

THE INSTITUTIONAL FUTURE OF ACADEMIC HISTORY IN NEPAL

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Like other disciplines, history has already established itself as one of the subjects of academic study in Nepal. Its practitioners and their work have contributed to enhancing our knowledge of Nepali polity and society in a number of ways. Hence it is not unusual that the discipline and the activities that constitute its substance should be selected for reflective exercises from time to time. Many seminars, discussions and workshops have been devoted to the themes and practices related to Nepali history in the past three decades or so. Several of the papers presented on those occasions have been published. Recommendations that have emerged from workshops and discussions to enhance the practices associated with the discipline in Nepal have also been made public. In addition, from time to time, several historians have published comments on some aspects of Nepali history as contributions to debates on historiography.

In this paper I do not intend to rehearse in full previously executed analyses of the history of academic history in and on Nepal.¹ Instead I will be concerned, in the main, with some institutional and financial themes that have not received adequate attention in relation to how history as a discipline has been practiced and promoted in Nepal. In particular, I will seek answers to the following three questions:

1 For those who are not familiar with these variously competent analyses, I would like to recommend in particular the works of Stiller (1974), Adhikari (1980), Vaidya and Bhurtel (1984), articles in Manandhar et al. (1995), Vaidya (1974), Manandhar (1984, 1997), Sharma (1974), and Kshetry (2003) and commentaries on some of these writings published adjacent to the original articles. Also interesting to read would be the exchange between Mahesh Raj Pant (1984) and Kamal P Malla (1984) for what it can teach us about different conceptions of historiography at play in Nepal. In addition most works on Nepali history also come with some sections devoted to literature review and additional comments on related historiography. Speaking for myself, in the past ten years, I have published my views on various aspects of history writing of Nepal and the profession of history in Nepal, both in academic (Onta 1993a, 1994, 1997b, 1997e, 2001a) and popular (Onta 1993b, 1993c, 1993d, 1997a, 1997c, 1997d) media forms.

1. What are the institutional sites from where academic history on Nepal has been produced, both inside and outside of Nepal? What is the future of these institutional locations?
2. Given that universities are important sites to history production globally, what are the characteristics of the current university-based state of history production – teaching, research and publications – in Nepal?
3. What can be done to overcome the institutional and financial bottlenecks that inhibit the robust growth of research on history in Nepal?

In an effort to answer these questions in this essay, I shall demonstrate that historical knowledge about Nepal has been produced from a variety of institutional sites both inside and outside of Nepal. However some of these sites have exhausted their energy due to their inability to reproduce themselves in intergenerational terms. Hence the future of history is probably dependent on the university as a home more now than any time in the past in Nepal. But the overall health of the university as a site for academic production is itself not too good. Hence I shall end by suggesting that if academic history is to have a future in Nepal, ways of individual and institutional collaboration between historians located in the university and new non-governmental organizations will have to be found.

At the outset it must be noted that methodological and thematic concerns of history as a discipline are not addressed in this essay.² It is also likely that I have been unable to ask other pertinent questions related to the practice of history in Nepal and fully answer the ones I have raised here. In any case, this essay must be seen as a contribution to the long-standing debate about the status and future of history as an academic discipline in Nepal, and not the last word on the subject.

Institutional Backgrounds of Academic History Production

Academic history writing on Nepal is done both within the country and outside of it. It thus makes sense to broadly separate these two spaces for

2 I have discussed some aspects of the thematic and methodological concerns of Nepali historiography at length elsewhere (Onta 1994, 1999). In the analysis that follows, where names of individuals and institutions are mentioned and works cited, no effort has been made to be exhaustive. The idea is to exemplify and not provide a full list of works, people and institutions.

an analytic look at the institutional geography of historical knowledge production on Nepal. Here I first discuss the Nepali scenario and then follow it up with a discussion about the scene outside of Nepal.

Inside Nepal

In the post-Rana period (i.e., post-1951), historical scholarship in Nepal has emanated from personal and institutional settings. At the personal level, we have had the likes of non-academic historians such as Chittaranjan Nepali who made a mark for himself in the late 1950s and early 1960s writing on Bhimsen Thapa and Ranabhadur Shah and more recently on various aspects of Rana Nepal (Nepali 2013 v.s., 2020 v.s., 2055 v.s.). People like Nepali have often led full-time careers elsewhere and have written history to fulfill their intellectual passions on the side.³ In this category we must also locate people like the recently departed Yogi Narharinath whose contribution to the publication of important historical raw materials (e.g., 2022 v.s.) are well recognized and Purna Prakash Nepal Yatri (e.g., 2035 v.s.) whose extensive travel accounts contain variously useful historical analyses.

As far as institutional settings of historical knowledge production inside Nepal are concerned, we have in the main two types: (1) non-university based institutions and (2) university-based departments and research centres. I will be examining the latter in some detail in the next section of this essay. Here I provide short descriptions of some examples of both types.

Non-university based institutions come in a variety of shapes and sizes in terms of their ownership, staff size, resource base and management styles. Just to exemplify this point, we can mention here the Royal Nepal Academy (a government supported body), Regmi Research Centre (a private company), Samsodhan Mandal (a group in which membership was based on commitment to certain 'fundamental' academic procedures), and the Centre for Social Research and Development (a non-governmental organization, NGO). We could include here other organisations (both NGOs and private companies) that do consultancy research with a historical component although such

3 Chittaranjan Nepali served in the bureaucracy of His Majesty's Government (HMG) until retirement and was then nominated for a post in the Elections Commission. After his tenure there was over, he was nominated as a fellow at the Royal Nepal Academy where he has done some more history-related work (see Nepali et al. 2058 v.s.).

research, fully in the domain of history, has been more the exception than the rule.

The Royal Nepal Academy has traditionally been a short-term institutional home to a small number of full-time and part-time historians (such as Surya Bikram Gyawali, Satya Mohan Joshi, Lain Singh Bangdel, Nayaraj Pant, Gyanmani Nepal, Chittaranjan Nepali, etc.). Established by late King Mahendra in the late 1950s, the Royal Nepal Academy is a government supported institution where a certain number of artists and academics get appointed as fellows with tenure of few years. These academic fellows are supported with a moderate state-given stipend and some secretarial and administrative support. The work of fellows is occasionally published by the Academy itself and often times by other publishers. The Academy also hosts irregular seminars on history and other topics and publishes several journals including *Pragñā* where articles in the field of history have been published. In recent years, the Academy has increasingly fallen into a fiscal and administrative crisis and its intellectual environment has deteriorated although it continues to publish works in the domain of history (e.g., Nepali et al. 2058 v.s.).⁴

Regmi Research Centre (RRC) was founded by late Mahesh C Regmi in the late 1950s. Until his death in mid-2003 Regmi functioned as the solitary historian of RRC, administratively helped by a small group of non-academic assistants. Based on documents he had collected from the department of land revenue in the Ministry of Finance, the Jaisikotha section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Department of Survey and offices under the Guthi corporation of His Majesty's Government (HMG) of Nepal, as well as the Pashupatinath Temple offices, Regmi produced about a dozen books of outstanding quality on economic and political history of 18th and 19th century Nepal (e.g., Regmi 1971, 1976, 1978). RCC and Regmi's work was mainly supported through the sale of the organization's several services, most of which have now been abandoned. These included miscellaneous translation services, the *Nepal Press Digest* (mostly summaries in English from the Nepali language press and some extracts from the English press in Nepal), *Nepal Recorder* (translations of Nepali laws) and the periodical *Regmi Research Series* in which apart from English translations of important historical documents, one comes across short historical analyses written, in the main, by Regmi himself. Regmi

4 For more details on the history of Royal Nepal Academy, see, among others, Royal Nepal Academy 2039 v.s.

resisted most invitations to participate in other academic forums in Nepal or to contribute articles to other journals (including this), preferring instead to invest his energies in producing important books. Although at times certain historians made extensive use of the documents collected by Regmi from various government offices, he seemed to have not put any effort to cultivate a new generation of historians to carry on with the kind of research he had managed to do all by himself. After Regmi's death it is doubtful whether RRC can provide any academic contribution to the field of history in Nepal.⁵

The late Nayaraj Pant's Samsodhan Mandal was a *gurukul* style school that adhered to some fundamentals as integral to the process of training as a historian.⁶ These included mastery of Sanskrit, rote memorization of some key texts, and rectification of errors committed by other historians, among other things. This school has made significant contributions toward the publication of various types of new historical documents and evidence, provided us with a relatively secure knowledge of the chronology of the successive ruling dynasties of Nepal from the Licchavi period to now and pointed our attention to inaccuracies in the works of both academic and popular historians of Nepal. It has also generated a corpus of booklets, monographs, books and more than 100 issues of its in-house journal *Pūrṇimā*. The school has produced important historians in the form of late Dhanavajra Vajracharya, Gyanmani Nepal, Mahes Raj Pant, Dines Raj Pant, etc. By the time of the death of its initiator on 4 November 2002, the school had been reduced to the guru and his two sons, one of whom, Mahes Raj Pant, had been variously employed in European academic institutions for most of the last two decades. Samsodhan Mandal was plagued by financial problems from its very beginning and after an initial phase of great activity in the 1950s and the 1960s, it could not find the means to retain its students and reproduce itself in intergenerational terms. Hence beginning from the early 1970s, it went into a decline. For this reason, among others, the two sons have described their father's attempt at a *gurukul* alternative to

5 See Pokharel (2003), Dhakal (2003) and Luitel (2003) for popular evaluations of Regmi's life and work that appeared immediately after his death on 10 July 2003. For my own reading of Regmi the person and his work, see Onta 2003.

6 See Pant (1984), Nepal (2054 v.s.), K.C. (2059 v.s.) and variously descriptive essays in Sivakoti (2059 v.s.) for more details on this school and its founder. See Uprety (1995) for a sympathetic account of this school's achievements and Malla (1984) for a critical view of the same.

formal university-based education and degrees as a 'failure' (Pant and Pant 2002).

The Centre for Social Research and Development is a NGO staffed by a few academics including this writer (who is the sole historian in the group), Jagannath Adhikari (geographer), Seira Tamang (political scientist), and Lazima Onta-Bhatta (anthropologist). Historical research has been accomplished through individual research, mostly done on academic fellowships at the doctoral or post-doctoral levels (e.g., Onta 1999, 2001a; Tamang 2000; Onta-Bhatta 2001) or on non-support basis (e.g., Adhikari's work leading up to Adhikari and Seddon 2002). Historical research has also been accomplished through group work mostly done with support from foundations and donor organizations (e.g., Onta 2002) who have also supported a joint CSR-D-Martin Chautari (MC) initiative in editing and publishing historical works written by other authors (e.g., Ojha 2003, Pradhan forthcoming).⁷ Historical scholarship has also been promoted through the journal *Studies in Nepali History and Society*. Since its founding in 1996, quite a few articles by Nepali and foreign scholars have been published in this bilingual (English and Nepali) journal in the fields of history or historical anthropology. CSR-D and MC have, in the past, prepared book review pages in major newspapers and radio.⁸ Historical scholarship has also been promoted through occasional inclusion of history-related presentations and discussions at Martin Chautari and Radio Sagarmatha's discussion program, *Dabalī*, during 1998-99. Mentoring of a new generation of researchers is being attempted via CSR-D/MC's group research exercises in media (e.g., Onta and Parajulee 2001, Onta 2002, Onta and Parajuli 2003, Parajuli and Onta 2003), environmental justice (e.g., Adhikari 2003, Adhikari and Ghimire 2003) and gender. However it must also be noted that since the overall objective of CSR-D and MC is to promote the conditions for the creative production of and deliberation on social science research and writing in Nepal, historical scholarship is not the only work these two organizations do.

7 Martin Chautari was originally only a public discussion forum. Between 1996 and 2002, it existed as an autonomous project of CSR-D. In November 2002, it was registered as a separate non-government organization. For more details on MC, see Lal 2001.

8 The book reviews were published in *The Kathmandu Post* for six and half years between 1996 and 2002 and *Rājdhānī* for six months between September 2001 and February 2002. Radio programs dedicated to books were broadcast over various FM radio stations for nine months during 2001-02.

University-based entities include teaching departments such as the Central department of history and research institutions such as the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies, both at Tribhuvan University (TU). The newly established universities (Kathmandu, Purvanchal, Pokhara) have not taken up history in their faculty, given their preference for relatively more market-driven subjects such as management and information technology and lack of commitment to build relevant social science faculties from the bottom-up.⁹ The central department of history at TU came into existence with TU's establishment in 1959 and hence it is now 44 years old. It granted its first MA in 1961 and its first PhD degree in 1971. The central department and other history teaching departments of TU currently employ over 230 historians and I would guess that private colleges affiliated with TU probably employ a few additional historians as teachers. There is an overwhelming amount of in-breeding because all teachers at TU have been educated (partially or fully) through the TU system with the same senior professors as teachers. The central department of history has published an irregular journal *Voice of History* and the history department of Prithivi Narayan Campus in Pokhara has in recent years published the journal *Historia*. These will be dealt with in more detail later.

The Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS) was founded in July 1972 as the Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies (INAS). An Institute of Nepal Studies (INS) had existed in a small scale in TU since 1969 and it was replaced by INAS in accordance with the directives for higher education in the New Education System Plan of 1971. Dr Prayag Raj Sharma, who had trained in ancient history and archaeology, was the founder dean of INAS. Due to lack of resources, in its early days, INAS gave priority to only Nepal Studies in anthropology and sociology, history and linguistics, the research in each being guided by a subject committee consisting of scholars from INAS, departments of TU and elsewhere. Perhaps because there were, relatively speaking, more faculty members trained in history in its initial years, some of INAS's early research projects and publications were historical documents and analyses related to different parts of Nepal and themes of Nepali history. The most well-known of them is the book of late Dhanavajra Vajracharya (2030 v.s.), *Licchavikālkā Abhilekh*. Vajracharya, who worked in CNAS from

9 These universities offer MA or MPhil level programs in certain subjects in which they do not offer a BA. On how the market (particularly the donor-driven development one) influences curricula, see Shah (2002).

its inception to the time of his death in 1994, was also involved in the research and publication of several other historical works.¹⁰

Due to changes in TU's academic structure, INAS was converted to CNAS in September 1977. It has continued to provide support for historical research by some of its faculty members through the provision of salaried employment without any teaching commitments as well as by some outside researchers.¹¹ Vajracharya and other CNAS researchers conceived the National History Project in the early 1980s and it was eventually executed in collaboration with other historians located in TU departments and elsewhere. This was an ambitious plan involving the commissioning of separate monographs on different themes of Nepali history including political, administrative, religious, social, cultural, economic and art history from ancient times to the end of the 1950s. This project ran into several administrative and fiscal problems (Nepal 2054 v.s.) and some assigned monographs were never completed. Those who completed their writings by the late 1980s had to wait until the mid-1990s to see their works in print.

More recently, with the help of American art historian Mary Slusser, CNAS has instituted a small grants scheme in the memory of historian Dhanavajra Vajracharya. This research fellowship supports one project in history per year and a few historians have already used this opportunity to execute short-term research projects (e.g., Gautam 2057 v.s., K.C. 2059 v.s.). CNAS has also supported historical scholarship through its publication of monographs, its journal *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, and an irregular seminar series. It is largely financially supported by its mother organization, TU and has in recent years, faced serious financial crisis, particularly in terms of funding for items other than faculty salaries (this will be dealt with in more detail later).¹²

10 Based on Tuladhar and Vaidya (2001), it seems that during its first decade (1972-81), CNAS published 41 studies, monographs and books out of which about half were historical tracts and research reference items. See Sharma and Malla (1994) and K.C. (2059 v.s.) for details on Vajracharya's work.

11 According to Nirmal Tuladhar, those who do historical research at CNAS belong to history or culture faculty. Among the 18 faculty members at CNAS, six are historians. They include Tek Bahadur Shrestha, Mohan Khanal, Ramesh Dhungel, Dilliraj Sharma, Jagaman Gurung, and Sushila Manandhar. Among them Shrestha is about to retire and several of the others are on various types of study or non-study leaves.

12 For more details on CNAS and the general challenges facing it, see Onta (2001b, 2001c).

Outside Nepal

As I noted ten years ago (Onta 1993a), in a curious division of labour, most anthropologists of Nepal are non-Nepalis and most historians of Nepal are Nepalis. In the immediate post-Rana period, Nepal's perceived isolation from forces of modernity made it particularly suitable for it to be transformed as a locale for anthropological explorations on the part of foreign academics. The highway initially opened up by the likes of Christoph von Furer-Haimendorf and other anthropologists of his generation in the 1950s has become quite crowded in recent years with Nepal receiving perhaps more anthropological attention per capita than most other countries of the region. On the other hand, the historical highway opened by the likes of Bhagwanlal Indraji, Cecil Bendall, Sylvain Levi, Hara Prasad Sastri, and Rajendra Lal Mitra during the late 19th century or at the turn of the 20th century has seen only an occasional traveler in the form of a Giuseppe Tucci, Luciano Petech, Rainero Gnoli, Bernhard Kolver, Mary Slusser, Kanchanmoy Mojumdar, Daniel Edwards, Jean-Claude Marize, Ramakant, John Whelpton, Bernardo Michael, Rhoderick Chalmers and a few others.¹³

The reasons that gave continuity to this curious division of labour can be discussed in some detail but for the purpose of this paper, it might simply be noted that the political economy of being a historian of Nepal located in an institution outside of Nepal has worked against individuals with qualifications (even more so than for the anthropologists of Nepal who are also marginalized). While certain Indologists in the west (such as Kolver in Germany) did manage to give continuity to their research on Nepali history, others, especially those specializing in modern Nepali history did not find placement in academic history departments, including those specializing in modern South Asia in the UK and the US. It is for this reason that a historian like John Whelpton had to abandon university-based academia and take up another profession.¹⁴ Closer to Nepal, amongst the first generation of post-independence Indian historians, a few like Kanchanmoy Mojumdar and Ramakant chose to do research on the

13 As far as I am aware, Hoar (1959) is the first PhD in history related to Nepal awarded by any American University. However, unlike those named here, Hoar seems to have not done any substantial research on Nepal after obtaining his doctorate.

14 Whelpton teaches English in a secondary school in Hong Kong (see interview with Whelpton in Onta forthcoming). I have discussed Indian scholarship on Nepal, including in the field of history, elsewhere (Onta 2001a).

diplomatic history of Nepal but even their achievements have not been built upon by subsequent Indian scholars largely due to the decay of Nepal studies in India (Onta 2001a). As far as I am aware, there is not a single dedicated chair or position on Nepali history in any academic institution in the rest of the world. This means that the few foreign historians of Nepal are scattered in various institutions around the world and work on individual projects and themes that are variously generated and funded.¹⁵

However three points must be noted. First it must be acknowledged that anthropologists of Nepal, especially those who are also interested in the historical dimensions of the subjects and themes of their inquiry have contributed significantly to historical knowledge of Nepal and its people. Just to cite some recent examples to prove my point, we might recall here the work of Gerard Toffin and the late Richard Burghart on Hindu Kingship, Veronique Bouillier on the relationship between the Gorkhali state and ascetics, Sherry Ortner on Sherpa history, Mary Des Chene on the history of the Gurkhas, Marie Lecomte-Tilouine on Magar history, Charles Ramble on the history of the Mustang region, Todd Lewis on Newar-Tibet connections, Mark Liechty on the history of consumption and class in Kathmandu, David Holmberg and Kathryn March on Tamang labour history, and Martin Gaenzle on Nepali history of Banaras. In fact it seems that most of the recent non-Nepali anthropological work on Nepal has had an explicit historical dimension. However, to properly assess the contribution of this trans-disciplinary genre of work to historical scholarship on Nepal would be to go beyond the remit of this paper.

Second, there have been several multidisciplinary research projects in which some foreign historians or historical anthropologists have participated and contributed to the furthering of historical knowledge related to Nepal. Examples that fit this type can be found under the Nepal Research Programme established by the German Research Council in 1980. Social historians, art historians, and Indologists who benefited from this program contributed to the furthering of history in Nepal (see Kolver 1992). Some such projects have been designed with explicit collaborative features between foreign and Nepali research institutions and individuals.

¹⁵ In the past ten years, apart from Bernardo Michael's 2001 PhD at the University of Hawaii and Rhoderick Chalmers' 2003 PhD at the School of Oriental and African Studies (University of London) I am not aware of any new entries in this group.

An example of this would be the Nepal-German Project on High Mountain Archaeology involving several German institutions and the Department of Archaeology of HMG. This project was begun in the early 1990s to do research on the history of Mustang area in western Nepal and some of the results have been published in various issues of the journal *Ancient Nepal* starting with its issue no 130. However it must also be noted that considerable difficulties remain regarding foreign research on Nepal and the execution of international collaborative research projects (cf. Kolver 1992).

Third, we must note instances of institutional collaboration that have contributed to upgrading the conditions of historical research in Nepal. As an example of this, we could cite the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project which lasted from 1970 to 2001. In these 31 years, variously owned handwritten and other documents numbering to a total exceeding 160,000 were microfilmed.¹⁶ A copy of the microfilm has been deposited at the National Archives of Nepal and another copy taken to Germany to provide access to scholars there. An index has also been prepared to facilitate easier access to researchers. Another effort at collaboration was the initiation of the microfilming project at the Kathmandu-based Madan Puruskar Library (MPL) by the US-based Canadian anthropologist Mary Des Chene. She purchased the microfilming equipment and had it delivered in Kathmandu from a personal research grant during the academic year 1996-97. The microfilming work began in 1997 but was discontinued after some months due to the lack of organizational commitment on the part of MPL. It has been resumed only recently.

Despite these attempts at international collaborations it remains the case that as a consequence of the division of labour discussed above, there has been very little cross-fertilization of various historical inquiry traditions when it comes to the history of Nepal. This means academic history writing in Nepal suffers from a substantial degree of non-critical inbreeding (especially amongst the graduates of Tribhuvan University) that has not been healthy to the life of the discipline.

Before we move on to the next section, it might be useful to sum up what I have demonstrated thus far. Through a brief account of the institutional geography of historical knowledge production related to

¹⁶ The documents copied by Mahesh C Regmi from various government offices and compiled in the form of what has been called Regmi Research Collections were also microfilmed as part of this project (Onta 2003).

Nepal, I have argued that in the post-1951 period, history writing has been attempted and achieved from a variety of individual and institutional sites, both inside and outside of Nepal. If the existing corpus of the discipline has any worth, then it is certainly the case that it has been produced out of the labour of many variously endowed individuals who were often greatly under-remunerated for the time and energy they invested in the process. With the demise of non-university based institutions started by the likes of Nayaraj Pant and Mahesh C Regmi and the fiscal and administrative crises that have engulfed government institutions such as the Royal Nepal Academy, it might seem that it is now up to researchers at Tribhuvan University and new non-government institutions in Nepal to carry on with further work in this discipline. However one can not be very optimistic about this for reasons discussed later in this paper. Outside of Nepal, unless the political economy of academic jobs for historians of Nepal improves drastically in their favour, historical knowledge related to Nepal will be produced increasingly from within anthropology. As such it will be subject to that discipline's thematic and methodological pre-occupations.

History at Tribhuvan University

In this section I want to address, in the main, some institutional aspects of the pedagogic status of academic history in Nepal including issues related to history teaching in post-secondary school environment and history curricula at the college and university levels. Since other universities do not offer history courses, my analysis will be confined to the case of Tribhuvan University. I shall also examine the state of outlets for professional writings in article and book forms as well as the financial aspects of history teaching and research. I also want to look at the workings of an organization formed to promote academic history in Nepal.

Students for History

In the past few years, it has become almost a cliché to say that history is a subject that no longer attracts students in TU, the only formal degree granting educational centre where intergenerational pedagogic exercises in history take place. A few newspaper accounts have reported that the number of students taking history has decreased and some history teachers themselves have enrolled in sociology classes seeing that there are not many jobs available to historians (e.g., Luitel 2001, Adhikari 2001). These reports have tended to focus on the small number of

students who enroll in MA courses at the central department of history of TU in Kirtipur, Kathmandu. But as the analysis of Krishna B Thapa and Chandra B Budhathoki (2003) – who are both professors in the central department of history at TU – have confirmed, although history is not a subject that is very much in demand in comparison with subjects such as sociology or management, the scene is more complex than has been hitherto reported.

According to Thapa and Budhathoki history is taught at the proficiency certificate level (PCL) in 99 colleges, at the BA level in 85 colleges and at the MA/PhD level in four colleges. Basing their analysis on data generated by the Examinations Control office of Tribhuvan University for the year 2058 v.s (2001-02), Thapa and Budhathoki say that about 5750 students took the second year PCL exam in history, about 1450 students took the third year BA exam in history and about 67 students took the first year MA exam in history. Extrapolating from these numbers they conclude that the number of students studying history in both years of PCL, in three years of BA courses and two years of MA total anywhere from fourteen and half to fifteen thousand students.¹⁷ Thapa and Budhathoki conclude that this number is not small and hence history continues to be a subject that remains popular among students. However they concede that there is another side to this story. Amongst the 99 colleges teaching history at the PCL level, 10 had less than 5 students each and 12 had between 5 and 10 students each. But other colleges fared better – one had nearly 400 students, five had more than 200 students, and several had between 100 and 200 students. Therefore it is safe to say that while history has attracted a diminishing number of students in some colleges, in other colleges of TU, the numbers of students enrolled in history classes are by no means small.¹⁸

17 They seem to have made a mistake when doing the calculations. If we assume that there are at least 5750 students in both years of PCL studies (i.e., 11500), at least 1450 students in each year of the three-year BA studies (i.e., 4350) and about 150 students in the two-year MA studies and about 10 PhD students, then the total comes out to be sixteen thousand. Also all students who are enrolled in history courses do not take the relevant exams each year, opting to 'drop' some papers. Hence the total number is certainly greater than sixteen thousand.

18 I have not been able to find published figures for student enrolment in history for an earlier period. The data for PCL enrolment given in Joshi et al. (1981) is disaggregated only at the level of institutes (e.g. the Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences under which history would fall) and not at the level of

Thapa and Budhathoki suggest that without further and substantial research on the topic (especially in relationship to several other factors influencing academic environments), it is very difficult to be precise as to why the numbers taking history has decreased in the colleges where they have. Since students are largely attracted to subjects whose graduates have done better in the job market in recent years, it is possible that more students in the humanities/social sciences have been attracted to subjects such as sociology and anthropology than history where the job market outside of academia is rather limited. Then it remains the case that these subjects come after science and technology, and management in the attraction hierarchy and general job markets for recent graduates. Thapa and Budhathoki also add that due to the specific nature of how certain subjects have been clustered during the first year of PCL of TU—which is the entry level for all further education in history at the university—those opting for history find themselves at a disadvantage while choosing subjects in the subsequent year.

Thapa and Budhathoki surmise that the diminishing number of students could also be related to the fact that the PCL curricula have not been changed for almost three decades. At one point in the mid-1990s, it was thought that the PCL level would be gradually phased out from the university system and a 10+2 system would become available to all students completing the 10th grade School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exams. With this expectation in mind, the PCL curricula were not changed but the BA and MA curricula were revised when a three-year BA program was introduced (instead of a two-year BA). Hence the history curricula in Nepal have not kept pace with curricular changes adopted by even corresponding history programs in the South Asian neighborhood. The linkages between the retention of the old curricula at the PCL level and the adoption of the revised curricula at the BA and MA levels and student numbers in history remain to be worked out. But it remains true that the demand for curricular flexibility in history teaching at TU far supercedes its capacity to respond to it.

On the other hand, in institutions where 10+2 is being offered, history is not being taught and more market friendly subjects are being offered. Given this lack of opportunity for students in this system at the entry

disciplines. Comparative enrolment data for PCL and BA for Bhaktapur Campus and for MA at the Central Department of History, for the years between 1996 and 2000, can be found in Hachethu (2002:58).

level, avenues for higher education in history do not remain open to these students in Nepal, argue Thapa and Budhathoki.

Finally it remains the case that failure to change the reading list often to reflect the changing challenges of the discipline gives it an image of being not 'up-to-date'. Bureaucratic regimes of academic management and the generally poor academic environment of TU do not provide an atmosphere conducive for the relevant faculty to take up frequent curricula changing responsibilities.¹⁹ In addition, financial and managerial concerns of the centralized bureaucracy of TU make changes in curricula a difficult proposition, both in terms of the money needed to come up with new curricula and the managerial capacity to produce and deliver reading materials according to frequently changing syllabi. While all disciplines taught at TU suffer from this lack, it might be the case that the perception regarding history as a 'backward' subject is more severe than 'new' subjects such as anthropology and sociology (which were introduced at TU only in the 1980s) and development studies (introduced in the last few years).

We must also add yet another point to put the diminishing number of master's level students at the central department of history in Kathmandu in perspective. Until some years ago, this department was the only one in which studies leading to an MA in history were conducted. As part of the democratic growth of education in Nepal (which has far surpassed TU's administrative and academic capacity for quality monitoring), MA studies in history are now available in three other locations and hence students who would have otherwise come to Kathmandu do not have to do so anymore. When universities other than TU also start offering courses in history, the number of students taking history at the MA Level at TU will most likely decrease.

Research

What is the scenario like for research in history at TU? Despite great odds research by faculty goes on. Just to cite some examples from various sub-fields, TU professor Rajaram Subedee has published six books of regional history in the last six years (e.g., 2054 v.s., 2058 v.s.). Diplomatic historian Vijay K Manandhar (2003) has recently completed a two-volume history on Nepal-China relations. Surendra K.C.'s history of

¹⁹ For various commentaries on the state of teaching and research at TU, see Hachhethu (2002), Manandhar (2059 v.s.), Bhattachan (1996), Simkhada (2003), Dahal (2000), and Subedi (2000), among others.

the initial years of the Nepal Communist Party was a bestseller (K.C. 1999) and its sequel has been published in 2003. Rajesh Gautam (2055 v.s., 2057 v.s.), Bhaveshwar Pangen (2053 v.s.) and Suryamani Adhikari (1998) continue to be prolific in their research and publications regarding the political history of the democratic movements leading to the end of the Rana regime in 1951 and its immediate aftermaths.

Despite the work of those listed here (and many others who have not been mentioned), it is still fair to conclude that not much investment is being made to produce the next generation of competent historians in Nepal. As discussed earlier, TU is the centre of intergenerational pedagogic exercises and there is very little evidence to suggest that a robust generation of young historians has emerged in the horizon (as is the case for India in the region). Those who register for an MA thesis or a PhD often find that the research supervision process is not institutionalized and substantial guidance from thesis advisors is more often than not missing.²⁰

Seminar series where researchers can present their work and interact with younger students and colleagues do not exist as a regular part of the academic exercise of even the central department of history of TU. When asked why faculty members (there are more than 20 lecturers, readers and professors in that department) can not take up the organizing of such a seminar as a routine part of their responsibilities, I have been told that there are no incentives within TU to take up such extra burden. The lack of enthusiasm to try something new and the overwhelming linking of any and all activities to ones career possibilities within TU are symptoms of inertia that is all pervasive and debilitating.

Publishing

In the early 1970s, discussions related to the study of history in Nepal often involved a complaint about the lack of publication possibilities for articles and books (e.g., Stiller 1974). With respect to the publication possibilities of research articles, the situation has definitely changed in the favour of historians. Journals that include Nepali history amongst the

20 This representation is based on conversations with students who are in the MA program or have just completed it at the central department of history in Kathmandu and Prithvi Narayan Campus in Pokhara. I would like to thank in particular Purna Ksetry, Matrika Sharma, Bikas Karki, Indra Dev Rai and Uma Kanta Regmi at the central department and Chandra K Poudel and Ishwar Subedi in Pokhara.

subjects they publish have grown in terms of numbers in the last three decades. The ones to note are *Ancient Nepal*, *Voice of History*, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, *Kailash* (now irregular), *Pūrṇimā*, *Rolamba*, and *Studies in Nepali History and Society* published from within Nepal and *Himalayan Research Bulletin*, *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* and others published from outside of Nepal.

As a publication of the central department of history, *Voice of History* stands as a window onto the editorial commitments of Nepal's most well-placed university historians. However an analysis of this bilingual (English and Nepali) journal's track record reveals some not so encouraging facts: long delays, poor editorial standards, and no strict quality monitoring in terms of what it chooses to print. This journal was first published in 1975 by the TU History Association. Second and third annual issues were published in the following two years. A combined volume four to six was published in 1980, volumes seven and eight were published in 1981 and 1982 respectively. A combined volume nine through eleven was published in 1986. Volume twelve was not published until 1997. After volume 13 was published in 1998, the editors decided to make it in a biannual publication. Hence two issues each have been published in 1999, 2000 and 2001.²¹

From the above discussion, we can say that in the 15 issues of the journal published until the December 2001 issue, a total of 1701 numbered pages have been printed for an average of 114 pages per issue. Between 1975 and 2000, only a total of 13 issues were published with there being no copies produced for 11 years in between. For this entire 25-year period, the average page of journal production was a paltry 60 per year. For a department consisting of more than 20 faculty members at the moment, this record of journal production and editing leaves a lot to be desired.

Journals largely devoted to historical writings have also been published from history departments of colleges under TU located outside of Kathmandu. Since 1995, the department of history and culture of Prithvi Narayan Campus in Pokhara has published the bilingual (English and Nepali) journal *Historia*. By early 2003, only four issues of this journal had already been published, with the average thickness being 126 pages per issue. After the first three annual issues were published on time, a combined volume four and five issue was published in 2000. A subsequent issue is slated for publication by the end of 2003. The

21 December 2001 was the last issue available in late 2003.

contents vary in quality. Similarly the department of history and culture of Post Graduate Campus in the city of Biratnagar has recently published the bilingual journal *Anveṣaṇ*. I have only seen its vol. 2 no 2 issue published in April 2002. This issue is 202 pages thick and the Nepali section in particular contains more than 12 historical articles of various qualities. Whatever we might say about their irregular publication schedule, both *Historia* and *Anveṣaṇ* have provided useful publication space for historians and other academics, especially those located outside of the national capital of Kathmandu. They have certainly helped in further inculcating a habit of scholarly writing.

In the past commentators have often pointed out that it is not too easy to find publishers for history books on Nepal. As Prayag Raj Sharma (1974) pointed out three decades ago, even in the past, good books have always found publishers. Today the number of publishers willing to publish historical tracts related to Nepal has increased both inside and outside of Nepal. If there is a problem today, then it is related to the absence of editorial quality control in book publishing houses which allows otherwise sensible historians to engage in embarrassing book publication ventures both inside and outside of Nepal (for further details see Onta 1993b, 1993c and 1997a).

Fiscal Aspects

As part of the bureaucratic quagmire in which history teaching and research are caught in TU, we would also have to analyze the limited

Table 1: Budget of Central Department of History, TU (in NRs)

Year (v.s.)	Total Budget	Faculty Salary	Office Support Salary	Provident Funds, etc.	Others
2052/53	18,69,000	15,11,000	66,000	2,38,500	53,500
2057/58	24,32,500	18,35,000	1,64,500	3,70,000	63,000
2059/60	41,60,500	35,22,000	2,30,000	3,36,500	72,000
2060/61	43,40,000	35,57,000	2,32,000	4,79,000	72,000

Source: These figures have been extracted from the annual budget allocations of Tribhuvan University for the relevant years. Printed versions of these budgets are available at the Central Library of TU. The category "others" includes money allocated for maintenance, furniture, stationery, travel expenditure, newspapers, books, meeting expenses, research and student scholarships.

budget available for history research at TU. I do not have the data for the entire TU system but a look at the budget allocated to the central department of history is instructive for what it tells us (see Table 1). A large part of the budget allocated to the central department is spent on covering salaries of the faculty and office support staff and very little money is available for research for faculty and students alike from TU sources. For instance, during the fiscal year 2052/53 v.s. (1995/96), the total budget allocated to the department was Rs 18,69,000 out of which Rs 15,11,000 (80 per cent) were earmarked for faculty salaries, Rs 66,000 for the salary of office support staff, and Rs 2,38,500 for contributions towards provident funds and other salary-like items. In other words, only Rs. 53,500 were available for maintenance, furniture, stationery, travel expenditure, newspapers, books, meetings, research, and student scholarships. Five years later the situation was no different. During the fiscal year 2057/58 v.s., the total budget allocated to the central department of history was Rs. 24,32,500 out of which Rs 18,35,000 (75 per cent) were earmarked for faculty salaries, Rs 1,64,500 for the salary of office support staff, and Rs 3,17,000 for contributions towards provident funds and other salary-like items. Only Rs 63,000 were available for other items including research. Similarly for the fiscal year 2060/61 v.s. which concludes in mid-July 2004, the total budget is Rs 43,40,000 out of which Rs 35,57,000 (82 per cent) are earmarked for faculty salaries, Rs 2,32,000 for the salary of the office support staff, and Rs. 4,79,000 for contributions towards provident funds and other salary-like items. Only Rs 73,000 are allocated for the rest of the items. In all the four years for which data is given in Table 1, the money allocated for research was exactly Rs 2000 each. Apparently this money is spent not on research but on postage and stationery.²² It must also be stated that given the increasingly security focused Nepali state (Kumar 2003), it is very likely that the government's fiscal support for TU will not grow and will possibly decrease in absolute or percentage terms. This means that it is unlikely that there will be any significant departures in the pattern of budget allocations to the central department of history.

²² I thank Rama Parajuli for drawing my attention to the printed versions of the TU budget. Information about how Rs 2000 allocated for 'research' is spent was obtained from Tri Ratna Manandhar, former head of the Central Department of History at TU and currently the dean of the faculty of humanities and social sciences (personal communication).

Occasionally faculty members in the central department and elsewhere have had access to small funding grants from within TU (e.g., from its Research Division) and outside TU (e.g., University Grants Commission, UGC, which was established in 1994). According to the analysis of Krishna Hachhethu (2002: 88-89), between 1996 and 2000, the UGC supported 12 mini research projects, three research visits, two travel grants for attending seminars, seven PhD fellowships and four seminar organizations in the field of history. Those who got fellowships for mini research projects were given grants of up to Rs 20,000. Those who got fellowships for research visits to other South Asian countries were given grants ranging between Rs 9,000 and Rs 20,000. PhD fellows were given monthly stipends ranging between Rs 2,000 and Rs 5,600. Support amount for the organization of seminars ranged between Rs 7,000 to Rs 25,000. UGC has supported the annual seminars organized by the History Association of Nepal.

The central department of history and individual faculty members have not had access to significant outside funding sources to do their work. However it has received small grants on 3 or 4 occasions. For instance, B. P. Koirala India-Nepal Foundation assisted the department in October 1993 to organize a two-day seminar on the 'State of Nepali Historiography' in Kathmandu. This was also attended by some Indian historians and its proceedings have been published (Manandhar et al. 1995). More recently, in 2002, the Kathmandu-based Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) gave the department a small grant (about Rs 60,000) to assist it in the cataloguing of a bundle of government documents. The government had decided to destroy these documents but the department was lucky to get hold of them due to the timely intervention of some faculty members and their acquaintances.

Elsewhere inside TU, the situation is not too different. Let us for example look at the research budget available for faculty members at the Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS). As shown in Table 2, the proportion of the CNAS budget available for research has declined significantly in the last seven years. During the fiscal year 2053/54 v.s. the money allocated for faculty and administration salary (about Rs 25.45 lakhs) was a little less than the money available for the library, research, publications and travel (about 26.5 lakhs). Five years later, the total amount available for research etc (about Rs. 11.41 lakhs) was about one-fifth of what was being spent on salaries (about Rs. 52.68 lakhs). While it is the case that salaries paid to CNAS faculty members should also be considered as research expenditure (as they do not have any other formal

obligations), it must be noted that monies available for research support (library, field research, travel, etc.) has declined significantly. This means that all researchers within CNAS, including its resident historians, have fewer resources available to them than in the past.

Table 2: Budget of CNAS, TU (in NRs)

Year	Faculty Salary	Administration Salary	Library	Publication	Travel, Research, etc.
2053/54	14,99,000	10,46,500	25,000	6,90,000	19,35,000
2058/59	29,57,000	23,11,000	41,000	7,00,000	4,00,000
2060/61	32,84,500	27,78,000	41,000	6,00,000	4,10,000

Source: Annual budget allocations of Tribhuvan University for the relevant years.

Given the scenario described here, it is quite clear that if history faculty and student researchers are to rely only on governmental and TU funding sources for research money, they will not be able to come up with much. An alternative would be to fund research from personal sources which are obviously equally lacking in most cases. This situation demands a new imagination on the part of the central department of history, CNAS, the administration of TU and other players in the Nepali society at large regarding how historical research should be funded in the future. I shall have more to say about this later.

History Association of Nepal (HISAN)

After many false starts, the History Association of Nepal (HISAN) was formed in April 1999. The preamble of the constitution of HISAN states that the organization's main purposes are to develop a sense of fraternity between historians engaged in teaching and research on Nepali history and to promote an atmosphere of mutual help and goodwill amongst them; to assist the writing of history of all aspects of Nepal and to solve erstwhile controversial issues in the field; and to look for, research and publish historical facts that promote Nepali national interests (Sharma 2057 v.s.). Many of the founding members of HISAN were TU faculty members, either at the central department or from several of its colleges. Most of its current members are TU faculty members.²³ Since

²³ It is for this reason that this sub-section of the essay has been included within the section dedicated to discussing teaching and research conditions at TU.

most of the historians at TU are males from the Bahun, Chhetri and Newar (BCN) castes and there are few women in the profession (and none who are professors of history), it is no surprise that an overwhelming percentage of HISAN members are BCN males.²⁴ As in many other Nepali organizations, it seemed like that the treasurer's position has been reserved for a woman (currently this post is held by Mina Ojha).

Since its founding, HISAN has organized an annual seminar where historians teaching in different colleges all over Nepal have come together for 2-3 days of academic deliberations and socializing. The most recent seminar organized by HISAN took place over two days in Pokhara in early April 2003. Apart from the ceremonial speeches in which several aspects of history teaching and research were highlighted by various speakers, a few papers were also presented. These included the paper by Krishna B Thapa and Chandra B Budhathoki (2003) on the number of students opting for history in Tribhuvan University (as discussed above); a paper presenting an overview of regional history writing in Nepal (Kshetry 2003), a paper on the kings of Kaski by Rajaram Subedee, and two other papers, one related to tourism in Pokhara and the other about the culture of Gurungs and Magars. The last two papers represent HISAN's effort to include academic deliberations related to the location and people of the part of Nepal in which its annual seminar is held.

The academic qualities of the papers were varied (as is customary in any seminar). As can be expected, the floor discussion after the presentation of the paper by Thapa and Budhathoki (on the number of history students) was the liveliest moment of the whole seminar. Suggestions were put forth to revise their data and interpretations, mostly based on the experience of historians working in different parts of Nepal. The total number of participants was about 120 of which some 25 were women, some of whom (such as Bhusan Shrestha, Jyoti Subba Rai, and Bimala Shakya) participated very actively in the seminar proceedings. On the second day of the seminar, a rapid visit of various sites in Pokhara was also included as part of the program. Many participants (including myself) wished that there had been more time allocated for additional

24 This is based on an analysis of the list of TU teachers in history provided by the Personnel Administration Division of TU and the list of HISAN members. I thank Krishna Hachhethu for drawing my attention to the former and making a copy available to me. Similarly I thank Mina Ojha for making the HISAN member list available to me.

papers while at the same time appreciating the hard work that had gone into the seminar's organization, especially under severe budgetary constraints. While much needs to be done to vitalize the organizational activities and intellectual contents offered by this association, its incipient role in building professional solidarity amongst academic historians of Nepal can not be underestimated.

Overcoming Bottlenecks

Nepal-based historians of Nepal face a wide array of challenges at various levels. These are mostly related to institutional and financial forces and factors that have contributed toward the inhibition of the robust growth of disciplinary history in Nepal. We need to collectively think about these challenges and find solutions that add trust and confidence in the process of the production of academic history. As I see it, there are various levels in which these challenges must be addressed. Leaving aside the challenges of theory from this discussion and focusing only on concerns that have been discussed in this paper, the following seem important to me.

Personal

Most Nepali historians of Nepal have a fairly limited social access to English as an academic language. Hence they are relatively handicapped when it comes to reading relevant works in English, especially those that are devoted to theoretical concerns in history. German or French, two other languages in which a great deal of historical scholarship is produced, are even further away from the grasp of all Nepali historians to date. While remedial language instruction might be a solution to established historians, the long-term solution is to attract a new generation of Nepalis with 'I know English' confidence to the discipline.

I do not know how personal initiatives can be engendered (some hold the view that you either have it or you don't and hence nothing can be engineered), but there is a lot that individual or groups of working historians *could* do at TU or elsewhere even under dire fiscal conditions. These include the holding of seminar series, journal editing (most of academic editing is done in a voluntary basis anyway), preparation of research aid items in the subject (e.g., theme-specific bibliographies and readers, archival indexes, etc.) and proper research mentoring (degree oriented or otherwise). Without such intellectual investments it will be difficult to attract a new generation of confident Nepalis to the field of history. It must be remembered that for a bright 20-year-old Nepali there

is no dearth of opportunities in other fields with higher market returns for her labour.

Institutional

The history teaching and research set-up in TU needs a complete overhaul. More than a revisiting of the syllabi, I have in mind the possibility of revitalizing the production environment of scholarly work in history through various means. I do not know if there is any political will in the TU central department leadership to do this but current levels of institutional investment are grossly inadequate to support good scholarship over the long-run. Included here are concerns regarding institutional items that would facilitate research and the research production environment. Some measures that could be taken in the latter category have already been mentioned. Others would include building up relevant collections in TU libraries, the production of regular journals and books (perhaps in collaboration with academic commercial publishers), fellowships for students to do MA/PhD level research, and grants to the faculty members to do doctoral or post-doctoral research.

Organisations like HISAN ought to take up various intellectual projects such as the organizing of seminar series in Kathmandu and other cities and prepare theme-based bibliographies and readers of relevant historical articles. This form of publication can bring together otherwise scattered articles in easily accessible books. Such collections constitute a research consolidation step in the progress of disciplines, allowing its practitioners a considered (from the point of view of the editor or editors) view of contributions made to specific themes within the discipline. The Royal Nepal Academy has already published an example of such a volume by a group of historians (Nepali et al. 2058 v.s.), although the articles collected in this reader do not deal with a specific theme. HISAN also needs to reflect upon the sociology of history practitioners in Nepal and set up targets and programs to make the set of Nepali historians more representative of the Nepali society in terms of its demographic constitution. A discipline dominated by men from the Bahun, Chhetri and Newar castes can not be described as socially accessible to members of Nepal's underrepresented groups such as women, dalits, and *janajātis*.

Challenges of institutions outside of TU also need to be publicly discussed. Quality control and mentoring aspects are often missing in the way in which new research NGOs execute their work and seminar proceedings dominate their publication portfolios (cf. Prasain 1998). Serious and long-term work in the discipline of history has not been the

strength of NGO research. In the past Regmi Research Centre and Samsodhan Mandal have done their bit and some institutions continue to devote their research energy into historical knowledge production but they will have to be far more innovative if they are to do substantial and long-term work, both in terms of attracting new talents and securing funds to support their work.

The time has come for TU institutions (relevant departments at the central, regional or college levels, research centers such as CNAS, etc.) to collaborate emphatically with outside TU institutions to secure human and other resources that will generate public goods in the discipline. Such collaborations can be for the creation of jobs and research opportunities for practicing and new historians, as well as for securing of funds. But more importantly they must be directed toward the execution of research and research-facilitating activities mentioned above in which active participation of members of the new generation of historians of Nepal is sought and secured.²⁵ They should also be directed toward gaining access to hitherto closed sources at HMG ministries and the National Archives of India through dialogues with our bureaucracy and through diplomatic channels.

Financial

I do not know if there was ever any direct development money set aside for good academic research including history but there ought to be. The need to set aside such money for good, pure academic work (that might have no immediate policy value) has *never* been made a subject of public importance in Nepal and this is a collective failure on the part of the community of academic researchers. If the academic community were to collectively demand that x% of all development money spent in Nepal ought to be reserved for specific research fellowships (that would be executed under various management plans within TU and elsewhere), then we will have taken the first step toward redressing the lack. Since research has the potential to produce insights that will help us to understand our long-term social challenges, academic research (including historical ones) certainly deserve financial support from donors active in Nepal.

25 See also the recommendations generated by a workshop in which the development of research and teaching infrastructure in history in Nepal was discussed (Institute of Humanities and Social Science 1984).

As has been noted in some of the recent media research work in which I have been a participant (e.g., Onta and Parajulee 2001), there are many ways of devising programs that could potentially enhance the field of our concern (in this case historical research) through financial support from the development world. For instance:

1. If a single dalit NGO has managed to get grants upwards of Rs 50 lakhs from a single donor agency, it would not be asking for too much for inclusion of research programs on dalit history to be worked into such or similar grants. Dalits and non-dalit history students could be given fellowships to complete routine degree courses followed by historical research on dalit themes in Nepali history. Some students pursuing this theme could even be sent to India to benefit from the relatively vast amount of historical research that has already been done on dalits in India by Indian and non-Indian historians.
2. Similarly since gender as a theme gets a lot of monetary support, what is stopping the donor agencies from funding long-term programs that will (a) reverse the gender imbalance among Nepali historians, namely, support the recruitment and training of women in the field; (b) encourage research on state and private patriarchy; and (c) promote further research on specific aspects of women's participation in Nepali history in different fields such as politics, media, academia, medicine, engineering, and other fields?
3. History mentoring exercises on different themes (in which several NGOs work for instance) could be devised as a joint academia-NGOs project. Since international and Nepali NGOs work on a diverse range of themes, finding some in which such joint projects can be designed and executed should not be a problem. It must also be noted that historical research can generate lessons for development policies in ways that remain under-utilized in Nepal.²⁶

26 I thank Jagannath Adhikari for this point. He remarks, "I have not seen any research conducted by historians on 'development policies' and their impact on various areas using historical methods. Historians can easily outperform others in analysing different developmental policies and their impact on the society. If they put their fingers in this area, there would not be much problem in getting funds which can also be used for research as well as in training historians grounded in analysing the policy issues using historical methods. Historians elsewhere are also employed in non-history departments like policy studies, and even in subjects like forestry, environmental studies, international relations, management schools and the like." However Stiller and Yadav's

Perhaps international donors active in Nepal ought to form a coalition to support good historical research. They could easily dedicate a few million dollars a year for this purpose and even constitute an organization to oversee its administrative execution (namely, calling of proposals, their evaluation and selection, and funding support). This organization could be the Nepali equivalent of international foundations that support social science research and could consist of board members nominated by the participating donors and a set of Nepali academics with demonstrated excellence in research design and execution. This same model could also be adopted by forward-looking members of the Nepali corporate sector. While it is true that certain rules regarding taxation need to be revised to promote corporate philanthropy, Nepal's major business houses could easily come together to build a coalition to support social science research (and other cultural activities). In this kind of a set up, history should be one of the major subjects eligible for support for obvious reasons.

To conclude then, it is quite clear that to reinvigorate the field of history in Nepal, relevant people in the Nepali government, Tribhuvan University (and eventually other universities in Nepal), foreign universities, History Association of Nepal, new non-governmental institutions, international funding agencies and the corporate sector ought to come together in innovative ways to provide a solid fiscal basis for supporting good and robust historical scholarship in Nepal. This is entirely possible if we can appropriately package our visions, resources and managerial skills. If this does not happen, the future of history as an academic discipline does not look too good in Nepal.

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(1979) book, *Planning for People*, would certainly qualify as a historical work on development policies and debates in Nepal.

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