

The Interface of Ethnicity, Modernity and Caste: A Study of Social Structures in the Lo Community of Upper Mustang

Uddhab Pyakurel¹ and Ajit Bhatta²

Abstract: Modernity has created a plethora of development opportunities for people in general. However, modernity has not always done justice for people and the community everywhere. This paper tries to contrast such a relationship between modernity and traditional community. This paper tries to depict how modernity could also pose a threat to the indigenous community, and disrupt their traditional social structure and practices. This paper is a study of the ‘Lo’ people of Lo Manthang. Lo Manthang is one of the culturally rich and geographically constrained highland places in Nepal. Remote geography, seasonal migration, low agricultural activity, and other different features have made this region relatively disadvantaged. While studying the case of Lo Manthang, we have observed many unique and unorthodox experiences relating to the social structure, traditions, and the culture. This paper presents the practices, traditions, and essentially the social structure of the Lo community (also Lo Manthang). The paper tries to present how the influence of modern ideology and principles can change the structure of the traditional society. Both primary and secondary data were used while preparing the paper. Primary data was collected through a short field visit, and a series of follow-up discussions with the locals, while the secondary data consists of some comprehensive book reviews and a literature review on similar topics.

Introduction

Lo Manthang is considered to be one of the most spectacular and culturally rich highland places located in Upper Mustang in Nepal. A Trans-Himalayan region of western Nepal, and previously known as Forbidden Kingdom, Lo Manthang has many features that are particularly distinct from modern society. Lo Manthang, a walled city, is considered by some scholars to be the best-preserved medieval fort in the world, and is a UNESCO World Heritage candidate (Rengel 2014).

Lo Manthang was considered to be the walled capital of the *Kingdom of Lo*, from its founding in 1380 by Ame Pal, who constructed the wall of the city including many of the still-standing structures (Piesel 1992). The culturally crafted and historically built structures, which have covered the boundaries of Lo Manthang with historical monuments and sculptures, are evidence that traditional cultures and lifestyles are well preserved in the Lo Manthang region. Previously, the settlements were only within the wall, and the wall was symbolically a protector of God. “A small strip of land outside the settlement wall used to be bounded by another small sacred wall. Though the sacred mani wall has almost disappeared except a few segments, there still is a circumambulatory way around the settlement. The space in between the sacred wall and the settlement wall can be considered as a ‘buffer zone’ in modern planning” (Chapagain 2007: 57).

Lo Manthang is heavily influenced by Buddhism and Tibetan culture. Among the four branches of Buddhism (*Ningma*, *Kagyre*, *Gheluk* and *Shakya*), the Shakya (also known as *shakyapa*) system was in practice in all of the four monasteries in Lo Manthang. All the walls and monasteries in Mustang are marked with the Shakyapa colours (ICIMOD, n.d).

It is also believed that the Shakyapa Buddhism practiced in Lo Manthang came from Tibet (Gurung 1998). The migration of people from Tibet, particularly to highland Mustang, has led to Tibetan influences in the Mustang region. It is said that the 13th Dalai Lama was influenced and impressed with the modernization that the British had initiated in India, and he hoped to bring the same in Tibet by introducing modern schools that would provide western education (Lama 2017). These types of modern schools are also evident in Upper Mustang areas.

Lo Manthang was forced to become dependent after the Unification of Nepal. However, it kept its hereditary rulers (Piesel 1992). Lo Manthang was entitled to dependent status until the implementation of the Dependent Principalities Act, 1961, by the government of Nepal. However, in its case, the traditional '*Raja*' title, with some traditional rights, allowances and honorary positions of the Raja, was left untouched. This position of Raja or king has been possessed by the same dynasty for 21 generations in Mustang (Dhungel 2002).

Loba People

Lo Manthang is not only home to the Loba people, but it is also their capital. They are considered to be the original inhabitants of Mustang. The villages in the Lo Manthang area where Loba people live are often 'ethnically referred to as *Bhote*'.³ If we go through the history of the Loba people and their settlements at the Bhote area, they are primarily farmers, shepherds, or merchants of high Himalayan areas. They build their homes out of stone, making the roofs out of stone squares. The roofs are extremely uniform and smooth. Most of the houses and decorative structures are culturally and traditionally structured (Mast 2015). Even today, the stoned and well-decorated walls and houses are so fascinating to look at. The traditionally built structures and the common colors seen in the houses perhaps reflect the Loba culture. However, the house structures found at Mustang could pose a question as to whether the society has been derived from feudalism. Examples could be seen in the three storied houses built by feudal lords; the common people and those in the lower ladder of the social structure were only allowed to build single-story houses without walls in compounds.⁴ These social class-induced house structures are distinct in the case of Upper Mustang.

Social Hierarchy within the Loba community

According to Ojha et al (2008), the social hierarchy structure in Upper Mustang trickles down from the ruling class *Kuthag* to *Phalwa*, and to *Ghara* at the bottom. The hierarchical structure sees the Kuthag people belonging to the highest level, Phalwa below the Kuthag, and Ghara belonging to the lowest level. These different old Tibetan terms present Kuthag as the ruling class, Phalwa themselves as similar to the *Gurung* ethnic group, and Ghara as tailors, smiths, butchers (Ojha et al. 2008). This argument could be compared and supported by Thakali when he argues (2012): "Households in Lo Manthang are divided into three groups considered as *Kuthag* (Ruling class) who use *Bista* as their surname, *Phalwa* (commoner class) who use *Gurung* as their surname and Ghara (the lowest class) who use Bishwokarma or *Bika* as their surnames."

Upper Mustang is divided into groups comparable to the castes of hindu culture. The occupational castes, regarded as the lowest, comprise the Ghara, *Shemba* and *Emeta* (blacksmiths, butchers and musicians respectively). The highland nomads, called *Drokpa*, take an outsider's position of slightly higher status. The middle class consists of the Phalwa, who now often prefer to call themselves Gurung. The *Kudak*, who have adopted the Nepali name Bista for their clan, make up the nobility and royal family of Lo Tsho Dyun" (Mustang Region section, para. 3)

A similar argument was made by a swiss family while writing their trek blog, saying that about 1100 Lobas live in the 180 mud houses of the walled city, and surprisingly, they observed a form of caste-hierarchy. The Raja and Rani of Mustang live in "Monkhar" – the four storied white – washed palace located in the middle of the town. The palace was believed to be built by the first King of Mustang, Ame Pal, in the early 14th century. The present Raja is his twenty-second descendent. This may be the reason why it is mainly the Kuthag (Bista: the nobility and royalty of Lo) and the Phalwa (Gurung) who live within the walled city. Ghara (blacksmith), Shemba (butcher) and Emeta (musician) mostly live in the settlement beside the Lo Manthang River that flows to the east of the city. The argument could be further supported by (Ojha et al. 2008), who mentions that "the settlement outside of the wall of Lo Manthang down near to the bank of the local stream is occupied by the inhabitant group that belong to Ghara. These people are often considered as people outside of the wall and are therefore considered as lowest class."

Cultural influences from the past in Lo Manthang have often characterized its social structure as well. "In Lo Manthang, just as in the Central Andes (see Guillet 1987), the management of the water is in the hands of socio-political organizations" (Ojha et al. 2008: 141) The water management and irrigation related activities in Lo Manthang are headed by one member of the Kuthag group, who is from the ruling class and is assisted by one of the Phalwa group. The argument has been strongly supported by (Thakali 2012) when he states: The role of those heads was managing four of the major elements of the environment such as – land, water, pasture areas and forests. These four pillars were considered important by the villagers for their livelihood." This social structure of people living within and outside of the wall of the Lo Manthang reflects the hierarchy within the community.

With this background, this paper tries to discuss the social structure of the Lo people (people of Lo Manthang) and also whether external influences have led to changes in the social structure. The social hierarchy within the Loba community is an integral part of the study of this paper. The paper tries to discuss the historical structure of the Loba community with reference to the relevant article and also tries to present the social structure of the community in the present times.

Theoretical aspect of Modernization and Modernity

Modernization theory discusses and deals with the process of evolution and development of societies (Goorha 2010). A similar argument has been made by describing modernization as a transition: from primitive to technological economies, subject to a participatory political system, from closed to open status, religious to secular, etc. (Tipps 2012). Modernity, however, is defined as a state of social existence that is radically different to all past forms of human experience (Shilliam 2017). Wagner (2012) refers to modernity as the progress of society. In contrast, Modernization is conceptualized as a process, whereas modernity is referred to as the progress of a society.

However, Wagner (2012) also believes that modernity has been considered mostly in terms of economic progress, followed by capitalism and market liberalization Post-World War II. Such a liberalized approach to modernity divided human society into two different classes: the owner of the means of production, and the labor class. This class division was developed after the concept of Modernity was coined. “The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign power of the society” (Simmel 1971: 324). A similar argument has been made by Haferkamp and Smelser (1992), referring to modernity as a base for increased social inequality and structural changes. This sort of modernity approach has been widely observed even in traditional societies. The case of Lo Manthang is one example, where we need to discuss and reflect upon the consequences of modernity for such a traditional society and its structure.

The general objective of this study is to trace the drivers of change in the social structure of the Lo Manthang community. The specific objectives are (a) to compare the historical and present social relations of the Loba people in the Lo community and (b) to discuss whether there has been any influence of modernity in the social and hierarchical structure of Lo Manthang.

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. The means of data collection were in-depth interviews with local people of Lo Manthang and officials from the local police administration of Upper Mustang. The location for the primary data collection was selected based on the type of information to be collected. The information regarding the historical governance was directly collected from the local government administration office at Lo Manthang, whereas the information about the historical and current social structure of the Lo Manthang community was collected from the interaction with locals that were living inside and outside of the community. To validate the data and collect additional information, various relevant publications have been reviewed.

Social Modernization and the Loba Community

A study by Ramesh Dhungel in 2002 titled ‘The Kingdom of Lo (Mustang)’ has stated that people who migrated from different parts of Tibet to Mustang at different times blended into the Loba⁵ culture. For this reason, it is logical that the Loba people are strongly influenced by Tibetan cultures and tradition. As his book states, it has been observed that the Loba’s livelihood is still based equally on the herding of domestic animals. Property was also measured not on the basis of land ownership, since they have access to limited arable land, but instead mainly on the basis of livestock holding.

Pyakurel (2020) quotes some social historians such as Prayag Raj Sharma and Ramesh K. Dhungel to acknowledge that there was a strong sense of hierarchy within Tibetan society i.e. Lobas in Lo Manthang. Historian Ram Niwas Pandey reveals that the mountain tribes in Nepal, especially Gurungs, who followed Lamaistic Buddhism, follow a caste-system, and this only started after the influx of Rajputs in the region in the 15th century. Sharma says he is unsure whether the Tibetan community had an influence on the caste system practiced by its southern neighbours. However, Dhungel is sure that there is indeed some impact of West Tibetan culture on the Khasa rulers who ruled the entire Himalayan region for centuries. The Khasa entered Nepal not via the Indo-Gangetic plains, but via the North, especially from areas in Western Tibet, such as

Mansarovar and Kailash. It was also the Khasa rulers who introduced the mixed caste-system by bringing Tibetan and Hindu traditions together. They did so as they were heavily influenced by Tibetan Buddhism before entering Nepal. Dhungel's conclusion seems to be based on his study in the Lo Manthang region where he found a hierarchical system similar to the caste-system (Pyakurel 2012). According to his study (2002: 14-15), a single *Phuru* (drinking bowl) is used among the people of equal status in public festivals and meetings. The bowl goes last to the 'low status' person. *Kha-thug* and *Kha-mi-thug* (acceptability and denial of the touching of food by mouth) has been practiced in Lo-Mustang as an old Tibetan tradition. But Dhungel has looked into whether the tradition of *Kha-thug* and *Kha-mi-thug* had any link with the practice of un-touchability in Nepali hills. That is why he writes in the subsequent lines that the tradition of acceptability and denial of the touching of food by mouth "does not have any link with the Nepali *pani chalne* and *nachalne* tradition" (ibid.).

The social hierarchy of the Loba community shows the historical interrelation of people within the community. As stated in the literature of Ojha et al. (2008), Loba society is composed of three main classes of people: *sku-drag-pa*, *phal-pa* and *mGar-pa* or Kuthag, Phalwa and Ghara. For locals, Bista, Gurung and *Kami* in the modern day are similar to the previously categorised Kuthag, Phalwa and Ghara of the Loba community. While Bistas are from the ruling class families, Gurungs and Kami are less privileged than the Bistas. Out of two bottom caste groups, Gurung are acceptable in most of the rituals, Kami are outcast and considered as low caste. On the one hand, the caste-based social structure is becoming weaker and weaker every day in the Nepali society due to the constitutional and legal ban of such practices in recent years. On the other, there are still a few people who treat lobas (a community with a different identity and culture) as if they are one of the 'low' caste groups.

Generally, modernity is considered to be a step forward from traditions, and the presence of a modern state in the traditional Tibetan society could be considered as a step forward in the process towards modernization. However, there are contradicting results witnessed in the case within Lowas of Lo Manthang. According to a few locals, they were the same people without any hierarchy until recently. But the intervention of the 'modern Nepali' state made the hierarchy as strong as its caste hierarchy. They argue that the situation was not as simple as some research suggests regarding the division of the households in Lo Manthang into three groups i.e. Kudak (noble class) who use Bista as their surname, Phalwa (commoner class) who use Gurung as their surname and Ghara (the lowest class) who use Bishwokarma or Bika as their surnames. This argument was very strong in the latter group who live outside the main village near the river. Pema Mustange, a local who lives near the river, states:

We were the same people till recently. We all had residence (53 households) within the boundary called *Jhong*. But some of our ancestors choose to plant Ghatta (Watermill) to ease the life of their own family members and also the whole Lowa community. Initially, they used to do it by being within the compound with others. Along with the growth of family members, they felt comfortable to live near their Ghatta. After some generations, the social hierarchy started becoming visible within people living near rivers and those living within the wall.

He remembers his grandparents' saying and narrates here that along with Ghatta, they started weaving Tibetan Bakkus (jackets made of raw wool of sheep and Himalayan goats), and also making some of the leather materials to be used while riding horses. By that time, minor discrimination between people within the compound and outside was visible, but no such hierarchy could be practiced there until and unless the Nepal government started distributing citizenship to them.

According to Pema and Norbu (former Chairperson of Kaligandaki Youth Club) it was the government team (*Door*) sent to offer citizenship to people of Lo Manthang that helped make the hierarchy more visible along caste lines. Local people who were illiterate, with no exposure to the outside world, were suggested to accept Bika identity by the *Door*. The logic of the government officers here was such that those who work with iron in the middle hills in Nepal were called Kami or Bishwakarma and the short form of Bishwarma was Bika or BK. That is what was suggested by the *Door* to Loba people residing near the river. Pema recalls the account shared by his seniors and states that those who were given the new surnames of Bika or BK could share their happiness as Bista and Bika or BK could almost sound similar. The joy was due to the illusion that they could gain a similar surname and social status amidst a sort of social hierarchy within them.

The story did not end here. Two members of the Loba community were invited and sponsored by the government to train them how to do metal work. And the community sent Nyima Tashi and Dorje for the purpose. This is how they developed their expertise in iron related work. But eventually the same modern state became instrumental in segregating the Buddhist community along the caste line. All of those who were experts in blacksmith work were initially given the surname Bika or BK by the state. That is how many seniors of Loba residing on the river side have citizenship with BK surnames. It has since changed and young generations have Loba as a surname following the Janajati movement in the late 1980s. But the social hierarchy established along with the government intervention to modernize them with state identity and training remains almost similar even today. Now those who live within the compound and nearby areas and identify themselves either as Bista or Gurung consider people of the river side as “others,” not as Lobas, and the map available in the locality also indicates the area as a low-caste village named as Jhong. Therefore, the social hierarchy is evident nowadays in the upper mustang group mostly because of intervention of the ‘modern’ Nepali state. One local youth argues:

Once local people who were illiterate with no exposure to the outside world were suggested to accept Bika identity by the representatives of the state, they were happy to take it as if it is good for them and their community. Training opportunities and exposures might have helped convince them to follow the suggestions by the government officials.

According to him, people have accepted the state-imposed identity happily as two words – Bista and Bika – are similar to each other in pronunciation. The finding is similar to a study titled ‘Caste, State, and Ethnic Boundaries in Nepal’ by (Levine 1987), where the author argues that the ethnic relations today are the outcome of a historical process of accommodation between regional ethnic systems and the policies of a centralizing state. Here one could argue that the government had to unify Nepalese society, which consisted of three historically and regionally autonomous caste hierarchies (Hofer 1979: 43-46), and the Nepali state responded to create a national caste system that stipulated a place for each of these groups based on the rulers’ own notions about caste. Imposition of caste identity onto the lowest strata of Loba is an attempt with such a motto.

The Social Structure of Lo Manthang Post-federalism in Nepal

The social structure of Lo Manthang has also influenced present day local governance. The traditional elite, or the ruling class Bista, are heavily dominant and hold the Palika authority in the present governance. The Palika (Rural Municipality) Chair, Deputy Chair and most of the Ward Chairpersons come from the Bista community there. Interestingly, the *Mukhiya*⁶ system is still practiced in the Lo community despite the fact that federalism has already been introduced. But besides other governing processes, Mukhiya nowadays is only responsible for irrigation, land and agriculture related issues that are happening locally. The Mukhiya or chief of the village is only appointed from the Bista family, and one could look at the influence of customary headship in the leadership of the modern state apparatus as well. While we conducted the study, the Palika Chief was the younger brother of the community Mukhiya. According to locals,⁷ the Mukhiya is changed each year and is selected from the Bista family, whereas Gurung would get the position of *Katuwal*. The role of the Mukhiya is to make decisions, whereas the Katuwal works under the leadership of the Mukhiya. Every year the role of Mukhiya is handed over to the next person from within the Bista group, and Katuwal, an assistant to the Mukhiya, is appointed from the Gurung community to work under the Mukhiya. Katuwal has no role in decision making but he has to report to the Mukhiya, and communicate the Mukhiya's decisions to villagers i.e. penalty to be paid by the guilty party, etc.

Conclusion

To conclude, this study clearly demonstrates that traditional society, even if it has a strong bond with 'we feeling,' has to opt for state intervention. Generally, one could easily assume that the modern-day states are not biased towards any traditional system and that whatever attempt the state makes could be to promote the value-free modernization of a society. But the present context of the Lo Community is very different to a general understanding about the new state apparatus. In other words, the presence of the Nepali state at Lo Manthang saw some changes in the cultural practices of the Lo Community. In fact, the ethnic mix that we see in Lo Manthang today is the 'outcome of governmental attempts to grapple with the country's remarkable ethnic diversity and peoples' responses to the system the government created'. Previously known as a walled city, these days it has turned out to be an attraction for tourism. The increasing flow of tourists from the outside community has changed the economy of the Loba people. The cultural practices are also changing and so are the perception of people and their practices. However, major changes have turned out to be different in the case of the community hierarchy in upper mustang. Although, new practices were also not free from discrimination and subjugations. The Nepali state's attempt to integrate the community through establishing national identity (citizenship card) for the Loba people has instead created another social stratification on the basis of caste. In other words, Loba people were categorized based on their occupancy and skill while the distribution of citizenship made them fall into different sub groups and hence led them to be fitted into a social hierarchy. The findings from the study could be closely compared with the theory of modernity where modernity has been characterized by the essence of human classification based on technological skills, labor and occupation.

It is a hierarchy which has been subscribed to and promoted by the Nepali monarchical state since 1769 in the name of Hinduization and Nepalization (Pyakurel 2007). Hofer (1979: 40, 195) argues that the government's needs in creating a national caste system were to legitimate Nepal's separate political identity, to unify the country internally, and to establish a cohesive legal system

in place of existing regional systems (Levine 1987). As a result, the presence of the Nepali Government in Upper Mustang could convert a community with minor hierarchical order into an almost caste-based society. The intervention to 'develop' the society with training and state identity has pushed an ethnic group into further fragmentation that has jeopardized the 'we' feeling concept of an ethnic group. Finally, this study has further demonstrated the unorthodox consequences of modernity and state unification on the social structure of a traditional community like Lo Manthang.

References

- Aasra. n.d. "Lo Manthang: the Walled Capital of the Kingdom of Lo. 2019." Accessed Aug 28, 2020. <https://aasraecotreks.com.np/lo-manthang/>.
- Aryal, Achut, Dianne Brunton, Ram Pandit, Rajesh Kumar Rai, Uttam Babu Shrestha, Narendra Lama, David Raubenheimer. 2013. "Rangelands, Conflicts, and Yociety in the Upper Mustang Region." *Mountain Research and Development*, 33(1): 11-18. <https://doi.org/10.1659/MRD-JOURNAL-D-12-00055.1>.
- Barash, David. 2016. "Polyandry." *Psychology Today*. Accessed July 18, 2020. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/pura-vida/201603/polyandry-one-woman-many-men>.
- Chalaune, Prem. 2009. "Water, Wealth and Power: A Case Study from Upper Mustang Nepal." *Occasional Papers in Sociology and Anthropology*, 11, 104-125. <https://doi.org/10.3126/opsa.v11i10.3033>.
- Chapagain, Neel Kamal. 2007. "Revisiting Conservation Charters in the Context of Nepal." *City & Time* [Online], 3(2). <http://www.ct.ceci-br.org/novo/revista/rst/viewarticle.php?id=107>.
- Dhungel, Ramesh. 2002. *The Kingdom of Lo (Mustang)*. Kathmandu: Tashi Gephel Foundation.
- Von Furer-Haimendorf, Christoph. 1964. *The Sherpas of Nepal*. California: University of California Press.
- Goorha, Prateek. 2010. *Modernization Theory*. Oxford: Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies.
- Gurung, Ganesh Man. 1993. "Polyandry, Adaptability and Environment." *Centre for Nepal and Asian Studies (CNAS)* 20 (2), July 1993 http://www.digitalhimalaya.com/collections/journals/contributions/index.php?selection=20_2.
- Gurung, Juddha Bahadur. 2012. "Rapid Cultural Change : A Xase of Polyandry Marriage System Among the Gurung Community from Upper Mustang, Nepal." *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 6: 75-106. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v6i10.8480>.
- Gurung, Jagman. n.d. *Study of Gandaki Regional Heritage*. Kathmandu: CNAS.

- Haferkamp, Hans, and Neil Smelser. 1991. *Social Change and Modernity*. California: University of California Press.
- Hofer, Andras. 1979. *The Caste Hierarchy and the State in Nepal: A Study of the Muluki Ain of 1854*. Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner.
- ICIMOD. n.d. *Case Study of Upper Mustang*. MEI Discussion Paper.
- Joshua Project. 2019. "Loba in Nepal." Accessed Aug 20, 2020. https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/13080/NP.
- Levine, Nancy E.. 1987. "Caste, State, and Ethnic Boundaries in Nepal." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46: 71-88, Cambridge: Cambridge University. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2056667>.
- Mandal, Monika. 2013. *Social Inclusion of Ethnic Communities in Contemporary Nepal*. New Delhi: KW publishers.
- Mast, Sicily. 2015. "The Loba of Upper Mustang." *Prezi*. Accessed Sep 05, 2020 <https://prezi.com/jmo4eqssjkar/the-loba-of-upper-mustang/>.
- Mustang. n.d. *Upper Mustang Trekking Blog*. Caravana Himalaya.
- NCARD. 2014. "Janajati." Accessed Sep 05, 2020. <https://www.ncard.org.np/categorydetail/bhote-bhutia.html>.
- Ojha, Hemanta R., Netra P. Timsina, Ram B. Chettri and Krishna P. Poudel. 2008. *Knowledge Systems and Natural Resources*. India: Foundation Books.
- Pandey, Rishikesh. 2017. "Life and Livelihoods in the Forbidden Kingdom, the Trans-himalaya, Nepal." *Dhaulagiri Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 11: 24-59. <https://doi.org/10.3126/dsaj.v11i10.18822>.
- Piesel, Michael. 1992. *Mustang; A Lost Tibetan Kingdom*. Delhi: South Asia Books.
- Pyakurel, Uddhab. 2007. *Maoist Movement in Nepal: A Sociological Perspective*. New Delhi: Adroit Publisher.
- Pyakurel, Uddhab. 2012. *Social inclusion and exclusion: a sociological study of Dalits in Nepal*. Unpublished PhD thesis. Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.
- Pyakurel, Uddhab. 2020. *Reproduction of Inequality and Social Exclusion: A Study of Dalits in a Caste Society, Nepal*. Brussels: Springer.
- Rengel, David. 2014. "Mustang: the Last Lost Kingdom." *The Diplomat*. Accessed Sep 05, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/11/mustang-the-last-lost-kingdom/>.
- Roberts, Joseph. 2017. *Herodotus and the Greek Identity*. Minnesota: College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University.
- Senanayake, Gamini. 2006. *Indigenous Knowledge as a Key to Sustainable Develop-*

- ment*. Srilanka: Journal of Agriculture Science.
- Shilliam, Robbie. 2010. *Modernity and Modernization*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Smith, Anthony. 1981. *The Ethnic Revival in the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Simmel, Georg. 1971. *The Metropolis and Mental Life*. New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.
- Thakali, Shailendra. 2012. "Localizing Environment: Mustang's Struggle to Sustain Village Autonomy in Environmental Governance." PhD diss., Lincoln University.
- Tipps, Dean C.. 1973. *Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Societies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vallangi, Neelima. 2019. "This Remote Tibetan Valley in Nepal Looks to India and China for Sustenance." *The Hindu*. Accessed Nov 18, 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/society/this-remote-tibetan-valley-in-nepal-looks-to-india-and-china-for-sustenance/article26341791.ece>.
- Visit Himalaya Treks. 2019. "Burial Rituals of Lo-manthang." Accessed Oct 20, 2020. <https://www.visithimalayastrek.com/burial-rituals-lo-manthang-mustang-nepal/>.
- Wagner, Peter. 2012. "Modernity." *LYCHNOS*. Accessed Jan 05, 2021. http://www.fgcsic.es/lychnos/en_en/articles/modernity_understanding_our_present_time.
- Willett, Jeff. 1997. *Tibetan Fraternal Polyandry: A Review of its Advantages and Breakdown*. Nebraska: University of Nebraska.
- Zhong, Arlan. 2016. "The Loba (People of the Lo) Tibetan People Living in north N." *Prezi*. Oct 27, 2016. <https://prezi.com/o0fy0estqaed/the-hyploba-people-of-the-lo-tibetan-people-living-in-north-n/>.

Notes

¹Uddhab Pyakurel, a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, teaches political sociology at Kathmandu University, Nepal.

²Ajit Bhatta, a MA in Development Studies from Kathmandu University, is a Co-founder of Samsara Creation and a Member of Alumni Steering Committee at UN SDSN Youth. He has worked for various national and international organizations in leadership capacities in the field of Sustainable Development, Inclusive Education, and Political Governance.

³*Bhot* is popularly used in history, at least in Nepal, to refer to the Tibetan areas, and residents of *Bhot* were called *Bhote*.

⁴There are hierarchical structures of social groups in Lo Manthang, where the hierarchy trickles down from Ruler or the king at the top level to other sub groups at the middle and bottom.

⁵The terms Loba and Lopa are interchangeably used to refer to the same community by scholars. However, Jagman Gurung (2012) states that people living in the upper mustang *Bhot* area are called loba, whereas people with the occupation of animal husbandry and living around the Bhot area are called Dogpa.

⁶The Mukhiya system is a traditional customary practice of some ethnic communities which is responsible for everything in the community, including agriculture, irrigation, pasture, food security, animal husbandry, marriage, festivals, worship and justice, etc.

⁷personal communication, 2019

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

