjunction with the wider scale of Tibetan sheep and goats being taken to the symbolic central pasture of the nation, at Tundikhel in Kathmandu, a synchronising of village and national pastoral chronometry is evident. Such a unique point in the year is an obvious focal opportunity for displays of productive and political control.

When household budgets are considered, *dasa* is the one moment of the year when even the poorest families will try to get sets of new clothing, and peripatetic Damai tailors arrive for business. In 1991 most Tengu families spent around Rs 500 per head on expenses for *dasa*. Many take loans at this time from the local rich (*baru*) who are frequently the officiating headmen of the whole *dasa* rite. Women set about brewing beer to distill into *raksi*, and give their husbands money to buy rice, clothing and meat⁵.

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka (1993:273-5) mentions the fact that *dasa* came to be constructed as the key national festival in the nineteenth century by the Shah and Rana regimes. Whatever the political motivations, the timing at least concurs with rural rhythms particularly as a marker of the end of the monsoon. Villagers told me they had heard that the spring *Caita dasa* had once been bigger than the autumn event, until a king said that because in *Cait* the farmers tended not to have much food, the autumn festival should be celebrated more. It is a time of plenty, of return (especially of family members working away from home), and of renewal.

Preliminary Rites

Prior to the onset of collective festivities, households may conduct certain smaller sacrifices. Chickens are killed by *bombos* over the bamboo mats used for storing maize for the god *Bhimshing*. Apart from *Bhimshing*, other deities to

⁵ Women control the household purse strings, because of course "men cannot keep account" (*rembo tse atsor*).

whom cockerels are offered on the day of Phulpati⁶ are *Guruchen*, *Kyekpasung*, and *Tangshing*. Most of these sacrifices are accompanied by the *bombo* chanting the routes of mythical trails from the Tamang speakers' place of origin in Tibet, Wi Samye, down to Gyagarden (India), or more commonly Gorkhana (thus connecting household health and prosperity with the state of Nepal), before returning back up to the village.

On the morning of the principal sacrifice, the village children take small chickens to the *lhaben*, a hereditary specialist who officiates at sacrifices for local territorial deities, for decapitation on a large rock to the god *Tangshing*.

The Sacrifice and Funeral of the Buffalo

Fifty years ago when there were only ten houses in the village, one buffalo sufficed for the whole community. In 1991 with a population of 250 people, three were killed. The animals are taken to terraces close by the houses and a *bombo* or *lhaben* sprinkles rice (*mone*) and water along the body from the head, chanting "nau Bhowani, nau Durga, nau tika", until the beast eventually trembles and shakes (*pururule kharpa*), indicating divine acceptability. One of several eager strong men is then directed by a ward chairman to perform the execution with an axe blow to the back of the head. A cauldron is immediately placed under its neck to catch the blood, some of which is taken by the chairman, mixed with rice, and dabbed as *tika* on the foreheads of anyone present. I was told "the state made the order, and the festival was honoured".

As the animals are skinned and cut up, involving a division of labour with women collecting up and washing intestines while men deal with hacking up the meat and bones into shares, a *bombo* takes off a few pieces of meat on a stick to roast quickly. Back at the site, these first pieces of cooked meat are tossed in the air for the hungry ghosts (*shingo*, *mang*) who would otherwise come saying "haha, huhu, hehe", making people have stomach ache, heart ache, vomit, and have diarrhoea.

⁶ Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka refers to the names of the four principal days of *dasa* as *Phulpati*, *Asthami*, *Navami*, and *Vijaya dasami*. In Tengu they are known as *Phulpati*, *Mar*, *Kali*, and *Tika*.

The ward chairmen in consultation with residents decide how many portions of meat to make at what price. Women turn up with jugs and kettles to carry off blood to mix with flour for sausages (*krung*). The hide is cut into strips and divided too for drying as yoke-plough shaft connecting straps. The head (*kraa*) is kept by the ward chairman,⁷ the tails (*meeh*) are taken by Kami blacksmiths,⁸ and the tripe (*tsiibu*) is given to the lamas.⁹ The rest of the day is spent with each household cutting the meat into strips to hang over the fireplace, eating and drinking.

The next formal event of *dasa* comes the following day with the buffalo funeral (*mai mane*). Tengu villagers are aware that higher up the valley live other more pure Buddhist communities who do not partake of *dasa* in the same way and regard the sacrifice as sinful. Although in Tengu they explicitly attribute the sacrifice to the command of the state, they still regard the act as sinful, for which they need to atone by giving the animal a funeral. The buffalo's head is kept in the house of the ward chairman overnight, with a butter lamp burning continuously between its horns. "Puja is done for the buffalo. It is said killing brings sin, so a lamp is lit on its head".

The funeral takes place on the second night after the sacrifice, "the funeral makes the sin go away" (*mane tse dikpa yerba*). The funeral is in fact not at all of the same order as for a person. Texts are not read, painted *thangkus* are not on display, drums are not beaten, *tormos* are not made, but the hymns are sung and danced through the night, led by the lamas. In the early hours cooked pieces of the buffalo's head and *raksi* are produced from the chairman's house, and fed to the people after a blessing by the lamas (*shelgar cheppa*), and a prayer is said for sentient beings. The dancing continues with more *raksi* being contributed which is dedicated to dead headmen of the

⁷ I was told that before Tengu had its own *mukhiya* (headman in the Rana state), buffalo heads always had had to be delivered to the *mukhiya* in the larger village five miles away.

⁸ *Dasa* is one of four annual festivals (the others being *magha sankreti*, *cheita dasa*, *saun sankreti*, when Kamis come for grain, meat and alcohol, to households they maintain a service, rather than cash, relationship with. I was told that in villages where Damai also participate in the division of the buffalo carcass, it is they who receive the tails and the Kamis get the base of the neck.

⁹ Holmberg (1989:35) mentions a mythical connection between lamas and tripe in the context of a Tamang narrative concerning the origin of caste differentiation.

village. As in the case of human funerals, there is a marked point at which the time for hymn singing comes to an end and secular songs (*wei*) can begin.

Hospitality and *Tika*

The day following the buffalo funeral is when the authority vested in the headman through officiation of the sacrifice, cleansed of its sinful connotations, becomes disseminated throughout the community by means of *tika*. This obviously used to happen more ceremoniously than in recent decades, for I was told "in olden times on the day of *tika* the *mukhiya* shot off his gun, and every household¹⁰ had to go to the *mukhiya*'s house".

The *tika* can be given with varying degrees of accompanying verbal formality along with the smear of butter in the hair above the forehead. I recorded what a respected village elder said was a roughly standard formula spoken with the giving of *tika* (tam. *mar kyappa*, literally 'to anoint with butter'). It begins:

Long life to you.

This is is not our *tika*. This is indeed the *tika* of The King of Kings.

This is indeed the *tika* of The Sri Panch.

May misfortune and illness be carried off by the wind of the Tibetan Plateau

May they be carried off below by the Trisuli river

If you touch a leaf may it become cloth

If you touch soil may it become grain

If you touch stone may it become a palace

From one goat may you be given a flock... (etc).

practical

Apart from village leaders, *tika* blessings are particularly sought from one's *ashyang* (MB, FZH, EF), who are offered respect (*shu laba*) and gifts of food and drink (*phit saaba*). *Ashyangs* are particularly privileged by the indigenous logic of wife-giver status superiority, and are the key legitimating figures in all life cycle rites.

¹⁰ The word used for household in this quote was *thuri khargar*, meaning separate roof-beam, and is the term employed for 'household' in formal contexts such as the exaction of corvée labour (which the *mukhiya* also oversaw).

From this emphasis on status difference, the mood of the festival shifts to a more egalitarian form of exchange in the following days, as neighbourhood households feed each other rice and meat in rotation on different nights, known as *nangsho*.


Public Dialogues on Power and Community at *Dasa*

If the description above of the key elements of *dasa* has come over as procedurally formalistic, that was an inevitable, but necessary prelude to the real thing, which needed the referential structure initially laid bare. In this section it is the opportunity *dasa* presents for airing intra-community dissent that comes to the fore.

Political authority in the village is a contested but diminished domain. Real power to affect serious issues of concern to all villagers is not seen to be within their grasp. Villagers have no illusions about the disparity of power between themselves and officials of the national park, of banks, health workers, the police, and military. I would argue that the effective centralisation of local power in the *pradhan panch* (under the Panchayat regime), and the offices of state administration, and the many barriers (illiteracy, prejudice towards *Bhote*¹¹ etc.) confronting Tamang villagers' access to influence their relationship with the world beyond their village, make occasions such as *dasa*, focussing on the symbolic distribution of the body politic, a residual arena for dialogues of power among a basically impotent and fragile community¹². I say that political authority in the village is a diminished domain because by all accounts the Rana period incumbent of the office of *mukhiya* had very considerable powers. This is not simple nostalgia

¹¹ A derogatory 'ethnic' slur which aggregates all Buddhist, beef-eating, speakers of Tibetan derived languages as a suspect population in the state of Nepal.

¹² I have chosen not to include in this paper a discussion of how villagers engage with the process of electioneering. I was not present at the local election from which the fallout manifested at *dasa* is retold here, but among this electorate which is so unfamiliar with the meanings of the discourse of national political parties, the primary interest of villagers is to enjoy as much as possible the free meals, drinks and other inducements to cast votes offered to them by all party representatives. Elections are momentary reversals of power relations, when the poor delight in the attention to which they are not normally accustomed. For an insightful study of attitudes towards politicians in Nepal see Clarke n.d.



because the memories of forced corvée labour, the exaction of fines, and the granting of rights to clear forest for fields are still vividly recalled. What is particularly salient is the reduction of village control over the common property of forest and pasture, once supervised by the *mukhiya* and subsequently ward chairmen (*adhyaksha*). Much of this control (at least the authority and coercive power to respond, however erratically, to infractions) has been assumed by the Langtang National Park since the 1970s. This deprives the village community of the formal means of control and accountability in the organisation of the productive basis of the village economy. In these circumstances, the contemporary position of ward chairman carries little weight.

In the absence of an effective political structure to articulate demands for change, and given the peripheral location of the village to organised class interests in Nepal, the institution of *dasa* is for the community a political event in that it presents a model for the local political constitution.

In 1990 half a dozen households had moved up to the motorable road constructed some five years previously, which passes a couple of hundred metres above the old village. The idea of this new settlement sacrificing its own buffalo was strongly resisted by the ward chairmen, whose interests lay in maintaining the all-inclusive character of the festival. A separate sacrifice would have definite interpretations as a diminution of the chairmen's authority. In fact, one of the chairmen preempted a separate sacrifice by personally dragging the buffalo in question downhill.

In 1991 the sacrifices were again kept in the old village but a dramatic incident erupted over the justice of distributing the tails to the Blacksmiths. The village crowd was excited by the prospect of bellyfulls of meat, and was already part-inebriated. Men were cutting up the larger hunks into equal shares, up to their elbows in blood and splitting bones with axes, while women squeezed out the contents of the ruminant's extensive innards, and dogs tried their best to snatch any morsel without getting kicked. Into this scene walked the Blacksmith who had left the village three years before to move to the bazaar town of Dhunche five miles away. He had continued to work for the villagers, but rarely visited except to collect his customary dues of grain, meat, and alcohol. Two months previously a new family of Blacksmiths had decided to try working in the village, and set up a forge in the porch of a rarely used village house. I was told that the original Blacksmith had left of his own accord for the better prospects of waged custom in the growing Dhunche bazaar, and the new one had moved in unsolicited but welcome. A

row erupted, with the Dhunche Blacksmith furious that the newcomer was about to be favoured with the buffalo tails, of which there were three. In the ensuing confusion over what the justice of the situation might be, the angry older Blacksmith put two of the tails in his bag. Before he got to the third, one of the ward chairmen seized the remaining tail and proclaimed that he had left a piece of iron with the Dhunche Blacksmith to make a hoe six months before, and it had still not been made, so the rights to the tail were forfeit. The new Blacksmith was clearly embarrassed and did not want to be seen to have encroached on the other's patch, who was an older relative after all. The latter left still angry, but the villagers seemed to consider the outcome fair enough in the circumstances as the new resident deserved some share, and if the Dhunche Blacksmith had not met the needs of some of the villagers it was because he had plenty of work in the bazaar.

At the *dasa* of 1992, during a brief revisit to the field, the political atmosphere in the community was still highly charged after the local elections of May in the same year. A factional divide had emerged around rival candidates, compounded by allegations that one of the new ward chairmen had pocketed a few thousand rupees from a sum granted by the local administration to build a new path connecting the old village site with the new settlement by the road. The successful candidate's behaviour in office was in question, and his right to a position of authority in the community was in dispute. *Dasa* provided a stage for the playing out of political tensions.

The opposition faction included the head village lama who had stood in the election as a communist and lost, as well as the main family of *bombos*. This group organised for their own buffaloes to be killed. The competence of the chairman's overseeing of the sacrifice and funeral was deliberately challenged through ritual non-cooperation. The opposition faction insisted that the chairman's buffaloes were not killed with the proper rites, as only a lesser specialist known as *sangdung*, rather than a *bombo* or *lhaben* was present to ward off the hungry spirits. Subsequently, the dysfunctional consequences of the situation came to the fore with the problem of what to do with the tripe of the buffaloes sacrificed under the aegis of the two chairmen. In order to sustain the symbolic integrity of legitimate political authority the tripe was required to be presented to the head lama, who would also be necessary to lead the funeral to overcome the sinfulness of the sacrifice. The lama had taken particular offence at a reported comment by a man of the new chairman's faction that "lamas and *bombos* are no longer necessary" ("*lama ado, bombo ado*"). The lama had complained that he endures night after night

without sleep in the performance of funerary rites, and cannot come and go as he pleases, or opt out of his duties to the community. One old woman expressed horror to me at the notion of a world without lamas in which the dead would simply rot in the rain.¹³

Neither the chairman nor the lama were going to take the initial step towards a reconciliation on the day of the sacrifice. A long-resident, in-married Newar began shuttle diplomacy, insisting on the need for villagers to come to an agreement ("*namsaba dii doba*") moving back and forth between the two sacrificial sites reporting the entrenched positions of both sides. The head lama said he certainly wasn't going to come and collect the tripe himself. After four attempts at bringing about parley he was accompanied by the older chairman who had held office several times, a couple of elder men, and the factionally neutral villager who has achieved highest status in the outside world as a soldier in the Nepal army. The comment about lamas no longer being necessary was asserted not in fact to have been said. The new chairman was seen to have acknowledged the desire for a resolution, rather than risk the social consequences of the tripe not going to the lamas, and the collective funeral of the buffaloes not being performed. The Newar was pleased that even if the compromise was grudgingly acquiesced to, forearms had not been bared with a view to a fight.

The night of the next day the buffalo funeral was held, but the ward chairman and his closest supporters did not dare emerge from their houses to join in or send the meat of their buffalo heads. Revelling in their sense of having put the chairman in his place, some of the funeral dancers of the lama-bombo alliance hurled abuse at him for all to hear. The next morning, sitting resplendent in his red turban, the oldest *bombo*, a senior kinsman of the head lama, sat in his house receiving visitors for *tika*, and told me that this year he was the most respected figure in the village for people to receive *tika* from. In the next days the ward chairman's circle of *nangsho*-entertaining consisted of a humiliating three households. The popular authority conferred by the electoral process had been effectively forfeited by the de-legitimation engineered by means of non-cooperation at *dasa*.

¹³ By way of a de-exoticising comparison, British people of my generation can remember the political impact of the Winter of Discontent in 1978/79, when the prevalence of strikes led to the dead not being buried.

These *dasa* incidents demonstrate the continuing importance of admittedly brittle notions of local community, linking social changes with local understandings of political authority. When faced with the prospect of the buffalo funeral perhaps not being performed in the future due to factional irreconcilability, one unrelenting villager of the new chairman's camp pointed out that the buffalo funeral is not a collective rite in the bazaar society of the local town Dhunche, where households make their separate arrangements for the provisioning of meat. I take this attitude to signify a profound change in the village, as it implies a hitherto unconscionable position of household independence from the secular and religious unity of the community. It mirrors the processes of commoditisation in labour, the lost ability of wealthy households to command unpaid labour of dependent clients, and the diminished authority of headmen in the transhumant economy, supplanted by the national park. It reflects, in ritual organisation, the ascendant power of delimited household interests in the pastoral and cash economy over those of extensive community incorporation under headmen. The alternative constitutional model suggested to that of households' unified interdependence under the complementary authority roles of village headmen and lamas, is explicitly that of independently organising households in semi-urban, market complexity, not beholden to participate in a show of symbolic unity.

Conclusion

Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka writes of *dasa* that "[e]ven where there was no Hindu population, local elites started performing this ritual (with...deviations), claiming a central position for themselves within the local community as if they were kings of Nepal" (1993:282). Village society invokes the sovereignty of the Centre in legitimising its local structures of authority. In Tenggu's locally meaningful enactment, the rite has been seen to be transformed from a sacrifice into a funeral, with the secular authority taking the buffalo's head into his house to guard its soul until the villagers can dance the mourning songs in collective expiation of their sins. The renewal of secular authority is seen as dependent on the performance of religious purification. Additionally, the division of meat acts generally as a focal metaphor of the social order, and not just in the context of *dasa*¹⁴.

¹⁴ The other main sacrifice for the benefit of the whole village is made at the full moon of *Baisakh* when a goat is divided up between all village households, and the *lhaben* gets a shoulder.

Macdonald (1987) has written of the phenomenon of the distribution of meat acting as a marker of social difference in relation to some Tamang texts concerning yak dismemberment, in which the division of meat is first used to differentiate a hierarchy of courtly functions, and secondly to provide names, derived from parts of the carcass, for different clans. The division of meat thus serves as "an indigenous model of and for the differentiation of society" (1987:79), and, further, that such models "are used by men and groups of men as instruments of social control" (*ibid.*: 81). In the account of *dasa* I have included from 1992, it is clear that if we talk about 'social control' this is not just a matter of a vertical relation of power, as the model can be turned around for use as a challenge to authority.

Ramirez discusses the idea that 'cosmo-dramas' connected with *dasa* "put into play the legitimation of royal authority by divine authorities", but draws attention to "the manipulation of this festival by more common actors, precisely by local dominant figures" (1993:48). His historically oriented research on *dasa* in Argha Kanchi reveals 'symbolic manoeuvrings' by priestly lineages who also held *mukhiya* office. In so many accounts of *dasa*, the particular ceremonial details are of such variety that, though the theme of religious legitimation of secular authority is a constant, as Ramirez has suggested, "central authorities did not care much about the content of the ritual" (*ibid.*: 48). Pfaff-Czarnecka by contrast is impressed by the very pervasiveness of *dasa's* celebration, whatever the symbolic variability, and attributes this to the dissemination of domination relationships "when subjects strive to display cultural elements of the powerful" (1993: 271).

Some of these points can be examined through the data from Tengu. It might initially be tempting to see the emphasis on funeral rather than sacrifice as a Buddhist community's statement of cultural difference from the ritual forms of the hegemonic power. However, the message of the buffalo funeral has clear parallels with the overall communicative intent of Hindu rituals legitimating royal power. Other approaches to the Tamang response to Hindu symbols include Holmberg's interpretation of a myth that deals with the origin of caste hierarchy in which he argues that the myth "refracts Brahmanical ideology and social order according to a different symbology rather than participates in this ideology" (1989:37). This idea of refraction allows the

The distinction between Tamang and Ghale clans is highlighted in the event of cattle dying, when the head used to go to the Tamang *tsok*, deputy to the non-beef-eating Ghale *mukhiya*, and Tamang lamas receive the tripe.

popularity of *dasa* to be taken seriously as not simply an imposition from above. Höfer uses the idea of "flexible integration, which does not also exclude creative misunderstandings" (1986:12) to convey the adoption of certain symbolic forms into differently constituted cultural logics.

I offered the preceding accounts of *dasa* partly in response to Macdonald's suggestion that "[i]t may be that future Tamang ... leaders are more likely to win response and active support to models phrased in terms of the redistribution of surplus production or the class-struggle rather than to old tales about cutting up yaks" (1987:81). The occasions of intense dispute over rights to shares in the *dasa* carcass highlighted the potential this festival provides for political drama and the public expression of claims for social justice. As such it is clearly no straightforward instrument of hegemonic control, and offers the occasion for public articulation of resistance. The question which remains for future research is whether *dasa* will remain a potent arena for political symbolism or be supplanted by new forms of democratic discourse.

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THE HORSE BOOK OF THE PRINCE OF JHARKOT

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Jharkot is a small village below Muktinath in Mustang district, western Nepal. In this remote high mountain area traditional Tibetan medicine is still practised. Modern Western medicine has hardly penetrated this region. Due to the almost complete lack of modern technical equipment, horses, mules, cows, yak, sheep and goat are necessary for the transport of goods, for the delivery of food and the planting of fields, and are still kept in large numbers.

Most of the veterinarians living in this area are illiterate and practise according to the oral knowledge they have received from an experienced veterinarian, in general their father. One of the few exceptions is mTshams pa Ngag dbang, a medical practitioner in Mustang district. He was taught by his father and studied traditional Tibetan medicine as well. The fact that most veterinarians are illiterate is not peculiar to Tibetan society but typical in the Orient and Occident as well. Veterinary medicine is based primarily on practical knowledge and the veterinarian learns his subject by oral tradition and experience. The texts were written by other professional groups such as philosophers and authors on agriculture.¹

As literate people in ancient Tibet were generally monks, and medical science was taught in a few monastic schools, the first scriptures are likely to have been translated and written by monks. It is a well known fact that

¹ Aristotle for instance wrote in his *Historia Animalum* a short treatise on veterinary medicine.

traditional Tibetan medicine, like other subjects too, is influenced by Indian culture, and documents have been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Regarding veterinary medicine, the only known book is the one on horses, *rTa'i tshé'i rig byed sha li ho tras bsdus pa shes bya ba*, thought to have been written by the famous Shalihotra, the father of horse medicine in India. This text was rendered into Tibetan by the translator Rin chen bzang po (958-1055) (see Blondeau 1972: 48).

The documents found in Dunhuang are the oldest written sriptures we have on Tibetan hippiatry and hippology in the Tibetan language. They have been translated by Anne-Marie Blondeau in her "Matériaux pour l'étude de l'hippologie et de l'hippiatrie tibétaine" (1972). Her Indo-Tibetan work gives an overview of the Indian tradition. She also translated parts of the so-called Bacot xylograph, reprinted by Tharchin in Kalimpong in 1934. But unlike the Dunhuang documents, which deal with hippology as well, the Bacot xylograph deals only with veterinary medicine.

In recent years a number of manuscripts have been found in Mustang district. All these texts deal with hippiatry and hippology as well. But as none of the texts contains a colophon, in all cases the author and date of composition are unknown. I can only state that these manuscripts are of a much later origin than the Dunhuang documents.

In this paper I would like to give a brief introduction to the text owned by the late dPal mgon po, the prince of Jharkot. The manuscript has been in the possession of the prince's family for three generations, and was most probably written at the end of the last or the beginning of this century.

The manuscript was photographed by Prof. Dieter Schuh in 1990. The text, consisting of 89 folios, is bound into a book, but is incomplete. The first four chapters are missing. The book is worn and the margins of the last pages are illegible. The pages are not numbered. The manuscript includes two titles:

1. *rTa bum mthong ' khol rta nad thams cad 'jom ba'i sman mdo*
2. *Cog ro rje'u khye'u chung gi rta dpyad gsal ba'i sgron me*

The included topics are pharmacology, hippiatry, hippology, divination and magical practices for horse races.

The sections dealing with the treatment of horses are, like the Bacot xylograph, illustrated with drawings meant to clarify either the symptom or the treatment of the disease. All passages are constructed in the same manner. In the beginning of each passage the diagnosis and the symptoms are given, followed by the method of treatment, mostly the enumeration of drugs applied. In the end we find in general the remark that this treatment will cure the disease. But as the diagnosis and the symptoms are not given precisely, the specific disease cannot always be identified.

An impediment to the translation is the poor orthography of the manuscripts. The erratic rendering of plant names in particular leaves open various possibilities for their interpretation. In the following examples I therefore give the Tibetan names of the plants in the translated passages as they appear in the text. The English terms and the correct spellings are given in a short supplement according to Parfionovitch *et al.* (1992).

The transliteration of the Tibetan text follows the Wylie system without any corrections of misspellings. Material presented between asterisks **...** indicates intercalated text; parentheses (...) denote contracted or abbreviated forms in the manuscript. The translation of each passage is followed by a brief commentary on the methods of healing described.

1. rta la gnams khris btab na / skad gnam du 'tsher mig gnam du
lta sbangs kyang sbangs su 'chor ba gnam mkhris btab*s* pa yin
pas / la cha lham khrad snying pa gu gul rnam kyi bdud pa snar
bsdugs / lham kyi nang shun bkru pa'i khu ba khar blug / drod pa
'phus bstabs pa la mig gi bzugs bris la / mda' (rgyag) pa' i tshul
byed / des nges par 'phan no / zab ithi /

Translation

If the horse is struck by the *gnam khris*-[disease], it neighs to the sky. If it runs galloping, it is struck by the *gnam khris*-[disease]. Therefore one fumigates the nose with smoke [prepared from] *la cha*, an old sole of a shoe and *gu gul*. One pours the liquid [that has been used] to wash the inside of a shoe into [the horse's] mouth. One inflates a stomach, draws the outline of eyes on it and pretends to shoot it with an arrow. This definitely helps.

Commentary

This passage shows three different kinds of treatment: the fumigation, the oral application of a remedy and a ritual in order to heal the horse. For the fumigation the ingredients are chopped up coarsely and mixed. This mixture contains plants and the old sole of a shoe, a remedy of the so-called Dreckapotheke. The medication given is here only prepared from the liquid which has been used to wash the inside of shoes. The latter indicates that Tibetan veterinary medicine is influenced not only by Indian but by Chinese medicine as well, where these kind of remedies were used frequently (see Driesch and Francke 1992: 133).

Magical performances are quite frequently used in Tibetan veterinary medicine. But these ideas are not unique to Tibetan or Oriental medicine. They are found in the Occident too, for instance in the German veterinary literature, the so-called Rossarzneibücher from the 17th century.

2. rta la chu byis smug na / gang smugs sar srang yong bas / gla rtsi shu dag gnyis byis pa lo (brgyad) pa'i chus rta la sbyar 'byugs / khong du mthar nu / re (lcags) spru ma mtshan a ru ra rnam / btang ngo / rtsa rnam gtar / chu bya'i ro snyed na rab / brad pas nges par 'phan par 'gyur ro / yang gcod lug cig la byi bas gang (smugs) sar tha la / thang gron me shur gyis (bkrag) bkor (rgyag) pas 'phan thag chod / dge'o /

Translation

If the horse is bitten by a water rat, at the place where [the water rat] has bitten a swelling appears. Therefore one mixes *gla rtsi* [and] *shu dag* with the urine of an eight-year-old child as a base and spreads [this ointment] on [the swelling]. Internally one gives *mthar nu*, *re lcags*, *spru ma mtshan*² [and] *a ru ra*. All the veins are bled. If one finds the carcass of a water-rat, this is excellent. If one scratches [the swollen part with the carcass], that helps definitely.

² The terminus *mtshan* is questionable. It either means the name of a remedy or that both *spru ma dkar po* and *spru ma nag po* have to be given to the horse.

According to another method of treatment, the edge of the place where the rat has bitten is circled fast³ with a pine-fire by singeing the swelling. This helps certainly. This is good.

Commentary

Throughout the history of veterinary medicine we find the description of a bite of the so-called water rat. It is already mentioned by Aristotle. According to Prof. von den Driesch of Institute for Palaeoanatomy of the University of Munich, the term *chu byi* could denote *Rattus rattus*, *Suncus murinus* or *Suncus montanus*.

In this section five different forms of treatment are described: the external and internal application of a pharmaceutical medication, bloodletting, a magical performance and circling with fire.

For the external application, i.e. the preparation of the ointment, urine of a child is used as base [*sman rta*) with plants as further ingredients. For the external and internal application as well, all ingredients are first pulverised. For the internal application they are either simply mixed with a base such as water, *chang* or molasses or else boiled with water and then given to the horse.

Bloodletting (*gtar ba*) is a very frequently applied method of healing for any kind of disease. It is often carried out on a vein near the diseased organ, the jugular vein or on all the veins. In the West too, it was a very common method of treatment and recommended for almost every ailment.

Behind this magical performance, i.e. rubbing with the carcass of the water rat, seems to stand the idea that a performance similar to the incident cures the disease. This concept is also found in German veterinary literature, where for instance worms are given in bread to heal a disease diagnosed as "worms in the belly" (Brebaum 1967: 151). The last mentioned therapy, circling with fire is used for disinfection. Fire has a disinfecting and purifying effect.

³ According to mTshams pa ngag dbang *bkrags* is a synonym for *mggyogs po*.

3. rta'i grod pa srang na / mkhal ma zho sha / (rgya) tshva lga skya /
drod sman hril mo / lcam pa'i bru rnam 'bu ram dang sbyar nas
btong / tshangs ra'i steng du lug mgo 'am / lo ma bya ra gla ril
gang rig kyi bdug byed / chu ser 'tshags / ra tshil gyi bdud pas
bdug go / dge'o /

Translation

If the belly of the horse is swollen, one mixes *mkhal ma zho sha*, *rgya tshva*, *lga skya*, all warming medicine and *lcam pa'i 'bru* with molasses and gives it (to the horse). On the tip of the rump-bone one applies a *lug mgo* or a compress prepared from any kind of [turnip] leaves⁴, used tealeaves [and] faeces of musk deer. One squeezes the pus [out of the swelling]. One fumigates [the swollen parts of the body of the horse] with goatfat. This helps definitely. This is good.

Commentary

The methods of treatment applied indicate that the disease described is not in the interior of the belly but on the outside. Most probably there is a purulent inflammation on the surface of the belly. According to mTshams pa ngag dbang, the swelling has to be cut with a small knife or a lancet (*gtsag bu*) before the pus can be squeezed out.

The application of the so-called *lug mgo* describes in my estimation a typical Tibetan form of treatment and is nowadays still practised in Mustang area. The term *lug mgo* describes a vessel, prepared from roasted barley flour (*rtsam pa*), mixed with tea or water. This is placed on the rump-bone of the horse and hot oil is poured inside for stimulation.

4. rta'i gzhung 'gram / (rgyab) bzhung bzhin srang byung na / tsha
chu dang sa khams pas / chu rtsa chu thag / dug mo rnam kyi
'byug pa byed / rtsib ma'i bar la me (thigs) byed / khong du gnyan
sman gyi khong bsrung gtong / rtsod 'dud / tshos shing 'bri mgo
zhu khan / a ru ra rnam gyi thang btong / des (phan no) /

⁴ According to mTshams pa ngag dbang the term *lo ma* always means *nyung ma'i lo ma*.

Translation

If the back of the horse is inflamed [and] the back is swollen like a feeding trough, one prepares an ointment of *tsha chu*, *sa khams pa*, *chu rtsa*, *chu thag* [and] *dug mo* [*nyung*]. Between the ribs one burns [in form of] a dot. One gives medicaments as internal protection. One gives a potion [prepared from] *rtsod 'dud*, *tshos shing*, *'bri mgo*, *zhu khan* [and] *a ru ra*. This helps.

Commentary

According to Prof. von den Driesch (personal communication), the inflammation of the back described is most probably a wound caused by loading the horse too heavily.

The term *me thig* is not listed in the dictionaries. This treatment is very similar to moxibustion (*me btsa'*) but the burning points are smaller and not as deep. The therapy is based on the idea that the disturbed flow of blood in the meridians can be countered through stimulation. For the moxibustion a cone prepared from plants is burnt down on the skin. Nowadays cauterisation (*me tshugs*) is still frequently applied in Mustang district and used as a general prophylactic. Instead of the cone a heated sharp kind of needle is used. The burning points are behind the ears, in the region of the temples and on the inside of the upper lip. Both therapies are of Chinese origin.

5. rta yi bdrug zos na / kha sbu ong / chu dang lce skrang / 'khun mig mi gsal / sman bong nga dmar po / ldum bu re ral / a ru ra / rnam par myu gu shing rams dang bcas pa zhibs tu brtags / chu dang sbyar ba bstong / mthong kha dang / snying khar chu (sgyag) / de' i steng la ram dang / a ru ra'i thang btang / rtse' u ltar / de nas rtsa (thams cad) rims bzhin (gtar ro) /

Translation

If the horse has eaten poison, foam comes out of its mouth. The lips and the tongue are swollen. It groans. Its eyes are not clear. One pulverizes as medication *bong nga dmar po*, *ldum bu re ral*, *a ru ra*, *myu gu shing* and *rams*, mixes this with water and gives it [to the horse]. The chest and the region of

the heart are sprinkled with water. Thereafter one gives a potion [prepared from] *ram* [and] *a ru ra*. One bleeds the jugular vein. Then all the veins are bled successively.

Commentary

Sprinkling with water activates the circulation of blood and is one of the oldest forms of therapy, already described in the papyrus of Kahun in Egypt, a document about veterinary medicine dating from the 19th century B.C. (Driesch 1989:133).

Summary

The different therapies described can be summarized as follows:

1. **Pharmacological therapy**
 - 1.1. Internal administration
 - 1.2. External administration
 - 1.2.1. Fumigation
 - 1.2.2. Ointment
 - 1.2.3. Compress
2. **Bloodletting**
3. **Moxibustion and cauterisation**
4. **Minor Surgery**
5. **Further Therapies**
 - 5.1. Circling with fire
 - 5.2. Sprinkling with water
 - 5.3. Rituals or magical performances

The methods of treatment show clearly that Tibetan veterinary medicine is not only influenced by Indian but by Chinese medicine too. Except *lug mgo*, which seems to be a typical Tibetan form of treatment, similar or the same procedures are found throughout the Orient and the Occident and are not unique to the Tibetan medical system.

List of remedies

Tibetan name	Latin/scientific name	English name
<i>gu gul</i>	<i>Balsamodendron mukul</i>	frankincense
<i>rgya tshwa</i>		Sal ammoniac
<i>lga skya (sga skya)</i>	<i>Kaempferia galanga</i>	galangale
<i>lcam pa'i 'bru (lcam pa)</i>	<i>Malva verticillata / silvestris or Althaea rosea / officinalis</i>	marsh mallow
<i>chu dag (shu dag)</i>	<i>Acorus gramineus / calamus</i>	sweetflag
<i>chu rtsa</i>	<i>Rheum emodi</i>	Himalayan rhubarb
<i>mthar nu (thar nu)</i>	<i>Euphorbia wallichiana / kansuensis</i>	Chinese spurge
<i>dug mo (dug mo nyung)</i>	<i>Holarrhena antidysenterica</i>	kurchee
<i>ldum bu re ral</i>	<i>Drynaria propinqua, D. quercifolia d.v. (acc. to Meyer 1981)</i>	
<i>spru ma (dkar po)</i>	<i>Heracleum wallichii / candidans / millefolium</i>	white cow parsnip
<i>spru nag</i>	<i>Heracleum dissectum / Aralia atropurpurea (Franch) / Angelica sp.</i>	black hogweed
<i>bong nga dmar po</i>	<i>Delphinium densiflorum</i>	red wolfsbane / red aconite
<i>'bri mgo ('bri rmog)</i>	<i>Onosma echoides</i>	hairy onosma
<i>myu gu shing (smyug (ma) cu gang)</i>	<i>Bambusa arundinacea (Gamble)</i>	bamboo pith
<i>rtsod (btsod)</i>	<i>Rubia cordifolia</i>	Indian madder
<i>(gtsod)</i>	<i>Pantholops hodgsoni</i>	Hodgon's antelope

<i>tshos shing</i>	<i>Butea monosperma</i> (acc. to Dash 1985)	flame of the forest
<i>zhu khan (zhu mkhan mchog)</i>	<i>Symplocos crataegoides / racemos</i> (Roxb.)	lohd tree / sweetleaf
<i>zhu mkhan dman pa</i>	<i>Eriobotrya japonica</i> Roxb.	lohd tree / Japanese medlar
<i>ram(s) (ram pa)</i>	<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i>	indigo
<i>re lcags (re lcag pa)</i>	<i>Stellera chamaejasme</i>	chickweed
<i>sa khams (sa kham)</i>		brown earth (acc. to mTshams pa ngag dbang)
<i>a ru ra</i>	<i>Terminalia chebula</i>	chelubic myrobalan

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THE TIBETAN MEDICAL TRADITION, AND TIBETAN APPROACHES TO HEALING IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Abstract

The Tibetan medical tradition derived primarily from Indian Āyurveda but integrated other elements within an overall Buddhist philosophical framework. While using a theory of natural causation, medical doctors were also trained in meditative healing techniques. Since the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tibetans have attempted to reconstruct their cultural heritage — including the medical tradition — in exile. The institutional structure of Tibetan Medicine in India is modern and secular yet Buddhism remains important, having been central in articulating Tibetan identity and in internationalizing Tibetan culture.

The purpose of this paper is to outline the main approaches to illness and healing in pre-modern Tibet, with particular reference to the Tibetan medical system, and to comment on the modifications — and also continuities — which characterise Tibetan approaches to healing in the contemporary world, especially in exile.

The first part of the paper considers the place of Buddhism in the theory of Tibetan medicine, summarises the essential features of the Tibetan medical system, and discusses its practice in pre-modern Tibet. The second part looks at the effects of the Chinese occupation on the medical system in Tibet and at

the changes brought about by the circumstances of the exodus of refugees and their attempts to reconstruct their cultural — and in this case medical — heritage in exile. The radical disruption of the refugees' social and economic life and the entirely new circumstances of life in India have meant that approaches to health and illness have greatly changed, and that biomedicine now has a central place in Tibetan refugee health care. At the same time, some aspects of the traditional Tibetan systems of healing are not only being preserved, but developed and taught beyond the Tibetan community. The Tibetan system of medicine is used in a way which is complementary to biomedicine, and its representatives have been involved in dialogue and cooperation with both western medical scientists and practitioners of various alternative medical systems. The Tibetan Buddhist meditative traditions of healing have also generated interest in the west, where they are simplified and taught to broad non-Buddhist audiences. Buddhism has also been important in the expression of Tibetan identity in India, and despite the modernization and secularization of the Tibetan medical system, its connections with Buddhist thinking and practice are unlikely to be severed.

Part I

I.1 Tibetan Medicine: its Relationship with Buddhism

Tibetan medicine in pre-modern Tibet was a complex scholarly tradition with semi-professional practitioners.¹ To a large extent, it can be seen as a coherent and rational system, although it has many strands of different origins, with rather different philosophical assumptions. Essentially, it derives from the Indian Āyurvedic system of the period when Buddhism was strong in northern India and had most impact on the medical tradition. Some elements were further developed in Tibet and Chinese medicine also had considerable influence, while at the outset, when the tradition was being introduced through royal patronage from India in around the seventh and eighth centuries AD, some ideas were also borrowed from Central Asia and other sources.

Buddhist thinking provides Tibetan medicine with a broad framework which encompasses the diverse elements of the system. Dr. Trogawa

¹ I use the word "semi-professional" here since Tibetan medics were not fully "professional" in the modern Western sense: see Section I.3.

Rinpoche, a Tibetan lama and doctor, presenting a paper to a symposium on classical Tibetan medicine organised by the Wellcome Institute in London (Trogawa 1986), characterised Tibetan medicine as having practices of disparate origins, but a "View" rooted in Buddhism. Now, since most of the main features of the system do not derive from Buddhism and are elsewhere associated with philosophical assumptions very different from those of Buddhism, it is possible to conceive that the system could operate without this Buddhist "View". Indeed, the Chinese in Tibet attempted to preserve Tibetan medicine while eliminating its Buddhist and other religious components. As I understand it, they have only had very limited success in doing so, and although Fernand Meyer writes that Tibetan medicine in exile is becoming more secular (Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992: 2), it would seem that while the training and practice may be less monastic, may involve less recourse to Buddhist authority and may be more experimental and "scientific", in important ways, the Buddhist basis still underlies the system. This argument will be developed later.

My purpose here is to illustrate the main ways in which Buddhist assumptions are used theoretically to underpin the whole medical system. In Tibetan Buddhism, the mind is said to be the "King", generating physical, psychological and emotional habit patterns which create the conditions leading to future happiness and unhappiness, and which are the driving force of the whole of phenomenal existence. The sorry state of affairs of worldly existence is said to be marked by suffering, impermanence and the lack of any real or lasting individual identity. Its root cause is the fundamental state of Ignorance, which gives rise to the "three poisons" — attachment or desire, aversion or hatred, and indifference or delusion. This simple set of three qualities are sometimes elaborated into a group of five, or other longer lists of emotional afflictions (Sanskrit. *kleśa*), but the threefold classification is always at the basis of more complex formulations. Now, in Tibetan medicine, the "poisons" are related to the humoral theory which is at the core of the entire system, such that the "poisons" are said to be the "remote" or ultimate primary causes generating imbalances in the three humours, and thus, ill-health. In the *Blue Beryl*, a seventeenth century commentary by Sangye Gyamtso, the Fifth Dalai Lama's Regent, on the most important medical text of the tradition, the *Four Tantras (rGyud-bzhi)*, several discussions of illness causation make use of the distinction between primary and secondary causes. Such a distinction is used in Buddhist texts, where usually, primary causes (*rgyu*) refer to the basic or inherent causes of past karma, which are compared to the seeds of a plant, with the capacity to produce a particular species of

plant. Secondary causes (*rkyen*), on the other hand, are the conditions which allow the ripening of past karma, like the soil, sunshine, rainfall and so on, which nurture or impede the growth of plants. In the context of this text on Tibetan medicine, the primary causes of illness are divided into the "remote" primary causes, which are the three poisons, springing from Ignorance, and the "proximate" primary causes, which are the classic three humours of the Āyurvedic system, when they are in an unbalanced state. Numerous secondary causes are given — usually factors such as climatic conditions, inappropriate diet or conduct, or the agency of harmful demonic forces, which activate or aggravate the primary causes. Since primary causes cannot produce illness without the supporting secondary causes, illness can be avoided or treated by eliminating such secondary causes, as well as or instead of attending to the primary level of causation. In dealing with the primary causes, the text directly relates the three poisons to the three humours (Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:89,95), as well as to other factors involved in the production of specific diseases. Desire and envy are said to cause diseases of serum and wind and those triggered by female demonic forces. Hatred and pride result in diseases of blood and bile and the onset of male demonic forces, while delusion is responsible for diseases of phlegm and those associated with neuter demonic forces. Complex disorders caused by unbalanced humoral combinations are connected with all three poisons.

In this way, the theoretical foundations of the Tibetan medical system are integrated with Buddhist assumptions about causation, despite the fact that the humoral theory is essentially secular and emphasises the physical natural basis of disease. In fact, in Chinese and Japanese medicine, it seems that the notion of psychological causes for physiological conditions is not accepted and even mental illnesses are attributed to physical disorders (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984:84-86;175). By giving a central role to the emotional poisons in its explanation for disease, Tibetan medicine represents an almost opposite approach, although it is quite unlike the kind of simplistic psychological explanations of illness which are a feature of some trends within the alternative medicine movement in the contemporary West.² On the contrary, the emotional poisons which are thought to be responsible for any particular illness episode are likely to relate to conditions stemming from lifetimes in the distant past rather than psychological tendencies in the

² An example of such an approach can be found in Louise Hay, 1988, "Heal your Body: the mental causes for physical illness and the metaphysical way to overcome them" (Eden Grove Editions).

present. In practice, especially in approaches to healing in the scholarly medical tradition, the emphasis is very much more on dealing with the proximate rather than the remote causes, and also on treating the secondary causes. This is not, however, the case in the Buddhist meditation practices, such as on the Medicine Buddha, which are concerned with mental purification of physical and emotional disorders. Such meditative practices were included in a doctor's training and complemented the theoretical training and practice of medicine.

The entire medical tradition was also conceived of as the teaching of the Buddha, in the form of Bhaijyaguru. The disparate elements within the system did not constitute any problem for this perspective, since any apparent contradictions could be accommodated through the classic Mahāyāna doctrine of skill-in-means, that varieties of teachings and in this case, methods of healing, are appropriate for different people in different circumstances. The *Blue Beryl* is introduced with a description of the Medicine Buddha's maala and the contents of the entire corpus of the *Four Tantras* are explained as a series of questions and answers between emanations of the Medicine Buddha, who manifest for this purpose and who dissolve back into the Medicine Buddha after the teaching is completed. The notion that the tradition was the Buddha's word and thus infallible, was clearly of importance in pre-modern Tibet; indeed, Tucci was informed by the president of Mentsikhang (sMan-rtsi-khang) medical college, who had travelled in India and had some knowledge of biomedicine, that it was precisely this fact which made Tibetan medicine superior to western medicine. He stated that western medicine is incomplete, being based purely on human understanding, while the Tibetan medical system has the advantage of being revealed by the Buddha as the Great Physician (Bhaijyaguru) (Tucci 1967). I shall argue that this kind of thinking is at least toned down if not discarded in the contemporary world, although there are still important ways in which the perspective that the tradition is revelation and inspired by Buddhist wisdom persists and is likely to continue to do so.

I.2 Tibetan Medicine: its Principal Features

Much has been written on Tibetan medicine; here, I would like to summarise its basic approach. I have consulted a number of recent books on Tibetan medicine, but much of my brief presentation is based upon the already mentioned seventeenth century *Blue Beryl* by Sangye Gyamtso, which

Yuri Parfionovitch, Gyurme Dorje and Fernand Meyer have summarised in English, and published together with the series of paintings which were made to illustrate the work. This text has the advantage of being a product of pre-modern Tibet rather than a modern interpretation for a western audience, but the disadvantage that some features of the tradition may have died out by the twentieth century, before the modern era. Certainly Fernand Meyer argues that some of the complex procedures are no longer followed by Tibetan doctors (Meyer in Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:12). However, it would seem that the basic elements of the tradition were not radically altered, and reference to them can be found in modern works, such as Dr. Yeshe Donden's *Health through Balance*.

Essentially, Tibetan medicine is based on Indian physiological theories, according to which the five fundamental elements — earth, water, fire, air and space — exist in various combinations as different phenomena. The particular combinations define the qualities of any substance, such as hot or cold, heavy or light. A substance with one quality will stimulate similar substances, while inhibiting substances with the opposite quality. The three humours, wind, bile and phlegm, themselves made up of specific combinations of the fundamental elements, circulate through networks of channels in the human body, maintaining health while they are in a balanced state. When this equilibrium is lost, medical disorders result. The scholarly tradition includes detailed information on anatomy and physiological processes, mostly deriving from Indian medical texts and tantric theory, although modifications based on research were not unknown. For example, the paintings illustrating the seventeenth century *Blue Beryl* treatise depict drawings faithful to the tradition — such as an upward pointing heart like a lotus — side by side with drawings based on the observation of dissected corpses — the heart "as observed" (Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:6-9; 114 (Plate 49). The resulting discrepancies are partially glossed over by the author, Sangye Gyamtso, as differences between healthy living and dead bodies or bodies which have sustained injuries. Nonetheless, it is clear that although such an explanation is not entirely adequate, the discrepancies are explicitly acknowledged, as are differences in the identification and use of herbal medicines in the two main schools of thought which had emerged within the medical traditions of Tibet by the seventeenth century.

A variety of diagnostic techniques were used. Complex pulse examinations, which may originally have owed much to ancient Chinese medicine, became one of the main hallmarks of Tibetan medicine. Visual

inspection of the tongue, other parts of the body and excretions from the body, were also important components of diagnosis, and could be supplemented by detailed questioning of the patient and/or his immediate care-providers as to the development and experience of the complaint. Essentially, the diagnostic procedure was concerned with physical examination of the patient and the natural causes producing the illness, in terms of the humoral balance and circumstances such as diet and climate, and it is presented as a rational empirical process. The *Blue Beryl* openly discusses ways in which a doctor can maximise his impact by impressing the patient and his family using "investigation through subterfuge"; he can, for example, closely question the messenger while en route to the house, and immediately announce the diagnosis on arrival. When uncertain in spite of the usual tests, he can prevaricate until he has had longer to observe the patient, or speak evasively about diet or the harmful influence of demons (in much the same way as a modern biomedical doctor in the U.K. may talk vaguely of "bugs" or viruses when an exact diagnosis is uncertain). Thus, the emphasis is on using the available evidence to rationally work out the natural causes of the disease, while not neglecting to reassure the patient and his family of the doctor's competence, even in uncertain cases. Some of the diagnostic techniques, however, are of a rather different nature: diagnosis through dreams and through omens occurring in the environment, owe more to analogical thought and non-falsifiable intuitions than to deductive reasoning. Methods of urinalysis included a whole set of divinatory procedures to be followed in cases of suspected demonic influence, using for instance, mantic grids to be placed over urine samples to ascertain the class of negative forces involved in the illness.

Similarly, there is a broad spectrum of treatments, principally dependent on the type of illness and its severity. Mild disorders might be treated through diet and modifications of behaviour, while more serious or advanced conditions would require medications. The scholarly tradition had a vast range of medicines deriving from plant, animal and mineral sources. Much of the painstaking research involved in the production of the paintings to illustrate the *Blue Beryl* was concerned with the careful identification of medicinal plants, through consulting experts from the areas where various plants grew, and assessing different scholarly opinions (Meyer in Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:7). While such medicines were classified according to their tastes and potencies, and their effectiveness was basically seen in terms of the humoral theory, such that the disturbed humour or humours were counteracted by opposing qualities, not all the varieties of medications would

seem to fit well in a system which is preeminently based on a theory of natural causation. The *Blue Beryl* lists numerous substances, the potency of which is presumably primarily symbolic. For instance, earth from a mouse hole facing east can be used for cold wind disorders, while a widow's underpants may protect against epilepsy and stroke and help in the healing of wounds (Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:75). In other words, the tradition included a medley of medications based on metaphorical associations. The preparation of medicines also included elements of ritual and symbolic importance: medicines were ritually consecrated using meditation and mantra recitation, and doctors could also prepare protective pills and charms with mantras inscribed upon them, to guard against demonic forces causing infectious diseases. A doctor might even perform curative rites for diseases particularly associated with demonic involvement, such as mental illness, epilepsy, stroke, plagues and leprosy.

In cases where medication was inappropriate or insufficient to deal with the disease concerned, there was a range of techniques of external therapy — compresses, massage, blood-letting, moxibustion and minor surgery.

A general classification of illnesses accounted for differences in treatment outcomes (Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:53, 165, 167). "Ostensible" diseases are self-limiting and will abate without treatment, although treatment may speed recovery. "Imaginary" diseases caused by demonic or negative forces (*gdon*) must be dealt with by ritual means. Illnesses entirely dependent on past karma may be immune to treatment and the sufferer may die despite the use of appropriate remedies, while "absolute" diseases which may threaten the life-force if untreated, will respond to the correct medical treatment. The Tibetan words which Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer translate as "imaginary" (*kun-brtags*), "dependent" (*gzhan-dbang*) and "absolute" (*yongs-grub*) are the same terms as those used in the Yogācāra Three Natures (*trisvabhāva*) system, where the "imaginary" or "conceptually constructed" is similarly contrasted with the "dependent" and the "absolute" or "perfected" levels of apparent reality. The "imaginary" or "constructed" level connotes the ordinary experience of events — how things appear to be at a superficial level — while the "dependent" level indicates the underlying causal process of karma, and the "absolute" level indicates the real nature of appearances. The use of these terms here may not necessarily imply Yogācāra philosophical assumptions, since the Yogācāra analysis is concerned with different levels of viewing the same phenomena rather than representing a classification of different phenomena. But the connotations of this medical classification are

clearly derived from an explicit analogy with the concepts of the Three Natures. Thus, "imaginary" illnesses are not to be equated with disorders which may be termed "psychosomatic" in the West: the word rather implies that the illness is relatively superficial, being associated with the immediate precipitating conditions of demonic influences and not with more deeply seated karmic causes or definite physiological conditions which will be responsive to the standard medical treatments. The use of this classification both justifies very different approaches to healing within the one system, and can explain failures or, for that matter, surprising successes on the part of incompetent healers.

To sum up, the Tibetan medical tradition integrates different assumptions about illness and its causes into an overall framework based on Buddhist philosophy. Elements which could be seen as contradictory — such as the humoral theory versus the notion of demonic causation in illness — were not so much synthesized as compartmentalized: each was considered appropriate for different conditions and circumstances.

1.3 The Practice of Tibetan Medicine and Other Methods of Healing in Tibet

The majority of doctors in pre-modern Tibet received their training as apprentices to other doctors. There were, however, several medical colleges where significant numbers studied medicine. The monastic medical college of lCags-po-ri in Lhasa was founded through the patronage of the Fifth Dalai Lama's Regent, Sangye Gyamtso, in the late seventeenth century, and in the eighteenth century, two similar colleges were set up at monasteries in East Tibet. However, the emphasis at lCags-po-ri seems to have been primarily on academic scholarship rather than the training of doctors, and moreover, it apparently declined during the late nineteenth century. Thus, in the early twentieth century, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama founded a second medical college in Lhasa - sMan-rtsi-khang — which recruited from the laity as well as from monasteries, and which was more oriented to the practical application of medical knowledge. Monasteries and government institutions in Central Tibet had to supply a quota of boys who would attend the college. Most would return to their own areas to practise medicine after they had graduated, although some of the monk graduates would remain to conduct research or practise at the college (Donden 1986:22). Prospective students were chosen on academic merit — principally on their abilities in memorisation, since the medical training involved memorising the major medical treatises and

commentarial works. The doctor Yeshe Donden, who was recruited under this system, recalls that few boys were enthusiastic about the prospect of medical training because the years of intensive training would entail a massive amount of memorisation (Avedon 1985). The training would last for at least eleven years, and at various stages, there were oral examinations. Yeshe Donden describes how, in order to enter the advanced course of study, he had to recite sections of the Four Tantras both in and out of sequence over a period of four days, in front of the entire college faculty and student body. At a later stage, he successfully passed an examination in which students had to correctly identify and comment on the uses of large numbers of medicinal plants. While the better students received public acclaim, the least successful were publicly ridiculed. This form of assessment could be said to be in practice testing levels of confidence — doubtless useful in a doctor's career — as well as purely medical knowledge. After most of his academic studies were completed, Yeshe Donden underwent a further period of three years practical training as an assistant to a practising physician. Advanced students also received some practical experience by helping in the clinic which was held daily at the college for any residents of Lhasa who wished to attend. Those too ill to come might be visited by doctors from the college in their homes.

One important component of the medical training was the strict ethical code, the main elements of which seem to have derived from India, from classical Āyurveda and Mahāyāna Buddhism. This code is one indication of "professionalism" in the occupation. However, other features of professionalisation — recognised examinations and qualifications, an elite status for physicians, and practitioner's organisations with the power to expel incompetent or irresponsible members — were not fully developed in Tibet. The scholarly tradition was undoubtedly sophisticated and graduates from sMan-rtsi-khang enjoyed a good reputation. In exile, Yeshe Donden came to the Dalai Lama's notice precisely since he was a sMan-rtsi-khang trained doctor, and having been summoned to Dharamsala, he subsequently became the Dalai Lama's personal physician. Nonetheless, there were no central professional bodies to vet doctors and no requirements to attend a college or to obtain professional credentials in order to set up practice as a doctor. Indeed, Yeshe Donden himself soon gathered a group of relatives who studied with him in his own practice in the years after he had qualified. There was a strong tradition of family lineages of doctors. In the context of the transmission of knowledge and skill along such hereditary lines, it seems that the medical occupation was open to women. Dr. Lobsang Dolma Khangkhar attended her family's medical school, studying for ten years with a monk tutor and receiving

her practical training mainly from her father. In exile, both her daughters have become doctors, the eldest taking over as the head of Dr. Dolma's clinic in Dharamsala after her mother's death (Coleman 1993:272).

The implication of the lack of any effective centralised control over the profession was that there was considerable variation between the levels of scholarship, training and competence of physicians in different areas. Nonetheless, the presence of such variation and local autonomy in the organisation of the medical profession can give a rather misleading impression of the practice of Tibetan medicine, at least in the twentieth century, when the central colleges undoubtedly had a major impact even in outlying districts. For example, Michel Peissel who worked in Mustang, close to the Tibetan border in Nepal, reported in the 1960s that there were two Tibetan doctors in Lo Mantang, both of whom had studied in Lhasa (Peissel 1979). Equally, in Ladakh, there were doctors who trained in Lhasa (John Crook, personal communication). The overwhelming impression given by the literature on pre-modern Tibet is not so much that of innumerable doctors of doubtful competence as a paucity of any kind of physicians at all in many parts. Notwithstanding the fact that most of the accounts are by westerners or westernized Tibetans who were probably biased in favour of biomedicine for the treatment of disease, it would seem frequently to have been the case that religious rituals were the only available recourse in the event of illness, and the available doctors often seemed to have travelled, especially to areas where there were epidemics. The limitations to the available medical care are made clear in Jamyang Sakya's account of the principality of Sakya, where she had married the young lama heir to the religious hierarch who headed the religious and political administration (Sakya 1990). The palace had a store of medicines which Jamyang Sakya helped to dispense during a measles epidemic. However, she makes the point that there were only three doctors for the entire area and many children died through inadequate medical attention (Sakya and Emery 1990:125). Moreover, although she makes some reference to doctors at various stages of her narrative, she also mentions episodes of illness or of heightened health risk when no medical attention appears to have been sought. Despite her high position as a Sakya family wife, she delivered her children with only her mother or other experienced female members of the family present. Her first child sickened and died at the age of three months: Jamyang Sakya recalls how an astrologer was consulted and monks recited prayers, but she makes no mention of any doctors involved.

Thus, Tibetan medical doctors were far from having a monopoly on the treatment of ill-health in pre-modern Tibet. There were simple self-help remedies, which included expertise in dealing with sprains and broken bones in livestock as well as humans, and folk religious practices, including rituals for recalling a lost or stolen life force or "soul" (*bla*), or for suppressing or expelling demonic influences. Some of these rituals had parallels in the more complex and sophisticated Buddhist monastic rituals, which would be performed for the wider community benefit in times of trouble. Monks might also be consulted for divinations using Buddhist texts, which would indicate the degree of the illness's severity and suggest appropriate religious and meritorious activities to perform as a way of overcoming the disorder. Long pilgrimages, for instance, were often performed for health purposes, especially for remedying female infertility. Helena Norberg-Hodge reports this practice in Zangskar (Norberg-Hodge and Russell 1994: 524), while an Eastern Tibetan man, Aten, describes in his memoirs how he had made such a pilgrimage with his wife, in the hope that she would conceive as a result (Norbu 1979:62-63). Lamas might also be requested to perform dream practice to diagnose the cause of an illness (Chopel 1983). Mediums and oracles who would divine the nature of an illness and the treatment necessary while possessed by deities or spirits, also existed. In Ladakh, the tradition of oracles still thrives, and people continue to consult them as well as having recourse to traditional doctors and biomedicine.

Even where medical treatment was sought, cures might be rather attributed to religious rituals performed simultaneously. An ordinary doctor would be unlikely to inspire as much confidence as a high lama, who might recite texts or provide protection cords or amulets (Harrer 1953:178).³ Certainly, for serious complaints, whether or not doctors were involved, lamas would be likely to be requested to perform religious rituals such as the meditation practices of the female deity Tārā or the Medicine Buddha, or in cases where possession by negative demonic forces was suspected, exorcism rituals might be held. Michel Peissel discusses how people in Mustang in the 1960s would usually call a doctor at first, but later, if the doctor believed demonic influence to be responsible for the illness, monks would be requested to perform the appropriate rituals (Peissel 1979:217-220).

³ Harrer makes this point very forcibly, arguing that faith-healing, and the consumption of substances which came from a lama, were considered more certain cures than the medicines of a monk physician, while the best possible remedy would be an object which had belonged to the Dalai Lama.

Openness to alternative therapies is also indicated by the fact that where biomedicine was made available, many took advantage of it. Snellgrove and Richardson write that some people travelled long distances to attend the British hospital established in the twentieth century, while aristocratic families invited British, Indian and Sikkimese biomedical doctors into their homes (Snellgrove and Richardson 1980:261). Rinchen Dolma Taring, a member of an élite Lhasa family, had frequently consulted Tibetan doctors and gives a favourable account of the Tibetan medical profession, especially emphasising the selflessness of doctors in considering the patient's interests first, and treating the poor without any remuneration (Taring 1970:181). However, she criticises Tibetan surgical techniques and discusses the inadequacies of Tibetan medicine for problems relating to childbirth, of which she had first hand experience (Taring 1970:77). When she experienced similar problems with her second delivery, a doctor from the British Agency was called, who later treated her child as well (Taring 1970:119). Jamyang Sakya also experienced doubts about Tibetan medicine while still in Tibet, when it failed to cure her son of a serious illness. This occurred after the Chinese occupation, and she was offered biomedical treatment instead. However, the Chinese doctor made treatment conditional on her rejection of the Tibetan family doctor. She was reluctant to take this step, but the Tibetan doctor himself was convinced of his inability to deal with the illness and begged her to reject him. Such an explicit opposition being forged between "traditional" Tibetan medicine and "modern" biomedicine was to become a feature of the experience of Tibetans under China, particularly in the following two decades and the confidence of Tibetans in their own medical tradition was also undermined in the early years of exile. However, the complementary use of Tibetan and biomedicine, which now characterises the situation in India, also had precedents in Tibet. Dr. Yeshe Donden mentions that while he was completing his practical training in Lhasa, he spent two hours a day at the British Legation, acquainting himself with western medicine; once he began practising, he administered penicillin injections where appropriate, as well as the usual Tibetan remedies (Avedon 1985:188,190).

Part II

II.1 The Chinese Occupation

Changes in the approach of Tibetans to illness in the modern era can be related to the upheavals engendered by the Chinese invasion and subsequent

exile of about 110,000 Tibetans. Unlike some accounts of third world peoples being brought into contact with biomedicine, here, one is not dealing simply with general modernizing forces or the integration into a wider economic system involving social and economic subordination to outsiders or new elites. In Tibet, not only was the entire political, social and economic structure dismantled by the Chinese, but all aspects of Tibetan culture were attacked, especially during the Cultural Revolution, although a long process of undermining Tibetan identity and culture had begun long before the Cultural Revolution, and the process continues today. The recently publicised destruction of Tibetan style housing and architecture in Lhasa is one example. Religious practice was under threat from the start. Monasteries, which were the focus of political and religious life, were attacked in the east during the 1950s and throughout Tibet after 1959. The Cultural Revolution brought a further ban on any private religious expression, so that by the late 1960s, there was virtually no possibility of openly using religious healing rituals of any kind. The Tibetan medical tradition fared little better until the late 1970s. The lCags-po-ri medical college was entirely destroyed by the Chinese forces during the Tibetan uprising of 1959. sMan-rtsi-khang survived but the scholarly medical tradition was vigorously attacked in the Cultural Revolution. One of the Dalai Lama's personal doctors, Dr. Tenzin Choedak, who was arrested in 1959, spent well over a decade in prisons and labour camps before any interest whatsoever was shown in his medical expertise. In the mid-1970s, he was allowed to start giving medical consultations in prison after having successfully treated a Chinese prison doctor whose condition had not responded to either biomedicine or Chinese medicine. Even then, he was given far inferior facilities to those of the biomedical doctors, he had difficulty in procuring sufficient medicines on his small budget, and there were continual attempts to discredit him and Tibetan medicine in general (Avedon 1985:382). Matters improved in 1979, when he was made head of a new research project on Tibetan medicine, although his status as a "class-enemy" was not publicly removed until he was freed to go to India in 1980 as a concession to the Dalai Lama. Since then, some revival of the medical tradition in Tibet has been allowed. For example, sMan-rtsi-khang has been enlarged and a 150 bed hospital was opened in 1985 (F. Meyer in Parfionovitch, Dorje and Meyer 1992:2). However, this revival has taken place in the context of modernizations which undermine the whole ethos of the tradition. For example, Tom Dummer quotes a Chinese source extolling the modern factory production of Tibetan medicinal drugs, and contrasts this with the situation in exile, where some of the medicines are consecrated with religious ceremonies (Dummer 1988:114). A recent report by an American doctor visiting the

Tibetan traditional medicine college in Lhasa (Stillman 1994) presents a picture of inadequate funding, dilution of the tradition with Chinese medical techniques and philosophy (including classes in Chinese history and political thought, taught in Chinese), significant modifications of the classical training and practice, and a strong emphasis on also learning about biomedicine, which is said to fill gaps in Tibetan medical knowledge. The Chinese Government effectively monopolizes control over all training in Tibetan medicine since more traditionally oriented private practitioners are no longer Government funded and are unable to compete financially with the Government-run institution, so that their numbers seem to be rapidly declining, at least in the Lhasa area.

II.2 Tibetans in Exile

II.2.1 The impact of Exile

For the Tibetans who escaped from Tibet in the period following the 1959 uprising, the early years of exile involved extreme physical and psychological upheaval. They were brought into contact with infectious diseases and parasites which had been practically unknown in the cold dry climate of Tibet. Large numbers died en route from Tibet or in the transit camps, and the survivors were forced to learn new notions about hygiene and health (Murphy n.d.:46).⁴ When the refugee settlements were established during the 1960s, they had a completely different political, social and economic organisation to that of pre-modern Tibet. The settlements were mostly located in south India, in radically different environmental conditions from any Tibetan area, so that an entirely new lifestyle, new agricultural methods and diet were imposed on the refugee population. Under such circumstances, biomedical notions about disease and its treatment penetrated the Tibetan community, and led to a greater acceptance of biomedical health-care than among some other peoples who have been spared such an abrupt and violent thrust into the modern age. For example, Robert Welsch writing of the Ningerum of Papua New Guinea, argues that while biomedical facilities have been accepted, they are entirely integrated into the traditional conceptual

⁴ Devla Murphy's account of her voluntary work in the nursery camps for refugee children in Dharamsala in the early 1960s gives an idea of the kind of adjustments the Tibetans had to make — for example, accepting the necessity of thoroughly washing children in the appropriate solution to combat scabies. In Tibet, bathing had been very infrequent.

scheme of illness and its cure, such that biomedicines are seen as an alternative to certain less convenient herbal medicines, for which they are simply substituted in the overall classificatory system (Welsch 1983). A much more radical change has taken place in the Tibetan case, where diseases such as tuberculosis, which decimated the exiles in the early years and is still a widespread problem, is usually referred to by the English term, pronounced in Tibetan as "ti-pi", rather than by one of the Tibetan terms under which it could be classified, such as "glo-nad" or "glo-gcong", and biomedicine is seen as essential for its treatment, even when it may be backed up by Tibetan medicine.

What I want to suggest is that while a radical change has taken place, so that biomedicine now has a central place in Tibetan refugee health care, and some aspects of traditional treatment have been altogether discarded, other elements of the traditional approach have been retained and perhaps paradoxically, become even more important in the exile context. Since I have not conducted research specifically on healing, I am not in a position to give an in depth analysis; here, I am rather outlining what would appear to be the broad general trends.

II.2.2 "Folk Cures"⁵

Essentially, much of the "folk" level of response to illness has been abandoned. Two incidents in Stan Mumford's study of Tibetans and Gurungs in Nepal close to the Tibetan border, might have had parallels in pre-modern Tibet. In the first, a Tibetan woman performs a simple "soul-recalling" ritual for a sick child whose illness is attributed to one of the area gods (Mumford 1989:168). In the second, a young woman is diagnosed by a Nepalese government health assistant as suffering from rabies (Mumford 1989:196). This diagnosis is dismissed by everyone present; not only does the Gurung shaman attempt an exorcism of the evil spirits which are possessing the girl as a result of witchcraft, but the local lama agrees with the verdict of

⁵ I am using this term following Tucci (1980) and Samuel (1993), and here I am specifically using it to refer to aspects of Tibetan religion which are not exclusively Buddhist. A rigid dichotomy between "folk" and "Buddhist" practices is impossible in the Tibetan case, but some Tibetan religious notions and practices belong more to a "folk" heritage than to Buddhism, and it is these I am referring to here.

witchcraft. He only differs in his response, which is to accept the inevitability of her death after his own exorcism has failed. With the exception of the Buddhist recitations for guiding the consciousness at the time of death which the lama then performs, and which would also be performed by Tibetan refugee lamas, it is difficult to imagine similar incidents among the exiles. Firstly, the refugees are much more orientated towards biomedical explanations of disease. I found in the early 1980s that they were, for example, knowledgeable about rabies, and anyone bitten by a suspected rabid dog would immediately go for the biomedical treatment. Secondly, individual or family rituals for exorcising troublesome spirits have declined in India. This is part of the wider phenomenon of the decline of the folk religion in exile. Folk rituals have become less important for a number of reasons. The Tibetan Government-in-exile has tended to discourage them, since it attempts to project an image of Tibetan exiles as civilised and intellectually sophisticated Buddhists, in the process of modernizing their institutions. Clearly, the Government-in-exile position is designed to elicit Indian and international sympathy and support, and it is partly a reaction to the Chinese attempt to paint Tibetans as backward and superstitious, but there is a considerable element of truth in the Government-in-exile portrayal of its people. Official discouragement has not been the only factor in the decline of the folk rituals. Rewalsar, where I did fieldwork in the early 1980s, was not an official Tibetan settlement and the Tibetans there had hardly any contact with the Dharamsala administration, but they did not perform such folk rituals. There would seem to be two other main reasons for the decline. The first is that many of the folk rites were specific to certain areas or communities, involving deities and spirits of the particular environment, so that they are inappropriate in exile (Epstein 1977). The second is that in the new context of relatively compact settlements with monasteries close at hand, the monastic rituals fulfil the local lay requirements. Krystyna Cech writes that people at the Dolanji Bonpo settlement reported that they no longer performed the end of year expelling rites in their own homes, because they were able to attend the elaborate monastic expelling rituals (Cech 1987:227).

I do not, however, wish to overstate the case. Although it is generally true that "folk" traditions are less central in exile, they are not entirely eclipsed everywhere. Per-Arne Berglie (1992), for example, reports that Tibetan spirit mediums continue to thrive in a refugee settlement in Pokhara, Nepal, now attracting Western and Nepalese as well as Tibetan clients.

II.2.3. Buddhist Healing Practices

Although folk healing rituals have declined, Buddhist practice continues to be important. It is less often the only resort in cases of illness, perhaps because alternatives are more readily available in India, so that it tends to be used in a complementary way, together with biomedicine, and/or Tibetan medicine. In the contemporary world, Buddhist practice has become the main way of articulating Tibetan ethnicity. It always had served as a unifying force throughout the Tibetan cultural world and lamas and monasteries had often acted as political mediators. The exodus of refugees also coincided with an upsurge of interest in Buddhism in the west, so that Tibetans can take pride in their religious heritage, not only as expressing the religious aspirations of their own people, who had their self-confidence undermined by the Chinese, but as a contribution to the world community. Some types of Buddhist healing practices are performed more or less exclusively in India and are not likely to be taught in the west. Exorcism and expelling rituals do not have a wide appeal among westerners, partly because western Buddhists tend to be more attracted to relatively simple meditation practices with little accompanying ritual, and they may also be sceptical about the existence of the various harmful forces to be expelled. It is also the case that most of these types of rituals are essentially community based healing rites. Expelling rituals are performed by monasteries during times when the community is felt to be threatened — on the eve of the New Year, when invasion or political upheaval is imminent, or during epidemics. They focus on gathering up *all* the accumulated harmful agents which are afflicting the community, redirecting and expelling them, sending them off to destroy the thoroughly negative forces of the three poisons. Such ritual activities would be less appropriate in the western context, where consolidated Buddhist communities are the exception. More significantly, they do not fit well with the usual western individualistic approach to illness. However, both Tibetan medicine (which I will return to) and rites such as the Medicine Buddha practice, which can be performed at both a community and individual level, are much closer to the western approach. The meditations on the Medicine Buddha can be performed in a group, or an individual may perform the practice for the benefit of other specific people, but the orientation of the practice is that of individual purification of personal negativities and illnesses and realisation of the pure healing powers of the Medicine Buddha. In assumptions about the causation of disease, Tibetan Buddhist thinking gives a place both to primary and secondary causes (see above, Section I.1). However, family and social disturbances are unlikely to be included in explanations for illness as secondary causes. Discussion of

the three poisons as primary causes for illness may include a social dimension: Dr Yeshi Donden includes the dishonesty of those in positions of power and throughout society, inappropriate behaviour on the part of religious practitioners, and deprecation of religious practice, as general indicators of the presence of the three poisons, responsible for increased types and numbers of malignant tumours in the world (Donden 1986:197). However, social factors — by which I specifically mean the patient's present social relationships and his/her social and economic position — are not emphasised either in meditation practices which focus on the individual emotional afflictions or in Tibetan medicine, which gives more attention to factors such as climate, diet and individual behaviour.⁶

It is interesting to compare the introduction to the West of the Tibetan meditative healing practices, which are increasingly being taught openly to audiences including non-Buddhists, with the process by which Indian yoga was westernized. In the ASA conference in Oxford in 1993, Sarah Strauss gave an interesting paper, showing how Indian yoga was taken to western countries, presented as a system of spiritual value which India could offer to the world community (Strauss 1993). In the process, it was transformed from a system practised by male ascetics with the purpose of release from mundane existence, to a secular lay system, with the goal of living life in the most positive, stress-free and harmonious way, which fits better with a modern western outlook. The modified system was then brought back to India and has become popular especially with the urban middle classes. In the case of Tibetan healing meditations, it is too early to say how far their internationalization will ultimately affect the practices as they are performed by Tibetans in India. But certain trends can be seen in the way in which they are taught in the West. Unlike the Indian teachers who transmitted yoga to

⁶ Nonetheless, although the theory of Tibetan medicine may largely ignore the social dimension, it does not follow that this is likely to be entirely absent in practice. Mark Nichter's work on a south Indian village, discussed by Charles Leslie (Leslie 1992: 202-3) shows how both an astrologer and an Āyurvedic practitioner could enable patients to be open about family problems and release them from the burden of seeing misfortune in terms of the social environment in which it had arisen. By talking respectively of planetary influences or humoral imbalances, the specialists could displace the patient's responsibility for the complaint and give advice which — apparently coincidentally — might necessitate appropriate social adjustments. Tibetan medical treatment could have similar implications.

the West, who had already adopted westernized values and lifestyles, the Tibetan meditation masters tend to be thoroughly committed to the traditional Tibetan Buddhist perspective, which they are anxious to preserve in the time of crisis for their people. Although stress may not initially be laid on the ultimate goal of the meditations in terms of Buddhist liberation, it remains implicit, and is gradually introduced to those who wish to become more deeply involved in the practices. The main modifications to the meditations is that they are often greatly simplified for western audiences, and sometimes the visual imagery is modified or even dispensed with. The emphasis is on the essential purposes — the symbolic functions of the religious imagery — rather than its complex outer form. Thus, for example, when a Tibetan doctor, Dr. Lobsang Rabgay, gave teaching on the Medicine Buddha in London in 1986, he gave students the option of either visualising the Medicine Buddha, or instead one's own image of an "ideal doctor", holding whatever preventative and curative medicines one may be using, in place of the myrobalan flower and the bowl of nectar held by the Medicine Buddha. Dr. Rabgay even suggested imagining in the ideal doctor's heart whatever words one may associate with healing qualities, rather than the mantra syllables which are in the Medicine Buddha's heart. He did not, however, suggest that the mantra could be altered for recitation purposes, and all the usual visualisations such as the healing light rays emanating from the Buddha's (or ideal doctor's) heart and purifying oneself, were retained, including the distinction between the general Mahāyāna way of performing the practice, which is open to all, and the Vajrayāna method of ultimately identifying with the Medicine Buddha, which, the doctor made clear, should only be performed by those who have received the necessary empowerment from a lama. Similarly, Sogyal Rinpoche, in his recent best-selling book, *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, presents many simple meditations which can be used for the purposes of healing or helping at the time of death. Most of these practices are techniques which simplify elaborate recitations and visualisations, such that they become accessible to anyone without any knowledge of Tibetan Buddhist symbolism. Sogyal Rinpoche's *Essential Phowa Practice*, for example, involves imagining any form embodying the beliefs with which one identifies - whether Christ, the Virgin Mary, a Buddha or simply a form of pure golden light for those who are not drawn to any particular spiritual figure. It has a very short supplication, a meditation on purification through light rays from the presence of light and the subsequent merging of oneself in a pure form of light into the form above. While Sogyal Rinpoche describes the meditation as, "the heart of the phowa practice" (Sogyal 1992:215), he is nonetheless very careful to distinguish it (in the next chapter), from the full traditional practice,

which he emphasises can only be practised after the appropriate transmission and under the guidance of a qualified master (Sogyal 1992:233). In other words, he is not substituting his new "heart" practice for the traditional practice, nor modifying the traditional practice as such, but rather, introducing a large number of people to the basic principles of Buddhist healing meditations. The minority who become enthusiastic enough to become committed Buddhists may take the necessary empowerments and perform the elaborate practice.

Thus, both Dr. Rabgay and Sogyal Rinpoche are simultaneously concerned with making some of the simple meditative techniques widely available to westerners and with preserving the original practices in the traditional way. Both objectives are viable, given the present level of interest in Buddhism and healing through meditation in the west. I am not able to comment on the extent to which the trend of emphasising simple meditative techniques has affected lay Tibetans in India, but it is certainly the case that the success of Tibetan lamas in attracting western students has boosted the Tibetans' confidence in their religious traditions.

II.2.4 Tibetan Medicine

Tibetan medicine has similarly been encouraged through western interest, especially in the last fifteen years. In the early years of exile, not only were traditional responses to ill-health undermined by the circumstances of exile and the inability of the Government-in-exile to set up any institutional support for Tibetan medicine, but Tibetan doctors came under attack from Indian biomedical doctors. It is worth pointing out that in the Indian context, while good biomedical facilities do exist, in many areas, local doctors are poorly or unqualified practitioners of biomedicine, reliant on pharmacists — and thus ultimately on the pharmaceutical companies — for information on drugs and their usage — (Taylor 1976:285ff). As Carl Taylor puts it, "indigenous practitioners of medicine" are widespread, but not "practitioners of indigenous medicine" (Taylor 1976:287). Tibetan medicine, of course, has much in common with Āyurvedic medicine, and nowadays, Tibetan medicines are administratively classified as "Āyurvedic" (Dummer 1988:121), but in the early period, Tibetan doctors attempting to practise medicine frequently had to contend with often poorly qualified biomedical doctors, who felt threatened by the Tibetan physicians. Dr. Yeshe Donden describes how when he set up a clinic at a refugee camp in Dalhousie, local doctors attempted to discredit him

and prevent him from practising (Avedon 1985:191). After he moved to Dharamsala, local doctors complained about him to the authorities (Avedon 1985:193) and eventually he was investigated by the Government Health Department. Ironically, after some Indian army officers had given evidence in support of Dr. Donden (p.194), claiming that he had cured complaints which had not responded to other forms of medication, a health minister arranged for funding for Dr. Donden to set up a Tibetan Medical Centre in Dharamsala, and institutional support for Tibetan medicine in India began. There are now good Tibetan medical facilities in Dharamsala, including a small hospital of fifteen beds, with branch clinics and dispensaries in Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal, and most importantly, the medical centre, renamed the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute, has seven year training courses for Tibetan medical students, and research programmes, and it also produces an English language journal, *The sMan-rTsis Journal*. In early 1992, Dr. Trogawa Rinpoche established the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute in Darjeeling, as the reconstruction of the lCags-po-ri medical college in Lhasa. Like the centre in Dharamsala, a seven-year training course has been instituted, along with a pharmacy, two clinics, research programmes and contacts with western universities and scientists. The specific intention is to preserve what their publicity material describes as Chagpori's "own unique combination of medicine and spirituality" (*Chagpori News*, February 1993:5). The Board of Governors is not dominated by monks, and the training is open to students without a monastic background, although a spiritual bond between teacher and student is said to be crucial for instruction, and it is clear that ritual transmissions, prayers and meditation practices are central aspects of the curriculum.

Such developments are mainly the result of the refugees' sense of urgency and dedication to preserve their cultural heritage; as with the religious reconstruction, some sympathetic support has come from the host country and the West. It is possible that Tibetan medicine is now actually more readily available in some of the settlements in India than it was in many areas in Tibet. This building up of Tibetan medical facilities is not seen by the refugees as an alternative to modern biomedicine. In Dharamsala, the Delek Hospital, which provides biomedical health care, was built with the help of the Indian Government Ministry of Health and international aid. The hospital project was initiated by and it is administered by the Tibetans. Such involvement with modern biomedicine is not seen as contradictory to simultaneous support for Tibetan medicine.

Since the 1970s, there has been increased awareness in the West of the way in which some aspects of biomedicine may be culturally relative and not necessarily applicable cross-culturally, and also awareness of the present limitations of biomedicine, especially in dealing with chronic disorders. In fact, recognising this, Dr. Yeshe Donden is explicit that it is with chronic disorders — and he specifically mentions hepatitis, some kinds of mental disorders, ulcers, paralysis, gallstones, kidney stones and arthritis — that Tibetan medicine is particularly effective (Donden 1986:20). In the modern world, "complementary" medicine of various kinds has received serious attention and increased popularity in the west. In the late 1970's the World Health Organisation developed a policy seeking to integrate certain kinds of indigenous medical practitioners into health care programmes (WHO 1978:49). These developments have been favourable to the Tibetan refugees, and have also helped to encourage the preservation and development of Tibetan medicine in the wider Tibetan cultural world, such as in Bhutan and Ladakh. In Ladakh, for example, the Save the Children Fund has a project which involves training local "amchis" (doctors) in the rudiments of biomedicine as a complement to their expertise in Tibetan medicine. Along with such official recognition of the value of their skills, the Ladakhi amchis have made attempts to become more "professional", collaborating in a more formal way. Their traditional training continues to be mainly locally based, with most amchis coming from hereditary lines of doctors, but just as there was contact with the Lhasa medical schools, some prospective doctors travel to the settlements to train with qualified refugee doctors (Maria Phylactou: personal communication).

The organisation of Tibetan medicine in exile is inevitably much more "modernized" and secular than in Tibet, with students at the Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute and the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute recruited from the modern Tibetan refugee schools rather than from monasteries, as was primarily the case in pre-modern Tibet. Moreover, in order to justify and encourage western scientific interest in the cross-cultural validity of Tibetan methods of diagnosis and treatment, any previous emphasis on the infallibility of the medical texts as the Buddha's words has been toned down.⁷ There have been some reinterpretations of Tibetan medical

⁷ It is not altogether absent. In response to a question on whether his views about specific diets were based on theory or empirical observation, Dr. Yeshe Donden responded that both were the case, adding that, "Buddha's knowledge

concepts to bring them into line with biomedical notions of physiology. For instance, in Tom Dummer's discussion of conception and embryology in Tibetan medicine (Dummer 1988:45), he refers to the ovum, but notes that this is a modern updating — the *Four Tantras* in fact talk of "menstrual blood" (Dummer 1988:285). This process of the modernization of Tibetan medical conceptions is perhaps similar to that described by Arthur Kleinman among the Chinese-style medical doctors in Taiwan: traditional concepts have been transformed into a modern and usually biomedical idiom, both because the patients were more familiar with western-style medicine and because the doctors themselves had integrated modern scientific ideas with Chinese medical notions (Kleinman 1980:264-265). Another instance of such reinterpretation is that of the Indian medical revivalists described by Charles Leslie (1992:172ff), who were primarily motivated by a political strategy to secure recognition of Āyurveda as a legitimate medical tradition. Leslie discusses the example of Dr. C. Dwarkanath who translated "*sattva*" as "essence" or "intelligence", "*rajas*" as "energy in motion", and "*tamas*" as "mass" or "inertia" (Leslie 1992: 189). In the Tibetan case, concern with international presentation and the need to modernize the tradition within the Tibetan exile community, who have in many respects accepted the superior expertise of biomedicine, are equally important.

Tibetan medical practitioners and institutions in exile frequently express some willingness in principle to participate in scientific investigations of Tibetan medical techniques, and they exhibit an interest in the comparative study of the Tibetan with other medical systems, and in experimental and cooperative approaches to help find solutions to modern medical problems, such as cancer and AIDS. In practice, they seem to be ambivalent about and cautious in pursuing collaborative research. Moreover, they are not reinterpreting all their medical theories. No attempt is made, for example, to hide the role of demons in disease causation in the traditional thinking; indeed, Dr. Donden discusses urinalysis through divination in his published series of lectures given in the U.S.A. The concern to modernise and communicate with the west is tempered with the concern not to lose any of the scholarly heritage: for instance, a recent project is the reconstruction of lost manuals from the memories of the trained doctors.⁸ In this respect, the Tibetans can be contrasted with the Taiwanese, who appear to be relatively

is non-delusive [and thus his explanation of the nature of foods is without error]" (Donden 1986:68).

⁸ This is Dr. Tenzin Choedak's project (Coleman 1993:273).

uninterested in the complex theoretical framework of traditional Chinese medicine, simplifying and limiting the number of indigenous medical concepts and treatments, while creating a practical and syncretic system of theory and practice (Kleinman 1980:280). Clearly, unlike the Tibetans, the Taiwanese doctors do not see themselves as the only representatives and guardians of the threatened cultural tradition of a small and powerless group. Similarly, at least at present, the Tibetans have not gone as far as Ayurvedic physicians and pharmacists, who, according to Francis Zimmermann (1992), have radically modified and commoditized certain remedies in order to appeal to modern Western and Indian sensibilities. Thus, the willingness of Tibetan exiles to adapt and modify their medical tradition has limits and while they may cooperate with biomedics, they are concerned to develop their separate institutional and theoretical framework for their practice.

Moreover, the practice of Tibetan medicine has not yet become entirely secular and it is likely to remain intertwined with Buddhism. I have mentioned the religious aspects of the curriculum at the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute, and that the exiles still have consecration rituals for their medicines. These are performed both under the auspices of the Government-in-exile Tibetan Medical and Astrological Institute in Dharamsala (where most common remedies receive no special treatment, but a few "precious" remedies are consecrated) and elsewhere. For example, Krystyna Cech discusses long and expensive rites (*sman-sgrub*) for preparing and consecrating medicinal herbs through mantra recitation at the Bon-po monastery in Dolanji (Cech 1987:272-3). The local Tibetans sponsor these rites and in return, receive quantities of the medicinal powders. The powders are in great demand, especially by Tibetans in Tibet, to whom they are given by refugees visiting relatives in Tibet. The value of such powders — in this case, imbibed with Bon-po rather than Buddhist mantras — is related to the Tibetans' concern with expressing their religious and cultural identity, and it is unlikely that simultaneous resort to more modern biomedical and Tibetan medical facilities will do anything to undermine it. This is especially so since the Buddhist meditative practices have gained respect in the contemporary world. The doctor's training was always combined with Buddhist practice and this religious component could act as a channel for intuitive understanding and inspiration in a system which was primarily scholastic and rational. Both Dr. Yeshi Donden and Dr. Tenzin Choedak describe incidents involving religious inspiration as turning points in their lives (Avedon 1985:189-190, 320-321). When Yeshi Donden first became a qualified doctor, he was sent to help control an influenza epidemic which had been introduced into southern Tibet

from India and had caused many deaths. After his arrival, he dreamt of a *dākinī* — a fearsome looking woman representing the forces of "female" inspiration in Vajrayāna Buddhism - who thoroughly questioned him about a urine specimen. On waking, he was brought the specimen of his first influenza patient, which he recognised from the dream, and successfully treated the patient and others accordingly. He interpreted this dream as his *real* final examination. Dr. Choedak was dying in a labour camp, when he recalled Tibetan medical theory concerning the loss of "heat" in the stomach and secretly began a Buddhist yogic practice which has the effect of increasing the internal body heat. He believed that it saved his life and was responsible for the fact that he had no further digestive complaints. Also significantly, his ability to regularly continue this religious practice secretly, gave him inner confidence and solace throughout his years in prison.

The central place which these doctors give to religious inspiration and practice is a feature of the Tibetan medical tradition which remains strong today. Great respect is given to doctors who are also lamas and although it is theoretically possible to divide the Buddhist meditation practices from the medical theory, given both the importance of religion in the expression of Tibetan ethnic identity and the fact that the Buddhist meditative traditions have won widespread international respect in the modern world, it is unlikely that further modernization of Tibetan medicine would involve complete secularization.⁹ In fact, even in contemporary Tibet, despite the fact that students and doctors at the Tibetan traditional medical college are not trained in Buddhism and are instead exposed to Chinese political philosophy, *all* the Tibetans to whom Stillman spoke (1994:12), commented that they considered themselves "spiritual healers".

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⁹ For the purposes of this paper, I have mostly relied upon publically prominent representatives of the tradition in exile, who were trained in Tibet. As Fernand Meyer has pointed out to me (personal communication, March 1994), a study of the new generation of exile trained physicians is desirable for understanding the full extent of the current process of change in exile.

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF THE THARUS: AN ANNOTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

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It is sometimes said that very little research on the Tharus has been done, or that the works dealing with Tharu culture are scarce or published in languages like French, rendering access difficult especially to Nepali readers. This is why it seems useful to me to present a bibliography on the anthropology of the Tharus, in the hope that this might open the way to further studies since, as we shall see, most of the existing research deals with the Tharus of the western Terai.

On Tharus and Tharu Groups

In the last census, the Tharus appear as one of the most numerous ethnic minorities of Nepal : 993,388 persons are classified as speakers of Tharu as their mother tongue, and 1,194,224 as Tharu (compared to, say, the Magars, for whom the corresponding figures are respectively 430,264 and 1,339,308). But whoever has been in contact with Tharus will immediately stress the great diversity of the different communities scattered over most of the Nepalese Terai and Inner Terai valleys. One might also wonder who identified themselves as Tharu and who did not compared to the previous census.¹ Ethnic boundaries have always been flexible, strongly influenced by

¹ For instance, in the Census of 1971 only five Tharu speakers were registered in the district of Saptari and in the 1991 Census 80,526! But since the 1971

the overall political or ideological context. However, within the last decade and particularly since the great political change which followed the return of the multi-party system and 'democracy' in 1991, it seems that the previous tendency to overemphasise differences between sub-groups has faded away in favour of a search for a Tharu pan-ethnic unity. Nevertheless, there are still many different Tharu subgroups, more or less numerous, more or less known, some sharing a very similar culture under different ethnic labels (e.g. Deshaurya Tharu and Dangaura Tharu in Western Terai), some having totally different customs though living in close proximity (Rana and Dangaura Tharu in Kailali and Kanchanpur districts). Besides marked cultural differences, the boundary between subgroups has been mostly based on marriage prohibitions, particularly marked, for instance, in the Western Terai between the Ranas and the Dangauras. It is noticeable in this regard that for the last few years most of the Tharu ethnic associations have been stressing the necessity to remove those marriage barriers.

By classifying groups which have always been changing, there is an unavoidable risk of reifying ethnic categories. Nevertheless, I shall stick to this sub-classification which is still meaningful for the Tharus themselves and gives a broad picture of their regional diversity, helping us to draw a kind of hypothetical ethnographic map of Tharu distribution before the great ecological and sociological change of the post-Rana years. The Unification of Nepal in the eighteenth century changed the situation in the Terai, a change that was further enforced under the Rana administration. But we should bear in mind that this Tharu population distribution, probably significant during the last two or three centuries, was also the result of unknown previous changes. Migrations or displacements of populations have shaped and reshaped group affiliation over centuries. The Panchayat years have nevertheless accelerated this process: there have been major changes in political and agrarian conditions, and also in relations between the Tharus and their neighbours from the middle hills who, in the sixties, settled permanently in the Terai.

Census does not provide data on ethnic groups, it is difficult to deduce how exactly the self-perception of the Saptari Tharu has changed (besides the data collection techniques which have a strong influence on the data themselves). Today the Saptari Tharu (Koshila) define themselves as Tharu-speaking Tharus but consider nevertheless that their language is close to Maithili. How did they present themselves previously to the 1971 surveyors: as Tharus speaking Maithili or as non-Tharus?

We now have a relatively clear picture of the different endogamous Tharu groups living in the Western and Far Western Terai. The two main and culturally contrasted communities are the Dangauras and the Ranas. 'Dangaura' refers to the Tharus who claim Dang as their original home (which includes the Deokhuri Valley, Dang denoting a 'country' larger than the Inner Terai valley of the same name), and 'Rana' to the Tharus of the far western Terai who claim to have a Rajput origin. We do not know exactly when this last appellation and the royal pedigree attached to it became an ethnic label. In fact 'Rana Tharu' is an anthropological creation, since the Ranas do not want to be called Tharu, preferring Rana or Rana Thakur. I am of the opinion that the process of 'kshatrisation' attached to this ethnonym could be a relatively recent phenomenon, linked to a general tendency of lower groups to raise their status particularly marked in colonial British India.²

Since at least the nineteenth century, the Dangauras have migrated, partly eastward (in Rupandehi and Kapilavastu districts or ex-Seoraj) but mostly westward, settling in Banke or Bardiya districts and in the Inner Terai valley of Surkhet. During the past few decades of this century, particularly after the land reform of the early sixties, new waves of Dangaura emigrants have gone further west, coming into closer contact with the Ranas who previously dominated the far western districts of Kailali and Kanchanpur. If we look at our hypothetical ethnographic map of Western Terai in the last century, the Karnali river would appear as a kind of boundary between these two main western cultural Tharu entities, Rana and Dangaura.

But other Tharu subgroups live in Western Terai: the Katharyas, mostly concentrated in India, south of Dangaura habitat, and in Kailali district, have clothes and houses quite similar to their western neighbours the Ranas, but their particular traditions are still unstudied. In Bardiya and Banke districts, the Dangaura Tharus distinguish themselves from the Deshaurya Tharus (lit. 'those of the country'). But Deshauriya culture is so close to that of Dangaura that I presume they could be an offshoot of an earlier wave of migrants from

² On the reform of customs at the beginning of the present century and the quest for a higher status among the Ranas, see Srivastava (1958). A similar process seems to have influenced the Tharu of Chitwan and Champaran who also claim to be Rajput (Choudhury 1952). By contrast, the Dangauras have no claim of that kind, maintaining that they have always been living in Dang. The Dangaura myth of origin significantly recalls the creation of the first (Tharu) human being in relation with that of the valley itself.

Dang or, at least, may testify to an ancient closer relation with Dang that was broken when the four districts of the Western Terai were under British administration from 1816 to 1860. It is significant that the Dangauras quite readily intermarry with the Deshauryas. The same can be said of the Rajhatyas of Banke (ex-Rajhat) who call themselves Tharu or Kusumya Tharu and whose culture and language are even closer to those of the Dangaura Tharus. These facts stress the crucial role of migrations and of settlements at different periods of time and under different political contexts in the shaping of group affiliation. It also shows that older geopolitical divisions (*thappa* and *parganna*, i.e. Rajhat) have influenced the distribution, the denomination and the relations of the different communities.

If we proceed eastward to Rupandehi and Kapilavastu our Tharu ethnographic map becomes blurred. No studies have been done in Nepal.³ Besides recent Dangaura Tharu migrants, the Tharus of this area, though called Katharya, do not seem to have much in common with the Katharyas of Kailali and from the scarce information I obtained appear to be more brahmanised than others Tharu groups of Nepal. An interesting fact is that the Katharya ethnonym seems to be in use all over the southern (and mostly Indian) Terai, in UP and possibly Bihar, without necessarily implying a common culture.⁴

In the Central Terai, the Inner Terai valley of Chitwan shelters an important Tharu population. The Tharus living in Nawal Parasi district are slightly different from their neighbours of Chitwan district proper, the Narayani River having created in the past a kind of boundary. But most studies have been done in Chitwan itself, on the eastern side of the Narayani.

The most imprecise part of our map and the least-known areas of Tharu habitat are the districts of Parsa Bara Rautahat, where Tharu speakers seem apparently less numerous. Some refer to themselves as Katharya (or Kacharya?), some are migrants of Eastern Terai or Koshila Tharus, intermixed

³ They are probably related to the Indian Tharus living around Gorakhpur. A PhD that I have been unable to find and read deals with the Tharus of Gorakhpur (Yadav 1978-86).

⁴ A distinction has been made in earlier mentions between the eastern and western Katharyas (for instance, see Nesfield 1885: 39).

with others minorities like the Danuwars.⁵ The Danuwars, whose main homeland is the Sindhuli Inner Terai valley around the Kamala river, are culturally and sociologically close to the Tharus, with whom they can intermarry. We do not know much about this part of Terai, but the Tharus living there are probably related to those living in the Indian Terai of Bihar, especially in Champaran.⁶

The eastern Tharus, called Koshi or Koshila or Kochila Tharus, are scattered in several districts from Morang to Rautahat, including Udayapur Inner Terai valley (in Jhapa district the Rajbamsis, sometimes called the 'Bengali Tharus', dominate). The Koshila Tharu, who seem to have mostly migrated westward are fewer and fewer in the districts West of Siraha. They claim Saptari and Siraha districts as their main home but many live also in Sunsari district on the other side of the river Koshi. Some Saptari Tharus pretend that until recently they would have not married Sunsari/Morang Tharus. There are also probably subgroups or endogamous units, such as the Lamputchwa Tharu of Morang district who are considered different by the Koshila Tharus.⁷ However, Saptari Tharus have recently migrated to Morang.

⁵ In the last census of 1991, there is a very noticeable difference for the district of Parsa between Tharu-speakers (1,203) and Tharu ethnics (32,701) which could indicate a greater integration of these Tharus in the Indianised or Hinduised local population. Even if less striking, the same discrepancy appears in Bara and Rautahat districts (where more Eastern Koshila Tharus seem to have migrated). Whatever may be the exact situation, the 1991 census has to be contrasted with the 1971 census in which nearly no Tharus (speakers) were recorded from Bara to Saptari districts! (see note 1). But to deepen the analysis we should know more about the language spoken by this sub-group (probably Bhojpuri, the dominant language of Bara and Parsa districts). An interesting fact can nevertheless be inferred from the census data: the Tharu population forms blocks divided by area with a much lower density of Tharu-speakers, characterised by a strong competitive and more Indianised cultural influence, as in Danusha and Mahottari districts we find Maithili Brahmanical influence, in Bara and Parsa districts Bhojpuri, and in Kapilavastu, Muslim.

⁶ An Indian Tharu geographer whom I briefly met in the eastern Terai, Dr Sharda Prasad, has written a thesis on the Champaran Tharus (Prasad 1992) but I have not been able to obtain a copy. See also Singh 1983, a PhD thesis referred to by Guneratne 1994.

⁷ It is said that they tie their clothes in such a way to form 'a long tail'; *lamputch*. Koshila were not supposed to intermarry with them. A clan of the same name is found in Chitwan and even among the western Dangaura Tharus,

The ethnonym Koshila or Kuchila could be related to the name of the river Koshi on the bank of which they used to live. As we have already noted rivers seem to have played a role not only as a focal area of Tharu settlement but as a cultural or sociological frontier. In spite of the importance of the Koshila Tharus, their ethnography is much less developed than for western Terai groups.

In contrast with western Terai where the Tharus are the only and dominant ethnic minority, the eastern - especially the far eastern - Terai is inhabited by several ethnic groups with very different linguistic affiliation, like the Dhimals or the Meches who speak Tibeto-Burman languages, the Rajbamsis or the Tharus who speak Indo-European idioms and even Munda speakers like the Satars. To give a sounder image of our map, another fact must be stressed: culturally affiliated groups live close by the Koshila Tharus, such as the Bantars or Raj Bantars (who can be found up to Chitwan), the Rautar, the Kebair and the Musahar. In Saptari, for instance, the Bantar are often the priests in Tharu villages but they are of lower status.⁸ The multiplicity of *jât* is a salient feature of Eastern Terai, and it seems that besides ethnic diversity, subdivisions through the paradigm of hierarchy have deeply moulded the sociological landscape. This hierarchic process is found up to Chitwan (where Bantar, for instance, are also living), an important difference with the ethnically more uniform Western Terai where such a 'castification' process is absent, especially among the Dangaura Tharu. On the contrary, the Dangaura Tharus used to integrate people from outside on a quite egalitarian basis.

In fact, the oldest reference we have concerning the Tharus refers precisely to the eastern Terai. In his book on India written in 1033, the Muslim scholar Alberuni mentioned the 'Taru, people of very black colour and flat nose like the Turks' who lived in Tilwat (Tirhut or Mithila).⁹ Later on, in the 13th century, a Persian historian cited the 'th'rw' near by the Meche and the Kooch but further east in Kamrup or north Bengal.¹⁰ We can therefore

pointing again to the role of migration in the shaping of group affiliation at different sociological levels.

⁸ Most of the Koshila Tharus call Maithili Brahmans for their domestic rituals.

⁹ Sachau (1888: 201).

¹⁰ See Chatterji (1974:101). In the 16th century Taranatha history of Buddhism, Champaran is equated with Tibetan *mtha'-ru'i brgyud* which has been

presume that people called Tharu have been living in the eastern Terai for at least a millennium. But one word is not enough to establish a direct cultural link between various present-day Tharu entities and ancient 'Tharu' settlers of the Terai. In terms of ethnogenesis, of migration and intermixing of groups of different origin under different ecological and political contexts, much has been happening in the Terai for the past thousand years. An interesting fact is nevertheless a general tendency of these very unsettled communities to migrate westward (at least during the past centuries). Actually the Western Terai has been deforested (or resettled) more recently than the Eastern Terai.

Concerning the languages spoken, the areas of linguistic affiliation encompass the proper endogamous Tharu social units. All the Tharu minorities speak Indo-European languages related to the North Indian ones. Despite many regional sub-variations, we can draw three main linguistic areas: Dangaura and Chitwanya Tharu dialects are different but exhibit Bhojpuri influence, Rana is closer to Hindi and Koshila to Maithili.¹¹ Finally, the related Rajbamsis speak a form of Bengali. We should, however, remark that the area of Bhojpuri influence extends much more westward for Tharu than for Indian Bhojpuri speaking groups,¹² a fact which could confirm a western migration (especially from Bihar) of Tharus otherwise noted. But regarding linguistic transformations or a hypothetical substratum of Tharu languages, more research is necessary. More generally, we need a better knowledge of the enigmatic old processes of Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman reciprocal influence in north-east India to understand the linguistic genesis of the distant past in the far eastern Terai.

It is not my intention to make definite statements on the diversity of the Tharus. For that purpose we need more ethnographic knowledge, and the main goal of the present paper is precisely to help further comparative research. But I should like to emphasise a few points. Whatever the future of the Tharu pan-ethnic movement and the building of a new Tharu identity which will support this revival in Nepal, published and unpublished studies show a striking diversity from one group to another, in social organisation, rituals and religious practices, village and domestic organisation, mythology

translated as 'the country of the Tharu' by S. Lévi, but could rather mean 'the country situated at the border', therefore without direct ethnic connotation.

¹¹ In the Census of 1971 a large number of Eastern Tharus have been classified as Bhojpuri or Maithili speakers. See notes 1 and 5.

¹² See the map on Bhojpuri and its sub-dialects drawn by U.N. Tiwari (1960: 283).

and festivals. The Tharus, like the other minorities living in the Terai share a similar ecological milieu and material culture - rice cultivation and fishing are the two main sources of production - but in each area they have developed a peculiar culture and social order. Two facts should be stressed: the influence of overall political and economic conditions, and a fission process which until recently created and recreated endogamous barriers. Alien influences, the loss of an improbable previous unique heritage or even the hypothesis of various origins are not sufficient to explain a diversity peculiarly marked in ritualistic organisation, kinship and social structure.¹³ More generally an opposition between the east and west Terai can be stressed, the Gandaki River delineating this passage, with significant differences in terms of hierarchical fission, economic and agrarian conditions and levels of deforestation.

I should like to emphasise here the significance of the region (*deśa*) in the sense of a political, ritual and economical space. Each local and particular 'Tharu' culture has developed in a wider context and a different geopolitical niche. The Terai is vast and the overall political and agrarian conditions of each region have changed over centuries. To give just one contrasted example, the Koshila Tharus have in the past been living in close contact with the Mithila kingdom (and its strong Brahmanical and Vaisnavite culture), whereas the Dangaura Tharus have been immersed in a very different context, the Himalayan Baisi kingdom of Dang-Salyan under a heavy Sivaite Nath Yogi influence. In one case the influence of the north Indian Brahmanical culture prevails, in the second we see the importance of western Himalaya Pahari culture.

A minority of Tharus live in India, and in the past relations used to be close on both sides of the border. It is still the case for the Rana Tharus, as numerous in the Nainital and Kheri Terai districts of India as in Nepalese Kanchanpur, who until recently were very far from Nepal's political centre. In fact, the most sizeable Indian Tharu population is in Nainital district where

¹³ For instance, the Dangaura Tharu have quite clear exogamous clans but the Koshila kinship system is closer to the Indo-Nepalese model of *gotra* and *thar*. Ritual organisation (specifically, priesthood) also differs greatly from one group to another, and even from one sub-group to another. Another striking example is the impact of the Hindu festival calendar: for the Dangauras, Dasai is the main festival, for the Ranas, it is Holi (Dasai is not really celebrated) and for the Koshila, it is the new year of Baisakh called Siruwa Pavan or Jur Sittal (Dasai is also not really important).

the Ranas live. A few scattered Tharu groups live south of the Nepal border in UP and in Bihar Champaran. (Further east in India we do not find any more Tharus.) This is probably why the earlier studies on the Tharus which dealt with the Indians Tharus concern mostly the Ranas. On the contrary, Dangauras as well as other 'Inner Terai Tharus' who are concentrated in Nepal, became a subject of academic study only after Nepal opened to research. Therefore generalisations on the Tharu tribe, current in writings from the beginning of the century, are biased by this restricted access: very little can be known of the Dangauras or the Chitwan Tharus from these earlier works.

The Indo-Nepalese political boundary does have a meaning. First, the political destinies of India and Nepal have split, especially since the colonial period; and second, border regulations have strengthened the barrier. Today the Tharus, except partly the Ranas who have maintained matrimonial and economic relations in spite of the border,¹⁴ are different on either side of the frontier, influenced by a different socio-political milieu. The Nepalese Tharus are more numerous and have remained generally more isolated until the middle of our century; moreover, their caste status and their relations with other castes have evolved differently ;¹⁵ sanskritisation or 'kshatrisation' have played a stronger role on the Indian side; finally, political and agrarian conditions, especially in the Inner Terai during the post-Unification period, have diverged over time.

In the following bibliography I shall present books and articles dealing directly with the Tharus. Short notes can be found scattered in different publications, especially those linked to the Terai, but the interested reader will easily obtain access to these secondary sources through the bibliographies of the works discussed here.

The bibliography will be divided into three periods, corresponding to methodology, tools of collection and analysis, and geographical area or groups concerned. For the third period - the richest in terms of anthropological works dealing with the Nepalese Tharus - I shall follow a thematic approach in order to bring out the main analytical and research trends.

¹⁴ On the close relationships between the Tharus of Kheri district in India and those of Kanchanpur and Kailali districts in Nepal, see Hassan (1993: 121-27).

¹⁵ The Tharus of UP in India were classified as a 'scheduled tribe' in 1967 with the ambiguous consequences this status brings.

Early Compilations: Colonial Encounters and Evolutionary Approaches

The first period cannot properly be called anthropological, since the publications rest mainly on the British residents' reports in India, very often second-hand material or simple repetitions of previous ones. They do not usually mention their sources or areas of collection, which are mixed up. Facts and customs are miscellaneously recorded without being related. These reports suffer from *a priori*, like the postulate of a unique and culturally uniform Tharu tribe, rooted in the ideological framework of colonial administration. They are in any case difficult to rely on, except maybe by those familiar with the field who, by a kind of informed rereading or by checking the area concerned, can make use of them. The presupposed idea of a unique Tharu tribe also goes hand in hand with preoccupations like origin, race, primitiveness and so forth.

The oldest available published mentions were compiled in the different Gazetteers of India (Imperial, NW Provinces, Oudh and Bengal among others), in Tribes and Castes series or in books of the same kind. Since most of these books repeat one another, only some of the earlier Gazetteers or representative texts are listed here. The most complete reference of that period is an article by Nesfield (1885) who, besides quoting the information of previous Gazetteers, includes material collected by himself. While it is full of details, this article suffers from too general an approach. Nesfield notes, for instance, that women elected for marriage must not bear any blood relation to the husband and may not be of the same village (*ibid.*: 13). But if village exogamy can be actually practised in the richest families or in the Tharu sub-groups more influenced by orthodox Hindu concepts like the Ranas, village endogamy is also very common, if not even a kind of rule at least among the Dangaura Tharus. In W. Crooke's *Tribes and Castes of the Northern Provinces of Oudh* (1896) which mainly relies on Nesfield's article, another source is quoted, S. Knowles' *Gospel in Gonda* (1889), which contains first-hand information on the Dangaura Tharus of Gonda district by a Christian missionary.¹⁶ But for this entire period the evaluation of the information given is a task in itself.

¹⁶ I have not been able to find this book in England or France, but some copies are available in America and maybe in India. A. Guneratne has been very kind in providing me some extracts from it.

There is not much difference between nineteenth century and early twentieth century Gazetteers, since the latter repeat the previous ones. An exception, however, in the sense that it introduces new materials, is the Census of 1931 compiled by Turner. But then a new period was starting, influenced by the development of anthropology, which strengthened the importance of fieldwork and of participant observation. The Census of India, a vast enterprise, slowly systematised the use of anthropological surveys, a trend reflected in later censuses which include detailed village survey monographs;¹⁷

The most valuable aspect of the older sources is nevertheless that they document a period when the Terai was still covered with forests and had a very low population density, with the Tharus comprising the majority of the population. But the quest for first-hand accounts, which requires searching through unpublished reports (of British administrators and surveyors) as well as archival material, is a painstaking and scarcely rewarding task.¹⁸

Buchanan Hamilton, F. *The History, Antiquities, Topography, and Statistics of Eastern India*, vol. 2, London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1838.

Carnegy, P. *Notes on the Races, Tribes and Castes Inhabiting the Province of Awadh*, Lucknow: Oudh Governmental Press, 1868.

Crooke W. *The Tribes and Castes of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh*, Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing of India, 1896.

Elliot, H. M. *Memoir on the History, Folklore, and Distribution of the Races of the North Western Provinces of India*. London: Trübner & Co., 1869.

Grierson, G.A. 'The Tharu broken dialects' in *The Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. 5, part 2, 1903, 311-24.

Hamilton W. *The East India Gazetteer*, vol. 1, London: Parbury, Allen & Co., 1828.

Hodgson B. H. 'Continuation of the comparative vocabulary of the languages of the broken tribes of Nepal', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal* 26, 1857.

¹⁷ See for instance Sharma(1964a; 1964b; 1965).

¹⁸ I have personally recently gone through an unpublished survey report of 1818 containing some interesting first-hand information on the Tharus of Western Nepal. Alas, preoccupied with the favourite question of his time, namely origin, the author considered that the stories he had collected were too illogical or false to be worth publishing in his report...

- Knowles, S. *The Gospel in Gonda: being a Narrative of Events in Connection with the Preaching of the Gospel in the Trans-Gaghra Country*, Lucknow: Methodist Publishing House, 1889.
- Nesfield, J. C. 'The Tharus and Bhogshas of upper India', *Calcutta Review* 80 (159), 1885, 1-46.
- Risley, H. H. *The Tribes and Castes of Bengal.*, Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, vol. 2, 1892.
- Turner, A. C. *Census of India*, vol. 18, part 1, Report, Allahabad: Superintendent of the Government Press, 1931.

Indian Anthropology and the Tharus of India

The second period, from the thirties onward, saw the beginning of proper ethnographic collection with deeper substantial field research, at a time when ethnography was developing. Like those of the first period, these works dealt with the Tharus living in India, and therefore the Ranas. Before the sixties, no research on the Tharus had been done in Nepal proper, and in the books of the first visitors to Nepal, mentions of the Tharus are nearly non-existent.¹⁹

The ethnographic research on the Tharus during this second period was done by Indian anthropologists. It is interesting to note in this regard that the first detailed studies were mostly produced by Census surveyors, anthropology and Census operations being tightly linked. An example of this trend is Majumdar's pioneering work done in the late thirties and especially during the Census of India operations of 1941. His most quoted work is his anthropometric and blood study of the Tharus (1942),²⁰ a topic related to the ideological preoccupations of his time with 'race', 'caste' and 'tribe' and with the

¹⁹ Hodgson's published works contain only some notes on the language. I have been unable to discover anything of particular interest in his unpublished manuscripts. The earlier mentions on the Tharus living in Nepal are mostly unpublished. See note 18.

²⁰ Here he argues, against the (mythical) theory of Rajput origins or the diverse speculations of earlier authors on the racial origin of the Tharus, that they are 'a Mongoloid tribe who have succeeded in assimilating non-Mongoloid physical features' (1944: 71). Majumdar also discusses the question of the relative malaria immunity of the Tharus in relation to blood groups, noting that Tharu children suffer from malaria as much as other children (*ibid.*: 74). For others physical anthropological studies related to the Tharus, see below.

composition (and classification) of the Indian population. But he also published a short monograph, including his anthropometric results (1944: 65-109) in which, besides his pervasive quest for Tharu origins, he dealt with the problems of cultural contacts and the (pseudo) superiority of Rana Tharu women. However, an earlier ethnographic study of the Tharu cycle of life customs (among the Ranas, although this is not explicitly stated) is a little-quoted article by Hari Dev (1932) who adopts an evolutionary perspective.²¹ Other early publications include H.D. Pradhan's work, with a misleading title on economy (1937-1938), the first one dealing with general information on the Tharus (origins, physical appearance and dress), the second with cycle of life rituals and practices which actually appears very close to the work of Hari Dev (1932). It is possible that the last two authors are one and the same person. Whatever the shortcomings of these studies they represent a total change of approach and methodology in data collection, and to this extent represent the beginning of the anthropological study of the Tharus.

The best representative of this period is S.K. Srivastava's monograph on the Ranas of Nainital district, Srivastava being himself a student of Majumdar at Lucknow University.²² His book (his PhD dissertation dating from 1951) includes his previous articles and describes several aspects of Rana Tharu life (material culture, economy, social organisation, religion, festivals, treatment of illness, incidence of crime, dances and songs, and riddles). His main analytic trend, as exemplified in the concluding chapter on problems of culture contacts and dynamics, is the transformation and adaptability of a tribe under a general Hindu influence. If his concluding part suffers from being insufficiently related to the main monographic bulk, for the first time research

²¹ This paper by Hari Dev is 'communicated' by D.N. Majumdar and has the misleading title 'Birth customs among the Tharus' (1932).

²² Lucknow University was a very active centre of anthropology from the late forties to the seventies linked to the foundation and development of that field of research in India. The *Eastern Anthropologist*, one of the leading anthropological journals of India (published by the Ethnographic and Folk Culture Society of UP, based in Lucknow), which includes most of the references to the Indian Tharus of this period, was founded by D.N. Majumdar in 1947. Since the Tharus live close to Lucknow some students were sent for field work in Tharu villages (concerning such a study among the (Dangaura?) Tharus, see Pandey 1979: 259-60). During a visit to Lucknow University's library at the beginning of the eighties, I tried unsuccessfully to collect unpublished and little-known references.

based on sociological questions and a precise description of facts was available. Another scholarly work is the geographer R.L. Singh's study on the Terai, which includes a chapter on the Ranas Tharus (1965, previously published as an article in 1956).

C. T. Hu wrote only two articles, but one deals with a very interesting anthropological phenomenon: marriage by exchange of sisters between two or more houses (1956), a typical marriage arrangement of the Dangaura Tharus. Hu's too brief work stands apart by trying to isolate a peculiar and meaningful social fact and by being the only one dealing exclusively with the Dangaura Tharus (in Gonda district) before Nepal opened to research.

The Census of 1961 gave way to three village survey monographs, that of the Rana Tharu village of Bankati in Kheri district (Sharma 1965) and of Dangaura Tharu Rajderwa and Suganagar Domri villages in Gonda (*ibid.* 1964a; 1964b). Their aim was to study 'the dynamic of change in the social, cultural and economic life of rural community' in order to promote rural development and the enforcement of social laws (*ibid.* 1965), an approach which actually illustrates most of the Indian anthropological studies on the Tharus. The most valuable part of these otherwise hastily-conducted surveys are the statistics on household and economy (which give a good picture of the Tharu joint family system), and the precise descriptions of dresses, jewellery and house building. The descriptions of birth, marriage and death customs, however detailed these may be, suffer from the methodology of the surveyors. Nevertheless the material provided could be the basis of fruitful comparison – for instance, with the Nepali Dangaura – the customs revealing a deeper impact of Hinduisation in Gonda district.

Another and more recent study of India's Tharus by an Indian of Lucknow is the work of A. Hasan. He was not trained as an anthropologist but was involved in Tribal Welfare functions and was mostly interested by folklore, economic change, sociology and more generally questions related to tribal development. Hasan's works do not offer a better structured approach but stand apart by his long term involvement with the Tharus (mainly the Ranas and others related groups like the Boksas), which culminated in his recent and last book dealing with a Rana Tharu village of Kheri district, close to Dudwa National Park and the Nepal border (1993). The best parts of it (containing new data) are the chapters describing the village relationships with the Nepalese Tharus and with the forest officials, the village being until

recently under the control of the Forest Department, which acts as a kind of zamindar, and those dealing with economic questions.

Other scattered studies in the form of very brief articles on different subjects have been published during the fifties and sixties: V.K. Kochar on the fission and composition of Tharu joint families (1963, 1965); S. Mathur, on marriage among the Ranas (1967); and a few very short papers on Tharu songs: Sohoni (1955), Chaubey (1957), Prasad (1959), Govila (1959).

So besides S.K. Srivastava's monograph and perhaps Hu's precise but isolated article, most of the research offers scattered results, and no general picture or strong analytic frame is therefore proposed. As we have noted before, the studies of this period owe their form and results to a general interest in the questions of tribal welfare, tribal contacts with the Hindus or with the government, changing economic and social situation or upgrading of the so-called 'backward' communities, which were crucial for the administrators of that time, specially after India's Independence.

If we try to sum up the studies done on the Indian Tharus, both periods reveal the impact of colonial anthropology through the census operations and related surveys. But the first and earlier period research, written only by the British and illustrated by the Gazetteers or the Tribes and Castes series, aimed to give a general and exhaustive picture of 'The Tharus' living in North India and in a way created an artificial ethnic category. The work of the second period, carried out by Indian anthropologists, emphasised a monographic approach; but by dealing mostly with the most numerous Indian Tharu subgroup, the Ranas of Nainital, ethnic generalisations have been built from this peculiar Tharu subculture. Nevertheless, their most noticeable contribution is the description of socio-economic conditions, house composition and material culture.

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_____'The occupational pattern in a Terai village', *Eastern Anthropologist* 22, 1969a, 187-206.

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- _____ *Village Suganagar Domri (Tahsil Balrampur, District Gonda)*. Village survey monograph 3. Census of India 1961, vol. 15, part 6. Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1964b.

²³ * indicates a reference which has not been read or found, and therefore needs to be checked or its content examined.

- _____ *Village Bankati (Tahsil Nighasan, District Kheri)*. Village survey monograph 11, Census of India 1961, vol. 15, part 6. Delhi, Manager of Publications, 1965.
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- _____ *The Terai Region of UP, a Study in Human Geography*, Allahabad: Ram Narain Lal Beni, 1965.
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During both the periods discussed above a recurrent question pervaded most of the works: the enigmatic origin of the Tharus. Compared with other topics, there is a surprisingly large number of physical anthropological studies of the Tharus, a racial approach which echoes the nineteenth century study of culture. In Indian universities, physical anthropology was closely associated with cultural anthropology, as illustrated by Majumdar's works. Following him and the earlier Gazetteers, several anthropometric and genetic studies addressing the mysterious racial mixture of the Tharus have been

systematically carried out to settle this question on a 'scientific basis', but without success.²⁴

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The Anthropology of Nepal's Tharus

The publications listed above are sufficient to belie the notion that no studies on the Tharus have been done. Nevertheless, this notion is not totally groundless, owing to the very scattered and disorganised approach of the first works and moreover to the fact that they deal with with a non-representative minority of Tharus, those living in India.

When Western anthropologists poured into Nepal after the country opened in the fifties, they were mostly interested in the Kathmandu Valley's rich heritage, the Himalayan Tibeto-Burman speakers and the ethnically Tibetan groups. The Terai sounded not much different from North India and

²⁴ Their mongoloid physical appearance is recurrently contrasted with the (Rana) claim to be Rajput giving way to the following question: are they mongoloid mixed with plains people or Dravidian or 'Kolarian' mixed with mongoloids of Nepal ?

the Tharus did not attract much attention. In his often quoted book *People of Nepal* (1967) the Nepalese anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista offered the first account on the Nepal Tharus.²⁵ But due to the general approach of the book (echoing the survey style of the previous Indian 'Tribes and Castes' series) and the state of research at this time, his valuable first-hand data, collected in different Tharu communities, are diluted in a too general presentation of 'The Tharus'. Nevertheless, this first survey showed how little was known. Another book on the economy of Western Nepal by MacDougall (1968) gave in two of its chapters a very precise and enlightening study of landownership in Dang and in Kailali, two districts of Nepal mainly inhabited by Dangaura Tharus. But in both cases, the author's main goal was not to study the Tharus.

Modern anthropological research on the Tharus started in the late sixties with A.W. Macdonald's isolated French article describing two Tharu festivals (Holi and Maghe Sankranti) in Dang (1969, reprinted in English in 1975) and moreover with D. Rajaure's monograph on the Dangaura Tharus. An earlier, very brief Italian article by G. Tucci (1956) was also published. In fact, research among the Dangauras was stimulated by Rajaure himself who accompanied A.W. Macdonald to the field and made his home valley better known to French and other European scholars. Rajaure's field work culminated in a Master's degree from which three articles have been published in *Kailash* and in others journals. His study was shortly followed by two European PhD dissertations (McDonaugh 1984 and my own, Krauskopff 1985) based on field-work conducted in the late seventies and early eighties. My PhD dissertation was published in 1989, in French like most of my others articles.

The anthropology of Nepal's Tharus was first concentrated on the Dangauras and more precisely on those of Dang valley proper, Rajaure and McDonaugh having worked in the central eastern part, and I in the western.²⁶ Thus the anthropology of Nepal's Tharus started with a group markedly, if not totally, different from the Indian Rana Tharus. It was, therefore, nearly impossible to create a bridge with the earlier studies, not only because of a

²⁵ See note 18.

²⁶ I have personally carried out short studies in Deokhuri (see Krauskopff 1989a) where the Dangaura religious organisation differs, and in Banke, Bardiya, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts among Dangaura, Rajathya, Deshaurya and Rana Tharus (unpublished except for a very brief description of the Rana house, 1987d).

different ideological context, theoretical framework and approach, but also because of this gap.

Eastern Terai Tharus drew the early and brief attention of a Nepalese anthropologist who published in Nepali (Regmi 1973; 1978) and whose work did not circulate and was not discussed by others. Very recently a Master's dissertation in Nepali has also been submitted to Tribhuvan University (N. Sangroula 2053 V.S.). In spite of its proximity to Kathmandu and its easy access, the Chitwan Valley was not the subject of long-term, deep anthropological studies until very recently. K. Mikame published only two articles (1979; 1990); Pyakuryal's PhD dissertation (1982) dealt more specifically with sociological problems like inter-ethnic relations, and U. Müller-Böker's early publications with an ethno-geographical approach in a broader pan-Nepali context. But very recently, she has published a comprehensive book on the material culture and ethno-ecology of the Chitwan Tharus (1995). A. Guneratne has also recently submitted a very a detailed PhD on the same group (1994). The topic of this thesis, ethnicity, noticeably marks a change of approach that I shall discuss further presently. Finally and strangely enough, Nepal's Rana Tharus had to wait for the beginning of the nineties for a new wave of research, a Nepalese-Norwegian team of professionals and students, whose work is in progress. They are giving new impetus to the research, having succeeded recently in bringing together for a conference (Skar and Gurung 1996 forthcoming), three generations of scholars, from S.K. Srivastava, the eldest, and most of the people who have studied the Tharus of Nepal. It is to be hoped that the gap between research in Nepal and earlier Indian studies on the Ranas of Nainital will be bridged, since even today the Ranas of Kanchanpur district maintain close relations with Indian Tharus. Finally, a general public and amateur concern for this numerous people of the flat land of the Himalayan kingdom has also very recently arisen.

For this period, of which I am a part, I shall not discuss each work in detail but shall rather present thematic and analytic trends.

The purely descriptive approach is represented by the work of Nepalese scholars like D. Rajaure for the Dangauras and R.R. Regmi for the Koshilas. Rajaure's work is a classical village monograph dealing with economy, rites of passage, festivals and some village rituals as well as more specialised customs or subjects like tattooing, child-rearing and the status of women. The short work of R.R. Regmi on the Koshila is included in a book written in Nepali devoted to two other ethnic communities. It is not a village monograph proper but, starting with the classical Tharu origin controversy, he describes

Koshi Tharu customs collected in different districts of Eastern Nepal: house building and decorations, fishing, agriculture, social organisation (*thar* and *gotra*, marriage regulations and rituals), religious practices (*dhami* village rituals and healing practices) and rites of passage. A.W. Macdonald's pioneering article on Holi and Maghe Sankranti (1969) is also a purely descriptive work.

C. McDonough's and my own studies of the Dangaura Tharus, although they are both village monographs in the Western anthropological tradition, follow different approaches. McDonough puts emphasis on social organisation, more specifically on kinship relations, with ritual and mythology being used as a means to define kinship units. Based on an exhaustive description of village, domestic and 'forest' rituals, I broaden the scope of the village study to the overall ritual organisation of Dang valley in relation to the previous political and agrarian structure of the Baisi Hindu kingdom of Dang. This ethno-historical perspective developed in further articles emphasises the political aspect of the Hindu centralisation process. Ritual is, therefore, a tool to bring out the process by which Dangaura Tharu society developed in a wider Hindu kingdom strongly influenced by the Kanphata Yogi Saivaite order. It is noticeable that McDonough and I insisted on rituals as a research topic arising from the field itself, a necessary tool to understand the Dangaura Tharus' social organisation. In that regard both approaches are in keeping with a more general trend in western Nepalese studies, especially illustrated by recent French works, stressing the social and political role of ritual and echoing the analyses of Hocart and Mus. The bibliography will illustrate the other subjects treated by these authors, the French articles titles being translated into English for the convenience of the reader.

A totally different trend of anthropological research has been started recently, being best represented by Guneratne's recent American PhD dissertation (1994). The latter deals with ethnicity and the State, linking the ethnic movement of the Chitwan Tharus to the Tharu elite of landlords who emerged during the Rana period. I think this heavy influence of Chitwan Tharu landlords could be related to the major role of Dang Tharu landlords and regional priests in the genesis of the centralized and peculiar Dangaura culture (Krauskopff 1989a; 1990), a comparative fact which points to the importance of the specific agrarian conditions in the Terai in moulding Tharu cultures and societies.

Echoing a firm tradition of Norwegian anthropology, the Nepalese-Norwegian team presently working among the far western Rana Tharus confirms this new trend of research by dealing mainly with ethnic problems and processes, in relation with the new context brought about by the recent political changes in Nepal. A collective book to be published (Skar and Gurung 1996 forthcoming) gives a good idea of their results. The subject of ethnicity is closely related to the present new situation of Nepal's minorities and is in keeping with a more general interest in ethnicity in recent years. Particularly interesting in this regard is the recent ethnic movement which originated among the Dangauras (see S. Ødegaard's article on BASE in Skar and Gurung 1996 forthcoming), and differs in its genesis and strategies from the older Tharu Kalyankarini Sabha studied by Guneratne (1994). The latter association was born among the Tharu elite of the eastern Terai and developed in Chitwan, but had very little influence in Dang and the western Terai.

In the field of environmental studies and in a broader context, the geographer U. Müller-Böker has written on Chitwan Tharu ecological and botanic categories (on ethnobotany in Chitwan, see also Dangal and Gurung 1991, and on medicinal plants in Dang, Manandhar 1985). To conclude on subjects which are on the margin of anthropology strictly speaking, we should mention the very brief linguistic research done by the Summer Institute of Linguistics in Chitwan (1972). But Grierson's much earlier comments on the Tharu 'broken languages' (1903) and U.N. Tiwari's (1970) study of Bhojpuri still stand as references in a little-developed field of research.

Another topic of research has been the study of house-building and spatial organisation conducted by architects, mostly on the Dangaura Tharu house which is remarkable for its unusual length (Blair 1983, Millet Mondon 1981, reprinted in English 1990). A forthcoming paper (Meyer and Duel 1996) offers a more general scope, covering a wide range of Tharu house styles from the western to the eastern Terai.

Having evoked the recent ethnic revival and the Tharus' concern for their own traditions, I should like to conclude with a discussion of publications in the Tharu language that are flourishing nowadays. They are often privately published or circulate only locally. It is, therefore, difficult to list this very miscellaneous production since most of the journals and books are unavailable, being mostly confined to village archives. It would be impossible to give a fair account of all: some are quasi-ethnographic (especially collections

of myths, sacred and profane songs), some are a good example of the discourse of the Tharus on themselves, and others simply describe a custom or offer poems or songs (for the most prominent of these publications of myths and songs in the Dangaura Tharu language, see McDonough 1989 and Krauskopff 1996). It should be noted that a few small Nepali booklets and very short articles in English and Nepali have been published on the Tharus, but since their perspective is not properly anthropological they have not been included here. They are generally written by local or national erudites, mostly Brahmin. If representative of other Nepalese people's discourse on the Tharus, they cannot be considered as proper anthropological research. Some of these references are for instance listed in R.R. Regmi (1973, 1978) and exhaustively in Sangraula (2053 V.S. 3-4; 97-101).

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