Ethnic Identity and Education in the "New Nepal:"
An Ethnographically-oriented Study of Limbu "Mother Tongue" Schooling

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the intersection of the ascendent *janajati* [‘indigenous nationalities,’ ethnic communities] movement with “mother tongue” educational policy and planning in the context of post-conflict, democratizing Nepal. The process of inquiry was centered upon the supplementary Limbu-language primary-level program of Anipaan, developed and promoted by the indigenous people’s organization advocating on behalf the Limbu ethnic community, the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC), and integrated into local government-run schools. Within a conceptual framework provided by processualist theories of ethnic identity and anthropological approaches to the study of “educational policy as practice,” this study addressed research questions relating to the decision- and meaning-making processes and perspectives of individuals associated with the Anipaan program, ranging from ethnic activists to local educators, students, and community members. The methodology of ethnography oriented the research design, involving multiple sites of research, sets of participants, and methods (interviews, observations, participant observations, and document analyses).

For members of the KYC and affiliated Limbu activists, the policy of the Anipaan program held both symbolic and practical importance. The Limbu language program represented a valuable avenue by which the organization, as advocates for the greater Limbu community, engaged in addressing significant political, cultural, and social matters and debates. As such, support of “mother tongue”-based educational policy related to the KYC’s explicit aims of promoting upliftment of ethnic persons and redressing past and current “problems;” implicitly, the program also provided an important discursive context for the re-assertion of Limbu ethno-nationalism and an opportunity to authoritatively define the nature of Limbu ethnic identity itself through production of the curriculum’s pedagogical texts. When integrated into the curriculum of one particular government school in far eastern Nepal, Anipaan lessons led to an ambiguous, contextually-defined set of outcomes and meanings for those implementing and experiencing it, simultaneously promoting and marginalizing Limbu language in practice. Local individuals participated in and responded to the practice of Anipaan by drawing upon their own interconnected meanings and understandings of education and schooling, place, language, aspiration, and identity.

for Lucy and Susan Hakala,
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I. INTRODUCTION

A result of intertwined risings of the *janajati*[1] [‘indigenous nationalities’] and democratization movements over the last two decades, ethnic identity has assumed ever-greater importance as a pivotal axis of social difference defining Nepalese culture and politics (Hangen, 2010; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2003; Tamang, 2001). The “growing phenomenon” of cultural difference in Nepal has been reflected by the transforming categorizations and measurements taken through the national census: for example, from 2001 to 2011, the number of caste/ethnic groups enumerated rose from 102 to 125, while the number of “mother tongues” [Nepali*, matri bhasha*] rose from 92 to 123. The purpose of this ethnographically-oriented study, conducted in urban and rural Nepal from July- December 2011, was to probe how the increasing socio-political salience of ethnic identity in the unique context of post-conflict Nepal intersected with the promotion, implementation, and experience of formal mother tongue educational programming.

In Nepal, as well as in the wider contexts of Asia and the globe, ethnic difference has been evoked as a relevant concept by groups of individuals both during critical political moments and through processes of modernization and state-building (Brass, 1991; He & Kymlicka, 2005). Following a decade-long civil war that officially ended in 2006 and the dissolution of a centuries-old Hindu monarchy, the contemporary age of rapid political and social transformation in Nepal set the conditions for public discussions of diversity and identity to come to the fore;

[1] In its essence, the neologism “*janajati”* refers to members of the “ethnic” or “tribal” groups of Nepal.

this post-conflict national context has been popularly termed the "New Nepal." The challenge of crafting and ratifying a constitution has served as the center of both practical and symbolic debates regarding the redefinition of the newly established democratic republic; the massive difficulty of this political endeavor has continued to the present, inflecting the everyday realities of ordinary citizens across the nation. 'Indigenous people's organizations' (IPOs), which began to proliferate following the first wave of democratization in 1990, represent an important new category of actors in these governance and policy-related debates, particularly as the issue of "ethnic federalism" has gained prominence in public consciousness and been asserted in various forms as a solution for national quandaries relating to the management of Nepal's social diversity.

As modern institutions, shaped by the past and (re)designed in the present to prepare youth to assume identities and roles in a future society, schools and educational systems serve as critical settings to examine wider cultural politics as they are being contested, transformed, and reproduced by social actors. The global phenomenon of mass formal schooling for children has made education an increasingly significant realm for the definition of social difference at national and local levels; as a consequence, scholars have begun to question the complex relationship between schooling and conflict situations (Anderson-Levitt, 2003; Pherali, 2011). Nepal's relatively brief history of mass schooling has been fundamentally characterized by exclusion of non-elites (including *janajatis*), the promotion of hegemonic national identity, and the influence of international development agencies and ideologies (Caddell, 2007; Valentin, 2005).

As signatory of the United Nations' Education-for-All (EFA) initiative, Nepal has pledged

its commitment towards providing free high-quality schooling through the primary level for all its young citizens. It has revised its objectives for the national primary curriculum to reflect its adherence to the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), including those to "help people live a better life in the modern world by protecting their identities in the national and international contexts, "help conserve and utilize... national heritages," and "help bring the underprivileged groups into the national mainstream" (Curriculum Development Center, 2008, p.2). Several national government-led educational commissions and policies have enshrined official support for "mother tongue" instruction over the last decades. Most recently, the Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) includes a provision for Fundamental Education [classes 1-8] in the "mother tongue." In the post-conflict era, *janajati*-focused organizations, such as the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), and specific IPOs have made such language-based educational issues central to their agendas for social change (Caddell, 2005; Gellner, 2004). The contemporary epoch in Nepal presented itself as a valuable temporal context to examine how the self-conscious promotion and representation of ethnic difference occurred through the deliberate (re)shaping of the government-provided education system by the historically marginalized *janajati* population.

To gain understanding of this phenomenon, this study was focused on the particular case of the Limbu ethnic community and their well-organized IPO, the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC). Resistance to the centralizing Nepalese government re-occurs as perhaps the defining theme of the Limbus' collective modern history (Fitzpatrick, 2011; Whelpton, 2005; Sagant, 1996). Representing 1.5% of the total national population (approximately 390,000 persons), the Limbu community has been historically associated with the eastern-most development zone of

unified Nepal (CBS, 2012). Presently, 85% of the total Limbu population continues to live in the nine districts said to comprise the Limbus' historical territories of "Limbuwan":[2] Ilam, Panchthar, Taplejung, Terathum, Morang, Sunsari, Dhankuta, Sankuwasabha, and Jhapa. Presently, the Limbu represent 10.2% of the total population of the region, a result of continual migration to the area by high caste Hindus since the commencement of the unification of modern Nepal in the last 18th century (CBS, 2014a). The districts in the Eastern Development Region with the highest percentage of ethnic Limbus are Panchthar (42%), Taplejung (41%), and Terathum (36%) (ibid.); in each of these, Limbus represent the largest ethnic/caste community. As is apparent, Limbus do not represent a majority in any of the nine districts.

Formed in 1989 in Kathmandu as a "non-partisan... common and representative organization of the Limbu indigenous people of Nepal" and one of the founding IPOs of the premier *janajati* umbrella organization of NEFIN, the KYC has taken a particularly active role as both participant in and advocate for the policy of instruction in mother tongue of Limbu language in both formal and informal educational settings (KYC, 2009a). In addition to being dedicated to the social and cultural advancement of the greater Limbu ethnic community, the KYC has pledged to "undertake activities for the achievement of Limbuwan autonomy under the federal system to ensure [the] country's national integrity and sovereignty" (ibid.). As an organization, the KYC includes a Central Executive Committee (located in greater Kathmandu), as well as District Executive Committees and international affiliate branches (representing expatriate Limbus throughout the world).[3]

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[2] An area of approximately 4500 square miles.

[3] Founded in 1989 with 68 members, the KYC grew to 12,000 supporters in 1995. By 1998, it had chapters in 11 districts and 200 villages (Hangen, 2010, p. 42).

Under new policy allowances for "mother tongue" instruction and with the assistance (as well as under the authority) of the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) of the Ministry of Education (Sanothimi, Bhaktapur), and financed by the Education Sector Advisory Team, in 1998 the KYC Central Executive Committee served as representative for the Limbu ethnic community in the development of a supplementary Limbu language curriculum for classes One-Five called Anipaan ['our language'].[4] The Limbu individuals included by the KYC in the process included educators, literary figures, and other affiliated Limbu language advocates. Their efforts culminated in the production of a set of textbooks, one for each class, which included poems, stories, essays, historical narratives, and other pieces written in *Sirijonga Lepi* [Limbu script], as well as accompanying illustrations. District-level KYC Committees began to offer local school governing committees in the Limbuwan region the option to include Anipaan in their primary school curricula as a supplementary subject. District Education Offices were apprised of schools' adoption of the program and were expected to assist in the provision of textbooks, while providing small grants to VDCs to fund teachers of the program.

In addition to serving as liaisons between local village community schools and District Education Offices, the KYC's District Committees effectively operated as providers of Anipaan teacher training, as well as the program's monitoring agency. In a recent outline of the state of Limbu "mother tongue" instruction in Limbuwan, Tumbahang (2013) notes the impossibility of providing an accurate number of schools currently implementing Anipaan, due to lack of monitoring by District Education Offices (DOE). Based on communication with KYC District Executive Committees, he gathered that approximately 476 schools had (at least nominally)

[4] 14 "mother tongue" textbooks have been produced under the direction of the CDC; of these, some were translations of Nepali textbooks into indigenous languages.

adopted the program, either up to class three or five (p.256-257). Panchthar had the greatest number (220) of schools in any district by a large margin (ibid). In my research however, KYC Panchthar District Executive Committee members explained that though these schools had requested textbooks, it was difficult to ascertain how many were actually implementing the program; estimates stood around 20[5]. In addition to their efforts with the formal, youth-oriented Anipaan program, the KYC also produced a set of textbooks for a non-formal educational program; according to Subba and Subba (2003) a pilot program of the non-formal program produced adults with "a strong love towards the mother tongue" and interests in asserting their Limbu identity (p.9). The KYC also published various materials in Limbu language, including the *Tanchoppa* newspaper, and engaged in many other activities in support of increased use of Limbu language, promotion of Limbu culture, and praise of individual Limbus' educational achievements.

Processualist theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity, language, and nationalism emphasize the continual, fluid, and deeply contextualized constructions of such notions of difference by individuals in practice (Brass, 19991; Fisher, 2001; Anderson, 1983). Language (in both spoken and written form) may be called upon as powerful means to underline articulations of unique ethnic identity. Recognizing that often the aims of ethnic activists, such as those in the KYC, do not neatly reflect the actual diversity of opinions and experiences of the wider ethnic community they (cl)aim to represent, it remains an important task to attend to the lived effects and meanings made of "ethnic" practices and policies from the perspectives of the many actors participating in them. This study therefore was designed to consider both how ethnic identity was

[5] According to Muksam Laoti, the District Administration Office of Panchthar disallowed the use of Limbu language as a subject of instruction during the Maoist insurgency, contributing to the presently low levels of actual implementation of the program (Tumbahang, 2013, p.256).

constructed, practiced, and represented by Limbu activists as related to their "mother tongue" educational efforts, as well as how the school-based Anipaan program was experienced and practiced by its "ethnic subjects" in everyday, locally-grounded educational settings.

In a complimentary vein, scholars of educational anthropology offer the theoretical lens of "education as cultural process" (Spindler, 1997). Through culturally-inflected practices of teaching, learning, and policy-making, individuals involved in educational endeavors participate in the transmission and transformation of culture itself. As a practice of normative cultural production that has the distinction of engaging with issues regarding the construction of "educated identities," skills, and knowledge, educational policy-making and the programmatic initiatives that follow from them represent important objects for anthropological inquiry (Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Wright & Shore, 1997). The Anipaan program, as an extension of the KYC's engagement in both expressly educational and greater socio-political policy issues, was therefore studied as a realm of practice and decision-making for both its activist developer-promoters and its agentive participants.

With these understandings in mind, this ethnographically-oriented study was designed with the people, ideas, and actions related to the Anipaan program as its organizing unit of concern. The following research questions were formulated to gain holistic insights into the contextually-grounded meanings made of the program from the perspectives of multiple groups of actors involved in its development, promotion, and implementation, as well as its lived experience.

1. **What goals and problems did the KYC and affiliated Limbu activists seek to address through the policy and practice of the Anipaan program? What assumptions, beliefs, and normative decision-making informed their engagement with "mother tongue" schooling?**
2. **What themes emerged from the KYC-produced Anipaan textbook series, in regards to the manner in which Limbu ethnic identity was characterized and represented?**
3. **In what manner and with what understandings did teachers, administrators, and schoolchildren implement and participate in the Anipaan program in one local government-run primary school?**
4. **With what beliefs, understandings, and assumptions did members of the local community (in which the school was a part) respond to the implementation of the Anipaan program?**

This study has been designed with the aim of contributing theoretical, methodological, and empirical insights to scholarship and practice. Carlos Fuentes (1996) succinctly captures one of the central conditions of the contemporary globalized age: "The paradox is this: if economic rationality tells us that the next century will be the age of global integration of the world's economies, cultural 'irrationality' steps in to inform us that it will also be the century of ethnic demands and revived nationalisms" (p.105). If Fuentes is to be believed, the findings of this study, conducted in what some observers might consider the far-removed Himalayan nation of Nepal, relate to increasingly global concerns regarding the negotiation between national governance and intensified self-conscious cultural identification. Broadly, the findings of this

research project may have the potential to inform pertinent discussions of the diverse ways in which local actors engage with the meanings and consequences of social diversity through the modern institution of the school and the cultural processes of education.

By training an ethnographic lens upon the particular "mother tongue-"based program of Anipaan, contextualizing its practices and underlying cultural meaning in local settings by agentive individuals, it is hoped that other such "multilingual-," "intercultural-," and/or "indigenous language-" based programs (related to larger "multiculturally"-oriented policies) may be illuminated in comparison. The study holistically attends to both the "policy" and "practice" dimensions of Anipaan. It offers anthropologically-based insights into the perspectives and normative assumptions behind new "mother tongue" programs in Nepal as formulated by an important new category of policy-makers and implementers, *janajati*-based civil society organizations. Furthermore, this study adds to theoretical understandings by exploring how exactly this text-based mother tongue curriculum itself symbolizes and serves as a means for the continual re-construction of ethnic identities and production of "imagined communities" through its transmission of ethnic-specific "cultural knowledge" (Anderson, 2006). Through the methodology of multi-sited ethnography, it also documents the implementation of Anipaan in a particular educational setting, put into practice, lived, and made meaning of by educators, schoolchildren, and community members. Grounding this "policy" in an local school and community context allows for specific insights to emerge in regards to the lived effects of the manner in which such programs are designed, taught, and incorporated into particular systems of schooling. Such findings have the potential to serve as meaningful sources of comparison and consideration for further studies of the longer-term consequences of such "identity"-based

curricular programs for the individuals participating (or not) in them, as well as for designers and practitioners of related programs.

Ultimately, locating the practice of this particular "mother tongue" educational program in the lives of the many groups of individuals involved in it helps to illuminate connections in larger web of social, economic, political, and cultural realities and debates, ranging from the local to the global in scope. The broader discursive and everyday, lived meanings of Nepal's status as a nation still very much in-transition, following recent armed conflict and political revolution, are brought into focus by considering the educational issue of mother tongue programming. While the political transformations of the past few decades have empowered previously marginalized communities, it remains to be seen how exactly the "New Nepal" will formally accommodate its social diversity and with what effects. One way or another, how ethnic identity is made to matter in the everyday lives of individuals in key social institutions, such as schools, may have important consequences for the future stability of Nepal as a nation.

In the following chapter, a review of scholarship regarding Nepalese education, ethnic politics, and language will be presented, in addition to a discussion of the theoretical framework informing the study. The methodology and methods used in the course of research will be detailed in Chapter Three. Data collected to address the four sets of research questions shall be presented and analyzed in the subsequent four chapters (Four- Seven). Chapter Eight will include a discussion of the preceding chapters, as well as suggestions for further scholarship and practice.

II. LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Review of Literature

In the pages to follow, I will review three bodies of literature related to the study of new practices in and experiences of ethnic schooling in Nepal. The first section will be aimed towards: 1) contextualizing the cultural politics of identity in Nepal, 2) detailing the emergence of *janajati* activism, and 3) providing a brief introduction to the Limbu ethnic community and their relationship to the Nepalese state. The second section will provide an overview of the development of schooling in Nepal, with a particular emphasis on literature that addresses the manner in which ethnicity has intersected with the education system, along with language. Throughout the three sections, I will attempt to provide as much historical perspective as possible on the subjects under review with the recognition that concepts, institutions, and persons are products of history and that they reflect changes over time (Gellner, 2001; Holland & Lave, 2001).

Cultural Politics of Identity

In order to situate the contemporary social phenomenon of ethnic activism in Nepal, I will first supply a brief outline of the relationship between *janajati* communities and the Nepalese state since the "unification" of the nation. In 1768, the armies of Prithvi Narayan Shah,

an ambitious prince from the hilltop state of Gorkha, successfully waged battle against tens of independent kingdoms in the Himalayan region in the effort to form what now essentially constitutes the modern nation of Nepal. Shah cannily centered his administration in the Kathmandu Valley, an unique oasis of fertile and flat land surrounded by steep hills and mountains, long an important hub along the India-Tibet trading route (Whelpton, 2005). Though Shah famously described the newly unified state as "a garden of different flowers," referring the scores of ethnic groups and communities encompassed by his kingdom, his reign marked the official commencement of a politicized system of cultural domination termed "brahamocracy"/ "*bahunism*"[6] by scholars of Nepal (Pandey, 2010, p.41; Lecomte-Tilouine & Dollfus, 2003). Though Nepal evaded the colonized fate of many of its Asian neighbors, through *bahunism*, internal "colonization" over diverse groups of Nepalese people characterized the policies of the state through the exaltation of high-caste, Hindu, Kathmandu-centered values and individuals. Though state control shifted from the theocratic Shah kings to their cousins, the oligarchic Rana ministers (1885-1951), and later back again to the Shahs (1961-1979), Nepal functioned as an essentially "extractive state," directing the use of its human and natural resources (such as corvee labor, land and natural resources, etc.) towards the service of the ruling family (Gellner, 2008, p. 7).

First produced in 1864, the Muluki Ain legal code formally enshrined the cultural and social privileging of the ruling elite; in no uncertain terms, this document codified a five-tier national system of social hierarchy through which members of indigenous ethnic groups, non-Hindus, females, and low-caste persons were defined as legally and culturally inferior to their

[6] *Bahun* is the Nepali term for "Brahmin," the highest position in the Hindu caste hierarchy. The basic varnas ('classes') in the system, in declining order, are: Bahun, Chettri, Vaishya, and Sudra (Dalit).

rulers by specific degrees (Hofer, 1979). Unsurprisingly under such circumstances, ethnic groups of differing religious, social, and cultural persuasions from the Shah/Rana clan experienced a process of forced cultural assimilation through their interactions with the state and its representatives. Recognizing the *bahunized* hierarchy for what it was, many ethnic communities engaged in collective attempts to transform their practices to mirror high-caste Hindu ways of being and to ally themselves with the ruling elite as means of increasing their status; scholars of South Asia commonly refer to this process of cultural shift as "Sanskritization" (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997; Srinivas, 1952). In a now classic essay, Harka Gurung (2003), considers the politicization of cultural difference through the founding of modern Nepal by spotlighting the religious emblems of the trident (a symbol of Shivaistic Hinduism) and the thunderbolt (a symbol of Tibetan Buddhism); he argues that communities in Nepal were characterized by a high degree of cultural and religious syncretism in previous eras, and only through the dominating efforts of the national elite did they come to represent mutually exclusive signs of identity (p.4-5).

Following decades of direct rule by the Shah monarchy,[7] in 1990 a wave of popular political protest known as the *Jana Andolan I* ['Peoples Movement I'] forced a democratic turn in governance, marking a new phase in the intersection of the state and matters of ethnicity (Hachhethu, Yadav, & Gurung 2010). Officially, the Constitution of 1990 declared Nepal a "multiethnic, multilingual" state, though Hinduism remained the state religion. Foreign anthropologists of Nepal noted striking transformations in discourses of diversity in Nepal during this era: Whelpton and colleagues (2008) observed that "When, before, issues of ethnicity and cultural disadvantage could only be alluded to indirectly, now they could be addressed only,

[7] Known as the *Panchayat* Era (1962- 1990).

publicly, and officially" (p.xvii). The remarkable expansion of Nepalese civil society during the post-1990 era was critical to the development of well-organized ethnic advocacy groups such as the Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN), in both the capital and in local districts (Rappelye, 2011). Ethnic groups no longer solely focused on issues of "cultural symbolism" as they had in the *Panchayat* era, and began practicing overt political activism (Whelpton, Gellner, & Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008, p. xix).

A strong tendency towards the emigration of Nepalese ethnic persons, which began with the colonial British army's recruitment of the famous "Gorkha" regiments, buoyed the growing strength of the indigenous nationalities movement through transnational networks and the purchasing power of repatriated wages. Likewise, the rise of ethnic activism in Nepal during the 1990s clearly evidenced strong linkages to transformations in authoritative global discourses of minority rights, frameworks of of indigeneity, and the mandates of international organizations such as the United Nations (Whelpton, Gellner, & Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008, p. xxiii).[8]

Despite the hopes of many, the democratic dispensations of the post-1990 era proved insufficient, ineffective, and ultimately impermanent (Whelpton, 2005). Rappelye (2011) argues the massive growth of international donor-driven civil society served to effectively delegitimate indigenous Nepalese social movements and set the conditions for future conflict: "Those with 'authentic' grievance had little choice but to turn elsewhere... a de-politicized civil society pushed the discontented into the arms of the Maoists" (p.46). Maoist insurgent forces began to mobilize in rural areas in the mid-1990s and low-level conflict steadily intensified until a full-scale civil war erupted between the (once-again) monarchist state and Maoists in the mid-2000s.

[8] See Onta (2006) for a discussion of the rationale behind the adoption of the term "indigenous nationalities" by the *janajati* social movement.

Given their historically subjugated positions in the national social hierarchy, certain economically disadvantaged ethnic communities and persons found particular appeal in Maoism (Fisher, 2008; Lecomte-Tilouine, 2004).

Marking the beginning of a third crucial phase of the relationship between the state and issues of ethnicity, the *Jana Andolan II* ['People's Movement II'] in April 2006 involved the mass uprising of hundreds of thousands of Nepalese citizens from diverse ethnic groups, castes, and classes. They joined in public protests, demanding for and successfully compelling the dissolution of the monarchy and the opportunity to establish Nepal as a secular republic. In the post-conflict era, as the country struggles to establish democratic institutions, *janajati* groups have vocally spotlighted ethnic issues in an effort to fully and formally accommodate Nepal's diversity in matters of public discourse and law (Hachhethu, Yadav, & Gurung, 2010). The primary issues *janajati* organizations have addressed fall into three broad categories: cultural (religious discrimination; linguistic discrimination); economic (low literacy; unemployment); and political (poor representation; subjugated governance) (Gurung, 2003).

While scholars of Nepal have begun to focus in recent years on the quickly expanding realm of ethnic organizations, a comprehensive survey of these diverse social associations has yet to emerge. Uncommon during the *Panchayat* era due to political constraints, "indigenous peoples organizations" (IPOs) are now estimated to number in the hundreds, though their individual capacities vary greatly (the larger ethnic groups tend to have better funded organizations). Though their central missions may encompass or range from emphases on cultural issues (religion, literature, music, history) to social services to gender issues, these organizations all essentially all engage in "*janajati* identity promotional activities" (Onta, 2005,

p.321). As Hangen (2010) notes, ethnic organizations function as important non-institutional political agents: "While these organizations prioritize cultural revitalization and the preservation of their ethnic group over political change, their cultural projects have clear political dimensions, challenging the state's past project of assimilating ethnic groups into the dominant national culture" (p.41). The proliferation of ethnic associations' headquarters in the nation's capital could be seen to reflect their emphasis on engagement with a national project of culture and identity-shaping.

Internally, ethnic organizations sometimes provide a space for discussions of culture and society within the "boundaries" of ethnic groups to emerge. Hangen explains, "The primary challenge for most of these organizations is to create a sense of unity within the group despite their internal cultural diversity" (Hangen, 2010, p.42). In his study of the Thakali ethnic group's attempts to define "their identity more precisely and to unify and codify their cultural practices," Fisher (2001) documented the contentious debates within the greater Thakali community at the first meeting of their national organization's general assembly in the early 1980s. As members expressed various opinions regarding the promotion of Hindu or Tibetan Buddhist ritual practices, the event "exposed deep divisions among the Thaksatsae Thakali and revealed the ways in which religious identity reflects political and social status both within the group and in Nepalese society at large" (Fisher, p.21). Gellner and Karki (2008) point out that the establishment of ethnic organizations' leadership tends not to result from internal elections, perhaps in order not to mirror the typical processes of political parties or to encourage the splintering of the organizations into factions. Hangen highlights the KYC as a particularly well-functioning ethnic organization, attributing its successes and wide range of activities to the

Limbus' "relative cultural unity" (2010, p.42).

Tracing their origins to the Kiranti[9] peoples of earlier eras, the Limbu have had their presence in the region east of Kathmandu noted in historical accounts produced by Western visitors since the turn of the 19th century (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p. 28). While living throughout the three regions of "Kirant," Limbus were most strongly associated with the easternmost section, east of the Arun River, known as "Pallo Kirant" ["Far" Kirant] and "Limbuwan." In his recent ethnography of a Limbu village, Fitzpatrick (2011) notes the lack of "clear and consistent accounts of the historical origins of the Limbu," as well as Western ethnographers' decisions to simply elide the matter in framing their own studies (i.e., Jones & Jones, 1976; Caplan 1967). The standard origin myth of the Limbu people traces the founding of Limbuwan to ten brothers, described as migrants from India or Tibet (depending on variants of the story), who then dispersed across the region.

Protracted battles with the Limbu during the Gorkha campaigns of the late 18th century marked the beginning of the ethnic group's particular history of resistance against the modern centralizing state. The armies of Prithvi Narayan Shah entered Limbuwan in 1774 and Limbu leaders were eventually compelled to surrender at Bijayapur. Originally granted relatively great levels of autonomy and privilege in the new nation of Nepal, Limbu headmen (known as *subbas*) continued to govern their communities; a critically important feature of their administration was their indigenous communal *kipat* land-use system, which contributed to a strong sense of association between Limbus and the land of Limbuwan. Soon however, Nepalese state rulers began to promote the migration of Hindu caste groups to historical Limbuwan and promulgated

[9] Other contemporary ethnic groups included in this broader designation include the Rai, Sunwar, and Yakka.

policies that lead to the eventual dissolution of the *kipat* system in 1964. As a result of these changes, multiple uprisings against the state and internal immigrants have steadily defined the history of the region (Subba, 1999). Furthermore, as ethnic persons in the unified nation, the Limbu community were enfolded in the official social and caste hierarchy. In the Muluki Ain, Limbus were first categorized as "Enslavable Alcohol-drinkers" before being re-categorized as "Non-enslavable Alcohol-drinkers" (Hofer, 1979, p.182).

In his ethnographic study of the contentious relations between Bahuns and Limbus in eastern Nepal, conducted in the 1970s, Caplan (2000) proposes that the Limbus' "vested economic interest" in the *kipat* system explains the group's relatively low levels of "Sanskritization" (p.183): "Cultural distinctiveness serves as an important weapon in the struggle for land. It becomes essential for the Limbus to reiterate the peculiarity of their own customs and values... Culture, in other words, comes to have a political role" (p.182). The Limbu ethnic group's collective history of opposition to the Nepalese state and strong sense of affiliation with Limbuwan itself continues to be displayed by way of particularly active demands for the redrawing of the newly democratic nation along ethnic federal lines.[10]

As of 2011, the Limbu population was counted at 387,300, representing 1.46% of the total Nepalese population (approximately 26.5 million), and thus constituted the 13th largest caste/ethnic group in the nation (CBS, 2012). Of the total Limbu population, a majority reside in the Eastern Development Region of the country; more specifically, 48% of those live in the Eastern Hill eco-development region, followed by the Eastern Terai (31%), and the Eastern Mountains (21%) (ibid.). According to the categorization of indigenous nationalities' statuses

[10] According an International Crisis group report (2011), an estimated 13% of the total Nepalese population supports ethnic federalism, compared to 42% of Limbus.

presented by NEFIN, Limbus are considered a socio-economically "disadvantaged" Hill community, along with the Rai, Gurung, and Sherpa ethnic communities ("Categorization of Indigenous People Based on Development"). Importantly, a significant population of Limbu also live in the states of Sikkim and Assam in North-eastern India.

The Limbu refer to themselves as Yakthungba, an ambiguous term variously said to refer to "a bearer of bows and arrows" (an archer) or "being stronger than the Yakha" (another Kiranti tribe) (KYC, "About Limbu"; Fitzpatrick, 2011, p.40). The clan [*thar*] serves as the main social group of concern in Limbu society; according to Subba (1995), there are 270 clans of the Limbu and they are exogamous in their marriage practices. The indigenous Kiranti religion of Limbus (and other eastern ethnic communities) continues to be practiced. The 2011 Census counted Kirantis as the third largest religious minority (the majority being Hindu), with 3% of the total population (over 800,000 persons) identifying themselves as adherents to it (CBS, 2012). Of these, 96% live in the far east of the country (ibid.). The standard bearers of Kiranti religion are several types of shamans and priests, including those known as Phedangma, Samba, and Yebayema.

Linguistically, the Limbu language belongs to the Kiranti group of the Tibeto-Burmese language family and includes four dialects: Yanggruppe/Chhattare/Panthare, Tamarkhole, Phedappe, and Chatthare, with 84% intelligibility between the four (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014). The 2011 Census reported 343,603 persons identifying Limbu as their "mother tongue;" 96% of these persons were located in the Eastern Development Region (CBS, 2012). In the Eastern Hill eco-development region, those speaking Limbu as their "mother tongue" totaled 174,318, while those speaking Nepali outnumbered the Limbu speakers four to one (ibid.).

Ethnologue categorizes Limbu as a level 5 (developing) language; as such, it is in "vigorous use" amongst older adults, while children generally speak more Nepali than Limbu, and it is characterized by not yet "widespread or sustainable" literary capability (Lewis, Simons, & Fennig, 2014).

The Sirijonga orthography has been said to have been first created in the late 6th century C.E., developed by King Sirijonga in the late 9th century, and revived in the 18th century by a Sikkimese Limbu monk (also known as Sirijonga); it is thought to be is derived from the Tibetan cursive script (Subba, 1995). During the Rana regime, use of *Sirijonga Lepi* was outlawed and possession of Limbu texts constituted a crime, leading to a near-complete loss of Limbu materials (Fitzpatrick, 2011, p.47). The cultural/religious reform movement led by Phalgunanda Lingden in the mid-20th century contributed to renewed interest in Limbu literature and language amongst the ethnic population (Subba, 1995, p.33-34). The Limbu scholar Iman Singh Chemjong again revisited and modified the script in the 1970s. Amongst Tibeto-Burmese languages present in Nepal, only Limbu, Lepcha, and Newari have their own system of writing. In Sikkim, Limbu language/script has been in official use for four decades; it also has a dedicated Limbu language post-graduate college and many Sikkimese-produced materials continue to be used in Nepalese Limbu communities.

In summary, the history of the Nepalese state since 1766 could be narrated as a process of the subordination of social difference by the ruling elite until recent transformations in governance. As numerous scholars suggest, the increasing prominence of ethnic identity politics in Nepal represents an important cultural phenomenon to explore in terms of the manner in which discourses of democracy, nationhood, development, and diversity intersect in the lives of

persons (Hangen, 2010; Gellner, 2008; Guneratne, 2002; Lawoti & Guneratne, 2010). While a substantial literature has been produced that provides insight into the dynamics of cultural politics in Nepal, little attention has been paid to understanding specifically how and why ethnic organizations are currently engaging in social transformation through formal schooling.

Schooling in Nepal

In a critical historical analysis, Caddell (2007) highlights the inherently political character of schooling in Nepal by tracing the development of the nation's education system. She argues that the shape and scope of the system has clearly reflected shifts in configurations of political power, as each iteration of Shah/Rana rule "attempted to reinforce its own vision of the idea of the Nepali nation-state by re-articulating the relationship between the state, schools, and 'the people'"(p.2).

In the era prior to 1951, during which Nepal"s rulers maintained strict isolationist foreign policies, access to education was almost exclusively limited to the high-caste Hindu male elite. The one institute of higher education in the nation, Kathmandu's Trichandra College, served to exclusively teach members of the Shah/Rana clans (Koirala-Azad, 2008, p.252); importantly, the medium of instruction in these schools was English (Weinberg, 2013, p.64). Giving tuition of any type to the Nepalese masses constituted a capital offense and, as a result, literacy levels in 1951 rested at an estimated 2% of the total population (Koirala-Azad, 2008). Gellner (2008) contends the Ranas' strict prohibitions on educational opportunity served as a means of discouraging internal dissent against the regime, in addition to limiting the masses' engagement with the warring foreign ideologies circulating at the commencement of the Cold War. As the

eminent Nepalese anthropologist Dor Bahadur Bista (1991) asserts, restricting individuals" opportunities to experience formal study could be linked to *bahunized* cultural understandings of the nature of education and its role in maintaining social hierarchy: "To be educated one had to be born into a caste where such an education was appropriate" (p.117). Unsurprisingly, as individuals of officially lesser status in the social/caste hierarchy, *janajati* persons had virtually no access to formal schooling.

However, the mid-1900s marked a critical point in the emergence of a national education system, as Nepal began its hugely important relationship with international development agencies and discourses. Reflecting on over half a century of international development in Nepal, Rappelye (2011) argues that the Shah government played the role of "donor darling" with great skill, negotiating and accommodating "the often-diverse agendas of major multi-lateral, bi-lateral and INGO 'partners'" whilst attending to their own interests (p.30). Nepal's sovereignty during the age of colonization, a result of both its challenging terrain and its isolationist political leadership, served as a primary reason for its relative lack of infrastructure development. *Bikas* ['development'] became one of the central organizing principles of the Nepalese nation and the government's promise to institute mass primary schooling functioned as an integral dimension of this process of modernization.[11] In Gellner"s (2009) terms, the school was intended to serve as a "Trojan horse of modernity" in the rural "village," a place that in *bikase* ideology was authoritatively positioned "as opposite of development" (p.121; Pigg, 1992, p.492).[12]

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[11] The enthusiasm for instituting mass schooling in Nepal during this first flush of the monarchist development state follows along closely with the principles of the modernization paradigm driving international development of the time (McMichael, 1996).

[12] Literature from the anthropology of education offers a rich comparative perspective on local reactions to the establishment of the modern institution of the school. See Anderson-Levitt"s (2003) edited volume for foundational readings on this process as it has been experienced in diverse settings.

Following the creation of a central Ministry of Education to manage the education system in 1951, the *Panchayat*-era political leadership continued the process of centralizing government control over schools. The Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) of the mid-1950s was overseen by an American professor of education, Hugh Wood; the report which was produced contained the strong recommendation to privilege Nepali in schools for the sake of national unity, though there was recognition stated of the possible usefulness of local languages in the earliest levels of schooling (Awasthi, 2004; Weinberg, 2013, p.71). The New Education System Plan (NESP) of the early 1970s was the largest, most comprehensive reform effort of the era and was undergirded with the principle of fostering a strong national identity in children (Caddell, 2007). The slogan, *Ek Bhasa, Ek Bhesh, Ek Dharma, Ek Desh* ['One language, one dress, one religion, one nation'[13]] was impressed upon schoolchildren throughout Nepal. Analyses of textbooks and exams produced during this period have made clear that the vision of Nepalese identity promoted was an exemplification of the values of the historical elite (Pigg, 1992). In his examination of history textbooks, Onta (1996) contends that Nepal's new commitments to mass schooling served as an opportune vehicle for the invention and instillation of collective national memories in schoolchildren: the authors of historical narratives in textbooks "tried to create a brave and virile image of the nation and produce Nepalis as one ethnicity by pruning and 'un-national' elements to erase historical ambivalences" (Bhatta, 2009, p.12). The promotion of a hegemonic national history through practices of the school had as its corollary the erasure of other dimensions of Nepalese identities, including ethnicity, and the denigration of ethnic groups" contributions to the shaping of modern Nepal (Onta, 1996). In his

[13] Respectively, Nepali, Khas-Nepali dress, Hinduism, Nepal.

ethnographic study of the impact of NESP on an ethnically Gurung community at the time of its introduction, Ragsdale (1989) illustrates how reforms not only disparaged ethnic identities but also reflected a clear "Kathmandu-centric and middle class bias, with exam questions that would mean nothing at all to rural children growing up far from the capital" (p.120-121).

A few decades later, in an analysis of Nepalese pedagogical materials, Caddell (2005) documents strong continuities with the nationalist messages elucidated by Onta and Ragsdale, despite overt changes in the representation of social difference. In the national *Mero Desh* ['My Country'] textbook used in the early 2000s, the section *Haami Sabai Eklai Hau* ['We are All the Same'] includes an illustration of several ethnic persons (as marked by their dress and physiognomy) standing together, yet they appear "frozen into their cultural differences" (p.13). Two schoolchildren dressed in uniforms, without ethnically distinct facial features, turn away from the gaggle of ethnic persons with looks of dismay. To Caddell, such an image is meant to transmit clear themes: "Attending school is thus presented as a means of transcending cultural differences, of leaving the constraint of the 'local' and the 'traditional' behind, to engage in the modern project of schooling" (p.14). By limiting the representation of difference to individual ethnic persons removed from any context, their collectively inferior position in the social hierarchy is downplayed: "Difference is depoliticized, sidelining inequality through a focus on dress, facial features, and customs" (p.15).[14] Ultimately, as described by the work of these scholars of education, the content of schooling under monarchical rule served to reinforce existing social dynamics, defining true Nepalese national identity in the image of its rulers.

Nevertheless, access to formal schooling has increased dramatically by all counts since

[14] The method of acknowledging social difference but minimizing it with the seemingly benign assertion that "we are all the same" has clear parallels to discourses of multiculturalism that persist in multi-ethnic Western nations like the United States (Hoffman 1996).

the introduction of mass primary schooling and has been seized upon by diverse populations of Nepal for its appealing, *bikas*-related promises of social mobility. Poor, *janajati*, rural, Terai-based (*Madhesi*), and female populations have continued to experience unequal access to and success in the education system; *janajati* students account for a majority of school "drop outs" (Valentin, 2005; Stash & Hannum, 2001; Toba, Toba, & Rai, 2005, p.195). Following along with the goals of the United Nation"s Education for All (EFA) initiative, the Nepalese government and international partners have instituted reforms in recent decades to redress these shortcomings, including the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) and Primary Education Development Project (PEDP). While such programs have succeeded in constructing schools, hiring additional teachers, and improving student enrollment, retention, and recruitment, scholars such as Khaniya and Williams (2004) question claims of actual gains in student learning. Thus, "general skepticism and even pessimism about public education, especially about its quality, relevance, and ultimately legitimacy, abounds at all levels of Nepalese society," resulting in what S.D Bhatta (2009) has termed the "pauperization" of government-provided schools (P. Bhatta, 2009, p.6). The crisis in quality of Nepalese mass schooling has led to a massive increase in the number and popularity of private schools, particularly those which offer English as the medium of instruction. As Caddell (2006) notes, "The distinction is no longer between the 'educated' and 'non-educated,' but is a more nuanced (but no less unsubtle) set of divisions between those educated in different private schools, in addition to a broader divide between government and privately educated students" (p.31).

In recent years, an emerging literature has begun to expressly probe the complex role of

education in the decade-long Maoist insurgency and civil war.[15] Observers of the conflict have highlighted the fact that schools functioned as both metaphoric and actual sites of discord during the conflict. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted with teachers and students in six districts of Nepal, Pherali (2011) concludes that "education served obliquely as one of the main causes of the violent conflict... Despite efforts to "modernize" and the push for "increased participation in education, Nepalese schools continued to embody socially and culturally prejudiced values and institutionally legitimized the inequitable practices in the educational system" (p.136). As seen from their 40-Point Demands and their call to "set fire to the educational marketplace," the Maoist leadership made issues of unequal access to and provision of quality public education central themes in their struggle against the monarchist state (in Hutt, 2004). It bears mentioning however that the Maoists never attacked the fundamental good of schooling itself.

Further complicating understandings of the relationship of education to conflict situations, Shields and Rappelye (2008) draw attention to the irony that the actual successes of Nepalese educational expansion might have played an important role in fueling the insurgency. They explain, "This rapid expansion of literacy and basic education created a new generation who had invested in their own education with the belief that it would offer improved life circumstance and employment. When these prospects failed to materialize- due to poor planning and relatively little economic growth- many became disillusioned with the national development agenda as a whole" (Shields & Rappelye, 2008, p.271). Appreciating the deeply political and

[15] This literature situates itself within theoretical discussions of the so-called "two faces of education" in conflict (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Bush and Saltarelli argue that schools can both add to ethnic conflict by denigrating certain groups and mitigate it by providing new spaces to deal with issues of difference. The following studies complicate the "two-faces" theory in productive ways.

multifaceted role of schooling in Nepalese society, Pherali suggests that additional empirical research is needed to more fully consider the role of schooling as a source of potential conflict in Nepal's future: "As sites that perpetuate historic deficiencies *and* generate new regressive norms, schools may be best thought of as part of the persistence of instability in Nepal" (2011, p.140, emphasis original) He adds that, instead of focusing academic studies of Nepalese education on matters of access to schooling, "what may be more essential now... is to look more closely at the 'type' of education that is on offer and the values and attitudes that it is promising" (p.150).

In the post-conflict era, the Maoist political party and increasingly prominent ethnic associations continue to agree upon one direction of school reform: the need for mother tongue instruction in primary schools. Several national government-led educational commissions and policies have enshrined official allowance for mother tongue instruction, including the National Languages Policy Recommendation Commission (1994), Nepal's Education for All National Plan of Action (2003), the National Curriculum Framework (2005), and School Sector Reform Plan (2009) (Laxman, 2013, p.59). The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) provisionally "ended the difference between the 'language of the nation' and 'national languages' recognizing all as 'national languages' of Nepal" (Tumbahang, 2013, p.254). The Local Autonomous Governance Act of 1998 allowed for mother tongue education to be provided for by local VDCs through economic grants. The vague distinctions between these official categorizations have been understood by many to reflect the passive role played by the government in supporting practical transformation of language policies (Turin, 2004).

Under the aegis of the Nepalese Ministry of Education and the government of Finland, a pilot project for the implementation of "multilingual education" at the primary level commenced

in 2007. Based in based in 8 schools in 6 districts, the program finds ideological roots in indigenous peoples' rights frameworks and makes use of the impassioned rhetoric of linguistic diversity advocacy, such as attributing the loss of local languages to "evil entrepreneurs of identity" (Hough, Magar, & Yonjan-Tamang, 2009; Yonjan-Tamang, Hough, & Nurmela, 2009; Mohanty, 2009, p.7).

A relatively new realm of research, studies of the Nepalese schooling system have overwhelmingly tended towards quantitative or evaluative methodologies, as they have primarily been produced by government ministries or international organizations for the purpose of assessing needs and the effectiveness of educational interventions (Gellner, 2009, p.120; Koirala-Azad, 2008, p.252; Robinson-Pant, 2009). Consequently, many have either implicitly or explicitly focused on identifying and decrying cultural "barriers" to the achievement of rights and goals enshrined in global mandates such as the UN"s "Education for All." Several recent ethnographies of schooling in Nepal, including those by Maslak (2003) and Rothschild (2006), have likewise displayed implicitly deficit-based perspectives in their studies of impediments to wider school success for diverse populations. As an example, Rothschild employs a feminist theoretical stance to illuminate prevailing assumptions made by Nepalese Hindus regarding gender and their effect on girls" opportunities to progress in school. Her intention in doing so rests in an instrumentalist desire to promote "change at this level and within family institutions worldwide" to increase the number of children in schools (p.11).

Additional academic studies produced by anthropologists serve as potentially valuable texts to inform studies of social diversity in Nepalese education.[16] Ahearn's (2001) longitudinal

[16] Several studies will be discussed in this section; additional scholarship will be presented later in the chapter in the subsection "Anthropology of Schooling and Educational Policy."

ethnography details how the growth of literacy has led to the practice of love-letter writing amongst young, ethnically Magar villagers in Nepal, thereby contributing to both social continuity and change in cultural conceptions of love, family, and personal agency; her work strongly suggests that social science research is deeply enriched through the task of looking closely at how schooling and schooled knowledges transform lives and communities. As previously mentioned, Ragsdale"s (1989) study of nationalized educational reform as experienced at the local level of a Gurung community represents an important early contribution to understanding the complex relationships between the Nepalese school system and ethnic groups. By observing his participants negotiate the new climate of educational reform, he concludes, "When education change is perceived by an ethnic community as contradictory to its own self-interest, educational change will be altered at the local level to serve that self-interest" (p.18).

More recently, David Gellner (2004), an esteemed British anthropologist who concentrates on the study of ethnicity in Nepal, conducted a thought-provoking, two-week-long study in 1996 through which issues of ethnic identity, cultural difference, children's voices, and schooling came to the fore. Comparing children's essays and pictures produced in a private school founded by ethnically Newar cultural activists with those produced by students in a government school, he posits that the experience of *being* schooled was more important for children's lives than *what kind of* school they attended. Returning ten years later to follow up with those students he was able to contact, he discovers that,

> Only one out of 13 children had even a passing interest in Newar cultural nationalism as an ideology. In other words, despite daily exposure to the messages of Newar cultural nationalism in their school days, as young people in their early twenties, struggling to make a living in Kathmandu, they were strongly resistant

> to the ideas of cultural nationalism... Cultural nationalism, while very "catchy" to some in Kathmandu, does not make much sense to many others, particularly the urban working classes from whom JSBK [the Newar school] tends to take its pupils. (Gellner, 2009, p.123)

Gellner's small-scale study in the urban context of Kathmandu would clearly benefit from comparison to other locations and to other ethnic groups. As the "host tribe" of Kathmandu, Newars have commonly experienced the highest levels of financial success and status amongst all the ethnic groups of Nepal, so the issue of Newari cultural nationalism might seem less essential to students' development than the financial pressures of urban living. Importantly though, Gellner's study highlights the need for a more systematic revisiting of the issue of cultural nationalism as emphasized in educational environments, particularly considering the recent revolution in governance.

In her ethnographic study of the construction of Nepalese citizenship through schooling, Caddell (2005) briefly alludes to the counter-responses of ethnic groups to hegemonic notions of nationalistic identity. Noting the KYC's efforts in the eastern hill region of the country to encourage Limbu students' success in school, she interprets their engagement in the realm of education as a means of helping to

> combat the perception of such people as "backward" and uneducated by increasing their association with the modern institution of the school. Thus, while such groups are challenging homogeneity as a basis for Nepali identity, they maintain a focus on the development as a key marker of identity and, significantly, a need for external validation of that identity... Schooling thus becomes a promotional activity for the wider agenda of the interest group, be that a religious organization or ethnically-based movement. (Caddell, 2005, p.30)

Thus, in Caddell"s understanding, the school serves as an essential social institution with which ethnic activist groups must engage in order to elevate their social status in general.

Presently, 42% of primary school teachers are *janajati* in the Eastern Development Region, representing a higher percentage than the national average of 29% (Ministry of Education, 2011, p.7). Of these, they represent 23.6% of lower secondary teachers, 16.8% of upper secondary, and 14.7% of post-graduate level teachers (ibid.).

In summary, existing research has illuminated the historically exclusionary nature of formal schooling in Nepal with regards to ethnic communities, in addition to noting the significant role of schooling in the ideology of *bikas* and in the decade-long Maoist insurgency. Scholars whose work relates to the interplay of ethnic groups and the educational system suggest that the experience of going to school and the acquisition of schooled knowledges transform ethnic children's lives, and that *janajati* communities engage with educational reform and institutions in strategic ways.

Theoretical Framework for the Study of Ethnic Identity and Language, Schooling and Policy

To further investigate the issue of contemporary *janajati* education in Nepal and, in so doing, to contribute to building knowledge of the relationship between schooling and the localized negotiation of social diversity in South Asia, I have anchored this study in two broad bodies of theoretical literature: 1) processual approaches to the construction of ethnic identities and cultural nationalisms, and 2) understandings of the culturally-grounded practices of schooling and of educational policy and planning. Anthropology provides the foundational disciplinary framework for this study, particularly its concept of culture and its empirical approach of ethnography. Within this frame, as Erickson (2011) succinctly explains,

contemporary anthropological theory has shifted from an earlier "understanding of culture from a tightly integrated set of rules learned in childhood to a more flexible array of principles for action, belief, and desire, which are then enacted adaptively and opportunistically in practice" (p. 31). Insights and perspectives from multiple disciplines, ranging from history to sociolinguistics, have also contributed to each of the bodies of literature drawn upon for the purposes of this study. In the following section, I will discuss these theoretical literatures, as the concepts and lenses they provide have existed in dynamic relationship with both my research design and my interpretation of findings.

Ethnicity and Language as Cultural Practice

As one of anthropology's central concerns as a discipline has been the exploration and explanation of cultural difference, the concept of ethnicity has been the subject of a wealth of empirical and theoretical literature. Fundamentally, theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity may be distinguished simply as being either primordialist or processualist in orientation. In the former, ethnic group identification is understood as an essential, immutable, natural part of an individual's identity, the product of biological affiliation with a group of people and their given, fixed "culture" (Shils, 1957; Smith, 1986). Long appreciated by anthropologists interested in ethnicity as a fecund regional field due to its multiethnic composition, Nepal has in recent decades served as the ethnographic setting of several works that have contributed to the development of the processualist theoretical approach, which has deeply informed this study (Fisher, 2001; Guneratne, 2002; Holmberg, 1989).

Alternatively referred to as “modernist” or “social-historical” approaches, processualist theories emphasize the contextually contingent, interactional, and fluid nature of ethnicity and ethnic identification; in other words, ethnicity must be understood as a concept constantly in the process of being summoned and shaped by actors, in implicit and explicit relation to other actors. Scholars operating within this approach owe much to the theoretical work of Paul Brass (1991), whose ethnographic research focused on nationalism movements in India. Underlining the importance of socio-cultural, historical, political contexts, he argues, “There is nothing inevitable about the rise of ethnic identity and its transformation into nationalism among the diverse peoples of the contemporary world. Rather, the conversion of cultural differences into bases for political differentiation between peoples arises only under specific circumstances which need to be identified clearly” (p.13). Interactions of different social groups within the wider process of state-building and political negotiation are particularly important circumstances for the on-going cultural construction of ethnic identities (He & Kymlicka, 2005; Holmberg, 1989).

In monarchies such as Nepal where “cultural differences” were enshrined in state structures such as the Muluki Ain, the fluid and constructed nature of ethnicity is often, paradoxically, obscured; as Comaroff and Comaroff (1992) explain, “In systems where “ascribed” cultural differences rationalize structures of inequality, ethnicity takes on a cogent existential reality. It is this process of reification... that gives it the [false] appearance of being an autonomous factor in the ordering of the social world” (p.61). Though his influential thesis remains controversial, Barth’s (1969) assertion that scholars of ethnicity ought not to focus on defining the cultural substance of different ethnic groups is worthwhile, as doing so requires one to run the risk of essentializing persons and theoretically under-privileging the similarities or

overlaps across cultural groups (p.6). Barth instead proposes that what makes "an ethnic identity 'ethnic,' therefore was to be sought in the social processes of maintaining boundaries that the people themselves recognized as ethnic" (Baumann, 1999, p.59). Barth recommends for scholars to interpret indigenous people's political activism as engagement in a "social struggle for meaningful change, not the revitalization of an unchanging heritage of aboriginal cultural traits" (1969, p.7). Barth's attention to the strategic and collective processes of "boundary" drawing and highlighting serves as an important theoretical orientation for this study.

Interestingly, and as shall be discussed in the chapters to follow, conflicting theories of ethnicity proved a matter of importance in the field. Likewise, Fisher's (2001) reflections on his long-term involvement with Nepal's Thakali ethnic group brings to light some of the complexities inherent to conducting research from a processual perspective. As a scholar with research interests in "how the Thakali attempt to understand what it means to be Thakali," his own fluid theoretical understandings of ethnicity directly contradicted those of his Thakali participants (p.21). As a newly energized *janajati* community, Thakali activists understood their main task in figuring out what it meant to be Thakali to be defining the primordial essence of their group "culture" and crystallizing "it." In turn, as Fisher explains,"They repeatedly argued that while my concerns with cultural complexities and historical processes might be interesting to foreign scholars, my real task, from their perspective, should be discovering the true history and culture of the Thakali" (p.10). Importantly, Fisher"s experiences conducting fieldwork remind us that not only is ethnographic research interactionist at its core but also that scholars (operating as they may or may not with keen theoretical appreciation of the fluidity of social

boundaries and identities) still play a role in possibly reifying those very categories and concepts, such as ethnicity, they work to problematize.

Of particular import for the study of education in Nepal, where schooled identities are afforded status in the national social imagination, processual scholars of ethnicity draw particular attention to the critical point that ethnic identity is often constructed through the "purposeful activities of dominant classes or elites" (Guneratne, 2002, p.17; Brass, 1991; Barth, 1969). Multiple studies of ethnicity in Nepal have pointed to the crucial role played by education in the development of *janajati* "elites," such as schoolteachers, who then tend to lead the process of constructing, maintaining, and transmitting ethnic identities (Caplan, 1970; Guneratne, 2002; Hangen, 2007; Levine, 1987). With their added authority, ethnic elites and activists generally have greater say in the "invention of traditions" that connect modern ethnic groups to some "continuity with the past" through symbolic or ritual means (Hobsbawm, 1983, p.2). However, as Gellner (2001) advises scholars of ethnicity,

> One should not assume that ethnic activists and ordinary people share the same agenda. It is a common mistake by scholars of all disciplines to speak to activists and to find out their views; the fact that they are activists mean that they have articulated their views, written them down, and are keen to disseminate them. Activists often seek out social science researchers because they need an audience and are delighted to find an attentive one, an audience which may lend them respectability by publicizing their views abroad. (p.5)

The work of such scholars reminds anthropologists framing studies in the present that they have a particular opportunity and responsibility not only to consider ethnic social movements from the perspectives of those "at the top" but also from the diverse perspectives of others involved in the phenomenon.

The study of a "mother tongue"-based educational program and its relationship to revived ethnic identity claims requires explicit theoretical questioning of the connection between ethnicity and language. Recognizing the ever-contingent nature of that nexus across various contexts rather than offering a definitive theory, the esteemed sociolinguist Joshua Fishman (1999) calls for a continuing, multi-disciplinary engagement with the subject: "How and when the link between language and ethnicity comes about, its saliency and potency, its waxing and waning, its inevitability and the possibility of its sundering, all need to be examined" (p.4). In short, contextual factors coloring particular manifestations of the ethnicity-language nexus require explication in each specific case.

In considering Limbu ethnic identity assertion practices as a form of ethno-nationalism, Benedict Anderson"s (2006) now-classic historicist text, "Imagined Communities," provides complementary insights in the study of invigorated nationalisms and, particularly, their relationships to language. He famously defines the nation as "an imagined political community;" it is "imagined" in the sense that it draws individuals together on a scale beyond face-to-face encounters, while the notion of "community" itself is "conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (p.6). In detailing the emergence of national movements in the West over the course of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, Anderson highlights the crucial importance of language and what he terms "print capitalism" in developing the conditions for new political consciousnesses to flourish in the imagination of distinct groups of persons. With the publishing market opened wide through the technology of the printing press, new languages of print ("below" official languages, such as Latin, and "above" spoken vernaculars) fostered new national awarenesses by, in effect, re-ordering language statuses and registers/modes of

communication (p.44). Anderson warns, "It is always a mistake to treat languages in the way that certain nationalist ideologues treat them-- as emblems of nationness, like flags, costumes, folk-dances, and the rest. Much the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect *particular solidarities*" (p.133, emphasis original). The growth of print materials and associated languages of print allowed new social spaces to emerge, through which narratives about the concept of the nation itself had the opportunity to be created, disseminated, encountered, and interpreted, across space and time. According to Anderson, structures of power, fields of communication, and modes of meaning-making were all mutually transformed and re-constituted by the advent of print capitalism.

Like Hobsbawm, Anderson draws attention to the nation's relationship with history and time, arguing that nationalist movements support the sense that "nations... always loom out of an immemorial past" and, "still more important, glide into a limitless future" (p.11-12). He asserts that the medium of print helps to provide a sense of inherent "fixity" to both written languages and to narratives about the nation conveyed through them, established seemingly permanently in the material form of a text (p.44). Print capitalism made way for new cultural products, such as mass-produced pedagogical materials and textbooks, to become essential means through which official accounts of memory-making and forgetting (the narrating of history) are accomplished for nations. Of particular import for this study (which involves the production of a government-sanctioned, text-based curriculum), Anderson's work reminds scholars of revived nationalisms to not only consider the symbolic importance of language as a means of developing political solidarities but also to query the actual messages and narratives conveyed through languages of print for their role in shaping imagined communities.

Furthermore, given the commonly-heard request for mother tongue school instruction from diverse sets of actors in Nepal, we might consider how processualist approaches to ethnicity are mirrored in theoretical approaches to linguistic identity, such as in Mitchell's (2009) historical ethnography of South Indian linguistic nationalist movements in the mid-1900s. Like Anderson, Mitchell makes a powerful argument regarding the deeply political nature of "mother tongue" activism, positing that any claim to such a language "can be seen as a vehicle for access to increased power. It is 'authority-seeking' as well as 'authority-defying' in its attempt to redefine the existing reference points for status and decision-making" (2009, p.23). Much like Brass and Fisher's understandings of the constructed nature of ethnic identity, Mitchell approaches the practice of the assertion of linguistic identity as fluid and interactionist in its essence:

> The defense of one's "mother tongue," where in public or in private, is learned behavior rather than a natural impulse. Yet this does not mean that such learned behavior is insignificant or should be dismissed. Whenever a "mother tongue" is invoked, the first questions that should be asked are 1) what is at stake for the person claiming a mother tongue, and 2) what are other languages against which the mother tongue is being defended or asserted? Any recognition or claim to a mother tongue points to an awareness of multiple languages. (2009, p.23)

Mitchell's theoretical lens offers a valuable starting point for studies of new practices of language instruction in schools promoted by ethnic activist groups.

Complementing cultural production and practice theory perspectives, the socio-historical, interactionist approach to the study of ethnicity requires keen attention to structures that interact with and constrain human agency. As Fisher (2001) notes, "Ethnic boundaries are fluid and flexible but not infinitely so. They move in response to economic and political opportunities and constraints, and vary within the community depending on such factors as class, gender, age,

locale, occupation, education, etc." (p.131). Finally, this study will therefore theoretically define ethnicity as a "set of socioculturally constructed relationships, symbols, behaviors, and identities that involve" members of ethnic groups and members of other groups, "that are crosscut by other dimensions of difference" which assume salience due to cultural processes (Ahearn, 2001, p.50).

Anthropology of Schooling and Educational Policy

George and Louise Spindler (1997), often referred to as the founders of the field of educational anthropology, define education as "cultural process." Conveyed through this pithy phrase is the foundational theoretical insight that a society's "culture" is simultaneously maintained and transformed by actors imparting "education" to its newest members, as well as the understanding that the means and modes of education are inherently cultural. Within this broad theory of education, they further define the concept of schooling as "a calculated intervention in the learning process" (Spindler, 1997).

The spread of the modern institution of school throughout the globe in the last several centuries has fundamentally impacted the provision of and nature of education; importantly however, cultural production theorists argue that schooling remains a phenomenon experienced and made sense of locally and through daily practice (Anderson-Levitt, 2003). Schools serve as particularly interesting and increasingly important modern contexts for the generation and emergence of ever-new subjectivities and identities, opportunities for the enactment of individuals' agency, and re-worked notions of difference and inequality (Levinson, & Holland, 1996). Broadly, cultural production theory orients researchers to query how "schools provide each generation with social and symbolic sites where new relations, new representatives, and

new knowledges can be formed, sometimes against, sometimes tangential to, sometimes coincident with, the interests of those holding power" (p. 22).

Despite the preponderance of quantitative educational research in Nepal, a robust body of anthropological research conducted in this Himalayan nation has been founded on and substantively contributed to cultural production theories of education. Skinner and Holland's (1996) ethnographic research with students in rural Nepal presents a classic illustration of cultural production at work in educational settings. In their village field site, schooling simultaneously served not only to transform traditional cultural frameworks for social hierarchy but also to bring into being new criteria for social distinction and inequality; with the advent of mass schooling, Nepalese persons could now be defined as "educated, or schooled" in (implicit or explicit) relation to the "uneducated, or unschooled." In her study of an international non-governmental organization (INGO)-sponsored adult literacy class for Nepalese women, Robinson-Pant (2009) provides another valuable instance of the ways in which humans make meaning and instigate social change through the cultural processes of learning and/or being in social contexts. Her participants used the literacy program as a space to produce new, "educated," empowered identities, while simultaneously perceiving the new literary practices taught as "symbolic of the [INGO] agency's authority and complied minimally [in the program] to ensure external support" (p.13). Likewise, as evidenced in Enslin's (1998) study of rural Nepalese women's participation in new civil society organizations, the participants

> author themselves as educated, middle-class activists for women's rights. As political activists, they have joined others in appropriating the rhetoric of development and progress with its emphasis on acquiring the forms of cultural capital that mark the middle class. This discourse divides people into the educated and the uneducated, and the modern and the backward. (in Skinner, Holland, & Pach, 1998, p.10)

Studies such as these draw attention to the often explicitly political, extra-local implications of identifications with schooling and certain forms of knowledge.

Policy in practice, practice in policy. The prevailing paradigm for studies of policy in educational research continues to be what Hamann and Rosen (2011) term the "technical-rational approach," in which researchers assume "a neat distinction between policy and practice and often a linear, unidirectional relationship between them" (p.463). In this model, policy is conceived in terms of "input" (typically decided upon by "policymakers" and based upon received categories, such as "drop-outs") leading to "output" ("what the policy does," its measurable outcomes, its "practice"/implementation). The study of policy through the technical-rational theoretic lens might be considered an auxiliary process to the policy itself, as it is geared towards providing "objective" evidence of the failure or success of the endeavor and/or predictions for further policy.

In the last two decades, anthropologists of education have put forth an alternative theoretical paradigm for the study of educational policy, extending from cultural production theories of education. In this culturally-oriented model, policy itself is conceptualized as an elaborate form of sociocultural practice, "an ongoing process of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse social and institutional contexts" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Shore & Wright, 1997). As such, policy (and the programming that may both stand for and result from it) may be studied with a broadened appreciation of the dynamic, multidirectional, and subjective processes of decision-making and action that characterize groups and individuals participating in each dimension of the "policy" process:

> As sociocultural theorists remind us, planning, or policy-making, necessarily includes doing (i.e. what is conventionally considered practice), while implementing necessarily involves planning as well as creating, adapting, and/or recording strategies for solving problems (i.e. what is conventionally considered policy). (Hamann & Rosen, 2011, p.464).

Levinson and Sutton (2001) choose to emphasize the active nature of the latter process of "policy in practice" by referring to it as "appropriation," rather than as passive "implementation" (p.3). Given the broadened awareness of multiple sets of actors operating in various sites and at various levels in the policy processes, researchers working within this paradigm must explicitly define the unit of analysis, based on the nature and context of the policy phenomenon of interest.

With keen appreciation of the contextually-defined nature of policy in and as practice, anthropological studies of education policy also are designed to illuminate the culturally-grounded meanings of categories in use. Researchers working with this lens therefore are sensitized to the necessary task of querying the constructed nature of categories embedded in policy processes rather than automatically accepting them. Rather than taking the inherent "good" of formal schooling or policies such as "mother tongue" instruction for granted, as is done in the overwhelming majority of educational research conducted in developing nations such as Nepal, this study was oriented towards critical perspectives on such practices in schooling and how they might even serve as "contradictory resources" for children who will grow up to operate within wider communities, ranging from the local to the international in scope (Valentin, 2005). Hamann and Rosen propose a useful set of ethnographic concerns (an elaboration and adaptation of those originally delineated by Malinowski) for researchers' consideration in studies of policy contexts and meanings, including: social organization, exchange, belief systems, myth, folk philosophy, and ritual (2011, p.468-471).

In elucidating meaning-making processes, power and structures of inequality figure prominently in culturally-grounded studies of educational policy. As a practice of normative cultural production, policy-making and -enacting necessarily involves its actors in the complex processes of defining and ordering problems, cultural values/goals, and means of dealing with both. Levinson and Sutton point out key concerns related to authority, power, and voice in the unique practice of educational policy:

> In the processes of policy formation, problems are constructed for solution and thus the needs of individuals and society as a whole become subject to authoritative definition. Policy can also be a practice of constructing "political" subjects and identities, of creating a certain kind of public, a certain kind of citizen or "educated person" (Levinson, Foley, & Holland, 1996). Among public policy arenas, educational policy is unique in its power to determine who has the right to become an educated person, as well as what bodies of knowledge and what cognitive skills count as properly educative. In no society that we know do the voices of all citizens weigh equally in the process, nor do such voices express uniform interests and values." (2001, p.11)

Ultimately, the "policy as practice" paradigmatic lens encourages educational scholars not only to query the "outcomes" of policy but also to gain understanding, in a holistic, contextualized manner, of what a policy truly is and means to those living it.

Contextualized multiculturalism. Highlighting the value of anthropology's inherently comparative disciplinary perspective, Dietz and Cortes (2011) argue that the growing phenomenon of incorporating "multiculturalism" in education represents an important object of study in the wider field of anthropology of education. Following from the cultural production perspective, they suggest that the notion of "multiculturalism" requires proper contextualization, critique, and "provincialization" as it is used/lived in local contexts, rather than being taken for granted as a universal concept (p.496). They also assert that it is necessary to expand educational research on "diversity"-related policies and initiatives beyond the physical walls of schools:

"Only in this way will it be possible to study critically both the discourses about multiculturalism, interculturality, and diversity, and the relationship that exists between these discourses and their associated practices as they contextually materialize in programs of so-called intercultural education" (p.496). Understanding mother tongue programming to represent an extension of "multiculturally"-oriented educational policy, this study has been designed with the understanding that "multicultural education" is socio-culturally constructed, with distinct meanings in each context it manifests.

Language planning and policy. The specialized field of educational scholarship of language planning and policy (LPP) offers important concepts and considerations to inform the study of mother tongue education policies. Hornberger (2000) reveals the core concern of this flourishing body of educational scholarship, which developed from experts' efforts to address and "solve" language problems, in noting that intercultural/bilingual education policies "embody a paradox wherein a traditionally standardizing education is increasingly called on to make room for and promote diversity, a paradox stemming from ideological tensions between assimilationism and pluralism" (p.171). Describing the present state of the field, McCarty and Warhol (2011) neatly summarize the "integrative frameworks" of study that "cross-index *types* of language planning with language policy *goals*: 1) status (for what purposes and in which domains), 2) corpus (standardizing norms and forms), and 3) acquisition (who will acquire and by what means) (p.179). As with anthropological approaches to education policy more broadly, LPP scholars recognize that planning and policy-making regarding language occurs at all levels of society, ranging from the individual and families to the nation and international bodies. Scholars of LPP often draw upon the useful theoretical concept of "language ideologies:"

situationally-defined decision-making processes regarding the uses and meanings of languages (Wortham & Reyes, 2011). This concept assists in attending to the particular aspects of language issues in everyday sites and situations, activated and reactivated by individuals and groups for various reasons and in diverse ways.

In paying close attention to how language debates figure into schooling, LPP scholarship has produced findings that increasingly point to the wider societal implications of such school-related discussions: "These debates are less about language (and, we would add, education) than about widespread assumptions linking competence in the national language to national loyalties" (McCarty & Warhol, 2011, p. 182). Importantly, rather than taking language as its initial object of concern (as would be done in LPP scholarship), this study was instead designed to consider mother tongue instructional policies/programs principally through the theoretical lens of ethnic identity. In other terms, this study inquires into the meanings and practices of Anipaan as an "ethnic identity- through-language policy" program rather than as a "linguistic identity-through-language policy" program. It is hoped that this alternate initial approach to the study of "mother tongue" schooling will complement and shed new light on subjects of central concern in the field of LPP.

In summary, the theoretical framework undergirding this study of a "mother tongue" instructional program (as an extension of multilingual education policy) defines the concepts of ethnic identity, schooling, and policy as forms of socio-cultural practice, involving diverse sets of agentive, meaning-making actors. The inter-relationship between these particular theoretical lenses and the design of the research process shall be be elaborated upon in the following chapter.

III. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Methodology: Ethnographically-oriented Research Design

In order to address the previously stated research questions, I modeled my study on the methodology of ethnography. It is my intention throughout this section to illustrate the close coupling between my readings of existing empirical literature, my theoretical framework, and the actual methods I used to carry out the process of inquiry.

Though it represents the defining methodology of the discipline of anthropology, ethnography has not been definitively formulated in any single manner by its users. For the purposes of this study, I have relied upon the conceptualization of this research method as detailed rather simply by Wolcott (1987). Acknowledging the usefulness of defining ethnography in the negative (by what is is not), Wolcott does identify several key (positive) features of the strategy: 1) it is based on fieldwork involving primarily observation and interview methods, 2) "data and interpretation evolve together, each informing the other," and 3) its purpose is to "describe and interpret cultural behavior," ideally by relating "smaller units of analysis to the macro-systems in which they are embedded" (p.43; p.54). More specifically, successful ethnographic research helps "us to understand how particular social systems work by providing detailed descriptive information, coupled with interpretation, and relating that working to implicit patterns and meanings which members of that society (or one of its subgroups) hold

more or less in common" (Wolcott, 1987, p.52). I understood my job, as an ethnographically-oriented researcher, to entail attending to the complexities of individuals' experiences and meaning-making perspectives while also working to render these comprehensible to others.

Given the foundational emphasis placed on the (increasingly) exceedingly contested concept of culture in ethnography, Wolcott points out the awkward position in which researchers who employ the methodology inevitably find themselves. I acknowledge the theoretical usefulness of challenging the concept but, at the very least, my understandings of "culture" were shaped by interpretive anthropologist Geertz (1973), who argues that culture is public at its core, in that it is constituted by humans in practice and interaction. Ethnographers who engage in the process of producing "thick description" may not therefore simply focus upon "objectively" recording behaviors and series of events as they happen; instead, their foremost task being to elucidate culture, they are required to make a leap of interpretation. As Wolcott explains, "Culture is not lying about, waiting patiently to be discovered; rather, it must be inferred from the words and actions of members of the group under study and literally assigned to that group by the anthropologist" (1987, p. 41). Geertz's famous example of the observation of a wink provides a useful illustration of the "thick" quality of description required of ethnographers: a wink might technically be defined as a twitch of the eye, but when interpreted in light of its presence in interaction amongst humans, this physical act may reveal a world of multilayered meaning to the ethnographer.

Ragsdale's (1989) dismay that "too little of what has been written about Nepalese education… incorporates what Nepalese know of their own personal experience" deserves echoing in the present day (p.180); accordingly, ethnography served as a valuable methodology

not only to highlight Nepalese perspectives of their own educational system but also as a means to make their perspectives meaningful to others (Erickson, 1986). As an interpretivist educational researcher, my aim in uncovering the "meaning-perspectives of... particular actors in... particular events," as they occur in particular contexts was to produce a rich and holistic portrait of the construction and practice of Limbu-specific schooling that might then be used to illuminate other instances of "ethnic identity-"related education, both in Nepal and internationally, in comparison (Erickson, 1986, p.121).

As alluded to previously, Gellner (2008) underlines the value of ethnography to illuminate complex relationships between ideals, practices, and experiences amongst different sets of individuals: "I would say rather that anthropologists, with their tradition of studying the everyday lives of ordinary people, have a particular duty to document the *lack of fit* between what activists say and the feelings and perceptions of those on whose behalf the activists claim to speak" (p.23, emphasis original). In other words, ethnography provides a strategy for the study of ethnicity and identity from "from the bottom up," as these concepts relate to the lived realities of diverse individuals (Gellner, 2001, p.4).

Arriving at the Issue: Researcher Experiences

In the following section, I will briefly narrate how elements of my personal history, interests, and scholarly development intertwined to set me on the path of conducting this research in Nepal. For interpretivists, it is especially important to consider the "personal, informal, and tacit theories" involved in the framing of qualitative social science studies so as to set the conditions for the exercise of "disciplined subjectivity" (Erickson, 1984, p.59). Though

the validity of qualitative research is often considered weakened by positivists for the fact that the researcher is the primary instrument of inquiry, interpretivists consider this the greatest strength of qualitative methodologies. My commitment to open-minded inquiry and the expression of my subjective viewpoint finds roots in the perspective of Erickson (1984), who explains, “I think that it is best to make the research process as reflective as possible-- that this informs and empowers intuition rather than stifles it” (p.52).

As the daughter of American diplomats who considered academic study of and personal interest in South Asia as a defining feature of our family identity, I spent several years in my early life in the region and have continually returned for independent travel and research. I began developing my formal knowledge of South Asian cultures and languages as an undergraduate. Following an independent study of Nepali language in 2004, I attempted to travel to Nepal from India but was thwarted by news of political instability and closings of the nation’s international borders; watching from a distance, the remarkable nature of the Jana Andolan II awed and troubled me. In the years to follow, my interest in Nepal continued, implicitly and occasionally explicitly underpinning my graduate coursework. In the summer of 2010, I had the opportunity to study Nepali language at Cornell University; the experience was instructive not only for continuing my language development but also for aiding my understanding of relevant theoretical issues and research conditions in Nepal by way of studying with experienced anthropologists of Nepal, including Professors Kathryn March and David Holmberg. My intention to conduct this research project led me to take a preliminary trip to the Kathmandu Valley in the winter of 2010 to asses for myself the feasibility and potential merit of the proposed study.

My experiences as a masters and doctoral student, focusing on comparative and anthropological approaches to the study of education, have played an integral role in translating my personal experiences with notions of multiculturalism, identity, and education (the products of a youth spent in diverse school settings with international classmates) into areas of academic interest.

Sites

Following Hamann and Rosen (2011), anthropological studies of educational policies and programs consider the "people, ideas, and actions" of such efforts as their unit of analysis. Thus, such projects must often take place in and across multiple spatial sites in order to access multiple ideational perspectives and to observe multiple practices in action. As Garcia (2005) explains, "Moving between rural and urban spaces and across local [and] national... scales not only allows multiple ethnographic vantage points but also makes it possible to trace and track the connections and contradictions of cultural politics" (p.14-15). In order to access the perspectives of multiple groups of individuals associated with the Anipaan program, my research was conducted in and across three main spatial zones: 1) urban greater Kathmandu, 2) the town (district capital) of Phidim in Panchthar district, and 3) the village development community (VDC) of Numidanda, also in Panchthar district. I shall describe each of these zones and important loci of research within each below.

Greater Kathmandu

Home to more than 7.5 million residents and serving as Nepal's political, economic, and cultural center, the Kathmandu Valley has experienced remarkable urbanization in recent decades.

The KYC's main headquarters, the Lalitpur *Chumlung Him* ['Community Hall'], was located on an unpaved road on the south-western periphery of the once-separate but effectively "agglomerated" cites of Kathmandu/Patan (Lalitpur). The building was newly built and stood three stories high, surrounded by new residences and a few remaining agricultural fields. Inside, bright plaques marked rooms named after particularly generous financial donors to the organization, mostly ethnically Limbu expatriates of Nepal, and photographs of other donors dressed in traditional Limbu clothing and ornaments decorated the stairwells. The building housed a library, a large hall, and offices for the KYC staff and their Tanchhoppa newspaper. Many of my interviews with members of the KYC took place in the second floor offices of the Chumlung Him, which were quiet and airy. On several occasions, I met with groups of Limbu individuals associated with the KYC who used the Chumlung Him for meetings of their own and with other groups of Limbu individuals who were visiting greater Kathmandu for particular advocacy campaigns or trainings. In order to meet individuals associated with the KYC Central Executive Committee and other Limbu language/education advocates, I also often traveled to other places in greater Kathmandu, including to radio stations, homes, guesthouses, and cafes.

Phidim

One of 75 districts in Nepal, Panchthar is positioned along Nepal's easternmost border with the Indian state of Sikkim and bordered by Ilam District to the south, Taplejung to the north,

and Terathum and Dhankuta to the west. The district encompasses approximately 480 square miles, includes 41 VDCs, and has a total population of approximately 190,500 (CBS, 2014). Home to approximately 17,500 residents, Phidim is scattered across relatively low hillside, surrounded by what seems like limitless hills of green and brown. Limbus comprised the largest ethnic/caste group (4,651), followed by Bahuns (3,698) and Rai (2,451) (ibid.). Panchthar district is part of Nepal's *Pahad* ['Hilly'] topographic region, which extends horizontally across the center of the country; Phidim sits at a subtropical altitude of 3,408 feet. Known as the "*Raato Shahir*" ['Red Town'], for its clay soil (which becomes infamously slippery during the summer monsoon), Phidim's ramshackle streets featured newer multi-story buildings made of concrete amongst older single-story homes of mud, rock, plaster, and wood, some with garden plots attached. At the western-end of town, perched on another rising hillside, sat the Panchthar Multiple Campus, a government educational institution offering post-graduate [college-level] courses; the college campus drew many students from the surrounding VDCs to either live or to occasionally visit to complete their course requirements.

The main avenue of Phidim was straddled by a 20-foot tall structure known as the "Limbuwan Gate;" as the most mammoth and central structure in the town, it served as a common directional marker. Several roads in central Phidim were paved with asphalt and along these, shared jeeps, armed police force vehicles, and public and commercial buses occasionally rode. As the number of vehicles owned in the area was small, traffic was light and groups of individuals often promenaded up and down the main avenue, with its tea-stalls, dry goods shops, drinking 'hotels,' mechanic shops, chemists (pharmacies), and a few guesthouses. Two public water-taps along the street also served as points of congregation. Several branches of national

banks, three internet cafes, and an NGO-founded library were interspersed amongst the district offices of political parties, NGOs, and social organizations. The KYC Panchthar Executive Committee headquarters was located on a street perpendicular to the main avenue, and comprised a single room on the 2nd floor at the anterior end of a building above a tire/tubing shop; construction on a dedicated building of the KYC's own had just begun at the time of research.

A center-point to the organization of time, sociality, and space in Phidim was the weekly Saturday market (*Shaniwar Bazaar*), held on the town's upper-hillside underneath a grandly sweeping tree canopy. Phidim locals (particularly women and girls) would wake early to purchase some of their weekly produce from mostly Limbu villagers from the surrounding VDCs (including Numidanda), who carried into town their surplus bounty on their backs.

My interactions with individuals in Phidim took place in multiple locations, from the KYC headquarters to nearby "cafes" (tea-stalls) and the dining rooms of guesthouses, as well as in individuals' homes and offices of NGOs, banks, and other organizations. Sites of research also included private schools. On several occasions, I travelled 14 kilometers south of Phidim to visit the important Kiranti religious site of Labrekuti, accompanied by individuals associated with the KYC.

The world's third highest peak, Mt. Kanchenjunga sits in the north-east corner of Taplejung district and was occasionally gloriously visible, rising above Phidim beyond northern hills. Considered a harder peak to climb than Mt. Everest, Kanchenjunga and the northeastern stretch of the Nepalese Himalaya sees far fewer tourists than other mountainous areas of the

nation; consequently, Panchthar rarely hosts foreigners and its lodges mostly accommodate traveling Nepalese citizens.

Numidanda Village Development Committee (VDC)

Scattered across a hillside, Numidanda VDC was accessed by way of an unpaved road leading off the asphalted highway running north-south through the three easternmost Nepalese districts, several kilometers away from the district capital. Being made of dirt, this access road was deeply rutted and rendered essentially unusable by motorized vehicles during the monsoon season. Winding across and through waterfalls and streams, cardamon groves, rice paddy fields, and individuals' plots of land, the road was used by persons of all ages, some carrying foodstuffs (vegetables were carried to the town; manufactured products, such as salt and sugar, to the village) in their arms or on their backs. Some herded goats or buffalos along the path, while others walked alongside family members; women rarely walked alone. It was always a social event to travel along the path for the approximate hour it took to reach the village; one greeted acquaintances and shared news of where one had been or where one was going.

Of Numidanda VDC's approximate population of 3800, about two thirds were ethnic Limbu, followed by Rai and Bahun (each approximately 10% of total), and small populations (>5%) of Damai [Dalit], Tamang, and others (CBS, 2014). Limbu was counted as the "mother tongue" of about two thirds the population, followed by Nepali (about 25%), and small percentages (>5%) of Rai and Tamang (ibid.).

Table 1:
Population and Households in Numidanda
(Source: CBS, 2014)

Population aged 5-14	1020
Male population	1750
Female population	2070
Number of households	800
Average household size	4.7

Divided into nine subsections termed "wards," Numidanda VDC did not have a distinct center-point, as families lived on plots of land across the hillside, though there were approximately four clusters of buildings that served as loci of interaction in the VDC. These gathering places typically had a tea-stall (doubling as a place for men to drink in the evenings) and a dry goods store with a few items for sale (including soap, packet noodles, tobacco products, and snacks). Within the VDC, most homes were accessed by way of cowpaths and steep, often slippery pathways snaking up and down the hillsides. About 20% of homes had electricity, while most used kerosene for illumination.

Table 2:
Education and Literacy Levels in Numidanda
(Source: CBS, 2014)

Literacy rate	73%
Percentage of persons aged 5-25 currently attending school	81%
Percentage of population over age 5 with highest educational level of primary school	40% (approx.)

Percentage of population over age 5 with highest educational level of lower secondary school	25% (approx.)
Percentage of population over age 5 with highest educational level of (upper) secondary school	13% (approx.)
Percentage of population over age 5 with highest educational level of School Leaving Certificate (SLC) or higher	15% (approx.)

Families in the VDC mostly lived in houses and compounds constructed in typical Limbu style: buildings were centered around a courtyard and featured covered, often pillared verandahs. The courtyard and verandahs served as the home's social and domestic heart as this was where visiting and chores were most often done, in a manner that has seemingly varied little from when Lionel Caplan conducted his ethnography of a Limbu community in the 1960s. Grains were set to dry, rice was winnowed from its husks, millet wine/beer was brewed on fires, and corn was husked and bundled for keeping, and work was often performed amongst neighbors. Kitchens were usually separate buildings, featuring mud stoves fueled by wood, and outhouses were typically the most removed of buildings in home compounds. Most houses were built with foundations and outer walls made of earth, brick, and stone and plastered above, with floors made of earth/cow dung and roofs of thatch. Wealthier denizens lived in two-story houses constructed with concrete at their bases and wooden upper portions. About two thirds of households had piped water, though families often carried water from springs to use in eating and drinking, and some also travelled to these areas to bathe.

Families typically kept animals to supplement their subsistence farming, including goats, buffalos, chickens, pigeons, and pigs. The main crops grown were squashes (such as chayote), legumes, potatoes, cucumbers, rice, chilies, millet, corn, greens, and fruit (including clementines and bananas), grown in terraced fields along the hillsides and next to homes. Wealthier families paid less well-off villagers to tend to their land in exchange for a certain share of the profits. Cardamon and ginger were seasonal cash crops increasingly promoted by non-governmental organizations and the government through schemes to inject cash into the local economy.

Numidanda School. Numidanda School was located in one of Numidanda's central wards. According to its principal, 90% of its primary level students were promoted to subsequent upper levels; dropout rates were 11% at the primary level and, of these, all were Limbu. In 2011, the primary school had a total of about 125 students: Class 1- 12 students; Class 2- 20; Class 3- 26; Class 4- 36; Class 5- 30. The average income of the immediate catchment area for the school rested at 60% below the poverty line. For students staying on at Numidanda School for their lower and upper secondary schooling, the average pass rate for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) was 60%. A further detailed description of Numidanda School will be provided at the outset of Chapter Six.

Participants

Approximately 20 individuals served as participants in Kathmandu and Phidim. These included: members of the KYC at the Central Executive Committee and District Executive Committee levels; members of other indigenous nationalities' organizations; and individuals who had either previously been members of the KYC or had worked closely with them to formulate

the Anipaan program, promote the Limbu language, or had produced literature in Limbu. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling and purposive sampling.

In Numidanda VDC, 15 teachers (primary and secondary) and the school's head-teacher were included. Approximately 225 students (all 125 primary/100 selected lower and upper secondary) participated. Approximately 40 community members from about 25 households immediately surrounding Numidanda School were included, as well as the Chairperson of the School Management Committee.

Data Collection

In order to address the research questions set forth, four research methods were used: observation, participant observation, interviews and focus groups, and document analyses. Data collection occurred over the course of five months (July- December 2011) across the different spatial zones/sites described above.

Timeline

Fieldwork began in greater Kathmandu and was conducted over the course of five weeks in July- August 2011. From August to late September, and again from November to late December, I spent a total of 14 weeks in far eastern Panchthar District, in both the district capital of Phidim and Numidanda VDC. I typically spent most days in the school week (Sunday- Friday morning) in Numidanda and then would travel to Phidim for the weekend holiday.

Observation and Participant Observation

Given the immersive nature of ethnographic research, particularly in new cultural environment in which I was learning to be a human being, observation and participant observation were nearly incessant modes of research and being.

In greater Kathmandu, I made seven visits to the KYC Central headquarters, ranging in duration from 30 minutes to two-and-a-half hours; these included informal discussions with KYC members and Tanchoppa newspaper personnel, as well as observations of the grounds.

In Phidim, I observed and participated in formal KYC events, including their anniversary celebration event, regular meetings, and their annual Chasok Tongnam festival (which took place at the Kiranti holy site of Labrekuti); I also participated in countless hours of informal socializing with members of the KYC. In the district capital, I also conducted day-long observations of 4th and 5th class lessons at two private primary schools in order to gain a sense of the variety of instruction available to towns-persons and to provide a source of comparison to schooling in the village setting. I visited a multi-level school for visually impaired children in Phidim as a participant-observer twice during my fieldwork.

In Numidanda VDC, I spent at least three hours per day as an observer/participant observer at the local school, though typically, my visits averaged four-and-a-half hours. As I was interested primarily in the Anipaan program, my classroom observations were most concentrated on these lessons in the primary grades. I spent a majority of my observations of these lessons with the fifth class, as they were the most advanced in the curriculum having spent the most time with it, and because Anipaan lessons in the early classes were often empty due to lack of student presence. I also conducted observations during the full range of subjects with the fourth and fifth classes in order to gain understanding of the daily experience of primary schooling. In my

observations, I alternated my object of focus, ranging from verbal to non-verbal interactions (between students, between teacher and students), spatial arrangements, time use, and so on.

Additionally, due to my status as an adult, I spent many hours interacting with teachers and observing them in their offices and in the school canteen during the tiffin time break in order to build rapport and learn about the community. My participation in the Numidanda School community extended beyond the confines of the school day, as I was invited to visit seven teachers' homes and meet their families. It was during many of these visits, some of which extended over-night (due to long distances, timing of school and sunlight, and the prestige associated with hosting me), and the journeys required to get to the teachers' homes that I was able to get a more intimate sense of the diverse experiences, relationships, and perspectives held by the different teachers regarding their work and their colleagues. Through these experiences, I came to appreciate that they were keen share their impressions with me, an outsider who expressed a desire to learn whatever she could about life at Numidanda School. However, because these interactions were extensions of the educators' hospitality (itself a theme of cultural importance) and were often included discussions of a personal nature, I chose not to include data directly gleaned during these events in my data presentation and analysis.

As a means of integrating myself into the school community and engaging in participant observation, as well as providing some benefit to the schoolchildren, I hosted "drawing sessions" in the fifth grade classroom during tiffin time and when classes were without instructors. Approximately ten times, I purchased paper and coloring materials from the bazaar in Phidim, as well as biscuits and other treats, and invited any student who was interested to draw to join. Many of the students did not have access to blank paper or coloring materials and eagerly

participated these sessions; a typical session included approximately 20 primary and lower secondary level students. During the drawing periods, other students milled around, observing the event and conversed with me. On a few occasions, I asked students to voluntarily respond to particular open-ended prompts, including “My village is...”, “When I am big...,” and “My school is...” These sessions allowed me the chance to observe students in “free,” unstructured tasks, to build rapport in the school community, and to gain some insights into how students perceived their lives and surroundings.

Fortunately, I became a particular source of fascination to one female student in the sixth class and her (unusual) temerity allowed me to slowly gain access to the perspectives of children in her particular ward of the village. I was often invited to their home and thus had the opportunity to observe and participate in the lives of typical Limbu children.

I also conducted participant observation on four occasions as a guest English teacher in a number of upper level classrooms when instructors were absent. With the hope of eliciting opinions and perspectives on their community and on schooling generally, in each of these cases, I spontaneously developed a loose lesson plan for the period based around a few questions, phrased in English and nearly always translated into Nepali (by myself to them). These participant observations allowed me the opportunity to learn a bit more about the life of students in the community throughout their schooling, to understand certain cultural models of learning/ teaching/schooling from the perspective of the instructor, and to, again, build rapport in the school community.

Also within Numidanda, I observed Anipaan lessons at two other government primary schools, as well as observing lessons and a school field-day at a new English-language primary

school in the Numidanda community. My intention in doing so was to develop a comparative sense of the manner in which Anipaan was taught and experienced in my main school field site, as well as to gain understanding of the nature of schooling in the community's new private schools. An observation also was conducted at a supplementary English-language *tuition* ['supplementary lesson'] session in one of the VDC's wards.

In the wider Numidanda community, I spent the remainder of my time (when not in school) visiting families for meals, snacking at the school canteen, attending all-night weddings, funerals, and other events. My landlady's home was often a meeting place for villagers and community members, and thus I was often given the opportunity to observe and participate in these social events. Attached to her home was also a tiny dry goods stall; schoolchildren often stopped there for snacks, giving me the chance to converse with them.

Field jottings were produced as soon as possible following my periods of observation and participant observation and were transformed into fieldnotes in a similar manner as described above. During each observation period, I took as detailed field jottings as could be managed without hindering my ability to build rapport with participants. Fieldnote jottings were hand-written in the field and then transformed into hand-written fieldnotes within 48 hours following the observation. Observation write-ups included analytic notes to provide background information and to present emerging themes, in addition to reflexive notes to reflect upon my positionality and personal feelings in the social context.

Interviews

In greater Kathmandu, I conducted seven interviews with KYC-affiliated persons, including the chairperson of the KYC, members of the KYC educational programs office in *Chumlung Him*, and leading Limbu educational and cultural figures, some of whom participated in the formulation of the Anipaan program.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature; individually prepared interview protocols were developed for each interview in order to guide the process (based on prior interviews and data collected), while I would occasionally shift questions and/or add follow-up questions as needed in the course of the event itself. These interviews were conducted in a variety of locations, ranging from offices in the KYC Central Committee headquarters in Kathmandu/Lalitpur, individuals' homes, and even restaurants/hotels. Often, the nature of the interviews were more akin to public conversations, as interested individuals would be invited to come to listen and/or participate in the event itself by the interview participants. The public nature of these interviews was initially a matter of concern in terms of confidentiality procedures but each of the participants readily gave permission to have their names and opinions linked. These interviews varied in length of time, taking (on average) approximately one-and-a-half hours.

Each interview was recorded on digital recorder and transcribed in full. Interview fieldnotes were also produced and included both analytic and reflexive notes.

Points of focus included participants' 1) perceptions of the purposes of education generally and of educational reform, 2) understandings of political transformation as it intersects with matters of ethnicity, 3) personal educational trajectories (if relevant), 4) understandings of concepts such as ethnicity and mother tongue language, and 5) beliefs involving important issues to consider in the crafting educational materials for Limbu children.

Interviews in Phidim were also conducted with ten individuals, including members of the KYC Panchthar Executive Committee and other indigenous people's organizations [(such as the Limbu Students' Forum, the Nepal Federation for Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)], individuals associated with the production of the Anipaan textbook, and public officials. These interviews were also conducted in a semi-structured manner, with individual interview protocols prepared for each event, and lasted (on average) one hour. Additional informal ethnographic interviews and conversations were a mainstay of my interactions in Phidim.

In Numidanda VDC, semi-formal interviews were conducted with ten individuals, ranging from teachers to headteachers at various schools (government and private) to community members. Over the course of two days, I conducted an informal interview survey of the residences surrounding the Numidanda school (north, south, east, and west) with the intention of speaking to as many parents and guardians of school-aged children as possible. I was able to visit approximately 25 houses and included in my survey both Limbu and non-Limbu families. I determined that it would be most effective to visit the homes/land of families rather than attempt to call them together to attend a focus group in a single location, as this would have been inconvenient for most individuals and unlikely to have been effective in recruiting non-male participants (as males tend to be the members of a household most willing to participate in public discussions). Parents were asked approximately four questions about their children's schooling; these informal interviews took approximately 20 minutes in each home.

Additionally, I conducted ethnographic interviews/dialogues with dozens of individuals over the course of my fieldwork. Participant observation in the everyday routines of the school

and community lent itself towards my informal asking of questions regarding all aspects of life and meanings made of it.

Document Analyses

As my aim was to gain as full as sense as possible of the KYC's articulated views on education, I collected documents and analyzed them throughout the research timeline. Examples of documents included pieces of journalism, academic materials, and written statements by members of the KYC, as well as documents related to cultural and educational events, materials found in their headquarters' and libraries, and publications underwritten by the KYC. Of course, the Anipaan classroom textbooks (one each for classes 1-5) served as a key collection of documents in this study; the fourth and most recent addition was published in 2008. Additionally, written materials given to me as gifts by Limbu activists, such as books and educational primers, were also included as data. Documents collected were written in English, Nepali, and Limbu languages; for those written in Limbu, a translator produced English versions. In my readings of the documents, I attempted to give attention to elements of both "text" and "context," or, in other words, both what was said and the social context from within which the document emerged.

Finally, I also collected documents and materials produced and used by the children in the course of their school days, including drawings produced during tiffin-time breaks. Textbooks and other pedagogical materials from non-Anipaan lessons were also collected and analyzed.

Positionality

The event of my "arrival" in the village of Numidanda seemed straight out of a film, shockingly (and embarrassingly) reminiscent of the classic trope of the (white) anthropologist's first encounter with "the natives." Trudging with my backpack full of books and hygiene products up the steep slope above Numidanda School while schoolchildren literally stopped in their tracks to stare in amazement at me, I understood at a visceral level what an unlikely task it was to conduct research on the experience of everyday life in new cultural contexts. Even having previously felt comfortable in both rural and urban South Asian contexts, I was engaged in a constant process of learning, my cultural background necessarily illuminated as I experienced and strove to understand the cultural worlds I was newly inhabiting. Maintaining a reflective/ methodological journal was thus a key research activity.

Being so obviously an outsider, entering into Nepalese communities that rarely hosted Western individuals, there was certainly no questioning of my position as "overt observer." Arriving in Panchthar with the assistance of my translator colleague and members of the KYC allowed me to rather quickly begin to access the perspectives of persons speaking a relatively seldom-spoken language (Limbu) and become situated in a research setting; these same conditions however also magnified my status as an outsider. As time progressed, I began to craft my own place and role within the community, both practically and socially. While I often wished for easier access to "insider" knowledge, my outsider status served as a valuable flashpoint for interactions, offering an opportunity for unsolicited reflections from participants in regards to their own lives and community. I engaged in countless spontaneous discussions about schooling, development, and Nepalese politics, in addition to fielding individuals' voracious questions regarding all aspects of American life and culture. These daily interactions, as well as the most

mundane aspects of everyday life, serve as the subtle bases of my interpretations. My fieldwork in Panchthar took place in two phases, with approximately one month between visits. Interestingly, I believe that my return for this second phase helped to strengthen my acceptance in the community, as my interlocutors were pleased that I kept to my promise of returning and the passage of time contributed to a shared sense of history.

My actual "position" in my fieldwork sites in Panchthar was a matter of significance. The room I rented in the VDC was in the closest residence to the Numidanda School and several other teachers also rented quarters there. My staying there communicated news about my research (inside the school itself) and my interest in Limbu life to members of the community; I was often sought out at this location by interested community members.

At an early point in my fieldwork, visiting a so-called *thulo maanche* ['big man'] in the Taplejung Bazaar Limbu community, it was decided that I was to be given a Limbu name. I was commonly called on by my research assistant to introduce myself with this moniker, which invariably led to much delight expressed amongst Limbus; it is possible that this kind of nominal affiliation played some role in building trust with the Limbu community of Numidanda. Later in my fieldwork, a Bahun teacher (who enjoyed tutoring me in Nepali and invited me to his home, calling me "his daughter") decided I needed to also have a Hindu name. This assignment of names and affiliations was a clear illustration of the many roles I assumed and negotiated in interacting amongst different groups of people during my fieldwork, as well as some of the deeper cultural meanings behind certain persons' claims over me.

When being proposed, this study was designed to make central the meaning-making perspectives of students in the Anipaan program; as the "subjects" of many educational policies,

students' voices are often not privileged in research. It became clear though after several weeks of fieldwork in Panchthar that it would be highly unlikely for me to adequately accomplish this task. Strong cultural scripts about child-adult interactions, as well as my oddity as a foreigner, made my attempts to conduct formal "focus groups" and "interviews" with students hilariously unproductive and inappropriate, as the students were confused, frightened, and curious all at once. As such, I decided to adopt as informal and non-authoritative role as possible when interacting with students, both during school and outside of it; I strove to distinguish myself from their authoritative teachers, taking care to disentangle myself from adult groups and settings in order to not be solely associated with them. As an aside, I also emphasized the fact that I was not a trained classroom teacher amongst the adult educators at the school, so as to mitigate fears that I was evaluating their teaching practice. While it was necessary to shift some of my research objectives to suit the realities of life in the field, I made negotiating my position in reference to children a matter of methodological concern and was eventually able to begin to develop some substantive understandings of the cultural meanings associated with students, authority, and schooling, albeit in a less formal and direct manner than I had originally anticipated.

Data Analysis

Ethnography requires, by its very nature, a built-in process of concurrent data collection and data analysis, as the researcher moves between emic and etic dimensions of understanding (Wolcott, 1987, p.40). In the data collection phase of my research, I was implicitly and explicitly engaged in data analysis as I constantly recalibrated my research methods and re-considered sites, participants, and directions for inquiry. Crafting interview protocols was always an

important event to catalyze this on-going process, as I needed to reassess what issues of theoretical and practical import to query. Living in a village without widespread electricity proved to be a significant matter to confront when it came to how I was able to access and process data. As it was not possible to maintain a charged laptop computer, I supplemented my hand-written methodological/analytical and reflexive journals with an audio-format version, spoken into a battery-run digital tape recorder in the evenings after dark. Because my time in the field was limited, I felt it a necessity to make participant observation a priority over formal data analysis and my daily life in the field reflected this methodological decision.

Formal data analysis commenced upon my return from the field in January 2012. Through my earlier graduate training, I experimented with several strategies of qualitative data analysis and eventually formulated my own hybridized method, modeled much on Erickson's (1986) Analytic Induction research strategy. His process begins with the reading the entire data corpus multiple times, followed by the generation of assertions and the uncovering of key linkages which tie assertions together in a meaningful manner in order to produce a coherent, plausible account of the phenomenon under study. I immersed myself in the data corpus produced (including fieldnotes, interview transcripts, textbooks, other documents, photographs, and so on) to encounter large cultural themes and patterns as they emerged from the data itself. Once these main themes emerged, my analysis process became increasingly finer in form, while also relating large themes to more subtle themes in a linked form. In subsequent rounds of analysis, I did consider *a priori* themes taken from my review of literature and theory.

To aid in this process, I engaged in a lengthy "analytic memoing" phase, through which I freely interpreted data through written memos, many of which constituted the first draft of this

dissertation. This iterative process (between data reading and memoing) was of utmost importance, as it was through writing that I was able to engage in the process of analysis itself, as I needed to write in order to analyze and vice-versa. These memos were also a means to search for exact examples of analytic themes, as well as disconfirming evidence. By engaging in the data analysis process in this holistic, emergent manner, I felt it was possible to stay attuned to the interconnected nature of phenomena and persons' perceptions/meaning-making that emerged in the data itself, rather than segmenting them prematurely into discrete analytic units (later to be re-assembled into whole for the purpose of writing an academic paper). Unlike Erickson, I did not prefer for the product of my data analysis to be in the form of "assertions" but rather in the presentation of cultural themes, elucidated through the display of data exemplars accompanied by a range of both low- and high-level inferences, and narrow- and broad-scope statements.

Access and Ethics

Through the assistance of academic colleagues, I was first introduced to members of the KYC Central Executive Committee in December 2010. I presented myself as an American doctoral student who was interested in learning about why multilingual education was important to members of the IPO and what they hoped to teach about Limbu identity, as well as observing what Anipaan looked like when taught in a local school. The extraordinary helpfulness and cheer shown by Arjun Limbu, the Chairperson of the KYC Central Executive Committee, set the conditions for subsequent approvals of my research and presence in various sites. The KYC Panchthar Executive Committee assisted me in deciding upon the school/community fieldsite of Numidanda, having considered some of my logistical and research-related concerns. In Phidim,

permission to conduct research in the government school was given by the District Development Office and the District Education Office. Once in Numidanda, facilitated by members of the Panchthar Executive Committee of the KYC, my access to the school was endorsed by its headteacher and the Anipaan teacher. Through each of these encounters, I maintained my initial description of my research interests and attempted to emphasize my intention to study *about* Anipaan, rather than evaluating the program or using it as a means to learn Limbu myself. However, I am not certain these distinctions were fully grasped by all my interlocutors.

During each research event and in each site, I strove to make clear the voluntary nature of participants' engagement and my commitment to protecting individuals' identities. In the case of the set of Limbu activists with whom I engaged, I recognized the public nature of their involvement with their ethnic organizations and asked if they wished to be identified by their actual names or not. All were willing to do the former. In order to protect the identities of individuals in Numidanda VDC, all names of individuals and institutions have been changed, including the name of the VDC itself. Specific details and quantitative data about the VDC have been altered in slight, insignificant ways to obscure identification of the actual site and its inhabitants.

Validity, Translation, and Limitations

Validity

To ensure the validity of my findings, my project was designed to take into account the need for adequate time in the field, the importance of multiple data collection methods and

sources of data to triangulate and substantiate findings (particularly as related to actors' meaning-making perspectives), and the integrality of researcher reflexivity in the research process (Erickson, 1984). Importantly, keeping in mind Wolcott's (1987) caution to "stay rather close to what one has actually observed or heard" and "to posit how culture *may* be reflected in that behavior," the interpretations to be presented in the following chapters include extensive data exemplars from interviews, observations, and documents as means to allow readers to assess for themselves the validity of my conclusions (p.50, emphasis original).

Translation

Due to the multilingual nature of the project itself and my own improving, yet still intermediate fluency in Nepali, the need for supplemental translation and research assistance was critical in the initial stages of the execution of this study. On the recommendation of a Limbu colleague, a doctoral candidate of anthropology at an American institution, I employed Ms. Bishnu Singak as my primary assistant/translator and provided supplementary training to her in regards to research methods; she accompanied me to Panchthar District for the first three weeks of my research there (in Phidim and Numidanda) and assisted me in Kathmandu. An ethnic Limbu originally from Terathum District, Singak was an independent journalist in Kathmandu and was fluent in English (having done post-graduate studies in India), Nepali, and Limbu. It is difficult to overstate Singak's centrality to this project, as she played multiple roles during my initial entry into my fieldsites in Panchthar District and certainly helped to shaped my cultural understandings of Limbu ethnic identity. With her enthusiastic attitude and personal connections in the activist community, Singak facilitated my gaining access to and relationship-building with

many different individuals and associations. Consequently, it is absolutely necessary to explicate how her participation impacted the data collected and the interpretations set forth.

Singak accompanied me as translator (of both Nepali and Limbu) for interviews and observations conducted during these first three weeks of fieldwork in Panchthar, and provided the translations of the Anipaan textbooks from Limbu to English. As has been noted immemorially, the task of translation is, by its very nature, an impossible one. Ms. Singak's formidable intelligence and personal commitment to the work were boons to the project; however, her tendency towards providing loose translations during interviews and her strong personal opinions/biases (e.g. her pro-"Limbuwan" stance) were matters that troubled me as potential challenges to the validity of data. Her translation of the Anipaan textbooks was systematic, having been conducted with aid of the Royal Nepal Academy's Limbu-Nepali dictionary. To provide some cross-checking of Singak's imprecise translations during interview events, I commissioned a second round of translations of the recorded interviews (stripped of identifying information) to be produced by Mr. Sharad Adhikari, journalist and writer, of Kathmandu. These two sets of interview notes/transcripts helped to more properly identify and situate Ms. Singak's subjective viewpoint in the data corpus.

I also employed Mr. Buddha Tamsuhang as a research assistant/translator for one day of on-foot interviewing of the Numidanda VDC's guardian population. Mr. Tamsuhang was also a participant in my study prior to this day of research; due to the dearth of individuals trilingual in English, Nepali, and Limbu in the Phidim area, it was necessary to call upon him for his assistance.

It would not have been possible to conduct this study without the help of these individuals and it is my hope that the experience of working with me aided in the development of their professional skills as well.

Limitations

In addition to the issues of translation discussed above and as the reader will have doubtlessly noted by this point, I describe my study as *ethnographically-oriented* rather than labeling it a bonafide ethnography. I make this distinction to highlight and acknowledge the limitations of my study, most particularly the abbreviated time spent conducing fieldwork. A key dimension of an ethnography's validity rests in the researcher's having been *there* in the field for a sustained and substantial period of time. While my process of conducting fieldwork was intensive, the objective count of weeks spent in my various sites of research was modest. Thus, while my aim was to illuminate "cultural meanings" in my surroundings through my fieldwork, I recognize that additional time spent in the field would strengthen the set of interpretations set forth. It is my hope that the future will provide opportunities to revisit and continue this research.

Additionally, as my Nepali proficiency was not yet at fully fluent status, my access to individuals' meaning-making perspectives (as expressed verbally) was limited at times. Similarly, as a non-Limbu speaker, I was limited by relying on a translator during Limbu-only exchanges. As verbal expression was a mode of communication that was not fully accessible to me at all times, I necessarily focused on non-verbal communication, notions of space and place, and other sensory information during my fieldwork.

Finally, due to the fact that the KYC played such an important role as both a set of participants in and as a facilitating organization for my fieldwork, my access to certain places, perspectives, and spaces may have been limited at times. For example, the determination of my school fieldsite doubtlessly reflected the fact that members of the Numidanda School community were known to the KYC Panchthar Executive Committee and that the Anipaan program at the school was thought to be particularly "good." To provide some counter to these limitations, I strove as much as possible to independently identify research participants, sites, and methods.

In this chapter, I have sought to provide a detailed explanation of the persons, timelines, sites, methods, analysis techniques, data, and methodological strategies which constituted this research project. Additional matters of consideration, such as limitations and research positionality, were also discussed. In the following four chapters, empirical data which emerged from the inquiry process will be presented and interpreted.

IV. PROMOTING "MOTHER TONGUE" SCHOOLING AS A POLICY OF ETHNIC ACTIVISM AND ADVOCACY

The aim of the following data chapter is to detail what goals and problems the KYC and associated Limbu ethnic/cultural activists sought to address by engaging in the process of creating and supporting the implementation of supplementary Limbu language schooling. In doing so, I shall attempt to illuminate some of the normative assumptions, practical preoccupations, and contextualized meanings made by members of this indigenous people's organization (as well as affiliated organizations) regarding notions of identity, schooling, and development. The chapter will include both explicitly articulated opinions, beliefs, methods, and perspectives which emerged in the course of research, as well as those which were implicitly conveyed.

Highlighting boundaries:

Asserting a unique ethnic identity through language, script, and schooling

The KYC's engagement with the issue of mother tongue schooling was inherently linked to their concerted effort to maintain and strengthen the existence of a unique Limbu ethnic identity. Following Barth, the policy avenue of mother tongue instruction offered a legitimate realm in the "New Nepal" to engage in the social processes of maintaining "boundaries" that the

Limbu people themselves recognized as "ethnic" (Baumann, 1999, p.59). In previous epochs, during which the social processes that would allow for the maintenance of boundaries around distinct ethnicities were actively suppressed and de-legitimized by national leaders, ethnic identity was officially positioned as deficiency, or a matter to be overcome. The post-*Jana Andolan II* era, in contrast, allowed for alternate modes of engagement with ethnic boundaries to be practiced. Ethnic persons were newly able to reassert these "differences" and highlight them as resources for power, pride, and progress. Central to the broader work of the KYC was their attempt to re-outline the boundaries around their "Limbu-ness" in order to re-load and re-legitimize their differences with political and symbolic importance of their own determination.

One of the most foundational aspects of the KYC's re-assertion of their ethnic identity was an emphasis upon the existence of the distinct Limbu language, a feature of Limbu communities upon which policies oriented towards the "mother tongue" had the potential to capitalize. Unlike the Tharu, Thakali, or other ethnic groups in Nepal without linguistic practices unique to their community, Limbus had steady use of a distinct language amongst its people in the historical territory of Limbuwan Eastern Nepal to draw upon as a source of true ethnic difference. Use of the Limbu language was strongly related to the distinct geographical region of eastern Nepal and bolstered by Kiranti religious traditions and rituals. As such, for activists and members of the KYC, Limbu ethnic identity was seen to be tightly bundled with Limbu linguistic identity. As Rajendra Jabeju, one of the original authors of the Anipaan textbook series, "life member" of the KYC, and an important elder Limbu "personality" in Panchthar district, succinctly explained, "If we have to protect our identity, the first thing is we have to protect our language. To protect our ethnicity, to protect our caste, we protect our language." As was

commonly the case when discussing issues related to Limbu identity with both ethnic activists and Limbu community persons, Jabegu framed his understanding of the primacy of language to Limbu ethnicity within a wider struggle for "identity," in which Limbus needed to adopt a defensive stance. Faced with an encroaching political-cultural "Other," which sought to eradicate their ethnic identity, Limbus' first and most fundamental bulwark of defense was maintaining the existence of their language.

Furthermore, the existence of the unique Limbu orthography, *Sirijonga Lepi*, served as another valuable boundary-signifier, once again a cultural feature of particular use in relation to policies of mother tongue curricular programming. Arjun Limbu, Chairperson of the KYC Central Executive Committee, expressed a predominant belief amongst Limbu activists in clearly stating, "Our forefathers were very much dedicated to preserve and promote our languages... Script is very important because it gives the strong identity of the Limbu language." "Fixed" as it was in printed text on the page, Limbu written in *Sirijonga Lepi* presented objective visual proof of the unique cultural resource and practice of spoken Limbu language, hence the "strong identity" to which Mr. Limbu alluded (Anderson, 2006). Mr. Limbu also emphasized historical usage of *Sirijonga Lepi* when describing the interest in language shown by his ancestors, helping to "build that image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (p.11-12). The KYC's first objective as an organization was reflective of the effective merging of the notions of Limbu ethnic identity with Limbu language: "To undertake various activities for uplift of Limbus, [and] their language including Kirat-Sirijonga script, literature, religion, and culture" (2009a). Used exclusively in the translation of spoken Limbu to the page, with a history

of use and continued development, Sirijonga script served as a deeply meaningful and authoritative symbol/practice of "ethnic" difference.

The difference between emic conceptualizations of the meaning of the Limbu language, held by the KYC and affiliated Limbu activists, and the etic, informed by processualist scholars of ethno-nationalism and linguistic anthropologists, bears explicit discussion. The naturalness of the Limbu language serving as the "mother tongue" of the Limbu community was a theme that resounded throughout my interactions with Limbu individuals invested in the practice of ethnic activism. Anderson (2006) and others, however, emphasize the analytic need to detangle these strands of belief. He presents the dual analogies of the "eye to the lover" as the "mother tongue" to the "patriot" to highlight the affective undercurrents of the inherently political concept of a "mother tongue:" "Through that language encountered at mother's knee and parted with only at the grave, pasts are restored, fellowships are imagined, and futures dreamed" (Anderson, 2006, p.154). With Anderson's understandings of the contextually-embedded lives of languages shaping the etic perspective on language, the "mother tongue" of Limbu represented not an *emblem of* Limbu-ness but rather a *tool for* the building of Limbu ethnic identity. Similarly, as Mitchell (2009) suggests, the defense of one's "mother tongue" is a learned practice and one that is enacted in relation to "Others."

Interestingly, language serving as a signal of boundary-reaching and -defining was a theme reflected visually and spatially in "Limbu" environments. A visitor to Phidim, the district capital of Panchthar, would inevitably pass under the Limbuwan Gate as he/she arrived by bus, jeep, or foot. Arching across the width of the two-lane asphalt road, the Gate was decorated by prominent text written in *Sirijonga Lepi* and images of key objects/symbols in Limbu material

and religious culture. A sign hanging above the bus stand, newly painted and installed during my fieldwork, visually depicted the map of Limbuwan and offered welcome greetings written in Limbu, *Devanagari* [Nepali], and English scripts. Likewise, at the KYC's *Chumlung Him* in Patan/Lalitpur, the Limbu word of greeting (*sewaro*) was spelled out in *Devanagari* script in wrought metal on the crest of its front gate. Expressing what must be a common experience of confusion and curiosity by Nepalese persons encountering the building, my ethnically Newari driver finally asked me one morning, after visiting several times, "Ma'am, I see this word many times-- what is *sewaro*?" Perhaps strategically written in the most commonly read script of wider Nepal (and the Kathmandu Valley), the transliterated Limbu word was highlighted through its use as an embellishment on a door. *Sewaro* signaled both a literal and metaphoric boundary drawn by the IPO. More widely, increased usage of *Sirijonga Lepi*, Limbu transliterated into Nepali script, and images of the Limbuwan map in public spaces seemed to have served the purpose of functioning as political "logos," helping to further promote the building of the "imagined community" of the "ethnically" Limbu nation (p.175).[17]

Most Limbu activists associated with the Anipaan program reflected upon the experience of becoming aware of the existence of *Sirijonga Lepi* as a key event in their development as Limbu activists. Dilli Lingam, chairperson of the Multilingual Teachers Association (formerly the Limbu Teachers Association), recalled how he came to know of the Limbu script:

> (*Translation): When he was studying in class 10 secondary level, he was the only Limbu student among 240 students. One of the Khas [Nepali] teachers asked him, 'Hey mister Dilli, do you have your own language?' He said yes. Do you speak? Yes [Dilli replied], and he again asked, 'Do you have a script?' He said, 'I don't know, sir.' Another student from the Bahun community said that, yes Limbu community who are from Sikkim said that yes, Limbu have a script. After*

[17] See Figure 2 in the Appendix for an example of such a display in a market in Taplejung Bazaar.

> *class was over, he asked his friend Bhattarai, did you really see the Limbu script? He said yes. And he started to follow up with him and after three years he brought three books for him from Sikkim. After two, three years he knew that those were books of class 1,3, and 5. By this time, he did not know which is "kha" ['a'] and which is "gha" ['b'] but in class one book there was some picture and its definition. If it is pig, there is a pig picture and there was like it is a book and a picture of a book, you know. And gradually he understood the alphabet.... They were humiliated from other communities, from the Bahun community. They said that they [Limbus] are not literate, they are illiterate; they are like bad people. And that made him to think, why these people So he became committed like this. He was inspired by this."*

Elements of Lingam's story were echoed by several Limbu activists, including the fact that many looked outside Nepal's political borders towards individuals and pedagogical materials from Sikkim (now part of India) to develop their knowledge of their ethnic group's history with written language. Interestingly, several individuals similarly first encountered Limbu script by way of interactions with non-Limbus; in Lingam's case, this meant through his high-caste Hindu friend. As Lingam described it, the lack of Limbu literacy was perceived by "Others" as reflective of Limbus' low status and worth, and thus as justification for the minimization and/or open denigration of Limbu cultural difference. As the lone representative of his ethnic group in an educational setting populated with "Others," Lingam's experience of gaining awareness of written Limbu language sparked his burgeoning resistance to those individuals and structures that promoted negative conceptualizations of his ethnic group. Most activists I met who had become literate in *Sirijonga Lepi* had done so through informal means, by teaching themselves, or by studying with Kiranti priests. In each of these cases, the process of developing literacy required these students to actively engage in the project of seeking out and acquiring supplementary knowledge, often involving induction rather than direct instruction. For such

activists, the dynamic process of becoming literate in their mother tongue served as a catalyst for increased engagement in ethnic identity-related advocacy and debates.

Importantly, the deeper meanings and uses of *Sirijonga Lepi* were key language corpus planning matters with which the KYC and its affiliated Limbu-language experts grappled during the development of the Anipaan curriculum. Rajendra Jabegu recalled:

> *When they discussed about the Anipaan curriculum in the process of developing Anipaan, the government said you know, no, publish your curriculum in Devanagari script. But they denied that and said like the Devanagari Nepali does not preserve our language because there are so many things in Limbu language, like 'Hama' and 'Hamma'. 'Hama' means to distribute, 'Hamma' means to buy. In Devanagari, there is no 'Hamma,' there is only 'Hama.' So how can Devanagari script carry out the feeling. They debated like that and after all, in the end, the government said so, its okay, publish your thing. Even some renowned persons of our Limbu community said, no, it should be better to publish in Nepali Devanagari language. Even the Limbu people. They were discouraging them. Their logic was if you publish our Limbu book in Limbu language and distribute it you cannot get promotion, you cannot promote it quickly. If you published in Nepali [script] then everyone would understand and your book would be promoted quickly. But they [the KYC] said, it does not matter you know it is not the matter of promoting the things, its for our culture, for our script, so it should be published in our script.*

As the de-facto representatives of the Limbu community, the KYC's planning process in developing the Anipaan curriculum involved wrestling with important tensions related to their ethnic language that were both social and conceptual in nature. Jabeju described a debate between what might be characterized an "efficiency-driven," or instrumentalist, approach and a "principle-driven," or ideological, approach to the representation of Limbu language in the Anipaan textbooks. At the heart of the discussion was the determination of whether the principle of the uniqueness of the script merited primacy over the efficiency of conveying the language through the predominant script used in Nepal and in the wider school system. Led by the Limbu

activists at the helm of the KYC, the former consideration reigned, despite widespread disagreement amongst the greater Limbu community and initial disapproval from the government-affiliated members of the Anipaan curriculum development effort. Relatedly, the development of the Anipaan curriculum necessitated decision-making regarding how to account for and convey the unique linguistic content of the Limbu language in written form, a rather scholarly linguistic planning issue that required a stand to be taken on how to negotiate between written and spoken versions of language.

Furthermore, the process of writing the Anipaan curriculum also required the KYC to make additional corpus and status decisions regarding Limbu language standardization and the establishment of a "dialect of power" in print Limbu (Anderson, 2006). The Panthare dialect was chosen as the form of Limbu language to be taught to schoolchildren throughout the Limbuwan region through the Anipaan program, a decision that continued to inspire criticism from Anipaan teachers hailing from other eastern districts. As Anderson (2006) notes, the nature of print capitalism requires the creation of "languages-of-power different from the older administrative vernaculars" (p.44); as such, the status of Panthare Limbu was elevated above those of the other three dialects (and placed in new relation to the "older administrative vernacular" of Nepali) by being chosen as the dialect represented in the textbooks. The KYC's insistence on *Sirijonga Lepi* as the script medium and Panthare dialect for the Anipaan textbooks might be interpreted as critical instances of their exercise of power as an indigenous people's organization in defining the cultural "identity" of their community and making key policy decisions of their behalf.

The comparative advantage of the Limbus in relation to other ethnic groups without a strongly established ethnic identity-language-script nexus was a theme that emerged especially in

discussions regarding the educational statuses and efforts other ethnic groups, as well as with non-Limbu ethnic activists. Dilli Lingam referred to this matter while describing his experiences teaching in a predominantly ethnically Magar community in a southern district of Limbuwan:

> *Dilli: The Magars are very illiterate and don't even know they can learn Magar language and they haven't demanded for the education [in it]. This is why sometimes I used to speak with them in Magar. I have tried to keep Magar language but the Education Office did not approve of it.*
> *Ingrid: What makes the Limbu community different?*
> *Dilli: Since Magars have migrated to this place [Limbuwan], I think they lack a bit behind the Limbus.*

Interestingly, this activist Limbu teacher used his position as a government-school educator to increase awareness and use of the Magar language amongst ethnic Magars; Lingam's linguistic activism extended beyond the borders of his own ethnic group to encourage the Magar community to strengthen their own ethnic identity-language connection through schooling. He attributed the lack of linguistic revitalization and advocacy amongst ethnic Magars in southern districts of Limbuwan to the Magars' relative lack of ownership over their local place, due to their migration from other parts of Nepal. In framing his explanation thusly, Lingam further added the consideration of indigeneity to the language-ethnic-identity nexus and to the processes associated with strengthening it.

Endorsed in several official documents and included in the Interim Constitution, "mother tongue" education, or "multilingual education," was the main educational policy issue that acknowledged and made some official allowance for Nepal's ethnic diversity to be substantively addressed in schools. The KYC's promotion, creation, and implementation of the Anipaan 'mother tongue' program represented opportunistic means of engaging in the broader processes of maintaining and re-asserting the ethnic identity of Limbus. In short, highlighting the

boundaries around the Limbu language and script in and through these educational debates and activities opened an important door for the continued and re-publicized practice of "being Limbu."

Goals of Upliftment and Protection

The organization of the KYC and its members explicitly framed their concerns with educational planning and policy-making, particularly in regards to language, as being tied to the grand aims of uplifting and protecting the Limbu community. As such, the KYC's central mission (as defined for itself) was both proactive and reactive in orientation; in both modes, their focus was on transforming the status quo of greater Nepal to better suit their ethnic group. The KYC's advocacy work on behalf of the Limbu community fell along three broad lines: political, social, and cultural. Naturally, these categories of aims and remediation overlapped and intersected as they pertained to issues of schooling in powerful ways.

Political aims

As one of the first explicitly "multicultural" policies at least nominally allowed for by the transitional national government, "mother tongue schooling" represented a critically important first step in the greater process of transforming "official" aspects of the nation to better serve the Limbu community. As an institution provided for by the state and mandated to be available to every child in the nation, the national education system functioned as perhaps the most readily encountered feature of "official" Nepal present at local levels, in both rural and urban settings. Thus, the integration of the supplementary mother tongue program of Anipaan into local

government-run schools served as a key strategy to more closely associate Limbu language, literature, culture, and, ultimately, Limbu ethnic identity with the administrative, official, and institutional aspects of the state. Allowing for Limbu language and cultural knowledge to be taught in local schools was understood by members of the KYC to strengthen Limbu claims to increased governmental authority and special political recognition in the far east of Nepal, including the actual re-forming and re-naming of internal political borders of the state.

To begin, the emic meanings held by my interlocutors in the Limbu activist community of the term "political" were of a particular cast. I was often told that various indigenous advocacy groups, including the KYC, were non-political organizations, and this was an assertion I initially found somewhat disingenuous. However, the descriptor "political" was used to apply specifically to political parties engaged in electoral processes. The conceptual distinction made between non-political and political organizations provided an illuminating window on how the KYC conceived of its role as an entity with an aim of societal change. When asked about whether he characterized the work of his organization as political, Arjun Limbu clarified:

> *We are a social organization but we prefer to say we are IPOs (indigenous peoples organization). We have a responsibility to express peoples' interest, we are thinking what-- (stutters) what to do. As a civil society organization, as an IPO, we had an active [participation] in 1990 movement, also in 2006 movement. We cannot go to the election, we have a definition of politics, but we have a responsibility to say yes or no, if-- on the basis of issues through all political parties and governments. And we are in the time of making the Constitution and it is the right time, and our IPOs should speak on the behalf of our people.*

As Mr. Limbu considered it, the KYC itself did not constitute an political body because it did not directly participate in elections. However, as his comments made clear, the organization's mission was founded on the "responsibility" and the right to advocate on behalf of the Limbu population in regards to political issues, particularly during periods of profound governmental

upheaval. As an organization dedicated expressly towards addressing the needs of a particular 'indigenous community,' the KYC defined itself first and foremost by its "ethnic"-orientation, rather than its participation in overt political processes.

The Limbu activists and KYC-affiliated persons with whom I interacted frequently hearkened to their understanding that the "problems" of Limbu persons related to the nature of Nepalese bureaucracy as a Bahun-dominated institution that purposefully disadvantaged *janajati* communities. Reflecting on the rationale for the KYC's need to support Limbu language promotion efforts at the local level, Leela Singak, secretary of the KYC Central Committee, explained:

> *Another reason is that even if there are many government offices, but Limbu people do not feel that they belong to that office because if a Limbu person goes into that kind of office, they have to take help from other community people such as Bahuns and all. The main reason for this is that Limbus are not used to such kind of culture... The issue has arisen now only because before they did not need any citizenships. They had their own culture and institutions where there were many facilities for Limbu people. But now they are compelled to follow each and every process.*

Underlying Singak's comments was the belief that alienation and oppression of ethnic communities was inherent to the current functioning of the Nepalese governmental realm. Alluding to a historical supplanting of a previously functioning indigenous (Limbu) socio-political system, she asserted that Limbus suffered automatic disadvantage by not sharing the "culture" of the Bahun administrators and architects of the system. Within the functioning of the modern state, Limbus had no choice but accept governance by the Bahuns due to the latter's hold on legitimate political power. Singak temporally located the "problem" of Limbu political disadvantage in the advent of the modern state, before which the notion of (national) "citizenship" was inconsequential and (ethnic) identity had inherent primacy and legitimacy.

Given the disadvantaged status of Limbus within the existing official governmental system, the KYC's set its sights upon the upliftment of their community by promoting efforts to reform local bureaucratic landscapes. Many individuals associated with Limbu advocacy discussed the goal of having Limbu language installed as a local administrative language in order to facilitate Limbu persons' greater ease in engaging with and negotiating official realms. Leela Singak referenced the KYC's Limbu Language Promotion project as an effort to achieve this end:

> *It has been three years [since organizing of Limbu language promotion project]. We have been focusing on making Limbu an official language by working with the land agencies, the political leaders, and journalists, etc. so as to learn more about the process of which our aim is. We are also translating government documents such as nationality forms, passport forms, etc.*

Singak referred to the literal process of translating the written materials of the Nepali/Nepalese system in order to improve the indigenous community's members' abilities to participate in state bureaucracy, including being "identified" and "made visible" through official procedures. It is clear, through this explanation of the KYC's efforts, the organization's strategy involved bringing Limbu language into the existing governmental system in order to engage with it more effectively, as opposed to advocating for the rejection of the system entirely. Dilendra Kurungbang, director of the KYC-affiliated Limbu Language Development Association (LILDA) and one of the Anipaan textbooks' authors, offered his view of the dual relationship between the promotion of Limbu language (through Anipaan) with its increased status as an official language: unless Limbu was installed as an official language, Anipaan could not develop, just as without Anipaan, Limbu could not be installed as an official language. As schools represented an official arm of the state, inserting Limbu into local educational institutions was an

important first step in eventually having this "ethnic" language become accepted as an official language of administration.

Likewise, as a part of the larger goal of improving the Limbu community's ability to participate in wider Nepalese public life, the KYC also sought to increasingly populate government and political structures with Limbu persons, rather than have them relegated to the periphery of the political process or completely disenfranchised. Singak explained,

> *There are two challenges we are facing. One of them is how to make Limbu indigenous institutes manageable and legitimate through the government sector. And another challenge is how to introduce the Limbu community with [into] the current government. We are faced with the challenge of making Limbu community competent in the developing governmental sector as well.... I also want to define by showing that there are 75 districts and there are 75 LDOs (local development officers), in that 65 are Chettris and Bahuns [high caste Hindus]. Two are [ethnically] Rai and altogether there is only 1 woman as a LDO [Lead Development Officer]... But we do not have any people in bureaucracy. Not only Limbus but any indigenous people. If indigenous people are there, then there is possibility for the development of Nepal.*

Upliftment, therefore, involved establishment of a strong cadre of indigenous persons to do the actual work of governance and to embody bureaucratic power; improved schooling outcomes were seen as key to this end.

Critically, as Arjun Limbu alluded previously, leaders of the KYC felt strongly that their organization had the responsibility to advocate for increased regional political autonomy. "Limbuwan autonomy" was an all-pervasive political issue in the late months of 2011 in far eastern Nepal, as debates roiled on in the new Constitution-drafting process. The KYC was firmly on the side of so-called ethnic federalism and official recognition of their special claims to political authority in the east of the nation, as stated in their list of objectives defining their work as an IPO. In their position paper, titled "Limbuwan Autonomous State: A Proposed Sketch," the

KYC's Central Executive Committee calls for the establishment of the principle that "the indigenous people have privileges/special rights of preservation and consolidation including self-management for the development of their language, script, religion, and spiritual belief" (KYC, 2009c). Arjun Limbu recalled the conditions and issues of concern for his organization during the previous decade of political upheaval:

> *Before 2006, during the, you know, heavy points of the Maoist insurgency, too, we had made this the ultimate--- we had the language problem, we have the cultural problem, linguistic, and the ethno-religious. We had different kinds of problems but these all problems should not be addressed without our autonomy. So we declared that at the moment of 2006. And after 2006, our organization participated actively in this movement. But there were so many challenges-- if this movement failed, our KYC would not be in this way because, ... we have a mandate from our people that, the bottom line should be democracy. If democracy is in crisis, if democracy is attacked, if the human rights is violated-- the indigenous peoples'- we should be against of this violations, against of this things. So with this mandate, we strongly participated in this 2006 movement. And after the 2006, we suggest that every--- you know, our energy, money, everything should be focused on this Constitution-making process. We should raise the issue of Limbuwan autonomy.*

In this recounting, Mr. Limbu highlighted his organization's longstanding adherence to the liberal principles of autonomy, democracy, and human rights. In doing so, he distanced his organization from the political groups of the left-wing Maoists and the right-wing monarchy, the two central factions of the civil war. As his comments imply, the context of the civil war was tremendously complicated, requiring the KYC to cannily negotiate alliances to support its goals and maintain adherence to its foundational political principles. Ultimately, the stance taken by the KYC centered upon the larger policy solution of ethnic/regional autonomy for Limbuwan as a way to ameliorate the problems they identified as the Limbu community's own.

With this in mind, Mr. Limbu directly connected the KYC's overarching concern with ethnic autonomy to the issue of schooling:

> *Because Limbuwan autonomy is the best way to address the issue of education. Because before going-- when we went to the Curriculum Center or the Education Ministry with the demands of introducing our language into the school, they said that there are 92 different languages. Our country is very poor, how can we afford, how can we give the money to learn all these different languages? So it is very difficult, and we have the different cultures, different history but we are supposed to participate in the Dasain festival [Hindu festival] because the government gives the facilities for the long holidays. So we said we have other festivals and government should be giving us our festivals and give proper holiday-- at least three days. Government says it is impossible- there are at least 101 different ethnic groups, cultures--- how can we address all of these things, we have only 365 days, if we give all peoples this-- (laughs). We said-- that's okay. We can look for the other options, what would be the good option for enjoying our holidays, our festivals, public holidays. Then we said it would be good to get the autonomy in our areas then we could say we don't need the 15 days holidays but at least three days. All of these things can be arranged, managed by the autonomy.*

Mr. Limbu's comments reflected his understanding of the existence of two opposing frameworks for addressing Nepal's multilingual and multicultural composition in its educational policy. For the central government, Nepal's cultural diversity was defined as its foremost unmanageable educational "problem," as it was not possible to meet every ethnic community's needs, such as incorporating local religious holidays into the school calendar or providing instruction in non-Nepali mother tongues. For the KYC, Nepal's model of centralized governance itself was defined as the critical educational "problem," as the system made it impossible for Limbus to simultaneously practice their "ethnic identities" as Limbus and participate in government-provided schooling. In discussing how his work as an activist confronted the "academic and educational problems and issues" of ethnic Limbus, Buddha Tamsuhang, chairperson of the Panchthar committee of the Limbu Students' Forum (which commonly partnered with and participated in the KYC's activities) offered an explication of one of his organization's mottos:

> *Even if they [the Forum] are a social institution, they have this slogan which indicates some political issue: Matri Bhasha ma Bebaharik Shiksha Haamro*

> *Aviyan, Sanghiya Loktantrik Ganantantrik Nepalma Swayatta Limbuwan... The slogan itself is defined well. Like 'Matri Bhasha ma Bebaharik Shiskha Hamro Aviyan' which means our aim is to give practical knowledge in their own mother tongue. And the other part, 'Sanghiya Loktanttrik Ganatantrik Nepalma Swayatta Limbuwan,' which means, since Nepal is already declared as a Federal Democratic country, there should also be a Limbuwan Autonomous State.*

For the KYC and affiliated activists, ethnic autonomy was asserted as a system of governance by which it would become possible to celebrate and further develop Nepal's cultural diversity through educational institutions.

With multiple, competing models of decentralized governance being considered in the Constitution-making process, Mr. Limbu carefully elucidated the model supported by his organization:

> *Sometimes they say its the new ethnic federalism but we say that ethnic autonomy is the proper term. Because now there is so many people-- Tharus so on- that is deprived because of their territories and some are deprived of the language issues, some are deprived of the working power because of the ethnicity. So our federalism should be on the basis of ethnicity, territory, and language. So we call this-- we are demanding ethnic autonomy so that we can have the rights to educate our people depending on their decision.*

In this conceptualization, "autonomy" involved a critical assertion of distinction from the wider political entity of the nation-state and the re-acquisition of power and control by particular groups. Given the "deprivation" of ethnic communities in the past and present of their "rightful" territories, languages, and identities, the political model of ethnic autonomy was believed to be a means to restore and re-power those communities in the future. In the estimation of Mr. Limbu and others in the wider Limbu activist community, such a new system would allow for the schooling on offer by the government to better reflect the wishes of the ethnic communities themselves.

Socio-Economic Aims

Social and economic upliftment represented an important dimension of the KYC's dedication towards holistically improving the lives and living standards of its constituent Limbu community. In KYC policy documents, social mobility and educational status were often presented as tandem aims, reflecting understandings of the value of schooling for the production of an "uplifted" Limbu populace. In a developing nation such as Nepal, formal schooling represented a critically important pathway for social mobility and engagement with the process of *bikas*. Ethnographic evidence from this study supported Caddell's (2005) argument that the modern institution of the school represents a highly significant practical and symbolic idea/space with which ethnic activist groups sought to associate their wider communities. Reflecting an instrumentalist understanding of the good of schooling for economic and social advancement, members of the KYC recognized the need to emphasize and develop Limbus' relationships with the modern institution of the school.

At the most basic level, the KYC strove to encourage the full breadth of the Limbu community to accept and internalize the ideology of the value of formal schooling for their children. Reflecting on earlier educational initiatives of his organization, the KYC Panchthar District Executive Committee Chairperson Chandra Raj Andangbe noted, "But even now, there are people who do not want to go to schools to study and for this we need the help of the government." In drawing attention to the continued resistance (or at least, lack of enthusiasm) some ethnic Limbus practiced in regards to modern schooling, Andangbe's comment implicitly reflected a paternalistic undercurrent to the KYC's work of upliftment. As the self-proclaimed

"representative institution of indigenous Limbu people," the KYC promoted policies and practices that may not have been universally supported by their Limbu constituent communities. On multiple occasions, I was told by both Limbu and non-Limbu individuals working in the more urban environments of Phidim and greater Kathmandu that some Limbus who lived in remote communities were "very backward," "completely unaware," and "not accepting of the 'development' approach." In order to properly instill in these communities the ideology of *bikas* and its associated practice of schooling, members of the KYC believed it was the necessary role of the government to provide its might for enforcement.

Additionally, members of the KYC emphasized the connection between "schooled" skills, such as reading and writing, as the acquisition of "schooled" credentials, and employment. Leela Singak referred to this inter-relationship in the context of commenting on Limbus' representation in official institutions:

> *In order to have a job in any governmental office, there is this process everyone needs to follow and Limbus being mostly illiterate cannot compete with other literate people. For example, to become a teacher, one should pass class 10 and likewise there are other requirements for every job, which Limbus do not have. And because of being illiterate, they start to fall back as compared to other community people and as a result, they start to become frustrated and start to have a conflicted mind.*

Singak's comment highlighted what she perceived to be the profound consequences of an under-educated Limbu populace, lacking the credentials and schooled skills required to qualify for official employment, leading to both internal and external discord. In the modern Nepalese social hierarchy, in which it was clear there there were relative levels of success and failure, the Limbu-without-schooling recognized him/herself as inferior to others. Such failure of social mobility then negatively effected the Limbu individual's "mind" and sense of efficacy. Once again,

Singak framed her belief in the need for a better-educated Limbu community as a matter related to mitigating "conflict:"

> *We cannot find any Limbus in such type of areas like hospitals, VDCs, schools. And people from outside the community have started doing jobs there. That is because Limbus are uneducated. They study until class 2-4 and go abroad to become Lahori [workers abroad]. And because of the illiteracy, there is conflict between the people.*

While in her previous comment, Singak referred to the "conflict" that arose internally in Limbu individuals due to lack of schooling, she (and many other activists) also considered the lack of adequately "schooled" Limbus to be a cause of conflict amongst themselves as an ethnic community, as well as between Limbus and other caste/ethnic groups. The unavailability of properly prepared ethnic Limbus encouraged migration of "credentialed" and "schooled" "outsiders" into Limbu communities to fill essential positions of employment. Meanwhile, Limbus with only a few years of schooling traveled "outside" their communities to work as *Lahoris* [Nepalese workers who went overseas]. In such a system, ethnic Limbus both forfeited the opportunity to both earn their livelihoods in their home communities and, in in the process, their sense of ownership over their historical territories. Underlying these tensions were realities related to the migration of persons in search of economic opportunity.

Beyond the general promotion of formal schooling as the most fruitful means for increased individual and collective Limbu socio-economic upliftment, the KYC advocated for mother tongue instruction as a strategy for improving Limbus' experiences of school itself. With better experiences of being schooled, it was hoped that Limbu students' outcomes within the wider educational system would correspondingly improve. Like Singak, Andangbe also

described the Panchthar District KYC Office's interest in Anipaan and education-related issues as matters relating to the expansion of opportunities for employment and social mobility:

> *Of course education is important... But the main thing is that, if people get education in their own mother tongue, they might feel more comfortable, rather than in an other language. Before people used to only think about going to become a Lahori when they become adults and for little girls, the only aim they had was to get married to a Lahori but this has lessened.*

Instruction in "their own mother tongue" was understood to be a potential means of facilitating Limbu students' greater comfort in the institution of the school, thereby allowing them to perform better within it. Again, Andangbe emphasized the constriction of unschooled Limbus' opportunities to the necessarily extra-local Lahori pathway.

Singak elaborated upon the standard view held by Limbu activists regarding the need for the "mother tongue" of Limbu language to be used in early schooling:

> *For Limbus to be competent, education is a must. And for them to get education in their mother tongue is much easier than other languages since Nepali language is their second language and English becomes their third language. The children only start to learn Nepali for the first time when they are in school for 5-6 years. Just like I spoke Nepali for the first time in class 11. (laughs)*

Singak points to the double set of challenges seen to face Limbu students: first, entering the alien institution of the school and second, beginning the process of being schooled in a language other than their mother tongue. Singak's description of her understanding of the typical experience of Limbu children emphasizes the heavy demands placed on their language learning skills, not only by learning the second language of Nepali but also the third language of English. Her laughter in recalling (perhaps exaggeratedly) that she only spoke Nepali once she reached the post-graduate level of her schooling served as punctuation to what she intimated was the absurdity of progressing through an educational system that privileged a language other than one' own

"mother tongue." Many Limbu activists I met told stories of being shamed during their schooling for their lack of native ability with Nepali language. Amar Tumyahang, a well-known Limbu scholar/activist/writer, poetically described his academic success as a ethnic student progressing through the Nepalese system as a matter of sheer fortune: he was a fish that somehow slipped out of the angler's basket and was able to keep swimming. Activists resoundingly promoted the belief that education in the "mother tongue" would ameliorate some of the inherent discontinuities between the features of the Limbu home and the (national) school.

Beyond the instrumental purpose of improving Limbu student performance, several members of the KYC and its affiliates also expressed the hope that, by first grounding Limbu students' schooling in their mother tongue, their broader interests in developing their multilingualism and thirst for knowledge would be stimulated. In being schooled in their "mother tongue," students would feel "comfortable" enough to expand their knowledge. Arjun Limbu described the connection between the experience of first being schooling in the mother tongue with the cultivation of broadened perspectives:

> *We are often asked by people-- why you are trying to introduce education in your own mother tongue? And why-- we have the reason that the--- we should get some knowledge of our own mother tongue. After reading some knowledge, we can decide--- this knowledge [of] our language is not enough. We have to get the whole knowledge--- to other languages. And maybe the Nepali... the national language, you know. People doesn't, you know, fulfill their interest to get more knowledge. They want to get other languages. Knowledge of other people. In Nepal, you know, language is taken as one knowledge, you know but we can also say that it is sometimes a matter of identity also-- languages. But we should not forget that it has an importance for the development as well. So it is a means if you think of it this way. A means to get the knowledge.*

From Mr. Limbu's perspective, "comfort" with learning through the medium of Limbu would naturally lead students to then seek schooling in additional languages and with new bodies of knowledge.

In brief, the normative view promoted by members of the KYC on the proper development of Limbu students' relationship to the school, through mother tongue instruction, was in part a reflection of the importance they placed on modern education as a critical feature of socio-economic development for individuals and the ethnic collective.

Cultural Aims

With its strongly and oft stated mission to aid in the "promotion and preservation of Limbu language and culture," the KYC appreciated the opportunity provided by mother tongue educational policies to create a platform for and means of transmitting ethnic-specific information to the next generation of Limbu youth. The development of the Anipaan curriculum represented a unique opportunity for Limbu leaders to legitimately engage in the "calculated intervention in the learning process" by shaping the formal schooling experienced (Spindler, 1997). Additionally, by locating Limbu language and "cultural knowledge" in the institution of the school, these aspects of Limbu ethnic identity were implicitly lent authority and legitimacy as "schooled knowledge."

As a vehicle for the transmission of culture, the mother tongue program of Anipaan was fundamentally oriented towards the reproduction of Limbu knowledge and language. As Leela Singak explained simply, "There is a lot of knowledge and information that we need to tell the

new generation." Buddha Tamsuhang expressed a common sentiment amongst Limbu activists in regards to the aims of the program:

> *Do you mean what do Limbus want to be after learning Anipaan? Well, I myself want to be a civilized man. All I want to see is that Limbu people start getting aware of the importance of their culture, tradition, and language and contribute in one way or the other in its preservation and development.*

Tamsuhang provided a neat summation of the processes necessary for the upliftment of Limbu "culture:" awareness of its uniqueness (in relation to "Others"), appreciation of its value in making one "civilized," and contribution towards its preservation. Clearly embedded in this prevailing conception of Anipaan's worth was the development of a new generation of Limbu individuals with the passion to practice and perpetuate their ethnic identity. Singak elaborated,

> *We are aiming to a point where the next generation will have knowledge about the Limbus culture, tradition, language, and they should also fight for the Limbus' indigenous rights... We need such type of Limbus who fight for our right, for our culture, traditions, norms globally.*

Thus, the Anipaan program represented more than a just a means of transmitting for Limbu language and cultural knowledge to students: an implicit corollary aim was to load the cultural difference of Limbus with political import and instill in students a desire to continually protect the boundaries around their "ethnic knowledge." Limbu activists such as Tamsuhang and Singak believed this process held possibilities for the general upliftment of the entire Limbu community. In describing how his interest in ethnic advocacy began, Buddha Ingwa, Secretary of the KYC Panchthar District Executive Committee explained,

> *From 1994 I used to create Limbu songs and even sang them. I was crazy about the Limbu language. And to tell you the truth, I was more interested when one of my friends, a Bahun, told me not to speak the language since its going to disappear and it has no value at all. And that was when I got more focused on it.*

Ingwa's personal story of coming to engage in the maintenance, development, and strengthening of Limbu culture and language involved his appreciation of Limbu musical traditions and was spurred onwards by a sense of counter-hegemonic resistance. For many in the Limbu activist community, the presence of a mother tongue-based curriculum, which conveyed cultural knowledge, in local government-run schools represented an opportunity to facilitate the processes of both cultural reproduction (maintenance) and cultural production (in the form of agentive resistance).

Though it was an aim that was never explicitly expressed by activists, by making space for the unique Limbu language/script and for uniquely "Limbu" knowledge to be taught in the official government school day (particularly in the form of official textbooks produced by the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Center), aspects of Limbu "culture" might assume "schooled" status. The opening in the curriculum represented an elevation, legitimization, and valuing of what previously might have been denigrated by national elites as "unschooled" knowledge, the property of undeveloped illiterates outside systems of formal learning. In considering what the term "identity" meant to him, Chandra Raj Andangbe made mention of previous Limbu generations' advanced understandings of the natural world:

> *When we talk about our identity... we have our own unique identity which we have to conserve and protect. Since people have been living here for a very long time and they have their unique identity. Like they have a different kind of foods, dresses, tradition, etc., etc. Our ancestors already knew that the earth was round before Galileo made the discovery-- we have written proof of that as well. So, you know, there are so many different and unique things that gives us a unique identity.*

Leaving aside the substance of Andangbe's claim, it might be inferred from his words, as well as the comments of many other KYC-affiliated activists, that the production and practice of a

formal curriculum that drew upon both spoken and written Limbu-derived understandings of the world was an important step in properly establishing the inherent worth of their "indigenous knowledge." Anipaan represented, as a schooled program, a modern means of officially adding value and status to what was considered the ethnically-distinct knowledge of Limbu.

Furthermore, Anipaan also symbolized an entry-point to the further elaboration of Limbu "culture" as a legitimate realm of scholarship and for Limbu individuals to develop as advanced scholars. In their objectives, the KYC stated its commitment to "conduct research on subjects related to Limbus and promote awareness among them" (2009a). Remembering the Anipaan curriculum development process, Rajendra Jabegu noted a particular conundrum:

> *There were not experts related to the curriculum in terms of Limbu language. Still today, there are so many people who speak Limbu language like him [the average Limbu individual] and of many villagers of Limbuwan state. But what he is feeling, what he is thinking, what he is realizing is there are some special people in the Limbu community who are PhD holders or doing PhD like you [the researcher] or are already PhD holder. They are there but they don't speak Limbu. The Limbu people who do not know Limbu language are in such a position but people who know the language are not there. So it is quite sad. It should be the opposite. We should be there with our language. That is why there are not experts on our people, Limbu people, until now.*

Jabegu lamented the fact that the most highly educated Limbu individuals were those who actually knew the least about their "Limbu" identity, due to the process of undergoing so much schooling (which was conducted in Nepali and did not include Limbu knowledge). Thus, when the process of developing an expressly Limbu curriculum began, there was a dearth of highly educated Limbu individuals with the capacity to access meaningful sets of Limbu knowledge and properly articulate them in Limbu language, much less to craft them into an excellent curriculum. Jabeju and others looked forward to the development of a new cadre of both highly schooled and

strongly “Limbu” individuals to elevate the status of Limbu knowledge; Anipaan, they hoped, was a means to this end.

As a corollary to their efforts to promote and facilitate the installment of mother tongue instruction in schools, the KYC also lauded the production of new works of literature in Limbu language and heralded Limbu individuals who performed well in the national education system. In the KYC’s Central Headquarters, as in other Limbu homes and buildings, the images of Iman Singh Chemjong (a notable Limbu scholar/author), Bairagi Kaila (the ethnically Limbu Minister of Culture), and other Limbu intellectual figures were prominently displayed on walls. During the KYC Panchthar District Executive Committee’s annual celebration of the Limbu holiday of Chasok Tongnam, a prize was awarded for contributions to Limbu literature; the Limbu poet prizewinner, dressed in ceremonial clothing, was presented with cash, granted by a wealthy Limbu patron who lived in Dubai. On several occasions at the conclusion of interview sessions with Limbu activists, I was presented with copies of books written by the activists themselves, including tomes of poetry and fiction, as well as pedagogical materials such as *Sirijonga Lepi* primers. For such activists, the production of these texts was an important step in further legitimizing, invigorating, and publicizing Limbu cultural knowledge and language.

In the same vein, Limbu activists accepted the academic study of Limbu language and culture by non-Limbus as welcome opportunities for elevating the status and claims of their ethnic community. Ethnic activists and Limbu community members alike often highlighted the work of non-Limbus on Limbu subjects: for example, Rajendra Jabegu expressed delight that a Bahun friend focused on Limbu linguistics for his doctoral research, admitting that he would “be happy if non-Limbu students read our language and curriculum.” There was widespread

knowledge of foreign scholars who made Limbu language or persons the subject of their own research, hence the extraordinary amount of openness and helpfulness shown to me by the KYC community. Attending my first KYC Panchthar District Executive Committee meeting, I was told, "Be like Fitzpatrick!," a doctoral student from England who had recently conducted an ethnography in a Limbu community in neighboring Taplejung District. As a guest at KYC events, as was the general custom, I was often publicly introduced as an American scholar who was doing the important work of "learning Anipaan" and asked to give speeches including my thoughts about Limbu "culture" and the work of the KYC. As during the KYC's 23rd Anniversary celebration program in Phidim, my presence at such events frequently served as impetus for additional speeches to be made regarding indigenous rights, particularly for mother tongue schooling and the distinctiveness of Limbu ethnic identity. The fact that the subject of my research was education often served to underline the deep connection between scholarship about the Limbu ethnic community and the mission of the KYC to advance their "cultural knowledge" through Anipaan in the contemporary context.

The appreciation of academic study of aspects of Limbu culture and community was reflective of the general enthusiasm on the part of Limbu activists to engage non-Limbus in what the former considered essential "Limbu" cultural practices. The following fieldnotes, taken during an all-day picnic that marked the second day of the KYC's Chasok Tongnam holiday program, provided a particularly public and elaborate illustration of this theme:

> *In a large clearing on the edge of the Labrekuti hill, below the cluster of Kiranti temples and shrines to figures like Phalgunanda [a reviver of the Kirant faith], approximately 70 persons are present. In addition to members of the KYC Panchthar District Executive Committees, the Limbu Students' Forum, and other ethnic organizations, the attendees include: managers of the local banks, politicians (one of whom was a noted Maoist rebel), representatives from Phidim's*

NGOs, journalists from several regional publications, and the Superintendent of Armed Police. About 70% of these individuals are ethnic Limbus; others are Bahun, Chettri, and Rai.

Approximately six younger Limbu females stand on the edge of clearing closest to the hillside, tending to several large fires made of wood, with massive metal pots perched atop. Tens of vessels about a foot tall, made from freshly-cut bamboo, cluster on the ground in this food preparation area. [These are tongba vessels, to be filled with fermented millet and hot water, and to be drunk through straws. This is the classic Limbu alcoholic drink. I have seen these vessels made from metal and cured bamboo before; I am told this fresh bamboo style of vessel represents an "older" way to "take tongba."]

Music is being broadcast loudly through two large speakers at the far edge of the clearing. Farther away from the hill's edge, a circle of about 30 people (including at least 15 non-Limbu persons) are holding hands, alternating male-and-female, and moving slowing in one direction. A Limbu man wearing/carrying a large two-sided drum [a Ke, a typical Limbu/village instrument] provides a slowly rhythmic beat, chanting/singing in Limbu; the circle's participants join in the steady refrain. [They are doing the traditional Limbu Kelang dance.] A majority of individuals in the circle are laughing, smiling, adding gestural flourishes to their movements as they shuffle across the muddy ground. Everyone is looking around them, at persons before and after in the circle. They continue to dance the Kelang for several hours, as participants enter and leave the circle periodically.

Throughout this event, the organizers from the KYC engaged their guests, who were strategically invited due to their significant positions in Phidim or affiliation with *janajati* advocacy, in what they considered foundationally important Limbu cultural activities. These included performing the Limbu Kelang dance, visiting the Kiranti religious site on adjacent Labrekuti Hill, and the drinking and eating of special "Limbu" comestibles (including alcohol and pork). As approximately half of the invitees at the celebration were not Limbu, their participation in these self-conscious displays of Limbu culture was highly symbolic: the doing of Limbu "culture," by these relatively powerful non-Limbus was public acknowledgement of their awareness of and

perhaps even support for the greater claims of the ethnic Limbu community.[18] In this case, the District Executive Committee of the KYC's designed their event to involve non-Limbus guests in the purposeful crossing of the boundaries around "Limbu-ness" that the KYC had constructed and highlighted. The result was that the Limbu ethnic identity was both performed and seemingly elevated in status.

Much as Fisher noted in his study with the Thakali, emic understandings of Limbu "culture," held by activists and wider Limbus community members alike, reflected a somewhat primordialist implicit theoretical basis. As most of the data excerpted above has evidenced, Limbu culture was a conceived as a fairly unified body of traditions, stories, and timeless standards, rather than a fluid set of conflicts and congruences. A factor possibly contributing to this understanding was the popular conception of the oral set of Limbu/Kiranti scripture known as Mundhum. The official KYC treatment of Mundhum, as the basis for the "distinct culture and tradition and life philosophy" of the Limbu ethnic community, explained it as: [I]t contains cosmology, cosmogony, mithology [sic], stories, and history of Limbu people. The life rituals of Limbus are based on Mundhum. Limbus customs, ideologies, moral values, thoughts are guided by Mundhum" ("About Limbu," 2009). Limbu shamans were the traditional bearers of the orally-transmitted Mundhum and were called upon to recite elements of it during rites and rituals, as well as for healing purposes; they did so "from time of immemorial" (ibid.). The sense that the essence of Limbu "culture" rested in this ancient set of stories, steadily transferred from one generation to the next, may be interpreted as part of the strong assertion of a distinctly Limbu set of knowledge, in need of protecting and promoting. The formal curriculum of Anipaan

[18] The diverse participants negotiated their participation in these various "Limbu" activities in strategic and subtle ways. For example, many individuals were careful to give the appearance of enjoying the "Limbu" drinks and food while actually not ingesting them.

was designed to make central the importance of Mundhum and the lesson that it was the responsibility of each generation to keep the essence of Limbu identity alive.

By gaining entry in the relevant avenue of the school, Anipaan was also a strategy to take control again of the public process of re-constructing and re-presenting "what it means to be Limbu." In other words, the contemporary importance of schooling made the "context of formal education" a critical realm of practice to pursue the goal of driving the process of cultural authorship/representation in a more explicitly multicultural Nepal. While at school, Limbu students would begin to be able to learn what they "needed to know" in order to both be Limbu and conserve Limbu identity.

Tying Local Struggles to Global Ideologies

The KYC's interest in the issue of "mother tongue" schooling was fundamentally reflective of a process in which the localized struggle of ethnic Limbus, as well as those of other indigenous nationalities of Nepal, increasingly existed in relation to globally circulating ideologies, practices, and persons. As such, ethnic activists engaged in normative decision-making using models set forth by international bodies and agreements, imbued with "globalized" authority. Limbu ethnic activists, from the KYC and other affiliated *janajati* organizations, frequently and steadily connected their work on behalf of indigenous peoples to globalized discourses of rights. The tenth official objective of the KYC stated the organization's commitment to "work for human rights, indigenous rights and women's rights and child rights" (2009a). Lokendra Ale Magar, the chairperson of the Panchthar district chapter of NEFIN (Nepal Federation for Indigenous Nationalities), worked closely with the KYC Panchthar

Executive Committee; his particular framing of the need for ethnic advocacy work was echoed in countless conversations with other activists:

> *The constitution-making process is still ongoing in Nepal and there are 59 listed indigenous people. The important thing is the implementation of the ILO 169 in UN papers. Some examples in ILO 169 is especially they are demanding for the land ownership and the resources... There is also a desk in the UN for indigenous organizations... The main office is in Switzerland. And we have this organization called AIPP (Asia Indigenous People's Pack). They look after all the South Asian side. And the reporter travels all over the world and spreads one important thing, for instance we should not think of the indigenous people any less and raise his voice for the rights of the indigenous people about how people all over the world are living. They discuss about the social inclusion.*

The UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (ILO Convention 169) was adopted by Nepal in 2007 and was frequently referenced, as were the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Dakar and Jomtien Education for All agreements (particularly as bases for the assertion of the right to education in the "mother tongue"). The activities of ethnic advocacy organizations often spotlighted one or more of these international agreements in their activities; for example, the Limbu Students' Forum in Panchthar hosted a screening of a documentary about ILO 169 to "raise awareness."

Additionally, it should be noted that several members of the KYC Panchthar Executive Committee and frequent attendees of their events in Phidim were also associated with other rights-based organizations in the district capital; for example, a female member of the Panchthar District Executive Committee was also a leader in a women's rights organization. Several of these individuals were also "social workers" of one type or another, employed by various non-governmental organizations, supported at times through grants given by international donor agencies with ideological ties to rights-based frameworks and mandates. On multiple occasions, I

noted that members of the KYC in Panchthar and affiliated ethnic activists left Phidim for urban centers to participate in "awareness" and rights-related "trainings" and demonstrations.

Ultimately, the significance of activists' drawing upon international agreements and rights frameworks emerged in regards their aims to ground their local work in "globalized" sources of authority and legitimacy. As Steiner-Khamsi (2004) and other comparativist scholars of education theorize, local groups of actors may look outside their immediate national contexts to borrow policies, ideas, structures, and persons for strategic use inside their own localities. These decontextualized policies of external origin may appear more neutral and/or legitimate as resources in local groups' efforts of transformation or re-establishment of power. In this case, the KYC and other affiliated ethnic advocacy groups grasped externally-produced policy frameworks to support their local struggles for their improved status and privilege. The dual positioning of the local and the global as sources of authority ultimately serve to make these realms of policy self-referential and mutually reinforcing, assuming an existential reality of their own. Given the Limbu community's history of domination and the temporary context of political uncertainty, reliance upon these international frameworks helped the KYC to bypass the troublesome policy context of the nation of Nepal.

In the course of this chapter, data and interpretations have been set forth to build understandings of the basic objectives and obstacles that the KYC and affiliated ethnic activists sought to address through and in relation to the development, promotion, and support of the Limbu "mother tongue" curriculum of Anipaan. In the process, beliefs and assumptions regarding ethnic identity and schooling that were held by those *janajati* activists were presented

and analyzed. Ultimately, the policy of "mother tongue" instruction and the program of Anipaan related to the KYC's aims of: re-asserting and re-constructing their ethnic identity to redress a history of identity abnegation by the Nepalese state; uplifting their ethnic community in social, political, cultural, and economic realms to remedy their lowered status and lesser development [*bikas*]; and linking their localized struggles for advancement and change to globalized, international ideologies, in part to reconcile difficulties with governance and autonomy. Understood from the perspectives of the Limbu activists who promoted it, this formal educational program related to broad and temporally pressing concerns regarding both the symbolic and technical re-definition of the state of Nepal and the role of the Limbu ethnic community within it.

V. CONSTRUCTING ETHNIC IDENTITY THROUGH "MOTHER TONGUE"-BASED PEDAGOGICAL TEXTS

In the chapter to follow, themes relating to the representation of Limbu identity in the Anipaan textbooks themselves shall be illustrated and interpreted. The preface to the series stated: "This book is for those who want to start their schooling career in Anipaan. I hope this book will help students to write and read properly." In addition to functioning as an instrumental aid for the development of schoolchildren's text-based literacy in Limbu language/script, the Anipaan series was significant as a cultural text itself. The creation of these "mother tongue-" based pedagogical materials by the KYC and affiliated Limbu language elites afforded a formal opportunity to "narrate" the biography of the Limbu nation and to transmit critical messages regarding "what it means to be ethnically Limbu" to those with understanding of the language medium. In this manner, these printed mother tongue instructional texts could be understood as a means by which the "imagined community" of Limbus could be further elaborated and politically solidified. Using Barth's (1969) metaphor of boundaries, Anipaan served as a powerful symbolically "bound" space, within which the contours and borders of Limbu identity could be mapped by its activist/advocate authors. In transmitting messages about the meanings of Limbu ethnic identity through the Anipaan texts, the authors and editors of the series collectively

engaged in normative decision-making processes regarding both cultural maintenance and reform for the wider Limbu community.

"We the Children of Limbus are the Same"

Throughout the Anipaan series, the "deep, horizontal comradeship" of community was steadily called upon by its developers to characterize the nature of Limbu ethnicity (Anderson, 2006, p.6). One was born into a unified Limbu family of siblings; the corollary to such primordial belonging to the ethnic community was one's profound responsibility to coalesce with other Limbus around that which made them Limbu. The poem titled "*Latchhaee"* ['Same one'], included in Textbook Four, written by the prominent Limbu activist and writer Yehang Lawoti, provides one of the most explicit presentations of the intertwined notions of ethnic identity, inclusion, and participation asserted to inhere to the Limbu community:

We all think from our fresh mind
Brothers and sisters are the same
Whatever the ways
We are the same

Wherever we live
We are the same
Wherever we are
We the children of Limbus are the same

Literature and Mundhum are the same
Let us love our culture
It's the same

To form any organization
That's the same
Find out the Mundhum and lift it up
Is the same.

Through repetition of the statement "we are the same," Lawoti underlines the fundamental similarity shared amongst all Limbu persons, despite potential differences in their external conditions, such as lifestyles ("ways") and location ("where-ever we live"). The poet's decision to use the first person plural lends the poem an intimate tone, drawing the reader in close connection with the narrator, defining them both as the "children" of a wider Limbu family. Lawoti further presents the Limbu "brothers and sisters," an allusion perhaps to the popular origin myth of the ten brothers who founded Limbuwan. In the 3rd stanza, Lawoti locates the essence of the Limbu "culture" in their "literature and Mundhum" and implores his Limbu siblings to "form any organization... and lift it up," to devotedly coalesce around these timeless bodies of Limbu knowledge and tradition. Through simple style and wording (fit for young students), Lawoti's poem offers a powerful assertion of the fundamental cultural sameness defining Limbu ethnic identity and hints at its necessary implications.

"Hand-to-Hand Support"

Elaborations on the meanings of the unified Limbu family are present in multiple written forms throughout the textbooks. A particularly rich example is the following non-fiction essay in Text Four, an introduction of the existence and work of the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung itself:

> *Nepal is a multicultural, multilingual, and multi-religious country. We the numbers of indigenous nationalities are living here. We can see lots of tribes, nationalities, ethnic groups, and clans in Nepal. They have their own culture, religion, and languages. That is their real identity by the way. But these all are disappearing day by day with various reasons. Some groups have already lost everything. If we lose our language, culture, and religion, we also lose our nationality. So, to lose nationality means to lose everything. Finally, we become empty. Emptiness shows the helpless people with no residence, honor, and respect. So we need to preserve our identity.*

> *But any one individual can't preserve such endangered culture, language, and religions. We need hand-to-hand support and unity. For the same purpose, different communities have formed different indigenous people's organizations (IPOs). IPOs are working for the development and upliftment of their respective communities. Thus, Limbus have also registered their organization with the name Kirat Yakthung Chumlung. This organization was formed by the energetic and potential-filled Limbu youths who were studying and working here in Kathmandu. The establishment of KYC was 17 Bhadra 2046 B.S. [September 2, 1989 C.E.] Kathmandu as a central office. The formation of KYC was seriously needed for all Limbu community as their identity was going to disappear. Such Limbu properties were desperately in need of organization for the unity and its preservations. Board members of KYC were less in number but they did a really good job. All Limbus from Kathmandu Valley weren't part of the KYC at the initial stage. But gradually, many Limbus became involved with this organization. It was just possible with many discussion programs and interactions. Now the KYC offices are widely formed at the place of Limbu communities including outside country. The area of work of the Chumlung is not limited now. It is working for the overall development of Limbu community and its people regarding education, health, economy, skills, employment, language, literature, culture, religion, etc. So we the Limbu people should follow the path of Chumlung for our unity to be smart and to make our people smart.*

The essay leads with a definition of the nation of Nepal as a land of ethnic multiplicity, a common feature of most documents produced by the KYC. Within this national context, "real identity" has been specifically highlighted for the reader as being rooted in indigenous nationalities' "own culture, religion, and language." This statement seems to reference an implicit contest between unique ethnic identity and "Other" versions of identity for claims to the authentic foundation of individuals' sense of being. Clearly, the author argues that the former holds this distinction, based as it is in "culture, religion, and language" unique to one's "own" ethnic family. Furthermore, the existence and practice of "real identity" is presented within a larger framework of urgent threat. The fate of other ethnic groups, who "have already lost everything," is drawn upon to illustrate the danger Limbus face from an encroaching, yet meaning-impoverished, "Other" form of identification. The real concern, the author argues, is

that ethnic persons without their "real identity" are "empty," "helpless," "without dignity," having been voided of access to the true foundation of their selves: their own (natural, indigenous, "mother") language, religion, territory, and culture. Hence, they have ceased to understand their belonging to their own ethnic family. Implied in this understanding is that to be a full human and to be able to exercise one's agency means to having the ability to draw upon the resources of "real identity" from one's sense of ethnic belonging. This perspective reflects the first in a set of "core values" delineated by the KYC for themselves: "self-esteem, self-respect, and dignity" (2009a). Ultimately, as the author seems to argue, the fortune or misfortune of the ethnic individual is inherently bound to that of his/her ethnic family.

In the next section, the link between the individual and his or her ethnic group is further elaborated. The author argues that individuals alone cannot effectively preserve and protect threatened cultures, languages, and religions: they need "hand-to-hand support and unity." The imagery of "hand-to-hand support' evokes that of the traditional Limbu dance of Kelang, described in the previous chapter. The message conveyed is that the most effective strategy for preserving "real identity" is through the coalescing of ethnic individuals, who join together in a circle of shared activity and understanding. Thus, the creation and promotion of IPOs, including the KYC, becomes necessary and justified, representing the best means to defend "real Limbu identity" from forces that would have it dissolved into the inauthentic identity of the "Other."

This official explanation of the development of the KYC (by the KYC itself) to Limbu schoolchildren also addresses the issues of legitimacy and authority underlying the "representative" nature of the organization. The formation of the organization is framed in terms of its reliance on its initial founders, those "energetic and potential-filled Limbu youths" who

were working and studying in the capital. Having recognized the need for official unity amongst Limbus and the motivation to organize themselves, these individuals are portrayed as deserving of their authority as modern Limbu leaders in the 'New Nepal.' The narrative ends with a clear directive for its intended audience of Limbu youth to "follow the path of the *Chumlung* for our unity to be smart and to make our people smart." The messaged conveyed is that "smart" and good Limbus recognize the value of ethnic unity and show their understanding by supporting the efforts of the KYC as their representative organization.

Even aspects of the Anipaan series' animal-based fables, certainly a common feature of to primary school textbooks throughout the world, might be argued to further supplement transmission of the idea of and implications associated with the "horizontal comradeship" of the Limbu community/family. The following story, titled *Tengchumnu Mendangmaare* ['The result of disagreeing with friends'], offers a lesson in negotiating between needs of the individual and those of a wider collective:

> *Dear kids,*
> *This is a very ancient story. According to the story, people used to communicate with birds, animals, fishes, insects, trees, and stones at once. They used to stay in the same society with full harmony. There was a unity among them and they helped each other for any kind of work and problems.*
>
> *One day, they decided to make a new road. All the animals and birds started to work on the road. The monkey worked in the scary hills and jungles where others couldn't go. The elephant was suitable to dig out big big trees and stones. The animals with horns plowed the ways and others also helped together. The animals with hands were digging out the clay. And the others, who couldn't help, had to prepare meals, snacks, and served the workers. Further, they had to entertain the tired workers by singing songs.*
>
> *Thus, they prepared the junction roads to meet everybody easily. But the dormouse didn't come to help with the road. That mouse replied to them, "I don't walk on the road. If I get any kind of hole, I can can walk." Other animals and birds wanted to invite that mouse to help but it didn't come. They shouted a lot with loud noise to find the mouse but it disappeared.*

> *At that time, there was a kind of rule that whoever didn't agree with the group work or plan will get a curse from everybody. Likewise, the every animals and birds cursed the mouse. The curse was as follows, "The mouse who didn't work to make the road. So it can't walk in the road. If it comes out towards the road or crosses the road, it will die." According to the curse, the road was banned for the mouse. It was sure that the mouse would die if it passed the road.*
>
> *That's why, you may know, that the dormouse gets scared whenever it passes the road or dies. Whenever you see the dead mouse in the road, that is the result of disagreeing with friends and not being ready for good work.*
>
> *Dear students, you also have to obey and follow the good works. You must prepare yourself for the group work with friends. Otherwise, the result will be the same as that dormouse.*

Read in conjunction with the narrative of the KYC's inception, clear parallels in values emerge in this "Limbu" version of a tale of the perils of non-cooperation. Temporally situated in a kind of timeless antiquity, the animal society presented resembles a Durkheimian super-organism and is characterized by a distinct division of labor, with appreciation for individual contributions to a harmonious whole. In the same manner that the KYC was described in the previous essay to be engaged in "good works" for the "overall development" of the Limbu population ("regarding education, health, economy, skills, employment, language, literature, culture, religion, etc."*)*, the animals' construction of their new road could stand as a symbol for that progress which may be accomplished through the "unity" of belonging and purpose. The cursed fate of the dormouse, due to his selfish refusal to take part in the road improvement scheme (with its potential to help all others in the animal community), would likewise be that deserved by the Limbu individual who does not prepare his or herself for "cooperation with friends" in the process of building a "new road" for ethnic improvement under the direction of the Chumlung.

Additional written pieces included in the Anipaan series reflect additional "core values" of the KYC, including: "mutual respect; common ownership and responsibility; consensus building; mutual cooperation and strong belief in unity" (2009a). Throughout the books, the

cultural sameness of Limbus is continually asserted and drawn upon to highlight the need for unity as a community, particularly in order to protect themselves from a potentially threatening cultural "Other."

Of the Land, of the Village

Taken as a whole, the Anipaan textbook series strongly reflects the perspective that "real" Limbu identity is inherently tied to the geographical landscape of "Limbuwan" and to village life there. The following essay, included in the Class Four text, re-presents a familiar primary school lesson regarding the three major geographic zones of Nepal from a Limbu narrative viewpoint:

> *Dear kids, do you know the name of the land we are living in? Its called Nepal.*
>
> *Nepal is divided in three regions: Terai [lowland plains], Hilly, and Himal ['mountain'].*
>
> *The land of the Terai is very good to produce grains among other regions. It has plain areas everywhere but the climate is very hot.*
>
> *Hilly: The hillside region is geographically diverse. There are many hills, stones, and steep rocks.*
>
> *Himal: The Himalayan region of course is full of snowy mountains. We can't grow many grains and fruits there compared with the other regions but the climate is very cold.*
>
> *Sherpas and Bhotes live in the Himalayan region. Whereas Limbu, Rai, Yakkha, Atthee, Sunuwar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Newar, Bahun, and Dalits live in the Hilly region. Then Dhimal, Rajbanshi, Tharu, Satar, Musahar, Chamar, and Yadav live in the Terai region. The people of the Terai seem black in color due to the hot heat of the sun.*
>
> *The Himalayan people wear Bakkhu, Todhaa [types of garments], and thick shoes. The people from the Hilly region wear Daura Suruwal, Lungi, topi [types of garments and accessories], and coat . On the other hand, people from the Terai wear light kurtas ['tunics'], due to the heat of the climate.*
>
> *Thus, the population of Terai region is increasing, as the people from Himalayan region migrate over there. Even our Limbu people are there in the Terai region. And the people plant rice the whole year, so they eat rice.*
>
> *We Limbus stay in the eastern part of Nepal, in the Mechi and Koshi zones. These areas are called Limbuwan and Pallo Kirant. Rai and Sunuwar people are staying in Kathmandu and the middle of Limbuwan. Tamangs are*

staying around Kathmandu. Kathmandu Newa state is the residence of the Newars. Magars and Gurungs are in the western side of Nepal. We can find the Khas and Bahuns in Khashan and Karnali region. But they have spread across Nepal.

We do have the multi-culture and multilingualism and multi-religion. That's why we are the people of this land. Let's be united with each other.

In this explanation of Nepal's (natural) geographic diversity, (social) ethnic/caste diversity is once again made central and used to tie specific persons and communities to specific locations. Each ethnic/caste community is associated with a particular "region" of the landscape (Terai, Hilly, Himal: running along a north-south axis) and further located within "zones" (running along an east-west axis); in this manner, communities are plotted like points on the map of Nepal. This explanation of people and places provides a grounding to the underlying assertion that Limbus exist as the indigenous community of their area of eastern Nepal, just as Newars are of Kathmandu and Khas and Bahuns are of far western Nepal. The accompanying images in the texts reflect the messages of the narrative: the first presents an image of the map of Nepal, displaying its three "zones" and the second offers another map of the nation, filled in with persons whose physiognomies are clearly meant to represent various ethnic/caste groups). The Limbu ethnic community's area of residence is matter-of-factly referred to as "Limbuwan" and "Pallo Kirant," rather than solely relying on the names of their zones as given by the national government (Mechi and Koshi zones).

Importantly, the process of internal migration of peoples within Nepal and through time is mentioned as a phenomenon in this narrative. Members of the Limbu community are presented as participating in migration from their ancestral homes in Limbuwan south to the Terai, due to the fecundity and advantageous climate of the region ("Even our Limbu people are there... the people plant rice the whole year, so they eat rice."). Khas/Bahuns are presented as having

"spread across Nepal" despite having a home region of their own; their claims to belonging in these other regions are implicitly portrayed as less legitimate. Notably, this lesson on Nepal's social and geographic diversity briefly touches upon understandings of race as an axis of social difference in referring to the darker skin of Terai residents. The Limbu cultural explanation for difference in skin color is ultimately tied to qualities of the landscape and indigenous origins: original denizens of the Terai are dark because they are from a hot place, unlike the Limbus who are not dark and not from a hot place. This explanation serves to further define Nepal as a nation of different communities, each with their own rightful origins in the landscape.

Once again, Anderson's (1983) reflection on the "map-as-logo" as a tool of nationalism illuminates the messages underlying this geography lesson developed specifically for Limbu schoolchildren by members of their representative IPO. The map serves as a useful tool for explaining, ordering, and authorizing the boundaries between spaces, which are made by persons to reflect differences of one type or another amongst people. The map may then be viewed, depending on one's perspective, as a "representation of reality" or as a "model for reality" (p. 174). The inclusion of these visual representations of the space of Nepal and their accompanying explanatory narratives represent an important process of authorizing "reality" from the perspective of "the Limbu community."

Of the Village

Presenting themselves as the indigenous dwellers of the Hilly eastern region, Limbus' identification with village life is also continually elaborated upon in the textbooks. As a textual whole, the Anipaan series celebrates aspects of Limbu village practices and modes of being, re-

affirming them as central to the character of Limbu ethnic identity, while other aspects are subtly highlighted as in need of reformation.

By normalizing village life through images and text, the Anipaan authors and editors project the message that the rural, land-based lifestyle of ethnic Limbus deserves appreciation. The following excerpt from a formal debate included in the Fifth Anipaan book presents the form of a formal debate, with one side arguing for the greater value of ownership of land over money, and vice versa.

> *Hangsohang Kurumbang [side for land]: I have a question-- if there is no land then where would there be to stay and to survive? When we take birth, is it on the surface of the land or money? Land is more important when we are alive as well as when we die. We earn money in the land. We grow what things are needed to survive in this land, not in money....*
> *Muksam Lingdam [side for money]:... Money does a lot of things in this computer era. The people are gaining name and fame, they have travelled around the world and become great personalities, just because of their money, wealth, and property...*

In this narrative, cash is promoted as an asset useful for the transforming, modern, capitalist Nepal, while land ownership is argued to prove a timeless, steady, grounded asset. Though the debate ends on a formalized note of ambiguity, the narrative's author has clearly picked the winning side, as reflected by the title "Land is Greater Than Money. " The inclusion of this social debate in the text of the Anipaan program reflects greater efforts by the KYC and other LImbu activists to distinguish land ownership (in Limbuwan) and its associated life-sustaining practices from the fleeting usefulness of monetary assets. This privileging of the "rural lifestyle" provides somewhat of a counter-narrative to that of nationalist *bikase* ideology of recently past times, in which the village was portrayed as the "opposite of development" (Pigg, 1992). Limbus' rightful

belonging to and ownership of the landscape of Limbuwan is implicitly asserted as a fundamental dimension of their "real identity" and "dignity."

Just as the textbooks convey messages regarding the inherent value of the land and village living, a few aspects of Limbus' experiences and practices in those rural places were addressed for their need to be re-considered and reformed. The following dialogue between anthropomorphized characters of Corn and Millet, from class two's text, engages with the issue of Limbus' robust "cultural" tradition of village alcohol production:

> *NamOtti [Limbu person] had planted lots of corn and millet on the month of Chaitra. One day, the Corn was very angry. After knowing that the Millet asked her...*
> *Millet: Why are you angry, my dear?*
> *Corn: You don't understand anything. These humans bother me a lot.*
> *Millet: Oh, I see. But they bother me a lot more than you. They beat me, dry me and even dance on me.*
> *Corn: That's nothing. You know they make me naked and dry me under the heat of the sun.*
> *Millet: Ouch! It seems they do nothing to you. They husk me, put me on the water, cook me, and finally they make me into beer and alcohol.*
> *Corn: They bother me a lot more than you. They dry me at the ceiling of the fire in the village. Then they grind me on the grindstone and also make me into beer.*
> *Millet: They also do the same to me.*
> *Corn: If they use me for their daily meal instead of making me into alcohol then it would be good for their health. But I really hate them for what they are doing.*
> *Millet: Exactly, they will be happy if they use us in the right way.*

Certainly, any Limbu child living in a village setting in eastern Nepal would be familiar with these two grains, how they are processed, and for what purposes. The story's personification of Corn and Millet, grumbling about their treatment by humans, is a canny means of conveying the KYC's endorsed message that the drinking and making of alcohol were not to practices to be particularly celebrated. Instead of explicitly stigmatizing Limbus for their practices, this discussion between the raw agricultural materials themselves serves to somewhat diffuse the

message that (Limbu) humans are mis-using them; in this manner, the critique of the practice does not come from a human source (e.g. Bahuns) but from the natural ingredients of alcohol themselves. The suggestion to re-purpose these materials highlights the benefit these reformed practices will have for the Limbu community.

Related to health, the theme of cleanliness also reoccured throughout the series, reflecting another noteworthy aspect of village life in (implicit) need of reform. In the following excerpt from the poem, titled "*Yamba Ningsang*" ('Great Hope/Expectation') by Ran Bahadur Menyangbo, children are implored to pay attention to their personal cleanliness:

My dear friends
..
I am little now
But have big aspiration
I will not be a filthy child any more

I will wake up early in the morning
and get freshened up
I will make myself clean, comfortable
and will sit for study
...
I will respect and salute all
the descendants of Yethang
And I will have the dream to reach the moon and sun.

Menyangbo presents the "clean, comfortable" child as the one who properly displays his or her "big aspiration" to achieve success. In this manner, the matter of attending to one's hygiene is associated with improvement and devotion to Limbu ancestors, while "filthiness" is associated with lack of ambition and disrespect. Choosing to narrate the poem in the first person, the author encourages the young Limbu reader to internalize the message that he or she must make the effort to privilege presentability and cleanliness in his or her daily life in the village.

The Anipaan series presented Limbu ethnic identity as being strongly rooted in the region and village life of Limbuwan, while underlining the need for both continuity and change in regard to aspects of Limbu culture. Interestingly, the production of these texts may have represented a strategically significant avenue of cultural transmission to bypass an older generation of Limbu individuals, some of whom may have perpetuated what are presented as elements of village life in need of "pruning," to use Onta's (1996) term for the processes involved in the production of historical narratives for nationalist textbooks in the Panchayat era. Ultimately, the quality of being connected to the land was not presented as antithetical to progress; rather, it was an inherently valuable condition that helped to shape the particular identity of ethnic Limbus, lending character to the development of distinctly Limbu *bikas*.

An Integral Part of a Multicultural Nepal

As data have already given evidence, the issue of particularly defining Limbu identity in reference to the wider nation of Nepal was of critical importance in the series. A clear two-part message was conveyed throughout the texts: 1) the Limbu ethnic community constituted an essential part of Nepal, because 2) Nepal's multicultural, multiethnic nature defined it as a nation. This framing of the foundational basis of the Nepalese nation and Limbus' belonging within provided a counter-narrative to that historically promoted by the monarchy through earlier educational texts, in which Nepalese identity was defined in the image of the Bahun, Khas-Nepali individual (Caddell, 2007; Onta, 1996; Ragsdale, 1989).

Amar Tumyahang's poem, "*Mangwa Thaa*" ('Full of the Blessings of God'), playfully engages the relationship between ethnic and national identity as its thematic focus:

I am a son of Nepal
Mount Everest is my Himalaya
I dance/enjoy with kelang
I sing/enjoy with yalang

The top snows are my crown
The land is in my heart
I do speak and laugh at Khyali
I sing, saying "orillo"

Nepal is a garden
I am one flower
I am feeling dejected listening to "Khokhe Khai"
The singer in Semeskwa

We should make Nepal 'beautiful'
We should get education for that
I'm learning Mundhum
I am learning Sirijonga script
And now I can have the blessing of God.

At the poem's outset, the narrator identifies himself as a "son of Nepal," drawing on the tallest mountain on earth (Mt. Everest) as a symbol of the nation, one to which he may lay legitimate claims of pride. He progresses to further define himself by the specifically Limbu cultural practices in which he habitually engages: participating in and enjoying the traditional dances of *Kelang* and *Yalang*. The structure of the following three stanzas assumes the same format of the first: the first two lines refer to the narrator's sense of belonging to and ownership of the nation of Nepal, while the concluding two lines detail his participation in distinctly Limbu displays of culture. With this, the poem's formal properties reflect the metaphoric positioning of the two forms of identity (Nepalese/national and Limbu/ethnic) as complements, mutually inclusive of one another. Once again, the first person narration assists in conveying the sense that the individual Limbu may embody both dimensions of identity in his or her self. In addition to the geographical wonders of Nepal as symbols of the nation, Tumyahang evokes other familiar,

contextually meaningful metaphors to illustrate the meanings of Limbu and Nepalese identity in relation to one another. The author alludes to Prithvi Narayan Shah's "garden of many flowers" conceptualization of Nepal's ethnic diversity ("Nepal is a garden/ I am one flower"), accepting his national identity, as an ethnic person, within these lines.

The final stanza shifts the poem's form to present a set of normative conclusions. Drawing the (Limbu) reader into the narrative with the use of the first person plural, the narrator implores the reader to make Nepal "beautiful" through its diversity; the recommendation is made that the practice of ethnic-specific education ("learning Mundhum... learning Sirijonga") stands as the proper means to do so. The reader is left with the message that to gain knowledge of one's ethnic group and perform their practices not only represents virtuous activity but also provides the very foundation for strengthening the nation. According to Tumyahang, only through a strongly embodied sense of ethnic identity may individuals contribute to the blossoming of Nepal as a garden of diversity.

Throughout its pages, the Anipaan textbooks promote alternative frameworks than those previously enshrined in pedagogical materials for making sense of the relationship between ethnic and national dimensions of identity. In an inherently multicultural nation, the practice of Limbu ethnic identity was not opposed to Nepalese identity but rather an integral part of it.

An Educated, Devoted Society

Perhaps the most steadily occurring theme across the texts is the portrayal of the Limbu community being defined by its deep appreciation for schooling and associated practices of literacy. Furthermore, these aspects of Limbus' ethnic identity are depicted as being connected to

both their spiritual/religious understandings of the world and progress as a people. The Limbu commitment to learning and literacy is narrated as an essential aspect of their "real identity" that has continually put them at odds with hegemonic forces that sought to dissolve their distinctive ethnic community and has thus required Limbu heroes to display sacrifice and courage in order to be maintained. Elaborations on these themes are illuminated through prominent narratives relating to the (re)presentation of both individual ethnic Limbus' biographies and the biography of the Limbu ethno-nation as a whole.

As displayed in Tumyahang's poem in the previous section, the "blessings" of the Kiranti divine are said to follow from the study of Limbus' script and traditional religious set of knowledge (Mundhum). The performance of these practices and the boons they incur are then said to give rise to general upliftment. The class 1 textbook offers a simple illustration of the connection between the flourishing of Limbu identity with school attendance: "Let's plant the *Andangfu* [flower of the Limbu]/Then let's water it./ This girl is going to school/She is going to start reading our culture" (p.9). The following poem, written by the famous Limbu literary/ national figure of Iman Singh Chemjong and titled *Nisamhim Theyand Kebek* ['Why do you go to school?'], takes the form of a dialogue in which key questions about the meaning of schooling for Limbu students are explicitly considered:

> *Hangsa and Hangdewa:*
> *Where do you go dear student?*
> *Just tell me where do you go?*
>
> *Wadohang:*
> *I go to school.*
> *I am truly saying I go to school.*
>
> *Hangsa and Hangdewa:*
> *What do you get dear?*

Please tell me what you get from school!

Wadohang:
I learn to read and write.
I get a lot of good things from school.

Hangsa and Hangdewa:
If so then we all go together.
We sit together and study together.

All:
Pray to the God
Ask for good things
Ask for good education.

Chemjong employs three Limbu children (Hangsa, Hangdewa, and Wadohang) to serve as emblems of all Limbu youth and their dialogue sets forth the basic, underlying reasons for school participation: to gain access to schooled skills (reading and writing) and to "good things." The poem conveys the message that education is such a central and valuable aspect of life for the ethnic Limbu that it represents a matter to be prayed for from God, as well as being a practice that should be done "together," shared across all persons of the community.

Narratives of heroes and martyrs: Sirijonga

The connection between education, devotion, and the definition of Limbu cultural identity is elaborated upon through the story of the historical figure(s) of Sirijonga. In addition to biographical narratives of Iman Singh Chemjong and Phalgunanda (a prominent reinvigorator of the Kiranti religion in the mid-19th century), Sirijonga's biography is presented twice in the series. Due to its import, the narrative in the class Five text is presented in full below:

Aanjiri Tyeangri Sirijonga ['Immortal Incarnated Sirijonga']

Students, you might have been surprised to get to know about the dead people who are still alive. This is quite confusing. Incarnated Sirijonga Sing Thebe is no more here on this earth. He had passed away long long ago but he is still alive. Now, we will read about why he is still alive.

Incarnated Sirijonga SingThbe took birth in 1704 A.D. at Tapleung district, Sinam Tellok village. According to the historian, he was born on the month of Mangsir. He was smart, clever, and familiar with his village when he was a child. He was interested in study, reading, writing, and learning new and knowledgeable things all the time, even in his childhood.

According to the historian, many years ago, most probably in eight or ninth century, there was one personality in Limbu land named Sirijonga Hang. He loved his people and he gave security of that land. He thought and planned to make all his people smart, clever, and wise anyway. For that, he was thinking to provide them an education but the problem was script. So for that, firstly he developed the alphabet. The script we are using nowadays belongs to him. Then he taught and educated his people through this script. But, this work was going to disappear after his death.

Later on, the boy from Sinam Tellok continued this great work. He did the same thing that Sirijonga Hang did before. That boy revealed his words as a God, "I am the incarnation of Sirijonga Hang who developed the Limbu script. So that I can read and write."

That is why the other people started to call him as an incarnated Sirijonga. They also started to respect him, considering him a teacher. They started to learn the Sirijonga script from him. The students increased day by day.

It's like a dream and Mundhum when we talk about his life. He used to do a lot of hard work day and night for the Limbu nationality. He began to teach Limbu script everywhere. He educated all the Limbu people without caring for his thirst and hunger. He even started to experiment and use this script by promoting it everywhere. He travelled to all the Limbu villages and thus he reached Sikkim land. He was there with his students. The Limbus of Sikkim also got an opportunity to learn from him. The students of the Limbu script increased unexpectedly. Sikkim land was ruled by lamas at the time, who were Buddhists. So, they got the information about the promotion of Limbu language.

The lamas of Thachhang Monastery, Sikkim, started to feel jealous of Sirijonga. They blamed him as a threat to the Buddhist religion, challenging Buddhists and changing the mindset of Limbus. The lamas even informed this rumor to their king. And the king preached them to do whatever they want to save the religion.

Then the lamas started to search for him with an intent to kill him. The students of Sirijonga got frightened and ran away from their house to save their life. And Sirijonga instructed his students, "Don't say to anybody that you are learning Sirijonga script and language. Otherwise, they will kill us." Even though he was teaching the script secretly. But finally those cruel lamas found him and

arrested him. They tied him with a rope on a tree and tortured him. They abused him a lot and finally killed him with a bow and arrow.

The lamas threw his dead body into the river. But a bird came out from his body and said, "Today people killed me because I taught Limbu script and language. They killed me but later I will come again." The lamas became surprised after listening the words of the flying bird. They felt regret about their bad work and agreed to respect him by bowing their heads.

Thus, the lamas killed Sirijonga who sacrificed his life for the Limbu script, language, literature, and for the whole Limbu ethnicity. We cannot forget his heroic deeds, So we celebrate his birth anniversary every year.

There is a Martwawn Sirijonga Manghim [statue] at Sikkim. They gather every year in the birth anniversary of Sirijonga. The Sikkimese government has declared the name of Pamek of Leksop main road as the Sirijonga Highway. The people of Sikkim unite and gather with each other and respect him.

That's why incarnated Sirijonga is no more among us but people still respect and remember him for his good work. If he had not taught the Limbu script, then our ideals wouldn't be here in this stage. This is the reason we call him as an immortal incarnated Sirijonga.

The richness of the Sirijonga narrative makes it worthy of a dedicated research study in its own right; for the purposes of this dissertation, a more abbreviated discussion of the themes it evokes will have to suffice. To begin at the most basic level, the story of Sirijonga as portrayed in the Anipaan texts presents the message that Limbu language and script are of the utmost significance to the Limbu people. Indeed, these elements of Limbu culture are so valuable (and powerful) that they have even merited the laying down of Limbu lives on their behalf. The story of the second Sirijonga's martyrdom reflects familiar aspects and themes related to those of individuals throughout time and across lands who have sacrificed themselves for greater causes and ideologies. The narrative highlights the humble beginnings of Immortal Incarnated Sirijonga, the call to continue his work by a divine power, hard work, travel, the further development of his gospel (in this case, an orthography), and the acquisition of disciples (some of whom do not embody similarly steady levels of sacrifice and dedication). His dramatic demise involves capture by insecure, competing religious authorities, death by gruesome means, an event of

resurrection, and shame felt on the part of his killers. The bird that arises from Sirijonga's battered corpse explicitly conveys the meaning of his death: "Today people killed me because I taught Limbu script and language. Hence, they killed me but later I will come again." Despite the teacher's corporeal death, the release of the winged creature symbolizes the immortal nature of that which he taught: Limbu language and script. The knowledge of and love for Limbu language that Sirijonga embodies is so powerful that it needs to be be "resurrected" again and again by the Limbu community through continued practice and protection.

Both versions of the Sirijonga biography in the Anipaan texts are accompanied by the same line-drawn imaged of the teacher's torture, showing him bound to a tree, half-undressed, pierced by multiple arrows, and languishing. This iconic image was commonly featured in Limbu spaces, including homes and offices. Promoted as a Limbu "hero" himself by the KYC, Iman Singh Chemjong's foundational text, the "History and Culture of Kirat People," re-published by the KYC in 2003, includes a dedication to "The Limbu martyr Shirijunga Dewangsi... He taught his Kirat people Mundhum religion by reviving the Kirat Script in 1734 A.D. But he was shot to death by the Tibetan Lamas or Tachhang Lamas of Pemayontse monastery in 1741 A.D." in western Sikkim. By being replicated and cross-referenced between these official textbooks and other printed materials, the alarming image of Sirijonga's mutilated body represented another emblem or logo of Limbu identity, holding organizing potential for Limbu ethno-nationalism.

With the Sirijonga icon serving as a tool of memory and meaning-making, the narrator tells a story that highlights the lineage of Limbu leaders devoted to the cause of language, implying that the chain needs to be perpetuated and properly commemorated in the present. The

author calls attention to the Sikkimese state's official recognition of the martyrdom of Sirijonga through the naming of a road, establishment of a holiday, and erection of a monument; these modern technologies of statehood serve to organize time and space to officially fix "Limbu history" in the present day. Thus, the author of the text seems to imply, the modern Limbu community has the duty to thank, revere, and recognize Sirijonga for his sacrifice and the responsibility to continue his work in promoting and preserving Limbu language and knowledge.

The presentation of the Sirijonga story to the Limbu ethnic community's youngest members through the medium of the textbook marks a deeply significant example of what Anderson (2006) recognizes as the necessary process for nations to narrate their official "biography." As a historical event that cannot be personally "remembered," the Sirijonga story is narrated as relating to the specific "personhood, identity" of the Limbu ethno-nation (p.204). To achieve this purpose, "The nation's biography snatches... poignant martyrdoms... But, to serve the narrative purpose, these violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as 'our own'" (Anderson, 2006, p.206). The centrality of the Sirijonga story in the Anipaan series, describing the man "who sacrificed his life for the Limbu script, language, literature, and for the whole Limbu ethnicity," symbolizes a key action in the claiming of historical events and persons as definitively Limbu.

Furthermore, a related message embedded in the presentation of the hero's biography is that the cultural product of a unique language/script and the acts of teaching/learning literacy both must be understood as transformative of social systems. As seen by his disruption of the order established by Sikkimese Buddhists and their "cruel" efforts to curtail his work, Sirijonga's project of promoting literacy (in their unique script) amongst the Limbu population made a

political impact. Sirijonga's imperative to his students to "Don't say to anybody that you are learning Sirijonga script and language" reflects what might be characterized as a Freirian understanding of the political valence of the act of acquiring literacy, as well as the inherently powerful resource of knowledge. Simply, the narrative illuminates the political importance of "education" and "schooled knowledges." The co-mingling of language, religion, and governance once again plays an important role in this account of history, as Sirijonga's education campaign not only taught Limbu individuals the mechanics of reading/writing Limbu language but also gave them access to Limbu spiritual materials and understandings. As the official religion of the Sikkimese state, hegemonic Buddhism was challenged by Limbus' increasing access to and control over their "indigenous" religious tradition, threatening not only Buddhists' spiritual dominance "over Limbus' mindsets" but also political dominance. The narrative conveys the lesson that knowledge is powerful, and when Limbus do the work of developing their own language/script, dominant existing social structures and institutions are sure to be affected.

Continuing with Anderson's conceptualizations of the nation and the narration of time/events, the telling of the Sirijonga story also served as an assertion of the Limbu ethnic group's extensive history and, more specifically, great interest over time in developing itself as an educated society. The linking of the two Sirijonga figures, separated by a span of centuries but united in their dedication to educating Limbus and advancing their written language, is key to this endeavor of establishing the "subjective antiquity" so necessary to the idea of the nation by its proponents (Anderson, 2006, p.5). The first king Sirijonga is characterized as a progressive, benevolent ruler ("he loved his people and he secured the land"). In his wisdom, he determines that a written script is the essential vehicle/technology needed to execute his egalitarian plan to

develop his entire community into "smart, clever, wise" persons. Education, for Sirijonga Hang, was a display of his love for his fellow Limbu people and a specific means to improve their lives. This positive characterization of a Limbu leader in antiquity is implicitly opposed to the negative manner in which Limbu persons have been treated in more recent history under non-Limbu leadership. The long history of literacy amongst its people and a long-ago establishment of a unique alphabetic identity lends authenticity and legitimacy to the assertion of Limbus' contemporary claims to their rights for language promotion and modern education.

The meaning of the medium of the textbook for the presentation of the Sirijonga story is also illuminated by Anderson. Modern technologies of the state, such as official textbooks, offer a means of fixing histories, giving them existential reality; through "the memory of print," complex past events are rendered accessible by way of re-constructing them as "things" with names, such as the French Revolution (Anderson, 2006, p.80). As "things," they may be appropriated as an "imagined community's" own.

The inclusion of the Sirijonga story in the Anipaan textbook series was a particularly significant exercise in the process of re-authoring "what it means to be Limbu." Through his repeated appearance, in text and image, Sirijonga serves as an emblem of Limbus' love of learning/education/language and of Limbu ethno-nationalism. In telling the story of a martyr for the cause of Limbu language/script, the textbook authors were engaging in the important tasks of promoting specific Limbu heroes and publishing alternate or counter-hegemonic accounts of history. These were key processes in the production of a shared Limbu narrative of history and body of transmittable "cultural knowledge" regarding the meaning of their identity to their youngest community members: schoolchildren.

In the preceding pages, key themes that emerged in the Anipaan texts related to the representation and characterization of Limbu ethnic identity and nationalism were detailed and interpreted. Limbu ethnic identity was portrayed as being defined by a shared essence, around which individual Limbu persons had the responsibility to unify and provide defense, as well as by particular attachment and rights to the lands of Limbuwan. As such, the rural, land-based identity of Limbu communities was re-affirmed, characterized as being compatible with *bikas* ['development'] though the reform of certain practices common to village life was promoted. Limbu ethnic identity was also presented as serving as the foundation of national identity, given the assertive definition of Nepal as a fundamentally multicultural, multi-ethnic nation. Finally, education, knowledge, and literacy were depicted as being central to the definition of Limbu ethnic identity, as evidenced through the group's shared history of martyrs and heroes who worked expressly to promote, protect, and develop these cultural products/practices.

In sum, chapters four and five have considered the official "policy" dimension of Anipaan from the perspective of the ethnic activists (as led by the KYC) who engaged in the development of the curriculum's content, its support at the local levels through teacher training, basic monitoring, and community dialogue, as well as the program's general promotion through the discursive and project-based work of the IPO of the Limbu community. Through this supplementary "mother tongue" program, the KYC participated in important processes of decision-making, representation, and authorship on behalf of the wider Limbu ethnic community of Nepal.

VI. EXPERIENCING "MOTHER TONGUE" PROGRAMMING IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

In the preceding sections, I have presented and illustrated understandings behind why Anipaan was created and promoted by the KYC, illuminating some of the contextual issues regarding ethnic politics and school reform for the case of the Limbus. Additionally, I have detailed and offered interpretations of what messages the Anipaan program relayed regarding the meaning of Limbu identity by closely examining themes that arose in the textbook series itself; in doing so, an explanation emerges relating to how ethnic identity may be constructed and transmitted through development of a mother tongue educational curriculum. In this chapter, I aim to describe how the Anipaan program was practiced and experienced in one particular school setting by agentive educators, students, and community members.

Numidanda School

Accessed by way of an uphill path from the main Phidim dirt road, the Numidanda School was perched approximately two-thirds up the Numidanda hillside and comprised a cluster of white-washed rectangular buildings, positioned at various angles in relation to one another terraced along the slope. Perhaps the most marked feature of the school grounds was the adjacent dirt playing field; as the flattest, vastest, and least vegetated swath of land along the steep

hillside, it presented itself as a clearly man-made space in an otherwise naturally-defined landscape. The school buildings were subdivided into classrooms, each dedicated to a particular class level (1-12), among which teachers would travel during their day of teaching, carrying markers, texts, and, sometimes, long whittled sticks. Built from stone and mud, the building walls extended approximately seven feet high and corrugated iron sheets served as roofs; during monsoon rains, the din produced by the precipitation hitting the metal made it difficult to hear instructors, while on typical days sounds carried from adjacent classrooms and outside spaces. Each classroom was equipped with sets of hand-made wooden benches and tables arranged on either side of a central aisle, along with a whiteboard supported by wooden stilt legs. Alongside large windows with wooden doors that swung out on open air and provided the rooms with light, the early classes had colorful plastic and hand-drawn posters attached to the walls of their rooms, while the walls of the fourth and fifth classes were without decoration.

A room slightly bigger than the average classroom served as the main teachers' office; the headteacher's desk was positioned at one end, surrounded by files, and at the other end, a set of cubbies for the teachers' personal effects stood. Male teachers most often spent their breaks in the office, chatting, playing board and card games, and reading the newspaper. In the adjacent library (also a privileged "teacher-only" zone) female teachers gathered; this room also held one of the school's two computers, most commonly used for playing games by the male teachers, and an electric power-strip. As only of the only locations in central Numidanda with electric power (supplied by two solar panels on the roof, donated by wealthy *Lahori* Limbus of the community), this plug-in point was a place of congregation, as educators and community members alike sought socket spaces to charge their mobile devices. A wooden building with three small interior

compartments and a covered front stall sat at the edge of the school grounds; this was the school canteen, a spot for teachers and older students to purchase snacks during break-times.

Serving as Numidanda VDC's only educational institution with lower and upper secondary levels (as well as a few post-graduate level courses) alongside its primary classes, the school's catchment included approximately 750 households in total and 150 for its primary levels (as the maximum walking time for these young students to arrive at the school was set at 30 minutes). Enrollment was approximately 125 students at the primary level; 90% of these were ethnic Limbu and 10% non-Limbu. Dressed in one of two sets of uniforms (depending on the day of the week), students commonly walked in small groups on their diurnal journeys to and from school, most carrying their texts and notebooks in their arms. Commonly, loose pages from these school materials littered the paths radiating out from the school.

The Numidanda school-day (Sunday-Thursday) officially began at 10am, following the standard mid-morning meal, taken after most adults and some children had risen prior to dawn and worked for several hours around their homes and land. The day was divided into eight periods, generally around 35 minutes each, continuing until 4pm. A recreational interlude marked at the middle of the day; called "tiffin time" (though none of the students brought *tiffins* [packed lunch] from home to eat), the break varied from a half hour to a full hour in timing. Additionally, the school operated for a half day on Friday.

Table 3:
National Primary School Curriculum
(Source: Curriculum Development Center, 2008)

Subject Number	**Subject**	**Weighting**
1	Nepali	8

Subject Number	Subject	Weighting
2	English	5
3	Mathematics	6
4	Social studies and Creative arts	6
5	Mother tongues, Science, Health and Physical education	5
6	Local Subject	4
	TOTAL	34

The following fieldnotes, taken during the opening "ritual" of the typical school-day, illustrate significant characteristics regarding the everyday experience of time, space, and presence at Numidanda School:

> *Students stream down and up from slippery paths surrounding the school; others, who have arrived earlier, run and interact amongst one another at the edge of the playing field closest to the school buildings. The atmosphere is literally cloudy; clouds move across the school grounds and envelop the setting. Amar Sir [the Limbu lower secondary science teacher], who has been watching a ball game played by several male students, picks up the ball (made from crumpled paper and trash) when he sees Shikhar Sir [the Bahun principal] emerge from the teachers' office, followed by two other male Bahun teachers [one is a upper secondary Nepali teacher who is also the deputy principal, the other is a young post-graduate English teacher]; they stand near the edge of the courtyard, which rises above the field by about five feet. The time is 10:18am. Following a sharp cry from one of the teachers, the students begin to arrange themselves in lines, according to their class; lowest to highest, left to right, facing the raised courtyard (in front of the school buildings) and the teachers. The number of students in each line increases from lower to upper classes: the first class line has one small student in it. The younger students fidget and several do not face forward. Shikhar Sir yells to the students [inaudible] and most shift their positions.*
>
> *One of the teachers has a tape recorder in his arms and has dragged out a plastic chair from the teachers' office for himself to sit in, while the younger of the two goes down to the field. He travels up and down the lines of students, quickly*

inspecting their attire and faces; he smacks several on the head and yells at them. Meanwhile, several students continue to arrive from the periphery and enter their lines. The young teacher returns to the elevated courtyard and stands with his arms behind his back, behind the principal. Shikhar Sir signals for his colleague to press 'play' on the recorder and the Nepali national anthem begins to be broadcast. Students are holding their hands up and are barely audible as they sing along. Once the song finishes, Shikhar Sir makes some announcements in a loud voice, without smiling [presenting himself very intimidatingly], including that students need to slow down when they travel on the paths around the school so as to not slip and hurt themselves. After being instructed to do so, students put one arm on the shoulder of the student in front and begin filing off the field in one continuous line, each line sinewing into the next, heading to their classrooms.

The somewhat paradoxical qualities of daily life as a participant at the Numidanda School were reflected in this scene: there were both clearly formal and authoritative aspects (seen in the established format of the routine, the presentation of students, the hierarchical ordering of persons) and yet also a vaguely dissociated quality to the events at hand. While complying with the order to sing along with the national anthem, students' hushed singing reflected both a general lack of engagement and a discomfort with the authority of the school administrators. Similarly, the educators were stern but generally unenthusiastic in enacting their roles in the ritual.

As seen in the "late" arrival of both students and teachers, the fluid comings-and-goings of students, teachers, and certain community members in the space of the Numidanda School reflected relatively loose expectations for attendance from everyone. Often, writing fieldnotes in my room after a morning spent at lessons, I would hear primary school students visiting the tiny stall my landlady had set up at the outer edge of her compound. When I would ask them, noting the time, "Why are you not in class?," they would inevitably chirp back, "Sir is not there," or "Miss is not there." Teachers would be present or not present, late or not late, engaged or not engaged on any given day. In the average week Kesar Sir, the Anipaan teacher, was absent for

one or two days out of the six; as was the case with other teachers, several times, he was gone (with no replacement) for multiple days at a time. Substitute instructors for missing teachers were generally unavailable, leaving students unattended during these lessons. Daily student attendance rested at 60%, according to Shikhar Sir; frequently, certain lessons were cancelled after teachers entered classrooms to find that none of the students were present. These attendance patterns were often explained by teachers with comments that there must be some sort of community function (a marriage, funeral, or festival) that was occurring. While official attendance was taken during the first lesson on the day, it appeared that no more than half the student population stayed at school until the official end of the school day at 4pm. On the whole, it was often not exactly clear who was at school, for how long, or what exactly they were doing when there.

Individuals' relationships to spaces, locations, and movement through the Numidanda landscape underlined important social realities of the wider school setting. The space of the village was mapped out in the minds of local residents based in part on which groups of individuals lived where: clusters of Damai [Dalit], (ethnic) Rai, and Bahun households were scattered amongst those of the predominant Limbu. The ethnically Limbu teachers of the school resided across the Numidanda hillside, most walking at least 30 minutes up or down the steep slope each day to arrive at school. Numidanda's Bahun teachers and administrators travelled the farthest to arrive at the Numidanda campus each day, as most lived in the district capital, Phidim, a two-hour walk/one way (or a short bus/jeep ride from town to the turn off to the path, then one hour by foot), or in a neighboring VDC on an adjacent hillside. Several of these Bahun educators had the financial means to possess motorbikes to speed up their daily commutes into and out of

Numidanda, if the weather did not render the dirt road impassable due to mud and rutting; the principal's presence at the school was most often signaled by way of his motorbike being parked in front of the teachers' offices. For these Hindu individuals, many of whom had been commuting from their homes to Numidanda School for decades, the value of government school postings merited the time and energy needed to arrive each day at their post. Due to the location of their homes and their social identities, these educators were considered both literal and figurative "outsiders" to the immediate Numidanda community.

Other non-Limbu teachers were migrants to the VDC for the sake of their employment as government teachers; some of these individuals were from the Terai [southern zone of Nepal] and more distant districts, and they lived in temporary quarters, most often without their families. One of my neighbors was a secondary-level science teacher who had been renting his room for nearly 15 years, traveling home to see his family several districts away only during long school holidays. Ultimately, the physical journey of each teacher to the center-point of the school each day told important and publicly accessible stories about their relationships to the Numidanda social landscape. The linking of teachers' with their original "places" was likewise publicly noted by way of large poster in the teachers' offices on which educators were listed, in descending order of seniority and status, by name, home ward/VDC, and education level. Male Bahuns occupied the upper portions of the list, while female Limbus were at the bottom.

In a context in which it was very clear "who was who," my appearance at the school and my interest in the Anipaan lessons in particular quickly became impetus for many teachers to jokingly highlight their respective cultural differences in the teachers' spaces. Common sources of laughter were differences between Limbus and Hindu physiognomy, their accents, and certain

practices unique to each group, such as drinking alcohol. Beneath these light-hearted displays at school, it was clear that social distinctions were deeply felt and practiced, both inside and outside of the educational setting. One Limbu primary school teacher revealed how "it made her very sad" that her Bahun colleagues would not eat or drink food amongst Limbus of the community (based on caste prohibitions). Meanwhile, some Bahun teachers attributed the poverty of the local Numidanda Limbu community to their practices of alcohol-drinking and its effects; one explained, "They are unconscious- that is why they do not accept our things." As educators though, these individuals from different caste/ethnic communities met daily at the Numidanda School to collectively engage in the project of government-provided schooling.

Ultimately, teachers at Numidanda school did not consider themselves solely defined by their work in and at school. As the headteacher explained (in English), "We are teacher and farmer." In this rural setting, some teachers had basic subsistence to look after as well as their professional work, in addition to domestic responsibilities (in the case of women). Some teachers appended additional paying work to their schedules, including giving private supplementary lessons [*tuition*]. In a particularly overt example of the double-duty assumed by some government teachers, a 30-year old English teacher at a neighboring government school had taken leave from his teaching post for several days to work as part of a roving electricians' crew in a lower ward of the VDC; he explained, with a large grin, he was happy to be a government teacher because he worked from "10 to 4 and there is much time to have another job to earn more money." While some government teachers had tenure within the system, others at Numidanda School existed in a state of limbo for not having the opportunity to sit for the government teaching exam, due to a moratorium caused by the civil war: one young Limbu

upper secondary teacher complained, “Our future is uncertain. We will be teacher... farmer... businessman. We do not know.”

Language Use in Numidanda

Numidanda was known for being a strongly “Limbu” community, though it was not as famous for this distinction as were as other, more remote VDCs in Panchthar district. Limbu language was certainly a readily encountered feature of life in Numidanda, spoken often around households and at work by both younger and older adults. Generally, older adults and less wealthy villagers primarily spoke Limbu. Families were of two general types: those in which guardians tended to speak half in Limbu and half in Nepali with their children, and those in which Nepali was almost exclusively spoken with children. In the village ward known for being the most “developed” (as it was home a number of wealthier individual landowners who were former Gorkha soldiers and other high status *Lahoris*), many families did not speak any Limbu at all with their children. Thus, approximately half of the children in Numidanda seemed to have a general understanding of and ability to speak Limbu language. Importantly, most children tended to speak in Nepali with one another, including during break-times at school; it was rare to hear Limbu spoken amongst the youngest generations, though it was observable amongst siblings on occasion. Though the population of non-Limbus in Numidanda was small, a few lower-caste Hindu individuals in the village spoke conversational Limbu. In the VDC, a few former *Lahoris* could speak some English (having learned during their time abroad), while several young villagers that had passed their SLC exams could speak, if prodded, and comprehend some English.

A Time and Space for Limbu Language

As one voluntarily included subject in the primary school curriculum amongst six others, daily Anipaan lessons in the Numidanda primary school provided a strongly "Limbu-"oriented space-time in the school day and a pedagogical environment alternative from those which generally characterized other lessons. Ultimately, the passionate role assumed by Numidanda's sole Anipaan teacher, Kesar Sir, was the most powerful force in defining it thusly. A career educator from Numidanda VDC, Kesar Sir first began teaching Nepali language, math, and physical education at the primary level in the early 1970s and was thereby the educator with the longest career at the school. By his remembrance, he began teaching Limbu language informally in 1992 and more formally around 2003; he first learned the Sirijonga script from a Kiranti priest at the nearby Limbu religious site of Labrekuti, using materials imported from Sikkim. Kesar Sir's relationship with the Panchthar District's KYC office was robust, having been a member for 12 years. His political affiliations with other organizations included membership in the Rastiya Janamukti ['National Emancipation'] party[19] and he freely admitted his support of the cause of an ethnically autonomous Limbuwan.

Kesar Sir's enthusiastic implementation, or "appropriation," of the Anipaan program was clearly evidenced in both his stated opinions and his actions as an educator. Somewhat rotund, with thinned gray hair and spectacles, Kesar Sir had a jolly nature and was always quick to display an impish grin or instigate a joke amongst fellow teachers. Sitting in the school canteen during tiffin time, he described his basic approach to the Limbu-medium lessons: "The

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[19] A political party founded 1990 by a *janajati* leader from the Magar community, previously known as the 'Nepal National Janajati Liberation Front.'

[Anipaan] classes are good. I really want them [the students] to know these special words in Limbu, such as the 'white white snow.' I want them to learn with the activities (he widens eyes and extends his hands horizontally on either side) 'really really big' so they will remember this until they die." Clearly believing that the Anipaan program was important, Kesar Sir emphasized his aim for students to develop their facility with uniquely "Limbu" descriptive terms and means of expression. His comment reflected his understanding of his work as an Anipaan teacher as representing more than an academic exercise: it was a means of impacting students' abilities to interpret and describe their worlds throughout their lifetimes, "until they die," through Limbu language.

Encouraging Student Participation

In addition to emphasizing his approval of Anipaan's "special" Limbu language educational content, Kesar Sir also held clearly developed views regarding the use of active and expressive methods of teaching to aid students' learning. Kesar Sir's expansive hand and eye gestures to accompany his use of the Limbu term for 'white white snow' in the previous statement above exemplified his kinesthetic approach to classroom instruction. The following fieldnotes, produced during a lesson in the second class, portray a typical Anipaan session in the early primary years:

> *Five Limbu students are present (1/3 class).*
>
> *Kesar Sir asks the students to copy the Limbu numbers 1-10 in their notebooks. As he travels around the room, looking over the students' shoulders at their work, he offers appreciative sounds and smiles. He gives small pats to the backs of those students who finish and display their work to him. After about five minutes of this, Kesar Sir turns back to the board and begins writing the Limbu numerals 11-20. After he finishes, he points to each number in turn, saying the Limbu word and*

having the students repeat after him. Their voices raise with each subsequent number, rising until the number '20' (Nibong!).

He goes through the round once again and, as he does so, one female student runs up to him at the front of the class and touches his leg, holding out her notebook to him. He pushes her off [not unkindly] and then tells the students to get up and come to the front of the room. The female students rise and come up first, giggling, clinging to one another. After a bit of prodding by Kesar Sir, who comes up behind their bench and pats their shoulders, the two male students join, also smiling and shifting. Kesar Sir takes two by the shoulder at a time, dis-attaching the girls, and spaces them apart in a circle of which he makes himself a part.

He then begins, "Ah Sewaro!"['Hello'] and the students respond, a bit more quietly, "Ah Sewaro Shikshambe!" ['Hello teacher']. He repeats himself more loudly and the students respond more loudly as well. Kesar Sir begins to recite the numbers from 0, clapping his hands together (alternately to the right and left) as he does so, pausing after each number for the students to repeat. They clap their hands together in beat with Kesar and giggle and smile as they participate, staring up at their teacher. [They seem absorbed.]

After reaching ten, Kesar Sir claps a few additional times to each side before beginning once more. At the end of this round, he starts with the number 11. He bends his knees slightly, crouching somewhat, then sticks out his right and left feet alternately as he counts. Kesar Sir is grinning widely and the students are following his movements, giggling and reciting along with him, continuing to stare at him. He goes through another round of 11-20 and then stops, telling the students to go back to their seats and copy the numbers 11-20 into their notebooks.

The students all do so and begin to write, most squirming their bodies around as they sit. One boy lays his body lengthwise on his bench as he squirms.

In the example above, Kesar Sir encouraged his young students to engage in active movement while learning the Limbu numbers; he instigated hand clapping, feet dancing, and increasingly loud recitation to rhythmically emphasize the repetition of the numbers. His warm demeanor, displayed through his steady grinning and his clownish movements, captured his students' attention and set the example for them to also display their enjoyment of the lesson, after initial shyness. Instead of admonishing the students for moving or yelling, Kesar Sir encouraged full expression of these physical and verbal activities. When asked about he had developed this style

of teaching, Kesar Sir stated that he attributed it to his long career, which included teaching physical education at the primary level. The Anipaan teacher's decision to have students step out from behind their benches and actively participate in the learning event seemed to evidence his belief in the pedagogical value of harnessing the kinetic energy of young students to make embodied, pleasant memories of counting in Limbu language.

In upper levels of Anipaan, Kesar Sir often demanded students' participation in the form of verbal feedback during lessons based on the textbook. The following fieldnotes from a session of class Five offer a view on Kesar Sir's standard approach to instruction which was predominantly based on the textbooks: in this case, the class was in the midst of reading a story about a young boy, named Hiliang, who was traveling with his parents in northern Limbuwan:

> *Kesar Sir: (reading, in boomingly loud voice) That way and that door were made by our 'god' [tageranigwa phumang] and described in the Mundhum. (Asks) Who made this door?*
> *Students: (some) God! (some) Mundhum made it!*
> *K: Wrong! God! Who made this? What did they make?*
> *S: The way.*
> *K: According to Mundhum, god made this. So that's why I'm asking who made it. Where is it?*
> *S: Up on the Phaktanglung [a mountain]?*
> *K: No, on the return from the Kunsa [another mountain]. From where do we have to return?*
> *S: Up Phaktanglung?*
> *K: No, from Kunsa. Who made this?*
> *S: God.*
> *K: What is this?*
> *S: Its a Mundhum.*
> *K: (returns to reading) From that way, you will feel that 'scary' feeling [pyangpyang; he emphasizes the word] because the way is along very steep hills and the Khelok river. (Asks) When we return from the same way, we feel very scared because of what that is there?*
> *S: Scary! Scary! [pyangpyang]*
> *K: What's that? What's there? Which is there?*
> *S: Scary!*

K: Khelok river. Which river?
S: (some scream) The scary river!
K: The scary one is the Khelok river. (reading) We cross the bridge through that Khelok river. (stops reading) How did we cross? What's there?
S: Scary! Scary!
K: Which river?
S: Khelok!
K: Where is that bridge located? There's a bridge near the Khelok river. According to the story, they crossed the Khelok river on a bridge. Who is telling that story?
S: Hiliang and his parents.

In the course of presenting the story of Hiliang's journey in a meaningfully "Limbu" landscape (made by a Kiranti 'god' and described in Mundhum), Kesar Sir read a line or two of the text's narrative before stopping to loudly pepper the students with questions of comprehension. The students' enthusiastic, though most often incorrect, answers spurred him to ask follow-up questions or to re-ask his original questions to facilitate their reaching of the correct responses. As he mentioned above, Kesar Sir took care to emphasize certain "special" Limbu words, such as 'scary feeling,' while reading from the text. Some of the students latched onto these fun-to-say words, repeating them loudly even when not appropriate (given Kesar Sir's questions); the teacher, however, did not quash the students' enthusiasm to use the terms through chastisement. The steady back-and-forth exchange between the instructor and his students made for an atmosphere of dynamic participation, in which it was clear that Kesar Sir intended for Limbu language to be spoken with passion, as well as that Limbu stories were supposed to be entertaining and meaningful.

As the above classroom fieldnote excerpts may make clear, Kesar Sir's Anipaan lessons were frequently characterized by unusually high levels of noise and movement, as well as by what would be considered student misbehavior in other lessons and with other teachers. Male

students, in particular, would often jump off their benches, hit one another with pencils, and engage in general squabbling while the instructor was leading lessons using the text. In the following conversation, Kesar Sir provided explanations for his style of classroom management:

> *Ingrid: I have noticed a fair bit of fighting amongst the students during class. What do you think about this?*
> *Kesar Sir: When I am teaching and the students are very excited and they hit each other-- they cannot help it. It is just an expression of their learning. When I control them, the student might become embarrassed or nervous.*
> *I: Why would it be important not to make them nervous?*
> *K: When you make them nervous, then they may not speak at all from the next day forward. Even if they know something, they won't say it and they won't interact with you any more.*

Interestingly, Kesar Sir perceived the rowdy behavior of his students to be a manifestation of their involvement with the process of learning, rather than disengagement with it (and interest in playing instead). His primary interest as an instructor was to encourage his students' continued participation in the Anipaan classes; thus, for him, the most successful sessions were those in which students were most "excited" and most willing to verbally express themselves. Kesar Sir's assumption of the perspective of his students reflected his sensitivity to the power dynamics inherent to classrooms; in order to achieve his aim of allowing students to feel free to speak during his lessons, he regularly decided not to exacerbate the imbalance by operating as a strict disciplinarian. For Kesar Sir, student participation was the cornerstone of learning in the Anipaan classroom and he strove to conduct his lessons to be as conducive to this as possible, regardless of the fact that the line between enthusiasm and misbehavior often blurred.

Cultivating an Intimate, Exclusive Teacher-Student Community

Kesar Sir's attention to his students' experiences of Anipaan lessons and desire to maintain ease in "interaction" with them were elements of the particular student-teacher dynamic he favored, one in which closeness and a sense of kinship predominated. A morning Anipaan lesson in the Fifth Class illustrated the cheerful interactions often shared by Kesar and his students:

> *Kesar Sir: (reading) Panchthar, Chathar, Terathum, Sharan, Myawa, Yangam, Yangangwa, Menchayam, Sehonamlang, Kumayok, Kusayok [special places/sites in Limbuwan]... And when you see them from that spot, you will get (emphatically) emotional!*
> *Students: (repeating, matching his intonation) Emotional!*
> *K: Do you know Yasak [Limbu place, near Terathum]? Yes, it's there. (looks out of the western windows)*
> *One male student: No! It's cloudy! You cannot see!*
> *K: Have you been at Kuma and Kusayo?*
> *Another male student: Yeah! I went there yesterday!*
> *K: (smiles and laughs) Hah! You went there yesterday? How is it possible? (with exaggeration)*
> *Male student: I was kidding!*
> *Another male student: No, my mom went there, I think!*
> *K: Kuma and Kusayo are the main place of our gods. Why do we go there?*
> *S: To pray! To do puja [prayer ritual].*
> *K: If you have once been to the Yasok, you can also go to Kuma and Kusayo. Why do we go to such holy places?*
> *S: (a jumble of answers)*
> *K: The main thing is to pray. And if you once (student tries to interrupt) pray there, you will have the good knowledge, the good education, and you will have the good things in life.*

During this lesson involving special "Limbu" sites in the landscape, students offered jokes and personal comments about their lives in response to Kesar Sir's questions. By pointing out the direction of the site of Yasak from the classroom itself, the teacher connected the abstract content of the Anipaan texts to the lived realities of the students. Kesar Sir responded positively to one of his students' mirthful responses to this "localizing" practice, using the students' comment as a

basis for a further question-and-answer exchange to elucidate the purpose behind Limbu/Kiranti religious pilgrimage throughout Limbuwan and the valued fruit of prayer.

Kesar Sir's steady reference to the students and himself as "we" bears mentioning, as it certainly signaled a sense of shared involvement in the substance and practice of the Limbu language-medium curriculum. Elaborating upon how he felt in regards to his students, Kesar Sir smiled broadly and waved his hands in emphasis, "Since I know how to speak, learn, and write Limbu language, I feel very close to them [students] because they too know how to communicate in Limbu language. I feel very happy when they instantly say *sewaro* ['hello'] to me." In Kesar Sir's understanding, their shared ability to communicate in the Limbu language contributed to an intimate, exclusive sense of connection between himself and his students. Interestingly, as Kesar Sir was a native of the Numidanda community, the kinship he felt with his students was an actuality in many cases.

Each of Kesar Sir's Anipaan classes included micro-rituals to mark the beginning and close of the session. During other lessons, when a teacher would enter a classroom, students were expected to rise and stay silent until told to sit down or were greeted by the teacher. In Anipaan sessions, a different routine prevailed, resembling a call-and-response of sorts: Kesar Sir entered the classroom and the students screamed, with great enthusiasm, "Ah *Sewaro Shikhambe*!" ['Hello teacher!'] and Kesar Sir would respond, "Ah *Sewaro*!" ['Hello!']. Above, Kesar Sir referred to this short exchange of greetings: indeed, as evidenced in a fieldnote excerpt above, he often insisted in earlier classes for students to employ what he believed to be the proper (loud) volume before he would complete the exchange. This miniature ritual appeared to symbolically demarcate the boundaries around the time/space of Anipaan from other lessons of

the day, signaling the primacy of Limbu language and acknowledgement of an alternate model of student participation for the period to follow.

Likewise, a closing micro-ritual provided the bookend to the deliberate setting apart of this alternate space/time. The following fieldnotes from class Five illustrate this feature of Kesar Sir's lessons, which occurred at all levels of Anipaan:

> *Following a reading aloud and following along of the story from the text, Kesar Sir asks the students to begin copying, in their notebooks, the story in Sirijonga script for the last seven minutes of class. [As often is the case,] some of the students (particularly those in the front rows of both the girls and the boys' sides) are actually doing the work, while others are not. Four girls in the back row are completely not participating; they draw and fidget and chat amongst themselves. Kesar Sir paces in front of the class, smiling, looking at his watch. He yells out, "Time to leave. Nogen! ['Thank you']" The room erupts in a frenzy, the students (particularly the boys) bursting off the benches, stuffing papers into their bags, and heading towards the door. One male student yells out, "Nogen!" as he speeds out the door, smiling.*

Kesar Sir expressed thanks to the students to signal the end of the class without fail during periods of classroom observation, an act rarely observed in students' other primary level lessons. When asked about the reasoning behind this particular practice, Kesar Sir explained, "It is not a usual thing to do, other teachers do not do it but I want to give my students inspiration. [Give] back support and sympathy to them. I want to tell them, you can improve what you are doing and what you are doing is very good." This exchange of thanks served as an active acknowledgement, on the part of the teacher, that students were doing their "jobs" by coming to school to learn and participate in classroom efforts. Kesar Sir's expression of gratitude might be understood as a conscious effort to extend respect to the children, perhaps with the ultimate goal of encouraging them to associate being respected with the use of their "mother tongue." In this manner, these micro-rituals were integrated into Kesar Sir's "appropriation"/implementation of

the Anipaan program with an implicit aim of building a positive relationship in the students' minds to the experience of being schooled in Limbu language, as well as marking the special symbolic boundaries around the time-space of Anipaan lessons.

Countering deficit-based perspectives

It is important to note that Kesar Sir's beliefs regarding his student's abilities and actions were contrary to pervading views of student deprivation expressed by the wider teaching force. My observations in classrooms throughout the primary level were commonly punctuated with comments like those volunteered by a Hindu mathematics teacher at the end of her fifth class lesson: "It is really hard to teach them. They don't have the foundation. If I give them homework, they will just forget it," or those by a Hindu science teacher, "These students are very bad. Very naughty. They don't learn anything." A Bahun upper secondary school English teacher, who was also a teacher educator at the district teachers college, provided an elaborated theory of Numidanda students' low academic performance:

> *(in English) "These students are very stupid. Because their parents do not know how to raise them properly... They are very very poor... They do not know how to talk to elders... it is not possible to teach them... Backward culture makes them economically backward."*

Clearly, in this geography of blame, students and their families were responsible for their lack of school success, rather than teachers, institutions, prevailing pedagogical models, or politicians. Adherence to deprivation theories of student performance was not limited to non-Limbu teachers or even always to Limbu students specifically, as seen in the following fieldnotes:

> *In a winter afternoon, in the yard outside the teachers' offices, several male teachers sit and stand (seeming to be killing time). The Limbu secondary level teacher Buddha Sir calls to me (with the faintly sardonic expression of a tiny*

smile I had come to recognize as a signal of his joke-making), "Miss," shaking a 3-feet-long, skinny stick, (in English) "In Nepal, this is the most important instructional material. Without this, they cannot learn anything... Because children's mental level is low, environment is low, school is low..." His fellow teachers smile and begin to make jokes of their own.

Conversations such as these, amongst teachers, students, and community members were a steady feature of my fieldwork, revealing a deeply ingrained negative self-perception amongst Nepalese (of all ethnicities and castes) regarding their "lack of development" and "backwards-ness."

Limbu Primacy

Importantly, Kesar Sir's Anipaan classrooms served as the one period of day for each class level in which the Limbu language was clearly and consistently privileged over other tongues. The following fieldnotes, taken during a particularly chaotic afternoon session in Class Four, exemplify Kesar Sir's commitment to having Limbu "speak for itself."

Kesar: What is "ten"?
Students: "Chum?" [completing phrase, 'friends']
K: Then what is "chum?"
Male Bahun Student: Saathi-bhai [Nepali, 'brother friends']
K: "Ten" is you sit together, you read together, you fight together. These are your "ten" (pointing to boys' side); we call them "ten-chum." (writing on board) What is this?
S: (no answer)
K: This is the topic: 'What will happen if you dislike your friends.' Now, is it? Now, look at your books properly! (roams around room) Which page is it? Show me. (begins to read) 'Dear students,' (stops reading) this is how your seniors address you. (students are making a great deal of noise amongst themselves) (begins reading) 'This is a long years' ago 'land.' Which is 'land' [iksa]? 'Land' means this whole earth/land [iksa-khambe], where we are living and surviving (he points out one girl, whose name is Iksa) 'At that time when the trees and the stones used to speak, communicate with each other. Now, the destruction is there--- (stops, groans; looks at the male students, who are generally not looking

at their textbooks) Where are we now? Which is the line I am reading? Here it is! Here it is! (he points it out on his textbook)
Male Bahun Student: (in Limbu) Here it is! Here it is! (imitating Kesar Sir) (throws a bit of paper in Kesar Sir's direction; he is trying to hit the girl named Iksa)
K: Where is the page? Turn the page!
Male Bahun student (in Nepali, to Kesar Sir): Sir, Sir! She is throwing a stone when I say 'Land-earth'!
K: (ignoring; reading) 'At that time... At that time.' (stops reading, looks up) Where is that word? (roams; reads) 'At that time, animals and the birds' (stops reading)-- what are they?
S: Animal and birds.
K: (writes on board in Sirijonga and says) Animal, bird. 'Animal' [taksa] means what? ["Taksa" is a 'higher' Limbu word, one not used often] 'Animal' means--- have you ever seen cows or oxen?
S: (Assorted shouted answers)
K: Then, buffalo? (writes) Then, goat? Then, pig? Oh, they are the 'animals'! (yells a note of warning from the door at students making noise outside the classroom) What are those animals?
S: Pig, cow, buffalo, goat!
K: Cow, then what?
S: Pig!
K: Then what?
S: Buffalo!
Male Bahun student: 'Land-earth!'
K: (to the student) Why are you bringing this up now? Is the 'land-earth' an animal? It's the land. Goat, then what?
S: Buffalo, pig, goat.
K: Then, what do we call an ox?
Male students: "Goru" [Nepali,'ox'].
K: "Goru" is a Nepali word! (with irritation) What do we call it in our language?
One student: 'Cow' (in Limbu)
One student: 'Ox' (in Limbu).

During this lesson, Kesar Sir consistently responded in a negative manner to the use of Nepali language in the Anipaan classroom, particularly as led by a rather vocal and disruptive male Bahun student. Leading the students to further develop their Limbu vocabulary through their existent knowledge of it, Kesar Sir did not allow for a process of translation from Nepali language to Limbu language. In this case, a Bahun student (whose "mother tongue" was Nepali

and for whom Limbu was a second language) was discouraged from interjecting his own "mother tongue" into the classroom and for "mis-using" Limbu words. Generally, Kesar Sir would allow for the occasional use of Nepali language in earlier classes but very rarely would he speak in or respond to Nepali language in upper classes. In Kesar Sir's Anipaan lessons, proper use of Limbu language was strongly privileged and promoted over other languages.

Ambiguous Outcomes

Taught by an experienced educator with strong commitments to the value of Limbu language and "Limbu" cultural knowledge instruction, as well as the confidence to appropriate the program/policy along the lines of his own beliefs, Anipaan at Numidanda School represented a clearly "Limbu" space-time embedded into the school-day. However, more ambiguous meanings of Anipaan as an educational program emerged when considered in relation to student outcomes, the institutional context of Numidanda School, and the realities of a wider state-run educational system.

The Anipaan textbooks appeared to provide primary school students the welcome opportunity to encounter what might be termed "culturally relevant content," particularly in the form of images in the text that depicted their immediate surroundings. The following responses reflected common upper primary level student reactions to pictures in their Anipaan texts: "I like the house, water-tap, temple, and garden;" "I liked the scene of cutting grass;" "I like house, water-tap, and garden." In addition to enjoying visual depictions of their everyday surroundings and village activities, students generally expressed preference for stories about nature (with flowers, jungle) and about animals (such as frogs, fish, elephants). A few expressed enjoyment of

stories and images associated with schooling (e.g. "I liked the scene of reading books"), as well as specific Limbu cultural content: "I liked story, biography, and *Palaam* [Limbu performative poetry] while studying Anipaan;" " I liked the story in Anipaan, the story of Sirijonga" [Limbu hero, described in previous chapter]. Students also expressed some dislike of "bad things" in the Anipaan texts, including stories involving quarreling and misbehavior.

When asked why it was that they studied Anipaan at school, upper primary class students offered appreciation of Limbu language as explanation: "We study it because we loved to study;" "There are also good things. Anipaan is one of the best languages;" "Because there are interesting stories in Anipaan and then I liked to read them;" "I like to study;" "I liked to speak Limbu language;" "I was curious to know and write Limbu language as I used to like this language a lot-- that is why I chose to learn." Given students' abilities to strategically offer what they believed to be "correct" guesses at answers to questions, it proved challenging to determine how faithfully students presented their true feelings. Significantly however, the notion that Anipaan was "good" was clearly in circulation, whether it was truly believed or not.

However, Anipaan itself seemed a course of study about which students expressed increasingly ambivalent feelings once they progressed beyond primary school. These feelings were generally exemplified in a conversation I shared with a 9th class female Limbu student while walking back to Numidanda from a wedding in Phidim. Wrinkling her nose in response to my inquiry about how she liked her Anipaan classes in primary school, she explained that she did not like Limbu language any longer because she did not know how to read it and had since forgotten much of what she learned. She added, "This is the country of Nepali and so we should learn to speak Nepali;" at the same time, she considered English to be her favorite subject; her

mother worked abroad and she imagined she would like to work abroad as a nurse when she was older.

Indeed, an observer in the Numidanda's Anipaan lessons would likely perceive fairly quickly the fact that students struggled to read and write in *Sirijonga Lepi*. The following fieldnote excerpt, taken during an afternoon lesson in the Fourth Class, presents this reality in the classroom:

> *Kesar Sir begins to read from the text while ambling through the room, tapping on various students' texts to show where they should be following. He looks up from his reading [ending on the word for "pig"], erases the board and writes the single word in Sirijonga on the whiteboard. He asks, whacking the board with his marker, "What is this?"*
> *Boys in the first and second rows yell, 'Pig!!!'*
> *Kesar: What is it?*
> *Students: 'Pig!'*
> *Kesar Sir begins to travel around the room, starting with the female side of the room, pointing to each student with his marker, "What?" The quiet females in the back row smile (shyly) and are barely audible when repeating the word. Kesar Sir turns to the boys' side of the room and starts from the back row. As he goes to the middle row, several students are not paying attention to him and he shouts, "Hey!" He steps close and thwacks one male student on the top of the head with his marker; the boy says "'Pig,'" and rubs his head. A few moments later, the boy smiles and continues to dance in his seat.*

During this frequently observed (in its essence) everyday scene, Kesar Sir singled out one word ("pig") from the text to re-present in written form on the board; instead of reading the word, the students likely took a good guess at what the word was, based on Kesar Sir's chosen stopping point in his reading. As Kesar Sir traveled around the room, asking students to individually "read" the word, they actually were not required to "read" but rather, to listen to and repeat what their peers (and Kesar Sir) had verbalized previously. In Anipaan lessons, students were not asked to demonstrate their mastery with written Limbu words in the textbook by ever reading the words, independently and without the instructor's lead.

Arguably then, perhaps the most notable outcome of these classroom practices related to written literacy was that students learned to "perform" literacy in Limbu language rather than "practice" it. The following fieldnotes from Class Five Anipaan provide an illustration of this performance, imperfectly executed:

> *Kesar Sir writes the title of the story on the board (picture of boy and girl, sitting on ground, writing in books), then writes the name of the author on the board, repeating these aloud. He asks the students to show where this is on the page by pointing. The girl sitting next to me points at the title.*
>
> *Kesar Sir asks the kids to show/follow along with their pointer fingers on their books as he reads. The girl next to me moves her finger along each word as Kesar Sir reads (it is fairly clear that she is timing her finger movements along the line to correspond with Kesar Sir's reading).*
>
> *Kesar Sir tells the students to turn to the next page and the girls one row in front of me (who are sharing a book) turn all the way (accidentally) to the next story and start moving their fingers along (to the beat of the words Kesar Sir is reading aloud). After a line or two, he paces past them and makes the girls turn their pages back, smacking them on the head with his marker. The girls smile slightly, rubbing their heads.*

In reading aloud from the text, Kesar Sir asked students to follow along with their fingers to display their participation in the "reading" event. Often, the students were completely lost; in this case, the female students continued to "read" by moving their fingers along the line, word by word, to the rhythm of the recitation, even though they were turned to a different page of text from that being read aloud. Throughout observations of Anipaan classes, I frequently saw students looking to their peers for guidance or performing the actions associated with reading (moving their fingers along the lines), as they counted discrete words and/or made educated guesses at Kesar Sir's place in the text based on context. When I asked on several occasions for students to caption their drawings produced during tiffin time in Limbu, only a small handful complied; of these, all wrote their names only in Sirijonga script.

Observations of Kesar Sir's teaching of *Sirijonga Lepi* in the earlier classes provided some explanation of how students emerged in the upper primary grades without strongly developed literacy skills. In Class Three, Kesar Sir read a poem from the textbook:

> *The children repeat after him with varying degrees of enthusiasm for each line. They wriggle on their benches and talk amongst themselves.*
> .....
> *Kesar Sir writes a few Sirijonga letters on the board and tells them (in Nepali): "Write!" He asks, "Do you know it or not?" One male student responds, (in Nepali) "No, I don't know it."*
> *Kesar Sir leaves the classroom for about four minutes, during which time the kids stand on their bench desks, begin jumping rope with a string made from candy wrappers, and barrage me with questions. I tell them to sit down, that Kesar Sir is coming, but they do not listen and peer over my shoulder and arms to see my writing in my notebook. A scout runs out of the room to see if Kesar Sir is coming and then returns with the news that he is not. The students continue to run wild and play. I ask them whether they have finished their work (copying the letters on the board) and they laugh at me.*
> *Kesar Sir then does arrive, taking them by surprise, as which they run back to their benches. He asks, "Is it finished?" and the students scream, "Finished!," then running up to the front of the room to show him their notebooks. He sits down and uses his pen to make checks across their pages without comment or close observation.*

In this scenario, Kesar Sir asked the students to copy the *Sirijonga* letters from the text into their notebooks, then left the classroom (as he occasionally would do) while they were supposed to complete the written task; upon his return, he checked the students' work for completion, rather than for content. The students' wild behavior in his absence, and general disinterest in doing their written work, seemed to evidence their understanding of the fact that they were not held to great account for the quality of their writing itself.

When asked how he felt regarding his Anipaan students' academic progress, Kesar Sir reflected:

> *Yeah, I am satisfied. They find it easy to read and speak, except writing. It's a little hard for them to write. But with little guidance, they can start writing with no*

problem... Students from classes 4-5 can read. Students in below classes is a little hard... They are weak in writing since they are used to writing in Nepali.
Ingrid: How do you feel that the students' writing is not good?
Kesar Sir: It may not affect them. The important thing is for them to learn the language, the medium, the vocabulary.

Quite clearly, given the manner in which he conducted his classes, Kesar Sir's priority as an Anipaan instructor was on improving his students' abilities with spoken Limbu language, rather than on its written forms.

Several times during the course of my fieldwork, I encountered individuals who were critical of the Anipaan program and they were quick to point out that Limbu students tended to perform less well than their non-Limbu peers in Anipaan itself, based on their test scores. In Kesar Sir's contention, these non-Limbu *toppers* [as the best students were termed] did well because of their academic approach to Anipaan:

They can write and read very well but they are a little weak in speaking Limbu language...
Ingrid: Why are there non-Limbu toppers?
Kesar Sir: Limbu students, since they already know and have an idea about how to read, write, and speak, they are reluctant to study seriously in the schools and in books. The non-Limbus, since it is not their mother tongue, focus more and tend to learn more.

Kesar Sir provided an intriguing interpretation of the less-than-outstanding relative performance of ethnic Limbu students in this formal "mother tongue" program: their unimpressive outcomes were due to their already-established affinity with the language. Thus, in the teacher's estimation, Limbu students' comparatively poor performance on official assessments (based on reading and writing) in Limbu actually served as evidence of their fluency with it in outside-of-school settings. In regard to the sole non-Limbu student in Class Five who was the class *topper* Anipaan, Kesar explained that the (male) student's writing was good and he performed best in

the class in exams; however, the student's accent kept him from speaking Limbu well. Two Limbu Anipaan teachers from Taplejung District echoed Kesar Sir's perspective on the matter: one exclaimed, "It doesn't matter if non-Limbus are the *toppers*-- identity is still there!" The emphasis on providing time and space in the school-day for the speaking and listening to Limbu language appeared of greater importance than objective measures of students' written literacy in their "mother tongue."

Cultural Models of Teaching, Learning, and Schooling

Despite its special features, the daily Anipaan lesson at Numidanda School and Kesar Sir's teaching generally conformed to the prevailing model of classroom instruction practiced in government primary schools. As many of the fieldnote excerpts included above have evidenced, Anipaan lessons were structured with a single teacher and a textbook serving as the central foci, mirroring the general logic and structure of students' other lessons. Furthermore, a wide-spread "folk philosophy" shared by teachers (including Kesar Sir) helped to shape Anipaan lessons and, arguably, their outcomes: it was understood that primary school students could not be expected to produce independent work, also shaped Kesar Sir's lessons and, arguably, their outcomes. As evidenced, students were routinely instructed to do exercises during class in which they were to copy words or sentences from their books or the board. As soon as students were done with their work, they would bring their notebooks to be "checked" by the teacher. The robustness of this model was made apparent to me during periods of participant-observation: students continued to ask me to "check" their drawings, despite my steady assertion that there were no correct answers and they could draw whatever they wished.

Comparing Anipaan Lessons Across Schools

In the course of my fieldwork, I observed Anipaan lessons in two neighboring primary schools to better make sense of Kesar Sir's implementation practice. On the morning I visited the primary school on the crest of the Numidanda hill, Babita Miss, the middle-aged headmistress, led students in the Fourth Class in a lesson from the Anipaan textbook about Limbu marriage customs:

> *Babita Miss arrives in room. Nine students are present.*
> *Students stand up from their benches and say (quietly): Ah Sewaro Shikshambe.*
> *Babita Miss sits in white plastic chair at front of class. All students (except one male student) have their Anipaan texts out. The teacher begins to read from text.*
> *For each line read, she stops and translates key terms from the text into Nepali, e.g. 'Boys and girls' (in Limbu) means?... Keta-keti ('boys and girls,' Nepali). Understand?" (in Nepali). Students murmur "Ho" ('yes', Nepali).*

As may be clearly discerned, Babita Miss conducted her lesson with several noteworthy differences from a typical Anipaan session as taught by Kesar Sir: she did not engage the students in a reciprocal exchange of greetings, nor did she teach with particularly kinetic energy. She also instructed Limbu language primarily through the medium of Nepali language, rather than providing an "immersion" environment as did Kesar Sir. Her students were also far less vocal and more orderly in their classroom behavior than their counterparts in Numidanda School.

Likewise, in the primary school near the base of the Numidanda hill that had newly adopted Anipaan into its curriculum, a young female Limbu teacher, Sita Miss, made similar assumptions regarding her students' knowledge of their "mother tongue" while conducting an Anipaan lesson for classes Four and Five:

> *Eight students are sitting around a plastic table and two benches in a classroom (partially used as a storage space). Sita Miss speaks in Nepali and then switches to Limbu when she announces that class has begun. She begins writing on board (without her book open) the Limbu numerals 1-10, spelling them out in*

Sirijonga script as well. As she writes, she stops to ask, "Tibong banneko.... [10 (in Limbu) means (in Nepali)....]" and the students respond (in Nepali), "Das" [10]. The teacher goes to a corner of the room, picks up a dried branch, whittles it into a stick and gives it to one male student. She tells him to use the stick to point out the numbers on the board as he reads them loud. He reads, as do two other boys after him, each pointing and saying the numbers loudly and with enunciation.

The teacher stops to sit by me and tells me (in Nepali), "The students do not speak Limbu. They do not know it. They do not know words or how to make sentences. They are just starting. We are doing 'ka,' etc. [ABCs].

The teacher then writes the 10 Limbu vowels on the board. She corrects their pronunciation as the same three boys go up to the board, one at a time, and read the vowels out loud.

Sita Miss had completed her teacher training for Anipaan (conducted by the KYC) one year prior. Like Babita Miss, the young instructor operated from the understanding that her Limbu students needed to be "taught" their mother tongue, through the medium of Nepali language. Instead of conducting her lesson directly from the Anipaan textbook, Sita Miss focused on teaching basic literacy skills, while asking students to individually display their competency in "reading" the numbers. While brief, observations conducted in other local primary schools' Anipaan lessons cast Kesar Sir's approach to teaching the subject in stark relief, underlining his dynamic teaching style, close student-teacher interaction, and particular emphasis on Limbu language as an educational means and ends in itself.

Anipaan: of Numidanda School

Official Administrative Support

The particular character of Kesar Sir's appropriation of the Anipaan curriculum at the classroom level existed in relationship to the wider school-level and educational system-level

context of which it was part. The Numidanda School administration expressed clear approval of the inclusion of Anipaan in their primary school curriculum, most definitively by the decision to allow Kesar Sir teach Anipaan lessons six times a week to each of the classes (double the "official: amount allotted in the national primary curriculum). The headteacher of the school, Shikhar Sir, a tall Bahun gentleman with a mustache and a serious mien, explained his understanding of the uses of mother tongue instruction for his predominantly Limbu student population:

> *The main thing is that if the students are not taught in their mother tongue, they are not excited to go to school since all the teachers speak in Nepali and that they do not understand the language. And when the Limbu language class was started then they were very excited to go to school. So teaching students in their own mother tongue can help in the dropout and repeating rates.*

The principal's belief in the instrumental value of Anipaan for improving school attendance and completion rates was formed in part by his own research on the Limbu community's rates of school success (or failure), produced for his masters' thesis in sociology. His assessment of the current functioning of the Anipaan program at his school was un-demanding and supportive:

> *It is not exactly formal but it is just a start and in the beginning the facilities are also not that much. And we should not also expect it a lot from the beginning. It will take some time to develop. There can be so many possibilities in the future that in the primary level all the subjects will be taught in the Limbu language... Yeah, we have Kesar Sir with whom all the students feel really happy. He treats the children like his own friends and brothers. They aren't scared because they don't look at him as a teacher. They adore him a lot.*

Following from his appreciation of the positive effects mother tongue schooling may have on student outcomes, the headteacher could envision a future in which the entire primary school curriculum would be in Limbu. He too recognized the unique relationship Kesar Sir shared with

his Anipaan students, considering this an important element in supporting students' "excitement" to go to school.

Additionally, Shikhar Sir described his relationship, as the leader of the school, with the KYC as cooperative:

> *They [the KYC] take us positively. We have approved of what they are saying to do. The positive thing is that 80% of the people here are Limbu and the rest are other [ethnic] community group people. Since there are many Limbus, there is not a problem to teach in Limbu language. Even the other ethnic group people are interested in learning Limbu language. So there is not much problem. Our relationship is very good.*

The principal had a clear understanding of the demographics of his school population and a pragmatic approach to the role of the KYC in engaging with policy issues, especially in a locality in which the Limbu ethnic community clearly represented the majority of the population. Kesar Sir's characterization of his relationship with the Numidanda School administration regarding the implementation of Anipaan was somewhat more complicated than that of Shikhar Sir's:

> *Everything is positive at this point. [Ingrid: How was it before?] They were a little negative about it. But now they are okay with it... We convinced them that it is very important to learn Limbu language which will in turn help in the progress and development of the Limbu people.*

One way or another, the extra time given to Anipaan in the primary school curriculum at Numidanda School reflected strong support for the program itself from the school's administrators.

Ambivalent Teacher Support

Many teachers at the Numidanda Schools were both amused and perplexed by my particular interest in Anipaan lessons; I was widely and often (mistakenly) asked why I wanted to

learn Limbu language. When I would explain that I was interested "about the teaching of Anipaan," some would still seem confused, while others would offer their opinions about the program. The following paraphrased comments shared by a male Bahun teacher of Nepali language reflected what might be described as a pervasive sense of uncertainty about Anipaan's role in the primary school curriculum and its effects upon student learning:

> *He supports the Anipaan program very much but he doesn't feel it is sustainable. It is very good for their culture, their traditions, but not sustainable as it is. He does not see much progress in the students in the program. Perhaps it is the nature of the teaching but maybe it is more than that... The world is becoming a global village; this is a time of science and technology and he doesn't see any of this in Anipaan and worries about its relevance.*

This Nepali teacher, who made a point of having learned some Limbu words to communicate with his youngest Limbu students, displayed a concern for the preservation of the Limbu community's "culture," but was not convinced that the Anipaan program had proven the most effective means to do so.

Systemic Challenges

As a supplementary program, voluntarily added to the standard government primary school curriculum, Anipaan was, at a practical level, peripheral to the central mission of Numidanda schooling. Various structural factors served to define it as such.

The cessation of the Anipaan program after Class Five clearly played a role in not more firmly establishing the Limbu language as an important feature in the educational careers of Numidanda School students. Kesar Sir expressed his desire to see Anipaan carry through the lower secondary and higher secondary levels; he revealed that he had petitioned the District Education Officer to continue Anipaan lessons into the Sixth Class. In contrast to the Limbu

language lessons, Nepali and English languages occupied positions of central importance in the educational system. The School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam that was given at the end of class 10 marked the end of upper secondary schooling and required passing scores from students to achieve their "graduation" from the system; much of the exam was given in the national languages of Nepali and the global language of English. Naturally, schooling was oriented in their direction.

As one subject amongst many, Anipaan was relegated an auxiliary role in the transmission of necessary schooled knowledge. Kesar Sir believed there needed to be an expansion of the educational content included in Anipaan:

> *There is still room for improvement. Since we have only literature in the book we need some mathematical information as well... Mathematical means we need some numbers that need to be taught to the children since its very important at every part of the practical life... As of now, there isn't much information in Limbu language in the book. But it will definitely have a positive effect if they have it in Limbu language and in a more descriptive way so that the children can understand.*

In focusing primarily on the transmission of uniquely "Limbu" cultural knowledge and ways of expressing one's self through language, the supplementary Anipaan program necessarily did not privilege other subjects and disciplines, such as mathematics. As a consequence, Anipaan reflected the limiting of Limbu language to literary-only functioning in the schooling system.

Furthermore, the liberal class promotion system for government primary school students did not require students to achieve passing grades in Anipaan. Shikhar Sir explained the rationale behind the wider policy as a means of keeping students in school,

> *It means that if a student has 70% in his attendance, he is allowed to go to the next level. And in Nepal are many dropout cases. This is the reason why they have the policy of passing everyone. So that they have at least a primary level knowledge. Even if he doesn't learn it in one class then he can learn it in the upper class.*

Thus, Anipaan students did not experience a strong structural incentive to demonstrate mastery in "schooled Limbu." Additionally, as a supplementary subject, Anipaan lessons were not defined by set official standards of "success," as based on "pass marks;" Kesar Sir elaborated:

> *Since the government itself hasn't declared the pass marks for the Anipaan class so there are no students who fail the class. But only some fail [don't do well]. They can also pass if they are a little more serious about it.*
> *Ingrid: Why is this so? If the Anipaan classes have not been given priority, then don't students neglect them?*
> *Kesar Sir: That is because we have very limited time to teach Anipaan and it is an optional subject.*

With limited hours of instruction available and formal mechanisms requiring the progressive advancement of students, Anipaan's importance as an official academic feature of the primary school curriculum was undercut.

Perhaps the challenge referred to with the greatest level of concern by school officials and activists alike related to the recruitment and maintenance of dedicated Anipaan instructors. As Kesar Sir was quickly nearing the end of his career as an educator, the robustness of the primary level Anipaan program at Numidanda School was threatened by lack of a clear successor to the position. As their pay was raised by the School Development Committee, Anipaan teachers were not hired to the same pension and pay standards as other government school teachers, making the proposition of fulfilling these posts less than attractive for otherwise qualified educators.

Formal Schooling During Challenging Times

Additionally, located as it was in the formal education system, Anipaan was subject to the same political and natural circumstances that impacted the day-to-day practice of schooling in Numidanda VDC. The political issue of Limbuwan autonomy and wider governmental uncertainty/transformation played a great deal into the experience of government schooling in the latter half of 2011. According to the school principal, in recent years approximately 30 days of school per session were lost to strikes [*bandhs*] called by various political groups. These strikes assumed multiple forms but were generally regionally designated, as in"all-Nepal" or "all-Limbuwan;" the instigators of the strikes would most often demand the closure of all commercial establishments, as well as educational institutions, transportation services, and other essential operations. According to the Nepal United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator's (RCHC) Office (2012), in 2011 Panchthar District was the 8th most *bandh*-affected district in the nation; all nine districts of Limbuwan were included in the 15 most affected districts. The potentiality for the calling of strikes injected a sense of tenuousness into the daily life of those of Numidanda School, as no one knew definitively when the strikes might be declared or their exact duration. News of a strike being declared would spread across the hillside by radio, mobile communication, and word-of-mouth, at times bypassing certain individuals. On several occasions, I walked down to the school at the start of the day only to be greeted by an eerie silence, the doors of the school locked, and a few uninformed schoolchildren dawdling around the grounds. Students expressed generally negative feelings about the frequent canceling of their schooldays due to the strikes. The following responses were given by 7th class students when asked how they felt about not attending school during a recent strike:

> *"I got disappointed for not getting to take classes."; "We were surprised and felt laziness at home;" "I became so confused. I don't like to sit at home because our*

lessons will be going on late;" "I got disappointed because I couldn't meet with my school friends;" "I was really surprised with this Nepal Bandh."; "It's 50/50. We were happy as well as sad;" "I felt sad and laziness as school was closed;" "I felt laziness because our teacher would have taught something at school;" "I felt laziness because I had to work at home."

Students missed the opportunities for socializing that school provided, as well as expressing understanding of how their academic opportunities were being curtailed. When asked about how they made sense of the strikes, teachers offered responses tinged with fatalism, commonly stating: "This is how it is in Nepal." Despite the fact that many individuals supported the political causes underlying the *bandhs* (Limbuwan autonomy being foremost), the frequent interruption they caused in the project of formal schooling was yet another circumstance over which individuals felt they had littled control, as well as an illustration of what was perceived as the dysfunction of the wider political system.

Additionally, the volatile geological nature of Nepal as home to the Himalayan mountain range made the threat of earthquakes and landslides a very real aspect of everyday life in Numidanda and played a role in the practice of schooling. A 6.9-level tremor struck the area (with an epicenter in north-eastern Taplejung District, approximately 70 miles away) during late September in 2011 at 7pm. Fortunately, Numidanda VDC did not suffer any deaths but Numidanda School's built structures were damaged.[20] One school building, used for early primary classrooms, crumpled into a mass of stone and plaster, its corrugated iron roof dislodged, while another building in the school compound was also destroyed, becoming home to rubble and abandoned items. The south-west wall of the teachers' offices also fell and was the first bit of damage to be repaired. Additional cracks extended vein-like across walls in other

[20] In Panchthar District as a whole, 4 persons were injured, 150 buildings were destroyed, and 319 buildings were damaged (UN RCHC Office, 2011).

school buildings and homes in the area. Numidanda School remained closed for approximately two weeks following the earthquake, eventually abutting the advent of the major national holidays of Dasain and Tihar; thus, students were left out of school for nearly one month in total. The disruptions in school functioning instigated by both man and nature marked an important dimension of the generally challenging environment for the practice of educational endeavors of any kind, including the teaching of Limbu language, in rural eastern Nepalese communities such as Numidanda.

In the course of this chapter, ethnographic data was presented and analyzed to describe the diverse understandings, decision-making, and models underlying the "practice" of the Anipaan curriculum at a local government-run school in a village setting in Panchthar District. Taught by an experienced educator passionate about the cause of promoting Limbu culture and language, with the confidence to appropriate the official mother tongue curriculum according to his own beliefs and meanings of it, and supported by school administrators, Anipaan lessons provided a strongly "Limbu" space-time in the official school-day. Importantly though, the inclusion of Anipaan in the primary levels appeared to provide a somewhat contradictory resource for students. The program allowed for the cultivation of a comfortable environment in which students could affectively "practice" their ethnic identities as (predominantly) Limbus; however, it also undermined their "mother tongue" by, in effect, defining it as a marginal subject in a wider schooling system characterized by challenges both inherent to models and structures of government-provided education and external to the school. Understood as a feature of

everyday educational practice in the richly layered, particular social context of the local institution of the school, the effects and meanings made of the Limbu "mother tongue" program were revealed as complex, ambiguous, and unfolding in nature.

VII. COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO "MOTHER TONGUE" INSTRUCTION IN LOCAL SCHOOLS

In the previous section, the integration of the Anipaan mother tongue program into the everyday educational experiences and practices of those at the Numidanda School was explored. To further contextualize the meanings of the practice of this policy at the local level, the following section will include the presentation and interpretation of responses to the inclusion of Anipaan in primary schools as expressed by those in the wider community of Numidanda VDC. In the process, community members' broader beliefs and understandings regarding notions of schooling, ethnicity, language, and upliftment will be elaborated.

Official Community Support

The School Management Committee served as the official body through which community members participated in the operations of the Numidanda School. Composed of ten individuals elected to their positions by the guardians of schoolchildren, the Committee included eight Limbus, one Bahun, and one Dalit (all of whom were males). The committee met bimonthly and occasionally would form subcommittees within itself. According to its chairperson, a retired middle-aged Limbu man named Mr. Mahendra, the central concern of the committee was *"*how to bring about the environment and connect them [the local community]

with the school." As such, the committee itself aimed to serve as both a bridge between local persons and the Numidanda School, as well as a force to promote the proper "environment" in the community to facilitate school-going. A well-known figure in his VDC and a founding member of the Panchthar District KYC Office, Mr. Mahendra and I engaged in a formal interview within the first few weeks of my arrival, sitting in the courtyard of my landlady's home; I often encountered him at later points, visiting the teachers' office at Numidanda School and at community functions, such as marriages and funerals. He recalled the decision to include Anipaan in the primary school curriculum as stemming first from the KYC's "demand" for it, as well as their offering of a pathway for implementation. Thus, the decision to adopt Anipaan as a supplementary educational program was a result of discussions first between members of the school management committee and the KYC at the sub-VDC level, before progressing onto the school administration itself and then to the Panchthar District Education Office.

Mr. Mahendra described an enthusiastic community response to inclusion of the Anipaan program at Numidanda School:

> *Everyone has agreed to this right now. There are other students [who have agreed] to learn Anipaan as well. Everyone is happy, especially Limbu community. They are excited... This was the chance to learn about Limbu language, about learning the words. It has started to be that the clarity of speaking Limbu language grew... There a lot of advantages [to students studying Anipaan]. Limbu children have had the ability to read and write Limbu language. Also, along with that, they tend to learn about the culture, the tradition as well.*

In his explanation, he underlined the consensus of local persons to the inclusion of this supplementary program to their schoolchildren's primary curriculum, acknowledging that other VDCs had greater troubles coming to such conclusions. In his view, Anipaan served as an opportunity to develop both the spoken and the written aspects of Limbu language by local

persons, as well as its value as a means of transmitting information about Limbu culture and tradition to youth.

The role of Anipaan in preserving and protecting Limbu language also figured into Mr. Mahendra's support of the program. Reflecting on his own early life, during which he left Numidanda VDC for eastern India in order to continue his schooling, Mr. Mahendra felt he had missed the opportunity to remain "fluent" in Limbu and mused, "If I think about it now, yes, I wish I had [Anipaan classes, when he was growing up]. Our language would have grown so much." He added,

> *I don't think should be compulsory [for students to pass Anipaan]. But we have to improve it. I am scared that our Limbu language will vanish. Since today's younger children are going abroad and becoming Lahori, they have stopped talking in Limbu. So institutions like KYC should take this issue on higher level and raise their voices so that it can be preserved. We also organize various activities to let people know about what we want, what our vision is, and ultimately what our aim is for Limbu people-- Limbu language and culture and traditions.*

Mr. Mahendra's support of "raising voices" extended to the School Management Committee's initiative to eventually extend Anipaan through the secondary curriculum, explaining that speaking up with support was the "only thing we can do since it [the program] is connected to the government."

Importantly, Mr. Mahendra's views about the Anipaan program were further contextualized when considered in relation to the issue of other languages of instruction at Numidanda School. As he explained, the School Management Committee had, as one of its foremost goals, the adoption of English as the medium of instruction for the secondary levels (beyond primary), but was thwarted due to lack of "human resources" to implement such changes in teaching. In this manner, the School Management Committee clearly placed emphasis

on students' English language development as they continued through their schooling. He acceded, in regards to which language would be best as the medium of instruction for primary school, "I guess it will be better if we do it in Nepali because it's the official language here, since there are other ethnic groups as well." Mr. Mahendra's weighing of the relative merits and uses of the three languages included in the curriculum at Numidanda School reflected a pragmatic understanding of the importance of Nepali and English in upper levels of the education system, as well as the multi-ethnic composition of both the local community and wider Nepal. Understood within the context of these overlapping considerations, the village-based School Management Committee's official stance on the "mother tongue" policy/program of Anipaan was that Limbu language lessons were best adopted as a supplement to the existing curriculum, rather than as a replacement for any particular element.

Guardians' Responses to Anipaan

Affective feelings for Limbu practices

A majority of Numidanda community members expressed deep pleasure in and support of the integration of Limbu language into the school day. Several pointed to Anipaan's value in teaching children a "higher" form of Limbu language: as one Limbu mother of three primary school-aged children explained, while shucking ears of corn in her courtyard, "What we know at home is not proper." As such, these Limbu guardians understood the formal teaching of Anipaan to be a means of further developing their children's capabilities with their "mother tongue." Built into this understanding was the notion that the official version of Limbu language taught in the "schooled" Anipaan program represented an improvement upon the local vernacularized Limbu spoken at home and in the community.

The notion of Limbu language serving as an essential means for intimate communion amongst ethnic Limbus was frequently alluded to, particularly in discussions with elder persons in the community and, even more specifically, with older men. A Limbu grandfather of children attending Numidanda School smiled broadly when asked about Anipaan, explaining his happiness with the program with the statement "Limbu language is very sweet!" Another Limbu grandfather hoped that the Limbu language program would serve to strengthen children's facility with their mother tongue, necessary in part because "according to Limbu culture, there are different *thar* ['clans'], and by interacting through *Palaam* [Limbu performative poetry], then girl and boy friends are able to happen." The expressive genre of *Palaam*, in which individuals used Limbu language in skillful and creative ways, was a traditional mechanism by which Limbu society itself was perpetuated, in that it was a socially acceptable mode of flirting and courtship between marriageable Limbu individuals[21]. As this Limbu elder understood it, *Palaam* as a mode of match-making required its participants to display mastery in their "mother tongue" and Anipaan might assist in perpetuating the critical cultural practice of inter-Limbu marriage.

Echoing the reasoning expressed by several other men regarding the value of Anipaan, the grandfather went on to explain that "speaking Limbu is very good for the sharing of secret things." From this perspective, Limbu language was believed to serve as a bit of a code for heart-felt understandings to be conveyed amongst persons of the Limbu ethnic family. As the "mother tongue" of ethnic Limbus, speaking in Limbu obviated the need to engage in the impossible process of translation and provided an exclusive means of communication, beyond the

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[21] As an form of entertainment/performance common to marriage celebrations and other "Limbu" gatherings, *Palaam* was a much discussed and beloved mode of expression amongst Limbus, in both urban and rural environments. Individuals, particularly males, were sometimes introduced to me as being "famous" for their skillfulness with it; these men were often bashful about displaying their talents but would eventually, after some socializing and sharing food and drink, consent to performing.

comprehension of non-Limbus. As the comments of these older men reveal, a strong current of appreciation ran through older generations in the Numidanda community regarding the integration of Anipaan into the school experience of their children, reflecting their deep, affective understandings and relationships with the unique "mother tongue" of ethnic Limbus.

As residents in the wider Numidanda community, scattered across a steep and broad hillside, guardians's responses to the Anipaan program reflected deeply established social networks. As mentioned previously, the Limbu community of Numidanda was home to a particular *thar* ['clan'], of which Kesar Sir (the Anipaan teacher) was an elder kinsman. Thus, many individuals directly connected Kesar Sir to the program, basing their responses to it in part on their understandings of him as a neighbor, relative (many cases), and an educator. A Limbu mother of five primary and lower secondary school-aged children drew a connection between her lack of understanding of happenings at the Numidanda School (including Anipaan) and her status as Kesar Sir's daughter-in-law; by custom, she was not allowed by custom to address him directly. A Limbu father explained his pleasure with the teaching of Anipaan: "Our things [Limbu language] are in a crisis. Teachers are from Terai and are Bahun. However, Kesar Sir is from our community and teaching this [Anipaan], which is very important to us." For this Numidanda resident, Kesar Sir represented an "insider" in the Numidanda School who understood the urgent plight of Limbus, as opposed to 'outsiders' to the community, who taught at their local school but did not appreciate their particular needs as ethnic Limbus.

Several guardians, particularly mothers, expressed understandings of the fact that, even as a "schooled subject," Anipaan as it was taught in Numidanda School was not producing students capable of writing and reading in *Sirijonga Lepi*. A Limbu mother of two primary aged sons

noted appreciatively that they were speaking Limbu (learned in their lessons) at home; yet, it was a "problem though because they are not graded in Anipaan class, there are no marks and it seems no one is taking it very seriously" and as a result, her children "do not actually know the Sirijonga alphabet." Another Limbu grandfather laughed as he reflected upon schoolchildren's general lack of facility with written Limbu: "At least there are some Limbu classes. But its like medicine, tablets... Only one hours a day, only one teacher; he [Kesar Sir] teaches just a little and then he leaves. There should be more than two teachers, more than two hours, more opportunity to practice."

Weighing Languages and Schooling Choices

Just as Mr. Mahendra and the rest of the School Management Committee weighed the relative values of different languages when considering Anipaan's inclusion in the primary curriculum, so did Numidanda School's guardians and members of the greater community. Alongside the intimate connection many community members felt with the Limbu language, addressing multilingualism as a necessary feature of modern life emerged as a key consideration in local understandings of the interconnection of schooling and language. Individuals' comments and practices reflected active negotiation and contemplation of needs, values, prospects, and ideologies associated with the many languages at play in their surroundings, both immediate and far removed.

Most Limbu guardians I spoke to expressed matter-of-fact understanding of the need for Nepali language in the school curriculum, due primarily to its usefulness in interactions with non-Limbus in wider Nepalese society. One Limbu father connected formal learning of Nepali

language with Limbus' improved abilities to participate in official Nepalese realms: "In government offices and official places, Limbu dialect will not work and they will laugh at us." He elaborated upon his perception of Limbus' contemporary conundrum regarding language: "We are in the middle situation. We don't know Nepali well and our children don't know Limbu well." A supporter of Anipaan and illiterate himself, this guardian's poignant statement encapsulated the double-bind felt by many Limbus in regards to their their personal engagement with contemporary language practices.

Of critical importance was the connection drawn by guardians between languages' uses/values and access to actual lived spaces, from the local to the global in scale. Despite (and/or perhaps due to) its rural and remote location, the Numidanda community was characterized by robust relationships to international places and, thus, a profound extra-local consciousness. During my fieldwork in Panchthar District, every single family I encountered had at least one member currently laboring or having labored abroad in the recent past. According to official measures, approximately 10% (380 persons) of Numidanda's population was "absent" in 2011; of these, males outnumbered females six to one (CBS, 2014). A clear hierarchy of transnational labor existed: British army (with the Gorkha regiments) and Singapore police service at the apex, followed by factory labor in South East Asia, nannying in Israel, and Indian Army service, and finally manual labor in the Middle East and North Africa. The majority of individuals worked abroad for limited time, sending remittances home, and ultimately returned to invest in their homes and families. The architectural landscape of Numidanda VDC told the story of some of the material returns for such travels, such as traditional homes improved upon with concrete and wooden additions. The home in which I rented a room was owned by an industrious middle-aged

Limbu woman named Saraswati with particularly successful sons (one in the British Army and one in the Singapore police); with their support, she built extra space in her living compound to rent to Numidanda School teachers (whose homes were distant) and a small stall to sell dry goods. Remarkably, Saraswati (who spoke mostly Limbu and some Nepali) had traveled to Libya, Singapore, and England to visit her laboring family members; as was the style, photographs from these trips and portraits of her sons (in their uniforms) hung from the walls of her home, providing the backdrop for the common activities performed in the courtyard, visually tying international spaces and modes of being to Numidanda village life.

With transnational work such an important facet of the local Limbu village economy, guardians recognized the strong likelihood of the future need for their children to work abroad, at least for some time, to infuse funds into their families' resource pools. The full extension of the extra-local consciousness embedded in community members' meaning-making about their youngest members' schooling was most clearly displayed in understandings involving English as a language of instruction and/or as a subject in the curriculum. One mother, whose husband was presently working in Dubai, pointed to the fact that when her children were "to go to another place, they will need to know English. If they don't know English, they will be valueless." Economic realities required contemplation of how to manage and prepare for encounters with different "global" languages. A Dalit father of two primary school-aged students neatly argued, while explaining why his students took *tuition* in English, "As far as Kathmandu, Nepali is important but no farther." This father's opinions were established due to eight years spent in Saudia Arabia as a laborer; his meeting of many Indian nationals while abroad also sensitized

him to the value of Hindi as a globally useful language and thus, he also made a point of speaking to his children in Hindi at home.

Generally, the upper-caste Hindu families that I met in Panchthar had fewer family members working abroad and few, if any, female family members doing so. Such families also tended to be somewhat more elevated in status, due to greater levels of education, financial means, and ownership of land. Still, English was deeply valued as a language of opportunity. One Bahun mother, whose children had attended Numidanda's government schools as they grew up, complained that her children continued to suffer for their lack of education in English and thus was a strong proponent of privileging English in the government school curriculum.

Ultimately, representatives from each household visited expressed keen understanding of the need for their children to develop competencies in multiple languages through their education experience. As a Limbu husband and wife asserted, while she made *raksi* [distilled alcohol] and he did woodwork in their courtyard, there must be "cooperation" between languages at school, for "those who speak English should be able to translate into Hindi, into Limbu." For some rural Numidanda community members, this model of "cooperation" stood as an alternative to language ideologies that emphasized competition.

Beyond Government Schooling

While there was widespread support for the adoption of the supplementary program of Anipaan into the curriculum at Numidanda School by guardians, the changing educational landscape of the village itself reflected perhaps the greater school-related concerns of families in the community. The recent establishment of two privately-run English-medium primary schools

at the crest of Numidanda hill marked the first flourishing of community demand for local alternatives to government schooling and its particular features/qualities.

A pattern was clearly discernible in Numidanda and Phidim: families with the financial and situational means to do so nearly universally sent their children to privately-run so-called "English boarding schools," rather than to government-run institutions. While most Limbu guardians expressed general satisfaction with the standard of schooling their children received at the Numidanda School, a notable few expressed outright contempt for that offered by such publicly-provisioned schools. When asked if his children studied Anipaan at school, a Limbu resident pursed his lips sourly and said certainly not; he explained that his grandchildren were attending one of the new private schools because Numidanda School was "very bad," primarily due to its poorly performing teachers, who did not care about their work. Such criticism of the Numidanda teaching force was rarely so explicitly expressed in my experience.

The newest of the schools (it was in its second year of operation) was headed by a young female Limbu teacher named Sushma Miss, who had attended Numidanda School herself as a girl, had a government school headteacher for a father, and remembered using only stones as writing instruments at the time. Having recently become a mother, Sushma Miss carried her chubby infant in her arms as she oversaw the running of the school, which had approximately 80 students from nursery to fifth class, the vast majority of whom were Limbu. Staffed mostly by young graduates of the higher secondary level of schooling from Numidanda, as well as a Bhutanese refugee from the Terai, the school grounds were simple, comprised of four 8-by-8-foot classrooms in a row, partitioned by mud-and-bamboo walls with a corrugated iron roof.

Sushma Miss explained the need for schools like her own by referring to realities pertaining to the national system of school progression/completion and the transnationally-supported economy of the local community. She explained (in English),

> *English subject is very difficult for government school, very difficult to pass SLC with what is taught. (in Nepali) There is so much struggle in our government schools. (in English) Guardians only want English. (in Nepali) Before going to become Lahori, they had only to be physically strong, but now students need English, Math. We are trying but what to do?*

Despite having several government teachers as close family members, Sushma Miss questioned the efficacy of government schooling in fulfilling the local community's foremost educational demand: the strong emphasis on English language development. Her comment reflected the wider community's understanding of the changing requirements for overseas labor: such opportunities now required the display of "schooled knowledge" such as English and Math, in addition to physical strength and hardiness.

A young Limbu man named Ananda served as one of the school's founders and current teachers; as an unsuccessful applicant for the British Army with strong feelings of disappointment, he often expounded on his beliefs regarding the social conditions that informed his work at the school and his perspective on Numidanda village life:

> *(In English) Here is lack of development. In so many fields, like electricity, transportation, communication. The people who are here are not educated, those who are unemployed, especially the youth. What kinds of things can we produce and how to supply. Where, why, and when-- and how, also I think. We cannot afford these things, it will not be possible, I think, because here are political movements and corruption.... Here's inhabitants are getting more trouble, and they are getting helpless. This is very important.*

Ananda acutely identified with the struggles of underemployed youth and believed his involvement with the private school to be one of the most meaningful and effective ways to

positively uplift the local Limbu ethic community with whom also he strongly identified. For Ananda, the new institution of the English-medium independent school offered an avenue to empower Numidanda youth to more fully engage with their social/political context and exercise their agency. Furthermore, the young man's dismissal of the worth of government schooling related fundamentally to his disillusionment with the government's capacity to both provide for and govern its citizens.

While comparing her institution to Numidanda School, Sushma Miss focused on the difficulties associated with providing private schooling options to the community. Her relationship with her students' fee-paying guardians was defined by their active demands for higher quality instruction and, generally, greater participation in their children's schooling. She explained, "Guardians do not complain about teachers in government school but they do in private school. They always complain. This is why government school teachers do not labour." As a private business, supported by community fees, Sushma Miss's private school was under pressure to produce educational results defined by the guardians as positive; under such consumer-driven circumstances, she emphasized that "private schools cannot make a profit." Sushma Miss's comments intimated the development of an important new pathway for the increased exercise of guardians' agency in defining the quality and type of schooling desired for their children.

Urban Choice

Many families with the means to do so made the choice to move their children out of the village to urban centers in order to improve their access to high quality education, which was

nearly universally defined as private schooling. When possible, families would take a residence in Phidim or send their children to live with relatives in other towns in order to attend private schools. Importantly, every government school teacher at Numidanda School with school-aged children sent their own to private schools.[22]

As I was frequently told that Arun Private School was the preeminent educational institution in Phidim, I visited the school in order to gain some understanding of local meanings of "high quality schooling," in part to compare with the purportedly "low quality schooling" available in government schools. Arun School was led by the Limbu widow of its late and, by all accounts, charismatic headmaster. Interestingly, the grounds included a Limbu/Kiranti temple. The following fieldnote excerpts from a Fourth Class English lesson, taught by a middle-aged Limbu woman from Sikkim, provide a portrait of the particular style of instruction characterizing such private schools:

> *30 students are in the room, 14girls and 16 boys.*
> *Written on one of the cross beams across the ceiling, "Speak in English" in stylized capital letters.*
> *Teacher writes on board: "The simple present tense, form of verb: vx^1, v^2, v^3, v^4, v^5." She says,"The form of simple present, we use v^1 and...."*
> *S: "v^5."*
> *Students look at their books, their tables.*
> *T: "Can you write a sentence using simple present tense?"*
> *S: "Yes, Miss."*
> *T: Asks class monitor to come forward from her seat to the board.*
> *Female student steps up from the back row and writes, "I cut some vegetable."*
> *T: "Class, is this right?"*
> *S: "Yes, miss!"*
> *The class claps in unison.*
> *Another student is asked to come forward. This male student writes, "The boy sings song."*
> *T: "Is this right?"*

[22] The one exception to this pattern was a Limbu teacher's decision to send an adopted daughter to the local government primary school; her biological daughter attended private school in an urban center.

S: "Yes, miss!"
T: "Why?"
Students loudly murmur for several seconds.
T: "Because it is simple present." She then tells the students to do an exercise of making 15 sentences using the simple present. She adds (somewhat sternly), "If any of you don't know, you can ask to me, okay? Can you all do this?"... Students are looking at their neighbors' pages (quietly and discreetly). After five minutes, a Hindu girl with pigtails stands up and says, "Miss, finished." More girls pop up from their seats; the teacher comes around to check their notebooks quickly. She asks one,"Did you understand? Can you make a sentence like this?" The students responds, "Yes, Miss." On one student's page, the teacher notes a mistake and tells the boy, "You have to make like this because we are making the simple present tense." She moves around some more and yells, "Boys, you are being very slow!" She tells another, "Don't put your pencil in your mouth."

She goes onto exercise two [using "base" form] and says, "We-- haami (Nepali, 'we'), you--- timi (Nepali, 'you'). Where I am teaching? Use your finger!" The students point their fingers to where she is reading from in the text. The teacher says, "This is your homework. I want the neat and clean one. Especially you boys because your handwriting is not good." She adds, "If you have any doubt, (translates this into Nepali), you can come to me."... She tells the students, holding the book,"Read pages 103 to 104. Read each night before you go to sleep. Read this."

In Arun School, the commitment to English as the medium of instruction was evidenced clearly and authoritatively. While I milled around with students during their break-time, I was quickly told by them not to speak in Nepali, as they would be punished for not using English as their medium of interaction. In contrast to lessons at the Numidanda School, in the Mechi School classroom students were expected to provide unscripted answers to exercises and to judge the correctness of their peers' responses; the teacher actively corrected mistakes in written class work and requested students to approach her if they did not understand tasks or concepts. The teacher's instructional style was commanding and demanding of her students' participation. As I was taking leave, the headmistress of Arun School revealed that she hoped to incorporate Anipaan into the curriculum of her school, as the promotion of Limbu "identity" was of great

concern to her. The future integration of Limbu language instruction in private English-medium private schooling would be an intriguing educational experience to explore.

Shadow Schooling in the Village

For the majority of Numidanda's residents, who could not reasonably afford to move their children to town or simply did not live in close enough proximity to the village's private schools, supplementary *tuitions* were taken by students and given by teachers outside of school hours. While visiting the lower Numidanda hillside one evening, I was led, to my surprise, to an English *tuition* class for over 25 students, ranging from Class Four to Ten, held in a classroom at the local primary school. The following fieldnotes offer a view of the supplementary "private school-style" of instruction offered in the VDC, commissioned by guardians:

> *5:30-7:00pm. 26 students (ethnic Limbu and Rai) are in the room, which is set up in four lines facing a blackboard. Most students (except for three in chairs at back) sit on cushions on the floor. The teacher, Nitin Sir (a Hindu from Darjeeling, formerly a teacher at private schools who has moved to Numidanda within the last two years), speaks in an extremely loud, commanding voice.*
>
> *The teacher asks, "There are how many tenses? Come on, tell me!" One student responds, "Bis [Nepali,'20']!" The teacher yells, "No! 12! How many? Tell me!" The students assembled respond, "12."*
>
> *Nitin Sir has an armload of thin notebooks in his arms. He says, "There are 26 students. I have 25 books. Who did not give his kapi [Nepali, 'notebook']? Tell me. Tell me!"*
>
> *The teacher writes four sentences/exercises on the board and goes out of the room to fetch more notebooks. He throws them back to the students, one by one, taking about 20 minutes to do this while the students set to the exercises.*
>
> *Meanwhile, Nitin Sir begins to check students' answers individually; they thrown their notebooks over to him and he makes red checks across the page or crosses out wrong answers.*
>
> *Three rounds of four sentences at a time and checking continue.*
>
> *The students are restless, particularly the female students; one sighs and says,"There are 10 minutes left. It better end soon." Another girl snickers and makes silly gestures as they do their work. There is quite a bit of copying going*

on. A few older male students, in the front of the class, do their work with serious expressions on their faces (and what seems like concentration).

Led by an authoritarian teacher who was well-regarded in the community for his English speaking ability and "high quality" of teaching, the structure of this supplementary lesson approximated formal schooling as much as possible. The class content was focused upon written literacy in English language rather than communicative competence, and the students who appeared to be taking the course most seriously were those in upper classes, nearing their SLC exams. The wide age range of students and the undifferentiated instruction offered was noteworthy. When asked about the reason he paid for his three children (in Classes Four-Seven) to attend these *tuitions*, a Limbu father explained that he felt they needed more exposure to English for both school and future work, in addition to the fact that his children showed interest in the language and all other children in their ward were attending. For this guardian (who had lived in South-east Asia for nearly a decade, working but also jailed for violating his visa conditions), the supplementary language lessons he believed his children were most in need of were those in English, rather than their "mother tongue" of Limbu (which, as a matter of fact, he did not feel was useful to speak with his children at home). The new appearance of locally-demanded, out-of-school additional lessons seemed to be rooted in guardians' understandings of the need to supplement and/or remediate for the quality of English instruction offered in the government school. Evidenced through their expenditures, these guardians sought to bolster their children's abilities to progress through school and to keep apace with the general trend of recognizing English as a language of global possibility.

In this chapter, beliefs and understandings held and acted upon by local community members in relation to the intertwined notions of ethnic identity, language, and schooling were put forth and analyzed. A general sense of approval of the Anipaan program was expressed by the wider Numidanda community, especially by older generations, most particularly as a means of protecting and preserving affectively cherished aspects of Limbu cultural practice. However, realities associated with the village economy and contemporary pathways for social mobility resulted in the fact that many community members felt it increasingly imperative to buy-out of government-provided schooling and/or turn towards English-medium instruction. Thus, the local "practice" of "policy"-making at the family level regarding the models and outcomes of schooling effectively re-oriented many away from the issue of "mother tongue" instruction.

VIII. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter, I shall discuss some of the major themes that holistically emerged in the course of this ethnographically-oriented investigation of the supplementary mother tongue Anipaan program, comparing meanings, actions, and outcomes across the perspectives of those many groups of individuals who participated in the practice and policy of it. Additionally, points of consideration for scholarship, policy, and practice shall be offered, as well as suggestions for further research.

Points of tension and complement,

in and across spaces, persons, and meanings

As has been evidenced, the Anipaan curriculum and program served as an important emblem in a greater process of both change and continuity for the Limbu activist community, as led by the Kirat Yakthung Chumlung (KYC). The educational policy avenue of "mother tongue" instruction provided a valuable discursive and practical space to address many of the problems and goals identified by this indigenous peoples' organization (IPO), including the re-assertion of Limbu ethnic identity, the redressing of a past history of marginalization suffered by Limbus in the wider Nepalese nation-state, and the engagement with globalizing ideologies of human rights. In this manner, the KYC was re-appropriating the Nepalese "nationalist" education

system (a mechanism of *janajati* oppression in the past) for their own purposes of re-invigorating Limbu ethno-nationalism. Ultimately, the KYC's interest in "mother tongue" education was intimately linked to a much larger project of advocating for a fundamental transformation of the model of multiculturalism adopted by the "new Nepal." Much the same as those activists representing the Guarani indigenous people of Bolivia who engaged in "intercultural education" policies and initiatives, Limbu activists sought not just greater inclusion in the nation-state but an actual re-definition of certain "symbols of legitimacy, territory, and authority" through transformation of the state itself (Gustavson, 2009, p.8). Within this larger struggle, the integration of Anipaan in government schools was of tremendous symbolic significance: government schools represented an "official" extension of the state and thus, the locating of Limbu language and cultural knowledge in the government school-day represented a foothold for the restoration of "privileges" (as indigenous inhabitants) in the political region of far eastern Nepal, or Limbuwan.

While Limbu activists understood it to be emblematically important for the elevation of their ethnic community's overall status to install Anipaan in local government-run schools, tensions emerged when these views were considered in relation to wide-spread assumptions and beliefs in local communities regarding the meanings of schooling and its various models of provision. As seen in Numidanda VDC, the government school itself was effectively functioned as an institution that was associated with low status. For most families, state-provided schooling was an "official" realm out of which they sought to buy themselves, if possible; private schools, instead, represented institutions of greater value for community members, as they were seen stepping stones along surer pathways for children's future success, both educationally and

economically. Thus, the locating of the "mother tongue" Anipaan program in the "official" realm of the government school reflected conflicting understandings between Limbu activists and members of the wider Limbu community of the meaning of state-provided schooling and its uses.

More specifically, community members sought to opt out of the government school system in large part because of the national curriculum's structural emphasis on Nepali language as the medium of instruction. Guardians in Numidanda clearly anticipated the extra-local nature of their children's future employment and sought to provide them with competitive communication skills in the globally useful language of English. These considerations in Numidanda echo LaDousa's (2007) findings related to education in India: it was "only some schools- precisely those in which language medium distinctions matter" that "provide a vehicle for middle class aspirations in India's liberalizing economy" (p. 927). In both settings (India and Numidanda), English-medium instruction was the characteristic of schooling that most mattered to schoolchildren's guardians. Though the national government had responded to the collective Nepalese demand for increased English language schooling in recent years by including it as a subject from the first class onwards, guardians and community members continued to believe English-medium schools were superior. Ironically therefore, it could be argued that the KYC's project of advancing the status of Limbu language (and, by extension, Limbu culture and persons) through the official institution of the government school was effectively undermined by being featured as part of an educational system that ultimately promoted Nepali over English.

Additionally, the national education system's emphasis on English language, as a compulsory subject from the commencement of schooling and as a medium of instruction and

testing in upper classes, also could be argued to have undermined "mother tongue" subjects in practice. In Zakharia's (2009) study of language policies in post-war Lebanese education, she observed that school-based policies tended to "push [students] toward learning foreign languages," perhaps compromising "their interest in studying Arabic [the language associated with Lebanese nationalism] with equal vigor" (Zakharia, 2009, p.229). Data from Numidanda appeared to similarly provide intimations that such built-in policies of the wider education system appear to denigrate (or at least offer contradictory messages regarding the value of) Anipaan in the perspectives of its intended beneficiaries: ethnically Limbu students.

As already alluded, the braiding together of the themes of place, aspiration, *bikas*, and access emerged as a powerful undercurrent across fieldsites, as the diverse perspectives of individuals belonging to various groups included in the study were profoundly connected to their current and imagined locations in lived geographies. The families of students attending the Numidanda School represented the least advantaged amongst the wider village community, as they were not able to purchase their way out of government schooling. In this manner, they were the least free to exercise their agency to re-locate their children to alternate educational settings. For such cash-strapped families, the extra-local pathway to social mobility which so many in the community believed would serve as a means of *bikas* was understood to be somewhat farther removed from their aspirational grasp. As Anipaan was located in the government school though, these predominantly Limbu schoolchildren were the population with access to the local "mother tongue" curriculum.

For members of the KYC and other affiliated Limbu activists, the local, lived landscape of Limbuwan (as a long inhabited and previously autonomously ruled "Limbu" territory) itself

served as a supreme source of authority and legitimacy in their contemporary struggle for increased political status in the region. An implicit dimension of the KYC's overt advocacy work was maintaining the presence of the Limbu community in their historical homeland and strengthening their claims to it. Much of the organization's various political, socio-economic, and cultural aspirations then had to do with transforming the structures and institutions of Nepal itself to better facilitate and re-define paths for the social mobility of Limbus, making it possible for them to remain "in place" in their local village settings while still participating in *bikas*. Thus, for the KYC, "mother tongue" instruction was conceived of not only as a prime technical solution to the problem of Limbu poverty and social exclusion by improving Limbu students' success in schools: it was also a way to strengthen the connection between Limbuwan, the speaking of Limbu, and the living of Limbu persons in villages there (rather than elsewhere). However, a basic disconnection was reflected by the reality that most ethnic activists themselves were located in more urban Nepalese locations, with greater access to employment and alternate choices in style and content of schooling.

These non-congruent meanings of *bikas,* place, and schooling ultimately illuminated important intra-ethnic group negotiations relating to representation and authority. As the self-professed representative organization for the Limbu ethnic community, the KYC and its affiliated personnel engaged in normative decision-making on behalf of their greater population. As Levinson and Sutton (2001) remind us, this IPO's "practice of [the] policy" of "mother tongue" schooling was fundamentally also the "practice of power" (p.2). Many ethnic activists attributed differences in beliefs and perspectives, between between themselves and others in their ethnic community, to the "backwards-ness" of the latter group and, thus, their need to be "educated."

Dilendra Kurungbang, one of the authors of the Anipaan curriculum and the director of LiLDA (Limbu Language and Development Association) expressed deep pessimism about the viability of the program due to the lack of "awareness" amongst village Limbus:

> Mainly the community would not understand the significance of language and development. The community wants to teach their children in English-medium, even more than Nepali...Without awareness, community will not understand. They will just care of how to make money... Like you saw, observed in the villages, parents do not speak with their children in their mother tongue. I asked some parents, Why do you speak in Nepali? and they say, 'If we do not speak, they will not do well in school.'

Similarly, the paternalism inherent to the work of the KYC was reflected in the subtle reformist agenda presented in the Anipaan textbooks series, with regards to the necessity to "prune" negative cultural practices of Limbu, such as the (excessive) drinking of alcohol. This normative constructing of modern Limbu ethnic identity by ethnic activists certainly existed in tension with the actual practices of everyday Limbu community members.

The KYC sought, through Anipaan and other programs, to bolster the status of the Limbu ethnic community by way of (newly) defining Limbu language, literature, and "culture" as a developed, modern, "schooled" set of knowledge. Additionally, through the technology of the explicit curriculum of the textbook, Limbu ethnic identity was portrayed as being fundamentally defined by long-standing identification with the Limbu language, as well as the associated practices of schooling and writing. The existence of the uniquely Limbu cultural resource of the *Sirijonga Lepi* orthography was represented not only as evidence of Limbus' advanced development as an ethnic group but also as reflective of their particular history of resistance against hegemonic cultural "Others."

A tension thus emerged between the emblematic importance of the written Limbu language and Sirijonga script to Limbu activists and the actual outcomes of Anipaan instruction, as lived in Numidanda School. Limbu students in Kesar Sir's lessons were exposed to literature and historical accounts authored by those activists/elites of their ethnic community through the curriculum, yet few emerged after five years of Anipaan lessons with strong facilities in reading and writing in *Sirijonga Lepi*. Kesar Sir's appropriation of the curriculum was defined by his classroom-level "policy-making," as a teacher, to prioritize the development of his students' spoken abilities with the Limbu language rather than with written literacy. Numerous other conditions (at the school- and system-levels) associated with the appending of the Anipaan program as a voluntary, supplementary subject to the core primary curriculum also contributed to its limited robustness as a means of "schooling" students in Limbu language. Therefore, another irony emerged: through the Anipaan program, ethically Limbu (as well as other ethnic/caste) students were made aware of the existence of the Limbu orthography and were explicitly informed of its significance in the definition of Limbu ethnic identity. However, in the process, some of these children also became frustratingly aware of the fact that they were not fully literate in their own "mother tongue." Only through further study will it be possible to gain understanding into the meanings developed by these students over time in regards to their "mother tongue" and their facilities with it as a spoken and written language, as well as its role and effects in their schooling careers as a whole.

The observed disjuncture between the KYC's assertion of the integrality of the Limbu "mother tongue" to the meaning of Limbu ethnic identity and the reality that Limbu was not actually the first language of many ethnically Limbu students at the Numidanda School

illuminates the theoretical point that such concepts are socially constructed and used strategically by groups of individuals in wider cultural processes and contests. The paradoxical realities of the term "mother tongue" are further elaborated by considering both the "policy" of the "mother tongue" program of Anipaan and its "practice:" while Kesar Sir insisted upon teaching his Anipaan lessons with Limbu language as the medium of instruction itself, it was observed that other Anipaan teachers used the medium of Nepali to teach the "mother tongue." Limbu activists with the KYC and other affiliated organizations formulated the Anipaan curriculum with the normative assumption that Limbu should be the "mother tongue" of ethnic Limbu children, even though in the contemporary age of cultural and language shift, this was not necessarily uniformly the case. As other scholars, including Ghimire (2013), have noted, the multilingual composition of Nepalese classrooms (even in localities with a large majority of a certain ethnic/caste group, such as Limbus in Numidanda) inevitably results in the reality that some students are asked to learn "mother tongues" that are not their own through promotion of such policies.

Despite many disjunctures and ambiguous outcomes when considered across levels and amongst the perspectives of different persons (in different roles), as it was taught in the Numidanda School, the Anipaan program did provide an officially-sanctioned time and space for the practice of "Limbu ethnic identity" the classroom. Kesar Sir's Limbu students experienced at least one session in their school day in which their their "Limbuness" was appreciated and, indeed, celebrated. Numidanda School's Anipaan teacher encouraged his students' active participation in and expression of their Limbu "identity" through their verbal use of their "mother tongue," kinesthetic activities, and the curriculum's meaningfully local, "Limbu" content. A definite congruence emerged between the messages embedded in the KYC-produced

textbooks that Limbus "are all the same" and the manner in which Kesar Sir implemented the program. The Anipaan teacher's use of classroom micro-"rituals" to "convey symbolic messages that reinforce sacred beliefs, legitimate existing social arrangements, and help manufacture or elicit feelings of social solidarity and individual belonging to a larger collective" mirrored the texts' messages of the meanings associated with the belonging to a unified ethnic family (Hamann & Rosen, 2011, p. 471). Through this Anipaan teacher's everyday, classroom-grounded "policy-making" regarding the manner in which he appropriated the explicit curriculum, the positive affective dimensions of practicing Limbu ethnic identity were highlighted as a key dimension of the implicit curriculum of the program as it was practiced. As such, it appeared that the goals of the KYC to "promote Limbu culture and language" could not have been hurt. Furthermore, Kesar Sir's decisions to teach as he did- emphasizing the fun, familiar, and familial- complemented the understandings held by elder Limbus in the Numidanda community regarding the "sweetness" they felt inhered in their language and practices. Interestingly, despite the general primordialist conceptualization of identity explicitly held by ethnic activists and community members alike, and conveyed through both the construction and messages of the Anipaan texts, Kesar Sir's Limbu language lessons provided a space for an alternative implicit conceptualization to prevail: the active "practice" of identity by students and educators, in settings of formal education.

Points of consideration

Ultimately, the fact that Anipaan was included as a supplementary subject in Numidanda School and other local state-run primary schools in the Limbuwan region reflected a deep

ambiguity regarding the Nepalese government's role in the provision of "mother tongue" schooling. The KYC Panchthar Executive Committee was proud of their enabling role in an initiative to offer Anipaan lessons at the post-graduate level (Classes 11 and 12) in a neighboring VDC; the program's main instructor, who was also a KYC member, offered a canny and accurate summation of the nature of the program: "It [Anipaan] sounds like it is formal education but really it is informal. It is something the government allows for to the make Limbus happy but it does not extend through." His assessment, echoed by others familiar with the program, illustrated Sonntag's (2003) argument regarding Nepalese language policies: "The provision for mother tongue instruction was merely that: mother tongue instruction was allowed, but not necessarily funded or supported, let alone required. It was a passive right a community could exercise, not an obligation of the government" (p.95). As the only monitoring agency of the program, the KYC and its members expressed general recognition of the reality that Anipaan, as it was currently being implemented, was not successfully producing students literate in Limbu written language. Explanations for such outcomes most frequently featured blame of the government for not providing adequate support to reach program robustness.

Findings from this study, which emerged through attention paid to the individual classroom-, school-, and system-level dimensions of Anipaan as practiced in local schools, may serve to illuminate important contextual factors and issues related to the actual educational practice of "mother tongue" programs in other cases and settings. As uncovered in the case of Anipaan, the *type* of school (publicly or privately provided) in which the program was implemented proved a matter of key importance, as strong local meanings were attached to each in regards to their educational, socio-economic, and political value. Significantly, different

groups of individuals held different beliefs about each type of school. Additionally the *style* of program (in this case, supplementary) was of critical importance; the "addition"-approach of the "mother tongue" program of Anipaan to a core primary curriculum produced a particular set of consequences (some unintended) in regards to its meanings and outcomes. This point has been elucidated by scholars of education such as Amrit Yonjan-Tamang (2009), who argues that confusion reigns in regards to the terms "multilingual education" and "mother tongue" instruction in Nepalese discourse; such undefined terms obscure what is actually meant by them, resulting in disorganized attempts to properly address the "problem" of multilingualism in education. Finally, though certainly not least, findings from this study evidence the importance of the *manner* in which "mother tongue" programs are taught and by *whom* exactly. Mundane classroom practices often reveal strong cultural scripts, while educators act as key "policy-makers" in the actual implementation/practice of such programs.

In regards to the lack of congruence between the stated aim of this language-based curriculum to "help students begin their career in Limbu language" and realities that emerged from its local practice, findings from this study echo those produced in research endeavors from within the field of language planning and policy (LPP) studies, with its core concern of language preservation. For example, King (2001)'s ethnographic study of the teaching of the indigenous language of Quechua in Ecuador revealed that "it remained on the periphery of their [students'] daily lives... Schools were not implementing a program that would enable children to achieve communicative competence in it" (as cited in McCarty & Warhol, 2011, p.185). In McCarty's (2002) ethnography of a bilingual program in a Navajo school, the initiative itself was deemed inadequate for the maintenance of Navajo language, yet it represented "nonetheless a critical

resource in the community's fight for educational, linguistic, and cultural self-determination" (as cited in McCarty & Warhol, 2011, p.186). Indeed, this was also the case in the implementation of the "mother tongue" Anipaan program, as Limbu activists clearly understood the policy to hold great power as an emblem of Limbu ethno-nationalism yet its present practice was not robust enough to maintain Limbu language use or reverse language shifts.

However, as discussed above, the findings of this study also reflect those put forth by Garcia (2005) in her study of Quechua-focused "intercultural education" in Peru. She observed

> powerful rejections, by indigenous parents and many highland teachers, of intercultural education in practice. The association of indigenous language, indigenous identity, and low socioeconomic status seemed absolute to parents, who preferred concrete results (seeing their children speaking and reading in Spanish) to abstract talk of social and economic rights (p.89).

Importantly, findings from this study add to body of literature that evidence how the diversity of meanings of and responses to these variations on "mother tongue," "indigenous language," "intercultural," and other such policies (and their associated programs) by the various groups of actors involved in them are both multiple and inherently contextually-defined.

As has been seen, transnationally circulating concepts and frameworks abound regarding issues of educational choice, rights, the modernizing function of schooling, and "best practices" in education. These (globalized) concepts and ideals serve as screens upon which actors in local contexts and independent nations project cultural values, beliefs, myths, and philosophies, as well as upon which enduring struggles are viewed. This study, which considered the mother tongue program of Anipaan from the perspectives of those involved in promoting and developing it, as well as those who experienced and implemented it in a localized context, provides "thickly descriptive" details to complexify the issue of such "global" programs as they are locally

practiced by agentive individuals, operating in response to complex political, socio-cultural, and economic realities. This approach helps to illuminate the policy as a matter relating to education/ schooling, and also as a facet of a larger social phenomenon relating to increased ethnic identity politics in a nation truly-in-transition. It is important to look both at the meanings of programs such as "mother tongue" instruction in Nepal both from the perspectives of those who have seized upon the policy as a "solution" for "ethnic" problems on behalf of ethnic communities, as well as from the perspectives of those for whom the policy is supposed to produce "improved outcomes."

Formal schooling continues to assume greater significance as a realm in which identity construction and social categorization is practiced and made to matter in the everyday lives of persons. Interestingly, as mass schooling has become an increasingly established social institution in modern Nepalese society, ethnic communities appeared to have had to further "institutionalize" their ethnic identities simultaneously.

Future research

As this ethnographically-oriented study was limited in multiple respects, additional research would greatly enhance its findings. The inclusion of an even wider array of involved policy actors related to the Anipaan program might prove important; these might include education officials in the Nepalese government, at both the district and national levels, and representatives of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) promoting policies and programs relating to multilingualism and social inclusion Additionally, it would likely prove useful to observe the KYC-run Anipaan teacher training programs to further undercover

meanings and methods related to the particular enactment of this "mother tongue" policy, especially as these trainings were developed by the IPO to educate ethnically Limbu teachers in the importance of "Limbu language and culture" as well.

Furthermore, as Gustavson (2009) points out, ethnic activists' interests in educational policies such as those of "mother tongue" instruction may hold "organizing potential" for some time, until the conditions for such "articulations" disintegrate. Certainly, the findings of this study, grounded in a particular point of time, would be augmented if considered from a diachronic perspective, with the aim of documenting and interpreting the shifting positioning of persons, policies, and conditions in the Nepalese context. Based on the ethnographic data which began to emerge in the course of this study, a potentially fascinating future study might take the notion of kinship as its central focus in querying the meanings and practice of educational policy as played out in local community schools that are underlain with robust family and kin systems.

Perhaps the most necessary direction for further studies would be that in which we might gain insight into the lived realities of *janajati* children participating in such "mother tongue" programs, who will shortly emerge to become full-fledged adults operating in the "new Nepal." As the "subjects" of educational policy, students' voices are still heard relatively little and less is know about their role as policy actors themselves. As McCarty and Warhol (2011) note, "More research is needed in this area, and on the ways in which these new forms of schooling are taken up by their intended beneficiaries-- the children and communities whose linguistic futures are at stake" (p.188) It remains important to consider "youth agency in interpreting and articulating mixed societal messages about their heritage languages and identities" (ibid.) Given the potential difficulties that may arise in carrying out such studies with young schoolchildren, it might be

useful to access the perspectives of these schoolchildren retrospectively, from the position of adulthood. It would likely prove an illuminating and important task to consider how or how not such identity-based programs shaped individuals' interpretations of their ever-changing social contexts over time.

Presently, the Constitution-writing process by which the state will be likely be reconstructed along federal lines continues to provide "a fertile ground for disagreement" and "the question remains how far anchoring citizens' rights around their ethnic or caste status will strengthen and rigidify the boundaries between groups"(Whelpton, Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2008, p. xxxiv, p.xxviii). As a case study, Nepal appears to bolster He and Kymlicka's (2005) assertion that "minority political mobilization tends to increase, not decrease, with democratic consolidation, economic development, and increased levels of education and literacy" (p.12). The unique circumstances of radical political and social transformation in contemporary Nepal might also serve as a valuable context to gain further insights into the intersection of schooling with wider democratizing processes. One way or another, exactly how ethnic identities may or may not be assumed, or made to matter, in the context of cultural sites such as schools will have direct bearing on how this fledgling democracy, wrestling with the legacy of recent mass instability and the unwieldy task of (re)defining a vision of society for itself, progresses into the future.

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APPENDIX

Figure 1. Panchthar District Location in Nepal
(Source: Cormier, 2007)

Figure 2. Limbuwan Map