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SIGNS OF TRADITION:

COMPILING A HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT, POLITICS, AND TOURISM IN BHAKTAPUR, NEPAL

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The idea that modernity is a break with tradition is a misconception... Some people might think that tradition and modernity are opposites. They welcome modernity destroying tradition. But it doesn't work that way. You can have tradition and modernity at the same time. I'm in fact a little of both (Yogesh Raj, personal communication, 6 February 1999).

Introduction: Signs of a Traditional City

The quickest route from Kathmandu to Bhaktapur is via the express bus that turns off the Arniko Highway and heads uphill through the Silaghari Forest area. As one turns the corner, the first object that one sees is a large red Coca-Cola sign. Under the Coca-Cola advertisement is a smaller blue sign with a silhouette reproduction of Bhaktapur's temple skyline, over which is written in white block Roman letters: "Welcome to Bhaktapur." Just in front of these signs, in the roundabout in the middle of the road, is an even smaller sign that reads in Nepali: "Preserve our historic city." While placed here by different groups and for different reasons, all of these signs indicate that Bhaktapur is a traditional city. In fact, they are just a few of the many signs left by municipal, national, and international institutions that welcome the visitor to Bhaktapur, Nepal's "Hindu medieval city," the nation's "cultural capital." The idea that Bhaktapur is a traditional city is also shared by many of the city's inhabitants, who tend to perceive the valley's two other major cities, Patan and Kathmandu, as "modern." Yet, while all groups seem to agree that Bhaktapur is traditional, and all seem to agree that tradition is tied to local culture, there is only an agreement of silence on "tradition's" ultimate meaning.

To understand tradition, we need to understand how it is falsely dichotomized with modernity. I argue that modernity and tradition are not dichotomized essential qualities, but rather pragmatic worldly concerns. Modernity and tradition are two cultural logics for the construction of lived worlds. Although modernity is the replacement of one set of social relations with another, this replacement is not inevitable, and the form it

takes is not predetermined. The reason that modernity and tradition are often falsely dichotomized is that development agencies-and many scholars-have a “historicist” view that posits tradition as a passive ontological essence that will, over time, develop into “modernity” (Chakrabarty 2000). From this perspective, Bhaktapurians neither have tradition, nor make tradition, but *are traditional*. The goal, then, of historicist accounts of Bhaktapur is romantic. Such accounts aim to winnow authentic tradition from the chaff of modernity. The false dichotomy between tradition and modernity breaks down, however, when one examines another use of the term “tradition.” In Bhaktapur, tradition can also indicate effective everyday social practices that are compiled from past generations. I gloss these practices as “genealogical-traditions” (*paramparā*).¹ Unlike the romantic understanding of the term, this everyday use of a genealogy-tradition is neither the seeking of pure origins, nor the plotting of an evolutionary timeline. Instead, like a “history of the present,” a genealogical-tradition indicates the pragmatic use of those past social practices that are currently effective. Such everyday traditions are not necessarily at odds with modern practices. They just happen to be one choice among many².

Bhaktapur’s historicist and genealogical understandings of tradition divide into two strands of historiography. First is the practice of monumental conservation that operates with a romantic historicist understanding of tradition. This approach can be evidenced in two texts, *Aktuelles Bauen im Historischen Kontext: Bhaktapur, Nepal* (Scheibler 1982) and *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing* (Haaland 1982). Second are chronicles of the city that view tradition as a genealogy. The lineage strand of historiography can be seen in two texts: the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī* (Vajācārya and Malla 1985), and *Nepālko Prajātāntrik Āndolanmā Bhaktapurko Bhūmikā* (Cālise 2051 v.s.).

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- 1 My use of the word “genealogy” glosses both a translation of *paramparā*, and also Foucault’s historical understanding of the term (Foucault 1984: 76-100). The romanization of words follows conventions of Devanāgarī script. Following Levy (1990: 623), the mark “(n)” is used to avoid having to place two diacritical marks over vowels to show nasalization of that vowel.
 - 2 There are other important notions of “tradition,” such as the Nepali nationalistic use of the term. However, at the present time in Bhaktapur, the romantic historicist and genealogy-tradition (*paramparā*) notions are not only the most significant ones, but are often used to resist the “Nepali” understanding.

As these two strands of historiography show, there are many signs in Bhaktapur which indicate that a traditional city is not determined by the purity of its “ancientness,” but rather by how its “ancientness” is imagined and used. I argue that the signs reveal that Bhaktapur’s current everyday practice of tradition cannot be reduced to either the historicist or the genealogical understandings. Rather, Bhaktapur’s contemporary everyday use of “tradition” is compiled from both. Understanding the contemporary hybrid notion of Bhaktapur’s tradition, as well as its role in development, politics, and tourism, is significant because it makes the city’s modernity concrete and specific. De-reifying the myth of modernity is crucial because it deconstructs the historicist understandings of tradition and thus allows “peasant” voices to emerge. Following the work of Dipesh Chakrabarty, by peasant I do not mean the pre-political. Instead, “The peasant stands for all that is not bourgeois (in a European sense) in Indian Capitalism and modernity” (Chakrabarty 2000: 11). My advocacy for peasant practices stems both from my radical reading of the *History of Religions* (Eliade 1969: 1-11), and from politics in Bhaktapur (Cālise 2051 v.s.).

Not Just a Laughing Matter: A Post-Romantic History of Tradition

I can pinpoint the spring morning of 6 April 1990 when the romantic version of Nepal I had learned from college textbooks was first challenged by the actuality of the concrete. As a tourist, I had traveled overland from London to Nepal and was guilty of what Milton Singer writes: “No traveler to India goes with pure eyes or untouched mind. He [sic] is lured by the fabulous or exotic spiritual images that have passed over India like the mist of her hills” (Singer 1972: 13). Naïve, fresh out of college, my head filled with a “positive orientalism,” I was searching for the romanticism of the “mystic East” (King 1999). On the misty morning of 6 April 1990, after consulting my *Lonely Planet Guidebook*, I rode my one-speed Indian Hero bicycle up the Arniko Highway to Nepal’s traditional city, Bhaktapur. What I found, however, once the mist had risen, was not the quaint traditional town I had been promised. I had just gotten off the bus from Varanasi the night before and was still enveloped in the cozy rose-colored aura of my “tourist bubble.”³ Unbeknownst to me, Nepal was in the midst of pro-democracy movement. In fact, it was

3 “Tourist bubble” is not a technical term. I use it to indicate what MacCannell (1973) sees as “tourist spaces,” which are organized around “staged authenticity.”

the day of what would prove to be the largest pro-democracy demonstration of 1990. The city was deserted. All the stores were locked tight, and piles of brick and stones littered the street.

I was able to incorporate the deserted city, the stone-strewn lanes, and the lack of activity into my rose-colored romantic notions of what Bhaktapur should have been. It was not until I reached the center of the city—Taumadhi square—that my book-learned mystic conception of Hinduism and its role in a traditional city were shattered by an ethnographic encounter. Atop the god Bhairava's twenty-five-foot-tall festival chariot, waved the hammer and sickle of a Communist flag. At the time, Bhairava's flag-bedecked chariot seemed to me like "a certain Chinese encyclopedia" mentioned by Michel Foucault in *The Order of Things*, which shatters "out of laughter ... all the familiar landmarks of my thought—our thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography" (Foucault 1971: xv). Yet, as the heady days of Nepal's 1990 pro-democracy demonstrations continued, as I heard the sound of soldiers marching in the streets, smelled the smoke of burning tires, and witnessed the numerous clashes between the government troops and demonstrators, it turned out the flag was no laughing matter, nor was it unique. As I detail below when I discuss two of Bhaktapur's chronicles, the mix of religion and politics in the Kathmandu valley continued after the 1990 revolution and began long before it.

There was absolutely nothing out of place with the Communist flag atop the chariot of Bhairava's festival. It only seemed odd to me because I had been imagining "Nepal" through a historicist understanding of tradition. As I mentioned above, one of the main distortions of the historicist understanding is that it dichotomizes "tradition" and "modernity." That is, even though inhabitants of such places as Bhaktapur are coeval with "us," the romantic view of tradition condemns them to a quaint dustbin of history. Accordingly, while tradition is usually spoken of in terms of chronology, it has an implied orientalist geographic element. The "West" is modern, while the rest are traditional. Beyond this geographic implication is an economic one. While the West is modern and rich, the rest are "under developed" and poor (Ferguson 1994). In any case, traditional practices are anachronisms that must be scrapped in the face of modernity.

Still, the romantic historicist understanding of tradition does not completely condemn it. The driving force of much historicist discourse is a "positive orientalism" (Sadik 2000; Said 1978, 2000). What is implicated is that in the West's scramble for material possessions and

worldly success “we moderns” lost our spiritual center. And just as the “folk” offered a solution to the nineteenth-century Western bourgeoisie, traditional places are seen to offer solace to alienated moderns. Yet, while seemingly a positive attribute, this romantic view of tradition places Bhaktapurians in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, they can actively scuttle their tradition and become rich, modern, and European. Or, on the other, they can remain passively spiritual, but poor and underdeveloped—the epitome of the noble savage. In either case “peasant” voices are silenced.

In Bhaktapur, the consequences of using a romantic understanding of tradition to justify the silencing of local voices can be seen in the Bhaktapur Development Project’s (BDP) historical conservation. Between 1974 and 1986, the BDP—or “German Project” as it is generally called locally—renovated over 187 pieces of the city’s religious architecture. The BDP was a cooperative effort between the West German development agency, Gesellschaft fuer Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and His Majesty’s Government of Nepal (HMG). While appreciated by many in Bhaktapur, the German Project also met much resistance because it did not take local concerns into consideration. In short, the BDP, which explicitly aimed to “improve the living conditions of the city’s inhabitants,” was plagued by a widespread hostility among Bhaktapurians—those whom it was supposedly helping (Grieve 2002: 73–122). Most of the hostility stemmed from the fact that the BDP neither consulted the local people in the project’s decision making process, nor had respect for the city.

For instance, in March of 1997, I spoke with a high-caste and well-educated male professional who said, “[The BDP] were always the #expert# [word in English] and they knew how to do everything . . . that was the bad thing.”⁴ I asked him how this caused harm. His example, like

4 Obviously what is presented here is not the unmediated voice of my discussants. Their words here are as I taped them, and as I have transformed them in the act of writing (cf. transliteration above). Whether to have the voices remain anonymous, or to name the speakers was one of the hardest decisions I had to make. On one hand, I desired to give full credit to those who gave so much to me. On the other hand, I was worried that the information may incriminate people, especially with the change in Nepal’s political climate. My strategy is a mixed one. Bhaktapur is a tightly knit community, and where the people spoken of would be recognized anyway, I’ve kept the authentic name. In other situations, I’ve either used appropriate pseudonyms, or have not used any name at all.

many, centered on water and sewage problems. He pointed to the faucet in front of his home and said, “[because of the BDP] it is no longer a faucet, but a kind of pond. They restored it, [he pointed to the water which filled in the sunken steps] but they did it wrong.” He also gave the example of the paving bricks in front of his home. “When they dug there they found stone pavement—nice big slabs. And what they did is that they didn’t take them out, they just put the bricks over the top. They had no feeling at all for the stones.” Perhaps the most telling evidence of people’s widespread distrust of the BDP can be found in the fact that many people felt that the BDP had stolen local god-images. As a middle-aged store-owner said to me in April of 1997:

It is #alleged# [word in English] [that many god-images were stolen]. You can see all around the city the pieces that were there before the BDP came in. God knows where they went during the period of the BDP. For example, there used to be a deity in the Pugari Math...you know, in the upper part of the city...that should not be seen by any one but the priest. That room is empty now, there is nothing but some fresco art on the walls. There is nothing left. Who is responsible for this kind of thing?

Much of the hostility arose because people felt that the German government operated as if it owned Bhaktapur. As a member of the municipality said to me in April of 1997, “Another thing, many of the Germans regard the city as theirs.” I asked him to give an example, and he answered, “Just recently a local civic group tried to put some trashcans at key city sites. Those trashcans were contributed by the Soltee Group [an international hotel chain-GPG] and an Australian municipality. All those dustbins had Australian flags and the Soltee Group logo. The German Embassy called on the then-mayor, and objected to those trashcans.” I asked him why. He replied, “Because they had the Australian flag and the Soltee Group logo.... [They] have contributed a lot in the things around here, but it doesn’t mean that we are a #colony# [word in English] of Germany.”

Colonizing Histories

The BDP legitimated its “ownership” of Bhaktapur by producing romantic historicist “myths” of the city. These myths concentrated on picturesque portraits of Newar culture that were used to justify development and monumental conservational practices in the city. Because they robbed Bhaktapur of history and politics, in a Barthesian sense, these texts are myths (Barthes 1957: 109-159). As he writes, “myth

is always a language-robbery" (Barthes 1957: 131). Take for instance, Anne Haaland's *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing: Process influenced by [the] Bhaktapur Development Project* (1982) and Giovanni Scheibler's *Aktuelles Bauen im Historischen Kontext: Bhaktapur Nepal* (1982).

Published in 1982, Haaland's text was a promotional piece produced by the BDP. Exclusive of the first chapter, whose data was collected by the anthropologist Todd Lewis, the text swings from romantic portraits of Newar life to propagandist justification of the BDP's role in Bhaktapur. In the romantic mode, on page six Haaland writes, "[T]he mist lies like a heavy blanket over the winter morning, obscuring the characteristic skyline.... This ghost town disappears, though, as one moves into narrow streets, where life has been busy since the first streaks of light made the roosters announce the new day"(1982:6). Such depictions of picturesque poverty are counterpoised with the nuts and bolts of development discourse. Haaland writes, "There are still difficulties with the LDCs [local development committee], but these are, slowly but surely, being weeded out as both sides gain more experience working with each other"(Haaland 1982: 89). The romantic and development discourses come together in the photographs taken by Anne Haaland that display picturesque poverty—images of traditional craft, agriculture, and religious worship—which mark Bhaktapur as traditional and an ideal location for development.

Scheibler's work, also published in 1982, was presented as his doctoral thesis for the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich. A study of historical conservation in Bhaktapur, the work uses architectural history to argue for the need for current/effective (*Aktuelle*) technology in Bhaktapur's development. Pragmatizing the conceptual work of other scholars, Scheibler posits Bhaktapurians as traditional people who have not yet been spoiled by colonialism or industrialization (Gutschow 1980; Gutschow and Klover 1975). His work traces out the steps by which such romantic historicist visions can be implemented and made concrete. Scheibler follows a romantic understanding of the city.

First and foremost, the ritual acts bind the open space in a creative context which cannot be understood functionally. They establish a spiritual infrastructure which is employed daily by the inhabitants. One is no longer able to differentiate the ritualistic from the day-to-day activities, for transcendental and real world are understood as one entity, and every action of the inhabitant is orientated towards the hereafter (Scheibler 1982:47).

Layered on the romantic descriptions is a discourse of technical jargon used to justify concrete suggestions on developing local building techniques: "In order to establish decision-making principles for finding fuel substitutes, research must be done into the local market situation with respect to cost comparisons and delivery capacities of fuels" (1982: 192).

While seemingly very different in purpose and audience, both Haaland's and Scheibler's historiographies share a romantic historicist approach to Bhaktapur. By stripping people of voices and being blind to politics, such romantic historiography works as an ideology to justify and legitimate the BDP. Accordingly, as an economic actuality the BDP *could* engage in one-sided development approaches because of the asymmetrical relations between the "developed" and "underdeveloped" nations (Escobar 1995). At the level of "myth," the BDP believed that it *should* engage in such an approach because it imagined Bhaktapur's religious architecture through a romantic conservationist notion of history. The "mythic" nature of such romantic historiographies is apparent because they are not really historical. As Michel Foucault writes in "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," histories of origin are "an attempt to capture the exact, and pure and [transhistorical] essence of things" (Foucault 1984:78). In an oxymoronic fashion, a history of origins assumes a level of meaning preexisting the world of accident. That is, it assumes a metaphysic which predates history, and is thus magically both pre-historical and outside of history altogether.

Signs of Contestation

The ideological nature of romantic historiographies helped the BDP to naturalize and legitimate the conservation activities that they undertook in Bhaktapur. Such activities were not abstract discourses, but often had a direct impact on people's lives. As a merchant who lives in one of the reconstructed buildings said to me, "The Germans wanted to turn our house into a museum. If they turn our house into a museum, where would we live?" (13 August 1997, personal interview). Several people in Bhaktapur told me that they felt that contestation of BDP conservation activities took on such intensity because there was little local governance in Bhaktapur before 1990, as a result of which people felt powerless against both the Germans and the Nepali central government. Without legitimate avenues of protest, it seems that Bhaktapurians on occasion resorted to destructive forms of protest, although mostly they engaged in

more “passive” forms of resistance.⁵ Stories circulated that Nepali BDP supervisors on a few occasions were beaten up and wheeled around the city’s procession route. Also, some Bhaktapurians engaged in demonstrations and tore down newly constructed buildings. The largest demonstration was reported in the German trade journal *Akzente*, which is published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). As “Lessons From Bhaktapur,” reads, “In 1980, there was the first and only strike against a project enjoying significant support from Germany” (September 1996). More “passive” forms of resistance to the BDP took the form of constant “poaching” of BDP supplies as well as work slow downs. Finally, people engaged in passive resistance by refusing to use newly constructed buildings and infrastructure.

What were the signs that point to Bhaktapur’s contestation of the BDP? Turn overleaf for a moment to a drawing from *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing* (figure 1) by Narendra Basnet⁶ (Haaland 1982: 3). Basnet’s drawings throughout *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing* (Haaland 1982) are contrapuntal, a point of resistance, to the rest of the book’s text and photographs. The drawings resist the rose-colored description of tradition and the uncritical appraisal of development ideology. They display a keen wit and an understanding of the political and social implications of the Germans’ role in Bhaktapur and of development in general.⁷

5 I want to stress that I cannot substantiate rumors I heard, nor do I think that such information could or should be used to incriminate anyone. People revealed information on resistance to the BDP to me only with hesitation and only in confidence.

6 Narendra Basnet, an individual about whom I could find no further information except that the name was listed in the forward of the book, produced this drawing. I hypothesize, however, that because of the repeated use of one character in his drawings that he was a Nepali man in his early 20s who had been exposed to modern consumer notions of fashions such as Levi’s jeans. His drawings also show the influence of “hippy” or “freak” comic strips such as those of Robert Crumb.

7 Other drawings include a critique of development on page 23, where Narendra Basnet shows a comic-strip narration of a development worker giving new seeds to a farmer, having the seeds fail, but having the development worker still write up a glowing report of his work. On page twenty-five is an image of a tourist as a dollar bill. On page 28 is an image of a figure representing Bhaktapur being robbed by a figure representing Kathmandu. On page forty-six is a drawing of a man in modern dress being asked by a *brāhmin*, “So what do you expect to look like in your next life?”

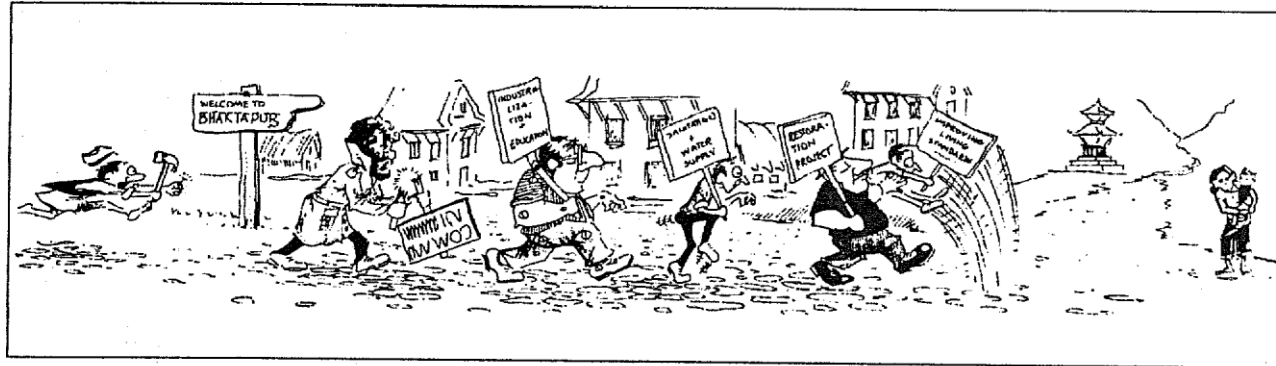


Fig. 1: "Welcome to Bhaktapur"

Ironically, it is the fashionable “counter-culture” cartoons which best display the subsumed “peasant” awareness of the situation. In the mid-ground on the right of the drawing is a sign that reads “Welcome to Bhaktapur.” In the background of the drawing is a line of traditional Newar houses. In the far background on the right is the classic pagoda-style Newar temple, and in the left mid-ground stands the classic development subject—an impoverished peasant woman holding her child. In the middle foreground stand five male figures that march with picket signs as if participating in a political demonstration. The first person in the line is a smug, robust German development worker with a sign that reads “Restoration Project.” The German nonchalantly swats a small Nepali figure out of the way. The Nepali sign reads “Improving Living Standards.” This image corresponds to a drawing labeled “Counterparts” on page 115 of Haaland’s text, where an obese, condescending German development consultant hugs a docile Nepali, and also to the general understanding at the time that, while the Nepalis wanted factories and jobs, the Germans wanted to “preserve” heritage. Tiptoeing behind the first German is a second Nepali who holds a sign that reads “Sanitation and Water Supply.” The sign, as mentioned above, indicates a constant problem with the BDP plans, a malfunction with the sewer system that has had ramifications in not only Bhaktapur but even in the highest levels of German government.⁸ Behind the second Nepali figure is another younger, “hipper,” but still smug German—representing the second wave of development efforts—whose sign reads “Industrialization and Education.”

The drawing represents visually what I heard from many Bhaktapurians, that it was not just that the people wanted jobs, education, and sanitation rather than temples, but more importantly that what the people contested was a lack of agency and recognition of their labor in the development project. As an elderly Bhaktapurian said to me, “[the Germans] wanted to turn our city into a little Vienna.” In addition, as a local Bhaktapurian historian voiced, “Why didn’t [the Germans] talk with

8 The Green Party’s widespread support of the BDP was sullied by the project’s failures, but especially in the realm of sanitation. A German ex-patriot who had worked for the BDP told me that there had been worries that the broken sewage system might cause a cholera epidemic, and that the German government might sue the GTZ because the most costly part of the whole project had never worked (Anonymous informant, personal communication, 9 March 1999). On the failures of the BDP, see Reichenbach (1999).

people who knew about the traditional society? With our carpenters, painters, Brāhmins, and other religious workers?" (personal communication, July 1997). A telling example is a tale related to me by a former deputy mayor and current consultant for the municipality on heritage activities. When I asked him about the BDP, he told a story about one tourist who said, "The city really should be German, because we rebuilt it for you." The former deputy replied, first, that the municipality has replaced all the German bricks with the ones that are seen now, and, second, that most of the money went to pay for German salaries and that, if the tourist wanted to see where the money went, he should disembowel the German experts who worked on the project (personal communication, March 3, 1999).

Outwardly, people demanded social security and permanent employment, as modeled on the working conditions in His Majesty's Government (HMG)'s civil service. Less vociferously, there was a demand for consultation and participation in the decision-making progress of the project. Paralleling the strife in Bhaktapur was a debate in Germany over the increasingly technocratic character of development projects. It was felt that the funds were being used chiefly to pay German experts and that there was no project sustainability. In addition, because of the European economic downturn at the time, there was concern about who would cover the costs of maintaining the project. Furthermore, politicians in the German government began to question the orientation of the project: How was it helping women and other disadvantaged target groups? The architectural heritage conservation that had gained so much international attention was seen as a hindrance to supplying the basic needs of the poor.

Compiling Effective Tradition: The Mythic Difference Between Toilet Paper and Napkins

Some nine years after my encounter with Bhairava's festival chariot, early on the morning of 4 March 1999, I arrived at the artist Madhu Krishna Chitrakar's house to finish priming a canvas. Madhu lives with his wife, son, and three daughters near Bhaktapur's main Bhairava temple. The upper stories of their home are a mix of workshops and living space; the ground floor is a small tourist store. After morning tea, Madhu entered and I showed the canvas to him. He nodded that it was fine and said: "the underlying canvas must be perfect so that the image is effective (*śakti*). It is like tradition (*paramparā*). If we don't follow tradition the painting will not have effectiveness." We then talked about what image to

use. Madhu sketched out a rough design on a piece of scratch paper. This would become the model underlying the grid for the *paubhā* painting I would work on over the next nine months. Madhu wanted to show me some other designs so he pulled out an old cloth book that he'd put together.

The book was his copybook, or *hākusaphu*. In it he had compiled symbols, colors, and deities: block prints, photocopies, the odd picture cut out from a magazine, cards taped in the book, and drawings that he as well as his father had done. Most other artisans I met also had such model books, as well as folders and printed books that they used as templates for their work. The oldest surviving Nepali copybook is from the fifteenth century, with the majority of such books dating from the early seventeenth to the twentieth-first century (Blom 1989). *Hākusaphus* are employed by all kinds of artisans in the Kathmandu valley, including painters, woodcarvers, sculptors, goldsmiths, and architects. "*Hākusaphu*" literally means "black book." Mr. Chitrakar informed me that the name indicated the book's black lining, "the most important part." Other craftsmen told me that the name referred to the color of the pages, the cover, or that the book held tantric knowledge. The *hākusaphus*' compiling of effective past practices provides evidence for the genealogical tradition of Bhaktapur's everyday life.

Later that morning, Madhu's oldest daughter served a mid-morning tiffin. As we warmed our hands on the teacups, I asked Madhu if he had any news. He said that he did; he'd gone to a wedding feast and it had been a "*parī*."⁹ He didn't like it; he felt shy and liked the traditional version better. The "clincher" for him was when, after eating meat, having gotten his hands sticky, he saw some toilet paper hanging from a pole (this is how it is normally done)-and he asked for toilet paper, and people laughed at him, saying, "No that's not toilet paper, that's napkins." He countered, "Well, it sure looks like toilet paper to me." Madhu's main point was that he mistrusts modern "myths" that have magically transformed toilet paper into napkins.

His skepticism about the myth of napkins stems from the fact that while in many ways modernity has been good for Bhaktapur, it has taken much of the effectiveness out of tradition. By effective tradition, both in

9 A *parī* is a type of buffet, which is perceived to be "American." It consists of folding chairs, rather than the traditional way of serving food seated in rows on the floor, and, rather than Newar food, a hybrid mix of Indian curry and European-style finger foods.

the concreteness of “napkins” and as the perfect preparation of a canvas, Madhu is indicating the successful practices by which everyday life is constructed. In Bhaktapur, such everyday practices tend to be glossed by the term “*paramparā*”—a word that is usually translated as “tradition” but might better be translated as “active genealogy.” Like the images in Madhu’s model book, *paramparā* means to use as your model what your father and grandfather did. At first blush, the genealogical understanding and the historicist understanding of “tradition” seem similar. Yet, as the Bhaktapurian Yogesh Raj said to me, “there is a difference between *paramparā* and #tradition# [word in English]. There is no exact translation. *Paramparā* is that which is still alive, *paramparā* is not the past, it is the present in continuity from the past” (personal interview, 6 February 1999). As I came to learn from many people, Bhaktapurians tended to see tradition (*paramparā*) as an active choice among a set of possible options. You could choose to either use the “napkin” or not.

Chronicling a Traditional City

Like the compiling logic of Mr. Chitrakar’s *hākusaphu*, the effectiveness of local genealogical tradition can be seen in two chronicles that frame the history of Bhaktapur. The first is the *Gopālarājavamśāvalī*, or *Chronicle of the Gopāla Kings* (Vajracārya and Malla 1985). The manuscript was “discovered” by Cecil Bendall in Nepal’s Bīr Library in 1889-99, and is currently housed in Nepal’s National Archive. The chronicle’s earliest date is A.D. 1057, and the latest A.D. 1389. Because King Jayasthitirājamalla is eulogized as the incarnation of Rāma, Buddha, and the eight lokapālas, the chronicle was most likely compiled during his reign (AD 1382-1395). Because most of the place names come from Bhaktapur, the text was most likely written there.¹⁰ The second chronicle,

10 I worked with a facsimile copy of the manuscript compiled, with commentaries, by Vajracārya and Malla (1985). The manuscript is a palm-leaf document, measuring 28 by 5 centimeters, and consisting of 48 folios. The script is fly-headed (*bhuji(n) mola*), and was copied by a single hand (except for folio 46b). A few pages are moth-eaten or faded from age. The chronicle, by matter of convention, has been divided by scholars into three sections (V1, V2, and V3). V1 and V2 are loosely related. Starting with the end of the Kali Yuga and the emergence in the Valley of Paśupatinath’s fiery phallus, and ending with the Muslim invasions and Jayasthitirājamalla’s reign, V2 and V3 are basically the same narrative but were separated because of a slight break where a double *daṇḍa* occurs, bringing the events up to the reign of Jayasthitirājamalla.

Puṣparāja Cālise's *Nepālko Prajātāntrik Āndolanmā Bhaktapurko Bhūmikā* (1997-2047 v.s.) [2051 v.s.], is arguably not a chronicle at all. The book presents itself as notes to a brief political outline of Bhaktapur's democratic movement and lists political events in Bhaktapur between 1936 and 1989. It covers the initial attempts toward democracy (1936-1950), the first steps toward democracy (1950-1960), and ends with Bhaktapur's involvement in the end of the Panchāyat system and the democratic movement (1960-1989).

As evidenced in these chronicles, effective genealogical tradition constructs Bhaktapur's lived world in four chief ways. First, both of the chronicles concentrate on Bhaktapur's locality. For instance, Vajrācārya and Malla write that the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* has a "Bhaktapur-centric outlook" (Vajrācārya and Malla 1985:xiv), and *Nepālko Prajātāntrik Āndolanmā Bhaktapurko Bhūmikā* outlines Nepal's democratic movement as it pertains particularly to Bhaktapur. In both chronicles, the local history is done to create a particular social reality. For example, the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* consists of a mix of terse genealogical lists and the myth and historical narrative of *itihāsa-purāṇa*. Romila Thapar argues that the genealogical section of the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī* is telescoped, with only a bare bones of names and relationships, which are regarded by the chronicler "as the most significant to social needs" (Thapar 1978:280). For instance, as Vajrācārya and Malla indicate, the miraculous origin of Paśupati (folio 17a) is brief, whereas the eulogization of Jayasthītirājamalla takes up many folios. Similarly, Cālise's (2051 v.s.) main point in his history is that political action is a form of praxis. He builds a platform upon which to articulate how Bhaktapur was inflamed by the People's Movement of 1989, including the role of the Nepal Workers and Peasant Party (NWPP) (Nepal Majdur Kisan), especially the chairman of the central committee, Mr. Nārāyanmān Bijukche(n) ("Comrade Rohit"). This can be seen in the fact that, when Cālise chronicles the events of 1989 and the demonstrations for democracy, he slows down to a day by day, even hour by hour, account.

Second, the main subject matter of both chronicles is historically situated political intrigue. For instance, as Vajrācārya and Malla write in their commentary to the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, "Most of the time, the royalty and the nobility were busy in campaigns of mutual extermination. The most frequently mentioned place of action in the chronicle is the fort, and understandably so" (1985:xvii-xviii). Similarly, Cālise's aim is to outline the interaction between different political forces in Bhaktapur. He writes: "Throughout this period [1950-1960], in Bhaktapur, as well as

the rest of the country, reactionary forces were using terrorist actions against their rivals. It was more intensified at night; and in Bhaktapur people started taking turns guarding every tole” (Cālise 2051 v.s.:32).

Third, the chronicles trace events of a socio-cultural nature. Besides forts, in the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, other important places are temples. For instance, on folios 29b-30a, the chronicler gives a list spanning six centuries of gifts that were given to the Paśupatinath temple. Similarly, in Cālise’s work, temples also are an important local stage: “In 1949... for the first time the flag of the Nepal Communist party was flown on Nyā(n)ṭapola temple” (Cālise 2051 v.s.:32). Dramas also play an important part in the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*; folios 60b, 61a and 62a detail the rehearsals and performances of the Bhairavānanda. The importance of cultural events is also outlined in Cālise’s work. He mentions that “such [dramatic] practices included singing a religious song from the Nepal National League: ‘Now it is time to open the eyes, time for darkness to leave your heart and let the bright air in.’ Nārāyanmān Bijukche(n), father of Bhaktapur’s Nepal Majdur Kisan Party, said this was an inspiration for him in his youth” (Cālise 2051 v.s.:27).

Finally, the chronicles focus on the economic and social importance of the monsoon. In the *Gopālarājavaṃśāvalī*, the Laṃkha-yata (rain begging festival), and the construction of aqueducts are just two of the many instances when irrigation plays an important role. In addition, kings are remembered not just for their military conquest or their construction of temples, but also for water works. For instance, on folio 31, King Śivadeva is remembered not only because he was the incarnation of Bhairava of Kāmarupa, but also because “he beautified the country by constructing water-conduits and wells in several places.” Similarly, Cālise chronicles that, in 1957, the Nepal communist party established the Young Communist League, much of whose earliest work promoted public health through the cleaning of the city’s ponds.

Signs of the Modern

Tradition has meaning only in opposition to modernity. In the romantic understanding, this is an ahistorical ontological difference. In a genealogical version “modernity’s” significance stems from its operational and *in situ* relation to tradition. Accordingly, to understand tradition we must place it in context with modern practices. By “modernity” I refer to social and cultural reorganizations that are associated with the emergence of global market capitalism. In other words, modernity captures the processes that have shaped the globe in the

postwar period: Third World industrialization, urbanization, the rise of mass communication, the increasing commodification of cultural life, new forms of imperialism, the creation of a global economy, and the worldwide dissemination of mass culture. As Mahalakshmi Prajapāti, a 28-year-old child care worker stated, “the modern (*ādhunika*) is new work and new things, isn't it?” People in Bhaktapur usually opposed this newness to tradition. For instance, Bijayashree Kamācharyā, a 28-year-old accountant for the Bhaktapur Chamber of Commerce, said that the modern is “development. Believing bad things about tradition.” And as Keshab Hada, a 32-year-old storeowner said, “To make modern is leaving behind tradition, religion, and culture” (personal interview, 5 May 1999).

In Bhaktapur, people gave examples of modernization as a change both in purchasing habits and in perspective on the world. As Keshab Hada stated, “Tall houses and other things are not only the sign of being modern, it has to do with communication facilities, roads, and other such things. It is also about changing people's consciousness” (personal interview, 5 May 1999). Less educated people and laborers tended to see modernization as a change in forms of technology. When I asked the 67-year-old sweeper Bāsulā Dyolā what changes modernity brought to Bhaktapur, she said, “We have Hondas...television” (personal interview, 20 July 1999). Duru Kaji Suwāl a farmer and mason stated, “When the tractor came, it did the work of fifty men. In the past, all things were done by people, but now machines do much of the work” (personal interview, 8 July 1999). New forms of entertainment and communication were also seen as a main sign of development. As Krishna Pradhana(n)ga said, “The main source of change is television. But that is only eight or nine years ago. Before that the thresher was the sign of modernization” (personal interview, 6 June 1999). Finally, as the store owner Ramesh Joshi stated, “A modern place should have somewhere for entertainment” (personal interview, 18 June 1999). Yet, in Bhaktapur the chief marker of modernity is *money*. For instance, in the locally produced film *Nhisutu*, the protagonist Dash Kumar wants to become modern by selling his family land so that he can have money to purchase consumer goods. Or directly to the point, as Bijayashree Kamācharyā responded to my question of what makes someone modern: “money” (personal interview, 11 May 1999).

A History of Politics: More Ambiguous Signs

Dear Guests, You are cordially requested to help us renovate our common cultural heritage and make the following contribution: 1. Rs. 300.00 (Rupees Three Hundred) or US\$ 5.00 (Five US Dollars) (for non-SAARC tourists) per tourist; and 2. Rs. 30.00 (Rupees Thirty) for tourists from SAARC countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Maldives) per tourist. We thank you for your cooperation and wish for your pleasant stay in this living heritage. Bhaktapur Municipality.

In what may seem a paradox, the words above greet visitors to Bhaktapur by insisting that tourists pay to enter a traditional city. Yet, the sign only seems paradoxical if one approaches it with either a pure romantic or a genealogical understanding of tradition. Instead, the sign indicates a compiling of these two traditions. In Bhaktapur, the social forces at work are *radical politics* and *cultural tourism*; the catalyst is the discourse of historical conservation spurred on by development ideology.

To trace the signs of politics, development, and tourism, turn back to Narendra Basnet's drawing (figure 1). In the drawing, the last figure in the line of marchers is a bearded angry-looking man in a trench coat who is breaking his picket sign in two. The bearded man's sign is scribbled and partially illegible, but if you look at it closely you can make out the letters "COMMUNI[sm]." This is the only time politics is mentioned at all in *Bhaktapur: A Town Changing*. (In Scheibler's work, politics is not mentioned at all.) Although the BDP ran extensive "Communication Studies" in the summer of 1979, fall of 1980, and winter of 1981, the book seems to miss the crucial fact that people in Bhaktapur were suddenly resisting the project's efforts because of politics. Nepal's 1980 referendum marked the first real political opposition since King Mahendra had banned political parties in December of 1960. The reason that the BDP was blind to politics was that romantic historicist accounts can only see such "peasant" logics as pre-political.

Although one could argue that the desire for self-government stretches back to the time when Bhaktapur was its own city-state (before 1769), evidence for modern progressive oppositional politics starts only 60 years ago.¹¹ In Bhaktapur during the late 1940s, most of the political action consisted of demonstrations and strikes in opposition to the Rana regime. After the overthrow of the Ranas in 1951, political parties and individuals

11 Because of the present political danger in Nepal, in the following section I do not use the names of the sources from which I drew the material.

concentrated on opposing conservative forces. And after King Mahendra gained the throne in 1957, there was a second round of demonstrations in an attempt to force elections. Probably more important for Bhaktapur, however, than direct political action in this period, were progressive educational and social movements, which consisted of the building of schools, the creation of literacy programs, the construction of libraries, and the cleaning of the city. The most important groups were the farmers' societies, which had a direct influence on the founding of the current party in power in Bhaktapur: the Nepali Workers and Peasants Party (Nepal Majdur Kisan Sangh) (NWPP). NWPP is lead by chairman Narayanman Bijuche(n) ("Comrade Rohit"), who has been a member of the Student's Union, Bhaktapur Municipality, and the Communist Party of Nepal (Bijukche(n) n.d.).

In 1960, King Mahendra dissolved parliament and took sole power of the government through the creation of the Panchayat, or partyless democratic system. After the coup of 1960, the next major oppositional incident did not occur until the coronation of H.M. King Birendra in 1974. And the main challenge to the coup of 1960, as I touched upon above, was not raised until 1978-1979 (2035-2036 v.s.), the first incident of major dissidence since 1950. The wave of protest was ignited on 4 April by the students' movement, with which Bhaktapurians were actively involved. On 12 Chaitra 2036 v.s. (1979), there was a huge demonstration that marched from Bhaktapur to Kathmandu. Eventually, this helped lead to a nationwide referendum on Panchayat rule, which the King announced on 15 December 1980. While in Bhaktapur the referendum for multiparty democracy was victorious, across the nation it was defeated.

For Bhaktapur, the next major event was the Hyo(n)ju Incident, which occurred in 1988 and is still a defining moment in Bhaktapur's political imagination. The incident was the beating and murder of Mr. Hyo(n)ju, by a crowd angered by the way he had distributed relief funds for the 21 August 1988 earthquake. Mr. Hyo(n)ju was mistrusted by many in Bhaktapur because he had been elected as a member of the NWPP but had given his support to the "Panchas." During the distribution of funds, Mr. Hyo(n)ju was accused of neglecting real victims and only giving help to "Pancha political cronies." A crowd gathered and started to drag Hyo(n)ju violently around the procession route. The police came but failed to stop the procession. Suddenly, many drunken people arrived. It is rumored that they were pro-palace police and spies (*maṇḍales*). Others say that they were just drunks celebrating the festival of Gai Jātra. In any

case, soon the crowd started to beat Hyo(n)ju unconscious. He was then rescued by police and taken to the hospital in Kathmandu, but died later that night.

While many say that they were falsely accused, the event led to the arrest of Comrade Rohit and twenty-four other Bhaktapurian political leaders. In Bhaktapur, many people suspect that the Hyo(n)ju incident was a conspiracy to discredit Rohit and the NWPP led by the Central Government. Other people suspect that, while NWPP leaders had not planned on Hyo(n)ju's death, they had aroused the people's anger and directed it toward Hyo(n)ju as a symbol of the *Panchas*. While it may or may not have been a government conspiracy, Hyo(n)ju's death was the perfect excuse for the Pancha forces to suppress Rohit and the other members of the Nepal Majdur Kisan Sangh who had won village, district, and national elections. After the 1990 restoration of multi-party democracy, the members of the NWPP were released, and took the reins of government in Bhaktapur.

A History of Tourism: Signs of a Strange Romantic Partner

Along with progressive politics, the second social force indicated by the entry sign is "cultural tourism" (Grieve 2002:94-109). In 1976, the BDP decided that one way to increase development was to jump start the tourist industry. To do this it was decided to make two of the newly renovated structures into restaurants. One restaurant was located across from the Pūjāri Maṭha in the Jangam Pati and became the Peacock Restaurant. The other was located in Taumādhi Square across from the Bhairava Temple in the Bhaildhya: Sata: and became the Nyatapola Restaurant. The BDP hoped to be able to sell Bhaktapur's otherness by transforming the city into an image of the romantic Orient. Both these conversions were completed over the objections of many residents. Yet, as mentioned above, the BDP could continue because local residents had little voice in governing their city. And the BDP felt that it should go along because of the romantic historiography that denied "traditional" people a voice in the modern world.

Yet, since the BDP left the city, Bhaktapurians have consciously taken up "developing tradition" and are reconstructing religious architecture, as well as promoting the romantic notion that Bhaktapur is a timeless medieval city. For instance, during the local elections held in May 1997, temple reconstruction was one of the NWPP's main platform planks. And during the fiscal year June 1998–July 1999, the municipality undertook a major UNESCO-funded mapping of Bhaktapur's *Protected Monument*

Zone. The rhetoric used to legitimate both these actions was the ideology of development. As the article, "The Discussion About Making Bhaktapur a Cultural City," reads:

There is no doubt that historical and archeological heritage has played a major role in developing the tourist industry. Intellectuals have argued that the main solution of the problem is to love and protect our culture. To accomplish this, a renaissance is necessary (*Bhaktapur Magazine*, Baiśākh 2053 v.s.:2).

Developing tradition is not just an intellectual undertaking, but has reconstructed the concrete space of the city. Massive temple reconstruction has been taken up not only by various *ad hoc* groups in Bhaktapur, but also full-scale by the Nepal Workers and Peasant Party (NWPP) Municipal Government. In fact, between fiscal year 1992-93 and fiscal year 1996-97, 161 local structures have been repaired, restored, or reconstructed, the most important being Siddha Pokhari, Bhairava's main temple, and Nyātapola temple. Temporarily, the outgrowth of the relationship between tourism and romantic reconstruction is especially clear in the Bhaktapur Festival, which was held on 22-26 October 1997. This cultural gala attracted about 400,000 Nepalis and 20,000 foreign tourists. And just recently, the municipality has been attempting to turn the entire city into a monumental zone. This means not only that the whole area would come under the Monumental Area regulations, but also that a series of stricter acts would be implemented (*Bhaktapur Magazine* Baiśākh 2053 v.s.:3-11).

There is a very modern reason to struggle to be traditional. From the five-dollar admission fee, to the small boys who hawk their services as guides, in Bhaktapur when one hears the word "tradition," one reaches for one's wallet. Besides development (but integral to it), Bhaktapur is now also part of a large, coordinated tourist industry: organized by a central government authority and involving many locations throughout the Kathmandu Valley and Nepal. Central to this industry is the changing social and territorial reproduction of "tradition." In the present global economy, tradition is a valuable commodity. And while tourist dollars may not have invented Bhaktapur's tradition (there definitely was something there before tourists arrived), such monies have helped 'repackage' it for sale. Tourism's commodification of tradition can be seen in a UNESCO study which defines cultural tourism as "the absorption by tourists of features resembling vanishing lifestyles of past societies observed through such phenomena as house styles, crafts,

farming equipment and dress" (UNESCO 1976). Similarly, Nārāyanmān Bijukcche(n), party leader of the Nepali Workers and Peasants Party, asserted in the speech, "The Importance of Art and Culture," that "art and culture are our legend of glory and pride. Because of that reason, tourism has fostered in our country. The tourism industry comes second or third position in badly needed hard currency" (22 March 1994).

The reason this romantic understanding of tradition has become important is that one of Nepal's few resources in the global marketplace is its perceived otherness from the modern "West." Bhaktapur, a convenient 30-minute bus ride from the smog, noise, and hubbub of Kathmandu, offers the perfect site for tourist practices that for a short period, and for profit, "re-enchanted" the tourists' lives.¹² This exotic quality comes about because the country was virtually closed to Europe in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nepal's otherness became an even scarcer commodity starting after World War II. The 1960's fascination with the exotic East also coincided neatly with the "opening" of Nepal. For the thousands of travelers who followed the overland route in the 1960s and 1970s, Kathmandu's ornate "non-western" and densely populated capital seemed to be "not only of another time but of an other world" (Shepard 1985:33; cf. Liechty 1996).

Yet, this "otherness" has to be cultivated (Grieve 2002:53-58; VNY'98 1997). The tourist industry did not start until the country was opened to the Europeans after the fall of the Rana regime in 1951. In 1954, tourist visas were liberalized, and, in 1959, Nepal joined the United Nations' World Tourism Organization (WTO). A Tourist Development Board was set up in 1957 under the care of the Ministry of Transport and Communication and in accordance with the provision of the Development Act of 1956. In 1959, the new directorate was constituted with a separate staff. In 1962, the Board was converted into the Department of Tourism and then into the Ministry of Tourism. In 1965, the ministry plotted places of interest, started courses for tour guides, and instituted forms for tourist statistics. Yet, by the mid-1970s, tourist sites had started to become saturated. A Tourism Marketing Strategy (1977-1981) was begun, which surveyed potential tourist areas and their developments. It also began construction of infrastructure at Pokhara, Jomson, Langtang, and Mt. Everest. The marketing strategy concentrated on four goals for

12 On the Weberian notion of "disenchantment" in relation to modernity see Coser 1977:233-234. On the notion of "re-enchantment" and tourism see Urry 1990.

Nepal: first, to earn hard currency; second, to increase the number of tourists and lengthen their stay; third, to replace foreign goods with domestic products; and, fourth, to provide employment opportunities through tourism-related industries.

By the mid 1990s, tourism was again lagging. 1998 marked Visit Nepal Year (VNY'98 1997). This was a massive effort by the Nepali government, the Civil Aviation Ministry, and tourist organizations to revitalize the nation's tourist industry. Along with posters, monthly calendars, logo stickers, and a newsletter, the bureau published brochures and leaflets. These included one in Hindi, thirty-nine in Nepali, and eighty in English. "Nepal Guides" were also published in German, Japanese, and Russian. There were also electronic media, which included three videos, as well as 236 spots about sports on Star TV, a CBS TV "Everest Challenge," a series by Scandinavian Broadcasting, and an SAARC seminar and exhibition on poverty alleviation through women's entrepreneurship. Since 1999 when I ended my fieldwork, because of the palace massacre and the Maoist insurgency there has been another sea change. 2002 saw the lowest level of tourists in three years. Yet, while there is no doubt that tourism will continue to be adversely affected, there is also no doubt that no matter what the future holds, tourism will continue to be important for both Nepal and Bhaktapur.

Conclusion: Signs of a Compiled Tradition

People not only make history, they make history differently. As mirrored by Mr. Chitrakar's *hākusaphu*, Bhaktapur's local historiography tends to follow the model of the chronicle (*vamśāvalī*), which copies a "compiling tradition." Compiling historiography is a form of praxis, not representation. It understands tradition genealogically, and aims to create a particular social world by compiling what is at hand. Contrarily, romantic historicist historiography searches for the pure origins of the city. The problem is not simply that the historicist romantic notion of tradition attempts to sift authentic tradition from modern pollutants. More significant, by placing tradition on a developmental timeline, historicist accounts posit it as "pre-political" and thus pave over "peasant" voices.

Taking into account Bhaktapur's "peasant" histories creates both theoretical and pragmatic benefits. Theoretically, by comparing romantic and chronicle forms of history, one can understand how tradition is configured and contested. Moreover, local historiography illustrates how people in Bhaktapur construct notions of development vis-à-vis those of tradition. Reciprocally, romantic histories reveal a European vernacular

view of tradition—for instance, the assumption that modernity is a globalizing process led by the technological, economic, and political superiority of the West. On a more pragmatic level, many development schemes such as the BDP have failed because their instigators have designed them according to their own personal views of tradition, never taking into account (except as objects of their actions) the people for whom the project is ostensibly run. For instance, instead of opening a dialogue, according not only to many residents of Bhaktapur, but also to many of the expatriates who worked on the project, the BDP was run with little or no involvement from the Nepali side. As Götz Hagmüller, a German expatriate who was director of the project for five years, told me, “During the [BDP] there was no emphasis on learning the languages, either Nepali or Newar. Basically, the unwritten policy was that, except for labor, there should be no participation of the local people” (personal communication, 15 April 1997).

Yet, as Bhaktapur’s many signs indicate, the boundary between genealogical and historicist notions of tradition is already blurred. There is a final figure in Narendra Basnet’s drawing (figure 1). This is the barefooted person on the extreme left, a man wearing the traditional clothes of a Newar “peasant.” He is quickly running toward the main line of marching figures and carries in his left hand a nail and in his right hand a hammer. It is ambiguous in the drawing as to whether this traditional figure is running to help the Communist repair his sign or if he is rushing to help the Germans with their reconstruction. History is no less ambiguous. Much like the communist flag-topped festival chariot, the genealogical and historicist notions of tradition have already been compiled into a “post-modern” form. This contemporary form was created through an appropriation of the romantic discourse of tradition by the pragmatic effectiveness of a local genealogical social logic. Or to put it bluntly, through the social force of politics and tourism what has occurred is the “cashing in” of the romantic myth for local “peasant” ends. In the present global economy, “tradition” is a valuable commodity that can be used not only to gain distinction, but also monetary capital. The traditional city is constructed by translating local practices into romantic Orientalism. The symbolic capital of the culture is then exchanged in the social field of the traditional city for monetary capital. This is not an abstract occurrence, but happens on a daily basis. For example, when I participated in the preparations for the Bhaktapur Festival 1997 tourist jubilee, I observed how a municipal committee decided which local practices counted as tradition. Dancing and ceramics

counted. But because of worries about flies and stench, molasses production did not.

In short, all the signs indicate that Bhaktapur has compiled a new form of tradition made from romantic and genealogical social logics. Moreover, it is Bhaktapur's contemporary compiled tradition that answers the question of how Bhaktapur can be both a "medieval city" and also house the NWWP, one of Nepal's most progressive political parties. The worth of the traditional city comes not because it is a remnant of an earlier era, but because it is valuable in Nepal's contemporary vernacular modernity. While having family resemblances to ancient practices, Bhaktapur's contemporary tradition was developed in the context of oppositional politics and tourism, and the catalyst was the discourse of historical conservation spurred on by development ideology. Yet, what recent histories of Bhaktapur show is that there is nothing inherently sinister about compiling this post-modern tradition. Instead, like any myth or ideology, it is, as Wendy Doniger writes, "a gun for hire, a mercenary soldier: it can be made to fight for anyone" (Doniger 1998:81). Like the final pragmatic "peasant" figure in Narendra Basnet's drawing, using the flotsam and jetsam that history and the global economy have given them, the of Bhaktapur have used both forms of tradition to construct an effective and often profitable social reality.

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