



## Textbook difference

### Spatial history and national education in Panchayat and present-day Nepal

Bennike, Rune Bolding

*Published in:*

Indian Economic and Social History Review

*DOI:*

[10.1177/0019464614561620](https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464614561620)

*Publication date:*

2015

*Document version*

Peer reviewed version

*Document license:*

[Other](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Bennike, R. B. (2015). Textbook difference: Spatial history and national education in Panchayat and present-day Nepal. *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 52(1), 53-78. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0019464614561620>

**Textbook Difference:**

**Spatial History and National Education in Panchayat  
and Present-Day Nepal**

Post-print version, published in *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 52, no. 1

(2015): 53-78. doi: 10.1177/0019464614561620

**Rune Bolding Bennike**

Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies

Centre of Global South Asian Studies

University of Copenhagen

[runebennike@gmail.com](mailto:runebennike@gmail.com)

## **Abstract<sup>1</sup>**

This article examines the transformation of the diverse imperial landscape of the Gorkha Kingdom into the more uniform and integrated space of the Nepali nation. It argues that nationalised schooling, as it was introduced under Panchayat rule (1960-1990), was central to the production of national space. However, it also highlights how this schooling concomitantly extended a language of ‘anthropological’ and ‘ecological’ difference with which to organise and negotiate this space. Below the textbook surface of unity-in-diversity, remnants of imperial caste and racial hierarchies remained. And, along with novel notions of national development, new hierarchies were introduced that separated developed centres from remote and backward peripheries. Through its engagement with Nepali history, the article thus contributes to our understanding of the continued interaction between the production of national space and historical developments in governmental differentiation. Approaching ‘spatial history’ as a combined emphasis on the history of spatial production and the spatial productivity of historical representation, it highlights the contingencies of national connections between time and space. In conclusion, the article suggests how the languages of difference built up across Panchayat and present-day schooling continue to shape contemporary re-imaginings of national space, in the midst of political uncertainties.

*Keywords:* spatial history, national space, Nepal, Panchayat, education, difference, development

## **Introduction**

‘How can you teach who the prime minister is, when he keeps changing all the time?’ the social studies teacher asks.<sup>2</sup> It is September 2010 and since the prime minister resigned in late June the Nepali political parties have not been able to agree on a new candidate.<sup>3</sup> The teacher’s concerns tell a story of the contemporary political volatility in Nepal. Following the 1990 introduction of multiparty democracy a broad range of groups have emerged onto the scene of national politics asserting shared ethnic ancestries and histories of marginalisation. These groups are now actively engaged in a critical re-imagination of the nation – including demands for a federal restructuring of the national territory. Since the 2006 peace agreement ended a decade of civil war, the Constituent Assembly is widely regarded as locus for institutionalising such a re-imagination. But as discussions over federal models combine with the continuous in-fighting of entrenched elite politics, the on-going transition remains rife with uncertainties.

In spite of this political volatility and international concerns about the ‘fragile’ Nepali nation, the present article provides an argument about the relative stability of national space and a national language of difference. In the face of an uncertain future, the teacher and her colleagues chose to rely on the language of the school textbook in their work. The textbook language provided a stable reference point amid volatility. In the present article, I argue that it does so – in a certain sense – also outside the school classrooms.

In short, the governmental technique of national schooling, as introduced during Panchayat rule (1960-1990), provided a major impetus to the production of an integrated Nepali national space. As national schooling provided a more widespread extension of government across the country than ever before, it helped transform the

hierarchical imperial landscape of the Rana rulers (1846-1950) into an ostensibly more uniform national territory. However, while textbook discourse and the spatial extension of schooling helped integrate national space, it also concealed a persistent subtext of anthropological and ecological inequity. Remnants of Rana era hierarchies of castes and races remained below the surface of unity-in-diversity and the novel notions of national development introduced new hierarchies separating developed centres from remote and backward peripheries. Hence, Panchayat schooling concomitantly integrated national space and provide a nationalised language of unequal difference with which to engage this space.

In post-1990 Nepal, this nationalised language of difference is increasingly exposed and re-fashioned.<sup>4</sup> In the contemporary politics of federal restructuring, it is re-employed in arguments for and against ‘ethnic’ statehood. At the same time, highly valued notions of development and education continue to be mapped onto each other across the Panchayat period and into the present. As a consequence, the textbook language of difference emerges as a privileged language of politics and civic engagement. Although the educated person her/himself is often cast as a person able to walk away from the anthropological differences of ‘traditional society’, an ‘educated’ fluency in anthropological and ecological differences continue to mark out those that have a say in the political negotiation of national space. Hence, in multiple and complex ways, the spatial practice and discourse of Panchayat textbook schooling provides a crucial past to the present re-imagination of *Naya Nepal* – a new Nepali nation.

## **National Space, Spatial History, and Languages Difference**

The production of nations has, classically, been treated through a focus on history and temporality. Benedict Anderson's, *Imagined Communities*, revolves around the notion of 'empty homogenous time' brought about by nationalised print capitalism and contemporaneous readership; Ranger & Hobsbawn's engagement with the imagination of the nation focuses on the 'invention of traditions' referring to the past; and Dipesh Chakrabarty's post-colonial critique of the global hierarchy of nations similarly brings out temporal aspects through the incisive notion of the 'imaginary waiting room of history'.<sup>5</sup> All of these classics, naturally, deal with space. But they do so through a primary interest in time. Recent scholarship has, however, directed more attention to the spatial characteristics through which we imagine the nation. Building on the work of Henri Lefebvre and Michel de Certeau<sup>6</sup>, these recent works illuminate the 'production of *national* spaces'. Here, space is understood neither as a pre-given natural entity nor a container for interaction, but rather as a social product brought about through spatial practices and representations.<sup>7</sup> The present article contributes to this emerging literature through a focus on the 'spatial history' of the Nepali nation as seen through the practices and representations of national schooling.

By spatial history, I understand a sensitive and critical engagement with the historical production of national space. I see this engagement as foregrounding what historical representations *do*, rather than what the veracity of their claims might be. Spatial history, in other words, concomitantly emphasises the history of spatial production and the spatial productivity of historical representation. This dual sensitivity provides spatial history with a critical edge in relation to the nation. National histories typically read history backwards from their positions within national territory producing a nationalized 'time-in-space'.<sup>8</sup> Spatial history, on the

other hand, seeks to clarify the ways in which this spatial position and territoriality has emerged out of broader and more diverse landscapes. As Paul Carter suggests in the introduction to his spatial history of Australia, such an approach is ‘concerned with the haze which preceded clear outlines’ and ‘recognizes that the spatiality of historical experience evaporates before the imperial gaze’ – that is, the gaze of established, cause- and-effect histories supporting specific territorial formations.<sup>9</sup> Hence, more than a history of origins, spatial history is a history of beginnings and transformations, a history of the delineation, naming, bordering, organization and representation of space into the form of distinct places and territories.

Nepal is a highly illustrative case for investigating intersections between such a spatial history of the nation and the ‘government of difference’. The Himalayan hills provide a landscape of vast ecological and cultural diversity. Here, government was initially enabled through imperial techniques of spatial differentiation and organised ranks of inequality.<sup>10</sup> On this background, the Panchayat era production of a national space – with the usual connotations of fixed territorial borders and relative internal uniformity – was a challenging governmental process. Inevitably, it involved an elaborate re-organisation of internal differences as an inherent element in the production of national space. As described below, this re-organisation included the detachment of ‘ecological’ and ‘anthropological’ differences, first, from their spatial reference points in different ‘countries’ and, later, from their organisation in an explicit hierarchy of caste. By engaging the spatial history of the Nepali nation, we thus learn about the continued interaction between production of national space and historical developments in unequal governmental differentiation. It is within this field of interaction that I position textbook discourse as an important source of nationalised ‘languages of difference’.<sup>11</sup>

## **Textbooks as National Language**

From the 1960s, Nepal entered a high tide of nationalism. In 1950, an alliance of exiled political parties and king Tribhuvan had succeeded in breaking the hold on power maintained by the Rana lineage of prime ministers since 1846. Over the following years, shifting constellations of the King, Ranas, and political party representatives ruled the country while shuffling for power between each other. In 1959 an election for parliament was held, but already the following year, king Mahendra dissolved parliament and imprisoned many of the political leaders. Mahendra's justification was that multi-party democracy had been proven unsuitable for Nepal. Banning political parties, Mahendra instead presented a vision of a party-less 'Panchayat democracy'. This 'unique' system of government evolved around the king and village councils (*panchayats*) – two supposedly 'native' institutions 'commonly known and understood by the people'.<sup>12</sup> Through these institutions, Nepali citizens were supposed to unite as one nation under the ubiquitous aim of economic development (*bikas*).<sup>13</sup>

Supported by early American aid to the education sector,<sup>14</sup> Panchayat ideology foregrounded education as a key element in the overall goal of national development. While school education had deliberately been restricted under most of the Rana rule<sup>15</sup>, the Nepali education system was nationalised and extended more widely than ever before during the Panchayat period.<sup>16</sup> The 1971 National Education System Plan presented education as 'an investment in human resources for the development of the country'.<sup>17</sup> Education was to 'serve the country's need and aspiration'<sup>18</sup> in terms of both material development and national cohesion. As the plan states:

(...) roads and tracks are not laid-out by natural volition just as sectional parochialism cannot be transformed into social cohesion

without deliberate effort (...) politicisation of the traditional multi-ethnic Nepalese societies will not lead to national solidarity and independent sovereign nationhood without a central guidance in planned socialisation (...).<sup>19</sup>

Through the construction of schools and the distribution of centrally prescribed textbooks, the new nationalised education system was to be the main institution for such ‘planned socialisation’ that provided national unity for the sake of development.

As the education system expanded during the Panchayat period, centrally prescribed school textbooks attained a broader reach in Nepali society than most other media, reaching ‘places where even state newspapers like the *Gorkhapatra* did not’.<sup>20</sup> Textbooks were not only a medium for transmitting the Panchayat state’s discursive representations of national space. In their unprecedented dissemination throughout national territory, the books themselves were artefacts in a centrally controlled but nation-wide spatial practice. Transported from the central printing press in Kathmandu valley to a broad range of localities across Panchayat Nepal, they were received as important material representations of ‘development’ and the existence of a uniform national space within distinct territorial borders.<sup>21</sup> Both the discursive representations in the textbooks and their spatial dissemination thus contributed to the production of a national space.

School education, obviously, comprises a number of elements: the built environment of school spaces, ritualised school practices such as morning assemblies, school symbols etc. Other studies of schooling in Nepal have considered several of these elements,<sup>22</sup> but the present article focuses squarely on the discourse and spatial practice of textbooks. While this limits its scope for addressing the potential ‘socialisation effects’ of national education, the argument presented does not rely on

such an effect. As multiple scholars have argued with reference to other countries and contexts, national discourse and spatial practices can have powerful – though sometimes counterintuitive – effects even ‘beyond belief’.<sup>23</sup> Although it would probably be naïve to assume that schooling holds no socialisation effect whatsoever – at least one major study on Nepal suggests it does<sup>24</sup> – the students’ potential internalisation of textbook discourse is beyond the scope and interest of the article. The argument here relies, rather, on the historically unique position of textbook discourse as the first language – within or beyond belief – to combine nationwide spatial dissemination with national scope.

The new education system and its textbooks gave an unprecedented reach to the centralised voice of national government. This was really something new. As an indication of this, the young Nepali students followed by Deborah Skinner in the mid 1980s ‘were still some of the first in their area to experience state-provided schooling’.<sup>25</sup> As the literacy rate rose many-fold across the Panchayat period,<sup>26</sup> this must have been the case in a wide range of localities across the country providing education and textbook language with a distinctly novel character. While not necessarily ‘believed’, this new language was valued as an indication of development. Education, with its promise of attractive jobs in the emerging development sector, folded the image of the education person back onto notions of development. As Skinner and Holland argue, being a developed (*bikasi*) was largely equated with being educated (*parhne manche*) and vice versa.<sup>27</sup>

The combination of the unprecedented reach of Panchayat education and the clear valuation of education as a marker of development places textbook discourse in a unique point vis-à-vis national spatial integration in Nepal. For many, the Panchayat textbook discourse provided the first literacy in nation-wide language in several

senses. In a literal sense, the Panchayat education system imposed a strong monolingual policy onto a highly multilingual social landscape. As explicitly stated in the 1956 education plan, the hope was that ‘if the younger generation is taught to use Nepali as the basic language, the other languages will gradually disappear, and greater national strength and unity will result’.<sup>28</sup> Textbooks, in other words, provided a means to national spatial integration through Nepali as a common language. In a wider sense, however, the textbooks also disseminated two ‘governmental languages’ codifying difference within national space: an ‘anthropological’ language organising people in terms of castes, races, cultures and ethnicities, and an ‘ecological’ language organising spaces in terms of ecological niches, development, and remoteness. Drawing on a longer governmental history, outlined briefly below, these languages persisted as a subtext to the textbook discourse of unity-in-diversity. Hence, Panchayat textbooks not only provided literacy in the national language but also in a nation-wide language of difference.

### **Imperial History and Proto-National Formations (1742-1950)**

Histories of Nepal inevitably begin with the conquests of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his immediate successors. In this section, I briefly outline the history of the Shah conquests (1742-1814) and Rana rule (1848-1950). This sketch of imperial history provides a critical backdrop to Panchayat and present-day histories of Nepal’s ‘unification’ as well as an indication of the proto-national elements in Rana era governmental innovations.

From his ascendance to the throne of the small hill kingdom of Gorkha in 1742 till his death in 1775, Prithvi Narayan Shah managed to extend his rule across a large stretch of the Himalayan hills. After his death, Shah’s successors continued the expansion and by the turn of the century, the Gorkha Empire extended from the river

Sutlej in present-day Himachal Pradesh to the river Teesta in the Darjeeling district of present-day West Bengal – a large area sometimes referred to as Greater Nepal.<sup>29</sup>

However, in 1814-1815, confrontations with the British East India Company finally blocked the Gorkha conquests. With the subsequent signing of the Treaty of Sugauli (1816), the Gorkha Empire was reduced at its western, southern and eastern borders. Following Gorkha assistance to the British during the 1857 Sepoy rebellion, some lands in the southern lowland belt were returned to the Gorkha Empire (from Oudh) making the territorial borders of the empire resemble those of present-day Nepal.<sup>30</sup>

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Shah family ruled the empire. However, in 1846 the royal minister Jang Bahadur Rana organized a successful coup and institutionalised a complex hereditary system of ‘prime ministers’ (*shree tin*) that effectively – though not officially – put the royal family out of power until the mid-twentieth century.<sup>31</sup> Under the Rana family, various governmental initiatives provided for a more unified government than had, most likely, been the case before – de-territorialising earlier categories of difference into a unified nation-wide hierarchy. Analysing pre-Panchayat governmental discourse, Richard Burghart (1984) argues that the empire initially consisted of three separate but overlapping spheres: the ‘possessions’ of the king that designated the people and areas paying taxes to the empire; the ‘spiritual realm’ in which the king ‘exercised his ritual authority’ and the ‘countries of different people’ that were made part of the Gorkha kingdom during the conquest.<sup>32</sup> Under the Ranas these spheres gradually merged.

Before the 1814 war with the British East India Company, the frontier of the Gorkha Empire had not had the character of a fixed border. Various feudal landlords in the frontier areas of the empire tactically shifted their allegiance back and forth between Gorkha, British, and Mughal overlords depending on the conditions of

taxation etc.<sup>33</sup> With their shifts, the extension of the empire in terms of ‘possessions’ changed similarly. At the same time, the ‘spiritual realm’ of the Gorkha kings referred to a range of religious places both within and outside those possessions. With the war in 1814, these two spheres of the Gorkha Empire were, however, forced into co-extension along the lines of the more stable border designated by the Sugauli Treaty.<sup>34</sup> Later, towards the middle of the century, the spiritual and territorial aspects of the empire were further integrated. As the British had emerged as the rulers of most of the subcontinent, the Gorkha Empire could now be represented as ‘the only remaining Hindustan’.<sup>35</sup> Merging the spiritual and territorial spheres, the image of the empire as the last truly Hindu polity on the subcontinent thus emerged as a central proto-national representation of the country.

In line with the designation of the country as the last Hindustan, the shifting governmental gaze placed the ‘countries of different people’ into a common caste hierarchy inspired by the Hindu Varna system in India. Earlier, these ‘countries’ designated ‘a unique people who experience a common moral and natural identity by virtue of their living and interacting in the same region’.<sup>36</sup> With the introduction of the 1854 civil code (*Muluki Ain*), this territorialised form of differentiation changed. Providing a unified and de-territorialised framework for governing the population, the civil code institutionalised a hierarchical division of the population into five caste groups.<sup>37</sup> At the top of the hierarchy were the high-caste, Hindu, ‘cord-wearing’ *Brahmins* and *Chettris*.<sup>38</sup> Below these, most of the former ‘countries of different people’ (*desh*) were tuned into ‘sub-castes’ (*jat*) under the groups of ‘non-enslavable’ and ‘enslaveable alcohol-drinkers’ (*matwali*). At the bottom of the hierarchy came the ‘impure’ but ‘touchable’ Europeans, Muslims and some service castes and finally the ‘untouchables’.

The shifts in the governmental gaze during the century of Rana rule provided important groundwork for the production of an integrated national space. The emerging governmental identity of the country as a last Hindu polity on the subcontinent attached a certain uniform meaning to the conquered area. And the corresponding de-territorialisation of internal differences into the language of the Hindu caste hierarchy facilitated centralised government and enabled the production of a spatially more uniform, and bordered territory. It should be noted, here, that my emphasis on spatial uniformity is not intended to suggest that inequities between people diminished under the Ranas. In fact, the 1854 Civil Code provided a legal framework that institutionalised massive inequities between those at the top of the hierarchy and those in the bottom – an institutionalised hierarchy that was only formally abolished in 1963 and continues to be felt today.<sup>39</sup> Rather than abandon differences, the Civil Code enabled the translation of ‘ecological difference’ into ‘anthropological difference’ using hierarchical differentiation as a way to govern a diverse and challenging landscape through a more uniform language.

However, although the innovations of the Ranas provided for a more uniform language of government, the extension of this language across the country was, most likely, patchy and concentrated around the governmental centre of Kathmandu.<sup>40</sup> It was only with the Panchayat introduction of national schooling that a nation-wide language of centralised government was successfully extended across the country.

### **Panchayat Textbooks and National Time-in-Space**

Panchayat textbooks have already provided the material for incisive historical analyses.<sup>41</sup> Historian Pratyoush Onta has shown how national history presented in these textbooks is rendered in what he calls ‘*bir to bikas* (brave to development) narrative mode’.<sup>42</sup> This implies a description of pre-Rana national history in terms of

the bravery (*bir*) associated with the ‘unification’ of Nepal along with a positioning of this history as a basis for a post-Rana focus on national development (*bikas*). Onta argues that:

Nationalization of the past in the *bir* mode and that of the future in *bikas* mode have been critical to the functioning of the state in the post-Rana era. (...) *Bir* history provided the bearings of an independent land on which *bikas* projects could be enacted. With foreign money and models pouring into Nepal in the name of development, it was *bir* history that made the country’s *bikas* “Nepali”.<sup>43</sup>

The employment of a nationalised time moving from past bravery to future development, thus, enabled a national appropriation of discourses associated with a wider, regional development regime at a time of increasing openness to ‘foreign’ influence.<sup>44</sup>

This nationalised time-in-space, from past bravery to future development, comes out clearly in the Panchayat and present-day textbooks analysed below – interspersed with notions of a timeless present of harmonious coexistence. It provides temporal reference points for the production of a bordered national territory, a unified but diverse national population, and an integrated yet also differentiated national space. The analysis thus illustrates connections between spatial production and the temporalities of Panchayat textbook discourse – along with complex entanglements of the production of national space with the extension of national languages of difference.

### **Territorialising a Brave National Past**

The 1989 (2046BS) civics textbook for grade seven commences with a long range of lessons that chronologically follow the lineage of Nepali kings from Prithvi Narayan Shah to Birendra. These lessons take the reader through the glorious past of the early kings ‘unifying’ Nepal, over the recession under Rana rule and into the Panchayat periods renewed development of the country.<sup>45</sup> The historical narrative of the textbooks connects the contemporary territorial borders of the country with a historical beginning in Prithvi Narayan Shah’s so-called ‘unification of Nepal’. While government documents as late as the 1930s, in fact, referred to the imperial area as ‘the entire possessions of the Gorkha king’, the textbook discourse sees a national territory of ‘Nepal’ already in the Gorkha kingdom.<sup>46</sup> This gives rise to a national ‘time-in-space’ that ties the beginning of Nepali history to the figure of Prithvi Narayan Shah and renders all time before his rule as ‘pre-history’.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, the stories of Prithvi Narayan Shah and his brave men impose national notions of a unified history and territory onto what is essentially an imperial history.<sup>48</sup> Vividly illustrated by an image that superimposes the characteristic profile of Prithvi Narayan Shah onto the present-day borders of the country (see illustration 1), these stories fuse the temporal association of the eighteenth-century Gorkha ruler with the territorial delineations of the contemporary Nepali nation-state – emphasising independence and sovereignty at a time when this was, in fact, increasingly compromised by reliance on foreign aid.<sup>49</sup>

[Illustration 1 around here]

A range of subsequent stories of the following decade’s conquests and battles provide the material for further cementation of the contemporary territory in relation

to the historical bravery of Nepali soldiers.<sup>50</sup> These stories maintain a distinction between a bordered Nepali nationality (*Nepali Rastriyata*) that match the contemporary geographical extension of contemporary Nepal, and a Greater Nepal (*Visal Nepal*) referring to the Gorkha Empire at its greatest extension just before the Anglo-Gorkha war in 1814. This representation of fixed territorial borders is further supported by textbooks graphics. One book displays first a map of the present-day Nepali borders with the Greater Nepal areas added in a darker shade. Halfway through the book, the map is repeated but now the surrounding areas of Greater Nepal have been removed and the country has been divided into the Panchayat administration's 'development regions'.<sup>51</sup> Both discursive and graphic representations thus provide a territorialisation of the landscape combined with a national time-in-space that moves from bravery towards development.

[Illustration 2 and 3 around here]

### **A Timeless 'Garden of Diverse Flowers'**

While the textbook discourse presents the past in terms of territorialised bravery, the present is repeatedly represented through the timeless and harmonious image of a flowering garden (*phulbaari*) across Panchayat and present-day books. This representation of Nepal stems from Prithvi Narayan Shah's memoir (*Divya Upadhes*) where he, supposedly, likened his empire to 'a garden of many different flowers'.<sup>52</sup> As Lisa Malkki has reminded us, plants are often employed as part of the imaginary vocabulary of national discourse, metaphorically 'rooting' people.<sup>53</sup> And indeed, the spatial metaphor of Nepal as a flowering garden can be read as an attempt to 'root' a diverse people in a common soil creating uniform attachment to a national space. The metaphor, however, does additional political work by distinguishing the

order of the garden from the wilderness of the jungle. This distinction reintroduces imperial forms of ecological and anthropological difference into the superficially harmonious image of the flower-garden.

With obvious connotation to beauty, fertility and harmony, the textbook image of the flower-garden is seen as an expression of the equality of all Nepalis within a notion of unity in diversity.<sup>54</sup> In contrast to the jungle, the garden (*baari*) connotes an organised and harmonious space. As a recent textbook recycles the metaphor, it states that: ‘we all castes, classes and ethnic groups (...) live together in harmony. We make a garland of all castes like the bouquet of flowers’.<sup>55</sup> The notion of a garland brings out how the different people of Nepal are tied together – a peaceful unity that is repeatedly posed as a defining characteristic of the country.<sup>56</sup> Hence, while recognising ethnic, religious and caste diversity, the image of the national garden de-emphasises the political salience that these lines of division held in Panchayat Nepal and largely continue to hold today.<sup>57</sup> In parallel with the 1963 abolishment of Nepal’s formalised caste hierarchy, the representation of the country as a garden thus imposes a harmonious surface onto a highly uneven landscape of imperial inequity.

Even in the contemporary conjuncture, where differences between people (of caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, etc.) are increasingly politicised against a background of past inequalities, the representation of Nepal as a diverse, but harmonious, flower-garden lives on in the centralised discourse of present-day textbooks. A 2009 book not only states that:

Nepal is our motherland. It is called a common garden of four castes and thirty-six sub-castes. We, the people of the country, are like different flowers grown in a garden. We are different in face and colour.

Apparently, there is a difference in our forms and kinds. This variation is called thirty-six sub-castes.<sup>58</sup>

It also asserts that, in spite of differences, ‘all people living in Nepal have similar interests and aspirations’.<sup>59</sup> Harmonious coexistence is thus, even today, represented as a timeless condition of the nation rather than something that has to be achieved.

Outside the official discourse of the textbooks, the image of the flower-garden has, however, come under attack. Over the last two decades, Nepali scholars and activists have repeatedly pointed out that the superficially harmonious representation of Nepal’s unity in diversity silences and aggravates the economic marginalisation and political underrepresentation of a large majority of Nepal’s (non-high caste, Hindu, male) population. In 1992, Nepali social scientist Prayag Raj Sharma asked: ‘Why not pull down the hedges and let a hundred wildflowers bloom?’<sup>60</sup> Sharma’s critique is interesting because it indicates some of the political work done by the aesthetic image of the garden. Under the title *How to Tend This Garden*, his article alerts us to another central dimension of the garden metaphor. While the garden is an organised space, it is so because it has been ‘tended’, ‘weeds’ have been uprooted and harmony established through the centralised vision of the gardener.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1982 Panchayat textbook for grade eight, this need for ‘tending’ of the national garden comes out strongly. A lesson on the ‘qualities of a good citizen’ conjures up the image of the development of a communal garden and the works involved such as ‘watering’ and ‘weeding’.<sup>62</sup> It suggests that ‘we can trim the plants of many types to give them beautiful shapes to decorate the garden,’ and – bringing in notions of modern development – exclaims:

How enticing the garden would be if we could generate hydro-electricity from nearby waterfalls or rivers and adorn the garden with

illuminating electric bulbs like thousands of stars in the sky! Our beautiful tranquil country (...) is in fact a natural garden (...).<sup>63</sup>

In the Panchayat rendering, development - in the tangible form of electric lighting - is thus brought about through the careful tending of the garden that is Nepal. And, in the bravery to development narrative form of the textbooks, this tending is brought home as 'our responsibility' to the bravery of the national past epitomised in Shah's visionary effort.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, the ostensibly unifying image of the organised and tended garden incorporates a subtext that brings the ecological and anthropological differences from the Gorkha Empire into the very imagination of a national space. When seen in relation to the history of cultivation and settlement across the Himalayan hills, the organised garden subsumes an ecological division between settled cultivation and chaotic wilderness. As Marie Lecomte-Tilouine has argued, this division maps onto the earlier hierarchical differentiation of people along lines of Hindu purity that was formalised in the civil code in the mid-nineteenth century. Here, upper caste Hindus migrating eastwards across the Himalayan hills were seen as the bringers of settled cultivation engendering a 'transformation of *jangal* into *mangal*, or wilderness into auspiciousness'.<sup>65</sup> During the Panchayat years, this image was underpinned by an intensification of existing policies that encouraged (mainly Hindu) migration for agricultural settlement especially in the eastern hills and the plains.<sup>66</sup> Hence, there continues to be a subtext of hierarchical difference attached to the use of the flower-garden metaphor.

In summary, the Panchayat textbooks' discourse on the brave past territorialises Nepali national space within distinct borders that did not, in fact, exist in the early eighteenth century. Within this territory, the image of a well-tended

garden ostensibly dissolves the imperial hierarchies of people within a harmonious aesthetic. Nonetheless, this aesthetic concomitantly conceals and delivers a language of ecological and anthropological difference. As critics have pointed out, these representations of national space are obviously ‘born out of a hindsight view of Nepalese history in modern times’.<sup>67</sup> Nonetheless, they continue well into the textbooks used today in Nepali public schools across the country, and continue to support a connection between education and fluency in a national language of difference.

### **Towards the Future on the Waves of Development**

Let us all go to the school for education. Let us go to the health post when we are sick. Let us make the village and town bright with electricity. Let us drive motors in all regions of Nepal. Let us drink safe water in each house. Let us send messages to friends through e-mail.<sup>68</sup>

With the overthrow of the Rana regime in 1950, Nepal quickly followed India in adopting governmental discourses and policies aimed at national development. Albeit phrased explicitly in nationalist terms, Nepal’s new project of development connected the country tightly into the expanding post-war development regime.<sup>69</sup> During the Panchayat period, the net inflow of official development assistance (ODA) to the country multiplied. From an average of 80 million US\$ per year in the 60s, it more than doubled over the 70s and finally exploded to an average of 561 million US\$ per year in the 80s.<sup>70</sup> Nonetheless, as Stacy Leigh Pigg suggested in 1993, ‘judging from the changes in Nepal, development has proved much more effective as an ideology than as a set of technical solutions’.<sup>71</sup> As an ideology, however, development has

become ubiquitous across the nation from the Panchayat period onwards – even in areas where the practical reach of development projects has been limited.<sup>72</sup>

In the textbooks, the massive focus on development provides a direction to the Nepali nation that reorganises national space. Much in line with Nehruvian development discourse, the Panchayat nation is presented as in need of development and the national citizens as resources with an obligation to fulfil this need.<sup>73</sup> As they are harnessed to the overall objective of development, people and places are ostensibly detached from their earlier differences. Ecological and anthropological differences are erased. Instead, as in Nehruvian India, national space is represented through the supposedly uniform image of the backward village.<sup>74</sup> Here, ‘Development Regions’ and ‘Development Zones’ named after ‘neutral’ geographical features such as river and mountains replace earlier forms of governmental differentiation. From the centralised perspective of planned state-led development, the diverse landscape is thus flattened into a ‘sea of villageness’ onto which the ‘wave of development’ can roll.<sup>75</sup>

Nonetheless, the superficial uniformity of the ‘sea of villageness’ merely obscures persistent differences and even brings about its own language of spatial inequity.<sup>76</sup> In the developmental map of Panchayat discourse, the periphery of ‘village’ Nepal – home, at that time, to more than ninety per cent of the Nepali population – is presented as ‘underdeveloped’ or ‘backward’. As Pigg argues for Panchayat Nepal:

Development focuses its efforts on villages because (ostensibly) most Nepalis live in them, but in doing so it reifies the village as the locus of Nepal’s underdevelopment. Hence, the village becomes a space of backwardness – a physical space that imprisons people in what is considered an inferior and outmoded way of life.<sup>77</sup>

This representation of national space as a ‘sea of villageness’ continues today. The grade six textbook from 2009 asks the students to ‘complete the following dialogue’ that illustrates ‘the problems in the absence of electricity’:<sup>78</sup>

Shyam: Our country first started electricity production in 1965. When did you start using electricity in your village?

Hari: We don’t have electricity even now. Our village is in darkness.

Shyam: I’m sorry to hear that. How do you study, listen to radio or watch the interesting programmes on television?

Hari: Our life is dark. We have been living a life of difficulty.

Shyam: It seems your village is still not developed.

In the written present, Hari’s village still has no electricity – the epitome of development – although the national production (i.e. in the cities) began in 1965. As the textbook spells out, the consequence is that the villagers live a life of ‘darkness’ without radio, television or even electric light to study by. Albeit part of a superficially uniform national space, Hari’s village is thus situated on the periphery of the developmentalist map of Nepal. Within the sea of development, as the grade seven textbook states, ‘the wave of development has not reached all places (...) in a uniform manner’.<sup>79</sup>

As the wave of development has not conquered all parts of the sea, the developmental representation of national space gives rise to a novel spatio-ecological differentiation in which ‘remote’ areas are considered ‘backward’. Here, spatial distance becomes temporal distance. A Panchayat textbook lesson brings this points forward rather starkly, stating that:

During the reign of King Mahendra, there were many underdeveloped places in Nepal that were just waking up from the nineteenth century's revelation and many places were sleeping in the middle ages. In addition, in some of the places in remote Nepal they were just trying to step out from the Stone Age.<sup>80</sup>

The same notion of an opposition between remoteness within the national territory and development continues in present textbooks. A lesson on the administrative zones of Nepal simply states that the 'Karnali Zone is very remote while Lumbini and Narayani zones are somewhat more developed'.<sup>81</sup> This fusion of time and space in the differentiation between developed and remote areas provides an obvious direction to development – as Pigg puts it: 'bikās comes to the local areas from elsewhere; it is not produced locally'.<sup>82</sup>

There is, nonetheless, a certain circularity incorporated into this notion of development's movement. As Pigg describes 'the topographical constraints we call "remoteness" are commonly blamed for the limits of development's reach in the countryside'.<sup>83</sup> Hence, remoteness is both the cause and effect of backwardness. As education is seen as the 'primary institution of bikas'<sup>84</sup>, we can regard the movement of textbooks as a spatial practice physically manifesting the direction and circularity of development. The movement of textbooks, even today, trace out routes from the urban centre to the rural villages. All textbooks continue to be edited and printed in the central education offices in the Sanothimi area of Kathmandu valley.<sup>85</sup> At the beginning of each school year, the books are distributed from here to the District Education Offices (DEOs) in all seventy-five districts of the country from where they are again re-distributed to the individual schools. With this system, books often arrive late and in insufficient quantities to the 'remote' areas of the country. The spatial

practice of textbook production thus reinforces the connotation of remote areas with lack in education and development.<sup>86</sup>

In sum, the textbook discourse on development contains its own spatio-ecological language of difference, hierarchically differentiating central development from remote backwardness in spite of its superficially uniform representation of Nepal as a sea of villages. Furthermore, while Panchayat government obviously sought to overcome the social hierarchies of the Rana period, the imperial languages of difference remain visible below the surface of the developmental ‘sea’. Out there in Panchayat ‘village’ Nepal, the old hierarchies coexisted with the new differentiation of centres and peripheries of development leaving people ‘simultaneously caught up in two social orders’.<sup>87</sup> In some instances, notions of development even intensified existing social differences.<sup>88</sup> Pigg presents an illustration from a Panchayat textbook (see illustration below). Seemingly inspired by an Indian textbook illustration from the same period depicting ‘citizens of India’<sup>89</sup>, the accompanying text explicitly describes people in equalising terms as ‘having the same red blood’. The illustration itself, however, re-inscribes a hierarchy of development that follows anthropological and ecological lines of distinction – from backward mountain dwellers, over hill ethnic groups, to high-caste Hindu hill and plains-dwellers.

[Illustration 4 around here]

Even in the present-day textbooks, we can trace the ‘imperial debris’ of old hierarchies behind notions of development.<sup>90</sup> Across the present social studies textbooks there is a striking emphasis on the problems of drinking.<sup>91</sup> Although presented in the neutral language of a ‘social evil’, this emphasis brings up unwarranted remnants of the earlier use of the ‘alcohol drinkers’ (*matwali*) category

as a placeholder for race and/or ethnicity.<sup>92</sup> It is, obviously, not the high-caste Hindu – supposedly shying away from alcohol as a polluting substance – that are the target audience for the textbooks’ insistent condemnation of drinking. Rather, it is the ‘drinking’ Tibeto-Burman population that is the target of moral ridicule (see illustration below). And as education is presented as the remedy for social evils, notions of lacking civilisation and developmental backwardness is once again tied up with the Tibeto-Burman position in the national hierarchy.<sup>93</sup>

[Illustration 5 around here]

### **Panchayat Languages, Contemporary Fluencies**

Back in the grade eight classroom, the teacher begins today’s lesson: ‘the executive’. Listening to my assistant’s whispering translation, I am taken aback by the degree to which what is taught seems detached from the outside world. ‘Do you know the constitution,’ the teacher asks the students. As their ‘yes’ rings through the classroom I wonder what constitution they are referring to: the last constitution from 1991, the interim constitution promulgated after the peace agreement in 2006, or the constitution in the making inside the walls of the Constituent Assembly? It seems to be none of these. The constitution of this class and its corresponding textbook lesson is a more abstracted and idealized one, detached from the world outside the school gate.

Despite this detachment, the present article suggests that the idealised world of national textbooks holds both historical and contemporary relevance also outside the school grounds. In the preceding spatial history, I have described the Panchayat production of a national space through textbook schooling. Judging from contemporary political developments, this production has been largely successful.

Even in the present state of transition the bordered space of the nation prevails and secessionist demands are few and far between. Although a federal future is on the table, a nationalised spatial imagination directs the political attention of ‘ethnic’ and regional movements towards the centralised politics of Kathmandu.<sup>94</sup> The languages of governmental differentiation, delivered and generalised as a subtext to the textbook discourse, also maintain a contemporary social life. The obvious discrepancies between superficial notions of national unity and subtexts of anthropological and ecological inequity were a central motivation behind the revolutionary changes taking place in Nepal since 1990. These changes, however, did not dismantle the languages of difference altogether. Today, these languages seem to provide a stable, privileged fluency for political engagement in the midst of contemporary volatility – albeit in novel constellations and refashioned forms.

With the rise of ‘ethnic’ politics in Nepal since 1990, anthropological differences are being re-articulated and re-valued. Through the discursive intervention of a broad range of ‘ethnic’ organisations, the former *matwali jat* (‘alcohol-drinking sub-castes’) have been refashioned as *adivasi janajati* (‘indigenous nationalities’). While *adivasi* is a Sanskrit term for ‘first settlers’ that is well known from the Indian context, *janajati* is a Nepali neologism.<sup>95</sup> Its use in relation to internationally supported discussions of ‘indigenous peoples’ has connected it to the globalised concept of ‘indigeneity’.<sup>96</sup> For the ‘ethnic’ organizations, this refashioning in terms of ‘indigeneity’ typically involves anthropological rooting in specific and often ‘remote’ places. Here, anthropological differences are re-translated into environmental differences. As a consequence, the spatio-ecological representation of remote villages as developmentally ‘backward’ is increasingly supplemented with representations of the same places as culturally ‘authentic’.

Furthermore, the conceptual shift from *matwali* to *janajati* has facilitated novel connections between the existing languages difference and notions of economic development. While development assistance to Nepal, as described above, exploded in the 80s, it has remained at a consistent high since then with many donors encouraged by the seemingly positive developments towards a more democratic political system.<sup>97</sup> However, in line with global changes, the developmental discourse in Nepal has changed substantially from the Panchayat period. While the Panchayat discourse sought, at least superficially, to dissolve earlier difference in a ‘sea’ of development, the focus is now on ‘targeted’ development. Here, development projects are directed exactly at the formerly marginalised groups – typically articulated in terms of ‘caste’, ‘gender’ and ‘ethnicity’.<sup>98</sup> Under the overall agenda of developing Nepal as an inclusive democracy, the inclusion of these groups in societal decision-making has become tantamount to development efforts. Thus today, development works through and reinforces, rather than overwrites, anthropological and ecological languages of differentiation.

With these developments, the relationship between anthropological differentiation and development appears more ambivalent than earlier. On the one hand, the developed/educated person continues to be cast as more conscious and morally superior to the uneducated parts of the population.<sup>99</sup> As a contemporary textbook lesson blankly states, ‘when a person is educated, the level of his/her consciousness increases. It is this personal consciousness which makes a person able to judge what is right and wrong’.<sup>100</sup> In the textbook version, this consciousness enables the educated person to transcend cultural differences and leave ‘the constraints of the “local” and the “traditional” behind’.<sup>101</sup> Development through

education is thus seen as a process that elevates consciousness above and beyond traditional forms of differentiation.

On the other hand, development and educated consciousness no longer totally repel anthropological and ecological differentiation. Rather, an ‘educated’ fluency in the languages of difference now seem to mark out those that have a say in the political negotiation of national space. With the intensification of discussions about the bordering of future federal states, a birds-eye mapping of anthropological difference has emerged as a central tool in political argumentation. The Nepali state, political parties, and ethnic organisation alike produce colourful ‘mosaic maps’ that illustrate the concentration of ethnic and religious groups within the naturalised borders of the Nepali territory.<sup>102</sup> Also in everyday conversation, people quickly jump at the opportunity to engage in lengthy discussions about the population numbers and relative distribution of ‘ethnic’ groups. Sure, the overtly essential notions of ‘ethnicity’ that such mapping relies on would bring nervous twitches to even moderately constructionist students of anthropology. But the essentialist mapping of this ‘found ethnography’ seems to work as a marker of ‘educated’ fluency in the anthropological and ecological languages differentiation.<sup>103</sup>

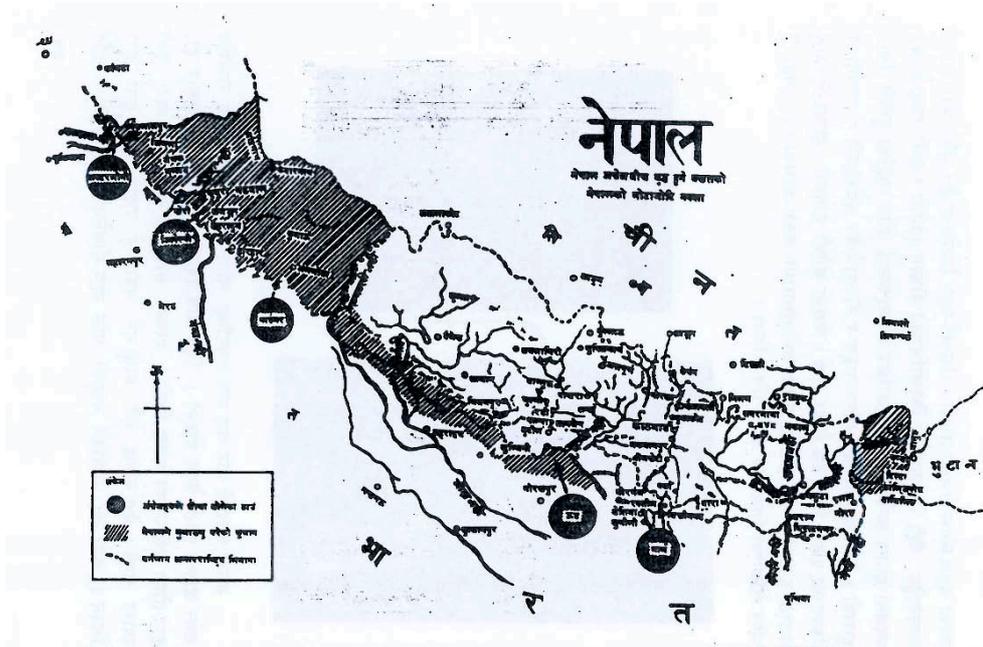
Furthermore, with the shift from *matwali* to *janajati*, ‘ethnic’ identity has even become an point of educated self-fashioning. I repeatedly encountered this among my relatively affluent informants in Kathmandu. In 2007, one well-educated man pointed out that he was not an ordinary *chettri* (the high, ‘warrior’ caste in the Hindu hierarchy). ‘I’m *Khas*’, he said using the old name for the original migrants into western Nepal ‘and a *matwali chettri*’ he added half-jokingly – an alcohol-drinker of the warrior caste and hence, in some sense, as ‘ethnic’ as the other *janajati* groups in Nepal.<sup>104</sup> Here, the nationalised language of anthropological difference is refashioned

to signal a positive 'ethnic' identity at the same time as marking an educated fluency in this language's lines of differentiation.

Obviously, these examples merely illustrate the contemporary life of the 'anthropological' and 'ecological' language of difference in Nepal. Nonetheless, I believe that they do sketch out a broader trend around 'ethnic' fluency that ties the contemporary re-imagination of Nepali national space together with an on-going redistribution of 'voice' in contemporary national politics. Here, the ability to identify, characterise, list, enumerate, and categorise 'ethnic' differences becomes a central marker of contemporary 'awareness' and 'development'. Fluency in a specific 'academic', 'educated' language of ethnic history and diversity tends to become a central criterion for entry into the on-going politics of territorial restructuring. Hence, in some sense, one has to 'speak like a state' in order to engage the state and be taken seriously. And the language of the state is, to a large extent, the language of the idealised world of national schooling.

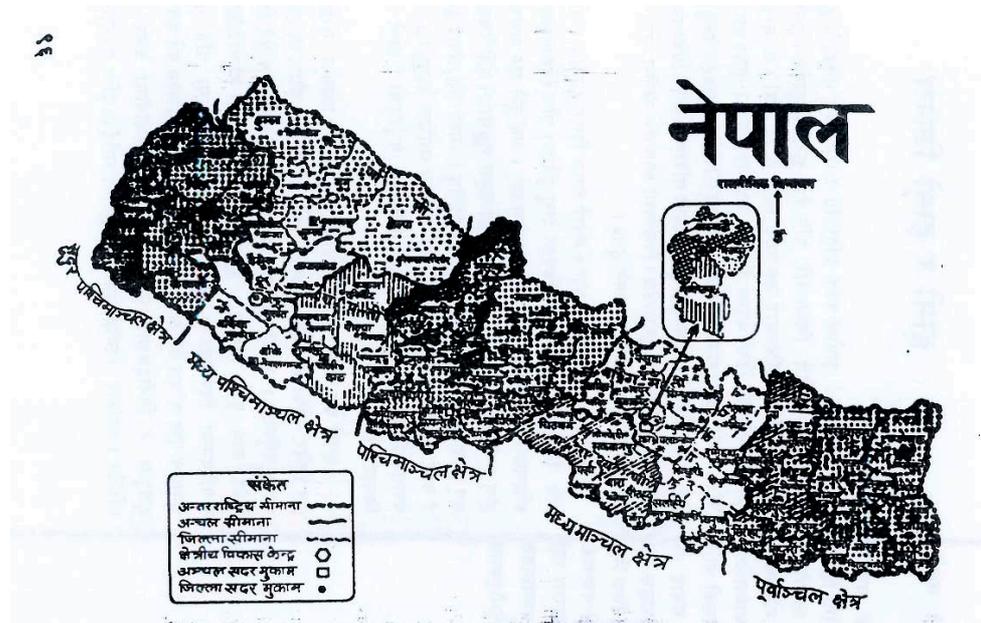


Illustration 2



Greater Nepal<sup>106</sup>

Illustration 3



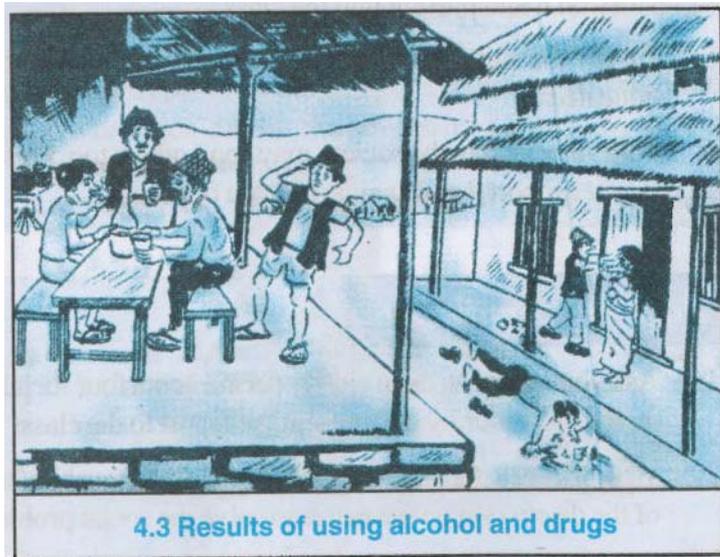
Panchayat Nepal with Development Regions .<sup>107</sup>

#### Illustration 4



Stating that ‘all have the same red blood’ this Panchayat textbook page, however, illustrates a hierarchy of development from the mongoloid *matwalis* in the upper left to the educated man wearing national dress in the bottom right.<sup>108</sup>

**Illustration 5**



The results of drinking as illustrated in the present social studies textbook for grade eight.<sup>109</sup>

## **Bibliography**

- Advani, S. *Schooling the National Imagination: Education, English and the Indian Modern*, New Delhi, 2009.
- Anderson, B. *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, revised ed., London, 2006. (Org. pub., 1991)
- Apple, M. W. *Ideology and curriculum*, 3rd ed., New York, 2004.
- Bennike, R. B. *Governing the Hills: Imperial Landscapes, National Territories, and Production of Place between Naya Nepal and Incredible India!*, PhD Dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2013.
- Borgström, B.-E. *The Patron and The Panca: Village Values and Pancayat Democracy in Nepal*, Stockholm, 1976.
- Burghart, R. 'The Formation of the Concept of Nation-State in Nepal', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 44 (1), 1984, pp. 101-25.
- Caddell, M. 'Discipline Makes the Nation Great': visioning development and the Nepali nation-state through schools.', in Veronique Benei, ed, *Manufacturing Citizenship: education and nationalism in Europe, South Asia and China*, Oxford, 2005.
- Caddell, M. 'Education and Change: A Historical Perspective on Schooling, Development, and the Nepali Nation-State', in Krishna Kumar and J. Desterheld, eds, *Education and Social Change in South Asia*, Delhi, 2006, pp. 251-84.
- Carter, P. *The road to Botany Bay*, London, 1987.
- CDC. *Our Social Studies New Edition: Grade Seven*, Sanothimi, 2009.
- CDC. *Our Social Studies New Edition: Grade Six*, Sanothimi, 2009.

- CDC. *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, Sanothimi, 2009.
- CDC. *Social Studies: Grade Nine*, Sanothimi, 2009.
- Certeau, M. d. *The practice of everyday life*, Berkeley, 1984.
- Cerwonka, A. *Native to the nation: disciplining landscapes and bodies in Australia*, Minneapolis, 2004.
- Chakrabarty, D. *Provincializing Europe: postcolonial thought and historical difference*, Princeton, N.J., 2000.
- Chene, M. D. 'In the Name of *Bikās*', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 1 (2), 1996, pp. 259-70.
- Fujikura, T. 'Discourses of Awareness: Notes for a Criticism of Development in Nepal', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 6 (2), 2001.
- Gellner, D. N. *Resistance and the state: Nepalese experiences*, New York, 2007.
- Goswami, M. *Producing India: from colonial economy to national space*, Chicago, 2004.
- Gupta, A. 'Imagining Nations', in David Nugent and Joan Vincent, eds, *A Companion to the Anthropology of Politics*, 2004, pp. 267-81.
- Gurung, H. *Nepal: Atlas and Statistics*, Kathmandu, 2006.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., and T. O. Ranger *The Invention of tradition*, Cambridge, 1983.
- Höfer, A. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*, Kathmandu, 2004.
- International Crisis Group. *Nepal: Identity Politics and Federalism*, Asia Report no. 199, 2011.
- Jodhka, S. S. 'Nation and Village: Images of Rural India in Gandhi, Nehru and Ambedkar', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 37 (32), 2002, pp. 3343-53.

- Kaur, R., and A. Wahlberg 'Governing Difference in India and China: an introduction', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 33 (4), 2012, pp. 573-80.
- Khadka, N. 'Crisis in Nepal's Partyless Panchayat System: The Case for More Democracy', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 59 (3), 1986, pp. 429-54.
- Lecomte-Tilouine, M. 'To Be More Natural Than Others: Indigenous self-determination and Hinduism in the Himalayas', in Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, ed, *Nature, Culture and Religion at the Crossroads of Asia*, Delhi, 2010.
- Lefebvre, H. *The production of space*, Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA, 1991. (Org. pub., 1974)
- Ludden, D. 'Development Regimes in South Asia: History and the Governance Conundrum', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40 (37), 2005, pp. 4042-51.
- Ludden, D. 'India's Development Regime', in Nicholas B. Dirks, ed, *Colonialism and Culture*, Ann Arbor, 1992, pp. 247-87.
- Ludden, D. 'The process of empire: frontiers and borderlands', in Peter Fibiger Bang and C A Bayly, eds, *Tributary Empires in Global History*, London, 2011, pp. 132-50.
- Ludden, D. 'Spatial Inequity and National Territory: Remapping 1905 in Bengal and Assam', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 46 May 2012, pp. 483-525.
- Malkki, L. 'National Geographic: The Rooting of Peoples and the Territorialization of National Identity among Scholars and Refugees', *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 7 (1), Feb 1992, pp. 24-44.
- Michael, B. A. 'Nepali History as World History', *Baha Occasional Papers*, Vol. 4 2011.

- Michael, B. A. 'Statemaking and Space on the Margins of Empire: Rethinking the Anglo-Gorkha War of 1814-1816', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 4 (2), 1999.
- Middleton, C. T. *Beyond Recognition: Ethnology, Belonging, and the Refashioning of the Ethnic Subject in Darjeeling, India*, PhD Dissertation, Cornell University, 2010.
- Muley, D. S., A. C. Sharma, and S. Das *How we Govern Ourselves: A Textbook for Civics for Class VII*, New Delhi, 1988.
- National Education Planning Commission *Education in Nepal: Report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission*, Kathmandu, 1956.
- Onta, P. 'Activities in a 'Fossil State': Balkrishna Sama and the Improvisation of Nepali Identity', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 2 (1), 1997, pp. 69-102.
- Onta, P. 'Adivasi/Janajati: Definitional Politics of the Past and the Future', *República*, 29 July 2011.
- Onta, P. 'Ambivalence Denied: The Making of *Rastriya Itihas* in Panchayat Era Textbooks', *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 23 (1), 1996, pp. 213-54.
- Onta, P. 'The Growth of the Adivasi Janajati Movement in Nepal after 1990: The Non-Political Institutional Agents', *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, Vol. 11 (2), 2006, pp. 303-54.
- Petersen, B. L. *Becoming Citizens: Youth, Schooling and Citizenship in Post-War Rural Nepal*, PhD Dissertation, University of Copenhagen, 2011.
- Pigg, S. L. 'Inventing Social Categories through Place: Social Representations and Development in Nepal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 34 (3), 1992, pp. 491-513.

- Pigg, S. L. 'Unintended Consequences: The Ideological Impact of Development in Nepal', *South Asia Bulletin*, Vol. 13 (1 & 2), 1993, pp. 45-58.
- Pradhan, K. *The Gorkha conquests : the process and consequences of the unification of Nepal, with particular reference to eastern Nepal*, Calcutta ; New York, 1991.
- Pradhan, K. *The Gorkha Conquests: Process and consequences of the unification of Nepal, with particular reference to Eastern Nepal*, Lalitpur, 2009 [1991].
- Pradhan, R. 'Ethnicity, caste and a pluralist society', in Kanak Mani Dixit and Shastri Ramachandaran, eds, *State of Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2002.
- Rai, A. 'Nation ends 7-month drought with Khanal as new PM', *The Himalayan Times*, 4 February 2011.
- Ramaswamy, S. *The goddess and the nation: mapping Mother India*, Durham N.C., 2010.
- Roy, S. *Beyond belief: India and the politics of postcolonial nationalism*, Durham, NC, 2007.
- Sagant, P. *The dozing shaman: the Limbus of eastern Nepal*, Delhi ; Oxford, 1996.
- Shaha, R. *Ancient and medieval Nepal*, First paperback edition. ed., New Delhi, 2001.
- Shaha, R. *Modern Nepal: a political history, 1769-1955*, 2 vols New Delhi, 1990.
- Sharma, P. *Unravelling the Mosaic: Spatial aspects of ethnicity in Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2008.
- Sharma, P. R. 'Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritization: A Study of Nepal's Old Legal Code', *Kailash*, Vol. 5 (4), 1977, pp. 277-99.
- Sharma, P. R. 'How to Tend This Garden?', *Himal*, Vol. 5 (3), 1992.
- Sharma, P. R. 'Nation-Building, Multi-Ethnicity, and the Hindu State', in David Gellner, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton, eds, *Nationalism and*

- ethnicity in a Hindu kingdom: the politics of culture in contemporary Nepal*,  
*Studies in anthropology and history*, Amsterdam, 1997.
- Shrestha, N. P. *Our Panchayat and Civic Life*, grade 8, Sanothimi, 1987 [2044 BS].
- Shrestha, N. P. *Our World, Our Society: Social Studies, Class 7*, Sanothimi, 1989  
[2046 BS].
- Skinner, D., and D. Holland 'Schools and the Cultural Production of the Educated  
Person in a Nepalese Hill Community', in Pramod Bhatta, ed, *Education in  
Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2009 [1996].
- Stash, S., and E. Hannum 'Who Goes to School? Educational Stratification by Gender,  
Caste and Ethnicity in Nepal', in Pramod Bhatta, ed, *Education in Nepal:  
Problems, Reforms and Social Change*, Kathmandu, 2009.
- Stoler, A. L. 'Imperial debris: Reflections on ruins and ruination', *Cultural  
Anthropology*, Vol. 23 (2), May 2008, pp. 191-219.
- Thongchai, W. *Siam mapped : a history of the geo-body of a nation*, Honolulu, 1994.
- Wedeen, L. *Ambiguities of domination : politics, rhetoric, and symbols in  
contemporary Syria*, Chicago, 1999.
- Weinberg, M. 'Revisiting History in Language Policy: The Case of Medium of  
Instruction in Nepal', *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, Vol. 28 (1),  
2013, pp. 61-80.
- Whelpton, J. *A History of Nepal*, New York, 2005.
- World Bank and DFID. *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in  
Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2006.

---

<sup>1</sup> This article presents a revised version of a chapter my PhD dissertation. For incisive  
comments on various drafts, I thank: Dan Hirslund, Anders Berg-Sørensen, Ravinder

---

Kaur, David Ludden, Somdeep Sen, Chitralekha Zutshi and two anonymous reviewers from IESHR. For fieldwork assistance, I thank Narayan Adhikary and for textbook translations Yubaraj Ghimire. The Asian Dynamics Initiative at the University of Copenhagen supported the research on which this article is based. The illustrations included in the article derive from textbooks published by Janak Education Materials Centre Ltd. Sanothimi, Kathmandu. Every effort has been made to contact the copyright holders.

<sup>2</sup> The first-person observations narrated in this article are based on fieldwork in Nepal in 2007-8, 2010 and 2011.

<sup>3</sup> After 'nearly seven months of leadership vacuum', Jhala Nath Khanal of CPN (UML) was finally chosen as the new Prime Minister in the beginning of February 2011. See Rai, 'Nation Ends'.

<sup>4</sup> Bennike, 'Governing the Hills', pp. 135-69.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hobsbawm and Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition*; Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, p. 8, see also Gupta, 'Imagining Nations'.

<sup>6</sup> Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

<sup>7</sup> This literature includes analyses of practices as varied as gardening, policing (see Cerwonka, *Native to the Nation*), and development of colonial capitalism (see Goswami, *Producing India*) as well as representations through maps (see Thongchai, *Siam Mapped*) and visual art (see Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation*).

<sup>8</sup> Ludden, 'Spatial Inequity', p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay*, p. xxii.

---

<sup>10</sup> I develop this argument in more detail in Bennike, 'Governing the Hills'. For an argument that we should see empire through the lens of spatial differentiation see Ludden, 'The Process of Empire: Frontiers and Borderlands'.

<sup>11</sup> Kaur and Wahlberg, 'Governing Difference', p. 575.

<sup>12</sup> King Mahendra cited in Khadka, 'Crisis in Nepal's Partyless Panchayat System', p. 433. Between the extremes of the king and the villages, representation was organized in multiple layers of decreasing popular influence from the village council (*gaun panchayat*) to the national council (*rastriya panchayat*). Borgström, *The Patron and the Panca*; Khadka, 'Crisis in Nepal's Partyless Panchayat System'; Gellner, *Resistance and the State*, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Resistance and the State*, p. 10.

<sup>14</sup> See <http://nepal.usaid.gov/about-us/history.html>. The American assistance to the education sector was personified in the 'education advisor' Hugh B. Woods who played a key role in the development of Nepal's first national education plan. National Education Planning Commission, *Education in Nepal*.

<sup>15</sup> As presented later in this chapter, the Panchayat discourse foregrounds and dramatizes the restrictions on education as illustrative of the 'dark age' of Rana rule prior to Panchayat developmentalism. Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 215; Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, pp. 52,56; Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, pp. 83,165.

<sup>16</sup> Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 221; Caddell, 'Education and Change'; Petersen, 'Becoming Citizens'. In 1951, by the end of the Rana regime, Nepal had only 321 primary and 11 secondary schools for a population of about 8,25 million (1952/4 census). By the end of the Panchayat period in 1990 the number of primary schools was 14,500, lower secondary schools 3,964, and upper secondary schools 1953 for a

---

population of 18,5 million (1991 census). Shrestha cited in Stash and Hannum, 'Who Goes to School?'

<sup>17</sup> Cited in Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 220.

<sup>18</sup> This needs discourse resembles Indian national discourse on development in the same period as described by Srirupa Roy. While both countries present discourses on supposedly distinctive *national* development they, at the same time seem to be entangled in a "'development hegemony" on a global scale'. Roy, *Beyond Belief*, pp. 106-14, see also Ludden, 'Development Regimes in South Asia'; 'India's Development Regime'.

<sup>19</sup> Cited in Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 220.

<sup>20</sup> Radio broad-casting might have been the only farther-reaching media at the time. Ibid., pp. 231-32..

<sup>21</sup> Skinner and Holland, 'Schools and the Cultural Production'.

<sup>22</sup> Caddell, "Discipline Makes the Nation Great"; Petersen, 'Becoming Citizens'. For a textbook based study on the Indian nation see Advani, *Schooling the National Imagination*. See Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, pp. 1-23 for a discussion of ideological hegemony across a typology of 'overt' and 'hidden' school curricular.

<sup>23</sup> Roy, *Beyond Belief*; Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination*

<sup>24</sup> Skinner and Holland, 'Schools and the Cultural Production'

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 295.

<sup>26</sup> Although the figures are probably not very precise, Skinner and Holland report a rise from about 5% adult literacy in the early 50s to about 36% by the end of the 80s. Ibid., p. 301.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 295-96.

---

<sup>28</sup> The report of the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NEPC) is cited in Weinberg, 'Revisiting History', p. 65.

<sup>29</sup> Gurung, *Nepal: Atlas and Statistics*, p. 7; Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests*; Shaha, *Modern Nepal*.

<sup>30</sup> Gurung, *Nepal: Atlas and Statistics*, p. 9.

<sup>31</sup> Whelpton, *A History of Nepal*, pp. 46-85.

<sup>32</sup> Burghart, 'The Formation', pp. 104-06.

<sup>33</sup> Michael, 'Statemaking and Space'; 'Nepali History as World History'.

<sup>34</sup> Burghart, 'The Formation', pp. 114-15.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> Pradhan, 'Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society'; Höfer, *The Caste Hierarchy*; Sharma, 'Caste, Social Mobility and Sanskritization'.

<sup>38</sup> While the correct Nepali names would be Bahun and Chettri (variously spelled) conferring to the Indian Brahmin and Ksatriya (variously spelled), I have chosen to reflect the typical present-day usage in Nepal of Brahmin and Chettri together.

<sup>39</sup> Höfer, *The Caste Hierarchy*.

<sup>40</sup> Pradhan, 'Ethnicity, Caste and a Pluralist Society'.

<sup>41</sup> Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied'; Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories'.

<sup>42</sup> Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 222; see also 'Activities in a 'Fossil State''. While Onta bases his analysis on two Nepali language primers ('Mahendramala', grades four and five) from the early 70s, my analysis focuses on 'civics' textbooks from the 80s (grades six and seven, based on a curriculum from 1981) and late 2000's (grades six to ten, based on a curriculum from 2005).

<sup>43</sup> 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 232.

- 
- <sup>44</sup> See also Chene, 'In the Name of *Bikās*', p. 266.
- <sup>45</sup> Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, p. 56.
- <sup>46</sup> Burghart, 'The Formation', pp. 119, 49.
- <sup>47</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Six*, pp. 83-92; *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven: 114-123*; Shaha, *Ancient and Medieval Nepal*.
- <sup>48</sup> Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests*.
- <sup>49</sup> Chene, 'In the Name of *Bikās*'.
- <sup>50</sup> Pratyoush Onta emphasises the same process in his analysis of the famous story of the Gorkha officer Balbhadra's brave battle with the British. In this story the Panchayat 'desire to read Nepal's independence and sovereignty in its past is so strong that Balbhadra's temporary supremacy over the British becomes the story of Nepali bravery at work'. Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied', p. 231; see CDC., *Social Studies: Grade Nine*, pp. 118-19 for a present-day textbook version of the story.
- <sup>51</sup> Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, pp. 30, 96.
- <sup>52</sup> According to historian John Whelpton, the 'archaic language' of the original text means that 'nobody can be sure what the intended meaning was' Whelpton in Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests*, p. xiii.
- <sup>53</sup> Malkki, 'National Geographic'.
- <sup>54</sup> Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, p. 2.
- <sup>55</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, p. 30.
- <sup>56</sup> *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven*, p. 61.
- <sup>57</sup> World Bank and DFID., *Unequal Citizens*.
- <sup>58</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Six*, p. 26.
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 34.

- 
- <sup>60</sup> Sharma, 'How to Tend This Garden?', pp. 7, 9; see also 'Nation-Building, Multi-Ethnicity, and the Hindu State'.
- <sup>61</sup> Malkki, 'National Geographic'.
- <sup>62</sup> Shrestha, *Our Panchayat*, pp. 34-35. All Panchayat textbook quotations are translated by Yubaraj Ghimire.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid..
- <sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 35..
- <sup>65</sup> Lecomte-Tilouine, 'To Be More Natural Than Others', p. 120.
- <sup>66</sup> Some evidence indicates that this settlement did in fact transform the landscape substantially from the 'wild' aesthetic of sparser settlement and rotational cultivation to the more ordered aesthetic of permanent, terraced farming. Sagant, *The Dozing Shaman*, pp. 328-35.
- <sup>67</sup> Pradhan, *The Gorkha Conquests*, p. 168.
- <sup>68</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, p. 13.
- <sup>69</sup> Pigg, 'Unintended Consequences', p. 45; Ludden, 'Development Regimes in South Asia'.
- <sup>70</sup> All figures are in constant 2009 US\$ (Source: World Development Indicators 2011).
- <sup>71</sup> Pigg, 'Unintended Consequences', p. 47.
- <sup>72</sup> 'Inventing Social Categories'; 'Unintended Consequences', p. 48; Chene, 'In the Name of *Bikās*'.
- <sup>73</sup> See Roy, *Beyond Belief* for a historical analysis of Nehruvian development discourse.
- <sup>74</sup> Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories'; Jodhka, 'Nation and Village'; Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, pp. 17, 39; *Our Panchayat*, p. 12.

---

<sup>75</sup> Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 503; CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven*, p. 104.

<sup>76</sup> This line of argumentation is influenced by Stacy Pigg's thought-provoking work. See Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories'; 'Unintended Consequences'.

<sup>77</sup> 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 507.

<sup>78</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Six*, p. 22.

<sup>79</sup> *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven*, p. 104.

<sup>80</sup> Shrestha, *Our World, Our Society*, p. 71.

<sup>81</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven*, pp. 7, 67.

<sup>82</sup> Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 499.

<sup>83</sup> 'Unintended Consequences', p. 48.

<sup>84</sup> 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 502; Skinner and Holland, 'Schools and the Cultural Production'; Onta, 'Ambivalence Denied'.

<sup>85</sup> The Department of Education (DoE), the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and the Janak Education Materials Centre Ltd. (JEMCL) are the three central offices all placed in Sanothimi.

<sup>86</sup> The information given here is based on a range of interviews with officials from the education bureaucracy (central and district level) and schoolteachers conducted during fieldwork in the autumn of 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 510.

<sup>88</sup> 'Unintended Consequences', p. 54.

<sup>89</sup> Muley, Sharma, and Das, *How We Govern Ourselves*, p. 47.

<sup>90</sup> Stoler, 'Imperial Debris'.

<sup>91</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, pp. 50-55; *Our Social Studies: Grade Six*, pp. 47-48.

- 
- <sup>92</sup> See also Pigg, 'Unintended Consequences', p. 55.
- <sup>93</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, pp. 51-52.
- <sup>94</sup> Bennike, 'Governing the Hills'
- <sup>95</sup> Sharma, *Unravelling the Mosaic*, p. 3
- <sup>96</sup> Onta, 'Adivasi/Janajati'; 'The Growth', p. 311, see also Bennike, 'Governing the Hills', chapter 6.
- <sup>97</sup> Since 1990 development assistance to Nepal has been consistently high. Measured in 2009 US\$ it averaged 553 million US\$ per year in the 90s and 589 million US\$ per year in the 2000s (Source: World Development Indicators 2011).
- <sup>98</sup> These observations regarding the current 'development regime' (see Ludden, 'Development Regimes in South Asia') in Nepal are based on my own work in the sector in 2007-2008 combined with the reading of a variety of development reports from around that time see e.g. World Bank and DFID., *Unequal Citizens*.
- <sup>99</sup> Fujikura, 'Discourses of Awareness'
- <sup>100</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Seven*, p. 72
- <sup>101</sup> Caddell, "Discipline Makes the Nation Great", p. 14
- <sup>102</sup> Gurung, *Nepal: Atlas and Statistics*; Sharma, *Unravelling the Mosaic*. For a outline of the historical development of the 'mosaic map' see Bennike, 'Governing the Hills', pp. 141-43
- <sup>103</sup> See Middleton, 'Beyond Recognition', for a related discussion of 'found anthropology' in Darjeeling.
- <sup>104</sup> International Crisis Group, *Nepal: Identity Politics and Federalism*, p. 23
- <sup>105</sup> Shrestha, *Our Panchayat*, p. 36.
- <sup>106</sup> *Our World, Our Society*, p. 30.
- <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

---

<sup>108</sup> *Our Panchayat*, p. 18; Pigg, 'Inventing Social Categories', p. 502.

<sup>109</sup> CDC., *Our Social Studies: Grade Eight*, p. 52.