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Panel: Democratic Transition in Nepal I
Chair: Joe Elder (University of Wisconsin), Discussant: Pradeep Giri (Kathmandu, Nepal)
Girija Gautam & Kagendra G.C. (Tribhuvan University)
“Democracy, Law, & Constitutional Development in Nepal”

For the past 40 years in Nepal, political repression and the undemocratic rule of a select elite has been conducted with the sanction of the supreme law of the land, the Constitution of Nepal. This doctrine lays out in no uncertain terms the grounds for the absolute rule of the monarchy and its close allies over all of Nepal and its diverse social groups. In a concrete sense, a struggle over the Constitution is an expression of the social antagonism between definite socio-political groups. Once again a major confrontation is in the making in Nepal as the royalists and pro-democracy forces prepare to make constitutional changes to address the demands of the recently mobilized democratic masses.

The second part of the paper analyses the major anti-democratic provisions in the Constitution up to the present time and the modes in which Nepalese courts have upheld these against challenges by opposition groups. In particular I will try to explicate the contents of Article 55 (emergency powers) and the spirit of the 1st amendment (ban on political parties), the justification for their inclusion and the manner of their enforcement. We will then discuss the socio-political costs of these anti-democratic Constitutional features on various segments of Nepali society and to the socio-economic progress of the country as a whole.

The third and final section highlights the need for a new Democratic Constitution in order to establish a “true democracy” with a strong foundation in the “rule of law.” Future Constitutional changes must make a sharp departure from the past by instituting a philosophy of the “supremacy of the law” and an unequivocal separation of judiciary and executive powers. The conspicuous absence of these principles from past Constitutions have provided the major arsenal for corrupt rulers and their political excesses. The paper will conclude with a brief look at the actors and their methods that are likely to shape the imminent Constitutional battle in Nepal.
Pramod Parajuli (Stanford University)

“Political Culture and the Future of Democracy in Nepal”

Leaders of the recent Movement for Restoration of Democracy in Nepal (MRD), have accurately called their struggle as Dharma Yuddha, a struggle between the right and wrong, between the will of the people and a minority of ruling elites corrupt by absolute power. Using concepts of hegemony and dominance, I will show that the monarchy in Nepal is no longer ruling by consent but governing by force and coercion.

I will demonstrate this not only in terms of the modern perceptions of democracy but also in terms of the traditional Dharma Shastra where power of the ruler lies not in the uncontrolled use of it but in the wise restraint in its use. By using brutal force against the Nepalese people since 1960 and in the recent struggle, the Nepalese monarchy has totally violated the dharmic as well as democratic principles. This can be avoided in the future only by expanding democracy not only in the political society but also in the civil society. It is urgent to give voice to participatory knowledge and practices of the plebeians: women, peasants and artisans.

Finally, I will articulate some of the communitarian and democratic institutions of Nepalese culture on which a participatory polity and culture could be established. Such analysis demystifies both Wittfogels’ “oriental despotism” or Max Weber’s theory that democracy does not figure in South Asian tradition.

Stephen Mikesell (Tribhuvan University)

“The Interim Constitution & Transition to Democracy in Nepal”

The democratic movement succeeded only in shifting the stage of the struggle to a legal one; it did not yet create democracy, despite the assertions of more optimistic leaders. The country is still left with basically the same array of forces: the old regime, merchants, contractors and other businessmen, students and intelligentsia, and the agricultural and industrial workers. And while the word “partyless” was dropped from the constitution, the rest of the constitution was merely suspended, not abolished: so technically, the king still could legally re-establish it. Thus, the interim constitution is an important document for clearing out the old legal framework and creating some breathing space in which to write a new constitution.

This paper will document the process of creating (or failing to create) this transitional constitution in Nepal. It will discuss how different individuals and groups were involved in the process, and how they represented their ideas, interests and visions in the new constitution. It will present the manner that questions were raised and dealt with. It will discuss how other groups were excluded or chose to remain outside of the process. It will show how reactionary forces influenced the process.

Panel: Democratic Transition in Nepal II
Chair: Joe Elder (University of Wisconsin), Discussant: Baburam Bhattarai (Kathmandu, Nepal)

Anup Pahari (University of Wisconsin)

“Democracy and Patronage in Nepal: Emerging Contradictions”

An inescapable feature of Nepali society is the vast network of patronage relations that undergird social relations at every level of the state and civil society. Relations between individuals often signify an underlying patron-client dimension. This same arrangement is generalized in relations between leaders and their supporters, within political parties, between state institutions and the masses and between social classes. Patronage ties form an essential strategy on the part of individuals and groups to feed on each other’s resources. Power and politics in Nepal are so fundamentally rooted in patronage that a discussion of democracy and emerging political trends would be crippled without a thorough discussion of this pervasive traditional force.

In this paper, I will show that patronage ties, drawn across caste and class lines, have defined the development of Nepali politics since the founding of the nation. I will briefly trace manners in which patronage has been transformed in stages with transformations in the political economy of the country. I will examine the 1950 revolution, the rise and fall of the first democratic polity, and the emergence of the Panchayat system in terms of shifts and tensions in the patronage structure with the monarch playing a key role in the entire process. I will argue that the patronage hierarchy that structures Nepali society is a basic hurdle that any democratic movement must overcome. The cycle of dependence, deference and exploitation that is inherent in patronage relations in Nepal will, if not systematically dismantled, negate the ongoing democratic experiment.
Finally, I will examine the process through which the present Movement was able to challenge the structure of power in Nepal on a scale that eluded previous attempts. I will discuss briefly the social bases of power of the dominant political parties and opposition institutions and will compare them to that of the old regime. A key question is the degree to which new political institutions are liberated from traditional patronage relations and the degree to which they perpetuate them. I will conclude with a discussion of the contradictions that arise in the process of social and political transformation of a society whose organization is deeply rooted in traditional patron-client ties.

Rabindra Nath Bhandari (Boston University)
"Planning and Economic Development in Nepal: A Critical Review"

Economic development through a national planning process has been the central development strategy for many developing countries after World War II. Though initiated during the brief period of Nepali Congress rule in 1959, the Panchayat government has tried to continue the planning approach to economic development. In view of the revolutionary changes in the polity of the country and the possibility of redefining national economic goals and strategies for economic development, it is important to review the past, make concrete assessments of the economic infrastructure and outline a viable strategy for economic development. This paper makes an attempt in that direction. In particular the paper will try to contribute to this debate by seeking answers to the following questions:

a) What is the legacy of 35 years of planning in Nepal?
b) Is national planning a correct way to address the problem of economic development in Nepal?
c) What should be the role of the government in the process of economic development of the country and how can it play a role if any?

In answering these questions I will:

a) Lay out the basic premise of the economy, its agents, endowments and general environment. I will also critique the past economic policies by identifying their inherent weakness.
b) Attempt to outline the important ingredients that are necessary for a sustainable economic development process in general, and specifically in the context of Nepal and identify the role that the government can play in bringing about such a process of development.

Nanda Shrestha (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater)
"Land Encroachment in Nepal Terai: Social Movement or Aborted Peasant Revolutions?"

Land encroachment or spontaneous settlement has emerged as a growing problem in Nepal Terai. This paper will deal with the issue of land encroachment from a politico-geographic perspective. The focus will be on how hill migrants have used land encroachment as a mechanism to access land and why the patrimonial state has allowed such a movement to go unabated. The argument will be that even though land encroachment can be viewed as a form of social movement, it does little to help transform the regressive agrarian relations of production and achieve progressive economic development. The paper will also discuss how and why the problem of land encroachment may persist under the multiparty system established in early 1990.

Jagadish Pokharel (Massachusetts Institute of Technology)
"Political Change, Environment and National Security"

In August, 1988, a surprise flood in Bangladesh killed several thousand people and destroyed an estimated 1.2 billion dollars worth of property. The flood was immediately linked with deforestation in the Himalayan mountains. Bangladesh did not officially blame Nepal, but, in private, prominent policymakers connected the disaster with Nepal’s mismanagement of forest resources. The press implied that “Bangladesh’s land and people were violated by deforestation: a deliberate act of environmental destruction by another nation” (Abbas, A.T. Himal, May 1988).

In March, 1989, India closed its borders with Nepal disrupting the lives of nearly 18 million people in Nepal who depended on supplies from India. Shortage of cooking fuel affected a majority of the population. After a few days it was reported in the press that the rate of deforestation in Nepal increased rapidly as a result of the Indian trade embargo.
The management of natural resources in some countries are directly affecting political decisions in other countries in ways that have not happened before. This new connection has raised security concerns of a new kind. It is also undoubtedly true that the use and exploitation of natural resources are directly linked to the nature of the political-economic set up within each country. Thus, the management of a resource as valuable as forests, and the potential regional and international conflict that can arise with regard to its exploitation, cannot be treated as an issue separate from that of the choice of national development strategies and the political structures that give them sanction.

My paper will bring out the dimensions of regional environmental inter-dependency in South Asia, namely the link between Himalayan forests and flood-plain waters. I will argue that a diffusion of the potential environmental conflict in the region depends, in good measure, on a fundamental restructuring of development priorities in Nepal, an agenda that is distinctly political in nature.

The lack of a coherent resource policy, failure to eject the national economy from the cycles of extreme underdevelopment and the inability of a corrupt regime to devise a comprehensive resource use strategy are at the root of the impending ecological collapse in Nepal. In the end, I will examine the potential of a new democratic government to address the major social and economic factors that shape resource use in the country and the possibilities of redefining national resource management goals and strategies such that the issue of a national security threat triggered by environmental impacts is permanently diffused.

Panel: Crisis and Change in Nepal, 1990 - A Roundtable

Participants: Peter Burlcign, US State Department
James Fisher, Carleton College
Nairanjana Koirala, University of California-Berkeley
Theodore Riccardi, Jr., Columbia University
Leo Rose, University of California-Berkeley
Daya Ratna Shakya, University of Oregon

Panel: Perspectives on Kashmir

Chair Raju Thomas, Marquette University; Discussants: Lloyd Rudolph, University of Chicago, and Mohammed Ayoob, Michigan State University

Damodar Sardesai (University of California-LosAngeles)

“Kashmir: Its International legal and Domestic Constitutional Status”

The author will examine the historical origin of the Kashmir issue, focussing on two aspects of the problem: first the legal status of Kashmir as perceived from the outside especially in the United Nations; and second, as perceived from the inside as determined by the Indian constitution.

Omar Khalidi, (M.I.T.)

“Kashmir and Muslim Politics in India”

Omar Khalidi will look at the problem of Kashmir from the standpoint of Indian Muslims. He will look at the changing perspectives of Indian Muslims since partition going through the breakup of Pakistan in 1971, and coming up to the present crisis. As an Indian Muslim from Hyderabad and author of a book on the state of Hyderabad under the Nizam, Khalidi will also cover the effects of such crisis on the political conditions of Muslims in India.

Pervaz Cheema, (Qaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad)

“Kashmir and Pakistani Politics and Strategy” [no abstract available]

Leo Rose, (University of California-Berkeley)

"The Politics of Azad Kashmir”

Leo Rose, who recently spent some time interviewing residents in Azad Kashmir, will examine the nature of Azad Kashmiri politics since 1947. His paper will look at past and present politics since 1947. His paper will look at past and present politics of Azad Kashmir in relation to its status under various regimes in Pakistan, and its efforts to reunite with Indian Kashmir.

72

HIMALAYAN RESEARCH BULLETIN XI (1-3) 1991
Newar Diaspora Throughout Nepal

Chair: Ter Ellingson, University of Washington

Daya Ratna Shakya (University of Oregon)

"Language and Newar Identity"

Newar diaspora communities in the middle hills and Terai show a wide range of linguistic variation in their adaptation. Part I of this paper attempts an overview description of this language pattern based upon field studies conducted in settlements west of Kathmandu (1986-90), and relates dialect trends to the history of migration. It will examine factors such as a family’s caste and original home location in the Valley, the population size of the new settlement, and the intensity of contemporary ties maintained (kin, business, cultural) with the hearth zone, seeking to correlate how these variables have affected the survival of Newari language. Part II will summarize the nature of dialect differences where Newari is still spoken today in the study sites of Palpa, Pokhara, and Gorkha. Part III will attempt to relate the linguistic evidence to larger cultural aspects of the Newar adaptation to the mid hills of central and western Nepal.

Todd Lewis (College of Holy Cross)

"Newar Religion in Diaspora Settlements"

The migration of Newar artisans, merchants, and government officials outside the Kathmandu Valley over the last three centuries has been a formative feature in regional demographic and economic change across Nepal’s middle hills. As whole lineages resettled, each brought core elements of their hearth culture with them. Today, diaspora Newars maintain a striking array of transplanted traditions and these have also interacted with the cultures of surrounding hill societies.

Part I of the paper presents descriptive overviews of religious tradition in three sites: Trisuli, Bhojpur, and Chainpur. Epigraphic and ethnographic data gathered in 1986-7 are used to present these case studies against a historical backdrop. Part II analyzes the patterns of enduring Newar diaspora religion in terms of Hindu-Buddhist contestation, Theravada missionizing, and caste-centered ritual cults. The paper ends with conclusions about the role of religious tradition in the maintenance of Newar ethnic boundaries in modern Nepal.

Linda Itlis (University of Washington)

"The Sword and the Truck Stop"

The Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, in the process of establishing satellite trade communities throughout rural Himalayan areas, dramatically shaped and reinterpreted local traditions through their introduction of both textual media and urban styles to previously non-urban settings. Local traditions likewise provided the Newars with new stimuli for creative adaptations of urban ritual forms to new non-urban settings and ethnic diversity.

Self-representations of ethnic identity and expressions of political unity and autonomy often underlie such rituals, particularly those centered on goddesses. In the Khadga Jatra of Bandipur, a sword of a former powerful king embodies the goddess Durga. A Khadga is a double-edged sword, symbolically as well as physically. It may symbolize political might, but in association with the goddess it also symbolizes the power of wisdom and the destruction of illusion. Thus, in the myth told as the foundation of the ritual, the king who owned the sword ruled many peoples by forced unification, without recognition of their ethnic diversity. But through the power of the goddess, a richer unity, built on recognition of ethnic diversity emerges victorious.

The Khadga Jatra ritual for the sword goddess not only recreates this mythic victory on the symbolic level of ritual action, but it also facilitates interethnic cooperation and convergence on the immediate phenomenal
level of socioeconomic interaction. With recent changes in local demography due to shifts in geopolitical boundaries and road construction, the meaning of local unity and diversity is undergoing new processes of redefinition and reinterpretation. As these processes unfold, the ritual seems to take on a revitalized meaning through ever-expanding reinterpretations of the sword, the goddess, and political and ethnic identities.

Panel: Psychological Approaches to Person, Society and Culture in Nepal
Chair: Robert Levy, University of California-San Diego; Discussant: McKim Marriott, University of Chicago

Debra Skinner (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill)
“Good Selves, Angry Selves: Formation of Caste and Gender Identities in Nepal”
Girls in Naudada, a mixed caste hill village in Gorkha District, are constructing identities and self-understandings as females. Their understandings of self are not homogenous, but contain conflicting voices. Extending Vygotsky’s ideas of mediating devices and sense with Bakhtin’s notions of voice and dialogicality, this paper examines the process whereby Hindu girls come to identify with culturally dominant notions of self and other, but at the same time, at least in some contexts, retain a sense of anger and resistance that has come from different voices and alternative views of self and the social world. What girls say about their lives and the ways they orchestrate various perspectives are the subjects of this analysis.

Steven Parish (Boston University)
Among Hindu Newars of the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal, the mind is sacred, and psychological experience has moral significance. This paper explores the way that psychological experience has social, moral and religious meaning for Newars, focusing on aspects of Newar ethnopsychology that help shape moral identity and self-awareness. Individual self-awareness of an “inner life” develops in terms of the cultural meaning that psychological experience has for Newars. In the Newar view, a moral god animates the mind, and the efforts of individuals to monitor and transform their “inner lives” may draw on the language of religious life. Newar accounts of psychological experience may also focus on its social context and moral meaning. Implicit understandings of moral experience and agency seem to be deeply embedded in the way Newars speak of psychological life. Newars conceive of the experience of a moral self in terms of sensitivity to moral emotions, and in terms of a capacity for self-control and self-knowledge.

Robert Levy (University of California-San Diego)
“Some Psychological Implications of the Organization of Life in a Traditional Newar City”
The presenter of this paper studied the urban organization of the very conservative predominantly Hindu Newar city of Bhaktapur in the Kathmandu Valley in 1973-76. The city’s organization was of a strikingly “pre-modern” archaic form. Some 40,000 people lived in a relatively self-sufficient unicultural community, whose social structure, space, time and a substantial segment of its action was minutely organized through powerful, dramatic, highly differentiated and interrelated religious symbolism. The sociocultural organization of the city, with its marked contrasts to the sorts of organization of simpler non-Western communities on the one hand and modern towns and cities on the other, had implications for much of the private experience and psychological organization of Bhaktapur’s citizens. This paper will discuss several salient features of an interview sample of Bhaktapurians that seem closely related to the organization of the city. These include aspects of cognitive organization, aspects of belief, “symbol hunger,” and aspects of personal autonomy and identity.

Alfred Pach III (University of Illinois-Chicago)
“Social Processes and Meanings in Disordered Experience in a Hindu Community in Nepal”
This paper examines the complex and varied meanings and consequences of local perceptions and responses to disordered experience in a Hindu village in Nepal. The ideas and actions which these experiences evoke indicate the social and moral concerns of individuals in particular circumstances. Thus, explanations and therapeutic responses to disorders depict powerful spiritual forces, moral expectations and dominant social relations affecting the meaning and response to personal experience.
Panel: Updating Education in Nepal — New Directions
Chair: Hugh Wood, American–Nepal Education Foundation

Jack W. Graham, Sarada Bhadra, and Madhav Sharma (Southern Illinois University)
“New Directions for Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Education in Nepal”

Education at all levels has developed and expanded rapidly in Nepal since 1951. There are a number of issues which persist and continue to be addressed in an effort to promote a sound educational program at all levels of education.

Primary Education. It has been the goal of Nepal to provide free and compulsory primary education throughout the Kingdom. Even though much progress has been made, more must be done. The expansion of this program requires the preparation of primary teachers who are capable of serving currently organized schools and of setting up new schools to meet the many needs of students.

Secondary Education. Several valuable programs of education have been established to meet the needs of secondary age students in Nepal. Progress has taken place in upgrading the quality of general secondary schools, technical and vocational schools, and the introduction of trade schools.

Tertiary or University Education. Even though the percentage passed on the School Leaving Examination has not been as high as educators would expect, the number of students seeking higher education continues to grow each year. Consideration was given to separating the professional and technical schools into a new separate University; such has not taken place due to a lack of funding and the lack of clarity on selected policy issues.

The Future. The country of Nepal has given and continues to give much importance to education and its close relationship to total country development and progress. Yet there are many challenges to the country and the Ministry of Education and Culture in providing quality education to all geographical areas. Innovations such as radio education for the preparation of elementary teachers, distance learning programs in general teacher education, special programs for women, and an increased interest in various types of vocational education has been most valuable in meeting the challenges.

An increasing number of educators have broadened their educational background through workshops and seminars in Nepal, special training in India, and advanced education in a number of selected countries. Nepal has gained through the continued upgrading of the curriculum at the primary level with a wider distribution of textbooks and teachers guides; expanded programs in teacher training; improved quality of teaching at the University level; the conducting of research by such agencies as the Center for Educational Research, Innovation, and Development of Tribhuvan University; extended study regarding a reorganization of higher education; the introduction of various innovations in instruction; and a concern of civic leaders for a continued improvement and expansion of education at all levels.

Hugh Wood (American–Nepal Education Foundation)
“New Directions for Education in Nepal”

Recently, King Birendra announced some general goals for his people to be achieved by the year 200. These goals included five specific goals for education:

1. Universalization for primary education.
3. Modernization of higher education.
4. Greater utilization of scientific research.
5. Professionalization of teachers.

A seminar was organized last March/April to discuss needed changes in education in Nepal to achieve these goals. Several “new directions” were discussed and recommended during the seminar:

1. On the recommendation of the National Education Planning Commission in 1955, the focus on educational development was quality; the time has now come for emphasis on quality.
2. For various reasons, the several segments of education have developed partially and separately; the time has now come for more and better coordination.
3. There have been scores of suggestions for change and some changes have been made, mostly without due consideration. The time has now come for thorough evaluation and implementation of appropriate changes.

4. “Teachers teach as they were taught, not as they are taught to teach.” Education can be improved most quickly, and perhaps only, through the improvement of teachers and teaching. The improvement of teacher education must be a major focus in the next decade.

5. Education in Nepal today is less devoted to Nepal’s cultural patterns and aspirations than envisioned, and perhaps practiced, in the 1950s. There needs to be a new focus on Nepal’s cultural patterns and values.

To achieve these goals, there must be a reduction of wastage in education. New types of institutions may be needed. Educational reform and innovation are definitely needed.

Exploration of the Adamantine Way: Studies on Vajrayana Buddhist Theory
Chair: Geshe Sopa, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Discussant: John Makransky, University of Iowa

James Burnell Robinson (University of Northern Iowa)

“Ritual and Correspondence in the Vedas and Buddhist Tantras”

In the Vedic religion of the Brahmans, the ritual of sacrifice unifies by establishing correspondences in the ritual context among components of the universe seen as the body of Prajapati. In the human realm, sacrifice is a process of ritually constructing and refining a divine self in a heavenly realm out of the raw materials of creation.

By sacrifice, human beings are able to create for themselves a divine self in a heavenly realm. After death, one is joined with this splendid spiritual body that has been created by sacrifice. Sacrifice enables creation to be made into a cosmos and the ability to do this comes about through ritual action empowered by the principle of correspondence. Ritual brings deification.

The religious outlook of India’s axial age (650-300 BCE) turned away from the archaic views of the Brahmana texts. Buddhism reflects a very different outlook. But the Buddhist Tantras contain elements that seem very suggestive of the archaic Vedic view though with a very different ontology. The Tantras hold that one may create a spiritual body in meditation by means of sadhana, “actualization,” a process which combines visualization, rituals and elaborate systems of correspondences all for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood by becoming a deity - and in this very life. While the differences between the Mahayana Buddhist outlook and the ancient Vedas should not be minimized, would one be far afield to suggest that the Tantras may represent a significant re-emergence of the Vedic ideas?

John Newman (New College of the University of South Florida)

“Cosmology and Anthropology in the Buddhist Kalacakra Tantra”

The foundation of the Buddhist Kalacakra (Wheel of Time) Tantra is the ancient notion of the identity of the macrocosm (cosmos) and the microcosm (anthropos). The Kalacakra Tantra utilizes this idea as the basis for its soteriology, which is the tantra’s raison d’être.

This paper will describe in general terms the cosmology and anthropology of the Kalacakra Tantra, and will discuss the role the integrated macrocosm-microcosm plays in the Kalacakra’s gnostic soteriology. The macrocosm-microcosm model articulated in the Kalacakra distinguishes this tantra from earlier Buddhist tantras - it is a clear and conscious borrowing from non-Buddhist religious traditions. The paper will conclude with observations about the Kalacakra Tantra as a vivid example of syncretism within Buddhism in particular, and Indian religions in general.

Roger Jackson (Carleton College)

“Sutra, Tantra and Mahamudra”

Most Tibetan traditions agree that the Buddha’s teaching is roughly divisible into sutrayāna and tantrayāna, or alternatively, paramitayāna and mantrayāna (or vajrayāna). They also tend to agree that a major line of demarcation between sutrayāna and tantrayāna is the centrality to the latter of “deity yoga” (lha'i rnal 'byor), whereby one “takes the goal as the path” and visualizes oneself as the Buddha one will be at the
time of enlightenment. Among the most important challenges to the coherence of this scheme and the impermeability of its lines of demarcation, is that posed by the existence of important meditative traditions that seem not to rest entirely within either yana, most notably those known to rNyiang ma pas as the Great Perfection (rdzogs chen) and to gSar ma pas as the Great Seal (mahāmudrā). In this paper, we will focus our attention on a three-way discussion among gSar ma pa schools on the nature and place of mahāmudrā. Using as our starting point sGam po pa’s division of the complex tradition of mahāmudrā inherited from India into sutra- and tantra-approaches, we will examine Sa skya pandita’s rejection (in his sDom gsam rab dbye) of the sūtra mahāmudrā category (and much contemporaneous mahāmudrā practice). Then, we will analyze the ways in which a dGe lugs pa, the first Panchen Lama, blo bzang chose kyi rgyal mtshan (in his Phyag chen yang gsal sgron me), and a bKa’bbrgyud pa, Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal (in his Phyag chen Zla ba ’i ’od gzer), reject Sa skya pandita’s analysis, while differing in subtle yet important ways on just how mahāmudrā fits into traditional Buddhist yana-schemes. The first Panchen asserts a strict division of mahāmudrā into sūtra and tantra, while bKra shis rnam gyal is more ambiguous, sometimes accepting such a division, but at other times suggesting that mahāmudrā in some way transcends either category. The interplay among the Sa skya pa, dGe lugs pa and bKa’bbrgyud pa views may help shed light on the nature of mahāmudrā, but, more importantly, it may suggest some conclusions about the boundaries of the concept of “tantra,” and whether its identification as deity yoga is adequate to the evidence from the various Tibetan schools.

Individual Papers in Other South Asia Panels

Mark Dyczkowski (Sampurnananda Sanskrit University)

“Possession, Ecstasy and the Erotic Goddess”

Panel: Recent Research in Religion

This paper discusses the initiation rites of the Kubjika Tantras. These Tantras constitute a large corpus of Tantric literature, mostly still unedited, centered on the worship of the goddess Kubjika. Introduced as an esoteric cult into Nepal probably about the 11th century by the Rajopadhyaya Brahmans of Kanyakubja that served as the gurus of the Malla kings for centuries, it is not found at present outside Nepal. Historically important as the earliest known Tantric tradition to expound the system of six cakras common in later Sakta Tantrism, this cult focuses on the goddess Kundalini as Kubjika. Powerfully erotic, her arousal is marked by the outer signs of ecstasy and possession in the initiate. The initiation, epitome of the highest mystical experience, is discussed in the context of initiatory rites found in other Tantric traditions. The strongly erotic, mystical symbolism and not uncommon inroads into the transgressive world of symbolic reversals of this cult is well illustrated by the myths and ritual parallelism associated with the rites of initiation. These focus on powerful, ecstatic experiences marked by sudden eruptions into vision, rather than the more gradual, sedate processes of transformation and conjunction with the deity that take place in older Tantric traditions, such as those of the Saivasiddhanta.

Paul Benjamin

“The Panchayat System and Local Level Organization in Nepal”

Panel: Local Institutions in South Asia

The Panchayat System of Nepal claimed the village as its basic unit of government. The village panchayat was asserted to be an ancient Nepali institution that all Nepalis would instinctively understand. Elected councils in a partyless government would abstain from divisive party politics and work for the common good. Three other levels of panchayats would exist above the village level: the district, zonal, and national, but the whole system would be based on the village level panchayat.

In the years immediately prior to its recent demise, the Panchayat System was in the process of “decentralizing” authority and responsibility to village panchayats in a formal and highly advertised attempt to invigorate local efforts at government and development. Yet informal attempts to control local level political activity directly contradicted efforts to decentralize authority to village panchayats. Whereas the government could claim that true authority was being passed to villages in the form of articles in the Decentralization Act, the government was also active in supporting for election local level candidates of its own choosing, dividing local opposition, and intimidating other candidates. “Sarkari umedwar” or “government candidates” were
expected to be unstinting supporters of the Panchayat System. Development and progress under the Panchayat System, whether it occurred or not, must be praised. As long as verbal support for the system was being generated in this manner, the central government was indifferent to what these government candidates actually did in office. Corruption was ignored. The village panchayat was hardly the basis for the system; in its last years, the Panchayat System at the local level was instead used as a device to manufacture a phony popular support for the Crown and the Panchayat System.

What can be expected at the local level under the new regime? Observations garnered from a projected visit to selected villages in Nepal will be discussed. Specifically, how will villages in Nepal be different? Will the current boundaries of village panchayats be maintained or will villages be allowed to “incorporate,” that is, establish themselves? Will open multi-party activity in village Nepal paralyze local abilities to organize for development? To what degree will national party politics in Nepal come to influence local level politics? How will competing parties and factions in Nepali villages find ways to work toward development?

Jana Fortier (University of Wisconsin)

“Land Tenure, Labor Practices, and a Theory of Multiple Modes of Production in Western Nepal”

Panel: Recent Research in Anthropology

The presentation discusses recent research findings on multiple forms of production in what has previously been labeled a “subsistence economy” in the Jajarkot political district of western Nepal. My research focuses on land tenure and labor exchange practices in this principally agrarian economy. An overview of the land tenure and labor exchange practices extant in this geopolitical area will serve as a descriptive basis for a theoretical discussion of three interrelated issues. First, characterization of Jajarkoti peasants’ subsistence strategies as a “subsistence economy” neglects the vast array of subsistence strategies operant both at present and in the recent past. While the population subsists through material ties to land and is characterized as agrarian in nature, there exist fundamental ties to economies of wage labor, reciprocal exchange through barter, and hunting and gathering from the forests. Politically and economically, Jajarkot is notable as it maintains status as a kingdom within the greater kingdom of Nepal and Jajarkoti royalty regularly appropriated corvee labor during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A reevaluation of the depiction of Jajarkoti society as a “subsistence economy” will be discussed based on detailed research of local land, labor, and exchange practices. Secondly, I propose that “multiple modes of production” is theoretically more suitable to present and historical circumstances of production than the concept of a “subsistence economy”. Evidence exists that pre-capitalist forms of production operate now and in the past alongside a burgeoning capitalist form of production. “Multiple modes of production”, allows for an array of subsistence strategies and acts as an elastic support structure, giving an essential broad infrastructure in an area where subsistence is tenuous. A final related subject is the issue of social class in Nepal. Nepalese relations of production are based on class as well as caste and this issue is unaddressed in theories of Nepalese social structure. The concept of a “geography of class” operating out of Jajarkot defines the nature and relations of production in which subsistence level class factions dwell in the rural hinterlands, the local elite in the district capital, and the landed elite with broadening interests in business and trade tending toward migration to Kathmandu.

Premalata Ghimire (Hartwick College)

“An Ethnographic Approach to Ritual Ranking among the Satar”

Panel: Recent Research in Anthropology

Among the Satar of Nepal, borrowing of caste rituals has related hierarchical categories and heterogeneity within their egalitarian and homogeneous group. This paper presents the methodology used in determining the influence of caste hierarchy among the Satar and examines how their implicit consensus with the hierarchical values serve to define the inter-group and intra-group relations among them.

Manjula Giri (City University of New York)

“Women in Nepali Politics: Past and Present”

In my proposed paper, I will focus on women’s role in Nepali politics both from the ruling and opposition perspectives beginning from the 1950 revolution and with particular reference to some powerful queens of the Shah dynasty and their role in Nepali history. The role and power exercised by the present queen will also be examined in light of the April 1990 revolution.
The second part of the paper will deal with the women involved in the present Movement, their backgrounds, party affiliations and organization within the parties and outside. Women in Nepal have been active in local and national politics for a very long time and have struggled along with the men in every aspect in addition to their struggle against a semi-feudal patriarchy. I will attempt in this paper to highlight the dual nature of women’s roles in Nepalese politics and society with primary emphasis on how women from different class backgrounds have historically joined forces to participate in the political struggle against the hegemony of the traditional elites. Finally, I will look briefly at the sources of present and future differentiation of interests among women in Nepali politics and its consequences for the position of women in a future democratic state.

Stan Mumford (College of Idaho)
“Iconic Discourse in Tibetan Historical Narrative”
Panel: Recent Research in History

Hayden White (1978) has shown how the historical imagination constructs narratives, with various uses of figurative language in the plot sequences. The Tibetan historical narrative usually has a three-period emplotment, summarized as 1) a “good age” harmony with the natural world (bskal-pa bzang-po), 2) construction of the religious kingdom (chos kyi rgyal-po), and 3) “decline” into the evil era (dus gnan-po). Tibetan informants describe the first period with images of the “hidden land” (sbas-yul) and fertility rites addressed to serpent deities (klu). The second period is emplotted with images of historical triumph of the Buddhist dharma in Tibet, while the third period refers to the causes of dharmaic decline.

Drawing on data collected from recent anthropological research in Tibet, Nepal, and Ladakh, this paper analyzes variations in the Tibetan historical narrative as contextualized in each of the three regions. Hayden White, drawing on Vico, argues that historical “decline” is typically expressed through “ironic discourse.” This is illustrated in the Tibetan narrative with field data, showing how ironic discourse is interwoven with diverse historical content in each of the three Himalayan regions studied.

Laurie Hovell (Syracuse University)
“Inner Transformation and Intertextuality: Two British Missions to Tibet”
Panel: Recent Research in Religion and Art History

In the West, Tibet has been written as inaccessible, as a place full of mystery and mysticism. We hear rumors of Shangri-La and the Dalai Lama as “God-King.” In many Western representations, to go to Tibet is to be changed; a movement in space comes to signify some inward movement in the traveller. But travel accounts are more than the simple stories of individual travellers; travel accounts are shaped by their precursors and by contemporary discourses which write both the relationship of self and other and the meaning of place. This paper focuses on two travel accounts, one by George Bogle, the first British emissary to Tibet in 1774, and the other by Frances Younghusband, who led 1200 troops from the Indian Army to Tibet in 1903 and 1904. Both narratives focus primarily on diplomatic and cultural matters, but in both narratives references are made to personal changes, to changes in vision and understanding. This paper looks at the production of these texts in Tibet and their intertextuality with other cultural discourses. These accounts of changes in personal vision, which purport to be somehow outside of activities in the “real world,” outside of imperialism, politics, and history, are in fact written by the material relationship between self’s culture and other’s culture.

Leela Ramanurthy (University of California-Berkeley)
“A Comparative Analysis of ‘Dzog-chen’ of Ningma Tibetan Tradition and ‘Dakshinamurthy’ of Smartha Brahminic Tradition”
Panel: Recent Research in Religion and Art History

Smartha Brahminism of South India and the Ningma School of Tibet have a common denominator in the realization of SELF-awareness. The Rigpa-arigpa levels of awareness in Dzogchen teachings is the Light-Shadow combination of Seeing-Veiling teaching of the Dakshinamurthy stotra Smartha tradition. “Dzog-chen” or the Complete Perfection is the state of All-seeing the View, with certainty, without any duality of the observer and the observed in the All-Self State. The Smukhga understanding of the Universal Self “Darshava of the city of Lights” in the Dakshinamurthy hymn in the individual self is the key to their commonality of approach in the Mirror of Mindfulness, within oneself like a reflection in water. The isle of the Teacher, the eternally youthful Mahayana is Daschamurthy communication the teaching in the depths of silence, the full
teaching to students seated around him under the Naryanor fig tree by turning oneself within - with all the sense faculties fully flowered, which act as vestments of knowledge or cognition for the integration of the Body, Mind and Speech. “The Oneness” of Self is the theme running through the garland of verses or the guru yoga practice of Dong chen Nyingthig and the Hymn to Dakshinamurthy or Ode to the Teacher of Shankara in expressing enlightened awareness. Similes used are also somewhat common like reflections in the mirror, or the youthful Vase body of the rounded sphere of Self of all encompassing space, or of the movement in stillness, i.e., air channels and the birds as experienced by one established in the primordial ground of self-awareness is the theme of both the schools for expressing spiritual perfection. Both belong to Tantra. The description of the poem of Dakshinamurthy and the “chinmurdra” of imparting the Teaching as of Wholeness is similar to the state of oneness of the Guru in “Dzogchen.” Both emphasize the grace of the Teacher (who is fully established in oneness) for the transmission orally or telepathically to the student of the one mind through sounds and sights - listening (shravas), enqyiry, contemplation (Dhayoga) Manaria (Mindfulness) for the seeker of Perfection and accomplishment (Siddhis).

Khim Sharma and Janardan Subedi (Miami University)

Panel: Population Problems and Policies

Infant mortality in Nepal is among the highest in the world. Since the 1950s, a number of studies have tried to identify some of the significant causes of infant mortality in Nepal. Even then, a research framework that incorporates the biological, socioeconomic, behavioral, psychological and health care aspects to provide a more holistic explanation of infant mortality in Nepal is still missing.

This study attempts to examine the underlying causes of infant mortality during the first year of life using a holistic approach. Data for the study is based on interviews of 621 mothers from 26 randomly selected villages in Deokhari Valley, Western Nepal.

The results indicate that endogenous factors are as important as exogenous factors in explaining infant mortality. The implications of the findings are discussed and recommendations for developing a multi-faceted governmental program for addressing infant mortality are made.
Pre-Conference: The Future of the Tibetan People
Opening Address: Lodi Gyari, (Special Envoy of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Washington D.C.)

Panel: Chinese Administration of Tibet, Tibetan Protest, and the Tibetan Right of Self-Determination

Ronald Schwartz (Memorial University-Newfoundland) “Tibetan Democracy, Independence, and Protest under Chinese Rule”

Warren Smith (Harvard University) “CCP and PLA Factionalism in the Chinese Administration of Tibet”

June Teufel Dreyer (University of Miami) “Tibet in the Aftermath of Tienamen Square”

Katarina Morris (International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet) “The Right of the Tibetan People to Self-Determination”

Panel: Tibetan Government: Then and Now

Eliot Sperling (University of Indiana) “The Priest-Patron Relation Between Lama and Emperor”

Rebecca French (Princeton University) “A Theoretical Look at the New Tibetan Constitution”


Michael Van Walt Van Praag (Secretary General of Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organizations, The Hague, Netherlands)

Panel: Ascertaintment of the Human and Civil Rights Situation in Tibet


Robbie Barnett (Chief, Tibetan Information Network) “Information Gathering and Communication on the State of Civil Rights in Tibet”

John Ackerly (International Campaign for Tibet) “Religious Freedom in Contemporary Tibetan Society”


Symposium: The Future of the Tibetan People

Edward Friedman (University of Wisconsin-Madison) “Will China Survive Until 2001: Tibet’s Future in the Light of the Potentially Disintegrating China”

Moderated Discussion

Closing Remarks: Geshe Sopa (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Main Conference

Panel: Perspectives on People and Landscape in Highland Nepal

Chair: Barbara Brower

John Metz (Northern Kentucky University)

“Food Consumption Pattern at an Upper-Elevation Village in West Nepal”

This paper describes the annual cycle of food consumption at an upper elevation village in west central Nepal. For most households the demand for food meets or exceeds supply, so the annual food consumption patterns closely follow farm production and the availability of wild foods. Study village, like most upper elevation villages in Nepal, has few irrigated fields, and so relies on rainfed grains of maize, millet, barley, dryland rice, and wheat for carbohydrate energy. Villagers supplement grains with legumes and vegetables they grow and collect from the forest. Usually the grains are ground to flour and cooked into a thick paste, called dhirro; the legumes and/or vegetables are prepared as a sauce, mixed with small handfuls of dhirro, and eaten.

The summer crops maize and millet are the staples from August till March; the winter crops of barley and wheat provide sustenance through the spring. Potatoes, which are grown through the winter and harvested in June/July provide a crucial transition staple after the barley/wheat run out and before the early maize ripens. Vegetables, or tiune, are mixes of cultivated and collected plants. Soybeans, taro, potatoes, and many other minor crops and wild plants provide tiune through the winter in early spring. Peas, ferns, jack-in-the-pulpit (Arasaema spp.) and bamboo shoots are major vegetable sources in spring and early summer. Villagers make tea and distilled alcohol from wild and cultivated plants.

Naomi Bishop H. (California State University)

“External Migration in a Yolmo Sherpa Village”

This paper focuses on the specific case of outmigration in a single Sherpa village in Yolmo, east-central Nepal. The analysis is based on a general history of each family in the village over the past twenty years, as well as an intensive study of all movements by individuals in and out of the village between 1989 and 1991. Patterns of outmigration are examined in the context of other economic options available, the changing demographic profile of the village, and the particular history of this village over the past thirty years. General theories about hill migration in Nepal will be considered in light of this data from a single village.

Barbara Brower (University of Texas at Austin)

“Grazing Tenure and Range Conservation in the Nepal Himalayas”

“The Tragedy of the Commons” as articulated by Garret Hardin particularly argues that resources held in common are more likely to be overexploited than those in private ownership. Hardin’s archetype is the grazing commons. Yet a comparison of two communities of Sherpa grazers in Solukhumbu, Nepal, suggests that under some circumstances, commonly owned and controlled rangelands may be more effectively protected from overexploitation and consequent environmental damage than private grazing lands. In the Sherpa communities centered on Junbesi Khola, Solu, grazing tenure for yak-cattle herders is a complex interaction of individual, family, clan, village and state control. Some rangelands in private hands are subject to heavy, damaging, unregulated, overuse. In contrast are rangelands used by Sherpa stockmen in the Bhotekoshi Valley,
Khumbu, where grazing is controlled by the community of users. When collective control remains intact, it has been shown to be an effective constraint on overgrazing and environmental damage.

Ann Parker (University of Oregon)

“Cultural Negotiation: A Tool for Understanding Change”

The concept of negotiation of cultural values provides a useful tool for understanding culture change in the multi-ethnic context of Nepal. An examination of farming systems at mid-elevation in eastern Nepal demonstrates that agricultural landscapes are shaped by cultural context. To implement change in farming systems it is necessary to understand the processes of change in their cultural context.

Calla Jacobson (University of Texas at Austin)

“Mythic Time and Common Place: Comments on Nepali Narratives.

This paper explores structural, formal, aesthetic, and thematic elements of a small number of Nepali-language narratives in their immediate performative and wider cultural contexts. The narratives were collected from a Sherpa informant in a half-Sherpa half-Tamang village of Northeastern Nepal. They range in content from greedy stepmothers and young girls turning into birds to the origins of Hindu caste distinctions and in genre from myth to joke; yet there are common stylistic patterns and recurrent thematic elements as well.

I first analyze formal poetic elements of the stories including composition of narrative events and effecting of closure within the tales; use of the particle re to appeal to an external, ambiguous authority; and the construction of time and space within the narratives. Second, I explore symbolic themes in the stories, concentrating on the metaphor of exchange and hospitality, particularly as it is used to comment on social relations from the level of the family to wider caste and ethnic relations within a national context. Third, I analyze the narrator in context — his social positioning as a Sherpa within both a local and a larger, Hindu, culture — and questions of ethnic, caste, gender, and religious identity as they emerge in the tales. I thus examine the elaboration of identity and related social commentary as expressed explicitly in the content of the tales, implicitly through language use and style, and in performative and contextual aspects of the stories as well.

Panel: Welcome as the Rain: 40 Years of Tibetan Performing Arts in Protest and Performance

Chair: Jeanette Snyder

Participants: Marcia Calcowski (University of Lethbridge)
Sonam Tashi (Chak Sam-Pa-Performing Group, Lethbridge Alberta)
Tsering Wang Mo. (Chak Sam-Pa-Performing Group, San Francisco, CA)
Tashi Dhondup. (Chak Sam-Pa-Performing Group, San Francisco, CA)
Jeanette Snyder (Milwaukee, Wisconsin)

A multi-media lecture-demonstration on the developments in Tibetan music, dance, and theater inside Tibet and outside during the last forty years, including performances, video clips, slides, films, and recordings.

Panel: Studies in Tibet Centered Cross-Culturalism

Chair: Guy Newland (Central Michigan University)

Guy Newland (Central Michigan University) “Good Cop-Bad Cop on the Tibetan Frontier: The Orientalism of Sir Charles Bell and Laurence Austine Waddell”

John Buescher (Voice of America, Tibet Service) “Voice of America: Tibet Broadcasting”

Jay Garfield (Hampshire College) “Post-colonial Cross-cultural Scholarship”

John Powers (Wittenberg University) “Hermeneutics and Tradition in the Sandhinirmocana-Sutra and its Commentaries”
Panel: Democracy and the Politics of Development in Nepal I
Chair and Discussant: Barry Bishop (National Geographic Society)

Paul Benjamin (Indiana University)
"Post-Panchayat Organization of Villages in Nepal: Seeds of Increasing Factionalization and Conflict"

The problem of post-panchayat organization of villages in Nepal is considered. The panchayat system had organized the entire country into over four-thousand local political jurisdictions called “village panchayats.” Village panchayats rarely mobilized resources themselves for their own development but relied instead on grants-in-aid and project requests from the district and central government. Access to projects and grants-in-aid came via important contacts in Kathmandu. These contacts were often the basis of factions in village panchayats. With the near monopolization of power by the panchayat system, the number of these important contacts was limited and so were village factions. With the advent of a multi-party system in Nepal, the number of political parties in Nepal has grown to nearly 50. It is suggested in this paper that the growth in number of political parties in Nepal will result in increasing political factionalization in what remain, in essence, village panchayats. With growing factionalization, the geographic and political entity that had been the village panchayat may split apart. Possible consequences of this and some potential means to avoid it are examined.

Nanda Shrestha (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater)
"Development Problems and Prospects in Post-Democracy Nepal"

There are several political models of economic development such as bourgeois democratic (US and England), fascist (pre-war Germany and Japan), bourgeois authoritarian (Taiwan, South Korea, and Brazil), socialist-democratic or semi-capitalist (India), socialist (USSR and China) and a host of others. Recent breakdown of the socialist system in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and a growing demand of democratic reforms in Taiwan and South Korea and many other countries have cast a dark shadow on both the authoritarian and socialist models of development. These events have led many social scientists to claim that the democratic (i.e. capitalist) system has finally triumphed and that capitalism is the only durable path to economic progress and prosperity. Accordingly, development and democracy are projected to be coterminous in that sustained development is not feasible in the absence of democracy. The question to be analyzed here is: now that democracy has arrived in Nepal, can (will) the country march forward and achieve economic progress and prosperity and thereby alleviate poverty, unemployment, and inequality — the most important objective of development? Given the fact that the country is deeply entrenched in feudalistic interests and foreign aid dependency and given the extremely high degree of party divisions and the unrealistic development goals of the major political parties vying for power, the answer to the above question remains uncertain.

Anup Pahari (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
"Feudal Politics and Capitalist Development in Nepal"

In this paper I argue that an organized conception of the past is central to an understanding of the present political and economic developments in Nepal. Scholars concerned with Nepal have looked at the past with the help of loosely defined categories that are seldom more than descriptive. From its gestation to the present day, the state of Nepal has passed through several distinct, but not discontinuous stages. These past practices have shaped present day politics and economic change in Nepal. However, no serious attempt has been made to re-construct the past with a view to deconstructing the present.

The central argument of my paper is that the basis of politics in Nepal continues to be rooted in relations that defy categorization as simple practices: relations that have retained essential elements of a mode of social organization in which “classes” do not have an identity materially distinct from that of competing social hierarchies. Simultaneously, economic relations, the basis of social reproduction, have undergone successive transitions towards a capitalist mode of production: “development” itself is a phenomenal form of an underlying capitalist economic dynamic. A key theoretical problem then is the following: What sort of relationship exists between “development” and politics? In more general terms, how does “feudal” politics in Nepal coexist with and reinforce capitalist development? What are the consequences of this relationship on long term political and economic transformation in Nepal?
These questions can be resolved only through a historical materialist reworking of the past in Nepal, something this paper will initiate.

Panel: Democracy and the Politics of Development in Nepal I
Chair: Frederick Gaige (University of Wisconsin-Whitewater)

Steve Mikesell (Madison, WI)
“Politics of Demobilization in Nepal” [no abstract available]

Pramod Parajuli (Syracuse University)
“Dancing with the Emperor in Shangri-La: Political Engineering of Development as an Apologia for Autocratic Monarchy in Nepal”

Examining the phenomena of the royal coup of 1960 and the intensification of development politics in the last thirty years in Nepal, this paper will explore the dynamics of Orientalism, the Euro-American hegemony in global political economy and the role of development discourse. I will basically focus on the paradox between the metaphors of “democracy” and “progress” on the one hand, and the real politics of “putting democracy back in the rails” as a sacrifice for national development on the other.

Elizabeth Enslin (Cornell University)
“Women, the State, and the Politics of Development in Nepal”

Although often overlooked in political and economic histories, gender has been integral to the construction and contestation of power in Nepal. This paper will examine the importance of gender in discourses and practices of development by focusing on state policies directed at women and various local responses to them. By considering the politics of women and development at both state and local levels, this paper will shed light on central problems in the contemporary transition to democracy in Nepal.

Panel: Newar Religion and Nepal
Chair: Gautam Vajracharya (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

Robert Levy (National Humanities Center) “Newar Brahmans”

The Newar Brahman plays a full range of Brahmanical roles, in a situation which is increasingly rare in South Asia. He is family priest, Tantric guru and temple priest at the same time. Until recently Brahmans only did priestly work. My paper will discuss the Brahman’s work and its relation to the Newar complex system of auxiliary priests, and will also note the implications of the Brahman’s role for the covert aspects of his status in the caste system.

Michael Witzel (Harvard University)
“The Significance of the Names of Nepalese Rivers” [no abstract available]

Todd Lewis T. (College of The Holy Cross)
“Tibetan Trade and the Sinhalasarthabahu Avadana: The Domestication of a Newar Buddhist Didactic Tale”

The paper presents a translation and analysis of a popular didactic story (avadāna) characteristic of Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism that is still important in the living Buddhist community in Kathmandu, Nepal. This work, the Sinhalasarthabahu Avadāna, is a tale of merchants shipwrecked, seduced, then devoured by alluring cannibalistic demonesses...except for one hero who is saved by the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and lives to avenge the evildoers.

The relationship highlighted in the Sinhalasarthabahu Avadāna, is between merchants and religious traditions, an especially important bond around sex and violence can be read symbolically on several levels. In this text, too, are significant discourses on ethical and political themes central to Buddhism in society.
Part II of the paper draws upon anthropological research in Nepal to demonstrate the text’s multi-faceted relationship with a specific socio-cultural setting. The Simhalasārthabahu Avadāna has special relevance to the large mercantile community of Kathmandu, where long distance trade with Tibet was an important undertaking in the last millennium. The hero of the story is regarded as a protector of local merchants, a relationship institutionalized in one of the city’s oldest Buddhist temples (Vikramāśīla Mahavihāra) and celebrated in a yearly festival. Shrines and ferries along the trade route from Kathmandu to Lhasa also grounded the text in reality. Nepalese folklore, art, children’s stories, and even a recent cultural comic book also derive from the formal textual account.

The paper concludes by focusing upon the dominant theme in the domestication of this tale: a caution against intermarriage outside the Newar community. In examining this adaptation, the Newar reaction suggests attention to universal patterns of socio-cultural adaptation in Buddhist history.

Panel: Politics and Practice: Land Use, Ownership, and Forms of Rural Production in Nepal
Chair: Jana Fortier (University of Wisconsin) and Mary Cameron (Michigan State University)
Discussant: Katherine Bowie (University of Wisconsin)

Jeffrey Riedinger (Michigan State University)
“Democratic Transitions and Redistributive Reform: Prospects for Land Reform in Nepal.”

In the still predominantly rural settings of the developing world, agrarian reform remains the most politically charged of the redistributive societal reforms and, arguably, the most important. Land tenure structures have long been viewed as a fundamental impediment to enhancement of agricultural productivity and initiation of a process of sustained economic development. Moreover, land tenure-related grievances have been regularly identified as fueling civil conflict and social revolution. At a more general level, agrarian reform has been seen as the principal vehicle for political incorporation and control of the rural poor, a means of promoting peasant political participation tied to a party or regime.

Agrarian reform policy — involving both redistribution of land ownership and the development of complementary credit, extension, infrastructure, pricing, and research programs — has been a notable element of the recent debates over political and social change in Nepal. Over the past year, populist forces have successfully promoted the restoration of democratic political forms in Nepal. The transition to democracy has heightened expectations of social and economic reform. These events provide an important new case with which to address questions concerning the links, if any, between the expansion of political rights and the reduction of socio-economic inequalities. This paper raises the issues of socio-economic inequality in developing countries and the capacity of democratic regimes to effectuate redistributive reform. Is significant agrarian reform possible under the auspices of a transitional democracy?

Mary Cameron M. (Michigan State University)
“A Critical Examination of Structure and Practice in Nepal’s Jajmani System: Exchange, Domination, and Resistance from the Perspective of Low-Castes”

In the densely populated yet still remote middle hills of Nepal, sharp differences exist in access to and ownership of arable land, while control over the distribution of agricultural products is a primary mechanism of ideological and material power. Throughout the country, land ownership differences mirror caste hierarchy and ethnic boundaries such that high-caste families comprise the vast majority of a landholding elite. This paper argues that material domination and forced dependency, alongside dominating ideologies, serve to sustain high-caste domination over low-caste families. It details the structure of land ownership, the complex nature and trajectories of intercaste exchange and describes the practices of domination through ownership.

Jana Fortier (University of Wisconsin-Madison)
“Signifying Land and Labor Practices with Verbal and Visual texts from Western Nepal”

The paper will explore how people living in Jajarkot District, Nepal verbally and visually signify tenurial relations and labor exchange practices. Social status rules, embodied in ideology, are manifested in land tenure and labor exchange systems by “practicing” system rules. These rules of practice are symbolically signified.
and expressed through language, dress, and artifact. I will use oral narratives, land dispute case histories, and photographs to argue that the significant or meaningful in an action creates either challenge or legitimization of ideology.

Central to the dialectic of representation and reality is the issue of the relationship between signifier and actual practice. This issue will be encapsulated as the question of the determinant relationship between base and superstructure or structure and ideology.

Caught up in the base-superstructure dilemma are the issues of the power of ideology, its hegemonizing capabilities, and ideological differences by social category. I will interpret Jajarkot narratives as ideological tools used to influence others about the truth or “naturalness” of their particular social and material position. As B. Brecht said, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality, but a hammer with which to shape it.” So I show that Jajarkot people’s words and other signifying actions have the power to confront, shape, or legitimate material conditions of land and labor.

Panel: Himalayan Possession Rituals in Kumaon, Tibet and Nepal
Chair: Allen Fanger (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania)

Ter Ellingson (University of Washington)

“Modes of Possession in the Himalayas: Tibetan Oracles, Tamang Shamans, Newar Tantric Dancers”

The modes of transformation of individual consciousness into an experience of identity with gods and spirits are as varied in Himalayan cultures as the discursive modes in which they are expressed, whether by insiders or outside scholars. Local tendencies to symbolic inclusiveness and cultural mutability and permeability contribute to the density of a thicket of distinct but intertwined terminologies — jhākri/Bon po, sku rten/pyākha huimha, sādhana/pha khog tu zhugs po/du: dune way — while opposing tendencies render anthropological glosses such as shaman, oracle, dancer and priest equally problematic. For the outside scholar, reductionist tendencies inherent in anthropology’s primordial urges towards universalism and cultural isolationism and Buddhology’s attraction to doctrinal fundamentalism, both part of the West’s philological heritage, inhibit clear understanding of the modes of possession either in themselves or in relation to one another.

Yet these modes, or at least some of them, can be clearly distinguished in terms of their processes of induction and of the experiences they produce. Using a combination of videotapes of induction processes and descriptions of their experiences by practitioners, this paper will examine differences in the external and experiential features of three modes, and attempt to clarify some of the long-standing issues of their scholarly understanding and representation.

Linda Itis (University of Washington)

“Pātras and Possession among the Newars of Nepal”

In both Hindu and Buddhist tantric religious practice, the pātra or ritual vessel serves as a central focus for ritual action. The vessel provides a physical, visually perceivable support into which a deity is invited to temporarily enter and reside. The support vessel may be a drawing, a clay or metal water pot, an image or a human being.

Configurations of gods and their human pātra vessels in Newar communities range from Kumārīs Ganešas, and Bhairavas who are embodied by children; to local geographic gods and famous gods of Purāyas and epics who are embodied by installed dancer priests, to the Aṣṭa Māṭkā and 330 million gods who may be embodied by women who study to become Dya: Mājus. Ritual practices associated with these transformative traditions are equally varied in appearance.

An examination of human pātra vessels in terms of their identities and qualifications, on the one hand, and of the different kinds of gods who enter them, on the other hand, suggests new ways of looking at tantric practice. Patterns of prescribed and proscribed social interactions surrounding human pātra vessels and the gods who inhabit them, helps increase our understanding of the kinship of both gods and humans in Newar life.
When we think of textual explanations and commentaries of tantric practice in South Asia, pātras are mentioned within the context of esoteric Doctrines of Vibration and complex meditation sequences outlined for the exclusive use of highly disciplined yogic practitioners whose primary aim is isolation from worldly experience and total restructuring of experience inside the body and mind in order to effect change outside the body and mind. This is perhaps one of the most asocial non-interactive kinds of experience one could imagine.

For the Newars of Nepal, the pātras or human vessels facilitate religious experience by providing an immediate link between the devotee and the sacred through ritual embodiment. In this context, ritual practice and religious belief systems are both tantric and socially interactive. Meditative accomplishment, physical yoga, and devotion combine to make tantric practices which are designed to provide immediacy for both practitioner and community.

Allen Fanger (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania)

"Jagar: Spirit Possession in Kumaon"

The spirit possession seance known as jagar is an important and widely distributed expression of village Hinduism in the central Himalayan foothills of Kumaon. All the major castes in the region, including Halia (land cultivating) Brahmins, Rajputs, and Shilpikars (artisans) participate in jagars. The jagar performance requires the combined efforts of a drummer-singer (jagariya), and at least one oracle-medium (dongariya). Additional assistance may be provided by a thali player and hebars who provide vocal accompaniment.

Jagars most commonly are performed at times of crisis or family misfortune; but, they also may be conducted in conjunction with cyclical ceremonies and rites of passage (e.g., birth or marriage). However, the most frequent context for jagar is the exorcism of malevolent ghost possession, especially among young, married and childless women. When the possession by the deity occurs, she/he dances and speaks through the oracle/medium. If the jagar is being held to exorcise a ghost, the jagariya asks (instructs really) the oracle to drive the ghost from the “victim.” These exorcisms and related pre- and post-jagar rituals almost always are successful. Discussion will conclude with a social-psychological explanation for the extraordinary efficacy of the performance. The key to this analysis will focus on the position of women in the joint family before and after marriage.

Stan Mumford (The College of Idaho)

"Tibetan Demon Exorcism: An Ethnography of Village Lama Performance"

In the Tibetan villages of the Gyasumdo area near the northern border in Nepal, demon exorcisms based on the Nyingma Buddhist texts are regularly performed by Tibetan lamas. This paper will first examine an actual case of demon spirit possession of a Tibetan woman as witnessed during field research in 1982, and the attempt to heal her through demon exorcism performed by the village lamas before she died. We will then describe and analyze various features and principles of Tibetan demon exorcism as performed by Tibetans of this Himalayan region, including the manner in which the Nyingma lamas compete with non-Buddhist exorcisms of the shaman practitioners living nearby.

Panel: Indian Issues, Tibetan Perspectives: Three Intersectarian Debates
Chair and Discussant: Roger Jackson (Carleton College)

John Makransky (Middlebury College)

“A dGe Lugs/Sa skya Disagreement on the Proper Understanding of Enlightenment”

Final nirvana in early and Abhidharma Buddhism was described as a state free from the realm of impermanence and karmic conditions, i.e. as unconditioned (asamskṛta). With the development of Mahayana Buddhism, a new notion of nirvana became prominent which conformed to the new emphasis on the Bodhisattva path of compassionate activity. A Buddha’s nirvana in this scheme was an “unfixed nirvana” (apratisthita nirvana), fixed neither in the unconditioned quiescence of the “Hinayana” nirvana nor in the conditioned suffering of samsara. Thus, Buddhahood was often described in Mahayana texts either as unconditioned, as conditioned, or as both.

But in precisely what sense was Buddhahood unconditioned, and in what sense conditioned? This question was related implicitly to other questions fundamental to Indian Buddhism: Is enlightenment primarily the
discovery of an innate purity (the unconditioned), or is it the fruition of limitless spiritual practices (a collection of conditions)? Is a Buddha’s awareness mainly a non-dual gnosis of emptiness (the unconditioned), or a dualistic cognition of all phenomena (the conditioned)? Different Indian traditions approached such questions in different ways, leading to a diversity of interpretations and emphases regarding theories of Buddha’s knowledge (jñāna), Buddhakayas, tathāgatagarbha, and yogic praxis.

Such problems continued to draw attention in Tibet, where leading scholars sometimes disagreed sharply with each other on the solutions. This paper will focus on a few areas of tension in Indian Mahayana formulations of enlightenment which gave rise to differing positions by late Indian Buddhist thinkers. It will then show how two important Tibetan thinkers, Tsong kha pa (dGe lugs) and Go ram pa (Sa skya), further deepened the discussion as they supported different Indian positions on the proper way to understand a Buddha’s enlightenment.

Jose Ignacio Cabezon (Illiff School of Theology)

"Experience and Reason: Shakya mchog-Idan’s History of Madhyamaka"

Shakya mchog Idan’s History of Madhyamaka (dBu ma’i byung tshul) is an important text for the understanding of the various strains of the Madhyamaka school that arose in Tibet. Written during what is arguably the high point of Tibetan scholasticism, it is a veritable gold-mine of information about the different sectarian views concerning the philosophy of the “Middle Way” prevalent during this time. This sets forth Shakya mchog Idan’s interpretive schema and contextualizes it against the background of the intersectarian philosophical polemics of fifteenth-century Tibet.

Leonard van der Kuijp (University of Washington)

“Rgyal-tshab and Shakya mchog-Idan: Aspects of their Interpretation of the Pramanasiddhi Chapter of Dharmakirti’s Pramanavarttika”

Gser-mdog Pan-chen Shakya mchog-Idan completed this *Tshad ma’i chos-byung in 1502. This work can be considered a summa of his intellectual and spiritual life. We find numerous references to the commentaries on the Dharmakirti by Rgyal-tshab throughout his epistemological oeuvre, and these are given a systematic and crystallized form in his *Tshad ma’i chos-byung. The focus of this paper will be his critique of Rgyal-tshab’s alleged position that (a) Dharmakirti employed a thugs-kyi rigs-pa for establishing the sense of the Pramanasiddhi chapter to have been thar-pa and thams-cad mkhyen-pa, and (b) the text is unusual in the context of the other Mahayana traditions.

Panel: Developments within the Yogacara Philosophy in Tibet

Chair: Ronald Davidson (Fairfield University) Discussant: George Dreyfus (University of Virginia)

Jeffrey Hopkins (University of Virginia) “Some Tibetan Contributions to the Philosophy of Mind-Only”

Ronald Davidson (Fairfield University) “The Sakyapa Doctrine of Innate Gnosis and its Relation to Yogacara Systems”

Joseph Wilson (University of North Carolina) “Some Considerations on the Gelugpa Approaches to Yogacara”

Lesley Kawamura (University of Calgary) “Indigenous Tibetan Commentary on Yogacara”

CONFERENCE PAPERS & ABSTRACTS 89
Individual Papers in other South Asia Panels

Kamal Adhikary (Austin, TX)
“Naming Ceremonies as Rituals of Development”
Panel: Recent Research on the History of Development
In Nepal the discourse of development is often infused with nationalist sentiment. It is assumed that by participating in projects of development, members of different social and ethnic groups will cooperate in building the nation, and thereby acquire a sense of shared identity. Central to this quest for common national identity is the process of Nepalization, which is implicitly or explicitly emphasized in any discourse or ritual of development. At the local level name-giving ceremonies, in which age-old local settlement names are replaced by Sanskritized names, illustrate the process. The replacement of local names has been going on in Nepal for decades, since the coming of new settlers. However, replacing local names with Sanskritized names in a ritual ceremony is comparatively recent, and is considered by the government media to be a process of development and a way of enhancing national identity. This paper describes two such name-giving rituals. It also discusses the fact that, although the two names are blazingly displayed on big signboards with government sanction fear that the practice of replacing old names by new ones will ultimately erase the local history and culture attached to the names.

Om Gurung (Cornell University)
Panel: Recent Research on Development
Common property resources, particularly forest and pastures are steadily decreasing each year in Nepal Himalayas resulting in many unintended and unanticipated environmental consequences. The increasing rate of resource depletion has not only threatened the environmental balance and conservation of valuable species of wildlife, but also the basic subsistence means of the vast majority of people. Those who follow the conventional model of environmental degradation assert that population pressure in common property resources is the principal cause of resource degradation in Nepal. Many of them suggest two solutions: control of population growth and privatization or nationalization of common resources to ensure their efficient management. However, I believe that population pressure is not the sole cause of resource degradation in Nepal. Therefore, privatization or nationalization of common resources can neither serve the interest of the local people nor can they meet the collective goals of local development. The complex of multiple factors, internal as well as external, such as encroachment of outsiders on previously single ethnic areas, devaluation of local cultures, political interference, frequently changing public policies and programs, the increasing rate of poverty caused by inequitable distribution of resources, the impact of mass tourism, and the introduction of market economy are simultaneously at work resulting in the resource destruction in Nepal. These forces have not only created conditions for mass poverty which has further exacerbated resource destruction, but have also undermined the traditional cultural strategies which work as a social control mechanism to maintain and regulate man-nature relationships among several communities in Nepal. Therefore, for the better management of common property resource in Nepal, firstly, these complexity of factors needs to be examined and analyzed in its broader historical, cultural-ecological and political-economic contexts at different organizational and institutional levels. Secondly, cultural strategies adopted by local communities should be evaluated and reinstituted with appropriate supports and incentives.

Laura Ahearn (University of Michigan)
“The Emergence of Cultural Meaning in a Nepali Women’s Songfest”
Panel: Recent Research on Gender
In Baugha Gumha, a small Magar village in west central Nepal, women look forward all year to the festival of Tij. Magars in Baugha Gumha, although of Tibetan decent and originally Buddhist, have become assimilated into the surrounding Brahman-Chetri Hindu culture, taking part in all the major Hindu rituals, including Tij. The manner in which Tij is celebrated in Baugha Gumha differs significantly, however, from the traditional two-day Brahman-Chetri festival described by writers such as Oscar Lewis and Lynn Bennett. In this paper I examine some of these differences and explore the complex multifaceted nature of Tij as it is
expressed in Baugha Gumha through a month of gatherings that include songfests, feasts, and pūjās.

According to Hindu scriptures, the pūjās performed by women during the two official days of Tij are aimed at promoting the long lives of their husbands and atoning for polluting men by touching them at inappropriate times, such as during menstruation or childbirth. In Baugha Gumha, however, the numerous gatherings of women (and sometimes women and men) that occur during the weeks preceding the official two days of Tij contain elements of resistance to as well as reinforcement of the dominant Hindu ideology regarding caste and gender. Tij song lyrics in particular illustrate the multivocal nature of the festival as it is celebrated in Baugha Gumha. Sung only during the month or so preceding Tij, these songs concern the fates of typical Nepali women and are often critical of traditional customs, such as arranged marriage. I analyze the song lyrics in the context of their performance and explore how the various manifestations of Tij in Baugha Gumha—songfests, feasts, and pūjās—provide interesting insights into the emergence of cultural meaning in the lives of the women and men in a Hinduized Magar community.

Leela Ramamurthy (University of California-Berkeley)

“Practices of Polygamy in the Sub-Himalayan Region Among Female Hindu and Buddhist Communities Across the Northern Borders of the Indian Sub-Continent”

Panel: Recent Research on Gender

The social and economic implications of a woman being married to a family of brothers is common among the castes of the hilly regions of the Himalayan border states. Research data of sociologists indicates that it has been successful due to the disproportionate male-female sex ratio of the populations and the scarcity of the cultivable land in these areas. At the same time unlike the patriarchal societies of the Todas and the Nairs of South India, these societies are matriarchal. Property inheritance is not through the female lineage like in the Nilgiri hills and Kerala estates, but through the male members of these families. The concept of sharing a common wife in order to deep the property homogenous, which in their consciousness includes the “wife”—the bride price paid at the time of the marriage. The woman divides her time and attention equally among the husbands; she cares for them equally, keeps home for them in an environment of harmony and peace. Both Tantric Buddhism and Tantric Hinduism, which is practiced in these regions sanction this form of marriage practice and other rituals within family lifestyles. Children born of such marriages accept all the male members in the role of the father figure as the uterine birth is the basic connection.

The paper analyzes the Bhotia Buddhists of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal and the Hindu Kinnuars of Himachal Pradesh—the Kangra and Kulu valley districts for the purpose of studying the polyandry marriage practices. The paper highlights the women’s perceptions, her mental emotional, physical perceptions of self, her acceptability by her friends, neighbors, and society in terms of honor, respectability etc. The former could reflect the power, control, decision making in the family and for her individual self about the responsibility of having to relate to different men in a similar vein in the marital situation.

Peter Edwina Hook (University of Michigan)

“Kesar of Layul: An Anti-Ramayana from Dardistan”

Panel: Popular and Traditional Culture in Pakistan: Words, Music and Print

In 1989 while conducting field work in the far north of Pakistan I encountered a version of the Central Asian epic cycle “Gesar of Ling” recited in Shina of Gultari, maybe the only version existing in an Indo-Aryan language. I was able to collect a synopsis of more than half of it. The Shins of Gultari are neither Buddhists nor Tibetans, differences not without consequences when their version of the Gesar myth is collated with more easternly ones. In the general context of cross-cultural comparison my paper focuses on depiction of behavior by and towards women in “Kesar of Layul.”

A dominant if not the predominant theme in both Tibetan and Gultari versions is Kesar’s use of trickery and magic as well as strength and courage in obtaining his ends. The central plot is not unlike that of the Ramayana: Kesar’s wife, Gulistan, the Queen of Layul, is abducted by a rival king whom Kesar must defeat and destroy in order to restore his family and his realm. While the Tibetan version has a superstructure of Buddhist piety that attempts to make the protagonist into the champion and defender of Buddhist Dharma in Tibet, the Gultari version gets right down to the real issue: the championship and defense of men’s rights and prerogatives against the continual challenge mounted by enterprising and unservient women. In the paper
I present several episodes in which women show themselves braver and cleverer than men and are in the end defeated only by treachery and by the male characters’ readiness to shame and torment them. As the culmination of this contest Kesar defeats his queen Gulistana by attacking her coldly and deliberately at her weakest point: Gulistana’s maternal love for the two sons she has borne to her abductor, the King of Horyul.

“Kesar of Layul” preserves and permits us to glimpse one culture’s construction of the struggle between the sexes at a stage before female protagonists have been taught (or forced) to play their allotted parts and to speak and act only as male authors and reciters direct.

Kathryn March (Cornell University)

“Two Houses and the Pain of Separation in Tamang Narratives from Highland Nepal”

Panel: Perspectives on Kinship and Gender in Women’s Oral Traditions

Sites for the expression of sex differences:

At the heart of the anthropological endeavor lies a Desire to understand other peoples. The modes and applications of this effort vary across a broad spectrum: from exploitative, if not baldly extorted, accounts put in the service of colonial, missionary, national, or commercial interests, through sincere, if not always successful, attempts at collaboration, to eccentric, even romantic or egoistic, chronicles of personal encounters. What is at stake in the most recent anthropological critiques of our own enterprise, is a series of questions about our ability to represent others’ identities, especially those forged in colonial and post-colonial structure.

O’Hanlon’s review of Subaltern Studies (1988), in particular, invites us to reconsider relationships of power and resistance, of hegemony and autonomy, and of women and men, suggesting that there are certain important parallels among all these relationships and to the contemporary critiques of them. This paper looks at men’s and women’s verbal constructions of their identities, then, at the continuities and discontinuities in their expressions of sex-specific experience, and, finally, at both women’s and men’s evocation of gender imagery to depict aspects of their lives as painful.

At stake in my presentation are two central reflections. First is the question of whether or not power and resistance, hegemony and autonomy, interact in the same way between women and men, and more specifically between contemporary Tamang men and women from central highland Nepal, as has been described between colonial authorities and local peoples in wider South Asia. To the extent that gendered and other forms of domination are NOT isomorphic, of course, an important subsidiary question to the first arises: if present understandings of colonialism and postcoloniality are inadequate to dissemble gender, then, is this more because gender is different, or more because subaltern studies are inadequate?...

Kirin Narayan (University of Wisconsin)

“Husbands as Foreigners: Women’s Songs and Subjectivities in Kangra”

Panel: Perspectives on Kinship and Gender in Women’s Oral Traditions

Folksongs of women’s sufferings are sung in villages throughout India. In this paper, I examine representations of relationships between genders in pokhara, a genre of women’s song from Kangra valley, H.P. Supplementing texts with performance contexts and oral literary criticism, I argue that images of geographical distance tied into a remittance economy are used to evoke distance between husbands and wives, even as solidarity between women themselves is highlighted.

Tsering Tsomo (University of Kentucky)

“Regional Movements in Tibet and the Himalayas”

Panel: Geographers’ Perceptions of Regional Movements in South Asia

A.K. Mittal (Nainital, India)

“Economic Life of the People of the Central Himalayan Region of India During the Colonial Rule”

Panel: Recent Research in History

The Central Himalayan Region is an integral part of Indian heritage. From the administrative point of view this area is divided into two Divisions, i.e., Kumaon and Garhwal. It consists of eight hill districts of Uttar Pradesh. Being situated on the border of Nepal and Tibet, the strategic significance of this area is beyond doubt.
From historical viewpoint this area remains relatively unexplored till now. The rugged topography had made communication extremely difficult resulting, to a certain extent, in an insular outlook and an indigenous economic history. The Central Himalayan region was ruled first by many dynasties and then by the British. The British conquered this area in 1815 from the Gorkhas of Nepal and ruled here till the independence of India.

The common adage “necessity is the mother of invention” could nowhere be better illustrated than in the economic life of the Central Himalayan people. The tremendous difficulties of the environment had not, as might be imagined, been able to suppress the initiative and the energy of man. The picturesque terrace of the Himalayan slopes that greet the eyes of the traveler represent an extraordinary degree of strenuous toil. The Central Himalayan region was an agricultural area and much of the economic life of the people depended upon their land and its cultivation. Besides agriculture, tea, iron, wool and trans-Himalayan trade with Tibet were some industries which existed during the colonial rule in this area.

After the annexation of the Central Himalayan region, the British introduced drastic changes in the existing conditions related to the economic life of the people. The only rich natural reserves to this region, i.e. forests were fully exploited through contract system. Human resource development was also crucified for safeguarding the interests of the British Empire.

The proposed paper brings to light the economic life of the Central Himalayan people which was hitherto, not known. It also throws light upon the changes made by the colonial rulers and its impact upon the society. It is interesting to note that the British economic policy for this region was different from the one which was implemented in the other parts of India. Why this discrimination was made and how it worked has also been analyzed.

Janardan Subedi (Miami University)

“Religious Conversion in Nepal: Legal and Political Aspects”

Panel: Religious Conversion in South Asia

Nepal, being the only Hindu state in the world, is very sensitive to the issue of religious conversion. The old and the new Nepalese Constitution permits the freedom to practice but not to preach and convert. This paper discusses the political sociology and legal aspects of conversion in Nepal.

Special Guest Speakers


All-Conference Dinner Lecture - by Robert Thurman (Columbia University)
Panel: Ritual Therapies and Discursive Rituals in the Himalayas
Organizer: Gregory Maskarinec; Discussant: John Hitchens

Maskarinec, Gregory G. (University of Hawaii and East-West Center)
“Shamanic Etiologies of Affliction from Western Nepal”

As part of every ceremony, Nepali shamans (jhâkris) recite lengthy, meticulously memorized, oral texts. These texts include passages that explain the origins of diseases and afflictions, and also provide elaborate instructions for their alleviation. A discursive analysis is undertaken of such passages, drawing upon the repertories of 15 shamans. The coherency of etiology and treatment is demonstrated, and reasons for the inclusion of these narratives within healing ceremonies are advanced.

Adams, Vincanne (Keele, England)
“Social Production of the Body in Nepalese Sherpa Lamaism and Shamanism”

This work examines Sherpa conceptions of the body in contemporary and historic Shamanic and Lamaist Buddhist practices of the Tibetan-Northeast Nepal region. The data are from archival materials on Tibet as well as 18 months of fieldwork among Sherpas in Nepal. The paper explores contemporary Sherpa body constructions in healing as products of a historical, gradual shift in conceptions of the self (as mental/physical and individual/social being) which was probably linked to transitions in social organization and expansion of state power in ancient Tibet.

McHugh, Ernestine L. (University of California-San Diego)
“Vision of the Good Life and the Goal of Healing”

This paper will explore Gurung notions of wholeness, and show how these provide a conceptual field in which the activities related to healing take place. Beliefs about what constitutes personal well-being and the relation of those to ideas about socially appropriate behavior will be considered. Individual descriptions of the experience of well-being (both physical and emotional) and its loss and recovery will be discussed. The presentation will provide an understanding of the processes of illness and healing in Gurung society grounded in cultural discourse and experience.

Desjarlais, Robert (University of California-Los Angeles)
“The Aesthetics of Illness and Healing among the Yolmo Sherpa”

This paper argues that a culturally-constituted “aesthetics” of personhood underlies experiences of self and body among the Yolmo Sherpa of Helambu, Nepal. The author examines cultural imageries and personal narratives of illness to show how this aesthetic shapes the ways in which the Yolmo construe and experience personal malaise. In turn, an analysis of shamanic rituals suggests that, just as notions of imbalance, disharmony and deficiency haunt the body in illness, so healing works to reinstate an aura of harmony, completion and vitality. These findings suggest that medical anthropologists must closely attend to indigenous, “ethno-psychological” understandings of illness and health.
Panel: Buddhism and the Tibeto-Burman Societies of the Himalayas
Chair and Discussant: Stan Mumford (College of Idaho)
   - Eva Dargay (University of North Carolina) - *Childhood in Zangskar: Studies in Sacred Biographies.*
   - Stan R. Mumford (The College of Idaho) - *Tibetan Buddhist Reform in the Nepal Himalayas.*
   - Elizabeth Napper (Stanford University) - *The Fate of Buddhism in Tibet.*

The Himalayan Forum
An ongoing seminar series held at the Centre of South Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, Spring and Summer 1991

- Martin Hoftun (Wadham College, Oxford) - *The Dynamics of Political Change in Nepal: Forces that brought about the Revolution of 1990.*
- David Taylor (Department of Politics, SOAS) - *The Political Crisis in Kashmir.*
- Major Nigel Collett (British Brigade of Gurkhas, Hong Kong) - *British Gurkhas in the Changing Environment of the 1990s.*
- Carol Tingey (Department of Music, SOAS) - *The damai bāja in a period of social change.*
- David Gellner (Institute of Social Anthropology, Oxford) - *Caste and Newar Ethnicity: Processes of Change.*
- Sandy Macdonald (CNRS, Paris) - *Continuity and Change in the Religions of the Himalayan region.*
- Declan Quigley (Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge) - *The Limits of Caste: some consequences of recent change for the Newars of Nepal.*
- Richard Burghart (Südasien Institut, University of Heidelberg) - *Sovereignty in the Himalayan region.*
- Lionel Caplan (Department of Anthropology, SOAS) - *“Tribes” and “peasants” in the anthropology of Nepal.*
- David Seddon (School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia) - *Democracy and Development in Nepal.*
- Peter Parkes (Queens University, Belfast) - *Minority Maneouvres: Continuities and Transformations among the Kalasha (Kalash Kafirs) of the Hindu Kush, 1950-1990.* (followed by a showing of the “Disappearing World” film on the Kalasha)
- Michael Hutt (Indology Department, SOAS) - *Intellectual realignments in post-Panchayat Nepal.*

CONFERENCE PAPERS & ABSTRACTS
Anthropology of Tibet and the Himalayas
An International Seminar held Sept 21-28, 1990 at the Ethnographic Museum of the University of Zürich
Publication of a volume of papers from this conference is in preparation

Tashi Tsering (Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, Dharamsala)- How Tibetans have regarded themselves through the ages.

Ernestine McHugh (University of California - San Diego, CA)- Culture and the Transformation of Suffering Among the Gurungs of Nepal.

Hiroshi Ishii (Tokyo, Japan) - A Comparative Study of Labor Recruitment in Nepal (with reference to Newars, Magars and other hill residents).

Prayag Raj Sharma (CNAS, Tribhuvan University) - Caste in the State of Nepal: A Historical Perspective.

Joanna Pfaff (Zürich) - Shaping State Ritual in Quest for Legitimacy. Transformation of the Nepalese Durga-Puja Festival after “Unification” of Nepal.

Peter Webster (University of Wellington, New Zealand) - The Epistemology of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal.

Christian Kleinert (Hagen) - Tradition und Wandel der Haus und Siedlungsformen im Tal des Kali Gandaki (Zentralnepal).

Reinhard Herdick (München) - Remarks on the Orientation of the Large Stupa in the Kathmandu Valley: A Discussion of Principles of Lunar Ordering.

Muhammad Abbas Kazmi (Skardo) - The Ethnic Groups of Baltistan i.e. Little Tibet.

Ursula Sagaster (Königswinter) - Observations during the Month of Muharram’ in Baltistan 1989.

Christian Schicklgruber (Vienna) - Remarks on the Kinship system of the Khumbo (NE Nepal).

Ganesh Man Gurung (Kathmandu, Nepal) - Polyandry in the Himalayas.


Nancy Levine (University of California, Los Angeles) - The Politics of Marriage: Tibetan Idioms and Variations.

Hans Roth (Bad Münstereifel) - The Central Asian Archive in Bonn and the Catalogue Project: Tibetan Material Culture in Europe.

Susanne von der Heide (Museumsdienst Köln) - From Traditional to Modern Art: Development in Nepal.

Veronika Ronge (Ittenbach) - Potters and Pottery-making in Tibet.

Wolf Kahlen (Berlin) - Thang-sTong rGyal-Po: A Leonardo da Vinci of Tibet.
Jeanette Snyder (Toronto) - Tibetan Selfpresentations in A Ice Lha mo.

Alexander Fedotov (Sofia, Bulgaria) - Some Forms of Folk-theatre in Tibet.

En-Hong Yang (Institute of Literature of Minority N., Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing) - Treatise on the Talking-and-Singing Form of the Artists of Gesar Epic.

Jiangbian Jiacuo - Divination in the Epic “Gesar King”

Barbara Nimri Aziz (Columbia University, New York) - A Himalayan Political Activist 1930.

Barbara Szerb-Mantl (Vienna) - Household in Lhasa.

John Gray (University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia) - The Concept of Dharma and the Constitution of the Household among the Parbatiya of Kathmandu Valley.

Rebecca French - Tibetan Legal System.

Klaus Seeland - Sanskritization and Environmental Perception among Tibeto-Burmese Speaking Groups.

Ayako Sadakane (Kanagawa, Japan) - Changing Aspects among Tibetan speaking Groups of the Langtang valley in the Development of Tourism.

Perdita Pohle (Geographisches Institut, Giessen) - Between Rural and Urban Life: The Manangis, a Community in Change.

Krystya Cech (Fife, Scotland) - The Social and Religious Identity of the Tibetan Bon pos-in-Exile.

Dilli Ram Dahal (CNAS, Tribhuvan University) - Anthropology of the Nepal Himalaya: A Critical Appraisal.

Eugen Wehrli (Zürich) - Tibet Research in China by Tibetans and Chinese.

Reinhard Greve (Hamburg) - The Sven Hedin Institute of the ‘SS-Ahnenerbe’.

Rohit Vohra (Ettelbruck) - Ethno-archeological Investigation before Excavation in Ladakh.

Charles Ramble (Woodlands Mountain Institute) - Ritual Complexity as Political Legitimation: Choosing a Headman in Southern Mustang.

Thierry Dodin, Heinz Räther (Bonn) - Buddhism and Society in the Himalayas: Presentation of a Research Project.

Marcia Calkowski (University of Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada) - Contesting Hierarchy: On the Praxis of Competition in Tibetan Society.

Michael Mühllich (Berlin) - Complementary and Hierarchical Aspects of Brahman-Chetris Social Structure.

Larry Epstein (University of Washington, Seattle, WA) - On Pilgrimage.

Michael Allen (University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia) - Hierarchy and Complementarity in Newar Eating Arrangements.
Todd Thornton Lewis (College of the Holy Cross, MA) - The Anthropology of Himalayan Trade: Diaspora Merchants and Networks of Religious Affiliation.

Gelek (Beijing) - The Tibet Plateau: One of the Homes of Primitive Man.

Lihua Ma (Tibetan Literary and Art Circles Assoc., Lhasa) - Travel Notes from Northern Tibet: The Report on the Fieldwork in Northern Tibet Pastoral Area.

Abby Ripley (New Milford, CT) - Vedic vestiges in Ladakhi folk rituals: An interpretive ground.

Kathryn March (Cornell University, Ithaca, New York) - Telling Songs, Singing Tales - of Tamang Life, Love and Lament.

Roland Bielmeier (Biel) - The Bono-Na Hymns of the Brokpa-Dards in Ladakh.

Arthur Mark Trewin (City University, London) - The Middle Way and India’s Great Tradition: Music and Power in Ladakh.

Maria Phylactou (London) - Anthropological Approaches to Ladakhi Ritual.

Bruce McCoy Owens (Chicago, Illinois) - Blood and Bodhisattvas in Bungaya: Sacrifice in Newar Buddhist Tradition.

Nicole Grist (London) - Muslim Kinship and Marriage in Ladakh.

Dawa Norbu (School of Int’l. Studies, New Delhi) - A Comparative Analysis of Karmic Ethos and Protestant Ethic.

Samten Karmay (Fontenay-aux-Roses) - A Ritual of Purification.

David Holmberg (Cornell University, Ithaca, New York) - The Western Tamang Festival of Chhe chu.

Hildegard Diemberger (Vienna) - The Hidden Valley of the Artemisia.

Andrea Loseries (Graz) - Tibetan Ceremonies of the Dead.

Charlotte Hardman - Ancestor Worship amongst the Lohorung Rai.

Vincenz Melches - The Possession of the Tibetan Oracles.

Amelie Schenk (Frankfurt) - Ladakhishe Orakelheiler.

Bapan Dorje (Central University for Nationalities, Beijing) - A Brief Study of Origin, Formation and Development of Tibetans’ Rational Thinking.

Geoffrey Samuel (Cardiff, Australia) - Shamanism, Bon and Tibetan Religion.

Michael Oppitz (Berlin) - The Drongo Bird as a Mythical Hero.

Gregory Maskarinec (Honolulu, Hawaii) - Flatter, Promise, Threaten, Kill: A Discursive Analysis of Shamanic Mantar
Chaoyang Sun - *Hospitalité, convivialité: l'évolution de la sociabilité dans le Tibet contemporain.*

Rinzin Thargyal (Norway) - *The Genesis of Tibetan Democracy in Exile.*

Rohit Kumar Nepali (Woodlands Mountain Institute) - *Cultural Consideration and Development in Eastern Nepal.*