Four Ānā and One Modern House: A Spatial Ethnography of Kathmandu's Urbanizing Periphery

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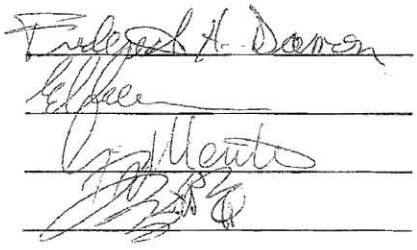

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Abstract

This dissertation concerns the relationship between the rapid transformation of Kathmandu Valley's urban periphery and the social relations of post-insurgency Nepal. Starting in the 1970s, and rapidly increasing since the 2000s, land outside of the Valley's Newar cities has transformed from agricultural fields into a mixed development of planned and unplanned localities consisting of migrants from the hinterland and urbanites from the city center.

The scholarship of Kathmandu's transformation reflects a common assumption in anthropology to understand space as a *product* of social relations. In Kathmandu, urban sprawl is often attributed to ethnic shifts in the urban population or economic transformations that have produced a shift from a caste to class social structure. Given the inchoate social nature of the urban periphery, I find it more fruitful to reverse the question to ask how *spatial processes produce* social outcomes. Rather than starting with the categories and practices of ethnicity, caste or class, I give analytical primacy to the material conditions, symbolic conceptions, and everyday practices regarding land, mobility, houses, and community.

In part one, I show how current sprawl patterns follow a history of land value altering in meaning and practice from a system in which land is an 'inalienable' good to one in which it becomes an exchangeable gift or commodity. I understand the current ethnic tone of Newar farmers' claims to land within a trend of land expropriation by 'outsiders.' In part two, I introduce the perspective of new residents in the periphery through the category of the Hindu householder. The move into the urban periphery reflects the householder's aspirations of social mobility, which combine the short-term demands of social status, migration and consumption with the long-term cosmic concerns

of kinship and morality. In part three, I reconsider the social organization of the urban periphery within debates of caste, class, and democracy in South Asian cities. Through a study of how space is used, I argue that the society and politics of the urban periphery reference nostalgia for Nepal's pre-democratic Panchayat era in which certain social positions of geography and ethnicity are privileged within the rhetoric of nationalism.

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When not in Nepal, I found the best avenues for thinking through these questions in the anthropology departments of Grinnell College, London's School of Oriental and African Studies, and the University of Virginia. I thank the following friends for the many conversations about South Asia, anthropology and politics: Joe Green, Max Muller, Luna Ranjit, Zorka Milin, Ian Huntington, Vivek Boray, Anshuman Rane, Amanda Lee, Subin Nijhawan, Nitin Sinha, Projit Mukherjee, Florence Winterburn, Jason Hickel, Lydia Rodriguez, Sergio Lopez, John Osterman, Claire Snell-Rood, Adam Watson, Arsalan Khan, and Harri Siikala. I am grateful to all of the professors who helped focus my scattered interests over the last sixteen years as I have wondered from cinema to land, post-colonialism to architecture: Jonathan Andelson, Mark Hobart, Annabelle Sreberny, HL Seneviratne, Prista Ratanapruck, Katya Makarova, George Mentore, Shiqiao Li, Fred Damon, and Nicolas Sihlé. I would also like to thank my instructors of Nepali and Newar

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Chapter 1. An Intellectual Journey to the Urban Periphery

Spring 1999: Pitzer in Nepal, Golfuṭar, and the Janajāti Movement

This dissertation stems from my own experiences living in and thinking about Kathmandu, Nepal, particularly through the disciplinary lens of anthropology. From the people I have lived and worked with and places in which I have resided, two prominent themes have guided my academic interests: (1) the rapid urban expansion of Kathmandu Valley; and (2) the relationship between social relations and place.

When I first traveled to Nepal in February 1999 as a student on the Pitzer College in Nepal program, I lived in the house of a family belonging to the Tamang ethnicity in the settlement of Golfuṭar. Golfuṭar is located six kilometers north of Kathmandu's city center and 1.5 kilometers north of Ring Road (which encircles Kathmandu and Patan). For the Tamangs, Golfuṭar is a village, one in which they and their neighbors have inhabited for multiple generations. Their house is located on a steep ridge overlooking a large valley of rice and wheat fields next to the Dhobi River. The hour walk from these fields to the locality of Chabahil, where Pitzer's school was located, felt very rural. To reach the school, I traversed footpaths cutting through rice paddies and curvy dirt roads moving through neighborhoods of farming households. Walking in the opposite direction from the Tamang's ridge-top house to the Golfuṭar Chowk (intersection) revealed a far different landscape. This route passed by large cement houses and straight paved roads organized along a grid pattern. Golfuṭar was selected as one of two government 'town-planning' projects initiated in the late 1970s and early 1980s by the Ministry of Urban Planning and Physical Development. While the other town-planning project in Kuleshwor was designated for state employees (discussed further in chapter 4), Golfuṭar

was open to private investment. Most of the inhabitants are retired members of the British military, Gurkhas. As opposed to the Tamang and Chhetri (caste group of Kshatri ranked below Brahman in Nepal's caste code) ethnic composition of the farming community residing along the ridge, most inhabitants of Golfuṭar are wealthier ex-Gurkhas of Gurung, Magar, Rai and Limbu ethnicities.

From the Golfuṭar farmer's perspective, the city represented the incursion of outside people, business and money. Newcomers to Gulfuṭar had built large cement houses that dwarf the mud-brick and modest one-story cement houses of the original inhabitants. The Tamangs and their older neighbors worried about the influence of the affluent new houses' children, who, they say, do not value work and engage in drinking and gambling. But the newcomers also brought certain benefits. They bought milk produced by the Tamang's two cows and employed the Tamang's children at a local computer institute and at a local athletic facility. Additionally, as more outsiders moved in, the value of the Tamang's land had rapidly appreciated, leading some of their neighbors to sell their farmland and move away. As of writing in 2013, despite the urges to leverage land for the education and marriage prospects of their six children, the Tamangs have not sold any land. As the father of the house tells me, "you can't eat money."

While the Tamangs and Bahun-Chhetri of Golfuṭar were united in their farming occupation against the ex-Gurkha newcomers, in terms of Nepal's complicated politics of caste and ethnicity, they were aligned with the ethnic groups of the Gurkha. According to the 1854 Nepal legal code, Tamang belong to the middle castes of alcohol-drinkers (as do the common ethnicities of the Gurkha - Rai, Limbu, Magar, and Gurung) ranked below

the sacred-thread (*tāgādhāri*) wearing Brahmans and Kshatri of the mid-mountains (Bāhun, Chhetri, and some Hindu Newar priests) and plains ('Indian Brahmans'), and above the 'impure but touchable castes' (Christians, Muslims, and some lower Newar castes) and 'untouchable' low castes of the mid-mountains and Tarai plains (Höfer 1979: 9) (see figure 1). Caste discrimination was made illegal in 1964, and the King's Panchayat government, 1962-1990, outlawed any organizations based on political, ethnic, linguistic, or caste difference in favor of promoting a uniform Nepali identity (a process referred to as 'Nepalization') – defined according to the King's particular Bāhun-Chhetri/Hills/Nepali-speaking identity (discussed further in chapter 7). In 1991, with the transition to multiparty democracy, ethnic activism experienced an explosion of expression, most prominently advocated by the Janajāti movement, which represented the non-caste societies of Tibeto-Burman language speaking groups (such as Tamang) against the social homogenization, or Nepalization, efforts of the upper caste-led state. When I arrived in Nepal eight years later, anthropological discourse, which has historically focused disproportionately on Janajāti groups, was primarily focused on the overtly political questions of ethnicity and identity (see Des Chene 1996). This moment of scholarship produced numerous excellent books (Guneratne 2002; Fisher 2001) and edited volumes (Gellner et al., eds. 1997; Gellner, ed. 2008; Dollfus & Lecomte-Tilouine, eds. 2003) focusing on the relationship between ethnic identity, nationalism and the Hindu state.

Simultaneous to the Janajāti movement's rising in the late 1990s, the Maoist insurgency was gaining immense steam in the hinterland using the Janajāti, or anti-Bahun, rhetoric to curry local favor against the state (Lawoti 2003; Tamang 2006;

Pettigrew 2008; de Sales 2008). The Maoist embrace of ethnic issues represented an unprecedented departure for the Nepali Left. Prior to 1990, Nepal's communist parties remained "remarkably silent or even hostile to the issues of culture, caste, and ethnicity" in keeping with broadly, the Marxist doctrine of focusing on class inequality and, particularly, the Nepali specific tradition of emphasizing national unity over regional differences (Tamang 2006: 275). The emergence of the Maoist party in the late 1980s reflected less a political shift than a decision to advocate armed insurrection motivated by attachments to the Shining Path in Peru and other Revolutionary Internationalist Movement (RIM) aligned groups. After the eruption of discontent expressed by ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities in the early 1990s, the Maoist party started to include cultural-based discrimination alongside class-based exploitation in its revolutionary platform.[1] While doubts remain whether the Maoists were committed to minority issues or merely exploiting them for political gain (Lawoti 2003), lower caste and Janajāti groups did contribute significantly high levels of cadres to the Maoist insurgency.

Figure 1: 1854 Muluki Ain (Höfer 1979)

Caste Category	**Groups Mentioned in Dissertation**
Tāgādhāri ('sacred-thread') wearing castes	Bāhun Chhetri Chathariya Shresṭha Newar
Alcohol-drinkers	Pãchthariya Shresṭha Newar, Jyāpu Newar, Tamang and other Janajāti groups

[1] For instance, amidst the Maoist 40-point demands list issued to the state on the eve of launching the armed revolution, four demands were related to cultural issues: secular state, language equality, regional autonomy, and an end to ethnic oppression (Tamang 2006: 287).

Impure but touchable castes	
Untouchable castes	Kāmi

Building on the Janajāti question, my final project at Pitzer questioned how Tamang families in Golfuṭar negotiated between the pulls of Nepalization on the one hand and Janajāti activism on the other. While many Golfuṭar Tamang made no secret of their disdain for Bāhuns, they expressed little interest in Tamang ethnic revitalization projects and liked to remind me of their close ties to Chhetri neighbors. For instance, they found it much more important for their children to learn Nepali and English than Tamang language. The father of my host family insisted that his political motivations remained in party rather than ethnic politics in support of CPN-UML (Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninists[2]).

2001-2004: Ranibũ, SOAS, and Orientalism

I returned to Nepal two years later in 2001 on a fellowship from Grinnell College to teach English at a private school in Patan (city to south of Kathmandu). This stay placed me on the opposite side of the Valley from Golfuṭar, teaching in the Lagankhel neighborhood and living with the Sitaulas, the family of the school's headmaster, in Ranibũ, a recently developed locality one kilometer outside Ring Road and 2.25 kilometers from the Patan city center. The headmaster was a middle-aged Bahun man from the district to the immediate east of Kathmandu Valley, Kabhre-Palanchowk, where

[2] UML represents the middle of the three main parties in contemporary Nepali politics positioned ideologically in between the Nepali Congress (NC) on the center-right and Communist Party of Nepal-Maoists (CPN-M) on the far left.

his family owned nearly a hectare of farmland. He had moved to Kathmandu in the late 1970s to pursue a career in education. Initially, he taught in a government school in a Newar agro-town, Bungamati, where he learned to speak Newar language. After starting his own school, Lalitpur Madhyamik Vidyalaya (LMV), in the city of Patan, he built his family's house in Ranibũ in 1991. In the early 1990s, the house stood alone in the middle of rice fields without paved roads and electricity, but by the time I arrived in Ranibũ in 2001, the area was crowded with houses, paved roads, electricity and a ward council.

Living with the Sitaulas not only placed me on the other side of the Valley, but with people on the other side of the Valley's social transformation. Whereas the Tamangs represented farmers with long-time links to the Valley's land, the Sitaulas represented recent migrants. Like the Sitaulas, the majority of neighbors in Ranibũ trace territorial affiliation to some other place in Nepal despite having lived in Kathmandu for several decades. Although they might come from a variety of castes and districts, they share a similar narrative of moving into the city for its employment opportunities and infrastructural facilities.

In south Patan, the division was not between Tamang/Chhetri farmers and ex-Gurkha newcomers as it was in Golfuṭar, but between Newar farmers and non-Newar newcomers. More than any other ethnicity, the Newar claim Kathmandu Valley as their home. As I will discuss in chapter two, the idea of Newar ethnicity is a relatively recent development that has unified a rather heterogeneous society consisting of Hindus and Buddhists, and over thirty caste groups. While teaching, I became close to a Dangol (Newar Jyāpu farming caste) family in Khokana, a Newar agro-town 4 kilometers south of Ring Road. In Khokana, I was introduced to a long-standing Newar farming

community that had undergone much less Nepalization than the Tamangs in Golfuṭar. Residents of Khokana continued to speak Newar language and follow Jyāpu ritual and social practices. As I would learn later from reading Toffin (2007c), and Gellner and Pradhan (1999), the Jyāpu tend to be the Newar caste least influenced by Bāhun-Chhetri or Nepali-speaking society. In fact, they saw themselves as more 'Newar' than the merchant castes of the city who tend to have no relationship to agriculture, often took jobs in the government, and spoke to their children in Nepali.

From my experiences living in Golfuṭar and south Patan, I saw affiliations of ethnicity, caste, territory, and class cut in several overlapping and confusing ways. In Golfuṭar, the Tamang were aligned with Bāhun-Chhetri farmers in opposition to ex-Gurkha newcomers; but, as Janajāti ethnics, they were aligned with the retired Gurkhas against the upper caste Bāhun-Chhetri. Meanwhile, in Ranibũ, Mr. Sitaula saw himself connected to Newar Jyāpu through a respect for agricultural production and his ability to speak Newar, but as a Bāhun newcomer to the Valley, he was considered an 'outsider'.

2005-2012: Virginia Anthropology, Kalanki, and Political Economy

In 2005, I entered a PhD program at the University of Virginia with the objective of studying the complicated relationship between social difference and space in the ever-changing Kathmandu. My literature review raised a disjuncture between Newar ethnography, focused on how caste, kinship, and religion have shaped urban space, and Mark Liechty's recent work on the emergence of middle class spaces shaped by consumerism. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 2, anthropologists have long read the lay-out of Newar cities, particularly Bhaktapur, as reflections of caste hierarchy imagined by the Hindu ideology of high caste priests and kings. This spatialization of hierarchy

functions according to a center-periphery model in which kings, priests, and land-holding castes inhabit the center of the city, lower castes reside on its edges or outside of the city boundaries with the middle castes of farmers and artisans in between (Gutschow and Kölver 1975; Pant and Funo 2007; Slusser 1982; Levy 1990: 174-182).

Space beyond the city's boundaries reflects not just social ostracism, but also ritual-moral exclusion, since the city's symbolic border of eight protective mother goddesses marks "not just the edge of the city, but the edge of the moral order" (Parish 1994: 21). The goddesses protect inhabitants from the "dangerous, chaotic, demonic forces outside of the city, thus keeping humans safe from ghosts, diseases, earthquakes, invasions, and other calamities" (Parish 1994: 22). More immediately, the outside is represented by the natural order of agricultural fields, understood to be "'wild' places" that are beyond the control of culture (Parish 1994: 23).[3] Finally, the outside is also associated with death, with the cremation grounds on the other side of the river bordering the city (Parish 1994: 24). Thus, the periphery stands for the place of lower castes, fields, and death.

Mark Liechty's ethnography (2003) and collection of essays (2010) offers a refreshingly non-Newar take on Kathmandu in which he argues that class has supplanted caste as the dominant form of social organization in Kathmandu. Liechty's consumerist Kathmandu shares much more with my experiences than did the Newar ethnographies. His portrait of a Kathmandu consisting of class-based neighborhoods, nuclear family houses, and spacious walled compounds certainly agreed with observations drawn from

[3] We can take a step further by asking if another layer separates worked fields from the uninhabited and forested hillside spaces of the Valley. As I show in later chapters, fields represent the site of significantly 'cultural' activity, such as lineage deity rituals, guthi association shared land, and landlord-tenant relations. While perhaps 'wild' for inner-city merchants and priests, I imagine Jyāpu farmers conceive of the periphery in more complicated ways.

my experiences. This observation probably has much to do with the fact that my two host families were not Newar. But, it is also reflective of an economic transformation of production to consumption practices in Kathmandu that Liechty puts central to his analysis. Importantly however, Liechty's work also left me questioning how the new city was connected to the old Newar city, particularly given his lack of focus on kinship, caste, ethnicity, language, religion, and region.

My research proposal took the gulf between the Newar caste city and Liechty's class city as its point of departure. Based on pre-field study of two months in Kathmandu during the summer of 2007, I asked how house architecture and local politics reflected the divide between caste and class, religion/kinship and consumerism. When I returned to Kathmandu in October of 2008 to commence fieldwork, I hoped to locate a field site that would give me access to a wide variety of people not necessarily of one caste or class. Thus, I purposefully avoided the upper class neighborhoods of Bhaisepatti and Buddhanilkantha or the Janajāti enclaves of Jorpati or Boudhanath. On the eastern outskirts of the city, I found two new localities within a short walk of each other that fit my relative objectives.

The two localities represented the extremes of Kathmandu's new urban periphery – one planned, Pleasant Housing, and the other unplanned, Maitri Nagar – in the area of the Balkhu river valley between the national Tribhuvan University, the Newar town of Kirtipur, and the cross roads of Kalanki, the Valley's point of departure for all traffic departing the Valley from to the west. Until recently, the area consisted of farmland worked by Newar farmers, a buffalo market, and a brick factory. Now it mostly consists of residential localities amidst fields. In Maitri Nagar, one finds a mixed residential

locality consisting of brick-cement houses painted a variety of colors and decorated with a variety of different ornamentations. The roads are an inconsistent combination of gravel and pavement; the infrastructure an equally inconsistent mix of occassional street lights, water tanks, and sewage lines. In contrast to the varied architecture of Maitri Nagar, the houses of Pleasant Housing share a uniform architectural style of brick facades, sloped roofs, and elevated ground floors removed from garden plots and driveways. Iron fences separate each house organized in a grid pattern street structure of paved roads and streetlights. The colony is surrounded by an eight feet high wall with two gates where cars, motorbikes and walkers are greeted by security guards and a large water tank pumping water out of a private well.

On the surface, Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing represent a certain image of caste and class homogeneity. Maitri Nagar's Bāhun-Chhetri predominance was countered by an upper class population of Pleasant Housing from a variety of Bāhun-Chhetri, Newar, and Janajāti backgrounds. While Maitri Nagar residents tended to have relocated from districts in Nepal's midwestern hills and Tarai plains, Pleasant Housing residents were mostly relocating from Kathmandu. However, housing colony residents possessed considerable family and personal links to transnational lives spent in India, East Asia, Europe and North America. While Maitri Nagar residents had travelled less, many of them, too, had connections to people working in the Gulf or India, if not East Asia, Europe and North America.

Although the physical and social differences initially caught my attention, over time my positionality as a Nepali-speaking American male also produced differences in how people from the two localities perceived my work. My wife and I rented a house

inside of Pleasant Housing, which granted me access to the otherwise prohibited-to-outsiders social community of the housing colony. Even though I lived in Pleasant Housing, I found meeting informants and gathering data much easier in the open Maitri Nagar. Whereas Pleasant Housing often felt like an uninhabited ghost town, the streets, shops, and tea-shops of Maitri Nagar were constantly busy with commuters, day laborers (mostly construction workers), and residents passing between Kalanki and Kirtipur. My time was split between structured events, such as attending Saturday morning community meetings (in both localities), household rituals, conducting scheduled interviews, and making unplanned visits to construction sites, tea-shops, badminton courts, and local temples.

Most Maitri Nagar residents saw it as 'normal' that I was living in the more expensive housing colony where 'tourists' live. As an American who speaks Nepali, it was assumed that I was in Nepal to 'do good,' an expectation paved by several generations of North American and European 'development' workers. As such, residents preferred to speak to me about infrastructural problems of water, electricity, roads, and health care. I was also often consulted for advice on how to leave Nepal and obtain a visa to the United States. Most residents of Pleasant Housing understood my role as anthropologist, but objected to me living with them. "If anthropology is about culture," I was told, "then you need to do research in a village, where you will find Nepal's culture." I used this assumption to interrogate spatial conceptions of society to see how residents understood their position vis-à-vis the greater Nepali polity.

In both localities, I gained limited access to female informants. It was no accident that the majority of my main informants were middle-aged men in both localities that had

both the time and patience to entertain my company and constant questions about their land, house, and family history. I established informant relationships with a few of the wives, parents, and children of these main informants, but rarely found situations culturally suitable to speaking with any of them one-on-one. The only woman that I spoke to privately was my Newar teacher, known in this dissertation as Sujata Shrestha, who was kind enough to meet me weekly, teach me a little Newar, and discuss my many questions. Interviews, informal discussions, and daily interactions were mostly conducted in Nepali, with occasional shifts to English and Newar.

My predominant focus on middle-aged men led me to a certain set of questions regarding the life of what I call the protagonist of this dissertation, the *ghar-jaggā-dhani* ('house-land-owner'). The more I spoke with *ghar-jaggā-dhani*, the more concerns of an economic nature emerged. Yes, most informants assured me, questions of class, caste, or ethnic identity were important, but it was more important to own four *ānā*[4] of land and a modern house; rent rooms in their houses; find good deals on land; secure security, electricity, drinking water, sewage lines, and paved roads for the locality; and, send children to the United States, usually in that order of urgency. As a clear example of these concerns, one day a participant pointed to a neighbor's house to call it the "perfect house." He explained that the owners rented out the ground floor to a shop, the first floor to a tenant, inhabited the third and fourth floors, and had a garden of vegetables on the roof. Their only expense was rice, which the rent income more than covered.

These concerns over landownership (ch. 3), infrastructure (ch. 7), the ability to leave Nepal for foreign employment and education (ch. 4), building a house and earning

[4] An *ānā* is a land measurement equal to 342 square feet. Most land plots in the Kathmandu periphery are four *ānā*.

rent (ch. 5) often led conversations down certain roads more materialist than symbolic in nature. Consequently, by the end of my fieldwork, I had become convinced that my dissertation needed a dual focus on both symbolic *and* materialist questions. Specifically, questions of identity, ritual, and territory had to be underpinned by understandings of value, land, houses, and politics. Christopher Gregory's (1997: 25) quotation precisely expresses this point: "The principle of profit and loss is as much a part of 'traditional' Indian values as are those of purity and pollution." I returned to Virginia and started reading and teaching political economy texts from anthropologists and geographers.

The analytical shift to political economy compelled me to also shift my thinking about social categories, such as caste and class. Since the late 1980s social scientists in Nepal have understood ethnicity within the political practices of the Nepal state.[5] For instance, as O'Neill (1994: 55) notes, the work of Levine (1988) and Holmberg (1989) shows how "religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity … are permeable and emergent." As Höfer's (1979) guide to Nepal's legal code demonstrates, the permeable and emerging identities of ethnicity in Nepal must be understood in dialogue with a classifying state. Guneratne (2002) and Fisher (2001) furthered this by point by showing how ethnicity is a product of economic and political conditions. Guneratne (2002) showed how state policy helped produce Tharu identity amidst multiple cultural and linguistic differences. Fisher (2001) imagines ethnicity to be like a river, permeable and malleable in how its boundaries are constantly changing. Moreover, he asserts that changes to group identity are contingent on both inside and outside factors: "What appear at first to be shifting

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[5] The emphasis on the state has led Sara Shneiderman (2010: 301) to wonder whether scholars "over-state" the role of the Nepal state in their analysis of Himalayan societies. Her response is to highlight the strategies of transnational populations to negotiate identities and subjectivities living between multiple states.

religious orientations among some hill groups over the past two hundred years reflect a complex set of political motives and identity choices influenced by both maneuvers for influence within these communities and the pressures of the regional and national status systems within which individuals had vested interests" (2001: 206).

While much of Nepal's anthropological discourse had shifted to the politics of ethnicity, Liechty (2003) changed the debate to include the practice of class in Kathmandu. Rather than an objective category, class for Liechty reflects a set of practices revolving around consumerism, display, and moral narratives that place actors in between the vulgar rich and deprived poor. Liechty argues that class practices organize the new public spaces of malls, cinemas, offices, and restaurants (2003: 145-148), and the social organization of the new suburbs in the urban periphery (2003: 52-58).

Building on Fisher and Liechty, I understand society to be produced through the fluid and dynamic practices and processes of everyday life. However, I wonder in what ways have studies that focus on just one social category, such as ethnicity or class, limit the scope of our understanding. As Fernandes (1997) asserts in her analysis of Calcutta's jute mills, the complexity of social practices must account for "overlapping identities." As Fernandes asserts, it is not enough to merely show that multiple social categories interact and co-exist, but we need to show how they interact. Towards this goal, she demonstrates that "Conceptions of class are produced *through*, not necessarily opposed to politics of community" (defined as caste, gender, religion, region, language) (1997: 15). Building on Fernandes, I aim to show how the overlapping categories are constituted through spatial questions and processes. Thus, instead of starting with social categories and processes, I reverse the question to use space as an analytical strategy to get at the

social. If anything, the urban periphery of Kathmandu is an inchoate in-the-making place that is defined by spatial practices, conflicts, and conceptions, particularly through the immensely significant symbols and physical representations of land, house, and community. I consider these spatial practices and processes to be the central problem of Kathmandu's urbanizing periphery.

The Case for Space

> Social reality is not just coincidently spatial, existing 'in' space, it is presuppositionally and ontologically spatial. *There is no unspatialized social reality*. There are no aspatial social processes. Even in the realm of pure abstraction, ideology, and representation, there is a pervasive and pertinent, if often hidden, spatial dimension.
>
> - Edward Soja (1996: 46)

The distance between the Newar caste city and the consumer city reflects the two dominant approaches to space in anthropology. The first approach comes from the symbolic construction of space, such as how gender and kin relations inform domestic (Waterson 1990; Gray 2006; Bourdieu 1973; Cunningham 1964; Löfgren 1984; Hugh-Jones 1995; Pellow 2003) and village (Lévi-Strauss 1963) space, or how conceptions of the cosmos inscribe temple architecture (Paul 1976), village lay-outs (Fernandez 1984; Errington 1989), city structure (Levy 1990; Parish 1994; Gellner 2001b; Wheatley 1971) and even national space (Heine-Geldern 1942; Tambiah 1977; Geertz 1980) with significant social meaning. As previously described, the bulk of Newar ethnography has understood the spatial order of Newar settlements according to this symbolic thrust in anthropology. The spatial, whether represented by the city, neighborhood, or the house is conceived as a reflection of the social-ethical order of the Newar worldview.

Although insightfully illuminating of how the world is symbolically conceived, anthropological interpretations often see space as a mere social construct, which limits

the possibility of spatial analysis. Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 40) nicely summarize this critique:

> The idea that space is made meaningful is, of course, a familiar one to anthropologists; indeed, there is hardly an older or better established anthropological truth. East or west, inside or outside, left or right, mound or floodplain – from at least the time of Durkheim, anthropologists have known that the experience of space is always socially constructed. The more urgent task would seem to be to politicize this uncontestable observation. With meaning-making understood as practice, how are spatial meanings established? Who has the power to make places of spaces? Who contests this? What is at stake?

The urge to politicize space has led many anthropologists and geographers towards a second approach informed by political economy. Influenced by the Marxist turn in 1970s geography, scholars have tended to see space as an outcome of social relations and material social practices, a move that grants causality to non-spatial social processes produced under capitalist conditions such as production, consumption, exchange and administration (Castells 1977; Harvey 1973). Particularly with neo-liberal economic restructuring of the Thatcher-Reagan era, this material focus sees global economic conditions in terms of de-territorialization of world cities (Sassen 1991, Castells 1989). In anthropology, this turn was most influenced by Wolf's (1982) call to how colonial capitalism has connected disparate places in uneven ways since the 1400s. Building on Wolf, anthropologists, often writing about places on the periphery of global economic structures, have contributed to this approach by identifying how local responses adapt global forces in surprising and unintended ways (Low 1999; Ong 1999; Rankin 2004).

An economic approach to the city serves as a starting point for a critique of the Newar 'sacred city.' In particular, Levy's masterpiece ethnography of the Newar city of Bhaktapur, *Mesocosm* (1990), has received criticism for ignoring the greater political

economy in which the city exists (Mikesell 1999; Grieve 2004). The spatial-social model of the Newar city struggles to account for the radical economic transformation of urban Kathmandu Valley from a center of agricultural production and trade to its current dependency on foreign 'development' aid, tourism, carpet exports, and remittance economy. For instance, Liechty's thesis (2003: 54) attributes the Valley's sprawl to the "city's growing incorporation into global economic and cultural processes and to Nepal's continuing position on the global periphery." In particular, he points to a shift in the occupational base of the capital from production to tertiary or wage labor employment.[6]

While the economic explanation brings necessary balance to our increasingly politicized understanding of space, it, too, renders space as a mere product of social relations. In this case, it is not a symbolic-cultural order producing space, but rather the economic structure of a given society. The question remains whether space could be more than a mere reflection of the cultural and economic order. What is gained by reversing the question to ask how spatial processes produce social outcomes?

Michel de Certeau's (1984) formulation of the everyday offers one starting point for conceiving how spatial practice could be at the center of analysis. According to de Certeau, space is produced through the interaction of top-down strategies of technocrats and engineers in the *voyeur city* and the quotidian tactics of the common person in the *walker city*. While the strategies of the former reflect the immobility, stasis, and rationality of structure, *langue*, and domination, the tactics of the latter entail the dynamism and chaotic improvisation of agency, *parole*, and resistance. James Holston's (1989) historical study of the making of Brasília offers a compelling anthropological

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[6] In just one decade, between 2038 B.S. (1981/1982) and 2048 B.S. (1991/1992), in Kathmandu Valley, agricultural labor decreased from 75% to 38%, while construction labor increased from 2% to 14%, and service sector employment increased from 14% to 29% (KUDBA 2059 B.S.).

portrait of this dichotomy. He highlights the struggle between the ideology-driven modernism of the planned city with the subversive and unplanned uses of the city by its inhabitants.

In the rigid opposition of *voyeur* and *walker*, or planning/use, strategies/tactics, structure/agency, however, exists a problematic homogenization of power. By defining the relationship between two groups in terms of dominant and dominated, we tend to see the relationship solely in terms of power and resistance. But, are all tactics necessarily forms of resistance against strategies? Can strategies, like tactics, be dynamic and unstructured? As Ortner (1999: 18) points out, the dominated can all too often be "defined wholly by their oppression, their only agency being expressed through 'resistance.'" Similarly, the dominant often become homogenized as a "monolithic force that transforms everything in its path in relatively predictable ways" (1999: 22). Ortner urges us to also consider the unintended and non-political acts of agents.

The neat opposition between strategies and tactics is further complicated in our case by the instability of the state in Nepal. While state planning is certainly central to the construction of society and space, we can hardly consider the unimplemented urban planning of the state to be a consistent strategy, let alone some sort of disciplinary mechanism (Foucault 1977; Scott 1998). Setha Low's (2000) offers a more flexible notion of how space is made through her notions of the *social production of space* and the *social construction of space*. The *social production of space* "includes all those factors – social, economic, ideological, technological – that result, or seek to result, in the physical creation of the material setting" (2000: 127-128). The *social construction of space*, meanwhile, concerns "the actual transformation of space – through peoples' social

exchanges, memories, images, and daily use of the material setting – into scenes and actions that convey meaning" (2000: 128). The making of space, according to Low's *production* and *construction,* entails a process that includes both the material and symbolic; plans and uses.

While Low's *production* and *construction* inspire the overarching organization, the internal units of the dissertation (6 chapters and 3 parts) follow closer to Lefebvre's triad. The problem with Low's two approaches is, as she admits, that such "sorting is somewhat illusory" and agrees with Lefebvre that space must treated as a whole (2000: 130). Henri Lefebvre (1991) attempts to treat space as a whole by proposing his "three moments" of perceived, conceived and lived space. The first he calls 'spatial practice,' or 'perceived space,' which much like Low's *production*, refers to the realm of the physical, real, concrete, objective, and the processes of production and reproduction. The second is the 'representations of space,' or 'conceived space,' which, much like de Certeau's *voyeur city,* entails the knowledge, signs, and codes of space, which give it a mental and abstract form, and is often framed from the top down by the "scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" or "a certain type of artist with a scientific bent" (1991: 38). The final category of 'representational spaces,' or 'lived space' encompasses and transcends the materiality of perceived space and the symbolic element of conceived space. It is the most "alive" space in that "it may be directional, situational, or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic" (1991: 42). As vibrant and chaotic form, lived spaces "need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness" (1991: 41).

From Lefebvre, I take two points to guide my definition of spatial process. First, I take his three moments as strategies for organizing the main points of the dissertation. In part one, I start with a materialist history of feudal land relations in Kathmandu (chapter 2), and then explore how the legacy of such relations is manifested in contemporary practices and conceptions of land (chapter 3). In part two, I understand mobility (chapter 4) and domestic architecture (chapter 5) according to a three-part awareness of the relationship between national and global economic conditions, personal conceptions of regional geography, and uses and interpretations of things and people moving through space. Finally, in part three, I focus on notions of community (chapter 6) and local politics (chapter 7) through descriptions of the built environment, social and political organization, and use of social space.

If attention to Lefebvre's triad organizes the internal units of the dissertation, his syncretic spirit motivates the broader arguments of each unit. I understand Lefebvre's triad an attempt to undo and overcome the binary oppositions of symbolic and material, mental and physical. While I follow the urge to overcome the traps of dichotomous thinking, I am critical of his particular choice of terms. I want to avoid the connotations of material logic as representative of some universal or pragmatic rationality, and symbolic thinking as reflective of the irrational realm of culture. As Sahlins (1976) claims, there is no material or functional logic that is not constituted by culture. According to Sahlins (1976: 206),

> The unity of the cultural order is constituted by a third and final term, meaning. And it is this meaningful system that defines all functionality; that is, according to the particular structure and finalities of the cultural order. It follows that no functional explanation is ever sufficient by itself; for functional value is always relative to the given cultural scheme.

In what Sahlins calls meaning and Lefebvre calls lived space, we have potential escapes from the confines of binary or deterministic thinking. For both Sahlins and Lefebvre, the move to a third category is an attempt to overcome the limitations of dichotomies such as utilaritarian and symbolic (Sahlins), or physical and mental (Lefebvre). While Lefebvre's lived space calls our attention to the dynamic and fluid nature of space, Sahlins' attention to meaning draws our attention to the organizing logic of cultural order. Both lessons are pertinent to understanding the multiple and overlapping systems of value in the complex history and society of Kathmandu.

The problem with binary or deterministic thinking is that they often force us to accept one value system as more hegemonic or dominating than the other. As Gregory (1997: 34-37) has questioned, South Asian anthropology has tended to over-emphasize the values of the pen (religious) and sword (State) while neglecting the values of the purse (merchant) and plough (farm household). He states, "Human beings are never trapped in a single set of values and this applies as much to a Rockefeller as it does to an Ongka in the highlands of Papua New Guinea" (Gregory 1997: 8). As he shows (and this point applies equally to Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing), a Brahman can be both landlord and merchant, just as a low-caste farming household can have a priest, a teacher and shopkeeper (1997: 35).

Lévi-Strauss' (1963) discussion of dual organizations offers an insightful way of thinking of multiple value systems within spatial terms. He attributed co-existing models of village lay-out in Amazonia – one based on dualism, the other based on concentric circles – to competing exchange systems. While the egalitarian and symmetrical relations of restricted exchange lead to a binary or diametric dualist model of space, the

hierarchical and asymmetrical relations of generalized exchange lead to a concentric dualist model. Similarly, Rodman's (1992) idea of multivocality and multi-locality adds questions of power to the question of how multiple systems of value exist in one place. Particularly, she advocates for appreciating how non-privileged speakers (often through non-verbal communication), colonial histories and trade networks have constructed meanings of place.

Building on Lévi-Strauss and Rodman, my objective is to ask how subjects inscribe their home with meaning by drawing from the multiple logics and spatial positions that impact them. Specifically, I document the alienation of land in terms of the tension between farmers, who define land as an immobile good, and the state, nobles, merchants, and land dealers, who understand land according to gift and commodity exchanges (chapter 2). In the contemporary land market of the urban periphery (chapter 3), the social value of land practices is less clear-cut than the historical distinction between farmers and alienators would seem. Thus, I argue that the social system related to land is produced more through what one does with land than categories of ethnicity, caste or class. In part two, I establish the dual values of the householder who must balance a life of *namunā* concerns geared towards competitive consumption and material display in the world, and a life of *grihastha* concerns geared towards maintaining the ritual and moral order. Finally, in part three, I move from the perspective of the individual incoming householder to the larger level of the locality. Specifically, I consider the dual values of public and private, unplanned and planned amidst a new locality and a state weakened by two decades of insurgency and political conflict.

Part I: The Alienation of Farm Land

A walk through the urban spaces of Kathmandu Valley can feel like a journey through multiple cities. Starting from the city centers of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, you will find large squares consisting of tall multi-tiered temples and courtyard palaces decorated in elaborate woodcarvings and brick facades. Walking outwards you will find residential and commercial neighborhoods with similarly styled tall brick and wood courtyard houses organized along narrow streets. Soon, however, you will start to see the brownish tint of the traditional brick-wood architecture give way to a colorful array of facades plastered in cement, or even displaying glass or aluminum paneling. Amidst the occasional temple complex, government compound, or river basin lined with squatter communities, you will mostly find shopping malls, cinema halls, businesses and restaurants. The streets, too, will get wider and become more crowded with cars and motorcycles than people. Down the smaller lanes, you will observe mixed residential-commercial buildings of varying heights, colors, and displays. With the exception of Kathmandu's central park-military grounds of Tundhikhel, you will likely not find any open space until traveling much farther afield, beyond the Ring Road, which encircles the once detached Kathmandu to the north and Patan. Although you might stumble across a compact settlement of nearly identical architecture to the city center, you will be more likely to encounter neighborhoods of dispersed and detached houses standing like islands of walled compounds within fields of rice or wheat (depending on the time of year). Here, most roads will turn to gravel and will abruptly end either in an open plot of land or hillside footpath.

When architectural historians and anthropologists speak of Kathmandu urbanism, they usually refer to the unique spatial form of the city centers defined by sacred temple-palace central squares, ritually inscribed urban boundaries, and socially integrated neighborhoods. This spatial form is associated with Newar society, a population known for its syncretic mixing of Indic and Tibetan cultural influences, and generally recognized as the indigenous inhabitants of the Valley. Newar urbanism is, like Newar society, a "layered and living overlap" of cultural ideas reflecting the varied histories of the Tibeto-Burman Kirata and the Indic Licchavi and Malla rulers (Tiwari 2009: 47). Although the 'old' city centers of narrow lanes and continuous tall brick houses and temples have come to represent Kathmandu or Newar urbanism, they account for less than 5% of the Valley's current urban area (Hollé 2007). As opposed to the sacred center, boundaries, and social integration of the city, the newer parts of the Valley, particularly the new urban periphery beyond Ring Road, follow more the characteristics of urban sprawl (Ingersoll 2006): center-less, unbounded, and socially fragmented.

Typically, scholars locate the social source of the Valley's transformations in the demographic shift from a Newar city to a city of non-Newar (particularly Bahun-Chhetri) migrants who have imported rural ways of being to the city, which in turn, have undone centuries of ecological (Rademacher 2007; 2009) social (Gellner 2001b) and architectural (Tiwari 1992) balance. Although Newar ethnographers locate this ethnic shift in the establishment of the Gorkha state in the late 18th Century, the massive migration of non-Newars into the Valley did not start until the mid-20th Century, when the repressive Rana regime ended, bringing to close their century-long policy of controlling migration into the Valley. According to most observers of the Valley's growth, the old centers remained

relatively 'preserved,' but "the changes since … 1951 have been so powerful that four decades have been enough to culturally destroy the Valley urbanism developed and maintained over 15 centuries" (Tiwari 1992: 7). Specifically, the ritual organization and Newar identity of Kathmandu urbanism has been eclipsed by the influx of "ethnic groups with no urban history" (Tiwari 1992: 7) who bring "rural characteristics" to the "urban fringes" (Tiwari 2001: 2). The ethnographer of Newar society, David Gellner (2001b: 286) describes these characteristics further as following "no coordinated plan, but … an ideology of private property, individual choice, and a secular environment."

In chapter 2, challenge the narrative of ethnic transformation by historicizing ethnicity in terms of social relations of land. While the Bāhun-Chhetri dominant state did much to change the spatial form of the urban Valley, I identify a conflict within Newar society between farmers and traders and two different valuations of land. Then, I look to the history of the region's political economy to understand the roots of urban expansion. Long before 1951, the Rana were building palace compounds in the late 19th Century and early 20th Century as imitations of European colonial power. This model of elite emulation was, however, not unique to the Ranas, but rather a trend in South Asian aristocracy that corresponded with the practices of previous rulers in the Valley. Thus, while the outcome of luxurious palaces on the city outskirts was indeed a shock to the Kathmandu urban form, its intent was far from novel.

Chapter three grounds the feudal legacies of the 19th Century in a contemporary land conflict between a Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl* (land dealer) and a Newar Jyāpu (farmers) family. I investigate how the root of this conflict is not ethnic, but rather a product of a dispute between a Jyāpu landowner and his tenant. I ultimately argue that the alienation

of land is not an ethnic issue, but rather a result of two different land ideologies that divide those who value land for production and those who value it as a commodity.

Chapter 2. From Newar Urbanism to Nepali Suburbanism: A Social History of Kathmandu's Sprawl

A Social History of Newar Urbanism

The history of Kathmandu Valley is the history of the Newar, a tale that begins with the appeal of the Valley's fertile alluvial soil. Slusser (1982: 8) states, "In time, the relatively level expanse of grazing and farm lands and the exceptionally fertile soil of the former lake bed began to attract settlers." In addition to its agricultural promise, the Valley has long attracted a wide mix of people – "pilgrim and scholar, mendicant and monk, artisan and ambassadorial entourage" (Slusser 1982: 6) - as a temperate middle point on Tibet-India trade and Buddhist scholar routes in between the Himalayan snows and the malarial southern plains. Until a Himalayan pass was opened through Sikkim in the late nineteenth century, the two routes via Kathmandu to Tibet were the shortest links between the cities of the Gangetic plain and China (Rankin 2004: 76). During the height of Malla rule in the 17th Century, Kathmandu represented the center of trans-Himalayan trade as Tibet conducted all business with Newar traders and contracted Kathmandu to mint its coins (Rankin 2004: 90). Beyond coin production, however, Kathmandu was not known as a producer or consumer of the major goods involved in the trans-Himalayan trade. Although some goods, such as brassware, copper, herbs, timber, wool, cotton and rice, were exported from the Newar kingdoms, most goods were produced in Tibet or India. For instance, from Tibet came salt, silver, gold, yak tails, borax, silk and wool; from India came spices, silk, pearls, jewellery, sugar, cotton and other fabrics, and (after the East India Company arrived) English glassware and cutlery (Rankin 2004: 90). Thus,

it was the traders of Kathmandu who contributed to the trans-regional alliances and connections in times prior to the establishment of the Nepal state.

As a center of trans-Himalayan trade and religious networks, scholars assume that inhabitants of the Valley have consisted of an amalgamation of migrants who have, at different times, settled in the Valley and learned a Tibeto-Burman language linked to what is now called Newar (Levy 1990: 48; Malla 1981; Slusser 1982: 8). We must remain cautious, however, to equate the existence of a Tibeto-Burman or proto-Newar language with the population known today as the Newars. The ethnic term, Newar, refers to a heterogeneous society divided into Tantric-influenced Hindus and Buddhists, and over thirty caste groups many of which hold geographically diverse origin narratives.[7] Moreover, the division between Hindus and Buddhists has produced what Gellner (1999a: 13-22) calls a 'two-headed caste system' in which the highest rank belongs to Hindu and Buddhist priests. What the residents of Kathmandu shared was a lingua franca, known today as Newar language, but historically called *nepāl bhāshā* in Nepali (literally translated as 'Nepal language') or *nepā bhāy* in Newar. Long before the term, 'nepal,' became the name of the nation-state (in the 1920s), it referred to Kathmandu Valley and

[7] Most Newar origin narratives connect specific castes to royal lineages in India. For instance, the merchant Shresṭha claim descent from a group of South Indian royalty of Karnataka who conquered parts of southeastern Nepal in the 11th Century (Gellner 1999a: 5). Similarly, low caste butchers, the Khadgi, claim that they came to Nepal from Indian royals (Gellner 1999b: 273). The tendency to claim royal Indian lineages is common in South Asia, a phenomenon which leads Gellner and Pradhan (1999: 161) to contend that it is a "thoroughly traditional mode of discourse in which Newar castes have tried to establish their status by claiming kinship with bygone dynasties." Even within castes, sub-groups claim unique origins in order to distinguish themselves from the others in the caste. For example, the Baniya subcaste (of the Buddhist merchant high caste Uray) claims to have migrated to Kathmandu Valley from Rajasthan, India to distribute Ayurvedic medicine (Gellner 1999a: 21). The one major caste to not claim a non-Nepali origin is the Jyāpu caste of farmers. The Jyāpus account for two out of every five Newar people, and claim to be the "original inhabitants of Nepal" (Gellner 2003: 110).

the language spoken there.[8] Doherty (1978: 442) surmises that the Prakrit term, *nevāla*, meaning 'people of a damp, low-lying area,' is the basis for both terms, *nepāl* and *newar*.[9] According to Gellner (1999a: 5) and Toffin (2007f: 361), the term 'Newar' first appeared in written records in the 17th Century to refer to the 'politically dominant groups' of the Valley; in other words, the upper caste functionaries of the Malla palaces or the wealthy traders of the merchant castes.[10] Interestingly, the Malla rulers, who ruled over the Valley from sometime in the late 13th Century to the late 18th Century, considered themselves separate from the commoners of the Valley and preferred to speak Prakrit and Maithili languages rather than Nepāl language. As I will discuss later in this chapter, a reoccurring theme in Nepal leadership is for rulers to emulate royal lineages from distant lands. Sahlins (2008: 190) might refer to this phenomenon as the stranger-king in reverse – not outside rulers becoming insiders, but "inside rulers who become outsiders."

As a place of migrants, scholars identify in Newar society a syncretic tendency to incorporate multiple cultural influences and practices. For instance, Newar marriage practices share aspects found in Nepal's Tibeto-Burman language-speaking groups (isogamy, lack of special status for 'virginal consanguineal girls') and in North Indian Hindu groups (prohibition of cross-cousin marriage, and acceptance of dowry and widowhood stigma) (Gellner 2001a: 270). Similarly, linguists classify Newar language as

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8 The term 'nepal' did not refer to the nation-state of Nepal until the 1920s when the British used it in reference to the entire country, previously known as Gorkha. The national language, too, changed in title at this time from Gorkhali to Nepali (see Burghart 1996: 253). Henceforth, when referring to Kathmandu Valley as 'nepāl', and Newar language as 'nepāl language', I will use diacritics to distinguish it from the nation-state, Nepal, and its national language, Nepali.

9 Malla, meanwhile, believes that Nepal is a Sanskritization of the Tibeto-Burman roots *nhet* (cattle) + *pa* (man) to stand for herdsman (1978: 19).

10 When and how, the ethnonym 'Newar' became a referent for all speakers of Nepāl language remains a debated question between scholars, although most agree that the military incursion of the Indo-Nepalese Gorkhas (Hindu Nepali-speakers) was a major contributing factor. See Gellner (1987) and Quigley (1987).

a member of the Tibeto-Burman language family, but with a tendency to borrow words and grammatical structures from the Indo-European languages of Sanskrit and Nepali (Gellner 1999a: 5).

It is no surprise, then, that Newar urbanism reflects a variety of spatial ideologies and practices. While Newar urbanism is often treated as a uniform type based on the Malla-era (13th-18th Centuries) city-states of Bhaktapur, Patan, and Kathmandu, it should be read as an amalgamation of multiple influences. From the era of the Kirata rulers, a non-Brahmanical social and non-Sanskritic language speaking group who inhabited the Valley from the 9th Century BCE to the 1st Century CE, the Malla cities reflect a dualism of what the architectural historian, Sudarshan R. Tiwari (2009) calls the "*pringga* structure." The *pringga* city divided space into two halves by a center point, or *dathutole*, marked by a shrine of the tutelary god, with a higher zone on one side, the *thatu*, where priests and nobles resided, and a lower zone on the other side, *kwathu*, where commoners resided (2009: 48). Importantly, too, the Kirata city was located on along ridges and hillocks (2009: 48), where residents lived on higher land, called '*tar*,' in order to preserve lower irrigable land ('*dol*' and '*tala*') for cultivation.

As opposed to the dualist elements of the Kirata city, the proceeding ruling house of the Licchavi era (3rd-9th Century CE) built cities according to a concentric structure. Unlike the non-Sanskritic and non-Brahmanic Kirata, the Licchavis ushered in a period of the "most intensified contact" with Indian culture, even claiming to be of royal Indian lineages of the same name (Whelpton 2004: 18). Licchavi towns extended Kirata towns down hillsides towards rivers, and built a ring of walls to give the cities physical protection. Importantly, the Licchavi employed the Hindu spatial ideology of

vāstupurusha mandala to order the city as a mirror of the cosmos. In Nepali Hindu-Buddhist cosmology, *mandala* refers to a circle divided into four separate sections, often to arrange deities in a tantric diagram (Grieve 2004). In Licchavi settlements, the city imagined as microcosm meant a square organized by four cardinal points with a main Hindu temple at the center point, or *bramhasthan*, and a Buddhist *vihara* on the periphery (Tiwari 2009: 49-50).

The Malla urban form, which developed between the 13th and 18th Century, combined aspects of the Kirata *pringga* city and the Lichhavi *mandala* city (Tiwari 2009: ch. 5). From the Kirata, the Malla located settlements on higher ground in order to separate residences from the irrigable fields of the lower lands. From the Lichhavi, they adopted an emphasis on bounding residential space from peripheral fields. In the Malla city, the urban boundaries are defined by the eight 'dangerous' mother goddesses, *astamātrikā*, who ritually protect each city's inside from the dangerous outside of untouchables, demons, witches, and cremation grounds (Gellner 2001b: 280). Not only do they mark inside urban space (*dune*) from outside rural space (*pine*), but also the end of 'moral order' (Parish 1994: 21). From both the Kirata and Licchavi, the Malla city is positioned in reference to a strong center, manifested in the royal palace (*lāykū*) and the temple of Taleju devoted to the tutelary goddess of the King. Much like sacred cities in other parts of South and Southeast Asia, kings and high priests constructed the temple-palace complex at the center of the city in order to concentrate political and ritual authority (Eliade 1959; Geertz 1980; Seneviratne 1992; Tambiah 1976).

The center point of the Malla city emanates outwards in concentric circles of social organization. Following the Licchavi Hindu model, the builders consciously

attempted to build cities as *mandala*s, maps of the cosmos, that serve to create social order and prosperity throughout the kingdom (Gutschow & Kölver 1975; Shepard 1985; Slusser 1982).[11] Whereas kings and priestly castes inhabit the center of the city, lower castes reside on its edges or outside of the city boundaries with the middle castes of farmers and artisans in between (Gutschow and Kölver 1975; Pant and Funo 2007; Slusser 1982).

While most scholars emphasize the concentric nature of the Newar city, Toffin (1996) reminds us of the prevalence and ritual importance of diametrical organization in Newar cities. Every Newar settlement in Kathmandu Valley, both urban and rural, is divided into two halves, upper and lower, often in accordance with the direction of adjoining rivers. Whereas the concentric model conforms to city and temple spatial ideology in "highly stratified" societies of South and Southeast Asia, the diametrical model "suggests an egalitarian society based on the spirit of reciprocity" often found in the settlement structures of Nepal's Tibeto-Burman language-speaking groups (1996: 67). The dual nature of Newar urbanism confirms the point about the composite nature of Newar society, but it also suggests that a dual organization exists. Oddly, Toffin does not mention Lévi-Strauss (1963) here or draw links between the dual nature of Newar settlements and exchange systems. Rather than articulate a connection between the two, Toffin is interested in the implications of the diametric model and how it suggests the possibility of a Newar moiety system "alien to the caste system and to hierarchy" (1996:

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[11] Parish (1994: 21) reminds us that although some credit is due to the designs of the Malla kings, it would be erroneous to mistake the Newar cities for 'planned'. Rather, he prefers to call them 'organic' and emphasizes their 'as if' quality: 'While shaped in some cases by royal will and priestly conception, Bhaktapur is not the city of an imperial state, or the product of modern bureaucratic rationality, where agents of the state could and would simply dictate urban form, as if they were simply drawing lines in the sand. Like the people of Bhaktapur today, the kings and priests of Bhaktapur past were content for the most part to act "as if" the actual space of Bhaktapur conformed to the ideal space of their religious conceptions. The city they imagined was a sacred, a moral, order'.

83). Additionally, however, the existence of the diametrical structure could also, following Lévi-Strauss and dual organizations, lead us towards a focus on exchange instead of ideology.

An interpretation of the Newar city based on exchange rather than ideology offers a slightly different insight into the spatial structure of Newar society. Following Quigley (1999b), I suggest thinking of the urban structure in terms of Hocart's (1950) royal-centric model of caste. Caste, according to Hocart, is less about hierarchy and ideology, as in the Dumontian model, and more about the exchange between the king (and associated nobles) and those performing purifying rituals on his behalf. In the absence of an actual king, this theory of kingship persists in the centrality of land-holding lineages – as much for rural India (Raheja 1988) as for urban Newar society (Quigley 1999b: 320). In the case of Newar cities and villages, this opposition persists most commonly in the exchange system between central land-owning Shresṭha (merchants) castes and peripheral farming Jyāpu castes. While the Shresṭhas, often understood to be the representatives of the Hindu nobility of Newar society, could represent the hierarchical concentric model, the Jyāpu farmers might be read as the representatives of the egalitarian diametrical model. In fact, Toffin has argued exactly this in his thesis that the Jyāpus constitute a "tribal substratum" of Newar society antithetical to Hindu royalty and hierarchy (Quigley 1999b: 314). Instead of reading Shresṭhas and Jyāpus as two opposing groups and the hierarchical concentric and egalitarian diametrical models as mutually exclusive systems, we need to ask how exchange practices bring the two groups and models into interaction.

From the Yogesh Raj's (2010) historical ethnography of Bhaktapur's peasant's movement (based primarily on the narrative of a Bhaktapur Jyāpu leader, Krishnabhakta Chaguthi), we are given a picture of the exchange relations between landowners and tenants in early 20th Century Kathmandu Valley. Jyāpu tenants were obligated "to smear the house of their landowners, to massage the female members of their family with oil, to chaperone their married off daughters on their return to their in-laws, to wash their clothes, even the undergarments of the ladies, they had to distil wine or beer, slaughter, then clean, cut and roast the male buffaloes and prepare vegetables for their feasts" (Raj 2010: 34). Chaguthi also relates stories of being required to carry landowner's children on religious pilgrimages from Bhaktapur to Dakshinkali, approximately 25 kilometers distance. Furthermore, when a member of the landlord's family died, the Jyāpu tenants would prepare and manage all of the funeral duties from purifying food waste and utensils at temples to watching over the corpse until it was cremated.

While Hocart's model of caste emphasizes the ritual obligations of exchange, the exchange between the tenant and landlord in late 19th Century and early 20th Century Kathmandu should be understood according to some other logic. As Chaguthi describes it, the tenants had no other choice than to fulfill the duties expected by the landlord. Even then, he recalls "the tiller could find himself bereft of his land one fine morning, because his claim to the land as subjected to the wishes of the landlord" (2010: 34). Although Chaguthi never refers to the caste of the landlords, we can presume that most belong to upper castes of merchants and state employees. Rather, the translation by Raj refers only to 'landlord' or 'landowner,' or occasionally 'sāhu,' (money-lender or shop-keeper). This emphasizes the point of the exchange being characterized by land-based economics. As

we now turn to the impact of the non-Newar ethnicity of Bāhun-Chhetri, it is important to recall the differences within Newar society.

Enter the Gorkha State and the Bāhun-Chhetri

While Newar urban history is considered a "layered and living overlap" (Tiwari 2009: 47), the post-Malla era of the Gorkha kingship is considered a disruption, not an additional layer, to the urban form. The year 1768 represents the conquest of Kathmandu Valley by the Gorkha Kingdom (see figure 2), and establishment of the growing kingdom-state according to the social and political values of the Nepali-speaking Bāhun-Chhetri, and the subjugation of local Newars. Bāhun-Chhetri refers to the highest castes, Brahman (Bāhun) and Kshatriya (Chhetri), in the caste system of the Nepali language speakers in the rural and agrarian settlements of the mid-mountain areas of contemporary Nepal. Along with the lower occupational castes - Damai (tailors), Sarki (cobbler), Kami (blacksmith), and Sunar (goldsmith) amongst others - of the same area, the Bahun-Chhetri are referred to as 'Parbatiyā' by English-speaking scholars, Indo-Nepalese by French scholars, and *khas* or *khay* by Newars. The two separate castes of Bāhun and Chhetri can be further divided into two sub-caste categories. Bāhuns are divided into the higher status Upadhaya and the lower status Jaisi (offspring of Upadhaya men and widowed or divorced Bāhun women), while Chhetri are divided into the royal aristocratic lineage of the Thakuri and the non-Thakuri.

Figure 2: Map of Nepal

Unlike the Newar, the Bāhun-Chhetri do not claim affiliation to any one place, such as the Kathmandu Valley.[12] Like the Newar, however, the Bāhun-Chhetri reflect a composite of mobile populations moving through the Himalaya sharing a common language. Scholars attribute the language of 'Nepali' to a group of people called the Khas of western Nepal, as evidenced in the language's more traditional name, '*khas kurā*' ("talk of the Khas"). It is generally accepted that Bāhuns entered what is now western Nepal from the higher lands of northwest India (Kumaon, Garhwal) around the 14th Century as an escape from the Mughal invasion of north India (Bista 1967: 2). It was there they encountered the 'Khasa,' who are estimated to have entered the Karnali basin

[12] The lack of a territorial homeland has put the Parbatiyā or Indo-Nepalese Nepali-speakers at a disadvantage of sorts in the recent initiatives to re-district Nepal based on ethnic or linguistic lines in the Constituent Assembly (2008-present). While the larger ethnic groups have designated areas and names to their "homeland," such as Tamuwan for the Gurung of the midwestern mid-mountains, 'ethnic' Nepali-speakers have no such place.

of western Nepal during the first millenium CE (Whelpton 2005: 10),[13] and intermixed with the indigenous populations as well as the later arrival of Rajput refugees (royal Thakuri) fleeing Muslim invasions in India.[14] Over time, many of the Khasa were incorporated into the Bāhun-imported caste system at the level of Kshatriya and wore the 'sacred thread' (*tāgādhāri*) of twice-born upper caste Hindus who abstain from alcohol and beef and form the group known today as Chhetri (Bista 1967: 4).[15]

The roots of the Nepal state are located in Bāhun-Chhetri and Khas history. The Khas kingdoms of the 15th Century stretched from the Kumaon regions of northwest India to southeast Tibet (Whelpton 2005: 22). Historians categorize the post-Khas kingdom "statelets" into the *baisi* ('twenty-two') kingdoms of the Karnali basin and the *chaubisi* ('twenty-four') kingdoms of the Gandaki basin. One of the *chaubisi* kingdoms, Gorkha, was ruled by the Shah family after 1559, a royal lineage which would become the Kings of Nepal in the late 18th Century (Whelpton 2005: 23). However, despite the link between the Gorkha aristocracy and Bāhun-Chhetri-Khas heritage, we need to distinguish between the elite status of the state's representatives and the larger ethnic category of Bāhun-Chhetri. As Pahari (1991: 54) argues, "it must never be ignored, however, that the majority of *tāgādhāri* people in Nepal do not share in the wealth and privilege of the ruling class, but are themselves marginal both socially and economically."

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[13] Sharma (2004b: 111-112) hypothesizes that many of the *kul deutā*s ('lineage gods') of central Nepal Bāhuns can be traced back to the Karnali basin in far western Nepal. The importance of *kul deutā*s and lineage is discussed further in chapter four.

[14] In another case of the local leader becoming a 'stranger-king' (Sahlins 2008), "Rajput blood," real or imagined, has long been used by rulers of states in Nepal, now known as Thakuris, a select caste ranking within the greater Chhetri varna, to justify royal position (Whelpton 2005: 10-11).

[15] Not all Khasa became sacred-thread wearers as many 'khas descendents' remain *matwali* (alcohol-consuming) Chhetris in the secluded districts of Jumla, Tibrikot, Humla, Mugu, Dailekh (Bista 1967: 4; Sharma 2004b).

Although there existed considerable interaction between the Gorkha rulers and the Mallas of Kathmandu Valley before the former invaded the Valley,[16] the military conquest of 1768-1769 made an unprecedented social impact on Kathmandu society. While Kathmandu political history has no shortage of outside invaders appropriating power, what distinguished the Gorkha rulers from previous invaders was that they did not integrate into Newar society. As Levy (1990: 48) states, "This was not, as it had been during the Licchavi times, to be a new dynasty fitting into and ruling from *inside* an established community, eventually to be integrated into it."

Most significantly, the Gorkha elite did not inter-marry with Newars. They also, with a few exceptions, did not invite Newar people into government positions of authority. For the most part, the "rulers, administrators, and soldiers" of the new state were all Gorkha while Newars were the "farmers, the craftsmen, and the merchants" (Levy 1990: 49). For the Gorkha state, the Newar were just one of many groups to incorporate into the *muluki ain* ('rule of the kingdom'), which integrated the country's social diversity[17] into a caste hierarchy based on geographic, social, and linguistic differences as perceived by the Bahun-Chhetri dominant royal state (Fisher 2001; Guneratne 2002; Höfer 1979; Holmberg 1989; Levine 1988). Despite the countless differences within Newar-speaking society, Newar were categorized as an 'autonomous ethnic group' under the category of 'non-enslavable alcohol-drinker' (Höfer 1979: 111-

[16] In fact, Kathmandu rulers adopted the Malla title in "imitation" of the honorary title taken by the Khas rulers of western Nepal (Whelpton 2005: 22). Malla means "victor" in Sanskrit, but is "a label without ethnic or dynastic implications" (Slusser 1982: 54).

[17] In general terms, Nepal's social diversity consists of three caste societies – Tarai (plains), Indo-Nepalese (mid-mountains), and Newar (Kathmandu Valley) – and numerous non-caste societies spread over the disparate ecological regions of the high Himalaya, Himalaya mid-mountains, and Tarai plains.

117).[18] The state also confiscated Newar communal lands, discouraged the speaking of Newar language, amongst other discriminatory policies. Newars responded to the incursion of the "uncivilized" and rural Gorkha (Toffin 2007a: 18) in several ways. While some left Kathmandu to become the shopkeepers, goldsmiths, and traders of hill-towns throughout Nepal (Sharma 2004d),[19] or joined the royal government as civil servants and adopted Bāhun-Chhetri practices (Quigley 1999a), the majority responded by growing increasingly insular (Quigley 1999b).

Most ethnographers of Newar society agree that the alienation of Newars from the new state produced an ethnicization of Newar identity. According to David Gellner (2001: 289), prior to Gorkha conquest, "there was no solidarity whatsoever among Newars… A strong Newar identity was only really the consequence of the establishment of the present dynasty and did not predate it." In fact, prior to Gorkha rule, the term Newar often referred only to those associated with the palace and upper caste traders, and not to other Valley inhabitants who spoke Newar language (Toffin 2007f: 361). As a whole, Newar speakers were "subordinate and despised" by the rulers (Gellner 1999a: 10), which in turn, led to a "gradual intensification of Newar cultural self-consciousness," such that "Newar identity today is starkly and obviously relational. Newars now define themselves as 'not Parbatiyā'" (Gellner 1992: 15).

Elite Landlords and the Alienation of Agricultural Land

[18] The all-Nepal caste system, as designed in the *muluki ain* of 1854, is ranked as follows: (1) Twice-born 'sacred thread-wearing' castes; (2) Non-enslavable Alcohol-drinkers; (3) Enslavable Alcohol-drinkers; (4) Impure, but Touchable castes; (5) Untouchable castes.

[19] Interestingly, the Newar migrants transplanted the 'compact settlements,' and religious and domestic architecture of urban Kathmandu Valley to the hill-towns where they settled (Sharma 2004d).

Whereas the inferior political status of the Newar accounts for the collectivization of Newar identity, an historical study of land ownership provides an alternative image of Newar society suggesting that the new state exacerbated pre-existing fragmentation within Newar society between merchants and farmers. Prior to Gorkha invasion, several systems of land ownership existed in the Valley. According to Sharma (2004a: 84), land ownership during the Kirata era functioned according to a system of "primitive feudalism" in which clan chiefs distributed land on a communal basis.[20] The Hindu Licchavi rulers, meanwhile, brought a "classical feudalism of the Hindu type" in which all land belonged to the king who endows individuals and groups with rights of use in exchange for annual payments of rent (Sharma 2004a: 84).

Although the Malla kings continued the tradition of royal ownership of land, since their rule was fragmented between three city-states, "the power vested in kingship had been much eroded during this time" (Sharma 2004a: 80). As a result, more land came under the intermediate category of *guṭhī* land in which trustees, or *guṭhīyar*s, represent particular social and religious groups who own the land. The corporate stewardship of *guṭhī* land, so argues Sharma (2004c: 171), mediates between the communal system of the Kirata and the individualism of the Hindu system. Importantly, while the *guṭhī* system tends to grant control to groups and the Hindu system to individuals, both function according to a landlord/tenant relationship. While the *guṭhīyar*, often from noble or merchant castes, served as landlords, the Newar farming caste, or Jyāpus, worked the land as tenants (Sharma 2004a: 82). The division of landlord and tenant speaks to a historical division of labor in Kathmandu history between the merchants who utilized the

[20] Sharma (2004a: 74) likens this system to the *kipaṭ* systems of land ownership in Nepal's various Tibeto-Burman speaking ethnicities, and most commonly associated with the Rai and Limbu in eastern Nepal.

Valley's strategic position between India and Tibet trade routes, and the farmers who utilized its fertile soil (see Whelpton 2004: 25). In caste terms, as we already alluded to, this division was manifested in the division between the merchant and trader's caste of Shresṭha[21] and farming caste of the Jyāpu.

Far from unifying Shresṭha trustee-landlords and Jyāpu tenants, the new Gorkha state only widened the gap between the two groups. When Prithivi Narayan Shah attained political control of Kathmandu Valley, land became consolidated under the central monarch. Although Shah allowed the Malla practice of *guṭhī* endowments to religious and social groups (typically organized along caste, kin, and territorial lines) to continue, he also appropriated large swaths of land to be administered according to the Hindu system of royal ownership, what has been called "state landlordism" (Regmi 1976). The state, or more specifically, the King, possessed all rights to sell land, whereas occupiers merely possessed "rights to its use and to its fruits" (Regmi 1976: 16). The state granted land to laborers (*rukum*), communities (*kipaṭ*), and religious organizations (*guṭhī*), but the majority of land served to ensure political loyalty from nobles (*birtā*)[22] and substitutes for monetary payment to government employees (*jāgīr*). Thus, although owned by the state, this system, particularly in the *birtā* and *jāgīr* arrangements, created a class of landed elites loyal to the King to oversee feudal land relations. The recipients of *birtā* and *jāgīr* lands, known as *birtāwāls* and *jāgīrdar*s, became an intermediary aristocratic class in between the King and the peasantry. In essence, the *birtāwāl* and *jāgīrdar* were tax

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[21] The Shresṭha caste is particularly difficult to categorize, and is a subject of considerable debate (see Shresṭha 2007). As Quigley (1999a: 81) notes, "Newars often say that nowadays anyone can call himself (or herself) a Shresṭha." Here, I refer to the particularly elite "*chatharīya*" Shresṭhas, who were most engaged as functionaries of the Gorkha state, as opposed to the more abundant '*pãchtharīya*' Shresṭha.

[22] *Birtā* grants were given to priests, teachers, soldiers, nobility, royal family; those who "cannot participate in economic pursuits;" but effectively, the grants were used to reward clients for political and social loyalty to the rulers (Regmi 1976: 20).

collectors for the government, such that "From the viewpoint of the peasantry, the authority of landowning elite replaced the state authority" (Regmi 1978: 41). Most often, the *birtāwāl*s and *jāgīrdar*s were absentee landlords who were disembedded from the local community and disinterested in improving agricultural production. Land was a political gift and status symbol, and eventually, a commodity to be leased to middle-men (Regmi 1976: 193). This arrangement produced what the economist, Sujeev Shakya (2009: 16), calls the "rent-seeking mentality" of Nepali elite, which he defines as "The pattern of elite high caste members of society showing an aversion to work, remaining content with doing nothing other than collecting rent and being socially praised for such inactivity."

Although some elite Newars did receive *birtā* land in Kathmandu Valley (Regmi 1976: 27), the far majority of recipients were Bāhun-Chhetri, often those related to the ruling Rana family (Regmi 1976: 33). Newar Shresṭha, particularly those employed in the palace, were more likely to receive *jāgīr* land– a temporary form of property as long as servant was employed in the government (Regmi 1976: 75). However, the most common form of land acquisition by Newars was by leasing it from *birtāwāls* and *jāgīrdars*, and then, in turn, squeezing tenants for more tax and rent. Since tax rates remained stable while agricultural products increased in value in the early 20th Century, land-leasing served as a vehicle to considerable profit (Regmi 1976: 171-186). Rent collection was nowhere the same in the Kingdom and generally considered to be the highest in Kathmandu Valley (Raj 2010: 74). Due to little governmental control over land practices, there never existed any oversight of rent extraction, thus allowing Shresṭha merchants to gain a reputation as exploitative landlords and usurious money-lenders (Rankin 2004:

107-115). Consequently, even though the state technically owned the land and distributed it as a gift, land was given a monetary value based on the exchange between nobles and investing merchants, neither of whom lived near the land nor cultivated it.

As already stated, the Bhaktapur peasant leader, Chaguthi, did not frame land conflict in terms of Jyāpu versus Shresṭha, but rather as tiller versus landowner. Landlords during the Rana era would often live in distant cities. In his family's case, the Kathmandu landlord expected tenants to walk their tax (rice and wheat yields) the 15 kilometers from Bhaktapur (2010: 34). Landlords would occasionally "surprise" tenants with visits expecting payment (2010: 89) or abruptly terminate the tenants' access to lands, since, as Raj (2010: 55) explains, "There was no compensation whatsoever for this abrupt termination of tilling." After taxes were taken, Chaguthi describes how peasants would have to sell the remainder of the crop in order to buy salt and spices; thus, making "a mouthful of rice … a distant dream for us" (2010: 32). Instead of rice, they consumed a "pot full of boiling water with two handfuls of wheat flour" (2010: 32).

The Newar festival of Gaṭhāmugaḥ illuminates the structural relationship to land between tenants and landlords. Gaṭhāmugaḥ occurs during a vulnerable period in the rainy season when the city's protective goddesses, nine Durgas, are dormant, allowing evil spirits to freely enter. After rice is transplanted from seedbeds to paddy fields, these evil spirits are captured in an effigy, 'Gaṭhāmugaḥ' which is then expelled from the city and set on fire. According to Levy's (1990: 517-523) ethnography, based primarily on the perspective of high caste Hindu priests, Gaṭhāmugaḥ was a dangerous character who did not believe in the power of the gods, had no concern for pollution, and would take money

from the rich to give to the poor. His effigy represents "unsocialized sexual power, wanton destructiveness, and a mockery of authority" (1990: 521).

Chaguthi gives a subaltern counter-narrative of Gaṭhāmugaḥ:

> The indigenous population of the Kathmandu Valley cut the forests, leveled the mountains, and constructed the canals branching out from the rivers. They tilled the land and produced the grain. It was thousands of years later that newcomers entered the Valley: from the south, from the east, and from the west. They gave gold coins to the Jyāpus and bought the land. Some of them worked on the land while the majority of them asked the same Jyāpus to till the land for them. Then the cities sprang up. Those who controlled the land and the money also controlled these cities. The laws were promulgated in their favor as it was they who would have authority to promulgate the laws. And a King was selected among them.
>
> There was one Jyāpu (Gaṭhāmugaḥ, who was not happy with all of this. He started visiting the houses of other Jyāpus and tried convincing them that they should not sell their land to the outsiders. What is the use of gold? Can it be eaten? Can it be drunk? Can it be used to construct the hoe? When he started asking questions the Jyāpus started looking for answers. Then the Jyāpus became united under his leadership. But how far can one individual go? Till one's strength allows, isn't it? Soon, he turned old and decrepit. So the birtāwāls represented him as a demon and started a new annual festival. They would construct his obscene idol and would take him away from the city with a great humdrum and then burn him to death.[23]

While Gaṭhāmugaḥ represents a threat to social order for Levy's priests, he is a heroic symbol of resistance for Chaguthi's Jyāpus. The two interpretations reflect two radically different ways of valuing land that are key to understanding contemporary social relations in Kathmandu land practices. Based on Baden-Powell's (cited in Gregory 1997: 87) two archetypes of appropriative value in British India, we are presented with two opposite definitions of rights to land that apply to Kathmandu. The Jyāpu perspective defines value in terms of productive labor, or in Baden-Powell's terms - the "right to first clearing" or ancestral claims to the land. As Chaguthi (Raj 2010: 189) states, the Jyāpu claim to land is a "natural right" since "they have cleared the forests and are the first ones

[23] Raj (2010: 88) points to the memoires of a contemporary of Chaguthi, Nati Maharjan, who gives a slightly different interpretation of Gaṭhāmugaḥ festival. For Maharjan, the outsiders who conspired against the peasant hero were 'lecherous Aryans' in reference, presumably to Gorkha Bāhun-Chhetri.

to cultivate land," while "the landowners claim that they got the land because of their services to the King and his relatives." The landlord, be it a *birtāwāl*, *jāgīrdar*, or middle-man merchant, defined value according to the second of Baden-Powell's terms, the "right claimed by military and superior caste or ruling races, in virtue of birthright or inheritance, which really meant that the land had been obtained by conquest, grant, or some form of superior might, and that the descendents who inherited it regarded it as their 'birthright.'"

This historic divide between land-clearers, or resource makers, and land-recipients, or resource takers, is manifested in contemporary debates of land development. According to the sociologist, Anup Pahari (1992), the valuation of land for non-agricultural production in the Rana era precipitated a trend in Kathmandu Valley's rapid urban growth in which the Valley's unusually fertile farmland is often converted into non-agricultural uses, and the agricultural villages (or 'agro-towns') have become rapidly incorporated into urban areas. As he states, "For all the space of Greater Kathmandu requires for its expansion, there has always been one way to get it – convert agricultural lands into urban use" (1992: 13). Chaguthi explains how in the post-Rana era of the 1950s and 1960s, Jyāpu political organizations lobbied government to declare fertile land as Protected Agricultural Areas. However, these pleas were ignored in favor of the rights of landowners who wanted to sell their plots for residential development. Echoing the urban planning of bygone eras, Chaguthi (Raj 2010: 190) complains, "Non-agricultural practices such as the expansion of residential areas and industrial activities should have been done on the hills and dry plateaus. That would have protected green

areas. The situation is the opposite. The expanding city is eating the fertile land. The hill slopes and tops are barren so we are turned into a grain-importing nation."

We should be cautious to attribute the current urban expansion of Kathmandu Valley to an opposition between native Newars clinging to their farmland while outside Bāhun-Chhetri appropriate it for non-agricultural purposes. The conflict between Bāhun-Chhetri and Newar, which started in the late 18th Century with the creation of the Nepal state, was incorporated within a pre-existing social opposition based on different evaluations of land. On one hand, farmers, or 'insiders,' understood land as a means of production, an inalienable good to be preserved. On the other hand, nobles and merchants, or 'outsiders,' saw land as an ends in and of itself, a mobile gift or commodity to be exchanged for monetary or political gain.

Housing the New Aristocracy: Rana Palaces and British Colonial Urbanism

If the transfer of land from farmers to landlords made peripheral land development possible, the construction of the Rana's palaces made it conceivable. Prior to Rana rule in the late 1840s, the Gorkha monarch inhabited the Malla palaces in Kathmandu's center. According to the 1819 memoirs of one of the first Europeans in Kathmandu, the British physician Francis Hamilton, the Gorkha royalty "have been contented with the palace of the petty chief [Malla] of Kathmandu" (1971: 210). It was not until the 1870s that the Shah royalty shifted from the Malla palace of Kathmandu, Hanuman Dhoka, to Narayanhiti Palace outside of the old city's northeast corner (Weiler 2009: 126).[24] Like the royal family, other Gorkha elites "occupied the best houses of the Newars, or have built others in the same style" (Hamilton 1971: 210). While early Shah

[24] The Narayanhiti Palace became home to the Prime Minister in 1877 and King in 1881 when the five year-old Prithivi Bir Bikram Shah obtained the throne (Gutschow 2011: 855).

kings might have been content not to build their own palaces, they did make significant changes to Malla palaces. For instance, the second Shah King, Bahadur Shah, added a wing to the Patan Palace in the 1780s with glassed window frames, Venetian blinds, and white plaster (Gutschow 2011: 843).

The conquest of the Valley did, however, symbolically at least, change the meaning of power and place. Foremost, selecting Kathmandu as the capital effectively rendered Bhaktapur and Patan politically insignificant cities. Perhaps more importantly, the Shah did not attach ritual or political power to the Kathmandu palace to the extent the Malla had. According to Lecomte-Tilouine (2009: 197), the history of the Malla kings can be understood in terms of place, namely Kathmandu Valley, whereas the history of the Shah kings is 'person-based' in that it emphasizes a genealogical line, thus giving that dynasty a mobile-like historical understanding. For the Shahs, the King is understood to have come from the sun, whereas the Malla king is understood to have come from the grounds of the palace (2009: 204). Finally, in contrast to the immobile Malla palace, the main symbol of the Shah royal genealogy is a rock (*dhungo*), which can be broken into pieces in order to establish the kingship in new areas (2009: 200).

Although the Shah invested power in the person, and not the place, they did, like the Malla, define the Valley to be a "sacred, bounded realm" in need of protection (Liechty 1997: 11-12). However, in contrast to the Newar ritual definition of this sacred realm as the urban settlement in opposition to the wild fields, malevolent ghosts, and lower castes outside of the city's walls, the Shah extended a more political articulation of the kingdom defined in opposition to the cow-eating Mughal and British invaders in India. Prithivi Narayan Shah is perhaps most famous for declaring Nepal to be an '*asal*

Hindustan,' a pure Hindu land in opposition to a polluted outside world (India) ruled by non-Hindus.

One consequence of Shah's definition of Nepal as a land for Hindus was the strict regulation of people and things into Kathmandu Valley (Liechty 1997: 11-12). As Liechty suggests, the insularity of Shah's policies might have had as much to do with his economic philosophy as it did his religious concern with purity. Under the first few Shah kings, the state maintained a trade surplus with the Raj and princely states to the south, importing much less than they were exporting. Not only did the Gorkha elite express little interest in European goods (Liechty 1997: 35), they banned European goods and foreign merchants from entering the Valley (1997: 31).

After the Anglo-Nepali war of 1814-1816, in which the East India Company annexed large swaths of Nepal's land to the east, west, and south, the protectionist social and economic policy of the Kathmandu elite started to change. By 1831, Nepal's trade with India shifted from a surplus to deficit (Liechty 1997: 31). Bhimsen Thapa, the commander of Nepal's military during the war and subsequent Prime Minister,[25] was the first Nepali leader to adopt a "purely western dress" (Liechty 1997: 37). It was the construction of his palace that would change the architectural landscape of Kathmandu in two unprecedented ways. First, the palace represented the birth of new aesthetic features in Nepali architecture that would dominate the palace architecture of the 19th Century: large window frames, white stucco plaster, and balconies (Gutschow 2011: 843). The palace also featured many Mughal or Lucknavi features, such as minarets, archways and domes. Second, his selection of the palace site in Thapathali, outside of the city's walls

[25] Before leading Nepal's war effort, Thapa was first Prime Minister in 1806 at the age of thirty. His first Thapathali palace might have been built during his first tenure as Prime Minister, but historians are not sure exactly when (Gutschow 2011: 844).

and two kilometers from the Kathmandu palace, signaled an even greater departure from Malla rule. Inspired by his time spent living in Lucknow and Benares, Thapa meant his palace to imitate a "Mughal city complex" complete with residential, religious, and service buildings surrounded by ponds, farmland, and gardens (Weiler 2009: 84).

What Thapa started, the Rana oligarchy of 1846-1951 extended with their ostentatious and enormous neo-classical palaces built outside of the Newar cities. Established through a massacre of nobles in 1846, and promulgated through some crafty gamesmanship, Rana rule originated with Jang Bahadur Rana, who elevated the status of Prime Minister to be the effective leader of the state essentially downgrading the Shah Kings to puppets.[26] He was also the first Nepali leader to travel to England and France in 1850, where he acquired a taste for European goods and architecture that he brought back to Nepal.

Jang Bahadur Rana oversaw the construction of just one palace during his rule, an addition to Thapa's Thapathali complex. He also transformed the Kathmandu palace by adding green painted Venetian blinds and white plaster. It was later Rana rulers, however, particulary the Shamsher Ranas, who realized Jang Bahadur's fondness for European architecture by building 37 palaces between 1888 and 1941. The Rana palaces shared no visual similarities with the brick facades, sloped roofs, and ornate woodcarving of the palaces and homes of the Newar cities. Rather they were modeled after the neo-classical architecture and scale of Buckingham Palace, Covent Gardens and Versailles. Inside, too, the palaces were replete with imports of European chandeliers, furniture from Harrods, Chinese and Japanese lacquerware, Wilton and Axminister carpets, Venetian glassware,

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[26] Originally named Kunwar, Jang Bahadur adopted the name Rana to claim a genealogical connection to the Rajput Maharajas of Udaipur, India.

Chinese vases, Italian marble, and Corinthian columns. Neither did they share the humble scale of the Newar built form. Whereas the Malla Kathmandu palace of Hanuman Dhoka takes up 1/25 of the size of Kathmandu's old city, Singha Durbar, the 1903 palace influenced by Versailles, covers 40 hectares, half the area of the old city (Korn 1974: 5) and included 1700 rooms and seven courtyards (Rana 1986: 90; Gutschow 2011: 858). The palaces were "small citadels" (Rana 1986: 89) complete with fountains and pools, geometric gardens, and large walls separating them from the outside world.

In opposition to the Newar model where the rulers represented the center of a bounded city protected by walls and deities against the dangerous and chaotic outside, the new leaders ruled from the outside in secluded and bounded palaces designed for personal use. They displayed a complete disregard for the political power of the city center and ritual power of the city's boundaries. This disregard for the spatial organization of the Newar city must, however, be countered with a consideration of their symbolic motivation to become local leaders who appear to be "stranger-kings" (Sahlins 2008). In their attempt to build palaces in the image of British neo-classical designs, the Ranas were following a common theme in Nepali authority to legitimate rule through the imitation of other regional powers. While the Licchavis borrowed their name, urban design, and land policy from rulers of the north Indian plains, the Mallas also looked to the Maithila cultural connection with the Kingdom of Tirhut (in contemporary Bihar) tracing descent from King Harisimha of Tirhut and from his ancestor, Nānyadeva of south India. They spoke Maithili language in their court in an attempt to appear "not local" (Gellner 1999a: 7-9). In addition to referencing Maithila aristocracy, they imported "secular aspects of Islamic culture" in the Mughal dress, court life, and arches and domes

of Mughal architecture (Slusser 1982: 68-69). In this sense, it is the early Gorkha rulers (Shah kings), who inhabited Malla palaces and attempted to distance themselves from the British and Mughals, who were the exception to the rule of imitating foreign rulers, not the Rana.

The difference between the Ranas and Mallas was not in the intent of their motivation, but rather in the source of their motivation. In the time between the end of the Malla rule in the 1760s and the start of Rana rule a little less than a century later, the political economy of South Asia had greatly shifted from multiple power brokers to the singular dominance of the British. According to Liechty (1997: 59), "What distinguishes the Malla kings from late Rana prime ministers is not some change in elite desires to lead opulent, distinct lives, but the resources they were able to mobilize." The dominance of the British in India allowed the Nepal state access to larger trade networks and capital as well as a more distant model to emulate. As Liechty (1997: 10), the global power of the British empire "was different than anything before" in South Asia.

While scholars have drawn attention to the visual links between the architecture of Rana palaces and European neo-classicism (Rana 1986, Liechty 1997, Weiler 2009), the spatial links between the two offers additional insight into Rana rule and the spatial future of Kathmandu. Just as the Ranas did not occupy Malla palaces and integrate into Newar society, the British built new centers of power in India, most evident in the post-1911 construction of New Delhi, a city separate from Old Delhi, or Shahjahanabad. According to British colonial ideology, spatial distance equaled social distance (King 1984: 35). Towards this goal, they established self-contained settlements for the colonizers in the military and civil lines of the European 'cantonments' and the

administrative-residential civil lines in areas detached from the 'unhygienic' Indian-native settlements. Particularly in the first colonial capital of Calcutta, British residents inhabited spacious and outward-oriented 'bungalows' as opposed to the centripetal courtyard houses of the Bengali elite (King 1984: 35).

In addition to building their palaces outside of the city, the Ranas borrowed a new sense of proportion from the British. In contrast to the Malla palaces, which were not much larger than other houses of the Newar city, the Rana palaces were compound settlements complete with open farmland. Furthermore, like the British, who moved their administration from Calcutta to Shimla, Bombay to Mahabaleshwor and Poona, during the monsoon (Chopra 2012: 89-92), the Rana also preferred to move their 'court' to higher altitude climates of the hills surrounding Kathmandu of Nagarjun, Godavari, and Nagarkot (Rana 1974: 230).

The spatial confinement and mobile administration guaranteed social separation for the Rana aristocracy away from commoners. Beyond this similar objective, however, the Rana were not inspired by the disciplinary techniques of spatial control in colonial India, such as zoning, record keeping, surveillance, and institutionalization of health (Glover 2008: xiii). For the Ranas, the spatial distance of the palaces reflected the spatial ideology of separating interior space from exterior. According to Greta Rana (1986: 90), for the families and servants of the Ranas, the palaces were called '*bhitra*,' or 'inside,' as a space of "security, authority and protection." Taken together, the palaces formed a network of aristocratic space in which the centrally located Singha Durbar served as the "womb centre" (1986: 90). In this sense, the Rana palaces continued the Malla emphasis on centers and boundaries. However, as opposed to the Malla notion of inside

encapsulating the entire city, Rana interior space did not include the rest of the city-state, but rather only extended to the palace walls, as if to distance inhabitants as socially and spatially superior to commoners on the outside. As Weiler (2009: 137) notes, "The notion of the enclosed Newar city was thus transferred to the microcosm of a Rana palace compound, a realm separated from the outside space."

Unsurprisingly, it is the Rana palaces rather than the Newar city, which provide the historical clues for understanding the peripheral urbanization of Kathmandu Valley. However, it was not until after the end of Rana rule in 1951 that non-Rana elites starting moving into the periphery. Thus, the larger proportions and confinement of Rana spaces was limited to the ranks of the aristocracy. Amidst the Rana's 'anglophilic sycophancy' also existed a fear of political rebellion, which often translated into draconian control over foreign imports and the practices of non-elites (Liechty 2003: 44). Particularly, as Indians increasingly challenged British rule in the early 20th Century, the Ranas imposed curfews, forbade large gatherings and barred Nepali commoners from riding in motorized vehicles, wearing European dress, and constructing stucco buildings without permits. The few who could receive building permits were select Newar merchants, who constructed what one scholar has called 'Newar neo-classical' residences – Newars imitating Ranas imitating the British imitating Greeks (Weiler 2009: 137). Particularly after the devastating earthquake of 1934, such Newar elites adopted architectural features from the Rana palaces, such as stucco pillars, cement, iron, glass, and corrugated iron sheets of the palaces. Importantly, however, these houses continued to be built inside the old city, not on the outskirts (Gellner 2001b: 285).

The Banesworization of Kathmandu Valley and South Asian Suburbia

The combination of land valued for non-agricultural purposes and the desire to emulate the Rana elite did not coalesce until the end of Rana rule in 1951 when an influx of migration into Kathmandu Valley started a trend of land pressure that has accelerated since. In concluding this chapter, I explore the legacy of feudal land relations and aristocratic palaces in contemporary urban trends.

As Chattopadhyay (2012) has recently argued, South Asian cases of 'suburbia' need to be analytically distinguished from Anglo-American models based on segregated spaces of classes and work and home.[27] We also need to be aware of key distinctions between the Kathmandu case and the colonial examples from British India. In some respects, the reversal of the periphery from a dangerous space of lower castes and farmland echoes Archer's account of Calcutta's first suburbs. Archer (1997) identifies a shift from the pre-colonial conception of the periphery as the space of criminals, heathen, and pollution hierarchically subordinate to the safe center. By the end of the 17th Century, and increasingly in the 18th and 19th century, he argues that the suburbs became 'contra-positional' to the city center as a symbol of pleasure, leisure and virtue for native elite.

The Kathmandu periphery is no longer associated with lower castes, dangerous spirits and death, but neither is it a contra-positional site of upper class leisure. Whereas the fear of disease epidemics and European colonial notion of sanitation drove much of the movement towards the edges for Indians in colonial cities like Bombay (Chopra 2012) and Calcutta (Sengupta 2012), Kathmandu's expansion followed different

[27] In fact, Chattopadhyay (2012: 52) bases her comment in the pre-colonial peri-urban spaces of Shahjahanabad, the seat of the Mughal power of what is now, Old Delhi, where half of the population lived outside of the city walls amidst an urban periphery consisting of neighborhoods, markets, shrines, gardens, and open spaces.

motivations. The initial development of Kathmandu's periphery prior to 1951 followed a pattern of 'linear urbanization' in which growth mirrored the construction of roads linking the city center with Rana palaces. The Rana built roads from the city center to the palaces, effectively creating a network of roads that appear like spokes of a wheel from the old cities of Kathmandu to Thapathali in the south, Baneswor in the east, Durbar Marg, Bhatbateni, Tangal, Gahiridhara, and Bishal Nagar in the northeast, Lainchour and Maharajganj in the north, and Chauni in the northwest; from Patan to Jawalakhel in the southwest, and Sanepa and Pulchowk to the west (see Gutschow 2011: 865). Alongside these roads, residential localities and commercial centers mushroomed to cater to the transportation routes. Thus, it was economic rather than social or health incentives that first drew people out of the city.

After 1951, these corridors of development continued to grow as did new roads. First, in the 1960s, it was land along the shores of the Bishnumati and Bagmati rivers; and then extending to the 1979 boundary of Ring Road (which circled Kathmandu and Patan) in the localities of Chahabil, Sinamangal, Baneswor, Kalimati, Bishal Nagar, Samakhusi, and Lagankhel. Interestingly, in the 1980s, the roads extending from Ring Road created new corridors of linear urbanization into the periphery: Chabahil to Jorpati, Kalanki to Thankot, Satdobato to Khumaltar, Maharajganj to Buddhanilkantha, Koteswor to Thimi.

After the development of roadside property, the farmland in between roads gradually converted into residential use, a process that urban planners have come to call 'Banesworization,' named after the rapid and unplanned growth of a locality in southeastern Kathmandu, Baneswor. As Pahari (1992: 12) has noted, the Rana pattern of

converting peripheral agricultural land into residential use served as a model of development. Additionally, since most landowners were not involved in agricultural production, they found more profit in selling land, which was quickly appreciating due to increased population, than from rent from tenants. The farmland and rural hamlets became engulfed by residential development. Parajuli (2008) charts this redefinition of the city: "The rice paddies were swallowed up – initially by suburban compounds and bungalows, then by the congestion of unplanned modern shelters, and finally, in the last few years, by the establishment of gated housing colonies and apartment blocks." Consequently, from the sky Kathmandu looks like a "fried egg" of a dense urban core surrounded by a "sprawling ring" of post-1951 growth (Liechty 2003: 5).

In this second wave of 'fill-in' development, residents started to build larger houses often surrounded by walls, much like miniature versions of the Rana palaces. Compared to the brick townhouses and high density of the Newar city core, most new neighborhoods have very low density and consist of seemingly haphazard organization of randomly placed detached houses. Further, unlike Newar houses, which border the street, most new houses possess high concrete or brick boundary walls in between the road (or footpath) and residence. In this sense, new houses have more in common with the Nepali village houses of Bāhun-Chhetri and Tamang (the two most common cases), which typically have courtyards consisting of shrines and vegetable gardens in between the house and public thorough-way. Like the meaning of 'inside' in Rana palaces, new compound residences define interior space in terms of private residence instead of the public city.

Conclusion

By all accounts, the new urban growth of Kathmandu looks nothing like the Newar urbanism of the old city centers. The city's growth over the last six decades has indeed eliminated the ritual and cultural importance of boundaries and centers in the old cities. Elites no longer express prestige in inhabiting central residences, but rather in building large compounds in the urban periphery. Thus, social status is reflected more in physical distance and separation from the center than integration into it. However, these changes are not simply consequences of a change in the ethnicity of rulers, from Newar Malla to Bāhun-Chhetri Gorkha or the liberal reforms of the 1951 economy. Rather they have historical antecedents in the land policies of Malla and Gorkha states, and the elite penchant for emulating regional powers.

Chapter 3. Jyāpu Farmers, Dalāl Land Pimps, and Housing Companies: Land in a Time of Urbanization

Property disputes are certainly not uncommon in Maitri Nagar, a place where plots of land are bought and sold on a daily basis. It was unusual, however, to learn of a dispute that led to property destruction. Upon hearing about two men destroying a brick boundary wall, a 13 ānā plot of land in the eastern edge of Maitri Nagar, I immediately wanted to investigate what had happened. It turns out that the two men were brothers, Krishna and Sunil Maharjan, were protesting the sale of the plot #7 of which they claimed to be the owners. Several days prior to constructing the boundary wall, the family of Sushila Maya Silwal had purchased one-third of plot #7 from Uttam, a local land broker (*dalāl*), for 450,000 NRs ($6,500) per ānā. When I asked about the motives behind the Maharjans' act, neighbors all seemed to agree that this conflict was an example of ethnic tension between Kirtipur Newars and Bāhun-Chhetri moving into Maitri Nagar. Kirtipur is a large town consisting of a majority of Jyāpu (Maharjan) farming castes. As of 2004, the vast majority of land in Maitri Nagar was farmland belonging to Kirtipur Jyāpu farmers. However, in the subsequent years, much of that land had transferred from Kirtipur residents to non-Newar, often Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl*s who, in turn, sold the land to prospective house-builders or held the land speculating that its value would increase.

The contemporary 'ethnic tone' of Kirtipur Jyāpu's struggle against the *dalāl* and settlers reflects the ethnic uncertainties of the post-Maoist insurgency Nepal, but it also perpetuates a much older anxiety about losing land to non-farming outsiders. While the destructive act of the Maharjan brothers might have signaled an element of ethnic-inspired disapproval of the Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl* and buyer, I argue that it reflects a

historical tension between two different ways of valuing land. Specifically, the conflict speaks to a structural opposition between 'outsiders' who value land as a mobile and exchangable commodity or gift (Newar merchants, state-appointed landlords, the state) and 'insiders' who value land as an inalienable good.

From the perspective of Kirtipur Jyāpu, the story of Maitri Nagar is the story of land alienation, a story reflective of much of Kathmandu's agricultural periphery. Between 2041 B.S. (1984/1985) and 2057 B.S. (2000/2001) agricultural land-use in Kathmandu Valley declined from 64% to 41.4% while residential land-use grew from 5.6% to 27.6% (KUDBA 2059 B.S.). In this chapter, I document this transition from the end of the Rana era in 1951 through the beginning of the 21st Century with a focus on the social relations of land. Although 1951 represents a formal departure from the feudal relations of the Rana era, the structure of landlord-tenant exploitation continues from the perspective of Newar farmers (Jyāpu).

Unmaking Feudalism: Post-Rana Privatization and the meaning of Ownership

In the wake of the democratic reforms of the 1950s, land shifted from state landlordism to private property. In a rush to jettison the feudal relations of Rana policies, the new government quickly abolished state ownership of land in 1951, and subsequently ceased to distribute *jāgīr* grants in 1952, and the *birtā* grants in 1956. In Kathmandu Valley, this change of policy led to the rapid increase of land prices. In a study of land prices from 1954 to 1978, Manandhar and Ranjitkar (1981) claim that the appraisal of land shifted from "agricultural value" to based on "speculative value." Unsurprisingly, this shift reflects a massive appreciation of monetary worth. For example, for one ropani

(0.05 hectare)[28] of land in inner core of Kathmandu, the price increased from 1400 NRs ($20) in 1954 to 58,000 ($828) per ropani in 1978. With a brief exception in the mid-1990s, these prices increased exponentially in the last two decades to the point now where one ropani in the city center would be conservatively estimated at 320 million NRs ($4.5 million).[29]

On the surface, Nepal's 1951 transition from an oligarchic autocracy to an era of democratic reforms seems to have precipitated a shift from state-run feudalism in which land was valued as an immobile good by farmers or a gift for nobles, to a system of privatization in which land is an exchangeable commodity. Analysis of property in post-socialist Europe is suggestive in questioning Nepal's transition. In particular, Katherine Verdery's (2003: 18-19) notion of 'property regime' in post-socialist Transylvania is helpful. She refers to 'property regime' as a heuristic concept referring to a "regular pattern of occurrences," and not a top-down imposition. Verdery shows how various property regimes – systems for organizing the relationship between things, goods, and values - can coexist in any given society. Most importantly, Verdery's formulation conceives of a property regime as a process of "making and unmaking certain kinds of relationships" (2003: 13). If we understand property regimes to be a process rather than an end point, the historical nuances of land policy and practices follow a more complex narrative of change in Nepal. As I will show, it would not be completely accurate to attach the history of land relations in Nepal to any one system of organizing economic relations. As I demonstrate in chapter two, the Shah-Rana era (1768-1951) consisted of a

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[28] 1 Ropani = 16 ānā, 5476 sq. feet, 0.05 hectare. Most plots sold for houses are 4 ānā or ¼ ropani (1368 sq. feet) large.

[29] The one exception being the short stint of the UML government in 1994 when land values plummeted out of fears that the communist government would appropriate land from large landlords.

mixture of forms of exchange ranging from gift-system in which the state gave land to nobles, to a commodity-system in which nobles leased land to merchants, who in turn rented it to farmers. Although land was privatized after the 1951 political transition, feudal elements of labor relations have persisted. It is thus necessary to remove any teleological presumptions about the transformation of the country's property regime. Just as Verdery (2003: 14) characterizes post-socialist Transylvania as a process of "unmaking socialist property," we might most appropriately refer to contemporary Nepal as the unmaking of feudal land relations.

Considering land regimes as processes allows us to consider how value is produced in land transactions. Building on anthropological approaches to property, I understand the process of value production to be both symbolically and materially relative to the cultural and historical conditions in which it takes place (Hann 1998). As such, let us substitute the assumption of scarcity as a human universal for the view that "resources are made scarce within a given system of values and power relations" (Verdery 2003: 14-15). The question, thus, becomes not just how scarcity is "made and maintained" (Gregory 1997: 74), but also what scarcity means to structurally opposed social positions.

As a starting point, it is necessary to interrogate the reforms of the post-Rana era. The reforms of land laws in the 1950s and 1960s did not immediately transform relations between tenant and landlord. Following India's "land-to-the-tillers" movements, and supported by the agenda of the US government and other international development to "contain communism," the Nepal state has made numerous attempts to reform land ownership (Adhikari 2011: 21). In particular, the Land-Related Act of 1964 fixed upper

ceilings of land ownership (2.67 hectares or 50 ropani in Kathmandu Valley); and granted tenancy rights to cultivators who had tilled land for one main crop season; and maximized rent payment of 50% of main crop produce (Adhikari 2011: 23). However, an "alliance of landlords, the army and monarch" succeeded at stifling these reforms and avoiding ceiling laws by circulating land to family members (Adhikari 2011: 24). Several times since, the government has debated even stricter land ceilings, but none has successfully implemented reforms.[30] Most recently, the World Bank and government implemented a "land-bank policy" in 2005 to provide credit to landless farmers to buy from willing sellers leaving insurgency-affected areas, but this plan, too, was subverted since most of the "buyers" were themselves displaced landlords (Adhikari 2011: 25).

The failure of reforms has maintained the 'rent-seeking mentality' (Shakya 2009) of elite landlords. Thus, despite the shift in ownership from the state to private individuals, the logic of rentier-ism persists whereby the main landholders profit from the ownership, and not the production, of land. This lack of transformation seeks comparison to the post-socialist transition of eastern Europe in the 1990s. As shown in Verdery's (2003) study of de-collectivization in Transylvania, a new "land regime" does not necessarily produce new ownership rights. As many economists miscalculated, shifting state-owned property into private individual ownership should not be read as a necessary step to capitalism and new social relations. In the Nepal case, similarly, the reforms of the 1950s and 1960s should not be considered a transition from feudalism to capitalism, but rather a slow and complex development that continues to take a unique shape in current property transactions.

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[30] In response to the momentum of the Maoist insurgency in 2001, the government introduced new land ceilings, which were half of the previous limit (1.5 hectares or 25 ropani in Kathmandu Valley).

Rather than the land reforms of the 1950s and 1960s, it was the urbanization of periphery land starting in the 1970s that has made the greatest impact on the social relations of land. While the Rana palaces represented the linear urbanization of the city with roads connecting old city and palaces (see chapter 2), it was not until the 1970s that the open areas in between the old cities and palaces started to fill-in. Known informally in Kathmandu as 'Baneshworization,' I refer to it here as secondary urbanization. With the conversion of land use from agriculture to residential, the relationship between landlord and renter, or rentier and producer, is quickly fading. The role of the state, too, has declined to that of a bit player in the profitable housing market.[31] The lack of centralized planning has allowed the haphazard and unplanned transformation of open fields into residential units. More recently, this trend has accelerated due to the (1) explosion of the speculative real estate industry; and (2) construction boom of tall cement houses. I divide the main players of this secondary urbanization into two groups. First there are the *dalāl* brokers who buy and sell land on a plot-by-plot basis without any guidance from a larger plan. The development of neighborhoods such as Baneshwor, Chabahil, Lagankhel, outside of the city core but inside Ring Road, was mostly conducted by *dalāl*s. More recently, a second group has emerged in the development of a more formal real estate industry, which, with the support of private bank financing, purchased larger parcels of land to be developed for housing colonies and apartment complexes. Amidst the great shortage of housing and the state's inability to provide housing, a new social structure has

[31] Since the late 1970s, the state has entered the housing/land market in three ways. In the first, the government buys land to create 'site and services' housing settlements (such as Golfuṭar and Kuleshwor, mentioned in chapters 1 and 4) intended to provide plots complete with running water, electricity, paved roads, and sewage lines. The second, called 'land pooling,' refers to an intermediary development in which owners put aside land for the government to develop and sell from which the owners and government share the profit. The third, 'guided land development' asks residents to donate land in order to develop roads and improve the value of the locality.

emerged between land-owners selling land to middle-man brokers (*dalāl*) and real estate/housing companies, who, in turn, sell to consumers (often migrants seeking their first property in the city or urban elites seeking more land) purchasing land for houses. Like the land-leasing merchants of the previous era, the *dalāl*s view land as an alienable product to be valued for monetary exchange. At the same rate, however, the *dalāl*s (more so than the companies) tend to be more embedded within the local society than the often distant landlords of the previous era.

Despite the shift in land use from agricultural to residential, the structure of landlord-tenant conflict continues. Importantly, decades of democratic social movements and the ten-year Maoist insurgency (1996-2006) have tilted social support to the side of tenant, which has effectively complicated the meaning of ownership. Rajendra Pradhan's (2007) analysis of a recent land dispute in Kathmandu illustrates this point. Despite a long relationship between a Kathmandu Newar land-owner and his Bāhun tenant, who lives near the plot of land outside the city, the owner asked the Land Reforms Office (LRO) to enforce the eviction of the tenant on the grounds that he had not paid rent (half of main crop or equivalent cash payment). The tenant claimed that he had paid the rent, but that the owner had never provided him with a receipt of payment. Although the LRO ruled that the tenant should be not be evicted for not providing proof of payment, subsequent rulings in the Appellate Court and Supreme Court overturned this decision, making the landlord the full rights-owner of the land without any tenant.[32] In spite of these decisions, the tenant never stopped farming the land; rather, he merely stopped paying rent. The landlord even had the tenant jailed "for a few days on several occasions"

[32] The tenant, thus, "lost not only his right to cultivate the land but also more importantly rights to his share of the land of which he had been the registered tenant" (Pradhan 2007: 303).

(2007: 304), but ultimately Pradhan argues that the tenant's social capital allowed him to continue farming the land in spite of the court decisions. As a member of a different ethnic group (Newar), different political party (Nepali Congress, NC), and resident of the distant city, the owner lacked the "symbolic capital" to stop the tenant, a Bāhun member of the communist UML (United Marxist-Leninist) party, from working the fields because of the social support provided by his fellow Bāhun-Chhetri villagers. Additionally, Pradhan argues that the popularity of land reform initiatives, 1990 pro-democracy movement, and Maoist insurgency further emboldened the tenant to demand his claim to the property.

The "popular non-state law" in favor of the tenant, in practice, rendered the rule of the courts effectively meaningless (2007: 315). As full legal owner of the land, the landlord then sold the land to a retired Gurkha (Nepali regiment in British military) living in England, but nonetheless, the tenant continued to work the land and even believed that he had "ultimate recourse" to the Maoists for support (2007: 305). This case reconfirms what Verdery (2003: 31) calls the distinction between property rights and ownership. While the courts and state bureaucracy clearly affirmed the landlord's right to the land, the tenant claimed effective ownership of the plot. The ambiguity of ownership highlights the different understandings of land value. The owner, like the *birtāwāl*s of the Rana era, bases value in the non-productive exchange or rent value of the land. Conversely, the tenant produces land value through labor and production by "transform[ing] a natural good into a household good" (Gregory 1997: 88)] and claiming social membership in the local community. Since the land happens to be located in a locality of UML-aligned Bāhun-Chhetri farmers, political and ethnic affiliation provides the social support to the

tenant against the outsider Newar and NC-aligned landlord. However, we may still ask what constitutes the category of 'community' by looking beyond ethnic and political ties towards the ways in which land is valued. To pursue this question, I turn to the community of the Kirtipur Jyāpu.

Kirtipur Jyāpu

Prior to 2004, the majority of land in Maitri Nagar was farmed by Newar farmers (Jyāpu) from Kirtipur. Kirtipur is a small Newar city consisting of 10,000 inhabitants of which 65% belong to Jyāpu farming caste (Grandin 1994: 160). In the discourse of Kirtipur's farmers, land sounds very similar to Gregory's (1997) notion of a good. For Gregory, the main distinction between commodity, gift and goods is revealed in their mobility. While commodities – valued when exchanged from house to market, and gifts - valued when exchanged between houses, are both mobile; goods are immobile - they remain within the house. In fact, as "inalienable keepsakes," the owners of goods, or "guardians," are punished and even alienated from their moral community for giving or selling a good. As such, the farmers are guardians of the land, an "inalienable keepsake," in which "the supreme value of land lies in the prestige and sense of belonging it gives to its guardians and … this makes them very reluctant to sell" (1997: 111) Indeed, Kirtipur farmers are reluctant to sell land. And yet, they have sold land, lots of it, to outsiders who belong not to the moral community of Kirtipur, but to that of Kathmandu or elsewhere. The selling of land is often explained through tales of family conflict or illness. Even when there is no conflict or tragedy, the alienation of land is assumed to be done against one's will, as one Kirtipur resident sympathetically explained, "Anyone who sells land must be in some sort of trouble."

Even worse than selling privately owned land is the alienation of *guthī* land. *Guthī* is literally translated as 'association' or 'assembly' and refers to social groups who communally possess a plot of land to support their activities. While it is not an exclusively Newar practice, *guthī* is most often associated with Newar culture, especially in Kathmandu. For Newars in Kathmandu, *guthī* associations are based on bonds of residence, kinship and caste and function to carry out religious, social and economic activities, such as funerals and the worship of lineage deities (see Toffin 2007e). The Nepali government defines *guthī* land as permanently endowed, communally owned, exempted from taxes, and importantly, prohibited from alienation (Regmi 1976: 63). Within Newar society, the selling or alienation of *guthī* land is seen as morally reprehensible, a sin punished by the gods (Gellner 1992: 234).

According to a Jyāpu history of Kirtipur land, land was not sold but taken – a claim based on a long history of exploitation. In chapter two, we covered the historical sources of land alienation, particularly the Shresṭha merchants, or *guthīyār*s, who were known to embezzle *guthī* land or exploit Jyāpu tenants. During the Shah-Rana era, it was the state-appointed *birtāwal*s and *jāgīrdar*s, often Bahun-Chhetri nobles or Shresṭha functionaries of the King, who expropriated land from indigenous farmers. More recently, Kirtipur Newars blame the state for taking their land to create Nepal's national university, Tribhuvan University (TU). According to one estimate, in 1965, the state expropriated 50% the entire land owned by Kirtipur farmers in exchange for undervalued payments, thus forcing many farming families into other occupations such as music or construction (Grandin 1994: 160). In contemporary Maitri Nagar, at the level of ideology, the outside threat of land-takers is not the merchant Shresṭha or the state, but rather the

figure of the Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl* land broker who is responsible for bringing large numbers of migrants moving into their land.

In the lived space of Kirtipur, the dichotomy between land-users and land-takers is not so clear. Following Bohannan's (1958) exchange spheres, we may ask how the exchange of land functions morally in relation to other exchanges. Liechty (2003: 99) argues that a moral division exists in Kathmandu between the "stabilizing" and "nurturing" consumption of land and gold, what he calls 'old materialism,' and the "unstable" and "treacherous realm" of 'new materialism,' such as motorbikes and TVs. As one might expect from market pressures, Kirtipur land-owners are selling land. Sushant Maharjan, a Kirtipur Jyāpu, who manages a book-store in Patan's central neighborhood of Patan Dhoka, the issue is one of labor. The youth of Kirtipur do not want to work in the fields and their fathers have wage-earning jobs so the only people left to do the work are the '*āmāharu*' (mothers). In his case, along with some cousins, they have sold land to build and start a private college in Kirtipur to grant finance degrees. Krishna and Sunil Maharjan, the brothers from the opening narrative, sold half of their land back in the early 1990s to pay for their father's illness. They also used the money to build a house in Tyangalaphat (new locality in between Maitri Nagar and Kirtipur) where they inhabit the top floor and rent out the lower three floors to students of Tribhuvan University. In these two cases, land has been exchanged for opportunities in education and housing, a trend that reflects a larger structural shift from productive labor to tertiary labor in Kathmandu Valley.

The Dalāl Land Pimp

Literally translated as 'middle man,' *dalāl* is also the common term for pimp in Nepali vernacular. What, then, accounts for this association between land brokers and pimps? In the Kathmandu periphery, *dalāl*s are ubiquitous. As one Maitri Nagar resident, Rajendra, joked, "out of five men you meet on the street, four are *dalāl*s." A quick glance at the appreciation of land value, and it is no surprise that real estate has become the business of choice. In the four years I have been documenting land prices in Maitri Nagar, they have, on average, quadrupled from 150,000 NRs ($2140) per ānā to 600,000-700,000 NRs per ānā ($8570-$10,000). Considering that this site was in a less than favorable position outside of Ring Road in a river valley prone to flooding, this price growth is relatively low compared to land closer to the city center or peripheral localities on higher ground with views of the city.

Some *dalāl* are simply 'middle men' who negotiate the sale between owner and buyer and take a small percentage of the sale. Others actually purchase land and then re-sell it for a higher value. This is done through several means. One group might just benefit from waiting for values to appreciate based on speculation. Others develop the plot by leveling it, adding sewage/water lines, access roads, and electricity. Of course, each developer's input fluctuates development to development. In the process of improving one lot, developers might actually destroy the agricultural viability of another, thus, ensuring its entry into the land market. This is done by leveling hill-tops with sand excavation, which often leads to landslides (Shrestha 2011: 14). *Dalāl* developers are also known to purposefully block access to drainage and irrigation sources for adjacent land (Shrestha 2011: 14).

It is not uncommon to hear a story about a dishonest of deceitful *dalāl*. Mostly, such stories refer to how a *dalāl* cheated buyers. They will tell the seller one price and the buyer another higher price in order take what is left over, or so the narrative goes. Additionally, they will promise the buyer the luxury of utilities – sewage pipe, water pipe, paved road, but never deliver. The worst offense though are those who sell land that does not exist or cannot legally be sold.[33] Bijay, a student at Tribhuvan University, who along with his father, a civil servant working in Nuwakot, bought a piece of land from a *dalāl* in 2005. After purchasing the plot, Bijay and his father started to construct a brick wall to demarcate their property. Soon after commencing construction, one neighbor told them "That is not your land." A government land official was then called to confirm that the property number they had bought was actually uninhabitable property on the other side of the river valley. The *dalāl* had promised them one piece of land while writing the property number of another piece of land.

While I do not doubt that many such cases of improper land transactions have occurred in the Kathmandu's real estate boom, I also observed that the major *dalāl*s of Maitri Nagar happen to be central and respected figures in the new locality. From my observations, the two most significant *dalāl*s of Maitri Nagar, who I will call Shah and Ram Prasad, were powerful figures in most events occurring in the locality. Both were subjects of considerable gossip and rumors. While residents mocked Shah for being stingy – living in a one-story modest brick house while he rented out his large four-story white-washed house, they spread stories of Ram Prasad's former crimes of loan

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[33] The dubious *dalāl* who sells non-existent land is common theme in Nepali comedy. In one particularly popular rendition of this story, the comedic duo Ram Krishna Shrestha and Hari Bhamsa Acharya (Mahajodi) made the film *Lalpurja* about a deceitful broker's attempt to fool a farmer into buying a piece of property that does not exist.

embezzlements. However, both were at the center of locality disputes and garnered reverence in their everyday interactions. As I discuss in chapter 7, Shah used his connections to resolve a conflict over the construction of a sewage line in a unit of plots he was developing. For instance, Ram Prasad's 'real estate office' and tea-shop next door were constantly full of residents speculating on the value of land and debating property disputes.

In Levien's (2011) study of *dalāl*s in the Indian state of Rajasthan, he argues that *dalāl*s use social capital not towards the collective good of democracy and development, but rather towards the opposite ends of private gain. In exploiting the trust of their fellow villagers, they undermine the 'norms' and 'trust' that might enable collective action (2011: 15). My observation of Maitri Nagar *dalāl*s appears closer to Gregory's (1997: 145) description of another category of Indian middle-men, *kochiya* grain merchants in north India, who are "part of the farming community, not a class apart from it. They are dealing with friends and relations, and their profits depend upon establishing and maintaining good relations with people, not by exploiting them." In the terms of Hansen and Verkaiik (2009: 16), Shah and Ram Prasad are 'urban specialists' – "individuals who by virtue of their reputation, skills and imputed connections provide services, connectivity and knowledge to ordinary dwellers … These figures are supposed to be in the know, supposed to have access to resources and knowledge that are not readily available to ordinary people."

I suggest that we read *dalāl* stories as morality tales about the uncertainty caused by rapid transition of the social value attributed to land. To discuss this further, I return to the connection with prostitution, particularly to Mark Liechty's reading of prostitution

narratives as morality tales in the cases of women who exchange sex for money or fashion clothing (2010b: 237-248). According to Liechty, "The story of the 'fashion prostitute' is a way of expressing anxiety over the power of the new world of consumer goods" and "the problems surrounding women's work and women's independence in a patriarchal society." Thus, instead of asking why *dalāl*s are so disliked, the more fruitful question is – what moral anxieties are revealed in the *dalāl* tales? To pursue this line of inquiry, I turn to two social positions structurally opposed to the *dalāl*: the housing company and the Kirtipur Jyāpu.

The Housing Company

The growing housing industry in Kathmandu frames the *dalāl* as a representative of a disorganized and corrupt city. In April 2009, the Nepal Land and Housing Association held its inaugural Real Estate 'Expo' in Kathmandu. A collection of dignitaries from construction companies, real estate associations, and the government each echoed the commitment of Nepal's 2006 uprising to make a "New Nepal," to which they would contribute by making a "*byabasṭit shahar*" (planned city). The Nepal Land and Housing Developer's Association President, Bijay Kumar Gachedar, captured this sentiment, stating that in order for Kathmandu to be a civilized society, it was necessary to destroy society's bad impression of contractors and *dalāl* for being "*thog*" (cheaters), "*paisā mātra kamāune hoina, muluk banāune rāmro shahar banāune ho*' ('We are not working only for money, but to build the country, to build a great city'). This rhetoric borrows heavily from the developmentalist nationalism of King Mahendra's Panchayat days, 1960-1990, which promoted service to the nation over personal enrichment and questions of social difference.

In practice, the *byabasṭhit* ('planned') and *rāmro shahar* ('great city') imagined by the real estate industry refers to the large-scale privatization of land to meet the urban elite's need for secure and exclusive housing with dependable infrastructure and utilities. With the entrance of Nepal's banks into the land and housing market,[34] the real estate industry has remade the Kathmandu Valley periphery with planned neighborhoods, gated housing colonies, and high-rise apartment complexes. With the passage of the Ownership of Joint Housing Act of B.S. 2054 (1997), the Nepali government set guidelines for the building of multiple housing units within one building or site. Soon thereafter, one of Nepal's leading industrial companies, Chaudhary Group, built Nepal's first housing colony, Kathmandu Residency, in southwestern Kathmandu. By 2004, there were over twenty housing colonies being constructed, and by the end of research in 2009, 72 housing colonies and apartments had been built or had started construction. Housing colonies, or simply 'housing' in Kathmandu vernacular, have come to represent a new form of residential social organization in which a private company plans and builds the residential units and provides the colony with infrastructure, services, security system,[35] and an enclosing wall. Once construction is completed, the company will 'hand-over' the

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[34] Having been launched as recently as the early 1990s, Nepal's private banking industry grew consistently during the initial years of multiparty democracy and neo-liberal policies of the ruling Nepali Congress. While rural to urban migration ensured that bank deposits continued to grow, the banking industry grew weary of investing in the industrial and commercial sectors, which were suffering from the Maoist-insurgency. Like the global pool of money found in the 2000s American housing market, Nepali banks turned to home loans as its preferred new source. This investment came in two forms. The first was a link with construction companies to establish a 'housing industry' – a growing production of apartment complexes and housing colonies. The second was to increase the accessibility and availability of loans for private individuals to purchase land and construct houses. In just two years from 2007 to 2009, loans for residential construction and real estate grew from 18.86 billion NRs to 59.71 billion NRs.

[35] Similar to Waldrop's (2004:99) observation in a New Delhi housing colony, in contrast to the heavy security and surveillance of gated communities in North and South America, Pleasant Housing's guards do not use an intercom system or CCTV. They permit vehicles to enter on face recognition and often ignore rules of visitation (posted just inside the colony). Moreover, the colony's iron and cement wall can hardly be considered impenetrable.

colony to residents who are expected to form management committees that handle residents' problems and organize social activities.

Similar to the global phenomenon of what Theresa Caldeira (1999) calls "fortified enclaves," Kathmandu's colonies and apartments represent class segregation and the privatization of public goods, such as water and power. With prices starting at 5 million NRs ($62,500), housing is limited to the "affluent few or the diaspora that are earning big in foreign lands" (Gautam 2009: 59).[36] The advertisements for housing and apartments make explicit references to the desire for exclusive living arrangements. For example, the Cityscape Apartments asks customers to 'Stake your claim at city's most exclusive address' (see figure 3). In the case of two newer building projects, Status Enclave and Prestige Apartment, the name explicitly draws on the connection between residence and status. Beneath the claim to be making a planned city for a new Nepal exists the reality of a city splitting in two – between the private planning and reliable infrastructure for the few who can afford it and the rest. The informal economy of the *dalāl*s represents the 'rest,' the city left behind, or as the upper classes worry, a continuation of the status quo of unplanned urbanization. In the words of the former Vice Chairman of Nepal's Planning Commission, "Isn't Kathmandu supposed to be a modern metropolis? Still, you will find plenty of peasants around." The real estate agents worry about the consequences of rapid unplanned urbanization due to migration as an invasion of peasants with no knowledge of urban living.

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[36] 'Diaspora', or NRNs (non-resident Nepalis), typically does not refer to the large group of Nepali migrant laborers in the Middle East, India and Malaysia.

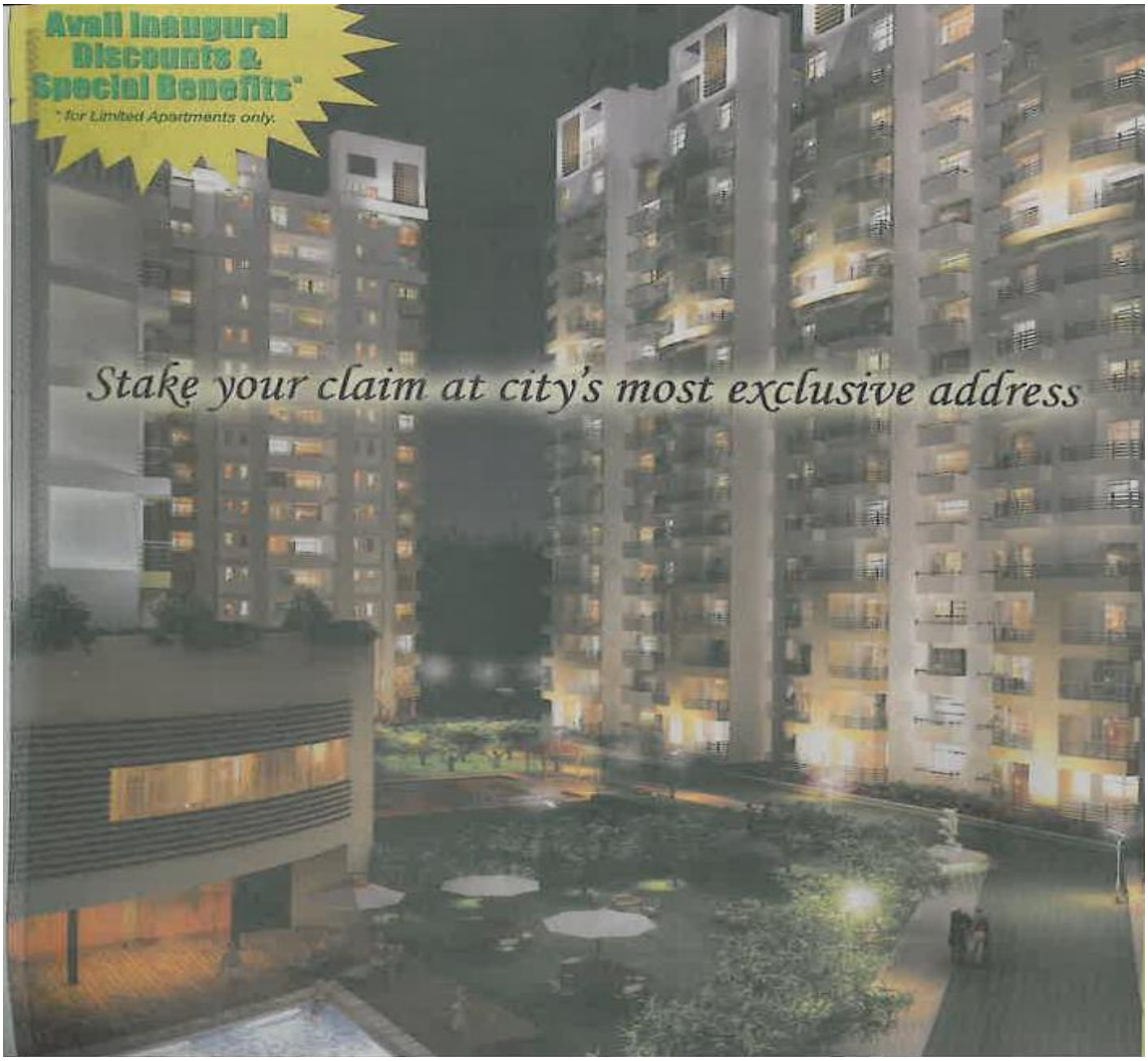

Figure 3: Adverts for Kathmandu Housing Colonies and Apartments

The case of Pleasant Housing, Phase II

Pleasant Housing is one of the oldest housing and real estate companies in Kathmandu. Started as a land investment company by the name, Pleasant Finance, Pleasant Housing built its first housing colony in 1999 and is in the process of beginning its fourth colony, as well as a mall and apartment complex in the city center. The company prides itself for being a composed of bankers and engineers who can deliver financial, physical, and aesthetic expertise to the emergent housing and land industry of Nepal. The company's second housing colony, Phase II, was started in 2004 in what used to be terraced fields mostly owned by a Bāhun landlord living in Kalanki. Significantly, the colony's location stands outside of the municipality of Kirtipur, which according to Phase II's director, Shyam Amatya, meant that the land was cheaper and the building by-laws were much less rigorous to follow.

Pleasant Finance advertised Phase II colony in four specific ways. The first was to sell the colony as an 'all-in-one' city that offers a store, swimming pool, restaurant, sauna, party palace, and pre-school to residents. Although these services were supposed to be completed in 2008, the company broke its promise in order to increase the colony size from 96 to 125 houses. The second appeal of the colony was in the 'traditional look' of the houses uniform architecture of exposed brick façade and sloped roofs (see ch. 5). Third, and most importantly Amatya urges, is the offer of security that the colony's walls and security guards offer. Finally, the colony promises a steady supply of water provided by a private well just for residents. The services provided by the company, however, were only temporary. Ultimately, once the 125 houses were sold and additional buildings built, the company planned to 'hand-over' operations of the colony to residents. At this point,

the colony converts into a cooperative of residents who are completely responsible for the security, water, electricity, and maintenance of grounds (see chapter 7).

From the perspective of Kirtipur Jyāpu, Pleasant Housing and other nearby housing colonies do not represent a threat separate from that of the *dalāl*. In fact, as Sushant Maharjan emphasized to me while visiting my residence in the colony, instead of protesting the conversion of a large piece of farmland into residences, he hoped to one day buy a house in the colony. For him, much like the housing industry representatives, the colony represents organized urbanization. While he applauded the colony and housing industry – even wanting to enter it – he condemned the actions of the *dalāl*, particularly in ethnic terms. Specifically, the *dalāl* represents the cause and the symbol of the influx of Bāhun-Chhetri into their farmland. Like other Kirtipur Jyāpu, Sushant refers to Newars as '*sṭhaniya mānchhe*' (local people), whereas Bāhun-Chhetri are '*bāhirako mānchhe*' (outside people). It follows that *dalāl*s are not Newars and since the majority of migrants in the area are Bāhun-Chhetri, *dalāl*s are Bāhun-Chhetri. A Kirtipur Maoist politician asked me, "Have you ever seen a Newar *dalāl*?" I had, but before I could answer, he spoke for me, answering "No you haven't, because they are all Bāhuns." According to him, the non-Newar *dalāl*s are selling land to other outsiders not for agricultural production, but for the construction of houses, or even worse, land speculation. The anxiety here is that land, absolutely central to the sense of economy and culture in Kirtipur, is not only being taken by outsiders, but it is shifting in use from productive to non-productive purposes.

The disdain for Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl*s also indexes a growing anxiety about territory and nationality in the post-insurgency era of Nepal's particular brand of ethnic

politics. Interestingly, the same Kirtipur politician who was quick to claim that all *dalāl*s are Bāhun also pointed to the conflict within the Newar ethnicity as a source of the city's problems. Specifically, he accuses the "Shresṭha traders" of holding back the indigenous farmers in the move towards a Newar state. His comments compelled me to reconsider the difference between Newars and Bāhun-Chhetri. Importantly, in the terminology of Nepali and Newar language, the same term, *jāt*, is used to distinguish castes within Newar society, such as Jyāpu or Shresṭha, or between 'ethnic' groups in Nepal, such as Newar or Bāhun-Chhetri. Fisher (2001: 194) provides three definitions of *jāt*. First, *jāt* refers to Hindu caste groups in which endogamy and commensality are practiced. This would be the base of Shresṭha or Jyāpu, or even Bāhun or Chhetri. The second definition, however, refers to a social classification much closer to the concept of ethnicity, as culturally and linguistically distinct groups within which multiple castes co-exist. This would be the case of Newars of Kathmandu Valley, who share a language, territory, and occupational structure, or perhaps more loosely, the Parbatiyā (or Indo-Nepalese), a category of Nepali speakers. Finally, Fisher defines *jāt* as a legal status, as group identities are defined by the Nepal state. In the case of Fisher's ethnography of the Thakali, a *jāt* of Nepal's central mountain areas, he concludes that *jāt* identity is ultimately "flexible, permeable, malleable with fluid boundaries" (2001: 12) and must be understood as responses to "political and economic opportunities and constraints" (2001: 15).

The idea of Newar ethnicity is very reflective of fluctuating political and economic circumstances. Although linked to the territory of Kathmandu Valley and a common language, on issues of origin, caste, religion, and politics, Newar people remain

deeply divided (Gellner 2003:76). Prior to 1990, Newar often referred only to the upper castes of Newar society – Shresṭha merchants, royal functionaries, and Buddhist and Hindu priests – some of whom were ranked ritually superior to the 'Newar commoner' (albeit lower than Bāhuns and Chhetris) according to the Nepal legal code of 1856. During the anti-Panchayat protests of 1990, Newar identity was championed alongside other Janajāti, or non-Bāhun-Chhetri, ethnic groups (Gellner 2003). The Maoist insurgency capitalized on this anti-Bāhun-Chhetri sentiment in its call for ethnic-based federalization of Nepal in which Kathmandu Valley would be the 'Newar state.' However, within the new claims of Newar ethnic nationalism, many divisions persist as the Maoist politician's comment about Shresṭhas suggests. He explained further that the Shresṭha traders represented Newars who had collided with the state's history of oppressing indigenous people, such as Jyāpu farmers.

Ethnographers of Newar society have attributed the historical and cultural differences between Shresṭhas and Jyāpus to their opposed position vis-à-vis the Nepal state, Nepali language and Bāhun-Chhetri society. For instance, while Shresṭha merchants have largely abandoned speaking Newar and participating in guṭhī organizations (Quigley 1999a), Jyāpu farmers have, perhaps more than any other Newar caste, clung to Newar language and guṭhī organization. Politically speaking, Shresṭhas tend to lean towards Nepali Congress, while Jyāpus often affiliate with communist parties (Toffin 2007f). Additionally, Toffin (2007f) maintains that Shresṭhas have historically been more assimilated to Nepali and western culture as the Newar caste most engaged in civil service from the time to Ranas. In his words, the Shresṭha are "oriented towards the outside world; they have long since been inserted in open market networks, and they

marry over greater distances than any other Newar caste." Jyāpus, on the contrary, tend to be insular, as he writes, they "are traditionally inward-turned; they record a very high percentage of territorial endogamy, and their social lives are much more turned towards closed units, either of the kin or the associative type" (Toffin 2007f: 382-83; see also Ishii 1999). For this reason, he argues that Jyāpus have been more inclined towards Newar nationalism of post-1990 democratic era, which works to preserve 'newar-ness' through language preservation, and folklore dances and art.

This is not to say that Kirtipur Jyāpu do not distinguish between Newar Shresṭha and Bāhun-Chhetri. In fact, the politicization of ethnicity in the wake of Maoist political success has produced even more collectivization of Newar identity. In particular, the Maoists have led the push for ethnic based federalism in Nepal in which Kathmandu Valley would become 'Newa Bagmati,' an administrative zone where Newar politicians would be guaranteed a minimum of 51% of the seats in government. The Maoist push for ethnic federalism reflects an interesting twist in the history of the Nepali left from class-based emphasis on eradicating feudalist land structures to ethnic equality. Prior to 1990, Nepal's communist parties remained "remarkably silent or even hostile to the issues of culture, caste, and ethnicity" in keeping with the Marxist doctrine of focusing on class and the Nepali left's tradition of emphasizing national unity (Tamang 2006: 275). After the eruption of discontent expressed by ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities in the early 1990s, the Maoist party, in particular, shifted to include cultural-based discrimination alongside class-based exploitation in its revolutionary platform.[37]

[37] While doubts remain whether the Maoists were committed to minority issues or merely exploiting them for political gain (Lawoti 2003), lower caste and Janajāti groups did contribute significantly high levels of cadres to the Maoist insurgency. Moreover, as the current fight over the constitution suggests, the Maoists have staked their political future on the issue of ethnic federalism.

The Maoist shift to ethnic issues is echoed in the configuration of land conflicts. Kirtipur Jyāpus flavor their protest against the actions of *dalāl*s and settlers in terms of an ethnic contrast between native Newar and outside Bāhun-Chhetri. Interestingly, the appropriation of land for Pleasant Housing by a housing company has not received the same approbation or protest. While the image of the Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl* has inherited the categorical position of the merchant/landlord who enables the alienation of land away from producers, the class (and often caste) distinction of developers and residents of Pleasant Housing remains ignored. Thus, the feudalist relationship of relations between landlords and tenants persists – at least in the view of Jyāpus – in the current forms of exchange between Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl*s and incoming migrants, but not in the housing colony. With this framework in mind, I return to the ethnographic account of plot #7 that started the chapter.

From Household to Market: the Controversy over Plot #7

After witnessing the incident at plot #7, I met with the *dalāl*, Uttam, who had recently sold the land. He lived in the nearby Syuchetar (just north of Maitri Nagar), where he was born and raised in a community of Bāhun farmers. Although a long-time resident of Kathmandu, he was relatively new to the land business. He had just transitioned from working strictly as a middle-man who would take a "3-5% commission" off of sales into an active buyer and seller of many plots. He mostly bought from Newar or Bāhun local land-owners, and then sold to "*jila basi*" ('district residents,' connoting 'rural folk new to the city') who had recently returned from work abroad or retired from civil service and were receiving a pension. He preferred to not sell his

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purchases for at least two or three years so they could "at least double" in value. However, even though he had bought plot #7 just one year earlier for 300,000 NRs ($4,285) per ānā, as soon as he learned of the plot's controversial past, he tried selling it, first for 500,000 NRs ($7,142), and then settling for 450,000 ($6,428). He feared being in conflict with local Newar people, who he called "*kachilo mānchhe*" ('ruthless people'). He referred me to a Binod Maharjan from Kirtipur as the person to whom I should talk.

Although I was unable to locate Binod, my research assistant was able to find Krishna Maharjan, the son of the Kirtipur farmer who cultivates the land, and one of the two brothers who had destroyed the wall. Krishna and his family split time living between their new house in Tyangalaphat (a new locality in between Maitri Nagar and Kirtipur), where they occupy the top floor and rent the bottom floors, and their old house in Kirtipur. The family was excited to learn of my interest in the case and asked for my help in restoring the land to their name. While discussing the case, Hari, the father, become very emotional, even at one point shouting that he was "ready to die for his land."

According to Krishna, his father inherited two plots of land in what is now Maitri Nagar, one 'above' of 13.2 ānā and one 'below' of 15 ānā. In 2038 B.S. (1981-1982) he gifted half of the above plot (6.3 ānā) to a female relative named 'Pupu' (paternal aunt). Since 'Pupu' had "no one" in her family and was very old, the father decided to gift her the land although he continued to cultivate it during the rice season.[38] When Pupu died in 2044 B.S. (1987-1988), Hari continued farming the land in the belief that he owned all of it. However, in 2053 B.S. (1996-1997), the Maharjans met a women holding a *lalpurja*

[38] As of 2008, Nepal law allowed daughters to inherit land regardless of their marital status or age. Prior to this decision, a woman needed to be unmarried and over the age of 35 to own land.

('red paper', or deed) who asked them (they were working on the land at the time) "where is this plot?" To their astonishment, it was for plot #7. The woman, Dhan Devi Acharya, a Bāhun from Butwal who lived in Sitapaila (north of Maitri Nagar), told them her husband had bought the land from Binod Maharjan in 2048 B.S. (1991-1992).

When the conversation turned to Binod Maharjan's role, Hari and his sons became angry. They described Binod as Pupu's conniving caretaker who tricked her into giving her land to him. Somehow, they claim, Binod was able to put the deed for the entire 13.2 anna plot, not just Pupu's half, in his name. When they confronted Binod soon after meeting Mrs. Acharya, Binod claimed to have only sold "Pupu's part." Krishna explained that Binod was not only guilty of stealing their land, but he also had embezzled land from a local college and *guthī*. Because of his shady dealings, he was forced to leave Kirtipur and rent a house in Balkhu (the locality at the intersection of Ring Road and the road to Kirtipur). Although they had registered a complaint with the police, they did not expect any resolution from that avenue. Rather, they were now preparing a legal case (which, according to Uttam, "no lawyer will touch the case out of fear of the Newars"). However, if the courts do not help them, they planned to turn to the local Maoist party for help. In the meantime, they intended to continue farming the land and tearing down any walls constructed on the property.

With Krishna's help, I found Binod several weeks later at his Balkhu residence. He was somewhat reluctant to discuss the case, but after hearing what Krishna's family had reported to me, he felt the need to give his own version of the story. He started by explaining that "Pupu" was related neither to them nor him. She had no family, he claimed, and moreover, as her caretaker, he was the closest person to her for the last ten

years of her life. Furthermore, they had never owned either the 'above' or 'below' plots of land. He was the legal owner of both plots. When he sold the above plot to Mrs. Acharya, he sold her just two-thirds of the plot as per the landlord-tenant law of Nepal in which the tenant (*mohī*) is entitled to one-third of land. He expressed satisfaction in talking to me, someone who would "not talk behind his back" since the Kirtipur community had slandered his name. Since leaving Kirtipur, he claimed he could not conduct business with anyone from the city, and instead was forced to look for employment in Kathmandu.

After speaking with Binod, I visited the Kalanki Land Registration Office (LRO) where I hoped to locate records of transactions pertaining to plot #7.[39] I was able to able to find documentation of plot #7 transactions that both contradicted and corroborated what Krishna's family and Binod told me (see figure 4). According to the files, Gyanu Maya Maharjan ('Pupu') inherited the land on Baisakh 9, 2039 B.S. (April 22, 1982) and listed Hari Bahadur Maharjan (Krishna's father) as the tenant. When she died on Jesth 28, 2044 B.S. (June 5, 1987), the owner became Binod Maharjan with Hari still listed as the tenant. Oddly, one year later, ownership was transferred for one day, Bhadra 22, 2045 B.S. (September 7, 1988) into Hari, the tenant's, name before being put in the name of Binod's wife, Ganga Devi Maharjan, on Bhadra 23, 2045 B.S. (September 8, 1988). Interestingly, this last deed has no tenant listed. While we cannot ascertain why Hari's status shifted from tenant to owner to absent in three days, we can surmise that Ganga Devi became the owner in order for Binod to gain the tax benefit of land owned by

[39] When I first inquired after the records, Office workers claimed that they were burnt in a fire from the 2006 Jana Andolan ('People's Uprising') revolt against the King. When I made the connection with the LRO chief officer that he was the older brother of a well-known academic that I happened to know, the chief officer granted me complete access to files.

women. The land would remain in Ganga's name for four years until Mrs. Acharya became the owner on Kartik 6, 2048 (October 23, 1991). Mrs. Acharya would maintain ownership until 2064 B.S. (2007-2008) when Uttam, the *dalāl*, bought the land.

Figure 4. Chart of ownership of Plot #7

Person	Plot #	Date Purchased	Date Sold	Remarks	Tenant	Owner's Address
1. Gyanu Maya Maharjan	79	Inherited (1-9-39)	2-28-44 (deceased)	No source	Hari B. Maharjan	Kirtipur
2. Binod Maharjan	79	2-28-44	5-22-45	Put in tenant's name	Same	Kirtipur
3. Hari Bahadur Maharjan	79	5-22-45	5-23-45	Put in Binod's wife's name	Owner	Kirtipur
4. Ganga Devi Maharjan	79	5-23-45	7-6-48		Owner	Kirtipur
5. Dhan Devi Acharya	7[40]	7-6-48	6-27-65	2-25-60 (put on file)	None	Butwal, Rupandehi
6. Uttam Bidari	248	6-27-65			None	Syuchatar-1
6. Suman Budhathoki	247, 249	11-5-64			None	Syuchatar-3
7. Birendra Thakuri					None	
7. Bhoj Kumari Shrestha	247, 249	10-29-65			None	Sarlahi, Hariban, 6
7. Sushila Maya Silwal	248					

Other than the one day in September 1988, Hari was never the legal owner of the land, at least not since the first record of the land in 1982. Rather, from 1982-1988, he was the legal tenant, but had no legal claim to the land thereafter. Thus, Binod's claim to

[40] In 2060 B.S. (2004) the Land Registration Office changed its measurement system, which changed the plot numbers in every district accounting for this plot's change from #79 to #7. Mrs. Acharya then sold the plot into three sections when she sold it to Bidari and Budhathoki, turning #7 into #247, #248, and #249.

ownership of the entire plot is true. However, it is false that he sold just two-thirds of the land and left the other third for Hari as per his legal right as tenant. In fact, it remains uncertain how or why he transferred the land into Hari's name for that one day, and then had his name removed completely from the deed as either owner or tenant.

Conclusion

Although we cannot settle the legal particularities of this case, we can draw several conclusions that demonstrate that the letter of the law is less significant than the social interpretation of it. One, rather than an ethnic conflict between local Jyāpu farmers and Bāhun-Chhetri settlers, the root of this dispute is between two Kirtipur Jyāpus. For Krishna and his family, the plot represents a stake in a world quickly disappearing as farmland for Kirtipur's farmers turns into residences for recent migrants to the city. Although of the same city and caste, Binod has become an outsider, both physically and socially. He now lives outside of Kirtipur (it is interesting to note that Krishna and his family also have a house in 'new Kirtipur' although still keeping their house in the old city), and must engage in business disconnected from Kirtipur society. In the eyes of Krishna and his community, Binod is equal to or worse than city Shresṭhas or Bāhun-Chhetri *dalāl*s, who are accountable for Newars losing their native land. In this case, when Binod inherited the land, he started a process of alienating it from Krishna's family, the workers of the land, essentially repeating a trend dating back to the practices of the merchants and nobles of the 19th and early 20th Century who used state policy to profit from gifted land and tenants' labor.

A contextual look at this case demonstrates that the current ethnic tone of land conflicts in Kathmandu Valley reflects a part of a larger structural inequality of

ownership, use, and exploitation. The particular case of plot #7 shows that the Maoist emphasis on ethnicity reinforces and is reinforced by interpretations of land inequality within the logic of Newar territorialism and identity. The more interesting point is that the relationship between ethnic identity and land is not a given, but rather it is made through social practice. As Binod's social alienation from Kirtipur Jyāpu society suggests, the identity of Jyāpu can be lost. His particular experience speaks to the larger anxieties of losing land in Kirtipur. Other Kirtipur Jyāpus have sold land and built houses outside of the traditional city, but manage to maintain identities as guardian farmers within the moral community. Rather than an objective and permanent category, the production of the Jyāpu guardian farmer is constituted through a process that is structurally reflective of interpretations of law, contemporary politics, and the feudalist legacy of land.

Part II. The Householder's Burden

The presumed ethnic shift of post-1951 Kathmandu from Newar to non-Newar is attached to an economic transformation that reshaped the relationship between Kathmandu, the Nepali hinterland, and the global economy. While the Ranas attempted to close the border and economy, the subsequent Panchayat (one-party) government (1960-1991) lifted regulations on commodity imports and allowed foreign diplomatic missions to enter the country. In particular, Nepal became a favored recipient of foreign aid and development 'experiments' due to its strategic position in between Maoist China and non-aligned (yet friendly with the USSR) Nehru-led India. The government's adoption of Nehruvian socialist policies, which nationalized most industries (often owned by royalty) and favored certain ethnic groups (such as Manangis), limited the economic benefits to urban elites working in government and tourism (Shakya 2009: 41; Rankin 2004: 167). It was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s when Nepal became a multi-party democracy that neo-liberal trade policies drastically increased the flow of and access to commodity imports for the greater population (Rankin 2004: 168-173). Not only did Kathmandu open up to foreign peoples, employment, and goods, it became a gateway for Nepalis leaving the country for study and employment opportunities in foreign countries. By conservative estimates, one-fifth of all Nepali citizens are living and working outside of Nepal. By the 2000s, remittances sent from Nepalis living abroad would supply one-quarter of the country's GDP. The combination of international aid, tourism, carpet and garment manufacturing and remittances produced a cash boom in Kathmandu that increasingly separated the capital from an impoverished hinterland. The Maoist insurgency of 1996-2006 was motivated, if not directly caused, by this growing

disparity between capital and country (Bhattarai 2003; Mishra, 2007; Pfaff-Czarnecka 2004; Pyakuryal 2001; Pettigrew 2008: 321-322).[41]

As a result of Kathmandu's economic expansion, social scientists have noticed a shift in social structure towards a market-oriented economic order of class away from the ritual order of caste (Pahari 1992; Liechty 2003; Rankin 2004). As Liechty (2003: 8) asserts, "As more and more of everyday life revolves around the social imperatives of the money/market economy, the moral (and economic) logic of caste is subordinated to the economic (and moral) logic of class" (2003: 8). In this sense, Liechty turns Dumont's (1980) famous formulation of Indian, or "collective," society on its head. Instead of morality and religion incorporating economy – as Dumont's holistic account of the caste system saw it, Liechty claims that the economic logic of class has incorporated the moral logic of caste.

While I consider the caste to class thesis more directly in Part 3, here I address the opposition of an economic and moral order to argue that neither encompasses the other, but rather to consider how one reinforces the other. With a focus on the people moving into the urban periphery as residents, I use the category of the 'householder' as my guide. The householder, I argue, must integrate the economic and moral order into one system of meaning. Following what John Gray (1994) calls the 'grihastha ideology' (based on the second of the four life stages for an initiated Hindu male), I understand the householder as the most vulnerable period in a Hindu male's life in which he is expected to enter the polluting world outside of the home to make a living, and yet, maintain his house and family as pure and auspicious. Thus, the householder carries a dual burden of

[41] However, as Shah (2004: 193) has pointed out, economic marginalization does not explain why the insurgency's 'epicentre' was located in the midwestern Rapti zone, which, 'is by no means the most marginal region in Nepal.'

needing to engage in the material world of economic calculation and social status while also maintaining a sacred house for his family.

Chapters 4 and 5 are organized around the problem of balancing the economic and moral expectations of the householder. Chapter 4 addresses the life of mobility for migrants entering the urban periphery. The residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing have lived a life of constant relocations. Importantly, however, within the transience of mobility, residents integrate symbols of fixity and permanence ranging from kinship ritual, owned property, and moral scales of place. Physical mobility reflects aspirations of social mobility in which residents incorporate foreign educational and labor opportunities into local registers of prestige.

In chapter five, I ask how residents understand their new houses as embodiments of local prestige systems constituted through moral and material concerns. The house, I argue, replicates a syncretic logic in which values of competitive consumption and display (what I call the *namunā* mode) reinforce and are reinforced by values of ritual and moral orders (what I call the *grihastha* mode). For instance, one informant understands the material inadequacy of his house in terms of his marriage prospects, while another uses the communalist logic of caste and geographic identity to best guarantee that he selects honest and paying tenants.

Chapter 4. Fixity within Mobility: Relocating to the Urban Periphery and Beyond

From the perspective of the Kathmandu's elites, the rapid and disorganized growth of the city is the fault of 'the village migrant' who has transplanted rural ways of being into the city (see Rademacher 2007). For instance, according to one urban historian, rural outsiders "with no urban history" are responsible for "destroying the Valley urbanism" (Tiwari 1992: 6-7). Similarly, in the words of a former Vice Chairman of Nepal's Planning Commission, Kathmandu has failed to become a "modern metropolis" because "still, you will find plenty of peasants around" (Shrestha 2006).

The anti-rural bias of Kathmandu elite is mirrored in the 'sedentarist bias' (Shiller and Urry 2006) of Nepal-based social science, which has tended to understand the Nepali polity as an immobile agrarian lot. With a few noteworthy exceptions that have studied trading groups,[42] the bulk of Nepal ethnography has overlooked mobility in favor of studying ethnic groups in a given, usually mountainous, village (Fisher 1987; Mishra 2007).[43] Even the ethnography of the urban Newar has typically focused on the agrarian culture of 'urban peasants' (Gellner and Pradhan 1999), and the centripetal structure of neighborhoods, or *twa*s, and houses as an example of 'urban villages' (Levy 1990: 182; Parish 1994: 53). In a telling example of sedentarist bias, the abundant literature of

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[42] Several ethnographies have discussed trading communities, particularly the cases of highland Himalayan traders bringing Tibetan salt to Nepal (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975; Fisher, J. 1986; Fisher, W. 2001); Newar and Tibetan traders in central Kathmandu (Lewis 1989) and those in bazaars of the hinterland (Lewis and Shakya 1988); or the transnational trade of Manangi into Southeast Asia (Ratanapruck 2008).

[43] This has changed recently with a surge of scholarship about Nepalis in India (Schneiderman 2010; Bruslé 2007; Bruslé 2008; Sharma 2008; Thieme & Müller-Böker 2010; Hollema et al. 2008), the Gulf (Graner & Gurung 2003; Seddon et al. 2001; Bruslé 2010b), United States (Dhungel 1999; Sijapati 2010), and the United Kingdom (Adhikari 2010).

development in Nepal has been largely based on the assumption that Nepal is an agrarian society fixed in place. Jeevan Raj Sharma (2008: 308-309) has illustrated how this assumption leads researchers to view migration as an aberration from the agricultural norm, and thus, a problem to be corrected by investing in agricultural programs and rural development projects.

The focus on village settlements and agriculture has not only normalized immobility, it has produced a seeming cultural separation between city and village, urban and rural. Anthony Leeds (1994: 56) expresses this critique best in the following statement:

> [Anthropologists] have failed to see that the participants are already urban people because the observing anthropologists have interpreted the 'rural' as tribal, that is, as nonspecialized in any significant degree in any of the senses I have defined, and as largely isolated from the 'urban' (i.e., city) society as a result of some inherent property of rurality, while sociologists have treated the 'rural' as some sort of converse of the city – the opposite of density, large size, anonymity, secondary relationships."

On the surface, the residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing seem to replicate the assumption of a country divided by rural and urban spaces. The inhabitants of Maitri Nagar tend to trace 'home' (*ghar*) to a place in the Nepali hinterland, often in the districts of the midwestern hills and plains. For them, the move into the urban periphery, often from a rented residence in the city, is less about moving into the periphery, and more about owning property in the capital. On the other hand, Pleasant Housing residents represent the flight of urban dwellers to the city's outskirts, often from an owned house or ancestral home in the center to a more spacious residence in the housing colony. However, the relocation histories of residents are far more complicated than the phrases of 'rural to urban migration' or 'suburban flight' allow us to appreciate. From a survey of 82 houses in Maitri Nagar and 43 houses in Pleasant Housing, I

gathered a complex picture of physical mobility that goes beyond Maitri Nagar rural migrants moving into the city, or Pleasant Housing urbanites seeking space in the urban periphery.

The key distinction of the two localities is not in terms of a rural/urban opposition, but rather that of *ghar* ('home') and *basāĩ* ('residence'). Residents in both localities often refer to *ghar* ('home') as somewhere outside of Kathmandu Valley. *Ghar* can refer to a range of geographic designations from a district, to a town, village or even a cluster of specific houses. Even for the Newars of Pleasant Housing, *ghar* will often mean a specific neighborhood in the city where they were born or their father was born. *Ghar*, however, connotes more than a geographic space. In the words of the geographer Bhim Prasad Subedi (1999: 138),

> *Ghara*[44] is not just the house to live in and not something that can be anywhere and can be exchanged, but an irreplaceable center of significance. It is neither limited to physical structure nor a physical space to carry on livelihood. It captures broader networks, intimate relations with the land and environment, and a place of rooted memory.

For many, their Kathmandu home, even if owned, is a *basāĩ*. In fact, *basāĩ*, a nominalization of the verb *basnu* ('to sit or reside'), can also be translated as "a settlement in a place other than one's own village or country," and is often coupled with the nominalization of the verb *sarnu* ('to move'), as in the phrase, *basāĩ-sarāi* to denote permanent relocation (Hutt 1998: 197).

Subedi (1999; 2006) argues that both the frequency and circularity of migration in Nepal requires us to see both the fixed *ghara* and the transient *para* ('beyond') not as a paradox, but two parts of one system, which he calls 'mobility within fixity.' Inspired by

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44 Subedi refers to the more colloquial pronunciation of the term, *ghar*, with additional 'a'. For the remainder of the article, I refer to *ghar* when discussing my own data and analysis, while reserving *ghara* to when alluding to Subedi's analysis is necessary.

Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974) notion of topophilia, Subedi describes the desire for experience and expertise of *para* as co-existing with the intimate relations and identity formation of *ghara*. From his research site of a village in eastern Nepal, he asserts that the expertise and knowledge gained while away is necessary and encouraged but within the expectation that one's *ghara* remains a fixed center of social significance.

While emotionally attached to the 'rooted memory' and 'intimate relations' of *ghar*, most residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing understand their lives more in terms of *basāĩ-sarāĩ.* In Maitri Nagar, residents have tended to move between a triangle of Kathmandu, the Tarai plains and the mid-mountains of midwestern districts. While most refer to a *ghar* in the mid-mountains (63%), others point to the Tarai (35%). Interestingly, of those originating in the mid-mountains, one-third trace their migration to Kathmandu via the Tarai.[45] Thus, in total, prior to moving to Kathmandu, over half of the households questioned trace their most recent location to the Tarai. Meanwhile, a little more than half of Pleasant Housing residents surveyed trace birthplace to somewhere in the Kathmandu Valley. Of those, relocation has entailed a combination of moves inside the Valley and temporary stays in foreign countries. For those who did migrate to Kathmandu, ancestral homes or birthplaces reflect a mixture of places all over Nepal and

[45] In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Nepal government, with the aid of American-European efforts to eradicate malaria from the lowland jungles of the Tarai (and curb communist ideology in South Asia), implemented land resettlement programs in the southern plains. Although designed to help indebted and landless Nepalis, landed classes were often the first to acquire the new land. Shrestha (1990: 188) refers to "migration dispatchment" as the practice in which wealthy landowners would dispatch one or more sons to attain land in the Tarai granted by resettlement programs. B.P. Koirala's (Nepal's first elected Prime Minister) short story, 'Madhestira' ('To the Lowlands') (translated by Hutt 1991: 201-205), drew attention to the connection between inequalities in the mid-mountains and migration to the plains. The story narrates the journey of a widow and four men from the hills to the lowlands in search of a better life. While the hills represent a life of misery, and shameful and laborious work, the lowlands represent a "salvation" of inexpensive and fertile land and the chance to start life over. However, as Shrestha (1990) notes, many of the same exploitative practices of the hills were transferred to land relations in the Tarai.

India. Due to the prominence of *basāĩ-sarāĩ*, I suggest thinking of mobility patterns in Kathmandu's periphery in terms of fixity within mobility.

The notion of fixity within mobility draws our attention to the movements of people rather than imposing a territorial fixity on to them. More importantly, it refocuses our attention on the political and economic conditions that have structured the conditions of mobility. In his ethnography of Zambia's Copperbelt, James Ferguson (1999) reads the performative behavior of 'localist' (affiliated with rural homes) and 'cosmopolitan' (affiliated with urban and foreign places) mine workers as reflective of different periods of economic conditions. While the boom of copper in the 1950s and 1960s enabled a cosmopolitan attitude in which subjects could reject rural-based obligations, the downturn of the 1970s onwards created a need for mineworkers to reestablish rural-local allegiances (Ferguson 1999: 230-233).

The history of migration into Kathmandu follows a similar historical pattern of echoing economic conditions. The first wave of post-1951 migration, which lasted through the 1980s, was generally limited to the exclusive groups of upper castes and classes who benefitted from government employment and contracts.[46] It was this group of elite migrants, who were the majority of the supposed 'third of the city' who relocated from the center to the periphery between 1971 and 1985 (Shrestha et al. 1986: 132) and reflect the 'suburban instinct' of nuclear families, tertiary labor, and new consumption practices in the periphery (Liechty 2003: 52-58). Missing from this account is necessary attention to a second wave of migration in the 1990s and 2000s consisting of a more mixed set of migrants drawn to the city's increasing opportunities as the countryside

[46] From 1951-1971, migrants to Kathmandu consisted disproportionately of Bāhun-Chhetri castes (66%), literate people (90%) and landowning individuals (84%) (Thapa 1977: 39-44).

became engulfed in civil war. Consequently, this era witnessed migrants with more diverse sources of income than just tertiary labor. Although some of these migrants found home amongst the squatter communities along riversides;[47] unlike in other South Asian cities, the majority of migrants have found housing in the urban peripheries (Mathema 1999).

While the migration patterns of Kathmandu residents are certainly reflective of national economic conditions and policies, they are increasingly contingent on global economic conditions and transnational mobility. The influx of foreign capital into the Kathmandu and the increase of foreign travel opportunities have reshaped the social and physical landscape of the urban Valley. As the abundance of projects and jobs funded by foreign governments and agencies have grown, so too have migratory labor (predominantly to the Gulf) and educational (primarily in Europe, Australia and North America) opportunities opened. In the wake of emergent global pathways, the categories of rural and urban, capital and hinterland, continue to express considerable social meaning, but in new and ever changing ways that must also include transnational networks.

In this chapter, I discuss both internal and external networks of mobility via ethnographic portraits of five residents in Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing. More than a system of movement, mobility indexes a system of social status, kinship relations, and material property. I suggest reading mobility as an 'aspirational cycle'[48] in how residents

[47] A growing body of scholarship has documented the uneven development of Kathmandu's *sukumbasi* ('squatters') along the city's decaying riverways (Rademacher 2011; Sengupta 2011; Tanaka 2009).
[48] I thank Shiqiao Li for suggesting the phrase of 'aspirational cycle' to represent the social meaning of mobility in Kathmandu.

convert the prestige of experience and material capital gained from travel into local registers of prestige and duty.

I. Moving to Kathmandu

Maitri Nagar: Hari Prasad

In the 2000s, migration into Kathmandu Valley was mostly motivated by the insecurity of the hinterland caused by the Maoist insurgency. Since most Maitri Nagar residents were already in Kathmandu by the start of the insurgency in 1996, the conflict itself was not a main reason for moving into the city. In fact, only two informants attributed their decision to relocate to 'insecurity' or 'safety.' One was coming from a village in the eastern district of Ramechhap, where he claimed only Maoist supporters remained, while the other decided to take his family away from the 'ethnic turmoil' of the Tarai, Biratnagar specifically, in the aftermath of the 2006-2008 Madhesi uprisings. The influx of insurgency refugees did, however, motivate residents to buy land in a rapidly appreciating market of rent and land prices. By one estimate, the going rate for a flat in the central city in 1990 was 500 Nepali Rupees ($7) per month, which by the time of research had grown to be between 5,000-10,000 Nepali Rupees ($70-140). Likewise, the rate for renting a room grew from 100 Nepali Rupees ($1.40) to 2-4,000 Nepali Rupees ($27-55) per month (Adhikari 2066) of the same period. The price of land, similarly, tripled between 2003 and 2009 (NLHA 2010). This made land inside of Ring Road unattainable for most, thus leaving land in the urban periphery outside of Ring Road the only option.

In addition to pushing land prices up, the insurgency also encouraged city residents to distance themselves from a *ghar* in the hinterland; as is said, *ghar chornu* ('leave home behind'). For Hari Prasad, a Bāhun accountant who has lived in Kathmandu since the early 1990s, leaving his *ghar* in Chitwan, a district to the south of the capital, behind requires disconnecting from his village-based lineage deity and property. Importantly, while a ritual practice allows the lineage deity to be relocated to the capital, land must sold, rented, or left fallow.

Kul deutā ('lineage deity') refers to the most commonly recognized and ritualized form of agnatic relation in Bāhun-Chhetri society typically ranging five to six generations of common descent (Bennett 1983: 18).[49] The members of a *kul* will travel to the deity shrine for a *pūjā* ('worship') anywhere from twice per year to once every twelve years in a ceremony called *devālī*. It is extremely important that members attend *kul deutā pūjā* ('lineage deity worship') to guarantee the well-being of kin. As opposed to death rites focused on continuing the patriline, *kul deutā pūjā* is concerned with horizontal relations between brothers (Bennett 1983: 131). Even when there is no land or kin left in the village, Maitri Nagar residents typically speak of one last tie in *kul deutā pūjā*. As one resident explained, "If we moved the *kul deutā*, we would never visit the village. We need to have at least one reason to visit the village."

Like people, *kul deutā* can move. I travelled with Hari Prasad to his *ghar* in Chitwan in June of 2009. As soon as Hari Prasad and I arrived he took me to see the nearby shrine of his *kul deutā*, an aniconic stone in a dense patch of forest several

[49] Other terms of agnatic descent in Bāhun-Chhetri society are the *gotra* (members who share descent from one of seven mythical sages) and *thar* (members who share the same surname). However, while *gotra* and *thar* groups share no fixed marriage rules or worship obligations, the *kul* produces obligations to observe birth and death pollutions and attend regular worship practices at *kul ghar* or shrine (Bennett 1983: 18).

kilometers from his house. At the shrine, he announced that "We are moving the shrine to Kathmandu." The members of Hari Prasad's *kul* have all left their Chitwan village for various cities in Nepal and around the world. Now they rarely returned partly due to what they claim is discrimination against Pahari people after the Madhesh uprisings of 2006-2008.[50] Of his immediate family, Hari Prasad has two sisters and a brother living in Kathmandu, and one brother living in Saudi Arabia. Since most members of the *kul* have a house in Kathmandu, it is the likely destination of the new shrine. In the previous year, the members of his *kul* met and decided not to relocate the shrine because they could not identify a piece of property to where they would like to move it. Ideally, a shrine is located in a "secluded spot on a hilltop or in the woods where outsiders cannot easily see the ceremony" (Bennett 1983: 132) (see figure 5), which in the diminishing land supply of Kathmandu Valley is becoming increasingly difficult to find. Once they have located a new place for the shrine, the *kul* will relocate the shrine by breaking off a piece of the stone and transporting it along with soil from the original site to the new site.

[50] 'Pahari' literally means 'hillspeople', but in contemporary Nepali ethnic politics, it refers to Nepali-speakers as opposed to the Madeshi ('People of the Plains'), who speak a variety of north Indian languages, such as Bhojpuri, Maithili, and Hindi.

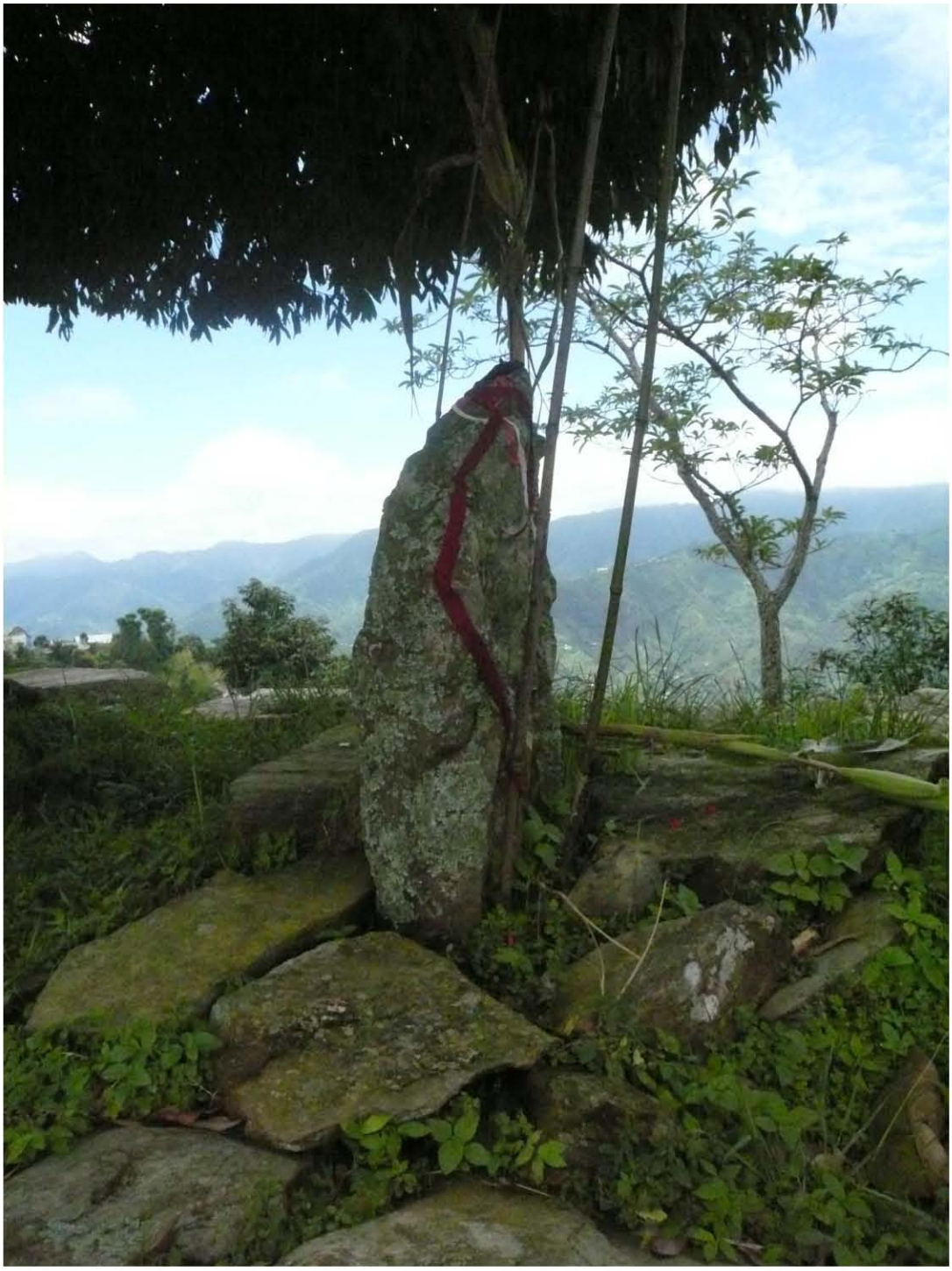

Figure 5: A kul deutā shrine in Kaski district of midwestern Nepal

While Bennett (1983: 18) attributes the fragmentation of a *kul* to poor record keeping or quarreling, I have found it to be more reflective of a society adapted to migration. For example, moving Hari Prasad's *kul deutā* to Kathmandu would not be its first relocation. For a mobile society, the *kul deutā* represents a way of spatially organizing kinship. When Hari Prasad was a teenager, his father and his cousins moved their *kul deutā* shrine from their parents' village in Dhading to their new home in Chitwan. Thus, his desire to move it to Kathmandu would not be the first time it has moved, but simply reflects the relocation of his family.

I also met Maitri Nagar residents who elected to discontinue the *kul deutā pūjā* in their village or Kathmandu. As Narayan, a Chhetri from the midwestern district of Palpa explains, "city people don't do *kul pūjā*." But, as we talk further, he admits that it is more a question of kin solidarity than of urban lifestyle. He reports that "People move their *kul deutā* only if brothers move to the city together," but because his brother is a "drunk," he feels no need to transplant the shrine or continue its worship in the village. In this case, the discontinuation of *kul deutā* worship appears to be less representative of a disconnection from the village and more a disconnection between brothers – a rupture along kin rather than territorial relations. Thus, the *kul deutā* can withstand territorial changes, but not kinship discord.[51] The question of relocating *kul deutā* is one of kinship relations, not one of mobility.

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[51] A comparison with the structurally similar Newar ritual of *digu dyaḥ pūjā* illustrates the territorial flexibility of Bāhun-Chhetri society (Toffin 2007e: 307). Like the *kul*, the Newar notion of *kawaḥ* (Toffin 2007b: 58) or *phuki* (Levy 1990; Gellner 1992: 207; Parish 1994: 61) also tends to range between five and seven generations of a single agnatic ancestor. What distinguishes these two rituals is the mobility of the Bāhun-Chhetri version versus the relative immobility of the Newar one. Newars have moved *digu dyaḥ* shrines due to land development (Lewis 1999: 56; Gellner 1992: 372) and political conflict (Toffin 2007b), but not for migration. Newar migration (mostly from inner city to peripheral areas) has simply meant farther trips to the shrine, less commitment to the lineage group, or worshipping inside the house (Gellner 1992: 238-243; Quigley 1999a: 102). Typically, when the lineage fragments due to a quarrel or some other

The relationship between land and mobility is more complicated. The relocated landowner can sell, rent, or leave land fallow. The more preferable options of selling or renting require a conversion of sorts; thus, asking the question, for what is land traded? Before answering that question, we must first ask how exchange systems work for those who maintain a link to the land of *ghar*. From the city, one is expected to bring "*bajārko kurā*" ('things of the bazaar') gifts, such as fruits, clothes, medicine for elders, "*nayā khāne kurā*" ('new things to eat'), and books and notebooks for the children. *Bajārko kurā* is considered *bikāsi* ('developed'), a term which Stacy Leigh Pigg (1992; 1996) states is not just referring to things, but also applicable to distant people, things, and ways of being in opposition to the supposedly 'unmodern' and 'undeveloped' village. In returning from the village, one is expected to take "natural *chij*" ('natural things') - rice, dāl, butter, nuts, and vegetables. Another informant summarizes this exchange as representative of the "artificial city" of manufactured commodities and the "natural village" of cultivated foods. On our return to Kathmandu, Hari Prasad and I encountered an alternative form of exchange. As expected, we met others returning from villages and towns in Chitwan carrying large bags of grains and vegetables. Interestingly, one of them, Roshan, added a variable to this exchange circuit. When the bus stopped at Bharatpur,

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reason, the new kin group, a '*bā-phuki*' continues to worship the same stone at the same place, but on a different day (Levy 1990: 140; Toffin 2007c: 96). The difference between the Bāhun-Chhetri and Newar version is not a result of ritual structure, but rather reflective of each society's history of mobility. The contrast between the two societies appears in the respective ideologies of kingship for the Newar Malla and the Bāhun-Chhetri Shah. While the history of the Malla kingship emphasizes attachment to place, the Kathmandu palace and Taleju tutelary goddess, the kingship of the Shah royalty appears "warlike and mobile," emphasizing a dynastic line rather than a place (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 195). Although we should be careful not to affiliate the practices of the Shah royalty with the population of Nepal's Bāhun-Chhetri, a structural homology links the practice of establishing a new kingdom by transplanting a piece of their tutelary "goddess rock," (Lecomte-Tilouine 2009: 198), and the commoner practice of transplanting the *kul deutā* shrine.

thirty minutes down the road from Hari Prasad's village, Roshan used the time to sell his rice. As he explained, "I prefer to just bring back money, it is easier."

Hari Prasad laments that his father's land in Chitwan is either sold, rented or laying fallow. When his father died, his five ropani (0.25 hectare) of land was split three ways between each son; half of which is left uncultivated today. Hari Prasad's particular portion is contracted to a local villager for 25,000 NRs ($350) per year, which he admits makes him a bit like Roshan, exchanging land, or the product of land, for money before returning to the city. Until Hari Prasad was able to buy land in Kathmandu in 2005, he felt particularly sorry for not having access to his land in Chitwan. At that time, he explains that he was without land since he owned none in Kathmandu and had cut off his access to the property in Chitwan. Whereas land is valued in the village as social prestige, especially if cultivated, in the city, it is the material possessions of cars, motorbikes, large houses, and cell-phones that people value. Ironically, for most, the move to the city often requires a choice between selling/renting out village land or leaving it fallow. In either case, the migrant is disconnected from the village's status-granting symbol – cultivated land. Once in the city, one becomes more susceptible to moral corruption - as Laxmi, Hari Prasad's wife, says, "*shaharī hāwā pānīle bhetyo*" – literally, "one met the city's air and water," but more figuratively, "one has become influenced and ruined by the corrupt environment of the city." To my question of what qualifies as 'urban environment,' she answers, "boys growing long hair" and "girls wearing short clothes."

The material exchange necessary for migration – selling of land for things of the city – can quickly lead to the moral separation of the new urbanite from his village *ghar* and moral compass. The relocation of *kul deutā* and conversion of land represent two

processes fraught with moral peril for the householder in Kathmandu. While the former depends on the strength of kinship ties, the second depends on the impact of city things and lifestyles.

Pleasant Housing: Gopal

Gopal, a Newar resident of Pleasant Housing, has had a government job in Kathmandu most of his adult life working in the Finance Ministry. His one break from civil service was to work at an INGO called New Era, started by a group of Nepalis and former Peace Corps volunteers in the 1970s. Gopal's experiences in the upper echelons of government and work with INGOs reflect the occupations of many in Pleasant Housing. Nearly half of the residents earn income from a foreign source, such as INGOs or foreign governments, or receive a remittance from a family member working in a foreign country. Of the non-foreign currency earners, others tend to either own a company or manage a business in the real estate, petroleum, or automobile industries, hold a high position in politics or government administration, or are employed as university professors. Additionally, as Waldrop (2004) suggests of a housing colony in New Delhi, the population of Pleasant Housing has an "upper caste flavor" consisting mostly of Bāhun-Chhetri (55%) and Newar (31%).

Not only does Gopal belong to a high Newar caste, but his family's occupational history is attached to Nepali aristocracy. He traces his family's place in Kathmandu Valley back to 1324, when an ancestor reportedly fled the Tarai to escape Mughal invaders. The generation of his great grandfather served as *vaidyas* (Ayurvedic doctors) to the Rana families in the 19th Century. In fact, his great grandfather's older brother was

Jang Bahadur Rana's personal vaidya, a position which required accompanying Rana on his famous crossing of the *kalo pānī* 1850 to England.[52] When Jang Bahadur Rana established his rule in 1846, he moved to the Thapathali Palace complex. At this time, Gopal's family moved from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu near the central Indra Chowk to be closer to the new ruler. In the late 1920s, a fire burned down their inner city house. Instead of rebuilding, they moved to Tripureshwor, which was 'outside' the city's boundaries – the first of many Newar families to do so, he claims. In the 1960s, when the government decided to build the East-West Kathmandu highway from Tinkune to Kalanki, the Vaidya house in Tripureshwor was demolished. The family decided to build another house in Tripureshwor, but instead of a traditional load bearing brick and wood house, they built one of the first cement pillar system houses in the city.

Of his four brothers, his eldest was the first to leave the family house in Tripureshwor, buying a plot of land and subsequently building a house in the 'town-planning' development, *Kuleshwar Āvās Chhetra* (KAC). KAC was the government's first 'town-planning' project developed in the 1977 and available only to civil servants.[53] In 1986, after his brother moved to South Africa, Vaidya moved into the KAC house where he stayed until 2005. Although named a 'planned community' the only 'planned' aspects of KAC, Gopal jokes, were the grid road system and electricity poles. Otherwise, the area was simply a collection of plots to be developed in any way the owners saw fit. Consequently, one finds one-story houses next to five story mansions in KAC, not to mention inconsistent electricity supply and chronic water shortages. In fact, Gopal

[52] The crossing of the 'black water,' or ocean, was considered taboo for high caste Hindus; thus, requiring elaborate purification rituals upon re-entry to Nepal (Whelpton 2005: 46).

[53] The KAC project took fifteen years to be completed "because high prices led to speculation and major disturbances" (Gutschow 2011: 969).

attributes his mother's death to one period of a severe water shortage. Without water access, his family was forced to rely on the sporadic visits of water-tank trucks, which would arrive to a crowd of neighbors competing for every drop. In one visit, an incompetent tank driver dropped a tank that fell on his mother, an accident that led to her death.

Throughout the 1990s, Gopal considered moving out of KAC and building a house to join the 'housing boom' in the periphery, but never found the time or right place to do so. It was not until March of 2005 that Gopal decided to leave KAC and move into Pleasant Housing. In the private housing colonies, Gopal found what 'the government wanted to do' in planned areas. The private sector, however, was able to not only plan a better site, but also implement that plan, too, he insists. Contrary to typical narratives of 'urban fear' inspiring upper classes to move into segregated and walled communities, (Caldeira 1999; Low 2001; Davis 1990), the privatization of resources attract people to housing in Kathmandu, specifically for how it represents an escape from the faulty public infrastructure of the city and country. When asked why residents moved to a housing colony, inevitably one of the first reasons given has to do with services and security. In the winter of early 2009, there was hardly a day without a media story about the decline of the city's quality of life. From the shortages of water, electricity, and oil to the rise of traffic, air pollution, and crime, colony residents have no shortage of reasons for leaving the city. The move to the colony represents a shift away from the unreliable services provided by the state to a reliance on the private company to "fulfill public functions, but in a segregated way" (Caldeira 1999: 96). The reliance on the company should only be considered partial in that it can only do so much to insulate residents from the problems

of the city. For instance, unlike some housing colonies and apartments, Pleasant Housing does not provide power back-up through generators. Many residents have bought solar roof panels and electricity inverters to provide power during outages, which reached a high of 16 hours per day in the winter and spring of 2009.[54]

Gopal's family's history of connections to the upper echelons of government has kept the family mobile, but along preferred routes of the city's elite. One of the first Newar families to live 'outside' the city, they also were one of the firsts to build cement houses and live in town-planning. The appeal of private services in the housing colony offers the most recent manifestation of 'new' elite residency in the form of privatized infrastructure and exclusive walls. Gopal views his moves as a trajectory from his ancestors' aristocratic connections to his own upper level positions in the public and private sector and city center to city periphery.

Maitri Nagar: Bijay

Born in a Bāhun village in Gorkha district (in central mid-mountain region), Bijay moved to Kathmandu in 2005 to pursue a Master's Degree in Mathematics at Nepal's

[54] The shift to reliance on the company for services, however, should not be understood as an aberration from a tradition of a democratic state providing services. Prior to 1950, neighborhood water taps (New. *hiṭī*) and roads were maintained according to cultural traditions, such as the Newar festival of *siṭhi nakhā* when neighborhoods consider the washing of local water taps to be a ritual duty. The little urban infrastructure that the state provided was given free of charge (Halcrow & Fox 1991). The party-less rule of Panchayat 'democracy,' 1960-1990, ushered in a new era of development projects and foreign aid that supported the state in starting to provide electricity, roads, telephone service, and drinking water pipes for some Kathmandu houses. Although most expected state services to improve after multiparty democracy replaced Panchayat in 1991, eighteen years later such optimism has turned into disappointment. In fact, it is the increasing sense amongst Kathmandu urbanites that the democratic state has failed them. Rademacher (2007) has shown how the failure of democracy to control environmental problems has created a situation where urban dwellers welcomed temporary authoritarian rule. For instance, Nepal's brief emergency rule in 2001-2002 allowed for an 'authoritarian environmental management' to make urban parks and remove squatter settlements in the name of 'urban beautification.' These undemocratic moves by the state faced little opposition and received support from environmental groups. In the case of housing colonies, individuals shift their support away from the state altogether to the private companies.

national university, Tribhuvan University. Prior to this relocation, Bijay and his family had lived in many parts of Nepal. When his father, Ram, a civil servant, was transferred to the south-central district of Nawalparasi, he decided to leave Bijay, twelve at the time, and his younger brother, Ujjwal, behind with family members in Gorkha Bazaar, where they attended school. At sixteen when Bijay finished class ten, he moved to Pokhara for his 'plus-2', the Nepali name for the school level in between school (up to class 10) and college. Then, he moved to the Tarai city of Narayanghat for his B.A. where his brother joined him several years later. Meanwhile, Ram and Bijay's mother, Shova, moved, too, first to the northeastern district of Solu Khumbu and then to the central mountain district of Nuwakot. When Bijay moved to Kathmandu, Ujjwal took a job with a USAID project in Jhapa in southeastern Nepal. His father's family is similarly spread across the country and world with two uncles' living with their families in Kathmandu, one in the western district of Surkhet, and another working in Afghanistan while his wife and children live in Pokhara.

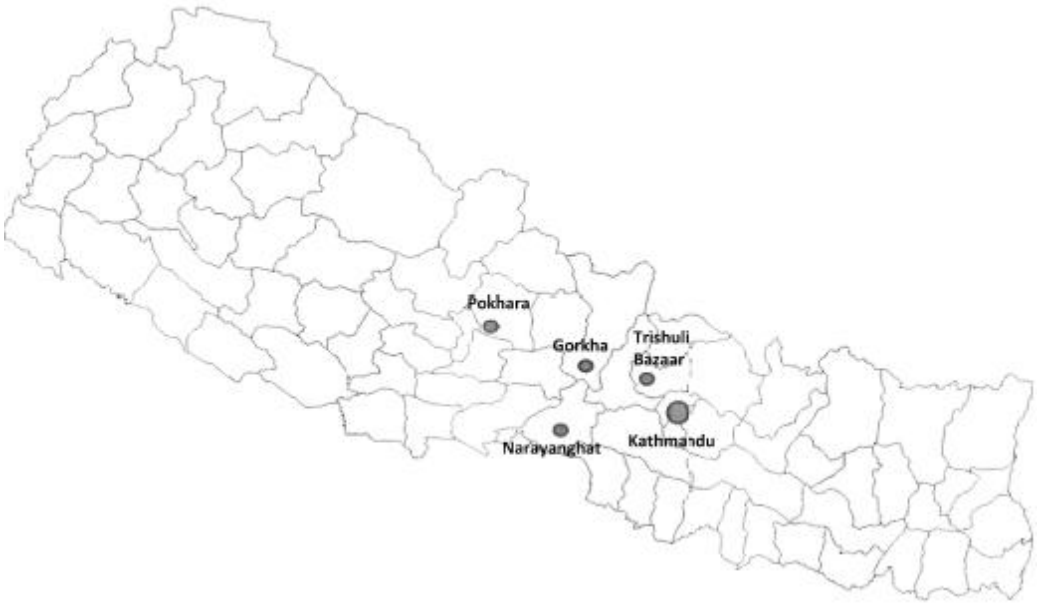

Figure 6: Locations of Bijay's *basāīs*

Bijay understands his family's mobility not in terms of rural to urban movement, but rather according to the phrase, *bajār-tira* ('market spectrum'). Much like Skinner's (1964) famous hierarchy of markets to understand urbanization in China, *bajār-tira* refers to towns as a sliding spectrum of market sizes. Bijay's schema presents several increasingly large gradients of markets. First there are the smaller markets and district centers located along trade routes (established prior to roads) typically on ridge-top plateaus. Next are the larger towns and markets located along highways and river basins in the more accessible districts. The final stage along the *bajār-tira* is the larger cities of Pokhara and Kathmandu in the mid-mountains, and the cities of the Tarai. Thus, rather than a rural/urban divide, which positions Kathmandu in opposition to the village, Bijay

sees his village birthplace in opposition to his residences in Gorkha bazaar, Pokhara, Narayanghat and Kathmandu. Furthermore, each move up the *bajār-tira* spectrum followed a move up in educational level from school in Gorkha to plus-2 in Pokhara to college in Narayanghat and now MA in Kathmandu.

The link between moving to Kathmandu and educational mobility is a common theme in Maitri Nagar. Whether to enroll children in an English-speaking private school, pursue their own postgraduate degree, or find employment teaching in a school or university, education served as main pull to the city. 34% of households questioned had one or more adults engaged as school-teachers, university professors or as students.[55] Like Bijay, moving to Kathmandu represents the possibility of upward mobility via education for many.

Bijay compared his own trajectory with what he called the lateral movement of his father. His father, too, had left their village home in Gorkha for the *bajār-tira*, but had not benefitted from moving. His father, he says, works within a trap with little to no possibility for upward mobility. He will continue to move from bazaar to bazaar renting government housing without the ability to make it to Kathmandu where he can make more money. Although the Nepal government does not pay according to the standard of living in different locations, it is commonly understood that Kathmandu civil servants can ask for (and will receive) higher bribes to supplement their incomes.

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[55] Besides education, employment opportunities in the commercial, government and NGO sectors serve as strong attractions to the capital. While 23% of houses questioned had someone working for the government as civil servants, police, military, or engineer, 9% were employed by NGOs. Many also found employment in transportation, real estate, or financial services. Beyond education and employment, informants spoke of coming to the city to "follow relatives," or access the better infrastructure and commercial opportunities of the city. By the mid-2000s, despite accounting for just 7% of the national population, Kathmandu Valley accounted for 40-60% of sales, 45% of electricity consumption, 75% of fixed telephone lines, 90% of mobile phones, 90% of cars, and 80% of motorbikes (Shakya 2009: 64).

Importantly, Bijay equates his father's position with that of the town of Trishuli Bazaar. Bijay and I travelled to Trishuli Bazaar, a four-hour bus ride from Kathmandu, in July 2009. Despite being slightly northwest of Kathmandu towards the Himalaya, Trisuli Bazaar exists in a deep river valley at a lower altitude than Kathmandu. As an administrator in a public hospital, Ram lives in government housing – a cement block of two rooms in a U-shaped collection of houses. As Bijay and I walk around the Trishuli market, he judges the in-between status of Trishuli Bazaar as even more morally deficient than Kathmandu. He categorizes Trishuli Bazaar as in between the *abikāsit* ('undeveloped village') and the *bikāsit* ('developed') city; as such, it is "mixed" in how it has the development facilities without the opportunities of the city. Therefore, he explains that people, especially youth, will know about the 'modern world' through its goods and media, but have no way to live it, leaving them with nothing but "drinking, sex, drugs, and laziness." He sees the houses as a metaphor for Trisuli Bazaar's liminal status. The houses have cement plaster only on the street-facing facade, leaving the brick face exposed on the other three sides.

The decline of Trishuli Bazaar is a product of shifts in regional political economy and state policy. Positioned alongside the Trishuli River, the bazaar served as a main market along a Kathmandu-Tibet trade network that dates back to the 16th Century when Malla kings inhabited the summer time palace complex of Nuwakot (Gutschow 2011: 156, 796). In the 19th and 20th Century, the market slowly became a remote outpost. First, the Tibetan trade declined when new routes via Sikkim were opened by the British in 1860 and were then closed after the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 (Whelpton 2005: 76). But, the most damaging change would come in the 1960s, when the Nepal

government shifted district headquarters south from Trishuli Bazaar to Bidur. The cultural historian Prayag Raj Sharma (2004d) explains this historical transformation as telling of urbanization patterns in Nepal. He documents how, since the 1960s, the construction of highways and government's selection of administrative centers shifted the flow of commerce and trade from ridge hill-tops along trade routes to Valley basins along highways – and ever more increasingly, Tarai towns. The access provided by roads supplanted the bi-directionality of south-north trade routes with the one-way movement of goods from south to north; and, one could add, people in the opposite direction from north to south. Although Trishuli Bazaar lies in a river basin, its commercial activity has shrunk due to the end of the Tibet trade and shift of district headquarters to Bidur (Sharma 2000d: 329).

According to Bijay, Trishuli Bazaar's history of decline mirrors is opposite to the promise of Kathmandu. Kathmandu represents a gateway to jobs, education, and foreign destinations. As I left the field in October 2009, Bijay was preparing for his foreign-service examination. Like his father, he wanted a civil service job, but one that would keep him in Kathmandu or take him outside the country. As I discuss further in chapter 5, a Kathmandu or 'foreign' job would help him build a better house in Kathmandu. For his parents, the better house would improve Bijay's marriage prospects. For Bijay, however, a larger and better-furnished house, simply meant belonging to the city.

II. Moving to the Periphery, Moving Beyond Nepal

In this second section, I show how the move to the urban periphery is connected to aspirations to leave the country. The current trend of labor migration has links going

back to Nepal-British Raj links in the early 19th Century. The first group of migratory laborers was the Gurkhas, soldiers recruited into the British and Indian militaries as a form of colonial diplomacy that the Ranas used to leverage political independence and financial assistance from the British Raj (Des Chene 1991). Importantly, the Gurkha tradition established a category of person, "the Lahure,"[56] broadly defined as someone who "exchanges labor for wages outside of his own community" (1991: 236), a meaning that persists to this day. Up to one-third of those who served in the Gurkha regiments in WWI did not return to Nepal; instead, electing to resettle in northwest and northeast India (Whelpton 2005: 76).

Besides Gurkhas, many indebted and enslaved Nepalis fled Nepal for northeast India (Sikkim, Bengal, Assam, Darjeeling), Bhutan, and Burma in the 19th Century (Shrestha 1990: ch. 4). As of 1872, both Darjeeling and Sikkim had Nepali-majority populations (Whelpton 2005: 76). Rather than the pull of the Raj's militaristic ambitions, thus, it was the exploitative land policies of Nepal's own feudal elite that drove these migrants abroad. Several short stories have covered the forced migration of exploited landless laborers into India. In Krishnabam Malla's 1968 short story, 'Halī' ('The Ploughman'), an agricultural laborer, burdened by immense debt, gives his land to the landlord and moves to Assam where he intends to herd cows. In perhaps the most popular story of forced migration,[57] Lil Bahadur Chettri's *Basāĩ* also connects economic conditions to emigration (Hutt 2008). In it, the economic exploitation by landowners and

[56] The term stems from the name given to Nepali soldiers who joined Ranjit Singh's Army in Lahore, 1809.

[57] According to the literary scholar and English translator of the novel, Michael Hutt (2008: xx), *Basāĩ* "is one of a handful of Nepali novels that almost every Nepali reader knows well."

moneylenders and social conservatism of the village society force the main character and his family to emigrate to India ('*mugalān*').[58]

Since the 1970s, global economic conditions have shifted Nepali migratory patterns beyond India to new geographic centers of production. Shakya (2009: 156) points out that two events in the mid-1970s - India's Emergency and the Gulf's 'oil boom' - shifted labor demand from India to the Gulf countries. Over the next forty years, the new labor demand in the Gulf has caused a major shift in the Nepali economy from its agricultural base to a "remittance economy" (Seddon et al. 2003) From 2002 onwards, remittances have served as the largest source of foreign currency earnings in Nepal, more than exports, tourism, and foreign aid combined (Graner 2010: 28-29). The number of households in Nepal receiving remittances more than doubled from 23.4% to 55.8% from 1995 to 2010, and the amount of remittances grew from 13 billion rupees to 328 billion NRs (CBS 2011). In particular, remittances from the Gulf and Malaysia have grown the most, increasing 3,000% from 1995/1996 to 2003/2004 (Graner 2010: 29).

During the same period at the end of the 20th Century, another class of Nepalis started traveling to Australia, Europe and North America for educational opportunities (Sijapati 2010; Dhungel 1999; Adhikari 2010). Shakya contrasts the proletarian and temporary component of labor migrants, who he calls *bipalis*,[59] with the increase of educated, permanent expatriates, who he calls NRNs (non-resident Nepalis). Whereas *bipalis* work for a few years to pay off loans and send remittances to family back in

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[58] 'Mugalān' literally means 'the land of the Mughals' in reference to Mughal India, but was meant as a reference to Nepalis emigrating to or returning from India (Hutt 1998: 201).

[59] *Bipali* is Shakya's neologism which combines the *bi* from the Nepali word *bidesh* ('foreign country') with the *pali* from Nepali.

Nepal, NRNs are more likely to stay in foreign countries and bring their immediate families to live with them abroad (2009: 165).

Maitri Nagar: Nilkantha

Similar to Bijay's hierarchy of *bajār-tira*, it is common to hear international destinations, too, ranked according to a hierarchy of prestige. At the bottom is India; then, the increasingly popular destinations of the Gulf, Malaysia, and East Asia; finally, the world of North America, Europe, and Australia. Importantly, the avenue of travel, labor or education, factors into this hierarchy as educational purposes are valued as superior. As shown in Bijay's narrative, moving to Kathmandu reflects for many Maitri Nagar residents a necessary step towards the top level of education in the English-speaking world. Many Maitri Nagar respondents thought of their family's move to Kathmandu as a step closer to opportunities for foreign travel and living often embodied in hopes that their children will acquire student visas for Europe, North America or Australia. Many have already worked abroad, a step which helped them buy property in Kathmandu. Much like those relocated from the hills to Kathmandu via the Tarai, another form of triangular migration applies to foreign laborers who have left Nepal from a village but upon returning settle in the city. As Bruslé (2010a: 20) notes, Kathmandu is a "stepping stone" to opportunities in foreign countries – a node rather than a destination. In addition to hoping their children travel abroad, 40% of households have a member who has worked or is currently working or earning a degree abroad. Of these, 41% are working in the Gulf (Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi) or in Malaysia. 35% have earned or are earning a degree or wages in India (in Delhi, Assam, Punjab, Mumbai). The remaining

24% of transnational links refer to people earning degrees outside of South Asia, in China or the United States.

For Nilkantha and his family, Bāhuns from a small village just south of Pokhara, the bottom of the ladder, India, has been their only option – until recently. In fact, Nilkantha's parents met, married, and started their family in India in the 1960s and 1970s. His father left his village, Pokhareltok, as a teenager to seek the forest-land of the northeast Indian state of Meghalaya, where he, along with fellow villagers, used to graze their cows. Nilkantha's mother was the daughter of a Nepali truck driver in India, and was born and raised in Shillong, the capital of Meghalaya. However, after the Khasi indigenous revolt of 1986, Nepali-speakers became targeted as 'foreigners' and started to leave (Passah 2009: 243). While many of their fellow Nepalis resettled in Ratna Nagar in Chitwan, Nilkantha's parents returned to Pokhareltok. Although born in India, Nilkantha lived most of his life in Pokhareltok until he finished school at age 17. Then, like his father, he immigrated to India to find work. In the state of Punjab he worked as a domestic in several wealthy houses. When he returned to Nepal in 2002, he entered Pokhara University where he met his wife, Nandita, from Chitwan. His academic success inspired him to continue with an M.A. program in English at Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu. Moving to Kathmandu was a "dream" for Nilkantha, but not for the reason of getting a job or staying there, but to gain access to the United States. With a post-graduate degree in Kathmandu, he believes he has a better chance of acquiring admission and a scholarship to pursue a PhD in the United States.

Whereas Nilkantha entered the transnational scheme at the bottom of the ladder as a laborer in India, he hopes to move to the top rung by seeking an education in the United

States. The majority of his foreign-travelled fellow villagers, however, have entered in the middle – as laborers in the Gulf. As we walk around Pokhareltok, Nilkantha points to what seems to be every other house that has a son working in the Gulf. This represents an important shift for foreign labor options for Nepalis from India to the Gulf. Des Chene (1991: 10) refers to a tradition of the Nepali foreign worker, or 'Lahure,' to return with "foreign commodities and knowledge." "Foreign," argues Des Chene could be substituted for *bikāsi* ('developed'), which, like *bajārko kurā* is opposed to the "local" or "*jangali*" ('of the jungle') things of the village. What changes is the actual content of gifts as reference points for one's foreign knowledge or 'developed' attitude gained abroad. In particular, Nilkantha sees the signs of the foreign-returned in the village architecture. While the standard house in the village is of *kachhā* style (mud-stone), the RCC (reinforced concrete cement) houses of, as he says "middle east influence," are increasingly common. RCC refers to houses constructed with reinforced concrete pillars instead of timber and brick/stone structures (explained further in chapter five).[60] Also, he points to the "flowers on rooftops" as an Arab influence as opposed to the Hindu preference for flowers planted near the Tulsi plants in the front yard.

From Pokhareltok migrating to India, and increasingly to the Gulf, labor remains the most plausible vehicle for foreign travel. In fact, one Maitri Nagar resident was able to calculate his options in monetary terms. He estimates that hiring a broker to arrange a labor visa to the United States would cost him 1.5 million Nepali rupees (apx. $20,500), whereas for a visa to Afghanistan or Iraq would cost three hundred thousand (apx.

[60] It is unclear, to me, why Nilkantha associates RCC-houses with the Gulf as they have become the common architectural form in Kathmandu and other Nepali urban areas.

$4,000).[61] According to Nilkantha, however, it is only through academic success that he can even imagine going to the United States. Many Maitri Nagar residents echo this sentiment referring to foreign travel as one of the main reasons for moving to Kathmandu. Only in Kathmandu, so goes the logic, can children learn English at a good private school, and thus, earn the possibility of attaining a student visa to the United States.

At the moment, as a renter in Maitri Nagar with two kids and wife to support, Nilkantha hopes to convert an American doctorate into a lucrative 'foreign-job' back in Nepal, which would allow him to build a house in the Kathmandu periphery. Like his father's experience in India and his fellow villagers in the Gulf, the goal is to use profits earned abroad to remake one's life in Nepal. Nilkantha is quick to admit that he will probably not make it to the United States, and if he does, he would probably stay there after his degree. In fact, by the end of my research period as he is completing his requirements for his Master's degree, he was considering a civil service position that would take him to Jomsom, a settlement in north central Nepal, which requires several days travel from Kathmandu. Although he would not be able to take his family with him, he would be able to better afford his family remaining in Kathmandu.

Pleasant Housing: Anil

What remains a distant wish for someone like Nilkantha in Maitri Nagar is a common reality for most in Pleasant Housing. The transnational connections of residents are linked to occupations, many of which earn foreign incomes. According to Kumar, a Kathmandu lawyer, most residents have 'foreign-jobs' as opposed to outsiders who must

[61] After 12 Nepalis were murdered in Iraq in August of 2004 (which led to riots in Kathmandu), the Nepal government banned travel to Iraq and Afghanistan. The ban on Iraq was lifted in 2010.

live on Nepali salaries. The difference in salary is significant. Kumar estimates that a government civil servant, what he calls a "Nepali job" will earn around 10,000 Rs ($145) per month, and someone with a "foreign job" will earn $5,000 USD per month with an INGO (International Non-Governmental Organizations), foreign government or United Nations.

For Anil Shrestha, his foreign-job and Pleasant Housing residence allowed him to move his family out of Nepal. Anil was the reason I ended up living Pleasant Housing. In 2001-2002, while teaching in Patan, I lived next door to Anil's sister's family and worked with his brother-in-law. Several years later, his sister and brother-in-law's son, Rajendra, moved in with my mother in Corvallis, Oregon while attending college there. When I expressed interest in researching and living in a housing colony, Rajendra and his parents contacted Anil who found me a house in Pleasant Housing to rent for the year of my fieldwork. Before the year was over, however, Anil was asking me to find a tenant for his house. He left Pleasant Housing in September, moved his family to Bangkok and himself to Kabul, Afghanistan.

Anil had worked as a budget accountant for UNICEF in their Kathmandu office for over fifteen years. It was the income from this 'foreign job' that helped him buy one of the first houses in Pleasant Housing in 2006 and move his wife and children from his parent's home in Lagankhel (south Patan). Although seemingly happy with his new house when I first arrived in November, 2008, as the year progressed, Anil became increasingly wary of living in Nepal. In April of 2009, his wife was hit by a motorcycle while walking on the sidewalk on the main north-south road of Patan. Due to traffic, particularly brazen motorbike drivers had taken to riding on sidewalks to move through

car jams. The accident broke her tailbone causing her to stay in bedrest for three months. At this time, Anil started to express interest in using his UNICEF position to look for employment in another of the agency's offices.

In September, Anil called me to ask if I knew of any Americans who would be interested in renting his house. He had just accepted a position in UNICEF's Kabul office, which he was to start within a week. He did not want to move his family to the war-torn country, but also did not want to leave them in Kathmandu. He decided to move them to Bangkok and was, while talking to me, booking a ticket to Thailand to find an apartment and enroll his children in a school there. Despite leaving Nepal, Anil did not want to sell his Pleasant Housing house. It was, he confided to me, both an investment in the short-term, and a place to retire in the long-term. Moreover, since it was a guarded and exclusive residence, he felt safer about leaving it, even if unoccupied.

On my walk home from Anil's, his next-door neighbor, Madhab, a biologist at Kathmandu University, called me to have a nearly identical conversation. He had just received news that he was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research at a SUNY university. 'Did I know any Americans who wanted to rent his home?' the conversation started just like the previous one with Anil. As I finished my walk back home, I realized that at that point in time, every house between Anil's and mine had a member living outside of Nepal. Kumar's sister was living in Seattle, the Pant's had one son in Australia and another in Irving, Texas, and the Shakya's had a daughter in Toronto.

Both Nilkantha and Anil see their moves to the Kathmandu periphery as steps towards lives in foreign countries. For the former, his new residence represents a gateway

to an education in the United States, which should guarantee the security of a future foreign-job whether in Nepal or outside. Anil already has the foreign-job, but now with a housing colony residence, he used his position at UNICEF to move his family out of Nepal even though it placed him in one of the most dangerous countries in the world. Importantly, however, he saw the colony house as the safest place to maintain property in Nepal. Thus, the move to Afghanistan and Thailand is predicated on a temporary divorce from Nepal, but longer-term aspiration of return.

Conclusion

Moving to the urban periphery must be understood as one of many moves that extend beyond rural/urban or capital/hinterland dichotomies. Following a trend that dates back to the early 19th Century, Nepali mobility encompasses the idea of the foreign as a standard option for making a living. Although diverse in place and meaning, the multiple networks of mobility are based on similar processes of kinship ritual, attachments to land and house, and finally, opportunities for education and labor. Consequently, relocation and mobility, particularly the emotional and physical distinction between a fixed *ghar* and temporary *basāĩ*, are made meaningful through both personal experience and the economic conditions of the national and global political economy. The social and material capital of mobility is converted into Kathmandu houses, whether they index elite status or a safe investment, marriage prospects or a new center of kinship relations.

Chapter Five. American Apartments, Bihar Boxes, and a Neo-Newari Renaissance: the Dual Logic of New Kathmandu Houses

> **"**Without consumption, the object does not complete itself as a product: a house left unoccupied is no house. Yet use-value cannot be specifically understood on the natural level of 'needs' and 'wants,' – precisely because men do not merely produce 'housing' or 'shelter': they produce dwellings of definite sorts, as a peasant's hut, or a nobleman's castle. This determination of use-values, of a particular type of house as a particular type of home, represents a continuous process of social life in which men reciprocally define objects in terms of themselves and themselves in terms of objects."
>
> - Marshall Sahlins (1976: 169)

From the rooftop of his neighbor's house, Narayan KC looked at his partially constructed house several hundred meters away and asked me, "does my house look like a *namunā ghar*" ('model house')? Unsure how to answer, I asked him to clarify what he meant by *namunā* ('model'), to which he answered, "a modern house that attracts attention, and that others want to imitate." Is the importance, then, of a house to be a model for neighbors to follow?, I asked him. "No," Narayan turned to me a bit dumbfounded quoting a famous proverb, '*Madāle ek pathak ghar banaucha*,' which literally means "A man must build a house one time." Narayan explains this proverb as saying, "to be a proper man, you must build your own house which you can pass on to your sons." In this dual motivation of display and inheritance, Narayan identified a source of dilemma for a house-owner in Kathmandu. On the hand, he aspires to build a *namunā ghar* that visually competes with neighboring houses – not to mention, earns money from renting out the bottom floors (Narayan later added); what I call the *namunā mode*. On the other hand, his house is also intended to satisfy the ritual obligations of the *grihastha* ('householder'), the second of four Hindu life-stages, in which a man is expected to build a house for his family and sons to inherit; what I call the *grihastha mode*.

Next to the multiple colors and disparate designs of Maitri Nagar houses, Pleasant Housing sticks out for its uniform architecture of sloped roofs, brick facades, cement driveways, elevated grass front-yards, and black-iron fences within a walled colony of paved grid-patterned streets. If Narayan's goal is to build a house that draws attention, the goal of Pleasant Housing is for the entire community to attract attention collectively. Here, residents attach the prestige of their house to the look of the entire colony rather than to their individual house. In fact, while alluding to the *madā* proverb, one resident, Kumar, puts it, "I did not put my own sweat into building this house, it was pre-built. We have no time for this kind of work." The 'we' here is the colony resident who is too busy to contribute to building a house, rather delegating all construction duties to the company, in this case, Pleasant Housing, to build the house for them. Additionally, few residents expect to pass on their houses to children rather expecting their children to get married and live elsewhere.

In trying to understand what makes the meaning of houses in the urban periphery, we need to understand how the *namunā* and *grihastha* modes function differently and similarly in the two places. Particularly, I ask how consumers negotiate between the seemingly opposing demands of material display of the *namunā* mode and the cosmic significance of the *grihastha* mode. In the scholarship of Kathmandu architecture, different disciplinary approaches have kept the two modes separate. Whereas architects have documented and studied the material form of the house, anthropologists have emphasized the ritual and symbolic significance of the house. The architects' attention to the material form, or display, has often ignored the social context, while the

anthropologists' attention to symbolic meaning, or ritual-caste-kin matters, has tended to overlook material conditions.

Narayan's dual logic definition of his house shows that both types of analysis are necessary to understanding contemporary houses in Kathmandu. My objective is to ask how house-owners simultaneously draw social meaning from the multiple spheres of meaning in valuing a single object. In Bohannan's (1958) famous Tiv example, the multiple exchange spheres of objects interact through morality. Objects exchanged upwards from the subsistence/market sphere to the prestige sphere or to the people sphere – are morally appropriate, while the reverse - transactions heading down the hierarchy - garner moral disapproval or shame. Parry and Bloch (1989: 23-28) offer a more flexible notion of conversion between spheres, or "transactional orders" as they call it. They distinguish between short-term transactions concerned with the arena of individual competition and those "concerned with the reproduction of the long-term social or cosmic order." The former can be morally acceptable as long as they "remain subordinated to, and do not compete with, the long-term restorative cycles." Thus, "when the short-term cycle threatens to replace the long-term cycle then the world is rotten."

Stirrat (1989: 108), in his analysis of houses in Ambakandawila, a Sri Lankan fishing community, applies Parry and Bloch's model to two spheres of consumption: one geared towards the "reproduction of the household and the identity of fishing households as fishing people: in a sense as a 'class'"; and the other concerned with "competition between households." Both are valued positively, but importantly according to Parry and Bloch's (1989: 28) reading of Stirrat, the competitive sphere is subordinate to the reproduction sphere, such that competitive consumption is "most fully justified" when

displayed towards marriage, but "becomes distinctly immoral when it jeopardizes the viability of the household." Thus, although the house possesses the possibility of the two orders co-existing, value is differentiated between the subservient short-term consumption and morally superior longer-term household needs. From this point, we would expect the *namunā* concerns to be subservient to the longer-term *grihastha* issues.

Although not addressing houses, Mark Liechty's contrast of "old materialism" - the "stabilizing" and "nurturing" possessions of land and gold - and "new materialism" - TVs and motorbikes, which represent enjoyment, display, and personal identity and status (2003: 99) – in Kathmandu consumerism offers a parallel to *grihastha* and *namunā*. Like Bohannan's case, Liechty maintains that an "ethical ranking of goods" exists whereby "increasingly vast, unstable, and therefore treacherous realm" of new goods (2003: 86) can be "portrayed as almost hostile intruders into the domestic sphere" (2003: 99). And yet, despite this moral danger, in what Liechty calls the moral materialism of the new middle class, consumption and moral propriety are two sides to the same problem of prestige. On the one hand, middle class subjects must consume and display their goods to be distinguished from the poor "trapped … in lifestyles of 'tradition' and poverty" (2003: 67), but on the other hand, they must remain morally superior to the "vulgar rich" whose "material excesses" produce "morally bankrupt lifestyles of affluence, pleasure, and foreignness" (2003: 84). Building on Liechty, we might expect that the *namunā* mode of competitive consumption to distinguish one's house from the poor, while the *grihastha* mode of cosmic concerns distinguishes one's self from the immoral rich.

Liechty conceives of consumption in terms of class – lower, middle and upper – but the case of houses requires a spatial interpretation. As we discussed in chapter four,

the fixity of *ghar* ('home') must be understood within the mobility of residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing. Whereas Maitri Nagar residents understand their new house as distinct from their village houses, Pleasant Housing residents interpret their houses as separate from the foreign-modelled Kathmandu houses. As such, it is not so much in between the poor and rich that residents see their houses, but rather in between hinterland, city, and foreign lands. The unique and conspicuous display of Maitri Nagar houses emphasize the material *namunā* mode to distance themselves from the idea of the village, while the uniformity of Pleasant Housing emphasizes the moral *grihastha* mode to separate themselves from the morally dubious consumption of Kathmandu. In both cases, however, the modes of *namunā* and *grihastha* do not function in opposition to one another, but rather in mutually reinforcing ways.

I. Namunā Mode: House as Competitive Display

The architectural discourse of house materiality is often articulated through the rhetoric of modern and traditional, a dichotomy that is mapped on to spatial categories of foreign and native. When I asked Narayan to define how his house is modern, he answered, "My Kathmandu house is neither a village house nor a Newar house." As someone who had relocated to Kathmandu from central Nepal in the last ten years, it was important to separate his new house from the general aesthetic of houses in his village and from the settlements of the Newar in Kathmandu Valley. Although one could suggest numerous varieties of forms that qualify as a Nepali village house,[62] Narayan's conception of village houses refers to the houses most commonly found in Nepal's central mid-mountain area defined by stone-mud masonry, wood frames, thatch roofs

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[62] See Gérard Toffin's (1991) edited volume, *Man and His House in the Himalayas*.

(but increasingly tin roofs), and open interiors. Newar houses, meanwhile, refer to the dwellings of the dense Newar towns, villages, and cities in the Kathmandu Valley. Specifically, scholars define Newar houses according to the following characteristics: sloped tiled roof, exposed brick facade, mud (or lime *surkhi*) mortar, timber-framed structure, and decorative ornamental windows and doors made of timber, brick, or terracotta.

In the spoken language of construction sites in new Kathmandu, Narayan's house is considered a *pakkī ghar*, meaning that it consists of 'permanent materials,' such as reinforced concrete columns, brick-cement masonry, cement roof, and perhaps most symbolically important, cement plaster. Like a typical Newar house, it is four stories tall, but the similarities stop there. For one, the proportions of its windows, doors, floor size, and ceilings are all much larger than what is found in Newar settlements. Second, it has a flat roof and is painted green contrary to the sloped roofs and reddish-brown tint of the brick exteriors typical of the Newar built form. Finally, Narayan's house is detached and separated from neighbors in contrast to the corridor structure of dense Newar settlements.

In the architectural discourse of Nepal, Narayan's cement house fits into a narrative of how modern and foreign forces tragically destroyed the traditional and native form. According to this narrative, the cement buildings of contemporary Kathmandu are slowly replacing Nepal's internationally recognized legacy of Malla-era architecture.[63] Interestingly, although "Newar architecture" is largely confined to the Kathmandu

[63] The Malla era (12^{th} – 18^{th} Century rulers) refers to the "golden era" of Nepali architecture in which the rulers of the Valley's three main cities – Bhaktapur, Lalitpur, and Kathmandu – competed to outdo each other's architectural achievements.

Valley,[64] architects often refer to it interchangeably with the category of "Nepali architecture." It is this architecture that is "unlike anything [an outsider] would get to see in India or anywhere else" (Sharma 1972: 20), and has "acquainted the outside world with us" (Manandhar 1969: 10). Moreover, the "tiered" or Pagoda architecture[65] "preserves [Nepal's] own special position in the cultural history of the world" (Manandhar 1969: 11). Bernier (1974: 52) writes that Kathmandu buildings "must be recognized as being entirely unique, absolutely unique, absolutely Nepalese, with an 'individual personality' that attracts visitor and scholar."

While architects celebrate Newar architecture as the authentic aesthetic of Nepal, they condemn the incursion of 'foreign' and 'modern' cement-based construction materials and practices. Compared to the Newar city core, the "drab, foreign, colorless" new houses of Kathmandu, which typically have concrete pillars, brick and cement mortar, flat roofs, and a vulnerability to earthquakes, are criticized for "destroy[ing] the visual unity of an entire village street" (Shimkhada 1972: 28). As early as 1966, one critic (L'Horloge 1966: 11) asked,

> How is it that a country which gave birth to one of the World's leading architectural forms, in the shape of the pagoda style, could permit the current rash of cement-like boxes, which stare, ugly, characterless, cold and totally abhorrent as we pass by? How explain the presence of these unseemly abortions, which are rapidly reducing the capital to the status of the most unlovely in the World?

More recently, critics have disparaged Kathmandu houses as "Bihar boxes," (Parajuli 2008) and likened Nepali architecture to a "crow that loses direction in the fog" (Sharma 2008) or worse yet, belittled it as "flat, thin, weightless and temporary"

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[64] After the Gorkha invasion of Kathmandu Valley and establishment of the kingdom-state in Kathmandu in the late 1760s, many Newar merchants migrated to various trading posts, such as Pokhara, Tansen, Bandipur, and Dolakha, in the 18th and 19th Centuries and established bazaars modeled after Kathmandu Valley.

[65] Tiwari (2009: 120-125) argues that the roofs of Nepali temples should be understood as 'tiered' rather than pagoda-style in order to distinguish them from East Asian architecture.

(Shrestha 2008). The fear was, and remains to be, that cement houses will replace the traditional look of Kathmandu, and thus, strike at the heart of Nepal's national identity. Invariably, writers accuse foreign influences of ruining the architectural heritage. According to the German architect, Wolfgang Korn (1976:33),

> Outside influences inevitably change the lifestyle of the people. These and the availability of modern building materials alter the previous ideals of house design and are reflected in a preference for rectilineal structures unadorned by the traditional woodcarvings and special bricks, which together with the use of bright colours instead of the natural brick and wood, change the appearance and function of the house. Unhappily under these modern pressures, the typical Newar dwelling is now rapidly becoming a building style of the past, especially in the Westernised city areas.

While Korn looks to Westernization as the culprit of change, others look to India. Since "foreigners had been living in neighboring India for generations, the answer, as some would have it, obviously could be found in India" … and thus, Indian houses, such as 'Bihar boxes,' became the "prototype for succeeding horrors" (L'Horloge 1966). The solution, thus, is for Nepali architects and engineers "open to continued inspiration from the traditional past" (Bernier 1974: 53) to revive the traditional themes in house form in order to counter the dominance of cement. The call for architects attuned to traditional aesthetics continues today. In a 2009 opinion piece in the newspaper *República*, urban affairs columnist, Shiva Rijal, wrote:

> Strategies for creative architectural wars need to be launched not only to redefine the urbanization process in Kathmandu but also to evoke or revive the cultural modes of expressions that have remained buried in the graveyards of negligence and naiveties… Traditional houses look fragile in the midst of the concrete jungles … they are in the process of drawing emotions and exude beauty day by day. Thus the common folk architects need to be rewarded, praised and inspired to intensify the architectural wars that the Valley needs in earnest… Every house built in traditional architectural form is a war against the mainstream pattern of urbanization in Kathmandu.

Also referred to as 'Kathmandu Post-Modern' or 'Neo-Newari Renaissance,' neo-traditional houses are mainly indexed by exposed brick exteriors, sloped tiled roofs, wood

doors and windows with intricate carvings alluding to Hindu deities, interiors aligned with the cosmos according to the principles of vastu shasthra, central courtyards, and ground level beds and sitting areas.

In this discussion of the materiality of Kathmandu houses, architectural writers equate bricks with native tradition and cement with foreign modernity. While this assessment reveals a certain ideology of materiality, it disregards how materials function in social practice. Assigning material objects, technologies, and aesthetics to the vague categories of modern or traditional, or foreign or native, greatly restricts our understanding of the cultural signification of houses. For a more cultural reading of houses, I turn to the anthropological discourse.

II. Grihastha Mode: House as Cosmic Reproduction

Ethnographers have tended to organize their discourse along ethnic lines. For example, John Gray has analyzed Chhetri householders (1995) and houses (2006) in a southwestern Valley village, while Newar ethnographers have studied houses in Panauti (Barre et al. 1981), Lalitpur (Gellner 1992), Dhulikhel (Quigley 1985), Kathmandu (Shepard 1985, Pradhan 1986), and Bhaktapur (Levy 1991; Parish 1994). In such accounts, anthropologists have emphasized the parallel of domestic and cosmological space, particularly in terms of ritual, kinship and caste relations.

At the root of this analysis is what John Gray (1995) calls the ‘grihastha ideology’ which refers to the householder, or second of four Hindu life-stages, in which married men are obliged to engage with the outside world to make a living, family, and importantly, a house. In this gendered obligation, householders, or in colloquial Nepali, *ghardhanī* or *gharpaṭṭī,* are expected to build one house that will last their life and then

be passed on to their sons. Although he must engage with the outside world of pollution in order to fulfill these obligations, he strives to maintain the house as auspicious and pure as possible. As other scholars have demonstrated in South Asian houses (Daniel 1984: 105-162; Moore 1990; Säävälä 2003), the character, actions, and properties of the inhabitants affect the house just as the qualities and properties of the house affect the inhabitants. According to the principles of the Hindu spatial ideology, *vastu shastra*, a houseowner establishes auspicious conditions by constructing the house as a microcosm of the universe and by following a ritually prescribed spatial and temporal order. Particularly, Gray addresses the importance of aligning the house's orientation and internal layout of the house with Hindu sacred geography, as determined by priests and architects trained in vastu principles (2006: 53-64). For example, the kitchen's ideal location is in the southeast corner to correspond with *Agni*, deity of fire, and the prayer room should go in the northeast corner to correspond with the *Isan*, deity of knowledge and wisdom. In consultation with a family priest and astrologer, house construction occurs in the following temporal order: removing harmful presences (snakes, ghosts) from the site; laying the foundation on an auspicious day determined by the *ghardhanī*'s ("householder") horoscope; performing cleansing rituals before the first night of habitation (2006: 69-87).

The symbolic organization of space not only protects insiders against the dangers of the outside, it inculcates them with the normative ideals of social organization. In the case of Newar houses, space is organized according to two different planes – horizontal and vertical [Barre et al. (1981), as cited in Gellner (1992: 28-30) and Quigley (1985: 16-17)]. Horizontal space is divided by a wall that separates each floor into public and

private[66]; outer and inner. According to Shepard (1985: 30), horizontal domestic space communicates kinship through the process of segmentation, the tendency by which Newar families divide themselves both socially and physically. When brothers decide to establish their own house, they divide the house vertically not horizontally; such that each brother's wife and children will have access to each level.

While the horizontal levels reference kinship, the vertical organization of the house references caste hierarchy and sacred space. The ground floor signals the profane space of "outsiders, dirt, impurity, and death," while the upper floors index the "intensely domestic, intimate, private spaces – separate, pure, and sacred" (Parish 1994: 57). The ground floor is reserved for toilets, storage, productive activity (weaving, husking of grain), animals, and the water-unacceptable castes. Importantly, this floor serves as a buffer with the city, and is often considered 'outside' of the house. The first floor (or second in US usage) often consists of a meeting room and bedrooms, and is open to water-acceptable castes. The second floor (or third) is for feasts and bedrooms, and is accessible only to people of the same or higher caste.[67] Finally, the top floor is associated with the gods (Slusser 1980: 480-1, 130-34) since it is where inhabitants place their kitchen, hearth, and shrine and is only accessible to family members.[68]

Unlike the town-house Newar dwellings, a rural Chhetri house, detached from other houses and distant from the road, is understood to be the 'compound' defined as the

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[66] I accept the private and public dichotomy with hesitation as it often carries assumptions of European-American notions of individual autonomy that I would not like to impose in this case.

[67] Levy (1990: 189-190) notes that this floor is also used for lineage deity rituals and Brahman-assisted family worship.

[68] Shepard (1985), interestingly, argues that the layers of the house are equivalent to the concentric rings of the Newar city whereby the King and highest castes inhabit the center, middle castes at the periphery, and lowest castes outside of the city's limits.

space bounded by a wall or fence.[69] Thus, while caste hierarchy is understood through vertical levels in the Newar house, it is horizontal barriers, both symbolic and physical, that translate caste relations in the spatial understanding of the Chhetri house (Gray 2006: 102-110). Any caste is welcomed into the courtyard where non-cooked food, such as rice paddy, is exchanged. It is at the raised verandah where water-unacceptable castes are prohibited from entering and rice flakes are given to guests.[70] Although the same type of food is exchanged and same type of person (water-acceptable castes) allowed to enter the sleeping rooms, Gray (2006: 107-108) considers these rooms as a "more interior concentric zone" since they are inside the house and not visible from people on the verandah, courtyard or outside the gate. Finally, the kitchen, often located in the most inaccessible part of the ground floor, is considered the center and only open to people of the same or higher caste status.

While these accounts address the embodiment of cosmological and ritual space in the house, they do not address the growing impact of transnational mobility and ethno-politics in contemporary Kathmandu. In short, their emphasis on cosmic reproduction overlooks the importance of place and connection to the larger political economy of house materiality. Now, I turn to ethnographic accounts of recently built houses in Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing with the aim of synthesizing and expanding the modes constructed by previous accounts of houses. As Lefebvre (1991: 121) asserts, "The House is as much cosmic as it is human. From cellar to attic, from foundation to roof, it has a density at once dreamy and rational, earthly and celestial."

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[69] Marc Gaborieau (1991) and Véronique Bouillier (1991) have also demonstrated the connections between caste hierarchy and domestic space in "Indo-Nepalese" (in which the Chhetri caste is included) houses. However, since their studies are located outside of Kathmandu Valley, I have not included them here.

[70] Although *chyura* ("rice flakes") is cooked, it is served dry, and thus considered to be less vulnerable to pollution than cooked rice.

III. Maitri Nagar: Building a Modern Kathmandu House

Bijay's Burden

As we discussed in chapter four, Bijay moved to Kathmandu in 2005 to pursue a Master's degree in Mathematics at Nepal's national Tribhuvan University. While he saw this move in terms of improving his education and employment prospects, his parents (Ram and Shova) saw his move as an opportunity to improve his marriage prospects. Just before Bijay moved to Kathmandu, his brother Ujjwal took a job with a USAID project in Jhapa, where he met his wife. However, Ram and Shova disapproved of the marriage since the couple eloped and, more importantly, Ujjwal's wife is a Jaisi Bāhun; a subcaste of Nepali Brahmans which is considered lower than an Upadhaya Bāhun.[71] According to Bijay, the illegitimacy of his brother's marriage caused considerable anxiety and shame for his parents, which compels them to ensure that Bijay finds a suitable wife to salvage the family's reputation.

[71] Jaisi Bāhuns are the offspring of unions between Upadhaya Bāhun men and a Bāhun widow or divorcee, and may not serve as priests or accept ritual gifts (Bennett 1983: 11).

Figure 7: Bijay's House.

As a recently arrived student in Kathmandu who made little income as a part-time school-teacher, however, Bijay felt he had few prospects for a respectable marriage. According to his parents, building a Kathmandu house would elevate the family's status and improve Bijay's marriage prospects. In order to be considered a 'Kathmandu house,' the structure needed to meet certain material requirements. In short, it needed to be a *pakkī ghar* ('permanent house'). When I asked construction workers in Maitri Nagar if they were building a *pakkī ghar*, they would simply laugh at me. 'Yes,' they would often answer by saying 'It's a Kathmandu house' thus implying that all houses in the city are *pakkī*. A *pakkī ghar* is opposed to a *kacchī ghar* in both the formal language of the Nepal government's housing policy and in colloquial speech. Instead of referring to "cement" or

"mud" houses, Nepal's Department of Urbanization and Building designates houses as either *pakkī,* semi-*pakkī* or *kacchī* in terms of materials used. Whereas most of Maitri Nagar's houses fall into the category of *pakkī* - 'permanent materials' (concrete, burnt bricks, stone, slate, tile, galvanized sheet) materials, some are considered 'semi-*pakki*', one level above *kacchī* - 'temporary materials' (bamboo, straw/thatch, mud and unburned bricks, wood flakes) materials.

In addition to these official definitions, we find another set of oppositional meanings between the terms *pakkī* as "ripe, mature, firm, strong," and *kacchī* as "raw, inexperienced, and weak."[72] Thus, although architects might condemn cement as foreign and inauthentic, it conveys the prestige of permanence and durability. As one informant explained, "Anything other than cement looks cheap and since I'm only making one house in my lifetime, it should look expensive."[73] Starting in the 1940s, cement became known as a 'modern surface' for elite houses that had cement plaster covering a brick façade, but the use mud mortar continued (Gutschow 2011: 977). It was not until the mid 1980s that cement plaster and mortar started to be used widely. At this time, Nepal's domestic concrete production became widely available one decade after Nepal's first concrete factory (Himal Cement) opened in 1974 (Mishra 1998).[74]

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[72] Turner (1931:355) documented *pakkī* as derived from the Sanskrit word pakvā which denotes cooked or ripe, and is related to *pakkā* – "mature, thorough, permanent, real, substantial, substantive." *Kacchī* comes from the Hindustani word *kacchā* to be "unripe" (1931: 67) and is related to kācho – "unripe; uncooked, raw; uncivilized" (1931: 82). In addition to houses, paved roads are *pakkī* whereas gravel roads are *kacchī.*

[73] A Kathmandu architect told the following story to prove this point. He worked on a project to provide inexpensive housing for land-less tenant farmers in Nepal's western Tarai. He initially provided houses with cement roofs but when the cement started to crack five years later, he decided to replace the roof with a mud-thatch roof. However, the inhabitants stopped him from replacing the roof stating that they would rather have cracked cement roofs than the mud alternative.

[74] Prior to domestic production, Nepal imported concrete from India primarily, but also from the Soviet Union, China, and South Korea.

In addition to the above oppositions of ripe and raw, mature and inexperienced, strong and weak, *pakkī* and *kacchī* also connote the ritual separation of the bazaar and the house as derivatives of the terms *pakkā* and *kacchā*. As Subedi (2010: 138) points out, *kaccha* food refers to food cooked with water, while *pakka* refers to food cooked with ghee. Since water is considered the most pollutable substance, food cooked in water must be consumed only if prepared by a member of one's own caste often in the intimacy of one's own home. Conversely, ghee produced from cow's milk is considered a purifying substance, and thus can be cooked by any caste. Thus, *pakka* food is often fried food, "the food of the bazaar, the food that is eaten at public events and in public places" (Subedi 2010: 138). A certain parallel exists between water-cooked food and mud-construction on one hand, and ghee-cooked food and concrete-construction on the other. Just like cooking with water, mud houses tend to absorb rain and heat, and are known to keep the house dry in the monsoon rains and warm in the winter sun. Although concrete does not possess the ritually purifying elements of milk products, concrete houses are known to block, rather than absorb, external elements. It follows that cement is the building material of the bazaar or city, and mud the material of the village. In the discourse of Maitri Nagar residents and builders, Kathmandu houses are *pakkī*, while village houses are *kacchī*.

Structurally, Kathmandu houses need not just to be made of cement plaster and mortar, but are also stabilized by steel rod pillars as opposed to load-bearing brick houses. When starting to build the house, Bijay suggested to his family that they build a simple load-bearing house from brick in order to save money. His mother quickly protested that building such a house would bring "*beijjat*" (disgrace) to the family. To have a Kathmandu house, it must at least be a *pakkī* 'pillar-system' house. 'Pillar-system'

house refers to the Reinforced Cement Concrete (RCC) frame with brick in-fill versus load-bearing or free-standing structures. Like many of Bijay's neighbors' houses, the pillar-frame structure of his house projects out from his roof leaving cement-ensconced rebar for the possibility of adding a second level to the house.

In addition to cement and pillar-system, houses tend to have flat roofs as opposed to the sloped roofs of most Newar houses and village houses. The flat roof became popular from the buildings of Robert Weise, a Swiss architect who came to Nepal in 1957 and built 34 houses and two hotels in the following decade. His houses were recognizable for their flat-roofs, large windows, and two-storeys, a style which Gutschow (2011: 974) calls "straight from the Swiss suburban environment." While some architects ridicule the flat-roofed houses, or "Bihar boxes," the flat roof does allow for the house-owner to continue building upper floors. With each additional floor, the owner can earn more income from rent or take in more family members. Bijay notes that his house is not finished, but rather reflective of his current income level. Once he finds a better job, he will add floors to the house.

Despite meeting the basic requirements of having a *pakkī* pillar-system house, Bijay maintains that it is his family members, not him, who gain the benefits of having a Kathmandu house. For them, the house represents status amongst kin and neighbors, respectively, in their non-Kathmandu (Nuwakot and Jhapa) locations. More practically, the house benefits his family by serving as a hotel for visiting relatives traveling to the capital for medical appointments, visa applications (to work or study abroad), educational testing, and city entertainment. For his mother Shova, the completion of the house, or at least the ground floor, meant that she could start looking for marriage partners for Bijay.

As Bijay explains, "Having a house in Kathmandu means a lot for marriage. I don't have good job or education, but I still have several choices of marriage. I have offers for marriage from high profile girls, which would be purely impossible for me if I didn't have a house in Kathmandu."

While his family enjoys the benefits of being *Kathmandu ghar hune mānchhe* ("People with a Kathmandu house"), for Bijay the house is a burden. Not only is he responsible for the loans,[75] hosting family members, and maintaining relations with neighbors, he must uphold the house according to Kathmandu standards. Being a resident of Kathmandu carries certain social obligations and costs. He explains, "If I were a renter, I would take any job – even as a driver, or in a restaurant regardless of the social meaning, but since I am a *ghar hune mānchhe*, I am trapped, I must maintain my social position, meaning the lowest job I could take is a teacher, professor, or nokarī ('civil servant')."[76] He finds his house embarrassingly short of Kathmandu standards since he cannot afford nice furniture and decorations. Instead of spending his paychecks to buy proper furniture or facilities, his earnings go to paying off the loan. Consequently, he laments that his house is left with plastic chairs and an outdoor toilet. Like a village house, hence, he must keep his pots, pans, stove, and utensils on the ground, and must use his bed as a seat for guests. Thus, Bijay distinguishes a proper Kathmandu house full of foreign things from village houses in which foreign objects are absent.

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[75] For Bijay to complete his house, his family took out 1.2 million NRs, or 12 lakh, loan from *Sanchya Kosh* (government employee fund) using their land as collateral. Five years later, however, the loan has grown from 12 Lakh to 15 Lakh due to interest and Bijay is unsure how to meet the next payment (67,000 Rs per half-year period). Although his brother and father earn a higher salary than Bijay, he worries they have forgotten about him and the loans in Kathmandu.

[76] Above such 'middle jobs', Bijay lists doctor, engineer, lawyer, businessman.

Figure 8: Bista Bungalow

Bijay refers to his neighbor Dilip Bista's house as exactly the sort of complete house (figure 8) that one needs to gain status in Kathmandu. Named the "Bista Bungalow,"[77] Dilip's house seems to have more in common with a Frank Gehry building than with Bijay's house. Its façade combines the materials, designs, and colors in a seemingly haphazard way. On the left side, an acutely angled brick wall lunges above a half-circle balcony made of grey-colored aluminum composite panel that extends to the right side consisting of a rectangular yellow and brown-painted cement structure. The shock of the exterior gives way to an uncommonly spacious interior. Despite the 4400 square feet floor size of the house, there are only two bedrooms, a kitchen, and a living room in the house. Dilip explains that unlike the cramped rooms of other houses where

[77] The practice of naming one's house (*nām rakhne*) is very common, particularly amongst Kathmandu's upper classes. Although based on the term for a "peasant's hut in rural Bengal, *banggolo*, bungalow became a reference for European housing in colonial India, and a symbol of the 'new imperial power'" (King 1984: 15). In addition to bungalow and other English terms such as villa and cottage, it is common to give houses Sanskritic names, such as *nivas*, *nikunj*, *avas*, *mandir*, *griha*.

house-owners try to make money by squeezing as many renters in as possible, he wanted just a few spacious rooms in the house. As we walk through the house, Dilip points out his massage bed from Japan, fish aquarium from India, lights from Malaysia, sofas from Korea, and a bar from Germany – all of which he purchased on the internet and had shipped to the house.

The use of materials to identify social position is by no means new to Nepali houses. Newar houses reflect social distinction through the decorative woodcarvings and brick moldings of struts, windows, pillars, and doors (Korn 1976:32; Toffin et al. 1991: 123), and "village houses" reference social distinction through roof materials.[78] What is striking about the display and enjoyment of new houses is the attachment of prestige to objects and materials of foreign origin.

Social scientists of Nepal have long identified a relationship between foreign objects and prestige. Pigg (1996: 163) argues that in Nepal, modernity is understood to be "somewhere else" and thus, it must be imported. She maintains that development ideologies and institutional practices defined development, *bikās*, as "anything new or foreign" (1996: 172). Thus, becoming *bikāsi*, or modern, meant having the "capacity to understand the ways of other places, to make a living away from the village, to be mobile" (1996: 173).

The appeal of the foreign is rooted in the political economy of Nepal in the 19th and early 20th Century. For Stephen Mikesell (1988) and Mary Des Chene (1991), the importation of the foreign occurred through Nepali agents embedded in colonial

[78] As captured in Mahesh Chandra Regmi's (1978) famous study of Nepal's feudal land system, house materials and roofs have long symbolized social distinction in rural Nepal. Whereas land-owning zamindars inhabit stucco houses with tile roofs, peasants reside in thatch-roofed houses.

structures. Although Nepal was never officially colonized by the British, scholars agree that Nepal was a 'nominally independent' 'semi-colony' (Seddon et al. 1980). According to Mikesell (1988: 137-140) the incursion of foreign capital created a class of merchant capitalists, who, as "agents of British industry," introduced and overwhelmed the local market with foreign commodities. Similarly, Des Chene (1991) identifies how Britain took advantage of Nepal's semi-colony status to recruit Nepali (Gurkha) soldiers into the British and Indian military. This legacy of Nepali soldiers serving in foreign armies is captured in the term *lahure*, which has come to mean someone who "exchanges his labor for wages outside of his own community," and is expected to return with foreign commodities and foreign knowledge that distinguish himself and his family as *bikāsi* from the undeveloped, untraveled status of others (1991: 236).

For Liechty (1997), the prestige attached to foreign things is a result of the tastes of the autocratic Rana rulers. As discussed in chapter two, the 19th Century and early 20th Century Rana palaces represented a shocking departure from the wood and brick aesthetics of the Newars to use stone floors, corrugated sheet roofs, Corinthian columns, colonnaded porticos, high ceilings, stucco plaster, lime based mortar, and blue and green paint. While building large neo-classical palaces on the outskirts of the city, the Ranas barred commoners from building houses with stucco exteriors and tile roofs (1997: 68). Importantly, Liechty (2003: 40-46) demonstrates how the Rana's tastes ultimately sowed the seeds for the emergence of a Kathmandu middle class hungry for foreign things and practices. While the Ranas enjoyed foreign goods and barred most locals from possessing them, an emergent class of civil servants in the government and Nepalis residing in India,

what Liechty (2003: 45) and Onta (1996:39) have labeled Nepal's "proto-middle class," could access them.

In the case of the merchants, *Lahures*, Ranas and the proto-middle class, access to foreign commodities, jobs, and powers provided an avenue to bolster one's own status within Nepal. This historical legacy continues today as witnessed in Bijay's solution to his house's inadequacies. He explains that he must either get a "foreign job" (as discussed in chapter 4) or migrate to the Gulf.

Bijay's second option of migrating to the Gulf refers to the massive growth of Nepal's "new *Lahures*," a class of migrant laborers, or "transnational proletariet" (Gardner 2010) who travel abroad for labor. Particularly, as I discussed in chapter 4, since the late 1970s, a growing number of Nepalis, mostly male, have entered labor migration schemes in certain geographic zones such as the Gulf states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Dubai), East Asia (Japan, South Korea), and southeast Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Brunei) (Seddon et al. 2003; Graner and Gurung 2003; Gurung 2003). Remittances from Nepalis working abroad doubled from 1974/5 (90.7m NRs) to 1980/1 (216.8m NRs) (1998); and by 1997, this number had become estimated between 35 and 69 billion NRs, or between 13% and 25% of Nepal's GDP (Seddon et al. 2001: 5). As of 2009-2010, remittances reached 231.72 billion NRs, which ranks Nepal as the fifth largest remittance receiving country in the world (Shakya 2009: 76).

During my twelve months of research, Shova arranged for Bijay to meet many potential brides. One meeting, however, was particularly telling of the relationship between the house, place, and prestige. Referred to as the "Delhi girl," Radha was visiting family in Kathmandu from New Delhi, where her parents had migrated to in the 1980s from Gorkha, the same district as Bijay's family. Because of her background being from India's capital, Bijay worried that she would see his house and judge his family. He thus requested that the meeting happen at a restaurant in the New Road commercial area of central Kathmandu. For their parent's generation, their regional and caste connection of being Bāhuns from Gorkha allowed for a possible marriage, but for Bijay (and Radha?), their Kathmandu meeting had nothing to do with their village connection. Rather, it rested on an urban/foreign sensibility that required moving the meeting from his insufficiently urban house to a city restaurant.

The construction and inhabitation of a Kathmandu house, granted it has pillar-system structure and cement façade, meets the prestige requirements of Bijay's family not residing in Kathmandu. However, for Bijay, these benefits are eclipsed by the material demands of a competitive Kathmandu prestige economy. In a rural or non-Kathmandu social universe, his inability to meet certain consumer expectations might not influence his marriage simply because he owns a Kathmandu house. However, within an urban transnational social context of contemporary Kathmandu, his ability to display his consumption is necessary to maintain a certain level of status.

Bijay did not marry Radha or any other girl that his mother chose. In early 2013, he eloped with his Newar girlfriend, Shristi, when she was on vacation from her graduate studies in Australia. At the time of writing in spring 2013, he remains uncertain whether

to join his wife in Australia or remain in Kathmandu in order pursue a career in journalism.

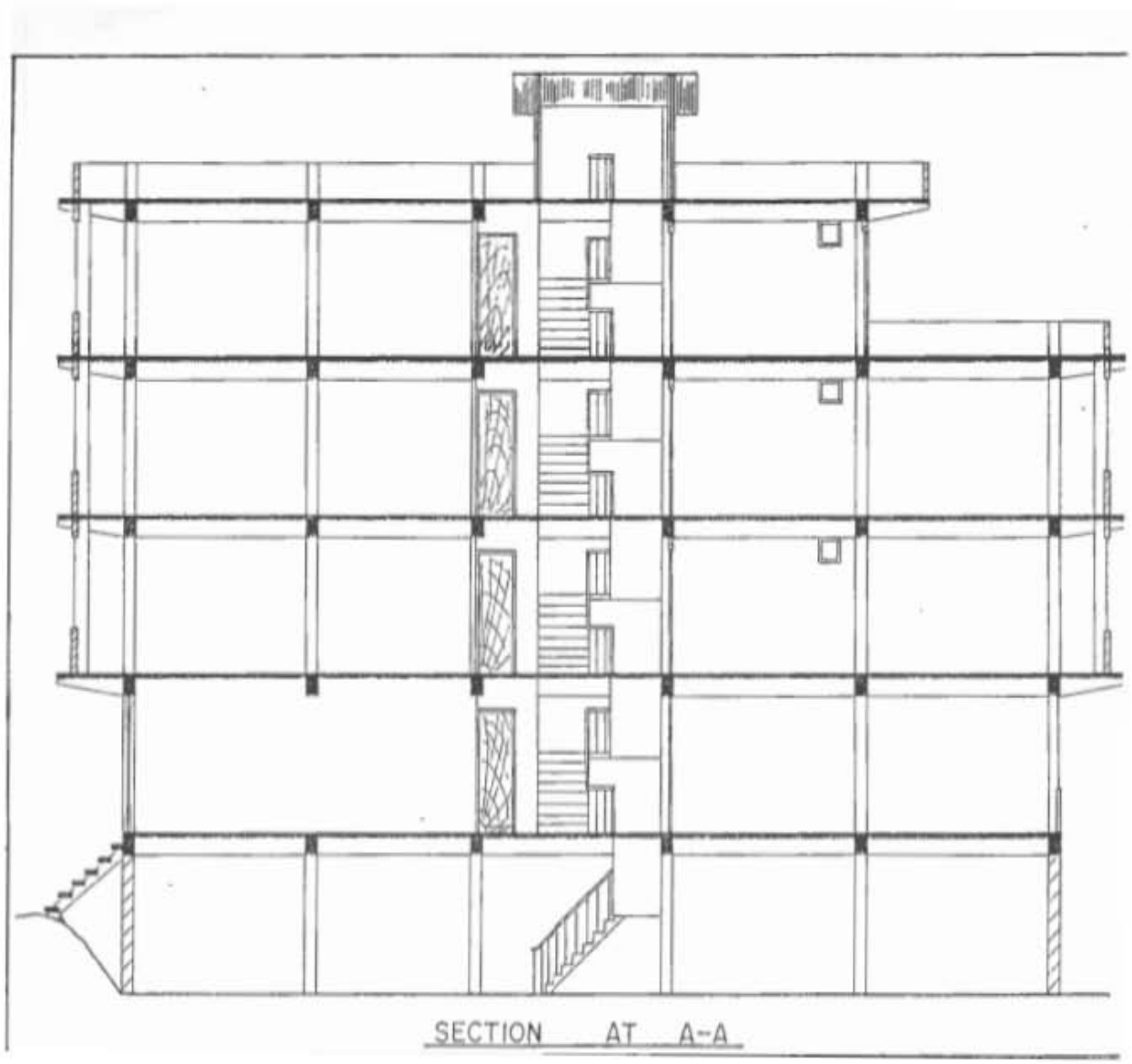

Figure 9: Section Plan for 'Flat-System House'. From National Building Code Development Project (Sample #26)

Narayan's House as Income

In between Bijay's one-storey 'incomplete' house and the ostentatious Bista Bungalow, the majority of houses in Maitri Nagar appear closer to Narayan's four-storey house in which he and his family inhabit the top two floors and tenants inhabit the bottom two floors. Narayan's house follows the 'flat-system' layout of the given section plan above (figure 9). The bottom two floors have four rooms connected by a corridor with a central staircase and bathroom. The third floor contains the bedrooms of Narayan, his wife, and two sons (both of whom live abroad, one in Darjeeling, India and the other in Boston, US), while the top floor has a kitchen and open deck.

As opposed to the multi-purpose spaces of the prototypical village house, where sleeping, cooking, and socializing might all happen in the same room, the 'flat-system' splits the house into levels and rooms for specific functions – much like the Newar house. Typically, such a house has an exterior staircase that leads into a central corridor leading to separate doors, which allows for single rooms to be rented in addition to the entire flat. In the example (figure 9), we find a central staircase that divides the first four floors in equal portions (two rooms per side) to be rented; and the top floor of three rooms and deck for the house-owner's family. Like the Newar house, the bottom floors are devoted to income-earning activity through, in this case, rent payments. Additionally, the top floors are reserved for the more private and sacred activities of sleeping, cooking, and worship.

What is interesting about Narayan's house lay-out is the way in which he applies a concentric logic similar to the Chhetri and Newar houses, to distinguish the kin and caste relations of tenants. The second floor is occupied by his wife's cousin-brother, wife, and two children. The first floor, meanwhile, is rented out to a different set of tenants per

room; one family of four in one room, a three-person family in another, and single college students in the other two rooms. Importantly, however, each of these four sets of tenants is a Bāhun-Chhetri from the districts of Lamjung, Kaski, and Tanahu (Narayan's home district). Read along kinship-caste-region lines, he has created three concentric circles of varying proximity in his house. The upper floors are reserved for nuclear family; the second floor for his wife's kin; and finally, the ground floor for people of his caste, Chhetri, or higher, from the Pokhara region of Nepal. When a family inquired about open rooms in his house, Narayan's first question was where they were from. After they answered "Ramechhap," a district to the east of Kathmandu, Narayan, despite having a vacant room at the time, told them he had none.

Narayan's regional-caste criteria for selecting tenants should not be confused with a ritual concern over purity. In fact, Narayan often references his own 'mixed' caste status as a KC *jāt*. His father was a Chhetri and his mother a Gurung (Janajāti ethnicity). Rather, Narayan's 'flat-system' interior clearly adds an economic set of motivations to his dual goal of building a *namunā* house that can be passed on to his sons. Having two floors open to paying tenants converts half of his house into an income producer. He receives 1,000 NRs ($14) per month per room, which if at capacity, earns him 8,000 NRs ($112) per month. Thus, rather than purity, his region-caste interest is driven by a concern for trust as he expects that a selection criteria based on social proximity will be more likely to produce better tenants.

The largest concerns for Bijay and Narayan are *namunā* in nature; filling his house with a sufficient amount of foreign goods and amenities for Bijay and earning rent money for Narayan. Importantly, these *namunā* concerns are not detached from *grihastha*

or cosmic worries of marriage for Bijay or finding his 'own people' for Narayan. Thus, the two modes work together to place each other in a Kathmandu modern house.

IV. Rajendra's 'Foreign Consciousness': Morality of Consumption

For those with capital sufficient to participate in the game of competitive consumption, objects associated with the foreign are simply a starting point. The question remains how such objects are interpreted and displayed. Rajendra, a resident of Pleasant Housing who had recently returned from five years living in Japan, wanted to show that he also gained a "foreign consciousness" from living abroad. He asks, "what do foreign-returned learn abroad? Did they gain a better consciousness or just bring back things?" Effectively, Rajendra is asking whether foreign experience is merely converted into the consumption of foreign-made goods or attached to moral concerns, too.

The process of incorporating the foreign into a local morality has a parallel in the domain of kinship. Marshall Sahlins (2008) has identified a structural parallel between the relationship of stranger-kings to natives and affines to consanguines. Stranger-kings, which he locates in a number of cross-cultural examples, represent a wild and dangerous outside power, which if successfully incorporated into the local can be used to protect and order society. Similarly, affines represent "life-giving outsiders," who hierarchically order and serve to prosper the consanguines. To this point, he asserts "that the social incorporation and distribution of external life powers is the elementary form of the political life, and that marital alliance is its experiential archetype" (2008: 184).

The history of royal genealogy and commoner kinship practices in Kathmandu society offers a slight variation on this theme. As we noted in chapter 2, only the Lichhavi and Gorkha rulers of Nepal technically came from outside to gain power. The

Mallas and Ranas, however, sought the symbols of foreign rulers to legitimate their power from within. In addition to the neo-classical palaces, the Ranas adorned western military dress, and imported tons of vehicles and goods via their ropeline from the plains. In Sahlins' (2008: 190) terms, they were "local people fashioning themselves as prestigious foreigners." Whereas Newar society tends to practice territorial endogamy and marriage isogamy,[79] Bāhun-Chhetri practice territorial exogamy and hypergamy. Technically, Bāhuns and Chhetris do not rank intra-caste relations, but for the purposes of marriage, wife-givers donate *kanyādān* ('gift of a virgin') to the ritually superior wife-takers (Bennett 1983: 145-147). Thus, in both the cases of Rana consumption and Bāhun-Chhetri marriage, we have a model of going out to acquiring the foreign (good or wife) in order to enhance one's prestige back at home (as ruler or wife-taker). But, this process also comes at a risk. The Ranas practiced what Liechty (1997: 7) calls "selective exclusion" in which "they sought to at once harness the shifting and volatile powers of foreignness while attempting to keep those powers out of the hands (and minds) of their political subordinates." Similarly, the Bāhun-Chhetri householder must similarly harness the "potentially unruly and destructive forces of female sexuality" (Bennett 1983: ch. 6) of his wife to reproduce the patriline but not let her disturb agnatic solidarity.[80]

Turning from kinship to consumption, Liechty's (2003: 99) point about new materialism offers a parallel morality. As we discussed in the introduction to this chapter, he claims that middle class subjects find it necessary to consume and participate in the "unstable" and "treacherous" realm of consumer goods, but not let those "hostile

[79] Ishii (1999: 153-155) argues that in the "intermediate" settlements, or the agro-towns in between the cities and peripheral villages, people marry outside of their locality.

[80] In addition to bringing home a wife, the householder must enter the polluting world outside of the house to earn an income for his family.

intruders" corrupt their lives. For Liechty, the moral meaning of 'foreign' objects is created through "Nepali" values. In other words, the outward display of foreign things is made meaningful through an internal and native morality. Liechty's (1997: 47) description of Rana palaces makes this point concrete:

> In their construction of public and private spaces, the Rana palaces seem to literally map out the distinction between the inside and the outside, core and surface, indigenous and foreign. The 'public' exterior is always foreign, designed to be seen and seen in; whereas the private spaces are always Nepali, intimate, shadowed, and secluded. From the external, foreign regions of display (or regions of foreign display), the Ranas could retreat into a more familiar non-visual world not oriented around competitive display and consumption.

According to this schema, the façade and exterior of the palace represents a superficial connection to foreign sources and consumption practices, and the interior stands for a more intimate setting based on native culture. One might read Liechty's theory of Kathmandu middle class practice in a similar framework of inside and outside. Whereas a material culture of foreign commodities belong to the realm of the superficial outside, the "local caste logics and other religiously based notions of propriety and suitability" belong to a "uniquely Nepali" realm of the inside (2003: 20). Or, according to our terminology, the exterior fits the *namunā* mode, while the interior belongs to the *grihastha* mode.

The neat division of foreign/*namunā* exterior and native/*grihastha* interior is challenged by the popularity of 'neo-traditional themes' in contemporary Kathmandu houses. In particular, I focus on two such expressions of the neo-traditional: the popularity of vastu shastra interior design in some Maitri Nagar houses and the exposed brick façade of Pleasant Housing houses. Neither example fits nicely into either foreign/native or *namunā*/*grihastha* dichotomies. Rather, I aim to show how they express

a moral critique against the inconsistent architecture and haphazard growth of Kathmandu. While some houseowners articulate this message through symbols of nationalism or ethnic pride, others express it through bourgeois values of foreign taste.

Vastu Shastra

Instead of probing the cosmic meaning of vastu shastra as others have done (Chakrabarti 1999; Pritchard-Jones & Gibbons 2008), my goal is to question the everyday meaning of vastu. From research in Hyderabad, India, Säävälä (2003) has revealed how members of the city's new middle class[81] conduct vastu rituals when building and inaugurating houses to portray themselves as proper middle class, and thus, Hindu. In Maitri Nagar, too, middle class status and Hindu practices often overlap. Since one must hire a vastu priest to conduct vastu rituals and an astrologer to arrange the house according to vastu rules, vastu compliance requires a certain wealth that many do not possess. However, in a locality consisting mostly of upper caste Hindus, few think of vastu as an attempt to identify as Hindu. Rather people use vastu to position themselves in a sensitive divide between city and village, science and ritual. A vastu non-believer commented to me that vastu "is for village people, it's not for the city." Specifically, he referred to the superstitious belief in rituals that protect people against *bhūt* ("ghost") and *pret* ("malicious spirit") or house-entering rituals that require a cow and virgin to enter the house first. Another person claims to do vastu worship, but in a city-based modern way. He explains that his family "did *jag pujā* ('worship for house foundation') without a priest early in the morning quickly before going to the office."

[81] Säävälä (2003:232) defines "new middle class" as tribal or lower caste families who have recently achieved middle class status through economic advancement.

Rather than a self-identification as Hindu, vastu reflects the house-owner's wish to build a personalized house. As already discussed, building a house is central to the *grihastha* life-stage for Hindu males. As Bijay explains it, "Next to the father's funeral, building a house is the most important responsibility in a man's life. It is our *ṭhūlo kām* ('important work'). Whereas for women it is to give birth, for men, it is to build a house." This sentiment is reminiscent of Constance Perin's (1978) conclusion that owning a detached house represents the highest rung on the American 'ladder of life' - from the transient, irresponsible, and temporary stage of tenant to the responsible, adult, and morally sound stage of owner. The major difference in the Nepal case stems from the need to build one's own house rather than buy someone else's house. The desire to build one's own house is not only due to a ritual expectation of males. It also reflects the general distrust implicit in moving to the city where builders and neighbors are strangers.

"My house is a temple, I cannot trust anyone else to build it," one informant explained to me, adding that "It might look good on the outside, but we can't know its condition on the inside unless we built it." When asked why they would not buy a house from someone else, informants expressed numerous concerns over trust. "We don't know the quality of materials or construction techniques they used. Who knows? You can't be 100% sure because even if they say they did, no one follows the building by-laws. It's not strict here," explains one contractor. Despite the general awareness of an impending major earthquake,[82] few follow building code safety procedures.

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[82] Kathmandu Valley is a geologic zone with extreme vulnerability to earthquakes that occur approximately every 70 years. The 8.3 earthquake of 1934 decimated much of the cities at that time, destroying around 80,000 houses. Experts estimate that up to 70% of Kathmandu's buildings will be destroyed in the impending earthquake (KVERMP 2000). Despite this threat, it was not until 2005 that Nepal passed a National Building Code, but with the exception of Lalitpur, the Valley's four other municipalities have only enacted parts of the code.

Rather than safety fears, house-owners worry that the building contractor and builders will cheat them. As one informant, Umesh explained to me, it was absolutely obligatory to have someone monitoring the building practices of the builders, or otherwise "*thogīhālchha*" ("they will definitely cheat you"). Prior to starting his house construction, Umesh rented a flat near his workplace in central Kathmandu. After starting construction, he moved his family to a rented (bedroom and kitchen) in Maitri Nagar. During the construction process, he visited three times a day – in the morning before leaving for office, during his lunch break, and in the evening after returning home. Additionally, he hired his nephew to stay at the construction site for 7,000 NRs (apx. $100) per month. He also invited friends with engineering backgrounds to visit the site and comment on the procedure.[83] He commented that "The good thing about my contractor was that he never ran off with my money like the Madhesi ones do, but the bad thing was that since he was Newar he always celebrating *jātra* ("festival") and *bhoj* ("feast") instead of working."[84]

While the vigilance over the construction process ensures the physical integrity of the house and safe-keeping of one's private property, a vastu spatial design ensures that the house interior will have a unique feel and look to it. Despite the shared definition of vastu as cosmically oriented layout, the interpretation of the 'correct' vastu layout varies

[83] Bijay commented on the help of friends during the construction process that there are three times in one's life when friends are needed: father's death, wife's pregnancy, and building a house.

[84] People in the construction industry point to the Nepali year 2040 (1983-1984) as a point when *bāhirako mānchhe*, or "outsiders," entered the Kathmandu construction industry and started to challenge Newar builders. The term "Outsider" functions in opposition to the categories of "Nepali" or "Newar," and most often refers to "Madhesis." Despite being Nepali citizens, people from Nepal's Madesh lowlands, or Tarai, are often considered Indian due to their darker complexion, preference to speak Hindi (or Bhojpuri and Maithili), and bachelor living situation in Kathmandu. Madhesi contractors tend to be less expensive than Newars, and are considered to be more obedient and take shorter holidays of only 3-4 days as opposed to the Newars who, as the above quotation suggests, tend to take longer holidays. While Maitri Nagar's house-owners imagine Newars to be disobedient and lazy, Madhesis are considered to be dishonest.

widely. For example, according to some, the kitchen must go in the Northeast, while for the others the southeast. For some, the entrance to the house must be in the west; for others in the east.

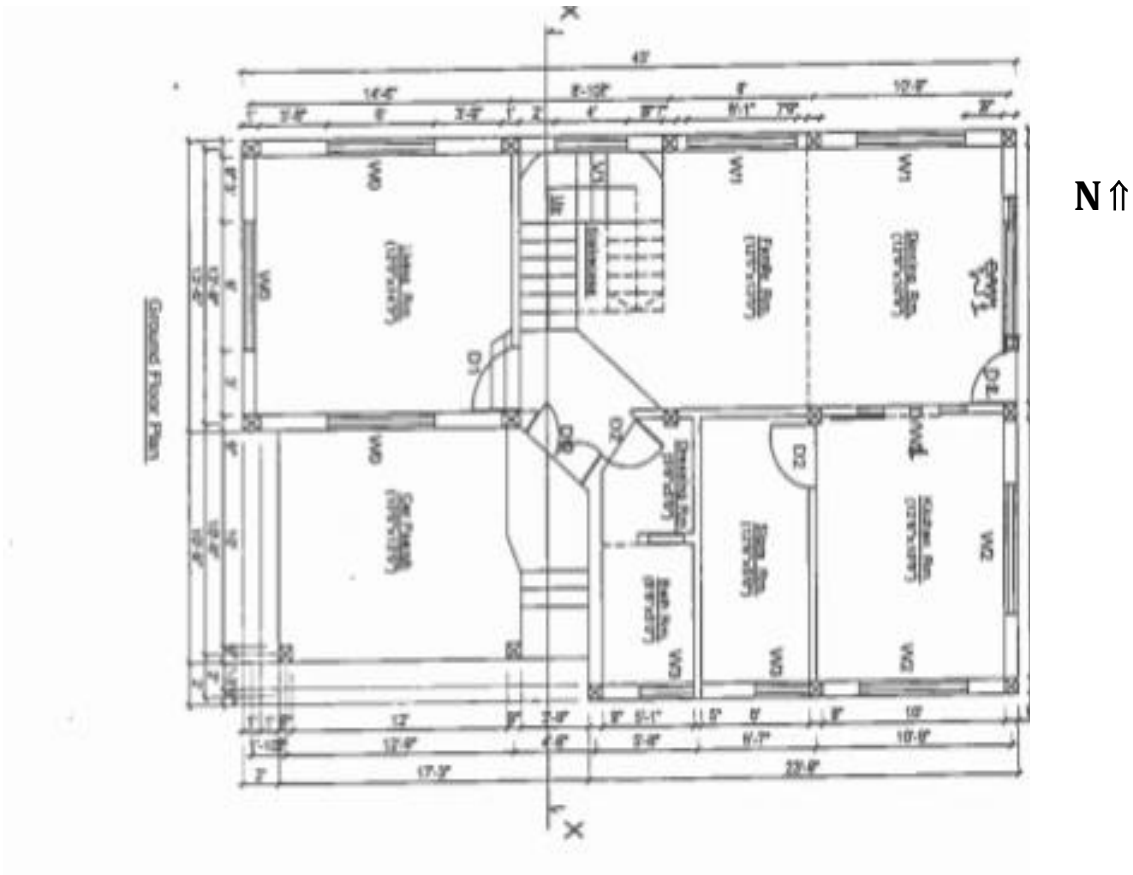

Figure 10: Shrestha House Ground Floor Lay-Out

It is the individualism of vastu that people often object to. The interpretation of the Shrestha family offers a particularly telling read of vastu's place in new building practices (figure 10). When building their house, they considered adherence to some vastu rules as necessary for the health and auspiciousness of the house and its inhabitants. However, complete conformity was not only financially impossible, but like large lobbies and imported marble in the houses of the rich, it would be applied for the wrong reasons.

They think that vastu should be done to the best of one's ability and not to show off one's wealth. They placed the kitchen in the southeast corner, the entrance facing south, and the staircase rotates in a clockwise fashion. However, they had to place their family shrine in the southeast storeroom in between the kitchen and bathroom due to insufficient space. Unlike their wealthier neighbors, they were unable to purchase a sufficient amount of land to implement vastu completely, and additionally, they could not afford to hire the astrologer to help them implement it. Consequently, they call their house "partial vastu."

Sujata laments that only rich and *ṭhūlo mānchhe* ('big people') can afford to make their houses according to vastu rules. Suman goes on to criticize how vastu has become fashionable, stating that "although the Lichchavis and the Mallas[85] used vastu, the return of vastu is very new and heavily influenced by Indian culture." In other words, vastu belongs to multiple geographic-historical reference points as has Kathmandu for a very long time. Suman tells a story of a neighbor's "vastu house" to illustrate his point. When his neighbor, a son of a Brahman priest, started building his house five years ago, he knew nothing of vastu and so consequently, the first two floors of his new house do not follow vastu principles. Then he went to India for a year and returned espousing the benefits of vastu. When he built the third and fourth floors of his house, he applied his knowledge of vastu to the lay-out. He now refers to his house as a 'vastu house' since his family occupies the upper floors and renters inhabit the lower ones. In Suman's critique of his neighbor, vastu represents a South Asian equivalent of *feng shui*, an idea that can be celebrated in large coffee-table books. Similarly, Kathmandu architects disdain the

[85] Licchavis (3rd-9th centuries) and Mallas (12th-18th centuries) refer to the rulers of Kathmandu Valley that pre-date the Nepal state.

increasingly common popularity of a South Asian understanding of vastu that ignores the importance of Nepal's specific climate and geographic limitations.[86]

Does "Indian vastu" then represent a case of Parry and Bloch's "rotten world" in which the cosmic order of vastu is subordinated to its display as a sign of one's wealth? If we think of the cosmic cycle and competitive display as mutually exclusive modes of interpretation, this might be the case. However, the rejection of "Indian vastu" as the house interior's equivalent of foreign commodity consumption tells only part of the story. India, after all, does not stand for just any foreign place, but rather for a very near foreign that is seen as a constant threat to Nepali sovereignty.[87] More importantly, vastu in Maitri Nagar houses encourages us to ask how the *grihastha* and *namunā* modes work in tandem to produce meaning.

While the Shresthas might dismiss 'Indian vastu' as antithetical to the ritual production of space, they, too, interpret their own use of vastu in terms of self-identification. Their "partial vastu" reflects their status in between city and village; rich and poor. Sujata's *māitī ghar* ("maiden home") is in Bhaktapur, but she moved to Khula Khani in Dhading district (directly west of Kathmandu) when she married Suman.

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[86] One of Kathmandu's new apartment complexes, KL Residency, with its claim of 100% obedience to *vastu,* perpetuates a South Asian-general notion of vastu while ignoring its specific Nepali modifications. According to the complex's brochure, vastu references 'vedic culture' and is 'universal' in its application. For instance, 'With its roots in ancient Vedic culture, Vaastu philosophy teaches us that our physical and spiritual well-being depends on our harmonious relationship with the space that surrounds us. The principles of Vaastu are ancient, yet are unconditioned by time, country, climate or geography.' The irony is that vastu is conditioned by climate and place. Nepal's version of vastu, which emphasizes a south-facing orientation in order to maximize sunlight, is extremely different than the vastu rules for a place with a warm and dry climate as is the case in many parts of India. Although KL Residency's north-facing exits and windows will provide its residents some great views of the Himalaya, it could also result in colder conditions.

[87] As Burghart (1996) has identified, Nepali nationalism has been defined in opposition to India. Whereas India was defiled by Muslim and Christian outsiders, Nepal remained "asal Hindustan" complete with its own monarchy and language.

Although they moved to Kathmandu for Suman to pursue his M.S. in civil engineering in Patan, they remain tied to their village house, only a two-hour bus ride away. They believe that their house should reflect their spatial location split between village and city, and thus, not be "too showy," but also have all of the necessary facilities of a Kathmandu lifestyle. As an engineer, Suman understands the trends in Kathmandu architecture, but criticizes other people's houses for being "*dekhāune mātre*" (only for show). He mocks the growing preference for structurally insignificant Corinthian columns, imported furniture and marble floors, houses painted in all colors, and the unnecessarily large lobbies of houses. In particular, the Shresthas believe that Kathmandu houses have become too tall. Sujata disapproves of the new trend of ten plus storey apartment complexes in Kathmandu. "The apartment system is American, not Nepali. We are low to the ground people" she opines. And yet, she wants a house taller than her two-story village house. Rather than looking to the "American" apartment complexes, she looks to the two and a half storey houses of Pleasant Housing as the model for her house – "not too tall, not too short."

For the Shresthas, vastu in and of itself does not refer to any particular place, time, or morality. Rather, it reflects a world in which the concerns over auspiciousness of the *grihastha* mode constantly reflect and produce meaning in the consumerism and display of the *namunā* mode. If applied as a matter of fashion to express one's connections to India, superior Hindu status, or personal wealth, then vastu is like the excessive consumption of foreign commodities. However, if integrated suitably to help and protect one's family within their economic means, it refers to a respectable form of consumerism.

The 'Return' of the Brick Façade

Contrary to the impression provided by the narrative of architectural historians, the brick façade represents only a slight variation of the standard *pakkī* house. Here, I point to two cases of brick exteriors – the "native exterior/foreign interior" Pradhan house in Maitri Nagar, and the houses of Pleasant Housing. As I showed in my analysis of Bijay's house, the starting point for having a Kathmandu *pakkī* house is the RCC-frame, cement roof, and cement mortar. The neo-traditional house of the Pradhans and Pleasant Housing do not challenge this starting point for they too, consist of RCC-frame, cement roof and cement mortar. The first point of departure, then, is the decision not to plaster the brick exterior with cement, but rather to leave the bricks exposed. The Pradhans used the expensive *dacchi appa* bricks, which possess a special tapered shape allowing enough room for mortar to be fixed but not visible from the façade side, and at 10 Rupees per brick cost nearly double the price of the normal brick.[88] Pleasant Housing uses the redder and longer-fired "Chinese bricks," which cost one or two rupees more per brick than the 'local brick' which has a browner tint. In addition to the exposed brick exterior, the colony houses also place a decorative terracotta mold design on a horizontal line around the ground floor.

Just as the 'traditional' brick exterior might not represent an architectural war against the foreign cement modernity in material terms, one might also question its associated political ideology. One possible response would be to link the foreign discourses of conservation to show that far from being a rejection of foreign models, the

[88] According to Ranjitkar (2006: 119), *dacchi appa* bricks historically were found on temples, palaces, and the homes of the rich, whereas the inferior *ma appa* bricks were found in "middle class houses" and sun-dried bricks belonged to the houses of poor families.

neo-traditional only perpetuates a foreign mode of looking at Kathmandu buildings, or, borrowing from Herzfeld's (2002: 900) notion of crypto-colonialism, the "myth of freedom" for non-colonized countries often "fashioned to fit foreign models." In Kathmandu architecture, one does not need to look far to find the "foreign model" in the projects of UNESCO and foreign governments which have, since 1963, entered Nepal with the objective of conserving the country's "historical buildings," 80% of which are in Kathmandu Valley (Sanday 1981: 10). In addition to classifying what is considered historical, they have trained local artisans to "relearn" traditional techniques (1981: 15-24) in order to defend Nepal against "the ever-increasing influence of the modern world and the impact of tourism [that is] disrupting this culture." While Sanday sees tourism as part and parcel of the negative influence of the "modern world," Nepali representatives of UNESCO and architectural conservation have twisted the conservation message to highlight the lucrative potential of commoditizing old buildings to appeal to tourists (Ranjitkar 2006: 5, 37, 41). In the most famous case of this clash between conservation and profit-seeking commoditization, the German-sponsored Bhaktapur Development Project (BDP), Bhaktapur residents resisted German efforts during the project, 1974-1986, but actively promoted itself as a "timeless medieval city" to appeal to tourists after the foreign project ended (Grieve 2002; Grieve 2004).

Figure 11: The Pradhan House

Several kilometers away from the World Heritage Sites of Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur, it is unlikely that any tourists will ever see the Pradhan's house or Pleasant Housing. Nonetheless, the conservation ideology has contributed to the establishment of neo-traditional materials as a form of cosmopolitanism that distances houses and their inhabitants from the Kathmandu status quo localism. Although the exposed brick façade does not appear 'cosmopolitan' - it is hardly "surprising, the shocking, the foreign, and the strange" (Ferguson 1999: 211), if we consider the motivations beyond the neo-traditional aesthetic, we find a strategy of distance-making at work. In the case of *dachhi appa* bricks, the distance is temporal, not spatial. Kathmandu Valley's largest producer of *dachhi appa* bricks, Shri Dakshin Barahi Brick Factory, advertises a

> A touch of history … With every step toward modernity, people have started going back in time when it comes to building and decorating houses. From the time of King Mandev

> that marks the starting point for [the] history of Nepal… the main raw material, brick is the main attraction of our history that has lived through all the adversities of time and nature.

For the Pradhan family, it is not simply historical bricks that distance their house from their neighbors. It is also their intention to blend a Newar house with the windows and roof designs of an English cottage (figure 11).

Manesh, a Newar who moved from central Kathmandu to Pleasant Housing in 2006, interprets his house's distance not in terms of space or time, but in terms of the increasing ethnic diversification of Kathmandu. Specifically, he pinpoints Bāhun Nepalis as the culprits of ruining the Newar city. He remarks, "They come here from their village without power, running water, and TV and then expect to have all of these services immediately. They over-use the facilities, build houses anywhere without any concern for their neighbors or community." Newars, meanwhile, "already have two or three houses in the city and know how to live appropriately." He labels Bāhuns as "outsiders" who turned Kathmandu Valley, the Newar homeland, into a "concrete *desh*" ('concrete country'). The foreign, thus, is not America or India, but rather the dominating cultural influence of the upper caste Bāhun. In response, he decided to model his front yard on certain Newar artistic themes, such as a shrine made of *dachi appa* bricks with metallic carvings of Newar deities complete with a *luhiṭī* (gold water tap).

While the conservation discourse of foreign agencies and "pragmatic orientalism" of Nepal's tourist industry (Grieve 2004) might contribute to the resurgence of brick exteriors and sloped roofs, I propose instead looking at the ethno-politics of post-insurgency Nepal as a key indication of Manesh's motivation. Since the 1991 constitution recognized Nepal's diversity of religions, ethnicities and languages, the country has witnessed a period of increasing "ethnic assertiveness" in the Nepali public sphere

(Lecomte-Tilouine 2004:113). This assertiveness was, additionally, mobilized by the Maoist leadership during the ten-year civil war by shifting their rhetoric from a standard Marxist/Maoist emphasis on class and economy to a tactically more salient proposal for "ethno-religious and regional mobilization" (Shah 2004:218). Since the peace agreement between the Maoists and the state in 2006, claims to ethnic rights have been channeled into calls for the federalization of Nepal based on ethnicity and language. In the case of Kathmandu Valley, Newar activists have called for the creation of a Newar state.

Whether for historical or ethnic-political motivations, in both cases, however, the brick certainly indexes a commoditized material placed for the purpose of competitive display. But, importantly the moral logic that interprets this display is neither consumer nor class-based, but rather mobilized through the particular discourses of Newar nationalism and identity. Other residents of Pleasant Housing, however, interpret their houses not terms of the traditional references of the brick façade, but rather through the novel concept of housing colonies. Whereas the Pradhans and Manesh interpret their separation through the "history" or "ethnic identity" attached to bricks, others reference the uniqueness and novelty of Pleasant Housing's walled-in form to represent a separation from the disorder of Kathmandu.

Figure 12. Pleasant Housing

For Indira, a Newar who splits her time between Nepal and Paris, the uniform architecture and clean streets of Pleasant Housing reminds her of European towns. She states, "From the moment you enter the Pleasant Housing gate, you move from Nepal to Europe." Deepak, a Bāhun who grew up in Sikkim and studied in New Delhi, connects the housing colony to what he calls the "well-planned, well-managed" apartment complexes and housing colonies in Indian cities of Delhi, Bangalore, and Mumbai. For him, the housing colonies in India represent the prestigious built environment of privatization disconnected from the unreliable public services of the state. Finally, Rajesh likens the spaciousness of Pleasant Housing not to a foreign place, such as Europe or India, but rather to the "Nepali village." Unlike the new "foreign apartment buildings" in Kathmandu, housing colonies speak to a Nepali sensibility, Rajesh thinks. In particular, the large courtyards in Pleasant Housing remind him of his village house in Chitwan

where people "had enough room to plant Tulsi plants." Importantly, again, the village does not refer to some universal Nepali form, but rather to a specific spatial and historical configuration. Bāhun-Chhetri villages in Chitwan emerged in the 1950s and 1960s when the Nepali state encouraged people of the mid-mountain regions to migrate to the Tarai plains. As a result, their villages appear like transplanted versions of the dispersive Bahun-Chhetri villages contrary to the more nucleated villages of Tharu settlements in the Tarai.

The use of space in Pleasant Housing houses suggests another departure from Newar and other Kathmandu houses. One, rather than a productive or profane space, the ground floor of Pleasant Housing houses contains the kitchen and living room. Although the kitchen remains distant from the door, it is right next to the open living room where families eat and socialize. Residents use the top floors for bedrooms, storage, and on the open patio of the third level, washing and drying of clothes. Houses have four or five bedrooms and three bathrooms (one on the ground floor and two on the first floor). Like other houses in Kathmandu, the pujā worship room is located on the top floor. Importantly, Pleasant Housing owners do not rent out rooms or flats as is the common practice in the flat-system houses. If they do rent, they rent the entire house to tenants. Residents refer to the house lay-outs as 'western' style pointing to the open living room, ground floor kitchen, and tendency for a family to reside in private bedrooms.

If cosmopolitanism means "reaching out to and signifying with an 'outside' world beyond the 'local'" - as opposed to the cultural compliance of localism - as Ferguson (1999: 211) suggests, then the house-owners of neo-traditional houses are cosmopolitans. However, what constitutes the "outside" and "local" does not replicate a simple

distinction foreign and native; modern and traditional. Neither are they limited to material symbols, but also constituted by moral interpretations of the physical houses. Rather, neo-traditional houses reflect a variety of spatial, temporal, and moral influences that take a multiplicity of material forms. The Pradhans and Manesh, meanwhile, identify their brick houses with a historic and ethnic Kathmandu as a sign of distance from the contemporary city increasingly populated by non-Newars. The other residents of Pleasant Housing also seek a separation from what they consider the disorganization of contemporary Kathmandu, but instead of history and ethnicity, they relate the colony's form to the disparate places of European cities, Indian middle class colonies, the Nepali village, and the 'western' interior. Ultimately, they read the uniform and neo-traditional appearance of houses as a morally inspired response to the contemporary disarray of Kathmandu houses.

Conclusion

Next to Bijay's "Bihar box," the Bista bungalow and the Shrestha's "partial vastu" house, the neo-traditional houses do not stick out as exceptions to the norm, but rather add one more style to the diverse mixture of *namunā* ("model") houses in new Kathmandu. Although such conspicuous displays might receive moral disapproval in some cases – as is the case for "Indian vastu" or tall American apartments – more often they reflect a shifting and more inclusive moral compass. Cosmic concerns over kinship and auspiciousness remain important, but increasingly must find room within the ever-more complicated social universe of Kathmandu materialism, which is based on spatial distinctions between city and village; native and foreign and include the moral nuances of consumerism and ethnic politics.

For Bijay, and his family living outside of Kathmandu, their new house indexes an anchor in the city and a measure of distance from the village. In order to turn his house into a proper Kathmandu dwelling and improve his marriage prospects, however, he must access a foreign job or experience, which will allow him to decorate the house with foreign things, install modern amenities, and add a second level. Narayan reproduces the concentric boundaries of caste and kin distinction in a village house as a strategy for guaranteeing trust from tenants in his apartment-style house. For the Shresthas, their house's "partial vastu" interior triggers the native logic of auspiciousness, but through the logic of moderate consumerism against the excessive display and fashion of their wealthy neighbors. Finally, the traditional brick exteriors of the Pradhan house and Pleasant Housing displays a cosmopolitan positionality temporally, spatially, and morally distant from contemporary Kathmandu. In these cases, the competitive consumption of the *namunā* mode and moral critique of the *grihastha* mode are neither mutually exclusive nor oppositional. Rather, the materialist concerns with having a house that fits in, earns income, appears unique and traditional are reinforced by concerns over marriage, caste-kinship spatial order, auspiciousness, and morality.

Part III. The Anxiety of Living amongst Strangers

Nepal's dependence on foreign 'development' aid, tourism, carpet exports, and remittance economy has shifted the occupational base of the country's economy, particularly in the capital, from production to tertiary and wage labor employment.[89] As the employment structure has shifted, so too has the consumption practices of Kathmandu residents. Nepal's liberalization of trade policy, particularly in its openness to imports, has produced a major influx of foreign commodities in the Kathmandu market. Mark Liechty (2003; 2010) and Katherine Rankin (2004) have both drawn attention to how the increase of tertiary labor and foreign commodities has led to a shift in the relationship between caste and class in contemporary Kathmandu.

Whereas Liechty claims that class has encompassed caste, Rankin argues that caste and class have become distinct domains of social life. According to Liechty, class has enveloped caste in contemporary social life. He contends, "Class has increasingly come to be the *framing* paradigm for many people in Kathmandu, encompassing (though by no means eliminating) the social valence of caste" (2003: 9). He argues that social status is increasingly marked by material consumption rather than by the ritual markers of caste; a shift that scholars have identified in other South Asian cities (Liechty 2003: 63; Dickey 2002: 216; Frøystad 2005: ch. 4). In other words, class status is visibly referenced through material signs such as one's clothing, hygiene, manners, speech, movement, occupation, housing, and education. According to Liechty, middle class subjects must consume the right commodities in order to distance themselves from the poor, yet also show restraint to demonstrate moral superiority to the vulgar and foreign-influenced

[89] In just one decade, between 2038 B.S. (1981/1982) and 2048 B.S. (1991/1992), agricultural labor decreased from 75% to 38%, while construction labor increased from 2% to 14%, and service sector employment increased from 14% to 29% (KUDBA 2059 B.S.).

lifestyles of the rich. At the same rate, the middle class aims to maintain social position in the middle instead of trying to out-do other groups. Thus, class practice involves both inter-group competition and intra-group cooperation.

Rankin (2004: 173-179) agrees that new consumer practices have produced new class-based logics, but instead of class encompassing caste, she claims that the two represent "increasingly distinct idioms of social life." "The commodity economy," she writes "knows no caste distinctions" (2004: 174). The social logic of commodities (and availability of service-sector employment) has allowed lower caste Newars to climb the social ladder of commodity competition, enter middle class lifestyles, and abandon caste-based patronage duties, while upper caste Newars have maintained ritual superiority but struggled to maintain the increasingly costly demands of social obligations. Thus, as competition increases between castes, cooperation fades away.

In the final part of the dissertation, I rethink the relationship between class and caste via the space of new urbanizing localities. Liechty's focus on consumer practices in the city's new public spaces and Rankin's focus on the exchange practices of a peripheral Newar town (Sankhu) inform their interpretations in ways that require adjustment to the context of new residential localities discussed here. The spaces of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing are almost exclusively residential, a marked difference from Kathmandu's central public spaces of and for consumption. Moreover, as opposed to the established social connections of Sankhu, the majority of residents in Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing move into the new localities as complete strangers.

Undoubtedly, the economic and political transformations of Nepal's post-1951 era have made immense social impact. In both Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing, residents

describe their community in the language of class and democracy as places of educated people with fair and open practices of decision-making. Within this rhetoric, the physical structure and lived practices of both localities express a counter-narrative of social and political exclusion. In particular, I argue that the moral anxiety of living amongst strangers produces an inchoate social structure that emphasizes communal categories of geographic, ethnic, and nationalist identities while downplaying ritual and consumerist practices.

In chapter six, I study the construction of social boundaries in both localities. Residents expect neighbors to be 'social,' an ideal defined in opposition to alternative geographic and ethnic designations. In Maitri Nagar, it means not being 'unhelpful' like local Newar nor 'uneducated' like caste-obsessed villagers, while in Pleasant Housing, it means not being profit-driven nor interested in caste divisions of neighborhoods in Kathmandu's center. The oppositional construction of this moral ideal functions more like the inter-group competition and intra-group cooperation of substantialized caste and ethnic groups and Liechty's class groups, than the ritual-economic interdependence of caste. However, the idiom of internal conflict is expressed through the communal designations of *jāt* (caste/ethnicity) rather than achieved status of class.

In chapter seven, I compare how the residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing respond to the weakness of the state and unstable public infrastructure by turning to local governance (Maitri Nagar) and private housing companies (Pleasant Housing). The ideal of being 'social' in chapter 6 is replicated here by the equally precarious ideal of being 'non-political.' Essentially, non-political means being disconnected from political parties in favor of the rhetoric of 'Panchayat nostalgia,' a

reference to Nepal's one-party royal rule in which national service was championed over social or political difference. I show how both localities resolve political and infrastructural conflicts through 'counter-democracy' practices of unelected 'big men' (*ṭhūlo mānchhe*) leading by consensus politics.

Chapter 6. Becoming a 'Social' Neighbor: Ethnicity and the Construction of the Moral Community

"When people buy a house, they buy a neighborhood."
- 'Dock' from Constance Perin (1977: 49)

While Kirtipur Jyāpus fear what will happen when their land is sold to outsiders, the reorganization of this land as residential presents the opposite problem for new buyers. When everyone is an 'outsider' buying into the land for the first time, the fear is not the disintegration of the community, but rather the integration of it. This is a particular threat when the people in control of transactions, the *dalāl*s and housing companies, are only interested in profit. Constance Perin's (1977) study of the symbolic meaning of housing in American cities offers a comparative example. She shows how, as the above quotation suggests, the value of a house depends on much more than the exchange value of any given property. Value is produced in relation to the surrounding houses and the people who inhabit them. In Perin's study, homeowners sought neighborhoods that would maintain the economic value and social value of their house. For most, this meant a 'middle class neighborhood' consisting of detached houses inhabited by their owners as opposed to duplexes or worse, rented apartments.

The residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing also link their house's value to the social status of their neighbors. The goal, for many, is to move into a locality in which social bonds will create a moral community of cooperative residents to help build roads and temples, and lines for sewage, water, and electricity while minimizing conflict and social instability. However, the value of a community is measured in more than just material infrastructure. As one resident put it, the value of a place is revealed when someone in your family is ill or dies. If your neighbors show up to help, you live in a

good place. While residents often speak of their former places of residence in such terms, they are less sure about their new place. To develop such social bonds would take many years to accomplish.

Looking back to Part I as comparison, residents know that land in Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing will never become an "inalienable possession." The rapid rate of land sales and appreciation of land prices certifies the fact that land is very exchangeable and movable. Moreover, residents do not claim ancestral links to the land nor possess the moral capacity to punish others for alienating land (Gregory 1997: 79). And yet, they speak of *ṭolko samāj* ('locality society') in the terms of norms and ideals as a place where residents will protect the value of land by contributing resources and labor to its improvement, and becoming 'social' and engaged in the community.

The reference to community or locality society is problematically associated with assumptions of boundaries and fixed identities. As anthropologists and geographers caution, assumptions of boundedness, autonomy, and fixity plague the usage of community or locality as analytical units. They criticize the treatment of a given place as bounded for ignoring the multiple and varied connections to other places through "flows of goods, services, personnel, property, knowledge, information, or possibly other values going in and out of any locality" (Leeds 1994: 86). The second problem stems from how the circumscription of a given place as a community or locality can lead to the equally troubling assumption of a place possessing a fixed and singular identity. Massey (1994: 5) refers to this phenomenon as "exclusivist claims to space" in which identity is produced through counterposition to other places rather than interactions with them. The point is to treat claims to community or locality not as objective statements, but rather as

a guide to understanding how a sense of place is socially constructed. In other words, the social construction of community boundaries is a process not a product (Fisher 2001: 190). For my particular concern about land and housing, my question becomes how do claims to community relate to value? I argue that residents define their community as unique and separate from other places as a strategy for overcoming the anxiety of living amongst strangers. This strategy is undermined by the fact that the community is neither bounded nor secluded, and thus, open to the influences of the greater city and surrounding areas.

In South Asian ethnography, notions of community are usually addressed through the prism of caste. According to Valentine Daniel's (1984) profound study of personhood in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, land value is determined by the bio-moral nature of the area's inhabitants. He found that Brahman migrants settled in areas of other Brahmans not for social reasons, but to ensure that the soil was compatible with persons of their same nature. In this bio-moral understanding of land, one's caste provides one's nature, but that nature can influence and be influenced by other substances, such as soil. In other words, one must constantly seek ritual solutions to ensure the purity and auspiciousness of land. This approach echoes the interactionist theory of caste, made most famous by McKim Marriott (1976), which conceives of persons as 'dividuals' consisting of transferable material substances, which are exchanged between others and the environment.

Steve Barnett (1973) also found caste exclusive localities in his study of rural to urban migration in Madras (also in Tamil Nadu). However, instead of seeking out soil

that was compatible with their caste-given nature, Barnett's migrants sought other members of their caste for the social security of being with one's own. Barnett argues that migration to the city turns castes into ethnic-like groups in a fashion similar to Dumont's (1980: 227) notion of substantialization. Substantialization refers to a process in which caste groups break apart from the interdependence and holism of the caste system in favor of intra-group solidarity and equality.

Caste in Kathmandu has long functioned closer to the 'ethnic-like' model provided by Barnett. As I discussed in chapter 3, the local term for caste, *jāt*, is also translated into the English term, 'ethnicity.' Within a particular caste system, such as that of the Nepali-speaking Parbatiyā (to which the Bāhun-Chhetri belong) or the Newar, caste refers to one's ritual (and often occupational) position within an interdependent system. But, as a response to the all-Nepal caste system (or *muluki ain*), or legal code of the country from 1854-1955, all populations, even Muslims, Christians and Buddhists, are categorized into a national hierarchy based on *jāt*. Although initially based on a Hindu notion of purity and pollution, *jāt* groups are organized in relation to each other in terms of competition. For example, the categories of Newar or Bāhun-Chhetri function at a level more reflective of ethnic differences (language, region) than caste differences (ritual purity and exchange).

The competitive aspect of *jāt* identity is echoed in how certain 'ethnic groups' ranked below upper caste Bāhun-Chhetri have profited from state policy and economic conditions, such as Thakali, Newar and Manangi traders, Gurkha groups (Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Magar) in the British military, Tibetan carpet makers, and Sherpa mountaineers. At the same rate, one's *jāt* is rarely a sure indicator of one's economic status. For this

reason, several scholars have turned to class as the dominant form of social organization in Kathmandu (Pahari 1992; Leichty 2003; Liechty 2010). Like caste, however, a clear definition of class in Kathmandu is nearly impossible to ascertain as even Liechty admits (2003: 64-67). Moreover, the term translated as class, *varga*, is rarely used in everyday discourse while *jāt* remains the most common form of social classification.

Rather than as an objective category, Liechty (2003; 2010) refers to class as a set of practices, what he calls 'middle-classness.' Being middle class is thus a process by which subjects consume and display products and tell narratives that place them in between the foreign imitation and excessive lifestyles of the rich and the tradition and deprivation of the poor. One must consume enough commodities to gain prestige and remain above the lower classes, but not let consumption corrupt one's lives like the rich. Following Douglas and Isherwood's (1979) work on consumption, Liechty (2003: 114-116) asserts that the goal of Kathmandu class behavior is not to "out-do" others, but rather to "claim and maintain a place in the ongoing debate" and avoid exclusion from the group. Thus, unlike Barnett's ascribed 'ethnic-like castes,' identity is achieved through consumption and then organized according to intra-group cooperation.

If we compare Liechty and Barnett, a key distinction emerges. Liechty (2010b) argues that the class practices of consumption and material display function in the new public spaces of cinemas, malls, offices, and restaurants as opposed to the private house where the caste logics of endogamy and commensality remain paramount.[90] Barnett (1973) emphasizes the neighborhood space in between the private house and the public

[90] Liechty does complicate this neat division in another discussion about the consumption of videos in private homes and video parlors (2003: ch. 6; 2010a), but in general, his argument shares certain structural parallels to Milton Singer's (1972) articulation of "compartmentalization" to show how urbanites in Madras maintain a ritual-ethos at home and a market-ethos in the workplace (see also Frøystad 2005: chs. 3, 4).

commercial zones. When looking for a place to live in a city of strangers, migrants look for neighborhoods of fellow castes. Importantly, however, they define caste not in terms of practice (or code for conduct relations), but in terms of birth status since it is more difficult to know other people's actions in the city. I suggest take a step further than Barnett by not only asking who they are in space, but what they do in space. Claims to community must be contextualized within the material relations of social relations and everyday practices.

Living next to strangers in which few have any previous social ties produces considerable anxiety about the future for residents of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing. As a safeguard against fears of social disintegration, residents construct a precarious notion of the locality as a moral community according to an ethical code of 'being social.' I argue that we understand the social construction of the moral community as a nuanced practice that exists somewhere in between the social registers of caste and class. Unlike the inter-group ritual and economic cooperation of caste practices, this code functions according to a more competitive aspect of inter-group relations, in that being 'social' is defined in opposition to other geographical units. In Maitri Nagar, being 'social' is opposed to the uncooperative, traditional, and intolerant local Newars, or in opposition to the caste and communalist mindsets of the 'village.' In Pleasant Housing, much like the architectural interpretations of houses described in chapter 5, being 'social' is defined in opposition to the unacceptable behavior 'out there' – drinking, profit-motivations, and parochial concerns - of city residents.

While inter-group competition is just as integral to class practices as it is to ethnic formation, like Barnett's migrants to the city, the content of being social is often

communicated through ascribed '*jāt*' and regional identities rather than achieved class status, particularly in times of internal conflict. The articulated non-caste image of each locality is compromised by internal cracks of Dalit and Madhesi exclusion in Maitri Nagar, and the Newar exceptionalism in Pleasant Housing. Despite economic transformations bringing class-like practices of consumption, social classification in newly established localities remains in the register of ascribed ethno-geographic register.

***Maitri Nagar:* ṭāḍhāko deutā bhandā najīkko bhūt kām lāgchha ("*A local ghost serves more purpose than a distant god*")**

In Maitri Nagar, my survey suggests that over 80% of residents identify as Bāhun-Chhetri. In fact, the *jāt* homogeneity of Maitri Nagar appears to replicate Barnett's finding in Madras that upper castes search for upper caste neighborhoods in which to settle in the city. In addition to caste ties, regional links are also important. For instance, in one case, what I call 'Baglung Bāhun Lane,' a Bāhun *dalāl* originally from the midwest mid-mountain district of Baglung, has sold every single one of his plots on a street (ten in total) to fellow Bāhuns of Baglung.

Figure 13. Maitri Nagar during the monsoon season

Concieved Space

When the *jāt* and regional homogeneity of Maitri Nagar is mentioned, it is in opposition to the dangers of other heterogeneous localities. For example, Sunil purchased land for his brother, who works in Saudi Arabia, in Dhapasi (peripheral locality in northwest Kathmandu), but came to dislike the place. He worried that "it would be difficult to survive in that community. The people are too mixed – Gurung, Newar, Magar." He goes on to label such people "the new rich of Nepal" in that they make their

money in dishonest ways as *dalāl*s and manpower agents.[91] Just as *jāt* heterogeneity is assumed to produce social disharmony, *jāt* homogeneity is assumed to produce social harmony. Similarly, Nilkantha chose to rent a flat in Maitri Nagar because everyone is "from the same zone (midwest hills), same Bāhun-Chhetri culture, and therefore, we have the same behavior." He adds, *"āphno mānchhe sahit, āphno samāj"* ('With one's own people, one finds one's own society"). For others, even upper caste homogeneity does not guarantee social cohesion. Anjay, a Bāhun from the midwest district of Nawalparasi, complains that *dalāl*s will sell to anyone to make a profit, leaving the neighborhood with a mixture of easterners and westerners.[92]

Instead of *jāt*, most residents recognize the newness of Maitri Nagar as its defining feature, as one informant states "it is easier to settle in a new settlement." *Nayābasti* ('new settlement') is defined in opposition to the spaces of Newar 'locals'. In one telling episode, a Bāhun-Chhetri respondent was looking through my field notes and came across a quotation by a Newar person who called Newars the most '*sojho*' (honest, straight) *jāt* of Nepal. To this, she started laughing while saying, "Newar *baṭo* ('clever') number one." In particular, Newar locals are seen as being unwilling and uncooperative to develop the area. As one community leader told me, "they won't even give a two feet donation to help build a road."

The distinction between new settlers and Newar is not necessarily in terms of *jāt* as even Newars in Maitri Nagar, who have moved into the Valley from other places, define the 'locals' in less than flattering terms. For instance, Sujan, a Newar from

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[91] Manpower agents employ Nepalis to work in foreign countries. Like *dalāl*s, they are middle-men, a position of disrepute in Nepali society.

[92] Although Bāhuns tend to be grouped as "one people," they too are socially divided between the *Purbiya Bāhuns* (from the east) and the *Kumai Bāhuns* (from the west), who each claim superiority over the other (Bennett 1983: 11).

Dhading district who has an inter-caste marrage with a Chhetri woman from Chitwan, calls local Newars "too traditional … they see us as *tala* ('below') and are scared of us." Whereas outsider new settlers are helpful, locals "give unnecessary trouble;" whereas newcomers are understanding, locals are "narrow-minded."

When newcomers fail to contribute resources to local betterment, the dichotomy of helpful newcomer versus unhelpful local falls apart. Residents are expected to be 'social'[93] in which they voluntarily give land and resources for the benefit of the greater locality. Hemnath Prasad, a self-proclaimed local leader, praises himself for donating two ānās from his own property to build the road. The problem is, as Hemnath Prasad explains, not everyone agrees to donate land, which makes building the road impossible. He states, "For a guy who owns land but doesn't live here, he thinks 'I don't need a road,' but the rest of us need his donation or else we can't walk during the monsoon, or we can't bring an ambulance in an emergency." He recites a proverb to describe the predicament: '*khalto khaeko ṭhāũmā rukh ropchha*.' This literally means, "A tree is planted in the place where the earth consumed fertilizer." Figuratively, he explains that the contributing residents are the fertilizer sacrificed so others, even the non-givers, can enjoy the benefits of the tree.

According to Sujan, the problem stems from the village mentality of many residents that is based on an assumed link between attitude and labor. Whereas people in the city are supposed to be conciliatory and industrious, residents of Maitri Nagar are combative and indolent. He comments,

> We liked the environment, but with migrants, their interests do not fit. They are selfish people. In Tyangalaphat (locality to the south in between Tribhuvan University and

[93] Even when the conversation was conducted in Nepali, respondents would use the English term 'social'.

> Maitri Nagar), there are professors, but here you will find below average person - lots of fighting, too much personality, too proud. They have 'a villager's nature' which means that they are not industrial, but rather possess a mentality of '*ghar banāera basne*' ('build a house and stay there doing nothing').

From Hemnath Prasad and Sujan's descriptions we gather that *ijjat* ('honor') is produced through giving property or labor. The honor gained by contributions is not through feasts, rituals or associations as it is in older Newar towns (Rankin 2004: 122), or through the consumption practices in new public spaces (Liechty 2003: 68). In a new locality consisting of recent migrants, honor is produced through improving infrastructure such as roads. However, while the non-givers will certainly not gain any *ijjat* from their lack of donation, by just staying in their house and not selling, renting or defaulting on it, they are contributing to the moral value of the place. Bijay provides another proverb to explain the importance of neighbors: "*ṭāḍhāko deutā bhandā najīkko bhūt kām lāgchha"* ('a local ghost serves more purpose than a distant god'). He explains that a neighbor who stays in his house, even if uncooperative, is more beneficial to the locality than a helpful relative or friend who lives elsewhere. He explains that if neighbors move into the locality, rent out their houses, or sell their houses to a new set of strangers, or worse yet, lose their house to the bank, Maitri Nagar will become a socially undesirable place to live.

Even worse than the absent neighbor are the squatters who occupy empty land and take from local resources. Whereas newcomers draw clear lines between their outside position and Newar 'locals,' they position themselves as 'insiders' in opposition to an outsider even more threatening than the Newar. For Maitri Nagar residents, *bāhirako mānchhe* ('outsider') almost always refers to squatters who have set up tents near the Balkhu River on the northeastern edge of the locality. Residents refer to squatters, or

sūkūmbasi, as "polluters" or "Indian." They come to the area to work in house construction or at the nearby carpet factory, but to the residents, they represent wasteful users of resources as they wash their clothes in the river, and then hang them on public walls to dry. While having tea with one house-owner and his tenant, a group of squatters came over, pointed to land asking if it was owned by anyone. The tenant whispered in the owner's ear, "don't give them anything, not even water, and tell them that the police will kick them out."

More than any other status, residents describe Maitri Nagar as a place of 'educated people.' Bijay states, "Here, no one is related, we are all *nayā mānchhe* ('new people'), but we are mostly professors, educated people too busy to meet each other even." The locality's proximity to Tribhuvan University makes it, for most, an "educated" place. For instance, when asked what the typical profession of neighbors is, most say "TU professors." Of the 86 houses included in my study, however, I knew just three professors none of which taught at Tribhuvan University. However, nearly one and five working adults were engaged in education, most teaching at private schools. Other common occupations were civil service, engineering, real estate and manpower agencies (previously mentioned *dalāl* jobs), military, police, NGOs, banks, and transportation. I suggest we read "educated" as a reference to tertiary occupations mostly in the public sector as opposed to agricultural productive labor. Importantly, it also references one's perceived background as possessing an urban, or non-village, mindset.[94] This mindset is

[94] Verkaaik (2004: 44-45) identifies a similar interpretation of 'educated' in his ethnography of muhajirs in Hyderabad, Pakistan. He asserts, "[illiterate and uneducated] stood for a lot more than the inability to read and write; they rather connoted to a 'backward' mentality. I have heard *illiteracy* used as an explanation for a range of unwanted forms of behavior and phenomena such as reckless driving, the use of drugs, strong commitment to spiritual leaders, the prevalence of kinship loyalty over national solidarity, and a stagnant economy."

indicated by a stated disregard for *jāt*. Although most residents admit that the neighborhood is mostly Bāhun, they are quick to say that *jāt* does not matter.

Sangita's statement represents this perspective in her description of her neighbors:

> All are good, they help us. They report to us whenever we are out. Mostly TU lecturers. The land next to us belongs to a brother who is in UK. Otherwise there are three Bāhuns, one Gurung and one Magar. They don't care about *jāt* so communal feeling is less in city. Newars do excessive worship, more than outsiders. For us, it not easy to follow traditions because we have a busy schedule. We can't know who are untouchables, not like in the uneducated villagers of Rupandehi (district in south-central Nepal).

From this statement, we can draw several observations. The first is the emphasis on being 'non-communal,' which is particularly poignant in post-insurgency Nepal when multiple political factions are calling for federal Nepal to base states on ethnic and linguistic identity. She refers to the multiple ethnicities of her neighbors, from Bāhun to the Janajāti groups of Gurung and Magar. Second, she defines the urban locality as non-religious in opposition to the Newar reputation for "excessive worship." City residents are too busy to be religious, she added, and too educated to know which neighbors are of a lower *jāt*, which is unlike in the village where a lack of education and abundant free time makes *jāt* known and important to all.

Perceived and Lived Space

The social definition of Maitri Nagar as not Newar and not villager is relevant to the locality's geographical position in between Kirtipur and Kalanki. While Kirtipur is known as an old Newar town, Kalanki represents the arrival of migrants into the city. As the final stop for busses leaving the Valley to the west and south, Kalanki is understood to be an entry point for 'villagers' as well as the exit point for residents returning to their 'villages.' Due to Maitri Nagar's position as a crossroads of sorts, it is not surprising to

see unfamiliar faces walking down the main road. Besides the occasional motorbike and very rare car, most commuters move through the area on foot.

The flow of traffic is contingent on temporal conditions of the day. In the morning hours, one finds school-aged children in uniforms walking through on their way to the various private schools in the area or to Kalanki to catch a bus into the city. In addition to children, one also finds a mixture of men and women commuting to and fro during this time. By late morning, however, the mixed gender of early traffic becomes increasingly male dominated. As one female informant explained to me, it is at this hour that she gets creative on her walk to the store looking for small pathways and *galli*s (‘alleys’) to avoid the larger crowds of men. From late morning into midday, the roads, tea-shops and restaurants in the locality are full of male construction and carpet laborers who make temporary residences in the area as well as locals. By late afternoon, the space again returns to a mixture of ages, genders, and directions of travel.

One of the most central tea-shops is run by the brother of Ram Prasad, the land *dalāl* mentioned in chapter 3, and serves as the area’s center of gossip regarding land. Several houses down is Ram Prasad’s actual real estate office which is usually either empty or occupied by Ram Prasad and a few of his friends sitting in blue plastic chairs watching the walkers in the street. It is in the tea-shop were most of his business takes place. Because of his presence in the area, most of the tea-shop customers are Bāhun-Chhetri from his district of Baglung in the mid-western hills of Nepal, and tend to be recent migrants to the city looking for land to buy or flats to rent as tenants.

The strong regional-*jāt* identification of Ram Prasad’s tea-shop and real estate office reflects the developing status of Maitri Nagar where most are recent arrivals and

few have have lived longer than three years. If you walk towards Kalanki, you enter the more established part of Maitri Nagar. While in Ram Prasad's area, the road is unpaved and many vacant lots line the street, farther down the road towards Kalanki, not only is the road paved, but it is also lined with houses, shops, and even a Shiva Temple. Here, one finds a greater mixture of regional and *jāt* backgrounds.

If you walk in the opposite direction from Ram Prasad's shops towards Kirtipur, you find more open lots and more dirt pathways diverting from the main road. Whereas most houses are dispersed randomly along roadsides, rarely positioned in adjacent plots of land, and often with walls around individual houses, here, in the southeastern edge of Maitri Nagar, stands an uncommon looking compound with multiple houses built within it. Six houses have been built side-by-side creating a rectangle of cement encircling a courtyard space with a few narrow passageways for inhabitants to enter and leave. The residents of all of these houses belong to Kāmi *jāt* (metalworkers), the only Dalits I met in Maitri Nagar.

The physical separation of the Kāmi block of houses is reinforced by social exclusion in local associations, or guthis. In the case of the southeastern edge of Maitri Nagar (bordering Tyangalaphat), there are two 'guthis' that cover roughly the same area. They also address the same issues, ranging from material concerns over water, electricity, and roads to providing economic support through rotating credit associations. What distinguishes these two is their *jāt* makeup. While the 'upper guthi' consists solely of area Bāhuns, the 'lower guthi' consists mostly of Dalit residents. The current leader of the 'lower guthi,' Akhilesh, is a Bāhun who prides himself on belonging to a group that includes Dalits. He tells me, "There are only two *jāt*s in Nepal: men and women."

Particularly, he criticizes the upper guthi for being pretentious and stuck in their caste ways. Due to Akhilesh's association with the lower *jāt*s, area gossip had started to spread that his son is not his natural child, but rather adopted by a Dalit woman in his home district of Jhapa in southeastern Nepal. The example of the two guthis, and in particular Akhilesh's treatment, reflects the lingering importance of *jāt* status in Kathmandu, even amongst 'educated people.' Just as stingy newcomers harm social unity, concerns over *jāt* crack the image of the locality's seeming non-village mentality.

Similar to the guthi exclusion of Dalits, another *jāt* fault line exists between Nepali-speakers of the hills (Pahari) and speakers of North Indian languages (Hindi, Bhojpuri, Maithili) of the Plains (Madhesi). After the Maoist insurgency ended in 2006, immense Pahari-Madhesi conflict erupted in the Tarai plains of Nepal, which inspired the new government to name a Madhesi as Nepal's President, Ram Baran Yadav. In Kathmandu, Madhesis remain second-class citizens often labeled 'Indian' or 'Bihari' rather than Nepali. In Maitri Nagar, Madhesis are assumed to be construction workers. As I discussed in chapter 5, most construction workers in Kathmandu do come from Nepal's southern plains. However, even for the few Madhesi residents of the locality who have nothing to do with the construction industry, discrimination seeps into their interactions with neighbors. One resident, Yadav, who recently migrated from the south-central district of Parsa, explains his differential treatment in Kathmandu and Birgunj (headquarters of Parsa). "In Birgunj," he narrates, "I can speak Hindi, Bhojpuri, Nepali or English, it does not matter, no one looks at me." However, "Here, we are *manu maru* ('not people' in Newar)." He bought his land in Maitri Nagar from a Madhesi *dalāl* because it is close to Kalanki, the gateway for buses going south to Parsa. However, he

purposefully bought a car to avoid interacting with neighbors on his way to work. As one of the few car owners in Maitri Nagar, residents mock Yadav and assume that he thinks he is superior to the rest of them.

The social capital of *ijjat* in Maitri Nagar is expressed in terms of certain cooperative social practices, such as donating land and joining associations, or through the achieved status of education and a perceived nonchalance about *jāt* status. Given the locality's recent development and geographic position as a cross-roads between the one of the city's major bus stops and one of the older Newar towns, residents are anxious to define it as the home of educated settlers in opposition to the Newar local, 'Indian' squatter, and villager. Despite emphasizing the newness of the area's social makeup and disregard for issues of *jāt* and background, the terms of inclusion/exclusion remain in the register of region and *jāt*. Importantly, however, the exclusionary practices of residents do not refer to the caste logics of endogamy and commensality based on ritual pollution or inauspiciousness. Rather, they refer to the ethnic aspect of *jāt*, in which group identification is defined in terms of solidarity within the group.

Pleasant Housing: 'If one person sinks, we all sink'

Upon entering the gates of Pleasant Housing, one sees the sign 'No Horn Please' (see figure 15). In a city where honking is the primary mode of communication on the street, the sign essentially states: 'You are no longer in Kathmandu; different rules apply here.' In spite of the sign, drivers of motorbikes and cars continue to use their horn as a

form of communication with pedestrians and other motorists. Thus, despite the sign, space inside the colony can often sound (due to the horns) just like the city outside.

Conceived Space

The high cost of Pleasant Housing houses (10 million NRs, or apx. $140,000) guarantees that residents have access to considerable wealth, but it does not guarantee the continued maintenance of the colony's exclusion from the city's inconsistent infrastructure and heterogeneous society. Once the company finishes construction, residents will no longer have a legal right to require assistance from the company. The hand-over of control from the company to residents will leave the residents as a cooperative dependent neither on the state nor the company, but on each other. Thus, despite the higher-class status, privatized infrastructure, and guarded boundary of Pleasant Housing, the cooperative living structure produces considerable social anxiety about the colony's existence. Against the threat of becoming *just like* other neighborhoods in Kathmandu, it is the residents of Pleasant Housing who must maintain the higher quality of infrastructure, governance, and sociality within the colony. While the company creates value through the appropriative labor of construction, it is the social labor of residents that maintains the value of the colony.

Figure 14. Entrance gate to Pleasant Housing

Figure 15. 'No Horn Please' Sign in Pleasant Housing

In the run-up to the hand-over, the residents have endured numerous conflicts against the company (discussed further in chapter seven). However, during the election for president of the colony's Residential Welfare Society (RWS), it was anxieties about other residents, not the company, that were the center of attention. As the new president Diprendra admitted in his acceptance speech, "I have also considered leaving." He went on to urge residents to think of the colony as their home ('*ghar*') rather than as an investment ('*lagānī*'). In a private conversation, the new secretary, Uday, echoed the president's fears by criticizing residents who had sold their house for higher values than what they had originally paid. For instance, he mentions one house that was bought for

‘75 lakh’ (7.5 million NRs, apx. $105,000) and sold for one crore (10 million NRs, apx. $140,000); another bought for one crore and sold for 1.3 crore (apx. $180,000). Even more detrimental are those who rent houses to temporary tenants. These cases provide an interesting point. Sales do not necessarily harm the monetary values of the homes. In fact, they might even increase the value. Thus, the fear is less over loss of exchange value and more over residents treating their home like a commodity to be bought, sold, and rented.

The threat to Pleasant Housing does not come from the outside as in the case of Maitri Nagar residents’ fear over local Newars, squatters, or villagers. As one resident put it, the biggest problem in Pleasant Housing is “anti-colony behavior by residents.” In particular, he disapproved of neighbors who throw their garbage into their neighbor’s yard; do not stop their dogs from eating other houses’ vegetables and pooping everywhere; and most importantly, engage in excessive drinking. All of these behaviors are acceptable “out there” (he points to the city), but not within the walls of the colony. But more than any other factor, residents, especially men, are expected to be ‘social.’ Residents who stayed in their house and did not participate in colony events, ‘evening walks’, Residents’ Welfare Society meetings, were labeled anti-social, and ultimately burdens to the colony.

The emphasis on intra-colony relations offers a new twist on our understanding of class in Kathmandu. Liechty describes Kathmandu’s middle class practices as a precarious game of maintaining one’s place in the unstable middle which requires appearing separate from the upper and lower classes and aligning one’s self with members of the middle class. In the site of his study – Kathmandu’s ‘new public

spaces'[95] – the objective is to identify one's self as a member of the 'suitable middle' and be someone who 'counts' (2003: 140). However, in the colony where everyone belongs to an elite economic status, 'interclass exclusion and competition' becomes less important than 'intraclass inclusion' (Leichty 2003: 114-116). If owning a house in a housing colony 'codifies upper status' (Caldeira 1999: 88), purchasing a house in the colony creates some status stability; that is, as long as the colony continues to symbolize prestige. In this sense, one's status not only indexes one's own social status or *gharko sṭhiti* ('house and family condition') (Leichty 2003: 135), but also that of the entire colony. At the previously mentioned pre-election meeting, multiple speakers alluded to the colony as a rock on which every house shares a spot: "If *ek janā dubchha, hāmī sabai dubchhãu*" ('one person sinks, we all sink'). Thus, it is the individual's responsibility to maintain his status just as it is the collective's responsibility to help neighbors from sinking.

Maintaining the colony's collective status requires the colony to be physically and socially separate from Kathmandu. Residents achieve such separation through narratives of elevated sameness when describing the sociality of the colony. Elevated sameness refers to statements of shared moral superiority between neighbors, which typically begin with 'we all' (*hāmī sabai*) and end by describing the sophistication of fellow residents possess. "Here we all have *sabhyatā* ('civilization') – We are all educated people, we don't fight, we respect each other," states Ram Bahadur, a former RWS president. Residents maintain such unity by emphasizing the distinction of residents from former Kathmandu residences. In the words of Ganga, a founder of an NGO devoted to women's

[95] By which Liechty (2003: 145-147) means cinema halls, restaurants, hotels, and malls as opposed to the 'old public spaces', such as temples, squares, water taps, vegetable markets, and public rest houses.

rights, colony residents are *kurā būjhne mānchhe* (‘people who understand things’) as opposed to the unsophisticated attitudes and practices of previous places of residence. The ‘things’ that the colony inhabitants understand range from a greater concern for community than profit and respect for private space to a tolerance for differences of political party affiliation and *jāt*.

Residents tend to describe the community of their previous residences as anti-social (‘where people living in the same house might know each other’) and profit-driven. There, people choose the neighborhood for economic reasons – where land is cheap and one could open a store or rent out a flat – not social reasons. Although some Pleasant Housing owners do rent out their houses, no one rents out rooms or flats within houses and more importantly, with the exception of the small store in the colony’s not yet opened social center, the community is purely residential. As one informant explained, he could have built a house in the bustling neighborhood of Naya Bazar, where he could turn his bottom floor into a store and rent it for a considerable amount of money. However, he didn’t want to contribute to the “messiness of the city,” by which he meant the mixing of commercial and residential spaces.

Just as Pleasant Housing marks a clear division between inside residential spaces and outside commercial spaces, private space is clearly marked and respected by residents. Each house is surrounded by a short wall and gate, which is rarely penetrated by outsiders without invitation. One resident remarks that “You have to ring the house’s gate bell before entering. Not like elsewhere in the city where people just walk in to your house without invitation.” Another resident compares the formality of housing sociality with that of Europe and the United States where neighbors give ‘respectful distance’ to

each other. He gleefully admitted that in contrast to his previous residence in the city center neighborhood of Naxal, "Here, no one bothers me, and I don't bother anyone. I have time and space to think, write, and live a retired sort of life."

Since the elevated distinction is shared between neighbors, it serves as a symbol of unity and equality. Thus, possible symbols of division, such as politics and *jāt* need to be downplayed. Party affiliation is a matter of discussion, but not of conflict as it too often is on the 'outside.' While walking with one neighbor, he sees someone in the distance and tells me, "There goes the Colony's Maoist" (referring to Uday, the soon to be Secretary of the Society). "Oh, really?" I ask, worried that this might be a sensitive piece of information, to which he responds, "It's just a matter of joking between us. We are all professionals."

The professionalism of the colony is expected to extend even to *jāt* differences – despite the active politicization of identity occurring in post-insurgency Nepal. In the political debates surrounding the Constituent Assembly, claims to states and rights based on *jāt* and regional differences are central. Amidst an increase in assertions of communal identities, however, colony residents attempt to de-emphasize differences. Waldrop (2004) suggests that, in the case of a New Delhi housing colony, the exclusive gate should be read as a replacement of a disintegrating caste hierarchy with the physical boundaries of class segregation. When discussing *jāt*, residents base their unity not on class ties, but rather on nationalism. When asked to describe the *jāt* of neighbors, often residents state "We are all one *jāt* – Nepali." Or as Bishnu states, "all castes are here," but then corrects himself, "with the exception of Pode and Kasai" (lower Newar castes of sweepers and butchers). In addition to the few lower castes mentioned by Bishnu, one

does not find any residents belonging to any of Nepal's many Dalit groups. Actually, similar to Waldrop's (2004) description of the Delhi colony's 'upper caste flavor,' Pleasant Housing is dominated socially and numerically by Bāhun-Chhetri and upper caste Newar. This point was emphasized in Uday's campaign speech when he promised to appoint all *jāt*s to his committees, and then specified what 'all *jāt*s' meant – "*bāhun mātra hoina, newār pani*" ('not just Bahun, but also Newar').

Perceived and Lived Space

The physical uniformity of Pleasant Housing houses symbolizes the idealized sociality of the colony. The elevated sameness of residents is represented in how each house shares the same external appearance. The only difference is whether a house has five bedrooms or four bedrooms. To take the analogy a step further, the houses are actually elevated five feet above the street level. From the street looking towards a house, one must look up over the black-iron gate and above the driveway to the elevated garden leading to the front door.

After living in Pleasant Housing for twelve months, the subtle distinctions between houses became more apparent. There are numerous ways in which residents individualize their house. For example, some residents would decorate the columns of the doorway. Others would name their house, putting a plaque with the title 'Govinda Sadan' (Govinda House). Many would put saffron-colored 'Jai Shiv' Hindu flags or Buddhist prayer flags on their rooftops. The most apparent example of house individualization was the 'Newar house' of Ram Shrestha. As he explained to me, he wanted to turn his house into a 'living museum' of Newar gods and *hiṭī*s ('water tap') as a conscious attempt to

demonstrate and maintain his Newar-ness in the colony.[96] He also proposed conducting a motorcycle rally around the colony's roads on the Newar New Year's day as Newar activists do in the cities. Other residents echoed Ram's Newar pride by conveying discontent with their non-Newar neighbors. For one Newar resident, Indira, who is married to a European social scientist and splits her time between living in Kathmandu and Europe, most colony residents buy houses in Pleasant Housing in order to appear 'urban' and 'modern'. "But," she adds, "They wake up at 5am and start yelling. Just like in a village. Only the Newar here are really from the city."

Social differences within the colony were even more apparent in a perceived hiearchy regarding different modes of transportation. On the high end, the industry owners and high-ranking government officials had multiple cars and drivers that would show up each morning and stay on hand until late into the evening. Often, such residents would own a Sport Utility Vehicle and a smaller four-door car such as a Suzuki Maruti. In the middle were the residents who would own a car and drive themselves or have a motorbike. These were often residents who earned income from foreign sources, such as work at foreign government embassies or INGOs, or through pashmina exports and remittances from family members working in Europe or North America. Finally, there were also many residents who did not have cars and needed to walk to the local bus stop (about half a mile from the colony) on the main highway going into Kathmandu. Due to my own car-less status, I was privvy to hearing the complaints of others who had to walk to the bus-stop. In particular, I would often share a taxi with one neighbor who worked as an engineer for Nepal Telecommunications (NTC). He had several friends who had

[96] I am reminded of Chatterjee's (2004: 146) comment regarding the desire of Kolkata's suburban middle class to assert their Bengali-ness "over a city they have physically abandoned."

invited him to live in the colony, but now that he was here, he worried that his job did not earn him enough money to maintain his house and lifestyle at the level of other neighbors.

Despite any internal differences within the colony, when residents leave the gates of the colony, there were just two groups: residents and outsiders. Amongst the residents, there is a noticeable fear of interacting with those living immediately outside of the colony. I would join one neighbor, Kumar, on regular 'morning walks' outside the colony towards the Newar village of Macchegaun. Despite my requests to explore around the settlement, Kumar would insist that we turnaround before entering. He worried openly to me that "they don't like people like us." Another resident, Sunil, would worry about his children's safety outside of the colony. As the manager of the security guards at the US Embassy, he explained to me that he knew what kind of threats existed "out there" especially since the Maoists insurgency. Consequently, he insisted that his children's school bus enter the colony to pick them up every morning and that his children carry walkie-talkies with them at all times.

Beside the more general fears of the outside, there were numerous cases of conflict between a small Newar settlement of butcher castes just outside the colony gate and colony residents. Since the Pleasant Housing Company had yet to establish any of its promised public spaces such as the general store, residents needed to shop outside of the colony, often at the corner store run by a young man named Arjun. Arjun is the nephew of one of the Colony's most prominent residents and supplied residents with general needs from water and gas to cooking goods. As being outside of the colony's walls,

Arjun's store also served residents of the greater Tinthana locality. Thus, the store represented a meeting place of colony residents and those immediately outside of it.

One night just before Tihar ('festival of lights') in late October, I was standing at Arjun's store while a young non-colony resident, Manoj, approached us smoking a cigarette and drinking a can of Red Bull. Then, an older woman from the colony, Ganga, approached the store counter and asked Manoj to move so that his smoke would not bother her. He immediately turned towards her and purposefully blew smoke in her direction. Then, he yelled, "I can smoke anywhere I want. Who are you to tell me not to smoke?" Arjun responded, "Don't speak this way to a *ṭhūlo mānchhe* ('big person')," after which, Ganga added, "I am not *ṭhūlo* ('big')." Manoj quickly inquired, "*timi ko?"* ['who are you (familiar'?)].[97] Ganga answered, "I am a person." Walking away, Manoj lit a firecracker and threw it in her direction, uttering under his breath "rich people." Ganga then asked him "What house are *tapāĩ* ['you' (honorific you)] from?" which infuriated him even more, yelling as he walked back towards us, "My house? Where are *timi* ['you' (familiar)] from? You people think you can tell us what to do?" At this point, Ganga collected her groceries and returned to inside the colony gate. Manoj, still angry, followed her and continued throwing firecrackers towards her. When he reached the gate, the colony guards quickly restrained him and physically removed him to outside the colony gate. He then returned to Arjun's shop asking for information on Ganga ('What number house is she from'). Arjun did not provide any information, but Manoj continued

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[97] Nepali has four second-person pronouns. The two highest are deferential terms, *hajur* – for special individuals who command immense power and respect; and *tapāĩ* – honorific for those of higher status, or of unfamiliar relationship with speaker. The two lowest are terms of familiarity, *timi* – for close friends of equal status, and *tã* – to express subordination or intimacy (Shrestha 2010: 232). While Manoj's choice of '*timi*' to refer to Ganga is a clear violation of social codes, Ganga's use of *tapāĩ* to refer to Manoj is considered unexpectedly polite.

to ask for it. When a car exited the colony gates, he ran up to it and pretended to kick its tires.

Unlike Maitri Nagar's claim to exceptionalism, Pleasant Housing's claim is supported by a wall, which serves as a visual reminder of the residents' separation from the outside world. The content of this message is that residents are expected to live a social practice of elevated sameness in which differences of wealth, *jāt* and background do not matter. This message is embodied in the uniform architecture of colony houses. However, the distinction provided by the wall, architecture, and social practices is challenged by the internal differences within the colony and the logistical necessity to interact with the world outside of the walls.

Conclusion

Although land and housing are some of the safest and most valued commodities in growing Kathmandu, their value is not just dependent on the market, but also on the social character of inhabitants. In order to ensure the future social integration and economic stability of neighborhoods, residents define local space according to a code that separates it from other geo-social categories, such as local Newars, uneducated villagers, or profit-driven urbanites. The purchase of land in a given locality is an attempt to fix one's status to that place and the 'inside' social space of people who live there. However, once residents have purchased land and moved into the new locality, they have no control over who will move in next. The social anxiety of a new community makes neighbors dependent on each other for everything from social status to running water.

The threat of not distinguishing Pleasant Housing and Maitri Nagar from the outside city or the uneducated village represents a threat to the value of the new locality. Although Pleasant Housing is supposed to be *jāt* and politically neutral and socially inclusive - unlike the city 'out there,' no lower castes have moved in and Newars criticize the parochial practices of their neighbors. Similarly, in Maitri Nagar, too, residents expect neighbors to be 'social' (not unhelpful local Newars) and 'educated' (not a caste-obsessed villager), and yet many do not donate land for the public good and *jāt* remains a key element of association membership.

The disjuncture between the rhetoric and practices of residents reflects the social politics of difference for Nepal's upper castes, particularly in the wake of Maoist calls for federalized states based on ethnicity and language. Bāhun-Chhetri are found in all districts of Nepal, but are 'indigenous' to none of them, placing them at a perceived disadvantage in the structural reformation of the country. It is no surprise that the far majority of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing are vehemently opposed to plans for ethnic-based federalism.[98] This makes sense if we understand the social politics of the two localities according to nostalgia for Panchayat-era ideology. As I explain further in chapter 7, the King-led Panchayat government, 1968-1990, defined the country as socially unified under the banner of Nepali nation without differences (Burghart 1996; Bajracharya 2008). Statements such as, 'there are only two *jāt*: men and women' echo the spirit of Panchayat nationalism. However, as anthropologists, Janajāti and Dalit activists and scholars have long pointed out, the unified Nepali nation of the Panchayat era was

[98] Interestingly, even among Maoist supporters in both localities there is a clear discomfort with the idea of ethnic based federalism.

defined according to the symbols and values of Bāhun-Chhetri society: a Hindu Thakuri (within Chhetri *jāt*) King, Nepali-language, and Hindu religion.

Chapter 7. Searching for the State in the Urban Periphery: The Local Politics of Public and Private Infrastructure

In 2002, amidst a state declared Emergency in response to the Maoist insurgency, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba cancelled elections for local government: municipalities, Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs). For the last eleven years, local government has been run by government appointed representatives often placed in towns and villages to where they have never been. In Kathmandu specifically, local government is recognized as dominated by political parties and bureaucrats unresponsive to citizen needs. In the case study of Pleasant Housing and Maitri Nagar, the failure of the state is reflected in the rhetoric of resistance to political parties and factions. The ideal of being 'social' in the previous chapter is echoed here in the ideal of being 'non-political,' or what I call 'Panchayat nostalgia' – a glorification of the one-party rule of the King in which political parties were banned as 'alien' to 'Nepali democracy.'

In resistance to political parties or state agencies, residents turn to other sources for infrastructural support. For Pleasant Housing residents, the weak or absent state is compensated by the private company, Pleasant Housing, which constructs the housing colony and provides an infrastructure of lighting, water, roads, security, marketplace, and leisure facilities for residents. Maitri Nagar organizes for the same facilities through local organizations run by residents, commonly known as *ṭol sudhār samitī* (TSS). In this chapter, I chart how residents of both localities react to infrastructural problems. In Pleasant Housing, problems are framed as conflicts against Pleasant Housing, the Company; while in Maitri Nagar problems are often framed through differences of party affiliation. These conflicts are resolved through the methods of 'counter-democracy' led

by local *ṭhūlo mānchhe* (‘big men’), or ‘urban specialists,’ who model their methods on the legacy of Nepal’s nationalist politics prior to multiparty democracy in 1991.

I. The end of Civil Society?

The relationship between citizen and state is often discussed through the prism of civil society, which refers to the associational activity of private citizens collectively organizing as a counter-force against the state. According to the liberal model, civil society serves to express and impose societal norms upon the state. One major critique of civil society has come from post-colonial studies, which has illustrated how civil society is often limited to exclusive elite sectors of society with access to institutions based on “western” values of modern associational life, such as equality, autonomy, and contract. For instance, Chatterjee remarks that civil society in India is really “bourgeois society” (2004: 38). Tamang (2002: 324-329), similarly, identifies Nepal’s civil society, or *nagarik sāmāj*, as limited to English-speaking members of certain castes (Bāhun-Chhetri and upper caste Newars) who have connections in Kathmandu. In Nepal’s specific case, elite associations serve not as “handmaiden to the state” as Gramsci warned of civil society, but in response to a structurally weak state, elite civil society serves as handmaidens to international aid and development agencies (Tamang 2002: 315).

Rather than civil society, scholars have suggested two alternative categories for considering the relationship between citizens and the post-colonial state. Following the global cities thesis (see Sassen 1991) in which the increasing global flow of information, commodities, and people has allowed elites to gain separation from the rules and regulations of the state, Holston and Appadurai (1999) identify how urban elites have forged a form of citizenship beyond the nation-state, what we might call ‘privatized

society.' It stems from attempts to make citizenship more exclusive through the privatization or dismantling of public services. In other words, privatization of housing allows upper classes to remove themselves from the governance of public (often elected) bodies to private (unelected) ones. Holston and Appadurai (1999: 5) exemplify this reaction in the practices and policies of Homeowner's Associations, which provide private services and resources to residents who pay for membership. A more fitting example appears in the development of 'fortified enclaves,' what Caldeira (1999: 87) defines as physically isolated, guarded and enclosed private property that cater to socially homogeneous (often upper class) populations.

The residents of Pleasant Housing, in many ways, fit the mold of a privatized society. First, like Caldeira's fortified enclaves, the private housing colony is separated from other neighborhoods by an eight feet tall wall, security guards, and a private source of water. Second, the residents have, for the most part, gained their capital through transnational sources of income (discussed previously as 'foreign jobs' in chapter 4), such as INGOs, foreign embassies, tourism, and exports, and social prestige, such as foreign universities and associations.

At the other end of the spectrum, for those with less or unequal access to public institutions and the substantive benefits of citizenship, there emerges a class of subaltern populations excluded from many of the rights and access claims to the state. As an alternative to civil society, Chatterjee (2004) proposes the label of 'political society' to refer to marginal population groups targeted by government policy. They access the state only through the "bending or stretching of rules, because existing procedures have historically worked to exclude or marginalize them" (2004: 66). Their actions, while

often based in illegal activities, require ‘outside groups’ or mediators to negotiate between ‘those who govern’ and those who are governed.

Holston’s (2008) example of ‘insurgent citizenship’ in the self-built, or ‘autoconstructed,’ neighborhoods of Brazil’s urban peripheries nicely exemplifies Chatterjee’s political society in a case of urban development. Through a historical process of spatial segregation, Brazil’s urban working classes were forced to relocate from the urban center to the periphery, into areas not included within the politically defined ‘city’. Without municipal services, “They had to construct their own houses, organize to gain basic services, and struggle to retain their lots in often-violent conflicts over landownership” (Holston 2008: 8). Thus, their ‘differentiated citizenship’ required insurgent political practices to demand recognition from the state, in the name of “full membership in the legal city” of municipal infrastructure and services (Holston 2008: 8-9).

Maitri Nagar might not qualify as an autoconstructed neighborhood since most residents own their land legally and reside within the legal jurisdiction of Kirtipur municipality. However, the ‘structural inability’ of the Nepali state to convert liberal ideals into practice produces a citizenry dependent on ‘illiberal democracy’ to meet its demands (Lakier 2007). In the particular case of Maitri Nagar, the inconsistency at which the local municipality provides services (roads, water, sewage, electricity, and security) leads residents to seek alternative sources, such as NGOs and political parties, to meet its infrastructural needs.

In general terms, it appears that Pleasant Housing and Maitri Nagar replicate the conditions of the critique of civil society. While the elite residents of Pleasant Housing

resemble the privatized and transnational connections of a privatized society, the residents of Maitri Nagar approximate Chatterjee's political society. Pleasant Housing demonstrates how privatization allows elites to avoid the weak state, whereas Maitri Nagar shows how residents use alternative non-state means to gain public services.[99] Thus, in the absence of a responsive state, residents of both localities look to alternative sources to fulfill public needs. While Pleasant Housing looks to the private resources of the Company, Maitri Nagar, primarily, looks to the party. At the same rate, my observation of conflicts over infrastructure in both localites leads me to understand them according to a similar process that is neither elite nor subaltern. I argue that their political tactics borrow from the counter-democratic and 'big-man' practices that were established in the one-party Panchayat era.

II. A Brief History of Local Governance in Post-Insurgency Nepal

The story of Nepali democracy is a tale full of fluctuation and upheaval, in which the democratic state has yet to be established as a stable institution (Hachhethu 2002, Hutt 2004, Lawoti 2005, Upadhya 2002). After 23 years of one-party royal rule, known as the Panchayat Raj (1968-1991), King Birendra conceded to multi-party government in 1991. Nepali Congress gained the most seats in the election of 1991, and was able to run several governments until the Nepal Communist Party – United Marxist-Leninists won the most seats in the 1994 election and ran a government for nine months. After the failure of several minority governments in the late 90s, the Nepali Congress returned to

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99 Interestingly, Shah (2002) argues that the state's weakness is a result of public sphere domination by parties and de-politicization efforts of NGOs. He writes, "If the political parties and their networks have disabled the community impulse by their petty politicization of life, the NGOization of society and intellect has circumvented and further emasculated the state rather than reform it" (2002: 156).

power after winning a majority of seats in the 1999 election. From these three elections over eight years, Nepal had 11 Prime Ministers.

The 2000s would prove to be even less stable. While the Maoist insurgency officially started in 1996, it would not become a serious threat to the government until 2001 when the Prime Minister, Girija Prasad Koirala called the military to fight against the insurgents. One year later, King Gyanendra (the brother of Birendra, who was murdered in the 2001 royal massacre) suspended government in 2002 and took complete control in 2004. The insurgency escalated into a civil war that would kill over 13,000 people and displaced hundreds of thousands. The violence and de-stabilization of the war left entire villages without any state presence, and led, as noted earlier, to the suspension of local elections.

2006, like 1991, marked another major transformation in Nepali politics. After months of protests against the King's rule, Gyanendra relinquished power, a move that led to a peace agreement between the Maoist insurgents and the political parties. In 2008, the country elected a Constituent Assembly (CA), a body of representatives charged with writing a new constitution. Although the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) won the most seats in this election, their lack of a majority required them to form governments with NCP (UML) and smaller regional parties based in the Tarai. While the CA successfully converted Nepal from a Hindu Kingdom into a secular Republic in its first day, it would prove unable to draft a constitution. In four years of existence, the CA was led by four Prime Ministers (two Maoist and two UML) and failed to draft a new constitution. As of writing in February 2013, the acting Prime Minister, Babu Ram Bhattarai, has called for elections in the fall of 2013, but few expect him to actually hold them.

Turning to the Local

In contrast to the unstable state, local government is understood to be responsive to citizens' needs – at least that was the intention of the Local Self-Governance Act of 2055 (1999). As stated in the first sentence of the legislation, "Having local bodies oriented towards establishing the civil society based on democratic process, transparent practice, public accountability, and people's participation, in carrying out functions devolved on them."

The particular structure of local government is split into three pyramid structures. At the top are the 75 District Development Committees (DDCs) spread across the country. Below the district level are Municipalities or Village Development Committees (VDCs), and within the Municipalities and VDCs are the ward development committees (*ṭol sudhār samitī* or TSS). A Municipality is determined by population size, income, and facilities such that a settlement of more than 20,000 residents with a tax income of at least 5 million NRs, and electricity, roads, drinking water, and communication facilities. Large settlements in the "hills and mountains" need 10,000 inhabitants and at least half million NRs tax income. All other settlements fall under the jurisdiction of VDCs. In Kathmandu Valley, there are five municipalities (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Thimi, Bhaktapur, and Kirtipur) and 96 VDCs. Pleasant Housing belongs to the VDC of Tinthana, Maitri Nagar is in Ward 2 of Kirtipur Municipality.

Within each municipality or VDC are a minimum of nine wards, each of which consists of elected committees (TSS) consisting of a chairman and four ward members, one of whom must be a woman, who serve for a five-year term. The duties of the TSS are summarized as follows (see appendix A for a complete list): to assist municipality in

protecting and "raising the level of consciousness" of the population and preserving the ward's built and natural environment, and selling of foodgrains; maintain the ward's thoroughfares, water sources, sanitation; manage health centers, schools and libraries, wildlife, electricity, funds; take care of "helpless or unclaimed" ill or deceased persons; arrange vaccinations for children; help "backward ethnic communities, helpless, disabled and heirless persons within the Ward"; and finally, "To carry out such other functions as directed and ordered by the concerned Municipality."

Maitri Nagar's ṭol sudhār samitī

Maitri Nagar's TSS was established in 2055 B.S. (1998-1999) when the area was home to just 35 houses. According to the current *adhyakshya*,[100] Bal Gautam, the early inhabitants were inspired by the idea of the guṭhī, common in Newar society as a form of organization that brings people according to lineage, caste, and territorial ties into bonds of solidarity and cooperation. Initially, the TSS established four objectives. The first was to improve the locality's infrastructure, such as access to drinking water, sewage lines, electricity, and roads. The second was to build a 'society building' for weekly committee meetings and regular social events during holidays. Third, the committee wanted to provide security for the locality by hiring police officers to patrol the area. Finally, the committee planned to build a temple.

Ten years later, the committee has fulfilled many of these objectives. It has, with the help of the Kirtipur municipality, built roads, initially three feet-wide walking paths and then wider gravel and paved roads that connect Maitri Nagar to the roads of neighboring Amrit Nagar and Kirtipur. Similarly, the committee has successfully lobbied

[100] Although *adhyaksha* is often translated as 'president' or 'chairman', due to the lack of a direct translation, I leave this term untranslated in the text.

the municipality to bring electricity power-lines to the area. In 2007, they were able to fund a temporary structure that served as a police station and paid for 5 officers to work the area. By 2009, they moved the police into a more permanent location in a rented house. Also, in 2007, inaugurated on the night of Shiva Ratri,[101] the committee constructed Ishaneswor Shiv Mandir at the northern end of the locality, and hired a priest to facilitate daily pujās ('worship') and organize communal worship during festivals. Although devoted to Shiva, in the following year the temple became a complex of sorts by adding a 'Buddhist garden' and shrines to Hindu gods with dedications to those who have contributed money to the temple.

Amongst these successes, the committee has failed to establish a consistent source of drinking water for the locality and has yet to build a meeting place for the committee or social events. If anything, as the demand for water has grown with more people moving into the area, access to drinking water has only declined. At the time of research, during the dry season, most houses were receiving just two hours of water per week. As an alternative, some residents had resorted to harvesting rain-water while others had grouped together to order 'Water Tanks' to deliver drinking water on a monthly basis. By the end of my research in October 2009, Maitri Nagar was paving many of its roads and setting up sewage lines for houses. However, how this would be paid for and where the lines would go was a topic of dispute that I will address later in this chapter.

Pleasant Housing's Residents Welfare Society

While Pleasant Housing falls within the Ward 6, 7, and 8 of the Tinthana VDC, as a private residential facility, its residents do not participate in any of these ward

[101] Shiva Ratri literally means 'the night of Shiva' and is an annual festival celebrating Shiva's return from the Himalaya.

committees. Rather, Pleasant Housing, along with Kathmandu's other housing colonies, sees its governance separate as dictated by the Ownership of Joint Housing Act of 2054 B.S. (1997) (and amended in 2066 B.S./2009). In it, just two sentences are devoted to the question of governance and the relationship between the company, or "developer," and the residents.

> If the developer sells or disposes of all apartment owned by him or her or if all apartment owners of any joint housing building express consent in writing to operate the joint housing building on their own and make a submission to the developer to that effect or if, the developer body corporate, being liquidated, or the developer individual, being insolvent, is not able to carry out protection, care, repair, maintenance and sanitation of the joint housing building and common areas and facilities, the apartment owners shall form a management committee from amongst themselves for the protection, care, repair, maintenance and sanitation of the joint housing building and common areas and facilities, and the committee itself shall determine the rules of procedures of its meetings. The developer or committee has the power to make or enforce "operational procedures" related to the protection, care, repair and maintenance of the joint housing building, "matters to be abided by the owners", terms of any hired employees of the joint housing building, and "other matters" necessary for the operation of the joint housing building.

In this statement, we have two reasons for the residents to form a management committee. The first is necessary when "the developer sells or disposes" of all the units, what residents call the eventual 'hand-over' of colony control from the Company to the residents. Once the company finishes construction and sells its units, residents will no longer have a legal right to seek assistance from the Company. It will be at this point that the residents will have to rely on each other as a cooperative. The second reason entails a transfer due to the Company's negligence: "…if, the developer … is not able to carry out protection, care, repair, maintenance and sanitation." The RWS of Pleasant Housing was established in 2063 B.S. (2006/2007), when the number of houses in the colony numbered in the forties, with the objective of preparing for the eventual 'hand-over'. However, by the time of my research, 2008-2009, the RWS' purpose had evolved in response to the residents' perception of the Company's mismanagement.

The Society consists of eleven members chosen in elections conducted every two years where each house has one vote. In addition to discussing colony problems and planning social events, the Society raises funds. Each resident is required to pay 1000 Rs ($12.50) annual membership fee, and 100 Rs ($1.25) per month or 150 Rs ($1.88) per month if using the colony's preferred cable provider. The reason for funds collection is two-fold: to pay the security guards and other workers, and to establish a savings fund for future problems after the Company leaves. After the Company transfers control, the RWS will have increase its fees substantially. Other comparable post-transfer colonies demand a 50,000 Rs one time fee and 1,000 Rs per month fee.

III. Democracy without Politics

Maitri Nagar TSS

For many residents of Maitri Nagar, the work of the TSS can be separated into two periods: before and after the CA election of 2008. When discussing the TSS, residents refer to activity before and after the national Constituent Assembly (CA) election of 2008. Prior to the election, residents reflect nostalgically about a time in which no one knew any one else's party affiliation and the TSS completed their work. According to one early resident of Maitri Nagar, the TSS was extremely efficient prior to 2008 – it built a road, brought the telephone line, electricity line, and generally improved conditions. But, after the CA election, he states, "everyone knew the party of others, and splintering crept in because of political talk." Now, the TSS members are known by their political affiliation instead of their service to the locality. The president, Mr. Gautam, belongs to Nepali Congress (NC), while the Secretary, Sam Pandit, is a Maoist. Now their "*kurā milena*," an expression literally meaning that their 'talk does not match.' One

particularly irate resident points to an example of how the Kirtipur Municipality allotted 3.2 million NRs to the TSS to build a road connecting Kalanki to Kirtipur via Maitri Nagar. However, he continues to explain that since the president is a NC-person, he is opposed to everything, and that is why the road was never built. Unsurprisingly, this speaker identifies as Maoist. From the NC supporters, it was common to hear another story. Roads were paved, they say, but just for those who support the Maoists. For these reasons, many see *daliya kurā* ('party talk') as divisive to local progress. As one resident put it, "We are all Hindu. We cannot be divided by issues of the ego, such as political party."

The members of the TSS tell a different story. Although they agree that political talk should not enter into *ṭol bikāsko kām* ('ward development work'), they attribute a lack of progress to a different source. They blame the rapid growth of Maitri Nagar. With so many new people, the *adhyaksha* tells me, "it's harder to please everyone. Not like when we knew everyone." Put simply, another member says, "too many people, too many interests." While the TSS remains the main organization recognized by the municipality, most new residents have not become involved in it preferring instead to start their own, more local, committees. A situation arises in which there is considerable overlap of the different groups and no fixed geographic boundary of jurisdiction between them. Consequently, the organizations become organized more along social lines than geographic.

As discussed in chapter 6, the two *guthī*s of southeastern Maitri Nagar are divided by *jāt*. Bijay is a member of both *guthī*s, which, he thinks, gives him a unique perspective to criticize both. He states, "Essentially they are the same. They request the same

membership fee (500 NRs per month) and have yet to help anyone in the area." He describes both *guthī*s as typical Nepali organizations in that "*kurā mātra, kām chhaina*" ('lots of talk, no work'). For the 'upper *guthī*,' speakers start sentences with "*Doctor gareko chhu*" ('I have done a doctorate') and rarely listen to each other. He quips, "They say "*hunchha hunchha*" ('okay okay') to one person's request and then say that we should do the complete opposite." The *jāt* difference simply means that the upper *guthī* is full of '*pakka Bāhun*' ('real Brahmans') by which he means they think they feel superior to others and will not mingle with other castes. Meanwhile, he accuses the 'lower *guthi*' of not completing any work. He states, "They brag about how much whiskey they can drink, but for work, they say, 'we will decide next week'."

The *adhyaksha* of the upper guthi, Gopal, came to Kathmandu from Arghakanchi in the late 1970s to earn a law degree. He claims to be inspired by the ideal of the Newar *guthī*, which he translates into meaning the sacrifice of one's own property and time for the purpose of social service. He goes on to list his social commitments since coming to Kathmandu – a member of the Nepal Inter-Corporation Employees Union (NC-affiliated); 'drafting member' of 2040 BS (1984) NC constitution; adviser to Nepal Telecommunications (Bagmati Region); first president of Janaseva Club, 2037 BS (1981); member of the Nepal Student Union, Arghakanchi district. He affirms, "On our own, we are nothing. We must commit to serving others." In response to Gopal's claims, Bijay jokes "*nayā jogile dherai kurani lagāuchha*," which literally means that 'a new Jogi puts on a lot of ash.' Bijay summarizes this proverb as fitting for all social organizations in Nepal, "At the start, they do lots of work, but soon stop, usually because of in-fighting."

When the lower *guthī* called a meeting to name itself, members saw each proposed name as a coded reference to parties. The first name suggested was "Jana Nagar" (People's Area), but that was quickly dismissed as 'Maoist.' Jana, after all, reminded everyone of the Maoist's military wing, the Jana Sena ('People's Army'). In a similar fashion, translations of the English word, 'democracy' carry significant baggage. Whereas the Panchayat era use of '*prajatantra*' ('rule by subjects') was rejected in the 2006 revolt as 'royalist,' now NC supporters say '*loktantra*' ('rule by the people') while Maoist supporters say '*ganatantra*' ('rule by majority'). Similarly, whereas *sangha* is considered reactionary, traditional and associated with NC, *sãstha* is considered leftist and Maoist. Manjushri Nagar was then suggested, but disliked by the Maoists in the meeting for having 'religious connotations'. Finally, they agreed on the name of Kirti Nagar, which means 'place of Victory' to honor the uprising of 2006.

Pleasant Housing RWS

Pointing to outside of the Colony, the RWS vice *adhyaksha* asserts, "Here we practice what *you* [referring to me, the U.S. citizen interviewer] would call democracy. A more real democracy." Committee members all quickly point out that gender (four of the eleven members are women), *jāt*, religion, or perhaps most importantly, political party affiliation, are no barrier to joining the Society. They also emphasize the need to make Society decisions and actions transparent. For instance, all meetings are recorded and when decisions are made, a letter is sent to each resident to be signed. Beyond the Society-only meetings, members stress the need for participation from each colony house. As one former president argued during a Society election, '*hāmi sabai adhyaksha*

chhãu' ('we are all *adhyaksha*') and in this participation, '*sabai samān hunu parchha*' ('all must be equal').

The desire for an equal and representative self-governance of the colony offers an interesting twist on the typical critique of fortified enclaves. Davis (1990) and Caldeira (1999) have each argued that the exclusion and insularity of gated communities diminish public sphere values and opportunities for democratic exchange of ideas. While retreating from the public sphere of the greater city, the Residents' Welfare Society sees itself as producing the values of an inclusive and equal public sphere for the first time in Nepal albeit within their exclusive Colony. Residents justify their segregation as an opportunity to challenge the faults of 'old-style Kathmandu politics.'[102] When residents refer to *rājnīti* ('politics'), they allude to the formal politics of Nepali political parties, parliament, and elections, which connote division and corruption. The hope of Nepal's "democratic spring" in 1991 has quickly faded into cynicism regarding democracy, particularly for Kathmandu elites.

Rather than 'politics,' residents reference 'democracy' and 'the nation' to connote unity, service, and equality of the Society. Bikram, a lawyer, explains that 'Politics is not appropriate inside the colony. We don't go looking for political things. We are all Nepali'. Politics is equated with other social categories that have splintered Nepali society, such as caste, ethnicity, religion and language.

This view of 'politics' echoes the Panchayat-era notion of King Mahendra's self-defined 'Nepali democracy' in which political parties (*dal*) were banned for being "alien" and "untranslatable" in Nepali society (Burghart 1996: 256-258). Mahendra defined

[102] I borrow this phrase from a Martin Chautari policy brief (2009) to reference the division, corruption, patronage and exclusionary practices for which Kathmandu's national politics is known.

political parties, along with organizations based on *jāt*, ethnicity, religion, or language, as divisive to the unity of the nation.[103] Burghart (1996) reveals how the King's translation of western democracy was based on the theological ideals of Vaishnavite Hinduism in which the state is envisioned as Vishnu and the citizens are expected to worship and selflessly serve it as a deity. This model defined all citizens as the same (*samān*) according to the ideals of *nepālipān* ('nepali-ness'), which really meant "assimilation to the dominant *Parbatiyā* culture" that consisted of (1) Hindu religion; (2) Nepali language, and (3) Monarchy (Hoftun et al., 1999:311). O'Neill (1994) adds a fourth category of '*bikās*' (development), an ideology perpetuated by international aid schemes, but absorbed by the Nepali government in the name of social service.

Western ideal	Vaishnavite ideal	Civic Nepaliness
Civic duty (nationalism)	Service to deity	National service through a. nation-building b. nation-construction c. nation-development
Equality	Samaan (sameness)	Ek ra samaan (one and the same)
State	Vishnu	Hindu state
Political parties	Reject self-interested acts	Ban on "alien" political parties, ethnic organizations

The condemnation of *daliya kurā* in Maitri Nagar and *rājnīti* in Pleasant Housing reflects what I call Panchayat nostalgia. Although residents rarely express support for royal rule, they refer to the values of the Panchayat (social service and harmony over party factionalism and ethnic-linguistic diversity) as the ideal for local political organization. As already discussed, Pleasant Housing is more successful at avoiding the influence of political parties than Maitri Nagar. Besides the one vocal Maoist supporter,

[103] The translation of 'political party' is *dal*, which literally denotes 'faction'.

Uday (referenced in chapter 6 and later in this chapter), I never learned the party affiliation of residents. In Maitri Nagar, one's party membership was one of the first things I learned. Regardless of these distinctions, both localities resolve conflicts in similar fashions more reflective of local allegiances and identities than party affiliation.

IV. All Politics is Local

Maitri Nagar's Sewage Line Dispute

The division between NC and Maoist supporters in Maitri Nagar spilled over into a dispute regarding the building of a sewage line through the center of the locality. Immediately in front of the area's main tea-shop exists a large parcel of land for 16 plots of land. The land is owned by Shah, one of the *dalāl*s discussed in chapter 3. Shah had promised sewage line to potential buyers, but he had yet to build it. Now that new buyers were starting to build houses, they demanded that he follow through and build the line. On a day in August, he had started the digging for the line from the road (separating the plots and the tea-stall) into the river, but a large group of area residents forced the workers to stop. They insisted that the line be connected to the road and enter into the sewage line of Amrit Nagar, the ward to the northeast of Maitri Nagar. This dispute quickly turned into a Nepali Congress vs. Maoist conflict. Since Shah was a well-known NC member, numerous NC supporters, including the TSS *adhyaksha* quickly came to his support to continue building the line as planned; that is, into the river. The Maoists, mostly consisting of workers at the local garment factory, insisted that he pay for the sewage line to connect with the road, which meant he needed to donate three feet of his land adjacent to the road. The Maoist supporters took the case to the Municipality, which unsurprisingly, sided with their agenda to avoid polluting the river. The Municipality was

mostly run by officials appointed by the Maoist-led government. Furthermore, as many would like to remind me, Kirtipur was Prachanda's (the *nom de guerre* of Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Maoist leader) constituency.

Figure 16. Sewage Line Construction

The few non-partisan observers of the situation were quick to point out a certain irony. This dispute had effectively inverted the national politics of the last ten years. On the side of legality was the Maoists, who spent the last decade as insurgents destroying infrastructure all over the country, while the NC, long-time representatives of the government, were on the side of illegality. More than this ironic twist, I believe this case reiterates the truism that all politics is local. This case was less about legality and more about individual personalities.

In chapter three, I introduced Hansen and Verkaaik's (2009: 17) idea of the 'urban specialist' – the hustlers, local big men, gangsters, and brokers who "connect the administrative, the political, the illegal, and the sphere of production and trade" – to help illustrate the local role of the *dalāl*. In this case, the equivalent would be that of *ṭhūlo mānchhe* ('big man') who carries significant social prestige in resolving local matters. When the lines of responsibility go fuzzy in between the promises of local government, locality organizations, and residents' demands, residents turn to *ṭhūlo mānchhe* such as Shah to solve it. It was Shah's connections as a local landowner and land dealer, and not his NC affiliation, that allowed him to resolve the conflict. In the end, Shah was able to negotiate a deal with his contacts in the Municipality to give part of their allotted 1.2 million NRs (apx. $16,000) budget for area sewage management in exchange for his payment of several fees on his properties. This deal allowed the sewage line to be publicly funded and connected to the neighboring locality's pre-existing line.

Pleasant Housing Water Crisis and Election

While Maitri Nagar's dispute was resolved mostly by the negotiations of one man with the Municipality, it would be a small group of respected residents in Pleasant Housing that would represent the residents' complaints against the Company. In January 2009, due to a sudden increase in power outages, the colony experienced a severe water shortage. One of the main reasons for moving to the colony, water, was suddenly threatened. After a few days of irate residents demanding to speak with the company's CEO and the RWS's *adhyaksha*, Surendra, the RWS called a general meeting. The *adhyaksha* introduced the meeting by stressing two ideas: that the problem could and should be solved by colony residents and that each resident must participate in the

problem-solving process. Towards the first point, the *adhyaksha*, Surendra, devoted the first part of the meeting to having resident 'experts' to speak. While one person suggested raising the price structure to be closer to that of another colony, another stressed the need to have the company provide a comprehensive report of the colony's physical infrastructure to the residents prior to hand-over. Surendra then devoted the second half of the meeting to demanding greater participation of residents in communication with the company and attendance at meetings. He condemned the residents who spread gossip and rumors instead of speaking up at the meeting. He then went around the room and demanded that each attendee share his/her opinion. For him, the success of the RWS required '100% representation' – one voice from each house. The meeting concluded with a decision to form a sub-committee of resident engineers to fix the problem. Interestingly then, it was a small group of resident 'experts', and not the general meeting, or even the elected RWS, who decided to raise the cost of water from 40 to 80 Rs ($0.50 to $1.00) per thousand liters to fix the problem, a decision that was unpopular with many.

Two months after the 'water crisis', Surendra resigned only one year into his two-year term after allegations of corruption were leveled against him. The allegations stem from a gift that the company, Pleasant Housing, gave to Surendra during the peak of negotiations between the RWS and the Company. The Company invited Surendra to a party where they gifted him a microwave. According to the RWS Secretary, invitation was addressed to the 'RWS *adhyaksha*,' not to Surendra the private citizen, and thus he should have given the microwave to the RWS for communal events. Since he did not donate the gift, his act was considered to be an acceptance of a bribe (*ghus khaiyo*) to be quiet. When the RWS Secretary confronted Surendra about the letter during a Society

meeting, the latter claimed there was no such letter. He resigned one week later, which happened to be a few days before Nepal's Maoist Prime Minister, Pushpa Kamal Dahal ('Prachanda') resigned after just nine-months in office. In the wake of these two resignations, many residents joked that Pleasant Housing politics was not different than Nepali politics, but in fact *just like* Nepali politics – the leaders are corrupt and never complete their terms.

After Surendra's resignation, the RWS decided to dissolve itself and hold an election to appoint a completely new 11-member committee. For many, this election represented an opportunity for the RWS to start over. One night before the election, all of the residents of the colony gathered in the Colony's parking lot to hear the two candidates for *adhyaksha* speak. The first candidate, Dipendra, spoke little about himself and instead asked everyone to be involved in the Society. The second candidate, Uday, meanwhile, devoted his speech to promoting himself as a capable leader. After listing his experience living in the colony and participating in the RWS, he defended himself against potential criticism. He admitted to not being very religious, not speaking great Nepali (he was born and raised in India), and most interestingly, since he is known as *the* Maoist in the colony, he asked the colony to know him as a *mānavbādi* ('humanist') rather than as a *māobādi* ('Maoist'). In a surprise conclusion, he finished his speech by suggesting that if the colony wanted, he would run for the secretary position in order to allow a third candidate, Narayan, to become *adhyaksha*. This suggestion was quickly condemned as 'coalition *rājnīti*' that would lead to division and harm in the colony.

The next morning, colony residents started to gather at 10 in the colony's meeting-house, but the meeting did not begin for another hour when a group of males,

fifteen to twenty men comprised of former RWS members and other well-known residents, entered the building. They admitted to the election committee that they had yet to establish a list of candidates and would need an additional thirty minutes. Soon thereafter, they returned with a list of *adhyaksha*, vice *adhyaksha*, secretary, and eight members. The out-going *adhyaksha* read each name, asked if there were any objections, and then proceeded to call up the new members, and give a certificate and *tika* blessing to him or her. Thus, after several weeks of speculation and campaigning, there was no election, the new *adhyaksha* and Society were appointed without a vote. Uday, who became Secretary, would later explain to me that this process of non-voting was essential to guarantee colony unity and the participation of women (two) and different castes (seven Bāhun, one Chhetri, one Newar, and two Janajāti) on the committee.

Despite the rhetoric of open elections, equal representation, and internal democracy, the RWS procedures were anything but. Much like Snellinger's (2007) description of student political organizations in Nepal, hierarchical organization and non-democratic consensus procedures reflect the main methods of decision-making. However, we need not read the non-democratic procedures as contrary to claims of openness and fairness. The selection of candidates by a few *ṭhūlo mānchhe* ('big men') and their uncontested election requires a rethinking of RWS' form of democracy. Stéphanie Tawa Lama-Rewal (2007: 55) describes a similar type of local governance in the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) of Delhi. She documents how RWAs are controlled by male elites, favour consensus and uncontested voting, and define themselves in opposition to electoral politics. Citing Pierre Rosanvallon's concept of counter-democracy, she argues that RWAs practices are not necessarily undemocratic, but rather

express a different kind of democracy that distrusts and contradicts the legitimacy of representative and electoral democracy. Similarly, the RWS' condemnation of electoral politics does not mean that they think politics is absent from Pleasant Housing. Rather, it is the politics and processes of ruling by *sahamati* ('consensus')[104] of a few that ensure the continuance of colony unity and participation in their conflicts against the Company.

VI. Epilogue: RWS vs. Pleasant Housing

On the morning of June 23, 2009, the RWS met to discuss possible actions against the Company for not fulfilling its promises to the colony. In particular, the disappointment with the Company revolved around the Company's decision to expand the Colony size beyond its originally planned size of 96 houses. By building 31 more houses, the Company postponed the construction of public spaces (department store, swimming pool, children's park). From this meeting, the RWS drafted a letter that asserted five demands:

1. That the Company completes all repair work on already inhabited houses. Most specifically, many houses had cracks in them and required a new plaster job. Additionally, the Company had yet to complete the boundary wall surrounding the Colony.
2. That the Company fixes the irregular flow of water to housing units, and not raise the price of water on residents.
3. That the Company provides each house with a building plan of the unit.
4. That the Company fulfills its promise of providing the Colony with an Intercom system.
5. Finally, and most importantly, that the Company starts building the Department store, swimming pool, and children's park.

[104] When discussing politically negotiated agreements, politicians tend to prefer the term, *sahamati*, an agreement by consensus, to the term, *samjhautā*, an agreement by compromise. In the consensus agreements of the RWS, the terms of agreement tend to be dictated by a few "strong men" leaders of the colony.

The RWS demanded that the Company respond to these demands by sending the CEO of Pleasant Savings, Ichha Raj Tamang, to answer to the RWS. In response, the Company did indeed schedule a meeting with the RWS for July 16th. However, instead of Mr. Tamang attending, he sent the 'In-Charge' representative, Mangal Sharad Joshi, to answer on behalf of the Company.

Feeling that Mr. Joshi did not adequately represent the Company nor answer the concerns of the RWS, the RWS again met two days later, on July 18th to create a new strategy. The RWS proposed to write another letter to Tamang providing him ten days to fulfill the Company's promises or else the colony will put all houses on sale at market rate (1.35 crore) and hold a news conference. While preparing this letter, the RWS went about researching other legal complaints against the Company. They ascertained that Pleasant Housing, Phase-2 has insufficiently wide entrances (10m instead of 12m), insufficient distance between the wall and river (5m instead of 10m), and an insufficient amount of land allotted for public space (15% instead of 30%).

On Friday, August 28th, the RWS issued a letter to Pleasant Housing in which it repeated its previous demands along with threats of legal case against the Company regarding the researched violations of by-laws. It finished the letter by informing the Company that it had three days to commence construction on the swimming pool and department store or else all houses in the Colony would go on sale.

Unsurprisingly, the RWS did not hear back from the Company within the given three days. On the morning of the 31st, the RWS raised two banners announcing the sale

Figure 17. Banner announcing 'Houses on sale! Houses on Sale!!'

of all the houses within the colony – one at the main entrance and one near the main cross-roads of the Colony. This was meant to be a publicity stunt to embarrass the company and notify potential buyers of the Company's mismanagement.

That evening, I met with the *adhyaksha*, Vice *adhyaksha*, and Secretary to discuss possible further actions. They called it day one of the *Basinda Andolan* ('Residents Uprising'). They considered destroying houses under construction, but worried about the legal consequences. "Should we take up arms?" the Secretary asked. "No! This isn't student politics" the *adhyaksha* fired back. They discussed locking-up the main office of Pleasant Housing (to become Community Building after hand-over), but worried that the Company would merely destroy the lock. Next, they deliberated notifying five major

newspapers and putting out an advertisement (250 Rupees each for 2 days). “But, would the media come or care?” they worried. Writing another letter to the Company seemed redundant and ineffective. Should they recruit an “elder,” a resident, who is a former high-ranking government employee and renowned professor of physics, to present the case against the Company? Finally, they also considered notification of the police. But, like the media, would the police care?

The greater concern was, “What might the Company do in response? They could turn off water, send police against us, or even lock the main gate and take away security guards. If they do that, we could hire own security,” started estimating the Secretary, but the Vice *adhyaksha* suggested that all of these acts might turn residents against the effort. Stating, “You can see it in their faces, many are not interested. They tell us, ‘don’t lose your temper’.” Worse than a lack of enthusiasm would be for the revolt to push some residents to sell their houses and leave the Colony completely.

As I walked home, I ran into one such skeptical resident, a Biology professor at Kathmandu University. He criticized the RWS for lacking professionalism and expertise. In general, he worried that the Colony will suffer after the hand-over because of this lack of expertise: “People here have money, but not know-how. For example, there are no water experts here.” Additionally, he added that “a place like the Colony will never be able to reach a consensus because the people consist of too many cultural and regional backgrounds. “How can you get everyone to agree?”

While the RWS plotted its next move, the Company did respond – four days later on September 4th (see appendix A for a translation of this text) by delivering a packet to each house in the colony consisting of a letter and copies of previous agreements between

the RWS and Company. Interestingly, the Company completely disregarded the legal complaints of the August 28th letter, while making seven points in response to the complaints of the June 23rd letter. Additionally, instead of answering particular complaints, it instead referred to a meeting between the Company and RWS from two and a half years earlier, what they call the United Problem Solving Meeting of 2063, Poush 1 (December 16, 2006).[105] In fact, they attached a copy of this meeting's agreements signed by the RWS at the time.

Several months after I left Pleasant Housing in January of 2010, the RWS filed a lawsuit against Pleasant Housing in the Nepali court system. More than three years later, the courts have yet to decide the case. Interestingly, this might be the exact outcome that the RWS desired. As long as the case is pending, the Company is legally obliged to maintain control and oversight of the housing colony. Although the Company has completed construction of all houses and all shared facilities, it remains attached to the residents of Pleasant Housing who, so far, are content to have an outside force still responsible for their welfare.

[105] In the letter, the Company refers to this date as December 16, 2006.

Epilogue

Soon after I left Kathmandu in October of 2009, Kathmandu's booming real estate industry came very close to crashing. Due to the rapid escalation of land prices, the government's financial regulators became nervous about an American-like housing crisis occurring in Nepal. They worried that banks had become too dependent on loans in the housing-land sector. In an attempt to stop the crash before it happened, in 2010, the interim UML (United Marxist-Leninist) led government implemented several regulatory measures. First, they required banks to reduce their loan exposure in the housing-land market to 40%, and to 35% by 2012. Second, they raised interest rates by several points. Third, they required buyers to disclose their income source on sales over 3 million NRs (apx. $40,000). Finally, they required realtors and brokers to become registered. Ironically, these attempts to postpone the bubble's burst led to a burst of sorts. In the wake of the new regulations, land transactions declined, and subsequently so did land prices. Although land prices remained somewhat stable in the city center, they dropped 20-30% in the city's outskirts. The drop has created stagnation in the real estate market at pains to continue sales and profits. In the following year, the government's land-tax earnings dropped from 6 billion to 3.21 billion NRs, a loss of revenue, which motivated the government to reverse a number of its earlier regulations. The government also raised the maximum housing-land loan from 6 million NRs (apx. $80,000) to 8 million NRs (apx. $112,000); rescinded the ceiling on land ownership for housing companies; and, erased a law prohibiting non-Nepali citizens from buying apartment units.

Despite the downturn in land prices, construction continues unabated in the urban periphery. Since I left, Maitri Nagar has added approximately one hundred houses.

Pleasant Housing has finished construction at Phase II, and added a Phase III in and Phase IV both in southern Patan. But, the real growth in the real estate industry has emerged in the construction of high-rise apartments. In less than five years, private housing companies have constructed 83 apartment complexes (and 33 housing colonies), and many more have received permission to build. Due to the government's new law allowing non-citizens to purchase apartments, real estate companies have held Expos in Sydney and New York to attract non-Resident-Nepalis (NRNs) to invest in Kathmandu apartments.

Amidst the boom in apartment and colony construction, in the summer of 2012, the Maoist-led interim government implemented a project to widen 187 kilometers of roads in the Valley and demolish any walls, sheds, and houses that encroach within 3-5 meters of the new road. To date, government bulldozers have demolished over 100 houses and partially demolished 425 houses, including the wall at the Five-Star Everest Hotel. While protests have emerged against the government demolition on behalf of poorly compensated house-owners, many of the city's public voices have applauded the efforts of the government to relieve the immense traffic congestion of the city. Advocates point out that Maoist Prime Minister Babu Ram Bhattarai's resolve to enforce the demolitions is actually in compliance with a 1980 law that 32 years of previous leaders were not tenacious enough to implement.

While the government has received some praise for its economic and urban development policy, it has collapsed under conflicts of a social nature. As I explained in chapter 7, four years after being elected to write a new constitution, the Constituent Assembly was dissolved on May 27, 2012. Many analysts attribute this failure to the

conflict over ethnic federalism. The Maoists refused to budge from their key demand that federal states be created according to ethnic and linguistic boundaries. For instance, the establishment of Newa Bagmati (geographically including all of Kathmandu Valley plus the Newar-dominant cities of Banepa and Dhulikhel) would ensure that Newar ethnics constitute at least 51% of the district's representatives in government. While Nepali Congress and other centrist or conservative parties remain adamantly opposed to districting the country according to communal differences, the main center party of United Marxist-Leninists (UML) is divided on the topic.

I raise the recent developments in economic, urban and social policy as a way of thinking through the main points of this dissertation. The fact that the ruling coalitions of communist parties were able to regulate the real estate market and physically remake the city, but unable to implement ethnic federalism is very telling of the politics of space in contemporary Kathmandu. Effectively, the policies of the leftist interim governments have divided the main groups – the Kirtipur Jyāpus of part I, and the settler-residents of parts II and III - of this dissertation in two. While Kirtipur Jyāpus protest against the urban planning of a central government, they support calls for Newar political autonomy. Conversely, the the predominantly upper caste residents of Maitri Nagar and upper class residents of Pleasant Housing tend to support the state's efforts to regulate the economy and urban planning, they oppose efforts to restructure the country according to ethnic or linguistic differences.

From the perspective of Kirtipur Jyāpu farmers, the state represents the threat of land alienation, whether through the feudalist legacy of the Rana state or the creation of the national university on their land by the Panchayat government in the 1960s. While

largely quiet on housing demolition in the city center, local farmers have led the so-far successful protests against the making of an Outer Ring Road, which was proposed in the early 2000s to absorb the new peripheral growth into a transportation network that encircles the entire valley. In the particular case of Kirtipur, local Jyāpu were able to overturn state plans to relocate squatter communities to their municipality in the mid-2000s.

The protests against the power of the central government, ironically, transfer to support of Maoist policies on the issue of ethnic federalism. As I argued in part I, the ethnic tone of Jyāpu solidarity should be read within a history of land in which Jyāpus have tended to be exploited by landlord representatives of the state and urban merchants. Considering this history, I argue that the physical expansion of the city is less informed by the spatial practices of certain rural or non-Newar groups and more guided by the historical structures of land. Rather than communal identity, it is one's structural relationship to land that dictates the current social politics of the urban periphery. Thus, much like the 19th Century distinction between noble and merchant landlords and tenant farmers, the current divide pits elite housing colony residents and recent landowners in Maitri Nagar who favor state intervention on one side with Kirtipur Jyāpu on the other side suspicious of the state's motivations.

Although Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing residents are divided by a wide gap of social and material capital, they constitute a similar position as settlers of the urban periphery vis-à-vis the state in terms of economic, urban and social policy. Part two of the dissertation addressed the privileges of the residents of the urban periphery not in terms of this political positioning, but rather in terms of the more personal aspirations of

the householder, which reflects on their relative positions of privilege. Within a life of continuous migrations between temporary residences (*basāĩ*), the ownership of land and house in Kahtmandu symbolize the re-positioning of one's permanent *ghar* (chapter 4). The move to the periphery represents a certain status to gain separation from a cycle of relocation in between the bazaar towns and villages of the hinterland (for most Maitri Nagar residents) or the unreliable services and mixed neighborhoods of the city center (for most Pleasant Housing residents).

The physical house (chapter 5) embodies the different trajectories of householders through a combined logic of competitive consumerism and ritual morality. The aesthetics of houses portray not just the social status of residents within the sphere of Kathmandu social prestige, but beyond to include foreign experiences and moral hierarchies produced in the Nepali diaspora and the country's hinterland. For most residents of Maitri Nagar, this means building a house that qualifies as belonging to the consumerist demands of Kathmandu and that can be converted into the social and ritual capital necessary for marriages and selecting tenants. The neo-traditional lay-outs of vastu houses and brick exteriors reference an alternative logic, which stems from a critique of the dominating presence of foreign goods in Kathmandu society. The embrace of the neo-traditional aesthetic serves, ironically, as a cosmopolitan identification with other places and times away from the disorganized aesthetics of contemporary Kathmandu.

Moving out from the personal experiences of relocation and houses, the third and final part of the dissertation discussed the two localities as sites of social and political contestations over the urban periphery. I argued that the residents' call for a stronger state stems from nostalgia for the Panchayat era prior to multi-party democracy when the

King's authoritarian rule was able to suppress protests from civil (and political) society and implement plans such as the national university in Kirtipur. The flip side of this nostalgia is the spatialization of social structure such that uniform nationalism is intended to displace ethnic regionalism. While the Maoist call for ethnic federalism is strongly supported outside of the capital in regions more dominated by particular ethnic groups (such as the Limbu call for Limbuwan in the east), it has confronted massive anti-federalist campaigns in Kathmandu. For instance, Bijay, the Bāhun from Gorkha described in chapters 4 and 5, sees no place for Bāhuns in a Maoist designed federalist Nepal. Particularly, he fears a Newar state in which he imagines that "They will kick us out!"

The predominantly upper caste Bahun-Chhetri and Newar populations of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing conceal the fear of communal identities through the rhetoric of being 'social' and 'non-political.' As I discussed in chapters 6 and 7, the moral ideal of the community echoes the discourse of Panchayat nationalism in which service to the country is emphasized, while expression of communal ethnic and linguistic identities is suppressed. On one hand, residents refer to the move to the Kathmandu periphery as a step away from previous locations (whether city center or village) in which caste and ethnic bias polluted social interaction. The intent of these non-communal expressions seem to follow the impact of economic transformations of the past sixty years in which caste hierarchy has been rendered less significant amidst a social environment constituted through commodity consumption and an occupational shift to tertiary labor. As I argue in chapters 3 and 6, the ritual and economic cooperation of caste holism has certainly faded in Kathmandu (and most places in Nepal) where few ritual obligations of caste remain.

That does not mean, however, that communal based identities of ethnic and regional affiliation do not continue to structure how people include and exclude others. The cases of Maitri Nagar and Pleasant Housing expose several fault lines along the terms of upper caste/lower caste; Pahari/Madhesi; Newar/Nepali-speaking; or, urban/rural social difference.

The Maoist shift from an exclusively class-based ideology to a more inclusive platform focused on minorities reflects the centrality of social classification in state restructuring. While most elites are quick to condemn ethnic federalism, the economic and urban planning of the leftist coalitions are complicated in the politics of the urban periphery. Similar to Rademacher's (2007) portrayal of Kathmandu elites welcoming authoritarian rule in the name of 'urban beautification' in 2002, the residents of Pleasant Housing seek a strong state to regulate the informal *dalāl* real estate industry, illegal construction practices, and unplanned infrastructure of the periphery. As shown in chapters 4 and 7, it is the disappointment in democracy that pushes residents to the private housing company to express a critique against the unruly city. The company provides the architecture of neo-traditional aesthetics, reliability of private security, water, and roads, and physical separation given by the colony's surrounding wall.

From the perspective of Maitri Nagar, state intervention is also welcomed. As discussed in chapter 7, local organizations and leaders seek the support of political parties or connections to the municipality. Moreover, although specific *dalāl* land dealers might be central social figures, in general as a social category, the *dalāl* represents the immorality of the land industry unregulated by an absent state. I expect the ensuing years

to include more conflicts between the state, informal markets, and the growing real estate industry of apartments and housing colonies.

Appendix A

Functions, Duties, and Powers of (Municipality) Ward Committee (as per Local Self-Governance Act of 2055)

1. To assist the Municipality in keeping inventory of, and in, protecting population, houses, land, rest houses, shelters, inns, divine places like temples, shrines, mosques, monasteries, madarasa, etc., barren land, ponds, lakes, wells, deep water, taps, etc., and similar religious and cultural places of public importance, within the Ward.
2. To keep neat and clean the roads, ways, bridges, drainage, ponds, lakes, wells, deep water, taps, etc. within the ward.
3. To arrange for disposal of wastes, dirt and rotten materials and to make arrangements to encourage the inhabitants of the Ward for maintaining sanitation.
4. To look after canals, drills, water spouts etc. within the Ward.
5. To assist in afforesting in the barren land and hills, steeps and steppe places and in conserving the environment, within the Ward.
6. To assist in management of health centers, health posts, etc. in the Ward.
7. To assist in the establishment and operation of schools and libraries in the Ward.
8. To catch the strayed quadrapeds and hand over them to the concerned agency.
9. To arrange for electricity lamps on the roads and streets within the Ward.
10. To keep safely the accounts of incomes and expenditures and other documents of the Ward Committee.
11. To assist the Municipality in the selling of food grains and other necessary goods at reasonable price within the Ward.
12. To distribute the goods of sports for the development of sports and help to organize art, dramas and cultural program for the development of language and culture.
13. To take any unclaimed or helpless person being seriously ill in the Ward to nearby hospital or health center and have such person treated.
14. In case any helpless or unclaimed person dies in the Ward, to arrange for cremation of such person.
15. To arrange for B.C.G., polio vaccination for the children in the Ward and to arrange for the prevention of infectious diseases.
16. To motivate the inhabitants of the Ward to register personal events.
17. To assist in carrying out various activities to raise the level of consciousness of the inhabitants of the Municipality.
18. To help in protecting the barren land.
19. To help in preserving ancient monuments within the Ward.
20. To help in preserving the temples of historical, archaeological, cultural, and religious importance, within the Ward.
21. To help the Municipality in having continuity to the cultural dance, songs as well as hymns reflecting originality.
22. To assist in the acts relating to the protection and earning of livelihood of the backward ethnic communities, helpless, disabled and heirless persons within the Ward.
23. To carry out such other functions as directed and ordered by the concerned Municipality.

Appendix B
(Translated from Nepali to English by the Author)

2066 BS, 5: 19 (September 4, 2009)
Honorable President
Residents Welfare Society
Pleasant Housing Phase II
Tinthana, Kathmandu

Subject: <u>Management of Pleasant Housing Phase 2</u>

Gentlemen,

In response to the letters regarding meetings on 3-9, 2066 from RWS (June 23, 2009) and on 5-4, 2066 (August 20, 2009). In reference to the various subjects raised in the minutes from the 3-9, 2066 RWS meeting, the company would like to make several conditions known.

Point #1. In reference to the dispute concerning the quality of equipment used by the company in building and repairing houses, the company would like to make it known that it used the same equipment for each house as it used in the construction of the model house. We would also like to make known that repairs have been done in an appropriate series based on weather conditions. Additionally, we would like to make known that even though during the 'hand-over' period house-owner's must pay for repair work, out of goodwill the company has completed about 75% of repair work with about 25% of repair work left to be done depending on conditions.

Point #2. Because of past disputes with representatives of the VDCs (#6,7, and 8) that border this residential area, the company has promised to the VDC representatives to ensure stable relations with the local residents. It is the company's belief that while the company is finishing all of its construction work, the use of roads inside the colony by local residents should not have a negative effect on security.

Point #3. This point refers to the safety of the housing area's inside compound and the need to enclose the open areas as decided in Poush 1, 2063 united problem-solving meeting. We would like to make known that of the necessary work to be done, plot #66-2's western side and plot 70's northwest corner have already completely finished the boundary wall. The necessary action left to be done is to construct the boundary wall for plot #9's western side, which will be completed as fast as possible.

Point #4. According to the fourth decision of the united problem-solving meeting on Poush 1, 2063, the company has given a 2 Rs. per unit discount on the electricity fee, which has not been raised until now. Additionally, the water fee has remained at the rainy season price. We want to remind everyone here that the rate, which was fixed by the working committee, including representatives of the Residential Welfare Society and the house-owner has committed to pay for water, has not materialized. Additionally, we want

to make known that the current situation of unregular water supply was created by a lack of money.

Point #5. We want to inform you that according to the rules of the Nepal Electric Corporation, each electric meter needs service wiring, and because of meter box conditions, new meter box needs to be set. In reference to the issue of economic cost raised in fourth decision of the Poush 1, 2063 united problem solving meeting, we want to remind everyone here of the consensus decision that "After the completion of all construction work, every house-owner is obligated to put the electricity line in their own name and pay the fees according to personal use as dictated by the Electric Corporation."

Point #6. After finishing all construction work, the company will make available to each house-owner the electric wiring, sanitation fitting, sewage exit, etc… as per building plan.

Point #7. While selling houses, we request residents to not express complaints with any buyers. If you anyone has a complaint, please hesitate, and contact Pleasant Housing with documented proof of the problem.

We want to remind the RWS that in order for negotiations to be suitable, the construction work needs to be completed in the near future and the transfer of facilities management, such as organizing of drinking water, road cleaning, sewage, gardens and security, to be agreeable and regulated.

Therefore, we want to request you to be humble and helpful in making the negotiation's environment to have discussions that fulfill all of the points written above.

Yours,
Keshav Lal Shrestha
Executive Director

Pleasant Housing Phase II
Tinthana-6 Dungeadda, Kathmandu

United Problem Solving Meeting

Today, on the Saturday of 2063 Poush 1 (December 16, 2006), in the Planning Community Building of Pleasant Housing Phase-2, Tinthana VDC, ward 6, Dungeadda it was decided that in the chairmanship of Pleasant Housing Welfare Society's (Phase-2) Chairman, Sundar Kumar Gaihre-jyu, Pleasant Savings and Trading Cooperative Limited's Executive Chairman, Icchha Raj Tamang, and other officials and present residents gathered to discuss the following subjects in the meeting.

Date: 2063-9-1
Time: From 11 am until 2 pm
Place: Planning Community Building

Present and Participating Dignified People

From Pleasant Housing: List of 17 people

Housing Representatives: List of 34 people

Building Contractors: List of 6 people

Negotiation Topics and Decisions:
1. On the issue of the Boundary Compound Wall – It was passed by unanimous decision that within three months, in order to stop animals and people from coming and going through the wall openings at west side of house #66-2, northwest corner of #70, west side of #9, all construction work of the wall would be done. Additionally, it was decided by consensus that if any part of the colony compound outside wall collapsed due to construction defects, Pleasant Housing would fix it.

2. On the issue of the Intercom – If the majority of residing residents in Pleasant Housing phase-2 requested an intercom facility in writing, Pleasant Housing would make that facility available. It was decided by unanimous decision if there was conflict over the Intercom in the future, the Welfare Society will solve it.

3. On the issue of the Children's Park – It was passed by a unanimous decision that for the residents of Pleasant Housing, Pleasant Housing will make a Children's Park on 7 ana of land. Additionally, it was also decided by unanimous decision that Pleasant Housing will not dispute that land set aside for the park.

4. On the issue of electricity fees – It was decided by consensus that Pleasant Housing will accept the rate of 9.90 Rs per unit for all settled bills up to the last day of Mangsir 2063 (November-December 2006), and 7.90 Rs per unit for all unpaid bills and usage after Poush 2063 (December-January 2006-7). It was decided by consensus that Pleasant Housing will not have to pay any fees after all construction work is completed. It was decided by consensus that after construction is completed, every house-owner will put their electric line from the Electricity Corporation in their own name and pay fees according to the rules.

5. On the issue of Construction Defects – It was decided by consensus that small construction defects needed to be finished faster than planned and that Nipon paint solution needed to be used to remove cracks in house plaster. It was also passed by unanimous decision that while purchasing property, Pleasant Housing must have each house-owner sign the maintenance chart affirming that the any construction defects were improved according to the agreement with the Welfare Society.

6. On the issue of Plot #66-2's sewage line – It was passed by unanimous decision that in reponse to the houseowner's complaint about the position of the sewage line, four technician members – Mr. S. K. Gaihre, Dr. Sunil Lama, I. Sharad Mangal Joshi, and

Birendra Pradhanang – will conduct an investigation on whether or not to remove the line and forward the report.

7. On the issue of the next meeting – A proposal was passed by consensus that on the last Saturday of every month, Pleasant Housing and Pleasant Housing Welfare Society officials and residents would meet for a united meeting.

8. Additional Facilities – It was passed by unanimous decision that the residents of Pleasant Housing phase-2 and the Residential Welfare Society would not request facilities unmentioned in the Brochure (with the exception of the facilities mentioned in points 2 and 3). Additionally, it was also decided that questions about marble floor dining rooms photographed in the brochure, underground electricity and communication would not raised and debate over this subject will not happen.

9. Finally, from the director of the meeting, we want to thank all participants, respectable house-owners present and members for completing today's meeting.

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