

David Gellner

What are the personal and academic reasons behind your becoming a Nepal researcher?

I got interested for a mixture of academic and personal reasons. My father, Ernest Gellner, who was a specialist both of Islamic societies (especially north Africa) and of eastern Europe, came to Nepal in the early 1970s when he was asked to advise the British Council on setting up a research centre in Tribhuvan University (which later became the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, CNAS). He returned to do a follow-up report in December 1975. I was just 18, had finished school, and had a year before starting undergraduate studies in Oxford, so I came with him. When he went back, I stayed on, with a school friend, Julian Murray, for four months. We learnt a little Nepali and trekked the hills. We visited three anthropologists, whom we had met at Christmas in the Kathmandu Guest House: Harvey Blustain was doing fieldwork in Liglig Dumre near Gorkha, Doss Mabe in Ghanpokhara a day's walk further north in Lamjung, and David Holmberg among the Tamangs above Trisuli. Harvey was just finishing up, Doss was in the middle, and David was just starting out.¹ That meant that we had a very vivid introduction to the process of anthropological fieldwork as it is done and as it is experienced. I think it was a pretty formative experience for both of us. Julian eventually did an MPhil in anthropology at Cambridge University and is now the head of Canadian aid (CEDA) in Indonesia. I went on to Oxford and studied mostly politics and philosophy for my first degree.

During my undergraduate years I read Louis Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980[1966]) and decided I wanted to do something on religion

¹ Harvey Blustain wrote an interesting PhD on Muslim-Hindu relations and the place of Muslims in the Nepali caste system (Blustain 1977). Doss Mabe unfortunately never completed his PhD and returned to his original profession, architecture. David Holmberg went on to become an authority on the Tamangs (Holmberg 1989) and professor of anthropology at Cornell University.

and society in South Asia. The lesson I derived from Dumont was that such a study would require some acquaintance with Sanskrit, and I discovered that the most practical way to acquire this was to stay in Oxford and do the newly established MPhil in Indian Religion (practical in the sense that it made intellectual sense, combining Indology, language-learning, and exposure to different ways of studying Indian religion, including the anthropological; but practical also in the sense that, because it was an MPhil qualification, rather than a second BA, I would qualify for a government grant to do it). So I embarked on the MPhil, not thinking about Nepal particularly, but having decided that I wanted to do some kind of fieldwork or empirical or historical study in South Asia, and not a more theoretical PhD (which would have been the case if I had stayed in philosophy).

During the first year of the MPhil my supervisor Richard Gombrich, whose Indologically and textually informed work on the contemporary practice of Buddhism in Sri Lanka was a kind of model for me, came to a World Buddhism conference in Nalanda, Bihar. Since he had never been to Nepal, I suggested he visit Kathmandu, and gave him the name of Dor Bahadur Bista. Bista introduced him to Father John Locke, who took him on a walking tour of Lalitpur and its monasteries. When he came back to Oxford he said, “Why don’t you do a doctorate on Newar Buddhism?” The idea made a lot of sense, because I already knew Nepal (even though I’d never visited Lalitpur), and because working on the priestly traditions of the Newar Buddhists offered a way of combining my interest in anthropology with the more Indological training I was undergoing as part of the MPhil. And indeed it turned out that the study of Sanskrit that I had done – though in no way sufficient to turn me into a textual scholar (and by now I have largely forgotten the grammar) – was extremely helpful when it came to attempting to understand Vajracharyas’ rituals. It also helped more generally with acquiring the more abstract vocabulary of Nepali and Nepal Bhasha.

Did you go on to finish your MPhil? If so, what was the topic of your MPhil dissertation? When did you finish your DPhil?

I did finish the MPhil in 1981, rather than continue straight into the DPhil, mainly for practical reasons to do with fees at Oxford University. By completing the MPhil and then ‘extending’ my MPhil thesis, I only had to pay one more year of fees: in fact the government paid them for me; but if I had proceeded directly to the DPhil, I would have been liable for more than three years of fees in all, and I would have had to pay them myself. The MPhil dissertation was called ‘Newar Buddhism’ and was little more

than a literature survey. It was a good foundation for the DPhil, but the idea that the DPhil (with two years of fieldwork and three years of writing up) was just an extension of the MPhil was no more than a convenient bureaucratic fiction. I finished the DPhil in 1987.

What was the thematic focus of your doctoral research? Also explain if any British national or disciplinary traditions were important in your selection of Nepal as a research site?

My aim in studying Newar Buddhism was to understand it ‘from within’, i.e. in its own terms and to achieve a full understanding of its relationship both to Hinduism and to other forms of Buddhism. There was a specific reason for doing this, which was that almost all previous studies of it approached it with the Buddhism of South East Asia and Sri Lanka, or with Tibetan Buddhism, in mind, and found it ‘corrupt’ or ‘Hinduism in all but name’ (e.g. Snellgrove 1957: 106; even Slusser 1982). This seemed to me biased and prejudicial and a failure of imagination. Stephen Greenwold (1974) and Michael Allen (1973), and especially John Locke (1980), had taken some steps to overcome this point of view, but in my opinion there was still work to be done to understand Newar Buddhism as a functioning ideological and ritual system. It is often thought – including by many Newars themselves – that the non-celibate clergy of traditional Newar Buddhism (the Vajracharyas) is unique and anomalous, whereas in fact married clergy are very common in other forms of Mahayana Buddhism as well (e.g. in Tibet and Japan).

Another theme, a claim that I made much of when applying for grants and so on, was what might be called the Sylvain Lévi thesis, namely that “Nepal is India in the making” (Lévi 1905 I: 28). In other words, the culture of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley preserves in important respects patterns and practices that are very archaic in South Asian terms (e.g. the co-existence of Buddhism and Hinduism, the cult of Indra, Tantric forms of worship in both religions). Thus the study of Newar culture and religion does not only contribute to scholarship in terms of the ethnographic record: it also is vital for an understanding of the whole of South Asian history in the pre-Muslim period.

This meant that there was a strong ‘Orientalist’ (in the non-pejorative sense) aspect to my fieldwork; and it also constituted what has been sneeringly called ‘salvage anthropology’, i.e. an attempt to study traditional culture before it disappears. I do not apologise for this; I still believe that this kind of research is valuable, if done with full awareness of the theoretical implications of so doing. At the same time, I was aware that ethnic and religious revivalism were important in the early 1980s, and I took time out

from writing up the doctorate to publish on the theme of Newar identity (Gellner 1986).

I was not aware of being part of any British Orientalist or anthropological tradition of studying Nepal. I had to find my own funding. There was no institution supporting study in Nepal, like the US Fulbright scholarships, or the French CNRS (all of whose members used to get full support from their Embassy), or the heavily funded German research programmes. British research was then, and has almost always been, a matter of individuals who happen to be interested. The only exception is perhaps an early research trip from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) which included Colin Rosser (who told me about it) and others; but even they worked largely on their own separate projects.

What is your research focus now? What other thematic transformations have occurred in your research in the mean time? How do you explain the changes that have occurred in your research focus (e.g. can the source of change be located in theoretical shifts in your discipline and/or political and social developments in Nepal)?

My current research is focused far more on questions of social and religious change, and political aspects are far more prominent. The shift in research focus is both a matter of personal development and a question of changes in Nepal. During my original research in the early 1980s I did not seek to discuss politics, at any rate certainly not party politics, with my friends. It was well known that if you wanted to get a research visa, explicitly political research themes should be avoided. One thing that must be said in praise of Marxist scholars like David Seddon and Piers Blaikie is that even in the Panchayat period they were attempting to deal with questions of political economy on a national and even international scale.

I have also done some work on Newar 'low' castes, but not nearly as much as I would have liked or as needs to be done. This was, in the first place, in connection with the volume *Contested Hierarchies* (1995). We needed a chapter on low castes. No one else seemed ready or qualified to do it. I did the best I could under the circumstances. The part I am most proud of is the table on p. 271 which summarizes a lot of hard work and analysis. I think that the ideas contained in it deserve discussion in South Asian debates about caste systems, but I fear that (a) because of the marginalization of work on Nepal (discussed below) and (b) because South Asian scholars have, for various reasons, lost interest in studying caste, my contribution on this question has gone totally unnoticed.

I have also done some work on Newar healers and mediums. I realized in retrospect that I had travelled a path already trodden by many scholars

of Buddhism, authors such as Stanley Tambiah, Richard Gombrich, Gananath Obeyesekere, and Melford Spiro, who have written the classic works in the anthropology of Buddhism. I didn't set out to do this. But it makes sense that, once one has studied and understood the formal structures of Buddhism, one should turn to the more offbeat, freelance, and charismatic use of Buddhist sacred ideas and symbols. Again, in this field too, I would have liked to have carried out a more detailed, systematic, and long-term research project. Some of the material I did manage to collect appears in *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes* (Gellner 2001: chs. 8, 9, 10).

Do you operate from a traditionally defined department or from an area studies centre?

In Britain area studies departments are relatively rare, and those that do exist do not have a named place for Nepal. Even when centres do exist they often do not have independent or secure funding, but rather are parasitic upon disciplinary departments where staff have their principal posts.

Before September 2002 I was in the Human Studies Department at Brunel University: this combines sociology, psychology, and social anthropology (which is the smallest of the three). Among the anthropologists, one worked on Fiji, one on Papua New Guinea, one on Indonesia, two on different parts of Southern Africa, and so on: there was no commitment to cover Nepal, just a vague presumption that among the anthropologists one would try to get as good a global geographic spread as possible. Despite the facts that (1) the Social Science Faculty is the largest in Brunel University, (2) because of its location in west London, a third or more of the Brunel student body is made up of British South Asians, and (3) a large number of professors in the science departments are South Asians by origin – despite all this there is no South Asian Studies programme at Brunel. I tried hard to persuade them of the short-sightedness of this, but I wasn't there long enough, and I wasn't senior enough, to have any impact.

Since October 2002 I have been the University Lecturer in the Anthropology of South Asia, University of Oxford. This is a post for a South Asianist, but it is just luck that it is held by someone with an interest in Nepal. Unlike a modern university such as Brunel, Oxford has an old and venerable tradition of studying South Asia going back to colonial times. As in most universities, there are centres for academic study as well as disciplinary departments, but these centres are kept going by outside funding, and whether a centre is well funded or not is something of a lottery.

The Middle-East Studies Centre in Oxford University is well funded. Likewise, the Nissan Centre for Japanese Studies is well endowed, and has enough money to have four posts, including one anthropologist. The Centre for South Asian Studies is kept going by small grants from the Indian government, though they have recently had to face controversy by endowing (cost: over £1 million) a professorship in Indian history. There is a Centre for Vaishnava Studies, also with outside funding. (The same goes for Muslim and Jewish studies.) In other words, area studies centres spring up, not because the university is willing to put its own resources in, but because somebody persuades businessmen to contribute. The current five-year half-time post in Hindi at Oxford University is about to disappear because, apparently, no Indian businessmen can be found who think it worth endowing on a permanent basis.

Do you teach and if so, at what level? What kinds of courses do you teach or have taught in the past and what Nepal-related content are included in those courses?

The modules (courses) I was responsible for at Brunel included

- Religion and Power
 - Ethnographic Themes in Medical Anthropology (South Asia)
 - Introduction to Ethnographic Method/Issues in Ethnographic Method
- I included a fair number of ethnographies on Nepal in the first two (Lynn Bennett, Linda Stone, all the literature on the followers of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal including Sherry Ortner, Stan Mumford and David Holmberg, Declan Quigley on joint households). I used Mary Des Chene's Bhauju essay (1998) as a model of restrained reflexivity and fine ethnographic writing for students in ethnographic method.

I currently hold a three-year research fellowship, which buys me out of teaching at Oxford, but once I start teaching there I will be expected to contribute tutorials on general anthropology, lectures on some aspect of general anthropology (e.g. political anthropology, anthropology of religion, kinship, or some such – it may vary from year to year), a course on the anthropology of South Asia, occasionally lectures on medical anthropology, and so on.

Where have you published your Nepal-related books, articles and essays?

I have published Nepal-related material in a variety of places, including *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (formerly known as *Man*), *Purusartha*, *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, *Social Anthropology*, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research*, *Studies in Nepali History and Society*,

and so on. The list of my publications is given at the end of this text. I have also published more than 50 book reviews, many of them being reviews of books related to Nepal.

Do you converse productively with colleagues doing research and other works related to Nepal in the UK, other parts of the world and Nepal? If so, how?

E-mail has become very important, both within UK, and with other parts of the world. Drafts are exchanged this way, yes. There has been an attempt to set up a once-a-month meeting of concerned government, NGO, and academic workers in London, but I've never yet been able to get to a meeting. Recently, at the suggestion of the Nepali ambassador to London, H.E. Singha Bahadur Basnet, we set up a forum for UK-based scholars of Nepal, the Britain-Nepal Academic Council.

You have collaborated with other scholars of Nepal in editing two books. What has inspired you to execute such collaborative projects given the individual nature of most UK based research work on Nepal? Have you also done some collaborative research?

The collaborative ethnography that I edited with my friend Declan Quigley (Gellner and Quigley 1995) grew out of our discussions about caste and kinship among the Newars, our comparisons of the Hindu Shresthas whom he had studied, and the Buddhist Shakyas and Vajracharyas I had studied. We agreed that Newar culture was so complex that it would require a whole team of scholars to grasp it from all angles; we put together a list of those who had done the kind of ethnographic work we wanted and approached them to contribute. We were very fortunate that all were willing to do so.

The other book (Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka and Whelpton 1997) also grew out of a sense that scholarship is a collaborative undertaking, even if research in anthropology and the humanities is more often an individual affair. In this case it was the felt need to discuss and come to terms with the changes that had come about in Nepal as a whole after 1990. In this case it was a small workshop held in Oxford in 1992, co-organized by me and Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka. We invited John Whelpton to join the editorial team later.

My more recent research has indeed been collaborative – with Sarah Levine on Theravada Buddhism, and with Krishna Hachhethu and Mrigendra Karki on activists.

What institutional and human resources were available to you as a graduate student?

I had access to the Indian Institute Library in Oxford, which is very good, but only for English-language materials. I have had to build my own library of works in Nepali and Nepal Bhasha. I think that even SOAS is not particularly good on works in Nepali. As far as specific expertise on Nepal was concerned, I was on my own as a doctoral student; in other words, it was up to me to ensure that I had covered the literature on Nepal. However, I had excellent support in other ways, and my supervisor, Richard Gombrich, and his wife, Sanjukta Gupta, actually visited me in the field, which was both useful and memorable. In attempting to understand Tantric Buddhism and its historical and textual background I was also aided enormously by Alexis Sanderson, now Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics, then University Lecturer in Sanskrit.

What kinds of funds/financial assistance were available for your graduate studies and for field research in Nepal as well as for the final write-up of your dissertation? What are the funding resources in the UK (outside of UK as well) that have made it possible for you to continue your research on Nepal?

As mentioned, I had government funding for two and a half years as a graduate student. I managed to get a Leverhulme Study Abroad Studentship after that, which covered my two years of fieldwork. When I returned to Oxford I was supported by a series of grants from university-connected bodies. These grants ran out just as I got a four-year Junior Research Fellowship at St John's College in Oxford, which saw me through finishing and publishing the doctorate.

As far as postdoctoral research is concerned, the British Academy is very good at giving small research grants, enough to pay for a short trip to Nepal. Brunel University funded one three-month stint in Nepal in 1996-7, and I also had money from the International Centre for Ethnic Studies in Colombo for work on transformations of Newar ethnicity as part of a larger project funded by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation comparing inter-ethnic relations in selected Asian countries (Nepal, India, Thailand, Malaysia).

What was the job market like for you when you finished your PhD? How many times have you changed jobs since your first post-PhD appointment? Is your current job a 'permanent' one? What is the job market like for future advancement?

It was not easy to get a permanent job after finishing the Research Fellowship. Like many students it was a question of one grant after another. I had to try and break into anthropology. I also tried for jobs in religious studies. After many failed interviews, I eventually succeeded in getting a

half-time lectureship in social anthropology at Oxford Brookes University. (The key to my success at that point seems to have come down to two facts: (a) my first book was hot off the press and I was able to pass it around in the interview; it was a hardback and printed on glossy paper, so it appeared very weighty and scholarly; (b) when asked if I would be willing to teach a module called African Ethnography, I expressed no reservations and said simply 'Yes'.) From Oxford Brookes I moved, after two years, to Brunel. I stayed at Brunel eight years (1994-2002). Both the Brookes and the Brunel jobs were permanent (with probationary periods at the outset). Other anthropologists, with more conventional trajectories than me, have tended to do several short-term replacement teaching jobs, while publishing their doctorate, before being considered for a permanent position.

Is a new generation of Nepal researchers being produced in the UK? If so, how is the next generation being mentored in the field?

Yes, new researchers are coming through. Until recently Nepal was an attractive and fascinating place to do research. It is still fascinating but it is now a lot more disturbing as a field site. I think we can expect different kinds of research topic in future – conflict, forced migration, war trauma, and so on – and perhaps a greater diversity of academic disciplines. I think that most of the new generation *are* being supervised by people with experience of Nepal, though one can think of exceptions, e.g. at London School of Economics or University College London (UCL) where there is no one who works on Nepal.

What is the attraction for this new generation to study Nepal?

The attractions of Nepal have always been that it is a culturally highly diverse country and that it is stunningly beautiful and that the people are generally welcoming (compared to some other parts of the world). But studying Nepal has always had elements of a vocation and has never been a direct route to a job.

Are the conditions of their recruitment different from the time when you entered the field? How would you compare the institutional and financial resources available to them to become Nepal researchers today compared to those in your own time? What are their job prospects?

I don't think it is harder for the new generation coming up now. I think that job prospects are about the same, possibly even slightly better. There was a time in the late 1970s and 1980s when there were simply no jobs (i.e., about one job per year in the entire country in anthropology). That is no

longer true. If you are willing to hang in there, to take temporary one-year and two-year posts in out-of-the-way places, to publish, and to defer getting a real job well into your 30s, you can still make it in anthropology. However, it is almost certainly harder as a historian of Nepal, or as a language and literature specialist, because of the very small number of South Asia centres, and because of the marginalization of Nepal.

Have you supervised undergraduate, MA or PhD level research on Nepal? If so, can you pls name your students and the themes on which they worked? Also have you examined PhD candidates doing work on Nepal in the capacity of an external examiner?

While at Brunel university I sent several undergraduate students to Nepal to carry out their work placements. One, Ben Tamblyn, did excellent work on Buddhist monasteries in Pokhara for his undergraduate dissertation, which was eventually published as an article (Tamblyn 2002). Another, Patrizia Bassini, also wrote an excellent dissertation on attitudes to education among Theravada Buddhists in Kathmandu; it was picked out by the external examiner as the best anthropology dissertation of the year. Both students went on to do the MSc in Medical Anthropology at Brunel, and did their MSc dissertations on Nepal as well. Patrizia is now doing doctoral work on the anthropology of Tibetan medicine at Oxford University. Ben is now considering a PhD programme in Canada on aid and development in Nepal.

Also while at Brunel I supervised two PhDs on Nepal: Anil Shakya on kinship and marriage in the southern part of Kathmandu, and Alfiani Fadzakir on Muslim identity in Kathmandu. I have examined the following PhDs on Nepal: Christine Daniels on Tibetan religious ideas and gender in Baudha (Oxford, anthropology, 1995); Greg Sharkey SJ on Newar Buddhist liturgy (Oxford, Oriental Studies, 1996); Rachel Hinton on Bhutanese refugees (Cambridge, anthropology, 1997); Celayne Heaton on NGO culture (SOAS, anthropology, 2002); Michael Willmore on indigenous media in Tansen (UCL, anthropology, 2002).

I was also on the honorary panel for the PhD of Balgopal Shrestha (on the history and rituals of Sankhu) at Leiden University in Holland (2002). In March 2003 I was on the jury in the Universite de Paris for Satya Shrestha's thesis on the Matwali Chetris of West Nepal, and in June 2003 I was the external examiner at SOAS for Rhoderick Chalmers' thesis.

It seems a majority of UK-based scholars on Nepal are anthropologists. What explains this phenomenon?

There are a lot of anthropologists, but there are also lots of agronomists, development experts, foresters, and so on: but these people often work in

many other places also, don't keep coming back, and so don't get labelled so readily as Nepal specialists.

You should ask this question to John Whelpton. He may have some insights. I think that historians and political scientists of South Asia suffer far more than anthropologists from the marginalization of Nepal. John Whelpton tried many times to get a job as a historian of South Asia in the USA and was never considered. I think it highly likely that in most cases only specialists on India and Pakistan get interviewed for South Asia positions where the discipline is political science or history. What this means is that you can make a career in the anthropology of Nepal more easily than you can in other similar fields. There is, as you know, only one position for teaching the Nepali language, and none in the other languages of Nepal, in the whole of the UK.

One could also make an argument that Nepal is even more culturally diverse than India, if one can measure per capita cultural diversity, and that therefore it is only natural that it requires a larger number of anthropologists. But I don't know how much weight one should give this.

Do you communicate about your research with the national public at large in the UK? If so, how do you do it and how often?

Not often. I have been requested to speak on BBC World Service radio about six or eight times over the years (but the audience here is not the UK of course), and on the BBC World TV service once (after the royal massacre). I tried to publish a journalistic account of Nepal 'One Year after the Royal Massacre' in the (elite) mass market *London Review of Books*, and then in *Prospect*, but they didn't think it would be interest to their readers, so I published it in the Oxford Magazine (internal to Oxford University).

What is the relationship between your current or past research and discussions in the various Nepali public spheres?

This is a complex and interesting question. I have always tried to make sure my published work is available in Kathmandu. My work on Newar ethnicity was quickly picked up by Newar ethnic activists themselves, and I was frequently invited to be present and to speak at their organized events. Newspaper headlines would follow saying "Foreign scholar says 'Newar culture and language must be preserved'" – regardless of the content of what I had actually said. Sometimes – as when I once gave a talk at the Royal Nepal Academy – the reporter obviously had no idea at all what I was talking about and made up some complete nonsense; in other cases, there is a tangential relationship, but the reporter simply heard what he expected to hear. A similar thing happened, though less extreme, in

Buddhist circles also. I have had to be careful not to take sides in debates within Buddhist circles on which form of Buddhism is better or more authentic. Although my doctoral work is available in a very cheap South Asian edition, and many people have it on their shelves, I think that only a few Nepalis have read it at all closely. The collaborative ethnography I edited with Declan Quigley on the Newar caste system (Gellner & Quigley 1995) has – thanks to an Oxford University Press Delhi paperback edition (1999) – been read and used by some Newar ethnic and caste-organization activists.

How has the availability of many Nepali newspapers in the internet impacted your work as a Nepal researcher based in the UK? Are their contents of research value?

Yes, the availability of Nepali newspapers on the internet has been a great boon. Whereas in the past it was quite hard to get information and to follow current affairs in Nepal from afar, now there is, as in so many fields, too much information to process or absorb. That said, it is undoubtedly the case that the internet is now an indispensable research tool.

Do you find that there is a tension between representing Nepal to your academic colleagues in the UK (and elsewhere in Europe and America) and making your research theme and conclusions ‘relevant’ and accessible for discussions in Nepali society?

There is definitely a tension in terms of publications. Status and advancement require one to publish with reputable academic presses and in expensive academic journals, which are not easily or cheaply available in Nepal. This means that there is a time lag, inevitably, between publishing one’s work and making it available to Nepalis. I have tried to deal with this in the past by giving photocopies or offprints to the Royal Nepal Academy, to CNAS, Asha Saphu Kuthi, and to friends in Kathmandu, etc. But often there is a long delay while one tries to get the paperback rights or the South Asian rights off the academic publisher, in order to produce an affordable local edition. Thus, I believe that the book I edited with Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka and John Whelpton, *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom* (1997), deserves to be much better known in Nepal than it is – but the price tag and the difficulty of dealing with the publishers (now bought out by Taylor and Francis) have prevented this.

There is another, more substantial tension at which your question hints. There are certainly pressures for young scholars, not just to publish with expensive scholarly presses in the West, but also to phrase what they say in terms of metropolitan debates and theories. Some of these

debates may seem obscure and irrelevant from the point of view of intellectuals based in Nepal. I have not felt this pull of different audiences very acutely myself. But, as indicated above, I have felt there were occasions where I should guard against communal or partisan readings of my work.

How do you evaluate the state of Nepal Studies in the UK at the moment? Do Nepal researchers languish at the margins of South Asian Studies?

I think Nepal Studies is fairly healthy at the moment, perhaps more so than when I entered the field. It is not always a question of languishing at the margins of South Asian Studies; but it is unquestionably true that when a position for a historian of South Asia is advertised, it will almost never go to a specialist on Nepal. India is just too important, and the other historians really don't think Nepal matters. Anthropology is a bit different, as witness the fact that I have got the job in Oxford, following Nick Allen, also a Nepal specialist. Other anthropologists, not usually being South Asianists themselves, do not share the opinion that Nepal is an insignificant backwater in South Asia.

South Asian studies exist in several places in the UK (Edinburgh, Hull, Birmingham, Oxford, Cambridge, SOAS). SOAS is the only one with a Nepal presence. Although SOAS has always had people interested in Nepal, it is nowhere written into its mission statement that it must cover Nepal. Whereas in the past the anthropology department at SOAS always had people in it who worked on Nepal (C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, Lionel Caplan, Richard Burghart), today it has three South Asianists, all of whom work on South India. Ian Harper is there on a temporary basis covering for one of them. This means that my wife, Lola Martinez, who is a Japan specialist, sometimes ends up co-supervising students who are doing research on Nepal on the grounds that she has at least been there a couple of times.

The same lack of named and ringfenced resources applies to language teaching as well. Although Michael Hutt is employed to teach Nepali in SOAS, there is no guarantee that, if he left, he would be replaced.

Can anything be done to arrest or reverse the declining support for social science research including research on Nepal in the UK? If so what?

This is a hard question to answer as it is not clear to me that there is declining support for social science research. What is definitely occurring is that research is more often being made to fit into pre-assigned research themes set up by funding councils, and all researchers are being required to account for their money more than in the past. There is, concomitantly, a greater stress on applied research. But with some creativity all these trends and constraints can be worked around.

References

- Allen, M.R. 1973. Buddhism without Monks: The Vajrayana Religion of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley. *South Asia* 2: 1-14.
- Blustain, H.S. 1977. Power and Ideology in a Nepalese Village. PhD Dissertation, Yale University. UMI 7815710.
- Des Chene, M. 1998. Fate, Domestic Authority, and Women's Wills. In *Selves in Time and Place: Identities, Experience, and History in Nepal*. D. Skinner, A. Pach III, and D. Holland, eds., pp. 19-50. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield. Another version published as "'We Women Must Try to Live': The Saga of Bhauju" in 1997 in *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 2(1): 125-72.
- Dumont, Louis. 1980(1966). *Homo Hierarchicus*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Gellner, D.N. 1986. Language, Caste, Religion, and Territory: Newar Identity Ancient and Modern. *European Journal of Sociology* 27(1): 102-48.
- Gellner, D.N. 2001. *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Gellner, D.N. and D. Quigley, eds. 1995. *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*. Oxford: Clarendon.
- Gellner, D.N., J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, and J. Whelpton, eds. 1997. *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Greenwold, S. 1974. Monkhhood versus Priesthood in Newar Buddhism. In *Contributions to Anthropology of Nepal*. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, ed., pp. 129-49. Warminster: Aris & Phillips.
- Holmberg, D. 1989. *Order in Paradox: Myth, Ritual, and Exchange among Nepal's Tamang*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.
- Lévi, S. 1905. *Le Népal: Etude Historique d'un Royaume Hindou*. 3 vols. Paris: Leroux.
- Locke, J. 1980. *Karunamaya: The Cult of Avalokitesvara-Matsyendranath in the Valley of Nepal*. Kathmandu: Sahayogi.
- Slusser, M.S. 1982. *Nepal Mandala: A Cultural Study of the Kathmandu Valley*. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Snellgrove, D.L. 1957. *Buddhist Himalaya: Travels and Studies in Quest of the Origins and Nature of Tibetan Religion*. Oxford: Cassirer.
- Tamblyn, Ben. 2002. Ancient Dialogue amidst a Modern Cacophony: Gurung Religious Pluralism and the Founding of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in the Pokhara Valley. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 22: 81-100.

Publications

Books

- 2003 (ed.) *Resistance and the State: Nepalese Experiences*. Delhi: Social Science Press.
- 2001 *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- 2001 (ed.) *Inside Organizations: Anthropologists at Work*. Oxford: Berg (with E. Hirsch).
- 1999 (ed.) *The Ethnography of Organizations: A Reader*. Uxbridge: Department of Human Sciences, Brunel University (with E. Hirsch).
- 1997 (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*. Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers (with J. Pfaff-Czarnecka and J. Whelpton).
- 1995 (ed.) *Contested Hierarchies: A Collaborative Ethnography of Caste among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal*. Oxford: Clarendon. Paperback edition by Oxford University Press Delhi, 1999 (with D. Quigley).
- 1992 *Monk, Householder, and Tantric Priest: Newar Buddhism and its Hierarchy of Ritual* (Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology 84). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Paperback edition for South Asia published by Foundation Books, Delhi, 1993.

Also edited

- 1998 Ernest Gellner, *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Hapsburg Dilemma*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1997 Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism*. London: Weidenfeld.

Articles, notes, letters¹

- Forthcoming Children's Voices from Kathmandu and Lalitpur, Nepal. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*.
- Forthcoming Buddhism and Caste: The Case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. In *Women as Peacemakers* (proceedings of Lumbini conference, 1999). K.L. Tsomo, ed.
- *2003 From Cultural Hierarchies to a Hierarchy of Multiculturalisms: The Case of the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. In *Ethnic Revival and Religious Turmoil: Identities and Representations in the Himalayas*. M. Lecomte-Tilouine and P. Dollfus, eds., pp. 73-136. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- *2002 Theravada Revivalism in Nepal: Some Reflections on the Interpretation of the Early Years. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 7(2): 215-37.
- 2002 One Year on from the Royal Massacre. *Oxford Magazine* 205: 3-6.
- 2002 Entry on Nepal. In *21st Century Encyclopedia of World Religion*. Oxford: Clio Press.
- 2001 Buddhism. In *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* (vol. on religion). L. Woodhead and D. Martin, eds. Amsterdam: Pergamon/Elsevier.
- 2001 Comments on 'The Global Media, the Probe Commission, and the Assassination of Nepal's Royal Family: Questions Unasked and

¹ * indicates more substantial pieces. † indicates that the article is included in *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes*.

- Unanswered' by Bipin Adhikari and S.B. Mathe. *Himalayan Research Bulletin* 21(1): 55.
- 2001 How Should One Study Ethnicity and Nationalism? *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 28(1): 1-10.
- 2001 Some Notes on Newar Identity. *Guthi* (Pasa Puchah Guthi UK) 1: 8, 10.
- *2001 From Group Rights to Individual Rights and Back: Nepalese Struggles with Culture and Equality. In *Culture and the Anthropology of Rights*. J. Cowan, M. Dembour, and R. Wilson, eds., pp. 177-200. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 2001 Studying Secularism, Practising Secularism: Anthropological Imperatives. *Social Anthropology* 9: 337-40.
- *2001 Introduction: Ethnography of Organizations and Organizations of Ethnography. In *Inside Organizations: Anthropologists at Work*. D. Gellner and E. Hirsch, eds., pp. 1-15. Oxford: Berg (with Eric Hirsch).
- 2000 Introductory comments for 'Roundtable: The Politics of Culture and Identity in Contemporary Nepal (12/3/99, Boston AAS)'. *Himalayan Research Bulletin* 20(1-2): 5-6.
- *1999 From Cultural Hierarchies to a Hierarchy of Multiculturalisms: The Case of the Newars of Nepal. In *Multiculturalism: Modes of Coexistence in South and Southeast Asia*. SPF, ed., pp. 103-63. Washington: Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA.
- 1999 Comment on 'Self, Identity, and Culture' by M. Sökefeld. *Current Anthropology* 40(4): 435-6.
- *1999† Religion, Politics, and Ritual: Remarks on Geertz and Bloch. *Social Anthropology* 7(2): 135-53.
- *1999 Religion, Politik und Ritual: Betrachtungen zu Geertz und Bloch. In *Rituale Heute: Theorien, Kontroversen, Entwürfe*. C. Caduff and J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, eds., pp. 49-72. Berlin: Reimer.
- *1999 Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion. In *Approaches to the Study of Religion*. P. Connolly, ed., pp. 10-41. London: Cassell.
- 1998 Models of Ethnic Accommodation in South and South-East Asia (conference report). *Culture and Identity Newsletter* 2(1): 1, 4.
- 1998 Preface to E. Gellner *Language and Solitude: Wittgenstein, Malinowski and the Hapsburg Dilemma*, pp. vii-xii. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- 1998 Religion, Ritual und Politik. *UniMagazin* (the magazine of the University of Zurich) 98(1): 50-2.
- 1997 Preface to E. Gellner *Nationalism*, pp. vii-x. London: Weidenfeld.
- *1997† For Syncretism: The Position of Buddhism in Nepal and Japan Compared. *Social Anthropology* 5(3): 275-89.
- *1997† Does Symbolism "Construct an Urban Mesocosm"? Robert Levy's *Mesocosm* and the Question of Value Consensus in Bhaktapur. *Journal of Hindu Studies* 1(3): 541-64.
- *1997 Buddhism and Change among the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. *Ethnic Studies Report* 15(1): 45-60.

- 1997 Foreword for N. Gutschow *The Nepalese Caitya: 1500 Years of Buddhist Votive Architecture in the Kathmandu Valley*, pp. 11-14. Stuttgart and London: Edition Axel Menges.
- *1997 The Consecration of a Vajra-Master in Newar Buddhism. In *Les Habitants du Toit du Monde: Hommage à Alexander W. Macdonald*. S. Karmay and P. Sagant, eds., pp. 659-75. Nanterre: Société d'Ethnologie.
- *1997 Introduction: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the World's only Hindu State. In *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom* (above), pp. 3-31.
- *1997 Caste, Communalism, and Communism: Newars and the Nepalese State. In *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom* (above), pp. 151-84.
- 1997 Comments on Phanindra Ratna Vajracharya. *Guthis in Newar Buddhism: Conference Report* (in Nepal Bhasha), pp. 35-7. Lalitpur: Lotus Research Institute (2053 v.s.).
- *1996† Temples for Life and Temples for Death: Remarks on the Organization of Buddhism in a Tokyo Locality. *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 27(3): 253-65.
- *1996 A Sketch of the History of Lalitpur with Special Reference to Buddhism. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (memorial issue for D.V. Vajracharya) 23(1): 125-57.
- *1996† "The Perfection of Wisdom": A Text and its Uses in Kwa Baha, Lalitpur. In *Change and Continuity: Studies in the Nepalese Culture of the Kathmandu Valley* S. Lienhard, ed., pp. 223-40. Turin: CESMEO; also published in *Paleswan* (Lalitpur, Nepal) 10: 32-49, 1996.
- 1996 An Interview with Padma Ratna Tuladhar. *Himalayan Research Bulletin* 16: 37-46 (with G. Sharkey).
- 1996 From Literature to Linguistics to Culture: An Interview with K.P. Malla. *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* 11: 37-52.
- 1996 Buddhism. In *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, pp. 80-81. London: Routledge.
- *1995† Max Weber, Capitalism, and the Religion of India (revised and expanded version). In *Religion and the Transformation of Capitalism*. R. Roberts, ed., pp. 21-46. London: Routledge.
- 1995 Structure and Consensus among "Untouchables" in South Asia. Letter to *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 1(2): 395.
- 1995 Heights of the Heavens: Buddhism in Mongolia and Tibet (exhibition review). *Himalayan Research Bulletin* 15(1): 46.
- 1995 Prime Minister Adhikari in London. *Himalayan Research Bulletin* 15(1): 46.
- *1995 Introduction. In *Contested Hierarchies*. Gellner and Quigley, eds., (above), pp. 1-37.
- *1995 Urban Peasants: Maharjans in Kathmandu and Lalitpur. In *Contested Hierarchies*. Gellner and Quigley, eds., (above), pp. 158-85 (with Rajendra Pradhan).
- *1995 Sakyas and Vajracaryas: From Holy Order to Quasi-Ethnic Group. In *Contested Hierarchies*. Gellner and Quigley, eds., (see above), pp. 209-39.

- *1995 Low Castes in Lalitpur. In *Contested Hierarchies*. Gellner and Quigley, eds., (see above), pp. 264-97.
- 1994 Lalitpur. In *Nepal: A Guide to the Art and Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley*. M. Hutt, ed., pp. 138-69. Edinburgh: Kiscadale.
- 1994 Buddhism. In *Nepal: A Guide to the Art and Architecture of the Kathmandu Valley*. M. Hutt, ed., pp. 40-7. Edinburgh: Kiscadale.
- *1994† Priests, Healers, Mediums, and Witches: The Context of Possession in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. *Man* (N.S.) 29: 27-48.
- *1993† Portrait of a Tantric Healer: A Preliminary Report into Curing Traditions in the Kathmandu Valley. In *Nepal: Past and Present*. G. Toffin, ed., pp. 135-47. Paris: CNRS (with Uttam Sagar Shrestha).
- *1993† From Sacred Centres to Communist Strongholds? On the Cities of the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. In *Urban Anthropology and the Supranational and Regional Networks of the Town* (Prague Occasional Papers in Ethnology 2). Z. Uherek, ed., pp. 216-37. Prague: Institute of Ethnology.
- 1992 Report on the conference 'The Anthropology of Nepal: Peoples, Problems and Processes'. *BASAS Bulletin* 19: 14-5.
- *1991† Hinduism, Tribalism, and the Position of Women: The Problem of Newar Identity. *Man* (N.S.) 26(1): 105-25.
- *1991† Max Weber, Capitalism and the Religion of India. Reissue of 1982 article in *Max Weber* (2): *Critical Assessments*. P. Hamilton, ed. London: Routledge.
- *1991 A Newar Buddhist Liturgy: Sravakayanist Ritual in Kwa Bahah, Lalitpur, Nepal. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 14(2): 236-52.
- *1991 Ritualized Devotion, Altruism, and Meditation: The offering of the Guru Mandala in Newar Buddhism. *Indo-Iranian Journal* 34: 161-97.
- *1991 Monk, Householder, and Priest: What the Three Yanas Mean to Newar Buddhists. *The Buddhist Forum* II: 115-32.
- 1991 Pollution and Politics in Kathmandu. *Oxford Magazine* 71: 10-11.
- 1990 assisted in compilation of *Nepal* (World Bibliographies Series vol. 38) J. Whelpton, ed. Oxford: Clío.
- *1990† Introduction: What is the Anthropology of Buddhism about? *Journal of the Anthropological Society of Oxford* 21(2): 95-112 (special issue on the anthropology of Buddhism).
- *1989 Buddhist Monks or Kinsmen of the Buddha? Reflections on the Titles Traditionally used by Sakyas in the Kathmandu Valley. *Kailash* 15(1-2): 5-20.
- *1989 Hodgson's Blind Alley? On the So-called Schools of Nepalese Buddhism. *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12(1): 7-19.
- *1989† Monkhood and Priesthood in Newar Buddhism. In *Prêtrise, Pouvoirs et Autorité en Himalaya*. V. Bouillier and G. Toffin, eds., pp. 165-92. Paris: éd. de l'EHESS (*Purusartha* 12).
- *1988† Priesthood and Possession: Newar Religion in the Light of some Weberian Concepts. *Pacific Viewpoint* 29(2): 119-43.

- *1988 Monastic Initiation in Newar Buddhism. In *Indian Ritual and its Exegesis*. R.F. Gombrich, ed., pp. 42-112. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- *1988 Hinduism and Buddhism in the Nepal Valley. In *The World's Religions*. Sutherland, Clarke, Hardy, and Houlden, eds., pp. 739-55. London: Routledge; Boston: G.K. Hall. Reprinted 1990 in *The World's Religions: The Religions of Asia*, pp. 207-23. London: Routledge.
- *1987† The Newar Buddhist Monastery: An Anthropological and Historical Typology. In *The Heritage of the Kathmandu Valley*. N. Gutschow and A. Michaels, eds., pp. 365-415. Sankt Augustin: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag, Nepalica Series 4.
- 1986 (NS 1106) Mr. David Gellner's Speech, Text of a Speech Given in 1984 to the Young Men's Buddhist Association, Kathmandu. *Nhasala* Kathmandu 16: 15-30 (in Nepal Bhasha).
- *1986 Language, Caste, Religion and Territory: Newar Identity Ancient and Modern. *European Journal of Sociology* 27(1): 102-48.
- 1984 Cities and Mandalas. Review Article. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* 12(2): 115-26.
- 1984 (NS 1104) On the famous Prajna Paramita in Lalitpur's Hiranyavarna Mahavihara. *Nhasala* 14: 37-42 (in Nepal Bhasha).
- 1983 Is Newar Buddhism Corrupt? *Prajna Darshan* 1 (yearly Buddha Jayanti magazine, Lalitpur, Nepal): 53-7.
- *1982† Max Weber, Capitalism and the Religion of India. *Sociology* 16(4): 526-43.
- 1980 *The Challenge of Populism: Can the Centre Hold?* Report on the Indo-British Exchange III, a conference held in Kingston-on-Thames, June, 27pp.
- 1978 Gurkha Swords into Ploughshares. *New Society* 17/8/78: 346-8 (with C. Humphrey).