

History and Society Module: A Reading List

By Pratyoush Onta

This reading list is a slightly revised one of the version I used for the history module of the Immersion Course conducted in Kathmandu (in the latter phase under the Social Science Baha) during 2008. This module consisted of five lecture-cum-discussion sessions for Nepali students.

Course Description

History is not a simple description of the past. Instead it is a narrative that tries to explain both how and why societies have changed or evolved over a given time period. Hence any understanding of the present requires an adequate understanding of the past. The aim of the "History and Society" module is to (i) familiarize students to the discipline of history and (ii) help them think about why and how history matters in the present. With respect to history as an academic discipline, we will briefly examine its own history and its current diversity, both thematically and methodologically. We will also discuss the relationship between the rise of history as a discipline and the history of the nation-states. With respect to the second aim we will discuss the modern history of Nepal.

Classes will be held in the form of lectures and discussions. The students should preferably read all the assigned readings for part I by the beginning of the module. Readings will be the source of discussions and students should come to class with a critical opinion on them. Students are also encouraged to read historical writings available in journals such as *Contributions to Nepalese Studies* (published by the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, CNAS of Tribhuvan University), *Voice of History* (Central Dept. of History, TU) and *Studies in Nepali History and Society* (published by Mandala Book Point).

I. The Production of Historical Sensibility (two sessions)

History as a sense of the past: fiction, facts, truth
Units of analysis: scale, time and space; individual/society; agency/structure
Evidence, sources, archives, methods, oral history
Causation, explanation, interpretations, narratives
History and the nation-state
State of Nepali historiography: themes and methods; sites of historical knowledge production; history as a profession; current state of historical pedagogy

Required readings:

First session

Pratyoush Onta. 1994. Dukha during the World War. *Himal* 7(6): 24-29.

Yogesh Raj. 2007. Itihasma byaktitvako utkhanan. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 12(1): 141-174.

Michael Hutt. 2007. Bhupi Sherchan: From schoolboy to sarvahara. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 12(1): 1-23

- Shekhar Parajulee. 2005. Radio sravanko Nepali anubhav. In *Radiosanga Hurkanda: Tinpuste Nepaliko Anubhav*. Shekhar Parajulee and Pratyoush Onta, eds., pp. 7-35. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari.
- Afsan Chowdhury. 2008. How little we will ever know...*Himal Southasian* 21(7): 48-51.

Second session

- Peter Burke. 1992. Overture: the new history, its past and its future. In *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. P. Burke, ed., pp. 1-23. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Lokranjan Parajuli. 2008. Researching civil society in Pokhara: Methodological concerns. Draft chapter two of his dissertation completed in 2009 as *The Historical Evolution of Civil Society: Pokhara (1949-1972)*. PhD diss., University of Bielefeld.
- Pratyoush Onta. 2003. The Institutional Future of Academic History in Nepal. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 8(1): 125-156.

II. History and the Nepali state (three sessions)

- The rise of the Gorkhali Empire (c. 1740-1816)
- The "Silent Cry" (1816-1846)
- The Rana Century (1846-1951): land, military, labour and politics
- The Panchayati State (1960-1990): State Hinduism, monarchy, Nepali language national history and gendered citizen

Required readings:

Third session

- Mahesh C Regmi. 1995. *Kings and Political Leaders of the Gorkhali Empire*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

Fourth session

- Ludwig Stiller. 1976. The Silent Cry. In *The Silent Cry: The People of Nepal (1816-39)*, pp. 288-313. Kathmandu: Sahayogi Prakashan.
- Ramesh Dhungel. 2008. Jung Bahadur revisited. *Himal Southasian* 21(7): 35-37.
- John Whelpton. 1993. Ranas Good, Ranas Bad... *Himal* 6(4): 11-14.

Fifth session

- Pratyoush Onta. 1999. The Career of Bhanubhakta as a History of Nepali National Culture, 1940-1999. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 4(1): 65-136.
- Tamang, Seira. 2000. Legalizing state patriarchy in Nepal. *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 5(1): 127-156.