

**PARK, HILL MIGRATION
AND
CHANGES IN HOUSEHOLD LIVELIHOOD SYSTEMS
OF
RANA THARUS IN FAR-WESTERN NEPAL**

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DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Lai Ming Lam and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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ABSTRACT

Despite the fact that conservation ideology has led conservation practice over the last quarter of a century, the removal of local residents from protected areas in the name of biological preservation remains the most common strategy in developing countries. Its wide-ranging impacts on displaced societies have rarely been properly addressed, particularly in regard to the establishment of parks. This thesis is based on 15 months fieldwork carried out among a group of displaced park residents known as Rana Tharus in the country of Nepal. They have long lived in Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve in the far-western part of that nation.

This thesis is largely inspired by recent academic advocacy that conservation-induced dislocations on rural communities are having a serious influence on policy implementation. Such advocacy is leading to more effective and pragmatic park policies. West, Igoe and Brockington (2006) point out that park residents are an indispensable part of protected areas and their cultural and economic interactions with parks occur in diverse ways. Without a full understanding of these interrelationships, any kind of forced conservation policies will be doomed to fail and cause severe disturbances to people's lives. Like most protected areas in developing countries, this thesis shows that the unplanned resettlement scheme of Shuklaphanta failed to mitigate the socio-economic losses that Rana Tharus experienced due to their displacement. The ethnographic data notes that when attention is paid solely to the economic losses experienced by Rana Tharus, the social costs such as social exclusion, loss of culture, and psychological depression are rarely addressed in the dislocation program. An inadequate understanding of the links between protected areas and local livelihoods is one of the major causes for the continuation of park-people conflicts including Shuklaphanta.

In this thesis, I demonstrate how the displacement and other social changes have gradually diminished the social and economic livelihoods of the Rana people. I argue that many of these social impacts were unexpected because Rana Tharus actively responded to all these changes by putting new social relations into effect. As a result, significant social transformations have occurred in contemporary Rana Tharu society. The undivided household unit was no longer their first preference when the new economic realities made themselves felt, and gender and patrilineal kin relationships became more tense. The traditional labouring system (*Kamaiya*) that existed between wealthy and poor Rana Tharus declined due to increasing poverty. All these had erased their ability to maintain sustainable livelihoods that they had previously enjoyed. Moreover, substantial loss of landownership had made it impossible for Rana Tharus to share equal social, economic and political status with the new migrants - the twice-born Pahaaris.

These accumulated and unforeseen results of conservation practices can only be well understood if a holistic analytical perspective is adopted. This thesis borrows the concept of sustainable household livelihood system and the social theories of practice, power and agency to explore the dynamic relationships between conservation, local livelihoods and culture. The stories told by the Rana Tharu provide some important lessons. I argue that dislocation programs should be put aside or at least closely reviewed if their hidden social impacts are not well understood or at least lead to some form of compensation. Such action may prevent the further expansion of park-people conflicts which are shown to hinder conservation efforts of Shuklaphanta and local sustainable livelihoods.

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This thesis grew out of the author's own personal interests. Although I am not Nepalese I do love the country of Nepal, especially its natural environment and friendly people. This thesis could not have been written without the continuous assistance of many people in different stages. They are unfortunately far too many to list individually. However, I owe a special thanks to Shiva Adhikari who has been my voluntary research assistant over the last five years and remains my dear friend.

Shiva, you are my irreplaceable companion and without your unconditional help and spiritual support, I feared that this study might never have been completed. Furthermore, many Nepalese people who assisted me had many concerns about going to the western region of the country, which has been described as a major Maoist area of activity. I could never forget your parents' words about my life: 'Shiva, she comes from far to visit our country, you should help her as much as you can.' I remembered during our fieldwork that we faced many problems but we solved them together. My fieldwork consisted of wonderful and risky moments, and the pressure far exceeded that which a junior researcher like me could manage. I recalled on several occasions we were in the midst of a war: we were stuck on a bus for four days because of confrontations between Maoists and the security forces on the highway. We were awoken by bombing at night in the village; your life was seriously threatened by the Maoists and we were interrogated by one of the Maoist leaders. However, your positive attitude towards life inspired me to be brave and to face those challenges. Your words, 'We can do it. We can do our best' gave me the greatest encouragement and assuaged my anxiety. It is really beyond description how you shared my stress. My debt of gratitude to you is deep.

I am also very grateful to my doctoral committee at the University of Adelaide. Thanks to Professor John Gray, Dr. Andrew Skuse and Dr. Michael Wilmore who supervised this project from beginning to end. In particular their encouragement and patience contributed to my growth as an anthropologist over the last four years. Their intellectual guidance helped to make my

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I am grateful to the following institutions for their generous financial support of this thesis: Ford Foundation, University of Adelaide and the Discipline of Anthropology. I am also very grateful to the local people in Nepal who participated by telling me their stories. Indeed the fieldwork experience changed my way of thinking. I understood that every person can respond to social and environmental changes in certain active ways no matter how socially deprived his or her situation is. More importantly, I hope that the life stories of the Rana Tharus that have been

collected for this thesis will inspire conservation policy planners to search for more effective park management strategies and finally those Park residents' livelihoods can be secured.

This thesis, hopefully, is not an end but a beginning, and will encourage scholars to do more in-depth studies in the near future. Such is my ambition.

NOTE: With the consent of Ranas who agreed to be interviewed, most names shown in this thesis are real except for a few which are pseudonyms, in order to protect their privacy. All the photos included in this thesis were taken by the author.

NOTES ON RANAS, PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSCRIPTION

The name 'Rana' is a confusing word particularly for those readers who have knowledge regarding the history of Nepal. It generally refers to the Rana family who ruled the Kingdom of Nepal from 1846 until 1953. Jang Bahadur was the first ruler of this dynasty. His original family name was Kunwar but he took the title Rana, after an old title denoting military glory used by Rajput princes in northern India. His descendants took this name as their family name. The downfall of this dynasty did not diminish the family's influence. Today, they still control most of the government's administrative positions. However, 'Rana' as it appears in this thesis mainly refers to the indigenous Rana Tharu community unless otherwise stated. This confusion is due to problems of translation. In written English, there is no difference between the Rana rulers and the Rana community but in the Nepalese language (i.e. written Nepali - Devanagari script) and pronunciation, they are different. For distinction purpose, I use the 'Rana family' to refer the rulers. In addition, I chose not to call them Rana Tharus because I found that they strongly resisted being called 'Tharus'. The fact was that they distanced themselves from other Tharu groups through their claim of being Rajput descendants. For a detailed discussion of Rana self-identity see Chapters Six and Nine.

Both the Nepali and Rana language were used in interview situations. Because the Rana language is an unwritten language, I usually translated what was said into the closest Nepali pronunciation. When I transcribed the Nepali words, I consulted R. L. Turner's *Comparative and Etymological Dictionary of Nepali Language* (1997 reprinted version). To make the thesis more readable to non-Nepali specialists, most interview contexts (both Nepali and Rana language in originality) were translated into English.

SPECIAL NOTES

My major fieldwork finished in December 2005. Since then there have been three major developments that may have long-term implications for Ranas' livelihoods. The first one constituted the dramatic political changes leading to the end of the 240-year-long absolute monarchy and Nepal becoming a democratic republic on 28th May 2008. After 10 years of civil war the Nepalese government and the Maoists concluded negotiations successfully on 9th November 2006. On 19th January 2007, the Maoists agreed to disarm (during my latest trip, I was told by locals that there were no more Maoist activities in my study villages). The constituent assembly election was held on 10th April 2008 and the Maoists became the biggest party. In the first assembly meeting, all political parties unanimously agreed to abolish the monarchy and the unpopular King Gyanendra was ousted from the royal palace. However, these changes have not stopped the political turmoil in Nepal and nor ended most people's economic hardships. Recently, the Maoist party warned that it would refuse to join the new government because it held an unfavourable attitude towards the first president, Mr. Ram Baran Yadhav from the Nepali Congress Party. What are the implications of these political developments on Ranas' livelihoods? Only more insightful and longitudinal research work can answer this question.

Recently, I have read an interesting article written by Nepalese scholar Nina Bhatt (2003). He analyses the relationships between the Nepali kings and the park management. There is no doubt that Nepali kings contributed much to Nepal's early conservation efforts. The creation of the first national park - Royal Chitwan National Park - in 1973 by King Mahendra and the establishment of the largest national conservation organisation (King Mahdendra Trust for Nature Conservation) were good examples. However, he also points out that the effectiveness of park management is often linked to different political contexts. The multi-party political system of the 1990s had adverse impacts on conservation efforts because officials worked only for the benefit of their own party or alliance. As a result, officials were not interested in working in remote areas where most Parks are located. Compared to the pre-1990s monarchy the park authority received less attention and resources. Today, the downfall of the Shah Dynasty has

enormous implications for the Nepalese people and the future of their country's park management. There is an urgent need for further research to investigate what these implications are.

The second change was the reinforcement of park management on the south-west side buffer zone villages. The Chief Warden of Shuklaphanta, Tikkrām Adhikari, said to me in our interview that a few army camps would be set up very soon in this region in order to stop illegal resource use activities. One of the army camps would be located in the Dhokka Block buffer zone forest area. The implementation of this policy may result in restrictions to forest resources and impact adversely on the local people's livelihoods. This ambitious park management strategy was still in the planning stage when I revisited the field in December 2006, but the Ranas' response to it would be worthy of more follow-up study.

The third change was the rising political unrest in the Tarai region. In an earlier study done by Gaige (1975), he pointed out that conflict and tension had long existed between the plains people and hill people. My discussion in Chapter Six and Chapter Nine has also clearly demonstrated that social, economic and political exclusion was deeply felt by the Ranas and twice-born Pahaaris. As a result, although the ten year-long Maoist insurgency has now been resolved, the Madheshi movement which emerged in mid-January 2007 has rapidly become a major potential risk to peace in the country. Madhesh in Nepali means Tarai and the Madheshi community includes Maithilis, Bhojpuris, Awadhis, Tharus and other smaller tribal groups. In contrast to the three dominant hill castes (Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars) who constituted 36% of total population in Nepal but occupied 89.2% of position in civil service, the Madheshi community accounted for 32% of the population but occupied only 8.4% of positions in the civil service (Karna 2007). They are now asking for the same rights as Pahaaris following a century of neglect. The on-going violent conflicts occurring in the Tarai region not only affect the daily livelihoods of Tarai people, but also shape the development of ethnicity among Tarai communities. Due to the limitations of this thesis additional research work is needed for finding out what the Rana community's future is.

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ACRONYMS

ACA	Annapurna Conservation Area
BZUGC	Buffer Zone User Group Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
KMTNC	King Mahendra Trust Nature Conservation
KTWR	Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve
PAs	Protected Areas
PCP	Participatory Conservation Program
RANA	Rana Tharu
RCNP	Royal Chitwan National Park
RNA	Royal Nepalese Army
RSWR	Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve
VDC	Village Development Committee

PROBLEMS AND THE PROJECT

What are the social, material, and symbolic effects of protected areas, and how do protected areas impact people's lives and their surroundings? Our contention is that protected areas matter because they are a way of seeing, understanding, and (re) producing the world. As such, they are rich sites of social production and social interaction.

(West et al. 2006: 252)



Plate 1.1 The extensive grassland landscape of Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve provides a paradise for Swamp Deer and other wildlife. However, its establishment and expansion has resulted in the displacement of thousands of families.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: PROBLEMS OF CONSERVATION PRACTICES AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL INPUTS

This thesis is concerned with the establishment and expansion of a protected area (Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve) among the Rana Tharus (hereafter referred to as Ranas) in Nepal. In particular the implications of geographical and socio-cultural dislocations imposed by the State in recent decades on the sustainable livelihoods of a particular minority group like the Ranas and their reactions are explored. This is also a thesis that explores the interactive relationships between dislocation, marginalization, impoverishment and cultural changes in relation to the roles of different social actors (Ranas, non-Ranas and the State).

The conflicts between park management and local residents in developing countries remain an unresolved problem in contemporary conservation debates. Recently, a growing concern with the impacts of conservation-induced dislocations on rural communities has been addressed by cross-disciplinary scholars (Colchester 2004; Goodall 2006; Mahanty 2003; McElwee 2006; Rangarajan & Shahabuddin 2006; West & Brockington 2006; West et al. 2006). In a detailed review of existing literature on dislocations, West, Igoe and Brockington (2006) state that a shortcoming of contemporary conservation studies is ignorance of dislocation studies even though dislocation is one of the most controversial and contested aspects of protected areas (PAs) and its accumulated consequences are often unexpected. They argue that park residents are part of PAs and their cultural and economic interactions with PAs occur in diverse ways. Without a full understanding of these interrelationships, any kind of forced conservation policies will be doomed to fail and cause severe disturbances to people's lives. They strongly note that more anthropological studies in conservation-related dislocation research are necessary to resolve the continuing park-people conflicts. This thesis contributes to this recent scholarly advocacy.

Reviewing contemporary conservation studies, I also find that conventional anthropological approaches in these studies are inadequate for exploring the complex relationships between

the park management and local communities particularly the adaptability of livelihoods, cultures and the role of human agency. In this thesis, a new research approach which largely builds on the concepts of sustainable livelihoods (Chambers & Conway 1992) and household perspective (Netting et al. 1984) is used to understand the changing Rana livelihood systems. Meanwhile, borrowing ideas from practice theory (Ortner 1989) and current debates on power and agency (Ortner 1996; Ortner 2006), this thesis discovers how park residents like Ranas resist, adapt and mediate the new socio-economic environments following the park's establishment and its impact on their daily livelihood practices.

The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part traces the historical developments of conservation practices from global and Nepalese perspectives. The relationships of park-people conflicts and the emergence of new conservation approaches are discussed. The second part explores the contribution of anthropology to environmental conservation. The merits and deficiencies of major anthropological research on environmental issues are reviewed. In the last part, four core analytical concepts - livelihoods, households and the theories of practice and power - are discussed.

Conflicts of Contemporary Conservation Practices

A Global Perspective: Conflicts in Developing Countries

Park planning concepts introduced in the United States in the 19th century have served as models for the development of PA networks worldwide, especially in developing countries (Brandon & Wells 1992; Ghimire 1994). Since the 1950s, PAs have expanded dramatically and more than 100,000 PAs had been established world-wide by 2006 (West & Brockington 2006). It is estimated that PAs now cover about 12 percent of the Earth's land area (West & Brockington 2006). A number of developing countries such as Bhutan, Nepal, Thailand, Chile, Zimbabwe and Togo have transformed more than 10% of their land surface into PAs (Ghimire 1994). PAs help prevent biodiversity and wildlife from being destroyed by development (Brandon & Wells 1992; Skonhofs 1998). However, in less manageable developing countries (also labelled non-Western societies), because of large rural populations and subsistence economies, any conservation policy may cause a myriad of park-people conflicts (Heinen 1993; Lekmkuhl & Upreti 1988).

Different perception of nature between Western and non-Western societies is one of the major root causes for those conflicts (Callicott & Nelson 1998; Cronon 1996; Guha 1989; Harmon 1998; Johns 1998; Michael 1995). A detailed review of the evolution of wilderness was conducted by Oelschlaeger (1991).¹ He points out that the concept of wilderness has rapidly spread in Western societies and has been the subject of debate on civilization and modernism. To be human is to be separate from nature according to many Westerners. The wilder the place is, the more natural it is. For example, the 1964 US Wilderness Act defines 'wilderness' as a place 'where man himself is a visitor and does not remain'. As a result, the aesthetic and recreational functions of nature often dominate its productive value (Klein 1994).

Influenced by this ideology, the world's first PA, Yellowstone National Park, was established in the United States and has rapidly become the model for the PA throughout the world (Sarkar 1999). This Western-model PA has usually meant an increasing restriction on livelihood or economic activities, e.g. restriction of access to traditionally-used resources, increased depredations on crops and livestock by wild animals and the displacement of peoples from their traditional lands (Ghimire 1994; Hough 1988; Mehta & Kellert 1998; Skonhoft 1998). Local people in developing countries who live near a PA are often extremely poor (Brandon & Wells 1992). Loss of subsistence and the feeling that they have been treated unfairly always cause local people's displeasure and hostility towards PA management authorities. They also feel that their futures are hopeless (Fiallo & Jacobson 1995; Ghai 1994; Heinen 1996; Rao et al. 2002; Sekhar 1998; Straede & Hells 2000).

Recent studies have shown that conservation-induced displacements have been commonly practiced worldwide and seriously impact on rural communities (Chatty & Colchester 2002), however these impacts were seldom well documented until the early 1990s (West & Brechin 1991). It is estimated that globally at least 8.5 million people have been displaced by conservation (Geisler 2003; Geisler & deSousa 2001). For example, in South Africa, when the Kruger National Park was established, more than 2000 people were moved (Fabricius & Wet 2002). In the early 20th century, due to the 'sleeping sickness' problem, it was estimated that

¹ For the historical developments of concept of wilderness see Oelschlaeger's (1991) work *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Present*.

more than 5,000 people living around the Ugalla River in Tanzania were relocated. Later the area became known as the Ugalla Game Reserve. Only those local activities perceived as environmentally friendly such as fishing and beekeeping by conservation authorities were allowed. The Sans constituted one of the Aboriginal groups in Botswana and traditionally, they were totally dependent on forest resources and most of them were hunter-gatherers. In the mid-1990s, however, the State authority categorized those traditional activities as incompatible with game conservation. As a result, more than 2,000 Sans were displaced from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve. This marginal group was therefore further excluded socially, economically and politically (Armstrong & Bennett 2003). In many rainforest areas of South America, thousands of indigenous people were forced to leave their ancestral lands (Colchester 2003).

Shrestha and Conway point out that 'a hungry peasant is an angry peasant' (1996: 326). Numerous studies have shown that with the exhaustion and restriction of natural resources, people will tend to extract as much as possible from PAs in order to satisfy their immediate needs, without considering the benefits to be gained from long-term environmental security (Heinen & Low 1992; Shrestha & Conway 1996). As a result, a vicious cycle happens: the level of impoverishment in rural villages increases and further environmental deterioration occurs (Ghimire 1994; Shrestha & Conway 1996). This is particularly true in developing countries. For instance, the establishment of eight tiger reserves in India in the 1970s led to the resettlement of people; all of Nepal's existing parks and reserves have management conflicts with local people to some extent (Low & Heinen 1993). In Africa, the indigenous peoples in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have been removed from national parks or have been prohibited from using their resources (Ghimire 1994). The competition for space and resources between humans and wildlife is worsening due to the continuous increase of population pressure, over-consumption of resources and high demand for land as well as food (Rao et al. 2002).

A National Perspective: Conflicts in Nepal

Conflict regarding park management and local livelihoods are evident throughout Nepal, which has abundant outstanding natural areas but is also poor and densely populated. Nepal is a landlocked country surrounded by India in the east, south, and west and China in the north, with

27.7million people living in an area of about 147,181 sq.km in 2006 (World Bank 2007). According to the World Bank's data, Nepal remains one of the world's poorest countries, with an annual per capita income of about US\$ 290 (World Bank 2007). A high 31% of the population still live below the national poverty line (World Bank 2007). Day-to-day survival is therefore the first priority of most Nepalese.

Nepal is predominantly an agricultural society (Shrestha et al. 1993; UNDP 1998; UNDP 2001) with about 80% of its population dependent on farming for their livelihoods (Shrestha & Conway 1996; UNDP 1998). The Nepal Human Development Report 1998 showed that in the last three decades, economic growth has averaged 4%, a level that only marginally exceeds the relatively high population growth rate of 2.37%. People heavily rely on the land but arable land is scarce in Nepal. According to the report only 20% of the total land is cultivable and it is very unevenly distributed. As a result, nearly 69% of landholdings are less than 1 hectare in size, which is hardly enough to support an average household with six members (Shrestha et al. 1993; UNDP 1998). Poverty is the major force leading to serious environmental degradation. Not surprisingly, clearing forests, intensifying the use of public land and farming marginal land have become common practices for Nepalese in order to grow and acquire more food (UNDP 1998).

Struggling against the environmental crisis caused by human activities, the modern era of conservation began in Nepal with the passage of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act in 1973. The act provided broad legislation for the establishment of national parks and reserves to protect a variety of areas and endangered species (Heinen & Mehta 1999; Lekmkuhl & Upreti 1988; Mehta & Kellert 1998; Sah 1997; Stevens 1997). In Nepal, there are sixteen PAs (including 11 with buffer zones), covering a total of 28,998.67 sq. km, which amounts to 19.7% of the total land (DNPWC 2008b) (Table 1.1).

As in many developing countries, however, this act was largely taken from standards developed in the Western world which aim to preserve wilderness preservation as the ultimate goal. Therefore, the removal of the local-level use right has led to a myriad of park-people conflicts (Ghimire & Pimbert 1997; Heinen & Mehta 1999). Numerous studies indicated that all Nepal's PAs have management conflicts with local people. The relationships between Nepal's park

managers and local people have been extremely poor in the most highly populated Tarai region where large-scale displacements were commonly carried out (Heinen & Mehta 1999; Low & Heinen 1993). Crop and livestock depredation caused by wild animals in those PAs was very serious (Adhikari 2000; Heinen 1993). A growing body of empirical evidence now indicates that the old 'big stick' management approach not only fostered the conflicts but also undermined long-term biodiversity conservation goals (Mehta & Kellert 1998).

NOTE:

This table is included on page 7 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Source: (DNPWC 2008a)

Contemporary Conservation Movements

Since the 1980s, in order to deal with continuous conservation conflicts worldwide, many academics have started to see relationships between conservation and local livelihoods. The concept of 'sustainable livelihoods' emerged. As Redclift (1987) clearly argues, 'sustainability' is a compromise between development and environment. Without fulfilling the basic needs of the local community, the goals of maintaining a sustainable environment will not succeed. This is

also the first time that development professionals realized that the sustainability of food security and the environment are linked (Davies et al. 1991). The new ideology has created a new era in contemporary conservation practices. As Colchester (2003) and Stevens (1997) concluded, the 'sustainability' of local livelihood and nature is the new discourse of conservation. Stevens (1997) also points out that the maintenance of indigenous cultures is the way to achieve conservation goals. These new arguments have rejected the Western-rooted conservation concept of 'wilderness' and have included the human dimension in conservation.

Influenced by these new conservation ideologies, governments and influential aid agencies have realized that PAs cannot be managed successfully without considering the subsistence and natural resource requirements of local people (Ghimire 1994; Sharma 1990). Thus, a new conservation paradigm of community-based management, emphasizing management of biodiversity by, for and with local communities, is viewed as the panacea for solving conflicts between park management and local communities in developing countries (Mehta & Kellert 1998). The new paradigm focuses not just on wildlife stock and endangered species but also on collaboration with surrounding local communities who need sustainable livelihoods. The area covered has moved beyond the PAs' boundaries into the buffer zone. Local participation in rural development and conservation programs has become the core management philosophy in community-based management approaches.

Taking Nepal as an example, in order to resolve park-people conflicts, there has been a shift from a centralized, 'preservation-oriented' approach to a more 'people-oriented' involving approach community-based management (Mehta & Kellert 1998) and the concept of the buffer zone² is one of the most popular management regimes in practice. The new model focuses on the active involvement and cooperation of local communities, as well as accommodation of local peoples' needs (Mehta & Kellert 1998). For example, three conservation areas³ including the

² Buffer zone is defined as the peripheral area of a National Park or Reserve declared under Section 3a of the National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1973 and this section refers to the villages, settlements or hamlets set aside as buffer zones lying within the National Park or Reserve (quoted by HMG 1999: 1) A buffer zone is an area of controlled and sustainable land use which separates the PA from direct human pressure as well as carrying certain benefits to the adjoining rural communities (Mackinnon et.al. 1986 quoted by Sah 1997).

³ They are: Annapurna Conservation Area, Manaslu Conservation Area and Kanchanjuna Conservation Area.

Annapurna Conservation Area (ACA), which is globally well-known as a paradigm of the community-based conservation, have been established in the Himalaya region of Nepal. In the ACA, in pursuit of increasing local people's positive attitudes towards the park, seven Conservation Area Management Committees which included local representatives have been formed to manage the park. Also, the improvement in the local socio-economic situation is important to biological preservation and therefore, local communities in the Annapurna region benefit economically through the revenue of park entry fees and other economic activities (Baral et al. 2007). As a result, tourism development is an important element in the new conservation policy. In addition, a project concerning buffer zone management is continuing in the five protected areas located in the Tarai. The project has been extended to two middle-hill PAs (DNPWC 2002; Heinen & Mehta 1999). Buffer zone communities are able to share the income of the PA with the Park authority and participate in natural resources management. However, park-people conflicts are still common in Nepal (Heinen & Low 1992; Heinen & Mehta 2000). In most cases, local people are participants in the process but are not particularly empowered (Heinen & Mehta 1999; Hough 1988). The best-known park-people conflict resolution initiative is the grass cutting programme in Royal Chitwan National Park (RCNP). The programme is introduced as a part of community-based conservation strategies with the aim to alleviate the negative attitudes of local communities who are deprived of their traditional rights in using forest resources since the creation of RCNP in 1973. Under the programme, local communities are allowed to enter the park for 20 days per year to collect essential building and instrument materials such as thatch grass, rope grass, reeds, and rope bark. However, Straede and Hells (2000) find that conflicts in this park have not been resolved - merely postponed. Local communities' high dependency on natural resources for basic subsistence remains a major threat to the ecosystem if the resource use pattern is not sustained yield based. Now, the buffer zone management has been applied in all PAs of the Tarai region. Whether the long-lasting park-people conflicts can be resolved is still in question (Heinen & Metha 2000; Lam 2003).

Hough (1988) suggests there are many obstacles to effective management of conflicts in developing countries. Such factors include the following: institutional context of protected areas; lack of trust and the difficulties of communication between park authorities and local people; the alternatives facing all parties involved in the process; and the problem of enforcing agreements

between the local people and the government. All these issues affect the effectiveness of the community-based management approach. Many studies conclude that misdiagnosis of the problem is the root cause for the failure to implement community-based management. Governments always neglect the realities of social stratification which have been part and parcel of the region's socio-economic and political context (Brandon & Wells 1992; Ghai 1994). Considering the high population pressures and extremely poor economic condition of many people in developing countries, it is believed that conservation strategies must be created locally in order to meet local people's concerns (Bookbinder et al. 1998; DeBoer & Baquete 1998; Ghai 1994; Infield & Namara 2001; Ite 1996; Low & Heinen 1993; Neumann 1997b). In recent years the increasing anthropological inputs into conservation are not only necessary for more human-faced conservation policies, but also needed to solve this conflict.

Engagement of Anthropology and Conservation

Recent Anthropological Studies on Conservation

In recent decades, more anthropologists have shown their interest in environmental issues, particularly in the areas of discourse analysis of environmentalism and its practices (Milton 1993; Milton 1996; Milton 2002).⁴ According to Milton, one major reason for this new trend is that human/ nature acts are fundamentally inseparable because people always tend to perceive their environment in terms of cultural and local importance. The perceptions or symbolic meanings of nature generated in specific cultures have therefore become a key concern for anthropologists. Some classical anthropological work on this field does exist.⁵ However, this study is more inspired by the latter work; therefore I will focus my review on recent influential anthropological critiques of conservation practices.

In contrast to the classical anthropological studies of human/nature relationships, recent anthropologists are more outspoken in criticizing contemporary conservation practices (Campbell 2005a; Campbell 2005b; Little 1999; Orlove & Brush 1996; West et al. 2006).⁶ Milton

⁴ An in-depth review regarding the anthropological input into different environmental issues was done by Little (1999).

⁵ Very influential work was done by Levi-Strauss, Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach. For details see Knight (2000: 12) and Willis (1990).

⁶ Orlove and Brush (1996) and Little (1999) provide a detailed analysis of the contributions of anthropology in different environmental contexts.

(1993) clearly points out that anthropological work on environmental issues is not only limited to symbolic discussions but also extends to an applied or practical level. The reason is that a better understanding of human interactions with the environment is a key to elaborating environmental problems and defining solutions. Anthropology, therefore, can play a more active role in improving environmental management policies and making them more sensitive to local livelihood needs (Milton 1993: 5). Milton's arguments also imply that explorations of indigenous knowledge of resource management are a priority. Much anthropological work on environmental issues has been undertaken during the last decade and generally involved a two-level discussion.

Firstly, many intellectuals adopt an anthropological perspective to criticize the nature of conservation and its practices as little more than a new wave of colonialism and closely related to globalization (Ferguson & Lohmann 2005; Hill 2005; Shiva 2005; West & Brockington 2006). Hill (2005) uses the ivory trade in Zimbabwe as an example to demonstrate how the imposed idea of conservation contradicts how local wildlife is valued. From a local perspective, wildlife is dangerous because it can destroy or damage crops. There is a gap between policy makers and the local community. Secondly, critique of contemporary conservation practices is becoming a growth area for anthropologists. An exploration of indigenous knowledge is gaining the attention of anthropologists (Croll & Parkin 1992). Fairhead and Leach in their book *Misreading the African landscape* (1996) criticize scientists' ignorance of local knowledge, which has resulted in misdiagnosing the causes of forest degradation. Their findings have shown that local people's traditional livelihood practices have not damaged forests but maintained them in a highly sustainable way. They suggest that natural scientists should investigate the ways in which local people deal with and live with their environments before making any scientific judgements. Similar criticisms have been made by other scholars (Hulme & Murphree 2001; Oates 1999).

Apart from indigenous knowledge, the ignorance of asymmetrical power relations between social actors is diagnosed as a key factor leading to ineffective conservation practices. Croll and Parkin (1992) argue that an analysis of existing power relations, together with cultural understandings of environment, is necessary. Regarding conflicts between wildlife preservation and local people, important work has been done by Knight (2000; 2002). Based on his long-

term anthropological studies, he concludes that most conflicts occur due to park management and involve different social groups who claim right of access to natural resources and wildlife in the park. Knight contends that environmental problems can only be solved by considering the complexity of local voices (2000: 20; 2002). Such studies have successfully brought into focus the voices of local people regarding policy-making processes. One of the major contributions is probably the emergence of the community-based management approach. Besides anthropologists, researchers from other disciplines such as geography, ecology, development and environmental sciences have increasingly realized the importance of anthropological inputs into their work.⁷ Yet, ethnographic studies on the social impacts of established PAs are less extensive in the existing literature. Particularly, the consequence of conservation-induced displacement is one of the most controversial and contested aspects of PAs.

The problem has been recently addressed by few scholars (Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau 2006; West & Brockington 2006; West et al. 2006; West & Brechin 1991). In their recent study, West, Igoe and Brockington (2006) review 250 reports regarding the conservation-induced displacement and most studies focus on the loss of indigenous people or the histories of displacement. Only less than 25% of individual studies have covered the livelihood and cultural changes of park residents after their eviction (Emerton 2001; Geisler 2003; Ghimire & Pimbert 1997; Olwig & Olwig 1979; Overton 1979; Shyamsundar & Kramer 1997; Tacconi & Bennett 1995).⁸ Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2006) argue that the importance of a full understanding of the impact of PAs on the livelihoods of the rural poor can help to implement pragmatic conservation policies that lead to both environmental and economic sustainability. They criticize existing research based on case studies lacking a theoretical framework and thus not influential at the policy level. They adopt the model of impoverishment risks and reconstruction to evaluate 12 PAs in Africa.⁹ The results indicate that displaced rural communities are continuously suffering social exclusion and impoverishment through displacement. As West and Brechin

⁷ See Chatty and Colchester (2002). Many contributors from other disciplines adopt an anthropological approach in exploring environmental issues.

⁸ In their articles, authors also extensively discuss many empirical studies on displacement.

⁹ The conceptual model was first developed by Cernea and adopted by the World Bank's policy on involuntary resettlement and many bilateral aid agencies in over 25 countries. Cernea surmises that there are eight common fundamental risks embedded in the nature of forced displacements: landlessness, joblessness, homelessness; marginalization, food insecurity; increased morbidity and mortality; loss of access to common property; and social disarticulation.

(1991) suggest in their landmark text *Resident Peoples and National Parks*, it is necessary to take further in-depth research on the cumulative social and economic impacts of displacement. Fisher (2002) in her study on the displaced people of Ugalla River Game Reserve writes that displacement has important implications for people's long term livelihoods:

The dramatic nature of this change fed into a process in which people had to encompass and internalize new experiences, social relationships, livelihoods, memories of the past, and visions of the future. By viewing resettlement in this way, our attention is directed not only to the shock people experienced, but also to their responses to the event, including their capacity to rebuild their lives.

(2002: 121-122)

This thesis thus echoes this very current academic advocacy. I am interested in enhancing anthropological inputs in inquiring about the impacts of conservation-induced displacement on people's livelihoods and their reactions. This is essentially new in the context of Nepal.

Inadequate Anthropological Inputs in Nepal's Conservation Studies

With the abundance of globally significant natural sanctuaries and increased poverty, Nepal is one of the most important battlegrounds for conservationists. In the past, with the development of concepts such as Community-Based Conservation, Integrated Conservation Development Projects and Buffer Zone Management, Nepal has attempted to be a leader in resolving serious conflicts between the park management and local people (Brandon & Wells 1992; Jones 2007; Stevens 1997). However, no matter how much effort has been made, there has been no significant improvement in the livelihood of local people and conservation conflicts continue to occur throughout the country. One reason for this is the continued ignorance of human dimensions in the studies conducted by both scholars and policy makers. In fact, anthropological studies on conservation practices in Nepal are rare.¹⁰ Campbell's (2000; 2005b) work on conflicts between park management and local people is probably the most influential, especially with respect to exploring indigenous perceptions of wildlife. However, most of his work focuses on the indigenous Tamang people. In her study on Yolmo herders, Bishop (1998) points out that the traditional subsistence system (herding cow-yak hybrid breeds) has been threatened by the establishment of Langtang National Park. Stevens's (1993) insightful monograph on the Khumbu Sherpa society has also demonstrated that the creation of

¹⁰ I note that there are increasingly anthropological studies on community forest management (e.g. Jones 2007). However, similar research work seldom extends to the conflicts concerning park management.

Sagarmatha (Mount Everest) National Park, forest regulation and rapid tourism development has led to a significant transformation of Sherpa society. The local resource management system is being replaced by the modern conservation policies. In order to maintain their identity, cultural values and subsistence practices, Sherpas have developed many strategies to cope with the effect of tourism and the national park. However, these PAs in the highland areas, though large-scale, have not led to conservation-induced displacement. The situation in the lowland area of Tarai is completely different.

Tarai, the 'bread basket' of Nepal, has suffered substantial forest degradation and yet is expected to support nearly half of the country's population. However, Tarai and its biggest ethnic group – the Tharus – have been continuously disregarded politically by the Kathmandu Valley-based political elites (Bista 1993; Ghai 1994; Jones 2007).¹¹ The monograph *The Chitwan Tharus in southern Nepal* written by a Swiss geographer, Muller-Boker (1999), is probably the only comprehensive study that explored the complex relationship between Tharus and the RCNP. Although displacement is one of the most common conservation practices in PAs of the Tarai region, its economic and social impacts have not been documented in the literature. For example, the relocation program of RCNP has targeted the removal of 22,000 people since 1964 (McLean & Steffen 2003). Following that, a large resettlement program was implemented in the RSWR (Sah 2002) and more than 12,000 people were moved from the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve (KTWR) (Lam 2003). In 1984, 15,000 families from twenty villages were resettled outside the extension area of the Royal Badiya National Park (Stevens 1997). Only McLean and Straede (2003) and Lam (2003) adopt an anthropological approach for evaluating the social impacts of displacement on local communities. The work of McLean and Straede (2003) has shown that Tharu communities dislike their present economic circumstances following the dislocation program in RCNP. Lam's study finds a growing negative attitude towards KTWR among the displaced communities. These studies enrich the local perspective of displacement, however they do not touch the core aspect – how this particular event influenced local livelihoods and how the locals react to such changes. Therefore, a growth in anthropological knowledge of the consequences of conservation-induced

¹¹ For the historical development of Tarai and its economic-political relations with the State, see Gaige's work, *Regionalism and national unity in Nepal* (1975).

displacement in the lowland Tarai area and of the Tharus is still a major priority. This anthropological study on RSWR in the far-west Tarai region hopes to contribute to this unexplored aspect.

Limits to Recent Anthropological Studies on Conservation

Having reviewed the existing literature, three deficiencies are found which have limited anthropology's role in improving conservation practices. Firstly, there is not enough input by ethnographic studies that address the interactive relationships between the changes and adaptations of local livelihoods and long-term nature conservation. Several studies about the impact of conservation policies on local livelihoods have recently been conducted (Homewood et al. 1998; Hoogvorst 2003). However, few of them study local coping strategies to new economic environment created by conservation policies. Attention has been paid to only a few coping strategies. Homewood, Coast and Thompson's (1998) study shows that more people migrate to urban centres to find jobs. In Sri Lanka, Hoogvorst (2003) points out that conservation of the wetland area of Muthurajawela has adversely affected local people's livelihoods and health. An-ongoing project in Tanzania, which focuses on the impacts of social and environmental changes on different social groups' control to land and resource, was carried out by Williams (2004). While a few anthropological studies have addressed some social impacts of conservation and displacement on local people (Armstrong & Bennett 2003; Fisher 2002; Meshack & Griffin 2002), these studies have not examined the economic system in its entirety.

West and Brockington (2006) warn that conservation policies may have many unexpected impacts on local communities. Few empirical studies have suggested that the enforcement of conservation policies can increase existing social divisions by changing social, economic and political power relations (Cameron 1996; Fisher 2002; Horowitz 1998). Undoubtedly, an understanding of local livelihoods in conservation is necessary. For instance, Kangwana and Mako (2001) point out that less consideration with livelihood concerns in the face of conservation is one of the major reasons for the failure of existing conservation strategies in Tanzania. Rather than assessing the conservation impacts on different individual livelihood issues, this thesis intends to study local livelihoods in a holistic and systematic way. This

strategy helps the reader to understand the subtle and interactive relationships between each livelihood factor in the system. It will provide a tool on how conservation policies change existing relationships that shape the livelihood/economic system. In addition, with increasing control of natural resource use, how people respond and pursue economic security is a very important aspect that has not been fully developed. Therefore, this study focuses on local livelihood adaptation techniques.

Secondly, another pitfall is that most anthropological studies tend to romanticize and homogenize the image of 'natural conservationists' as applicable to all traditional social groups. Abundant studies on traditional resources management are evident (Fairhead & Leach 1996; Santasombat 2003). Those authors argue that the resource use pattern of those groups to a large extent is not the sole cause for environmental degradation. Without doubt, these invaluable studies have contributed to improving contemporary conservation practices that have a more human face. In fact, studies on indigenous resource management first emerged as a critique of the old conservation approach where local communities were excluded. Today, the importance of local involvement is widely recognized in the new conservation concept at the theoretical level.¹² Traditional social groups being portrayed as nature lovers by scholars is not helpful to the development of conservation practices. The disadvantage of such portrayal has recently been addressed by West and Brockington:

When NGOs rely on a strict division between nature and culture and pose both as static, there is a tendency to see people and their activities as unnatural (Nygren 1998). The flip side of this is the presentation by some of indigenous people as "ecologically noble savages" who are closer to nature (Redford 1991). Both of these kinds of images of people and their surroundings fail to grasp the complicated ways that people interact with what they rely on for food, shelter, and spiritual, social and economic needs.

(2006: 611)

One immediate effect is that this kind of relativism has in fact prevented scholars from exploring the dynamic interactions between local communities and environment from a local perspective.¹³ Bloch's experience is not an isolated case and many researchers who are engaged in exploring how people perceive nature share the same experience with him.

¹² Numerous studies claim that local involvement in conservation seldom occurs (e.g. Brockington 2002; Heinen & Mehta 1999; Hough 1988).

¹³ Some academics criticize that this trend reflects the Western ideology of nature and human dichotomy dominating conservation debates in non-Western societies (e.g. Edgerton 1992; Little 1999; Redford 1991).

Influenced by the Western media's coverage of the disappearance of rainforests, he conducted his fieldwork in a Zafimaniary village in eastern Madagascar where a large forest existed. He expected the Zafimaniary people to share feelings of losing their forest and many endangered species but instead the Zafimaniary showed no interest in this issue. On one occasion, he finally saw an old lady who had been looking for this forest for a long time and he thought to himself, 'the moment had come to make her say how much she liked the forest'. He asked her how she felt about the forest but he received an unexpected answer. She told him she liked the forest only 'because you can cut it down' (Bloch 1995: 65). His study has shown that people who do not live in Western countries often experience and respond to nature differently.

Influenced by the mainstream image of nature/ traditional communities' interactions as portrayed by most anthropologists, researchers may find themselves confused and frustrated when the people they are studying are actively involved in hunting and/or logging activities. This has been my experience as well and my ethnographic study of the Ranas shows that local resources management is fluid and changes over time. They can be either constructive or destructive in regard to the environment. Instead of over-romanticizing traditional resources management, social researchers should focus on the adaptive resources management of local communities. Pottier's recent work (2003) on local knowledge has provided an innovative approach for researchers. He proposes local knowledge is negotiable and not static. Therefore, it is time for scholars to jettison certain preconceptions and study the adaptive strategies of local communities (Turner 1991).¹⁴ I urge this new approach so that conservation debates are more constructive and pragmatic.

Thirdly, studies on social changes have long been contentious issues for social scientists, however, there is a tendency that other disciplines inquire into issues from the macro political-economic level while anthropologists only engage in the ground level perspective. The problems derived from polarization were recently addressed by scholars. Ortner (1989) suspects that when scholars adopt a political-economic approach they often tend to generalize all communities as suffering from the same socio-economic changes such as modernization.

¹⁴ Turner's work demonstrates how the indigenous Kayapos create a new internal social structure and political strategies in an attempt to address environmentalism and a new political era.

The local perspective, particularly how they react or negotiate those changes, is almost absent. On the contrary, Rankin's (2004) study about the influence of the new economic liberalization on the Newar community in Kathmandu Valley points out that anthropologists tend to give 'subordinate analytical status to the macro-regulatory contexts for human agency' (2004: 44). This dichotomy has prevented researchers from assessing the complexities of the social world. Likewise, Rankin proposes an articulation of anthropological and geographical approaches in studying social changes within the Newar community and in the wider macro-economic environment.

In the field of conservation studies, neither the macro nor micro perspective is enough to understand the issue. The ideology of conservation is a global product (Shiva 2005) but its application is local. In relation to PAs, it is an interface where the global system and local system meet. Local communities living around PAs are facing new local and global challenges. As Milton suggests, the global environmental discourse in fact 'encompasses a number of transcultural perspectives which both compete and overlap with one another' (1996: 218) and anthropologists have a special role in exploring these complex relations. I therefore reason that our anthropological enquiry into environmental issues should focus on how local communities respond to local environmental and wider socio-economic changes.

Responding to these deficits in contemporary anthropological work on conservation issues, I am therefore interested in exploring the accumulated social impacts of conservation-induced displacement on local communities and their livelihood in Nepal. This is the major theme of my thesis. I believe more assertive anthropological inputs can help us understand the complex interactions between conservation and humanity. The following section will provide further explanations about four key analytical concepts employed in this thesis.

Theoretical Framework

Livelihoods Perspective

The analytical framework of this thesis is developed by the abundant existing literature on rural livelihood systems. Concepts of seasonal aspects of agricultural cycle (Chambers et al. 1981), farming knowledge and diverse systems in local communities (Lipton & Longhurst 1989; Pottier

et al. 2003; Richards 1985; Richards 1989) and coping strategies of the poor (Chambers 1989; Davies & Hossain 1997) all offer multiple perspectives for understanding the complexity of rural livelihoods. I cannot possibly discuss all of these works here; instead I use Chambers and Conway's influential work on 'sustainable livelihoods' as a point of departure for building an analytical framework. As discussed in the previous sections, effective conservation practices coincide with sustainable livelihoods (Davies et al. 1991; Redclift 1987). Taking the definition given by Chambers and Conway (1992), 'sustainable livelihoods' consists of tangible assets (stores and resources), intangible assets (claims and access) and livelihood capabilities. The model demonstrates the dynamics and adaptabilities of livelihood. This concept of intangible assets has extended the meaning of 'livelihood' to include long-term security. According to Chambers and Conway, intangible assets are closely associated with power relationships:

They [claims] are based on combinations of right, precedent, social convention, moral obligation and power. Access is the opportunity in practice to use a resource, store or service or to obtain information, material, technology, employment, food or income.
(1992: 11)

The sustainable livelihoods model allows scholars to pay attention to the impacts of an existing social structure on people's livelihoods. When applied to conservation studies, researchers should realize that any conservation policies will generate different consequences on the livelihoods of different social groups because groups have different tangible, intangible assets and capacities. While the contemporary livelihood analytical approach appropriately highlights the role of social structure in livelihood issues (in particular how these structures enable and disable people to access economic resources), it does not provide enough 'practice' power to the social actors. This limits our understanding of the rich complexity of the adaptable nature of livelihoods. In other words, it ignores local interpretations of people's livelihoods.

I thus argue that people do not blindly following the social structure to practice their livelihoods but they often adopt, modify and even resist these structures. It is too much of a simplification to suppose that socially disadvantaged groups such as lower caste people and women cannot make social change happen. Abundant in-depth ethnographic studies support the view that socially deprived groups are the most vulnerable to changes in livelihood, however, they still can react in ways which scholars do not consider possible. For example, the Comaroffs' (1991; 1997) study on one of the most asymmetrical power contacts between the Western

missionaries and Tswanas has shown that the ways of Tswana life were not managed as how colonists thought. The outcomes are many modifications and negotiations and finally missionaries to some extent were also changed by the Tswanas after frequent contacts. In an article reviewing the Comaroffs' work, Ortner (2001) further argues that if missionaries acted as 'agency' (see the later section of this chapter) for changes in Tswana society, then the Tswanas themselves were definitely a form of 'agency' that generated social changes. In this thesis, I therefore propose to add 'practice' to contemporary livelihood studies. Besides agencies such as conservation policies and other corresponding social changes being analyzed in this study, I am also interested in elevating the people studied here as agents and exploring their roles in continuous local livelihood changes after the conservation-induced displacement got underway.

My argument is not totally innovative as it builds on work already published on poor farming communities' coping strategies. For example, studies by Beck (1989) and Gupta (1987) have documented that poor farmers have developed diverse livelihood strategies like using common property resources, social networking, credit system, and taking wage labour jobs to overcome poverty and hunger.¹⁵ In the following chapters, my ethnographic analysis will clearly demonstrate the ways in which Ranas changed their household structure, gender and production relationships, social networks and cultural identity as a way of coping with political and socio-economic changes.

Household Perspective

The household approach which characterized adaptability and power relations largely contributed to my in-depth understanding of the dynamics and adaptations of the livelihood system. Indeed, the importance of households is widely emphasized in anthropological literature (Netting et al. 1984). Studying the family household is typical of anthropologists' work and its popularity is because household-like social organizations can be found in different cultural groups worldwide. Although there are plentiful debates on the definition of 'household' (Netting et al. 1984), this will not affect its significance for livelihood studies¹⁶ because the

¹⁵ For studies on coping strategies see Chambers (1989), Davies (1996) and Dove (1990).

¹⁶ The difference between the terms 'family' and 'household' have been emphasized by anthropologists since the 1950s (Bender 1967). Family is often tied to kinship while household refers to a set of individuals who share not only a living space but also domestic activities (Yanagisako 1979).

relationship between livelihood and household is a close one. According to Yanagisako (1979: 166), household is generally associated with a set of domestic activities including food production and consumption and social reproduction such as child-bearing and child-rearing.

In the early 1980s, there was a breakthrough in household studies when a new direction was widely advocated by academics at one particular symposium. They addressed the importance of the household as a unit for social scientists to understand daily decision-making processes. They called for researchers to shed their preconceptions and 'go beyond static structural studies to a better understanding of the process that transform the household' (Netting et al. 1984: xx), particularly the interplay between household form and function. The concept of 'adaptive household' thus emerged. It was pointed out that:

[In a peasant agrarian society] the household was perhaps the most flexible and responsive social grouping.....The family household is an institution sensitive to minor, short-term fluctuations in the socioeconomic environment and a prime means by which individuals adapt to the subtle shifts in opportunities and constraints that confront them.
(Netting et al. 1984: xiii)

Moreover, this scholarship argues that household social arrangements are responsive to both local and global issues. One of the most representative works was done by Wilk (1997). In his monograph *Household ecology*, he successfully uses his rich ethnographic materials of Kekchi Maya households to demonstrate that the traditional community does not passively endure social changes. Rather, they are sensitive to changes and respond to them actively. In Wilk's household ecology model (see Figure 1.1 below), he emphasizes the influence of 'time' and 'political economy' on the development of households. He comments that household is 'the best social unit, the best analytical level through which to study these active strategies and the conjunction of local and global processes of change' (1997: xxx). This is because all changes are first reflected at the household level and presented as adaptive strategies for livelihood. He states that 'adaptation is an active and dialectical process whereby people change their environment, even as they change themselves and their social arrangements' (1997: 33). His model has provided an insightful and broader perspective for researchers who are interested in social changes and household livelihood.

Despite scholars' efforts, many cross-cultural studies show that a universal definition of household formation is impossible to make because it is so adaptive, contextual and changeable.

Figure 1.1 Households as an Adaptive Unit

NOTE:
This figure is included on page 22 of the print copy of
the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Source: Wilk (1997: 39)

Apart from changes in households, many existing literature reviews support the view that households have reflected class systems and power structures (Caldwell et al. 1984; Goody 1972; Wheaton 1975; Wolf 1966). One significant example is that household size is often used as a symbol to differentiate wealth status in households. For example, Wolf suggests that food sufficiency status is a key issue for determining the household form:

Permanent members have to be fed, housed, clothed, and provided with other satisfactions over a prolonged period of time.extended families were largely found among so-called middle peasants, well-to-do peasants, and landlords, but lacking among farm laborers and poor peasants.

(1966: 66)

Unsurprisingly, Wolf's simplistic argument which completely ignores the influence of local histories, cultural ideas, rules of inheritance, etc. has been attacked by many social scientists (Goldschmidt & Kunkel 1971; Guyer 1981). However, his work implies the existence of an intra-household power dimension. At the micro level, household studies have illustrated complex social structures which affect the relationships of inter-household members, especially in South Asian societies. In Gray's (1995) detailed analysis of higher Hindu caste households in rural Nepal, he demonstrates that the operation of household activities are motivated by hierarchical social relations, such as the male household head having absolute power in all household matters. Only a male heir is able to inherit land and women are subordinate to their men. Seniority is an indicator of power: senior household members obtain greater power than juniors. Therefore, exploring livelihood issues from the household perspective enables me to better

understand the interactions between social systems and social relations which affect people's reactions to social changes. It is necessary, firstly, to understand the Ranas' capacity to act. Thomas Fricke defines the meaning of 'adaptation' in his study on the changes of Himalayan Tamang households that 'adaptation is not a cyclical or seasonal process but a continuous one rooted in actors who must constantly decide and act' (1984: 19). In the following paragraphs, I will thus introduce the theory of practice that serves as the backbone of this study on livelihood.

Theory of Practice

The development of practice theory was largely due to an American anthropologist, Sherry Ortner, in the 1980s. The emergence of this new theory is in response to two discussions. Firstly, the theory has taken the idea of Bourdieu (1977) and Sahlins (1981) regarding 'how practice constitutes cultural systems' (Rankin 2003: 47) and the ideas developed by Giddens (1979) and de Certeau (1984).¹⁷ Ortner reemphasizes the role of human agency in constructing their cultures. Secondly, the theory rebuts the political economy approach led by Eric Wolf and others (Ortner 1989). Ortner elaborates practice theory in detail in her paper, 'Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties'. Here, I will highlight two points that are relevant to this thesis. They are: 1) the nature of social structure, or culture; and 2) the relationship between internal and external forces and their influence on cultures.

The meaning of 'practice' according to Ortner is that 'Practice emerges from structure, it reproduces structure, and it has the capacity to transform structure' (1989: 12). Her words imply two important messages to scholars who are interested in the study of social changes: 1) the existence of social structure; and 2) social structure is adaptive and creative. She states:

People in different social positions will obviously have different relationships to a given cultural form- different interpretations of it, different feelings about it, different senses of its meaningfulness, and so forth. Moreover, these relationships may change over time, evolving into new interpretations, new feelings, new senses of meaningfulness – or meaninglessness. Indeed, talking about culture change really means talking about changes in these *relationships* between actors and culture, as much as, or more than, changes *in* culture.

(1989: 128 Emphasis added originally)

¹⁷ Giddens' *Central problems in social theory* and de Certeau's *The practice of everyday life* have contributed to the development of practice theory in significant ways. In the study of working class children and their career development, Willis (1980) clearly demonstrates that the relationships of culture, children's practice and the reproduction and transformation of culture. He argues that actors' practice is an essential part for producing culture.

Furthermore, in her practice theory, she attempts to make explicit the interactive relationship between 'internal' and 'external'¹⁸ forces on a local community. She defines the relationship between these two forces as one where 'the impact of external forces is internally *mediated*' (original emphasis) (1989: 17). Either internal or external forces have played a significant part in contributing to the reproduction and transformation of culture. Her argument is demonstrated in her study on the Sherpa, one of the ethnic groups in Nepal. She says:

In every case, it would have been virtually impossible to understand the impact or influence of external forces on Sherpa history without a prior understanding of the internal social and cultural dynamics of their society.

(1989: 200)

Practice theory has enriched and broadened the academic debate on cultures and its influence on current social science research approaches should not be neglected. These two points of practice theory mentioned above have offered a new way for recent social scientists to analyze social changes. According to Rankin:

Without losing sight of the broader macroeconomic currents of power, that is, practice theory opens up analytical space not just to explore how local societies change as they are increasingly integrated into the global capitalist system, but also to view global processes as local processes, as embedded within communities, neighbourhoods, and households.

(2004: 56 Emphasis added originally)

Without doubt, practice theory 'enables anthropologists to view political-economic systems from the ground level' (Rankin 2004: 49). However, its potential for policy application is still overlooked by most academics. Rankin states that the major deficiency of existing practice theory studies is lack of practice. She says 'most anthropological writing has not taken the "practice" in practice theory to its logical conclusion' (2004: 57). She points out that the application of practice theory is often limited to cultural debates in the academic field and seldom engages directly in politics. I agree with her view and believe practice theory can in fact do more. In this thesis, I will demonstrate how practice theory helps us understand the on-going and complicated process of social changes happening in Rana society in the wake of scarcity of land and forest resources, the State's increased intervention, the establishment of the park and the moving-in of hill migrants. The focus will be on how Ranans negotiate and

¹⁸ Ortner admits in her book (1989: 200) that the adoption of terms of 'internal' and 'external' are vague. We can simplify the use of these terms as follows. When internal forces may mean such as natural increase in population, external forces always relate to the State policy.

meditate those changes into their daily social world. What are the implications of these cultural practices in regard to their long-term sustainable livelihood and to forest conservation?

Before embarking on the Ranas' story, another concept - power and agency - which has led debate in practice theory should not be overlooked. Because the theory of practice is adopted in this thesis, influence of social structure on human behaviour is not neglected. The relationships of power, agency, social reproduction and transformation are explained in Ortner's earlier work:

Reproduction takes place either because people cannot see alternatives, or do not have the power to institutionalize the alternatives that they see. Change takes place because alternatives become visible, or because actors have or gain the power to bring them into being.

(1989: 201)

In recent years, Ortner's contribution to the clarification of power and agency has further expanded the capacity of practice theory in understanding the complex social world (Ortner 1996; Ortner 2006). Therefore, this thesis does not focus on how Ranas respond to social changes in a free way but more likely, it demonstrates the ways in which Ranas are being controlled by different power constraints on the one hand and utilize and transform power structures on the other. I thus choose power dynamics and agency as my last analytical framework and an in-depth discussion of power in the contemporary practice theorists' work follows.

Power Dynamics and Agency

Power has long been a key issue in the field of social science. Social scientists believe social structure or systems construct power relations between different social actors and these relations constrain people's behaviour and their reactions to the world. Influential work including French structuralism, British-American structural-functionalism and capital-deterministic Marxism, according to Ortner (2006: 1), point out that human behaviour is shaped by culture, by mental structures or by capitalism. Until the 1970s, the pioneering practice theorist Pierre Bourdieu successfully focused analysis on human agency. However, he did not account for human intentions. In his famous Habitus theory (Bourdieu 1977), he describes all human behaviour as being deeply embedded in invisible structures of 'habitus' and these habitus shape people's minds to react and accept the dominance of others without consciousness and

overt intentions. Afterwards, Foucault (1978) developed his influential power theory which emphasizes power as unavoidable because it deeply permeates every aspect of social life. In *The history of sexuality*, he defines power in this way:

Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. ...power is not an institution, and not a structure; ...power is exercised from innumerable points, in the interplay of nonegalitarian and mobile relations.

(1978: 93-94)

Foucault's interpretation of power has further denied the possibility that people can resist those in authority. However, this might not be always the case. During my long stay with the Ranas, I noted that they were not dominated by the twice-born Hindu caste hill migrating Brahmins and Chhetris (hereafter referred to as Pahaaris) and their reactions did not follow any designated or preordained path. I do not object to the above scholars' view of power and human agency, but I find the work of Anthony Giddens, Sherry Ortner and power theorists Raymond Williams and James Scott to be most useful in my thesis.

Giddens (1979) clearly points out that one of the central problems in social theory is lack of agency. He argues that power and control systems can never work perfectly because being controlled humans can understand their social situation and think about ways to resist. In his book *Weapon of the weak* (1985), Scott illustrates that powerless people know what is going on through a detailed ethnographic description of Malaysian farmers' reactions to modern agricultural development. He explains that sometimes farmers do not resist strongly because their actions are controlled by the powerful dominant group. A similar view is suggested by Williams (1977a). In his discussion of hegemony where he denies the existence of absolute power and control:

The reality of any hegemony, in the extended political and cultural sense, is that, while by definition it is always dominant, it is never either total or exclusive.

(1977a: 113)

As suggested by Ortner (1996; 2006), the alternative interpretation of power and hegemony has brought new developments in practice theory. Firstly, the emphasis on human practice does not overlook the influence of social structure on human behaviour. Secondly, the exercise of human agency is not a synonym for 'free will' and resistance. As a result, the direct outcome is not a product of structure or human intentionality but is a hybrid of them (Ortner 1996: 11).

Therefore, my thesis intends to look at how the social structures influence Ranas' capacity, and the ways in which Ranas modify these structures in response to social changes. Taking this power into account, I agree with Laura Ahearn's view of agency. She defines agency as 'the socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (2001: 112). My thesis therefore examines the sociocultural factors which affect Ranas' agency or ability to maintain their livelihoods. Particularly, the role of changing control over land resources is a particularly critical point.

Thesis Structure

In order to illustrate the complexity of the Ranas' changing livelihood system, this thesis is organized into four major sections. Chapter One to Chapter Three describe the problems and justifications for carrying out the present project. Chapter One highlights the deficiencies of contemporary conservation practices and anthropological studies on environmental issues. I state that there is an urgent need to conduct further research work in exploring the complex relationships between conservation practices and how local livelihood systems adapt to change. Also, four core analytical concepts I employed in the thesis are introduced. In Chapter Two, I provide a detailed description of the multiple research methods adopted in this study such as participant observation, household survey and reflexivity is discussed. Chapter Three reviews all the relevant historical developments concerning the RSWR and its influence on my project site, one of the longest established indigenous settlements in Kanchanpur district - Rauteli Bichawa Village. Attention is paid to the relationships in the new demographic scenario caused by the hill people's migration and the State's land management policies and the establishment of RSWR.

In Chapters Four and Five, an in-depth analysis of the economic-political and cultural meanings of land to Ranas is provided. However, these meanings have shown us the asymmetrical and coercive power relations that exist between the Nepalese State and Ranas. Chapter Four demonstrates that the introduction of conservation and land policies has seriously violated the standard of subsistence and political power that Ranas enjoyed previously. They have lost control of their agricultural lands and been restricted in using forest resources. Chapter Five explores the changes in sustaining a livelihood that have generated Ranas' different cultural interpretations of their old and new lands. The Ranas' new home is

one of poverty, helplessness and danger because they no longer enjoy the mutual help or support from neighbours as they did in their old abode. The destruction of Ranas' social networks not only created psychological problems but also led to dispossession, threats to their livelihoods and leading more vulnerable lives.

Chapters Six to Nine offer readers an alternative perspective on understanding the interactive and mobile power relations of Rana daily social life. Household structure, gender, kinship and production relations and ethnicity emerge as the major discussion themes. Four key analytical concepts are employed to develop the discussion. Each of these chapters demonstrates how these social systems or cultures allow or disable Ranas for pursuing sustainable livelihoods and the ways in which Ranas adopt, modify and transform them for adapting to social change. In fact, the Ranas emerge as being active in creating a range of strategies to ensure their economic survival. They do not behave passively in regard to issues of livelihood. In Chapter Six, the discussion focuses on the changing relationships between Rana inhabitants and Pahaari migrants. The ethnographic data supports the view that the emergence of new Rana-Pahaari relationships was the product of increasing conflicts over the control of land and the caste system. In the case of Rana-Pahaari relationships, caste was also treated as a tool for both groups to negotiate and justify their social position.

Chapters Seven and Eight illustrate the changing social relations in Rana society at household level. Chapter Seven demonstrates that the formation, structure and management of Rana households were fundamentally linked to the issue of livelihood. Changes in the economic landscape motivated by new developments in demography and socio-economic reality had shaped the traditional form of Rana households. Within the lifetime of most Ranas, they first experienced household fission when they settled in Rauteli Bichawa. Moreover, it was evident that the rapid decrease in food security caused by the park extension program had resulted in faster and more conflict-ridden household partitions in resettled Rana households than non-resettled households. Chapter Eight outlines the new developments in production, kinship and gender relations among Ranas and illustrates how these changes relate to wider social transformation. The findings show that the traditional patron-client system and patrilineal relations, which had long contributed to household production and served an important social

security net for most Rana households, were undermined. Today, Ranas rely heavily on household labour and new economic cooperation alliances. Most Rana women felt and experienced their lower status due to increased economic dependency on their men although their involvement in livelihood activities significantly increased. The traditional gender division of labour practices has nonetheless been transformed despite Rana men's aim to 'reclaim' their dominant position at the domestic level and in the wider society.

In Chapter Nine, I discuss how Ranas perceive themselves in the context of the dramatic social changes that are occurring. The result shows that Ranas actively used multiple identities and cultural practices to achieve an equal social footing with the dominant twice-born Pahaari settlers. They emulated the hill people's cultures on the one hand but also clung to some traditional customs and were proud of 'being Rana'. The motivation behind this was linked to the aim of obtaining a better livelihood.

These ethnographic chapters elicit two important messages. Firstly, Ranas have made significant economic, political and cultural adaptations to respond to the social changes caused by the RSWR, hill migration and State landownership policies. Secondly, ethnographic studies of Ranas have clearly shown that the exercise of power or authority is a negotiated and compromising social process where many unexpected outcomes often appear. This is because every social actor to a certain extent is able to make their own choice of how they should live. The extensive discussion of the impacts of the dislocation on Rana daily livelihood and changes of social relations allow me to search for answers to the questions posed in this thesis in Chapter Ten: how do local livelihoods interact with the park policies and other socio-economic changes and what are the implications of these relationships of improving contemporary conservation practices?

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methods and the direction of analysis. Multiple research techniques including household survey, participant observation and case study were adopted for exploring the complex and dynamic relationships between the park management and Rana livelihoods. While a household survey offered me a broader picture of the socio-economic conditions of Rana society, the conventional anthropological techniques of participant observation and in-depth case study allow me to analyze more closely the daily livelihood practices of Ranans, particularly the ways they felt, experienced and reacted in relation to different socio-economic contexts. One of the strengths of this research approach is better illustrating the on-going transformations in Rana society that are the hybrid product of macro and micro social forces. This is a crucial point for a deeper understanding of the root causes of the problems of contemporary conservation practices. In addition, the increasing importance of reflexivity as an essential step in social inquiry is widely recognized by academics (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Kleinsasser 2000; Schwandt 1997). In this study, the discrepancies between my impression and empirical contact experiences with Ranans proved the need for an alternative perspective so that the changes in Rana society could be understood. These included an abandonment of stereotyping traditional societies and new interpretation of culture. Through this reflexivity process, I realize that culture is dynamic, adaptive and created by humans to respond to different social situations (Anderson & Gale 1992; Oakdale 2004). In the case of Rana experiences, the formation and changes of culture are inextricably linked to livelihood issues. This chapter therefore explains how the research was carried out and the important issues raised.

Household Survey, Participant Observation and Case Study

My fieldwork was shaped by my critique of contemporary conservation practices and inadequate anthropological input into conservation studies concerning the social impacts of

dislocation on powerless social groups. With the introduction of a Nepalese scholar¹⁹, I made my first trip to Kanchanpur in January 2004. After consulting with the Park authority and some NGOs, I further decided that Rauteli Bichawa Village and its Ranas inhabitants were the most appropriate subjects of study. Nonetheless, unfavourable attitudes were widely expressed by park management staff. In their opinion the Ranas were socially and economically backward. Some of them even believed Ranas were supporters of the Maoist insurgency. The village was perceived as a dangerous region that park staff would seldom visit.

The next practical issue in respect to the study area was that these Ranas were dispersed because of hill migration and park-induced resettlement. I was told that many Rana families moved to India or to some public land near the town as refugees. There was no doubt that their situation necessitated my concern and proved valuable in my in-depth study. However, due to time and financial restraints, instead of studying all affected Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, I decided to make multiple fieldwork sites including both resettled and non-resettled Rauteli Bichawa Ranas.

In order to understand the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas better, my research work consisted of household surveys, participant observation and a case study. My familiarity with and understanding of the Nepalis' rural life allowed me to fit in easily with Rana village life. The first Rana I contacted was Vagat Rana who lived in Ward 7 (Iymilia) and he was the ex-leader of Rauteli Bichawa. He was the most influential person in the village. I stayed with his family and got to know more about Rana cultural practices. His acceptance of my presence helped me to fit into the Rana community. This improved my confidence in conducting research work in Rauteli Bichawa. I learnt from Vagat Rana that the Rana population in Rauteli Bichawa had decreased dramatically due to emigration and park-induced displacement. Unfortunately, he died in 2006 as the result of an accident just a few months before my third visit to the village. His death was a huge loss for my research work because he was the person I worked with the most. His knowledge about the history of the village and Ranas was invaluable.

¹⁹ Dr. Jay Prakash Sah completed his biological study of Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve's vegetation in 2002. He strongly encouraged me to conduct in-depth social research on this Park because the literature in regard to serious conflicts between local communities and park management was almost absent.

The ethnography of Ranas was based on three fieldwork trips in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The major phase of data collection occurred during my second fieldwork trip, from September 2004 to December 2005. The household survey was first conducted in four settlements where the Rana lived: two in Rauteli Bichawa (Ward 7, Iymilia and Ward 8, Jhilmila) and two in resettled area- Dhokka Block (Ward 9, Rampur and Ward 9, Belandi).²⁰ All surveys were written in English but assistants who could speak Nepali and the Rana local dialect were hired for the survey. Male and female members of each household could respond to the structured questionnaire. The foci of the questionnaires distributed to these four settlements differed slightly. I was most concerned about the impact of resettlement on the Rana community and asked the displaced Ranas a series of questions regarding their feelings about the old and new places of settlement (Appendix). A total of seventy-two Rana households were interviewed. The survey enabled me to understand the socio-economic background and activities that Rana households engaged in. The household results further assisted me in searching for suitable sites and families to conduct my research. Suitable study targets refer to Rana families whose livelihoods are substantially affected by the establishment and dislocation program of park.

In general, Ranas were very cooperative people and were willing to respond to my questions regarding landholding size, family histories, etc. I did not find it difficult to conduct the household survey with Ranas. However, I found that Pahaaris' enthusiasm for my research work interfered with my work when listening to Ranas' feelings about their lives. In contrast with Ranas, Pahaaris had suspicions about my work from the beginning and almost every Pahaari asked what my motivation was, while Ranas did not. Questions such as 'Why do you need those household information?' and 'Do you work for the government or some other organization?' were asked by Pahaaris. To allay their suspicions, I did my best to explain my research to them and a Nepali-version information sheet was provided on their request.

In most situations, particularly in Pahaari-dominated settlements (Jhilmila and Beldandi), Pahaaris more so than Ranas responded to my survey questions. Whenever I conducted the

²⁰ The local name of Ward 9 Rampur is 'Dhokka Block' while Ward 9 Beldandi is referred to as 'Jharnasagar'. As only these two Wards out of all the VDCs were designed for resettling park-affected families, these terms are used instead of their local name in this thesis.

household survey, there were large groups of listeners around my Rana interviewees. A few times, I was told by Pahaaris that Ranas knew nothing about the Park policies and local politics; they were not good informants for me. I noted that when in the company of Pahaaris, Ranas often kept silent. I recalled one time when my Rana assistant and I conducted a survey with one Jhimilia Rana family, when one young and educated Pahaari suddenly interrupted our conversation. He insulted the Rana family and accused it of not knowing how to respect visitors. He ordered the family to provide us with some food. At that moment, both the Rana family and my Rana assistant fell silent. Finally, I had to stop the Pahaaris' interference tactfully by promising them I would visit and talk to them later. My experiences not only demonstrated the problem of conducting interviews with deprived or socially-subordinated groups in Nepal. More importantly, it reflected the inherent social hierarchy at the village level. The experience reminded me that although the focus of my study was the Ranas, the influence of Pahaaris should not be neglected. A more detailed discussion on Rana-Pahaari relationships is included in Chapter Six.

Another concern arose in the designation of my household survey. The lives of Ranas were central to my study and therefore I did not survey the Pahaaris and Dangauras. The lack of socio-economic data concerning the Pahaaris, for example, made it difficult to make comparisons with Ranas. Many of the changes that affected the Ranas were due to the moving-in of the Pahaaris. Nonetheless, my good relations with Pahaaris enabled me to stay with a Pahaari family in Iymilia during the last two months of my fieldwork. Despite my frequent contacts with Pahaaris, I did not obtain a clear idea about the non-Rana population but they did provide me with an alternative perspective in terms of understanding recent changes at the village level. All these significantly contributed to my research.

Based on my household survey results (see Chapter Three), I decided to stay in Iymilia and Rampur for most of my fieldwork. The differences in cultural practices and livelihoods of these two Rana settlements were very significant. I was able to examine the impact of recent social changes on Ranas' livelihoods and the way they respond. Although I fully understood that the ability to comprehend and speak Rana dialect could significantly improve our communication,

the reality was that it was almost unrealistic for me to learn two languages (Nepali and Rana dialects) in a short time. One of my non-Rana informants said that learning the Rana language might be essential for establishing a good friendship because Ranas were very shy people and seldom opened their hearts to strangers. To solve this problem, I first tried to find a Rana research assistant but this was impossible because none of them could speak basic English and some Ranas could not speak fluent Nepali. Finally, I decided to request one of my devoted Nepalese friends as my research assistant. Although he was not from the local community, his familiarity of village life and excellent communication skills made him establish good relationships with Ranas.

During my stay with Rana families, besides formal and informal interviews, participant observation was another important research tool, which allowed me to understand changes in the Rana livelihood system by looking at their everyday social life from both an insider and outsider perspective. Daily conversations, farming activities, festival celebrations, marriage ceremonies, rituals and forest resources collection activities all had drawn my attention and most of time, I participated in these activities. I did farming work with Ranas such as rice transplanting and wheat harvesting. Because of my enthusiasm in all their daily activities, my relationships with Ranas became closer. I was often invited to join different kinds of festivals and marriage ceremonies, etc. By observing their activities, I was able to construct relationships between conservation and Rana livelihood, about which most Ranas in fact could not tell me directly. Most of them had little comprehension of the idea of conservation.²¹ I also had the opportunity to experience their daily difficulties, such as collecting fuelwood and their lack of access to the Park. On one occasion, I followed a few Rana women who went in the Park to collect fuelwood and grasses. We had to cross the small river and walked about an hour to the Singpur Army Post where they might get permission from security personnel. I surmised they would extract as much forest resources they could quickly, but this was not so. When we passed one historic temple (see Plate 2.1 below), they decided to have a rest. One old lady turned to me and said:

²¹ When I designed my questions, I preferred to ask Ranas what they felt about forest and wild animal protection rather than the concept of conservation.

I don't really know what the name of the God is and where he is come from. However, since my grandparents' time, we would visit here whenever we were inside the Park. Nowadays, we can't visit here very often. I feel very sad about this.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 35 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 2.1 This was the historic temple which Pamela could visit very often before the establishment of the Park. Her feelings about the cultural significance of the Park were therefore included in my study.

Later, they even used this opportunity to visit the Rani Tal (see Plate 2.2 below). I realized that the Park did provide Ranas with something that went beyond mere subsistence. I therefore expanded my research focus to exploring the social and cultural meanings of Park. In fact, the following ethnographic chapters clearly demonstrate that the Park-induced dislocation project has violated the social, economic and political lives of Ranas.



Plate 2.2 This was the famous Rani Lake inside the Park

Using socio-economic data collected from the household survey, I was able to identify that Beldandi Rana households were the poorest Rana group. In fact, some of them became landless and were resettled in non-Rana villages after the park-induced displacement. Their coping strategies in this new socio-economic environment are particularly important in this thesis. I visited these households frequently and the Pachan Rana family was chosen as my case study. With the consent of Pachan, I conducted year-round research on his livelihood. His experiences substantially contributed to the following chapters.

I revisited these villages in December 2006. The period of this fieldwork was short but it contributed to my work in two substantial ways. Firstly, I could collect more details about household composition from every interviewed Rana household. The data enhanced the accuracy of my analysis on the relationship between household structure and social changes (see Chapter Seven). Secondly, I could verify and share most of my findings with local informants, who corroborated what I had recorded about the life of the Ranas.

The Rana-Maoist Interactions in My Research Areas

Before I further explain how this thesis has been shaped by the concept of reflexivity, I will first devote a few paragraphs on the relationship between the Maoists and Ranas. Prior to the fieldwork, due to the generally subordinate position of Ranas in Nepalese society, I retained a preconception that the Ranas may emerge as one of the major targets for Maoist recruitment. The discussion with park officers further reinforced this belief (see p.31). However, the reality turned out to be much more complicated than I expected. I found that the Rana-Maoist interactions were positive but their association was mainly casual and unpredictable, which deeply reflected the dilemma that Ranas had when dealing with dramatic social transformations triggered by: firstly, the Nepalese government; and secondly, the Ranas' position between the government and Maoists. Two features of the Ranas' socio-economic situation contributed to the complex attitudes that they had toward the Maoists.

In my research areas the Ranas were not the poorest group. Compared to the untouchable castes, most Ranas at least own some land and a few of them could even be classified as

influential landlords. Landless Rana families were hardly found in my study settlements. This was because Ranans were the inhabitants of this region and the park resettlement program guaranteed land compensation to these affected Rana families if they had previously registered their original land in government offices. Their increasing impoverishment was caused by significant loss both in terms of the quality and quantity of land, rather than them being absolute landless.²² Therefore, they had no immediate need to rely on the military for their basic survival, unlike other poor socio-ethnic groups. A fear of being punished by the security forces was another reason that no Ranans in my study area were Maoists. One of the Rana informants told me that their lives were threatened if the army discovered they were Maoists. On a few occasions the Ranans were seriously hurt by the army because they were suspected of being Maoists. Most Maoist members in my research area were not local but mainly high-caste Pahaaris (Brahmin and Chhetri) from the neighbouring hill districts. Furthermore, some Dangaura Tharus in my non-research villages were Maoists.

On the other hand, Ranans have been long-neglected by the government. Their social status is low and their participation in bureaucratic agencies is almost non-existent. The strained Rana-State relationship has encouraged them to align themselves on the Maoist side. From what I observed, most Ranans in my research areas to some extent were scared of the Maoists, however they did not demonstrate their strong unfavourable attitudes toward to the Maoists. In fact they supported the Maoists in many informal ways. At the same time the Maoists showed sympathy for the Ranans' subordinate position.²³ As a result, a positive Rana-Maoist relationship formed and this was further enhanced by the perception that both Maoists and Ranans benefited from this relationship. I was told by informants that the Maoists 'approved' of the illegal forest resource activities in order to curry favour with the weak and poor groups.

Ranans often perceived the Maoists as their protector. On several occasions, I heard Ranans discuss the Maoists' local attacks and they believed that being local the Maoists would not attack them. This was proved correct by my observations. Throughout my fieldwork, I did not hear of any instance when the Maoists attacked Ranans who in fact complained they were being

²² I was told by Rana informants that most landless Rana families moved to the settlements near the highway and the town.

²³ Their 'approval' for my research was an example. More detail discussion was seen in later section of this chapter.

harassed by the security forces. Ranas supported the Maoists in several ways including provision of meeting places (for details see following discussion on 'Reflexivity'), accommodation and food. Although these logistical supports might be voluntary or involuntary, according to my observation the Maoists' visits did not cause any significant physical disturbance to the Ranas. For example, I was told by my host family that they would like to arrange two Maoists to stay in my room. For reasons of my own personal safety, I strongly disagreed, but the Maoists stayed with my host family regardless. Offering food and accommodation to Maoists was commonly practised in my research areas.

For the reasons mentioned above, despite the fact that the Maoist movement has played a vital part in the daily life of Ranas and the conservation of Shuklaphanta, rather than elevating it as the central theme of my analysis, I chose to consider it and other socio-economic and political factors on an equal basis. I believe this strategy can better reflect the ways in which Ranas interpret and weigh up all social changes from a local perspective. In fact, a detailed report, *Conservation in conflict: the impact of the Maoist-government conflicts on conservation and biodiversity in Nepal*, sponsored by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (Murphy et al. 2005), provides invaluable information on this issue.

To summarise, my ethnographic data indicated that Ranas were not active supporters of the Maoist movement. They did not have any formal association with the Maoists, however the socio-economic and political realities resulted in the Ranas initiating positive interactions with the Maoists. The informal, unorganised and individual actions were often taken by Ranas as everyday forms of resistance to the State government (Scott 1985). Now, I will shift my focus to reflexivity which significantly shapes and contributes the structure of my thesis.

Reflexivity

Since starting the fieldwork, I increasingly realized that my contact experiences had substantially shaped the outcomes of the research work, i.e. both fieldwork and writing stages. The importance of this self-critical thinking is increasingly recognized as a necessary research step by social science scholars (Clifford & Marcus 1986; Kleinsasser 2000; Schwandt 1997). As

Schwandt (1997) suggests, the process of reflexivity not only enhances the researcher's awareness of the influence of their personal backgrounds and knowledge on the research results, it also allows the readers to understand the formation of analytical approaches of this thesis. In fact, my reflexivity has contributed to the analytical direction of the present thesis and I could thus appropriately locate the position of Ranas in the wider social setting. Therefore, the following stories involving Ranas and myself are essential parts of my research methods.

Firstly, one of the major functions of anthropologists is to act as cultural brokers. Through anthropologists' ethnographic descriptions of communities they study, people are able to understand how different cultures and societies operate. However, this function can be ineffective if anthropologists have strong presumptions about the societies they describe. My familiarity with Nepalese cultures actually proved to be a problem in studying the Ranas. Before my first contact with them, I had visited Nepal many times and established good friendships, most of them from the middle-hill regions. I enjoyed their hospitality and said *Namaste* (the common Nepalese greeting, meaning 'God bless you'). Every time I visited them, they would provide me with *Cyaa* (Nepali milk tea) and *Dal Bhat* (curry and rice) as a mark of respect. However, Ranas' relatively 'inhospitable' behaviour on some occasions confused me. When I first visited Rana settlements, I noted that saying *Namaste* was a strange greeting for them. I learnt to say *Ram Ram* (Rana's greeting). I had to adjust to not receiving *Cyaa* or *DalBhat* as a sign of welcome from Rana families. On some occasions the interview or survey lasted for one hour but during this time I received only water. I started to understand that my knowledge was based purely on mainstream Nepali cultural practices, particularly those of the Pahaaris - not from Ranas themselves. Gradually, I understood that the only way to learn about Ranas was to see things from their perspective and abandon my preconceptions along the way.

Learning Ranas' customs and ritual practices was relatively easy but I found it difficult to erase my deep-rooted images of Rana personalities. In the early stages of my fieldwork, I continually portrayed the image of Ranas as friendly, simple-minded, hospitable and socially, economically and politically powerless, a description based on their presumed subordinate position in Nepalese society and early ethnographic writings, such as the famous Sherpas, who are excellent mountaineers and often described as honest, hard-working and friendly (Furer-

Haimendorf 1964). Other hill tribes like the Magars were very hospitable people (Miller 1990) and Limbus were simple people (Caplan 1970). Also, Tharus from different parts of Tarai were often labelled by scholars as hard-working, honest, shy, non-opportunistic and non-materialistic (Bista 1980; Guneratne 2002; Krauskopff & Meyer 2000; Odegaard 1997). Tharus perceived themselves as being backward and easily cheated. Before conducting my fieldwork, a Nepalese scholar who carried out research work on the Rana community in the early 1990s described Ranas as very hospitable people.²⁴ Such impressions made me make generalizations about the Ranas but the reality was that many discrepancies exist between my impression and their actual behaviour.

For example, my first host Rana family lived in Iymilia. The family was wealthy in terms of owning a large landholding and the headman of this family had substantial political influence locally. My research assistant and I were given a grain storeroom in which to stay. We slept on the floor with locally made mats without any hesitation because we believed the family could not afford to provide us with beds. However, we were proved to be totally wrong. One day, the headman told us if we were able to pay Rs 35 more per day, we could have beds. As guests, we felt uncomfortable that all family members got beds except us and then our relationship deteriorated because of their continuous demands for medicine, clothes and meat. If it was common for villagers to make demands of visiting foreigners (Miller 1990), I still could not accept the way Ranas asked for gifts. For example, several times, the wife of the headman requested me directly to bring her some medicine. My long contact with rural villagers in Nepal showed that they would show their demands indirectly. Local gossips also mentioned that the wealth of this Rana family was accumulated by abusing their influence and treating people poorly (for a further discussion about the local political structure see Chapter Four). Finally, we decided to find new accommodation.

My second host Rana family lived in Rampur and had been living away from the Park for four years. The younger son was in charge of household activities and he provided us with beds and two chairs and he expected we would pay him for our daily living expenses. He wanted me to

²⁴ Prior to my fieldwork, Dr. Ganesh Man Gurung pointed out that Ranas drank alcohol. Drinking together was one of the ways to establish friendships with them (personal communication 2004). One my key Pahaari informants told me this as well. However, we were seldom invited by Rauteli Bichawa Ranas for a drink (this issue is discussed further in Chapter Four).

buy fish and meat for his family and he even asked me to sponsor his four-year old daughter to go to private school. I found it very difficult to agree to the local Ranas' demands and had to feign ignorance or poor understanding of their demands.

Although the influence of the Maoist insurgency on conservation was not the central theme of this thesis, it was another key factor that led to strained relationships between Ranas and myself. The armed Maoists would do regular patrols in the village particularly in Dhokka Block and one of their strategies was to engage in frequent strikes. Many times, my travels between town and village, Kanchanpur and Kathmandu were disturbed. I could recall that the longest strike in the Kanchanpur lasted fifteen days. At that time, there was no bus service and all the shops were closed. I recognized the unstable security situation in this region so I was careful. I avoided attending any public gatherings and never conducted interviews in public areas (e.g. teashops) in Dhokka Block.²⁵ However, we met the Maoists at one teashop and we were interrogated by them. They even wanted to attack my Nepalese research assistant. At that critical moment, despite several Ranas being around us including our host family, no one said one word about us and our work. We were brought to one Rana house and all our valuable personal things such as mobile phone sets, identity cards were taken by the Maoists. We were asked to wait for their leader. About one and half hours later, the leader came to us and we talked for that same amount of time.²⁶ Finally, our research work was identified as being no harm to the Maoists and to some extent matched the ideology of the Maoist party - helping the poor and deprived groups in Nepal. Even though my research work was approved by the Maoists, conflicts and receiving no help from the Ranas were two major reasons for me leaving Dhokka Block. One night, I heard an explosion close to my host family and a group of Maoists showed off their military prowess. I discussed the matter with Ranas and most of them showed no fear, believing that the Maoists would not attack them because they were locals; however, they never tried to help me. I felt disappointed by the Ranas' apathetic attitudes to my situation and felt that I had to emphasize my Asian and Chinese identity in order to get the Maoists'

²⁵ In the old settlements of Iymilia and Jhilmila, teashops were ideal places for me to meet people and conduct interviews.

²⁶ During our private meeting, we were first suspected of being 'spies' working for the Nepalese government. We had to show the leader all my travel records in Nepal and my student card from the affiliated university. Our conversation topics also included a discussion about democracy. The leader could speak some English and explained about his party's work.

trust.²⁷ In order to prove my Chinese identity, I was even requested to write and read out Chinese words written in my field notes. For reasons of safety, I chose to stay with a Pahaari family in the non-resettled village Jhimilia during the final stage of my fieldwork where both Rana and Pahaari families were more friendly than those in Dhokka Block (for further discussion on the different neighbouring relationships see Chapter Five).

These contact experiences did not represent the whole picture of my interaction with Ranas. I put more effort into contacting different Rauteli Bichawa Ranas and I learnt that they were not all the same. For instance, my case study Pachan family (see Plate 2.3 below) was very friendly and though the family was poor they always shared the best food they had with me. In the year-long contacts, I regularly brought some clothes and biscuits for his family, however the family never demanded any material things from me. One time, I participated in collecting resources from the forest with a group of Rana women from Jhimilia. After that, they were so hospitable and invited me to have *Dal Bhat* with them even though they were extremely tired. Experiences with Ranas from different backgrounds allowed me to understand that instead of generalizing people's behaviour, it is more important to recognize their differences.

²⁷ Not every Maoist member could distinguish between Western and non-Western people. Some of them tended to label all foreigners as 'American' and 'Christian'. I was no exception to this.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 43 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 2.3 In order to gain secure livelihood, Pachan's family developed very complex coping strategies which offered me an excellent year-round case study. A good friendship was established between his family and me. Toward the end of my fieldwork, his wife gave birth to a baby boy.

Rather than being a cultural broker, I realized that I was in fact a cultural keeper and often expected that the people I studied would think the same as me. This idea proved to be a problem for my writing. I found it difficult to describe the life of Ranas because I had a fixed idea of who they were, yet I began to feel depressed because it seemed that I betrayed the Ranas if I wrote about them in a negative way, for example describing them as selfish and money-minded people.²⁸ I struggled for a long time over the reality of their lives and if their culture was changing, what would be the implications of ceasing to practice their traditional culture? And why did I refuse to accept the changes in Rana society? If I accepted their changes, why did I tend to blame external forces (e.g. the State land policy, the park policy and hill migration) rather than Rana society's internal changes, such as its social structure? The dichotomy between tradition and cultural changes, between external forces and internal forces leading to cultural change; all these themes made it difficult for me to truly understand the lives of Ranas

²⁸ A similar conclusion is expressed by Fisher (2001). He noted that his interest in Thakali cultures (how does cultural practice evolve over time and under specific circumstances?) was not the same as what Thakalis wanted (i.e. our true tradition). When he was requested by the Thakali community to express his views about Thakali culture, he found this difficult to do as he did not want to offend some Thakalis by recording the wrong answer.

but being enlightened by recent anthropological work and adopting practice theory turned things around.

Recent anthropological work clearly notes that many ethnic or minority groups throughout the world and in Nepal are changing, such as Turner's ethnographic study of the Brazilian Indians who are now articulating their traditions and values along Western lines (1991). Fisher's (1997) and Ortner's (1989; 1999) studies on contemporary Sherpa society also indicate that the Sherpas have changed over the decades in that, according to Fisher, tourism has made the Sherpas richer, more materialistic, individualistic and having less sense of community. Similarly, Ortner noted that the Sherpas acted differently from descriptions of them in earlier ethnographic work:

although I too found people to be quite outgoing and in many ways quite easy to get along with, I also found much strain in social relations, a great deal of intracommunity conflict, and a general unwillingness on the part the villagers to cooperate for the general welfare.....toward individual selfishness and family insularity.

(1989: 6)

Over a period of twenty years with the Ladakhis, Norberg-Hodge (1992: 102) noted the changes wrought by the development of tourism. She recalls that she could not manage her first journey to Ladakh without an old Ladakhi's generosity in the form of a walking stick. Currently, however, she says, 'When I get on the bus in the crowded station in Leh, I have to fight my way on board, and even old men try to push their way ahead of me.' (1992: 122). She comments that Ladakhis have become greedy and money is the most important thing for them: 'The money becomes a wedge between people, pushing them further and further apart' (1992: 102).

These insightful anthropological studies of traditional societies highlight two important points in my study. Firstly, an ethnographer should always accept the diversity of people being discussed because they will differ in terms of age, gender, economic status, experience, etc. Secondly, cultures inevitably change over time and to quote Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock, culture is 'continuously produced, reproduced and revised in dialogues among their members' (quoted in Oakdale 2004: 72). A similar view is shared by Anderson and Gale (1992). They point out that culture is 'dynamic mix of symbols, beliefs, languages and practices that people create, not a fixed thing or entity governing humans' (1992: 3).

In sum, it is not my purpose to reinforce or to avoid any particular portrait of Ranas through a description about the contact experiences between Ranas and myself. I am more interested in their actual reaction and behaviour to changes in livelihoods. My thesis therefore seeks to demonstrate the diverse life stories of Ranas from different social backgrounds (e.g. rich, poor, female, male, etc). Moreover, this research does not intend to search for the absolute cause-effect relationships between recent social changes and the lives of Ranas. Rather, the focus is on the dynamic interactions between Rana culture and the wider world. It would be arrogant of me to assume that my position afforded me no restrictions to the life of Ranas, but at least my reflexivity toned down any preconceptions I had about the Ranas and allowed Ranas to tell their own stories. The following chapters are devoted to exploring the changing lives of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas.

CHAPTER THREE

AN OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY AREA

Introduction

In this chapter, history will show us that developments regarding the Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve corresponded to the dynamic changes occurring in Kanchanpur district. These changes included a new demographic scenario influenced by two factors: the moving-in of hill migrants to this frontier lowland forest; and the State's land management policies. These new developments have put increasing pressure on the utilization of forest resources. As a result, the Park was created as a measure to head off serious deforestation. Moreover, in order to preserve this unique wildlife habitat effectively, a large-scale displacement policy was implemented by the State, which further impacted on local people's livelihoods. Since the emergence of the Park, conflicts between Park management and local people have escalated. The Park has become a contested area during the last twenty years. In this chapter I review all the relevant historical developments concerning the Park and its influence on one of longest established indigenous settlements in Kanchanpur district - *Rauteli Bichawa Village*. A detailed historical and ethnographic description of the fieldwork sites is thus provided as it creates the necessary background for the following ethnographic chapters.

Kanchanpur District

My fieldwork was carried out in villages neighbouring the Royal Suklaphanta Wildlife Reserve located in the westernmost of Nepal, Kanchanpur district, 750 km from the capital city Kathmandu. The East-West highway built in 1999 has linked this remote district to Kathmandu. Kanchanpur is situated in the Mahakali administrative zone²⁹ and is part of the far western development region.³⁰ The district consists of flatland and gently sloping hills with an elevation from 176m to 1528m above sea level. On the north side, it connects to the Churia Range and the hill district Dandeldhura with India in the west and Kailali District in the east. It is currently

²⁹ Mahakali zone contains four districts and Kanchanpur is the only district in the lowland Tarai. The others are all hill districts: Dandeldhura, Baitadi and Darchula.

³⁰ Kanchanpur is one of the two Tarai districts located in the far western development region; the other is Kailali district (KDDC 2002).

divided into nineteen Village Development Committees (VDCs) and one Municipality. The district headquarters is MenhendraNagar (see Figure 3.1 below).

Figure 3.1: Nepal and the Location of Kanchanpur District



Kanchanpur was once a part of the western Tarai, which Nepal conceded to the British after the Anglo-Nepal war (1814-1816). However, the British Government returned it to Nepal in 1860, as a reward for assisting the British to quell the Indian Mutiny of 1857. This area was known as *Naya Muluk* and would be recognized later through Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts (Guneratne 2002). Kanchanpur had previously suffered from an extensive malaria epidemic, which made extension of the cultivation area almost impossible for the State to collect the land tax. Therefore, until 1963, it was mainly covered by the forest with a sparse population and scattered settlements. The majority of the population consisted of the indigenous Tharu group who were believed to have strong resistance to malaria. Tharus were divided into two subgroups - *Rana Tharus* and *Dangaura Tharus* (hereafter referred to as ‘Rana’ and ‘Dangaura’ respectively) - due to their significant differences in language and customs (see Odegaard 1997). A criminal element from India had infiltrated the region³¹ but recent history shows that Kanchanpur experienced remarkable socio-economic change, including shifts in demography

³¹ In earlier times the State allowed Indian criminals to settle and cultivate more areas.

and rising conflicts over land resources. The government enacted a resettlement and land tenure policy that were responsible for these changes.

Government-activated Resettlement Programs and Forest Loss

Following the success of the malaria eradication program in the Tarai region during the 1950s, the area became not only favourable to Tharus but all other people, particularly the hill population. The State's resettlement programs were a top priority for the national development strategies of the 1960s and thereafter. In 1963, the Nepal Resettlement Company identified several forest territories for resettlement purposes in Nawalpur, Banke, Bardia, Kailali and Kanchanpur districts. The first project was in Nawalpur but the biggest project was carried out in Kanchanpur in 1971. Thousands of families from Jhapa, Bhojpur, Chitwan, Dhading and Nawalparasi were resettled on 6,800 ha of forest in Kanchanpur. A further 367 ha of forest was resettled with 135 ex-army families. Apart from government-sponsored resettlement programs, large scale uncontrolled migration occurred in Kanchanpur following the eradication of malaria. Many migrants from neighbouring hill districts moved down in order to search for fertile land, better education and job opportunities. Until recently, this migration flow has been sustained because Kanchanpur is one district selected for resettling ex-bonded labouring families (*Kamaiya*). A further 466 ha of forest has been opened up for those families (KDDC 2002; Pandey & Yonzon 2003).

The migration resulted in Kanchanpur changing from the least populated district in the Tarai and becoming a major destination for the hill migrants. In 1961, it had a population of only 17,000. With an average 6.02% growth, its population reached 68,863 in 1972 and 377,899 in 2000. The increase was largely generated by the influx of hill migrants (4.5% - 11.8%) over the past thirty years (Pandey & Yonzon 2003). Nowadays, the dominant population consists of the hill migrants rather than the indigenous Tharus. According to the 2001 census data, the caste and ethnicity distribution of the population in Kanchanpur were as follows: Chettri (30%); Tharu (20%); Brahmin (17%); Dalits (14%); Thakuri (5%); and others (14%).

The dramatic increase in population in Kanchanpur after the 1950s was accompanied by the significant loss of forest tracts due to increasing demands on agricultural land and forest-related resources. Although the forest (882.52 km. sq) continued to influence land use patterns (49.81% of total land in Kanchanpur), the cultivated area rose rapidly to 36.96% with a total of 587.83 sq. km (KDDC 2002) (Table 3.1). A study published in 1994 showed that - excluding the Park- the existing forest coverage in Kanchanpur was only 386 sq. km. The decline in forest area is attributed to the hill migrants' continued encroachment (Pandey & Yonzon 2003). Lohani's recent work has pointed out that the urbanization of Menhendarnagar has put pressure on the forest as well (2000) (see Plate 3.1 below). The government predicts that in the next twenty years, the population of Kanchanpur will reach 617,855 (KDDC 2002) and figures indicate that approximately 8,250 families and 8,963 illegally settled families still require land settlement (Pandey & Yonzon 2003). In addition, an amount of forest was cleared for compensating families affected by the extension of the Park (KDDC 2002). Forest degradation will continue to be a contentious issue for Kanchanpur due to the increasing population.

Table 3.1 Land Utilization of Kanchanpur District

NOTE:
This table is included on page 49 of the print copy of
the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Source: KDDC (2002)

NOTE:
This plate is included on page 49 of the print copy of
the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 3.1 Kanchanpur has the highest population density in the Tarai district. The construction of the East-West Highway divided the Park and human settlements were rapidly established in the forest area.

The Transformation of Landownership

Land is another core issue in the contemporary history of Kanchanpur. In Nepal, land was the property of the State and this type of land was known as *Raikar*, except *Kipat* land which belonged to some hill tribes (Regmi 1999).³² All land tenure in Kanchanpur was thus considered part of the *Raikar* system. Under this state-as-landlord system, the government had absolute power to grant and confiscate land for grantees and could appropriate land for its own needs. Before the collapse of the Rana family regime in 1950, land was in fact often granted by the State in an attempt to buy favour. The *Raikar* system created a number of secondary forms of land tenure system: *Birta*, *Guthi*, *Jagir* and *Rakam*. Excepting *Rakam*, another three types of land tenure were all granted land but the grantees had different backgrounds. *Birta* was granted to any individual who had the favour of the State. *Guthi* land was generally a gift for religious and charitable institutions while *Jagir* landownership was available to government employees and functionaries. Grantees enjoyed the privileges of having unpaid labour, the authority to evict tenants and receive rents. *Rakam* is not any particular category of land grants, but refers to any *Raikar* land which cultivators were required to provide unpaid labour for on a compulsory basis to meet government requirements. Most grantees were from the upper castes, generally from a military background or had kinship ties with the State. Due to the unique economic background of the Tarai region, the *Birta* system of land tenure existed in Tarai because the State wanted to extend the cultivated area and settlements from reclaimed wasteland. The literature supports the view that as with other far western districts, Kanchanpur was once granted as *Bakas*³³ to the Rana royal families shortly after its restoration by the British in 1858 (KDDC 2002; Krauskopff & Meyer 2000; Regmi 1999).

Regarding landownership rights, the State has acted as a landlord with absolute power. All *Raikar* users had only the right to use land but not the right to alienate any part of it, or to sell or mortgage it as they did in earlier times. Until the 1930s, the development of property rights was restricted to the Tarai region. At that time, the property right was granted to Tarai

³² *Kipat* tenure was not granted by the royal authorities but existed as a customary right as the result of an ethnic group's occupation of some specific land. The practice of *Kipat* ownership was specifically limited to a few communities in the eastern and western hill areas of Nepal like Limbus, Rais, Danuwars, Sunnuwars and Tamangs. *Kipat* tenure was abolished in 1963 and incorporated into the *Raikar* tenure system (Regmi 1999).

³³ According to Regmi (1963: 165), *Bakas* was a category of *Birta* grants, which was generally made on a tax-exempt, inheritable and transferable basis, particularly during the Rana period.

cultivators in return for paying taxes to the local administration. Those cultivators were allowed to sell or to mortgage their *Raikar* land. This was a response to the problem of abundant wasteland in Tarai so a more competitive and flexible land policy was introduced to encourage economic development. At that time, the State had to rely on the cooperation of local elites to exercise its power over land resources indirectly. This situation changed completely after the introduction of a series of land reforms in the 1950s. Under this new land policy, all *Raikar* cultivators were upgraded to landowners who could trade their land freely and landownership would only be granted through official land registration documents and an obligation to pay tax to the State (Regmi 1999). The policy caused dramatic changes in landownership in Kanchanpur. Before the hill migration and land reforms, almost all land in Kanchanpur was controlled by indigenous Tharu groups. Afterwards, landownership rapidly transferred from the Tharu groups to the hill migrants. The following ethnographic chapters will clearly demonstrate that the transformation of landownership in Kanchanpur is in fact not only influenced by the State-imposed concept of landownership (see Chapter Four). It also closely corresponds to its local socio-economic context, particularly before and after the large-scale hill migration (see Chapter Six). Social conflicts between indigenous and migrant groups due to changes in landownership will continue to be a major challenge for Kanchanpur.

The Creation and Expansion of the Park

During the 1960s, influenced by the growing global conservation ideology and the King's special interest in establishing protected areas in Nepal (see Chapter One), *Shuklaphanta* was first designed as the Royal Sikar Reserve in 1969 and was closed for public shooting. Later, it was officially declared as the Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve (hereafter referred to as 'the Park') in 1976 with a total area 155 sq. km as a response to the shrinkage of forest in Kanchanpur district caused by rising population and demands on agricultural land and forest resources. When the Park was first established, a few settlements in the reserve area were resettled in Mahendranagar.³⁴ Although the Park is small it is ecologically important in that it is home to the world's largest population of Swamp deer (2000), and its extensive grassland and swamp along with the tropical and sub-tropical forests has supported some endangered species

³⁴ The data for the exact number of these resettled families was not available during my fieldwork. According to my local informants, it was estimated that due to the establishment and expansion of the Park, more than 3,000 local families were displaced.

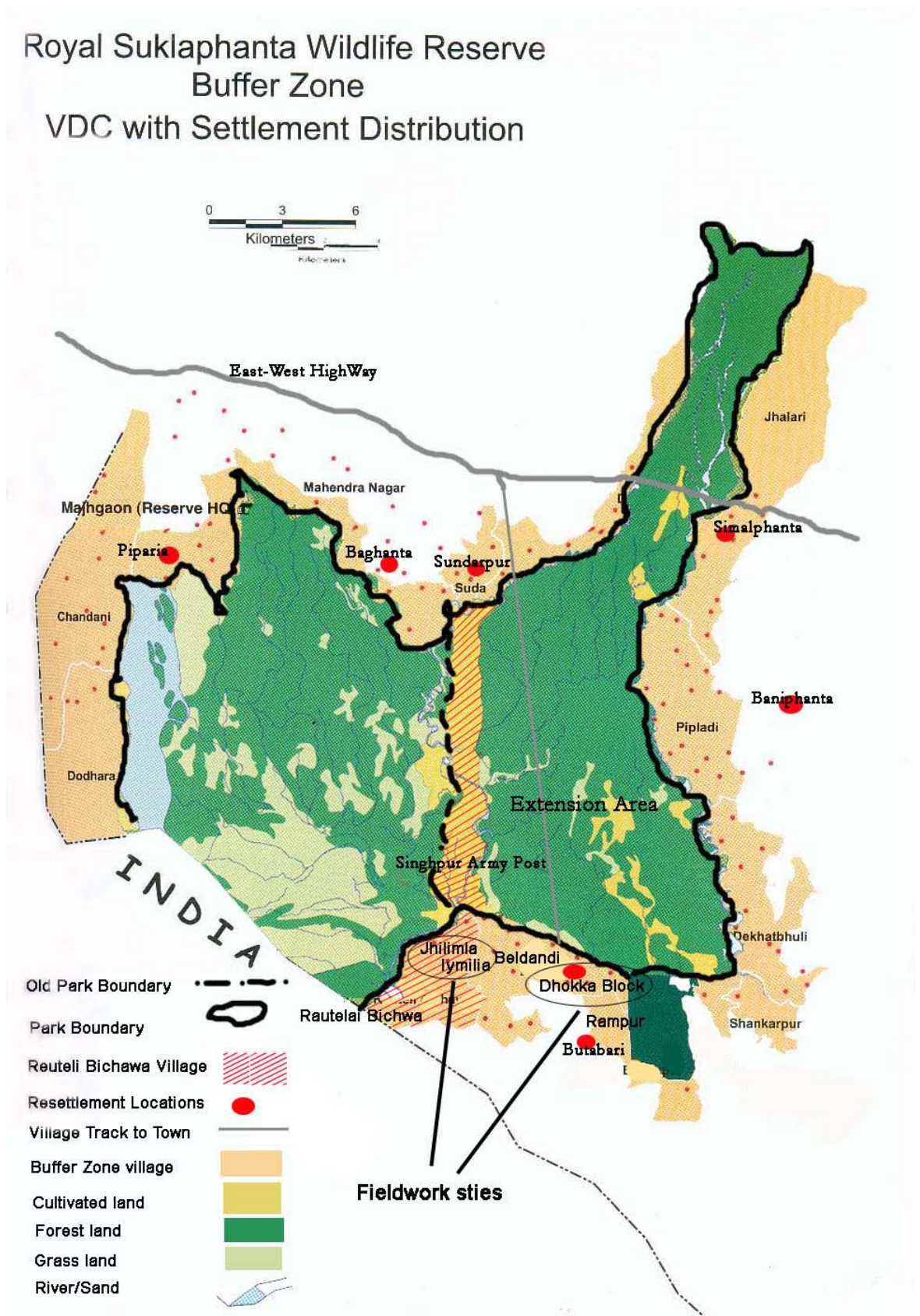
of tigers, elephants and rhinoceros (see Plate 3.2 below). Moreover, a total of 349 bird species including six globally threatened species has been recorded in the Park (Upadhyaya & Yonzon 2003).

However, the ongoing development of new settlements adjoining the Park and illegal settlements in the whole district has hindered preservation efforts in the Park. Activities such as logging, grazing and poaching have seriously damaged the natural environment and wildlife habitats. The reserve was therefore considered too small for wildlife and encroached on by humans too often (Bhattarai 2001). An extension of the Park was launched in 1981 to strengthen conservation of the flora and fauna in the area (Bhattarai 2001). It proposed to establish another 155 sq. km for the reserve (see Figure 3.2). This time, a total of seventeen existing blocks of five VDCs inside the proposed extension area were affected.

ROYAL SUKLAPHANTA WILDLIFE RESERVE		
शाही शुक्लाफाँटा वन्यजन्तु आरक्षणा पाईने जनावरहरू :		
LOCAL NAME	ENGLISH NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
१. जंगली हाती	Wild Elephant	<i>Elepus maximus</i>
२. बाघ	Royal Bengal Tiger	<i>Panthera tigris</i>
३. चितुवा	Leopard	<i>Panthera pardus</i>
४. फ्याउरो	Indian Fox	<i>Vulpes bengalensis</i>
५. स्याल	Jackal	<i>Canis aureus</i>
६. वनैरु	Wild Boar	<i>Sus scrofa</i>
७. न्याउरो मूसा	Common Mongoose	<i>Mephastes civivardsi</i>
८. दुम्सी	Porcupine	<i>Mysticis indica</i>
९. जंगली बिरालो	Wild Cat	<i>Felis chaus</i>
१०. बाहुसिंगा	Swamp Deer	<i>Cervus duvaulli</i>
११. जसयो	Sambar Deer	<i>Cervus unicolor</i>
१२. चित्तल	Spotted Deer	<i>Axis axis</i>
१३. लुगना	Hog Deer	<i>Axis porcinus</i>
१४. रतुवा	Barking Deer	<i>Muntiacus mufac</i>
१५. नीरु साई	Blue Bull	<i>Boselaps fragocamelus</i>
१६. हिस्पिड खरायो	Hipid Hare	<i>Caprolagns hispidus</i>
१७. खरायो	Black Naped Hare	<i>Lepus nigricollis</i>
१८. मगर गोही	Marsh Crocodile	<i>Crocodylus balustris</i>
१९. अजिगर	Python	<i>Python molurus</i>
२०. उडने लोखके	Fly Squirrel	<i>Petaurista petaurista</i>
२१. लोखके	Three Striped Palm Squirrel	<i>Tamambulus palmurus</i>
२२. बौदर	Rhesus Monkey	<i>Macaca mulatta</i>
२३. लंगुर	Langur	<i>Presbytis entellus</i>
२४. सालिक	Pangolin	<i>Manis crassicaudata</i>
२५. टोडी बिरालो	Common Palm Civet	<i>Paradoxurus hermaphtoditus</i>
२६. ओत	Common Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
२७. गैंडा	Rhino	<i>Rhinoceros unicornis</i>
चराहरू		
१. खर मयुर	Bengal Florican	<i>Lupodotis bengalensis</i>
२. मयुर	Common Beafowl	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>
३. धनेश	Pied Hornbill	<i>Anthracoceros malbaricus</i>
४. लुईचे	Jungle Fowl	<i>Gallus gallus</i>
५. तिआ	Black Partridge	<i>Francolinus francolinus</i>
लगायत ३०० भन्दा बढी जातका चराहरू पाईन्छन् ।		

Plate 3.2 The signboard at the entry gate of the Park Headquarters, listing the endangered wildlife species that inhabit the Park.

Figure 3.2 Location of Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and Fieldwork Sites



The Resettlement Program of the Park

Considering the large-scale turmoil that would have resulted from poorly implemented policy, the royal directives emphasised three principles: firstly, that all displaced families should be given land which they lost to the extension of the Park; secondly, all compensation land should be cultivable; and thirdly, the social and cultural composition of displaced villagers should be maintained in resettled areas (Bhattarai 2001: 270). Figure 3.2 above shows that seven places adjoining the Park were designed for resettling affected families and one major consideration in allotting land was on the basis of land registration record. The State decided to provide a similar landholding size to affected families who had official land documents or some sort of records in survey field books, while the rest which were identified as illegal occupations could only get five to ten kattas (0.035ha)³⁵ of land. According to Bhattarai (2001), there was no appeal mechanism for these families against the decision of the State. This caused serious problems for those indigenous cultivators who had no land documents. This issue is further discussed in Chapter Four.

The Park's resettlement program, which took twenty years, was completed in May 2002. Bhattarai's (2001) detailed study shows that this delay has had serious implications for local livelihoods and preserving the forest. The major problems linked to the resettlement were: households' poor and incorrect record keeping; delayed relocation of households; and rapid encroachment in the resettlement sites together with corrupt bureaucracy and dramatic changes in the political environment after the 1990 People's Movement.³⁶ Table 3.2 summarizes the work performance of resettlement Commissions. It shows that eighteen such Commissions over twenty years were unable to satisfactorily solve the resettlement program as it had become virtually unenforceable. For example, household surveys and land allocations were carried out by the 4th and 5th Commissions. However, the survey quality was so poor that it did not even record the name of all household members in each household or their sex. Furthermore, the survey did not distinguish between landowners who were the original

³⁵ 1 katta=0.0335ha

³⁶ The 1990 People's Movement (Nepali: *Jana Andolan*) was a multi-party movement in Nepal. It brought an end to absolute monarchy and eliminated the Panchayat system. It marked the beginning of constitutional democracy (see Hutt 2004). In 2006, following the restoration of absolute monarchy in Nepal, the *Loktantra Andolan* was launched, which once again illustrated a unity between various political parties leading some to brand it *Jana Andolan II*.

inhabitants or encroachers. This caused difficulties in land allocation. Records showed that the same household was compensated with land ten times, yet some affected households never received any land. This happened during my study and people's stories are recorded in Chapter Four. In fact, the delays encouraged encroachers to resettle on new areas that were already occupied and this created no incentive for those affected families to leave the Park. Meanwhile, many affected families were supported by political parties and thus resisted leaving their land. The double planting phenomenon (planting in old and new fields) was very common. The worst outcome was that the rapid increase in household numbers put further pressure on forest areas. For instance, according to the 4th Commission in 1987, the affected household number was 1,199. However, eleven years later the household numbers according to the 15th Commission rose to 3,397 (Bhattarai 2001; Pandey & Yonzon 2003).

Table 3.2 The Performance of Eighteen Commissions regarding the Park Resettlement Project

Time Period	Commissions	Performance and Major Problems
1981	1 st Commission	No work done
Mid-1982	2 nd Commission	Acquired 217 ha of forest land and clear-felled, but resettled none.
Early 1986	3 rd Commission	No significant work done
Late 1987 to mid-1988	4 th and 5 th Commissions	Household surveys and land allocations were carried out. However, the survey quality was poor and caused unfair land allocations.
Mid-1992 to 1995	6 th to 10 th Commissions	The Commissions were beset by party politics. Almost no significant work of resettlement was done.
Mid-1996 to 1999	11 th to 18 th Commissions	The Commissions were headed by politicians. All Commissions were short-lived due to the frequent change of government. Land was even distributed to unlisted households who commissioners knew personally.

Source: Bhattarai (2001), Pandey (2003)

Finally, a total of 2,108 ha of forest land were cleared to resettle 2,249 households in seven locations (Table 3.3). Those 2,249 households were categorized into four groups for land compensation: 1) 926 households had landownership; 2) 100 households had registered land without ownership; 3) 954 households were confirmed as encroachers but they were still compensated with ten kattas of land (0.34 ha); and 4) 169 households were being investigated. The remaining households that were identified as settling in the reserve after the announcement of extension program received no compensation (Pandey & Yonzon 2003).

Table 3.3 Resettlement Locations and Land Distribution

NOTE:
This table is included on page 56 of the print copy of
the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Source: Pandey and Yonzon (2003)

In October 2001 the Park authority finally decided to enforce the extension program with the help of the army using elephants. This action was undertaken under the authority of the State, which authorized the Park management to segregate the in-migration in the extension area. All households inside the extension area were therefore evacuated. The resettlement program was completed in May 2002 and today there is no human settlement inside the Park (Pandey & Yonzon 2003). The disputes, however, did not end after the extension problem had been resolved. In his detailed study of the park resettlement project, Bhattarai (2001: 319) concludes that the major objective of the project is the removal of local communities from the Park but the restoration of livelihoods seemed beyond the scope of the project. He notes that instead of paying Rs 2000 to affected families to relocate, it would have been better to extend the transition and post-displacement periods by offering better support mechanisms. Instead there has been a steady deterioration in the poverty problem and rising social conflict among local communities. He states:

Though the RSWR project is yet to be completed, looking at the criteria adopted for allotting land it seems to be unlikely that the PAPs [Project affected persons, here refers to all Park-affected families] will be rescued from the poverty trap. The threat of impoverishment looms large among the PAPs. The absence of transitional support, grants, aids food and seed supply, employment or income generation scheme is likely to have serious implications...Another adverse impact is felt in terms of scattering of communities...This has a likelihood of seriously affecting the indigenous Tharu community who live in a closely knit surrounding. But despite the King's directives there exists no plan to resettle these Tharu communities in a group.

(2001: 319, 322)

Despite the large-scale displacement in Shuklaphanta and increasing recognition of interlocking relationships of sustainable local livelihoods and conservation practices, scholarly work – except for Bhattarai (2001) - regarding the long-term and cumulative social impacts of large-scale displacement in Shuklaphanta on local livelihood systems is absent. For example, none of

the reports conducted by conservation agencies (WWF 2002) and some Nepalese scholars (Acharya 2002; Baral 2002; Lohani 2000; Pande 2000) focus on this issue. While Bhattarai is concerned with the livelihoods of displaced families, his study does not provide convincing ethnographic data of how people's livelihoods are affected by dislocation particularly the Tharu communities. This research is interested in exploring how the creation and extension of the Park affect the livelihood systems of the indigenous Tharu group (Ranas) living in close proximity to the Park. The following ethnographic chapters focus on the issues of changes and adaptations of Ranas' livelihood systems, particularly their ability to cope with a new economic environment that has emerged as a consequence of the rapid social and environmental changes mentioned above. My research seeks to incorporate all these recent developments happening in Kanchanpur into a detailed examination of how Rauteli Bichawa Ranas have to adapt in order to ensure their livelihoods. Its long history, close proximity to the Park and the fact that it was an indigenous settlement for Ranas has made this region ideal for conducting fieldwork. A comprehensive description of Rauteli Bichawa Village thus serves as an introduction to understanding the daily life of Ranas.

Rauteli Bichawa Village

Before the establishment and extension of the Park, the Rauteli Bichawa overlapped with the Park area (see Figure 3.2). Examining this village will enable me to understand the complex relationships between local communities and the Park, and assess what kinds of impacts park management policies have on local livelihoods. It is also the biggest park-affected village in that more than 1,600 households have been resettled there.

The changes in Rauteli Bichawa also provide me with the opportunity to probe the influence of hill migration and transformation in landownership on indigenous communities. This is because significant changes in demography and landownership have occurred in the village (see discussion in Chapter Six). This study of Rauteli Bichawa will also assist me in analyzing another important issue - the emergence of ethnicity and nationalism among many communities in contemporary Nepal. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Nine. Rauteli Bichawa was also chosen because it is the first settlement for indigenous Ranas. The Rauteli Bichawa Ranas have to endure many new challenges and the ways in which they respond to those changes is

central to my thesis. Many Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were moved to different villages because of the extension program of the Park, so my fieldwork has been carried out in both *old Rauteli Bichawa* and one of the biggest resettlement areas known as *Dhokka Block*. I will now describe the settings of these two major fieldwork sites in a more detailed way.

Old Rauteli Bichawa Village

Old Rauteli Bichawa Village stretches from the southern boundary of the present Park to the district centre Menhendranagar (see Figure 3.2). It is surrounded by extensive forest, grasslands and a few branches of the River Mahakali. Many forest paths are connected to settlements and the town centre. However, after the Park's extension program, a muddy and stone track which passes through forest area in the southern part of the Park is now the only way for villagers to travel to town (see Plate 3.3. below). Its soil has the highest water storage capacity and is categorized as Class I. This soil is the most suitable for agriculture and forestry (KDDC 2002).

Rauteli Bichawa Village has a long history and it is believed to have been the first human settlement in Kanchanpur district. The Ranas originally settled in this particular forest frontier (KDDC 2002). Despite the fact that written histories regarding the origin of Ranas in Kanchanpur are very few, their past has been recorded via local oral traditions. Rauteli Bichawa Ranas claimed that they were descendants from the Rajputs (Thakuri) of *Chittogarh* in Rajasthan of India. When the Muslims invaded, the king and his twelve security guards fled *Chittogarh* and some settled in *BaraRana* (meaning twelve Ranas and the place is believed to be *Garwal* in India today), while others fled until they came to *Sukala*, which is now under Nepal's jurisdiction and has been officially renamed Shuklaphanta. At that time, there was one Brahmin girl in the group and she fell in love with a security guard. Due to her higher caste status, it was agreed that her husband could never enter the kitchen when she made food. Their descendants are nowadays known as Rana Tharus. The earliest settlements were Iymilia, Hariya, Bataya and Bichawa, which were located in the southern part of the reserve and later extended to other areas such as the neighbouring district, Kailali. Today, the Rana population is found in Kanchanpur and Kailali districts in Nepal and the States of Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh in India (see Figure 3.3 below). Afterwards, the Dangauras who originally came from

the western district of Dang moved into Rauteli Bichawa and worked with Rana families.³⁷ Some people from the neighbouring hill districts occasionally visited Rauteli Bichawa Village for casual agricultural work. The hill people were afraid to live in this region because of their fear of malaria.



Plate 3.3 The total length of this newly built muddy and stoney track was 25km. It was the only way for Rauteli Bichawa Ranas to travel to the town legally.

However, another version of the origins of Ranas was told by a Rana from another village in Kanchanpur. After the downfall of Maha Rana Pratap (a ruler of Rajasthan), many Ranas were killed in battle. Instead of taking *Jauhar* (in ancient Hindu times, after the death of their husbands, women were expected to die with their husbands), Rana queens were sent to safer places in Nepal with other Rana guards. However, they lost their way in the forest and settled down. The place is now known as Kanchanpur, Kailali and Dudhwa National Park and Nainital district in the Indian State of Uttranchal. The queens waited for their husbands to return but they did not. So the queens and the Rana guards agreed to lead a conjugal life. Their descendants are known as Rana Tharus. I did not give this version too much credence because none of the Rauteli Bichawas Ranas had heard this story. The conflicting views about the origins of Ranas

³⁷ Singhpur, located at the centre of the Park, was once a major settlement for Dangauras. They were moved out when the Park was established in 1976. Today, the place now serves as the Singhpur Army Post.

illustrate the issue of self-identity of Ranas and how they relate to others (see discussion in Chapters Six and Nine).

Figure 3.3 The Population of Rana Tharus in India and Nepal



Historical circumstances had thus made the Ranas the dominant population group in Rauteli Bichawa Village. The Nepalese government seldom distinguishes between different Tharu groups in the national population census, so Ranas are only broadly categorized into the 'Tharu' group.³⁸ Some local data is also in the hands of the Maoists. Finally, two sources of data I collected from the field helped me to understand more about the Rana population of Rauteli Bichawa. According to Vagat Rana, the previously mentioned ex-leader, the total population of

³⁸ The argument about the exact number of people is an issue of debate between the State and ethnic groups in Nepal. Gaige (1975) has made an in-depth analysis of this. Some ethnographic studies have also shown that increasing the population is often a strategy that many ethnic groups use to increase their political influence (Fisher 2001; Guneratne 2002).

nine Wards in Rauteli Bichawa at one time had been estimated to be about 30,000 to 35,000, of which 20,000 were Ranas. An ex-secretary of the Rauteli Bichawa Village Development Committee Office indicated that before the displacement, the total population of Rauteli Bichawa was 9,956 with 1,642 households in 2000. The largest population group consisted of twice-born Pahaaris Chettri (33.81%) and Brahmin (9.78%) and the Tharu population was second (31.45%). The third group consisted of untouchable castes (7.48%).

Although official data concerning the Rana population was not available, the secretary was a village local and therefore familiar with the composition of the local population. His personal data indicated that the total number of Rana households was 350 (21%) and they were distributed unevenly in the nine Wards (Table 3.4). After the forced displacement in 2001, Rauteli Bichawa became the smallest administrative village in Kanchanpur district with only three existing hamlets, Wards 7, 8 and 9. Another six Wards were included in the new boundary of the Park. A total of 1,061 households from Wards 1 to 6 and a few from Wards 7 and 8 were therefore relocated, including 204 Rana households. The displacement has resulted in the total number of Rana households living in Rauteli Bichawa Village dropping to only 150. All of them settled in Ward 7 (Iymilia) and Ward 8 (Jhilmila). These two sets of data seem contradictory, however they reflect the fact that the Rana population in Rauteli Bichawa has declined dramatically in recent decades.

Table 3.4 The Distribution of Ranas in Rauteli Bichawa in 2000

Ward No.	Local Names of Wards	Total No. Households	Total No. of Rana Households
1	Badani Kheda	42	25
2	Darak	170	126
3	Andaiya	514	
4	Bhursa	193	27
5	Lalpani	29	0
6	Radhapur	68	26
7	Iymilia	113	120
8	Jhilmila	279	26
9	Shivapur	234	0
Total		1,642	350

Source: Field notes 2005

New Resettlement Area - Dhokka Block

Dhokka Block is a new home for at least seventy Rauteli Bichawa Rana households. The total area of Dhokka Block is 600 ha, which is the biggest resettlement area specifically designed for those park-affected households from Rauteli Bichawa. It is located about 4 km from the old Rauteli Bichwa Village. It takes about half an hour by bicycle to get there. It falls within Rampur Bilashpur Village Ward 9 and Beldandi Village Ward 9 (see Figure 3.2). Its eastern side touches the Indian border and western side extends to the south-east boundary of the Park. The area was originally covered with extensive and dense forest but now the forest has been cleared for resettlement. In general, the soil in Dhokka Block is classified as Class II, which is not as good as old Rauteli Bichawa's and is only suitable for terraced agriculture (KDDC 2002). A new irrigation canal has been built to partially improve agriculture in the Dhokka Block. A new bus track has been provided for villagers to travel between the village and Menhenranagar.

The history of Beldandi and Rampur differs from Rauteli Bichawa village. Beldandi's establishment is closely linked to the resettlement programs. Previously, Beldandi village was surrounded by the Sal forest but thirty years ago the government cleared vast tracts to resettle families who suffered natural disasters from neighbouring hill districts, lowland villages and park-affected families. The hill population was therefore the dominant group. The official census data showed that the total number of households of Beldandi village was 2,074 and an overwhelming percentage (90%) were hill people, which included twice-born castes and untouchable castes. Unlike Beldandi, Rampur is an old settlement and only Ward 9 is a newly developed settlement for park-affected families. The Ranas and Dangauras made up 36% of the total population in 2000 (KDDC 2002).

The development of Dhokka Block is influenced by the Park's two-phase resettlement program. According to my local informants, the resettlement program started fifteen years ago but was not completed until 2002. Table 3.5 shows that in the first phase, about 200 households received land in the Dhokka Block from the government as compensation. All of them were Rauteli Bichawa landowners and at least fifty to sixty households were Ranas. However, due to political parties' intervention, most households stayed inside the Park and continued to practice double planting on both old land and new lands. In 2001, all Rauteli Bichawa households in the

extension area were forced to move out. Another 100 Rauteli Bichawa households were relocated to Beldandi and ten of these were Rana households. At that time, most affected families were categorized as illegal occupants and received only 2-10 *kattas* of land as compensation. About 200 households mainly from the untouchable castes were categorized as encroachers who moved to *Sukala* after the announcement of extension and they did not receive any compensation. They therefore set up a refugee camp located 2 km from Dhokka Block and continued their struggle for land compensation. In the absence of a security force this area remained under the Maoists' control when I conducted fieldwork in 2004 and 2005.

Table 3.5 Resettlement History of Dhokka Block

Resettlement Periods	No. of Total Resettled families	No. of Total Resettled Rana families	Background of Resettled families	Resettlement locations
1 st Phase From early 1990s	200	50-60	-All from Rauteli Bichawa Village -Received same landholding size as compensation from the government	-110 families were resettled in Rampur -90 families were resettled in Beldandi
2 nd Phase 2001	100	10	-Resettled family were categorized as illegal occupants so they only received 2 to 10 <i>kattas</i> of land	-All families were resettled in Beldandi

Source: Field notes 2005

Socio-Economic Background of Four Study Settlements

The four selected study areas were all inhabited by Rauteli Bichawa Ranas with varying historical traditions and therefore responded in different ways to the recent social changes. Therefore, an introduction of the socio-economic backgrounds of these four settlements is essential. The data is based on several sources including my household survey, interviews with local villagers and secondary data. Their similarities and differences are highlighted in five contexts: 1) geographical location and demographic composition; 2) settlement distribution landscape; 3) landholding size and number of household members; 4) food security and economic activities; and 5) security.

Geographical Location and Demographic Composition

Iymilia and Jhilmila were all old settled areas. Iymilia was believed to be one of the oldest settlements in Rauteli Bichawa village. They shared the same geographical characteristics such as being less than 1 km from the Park and 3 km from the Singhpur Army Post (see Figure 3.2).

Jhilmila even touched the boundary of the Park. Bahuni, a branch of the Mahakali River, is next to these two settlements and the irrigation canals covered the whole region. Both settlements had the best quality soil for agriculture. The resettlement area known as Dhokka Block (Rampur Ward 9 and Beldandi Ward 9) is located far from the core of the reserve. It was at the periphery of the extension area of the Park. Both Rampur and Beldandi were next to the newly-built bus track. There were some irrigation facilities but these did not include all the agricultural land. I was told by locals that the soil quality of Rampur and Beldandi was poor compared to Iymilia and Jhilmila. All of them were declared buffer zone villages of the Park in 2004.

In general, Rauteli Bichawa and Dhokka Block had shared similar demographic characteristics with Kanchanpur. The high-caste Pahaari group (particularly twice-born Brahmin and Chhetri castes) was the dominant group (60%)³⁹ and this was followed by Tharus (20%) and the untouchable castes (Damai, Kami, Sarki, 17-19%) (Upadhyaya & Yonzon 2003). Therefore, the discussion of Rana-Pahaari relationships throughout the thesis specified the Ranas and twice-born caste hill migrants - Brahmins and Chhetris. In a further observation, the demography in my four study settlements shows notable contrasts (Table 3.6). Iymilia was a significant Rana settlement. A total of ninety Rana households made up 90% of the total population. The remaining ten households were mainly Pahaaris and the untouchable castes. Most Rana residents lived in Iymilia for at least four generations while other non-Rana people stayed for about thirty years. Unlike Iymilia, Jhilmila was a relatively late-established settlement with a mixed ethnic population. Some interviewed Rana households moved to Jhilmila from Kailali district only forty years ago. Those Ranas told me that they heard from relatives that the land in Rauteli Bichawa was abundant and fertile, so they moved there. There were also a few Dangaura households. The dominant population did not consist of indigenous Tharus but Pahaari migrants. During my fieldwork there were 165 households. Villagers pointed out that only 20 households were Ranas while 105 were Brahmin and Chhetri households and the rest were Dangauras. My Rana informants explained that many Jhilmila Ranas moved to other places in recent decades after they lost land to the Pahaaris, and therefore the Rana population was not as significant as it was in Iymilia.

³⁹ Another high caste Pahaari group like Thakuri was found in Kanchanpur however due to its small population with only 5% of total population (KDDC 2002), little attention has been paid to them in this study. Also, I did not find any Thakuri families in my research area.

Rampur was a new settlement area designed for resettling families affected by the extension program of the Park. Its population was composed of three groups: Ranas, Dangauras and Pahaaris (mainly Brahmins and Chhetris). Most of them in fact got land compensation in Rampur fourteen years ago, however they did not move in until three years ago when the Park authority carried out the displacement. Those Ranas came from three different hamlets of old Rauteli Bichawa: Darak (Ward 2), Andaiya (Ward 3) and Bhursa (Ward 4). According to official population statistics, the total population of Rampur was nearly 3,000 with 506 households in 2000 (KDDC 2002). A proper estimate of the population's composition was not available during my fieldwork because that data was controlled by the Maoists. Conflicting data was thus collected. Referring to the information provided by the ex-chairperson of Beldandi and Rampur Buffer Zone User Group Committee (BZUGC), Bhim Thapa, half of the population consisted of hill migrants, and Ranas and Dangaros made up the rest. The initial number of resettled Rana households in Rampur was about 50 to 60. He pointed out that many households then split up into smaller ones so the present Rana households numbered approximately 126 (25% of the total population in Rampur). In contrast to this estimation, my Rana informants estimated that the populations of Ranas, Pahaaris and Dangauras were 70%, 23% and 7% respectively. They explained that the speed of household partitions among Rampur Ranas has been rapid in the last few years. A discussion of changes in Rana household structure is presented in Chapter Seven.

The demographic composition of Beldandi differed from Rampur in that its demography was overwhelmingly dominated by Pahaaris (Brahmins and Chhetris). The government statistics showed that the total population in Beldandi was 2,648 with 460 households in 2000 (KDDC 2002). The total Rana households were, however, found to be only nineteen at the time I conducted fieldwork in 2005. These nineteen households had different socio-economic backgrounds. Nine households received land as compensation and moved to Beldandi twelve years ago. The remaining ten were all from Andaiya and relocated in Beldandi only four years ago.

Table 3.6 The Number of Rana Households in the Four Study Settlements

	Iymilia	Jhimila	Rampur *	Beldandi
No. of total households	100	165	506	460
No. of Rana households	90	20	126	19
Percentage of Rana households	90%	12%	25%	4%

*The Rampur estimate was based on information provided by the ex-chairperson of Beldandi and Rampur BZUGC, Bhim Thapa.

Source: Field notes 2005

Settlement Distribution Landscape

The distribution of Rana households in the four study settlements is closely related to population composition. In Iymilia, the Rana population predominated and their households were close to each other, and a significant separation existed between Rana and Pahaaris households. Most Rana households were located at the hub of the Iymilia while Pahaaris were at the periphery. This distribution pattern might also relate to their length of residency. Ranas were original inhabitants of Iymilia while the Pahaaris were late settlers. The similar distribution pattern of Rana houses was not found in Jhimila and they were divided into several small clusters. In general they were quite far from each other and were surrounded by Pahaaris houses. The reason for this distribution may relate to the emergence of the Ranas' moving-out and the Pahaaris' moving-in in recent decades.

Similar to Iymilia, the Rana houses in Rampur were very close to each other. This was because the Park authority to some extent considered the cultural factors when the resettlement was carried out. Three Rana groups from different wards were found in Rampur. Ranas from Andaiya were the biggest group. Those Ranas were wealthier than others due to their substantial landholdings. The settlement distribution pattern of Rampur Ranas was linked to their system of kinship relations, particularly patrilineal kin who tended to live very close to each other. This also reflected the fact that when partition happened in a Rana household, split households would still locate near their main household. Further discussion of Rana household structure is found in Chapter Seven.

In Beldandi, the distribution of Rana households was irregular because the government used this area to relocate park-affected families who were categorized as illegal occupants. Cultural factors were not a major concern. Rana households were thus arranged wherever space was available. The outcome was that Rana households were surrounded by Pahaaris. Different

neighbourhood settings in fact affect Ranas' sense of their living place differently (see Chapter Five).

Size of Landholding and Household

According to my household survey concerning seventy-two Rana households in four settlements, the landholdings of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were larger than the national standard, with an average of 1.4 ha per household.⁴⁰ Most interviewed households fell into the category 'medium landholding' with one to three *bighas* of land (0.67 to 2.1 ha) (Table 3.7). Caution should be paid to this figure because it does not reflect the real economic status of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. My Rana informants told me that many Rauteli Bichawa Ranas became landless and they migrated to different places like India. My study was unable to find which of the Rauteli Bichawa Rana population had moved out. The above-mentioned figure also does not take into account the substantial loss of land that has occurred over the past few decades. In addition, the data showed that the landholdings vary in size from place to place.

The highest average landholding size was found in Rampur with 3.5 *bighas* of land (2.4 ha). There was no landless household. Seventy-two percent of interviewed Rana households in Rampur were categorized as medium landholders. Seven households who owned more than four *bighas* (2.68 ha) of land were big landholders. The biggest Rana landholder I met in Rampur had eleven *bighas* (7.4 ha). The Pahaaris and Dangauras who lived in Rampur were not landless and most of them had enough property for their subsistence needs. Comparing these four Rana groups, Rampur Ranas owned the most land, closely followed by Iymilia Ranas who were also rich in terms of landholding size. The average landholding size was 2.9 *bighas* (2.01 ha). Forty percent of them were categorized as medium landholders while one-third of them were big landholders. The largest landholding in Iymilia I recorded was 8 *bighas* (5.36 ha). Most Jhimila Ranas were small to medium landholders with an average landholding of 1.5 *bighas* (1 ha). None of the Jhimila Ranas who I interviewed was a big landholder. The smallest landholding in Beldandi averaged 1 *bigha* (0.67 ha). In fact, ten Beldandi Rana households who I interviewed owned less than a quarter *bigha* of land (0.17ha). Most of them were resettled in

⁴⁰ According to the Nepal Human Development Report (1998), 88% of the landholdings were less than 1 hectare in size.

Beldandi four years ago due to the Park's extension program. Most land in Jhilmila and Beldandi was controlled by Pahaaris.

Table 3.7 Size of Rana Landholdings in Four Study Settlements

Landsize (Bigha)	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
Landless (less than 0.25 bigha)	1 (7%)	1 (7%)	0 (0%)	10 (59%)	12 (17%)
Small Landholding (less than 1 bigha)	3 (20%)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)	1 (6%)	9 (12%)
Medium Landholding (1 to 3 bigha)	6 (40%)	9 (60%)	18 (72%)	5 (29%)	38 (53%)
1	3	5	3	2	
2	3	4	8	2	
3			7	1	
Big landholding (4 bighas or more)	5 (33%)	0 (0%)	7 (28%)	1 (6%)	13 (18%)
Total interviewed family no.	15	15	25	17	72 (100%)
Average landholding size per household	2.9	1.2	3.5	1 *	2.15 bighas (1.4 Ha)*

*The land distribution in Beldandi varied and this affected a relatively high average landholding size per household. While the official ownership of land was 1 bigha, the actual average landholding size per household was 0.73 bigha if I did not count one household having more than 5 bighas of land.

* 1 Bigha = 20 kattas / * 1 Bigha = 0.67 hectare

Source: Household survey 2004

Table 3.8 illustrates that the household size varied from place to place. The largest household size was in the non-resettled Rana settlements of Iymilia and Jhilmila. The largest household I encountered in Iymilia had thirty-six members and another in Jhilmila had twenty-four. When Rampur Ranas had the largest landholdings the average number of people in their households was nine, which was smaller than Iymilia. The smallest household was found in Beldandi, which averages eight members. This brought to light the theme of discovering what were the key determinants of Rana household size. The differences in household size among the four Rana settlements were due to internal demographic developments and recent social changes. What were the relationships between household development cycle and social changes? To answer this question, a detailed comparison of household structure (e.g. composition, generations) of each interviewed Rana household and social changes became necessary. This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Table 3.8 Household Size in Four Study Settlements

	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
Average household size	14	10	9	8	10
Total interviewed families	15	15	25	17	72

Source: Household survey 2004

Food Security Situation and Economic Activities

The four Rana settlements' food sufficiency situation was poor with only a small percentage of the forty interviewed Rana households having enough for the whole year. Instead of taking international and national food security calculation methods as a guideline⁴¹, the food security situation documented in this thesis relied on the self-reporting of informants. The self-reported data was important because it not only reflected Ranas' perceptions of their food sufficiency after the resettlement, it also indicated the level of understanding of what food sufficiency meant in the local context. From the Ranas' point of view, food insufficiency was not necessarily related to absolute food shortages; however it could mean a reduction in food varieties, their quantity (further discussed in Chapter Five) and quality. According to my household data, the best food supply situation existed in Iymilia while the worst was in Beldandi (Table 3.9). This situation is primarily due to the size of landholdings in an agricultural society. Interesting responses were obtained from the four study settlements. Rampur Ranas owning the largest landholdings did not automatically have the best food sufficiency; in fact, less than 30% responded that they had enough food for one year. The complex relationships between landholding size and food security will be analysed further in Chapter Seven.

Table 3.9 Food Security Situation of Ranas in Four Study Settlements

Food Security	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
Less than 3 months	1	1	0	1	3 (4%)
3-6 months	2	8	8	7	25 (36%)
6-9 months	2	1	5	4	12 (17%)
Over 9 months	0	0	3	0	3 (4%)
Whole year enough food	10 (66%)	5 (33%)	9 (36%)	5 (29%)*	29 (40%)
Total interviewed household no.	15	15	25	17	72 (100%)

* Only two interviewed Beldandi Rana households had enough food from their own land. Another three households claimed to have enough food on the basis of their tenancing land.
Source: Household Survey 2004

All Ranas in my four study settlements depended heavily on agriculture for their livelihood. The increasing food deficiency forced them to search for other means of sustaining their lives apart from working on their own land. Table 3.10 shows that working on other land as tenants and becoming casual workers was the most common strategy for Ranas, particularly Ranas from

⁴¹ Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has established a detailed database and index in regarding the issue of food security such as Minimum Dietary Energy Requirement (kcal/ person/day). A profile of Nepal is also available (see http://www.fao.org/faostat/foodsecurity/index_en.htm).

Jhilmila, Rampur and Beldandi. Some of them also started to work in non-agricultural work in India and in town. The resettled Ranas in Rampur and Beldandi tended to prefer obtaining a loan to overcome their problems. The different livelihood strategies of Ranas are further discussed in the following ethnographic chapters.

Table 3.10 Economic Activities of Ranas in Four Study Settlements

Economic Production Activities	lymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
Tenants	0	0	0	11	11 (15.3%)
Casual workers in the field	5	8	9	3	25 (34.7%)
Non-agricultural work	5	9	4	6	24 (33.3%)
Loan	1	1	7	10	19 (26%)
Fishing	1	0	0	0	1 (1.4%)
Total interviewed household no.	15	15	25	17	72

Respondents could mention more than one economic activity they were involved in.

Source: Household Survey 2004

Security Situation

During my fieldwork, the four study settlements were controlled by two different and antagonistic political forces – the Royal Nepalese Army and the Maoists. This complex political situation did not only affect my research strategies as I have discussed in Chapter Two; it also shaped the daily life of Ranas. For example, due to the close distance to the Singhpur Army post, lymilia and Jhilmila Ranas had to establish new relationships with the security personnel in order to have better access to forest resources (see Chapter Four). Meanwhile, most lymilia and Jhilmila Ranas pointed out that they were afraid to be identified as ‘Maoists’ so they seldom walked around the place except when working in the field. They could not go to the forest to collect fuelwood or fish anymore because they could be picked up by the security force. As a result, Rana women from these two settlements were responsible for collecting forest resources. The influence of park policies and the security situation regarding gender relations in Rana society will be further discussed in Chapter Eight.

In contrast, Rampur and Beldandi were controlled by the Maoists. Fearing their attacks, the Park officials and security force seldom visited the region. In fact, all the security force posts in the extension area (eastern sector) were destroyed by the Maoists in 2002. Furthermore, on 16th March 2006, the Maoists attacked a reserve-owned vehicle and eleven people were killed. Therefore all manpower was allocated to headquarters only. In an interview with Chief Warden Tikkrām Adhikari, he described the reserve management as being in an ‘abnormal and

uncontrollable' situation. The loss of forest was immeasurable. He did not visit the buffer zone villages located at the southern part of the reserve like Rauteli Bichawa, Beldandi and Rampur for almost one year. The reality was that Maoists 'protected' the illegal forest resources collection activities. Bhim Thapa, the ex-chairperson of Beldandi and Rampur BZUGC told us about the dual conservation policies of the Maoists. At the beginning, he felt very happy because the Maoists caught timber-stealing people and handed over these people to his committee. However, later, the Maoists attacked him and threatened him not to end the illegal activities of local people. Some Maoists were even suspected of being involved in illegal community forestry committees. According to my own observation, many locals from Rampur and Beldandi utilized the unstable political situation to collect as much timber and non-timber products from the Park as possible (see Plate 3.4 below). Villagers' daily activities were also affected by the Maoists, and consequently the frequency of visiting friends and neighbours decreased. I was told by an old Rana from Rampur that most villagers were afraid to talk loudly at night because they thought this might attract the Maoists' attention. The change in social relations in resettled Rana settlements is described in Chapter Five.



Plate 3.4 Due to political insurgency, the forest area of the Park next to Dhokka Block was seriously threatened by local logging activities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have demonstrated the indisputable linkage between the creation of Royal Shuklaphanta Wildlife Reserve and new socio-economic and political developments in the Kanchanpur district. The State's resettlement program and changes in land tenure policies from time to time caused rapid development in this region but also led to serious forest degradation because of the increasing population's huge demands on land resources. In these circumstances, the Park was established to control this environmental crisis and its extension indicated the State's commitment to conservation (Bhattarai 2001: 267). However, this biologically diverse area was not solely the habitat of flora and fauna. This chapter has shown that the area was also the home of many agricultural and forest-based communities. Violent social impact due to people's removal did occur and this was the reason for introducing the land compensation scheme. Cultural considerations (see p.53) emphasized in the resettlement program as a form of mitigation. However, can these policies effectively compensate the loss of land to these displaced families in particular to Rauteli Bichawa Ranas who had been living in *Sukala* for centuries and achieve the biological conservation goals? To answer this question, a detailed examination of the complex relationships between the Park and the Rana livelihoods is needed. In the following chapters, the life stories of Ranas living in four study settlements will thus be the focus. They will tell us their feelings about *Sukala* and why they reacted in the way they did to all these social and environmental changes. In the next two chapters, the diverse meanings of land for Ranas will be first explored.

LAND AND ITS MEANINGS

I really feel sad when I see my land and my house all turned into forest and bush area. (See also Plate 4.1 below)

(Quote from an ex-Andaiya Rana. He revisited Andaiya with the author in 2005)



Plate 4.1 The present landscape of Rauteli Bichawa Ward 3.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUBSISTENCE AND POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ABOUT LAND AND LIVELIHOODS

Introduction

As stated in Chapter Three, the factors of increasing demographic pressure and environmental degradation in Kanchanpur district, have forced the Nepalese State to pursue a strategy of large-scale human displacement to preserve the remaining wildlife habitat - *Shuklaphanta*. The State believes that massive social impacts on rural communities including Ranas can be managed by utilizing a land compensation scheme. In this chapter, I intend to challenge this notion by exploring the subsistence and political importance of the Park, including what it means to the Ranas, which their new land does not have.

This chapter builds on the extensive literature about rural livelihood systems and in particular the influential work of Robert Chambers (e.g. 1984; 1995; 1997) and others.⁴² Their scholarship suggests that the agricultural practices carried out in rural communities in Third World countries⁴³ are highly diverse and complex. The resources used to sustain a livelihood are, according to Chambers, often 'outside of the boundary limits of their farms' (1997: 167). Access to common property resources is a key part of these communities (e.g. Beck 1994; Davies 1996). Secure ownership of land generates opportunities to develop complex agricultural systems such as multiple cropping systems. Richards (1993: 67) has commented that each crop mix is a 'historical record of what happened to a specific farmer on a specific piece of land in a specific year' so there is no general theory. In this sense, removing local communities from their former land will result in increasing vulnerability of rural economic systems. In her critical review of contemporary common property resources management strategies,⁴⁴ Ostrom (1990)

⁴² A detailed discussion sees the section of theoretical framework in Chapter One.

⁴³ 'The third agriculture' is a term used to describe this particular farming system. According to Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp (1989) and Scoones and Thompson (1994), the first or industrial agriculture and second 'Green Revolution' agriculture are all relatively uniform and standardized compared to third phase agriculture.

⁴⁴ According to Ostrom (1990), 'the tragedy of the commons', 'the prisoner's dilemma game' and 'the logic of collective action' have led the contemporary common property resources management

points out that only if the complex ways in which local communities interact with natural resources are taken into consideration; will the resource management policies be more likely to be pragmatic and effective. Therefore, this chapter focuses on exploring the relationships between land resources and Rana livelihoods.

In the name of conservation, Ranas were forced to leave their old lands and therefore rights to access to use and own land, and the natural resources. In this chapter, I address the dynamic changes in Ranas' access to resources following the establishment of the Park and the implications for their livelihoods, which are rarely considered by policy makers. My ethnographic data has clearly demonstrated that the introduction of conservation and land policies seriously violated the standard of subsistence and political power that Ranas enjoyed previously. Ranas have lost control of their agricultural lands, and this occurred with the emergence of landownership as dictated by the State. The loss of subsistence meant they were restricted in using forest resources. Today, access to the forest depends on the State, which is challenged by extracting natural resources from the Park illegally. The power struggle between the State and Ranas and intra-Rana communities is based on control of land.

Instead of discussing the impact of State policies on the rights to access to land, this chapter will draw on the Ranas' stories about their experiences with landownership issues in different historical periods. This perspective allows me to understand the relationship between economic and political values symbolised by the Park from the Ranas' point of view. The first three sections of this chapter focus on the ways Ranas interacted with the *Sukala* forest in the pre-Park period. Interviews suggest that Ranas enjoyed a prosperous agricultural economy and had influence in local politics. In the last part of this chapter, the discussion shifts to the period following the Park's establishment. Many Ranas found it extremely difficult to access forest resources and their new agricultural land was poorer. By comparing the pre-Park and post-Park periods, it becomes clear that the Ranas' control over land was decimated by State policies, putting at risk their economic system.

policies. She argues that neither the state control nor privatization can resolve the conflicts if the forms of self-organization are not well understood.

The Subsistence Agricultural System of Rana Tharus

Shuklaphanta is the name officially used by the State to describe this extensive forest and grassland area (Nepali *Phanta* means grassland). For most Ranas, they have long called it *Sukala* but the linguistic meaning of *Sukala* is unknown. A detailed study of the history of the *Sukala* area is not available but the Ranas' oral history suggested that the *Sukala* landscape was substantially transformed by their ancestors in past centuries. When the Rana ancestors first came to *Sukala*, it was wild with only extensive forest and wildlife, and significant human settlements did not exist. Many old Ranas told me that their ancestors worked very hard in converting forest into arable land. Due to the variable quality of the soil the early Ranas had to practise shifting cultivation in order to retain fertile land. They would move to new land every ten years. One seventy year-old Rauteli Bichawa Rana described his previous life in this way, 'When I was a small kid, my parents could plant everywhere. If the soil was not good, we would move and try another piece of land.' After many years' effort, Ranas successfully integrated their agricultural knowledge into the micro-environment and created enough arable land. Many of them started to settle down in the *Sukala* area permanently and the first Rana settlement, Iymilia, was thus established. Since that time, agriculture has been their major livelihood for generations.

The Ranas use the land extensively for farming. The characteristics of the soil and climate have led to the development of two planting seasons. In the wet seasons, rice is the major crop for irrigated land and corn for non-irrigated land with some sesame and black lentils. In the dry seasons, wheat, mustard, lentils and beans are the main crops grown. The multiple crop planting system has reduced Ranas' risk of suffering economic distress caused by the seasonality of agricultural cycle and any sudden crop failure. According to in-depth research work done (Chambers et al. 1981; Lipton & Longhurst 1989), the agricultural cycle of most farmer societies in tropical regions can be divided into four periods: post-harvest (early dry season), dry season (late dry season), wet season (early wet season) and pre-harvest (late wet season). Farmers face different levels of livelihood stresses in each period. Farmers experience the most difficult times during early and wet seasons when food is often the least available and labouring work reaches its peak. These periods are often peaks in the hunger season but the high fertility of *Sukala* soil not only guarantees higher rice productivity, it also offers Ranas the

opportunity to grow a second grain crop during the winter seasons. My Rana informants pointed out that in the wet seasons, they could consume just-harvested wheat. In winter, when they had to plough land for planting wheat, they could eat rice (see Table 4.1). As a consequence, most Ranans could enjoy food security for a whole year.

Table 4.1 The Agricultural Cycle of Rauteli Bichawa Ranans

Months	Winter Season		Summer Season	
	Planting (Early dry season)	Harvesting (Late dry season)	Planting (Early wet season)	Harvesting (Late wet season)
Mid-Nov to Mid-Dec	Wheat Lentils, Beans			
Mid-Dec to Mid-Jan	Rest			
Mid-Jan to Mid-Feb				
Mid-Feb to Mid-Mar				
Mid-Mar to Mid-Apr	Corn	Wheat		
Mid-Apr to Mid-May			Ploughing land	
Mid-May to Mid-June				
Mid-June to Mid-July			Wet Paddy	
Mid-July to Mid-Aug			Sesame, Black lentils	Corn
Mid-Aug to Mid-Sept				Sesame, Black lentils
Mid-Sept to Mid-Oct				
Mid-Oct to Mid-Nov	Mustard / Ploughing land			Wet Paddy

Source: Field notes 2006

Agricultural land is an important source of grass for feeding domestic animals. Particularly after the harvest seasons, grain straw from the field is a source of food (grass) for domesticated animals. Animal husbandry is an integral part of the Rana household economy because it produces dairy products for domestic consumption and ensures the supply of animal labour. In addition, owning sufficient land allows every Rana household to reserve a small plot of land next to their house as a garden for planting vegetables (primarily potatoes and chillies) and fruits. The importance of home gardening to the household economy is increasingly recognized by scholars (e.g. Fernandes & Nair 1986; Hoogerbrugge & Fresco 1993; Landauer & Brazil 1990) and most development organizations, such as the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (Landon-Lane 2004). Home gardening is perceived as a small enterprise and it is effective in reducing poverty (Landon-Lane 2004). By promoting home gardening practices, it can reduce rural communities' dependence on the market and provides alternative household income generation activities (Dove 1990). In the past most Ranans could grow their own vegetables and fruits. Like the host family I stayed with in Dhokka Block, they planted lady

fingers, potatoes and cauliflowers. To summarize, the diverse subsistence agricultural system of Ranas consists of a multiple crop planting system, animal husbandry and home gardening.

To maintain this complex agricultural system, intense labour is necessary (Chambers 1997). A yearly farming routine collected from my Rauteli Bichawa Ranas has illustrated that farming takes up most of their time throughout the year. For example, every April, Ranas will have to engage in extensive ploughing to plant rice. When the monsoon comes, around June to July, this is the busiest time of year for all Rana families, during which all family members have to work in the fields. Although like most areas in the Tarai region, the land in Kanchanpur is ideal for using machines, hardly any Ranas in my study area used trucks. Most farming work involves human labour and trucks are only occasionally used during rice and wheat threshing. The Ranas do not commonly practice a system of labour reciprocity, and therefore each household is fully engaged in working their own land (see Plate 4.2). The household is the major source of labour for farming tasks. For instance, instead of machines, Rana males use oxen to do the ploughing. One *bigha* (0.67 ha) of land will involve 10-15 days of ploughing and Ranas believe that soil can be improved with human rather than machine-based ploughing (see Plate 4.3). The outcome of Ranas' physical input is that the land will become flat and soft enough for planting. Besides ploughing, Rana males do rice transplanting and harvesting. Rana women, although traditionally not supposed to work in the fields and instead look after the vegetable garden, are now responsible for rice transplanting. The changes in gender and production relations in Rana society will be further discussed in Chapter Eight. After the planting season in September, Ranas will be busy during the rice harvest and after this they have to plough again to prepare the wheat crop. Wheat will be ready for harvesting in the following March.



Plate 4.2 Monsoon is the most important planting season for Ranas and involves most household members.



Plate 4.3 A Rana using his oxen to make the land suitable for planting.

The old Rana generation told me that owning fertile land not only generated subsistence but also the opportunity to become wealthy and lead a comfortable, secure life. Eating customs and festival celebrations indicate the high levels of wealth and standing that can be obtained in Rana culture. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas told me that they could obtain enough food from their land in previous times. Fertile land provided plenty of rice and wheat for a whole year for most Rana families, but traditionally the Ranas put a different value on rice and wheat. They strongly preferred to consume rice rather than wheat when this choice was available. This preference was a reflection of economic status. *Roti* (wheat-made bread) was often treated as inferior. I was repeatedly told by Ranas that when they could get enough grains for one whole year's consumption, they had a very good life. Furthermore, if they could get *Dal Bhat* (curry and rice) twice per day, this symbolised wealth. The Rana families I stayed with remarked that most Ranas still consume more rice than the other castes and in spite of the increasing poverty they face. Both Ranas and non-Rana informants pointed out that it is not uncommon for every adult Rana male to consume at least 1.5 kg rice every day. My year-long stay with Rana families confirmed this comment.

Substantial agricultural surpluses make it possible to enjoy large festivals, especially *Holi*. Most Rauteli Bichawa Rana families have celebrated *Holi* previously. Many families would invite dancing groups and host big parties in their homes. An average Rana family would consume at least 50-60 kg rice in one day and spend money on meat, curry and alcohol. In addition, many Rana families stated that they could still afford to go shopping regularly and consume various meats as part of their daily diet. For example, they would have fish a few times per week and meat at least once a week.

A highly stable subsistence agricultural system, on the other hand, has resulted in Ranas' low participation in other economic activities. Many Rana informants told me that they spent their whole lives in the field and have never left their land or village, not even to do some short travelling. Since early times they have always been too busy doing planting and therefore cannot afford to become involved in non-agricultural work. The fear of becoming landless is what drives Ranas to pursue this way of life as it is the only one they have ever known. As one

landless Beldandi Rana said, 'I really don't know what I can do (*ke garne*) now. I only know how to do farming (*khetipati kaam*)'.

The material relationships between *Sukala* and Rana livelihoods are therefore closely entwined. The most important economic asset of the Ranas is land, which they must work on continuously to feed their families. There is a strong connection between the Ranas and their ancestral lands. However, the diverse and complex rural livelihood systems as Chambers (1997: 167) suggested, means that these systems are not limited to different land uses in farm areas but often go beyond the farms. In the following section, I focus on the ways Ranas have interacted with forest land historically and the implications this has had on their livelihoods.

Sukala Forest Resources and Rana Tharus Livelihoods

Access to common property resources and in particular to non-timber products has played an important role in the livelihood systems of most rural societies (e.g. Beck 1994; Chambers 1997; Davies & Hossain 1997; Jodha 1989). Beck (1989: 125) argues that poor rural communities are active in diversifying their livelihood strategies by using common property resources. An extensive literature on South Asia (Gupta 1987; Jodha 1981; Jodha 1990) and Africa (Davies 1996) documents that collections of fuelwood and wild foodstuffs have supported many poor rural households during times of hunger. In Jodha's (1990) study of 82 villages in 21 districts in a dry region of India, more than 80% of poor households rely on common property resources for fuel and food. Traditionally, Rauteli Bichawa Ranas have utilized *Sukala* forest resources in various ways, and the following ethnographic stories show that Rana livelihoods were diverse and supported by *Sukala*. One major contribution of *Sukala* emerged in non-timber forest products, which provided them with fodder, furniture, fuel, handicrafts and food.

Firstly, the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas had owned large herds of animals especially oxen, cows and buffaloes to provide them with dairy products and farm work. In accordance with Hindu practices, they were not allowed to slaughter and consume cows and oxen. The forest therefore provided an ideal place for grazing (see Plate 4.4 below). Previously, most Ranas went into the reserve with their animals daily, a practice that reinforced the interactions between Ranas and

wildlife. The headman of my host Rana family in Iymilia shared his grazing experience with me, stating:

Sukala was very nice because we went inside everyday with our animals and spent almost a whole day in there. We saw many different kinds of animals like deer, tigers and chittals. We went with friends. When we saw animals, we would make sounds like “wow, wow, wow...”



Plate 4.4 *Sukala* forest provided excellent grazing place for Ranas particularly from Iymilia and Jhilmila.

Secondly, for Ranas, the forest is the major source of wood. Traditionally, Ranas were knowledgeable in using different kinds of timber for their daily necessities. Seven kinds of wood only available inside the park had been used by Ranas to make furniture and build houses (Table 4.2). For example, Ranas would collect very highly valuable *Sanna* from *Sukala* to build their houses. Many old Rana males had traditional skills in using *Beraolaa* and *Simola* to make beds. Still, many Ranas used the beds that had been made by older generations. Besides timber products, fuelwood is extremely important for Ranas as it is the primary energy source for cooking. Most Rana households I saw used fuelwood for cooking. Before the establishment of the Park, they could freely use bullock carts to collect fuelwood from the forest. During that time, the fuelwood resources were plenty and easy to access; they only needed to go once or twice per year usually in dry seasons.

Table 4.2 Seven Types of Timber Used by Ranas

Types of wood (in Nepalese language)	Purposes
1. <i>Saana</i>	Very strong, for building houses
2. <i>Sisoo</i>	Strong and elastic, for making furniture such as cupboards
3. <i>Kayar</i>	Water proof, for making farming implements
4. <i>Beraolaa</i>	For making beds
5. <i>Simola</i>	For making beds
6. <i>Jaamuna</i>	After taking off bark, very strong wood for building houses
7. <i>Gilaodiya</i>	For medicinal purposes

Source: Fieldnotes 2006

Thirdly, other non-timber resources particularly grasses are also indispensable to the Ranas. Four kinds of grasses were the major sources for making baskets and ropes (Table 4.3). For example, the grass known as *Patari* was very important because they used it to make ropes, strings for controlling ox and tightening local mats (see Plate 4.5). Another important grass was *Gaas*, which was used in the construction of roofs and was only found inside the reserve seasonally. Most Rana women knew how to use *Kass* to make baskets and floor sweepers depended on its different growing stages (see Plate 4.6). Rana women were more active in producing household appliances for domestic use because they did not involve themselves very much in farming work in the past.

Table 4.3 Four Common Grasses Used by Ranas

Type of Grass (in Nepali Name)	Details	Available time/ Place	Economic Values
'Kaas' (Depend on its growing stages. It has been used for 4 different purposes)	'Pujaa' (local name)– very young stage	Seasonal (June and July), around riverside	Make baskets
	'Kaas' – mature stage	Seasonal (Aug), around riverside	Make baskets
	'Bhalaana' (local name)- fully matured, get white flowers	Seasonal (Sept), around riverside	Make sweepers
	The straw of 'Kaas' after firing, very strong	Seasonal (Feb and March)	The building material for walls
'Gaas'	Now need to buy from India	Seasonal (Dec and Jan), only inside the Park available	Make roofs
'Muj'		Inside the Park	-Straws of grass can make big baskets for storing rice; -Takes out skin, middle part can make ropes, straws can make big sweepers
'Patari'	(local name 'Baybe' 'Galagla')	Whole year, inside or outside the Park along riverside	Make ropes, tight local mats, and make control Ox string

Source: Field notes 2006

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 84 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 4.5 Many old Rana males are skilled in using different grasses from the *Sukala* to make tools.



Plate 4.6 Rana women's handmade basket

Fourthly, there are rivers, streams and ponds near or inside the Park where fish is available. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas are fish lovers and fishing is part of daily life for both men and women. In fact, Rana women are more involved in fishing activities (see Plate 4.7 below). Traditionally, the peak season for fishing is post-monsoon, usually in September. During this time, due to the close distance from the river, I saw that Iymilia and Jhimilia Ranas went fishing every day - both at daytime and night time. Participants included Rana women, young males and children as well. In the two old Rana settlements were full of fish aromas because each household stored more than fifty kilos of fish. My Rana informants explained to me that fish was too expensive to buy at the market (at least Rs 50-60 / per kilo) so they wanted to catch as much fish as possible.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 85 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 4.7 A Rana woman from Iymilia fishing in a river next to the *Sukala*.

Finally, there is no evidence indicating that the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas became actively involved in large game hunting previously, but their knowledge of wildlife enabled them to develop good relations with the royal family and foreign adventurers. In the past, some Ranas were employed as guides. One of my Rana informants recalled the time when he still lived inside the *Sukala*, the King and Queen visited the *Sukala* several times for hunting and one old Rana next to his house was the local guide for the royal family.⁴⁵ The local also told me that an American adventurer visited the *Sukala* for 20 years. On every visit, he would hire the same Rana from Jhilmila as his guide. Indeed, most Ranas were familiar with wildlife habits due to their experience; they shared with me the knowledge that they could see hundreds of deer inside the *Sukala* at a close distance and sometimes tigers as well. In one instance, because of the strike called by the Maoists,⁴⁶ I risked taking the forest path to the Park to cycle into town. My host Rana family even taught me the different methods of self-defence in case I met tigers, wild elephants and rhinos in the forest.⁴⁷ *Sukala* is also an important source of meat for Ranas. Previously, Rana males would form groups to catch wild pigs. Wild pigs were particularly important for Ranas in marriage ceremonies and festivals. For them, meat consumption was a symbol of well-being and wealth. If the host family could not provide any meat for visitors during marriage or festival ceremonies, this indicated poverty. Occasionally they would have opportunities to get deer meat when deer were killed by tigers. Many interviewed Ranas said that they missed the taste of deer. The forest resources of *Sukala* have not only provided materials for shelters and cooking but its diverse biological resources such as wild animals and fish have also enriched Rana daily diet and reduced Ranas' experience of food shortages.

This description of Rana livelihoods demonstrates that resources inside or outside the farms have strengthened Ranas' non-monetary subsistence economy, enabling them to overcome seasonal food deficits and high market prices for food. Apart from the subsistence values discussed above, I noted that the right to access *Sukala* is very much part of the Ranas' pursuit

⁴⁵ The relationships between the Nepali kings and the park management can see Bhatt (2003).

⁴⁶ It was April 2005. The Maoists imposed an indefinite strike in Kanchanpur district. Transport services between my study villages and the town were unavailable. I was told by locals that there were many dangerous animals such as tigers living in the Park.

⁴⁷ I was told that if I encounter tigers, I should look at them and slowly walk towards them from behind. With wild elephants, I should keep absolutely quiet because elephants have poor hearing; when encountering rhinos, I should run away in a zig-zag fashion because rhinos can only walk in a straight line.

of their political autonomy. In the following section, I will illustrate how land functioned politically for the Ranas before the 1950s.

Sukala and Local Politics

As noted in Chapter One, control over land-related resources has substantially influenced the political structure at the village level. Here, I look more specifically at the political meaning of land to Ranas during the pre-Park period. I argue that control over abundant land resources provided Rauteli Bichawa Ranas with subsistence, wealth and an avenue for Ranas to share political power at the local level. Prior to the 1950s, centralized control of Nepal's more geographically remote areas was weak so assistance and cooperation from the locals was needed in order for the State to manage territory. The appointment of Rana elites as local functionary tax collectors (*Jimidars*) had two outcomes. Firstly, it established the cooperative State-Rana relationships and secondly, it also shaped the politics of Rana society. Before a closer examination of the interplay of land access and the *Jimidar* system as a symbol of local politics, the *Jimidar* system is briefly introduced.

The Jimidar System: Accommodated and Cooperative State-Rana Tharus Relationships

The introduction of the *Jimidar* system in the Tarai region occurred in 1860 and was implemented in Kanchanpur in 1896. Its establishment reflected the lack of resources and machinery of the State to collect land taxes at the local level. Therefore, the State needed to authorize locals as 'intermediaries' between individual landowners and the official revenue office (Regmi 1978a; Regmi 1978b; Regmi 1999). Since earliest times, *Parganna* was the basic unit of land administration in the Tarai. Usually, one *Parganna* included many villages and an official functionary called a *Chaudhari* had to collect taxes from local landowners. The large and sparse coverage of villages made it almost impossible for *Chaudharis* to carry out their duties. As a result, the State established the new non-official local functionary '*Jimidar*' and further decentralized its power to the village level. *Jimidars* had two major responsibilities. A *Jimidar* was a tax-collecting functionary and a source of agricultural finance. After collecting tax from local landowners, he needed to hand in the tax to the district revenue office. In order to gain cooperation from the local elites, the State granted every *Jimidar* a fixed rate of remuneration of approximately 2.5%, although overcharging was common. Apart from tax remuneration, a

Jimidar received some privileges because of his service; for example, he could receive unpaid services of one ox-team, or a plough hand from every household.

The criterion for being a *Jimidar* was related to size of landholding. Regmi (1999: 105) noted that the 'most substantial landowners of the village' were often chosen as functionaries. Before the modern development of Kanchanpur, most land in Rauteli Bichawa was predominantly controlled by indigenous Ranas. Elderly Rauteli Bichawa Ranas pointed out that in early times Rana elites were appointed to be *Jimidars*. At that time, their landholdings were typically more than twenty *bighas* (13.4 ha) in size. Therefore, the *Jimidar* system created an alliance between the State and the Rana elites. Regmi noted that:

The Rana aristocracy [refers to Rana Rulers, not Rana Tharus] and the bureaucracy exploited this economic base [land] through the cooperation of village overlords (*Jimidars* and *Talukdars*)⁴⁸ instituted for the purpose. These village overlords functioned as intermediaries between the aristocracy and bureaucracy in Kathmandu and the peasant society at the local level...The village overlords, especially the *Jimidars* of the Tarai, long remained one of the main bastions of Rana rule in Nepal.

(1999: 225)

Jimidars and Hierarchical Rana Tharu Society

In the local political and economic context, Regmi also comments that without any effective monitoring system, it was inevitable that the *Jimidar* often abused privileges in accumulating his own fortune (1999: 104-122). He concludes that a *Jimidar*, who owned substantial land, functioned as tax collector, rent receiver and moneylender as well. I fully agree with Regmi's analysis and I also argue that the *Jimidar* system further strengthened the hierarchical political structure in Rana society. My argument is illustrated by the interactions between rich and poor Ranas. Many Rana elites actively used this system to justify their superior position both economically and politically over other Ranas.

For example, Rana *Jimidars*' main duty was to collect tax from villagers and make more forest available for cultivation. They were granted free labour and absolute control of all land documents, which enabled them have more opportunities in accessing land resources than other Ranas. In the past, forest clearing was difficult due to the absence of sufficient labourers; however, Rana elites could utilize the local labour force through the *Jimidar* system to increase

⁴⁸

The Talukdar system was practiced in the hill areas.

their own landholdings. One landless Rana family complained to me that a *Jimidar* could wield absolute power regarding land registration. The family's grandfather had no land and depended on shifting cultivation for survival. When his son received a little education, he noticed the importance of registering original land. At that time, the family got one *bigha* of land (0.67 ha) inside the reserve extension area. However, his request was not approved by the *Jimidar*. Later, the *Jimidar* asked them to sell this land to him and the family sold it, but never received payment for it. As a consequence, the whole family had to work on the *Jimidar's* land. Meanwhile, the authority of a *Jimidar* provided him with the opportunity to accumulate wealth. For example, although the government fixed the commission rate for *Jimidar* at Rs 0.025 on every rupee of land revenue (2.5%), one *ex-Jimidar* told me he received 15% commission, six times the official rate.

Besides economic power, *Jimidars* also had jurisdictional power, which meant they had the last word about village matters. In effect the Rana *Jimidars* acted as village chiefs who were in charge of all local economic and political issues. A *Jimidar's* superiority was reflected in his higher position in the local political structure. Traditionally, *Balmansa* (the village leader) was in charge of all village matters. However in the case of Rauteli Bichawa, I was told by an old Rana that *Balmansa* was also supervised by *Jimidars* because the appointment of *Balmasar* had to be endorsed by *Jimidars*. Under the supervision of *Jimidars* and *Balmansa* was the *Chukedarra*, who helped to disseminate messages to villagers and acted as a security guard for the village. All power was concentrated in the *Jimidar* who already owned most of the land. For example, the headman of my host family in Iymilia, Vagat Rana, was one of the most influential *Jimidars* and he acted as the leader of Rauteli Bichawa village (see Plate 4.8 below). Controlling huge amounts of land for Ranas and in particular the wealthy class granted them autonomy and control over local politics as well.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 90 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 4.8 Vagat Rana acted as *Jimidar* and leader of Rauteli Bichawa Village.

Corresponding to this hierarchical social structure, a particular social relationship was formed between Rana *Jimidars* and other Ranas. Many small landholding Rana livelihoods in the past were heavily dependent on wealthy Rana *Jimidars*. They worked for these *Jimidars* or Ranas with large landholdings and received surplus grains to cope with short-term food deficits. Rankin (1999) refers to this production-oriented relationship as the *indigenous Rana Kamaiya system*. The changes in the Rana *Kamaiya* system are further discussed in Chapters Eight.

To sum up, Rauteli Bichawa Ranas often value land as their most important asset not solely in term of materials but also as the embodiment economic and political power. Indeed, in Rana society, the highest respect and power was often given to Ranas who owned substantial amounts of land. For example, while the *Jimidari* system may have been officially abandoned, many Ranas still show their respect and obligation to ex-*Jimidars* and their off-spring. One son of an ex-Rana *Jimidar* elaborated the influence of *Jimidars* in this way:

We now still have *Jimidars*. For example, my father is a *Jimidar*. When he dies, people will respect me the same as my father. Although nowadays *Jimidars* don't have as much land as before, many Ranas still respect them.

The State, Sukala and Rana Tharus Livelihood

This section concentrates on the changes in control of land-related resources in Rauteli Bichawa, which have occurred over the past few decades. It looks at the power relations between the Nepalese State and Ranas. From the Rana perspective, the expansion of State power has removed Ranas' right to access *Sukala* forest resources and to control land that is crucial to their agricultural subsistence economy. These State policies are explored from the Ranas' point of view.

From Common Forest to the State Park

For many forest-based rural communities, the establishment of parks has often meant loss of customary rights to use forest resources inside the boundary of the Parks. Scholarly work has increasingly argued that the centralization of the State's involvement in land management matters has seriously violated local communities' right to access livelihood resources. For example, the studies of Peluso (1992; 1993), Hitchcock (1995) and Neumann (1997a; 1997b; 1998) have all addressed the contention that a global conservation ideology has provided an unchallengeable justification for national states to directly control their territories and people. Peluso (1993: 210) argues that the nature of conservation itself is 'generally depicted as being in the common interest of the entire global community' and it legitimates states' violent actions in pursuit of control of their ecosystems. In her study of conservation practices in Kenya and Java, she explores the relationships between various international conservation groups, the State and local communities and identifies that the associated relationships between conservation groups and the State are based on mutual and vested interests. However, from a local perspective, she points out that both State and conservation groups are perceived as 'illegitimate controllers of local resources'. A similar comment is made by Brockington (2004):

Conservation ideologies, like other ideologies, also work by ignoring or overlooking problematic consequences of its policies. Because it is a good cause undertaken for posterity on behalf of nature, people do not expect any ill effects.

(2004: 414)

Furthermore, PAs are not merely characterized by ecosystem biodiversity but also with long established human populations (Orlove & Brush 1996). These rural communities are perceived

to be a threat to national integration by the State. In his study of the Tyua community in Africa, Hitchcock (1995) shows how the State utilizes the PA to control the Tyua:

The rhetoric of conservation has been used to justify programs that remove people from their land, deny them access to goods that are crucial to their subsistence, and require them to give up their lifestyles and cultural traditions.

(1995: 170)

As a result of strict restrictions on their right to access land and natural resources, the Tyua community has to cease their subsistence and commercial hunting activities. In some extreme situations, although there is an increasing recognition to implement more humane conservation practices, coercive conservation policies such as displacement, killing and catching illegal resources extractors commonly occur.⁴⁹ I therefore contextualize that the State, in establishing Shuklaphanta, has increased its control over local resources. However, for the Ranas the Park means their loss of customary right to freely access resources. The policy that exists now is that previous common forest of *Sukala* is now owned by the State and Ranas' use of natural resources must be endorsed by the State.

The designation of RSWR is a typical fence-to-fence management model. It is part of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) protected area categories, in which all settlements and human activities such as cultivation, fishing and hunting are outlawed. The park authority in Majhon Headquarters officially managed the Shuklaphanta. There were a total of fifty-one staff members and they were responsible for the twelve posts located in the western and eastern sections of the park before the Maoist insurgency in 2002. The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) was authorized to enforce all regulations, particularly stopping all illegal resource extraction activities. There were two Army posts in Shuklaphanta with a total of 260 personnel (DNPWC 2003), located at Majhon Headquarters and Singhpur. During my fieldwork, due to the absence of park officials in the southern part of the park, the Singhpur Army camp, which was only a few kilometres far from my study Rana villages, became the only State representative to maintain the new extension area of the Park.

⁴⁹ A global review in regard to conservation-induced evictions was recently undertaken by Brockington and Igoe (2006). Other studies include Peluso (1993) and Hitchcock (1995).

Apart from State agencies, local participation was often emphasized in the management level and thus several local resources management communities like the BZUGCs, supported by the Participatory Conservation Program (PCP) of United Nation Development Program, were established. Meanwhile, the influential international conservation group World Wildlife Fund Nepal (WWF Nepal) and the leading national conservation organization King Mahendra Trust Nature Conservation (KMTNC) also became involved in the park's management and promoted conservation and rural development projects in Buffer Zone villages. However, in the course of my year-round observations and conversations in the village, it was clear that these projects did not have any Rana representatives on their committees.

Previously, *Sukala* was a kind of common property resource that was 'free for collection' (Gupta 1987) and all local people had 'co-equal use rights' (Jodha 1990). One of the most immediate effects of the creation of the Park was the new boundary between forest and human settlements. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas could not imagine the forest that they could enter freely before was now only a home for wildlife. They were perceived as encroachers and their livelihood activities inside the Park were now illegal. For example, despite the strict prohibition on wood collection, in the absence of any alternatives the Ranas continued to collect wood illegally from the Park. According to the Buffer Zone officer from PCP Devaraj Joshi, a total of fourteen registered community forests were established in almost all buffer zone villages in 2005 to compensate local people's subsistence needs. However, old Rauteli Bichawa and the new resettlement area Dhokka Block were excluded. In order to survive, Ranas undertook many new strategies to 'improve' their access to forest resources. Instead of bullock carts, nowadays they have to carry it by themselves and this job is performed by men and women. At the adjoining settlements of Iymilia and Jhilmila, fuelwood collection was done by women because they were believed to be at less risk of being physically attacked by security personnel (the impact of new duties on gender relations in Rana society is discussed in Chapter Eight).

It was apparent that the Park had violated the practice of equal resource rights in Rauteli Bichawa. Nowadays rights are only granted to specific social categories such as young females or persons having good relationships with the State authorities. My Rana informants pointed out that security personnel would visit these two old hamlets very often, particularly Jhilmila.

Therefore the contacts between the security personnel and Jhilmila villages were much closer than Iymilia. Jhilmila Ranas complained that they often suffered disturbances from the army such as forced provision of free food and accommodation. Some women even experienced sexual harassment from the army. They obeyed in order to avoid suffering physical abuse and sometimes gained 'permission' from the army to collect forest resources. Due to the political insurgency, building connections with the army force was one of the most effective ways for park residents like Jhilmila to secure sources for fuelwood and other forest products. On one occasion, many Iymilia and Jhilmila residents gathered and I was told by villagers that they received news that the Park would be opened one day for locals to collect forest resources. The army simply allowed a few girls to go inside the Park. Many residents thus felt very angry about the unequal treatment.

The State's control over land and natural resources has also resulted in more social conflicts. The old and socially powerless people hardly have any chance of accessing the forest. I met some Jhilmila Rana families who could collect fuelwood a few times per week inside the Park; on the contrary, some Iymilia Ranas faced great threats and almost lost their lives in the process. The story of Bhajandra Rana in Iymilia was a good example. His eleven-member family relied on one and half *bighas* of land and forest resources for their survival. Once, he and his son with four other villagers went inside the Park to collect some dry wood to repair fences. They were caught by the security personnel, some of whom were drunk and accused them of being Maoists. They were physically attacked and detained in jail for one day. Bhajandra recalled this incident and said:

We were nearly dead. This kind of thing had never happened in my life. Before, I could easily get wood, grasses and grazing. I never can imagine a time will be this hard, but this difficult time really comes to us. Nowadays, if I go inside, I may get problems. Like the incident, after being hit by the army, we did not have money to get medical treatment. I'm not strong enough to collect wood and graze my animals inside the Park illegally, not like other people. I am poor so I can't afford to pay big fines after being caught. I don't have any social connections with officials; how can I get permission to go inside the Park like others? I can only wait for some casual work from the Park authority, and then I can go inside. However, the chance is seldom and the quantity I am allowed to collect is so little for me survival. Now, I need to strictly control to use fuelwood and most of time I mix dry grasses and dung cake as fuelwood substitute. Maybe the government and the Army want to protect forest but they never see how importance of forest to all Ranas.

Levels of accessibility to the fuelwood explained different resource use patterns in my research area. The supply of fuelwood was not enough and this forced some people like Bhajandra to revert to dry grass and dung cake as a substitute (see Plate 4.9 below). My observations and household survey records showed that except for Jhilmila, many Rana households in the last few years have used dry grass and dung cake to cook as a strategy to cope with the lack of fuelwood (see Table 4.4). The different situation in Jhilmila might relate to their relatively close and good relationship with the security forces. In addition, I noted that the popularity of using dry grass and dung cake in Iymilia and Dhokka Block was different. The latter was on a much smaller scale because they could collect more fuelwood illegally when the security situation worsened. Only Iymilia Ranas used dry grass and dung cake for cooking regularly. They told me that the problem of fuelwood storage became more serious in recent years.

NOTE:
This plate is included on page 95 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 4.9 Lack of fuelwood: Bhajhadra’s wife changed to mixing dung cake and dry grass (‘stick-like’) as a fuelwood substitute.

Table 4.4 Using Dry Grass and Dung Cake for Cooking

	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi
Total interviewed households	15	15	25	17
Yes, using dry grass and dung cake	8	0	12	9
Percentage of using dry grass and dung cake	53%	0%	48%	53%

Source: Household Survey 2005

Violence and punishment by fine appear to be the two common strategies used by the State to control local communities' use of natural resources. However, more studies show that this management approach does not benefit forest and wildlife preservation. All it does is increase local residents' resentment of the Park (e.g. Campbell 2000; Ghimire & Pimbert 1997; Heinen & Mehta 1999; Hitchcock 1995; Peluso 1992). Questions regarding the Park were put to all my interviewed Rana households in the four settlements. The responses were completely different between displaced and non-displaced Ranas despite the fact that all interviewed Ranas did not have many ideas about the Park. Iymilia and Jhilmila Ranas had more positive attitudes towards forest preservation. Many of them showed their anxiety regarding forest loss if there was no park. Displaced Dhokka Block Ranas argued that the emergence of the Park was solely good for wildlife and the forests but not for people.

Local communities tended to over-collect wood whenever they got the opportunity. Jodha's (1990) study has indicated that when common property resources become scarce, the rural poor in India utilize more. During my fieldwork period, on one occasion I saw Iymilia residents and Ranas helping the Park management to remove weeds and grasses. After that they were allowed to collect some dry grasses for domestic use as reimbursement but they also carried home wood illegally. I noted that many Rana families use oxen carts to carry wood in bulk in one night. I also saw a Dhokka Block Rana family remove one large tree to build a house. The family explained that due to the weak enforcement of park management rules during the political insurgency, it was the best time for them to collect as much wood as they could. The husband said to me, 'I never know if my son can get wood or not in the future. So I want to prepare wood for him to build a house when he grows up.' The family targeted six trees to cut. A chairman of Rautali Bichawa BZUCG also told me that he once saw a local villager cut two big trees. In response to his inquiries the villager only claimed that 'someone just cuts four pieces of tree, why can't I?'

While the rich could afford to buy wood from the community forest and hire workers to collect wood illegally, the poor had to suffer continuous anxiety and worry. This challenged the prevailing view that the poor were actively involved in logging activities. Pachan Rana (my case

study family in Beldandi) said to me that 'You know only rich people can do logging and sell wood to get money. I can't do this if I am caught, who would take care my family and the land?' He still remembered that the most difficult time in his life was his going to jail because he did not have enough money for bail (Rs 18,000). At that time, his house was too old so he went in the park to cut down the trees and unfortunately was caught. The escalating conflicts over natural resources have brought into question the park management's efficiency. I recalled one incident during my fieldwork, when thirty-six bullock carts inside the Park were caught by the Park authorities. To avoid further conflicts with locals, the Chief Warden decided to release them because alternative resources were simply unavailable.

Restrictions to the forest also meant that the Ranas found it difficult to collect *Gaas*, which was essential for making and repairing roofs (see Plate 4.10 below). Similar to other reserve areas in the Tarai region, the park authority of Shulkaphanta permitted the locals to collect *Gaas* once per year. This activity often occurred at the end of winter (December to January) for 7 to 10 days. However, according to villagers' complaints, the policy has not been regularly implemented in the last few years. The authority blamed the deteriorating security situation on making management difficult and therefore they did not open the reserve for grass collection. Due to the insufficient supply of *Gaas* and expensiveness of tin roofs, many Ranas had to buy *Gaas* from India. The ex-village leader told me that almost a total of Rs 200,000 was spent by Iymilia and Jhilmila Ranas to buy *Gass* each year. On average, each household had to pay roughly Rs 200. Nowadays, most Ranas seldom made tools and furniture by different kinds of grasses and wood as before because these resources were inaccessible. Many Rana families felt frustrated because they had to spend more money on buying furniture and household appliances.



Plate 4.10 Gaas is still the main material for making roofs. Every year, people will repair their roofs before the monsoon season.

Furthermore, access to fish and meat resources was not free anymore but depended on their relations with the State authorities. For example, during the off-season, some Jhilmila and Rana women would go further inside the reserve to fish, as long as army personnel granted permission to do so. In contrast to these two villages, Dhokka Block Ranas were seldom involved in fishing because they were far from the river and seldom had contacts with army personnel. If they want fish, they have to buy it from the market. Sometimes in the post-monsoon season, some Rana males will form small groups and take risks to go inside the Park to fish illegally. A significant decline in fish and meat consumption has been found in the diet of Dhokka Block Ranas. Before the displacement, they would eat fish almost every day and meat a few times per week. However, now only the rich can afford to (only once a month) while the poor may only ever have it once a year. For example, Pachan Rana could only afford to buy 1 kg of wild pig meat (Rs 90/ \$US 1.3)⁵⁰ and 1 kg of fish (Rs 50/ \$US 0.74) on the first and last day of the *Holi* festival for his seven-member family throughout the year. He said:

When inside, we can have very often meat, fish, chicken, we can have pig poultry at home; but in here, we can only get meat and fish once in several months ... we are poor because of the Park.

⁵⁰ During my fieldwork time, the average exchange rate was \$1 (U.S) to 68 Rs.

To summarise, *Sukala* has played a very critical role in maintaining the Ranas' diverse and complex livelihood system. Loss of customary rights and access to the *Sukala* forest resources has made the Ranas more dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. The implementation of new land policies and the resettlement program are major challenges to the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas' control over their ancestral lands.

From Ancestral Land to State Land

As stated in Chapter Three and the early part of this chapter, the State landlordism system has been long practiced in Nepal. The State can control all types of land tenure and enjoys absolute power in the collection of tax. Historically, it granted authority to the local elites due to the manpower and geographical limitations. These local elites were landowners and local communities perceived these elites to be the authority rather than the State. My ethnography has shown that many Ranas had to register their land with the approval of Rana *Jimidars*.

However, this situation changed after the abolishment of the *Jimidari* system under the terms of the 1964 Lands Act. The State retained its power in land control. Praff-Czarnecka (1997: 437) and Sharma (1997: 479) both comment that one of the major implications of the land reform program was the centralization of State control over local land resources. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa, instead of local *Jimidars*, Ranas now deal directly with the State regarding land issues. From the national perspective, a chief motivation in facilitating land reform is to improve social equity by granting more rights to actual cultivators (tenants), but as Regmi (1999: 227) comments, it is more likely that the land reform program constitutes an effort to widen the political base for the *Panchayat* monarchy.⁵¹ Policies focus on how to extract more agricultural surpluses from the farmers to the bureaucracy than in pursuit of landownership distribution.⁵² At the local level and particularly in the Tarai region, the shift in power has affected many pioneering farmers' loss of land to hill migrants (Regmi 1999: 215). In fact, the State played the leading role in shaping or manipulating the transformation of landownership from the hands of inhabitant Ranas to later migrant Pahaaris via a series of policies such as land reforms,

⁵¹ Panchayat was a system of government that existed in Nepal from 1962-1990, during which time political parties were banned (Gellner et al. 1997: 547).

⁵² Regmi (1999: 198) points out that the first attempt of land reform (the 1957 Land Act) intended to improve social inequity by focusing on landlord and tenant relationships. However, he notes that the land reform program after 1961 was more about the successful implementation of the economic and political goals of the Panchayat system.

government-sponsored resettlement programs in the Tarai region, and the introduction of conservation. In this new politico-economic environment, Pahaaris could now access the land resources. Here, I first focus on the relationship between the State and Ranas and the change in landownership between Ranas and Pahaaris, which is further discussed in Chapter Six. A brief description of the contact histories between the State and Rauteli Bichawa is essential to this discussion.

According to Burghart (1984), the concept of nation-state in Nepal developed in six phases.⁵³ Particularly during the 1860s, the rulers first developed the country idea by integrating different species (Nepali lit. '*Jaat*'; Eng lit. 'people'), possession (refers to the limits of collecting land revenue) and realm (refers to the boundary of the exercise of ritual authority). Later, from the 1930s to the 1960s, the designation of Nepali as the official language of Nepal and the government by the king and four tiers of elected councils (*Panchayat*) have further centralized the State power. Burghart's insightful analysis sensibly explains the transformations of State power in Kanchanpur. Due to distances and poor systems of communication, the administrative control of the State in the Kanchanpur district was very limited. I was told that some old Rauteli Bichawa Ranas did not know that Nepal existed as a country. Interactions with the outside world were almost absent in geographically isolated villages like Rauteli Bichawa. Contact between the State and Rauteli Bichawa has existed for less than a century. According to a Rana *ex-Jimidar*, the first time government officers visited the place was c. 1935. This means that after the restoration of *Naya Muluk* (the history of Kanchanpur district see Chapter Three) in 1860, the Rauteli Bichawa has not been governed directly by the State for 72 years - only through local functionaries like the *Jimidars*. The power was thus wielded by local elites who owned large amounts of land. The turning point occurred in the 1950s after the fall of the Rana family rulers. The State became more assertive in matters of local administration. Oral histories collected from Rauteli Bichawa villagers showed that many officials came to Rauteli Bichawa to map the land and establish new settlements. The ex-leader of Rauteli Bichawa, Mandal

⁵³ These six political episodes were: (1) the establishment of a defined border (1816); (2) the borders of the realm overlapping with the boundary of the possessions (c. 1860); (3) the interpretation of country in terms of species (c. 1860); (4) the designation of Nepali as the official language of Nepal (c. 1930); (5) the implicit differentiation of kingship from the state (c. 1960); and (6) the formation of a culturally unique polity (c. 1960). See Burghart (1984: 113-122)

Upadhya, pointed out⁵⁴ that the existence of Rana settlements was not known by the State until the 1950s. Officials visited Rauteli Bichawa in 1970 and 1980 and the effect of State intervention was to diminish local autonomy by tearing down the traditional concept of landownership in Rana society.

In contrast to the modern concept of landownership, like many traditional societies, the Ranas did not see it as an exercise in land registration documents, but more about actual land use practices. For example, Williams (1983) in his exploration of the Yolngu, an Australian Aboriginal group, concept of landownership - found that their concept is different to the West, which emphasizes economic and legal aspects. Rather, the Yolngu 'articulates economic and religion in their system of land tenure' (1983: 94). Their landownership is closely linked to their social structure. A similar situation is found in Nepal. Studies have shown that the concept of obtaining legal land documents to secure landownership does not exist among many tribal or ethnic communities, particularly those from the lowland Tarai region (Guneratne 1996; Guneratne 2002). Guneratne's study of the Chitwan and Dang Tharus has shown that they do not understand the purpose of landownership surveys, are suspicious of taxation matters and therefore reluctant to obtain a land title. Many of them think that because they use the land for planting crops it therefore belongs to them. This situation applies to Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. Many of my Rana informants mentioned that their land had been cultivated for generations so they thought they 'owned' it without any hesitation. Their ignorance of land registration has put the Ranas into an extremely weak position in controlling their ancestral land, particularly Ranas with small landholdings. This was the case when the Park authorities allocated land as compensation to displaced families on the basis of official land registration records. The story of Jekur Rana provides an example of this.

The Jekur Rana family was one of the displaced families. He was born in Andaiya (Ward 3) in Rauteli Bichawa Village and relied on subsistence agriculture for his livelihood. He 'owned' five *bighas* of ancestral land, which had been cultivated more than one hundred years. However, his land had not been registered officially. He explained that the older generations had no idea

⁵⁴ Due to the Maoist insurgency, the VDC election was suspended and many villages' leaders at the time I conducted my fieldwork ran away or were not at their duties. Mandal Upadhya was one of them.

about land registration and when government officers came to the village on one occasion, they only talked to the rich and educated people, not them. When the rich - including some wealthy Rana families - registered their land to the government to secure their ownership, the Jekur family did not. In 2001, when the Jekur family was forced to move out from the extension area of the Park, they did not receive any equal landholding size because his land was not in the registration records. As a consequence, he only received two *kattas* of land (0.15 ha) to build a shelter in a new resettlement in accordance with his inhabitant status. Jekur requested the Park authority to reassess his case more than 18 times but this failed to occur. At least ten Rana families in Dhokka Block faced a similar situation as Jekur.

In contrast to poor Ranas, in my conversations with Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, I noted that Ranas who previously had big landholdings and close relations with *Jimidars* obtained documents and suffered less loss of land after the dislocation. Most displaced Ranas in Rampur who received equal landholdings as compensation from the government had previously been large landowners owning more than 10 bighas inside the *Sukala*. Thus State policies meant that agricultural land was no longer equally accessed by all Rana cultivators and ownership of land would only favour the rich.

Access to new agricultural land, however, did not necessarily guarantee displaced Ranas' having the capacity to maintain their subsistence livelihoods. Another problem was generated after the dislocation. Most Ranas noted that new land could not support their diverse livelihoods because they were excluded from using the *Sukala* forest in the new resettlement area. Their livelihoods solely depended on their cultivation of agricultural land. Moreover, new land was less productive and consequently they obtained less grain from their fields. Without alternatives, many poor Rana households thus adopted new farming practices in an attempt to maximise their food supply. Abundant home gardening practices were an example of poor households responding to the lack of land.

A case study of the family Pachan Rana illustrates how the change in rights to access land had affected poor Ranas' farming practices and robbed them of their livelihood. Pachan did not have any land title for his 2 *bighas* of land in the Park so he only received 3 *kattas* of land as compensation. After the displacement, his family life completely relied on this small land and thus he always had to use it very carefully. For instance, due to restrictions on entering the Park, he had no choice but to change to stall-feeding rather than free grazing inside the Park. With the shortage of grasses in supply, he had to reserve one third of land to plant grasses for his animals throughout the year, which he had never had to do before (see Table 4.5). He explained to me that he would like to plant more rice for his family but meanwhile, he also needed his oxen for farm work and he did ploughing work for landlords to earn a living. Therefore, it was also important for him to provide enough nutrition for his oxen. Another two-thirds of land was designated for planting seasonal crops like rice, wheat, mustard and corn. He pointed out that he had virtually no land on which to plant vegetables. He could only plant small vegetables in front of his house which could not fulfil family subsistence needs. He said sadly:

I can only get three months worth of potatoes from my field. I really want to plant more potatoes but I need to plant other things especially grasses for animals because now I can't graze my animals in the forest. Nowadays, because of this small land, I have to buy chillies, potatoes, lentils and other daily necessities like salt, masala [curry powder] from the market. How can I afford this?

Table 4.5 Land Utilization of Pachan Rana's 3 Kattas Land

Late dry season (from April)	Monsoon (from June)	Early dry season (from Oct)
Corn	Rice	Mustard/ Wheat
Grass	Rice	Grass
Corn	Grass	Mustard/ Wheat

Source: Fieldwork 2005

Loss of rights to access his ancestral land inside the Park meant that Pachan was reduced to a poor farmer and had to face regular four-month food deficits. Even though he worked hard in his field and as a tenant for several landlords, the grains (rice and wheat) were only enough for 8 months. My year-round observation of Pachan's activities showed that Pachan developed various strategies to cope with food shortages. These strategies involved changes in lifestyle, increased food purchases, short-term loans from friends and participation in non-farming activities. Table 4.6 shows that in the post-harvest season, he diversified his income with casual agricultural work. He monitored expenditure on festival celebrations and borrowed wheat from

friends to reduce the demand for rice (see Plate 4.11 below). He did so because his experience told him that the market price of rice tended to be more volatile than wheat, from Rs 14 to Rs 16 per kilo (USD 0.2 to 0.24). After harvesting wheat, he could return wheat to friends. When he had almost enough rice in the dry season, he continued searching for more wage-labour work, consumed more wheat than rice and bought large quantities of rice when possible to prepare for the next season, the hunger season peak. When the wet season approached, Pachan decided to buy another 100 kg of rice to avoid the highest price. Meanwhile, his family still consumed more wheat than rice. He also looked for more casual labouring work in the village rather than sharecropping. However, he complained that he often could not receive wages so he decided to work in India during the off-peak farming season. Still suffering regular food shortages after the displacement, Pachan found it difficult to manage any sudden shocks. For example, he had to give up his plan to work in India because his children were sick. He spent all his savings on medical treatment and was thus worried how to purchase food in the next season. He remarked:

When I lived inside the *Sukala*, life was hard but I knew when I worked hard, I always could get enough food and my livelihood was secure. But here [Dhokka Block] I don't even have enough food for subsistence; I need to buy everything from the market. It is hard for me to think about tomorrow.

Table 4.6 Seasonal Impacts and Coping Strategies of Pachan in Different Agricultural Cycle

	Post-harvest (early dry season)	Dry season (late dry season)	Wet season (early wet season)	Pre-harvest (late wet season)
Seasonal Impacts	Not enough rice	Almost enough rice	Food almost finished and the price of rice at most expensive point	Not enough food
	Extra expense for celebrating <i>Dipalwaali</i> festival	Extra expense for celebrating Holi and Nepali New Year festivals	Baby born, extra expense for celebration	Children's sickness
Coping Strategies	Relied on just-harvested rice from own land and tenanting land, enough for two months	Almost no celebration for Holi festival (only 1 kg fish and 1 kg wild pig meat)	Consumed less rice and more wheat	Gave up plan to work in India because of children's sickness
	Got ploughing work, earning Rs 1,200	No celebration for Nepali New Year	Avoid indebtedness, return money to friends	Spent all savings Rs 2,000 for medical treatment
	Worship the god during <i>Dipalwaali</i> festival and pray for good health for family members. Limit the expense to Rs 800	Got building house work, earned Rs 3,000, and some income from road construction work	Instead of doing crop sharing, searched for more casual work in the village like ploughing	
	Borrowed 100 kg wheat from friends to cut the purchase of rice	Tried to buy large quantity of rice at one time to more cheaply	Brought rice 100kg earlier to avoid the highest price	
		Borrowed Rs 12,00 from friends to buy 100 kg rice	Planned to go to India to work for several months	
		Started to consume wheat	Spent Rs 100 for baby ceremony	

Source: Fieldwork 2004-2006

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 106 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 4.11 In order to reduce rice purchases, Pachan's family consumed wheat in the early dry season (before wheat harvesting). After harvesting, he would return some wheat to friends and kept the rest for his family.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the indisputable relationship between Rana livelihood system and land. The characteristics of Rana livelihood were diverse and complex and not limited to the farms but extended further. The biodiversity of the *Sukala* forest played a critical role in maintaining their livelihoods and allowed them to cope with economic shocks. Their old agricultural lands in the *Sukala* forest supported them in developing a diverse cropping system. Meanwhile, the ethnographic inquiry supported that important economic and political implications were attached to the land. They would thus enjoy the economic and political fruits of owning fertile resources. These embodied relationships enlarged the conflicts between conservation practices and local livelihoods. As Sandy (2006) argues in her study on the land use in the Menabe region of Madagascar, the conservation area is an imposed and imagined landscape. Her findings regarding local perceptions of that particular place show that 'the forest is understood as a resource to be used, not as something precious to be protected.' (2006: 317). It was obvious that from the Rana point of view, the function of *Sukala* was for utilization rather than for protection.

From the Rana point of view, the ironic fact was that the creation of the Park changed the 'free collection' and 'equal access' characteristics of the *Sukala* forest. They no longer had the right to freely enter the *Sukala* and gather its resources. For example, prohibitions on fishing and hunting limited their sources for diverse diets, and they also found it difficult to afford the expensive fuelwood and timber products at the marketplace. As a consequence, Ranas who were richer and had good relations with the State authorities were more able to access resources than poor Ranas. Only physically strong Ranas were able to extract Park resources illegally because the old ones could not. The centralization of the state's control over land conflicted with the Ranas' traditional landownership patterns. Substantial loss of land had weakened the security of Rana livelihoods. Most Ranas now face unmanageable regular food shortages which they have seldom experienced before. I conclude that the Ranas' economic subsistence is under great pressure to become part of a highly market-dependent economy after the introduction of the Park and modern land policies. The more I talk to Ranas the more I note that land has not merely economic and political meanings attached to it, but also has cultural significance. Many Ranas still feel very attached to their old lands despite many of them no longer actually owning them. What the land means to the Ranas from a cultural perspective is thus explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES OF LAND AND LIVELIHOODS

Introduction

In Chapter Four I demonstrated how the developments of the Park and new land policies violated Ranas' customary rights to access land resources in order to maintain their subsistence livelihoods. In this chapter, through a detailed exploration of cultural meanings of both old and new land to Ranas, I argue that the policy-makers' belief that social impacts of dislocation can be properly mitigated by well-designed resettlement programs is a myth. The focus here is on the meanings of land from a cultural perspective, which is largely inspired by the increasing anthropological work on landscape (Hirsch & O'Hanlon 1995). This scholarship, in particular its emphasis on dynamic social relations embedded within a particular place offers me a meaningful perspective in understanding displaced Ranas' senses of belonging and loss after dislocation. In this sense, the fundamental nature of dislocation is a violent disruption of the daily social contacts of a community.

However, the potential and unexpected social impacts have been overlooked in resettlement policies (Agarwal 1997). Empirical studies on involuntary resettlements have clearly shown that such dislocation is dehumanization because it leads to a disconnection between existing social networks. For example, Fried's study of an urban relocation project in Boston in the United States (1963), finds that a deep feeling of grieving is expressed by affected families. The extension of grieving is closely tied with residents' previous contacts with their old home. The more familiar the old place, the more people feel the need to grieve. He concludes that dislocation has undermined the continuity of the community's social life. Indeed, literature confirms that symptoms of nostalgia or homesickness are common in dislocated communities.

This situation was felt by the Dhokka Block Ranas. Their collective memories revealed the old place to be nice and comfortable. In contrast their new home was one of poverty, helplessness and danger. It became clear that most of them suffered severe nostalgia. The ethnography had shown that their feeling of nostalgia was not only an evasion of present life but it was also

resistance to new socio-economic realities. The different feelings of two places were closely related to lived experiences. Dhokka Block Ranas' depression was due to the fact they no longer experienced the mutual help or support from neighbours as they did in their old abode. This highlights the second theme of this chapter. I argue that cultural meanings of a place and rural livelihood are closely linked. The destruction of Ranas' social networks not only created psychological problems but also led to dispossession, threats to their livelihoods and more vulnerable lives. As Gupta (1987) has suggested, the traditional social web is a part of 'informal security mechanisms' in the rural economy. This chapter is divided into three parts. Firstly, I review the relevant anthropological work on human-place relationships. This sets the stage for the importance of a closer examination of social and psychological impacts of dislocation on a community. Secondly, the central concern of this chapter is the focus on Ranas' cultural interpretations of their old and new lands. Lastly, I demonstrate the implications of these social values of land in the context of the displaced Ranas' livelihood.

Feeling at 'Home'

To understand the social impacts of dislocation, it is essential to explore the cultural meanings of the land for displaced communities. In other words I need to know how people's belonging of a particular place is established. I find that the recent emergence of anthropology of the landscape has made a manifest contribution to a discussion of this kind. Scholars are not only aware of how human activities shift the evolution of landscapes⁵⁵ but more importantly, they also stress the embedded relationships between social relations and a particular place (Hirsch & Hanlon 1995; Lovell 1998).⁵⁶ Gow (1995: 48) in his study of native Amazonian people and their land, points out that an exploration of functions of land seeks to understand people's relationships with other people. Similarly, Leach in his recent study of local people's cultural sense on the Rai Coast of Papua New Guinea (2003: 31), argues that the purpose of traditional kinship study in anthropology is to identify with 'an outcome of relations between land and

⁵⁵ For example, in the introduction, Hirsch (1995: 2) writes 'the landscape we initially see and a second landscape which is produced through local practice'. See also Bender (1993), Ingold (1994) and Tilley (1994).

⁵⁶ Through an extensive collection of ethnographic studies, Lovell (1998) further extends the discussion of place at a symbolic level. She argues that people's sense of belonging is intertwined with a specific place. However, people do not need to physically reside in this place. Their belonging can be constructed by a wider political context. I agree with her view, however, that in the case of Rauteli Bichawa, displaced Ranas' sense of belonging to their old land is based on lived experiences.

people'. Gray's (2000: 94) study has also demonstrated how Scottish border farmers' relationship with their land goes beyond 'just a legal relation' granted by the form of tenure. Gray argues that through direct interaction, people have created meanings of their land and individuals have therefore related to each other in terms of different social organizations like kinship, neighbours, and labour relations. This particularly applies to most rural communities in Nepal because the bond between land and people is far stronger (Subedi 1999). For example, Subedi's study regarding the belongingness of a village community has shown that the meaning of land to its people even exceeds physical barriers and extends to human histories and daily life. He concludes that:

It [refers to 'Ghara', a place name] is neither limited to physical structure nor a physical space to carry on livelihood. It captures broader networks, intimate relations with the land and environment, and a place of rooted memory.

(1999: 138)

This is because these social ties and feelings have gradually established people's sense of 'feeling at home' for a particular place as suggested by Fried (1963). In his study of the dislocated working class in the West End of Boston, he summarizes the formation of home belonging in this way:

It is the sense of belonging some-place, in a particular place which is quite familiar and easily delineated, in a wide area in which one feels "at home." This is the core of meaning of the local area. And this applies for many people who have few close relationships within the area. Even familiar and expectable streets and houses, faces at the window and people walking by, personal greetings and impersonal sounds may serve to designate the concrete foci of a sense of belonging somewhere and may provide special kinds of interpersonal and social meaning to a region one defines as "home."

(1963: 154)

Dislocation and Feelings of Nostalgia

It is clear that the belongingness of a place as 'home' is the outcome of long interactions between people and a place and also between peoples over a place. In this sense, removing a community from their former land is to uproot their histories and current social ties and this will inevitably cause significant social and psychological disturbances. Nostalgia is a psychological state commonly found among displaced communities. Nostalgia was once used as a medical term when a Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer first diagnosed it in 1688. At the beginning, it was treated as a kind of serious medical disorder that a person suffers pains from leaving

home and wishes to return to this native land. In the twentieth century, nostalgia has become known as a widespread social phenomenon rather than a mental illness (Davies 1979).

The most influential work on nostalgia has been done by a sociologist, Davis (1979). In his book *Yearning for yesterday*, Davis analyzes nostalgia from a sociological perspective. He points out that there are three major characteristics of nostalgia. Firstly, it is not a set of random memories but a particular form of collective and selective memories. Secondly, although it is drawn from the past, it is in fact the product which reflects the fear, anxiety and insecurity of present life. He thus concludes that nostalgia is people's psychological reaction to the experience of discontinuity in their present life. It offers a shelter for people mitigating their sense of loss by the remembered past. Thirdly, Davis also clearly distinguishes the differences between nostalgia and other forms of memories. According to Davis, the latter can include myths and folk stories that are passed down the generations. However, nostalgia in this study context does principally consist of the memories of lived experiences.

A similar view is expressed by Fried in his empirical study on a dislocated West End (Boston) community (1963). He points out that any severe loss is a disruption in people's relationships to the past, present and future (1963: 153). In recent decades, building on these new social interpretations of nostalgia, social scientists further emphasize the practice and diverse nature of nostalgia. The concept of active nostalgia is first introduced by Battaglia (1995). Her inquiry of the social impacts of colonialism on Papua New Guinea society found evidence that nostalgia is not only 'a yearning for something lost' but a vehicle of knowledge of the ways that people feel their past, present and future. She states,

It [nostalgia] may be *practiced* in diverse ways, where the issues *for users* become, on the one hand, the attachment of appropriate feelings toward their own histories, products, and capabilities, and on the other hand, their detachment from and active – resistance to – disempowering conditions of postcolonial life.

(1995: 77 Emphasis added originally)

Using Hutcheon's writing, nostalgia can be connoted as 'evasion of the present, idealization of a (fantasy) past, or a recovery of that past as edenic[An] ironic rethinking of history is definitely not nostalgic [since] it critically confronts the past with the present, and vice versa' (Hutcheon 1988, quoted in Battaglia 1995: 93). I have no argument with these scholars' views. In the

discussion of Dhokka Block Ranas' emotional reactions to their dislocation later in this chapter, nostalgia emerges as a product linking the past to the present. It is practiced as evasion (Battaglia 1995) and resistance to the present life.

Homesickness is another word synonymous with nostalgia. Abundant case studies on refugees and development-related resettlement projects confirm that dislocations cause psychological turmoil and social impacts for local residents. Most residents experience a sense of loss, depression and helplessness after being resettled. Moreover, these studies demonstrate that dislocations violate people's daily life routines and existing social networks. For example, Loizos (1999) in his study on Ottoman displaced communities suggested that human lives are completely destroyed or disrupted by dislocation because it takes away people's family support, love and nurturance. These impacts are not temporary and they do influence extensively every aspect of life. He states:

The survivors sometimes wandered for years in unsettled and unproductive conditions, de-skilled by loss of appropriate contexts to use their skills. Farmers without land, merchants without stocks, craftsmen without workplaces or customers, teachers without pupils, dis-membered families, neighbours without neighbourhoods. These massive, bloody, destructive dislocations had knock-on effects in many directions. But such costs were not addressed by state-builders.

(1999: 255)

A similar conclusion is made by Colson (1971) in her assessment of social consequences of Kariba resettlement upon the Gwembe Tonga. She points out that the life of a displaced community becomes meaningless and disordered. After the dislocation, they have suffered dramatic changes in family and kinship relations, local political structure and religious practices.

Furthermore, both Fried's study on the West End of Boston (1963) and Young and Willmott's (1957) social inquiry into a Bethnal Green relocation program in East London have clearly demonstrated that new resettlement areas for displaced families do not offer the same cultural values to them as their old places. Therefore, relocated communities grieve for their lost homes. Fried points out that the extent of grieving is closely related to the life differences between the past and the present and also the levels of familiarity with old places. His research has shown that people who have a stronger commitment to the West End, lived there longer and are very familiar with the people and buildings will experience more serious homesickness. On the other

hand, according to Fried's observation, despite the fact that significant improvements in the socio-economic situation have been expressed by resettled West End residents, after two years they still grieved for their old home. There is a tendency for people to idealize their lost home as a friendly, secure and cozy place.

Similar results are recorded by Young and Willmott (1957). Most relocated families from a slum residential area (Bethnal Green) do not appreciate their modern homes but they continuously complain about social isolation because the close neighbourhood and community solidarity no longer exists. They are therefore upset. Except when they are working, most of time they stay at home and social activities are very rare. According to Young and Willmott (1957), one of the major reasons for this situation may be that a sense of belongingness can only become well established through the passing of time. They state:

Long residence by itself does something to create a sense of community with other people in the district [Bethnal Green]. ...There is sense of community, that is a feeling of solidarity between people who occupy the common territory, which springs from the fact that people and their families have lived there a long time.

(1957: 105, 113)

The authors further argue that geographical dislocation will affect the forms of social contacts. In the case of Bethnal Green residents, they do not practice the same social contacts with their relatives and friends as they did before; they tend to rely on themselves for everything. Young and Willmott describe the situation in this way:

When they leave the East End the people also leave their relatives behind them, and, although few of them cut the threads which connect them to their former homes, they can no longer see their old companions every day or even every week. In emergency, they can no longer so easily send word round to Mum's. When they arrive at Greenleigh, being deprived of relatives, they have to make do as best they can, sometimes with the aid of neighbour, but usually by their own devices. Children do more, Husbands do more. The family is more self-contained in bad times and in good.

(1957: 145-146)

With these analyses in mind, it is unlikely that I will fully understand the comprehensive consequences of dislocation on the livelihood of Ranas without taking into account the cultural meanings attached to land. In the following two sections, I focus on the different ways Ranas culturally construct and interpret their old and new land. The cultural meanings of land have often been ignored and only become visible once people feel they have lost it. As Young and Willmott (1957: 111) point out, when people are moved far away from their old place of residence, they can appreciate the difference. Therefore, a study of displaced Rauteli Bichawa

Rana groups' feelings about new land in Dhokka Block and old land in Rauteli Bichawa can help us understand the hidden cultural values attached to land. Indeed, the following ethnographic description will show that Ranas' perception of their old and new land is dynamic and is integrated with their feelings of life experiences in the past, present and aspirations for future.

Finally, attention should be paid to understand the following ethnographic writing. I have noticed that the meanings and histories of land are selected by Ranas on a subjective basis. In the other words, Ranas practise their feelings of nostalgia and collective memories with purposes. Larsen (1998) has emphasised that the past is not fixed but is artificially constructed from the memories of people. Moreover, I have discussed above that the feeling of grieving or nostalgia does not merely refer to the past but the present as well. Tannock (1995: 454) adopts Raymond Williams' term 'structure of feeling'⁵⁷ to describe nostalgia as involving a positively evaluated past world in response to a deficient present world. By listening to displaced Ranas' comments about their old and new homes; it becomes clear that their narratives are based on a mixture of perceptions, realities, imagination and selective histories. The (sometimes idealised) memories of their previous life have prevented them from accepting their new place. Therefore the Ranas' description of their past life may not be completely accurate but my concern is why Ranas from different socio-economic backgrounds share a similar perception of their old land. Does this reflect their common feelings about their present life? To answer this, I will rely on the Rana informants' own words about the old and new land.

Rauteli Bichawa- 'Living Inside [the Park] is Good' (Sabai Bhitri Raamro Chha)

This section focuses on how displaced Rauteli Bichawa Ranas in Dhokka Block feel about their old land. Most Ranas I talked with have been resettled in Dhokka Block since 2001.⁵⁸ In general, all of them have strongly grieved for their old land. Economic differences were not a significant factor in generating Ranas' different feelings. In fact, I often received the same

⁵⁷ Raymond Williams uses the term 'structure of feeling' to show how humans make sense of their world. He argues that humans get to know the world because of a set of systematic cultures; however, they will select it on the basis of their own feelings and lived experiences in different periods as well. For a more detailed understanding of 'structure of feeling' see Williams (1977b).

⁵⁸ Except for a few Rana families, due to their personal reasons such as serious wildlife depredation in the old land, they moved to Dhokka Block following an allotment of land provided by the government in the mid-1990s. They grieved for their old land less than other Ranas.

responses from wealthy and poor Ranas. They all described their old way of life as being perfect. Their strong sense of belonging to the old land could be easily understood because they had long resided in this particular place for many generations. Despite the fact that they were physically separated from their old land for years, the image of the old land was still deeply embedded in the Ranas' memories. The experience of Tikkrām Rana was a good example. He was a middle-aged man and came from a comparatively affluent family so he did not suffer great economic difficulties after the dislocation. However, he told me that he saw his old land in the dreams many times repeatedly:

I always have dreams that I am inside the park again. Particularly during the time when I had just moved to here, I see my old place in day dreams and night dreams where I used to have my old house and everything.

His words clearly implied that the old land was so important and its social meanings were irreplaceable. Bhagora Rana also pointed out his preference for the old place, 'I don't like my new place because I still remember my old place. I want to go back there. I miss my land.' In fact, because of these invisible but strong social and historical ties between Ranas and their old land, some Dhokka Block Ranas even took the risk of visiting the Park just to reminisce about old times before their displacement. A Dhokka Block Rana told me that despite the fact that he was scared of the security forces, he went inside the Park twice with friends because he missed his land. 'I love my land so I always want to see it. When I am really inside the Park, I see the forest and I remember my past life.' Such feelings were commonly shared by other Dhokka Block Ranas. One said to me, 'When I visited my old place, I don't want to come back here. I really want to stay inside. I see my land become bush area, forest and I feel not well.' For those who never visited their motherland again, their memory remained. 'After moving out, I never visited my old place. However, I do miss many things inside. I always see my place in dreams.' I heard this repeatedly from Dhokka Block Ranas:

I can never forget my place forever. Because the environment is so nice, we have enough water; we can go to forest with animals every day. On the moving day, I feel worry because I don't know what will happen to me in the new place.

Belonging to a place is not simply built through residential relationships but also through familiarity with one's old abode, according to Fried (1963). His study has shown that the more West End working class people are familiar with every person and everything in the old place, the more they grieve for their lost home. This feeling has increased dislocated West End

residents' anger, resentment and resistance to the new place. This scenario occurred with the Dhokka Block Ranas. For example, Tharsa Rana was born in Andaiya, located in the central part of the extension area of Shuklaphanta. His home was only 5 kilometres from the forest. When he lived there he had everything. His family was resettled in Dhokka Block far from the *Sukala*; he often felt that he was exiled to India rather than to Nepal. The separation from motherland and his comfortable life often depressed him. He said:

Living inside [the Park] is very good (*Sabai bhiri dherai raamro chha*). We had forest and had enough food for survival. We had fish to eat. We could go to town very easy, only 7-8 km. Now the government moved us to a place seemed like India border. I enjoyed forest and wildlife. But now I can't see wildlife in here. How do I say to you? Even though I was just walking there, I liked. I feel that the *Sukala* is belonging to me, not the government. I always enjoyed natural environment and wildlife. It seems is ours. In the past, we could graze our animals inside easily and our life was easy as well. I felt very sad when the government set up the park because I enjoyed being there so much; why were we forced to move out? We had many generations stayed here like my grandfather, why did we need to move out?

Such a feeling represents the collective memories of most Dhokka Block Ranas. When I talked with Dhokka Block Ranas, they often recalled their previous life as very good (*dherai raamro chha*). The Ranas had many positive memories of life experience before their displacement. In their own words, what they felt they had previously and had lost in present became obvious:

When inside, we had chicken, *Dalu*, buff for festivals like *Holi*. However, now we don't have any friends but have only high interest rates. We can't celebrate any festivals any more. Our marriage ceremony becomes very small. I am getting poorer and poorer.
(Quote from Bhagara Rana, male, 50 yrs old, a medium landholding farmer)

I really don't like and I feel sad about the new place. My life inside was really better. I did not need to work hard when living inside. But now I need to go there to collect fuelwood and my husband needs to work somewhere. In here, I never get any help. Before, if no food, we could easily get it from others. I really feel lonely during daytime. At night, I sleep here, however my body seems to be in my old place in my dreams. I'm not happy since the government moved us to here. I stop celebrating festivals for three years. I always worry about food. My family needs to control food and for myself, I have many times experienced not having dinner. Before, I used to go the market quite often. However, I have never gone to market for three years and haven't bought any new clothes. In the past, my grandfather was the leader of our family and everything was enough under his management. After moving out, we don't have enough food and then we have to divide our family and the land. Today, everyone is working for their own survival.
(Quote from Rabato Rana, female, 35 yrs old, from a big landholding family)

Inside, everything is enough and everyone is happy. In here, everything is less. For example, we had big festival celebration with lots of rice, fish and wild pigs. We sang and danced every day and we were so happy. At present, we can't really dance and sing freely because we are afraid that the Army and the Maoists will come to us.
(Quote from Balsukram Rana, male, 57 yrs old, a big landholding farmer)

I miss many things inside so I don't like here. Before, we had big *Holi* celebration. We had almost 20 kg rice for whole family per day per meal. We killed a very fat pig to eat. We could afford to spend Rs 5,000 for *Holi*. Today, we don't have enough food; how can we celebrate festivals? Sometimes we may have one kilo meat on *Holi* and that is all. I am very sad about my life.
(Quote from Buli Rana, male, 70 yrs old, a medium landholding farmer)

The above comments demonstrate that feelings of nostalgia or homesickness interlock with lived experience in the present and indicate what they think their future will be like. The unpleasant interactions with the new land have further accelerated their sense of nostalgia. As a result, the old Rauteli Bichawa is often subjectively idealized as perfect for those displaced Ranas while the new place is culturally constructed as one consisting of poverty, helplessness and loneliness.

Dhokka Block - 'Nobody Will Like It' (Kasaile Pani Mann Paraaudaina)

The focus now turns to how Dhokka Block Ranas culturally perceive their new home. In interviews with more than fifty displaced Rana households, almost none of them expressed good opinions concerning their new homes in Dhokka Block. The new places were perceived as bad due to the poor quality of soil, lack of food and weak social relations.

'Not enough food here' (Yahaa Khaana Pugdaina)

In Chapter Four I discussed the changes and how Ranas had to cope with seasonal agriculture. Most Ranas experienced a significant decline in their standard of living after the displacement because they were denied access to the *Sukala* forest and the new land was poor in terms of productivity. The main focus of this chapter is to explore the ways Ranas culturally perceive the new land, and this is built on their interpretations of what land means to them. Even though most displaced Ranas received equal sizes of land as compensation, when I asked them about their first impression of their new land, the most frequent complaint I heard was that their new land could not support subsistence livelihoods. Ranas pointed out that they suffered food shortages because of the poor soil quality. Their claim largely agrees with the household survey. Table 5.1 indicates that nearly 60% of Rana households claimed to have less than nine months' supply of food. Noting that interviewees may tend to conceal and underestimate their real economic situation, I was reluctant to believe this completely.⁵⁹ For this reason, factors such as household size, landholding size and its productivity, and Rana dietary consumption patterns will be discussed in Chapter Seven. In addition, some Rana households' food situation

⁵⁹ As I pointed out in the early chapter (see p. 69), the concept of food sufficiency was a relative term that Ranas evaluated their current situation compared to their perceptions of their previous situation.

depended on tenanting land rather owning land. It may nonetheless explain why the Ranas viewed their poverty as a result of being on new land.

Table 5.1 Food Sufficiency of Dhokka Block Ranas

Estimated Food Sufficiency (in months)	No. of Households	Percentage (%)
1 to 3	1	2.4
4 to 6	15	35.7
7 to 9	9	21.4
10 to 12	17	40.4
Total interviewed Households	42	100

Source: Household survey 2005

According to Dhokka Block Ranas, the new lands' soil had poor water storage capacity, which caused difficulties for rice planting. I visited rice fields both in Rauteli Bichawa and Dhokka Block. Most Rauteil Bichawa Ranas mentioned to me that the soil could keep water for almost one week so they had plenty time to do rice transplanting. Yet, Dhokka Block Ranas pointed out that after ploughing and irrigating, they had to plant rice immediately because the soil would be dry again within a few hours. Local experience showed that the land productivity in Dhokka Block was less than half of their old lands in Rauteli Bichawa. In one *bigha* of land, Dhokka Block Ranas could only obtain about twelve bags of husked rice (*Dhan*) - 70 kg in each bag. They could get up to twenty-five bags of *Dhan* per *bigha* while living inside the Park.⁶⁰ Therefore, Dhokka Block Ranas blamed their new land for generating food shortages (*Khaana pugdaina*).

Two important indicators were commonly used by Ranas to illustrate their increasing poverty. The first one was change in dietary habit. As the new land produced less rice for Ranas, many of them had to adjust their diet by consuming more wheat products (see Plate 5.1 below). *Dal Bhat* and *Roti* became part of the diet for most Ranas. As mentioned previously, the Ranas made a social distinction between rice and wheat consumption. Eating *Roti* symbolised poverty and the new land proved to be more suitable for wheat rather than rice planting; therefore it was immediately perceived as a bad place (*Thaau raamro chhaina*). The second indicator of poverty was the significant decline in festival celebrations. Most Dhokka Block Ranas pointed out that because their new land could not provide them with a food surplus they could not afford to

⁶⁰ The estimate for rice productivity was based on the normal agricultural year that did not include serious crop failure from natural disasters such as floods or drought.

celebrate festivals such as *Holi* and *Dipalwaali*. Most people could not afford to go to the market to shop. The Pachan Rana family case study provides a good example of this situation.

Pachan Rana was a small landholding farmer in Andiaya (Ward 3). He owned two *bighas* (non-registered land) before the displacement. At that time the land provided his family with more than enough food and every year he could sell agricultural surplus and earned on average about Rs 3,000 cash. Besides working in the field, he could often drink '*Raksi*' (local wine) with friends for relaxation and could afford to eat meat and fish at least once per month. For the *Holi* festival, he could buy new clothes for his family and invite *Holi* dancing groups to his home. However, since the displacement, he has experienced a completely different life. Facing severe food insufficiency, he had to develop new livelihood strategies in order to survive (see Chapter Four). He basically had to give up his old way of life. Four years after moving to the Dhokka Block, his family never celebrated any festivals or went to the market. The frequency of meat consumption was almost once per year. Pachan himself seldom drank *Raksi* any more. He often said to me, 'If I still drink *Raksi* and celebrate festivals, how can I feed my family?'



Plate 5.1 Due to the shortage of rice, *Roti* became part of the Rana daily diet.

'The place is so narrow' (Thaau Saaguro)

The new place was also perceived to be narrow (*Saaguro*) by many Dhokka Block Ranas. The term *'Thaau Saaguro'* referred to barriers in social interactions rather than spatial limitations (see Plate 5.2 below). The place became narrow because interactions between Dhokka Block Ranas were very limited. Instead of talking with other people, most Ranas chose to keep working in the field for the whole day and stay at home. Social interactions among Ranas were now much less than before. The immediate outcome was that most Ranas felt lonely in Dhokka Block. I can therefore interpret their word *Saaguro* as being similar to the English word 'lonely'. This social outcome was not what the policy-makers had envisaged; they had intended the resettlement area to minimize the social impacts of displacement. Affected communities sharing the same cultural background were resettled in the same area. This was particularly the case in the Rampur area.⁶¹ Rana communities from Rauteli Bichawa were grouped together. The aim was to maintain their community network and cultures but obviously something had gone wrong.



Plate 5.2 The Rana settlement distribution in Dhokka Block was close but they seldom visited their nearby kinsmen's or neighbours' houses.

⁶¹ The situation in Beldandi was different in that this area was mainly designated for resettling those affected landless families including Ranas and other caste groups. There was no consideration of cultural factors. As a result, few Rana households were sparsely settled and they were surrounded by the hill population.

Why then did most Dhokka Block Ranas feel lonely in their new abode? In order to answer this question, a closer look at their social networks may be helpful. When I asked displaced Ranas about their social networks, half of them did not have any relatives or friends living around them while others did. The higher percentage of people having relatives and friends was found in Rampur rather than Beldandi. Twelve Rana households in Beldandi did not have any relatives and friends and only five in Rampur had the same experience. Although the level of loss in social networks due to displacement among Rampur and Beldandi Ranas differed, both shared the same feeling of loneliness. Three factors contributed to their loneliness: heavy farming workload, distance and language problems.

In Dhokka Block, Ranas complained that they needed to work harder in the field because the soil was quite dry and solid. On average, they had to spend double the time ploughing the same size of land than before. The implication was that more farming work led to decreased opportunities and motivation for them to visit and talk with their relatives and friends. The situation could be summed up by Mulchandra Rana's sentiment:

I feel very lonely because no one in here wants to talk. People are in fact friendly in here but we all need to work hard, worry about our own lives so we don't have a chance to talk each other.

Jilabati Rana had few friends around but most of her friends moved to other villages because of the Park. She said:

I am very unhappy because we Ranas, are no more living in same place. If they are around me, I will feel better. Nowadays, I only stay on my land and seldom go outside. In my old place, I always spent time with my friends. Now I find it very hard having to spend time in here.

Bhagora Rana did not have friends and relatives living close by and said, 'Without any friend, most of time I only work in the field and stay at home. Life is lonely.' One of the effects of the dislocation is that it can often change interpersonal interactions in a latent and silent way. Even having relatives and friends living close by cannot guarantee the maintenance of Rana community solidarity because after the dislocation, the previous interaction patterns no longer exist.

The hardships were inflamed by some Ranas having to endure long separations from their family members. Long distances made it virtually impossible for them to visit each other. For example, Roson Rana was a sixty-five year-old man. His family was moved out from Rauteli Bichawa four years ago and was told he would receive ten *kattas* of land in Beldandi as compensation, yet the government's promise did not come true. He now lived alone on his two *kattas* of land and his son's family moved to another village to tenant land in order to get work. Every night he felt extremely lonely without his family and friends. He said, 'I had land, big house and my family inside the park. I have never thought before that my life will become like this one day.' Similarly, Bann Rana lived alone in Beldandi. He totally relied on help from his grandson who worked in another village. He never visited his grandson's family because he could not afford to pay for the bus ticket. Only the grandson visited him once or twice a year to bring him some rice.

Another problem Beldandi Ranas faced was that they found it difficult to communicate with their new hill neighbours. They could not speak Nepali frequently and the result was social isolation. When they felt depressed and worried about life, there was nobody they could share their problems with. I recalled one old Rana in Rampur who often spoke about '*Thaaу Saaguro*'. When he first moved to Dhokka Block, he felt very lonely because he did not have friends to talk to. Finally, he opened a small teashop just to have the opportunity to talk to people. I was told by most Dhokka Block Ranas that they kept their loneliness in their hearts.

'The place is so dangerous' (Thaaу Khataraа Chha)

One immediate effect of Ranas leading an inactive social life in Dhokka Block was that the place provided less security. This is because trust seldom existed between migrants. Most Ranas in fact described their place as dangerous (*khataraа chha*).

In contrast to the old Rauteli Bichawa settlement, the demographic composition and economic status of Dhokka Block was more complicated. It was a new settlement characterized by mixed ethnic population groups such as Ranas, Dangauras, twice-born castes and untouchable castes. Some were big landowners while others were landless. In a strict sense, all of them were new migrants and their residencies were relatively short. Besides this, due to its proximity

to the Indian border, Dhokka Block residents had to endure the depredations of Indian gangs. Many small shop owners in Rampur and Beldandi experienced substantial losses from stealing. In order to minimum the loss, they had to sleep inside their shops at night. I was told by the locals that some local people were even killed by gangs. The Maoists represented another major source of disturbance to local people. Dhokka Block was a Maoist area during my fieldwork and it was not uncommon to see armed Maoists doing patrols around villages. They would often ask locals for donations and food.

During my stay in Dhokka Block, there were two incidents which clearly illustrate the impression Ranas had of their new home and the people they had to live with. On the first occasion, I was invited to join a marriage party of a high-caste Brahmin family in Beldandi, which was only less than 1 km from my host family. The party was held in the evening. Before I left for the party, my host family reminded me many times not to go because it was too dangerous. They said there were many bad people out at night and they would do anything they liked especially after getting drunk. I did not take their advice but I promised them I would go home with my research assistant early. On the second occasion - *Holi* festival time - I planned to attend *Holi* parties organized by Ranas from Bhursa and Darak in Dhokka Block (see Plates 5.3, 5.4 below). My host family, which originally came from Andaiya, told me I should be very careful because most Bhursa and Darak Ranas were heavy drinkers (*Raksi dherai khaana manchhe*). This implies a type of social differentiation between different Rana groups. Andaiya Ranas perceived themselves richer than others. The repeated reminders from my host family also reflected their negative perception of both Rana and other caste neighbours in the new place. I did not intend to persuade the whole picture by illustrating examples of my host family; however, the reality was that Dhokka Block residents behaved and talked carefully when they were at public places because they were afraid of the Maoists. At night, almost all kinds of social activities were absent. In order to avoid the Maoists' attention, one old Dhokka Block Rana pointed out that they seldom visited their neighbours and had family meetings. A sense of danger and insecurity was widespread in the Dhokka Block.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 124 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 5.3 This was the Darak *Holi* party I attended at night.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 124 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 5.4 Bursa *Holi* was one of the most popular parties I attended.

The more times I stayed with Ranas, I noted that they seldom spent time chatting with neighbours and no help was expected from them. During my fieldwork, I encountered the Maoists several times. They interrogated me on my research in the region and in particular about the Ranas. No Rana was willing to say one word to the Maoists on my behalf (see Chapter Two). Later, I discussed this matter and expressed my disappointment to Mantri Rana. He was from an ex-*Jimidar*'s family of Andaiya and was one of few Ranas I met who actively advocated the importance of retaining the solidarity of the Rana community. For him, the old place nurtured close neighbourhood relations and mutual trust, which offered a feeling of security. He shared with me his feelings of community relations before and after the Park-induced displacement:

Our relationship was closer in inside the park than outside. When we lived inside, the Rana population was big and we had enough things so we could always stay together and celebrate festivals together. Now, Rauteli Bichawa Ranas separate everywhere, some in Beldandi, near the highway and have even disappeared. We have less people and less food so we are only looking after ourselves. We are not interested in celebrating festivals and food together. Of course, if we only look after ourselves, many changes will be continuously happening in our community in the near future. Just like people living in towns, we don't know each other anymore.

'No help is available' (Sayaaga Paaidaina)

Sayaaga Paaidaina is another major reason that makes the new place unpalatable to Dhokka Block Ranas. Many Ranas have experienced that since they moved to Dhokka Block, they find it difficult to get help from neighbours and relatives when economic difficulties arise. Of forty-two Rana households interviewed in Dhokka Block, 17 households responded that they did not receive any help. While the rest did mention that they could sometimes get help from neighbours and relatives, this depended on the type of help they needed. For example, if help involved money and food, this was virtually non-existent. The reason was that every Dhokka Block Rana household was getting poorer. One Rana said to me, 'It is so hard to get help (*sayaaga*) because everyone is similar to us.' Another Rana said, 'I cannot get help in here when my food and money is run out. Inside is better because everyone knows me and believes me. In here, new people are living around me and it is hard for me to get help from them.'

Instead of seeking help from relatives and friends, obtaining loans became a new strategy for those Dhokka Block Ranas experiencing hardship. Previously, short loans were popular in overcoming temporary food shortages and contingency expenditures such as marriage and

mortuary rites. Following a harvest the Ranas could repay the debt in a short time but now their situation had changed. One Rana said to me, 'Today, in the new place, loan is loan and hard for us to return'. According to my household survey (Table 5.2), seventeen Dhokka Block Rana households had debts and most of them started receiving loans after the displacement. The loan varied from Rs 5,000 to Rs 400,000. All loans involved cash rather than grain. The figure might be even higher because some interviewed households tended to hide their debt.⁶² Half of households used loans to purchase rice to fulfil their subsistence needs. The figure matched the Ranas' claim about increasing food shortage after the Park-induced displacement.

Table 5.2 The Debt Situation of Dhokka Block Ranas

	The loan amount (Rs)*	Reasons
Household 1	10,000	Food purchase
Household 2	20,000 –25,000	Business
Household 3	10,000	Funeral rites
Household 4	20,000	Marriage
Household 5	30,000	House repairs
Household 6	400,000	Agricultural loans
Household 7	10,000	Food purchase
Household 8	50,000	Food purchase
Household 9	30,000 – 40,000	Food purchase, marriage
Household 10	15,000	Food purchase
Household 11	4,000	Food purchase
Household 12	7,000	Food purchase
Household 13	10,000	Food purchase
Household 14	5,000	Food purchase
Household 15	Have but amount unknown	Food purchase
Household 16	10,000 –15,000	Medical treatment
Household 17	22,000	Food purchase

*The loan amount was high comparing the village living expense. In my research area, for one meal it cost less than Rs 30; 1 kg rice the market price was about Rs 15-16; daily salary for casual labouring work was Rs 60- 150. (1 USD= 68 Rs)
Source: Household survey 2005

Ranas had no alternative but to rely on money-lenders' loans, in which the interest rate was often higher than loans from relatives and Rana neighbours. Levine (1988) has mapped the complex web of the credit system in rural Nepal. She sees credit as following the norm of kinship and is part of the local moral economy. This kind of loan can be interest-free. Ranas are now victims of a vicious loan cycle. Both Caplan (1970) and Levine (1988) in their in-depth ethnographic studies have demonstrated that indebtedness is a critical factor in influencing social relations at the village level. Firstly, they argue that debtor-creditor relationships reflect

⁶² Levine (1988: 218-219) in her study of indebtedness in rural Nepal, describes the difficulties in obtaining accurate data of indebtedness because of the deception of both debtors and creditors. However, she insists that indebtedness is a prevalent and traditional social phenomenon in rural Nepal. See also Jodha (1981) and Richards (1990) for a discussion on the role of traditional credit systems in Africa.

the local power structure. Caplan finds that due to the cash shortage, the tribal Limbus have started to obtain loans from high-caste Brahmins. As a result the new form of dependent and exploitative relationship is established between Limbus and Brahmins. Limbus debtors thus gradually become the subordinate group. Levine's careful observation on multi-ethnic villages in Humla district noted that instead of caste status, indebtedness is indeed the key issue in determining the character of power relations. She concludes that the rich people from either higher or lower castes who can control the credit have the power in the village. Secondly, their studies also indicated that serious indebtedness is one of the major contributors to 'landlessization'. Levine (1988: 214) states that 'the vicious cycle of debt may lead first to temporary mortgaging and then progress to permanent alienation of farmland.'⁶³ Indeed, Dhokka Block Ranas faced increasing pressure to sell their land to repay the debt.

The story of Buli Rana clearly illustrates the relationship between impoverishment, indebtedness and landlessization. His family moved to Dhokka Block five years ago. The land he received as compensation could only provide a half-year's food supply for his family. He could not get any job in the village so for another six months, and his family depended completely on loans to buy food. Even though the interest rate reached 60%, he had to accept this because he could not get any help from friends or relatives. Ranas also had to apply for loans because they could not manage the expenses associated with marriage, medical treatment, house repairs and funeral rites. Due to the accumulation of loans, some even needed to sell land to repay their debts. The Chanaru family moved to Dhokka Block sixteen years ago after they received three *bighas* of land as compensation. However, the new land could only support a half-year's food for his family. With no foreseeable alternative, he received an agricultural loan from the bank. Without the means to service the debt such as obtaining employment, the debt became more serious (approximately Rs 400,000). He also needed money for medical treatment and festival celebrations. As a result, just after moving to Dhokka Block three years ago, he started to sell land in order to survive. He felt so sad about his present life, 'I don't know what I can do except selling land for the debt. Nowadays, my family has to control food very strictly. We never have meat and never celebrate festival any more!'

⁶³ The literature on livelihood strategies in South Asia has shown that loans are a common strategy for rural people who encounter regular economic difficulties. However, when indebtedness becomes a chronic problem, in many cases farmers have been forced to sell their most important assets such as land or livestock to repay the debt (Jodha 1975; Jodha 1978; Nabarro et al. 1989).

The seriousness of indebtedness in Rana society can be summarized by Pachan Rana's comment. He suffered regular food shortages after the dislocation but unlike other Ranas, he was reluctant to get a loan. He often asked himself that 'If I get loan, how can I repay back? Finally, I have to sell my land and become poorer.'

As a consequence of the above reasons, Dhokka Block has become a culturally unpleasant place for displaced Ranas. Many interviewed Ranas felt that every day consisted of worry and anxiety. One Rana said of the place that 'no body will like it' (*Kasaile pani mann paraudaina*). In fact, their resentment to the new place is reinforced by their memories and recreation of their old place - Rauteli Bichawa. I recalled that when I conducted the household survey, I was requested by one depressed Beldandi Rana not to ask him about his previous life. He said sadly, 'Don't ask me about my life inside the park. I can only say everything was so comfortable for me when living inside.'

Implications for Livelihoods

In summary, although displaced Ranas culturally perceived their old and new land differently, the differences would not be meaningful without taking into account of the most important concern for Ranas, livelihood. The cultural values of land and rural livelihoods had indissoluble relationships. Farm work and various kinds of social interactions between people had nurtured Ranas' perceptions of their land. On the other hand, Ranas felt alienated from their new land, and this implied dramatic changes in their economic experiences. It was obvious that Ranas hated their new home because they faced severe problems in earning their livelihood. Food shortages became a chronic problem for Dhokka Block Ranas. Most of time they were too busy trying to earn a living and appeared to have no time or motivation for social activities. The consequence was that Ranas socially isolated themselves from each other. Close neighbourhood and social networks were not developed in the new place. This explained Ranas' feelings of danger, loneliness and helplessness in their new land. In this sense, dislocation not only caused psychological problems for Ranas but also the issues over economic survival led to the breaking up of their traditional social networks. Gupta (1987) emphasizes social networks as parts of 'informal security mechanisms' in rural communities

because it can offer them alternatives in coping with sudden and seasonal livelihood shocks.

She states:

The support available from sources such as kin and patrons helps the poor in times of need. It can take the form of smoothing out small fluctuations in income by such means as small short-term loans of rice or money. Far more important, it can take the form of help in the event of major contingencies, thereby providing a source of insurance against being reduced to destitution.

(1987: 114)

A number of case studies in Asia and Africa have confirmed that the community-based social security system is an important strategy for the poor (Agarwal 1991; Agarwal 1997; Ahmad et al. 1991; Platteau 1991; Streefland 1996; VanSchendel 1986). The forms of help from social networks can be very diverse such as: use of interhousehold transfers of food, livestock and loans (Jodha 1975; Jodha 1978; Jodha 1981; Rahmato 1987); borrowing grain from kin (Watts 1983); exchanging goods and services with neighbours and relatives (Rahmato 1987); and credit arrangements with relatives (Agarwal 1992; Rahmato 1987). However, these social security mechanisms have gradually declined in traditional societies due to social and economic changes as suggested by Dirks (1980) and Richards (1990). In order to help the rural poor, Richards (1990: 275) argues that rather than undermine local livelihood capacities, it is more important to develop strategies that strengthen traditional security mechanisms. The impacts of changes in social relations and disconnection of social networks on the Ranas' long-term livelihood will be further discussed in the following ethnographic chapters and the concluding chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the cultural meanings of land to Ranas that help me to understand the psychological impacts of displacement on Dhokka Block Ranas. It also emerges that they influence Ranas' long-term livelihoods. My ethnographic data has clearly shown that the old land was the home for Ranas and gave them a sense of well-being. Well-being refers to both material and spiritual satisfaction. Being moved out from the Park, most displaced Ranas started to realize that the new place was alien to them. They then suffered deep depression and symptoms of nostalgia spread to every Rana. The more hardship in their present livelihood, the more they idealized their lost home. The result was that their negative impression of the new place increased.

On closer examination of Ranas' feelings of loneliness and danger in the new place, I noted that the break up of social networks was a major factor. The reality was that although having friends and relatives around was welcome, there was no guarantee they could get support in times of need or distress. Most Ranas complained that they could hardly obtain help from friends and kin folk either in the form of food or money after the displacement because every Rana was becoming poorer. The close neighbourhood and community relationships were further undermined while Ranas ceased to participate in social activities. The result has demonstrated subtle relationships between the place and social relations. Stronger social networks were often attached to a particular place where people had resided for a long time and had frequent contacts with each other. Dramatic changes in livelihood would significantly influence interactions between people. It became clear that weak social networks would ruin the compromise as a crucial livelihood security mechanism.

This detailed exploration of what land means to the Ranas culturally has confirmed that the designation of a particular place for a distinct cultural group did not result in maintaining that same community. This simple notion reflects the policy makers' ignorance of the complexity of human-place relationships. Senses of belonging and community solidarity are gradually established through people's long contact with a particular territory and interactions between people in and around that place. Dislocation, did not only physically separate Ranas from their home, it also took away their previous social networks which resulted in their further impoverishment. However, as I have argued in Chapter One regarding the social changes, the rural population do not behave passively in regard to issues concerning livelihood. Their feelings of nostalgia about the perfect past life reflected Ranas' strong resentment of the current situation as caused by the State's land and conservation policies. Conversely, they are also active in creating a range of strategies to ensure their economic survival. In the following four chapters, I will thus focus on how Ranas adjust and modify their social relations with an attempt to negotiate the new economic environment and the implications of these changes for their livelihoods. The discussion of changes in Rana-Pahaari relationships focuses on the moving-in of Pahaaris as having caused substantial cultural, economic and political change to Rana society.

CHANGES IN LAND, CHANGES IN SOCIAL RELATIONS

A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, a system or a structure. It is a realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is, hegemony can never be singular. ...it does not just passively exist as a form of dominance. It has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own.

(Williams 1977a: 112)

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 131 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 6.1 Performing the traditional Rana *Holi* dance is not only for festive occasions but also symbolizes the Rana identity and their reaction to new realities.

CHAPTER SIX

LAND, PAHAARIS AND RANA THARUS

Introduction

Current social changes have not only resulted in Ranas' sense of homelessness and changed economic circumstances as discussed in the previous two chapters, but as this chapter will show, the new socio-economic developments have significantly influenced power relations at the micro level. The new power arrangement had interrupted Ranas' capacity to pursue subsistence livelihoods. This chapter focuses on the changing relationships between Rana inhabitants and the Brahmin and Chhetri castes⁶⁴ and the implications of these social relationship transformations for livelihood practices. Having substantially lost much of their landownership, Ranas were increasingly excluded economically and politically. They were no longer the dominant landholding group and previous Rana landowners had to work as tenants for the Pahaaris. The Ranas no longer shared any power in the local polity. New economic and political relationships have been established between Ranas and Pahaaris.

In recent decades, the caste system has played a dominant role in explaining the phenomenon of social exclusion in the literature on South Asia. Dumont (1980) argues that the hierarchical religious ideology inherent in the caste system has constructed the rank-based relationships between different caste groups; these asymmetrical relationships have been practiced in every facet of social life. Caste is thus treated as a superstructure which determines the operation of social relations. However, the scholarship on caste hierarchy has been challenged recently. For example, Raheja (1988a; 1988b) criticizes the scholarship for overlooking the impacts of local experiences, cultures, and histories on people's understanding and practice of caste relations. Her study has shown that the gift-giving practice in North India is not constructed by the purity and hierarchical nature of the caste but in fact represents the local concerns about auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. Gough (1960) also suggests that low caste people suffer economic deprivation not because of their low caste positions but as a result of new economic

⁶⁴ High caste hill migrants (Brahmin and Chhetri castes) were the largest population groups in Kanchanpur district (see p. 61) and their influence on the local economy and politics was substantial. Therefore, particular attention was paid to these two Pahaari groups.

and political realities. The new scholarship emphasizes the importance of exploring social relations from multiple perspectives because the relations are constructed by many factors such as local cultures as well as the economic-political environment, not merely caste. This chapter thus explores the nature of Rana-Pahaari relationships from multiple perspectives. Particularly, the ethnography of social exclusion as a phenomenon of interactions between both dominant and subjugated groups is explored. The agency of Ranas in resisting increased domination should not be neglected.

The main theme of this chapter is to look at the dynamics of the Rana-Pahaari relationship. Firstly, the hierarchical ideology of caste was not equally accepted by these two groups. Pahaaris adopted the concept of purity of caste and actively established their way of life as the model for higher caste people. For example, Ranas' diet and the role of Rana women in the society were often utilized by Pahaaris to justify the Ranas' uncivilized, low caste position and justify their own upper class position and superiority. In contrast the Ranas interpreted the caste system not in terms of hierarchy but as meaning different people (*Jaats*)⁶⁵ who had different origins and cultural practices. In order to shake off the lower caste label, Ranas emphasized that they were honest people having better moral behavior than others, particularly Pahaaris. The caste relationships of Ranas-Pahaaris were characterized by conflict. In the case of Rana-Pahaari relationships, caste was treated as a tool for both groups to negotiate and justify their social positions for better access to livelihood resources. In fact, my ethnographic data has supported the view that the emergence of new Rana-Pahaari relationships was the product of increasing conflicts over the control of land and the caste system.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first two sections discuss the formation of social exclusion and its relationship to the new economic-political environment and social structure, particularly the caste system through an extensive literature review. Later, the last three sections bring the discussion back to the situation of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. The ethnographic data demonstrates how the transformation of landownership greatly changed Rana-Pahaari

⁶⁵ Most Ranas used the term '*Jaat*' to define what caste means. A similar situation is found in Cameron's study of lower caste in Bhalara in far western Nepal. She points out that local people interpret '*Jaat*' as 'people share some implied features that make them different from others.' (2005: 14). In Quigley's book *Interpretation of caste*, he states: 'the sense of jati [same as Nepali word '*Jaat*'] is of those people who are in some fundamental way alike because of their common origins, and fundamentally different from those who do not share these origins' (1993: 4).

power relations and the role of caste, especially how it reinforced the sense of social exclusion and how the Ranas reacted to it and the implications of these power relationships on people's livelihoods.

Social Exclusion and Caste

The impacts of hill migration and other social changes on the livelihood of Ranas need to be assessed. An in-depth exploration of Rana-Pahaari relationships is a good starting point. However, whenever the discussion involves interactions between high Hindu caste groups particularly Brahmin and Chhetri and an ethnic group like Ranas, taking into account the caste system is unavoidable. Indeed, caste is extensively recognized as one of the major contributors to the formation of social exclusion in South Asian societies (Beall & Piron 2005; Gaige 1975).⁶⁶

According to Beall and Piron, the definition of social exclusion is:

...a process and a state that prevents individuals or groups from full participation in social, economic and political life and from asserting their rights. It derives from exclusionary relationships based on power.

(2005: 9)

The interlocking relationship between caste and social exclusion is well established because caste is believed to be the most influential social force which can structure economic, political and social relations between different caste groups. There are two major schools of scholarship on the interpretation of the caste system. Scholars such as Barth (1960) and Berreman (1979) argue that the word 'caste' can be referred to as a practice of social stratification which provides for a hierarchical ordering of higher and lower social rankings; therefore the caste system can be found in every society. However, this scholarship is seriously attacked by French sociologist Louis Dumont. In his influential work on the Indian caste system (1980), he strongly insists that the concept of 'caste' is merely associated with the practices of social stratification in Hindu society, which people are ranked hierarchically on the basis of their degrees of ritual purity and impurity. Although these two types of scholarship have different views on the scale of application of caste system in human society, they all perceive caste as a kind of social structure that constructs visible social rankings.

⁶⁶ For example, Gaige (1975: 74) in his detailed analysis of relationships of Pahaari and Tarai people, clearly points out that 'the caste ranking of migrants is an important determinant in the role they play in changing the economic, political, and cultural matrix of the Tarai.'

I find both notions of caste have their deficiencies in explaining the complex social world. The first scholarship tends to confuse the concept of caste and class relations, which Edmund Leach addressed. According to Leach (1960: 7), class relationships occur not only between different caste groups but within the same caste group which is tied of kinship and some cultural boundaries. In this sense, class and caste relations are different and they can co-exist in Hindu society. In Dumont's notion of caste, his religious-based interpretation of caste is found to be too ideological without sufficient ethnographic support. For example, the caste system has played an extremely important role in social relations in the South Asian literature and Nepal is no exception (Bhattachan & Pyakuryal 1996). The caste system was codified in Nepal by the National Legal Code (*Muluki Ain*) of 1854 by the Rana family rulers. Different cultural groups were categorized into five different caste groups and granted different social status under the *Muluki Ain*. While twice-born Hindu castes had the highest status including Newaris who inhabited the Kathmandu valley, plus a few hill tribes who shared the second highest caste ranking with representatives of the State, the remaining ethnic groups either from the hills or Tarai origin were classified as enslaved alcohol-drinkers (*Masinya Matwali*). However, this categorization might conflict with local social rank and look strange to many tribal groups. As Quigley (1993: 102) points out, many Hindu concepts such as commensality and connubium⁶⁷ are strange to the vast majority of Himalayan tribal groups and caste-based social rank also does not consider a cultural group like the Newar community in the Kathmandu valley. If the concept of caste is not fully comprehended by all cultural groups, it seems dangerous to say that the caste system influences all kinds of social relations.

Indeed, as I have discussed in Chapter One, any kind of hegemony is not perfectly practiced; it will be modified and transformed through local experiences and histories. Increasing scholarly work has shown that social ranking in South Asian societies is not necessarily related to the caste system or Dumont's notion of religious caste ideology (Burghart 1978; Krause 1988; Raheja 1988a; Raheja 1988b). Raheja's (1988b) two year ethnographic fieldwork of studying a gift-giving practice in a North Indian village, Pahansu, has convincingly shown that according to the locally cultural interpretation, this particular ritual practice is more to ensure the well-being of

⁶⁷ The practice of commensality and connubium in Hindu society prohibit the exchange of food and daughters between higher and lower caste groups. For example, Brahmins have to cook themselves to avoid food being contaminated. In tradition, intercaste marriage is not allowed.

the whole community rather than any implication of hierarchy. Concepts of auspiciousness and inauspiciousness are the primary reason for the existence of the gift-giving practice. In a study of a caste and labour relations in North West Nepal, Krause (1988) states that the influence of the local economic structure on agrarian and tenurial relationships, and local historical and political circumstances, should be seriously considered in the analysis of intercaste relationships. The findings have shown that owning different amounts of bullocks and the practice of usury, as well as control over labourers have determined local caste groups' economic status. Differences in wealth have further reinforced the caste hierarchy. Burghart's (1978) insightful analysis into the power relations between the Brahman, ascetic and King differs from Dumont's Brahmanical theory. He argues that the hierarchical relationships in the Hindu social system are not linear but 'ordered in various intersecting codes of hierarchy' (1978: 520). He explains that 'each person claimed the supreme rank according to his own hierarchical model of social relations' (1978: 519). For example, the Hindu king can claim his superiority in terms of a tenurial hierarchy derived from his lordship over the land. In order to seek their livelihood in the territory of the king, Brahmans' ritualistic and ascetic spiritual status are controlled by the king's tenurial code and their ranks have to incorporate the King's civil administration (1978: 529). Adopting a conclusion made by Leach (1960: 10), caste does not only mean rank but we should treat it as 'a system of interrelationship'.

I argue that caste is still one of the most important contributors to explaining the formation of power relations and social exclusion in South Asian societies. However, rather than working singularly, the practice of caste is often embedded in the local cultures and is closely incorporated with livelihood issues caused by new economic-political realities. In this chapter, I will thus focus on how new economic-political developments together with the caste system shift the Rana-Pahaari relationships and their relations to social exclusion. More importantly, the implication of these new social contacts towards livelihoods is discussed. Before doing so, the literature on the importance of land in ethnic and high caste group relationships is introduced because such research has outlined the importance of the role of the land in Rana-Pahaari social relations. The ethnographic data supports the notion that the transformation of landownership is a crucial economic-political factor which has shaped Rana-Pahaari relationships.

The Importance of Land in Ethnic-High Caste Group Relationships

A significant number of anthropological studies have shown that land has played a crucial role in influencing social relations in Nepal society because the emergence of new social relations between ethnic and Hindu caste groups is often associated with changes in the ownership of land (Caplan 1970; Guneratne 2002; Odegaard 1997). For example, in Caplan's study of relationships between the eastern Limbu community and high Hindu caste Pahaaris, the ethnography clearly points out that the loss of traditional *Kipat* land has made Limbus powerless economically, politically and socially. Pahaari migrants have successfully replaced Limbus as the locally-dominant landholding caste. The local polity is no longer controlled by the Limbu elites but by Pahaari officials and politicians. Moreover, traditional Limbu customs have declined and been replaced by more Limbus adopting the Pahaaris' way of life.

The argument is very relevant to the situation regarding the lowland Tarai where substantial changes in landownership and more frequent contacts between inhabiting Tharus and migrant Pahaaris are found. Many recent studies regarding different Tharu groups have focused on land. Land is a contentious issue in contemporary Tharu society. For example, both McDonough's (1997; 1999) and Odegaard's (1997) studies have shown that after the large-scale hill migration, the control over land has significantly shifted from the hands of Dangauras to the Pahaaris. This resulted in adverse impacts on Dangaura livelihood and Tharu-Pahaari relationships. Many Dangauras have become bonded labourers (*Kamaiya*) and exploited by their Pahaari landlords, thus forming a new economic relationship between Pahaari landowners and Dangaura tenants. Having no alternative, many Dangauras are moving to far west Tarai to escape over-exploitation. A similar observation is made by Guneratne (2002), who argues that the moving-in of Pahaaris has changed the way land resources are controlled in Chitwan. The loss of land has generated new relationships between Chitwan Tharus and Pahaaris. New ethnic-high Hindu caste relationships and the transformation of landownership are coincidental.

Although many studies have made it evident that the hill migration and new land policies have resulted in the domination by high-caste Pahaaris, this may not be the case of the Rana community. Over-generalization will constrain researchers from understanding Ranas' capacity to react and the dynamic changes that exist in economic-political environments. For instance,

McDonaugh's (1999) follow-up study on Dangauras from Dang has shown that more Dangauras have reclaimed their land from Pahaaris due to changes in the economic and political environment. Gurneratne's (2002) comparative study on Tharus from Dang and Chitwan has recorded that these two Tharu groups responded to social changes in different ways. While most Dangauras are now landless, most Chitwan Tharus are still landowners and able to use new opportunities to improve their livelihood. Rather than highlighting the lower social status of Ranas as exemplified in the caste system, this chapter focuses on how Ranas and Pahaaris perceive and relate to each other in different socio-economic and political environments. The analysis will explore the complex interactions between economic-political changes and the caste system regarding Rana-Pahaari relationships.

Hill Migration and Changes in Landownership

As discussed in Chapter Three, the substantial transformation of landownership in Rauteli Bichawa Village had coincided with Pahaari migration. The new socio-economic developments had stimulated the new Rana-Pahaari relationships. In the following paragraphs, I will take a closer look at the reasons for the emergence of a new local landownership structure and its implications on Rana-Pahaari relationships and livelihood practices.

According to my Rana and Pahaari informants, the interactions between Ranas and Pahaaris could be traced back before the hill migration, when Pahaaris migrated to the Tarai region as seasonal agricultural workers especially in winter when the area was free from malaria. Ranas pointed out that most Pahaaris worked with Rana families and they could not recall any serious social and economic confrontations happening between them. The early relationship between Ranas and Pahaaris was described as harmonious by both my Rana and Pahaari informants. Many Pahaaris told me that their previous Rana masters were generous because they would provide much surplus grains, lentils and oil seeds to their Pahaari workers. Apart from agricultural work, Pahaaris would engage in small trading with Ranas such as selling animals and mandarins in exchange for grains. My informants emphasized that the earliest contacts between Ranas and Pahaaris were short, seasonal and seldom involved land possession matters.

Their relationships changed significantly due to the State's increasing intervention in land management and the migration of Pahaaris. Due to distances and poor systems of communication, the administrative control of the State in the Kanchanpur district was very limited but relied on local functionaries *Jimidars* (see Chapter Four). It was believed that interactions with the outside world were almost absent in geographically isolated villages like Rauteli Bichawa. However, since the fall of the Rana family rules in the 1950s, the State played the leading role in shaping or manipulating the transformation of landownership from the hands of inhabitant Ranas to Pahaaris via a series of policies such as land reforms, government-sponsored resettlement programs in Tarai region and the introduction of conservation (see Chapters Three and Four). Under these new economic-political environments, these Pahaari migrants had the opportunities to access land resources and Ranas suffered substantial loss of land like most other tribes in Nepal. The major reasons attributed to the transformation of landownership were summarized by my Rana and Pahaari informants as follows.

The Reasons for Pahaaris Gaining Land

From the Rana perspective, Pahaaris were newcomers to Rauteli Bichawa but their flexibility in livelihood adaptation, literacy and links with government officials contributed to their ability to control land. Pahaaris' adaptability to their new environment was clearly evident in their diverse livelihoods.⁶⁸ During my stay in Iymilia, I observed that there were few grocery shops and most of them were owned by Ranas except one which was the biggest and most popular in Iymilia. Talking with my Rana informants, I realized that the first grocery shop in Iymilia was in fact established by a landless Pahaari migrant fourteen years ago (see Plate 6.2 below). He was originally from a neighbouring hill district – Dandeldhura - and married a Pahaari woman from Iymilia. The Pahaari shop owner told me that when he first came to Iymilia, he had no land and looked for construction work opportunities from a foreign-sponsored irrigation project but failed to obtain them. His parents-in-law did not respect him due to his poverty but he did not give up and he used his wife's jewellery as a mortgage to get a loan and start his business. At that time there was not even a shop in Iymilia and most local people went to the market. He saw this as a good opportunity and decided to spend Rs 7,000 to open a shop in Iymilia. Most of his clients

⁶⁸ Pahaaris are believed to be more adaptable to their new environment than Tarai Tharus. Gaige (1975) explains that the reason why hill migrants dominate the commercial sector in the Tarai is because hill people have a flexibility that permits them to take advantage of economic opportunities when they arise.

were Ranas and only three months later he earned Rs 30,000 profit. Currently, although Ranas manage the other four shops in Iymilia, these shops did not threaten his business in that the money he made from the shop was enough to support his five-member family. Moreover, he re-invested his money into the purchase of land and now he owns two and half *bighas* of land, from which he sold agricultural surplus and was steadily accumulating wealth.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 140 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 6.2 Within fourteen years, Air successfully ran the first grocery shop in Iymilia and owned more than two and half *bighas* of land.

Another example involved one untouchable caste family that had no land in Iymilia but the brothers concerned worked hard and were able to purchase two *bighas* of land from their Rana landlords.⁶⁹ Even though the family was not affected by the Park extension program, the family sent their relatives to the refugee camp in Beldandi and occupied some public land. They hoped to obtain land registration from the government. Illegal occupying of public land and forest clearings are common strategies for most landless hill migration families (both high Hindu and lowest castes) to obtain land in the Tarai region.⁷⁰ Unlike Pahaaris, many Ranas described themselves as 'today have, tomorrow we do not have' (*Ajaa Chha, Bholi Chhaina*). They admitted that they did not think they were as smart as Pahaaris who always took the initiative in expanding their landholding. One Rana who owned unregistered land explained to me why he

⁶⁹

Due to lack of male heir, the Rana landlord decided to sell some of his land.

⁷⁰

For a detailed discussion see Ghimire (1992).

became landless. He said, 'I have told the government many times that my ancestors cultivated the land more than a century but no one listened to me. What more I can do?' Most Ranas did not plan for the future and my observation showed that even though they faced serious food shortages, they refused to eat less. As a result, they finished their new harvest within a few months.

Literacy and having close relationships with government officials were another major reason for Rauteli Bichawa Pahaaris obtaining land. Literacy referred to the ability to speak and write Nepali. Matters regarding land registration and land transaction often require good communication with government officials verbally and literally. Pahaaris' close ties with officials were not necessarily a tie of kinship relations but more often a case of shared language and culture. This allowed Pahaaris to get assistance from officials to access land resources more easily. Many Ranas complained that in many instances, when disputes over land control happened between Pahaaris and Ranas, the results were often favourable to Pahaaris. For example, one of my Rana informants told me that without the consent and authorization of his grandfather, his granduncle signed a land transaction document for a Pahaari. The validity of the document was challenged by his grandfather but the Pahaari government official simply judged this document to be legal without giving any reason.

Many times I heard from Ranas that Pahaaris also took advantage of the illiteracy of Ranas and provided them with flawed contracts for them to sign. Instead of selling some parts of land, those contracts showed the consent of Ranas in selling all the land. Many Ranas repeatedly complained that Pahaaris bought their land without paying for it. When they went to the district office for help, Pahaari government officials often ignored their complaints. Ranas believed that many Pahaari workers were becoming the masters and new landowners because they had a close relationship with government officials. At present, although illiteracy was recognized by Rauteli Bichawa Ranas as a major cause for their poverty, only minor changes in their actual behaviour has occurred in the later generations of Rana families.⁷¹ Rana informants pointed out that they could not read Nepali so they were easily cheated by Pahaaris in land documents and

⁷¹ Two Rana children from an ex-*Jimidar* family studied in a private primary school, costing their father almost Rs 700-800 per month. This exceptional case showed that few new generation Ranas have begun to recognize the importance of education.

neither could they talk to government officials easily. Half of Rana children did not go to school and the situation was worst in the main Rana settlement of Iymilia. Most Iymilia Rana families still relied on their children to do farm work and therefore many Rana children could not get an education (see Plate 6.3 below). Like the case in Iymilia, most Rana families were wealthy enough to afford education for their children. However, most Rana parents did not think education was important. According to the Kanchanpur district government's data (KDDC 2002), Rauteli Bichawa Village shares the second lowest literacy rate (44.01%) in the 20 administrative units in Kanchanpur district.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 142 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 6.3 During the time I stayed in Iymilia, I taught village children basic English and children from different castes were welcome. However, after a few lessons, more than half the students were Pahaaris and while the number of Rana students declined.

The Reasons for Ranas Losing Land

Apart from illiteracy, the inability to pay debts was another major reason for Ranas selling their most important asset - land. Their heavy indebtedness was closely related to Ranas' high expenditures in daily life, ritual cycle ceremonies and social occasions. A description provided by a Rauteli Bichawa Rana clearly presented the lifecycle of most Ranas and the problems they faced:

Most Ranas have some land and get enough food for one year. However, because of marriage expenditures, they need loans from someone in January and February. After that, the biggest festival *Holi* comes, they need to celebrate. Then it is monsoon which is their busiest time for planting. Later on, they will celebrate other festivals such as *Dipalwaali*. Then it is the time for rice harvesting. They will get enough food so they never think to save money or sell some grains for repaying their debts. Years after years, they never think about debts. One day, their moneylenders come and ask for money back. Of course, they don't have any money and have to give their most important asset – land.

The link between indebtedness and landlessness has been illustrated in Chapter Five. Here the focus is on understanding why Ranas need more loans today than previously. Firstly, as the household survey data has shown in Chapter Five, most loans were spent on buying food and daily necessities such as rice, oil, vegetables, salt, kerosene and sugar. There was no doubt that park-induced displacement was one of the major contributors to rising daily expenses. However, the Ranas' eating habits should be taken into consideration as well. According to my observation, despite the fact that many Ranas mentioned they no longer had a food surplus to enjoy as previous generations did, a male Rana will still typically consume 17 to 18 pieces of big *Roti* for one meal.⁷² When I asked them why they did not consume less food, most of them only responded that they were used to eat large amounts of food. Also, Ranas perceived that their drinking habits resulted in indebtedness. *Daalu* (Rana language word for *Raksi*, alcohol) used to be part of the social life of Ranas, especially during festivals and social occasions. Traditionally, host families had to provide *Daalu* to all visitors. The importance of *Daalu* was reflected in a Rana description: 'Where there is Tharu, there is *Daalu*! Whenever we are free, we will drink!' Influenced by this cultural practice, most Ranas spent their money on drinking *Daalu* and therefore had to resort to loans.

The common story provided by my Rana informants was that if a Rana drank Rs 100 *Daalu* per day, in one month he spent Rs 3,000. Cash income was absent for a subsistence farmer and therefore he had to get loan at an interest rate of 5%. After one year his debt would have risen to more than Rs 36,000. It became almost impossible to repay the debt and as a result, he had to sell his land in order to honour the debt. Ranas pointed out that the money lenders were Pahaaris, giving them control over the transfer, organization and ownership of land. The Ranas gradually learned that drinking was an important factor in their poverty. At present, most Ranas

⁷² I fully acknowledge that farming requires many calories as it is labour intensive. However, according to my observations, it was uncommon for Pahaaris in my research area to consumed same amount of food as Ranas.

have abstained from drinking. A relatively wealthy Rana commented that if he drank like other Ranas, he would also become landless. Drinking had ceased being an essential part of the life of Ranas. I observed that many Ranas were reluctant to drink much even during particular social events such as festivals and marriage ceremonies.

Secondly, the Ranas spent much money on celebrations such as marriage, *Holi* celebration and funeral rites. It was apparent that only the previous generations could have afforded such lavish funerals but it tended to further impoverish Ranas and force them to get more loans. Let us take a closer look at Rana cycle ceremonies and social occasions. Traditionally, Ranas practiced '*Magani*' which could be interpreted as a system of arranged marriages (Kittelsen & Gurung 1999). In this system the marriage could be arranged during the couple's childhood. The boy's parents would bring gifts such as sweets, fish and clothes to the girl's family in order to retain the *Magani* relationship. When the girl and the boy reached marriageable age they were wed with both sides' consent. The marriage ceremony would last for a few days and involved many relatives and friends (see Plates 6.4 and 6.5 below). I was told that an *ex-Jimidar's* son's wedding ceremony cost almost Rs 250,000 (USD 3,637). Typically, Ranas needed loans to manage such marriage expenses but most cannot afford such extravagance. On one occasion when I was invited to a Rana marriage the host Rana family may have been rich in terms of owning more than 10 *bighas* of land, but even they did not provide any meat and *Daalu* to guests.



Plate 6.4 In the Rana tradition, the groom and the bride are carried by this bamboo-peacock fur made vehicle '*Doli*' (Rana language). It cost more than Rs 1,000 (USD 14.7).

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 145 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 6.5 Marriage is one of the most important social occasions in Rana society. All the relatives and the entire Rana community are involved.

Celebrating *Holi* was another social occasion where Ranas spent much money. Instead of celebrating the national-wide festival *Dashain*, Ranas only celebrate *Holi* as it has been their most important festival. When *Holi* approached, young boys and girls would form dancing groups and performed for the host families. On the first day of *Holi*, Ranas would give blessings to everyone by putting different coloured powders on people's faces. The dancing group would separate into male and female groups. An experienced drummer and an old, respected singer would lead the group in singing and dancing. The party would start from late afternoon until midnight. The most exciting moment was at night as more Ranas danced and sang loudly. The host family also provided good food for all participants such as meat, fish and alcohol. In each *Holi* party, the host family usually had to purchase at least 50kg of rice and also buy curry and *Raksi* in bulk. I saw one *ex-Jimidar* provide nearly 80 kg of rice within two hours for 150 participants. In the old days, Ranas would celebrate *Holi* for one whole month. Now the celebration lasts only a few days to eight days at the most. For example, the *Holi* celebration activities in Rampur lasted only four days and many resettled Ranas told me that they have never celebrated *Holi* since moving out from the Park.

Funeral rites were very important social activities for Ranas and entailed much expenditure on decorations, a new bed, visiting relatives, and food for all participants. All participants would give some 'mortuary wealth' to the host family and a small mortuary feast would be held for family members. After this, the family would choose Sundays for two '*Rotis*' (in Rana language this means funeral rites) for their dead family member. In the small *Roti*, relatives living nearby would be invited by the host family to have a mortuary feast and then they danced together. The function of small *Roti* was to purify the host family. After that, the family could then be socially accepted by other people. A big *Roti* was the most important part of the ceremony but also the most expensive. It was a necessary step for sending the deceased to heaven. All relatives - even those living far away - must attend the big *Roti* and the host family had to prepare a new bed, new bed covers and a body-like model for decoration. A special Rana dancing group would be invited to perform for at least two nights. On this particular day, varied dishes especially wild pig or fish must be provided by the host family. On average, a funeral ceremony would cost Rs 15,000 (USD 220).

New Economic-Political Environments, New Social Relations

Relationships of Pahaari landowners- Rana Tenants

One of the most obvious and new relationships after the changes in landownership was the appearance of Pahaari landowner-Rana tenant relationships. Pahaaris emerged as the new dominant landholding group while many Ranas became small landholding farmers, tenants and agricultural labourers. This was particularly serious in Pahaari dominated villages like Jhilmila and Beldandi. Ranas tended to have smaller landholdings (see Chapter Three). Previous relationships between Rana masters-Pahaari workers were fuelled by mutual necessity. While Ranas could obtain a sufficient labour force during the planting time, Pahaaris could get grain as remuneration. In contrast, this new type of relationship seldom involved social and cultural ties. From the viewpoint of Pahaari landowners, controlling expenses and maximizing income from the harvest were the priority considerations. Previous Rana landowners now had to work for Pahaaris as tenants in order to survive so obtaining enough grain was their most important concern. As a result, confrontations over agricultural investment and crop sharing arrangements often occurred between Pahaari landowners and Rana tenants. Their new economic relationship became tense. The experience of my case study family headed by Pachan was a good example. His experience symbolized the typical relationships between Rana tenants and Pahaari landowners.

The park-induced displacement and the new land title policy had dramatically changed Pachan from a subsistence farmer owing two *bighas* of land to a small landholding farmer with only three *kattas* of land (see Chapter Four). Without any alternative, he worked as a tenant. At the beginning, he found it difficult to get tenanted land in Beldandi because he did not have a good relationship with local landowners and all of them were Pahaaris. Finally, he got one and half *bighas* of land from two Pahaari landowners⁷³ but relationships with them were poor. He pointed out that as his family was heavily dependent on tenanted land for basic survival, they worked very hard in order to obtain more grain. His request to his landowners to share the cost of fertilizers was rejected. According to him, because of half-half sharing practices between tenants and landowners, he got only four bags of husked rice from one and half *bigha* of land

⁷³ Most large Pahaari landowners in Beldandi had other businesses in town or even in Kathmandu so they seldom cultivated their own land. Instead they leased their land to other small landholding farmers or those who were landless.

(75kg per bag, after husking, only 2 bags of rice) which was just enough for two months. He recalled one instance when even though his family worked very hard, they only got three bags of husked rice because his Pahaari landowner was not satisfied with the harvest and gave them less grain. Unfair treatments from Pahaari landowners and poor productivity of tenanted land in Dhokka Block were two major reasons why he often changed landowners. As a result, within four years, he changed landowners four times due to disputes. Being a tenant, he always felt anxious due to the threat of termination of his tenancy and the weather. He said to me that 'during the past two years, I always needed to work hard but I never got enough food. I really want to make changes.' Similar to Pachan, 65% of interviewed Beldandi Ranas worked as tenants and all of their landowners were Pahaaris. Almost half of the interviewed Beldandi Ranas could not get food that would last 6 months from their tenanted land (see Chapter Three). Economic dependency between Ranas and Pahaaris was not only found in the tenant-landowner relationship but also in the debtor-moneylender relationship. It reinforces the point in the previous section that most Ranas fail to manage their finances and need loans from Pahaaris.

Local Political Power Transformed

New Rana-Pahaari economic relationships also implied a structural change in political power. In a village's economic-political structure, owning large landholdings generally dominated all political activities (see Chapter Four). The effect of loss of land had thus further excluded the Ranas' participation in local politics. The outcome was that Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were almost absent in all civil and local political positions. This further weakened Ranas' capacity to earn a better living. The intertwined relationships between economic and political power are well illustrated by the story concerning Ward 5.

According to the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, the loss of control of land in Ward 5 was the first time that they noticed the threat from their new neighbouring Pahaaris. Ranas pointed out that about 55 years ago, a Brahmin Jaya Bhata who worked on the border between India and Nepal first came to Ward 5. He always bought gifts for Ranas with the intention of building a good relationship with his Rana landowners. Within 20 years, he used many tactics including lending loans to Ranas and his good relationships with government officials also allowed him to register land easier; he finally controlled all the land and all the Ranas became landless and left Ward 5.

Therefore, Ward 5 was a Pahaari settlement before the displacement and most landowners in Ward 5 were descendants of Jaya.⁷⁴ After taking control of all the land in Ward 5 of Rauteli Bichawa, Jaya became the biggest landlord and was appointed *Jimidar* by the government. His influence immediately penetrated to local politics so that at the village level he became village leader. After him, almost all village leaders were Pahaaris, except the *ex-Jimidar* Vagat Rana. Vagat was one of few Ranas who was active in politics and wanted to challenge the domination of Pahaaris. However, without the help from another Brahmin, Chandra Bhata, it was unlikely he would achieve this. When Jaya completely controlled Ward 5, he was not satisfied and planned to expand his power to Ward 4. All Ranas were afraid of Jaya. At that time, Chandra settled in Ward 2 and received assistance from Rana families to build his house. Ranas told Chandra the problems they had with Jaya. Chandra requested Ranas to support him and he would be able to solve any problems. One day, two Bhatas meeting in a drinking place fell into a fight and Jaya was later set on by a group of Ranas. Later, although Chandra lost the first election to Jaya, with substantial Rana support he won the second election and replaced Jaya as the new village leader for the next ten years. After that, his close friend Vagat Rana succeeded as village leader. He is the only Rana to have had this post.

The committee records also showed that Ranas were the minority group in local political bodies such as the BZUGCs. During my preliminary fieldwork in early 2004, when I first visited the headquarters of RSWR and outlined my intention to study the Rana community, the Chief Warden immediately expressed his reluctance to agree with my research. He commented that the Ranas were uneducated and socially backward. I was told by Rana informants that although every committee would include at least one Rana representative, his opinion was not taken seriously by the Pahaari-dominated committee. All chairperson positions on the local committees in my research areas were controlled by Brahmins and Chhetris. I met one well-educated Rauteli Bichawa Rana who had completed college level education yet he could not obtain a junior position in the government or an NGO. He complained that Ranas were always excluded by other communities. For example, no Ranas could work in a well-known Tharu

⁷⁴ Jaya died four years ago. My Rana informants told me that two months before he died, all his skin had become rotten. His family agreed to give him euthanasia.

project - 'BASE' - in Kanchanpur.⁷⁵ Finally, he set up his own local organization called 'PAL' (Public Awareness Campaign) with friends twelve years ago. The committee consisted of six Ranas and five Dangauras and the project focused on improving education for the backward communities. Unfortunately, the organization failed to obtain any financial support from the government or other funding organizations. The well educated informant pointed out that all senior posts were controlled by Pahaaris, and they were reluctant to give any opportunity to Ranas. The reality was that during the village elections, I was told that nowadays Ranas seldom stood together to support Rana candidates because Ranas were too occupied with their daily survival. Such an outlook was communicated by a Rauteli Bichawa-born Rana in Dhokka Block:

After moving out from the park, our community is disappearing. When we are forced to leave our original land, we don't have enough food for survival. We never think about the solidity of community anymore. Today, we always think of ourselves. The fact is that some of us work in India, some go to somewhere else and finally our community is disappearing. I feel very sad that people only look after themselves and our community is disappearing.

To summarize, the present Ranas' subordinate economic and political position is due to the new economic and political realities. Loss of land not only resulted in poverty for Ranas but it also deprived them of their rights to participate in the local polity. This further limited Ranas' control and access to the most important livelihood asset - land. Moreover, together with the caste system, social exclusion had further expanded and penetrated into every aspect of social contacts between Ranas and Pahaaris. In the next section, how these two groups perceive each other and the influence of caste will be discussed.

Caste and Constructing of 'Otherness'

Before I analyze the influence of caste system on the Rana-Pahaari relationships, I found that Edward Said's theory of Orientalism offered me an excellent gateway to understanding the process of constructing of 'otherness' and its relationship to social exclusion. According to Said (1985: 1), the West's construction of the Orient is not only imaginative but is on the basis of accumulated Western knowledge.⁷⁶ The way that the West perceives the Orient is not

⁷⁵ Backwards Society Education (BASE) was a local grass-roots organization founded by a Dangaura from Dang. The influence of BASE spread rapidly and more recently into the Kailali and Kanchanpur districts. However, most Ranas have perceived it as a Dangaura society and felt that they were excluded from it. Detailed discussions are found in Odegaard (1997; 1999).

⁷⁶ In the introduction to his book *Orientalism*, Said clearly points out that his thinking is deeply influenced by Michel Foucault's notion of discourse (Foucault 1972; Foucault 1977).

particularly related to any objective fact; more likely, it reflects the developments of knowledge of the West itself. He says:

The Orient is an integral part of European *material* civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles.

(1985: 2 Emphasis added originally)

Also, Said (1985: 3) points out that strengthening themselves and undervaluing others is the typical strategy found in the process of social construction. The motivation behind this strategy is that the constructing side intends to maximize its own interests. His theory can explain how the dominant Pahaaris group constructs Ranas. However, the theory of Orientalism does not provide enough discussion on how dominated groups perceive themselves and construct others. For this reason, I find the recent scholarly work on agency (see Chapter One) can further expand our discussion of social construction. For example, Ortner's (1999) monograph about the relationships of Sherpas and their Western mountaineering masters (*Sahibs*) has clearly demonstrated that although their relationship is so unbalanced, Sherpas can dismiss what they see as their Western Sahibs' arrogance and casual approach to sexual behaviour. Scott's (1985) study on peasant resistance also illustrates that powerless peasants develop many strategies to resist unfair treatment and express their anger. Therefore, in the following two parts, I will explore how Pahaaris construct Ranas as well as Ranas' perception of Pahaaris. The role of livelihood in motivating these social contacts is discussed. The influence of caste system on social construction will also be assessed.

Pahaari Perception of Ranas

Pahaaris consider themselves to be of higher social status than Ranas and this may well echo traditional caste ranking. My Pahaari informants told me that some old generation Pahaaris refused to accept the water from Ranas because they believed in the purity and impurity of caste ideology.⁷⁷ However, more popularly, most Pahaaris modified the caste concept by integrating their ways of cultures as the model for high caste people. Cultural practices such as the power of Rana women in their society and diet justified the Pahaaris' view that Ranas were deservedly of lower caste status. These examples may not necessarily relate to the caste

⁷⁷ Rules of intercaste interaction such as sexual relations, marriage, commensality and food (particularly water and rice) were clearly described in the *Muluki Ain* ((Macdonald 1975: 283-286).

system itself but they do illustrate how the concept of caste was modified, interpreted and practiced at the local level.

One of the most obvious examples was that Rana women were often portrayed by Pahaaris in a negative way due to assumptions made about their attire, behavior and attitudes. Odegard's study on Tharu-Pahaari relationships in the district of Kalaili (1999) bears this out. Most Pahaaris thought the traditional Rana women clothes were too 'open' because they showed others too much of their bodies. Also, Pahaaris had the impression that Rana women were too independent in their right to refuse '*Magani*' fiancé, cultural acceptance of second marriage and had less respect for their husbands. These practices were all social taboos in a higher caste society and the most glaring example of this concerned a story about the serving of food. According to Pahaaris, because in the past a Brahmin girl had married 'down' by taking a Rana servant as a husband, Rana women were thus believed to have higher social prestige than Rana men. For example, men were not allowed to go into the kitchen. Rana wives could use their feet to pass plates of food to their husbands. If they did not like their husbands, they could leave them and take new husbands. These social acceptances led Pahaaris to believe that Rana women were casual regarding sex and did not respect marriage. A story concerning a Rana girl from one of the wealthiest families in Iymilia as told by a Pahaari woman illustrates such perceptions.

The girl had a *Magani* fiancé but she got pregnant twice to another Rana male. When the girl's parents found out they sent her to India to have an abortion but she got pregnant again and her parents requested him to marry her. He refused because he was angry at the loss of their first baby. The '*Magani*' fiancé wanted the engagement stopped and without any alternative, the parents gave some money to one Rana male from a poor family to marry their daughter. She commented that due to the popularity of premarital sex among Rana girls, it was unlikely a Rana husband would have a virgin girl as a wife. She further pointed out that marriage was not seriously treated by Rana women due to the high incidence of new Rana wives 'running away'. Sometimes wives became pregnant when they went back to their natal houses, so the husband's family could not do anything. She concluded her understanding of husband-wife relations in Rana society in this way:

I agree that Rana women get much freedom than us [married higher caste Pahaari women]. After marriage, they never think this is ending. I mean married Rana women never scare to talk to other guys even though husbands are in front. Like us, we cannot do a lot of things. Also, if a married Rana woman gets pregnant at her parent house, her husband also needs to accept. It seems this is their culture. Rana wives definitely have more power than their husbands. In old generation, wives can even hit their husbands and say some bad words to husbands and run away with other guys. However, these seldom happen in new generation. Nowadays, before marriage, the new couple will meet each other.

Utilizing the Ranas' unique gender rules helped the Pahaaris slander Rana society. Most of my Rana informants felt that the Pahaaris' interpretation of the Ranas' gender power relations was completely wrong. They pointed out that Rana wives would not give husbands food with their feet. One old Rana said to me angrily that this kind of distortion of power relations between Rana males and females by Pahaaris was a form of cultural domination. The fact was that Rana women staying in kitchens and eating was the way to satisfy God. Another young and educated Rana commented that it might happen only if the wife did not like her husband. In this circumstance, she might use her foot to give food, never wash clothes and sleep away from her husband. He also agreed that many Rana wives would run away if there were too many arguments with their husbands. In most cases, they would establish new relationships before they left their husbands and their new husbands had to give money to the women's ex-husbands as compensation. These were problems inherent in the *Magani* marriage system rather than issues of gender relations. My extensive fieldwork also allowed me to understand that Rana women's relative freedom in some aspects did not represent the full picture of power relations between husbands and wives in Rana society. Indeed, due to dramatic social changes, the gender relations in Rana society were challenged (for details see Chapter Eight). Pahaaris' over-simplification of Ranas' gender relations was a justification for treating Ranas badly.

The Rana diet was another topic that Pahaaris frequently talked about in their daily conversations to undervalue Ranas' social status. According to the rules of the caste system, consuming meat (particularly pork) and drinking alcohol were labeled as uncivilized and therefore what lower castes indulged in (Srinivas 1962). Traditionally, higher-caste Pahaaris were reluctant to consume pork and alcohol. However, as mentioned in Chapter Four and in the previous section, pork and *Raksi* were parts of the Rana diet. Many Ranas kept pigs and during festivals and marriages, most Ranas would eat pork and drink *Raksi*. A higher economic status

was often granted if a Rana family could provide wild pigs on those social occasions. Moreover, during my fieldwork, most of my Pahaari informants expressed their extreme concern about the food I received from my Rana host families – about which I had no problem. They were nonetheless curious about how I could adapt to Ranas' spicy and salty food. The Rana diet was seen as having less variety and including only plain rice. In my observation, a standard Rana-style dish was served with very little curry and large amounts of rice. Lentil soup was not as important in the Rana diet as in the Pahaaris' diet. On average, Rana families would only have lentil soup once or twice a week. The Nepali milk tea (*Chyaa*) which was always served as a welcoming drink for visitors was not common among Ranas. They would provide me with a glass of water instead of milk tea, which I could get often from Pahaari families. Although less varieties of food and no drinking milk tea did not contradict the caste system, Pahaaris' comments on the Rana diet clearly indicated they looked down on Ranas as being of lower social and economic status. It also seemed that Pahaaris always thought Ranas uncivilized in that they did not respect and provide food to visitors.

Rana Perception of Pahaaris

Ranas defended themselves from the Pahaaris by simply changing their self-image and in fact they gave a new meaning to the caste. Meanwhile, instead of highlighting the cultural practices of different caste groups as Pahaaris, they emphasized themselves as better and more moral people than Pahaaris. Most Ranas I talked with clearly knew the existence of the caste system and their position as the enslaved alcohol-drinker (*Masinya Matwali*). However, they did not interpret caste as a hierarchical social system as the Pahaaris did. One Rana shared his view of caste with me:

Caste, I know. I know there are five different caste groups (*Jaats*) under the caste system. I don't think there are ranking relations between different caste groups. These groups are different only because they have different cultural practices and lineage.

Therefore, caste was not a common topic for most Ranas when discussing the Rana-Pahaari relationships but the concept of 'honesty' was. During my early fieldwork, I gained the impression that Ranas were honest people through their own words and a few comments uttered by Pahaaris. The word 'honesty' created a very positive image for Ranas to new people like me. Most Ranas described themselves as 'we are simple and honest (*imaandaar*) people'.

Particularly, the word 'honesty' was used as a defense by the Rana to justify their weakened position compared to the Pahaaris. For example, one of my Rana informants described Ranas in the following way:

Ranas are very scared to talk at the beginning. We are really honest but are often afraid of people. When we see new people, we always think they are junior post of the Army (*Sipahi*). We will thus feel scared and run away.

Also, Ranas' honesty served as an illustration of how they interpreted having lost land to the Pahaaris. Many Ranas told similar stories to me:

They [Pahaaris] always provide *Raksi* for us and ask us to show them land documents. However, after the transaction, they never pay us money.

The continued emphasis on honesty was used by the Ranas to regard themselves as being better than Pahaaris. Honesty also became a good excuse to justify Ranas' weaker position in their contacts with Pahaaris. Ranas thought that they suffered economically and political exclusion not because they were lower caste ranking but due to their simple honesty. Therefore, the term 'honesty' also implied 'dishonesty' in the Pahaaris. Rather than describing Pahaaris as people who cheated, Ranas tended to emphasize themselves as being honest.

However, the honesty of Ranas was not recognized by most Pahaaris, for example Iymilia Pahaaris who had a long history of contact with Ranas. Two stories regarding a Rana *ex-Jimidar* family were told by Iymilia Pahaaris. In one instance, the son of the *Jimidar* hunted deer from the reserve and was caught by the game scout. When he was on the way to the headquarters the *Jimidar* saw him and gave him the signal to escape. As a consequence, the old *Jimidar* was attacked by the game scout and the son did not receive any punishment. Indeed, in a similar case involving another Rana, he killed the deer at home but was spotted by army personnel. Although the floor was full of blood, he still denied the accusation. Another story regarding the same *Jimidar's* son and a just married Rana girl emerged during my fieldwork. One night, they met each other and had sex but their immoral behaviour was exposed by the girl's brother. Next morning, the body of the girl was found in the village and most villagers thought she killed herself because of her shameful behaviour. Her husband suspected this and requested further investigation. A village community meeting was therefore held in Iymilia. Later, it was revealed that the son had poisoned the girl. In an attempt to end the matter the old *Jimidar* decided to give cash compensation to the girl's husband but his offer was

rejected. The case did not get to court and the son went back to the village after a few days in exile because the Rana community decided not to take further legal action. After telling these two stories, the Pahaari shared with me his perception of Ranas:

From their appearance, they seem very honest. But they can be actually more 'smarter' than us' The *Jimidar* son killed the girl and said, 'No, how honest are Ranas?

I should not believe such stories at face value because they were told in such a way to claim Ranas' better moral behaviour than Pahaaris or justify Pahaari superiority over the Ranas. These stories showed me how Pahaaris and Ranas perceived and constructed each other. There were many instances indicating that Pahaaris could not get along with Ranas in daily life. I heard a story concerning one Iymilia Pahaari and his Rana neighbour. The Pahaari wanted bullock carts to carry heavy things. He asked his Rana neighbour but he refused to help unless he could get chickens. Then the Pahaari asked him, 'When do you want to have chickens - before or after the help?' The Rana responded, 'Before'. The Pahaari felt very disappointed about his Rana neighbour's behaviour: 'He never thinks we are neighbours even though the help is so small and easy.' He went on to say that, 'They are greedy people. If you have much money, they can be your friends but this kind of friendship is not forever because Ranas change easily.'

Most Pahaaris did agree that Ranas were simple people but their comments should be treated cautiously. One Beldandi Pahaari who had long experience in cooperating with Ranas for farming work said to me, 'Ranas are very simple and shy people. Even though they get drunk, if you pretend to be stronger than them, hit them, you never will get any problem from them because they run away.' A similar comment was made by an Iymilia Pahaari: 'Despite the fact that we can't get help from Ranas easily, if we want to get land documents from them, we just provide a little bit of *Raksi* and chicken meat; then they will easily give you the documents.'

Social Conflicts in Daily life

Both Pahaaris and Ranas have the ability to construct realities about each other and the ways they perceive each other have become the basis of a system of knowledge, life experience and intentionality. Without doubt, caste was one of the most influential means for constructing the social relations of Ranas-Pahaaris. However, it was often practised in different ways to justify

people's own interests. The escalating confrontations over the control of resources increased their resentment of each other. In fact, it was commonplace nowadays for every trivial matter to become a battleground for Ranas and Pahaaris. Ranas often complained that Pahaaris were dangerous people because they had always wanted to control Ranas. A Beldandi Rana shared his feeling about Pahaaris as follows:

If I get the chance, I want to stay with Ranas, however I know I can't. They [Pahaaris] scold at me just because my chickens go on their land. If I stay with Ranas, this should not be a problem at all because I will let their chickens go to my home also. Nowadays, I must keep my chickens at home strictly. It is very difficult for me. You know, for Ranas, we really need lots of chickens for slaughtering in festivalsThey always want to show their power on us so I don't like them. Now living in here [Beldandi Ward 9], I feel I'm in jail because Pahaaris are all around me.

An Iymilia Rana gave me another example how Pahaaris exercised their authority over Ranas and the way Rana responded:

When Pahaaris visit Rana houses, dogs sometimes bite them. After that, they will easily ask for a fine as compensation from us. The amount is about Rs 50 to Rs 100. Due to many kinds of unreasonable requests, many Ranas are afraid of Pahaaris. They sell land here [Rauteli Bichawa] and even leave the village to go to India. As a result, half of the Rana population is disappearing.

Resentment was fueled on both sides. In the eyes of Pahaaris, Ranas were stubborn, money-minded and mean people and Pahaaris considered their behaviour strange. One Iymilia Pahaaris shared with me his thirteen years of interacting with Ranas and concluded that:

From my own experience, it is really hard to develop friendship with Ranas. If you are also drinking person, drinking with them, probably you can easily become their friends. Or alternatively, you give them some gifts. As I do not do these, despite many years' contact, I still can't make real Rana friends. I can only say that if you have money and spend on them, then you become their friends.

Another Iymilia Pahaari woman also pointed out that she always found it difficult to understand the mentality of Ranas. She stated quite firmly:

They [Ranas] are really different from us. Sometimes we give them some ideas but they will still follow their own way. For instance, most Ranas want to get more money, however they won't spend it but keep it at home. Even though someone is seriously sick and need to send to hospital, they still don't want to use this money. Wealthier families always don't want to wear nice clothes or eat good food. On the other hand, the poor ones, they work hard and spend all their money on drinking *Raksi*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how recent social changes had shaped Pahaari-Rana relationships and influenced Rana livelihoods. Substantial loss of landholding did not only directly cause the immediate economic problems for Ranas but also further marginalized Ranas socially, economically and politically. Indeed the emergence of social exclusion was one of the major reasons for the Ranas' increased poverty and loss of their subsistence livelihoods. In the economic sense, due to their high flexibility, literacy and good social ties with government officials, twice-born caste Pahaaris had more opportunities to access land resources. In contrast the illiteracy of Ranas had made them the losers under the new land registration policy. Moreover, the conservation-induced displacement took away Ranas' fertile land and heavy indebtedness further forced them to sell their land. As a result, Pahaaris became the dominant landholding group. Many Ranas had to work as tenants but their relationships with Pahaari landowners were tense.

Loss of control over land also shifted the existing political structure in Rauteli Bichawa. Ranas could no longer compete with Pahaaris to obtain civic positions such as village leader. Their importance was neglected by the Pahaari-led government or related institutions and they were excluded from certain political bodies or organizations. In the social context most Ranas deeply felt and experienced the dominance of the Pahaaris. The social exclusion had limited Ranas' opportunities to retain better livelihoods.

Ranas realized that they were down the caste scale, but my ethnographic data also clearly showed their resistance to this. This challenged the notion that the acceptance of social position as formulated by the dominant group or specific social structure meant that poorer groups had no option but to remain powerless and deprived. In the case of Rana-Pahaari relationships, if caste was the superstructure which controlled all caste groups' behaviour, I can say that it did not work perfectly at the local level. The Ranas simply interpreted caste as their being a different cultural group and challenged the dominance of Pahaaris. Ranas were actively engaged in a struggle for equal social status. This chapter has shown that the process of social exclusion is complex and it is the outcome of interactions between social structure, new economic-political realities and people themselves. Even the most socially deprived group will

still desire to implement ideas and strategies that allow them to adapt to and take advantage of a new environment. In order to understand the impact of social changes on Rana society, an in-depth exploration of their constraints and capacities to act is equally important. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will take a closer look at how Ranas actively transformed their household structure to fit the new economic environment.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LAND AND ASSOCIATED CHANGES IN RANA THARU HOUSEHOLDS

Introduction

In dealing with new livelihood realities associated with the changes in land ownership, Ranas are not passive and the main theme of this chapter is to look at the transitions in Rana households during the last few decades. The discussion challenges the notion that conventional household analysis fails to understand the complex changing processes of households. In the literature on household studies, while household transformation is often analyzed as the outcome of cyclical developments, economic or cultural products (Yanagisako 1979), the mutual embeddedness of household units and their livelihood has not been given full attention until recently (Netting et al. 1984; Wilk 1997). This chapter borrows extensively from the new theory of household, which readdresses its essentially adaptive nature and its ability to respond to local and wider social changes. The objective is to explore how the Park extension program and other social changes shaped the Rana household structure and relationships and the ways in which Ranas react these changes.

My ethnography of Rana households clearly illustrated that the formation, structure and management of Rana households was fundamentally linked to the issue of livelihoods. In the past, abundant land resources allowed Ranas to live in joint-typed households. This particular household arrangement not only fulfilled labour needs but also secured the mutual security for every household member. Gradually, undivided and big households (in Rana known as '*Badaghar*') became the ideal household model for Ranas as long as such establishments did not become divided or separated. This household structure also served as an important social safety net for most Ranas. However, changes in the economic landscape motivated by new developments in demography and socio-economic reality significantly challenged the maintenance of traditional Rana households. Within the lifetime of most Ranas, they first experienced household fission when they settled in Rauteli Bichawa. They realized that a big family could no longer offer them food security as before. Moreover, in a detailed comparison of my four study Rana settlements, I noted that the process of household transformation was not

identical due to their different histories and economic realities. It was evident that the rapid decrease in food security caused by the Park extension program had resulted in faster and more conflict-ridden household partitions in resettled Rana households than non-resettled households. It has been reported that one resettled *Badaghar* household broke up into six households within ten years.

This chapter is composed of three sections. In the first part of this chapter, the traditional Rana household structures are introduced with particular emphasis on their relationship to the land. The discussion serves as foundation for the later analysis of household transformations in Rana society. The second part provides a literature review of household studies, which have readdressed the intertwined relationship of household and livelihood. Finally, the last part of this chapter looks at the changes in Rana households. The section demonstrates that there is no single development pattern for households experiencing transition and changes in households have been caused by demographic factors, economic changes, local histories, cultural values and human agency. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, it is livelihood that is the crucial link between all these factors.

Traditional Rana Household Structure

This section discusses some key characteristics of traditional Rana household structure by looking more closely at its formation and management. Rana household structure was first noted by Gurung and Kittelsen (1996) who wrote that the transformation of Rana households followed the domestic developmental cycle. They point out that Rana households are often joint-typed or extend-typed, in which 'brothers often live together in one household with their wives, unmarried children, and married sons with their own families'. Later disputes caused the household to split into several households (1996: 78-79). While their work is invaluable due to the limited literature on Rana society, they did not emphasize enough the adaptive nature of the Rana household structure. Their work ignored the existence of '*Badaghar*' and its cultural and economic significance to Ranas. I argue that only taking the developmental cycle perspective cannot allow us to assess the recent social changes on Rana households unless the transitions of *Badaghar* household are taken into account.

The Concept and Practice of Badaghar Households

According to my Rana informants, the typical Rana household was a big family with many generations living under the same roof, and members had no memory of household partitions since their ancestors migrated to Rauteli Bichawa. They called it *Badaghar* (Rana language, Nepali '*Thulo Pariwaar*', meaning 'big family'). It was thus not unusual for there to be 40-50 in one *Badaghar*. All household members must pool their labour for farming work and contribute their income from the harvest, share in the expenditure and use one kitchen. The kitchen was an important symbol of membership affiliation. The size of *Badaghars* was reflected in the time it took to cook meals, which could take many hours due to the size of the household.

This cultural interpretation, *Badaghar*, did not literally mean the joint-typed household. The biggest difference between *Badaghar* and the joint-typed household was that the latter focused more on household composition and was only one household developmental process. For example, Gray defines a patrilineal joint-typed household as having 'up to fifteen members consisting of two or more agnates related lineally and/ or collaterally, their wives, married sons and unmarried children' (1995: 57). In this sense, the emergence of joint-typed household occurred when the number of household members increased and had at least two couples. In contrast, in the case of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, *Badaghar* was a household structure that had particular historical significance: whenever a household partition happened, the household was no longer technically a *Badaghar*. In Caplan's study (1970) on the Limbu community, he clearly points out that the joint-typed household was popular in tribal groups but it was often treated as a 'temporary arrangement'. He explains that the weak financial situation of just married sons in supporting their own families at the beginning and cultural taboo of leaving the main household when the father is still alive are two major reasons for the popularity of joint-typed households in a Nepalese village. Therefore, when young couples garner enough economic dependence, they tend to form their own household. A similar view is shared by Thornton and Fricke (1987) who argue that while the big family is an ideal model in South Asian society, this reality 'seldom lasted long' (1987: 753). However, the pursuit of *Badaghars* avoided frequent household partitions in Rana society. So what were the underlying reasons allowing Ranas to maintain unbroken *Badaghar* households during the last few generations?

Firstly, the popularity of *Badaghars* was very much related to economic realities. According to my Rana informants, when their ancestors first settled in Rauteli Bichawa, land was always abundant but the labour force was in short supply. Particularly, clearing forests proved to be labour-consuming work. Unlike the eastern and western Tarai regions, seasonal workers from India and from neighbouring hill areas were almost impossible to employ due to its remoteness and endemic malaria. Therefore, Ranas believed that family members living together ensured the existence of a labour force to produce enough food for daily survival.⁷⁸

Secondly, the reason for *Badaghars* among Rana society was also due to their cultural ideology and the sense of social security. Most Ranas were proud of having *Badaghars* and had a strong preference to live together. I recalled one occasion when I showed my great surprise at one of my interviewed Rana households having thirty-six members. A few Ranas said proudly, 'Yes, we have. We like big family (*thulo pariwaar*). It is very good (*Dherai raamro chha*).' They explained to me that mutual love between family members and social security consideration were the two major forces that influenced them to live together:

We really want to have big families because we love each other very much. We always think if we need to separate, it may be difficult for survival, therefore we always prefer living together.

This feeling was particularly expressed by the older Rana generation of people. Some old Ranas mentioned that having big families secured their livelihoods. As they aged, younger household members would gradually take over all responsibility for all the hard jobs and look after them. Take the Chataa Rana family as an example. Chataa lived in Rampur and was a displaced family. His household separated from the *Badaghar* ten years ago. After the displacement, although he was in his seventies, he still had to work in the field and his son's small tea shop due to the shortage of household labour and the need to make ends meet. He expressed his displeasure with modern attitudes: 'I like the big family (*Badaghar*) I had before. In the past, I did not need to do anything because we had enough young members to share the heavy farming workload.' Thus the emergence of *Badaghar* was a response to economic realities and cultural values and served as an important social security net for most Ranas.

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I will discuss household labour relations in more detail in Chapter Eight.

Patrilineal System and Land Inheritance Right

Apart from the *Badaghar*, like most cultural groups in Nepal, patrilineal and patrilocal post-marital residence systems were the two basic elements that form a Rana household. This particular household structure also influenced the land inheritance system. According to my observation, male members once they had married lived in their parental households while Rana females left their natal households and joined their husbands' households. Therefore, the typical Rana household was patrilineal in character. This was what Ranas referred to as a *Badaghar* household and in the patrilineal household structure, only Rana males could inherit property. From the Rana point of view, having sons meant the maintenance of patrilineal family patterns and a guarantee of property being passed on through the generations. This custom was similar to mainstream Nepalese culture in which Rana males had the right to inherit land when they were born. Not having heirs not only made continuation of the *Badaghar* impossible but also decreased their motivation for expanding the landholding. An example of how this system works was that of Vagat Rana, who was the headman of one of my host Rana families.

Vagat Rana was one of the most influential persons in the Rauteli Bichawa Village and at the time I met him he was in his seventies. When he was only in his early twenties, he was the household head, the village leader and also *Jimidar* due to his ownership of substantial land. While his properties included more than 30 *bighas* of land (almost 45 ha) and a big house for lease in another village, this did not bring him personal happiness. During my fieldwork, I noted that he preferred to play cards with other villagers for the whole day rather than spend time with his family. It was his only son who remained in charge of all agricultural work. Later, I realized the real situation of Vagat's relationship with his son.

One evening, the son told me his story. He said to me that he was not the son of Vagat but was adopted when he was a baby. Later on, some villagers told me that in fact Vagat and his wife had a daughter and son but they both died in infancy. People thought it was auspicious that his baby son shared same birthday with the last King Birenda. Unfortunately, he died when he was only three months old. Due to the fact that his wife produced no sons, Vagat got a second wife who was a widow but had a son. However, his second wife became mentally ill and ran away. He was therefore very depressed without any male heirs to succeed to his properties. At that

time, his younger brother also decided to separate from the *Badaghar*. Several times, he said to me that 'If I have four to five sons, I will not sell my land'.

He started to sell his land and today he had only three and half *bighas* to support his family (see Plate 7.1 below). He adopted an orphan and also brought up a girl who was his brother's eldest son's daughter as his own daughter. The 'son' and 'daughter' cared for him and his wife and did the farming work. In Vagat's household other members included his son's wife and his two grandsons. One was the issue of his adopted son; the other grandson was actually his second wife's ex-husband's grandson. As I understood it, Vagat would provide food and give education to this 'grandson' and the boy had to work and thereby make his contribution to the household. The boy's father would visit him occasionally and he would obtain some tenanted land from Vagat for planting vegetables or crops. Vagat's desire to have sons was obvious but his failure to do so despite several attempts upset him, and made him think about the meaning of owning huge land if there were no male heirs to inherit it.



Plate 7.1 Due to having no male heir, Vagat (wearing white shirt and sitting on the bed) saw no point in owning substantial landholding so he sold most of his land.

Traditional Household Management System- Mukhiya

The *Mukhiya* system was the third characteristic of Rana household structure I would like to comment on. Although *Mukhiya* had played an important role in maintaining traditional Rana *Badaghar* households, it has not been discussed in any literature. The *Mukhiya* system was the social structure of Rana society at the household level. According to Turner (1931), the Nepali word '*Mukhiya*' means the head of village, chief or leader. However, for Ranas, *Mukhiya* referred to the household management system and to a person who was in charge of a big household and owned much land. Therefore *Mukhiya* was not found in every Rana household. Its establishment was closely related to the Rana cultural preference for *Badaghar* households.

According to my elder Rana informants, the criteria for being a *Mukhiya* were gender and seniority. In most situations, the eldest male of every household would be the *Mukhiya* but two exceptions could be found. Firstly, when the father thought that his son was mature enough to manage household matters, he could pass the title to him. Secondly, the younger male member could act as *Mukhiya* with the approval of the seniors. Therefore, in practice, leadership ability was also recognized by Ranas as an important criterion in becoming a *Mukhiya*. For example, Vagat Rana became the *Mukhiya* in his twenties with the consent of his father and household members. In a *Mukhiya* Rana household, the relationship between the *Mukhiya* and others adopted the form of social ranking. The *Mukhiya* had absolute authority in assigning household tasks to every family member, particularly farming work and he was responsible for all economic and social activities. For example, he traditionally managed the household expenditure from the harvests. All income from the harvest and cow-buffalo herds was kept by the *Mukhiya* and used for household and health matters. He had to report the income and expenditures for household members annually. All members had to trust their *Mukhiya* in managing their expenses. Because of the absolute power of the *Mukhiya*, the introduction of the *Mukhiya* system significantly assisted the maintenance of *Badaghars* and decreased the occurrence of household partition. *Mukhiya* acted as an important intermediary. My Rana informants pointed out that in practice, the continuation of *Badaghar* was even more important than the title of *Mukhiya*. In previous times, when disputes could not be settled, most *Mukhiyas* were willing to pass their authority to other household members to placate the household

because of cultural and economic considerations. The intertwined relationship of the *Mukhiya* and the *Badaghar* systems was demonstrated by a comment made by one Rana informant:

Most Ranas really prefer to have big families. In most cases, the eldest one will be the *Mukhiya*. However, when some household members do not listen to their *Mukhiya* any more and want to separate from this household, the *Mukhiya* always prefer to give the post to other household members because he does not want to break the household.

As Thornton and Thomas suggest, there are three steps for studying changes in family transitions: 'a description of essential characteristics of historical family patterns, the identification of the forces of change, and the delineation of how these forces affect specific aspects of social life' (1987: 749). My detailed description of traditional Rana household structures as above does not imply that households are static in form. Rather, the discussion has shown that the formation, structure and management of Rana households are tied up with land and livelihood issues. In the previous chapters, the dramatic changes in land and its impacts on Rana livelihoods have been discussed, and it is safe to assume that associated changes in Rana households will be found. But what are the forces for these changes in Rana households? Before I can go into an in-depth discussion about the transformation of Rana households; it is necessary to review and compare other scholars' work on changes in household because their research helped me develop and map out the complex relationships of changes in land and Rana household changes in a critical way.

Household Transformations

The influence of social and economic changes⁷⁹ on household structure has attracted most social researchers' attention, especially anthropologists (Thornton & Fricke 1987). The debate began during the mid-1950s. According to Yanagisako (1979), the discussion of the evolution of households can be categorized into two fields of scholarship: first, domestic developmental cycles and second, economic and cultural determinism. These two schools of thought have played an influential role in household studies and Nepal is no exception. However, in reviewing these works I am reluctant to adopt either model. The reason is that the existing household analytical framework does not establish a systematic analysis of the relationship between

⁷⁹ Thornton and Fricke (1987: 747) define social and economic changes including industrialization, urbanization, demographic change, the expansion of education, and the long-term growth of income, etc.

household structure and livelihoods although few exceptions are found.⁸⁰ Also, conventional household studies tend to search for a single developmental path for household transformation and lack a more holistic perspective which takes into account the processes of demographic factors, economic realities, cultural values and family household members' behaviour. Following this discussion, I will introduce an alternative analytic framework based on livelihood or economic perspectives.

Literature of Household Analysis

The development cycle of domestic groups was first invoked by Fortes and supported by a group of scholars from Cambridge in the United Kingdom (Goody 1958). They argue that demographic process affects the size and composition of domestic groups. Every household in fact will go through the same development cycle but will experience different developmental stages. However, one of the major pitfalls of this developmental cycle is its insensitivity to different societies' historical contexts. Yanagisako in her paper 'Family and household' (1979: 168) clearly points this out, and even Fortes himself has to concede that 'a model of a uniform development cycle cannot explain why the actual histories of different families entail different development sequences.' A comment on the strengths and deficiencies of this scholarship is made by Yanagisako:

Despite these limitations, the concept of the development cycle of domestic groups has been extremely useful in displaying the impact of events such as marriage, birth, death, and division of property on the composition of families and households. Although the timing and sequencing of these events have been shown to be complexly shaped by wide range of cultural, political, and economic processes, these events clearly mediate between the complex causal factors and the shape of domestic groups.

(1979: 169)

However, scholars specialising in economic and cultural determinism have responded to this by suggesting that industrialization, modernization and migration made household forms more nuclear and smaller (Hareven 1982; Modell & Hareven 1973; Tilly & Scott 1978).⁸¹ Others argue that the mode of production determines the household form (Netting 1974; Pasternak et al. 1976; Sahlins 1957). For example, Pasternak, Ember and Ember's (1976) study proposes that the lack of labour in daily farm or household work is the major reason for a few nuclear

⁸⁰ The emphasis on the close relationship between household and livelihood was first addressed by (Netting et al. 1984). They developed the concept of 'adaptive household'. For more details see Chapter One.

⁸¹ Counter opinions are found in (Brandes 1975; Hammel 1972). They argue that the solidarity of a family is not necessarily weaker due to the urbanization or new economic realities.

households pulling together despite the fact that conflicts exist between members. Netting (1965) developed a typology that shifting cultivators tend to have extended families and intensive farmers prefer to establish nuclear families. Scholars such as Caldwell (1982) and Hull and Hull (1977) also propose that the expansion of education is also a key factor in altering the household structure because children who learn new ideas tend to challenge parental authority and threaten household partition.

In contrast, some empirical cases show that even though significant changes in socio-economic situations have occurred, the household remains unchanged for a long period due to the transmission of cultural values and practices. Kunstadter's longitudinal demographic study (1985) on several ethnical groups in northern Thailand has shown that the household structure of these highland tribal groups (Lua, Karen and Homong) did not experience significant change following modernization. He points out that the change in household forms (nuclear or jointed) seems more likely related to the demographic changes and cultural preferences. Furthermore, an increasing reliance on wage-paid work has not caused the nuclearization of households because such job opportunities are close to the village.

Household studies in Nepal have been greatly influenced by conventional household theories. Moreover, although the household is widely recognized as the important social unit in Nepal, it has seldom been the focus of primary research.⁸² Gray's *The householder's world* (1995) and Thomas's *Himalayan households* (1984) are two exceptions. Although the primary research interest of Gray's work is to explore the intergenerational power relationships of household members, his insightful observation brings us closer to understanding the unique characteristics of Nepali household structure. Apart from demographic factors, Gray argues that inherent conflicts in the social relations of household members are the underlying reason for household partitions. He states:

...the marriage of children and the birth of sons.....It [marriage] was also one of the most significant domestic events because of its consequences for household dynamics and partition. The new bride's entry into her husband's household became a point of instability.

(1995: 113)

⁸² 'Household' as the focus of study is evident in (Caplan 1970; Miller 1990) but these studies did not explore the formation, structure and changes of households.

In his study of Tamang households, Thomas demonstrated how Tamang household size and structure are changing in the face of increasing population and decreasing availability of land for agriculture. He suggests that the household is an adaptive social unit. However, one of the shortcomings of his work is that he does not explain in detail the dynamic nature of households particularly their relationship to economic livelihood. My experience with the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas led me to conclude that the household transition is not the outcome of any sole factor such as demographic development, wider social and economic change as well as inherent conflicting household social relations, but more likely it is the result of the interplay of all these factors. The transformation of Rana households reflects the impacts of internal and external forces on the one hand, and Ranas' strategic decisions and reactions to all these changes on the other hand. Therefore, my analysis of Rana households adopts a holistic perspective that incorporates the embedding of household and livelihood and the ways they interact with each other.

Household Economic Livelihood Approach: Changes in Land, Food Security and Households

Over the last few decades, the substantial loss of land has impacted on Rana livelihoods (see Chapter Four). In particular the increasing uncertainty of food security is one of the crucial factors that cannot be overlooked in understanding the changes occurring in Rana households. In fact, the relationship of food security and household size has long been recognized by scholars. However, they take it for granted and it is the reason for the absence of extensive and in-depth research work on the impact of food security on household developments. For example, Wolf (1966) roughly categorizes different kinds of land tenure and household structure on the basis that only large landowners can afford to feed large households. He does not consider the influence of other factors such as local histories, cultural values and social relations of household members. Therefore, when land and associated changes in food security are recognized as an important factor in the recent Rana household transitions, I do not follow Wolf's approach. Instead, I am interested in exploring the complex ways in which how food security (or the lack of it) interacts with other factors and their relationship to the changes in Rana households. Before doing so, land productivity and food security need to be addressed.

The influence of size of landholding size is always over-emphasized in determining household structure in traditional societies (Caldwell et al. 1984; Goody 1958; Netting 1982). I argue that landholding size is not a good indicator for understanding the relationship between land and household structure. The focus should be on land productivity. The term 'land productivity' is defined as the quantity of food which any land can produce. In this study, landholding size and soil quality are the two important determinants that measure overall land productivity. Over the past few decades, most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas have experienced land changes in terms of size and soil quality. A significant indicator was the difference in land productivity between non-resettled and resettled Rana hamlets. This was the key to explaining the differences in household transformation in the four Rana settlements.

Land productivity in the resettled Rana area in Dhokka Block was less than the old Rauteli Bichawa settlements like Iymilia and Jhilimila. Rice planting, according to local experience, in one *bigha* of land at Dhokka Block Ranas results in 12 bags of '*Dhan*' (unhusked rice), which was under half of that produced at Rauteli Bichawa (25 bags). As one bag was 70 kg, the total quantity of *Dhan* from one *bigha* (0.67 ha) of land in resettled and non-resettled areas was 840 kg and 1,750 kg respectively. After being milled, one *bigha* of land could produce approximately 420 kg '*Chamal*' (husked rice) in the resettled area and 875 kg in the non-resettled area. Therefore, although most displaced Rauteli Bichawa Ranas (except for ten Rana households in Beldandi) obtained equal size landholdings as compensation, land productivity was much lower than before due to poor quality soil. The reality was that if Dhokka Block Ranas wanted the same amount of food as Iymilia and Jhilimila Ranas, they needed to have twice the amount of land.

According to Sahn, food security at the household level is defined as 'adequate access to enough food to supply the energy needed for all family members to live healthy, active, and productive lives' (1989: 3). In agricultural societies, food security is related to levels of land productivity. Demographic factors such as the number of household members and cultural practices like dietary habits can also influence the levels of food security. When there is no significant change or improvement in land productivity, an increase in household members will mean less food for every person. Household members will change their dietary habits by

consuming less food or eating other types of food in order to survive. This was very relevant to those displaced Ranas. Nearly one-quarter of interviewed Dhokka Block Rana household members stated that they had to strictly control rice consumption after their displacement.⁸³ Even then some people went without dinner on many occasions. One Belandi Rana woman pointed out that she could only afford to cook 2 kilos of rice for dinner, which was not enough for nine people. The low socio-economic status food *Roti* was accepted in their daily diet in Dhokka Block Rana households (see Chapter Five).

I also noted that Ranas consumed more food than all other caste groups (see Chapter Six). On average, every adult Rana male could eat at least 1.5 kilos of *Chamal* per day. Consumption of wheat was quite similar to rice. Most Rana males could eat eight pieces of wheat-based *Roti* bread per meal and some even could eat seventeen pieces of *Rotis*. Rana women also consumed more than other caste women. Due to cultural restraints, I was not able to eat with Rana women but every time I saw them they came out of the kitchen after every meal with empty pots. It was estimated that every adult Rana needed about 300 kilos of rice and wheat to fulfil their subsistence needs each year. This meant that every Rana needed approximately 150 kilos of rice per year if they consumed rice and wheat as part of their daily diet. According to FAO statistics (2009), cereals were the dominant food consumption group in Nepalese society. In 2002 to 2005, the daily consumption for cereals was 453g per person per day (about 165 kg per person per year). The further breakdown of daily cereal consumption per person was 226g milled rice, 104g wheat, 3g barley, 94g maize and others (FAO 2009). It was believed that due to the Rana dietary habit (large amounts of rice with little curry - see Chapter Six, p.151), their grain consumption was higher than other social groups such as high-caste Pahaaris. Every Rana in the non-resettled area needed about 3.5 *kattas* of land while those in the resettled area needed 7.1 *kattas* to produce enough food.

⁸³ Their claims tended to be contradictory judging by what I had observed regarding Rana eating habits (see Chapter Six). Undoubtedly, for some extremely poor displaced landless Ranas in Beldandi, they had to consume less food than before due to severe food shortages but the situation did not apply to all displaced Dhokka Block Ranas. Some of them might have overstated their food control behavior to me.

Hill Migration, the Park Expansion and Changes in Rana Households

This section examines the changes in Rana households. The household structure of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas varied from village to village. In order to collect more reliable information regarding the transformation of Rana households, two household surveys of 72 Rana families were carried out in 2004 and 2006.⁸⁴ The latter survey provided particular information on the composition and history of each household. Table 7.1 shows that Rauteli Bichawa Ranas existed even in *Badaghar*, joint-type and nuclear form. The findings seemed contradictory to the Rana cultural ideal of large and undivided *Badaghar* households on one hand. The results also implied that although *Badaghar* was the ideal household form for most Ranas, household partition was inevitable. '*Kurmaa*' (in the Rana language) was the specific term referring to household partition. Ranas called separated households *Kurmaas* and it highlighted their patrilineal relations between *Kurmaas* members (Gurung & Kittelsen 1996). According to Table 7.1 below, the highest percentage of joint-type households is found in the non-resettled Rana dominant village, Iymilia. Jhilimila and Beldandi have shared the highest percentage of nuclear households, according to half of the households interviewed. Special caution should be paid to this data because the differentiation may be caused by the small survey sample. Also, the households involved are not uniform in character and have developed differently. Furthermore, the survey data does not explore the complex relationships between household developments and social changes. The following analysis of Rana households is supported by both survey and ethnographic data. The results clearly show that *Kurmaa* was not only a natural process of household development but it was also used by Ranas as a strategy to cope with dramatic social changes.

⁸⁴ Although I revisited 72 Rana households to collect more detailed household information, due to the unclear answers provided by some interviewees, only 64 households' information was used for further household analysis (Table 7.1).

Table 7.1 The Household Structure of Four Rana Settlements

	Iymilia	Jhimila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
No. of interviewed households	11	12	24	17	64
No. of <i>Badaghar</i> households	4 (36%)	3 (25%)	5 (21%)	4 (24%)	16 (25%)
No. of nuclear households	3 (27%)	6 (50%)	10 (42%)	8 (47%)	27 (42%)
No. of joint households (with more than one couple, including <i>Badaghar</i>-type and <i>Kurmaa</i>-type households)	6 (55%)	4 (33%)	11 (46%)	6 (35%)	27 (42%)
No. of nuclear- joint households (with singular parent only)	2 (18%)	2 (17%)	3 (13%)	3 (18%)	10 (16%)

Source: Household surveys 2004 and 2006

There are a total of sixteen *Badaghars* in my Rana household group (Table 7.1). Although they were distributed quite evenly across four Rana settlements, the characteristics of *Badaghars* in Iymilia were completely different (Table 7.2). Except for one household, the rest of the *Badaghars* in Iymilia were all large families with more than three generations of people and a few married couples. These characteristics were seldom found in *Badaghars* in Jhimimila and Beldandi. The household survey showed that these *Badaghars* had not suffered partition because they were one male-heir households. The number of household members and generations was therefore limited. These households faced no demonstrable risk of household and land partition (see Plate 7.3 below). It was apparent that demographic factors and cultural practices influenced the developmental cycle of Rana households. In the case of Rampur, most *Badaghars* tended to have smaller households than Iymilia. The question arises: why were huge *Badaghars* only in Iymilia? And what were the reasons for the break up of huge *Badaghars* in Jhimimila, Rampur and Beldandi? Taking a closer look at Iymilia *Badaghars*, I noted that all of them were large landholdings and enjoyed year-round food sufficiency. These were features hardly seen in the other three Rana settlements. This clearly implied that the relationships of food security and the household development process should not be overlooked. Apart from shaping the household, changes in food security also affected the tempo of the Rana household development cycle. In the following sections, a comparison of household transitions in four Rana settlements is discussed.

Table 7.2 The Characteristics of *Badaghars* in Four Rana Villages

Iymilia

No. of *Badaghar* households: 4 cases

Household 1: 4 generations, 7 married couples (one couple+3 married sons+ 3 married grandsons), 29 members, 6 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Household 2: 3 generations, 4 married couples (two married brothers + 2 their married sons), 19 members, 5 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Household 3: 2 generations, 1 married couple (only one son), 6 members, 15 kattas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Household 4: 4 generations, 8 married couples (the parents + 4 married sons+ 3 married grandsons), 36 members, 7 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Jhilmila

No. of *Badaghar* households: 3 cases

Household 1: 3 generations, 1 married couple (single grandfather + only one married grandson), 8 members, 16 katta of land, reported to be only 6 months enough food

Household 2: 2 generations, 1 married couple, 4 members, 1.5 bighas of land, reported to be almost enough food for whole year

Household 3: 3 generations, 3 married couple (the parents (husband is the only son)+ his 2 married sons), 12 members, 1 bighas of land, reported to be only 6 months enough food

Rampur

No. of *Badaghar* households: 5 cases

Household 1: 4 generations, 7 married couples (the parents + only one married son+ 5 married grandsons), 31 members, 4 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for almost nine months

Household 2: 3 generations, 4 married couples (the parents + 3 married sons), 18 members, 3 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for eight months

Household 3: 3 generations, 3 married couples (the grandfather+ two married sons), 12 members, 3 bighas of land, reported to be food enough for a whole year

Household 4: 3 generations, two married couples (the grandmother+ only one married son), 9 persons, 3 bighas of land, reported to be only enough food for six months

Household 5: 2 generations, 1 married couple (only one son), 8 members, 1 and half bighas of land, reported to be only enough food for six months

Beldandi

No. of *Badaghar* households: 4 cases

Household 1: 2 generations, 2 married couple (the parents and two married sons), 9 members, 10 kattas of land, reported to be only enough food for 6 months

Household 2: 3 generations, two married couples (the mother +the only one married son), 8 members, 20 kattas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Household 3: 3 generations, two married couples (the grandfather+ the only married son), 8 members, 2 kattas of land, reported to be no food production by themselves but totally relied on buying food

Household 4: 3 generations, two married couples (the parents + their only one married son), 7 members, 1.5 bighas of land, reported to be enough food for a whole year

Source: Household surveys, 2004 and 2006

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 176 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 7.2 Like the Laxmi Rana household (the middle-aged woman wearing purple shawl) in Jhilmila, the main reason why they could able to maintain *Badaghar* household was because her husband was the only male heir in the household. Therefore, despite experiencing some food shortages, the household partition had not yet occurred.

Table 7.3 shows that larger Rana household size coincides with greater land productivity. The biggest average household size in Iymilia had nearly fourteen members per household. Despite the fact that the average landholding size between Jhilmila and Rampur did vary, there was no significant difference regarding household size. This corresponded to my earlier argument that landholding size was not the only factor affecting household size. Taking into account the soil quality, Jhilmila and Rampur Ranas actually had similar land productivity and this might explain why their household sizes were similar. Interestingly, Bledandi Ranas have the lowest land productivity but their average household size was eight, which was not so different from Jhilmila and Rampur. Such findings reflected the household's ability to be adaptive and flexible.

Table 7.3 Comparison of Household Size, Land Productivity and Food Security in Four Study Rana Villages

	Non-resettled Rana villages		Resettled Rana villages	
	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi
Total interviewed Rana household no.	15	15	25	17
Average household size	13.8	9.5	9.4	8
The biggest household size in interviewed sample	36	24	30	14
Average landholding size per household (katta/ bigha)	57.7 (2.9 bigha)	24 (1.2 bigha)	77 (3.5 bigha)	20.4 (1 bigha)
Actual land productivity per household (<i>Chamal</i>) *	2,525kg	1,062.5 kg	1,675kg	421.2 kg
Average landholding size (katta) per household member	4.1	2.5	7.5	2.5
Average <i>Chamal</i> shared by each household member per year **	183 kg	111.8 kg	178 kg	53 kg
No. of Rana households claiming to have food security for the whole year	10 (66.7%)	5 (33%)	9 (36%)	2 (11.8%)

*The calculation was based on the information provided by Ranas that the land productivity in resettled area was half less than in old Rauteli Bichawa land.

** According to the earlier calculation on the basis of my observation of Ranas' food consumption, it was estimated that each Rana needed about 150kg rice per year if they consumed rice and wheat as part of their daily diet.

1 Bigha = 0.67 Hectre = 20 Kattas

Source: Household survey, 2004 and 2006

Larger households in the Rana settlement were evidence that they enjoyed higher food security. Table 7.3 shows us that on average each Rana household member in Iymilia could have about 183 kilos *Chamal* per year, which was higher than my estimated subsistence level of 150 kilos per year. Moreover, each household member could also share 4.1 *kattas* of land and this was also more than the estimated subsistence level of 3.4 *kattas*. Therefore, 66.7% of Iymilia Rana households recorded one year's food sufficiency. On the other hand, as the annual production of *Chamal* in both Jhilmila and Beldandi was below the subsistence level, they shared conditions of lower food security. The worst situation was in Beldandi, where only 12% of interviewed Rana households had enough food for one year. In Rampur, the situation was even more complex, where there was a significant contradiction between the annual *Chamal* production and level of food security. According to the household survey, each household member in Rampur could share 7.5 *kattas* of land and received 178kg *Chamal* per year, which in fact was slightly higher than my estimated subsistence level. However, only 36% of Rampur Ranas claimed to have enough food for the whole year. A further comparison of land productivity and household size of each interviewed Rampur Rana household found that a total of 16 households had more than 150 kilos of *Chamal* per year. The percentage of households

with one whole year's food security increased to 64%. Two reasons might help me to explain the discrepancy between Rampur Ranas' stated answers and my calculation. Firstly, those interviewed Rampur Ranas had suffered serious changes in their livelihood after relocation, so they might tend to overstate their hardship to outsiders in order to gain more sympathy. Secondly, I was told by a few Rampur Ranas that the quantity of rice in Dhokka Block was five times less than in Rauteli Bichawa. Some pointed out that in one bigha, they received only 350 kg *Dhan* (175kg *Chama*) in Dhokka Block. These extreme cases may be at odds with my calculation. Rather than taking into account a few exceptional cases, it seemed more reasonable to accept the majority Ranas' experiences.

Table 7.4 also clearly shows that household partitions were common in Rana society. I was told by my Rana informants that most old and young Rauteli Bichawa Ranas lived in *Badaghars* and had not experienced household partitions until the last 20 years. Recently, economic pressures causing household partitions have increased among Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. Land became scarce and its influence in maintaining household member relations had waned. Conflicts between household members over land resources were causing household partitions. Most Ranas pointed out that the hill migration and establishment of the park were two critical events affecting their households. The impact of changes in land on Rana households was obvious but not identical in my four study Rana villages in terms of the timing and scale of household partitions. The transformation of Rana households was not simply a cyclical phenomenon but was a response to internal and external forces. I now examine in more detail how household transformations occur differently in the four Rana settlements.

Table 7.4 Household Partitions in Four Rana Villages

	Iymilia	Jhilmila	Rampur	Beldandi	Total
No. of total interviewed households	11	12	24	17	64
No. of separated households	6 (55%)	9 (75%)	19 (76%)	14 (82%)	48 (75%)
Timing for household partition					
More than 15 years ago	--	4	--	--	4 (8%)
6-15 years	4	5	13	6	28 (58%)
Less than 5 years	2	--	6	8	16 (33%)

Source: Household survey 2006

In the non-resettled Rana settlements of Iymilia and Jhilmila, most Rana households pointed out that household partitions have happened in the last twenty years (Table 7.4). Instead of persisting with *Badaghar* households, male siblings chose to live separately and divided all household property, particularly land. They blamed the massive hill migration for the upsurge in Rana household partitions. Agricultural land could not cope with the needs of the new population. Many Ranas lost their land to hill migrants (see Chapter Six). For this reason the Ranas enjoyed less land productivity and food security. As a result, disputes between household members increased and they felt that *Kurmaa* was the best way to ensure food security because they did not need to pool all livelihood resources with larger households any more. However, the household partition patterns were not identical in Iymilia and Jhilmila. The relatively smaller household and landholding size indicated that Jhilmila Ranas experienced faster household separation than Iymilia. According to my household survey, there were six and nine household partition cases in Iymilia and Jhilmila, respectively. Two cases in Iymilia happened less than five years ago while most household partitions of Jhilmila Rana households occurred more than ten years ago. The difference meant that Iymilia *Badaghars* showed more resistance to partition during the past decade despite the emergence of hill migration. This was because Iymilia was one of the earliest Rana settlements in Rauteli Bichawa. My Rana informants pointed out that many Iymilia Ranas settled there over many generations and it remained a major Rana settlement to this day. They controlled large areas of agricultural land and many of them still had substantial landholdings. The relatively higher economic prosperity of most Ranas slowed down the process of household partition in Iymilia. As a result, although household partitions did happen in Iymilia, multi-generational *Badaghar* households persisted.

In contrast to Iymilia, the establishment of Jhilmila was shorter and some Jhilmila Ranas originally came from Kalaili district a few decades ago. They did not share the same landholding size as Iymilia. In Jhilmila, due to the custom of small landholdings, many Ranas faced food shortages so they had to find an alternative source of income. During the past twenty years, Jhilmila Ranas gradually developed diverse livelihoods. Many found work in non-agricultural projects such as working in town or in India. A highest percentage (60%) was recorded in Jhilmila (see Chapter Three). Interviewees said that at least one male member would work away from the village. This finding echoed with that of a recent study on livelihood changes in West-

Central Nepal conducted by the authors of the influential book, *Nepal in Crisis*. In their study, Blaikie, Cameron and Seddon (2002) claimed that the agency of rural population is overlooked in this book. Their study shows that these rural communities had developed a range of strategies to cope with different livelihood environments. Particularly, non-farming income had played an important role in shaping new dynamic economic relationships at the local level which no one single theory could predict.⁸⁵ As some scholars suggest, when household members worked more in non-agricultural jobs, they tended to become more reluctant in pooling their individual incomes when it came to supporting household expenditures (Hareven 1982; Medick 1976; Thomas et al. 1990; Tilly & Scott 1978). Therefore, the new economic structure further accelerated household partitions in Jhilmila.

Both Iymilia and Jhilmila Ranas also pointed out that new social developments such as better transportation network to the town, and the introduction of media and education had introduced the younger generations to the outside world. The younger people were not as obedient to traditional authority as previous generations had been. The significant example was that *Mukhiyas* could no longer exercise their power on household members as they used to do. The fact was that when most Ranas suffered a decline in landholding size and most *Badaghars* became smaller and broke up in recent decades, the *Mukhiya* system also became obsolete. Nowadays, Ranas have adopted the Nepali term '*gharmuli*' to refer to their household heads of separated and smaller households. The relationship between the weaker *Mukhiya* system and household partitions was summarized by one Rana:

Old Rana generations never want to break the family, however when they have bigger families, more sons, it is evitable that our household will be split up. The difference is that in recent times, most new couples decide to separate from their parents when they are still young such as 20 to 25 years. The reason is that before sons always listened to their parents, but today the new generations do not listen to their parents.

Unlike Iymilia and Jhilmila, Table 7.4 indicates that the widespread household partitions did not happen among Dhokka Block Ranas until the emergence of the Park extension program. No Dhokka Block Rana household partition cases had occurred twenty years ago. Also, it seemed that Dhokka Block Ranas experienced pressure from household partitions later than Iymilia and

⁸⁵ The scholars admit that predictions based on classic development theories such as class analysis and dependency in *Nepal in Crisis* did not happen. They point out that no single theory can generalize about the complex livelihood activities.

Jhilmila Ranas, but for the Dhokka Block Ranas it occurred at a much faster rate. A higher percentage of household partitions was recorded in both Rampur (76%, 19 cases) and Beldandi (82%, 14 cases). Within a short period, many households experienced more than one break-up. For example, according to official statistics, the number of displaced Rana households in Dhokka Block was about fifty to sixty households. However, by the time I conducted my fieldwork, the number of Rana households in Dhokka Block was almost 150. The figure reflected the fact that fast and extensive household partitions had happened among Dhokka Block Ranas. In addition, as many new households were just separated from their huge *Badaghars*, a high proportion of joint-type households were found in Rampur (see Table 7.1 above).

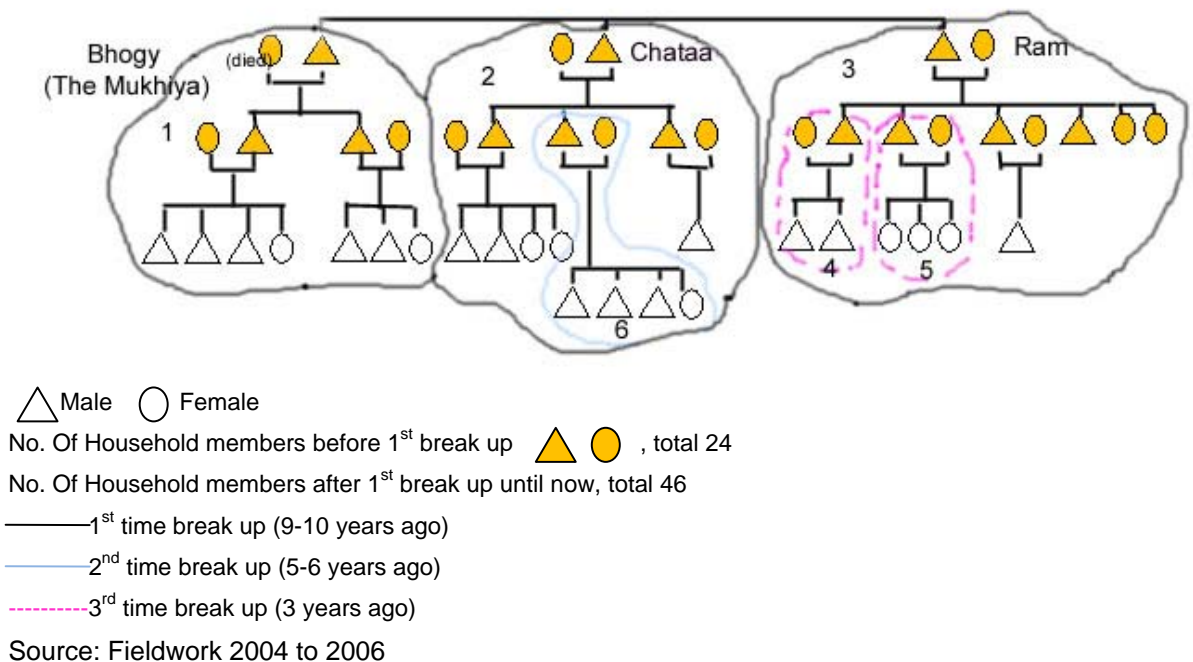
The delay in household partitions of Dhokka Block Ranas may be linked to their longer historical control over land than Jhilmila and Rauteli Ranas. Most household separations of Dhokka Block Ranas happened during two periods: 14 to 15 years ago and 4 years ago. These times corresponded with important developments in Park policy. In early 1990s, the Park authority started to allocate land to affected families. In 2002, the authority carried out a forced resettlement program. During the 1990s, although most Rampur Ranas were granted land in Dhokka Block, they did not leave Rauteli Bichawa immediately because the enforcement policy was weakly implemented. Many households practiced double cultivation in both old and new land. Their landholding size and productivity in fact doubled. They received substantial income from selling surplus agricultural products and some Rana landowners became even wealthier. They enjoyed large festival celebrations, drinking and good food. Although few households started to split up⁸⁶, extensive landholding and sufficient food preserved the existence of huge *Badaghars* in Dhokka Block. My Rana informants pointed out that before the displacement, *Badaghars* were easy to find. The situation changed completely when the authority carried out the resettlement program in 2002, and most displaced Ranas found it difficult to survive due to the dramatic shrinkage in landholding size. I was told that some displaced Ranas even sold all their land in Dhokka Block because they did not have enough labour. After the displacement, these Ranas became landless. Dhokka Block Ranas also realized that the new land could not

⁸⁶ Few Rampur Rana households told me that they moved out of the Park immediately when they received the land from the government 14 years ago because they were afraid of the Park authority. However, shortly after, the rise in household members and the new land's poor productivity caused family conflicts and as a result, they decided to divide households.

provide enough food for their subsistence needs. They worked hard but they never got enough food from their own land. More arguments occurred between household members and this made household partitions inevitable. Such partitions first emerged between married male siblings and then extended to the father and sons. When a *Badaghar* household involved more generations and members, the break up tended to be more rapid and serious. This happened to Rampur Ranas who were once large landowners. The story of an ex-Rana *Jimidar* family in Rampur was a good example of this process.

Seventy-five year old Bhogy Rana was the *ex-Jimidar* of Andaiya (ward 3) in Rauteli Bichawa Village. When he was born there was no wildlife reserve and he lived in Rauteli Bichawa his whole life. He had two younger brothers, Chataa and Ram. Before the household split up, his family was a typical Rana *Badaghar* household with three married brothers, their wives and their married sons, sons' families and also unmarried children living together. They also co-owned all the household property and there were two generations of people in the household. Bhogy was the *Mukhiya* of this *Badaghar* household with a total of twenty-four members (see Figure 7.1). Later, Bhogy's household had to move out from the park.

Figure 7.1 The Development of the Bhogy *Badaghar* Household



As Bhogy was an indigenous landowner of Rauteli Bichawa, he received a total of 11 *bighas* as compensation in Dhokka Block (8 *bighas*) and Sudarpur (3 *bighas*).⁸⁷ Like most affected Rana families, the Bhogy household did not move out from the park immediately but practiced double planting when they received the compensated land from the government 14 years ago. This substantial landholding still could not satisfy the growing number of family members and gradually, arguments between people worsened. The key to partition in this case was the continuous disputation over control of the land.

About ten years ago, three brothers agreed to break up the *Badaghar* into three smaller joint-typed households headed by Bhogy and his two brothers, respectively (see Plate 7.3 below). However, the first separation did not solve the family conflicts. On one occasion, Bhogy's youngest son told me that he always worried about the livelihood of his family as he might receive not much land after his father died. The reason for this was because the present division of land between the three brothers was not equal.⁸⁸ Bhogy, due to his social position of *ex-Mukhiya* received the most land (4 *bighas*). The *Kurmaas* of Chataa and Ram owned 2.5 *bighas* and 1.5 *bighas* of land respectively and each household had 1 *bigha* of land in Sundarpur. About 5-6 years ago, Ram's two married sons and their families decided to separate from their parental household. Each household received 15 *kattas* of land. Ram and his wife lived with their two sons in Sudarpur and owned 1 *bigha* of land. Four years ago, the old Bhogy household was forced to move out from the Park, leading to further decline in their landholdings, harvest size and livelihoods. As a result, Chataa's second married son requested a household separation and the other members also had to consider partition. Bhogy's two sons told me that they planned to split up when their father died.

⁸⁷ He received land as compensation in Sudarpur 26 years ago but due to serious encroachment, he did not actually receive the land until 3 years ago. The ex-Warden Surya Pandney evacuated encroached families from the land. In 2005 when I visited Sundarpur, there were still 9 landless families' houses occupying some of his land.

⁸⁸ The Bhogy family's land arrangements were probably illegal. The law states that land should be equally divided among the brothers after the household has been split up.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 184 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 7.3 The ex-Bhogy's *Badaghar* household broke up into several smaller jointed-type and nuclear households after the displacement. Bhogy (on right, seated) now lived with his two married sons' families. (The person sitting on the left was not one of Bhogy's household).

The break up of the Bhogy *Badaghar* household clearly demonstrated the complex interactions between household structures, changes in land, livelihood security, household member relations and demographic factors. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas had to adjust their household forms rapidly to cope with changes in circumstances. Within 10 years, the Bhogy *Badaghar* had even broken up into six smaller households with three joint-type households and three nuclear households. The tempo of the domestic developmental cycle was fast which seems rare in Nepalese mainstream society. My informants pointed out that if not for the Park extension program, a big household like Bhogy's might take more than 40 years to split into six distinct households.⁸⁹ Ranas had long practiced their belief that unbroken and large families were the ideal, but currently this ideal was no longer affordable as conditions in which to earn a living deteriorated or changed. Furthermore the younger generations of displaced Rauteli Bichawa Ranas had started to accept that smaller households were better because they were more manageable.

⁸⁹ The process of household partitions takes quite a long time to occur in most Nepali households because the break-up will not happen until the married sons are mature and economically independent (Caplan 1970; Gray 1995).

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the process of how the emergence of the traditional Rana *Badaghar* household and its partition had occurred. The mutual embeddedness of household and livelihood was clearly supported by ethnographically analyzing the relationships between changes in Rana household structure, cultural values, demographic developments and wider social changes. It was also apparent that the household transformations were highly adaptive. The Rana household form did not simply reflect cultural practices but more likely it fulfilled changing economic needs. The increased poverty had violently undermined the function of *Badaghar* as an important social safety net. The ethnography documented that in a traditional subsistence agricultural society like that of the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, household partitions were closely linked to changes in land. Rising population accompanied by declines in landholdings since the hill migration and the Park program had caused much hardship for most Ranas. As a result, instead of *Badaghar*, they had to adjust their household structure and this represented an adaptive strategy to changes in land and food security and finally smaller household form became the ideal for Ranas. The finding confirmed the adaptive and dynamic nature of the household unit as suggested by advocates of new household theory (Netting et al. 1984; Thomas 1984; Wilk 1997).

When most Rana suffered remarkably similar changes in their livelihoods due to wider social changes, the result suggested that the differences in the trajectory of household changes particularly in terms of the timing of partition and scale were evident in my four Rana villages. This reflected that the method of change in household structure was constrained by the opportunities available to Ranas. The most significant example was that before the displacement, Dhokka Block Ranas could practice double planting due to weaker enforcement of Park policy. They could thus manage any livelihood difficulties caused by hill migration and rising population. This allowed them to maintain *Badaghar* households longer than Iymilia and Jhilmila Ranas. However, after the displacement, the dramatic decline in landholding and food security resulted in radical household partitions among Dhokka Block Ranas. The result of the processes of household transition in four Rana villages reinforced Thornton and Thomas's observation (1987: 770) that changes within the family cannot be understood without

considering the family role in specific cultural, social and economic contexts. Clearly, there is no single developmental path for household transformation.

Furthermore, the discussion has shown that the change in Rana household was not limited to the form but also to its management system and social relations between household members were transformed simultaneously. All these transformations had caused influential implication to the Ranas' long term livelihoods in particular to the maintenance of sustainable livelihood system. In the next chapter, a further exploration of how Ranas adjust their production, gender and kinship relations to cope with new social and economic realities is thus discussed.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CHANGES IN PRODUCTION, KINSHIPS AND GENDER RELATIONS

Introduction

This chapter continues my exploration of how Ranas adjusted their social relationships after the emergence of the Park, their displacement and the hill migration. The discussion focuses on three issues, namely production, kinships and gender relations. It was apparent that the rising number of land conflicts had undermined the traditional production relations and *Kurmaa* relations (patrilineal kinship connection), which had long contributed to household production and served as an important social security net for most Rana households in terms of maintaining adequate subsistence levels. My ethnographic data illustrated that without sufficient land resources, the traditional patron-client *Kamaiya* system had been broken and *Kurmaa* relations were tense. For those relatively wealthier Rana landholders, their farming practices tended to be carried out by household members and increasingly relied on the assistance of non-*Kurmaa* kin, particularly married-out daughters and also wives' relatives who did not have any conflicts concerning land matters. In contrast to this, poorer and smaller Rana landholders could only establish new social and economic alliances to diversify their means of livelihood. These kinds of alliances were found beyond the caste, household and kinship boundaries. Cooperation in economic production between Ranas and Pahaaris was a good example of this phenomenon.

In the analysis of changes in social relations at household level, the importance of gender relations should not be neglected. In particular the labour arrangement between men and women has been widely recognized as a unit of critical analysis by social scientists in understanding gender relations and its role in the transformation of a society (Beneria 1982; Harris 1981; Mies 1986). Gender division of labour does not only reflect the social values of men and women but it is also shaped, recreated, transformed and reinforced by social and economic changes taking place (Deere 1990; Moore 1988). In the case of Rauteli Bichawa, recent social changes have shaped Rana gender labour arrangements significantly. Rising poverty and the Park policies resulted in Rana women working more in agricultural activities

and fuelwood collection. On the other hand, their increasing workload was constantly underestimated and treated as 'informal productive work' compared to men's work. As a result there was tendency that the level of economic dependency of Rana women on men grew. Furthermore the hill people's cultural ideology resulted in stricter control being exerted by Rana men over their women. It was noted that the traditional gender division of labour practices had been transformed and reinforced as Rana men's weapons to 'reclaim' their dominant position at the domestic level and in the wider society; it was also the strategy for them to attain higher social status.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first and second sections provide a historical overview of the organization of Rana household production relations and its changes by illustrating how changes happened in the traditional *Kamaiya* system and *Kurmaa* relations. The analysis of Rana gender relations is the central theme of the last two sections. The sections demonstrate how gender division of labour is used by Rana men and women to respond differently to new economic and social realities. The stories told by Rana women are used to explain new gender labour arrangements, changes in life and the implications that these changes have on the status of women.

Traditional Production Relations of Rana Society

The mutually-interdependent relationships of household and the mode of production is widely recognized by many scholars (Netting 1974; Pasternak et al. 1976; Sahlins 1957; Yanagisako 1979). An exploration of changes in production relations can therefore allow us to understand the responses of Rana society in regard to recent social changes. My ethnographic data supported the contention that in Rana society, the transformation of production relations was closely associated with the patterns of landholding and household structure. When the household was large and had substantial landholdings, household labour and the traditional patron-client system (*Kamaiya*) provided most labour resources. When necessary, *Kurmaa* kin would also provide free labour during critical farming periods. Dramatic changes in both landownership and household relations had made new production relations and methods inevitable. Increased impoverishment in Rana society meant that the pressure to produce had fallen on the shoulders of household labour rather than the *Kamaiya* system and *Kurmaa*

relations. Before turning my discussion to this particular change, a brief description of traditional production institutions or methods of Rana society is necessary.

Household labour had long been the primary labour input in the Rana agricultural system. It was also one of the major reasons for forming large households in Rana society as discussed in Chapter Seven. Although the '*Parma*' (cooperative labour exchange) farming practice prevails in Nepal, especially the hill regions, it was never universally adopted by Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. The reason given by my Rana informants was that they worried about their own land and thus were not willing to work with or for others. The situation in Iymilia was that even Pahaari residents were largely influenced by this and seldom practiced their traditional '*Parma*'. One Pahaari resident of Iymila explained to me, 'All people prefer to work in their own field. If people work together, people may always worry about their own land. In particular to they are really concerned when they can start planting on their land.' My observation showed that even in the busiest farming seasons such as rice planting and harvesting, household labour remained the most important source of labour for most Rana families.

Besides household labour, the *Kamaiya* system (defined as the system of permanent agricultural workers) was another important production institution of the old Rana society. The system differed from other bonded labour systems as Rankin (1999) suggested in her research on the Rana *Kamaiya* system.⁹⁰ According to Rankin, traditionally many wealthier Rana families hired someone to work for them. They were usually young boys and came from poor Rana families (see Plate 8.1 below). Young *Kamaiya* stayed with their masters' families. Their duties included housework and agricultural work. Their working hours were long but they received several bags of unhusked rice as salary. Their masters were responsible for providing food and clothes. If working families' livelihoods were in crisis, their masters were expected to give assistance such as grain and loans. Rankin (1999: 33) describes the indigenous Rana *Kamaiya* system as being practised through 'generous patronage' and is 'integrated into the kinship

⁹⁰ The term '*Kamaiya*' had played an important role in the contemporary social movement of Nepal. It was practiced as an exploitative bonded labour system. After the hill migration, many plain people particularly Tharus became *Kamaiyas* and served Pahaaris landlords. They were overexploited and abused by their masters. Finally, they formed together in an effort to end the *Kamaiya* system. In July 2000, the Nepalese government announced that the *Kamaiya* system was illegal. Therefore, when I enquired about the *Kamaiya* system, they felt reluctant to talk about it. One educated Rana first denied the practice in Rana society and then later he explained the system existed only in the past. Some rich Ranas would hire poor Ranas or even Pahaaris as *Kamaiyas*.

systems and societies of their masters' and the system serves as a 'social safety net' for poor Rana *Kamaiyas*.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 190 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.1 This *Kamaiya* boy worked for an ex-Rana *Jimidar* family for economic survival.

For example, one *Kamaiya* in Rampur told me that he had bonded himself as a *Kamaiya* due to family poverty. The young boy was not from a landless family. His grandfather owned 3 bighas of land but due to the alcoholism of his grandfather and his father, the family had to sell most their land to pay a debt. With eleven brothers and sisters, one *bigha* of land was not enough on which to subsist. Therefore, his father sent him to work as a *Kamaiya* for an ex-*Jimidar* Rana family because his son was guaranteed food for basic survival and could earn some grain for the family. His master always emphasized his kindness to his Rana *Kamaiyas*, 'We are all Ranas. I never treat him badly. I never try to dominate my workers like Pahaaris do. We are like the same family.' It was apparent that the existence of the *Kamaiya* system provided a secure labour force to the rich while the subsistence of poor Ranas was guaranteed. However, today the interdependency between these two groups has virtually disappeared. The number of *Kamaiyas* in my research area was very small. When the landholdings of most Ranas declined, they produced fewer crops and could not afford to hire temporary and permanent workers as

they had before. At present, most poor Ranas can only obtain jobs from wealthier Pahaari families and confrontations between these two cultural groups began (see Chapter Six).

In addition, although Ranas did not cooperate economically with *Kurmaas* during difficult times, Ranas could always get help from their *Kurmaas* either in the form of labouring, money or spiritual support. *Kurmaas* would visit each other often to chat. According to my Rana informants, *Kurmaa* labourers were totally different from other labourers because they did not receive any material return for their work. Usually, host families provided meat to their *Kurmaas*. Also, it was not compulsory that host families had to contribute labour as their *Kurmaas* did. The close *Kurmaa* relations therefore served as a good and flexible safety net for most Ranas. One of my Rana informants pointed out that the old generation would often invite their *Kurmaas* to live closer to them as if they were their sons or male siblings. They believed this could guarantee mutual help and it was particularly noticeable in non-resettled Rana settlements. Most Iymilia and Jhilmila Ranas mentioned that they could get help easily from their *Kurmaas*. However, increased confrontations over very limited livelihood resources have made *Kurmaa* relations tense. This situation existed in Dhokka Block regarding serious household partitions. I now turn to the changes in *Kurmaa* relations and the transformation of production relations.

Changes in *Kurmaa* Relations and New Production Relations

After my long stay in the resettled Rana village Dhokka Block, I noted that a mixture of competitive, resentful and apathetic attitudes were common in Rana *Kurmaas*. Although they lived close to each other, they seldom talked to each other or had any social interactions. Rich and poor Dhokka Block Ranas felt that they did not expect to receive any help from *Kurmaas*. They reasoned that *Kurmaas* also had the same difficulties so it was hard to get help from them. More likely, however, the underlying reason was that *Kurmaas* did not trust each other as they had done previously. Most Dhokka Block Ranas relied on themselves or friends to solve problems but not *Kurmaas*. I met a few wealthy Dhokka Block Rana families who owned much land and thus a heavy farming workload was expected. They told me that 'we don't need any help from our *Kurmaas*, we can work ourselves. We don't mind to work a lot because we believe our hard work can bring us more grain than others.' One landless Rana also said, 'How I can ask my *Kurmaas* to give me help? They are also poor. I feel very uncomfortable to ask for

help from them.’ Instead of depending on traditional production institutions like *Kamaiya* system and *Kurmaas*, my study recorded that Ranas had adopted different strategies to overcome the temporary labour shortage and other livelihood problems.

According to my observations, more developed Rana farming practice tended to be concentrated on household members and non-*Kurmaa* kin, especially kin such as married out daughters’ families and wives’ families. Additionally, agricultural workers were seldom hired by Ranas due to rising poverty. My Rana informants admitted that they had only close relations with married-out daughters and wives’ kin in social contacts such as festival celebrations. They seldom requested labouring help from them because ‘all of us have our *Kurmaas*, why do we need to ask our kin from wife’s side?’ It might be too early to comment on this new trend in Rana production, however the new labour arrangement could secure the labour source and minimize the expense of hiring labour. Aside from this, I noted that a few families would employ casual workers at the most critical planting times such as rice transplanting and harvesting. The employment period tended to be as short as possible. The story of the Bhogy family household was a good illustration of these changes.

Due to the Park extension program, the Bhogy family’s *Badaghar* household was broken up into several *Kurmaa* households (see Chapter Seven). The Bhogy household owned nearly 4 *bighas* of land and the major labourers were a young Rana couple⁹¹ and one young working boy. It was mid-June 2005 when rice planting began. The temperature was up to 45 degrees Celsius due to the late monsoon. Every morning, the Bhogys’ second son went to plough the land with the boy for a whole day. His wife joined them in the early evening when the temperature fell. Their dinner was often late because much work had still to be done. The wife did not have time to make dinner. She cut rice seedlings and tied them into small bunches for rice transplanting. I asked the husband why he did not ask for help from his *Kurmaas*, or hire workers or work in groups. He responded, ‘No, we never do that. We always do planting by ourselves.’

⁹¹ The household head Bhogy was too old to work in the field and the elder brother’s family had moved to Sudarpur so the youngest son and his wife had to shoulder the burden of work. Their three children - 2 sons (7 and 2 years old) and 1 daughter (4 years old) - were all too young to work in the field.

The husband estimated that they needed one month to finish rice planting. After three days, I saw the couple transplant their rice the whole day with the help of their eldest son (see Plate 8.2).⁹² I noted that half the rice seedlings started to die after 1-2 days (see Plate 8.3).⁹³ He told me it was normal. His wife told a different story in that they used to take only twelve days to finish planting because the monsoon started early last year. The husband admitted that because of limited labour, the crop produced was unsatisfactory but he did not want to lease the land. He was afraid he would lose the land to the tenants.⁹⁴ He would like to keep land for the family.



Plate 8.2 Due to lack of household labour, it was common for Rana children to help their parents by working in the field.

After a few days, the couple ignored the hot weather and worked during the daytime using umbrellas. At that time, his mother-in-law visited and helped her daughter to cook and look after the children, and sometimes worked in the field as well (see Plate 8.4). Finally the family decided to hire three Rana girls temporarily. One helped collect the rice seedlings and two did

⁹² They could not do it during the day due to extremely high temperatures. It was not usual to see men do rice transplanting. A sense of shame was often attached to a hill man if he did rice transplanting because it was treated as women's work. However, on many occasions I saw Rana males do this job.

⁹³ This could be caused by bad weather. However, it could also relate to the delay of irrigation and transplanting due to the shortage of labour.

⁹⁴ According to his interpretation of land acts, if a tenant kept planting on the same land for three years, he was granted the right of sharing landownership.

the rice transplanting. Their daily salary was a relatively low Rs 60 plus one meal. They worked from 10am to 7pm. However, these casual workers were replaced immediately when the husband's two nephews and one niece arrived. They were requested by several uncles around Rampur to give help and they would receive several bags of rice as payment. Similar to the Bhogy household, almost all Andaiya Rana households in Rampur worked their own fields (see Plate 8.5). In Rana society, one of the important functions of kinship was to provide a secure labour force and help. In the case of the Bhogy family the wife's mother and nephews on the husband's side provided free labour. However, relatives like the cousins from '*Kurmaa*' were not involved.



Plate 8.3 Just transplanted rice seedlings were dead after few days because there was not enough labour to monitor the irrigation.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 195 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.4 The mother (left) helped in the field and this lightened the young couple's heavy workload during the critical planting time.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 195 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.5 Household members were the major labour source for most Dhokka Block Rana families.

Instead of asking for help from *non-Kurmaa* kin, why did the son not request *Kurmaas*' help who lived just next door? I observed that interactions between Bhogy *Kurmaas* were rare. They seldom communicated with each other and people had arguments over trivial matters. For instance, one day, when I was on the way back to Bhogy's house, I heard uproar from next door. Bhogy's youngest brother's eldest daughter-in-law scolded her younger sister-in-law who came from the richest Rana household in Iymilia. She accused her of stealing her potatoes and chilli.⁹⁵ The rich Rana wife denied this and became angry and they got into a fight. Their husbands failed to reconcile their wives and got involved in the argument as well. The elder brother warned his sister-in-law, 'Don't use your natal family to threaten us' and his wife said she would inform the Maoists about the theft.⁹⁶ The son of Bhogy saw it but he did not attempt to stop the fight. When I asked him what happened, he just answered, 'I don't know. This is their matter.' At night, a joint *Kurmaas* meeting was held in Bhogy's house regarding the dispute. Bhogy acted as the leader and censured both young couples and said angrily, 'You two are the most useless of my eight sons.'⁹⁷ Your behaviour has lost our whole family's reputation!' However, one *Kurmaa* pointed out that they did not need to obey the *ex-Mukhiya* because 'we have already split from his household.'

In contrast the small and medium landholding Dhokka Block Rana families extended social networks to neighbours and friends in order to obtain labour. This occurred in the Pahaari-dominated settlement, Beldandi. Ranas there formed small working groups involving both Ranas and Pahaaris. For example, a few Ranas in Beldandi worked with their Pahaari neighbours (see Plate 8.6). They exchanged labour and oxen for ploughing and transplanting rice seedlings.⁹⁸ The new alliance went beyond household, kinship and caste boundaries in that it allowed them to exchange news regarding available employment and economic opportunities as much as they could. Taking my case study family Pachan as an example, besides agriculture, his family relied heavily on tenancy and wage labour for their survival. He worked as

⁹⁵ Potatoes and chili were very important for Rana diets. In particular the latter became very rare because the soil in Dhokka Block was not suitable for chili planting. Therefore, many Ranas could only get small amounts of chili and had to buy chili from the market.

⁹⁶ It seemed funny to inform the Maoists about this kind of trivial thing. However, for some locals the Maoists acted as the local government. Moreover, the Maoists emphasized their hostility to rich and bad people, which might explain why she wanted to report this matter to the Maoists.

⁹⁷ He counted his two younger brothers' sons as his sons and this explains his comment about having eight sons.

⁹⁸ The labour arrangement was similar to the '*Parma*' farming practice.

a construction worker, leased land from landlords and later planned to work in India⁹⁹; all these employment opportunities were initiated by his friends rather than any of his *Kurmaas*. When his family finished all the rice, he received a non-interest loan and wheat from his friends. When I visited him I always saw his friends but never met his *Kurmaas* who lived next door to him. On one occasion, I was invited to join his just-born son's ceremony. Besides his Rana and Pahaari friends, none were *Kurmaas*. Once he shared his feelings with me: 'Without helps from friends, I don't think I can survive after the displacement.' Most of his friends suffered similarly and shared the same economic circumstances.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 197 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.6 The Rana (behind) and the Brahmin exchanged labour for many years.

The shift in *Kurmaa* relations after serious household partitions was apparent and now the *Kurmaa* did not act as a major social and economic security net for most Ranas. In the case of Dhokka Block, bad soil quality had doubled the workload for most Ranas (see discussion in Chapters Four and Five). The help from *Kurmaas* was very important but due to the conflicts over control of livelihood resources particularly land between *Kurmaas*, their relationship was tense. Matrilineal kin or other non-*Kurmaa* kin and friends played more important roles than

⁹⁹

Due to family sickness he did not go India to work with friends.

Kurmaas in economic production. The main reason was that they had less direct involvement in land matters.

Gender Relations and Gender Division of Labour

As I demonstrated in the previous two sections, the household labour and kinship relations were constantly being transformed as social and economic changes took place. This section focuses on how gender relations of Rana society were changing to reflect the new material conditions and cultural ideology. The key question I intend to answer is: did these changes have any implications for the status of Rana women? To answer this question, it is necessary for me to start with a deeper understanding of the gender division of labour of Ranas at the household level.

A Critique of Gender Studies

The importance of the gender division of labour has long been recognized by social scientists (Beneria 1982; Bossen 1984; Harris 1981; Mies 1986; Moore 1988; Sharma 1985). Deere and Leal comment that understanding daily production arrangements between men and women is one of the most important variables in the analysis of gender relations (Deere & Leal 1982). For example, they point out that asymmetrical and socially-hierarchical relations have become very apparent in the gender division of labour in everyday life. Cameron (2005: 89) also argues that gender labour arrangements are closely linked to local cultures and historical contexts. In this sense the analysis of gender division of labour is not just knowing who does what work but also understanding the underlying cultural meanings of these arrangements, particularly the ways in which men and women perceive themselves. Cameron thus concludes that 'making labour a part of other cultural and value systems as well, systems that further constitute people and their work'. A similar comment is made by Mies, who states that:

.....the analysis of the dynamics of sexual division of labor- we are not asking "When did a division of labour arise between men and women, and how is it changed?" (such a division is the necessary consequence of all human interaction with nature); our question is, rather, "Why did this division of labour become a relationship of dominance and exploitation, why did it become an asymmetric, hierarchical relationship?"

(1982: 3)

Meanwhile, a substantial number of feminist and anthropological studies have proposed that gender division of labour is not only cultural but also closely corresponds to changes in economic and political contexts (Deere & Leal 1982; Moore 1988: 64). Moore (1988: 82) points out that the relationship of gender division of labour, the organization of household, kinship and other social systems such as marital and inheritance patterns are interdependent. These factors all determine how people react to the social and economic changes. Due to the complexity of interacting processes, it is unlikely that there is a single explanation for the influence of social changes on gender labour arrangements and more importantly, the relationships between men and women in all societies. This point is well illustrated by Mies's (1982; 1986) and Gita Sen's (1982) anthropological studies of rural Indian women. Mies's study has shown that the reason for the rapid expansion of the lace industry in Andhra Pradesh in India is because it can incorporate into local cultural practice the domestication of high-caste women. These women can work at 'home' on lace products and get extra income. This explains why the new industrial sector has attracted more higher-caste women than lower-caste women. For the latter group, they still rely on working as agricultural labourers to keep poverty at bay.

Sen finds that the 'Green Revolution' and land reforms have adversely impacted on the social position of Haryana and Punjab women. New technologies mean that their traditional tasks in agriculture are being replaced and now they are a 'surplus' labour force. Therefore, the gender division of labour is dynamic and may serve as a strategy of adapting to specific cultural and economic-political contexts and more importantly, its transformation or reinforcement reflects how the people position and integrate themselves into the new world. The nature of gender division of labour is summarized by Beneria:

This flexibility in the types of activities that women are performing outside the household implies that the sexual division of labor should not be viewed as "a given," but as subject to change.

(1982: xv)

Despite the fact that gender division of labour allows me to understand the gender relations of a society, some scholars also argue that it is problematic to adopt gender division of labour as an unquestionable variable when analysing the status of women (Cameron 2005; Mukhopadhyay & Higgins 1988; Whyte 1978). For example, in the study of labour and income arrangements of the Kusasi community in north-eastern Ghana, Whitehead (1984) has clearly shown that both

men and women are involved in significant amounts of agricultural labour and equally in access to household farms and private farms. Women in the latter can own the produce from these farms and establish their individual incomes, which they do not need to share with their men. However, the right to access to land does not mean Kusasi women have the same status as men because women do not have equal authority to request for labour. When they need extra labour, they have to rely on their men to arrange and pay labour in terms of food and drink. As a result, most women receive less profit from their private farms than men.

Using extensive ethnographic data, Sharma (1980) successfully demonstrates that the practice of the dowry system in the Indian states of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab does not offer the right for women to inherent property as men can. In some cases, when dowry is transferred, it is allocated to the couple but not to the bride as an individual. She concludes that dowry increases a woman's position in the household because it makes her family respected but in reality, it does not give her any autonomy in her husband's household. Brockington's study (2001) also shows that pastoral women in Tanzania have the right to access some productive resources like animals but their right must be endorsed by men. Moore (1988: 12-41, 56) states that the analysis of gender relations is often done from the perspective of scholars who lack the ability to understand women's circumstances and the strategies they employ as social actors.

The same concern is expressed by Cameron in her study of low caste women's status in Nepal (2005). Avoiding replicating the stereotype of low caste women portrayed by other social scientists,¹⁰⁰ Cameron has chosen to understand the gender division of labour and its implications for the social position of women through their voices or stories. She emphasizes that 'it is important to find out what people of low caste say their relations with others in the context of their everyday lives' (2005: 56). In the following discussion of gender relations in Rana society, I therefore adopt Cameron's approach which sees Rana women as social actors and listens to their feelings about the changes in their livelihoods and their relationships with men. The discussion demonstrates on how Ranas actively modify their gender relations to

¹⁰⁰ Cameron (2005: 54-55) points out that many South Asian scholars tend to portray the lower caste or untouchable women as enjoying more freedom and autonomy than higher caste women (Allen 1982; Bennett 1983; Krygier 1982). The reason for that is because the lower caste's ritual impurity gives women fewer social and behavioral restrictions. She criticizes these impressions as being based on studies of high-caste communities rather than low caste communities; they may not be factual impressions.

respond to the new social world resulting from the introduction of State policies, dominant hill cultures, changes in household, kinship and production relations. A detailed description of the traditional Rana gender division of labour is provided. Afterward, the lived stories of Rana women are used to tell us their changes in livelihoods and the implications of these changes on gender relations.

Gender Division of Labour in Traditional Rana Society

A quick glance at the daily work arrangements in Rana society shows that the Rana gender division of labour is similar to mainstream Nepalese society. Women were mainly responsible for reproductive activities such as cooking, child bearing and cleaning. However, their level of involvement in agriculture and other work varied among different cultural group women. For example, in a study of higher caste Nepalese women, Bennett (1983) points out that the gender division of labour is influenced by the caste system wherein women are domestically subservient. This is the stereotype of good behaviour for higher caste Hindu women in most South Asian societies. The mobility of high caste women is restricted and traditionally they are expected to stay at home (Rankin 2003). Unlike higher caste women, lower caste women are actively working in agricultural and artisan work in pursuit of earning a living. Cameron's study (2005) has shown that the patriarchal ideology associated with high-caste families in Nepal does not apply to low caste women. With no restriction from cultural ideology and for the necessity to have a livelihood, low caste women have traditionally contributed to household subsistence in a substantial way.

In contrast to this, Ranas had also practiced a very clear space-based labour division but there was no evidence to support that this traditional labour arrangement was motivated by the caste or patriarchal ideology. When I asked Ranas about their division of labour, the answers I heard were always the same: 'man is outside the house while woman is inside the house.' The house symbolized different spaces for men's and women's activities. In his early sociological research on the Berbers of Algeria, Bourdieu argues that the building is not only for functional purpose but it also reflex the arrangement of social division and cosmogony in a society.¹⁰¹ In Rana

¹⁰¹ Although Bourdieu clearly demonstrates the bonding relationships between building structure and social hierarchies in the Berber society, I have reservation to adopt all his interpretation in the Rana case. I agree that building itself attaches some kinds of social meanings but it is not necessary a reflexion of

tradition, the house itself was built by the collaboration of men and women. Men built the house and women were responsible for making the walls and decorations. Work tasks inside the house were carried out by Rana women so they were responsible for cooking, cleaning, childbearing, etc. Most Rana women accepted this labour arrangement. They explained that due to the strong cultural preference for large families, heavy domestic workloads made them busy for the whole day and therefore they seldom participated in agricultural work.

Rana women's acceptance of domestic tasks might be well illustrated by Ortner's gender theory. Ortner (1974) suggests that the fundamental differences between women and men are 'nature' and 'culture' as well as 'domestic' and 'public'.¹⁰² She argues that because of women's involvement in reproduction they are close to nature. As a result, they are confined to the domestic domain and their activities are limited to intra- and inter-family levels. On the other hand, outside the house was where Rana men worked, such as agriculture and collecting wood and grass from the forests (Table 8.1). I was told by my Rana informants that they had practiced this labour arrangement for many centuries. Influenced by this cultural practice, Rana women were thus in charge of house interior spaces such as the kitchen. They could refuse men entering the kitchen and the ancestral gods were traditionally placed and worshipped in the kitchen by Rana women. One old Rana woman proudly said to me about this tradition:

In the past, I never allow my husband to go inside the kitchen because men are dirty so they will make the things dirty. Moreover, they don't know how to cook so they are not allowed to go inside. Even though my husband is very tired after collecting wood from the jungle, I still won't allow him into the kitchen. He has to wait outside the kitchen to get food.

social inequities. The Berber example may not apply in other societies and one of the most important contributions of Bourdieu's work is that he offers scholars a new perspective to understand the practice of social relations in everyday activities in particular the relationships of architecture and anthropology. Due to the lack of indepth and focused study on Rana house structure and gender relations in this research, it would be over-interpreting and over- generalising if I conclude the low social status of Rana women on the basis they work inside home.

¹⁰²

For details of Ortner's gender theory and relevant criticisms see Moore (1988: 12-41).

Table 8.1 Labour Division Between Rana Men and Women

Work Items	Physical Input	Space (In/ Outside house)	Duty for
1. Agricultural work (ploughing, harvest)	High	Outside	Male
2. Fuel wood collection	High	Outside	Male Female sometimes only for visiting forests
3. Grass collection	Medium	Outside	Male Female sometimes only for visiting forests
4. Fishing	Medium	Outside	Male and female sometimes for leisure
5. Cooking	Low	Inside	Female
6. Making pots	Low	Inside	Female
7. Making clothes	Low	Inside	Female
8. Cleaning house	Medium	Inside	Female
9. Making baskets	Low	Inside	Female
10. Building house	High	Inside plus outside	Male
11. Making mud walls	Medium	Inside	Female

Source: Field notes 2005

While there was a sharp labour division between men and women, many old Rana women also told me that in the past, husbands and wives always shared the authority in making decisions on household matters. They pointed out that when they discussed what and how to work in the field for their husbands, they would reach an agreement. While gender was one of the important determinants of labour division the influence of seniority should not be ignored. Table 8.2 shows us that the senior males or females were the persons who could supervise the junior household members. For example, mother-in-law or the eldest sister-in-law would decide daily meal arrangements. Therefore, gender-based seniority had helped form the hierarchical Rana household structure.

Table 8.2 Decision-maker(s) of Household Matters in a Rana household

Household matters	Decision maker(s)
1. Magani	Husband and wife will discuss the issue together
2. Daily meals	Need to ask mother-in-law or the eldest sister-in-law
3. Daily working plan	Husband follows his father or household head; wife follows her mother-in-law
4. Festival celebration	Husband will decide how to celebrate, he will go to buy meat
5. Money	Husband will decide how to get and use it. If not enough, it is always wife's duty to inform her husband

Source: Field notes 2005

As discussed above, Ranas had traditionally practiced a very clear space-based gender division of labour. However, its domestication of Rana women should not be confused with higher Hindu caste women's practice. It was more likely that the nature of motherhood and historical socio-economic contexts resulted in the formation and maintenance of traditional Rana gender labour arrangements. Particularly from the Rana women's point of view, no convincing evidence

showed that these labour practices generated the subordinate and oppressive position of them in previous. On the contrary, most Rana women did not value their work tasks less important than men. They told me that they were proud of their authority in the kitchen, skills in making pots and baskets for domestic use and high level of participation in the household decision process. Still, I am reluctant to thus comment on Rana society as one practising 'gender equality' because a simple category is not enough to represent the complexity and dynamic nature of gender relations.¹⁰³ For example, Ortner realizes that gender relations are many faceted after her long study of Sherpa community in Nepal (1996). She states:

On a scale of gender inequality across world cultures, the Sherpas are pretty good. "Pretty good" is not exactly a scientific category, but then it is notoriously difficult to assign a score of degree of gender equality or inequality in a particular society. The Sherpas are not "egalitarian", and the culture is in many ways biased in favor of male privilege of various kinds.

(1996: 186)

Apart from gender division of labour, although male-centred property inheritance rights and household head leadership systems are often treated as important variables in the unequal gender relations between men and women, this may only represent the views of scholars, policy makers and development workers. It may not actually be the opinion of people who live in this society. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa Rana women, they were happy to work inside the home. After my long contact with them, I noted that 'working inside the house' symbolized a wealthy and comfortable life for them. Instead of taking the conventional debate on the male or female dominant society through an exploration of the relationships between these social systems and gender relations, in the following section, I devote my discussion to what Rana women felt about past and present life and gender relations. Three major changes in life including an increase in economic dependency, in workload and control from husbands are discussed by Rana women in regard to their relations to men.

¹⁰³

A comprehensive study on the gender relations in Rana society has not yet been written. However, an article titled 'Rana Tharu: Women of Grace' published in *National Geographic* (2000) had aroused my interest in this topic. The author, Debra Kellner, visited a remote Rana settlement in Kailali district. Through her understanding of Rana history, customs and practices and observations of Ranas' daily activities, she concluded that Rana was a matriarchal society. She said, 'the noble standing of their ancestors, plus women's right to reject an arranged marriage and to divorce (uncommon among most Nepalese women), lead anthropologists to believe that Rana Tharus was once a matriarchal society.' Also, she observed that Rana women lived a relaxed lifestyle and only their men had to work hard so she concluded that Rana women had a superior position in the family.

Changes in Livelihood and Implications for the Status of Rana Women

Previously, Rana women seldom participated in work activities but they did not value themselves as less worthy than men. Many Rana women pointed out that they had huge families so they were always busy doing domestic work and contributed to household subsistence as much as men. However, changes in the local economic structure had gradually marginalised the economic significance of Rana women. The reason was that influenced by the traditional division of labour, Rana women did not have experience of the outside world. Compared to men, Rana women had less opportunity to find employment. Faced with declining landholdings, many Rana households had to seek new livelihoods besides working in subsistence agriculture. Unable to access the labour market, Rana women had to rely increasingly on their husbands. This situation is commonly found in rural India and Africa. Mies' study (1982) has shown that the expansion of the lace industry gave men opportunities to control the production process and this further reinforced the male-dominated economic structure. She (1982: 16) points out that the impact of new economic development has not created a revolution in gender relations. On the contrary, she comments that 'older forms of the sexual division of labour were not abolished but, rather, were used, reinforced, and reinterpreted'. The study of Agarwal (1992) documents that poverty has pushed women more into income generation activities. However, their economic autonomy does not improve because they have to spend most of their incomes on the family's basic needs. A similar finding is evident regarding the pastoral women in Tanzania (Brockington 2001). In the case of Rauteli Bichawa, the new economic situation further accelerated the importance of men as major contributors to maintaining the household's livelihood and women became dependent on men even more.

During my fieldwork I did not encounter any Rana women who were actively involved in wage labour while many Rana males worked in India, in the town, in the military or casual construction work. The high level of dependency of Rana women could be illustrated by a conversation with a Beldandi landless Rana couple. The wife said to me that 'when rice is nearly finished, I asked my husband how to solve the problem. He will always ask me to wait, he will bring rice'. She continued, 'If there is no money, I will ask him. I will request him to find a job and bring money back to buy things.' Although the husband sometimes felt uncomfortable

about his wife's requests, he was never angry with her. He explained to me that it was his responsibility to feed the family.

While Rana women were unable to access 'formal production activities', their increased involvement in informal production activities was often undervalued. The situation was common in rural agricultural societies (Beneria 1982; Boserup 1970; Boulding 1983; Carney 1996). For example, Agarwal (1997) argues that rural poor women in India always do much more work than men particularly when environmental degradation becomes serious. Her study finds that women of Gajerat in western India have to spend four to five hours collecting small amounts of fuelwood which do not even provide enough heat. A research conducted by Kumar and Hotchkiss (1988) shows that there is a substantial increase in the time needed to collect fuelwood for hill Nepalese women due to serious deforestation. As a result, this reduces women's time to work in crop production. The undervaluation of Rana women's work was serious in Rauteli Bichawa. Few Pahaaris even commented on the gender practices of Rana in this way: 'Rana women only stay inside the house. They do not work so much so their husbands always need to work for the whole day.' Their inactivity in formal production tasks was portrayed as laziness.¹⁰⁴ However, my ethnographic data showed that this was not the case. The introduction of new agricultural technologies, changes in household and strict natural resource extraction regulations have had an adverse impact on the life of Rana women. Their new work tasks were not limited to inside the home. The stories of a few Rana women illustrate clearly their life changes that Rana male informants and Pahaaris failed to inform me about.

Firstly, Rana women became increasingly involved in agricultural work after the introduction of rice transplanting (see Plate 8.7 below). This new agricultural technology was developed in the hills. Compared to old practices, this form of cultivation was much more labour intensive but it produced higher yields. As a result, Rana women worked in the field. Meanwhile, household partitions decreased the availability of labour in each household. Inevitably, females had to contribute their labour to their men. This change affected both wealthy and poor Rana women in the resettled and non-resettled Rana villages. The difference was that besides working in their

¹⁰⁴ The ways in which Pahaaris portrayed Rana women was deliberately done to lower the social status of Ranas (for more details see Chapter Six).

own land, poor Rana women even had to help their husbands who worked on other people's land. A Rampur Rana woman shared her feelings:

Traditional Rana women only work at the home. This is because they have big families and need to do much housework. Nowadays, we have the same duties as men and we also need to work hard in the field. What is the reason for this change? I don't know but I only know today the new generation Rana women are all like this. Like my mum, she never needs to collect grass and wood, it is all male duty. But we do it today, so we have more work to do than before. I don't feel sad because all new generation Rana women are like this. We believe if we work more, we can gain more. We need to show others [Kurmaas], we like competition.



Plate 8.7 Nowadays, most Rana women actively work in the field.

Like most Rana women, she had a very busy daily schedule particularly during rice planting, rice and wheat harvesting seasons. She woke up at 3am and before she went to work in the field to transplant rice, seedlings and harvest work, she had to finish cleaning the house, animals and prepare breakfast. Afterward, at around midday, she needed to cook the lunch and then went back to work in the field again. She did not finish her fieldwork until evening and then even though she felt tired, it was her duty to prepare the dinner and clean pots and the kitchen afterwards. She could only start to rest at approximately 10pm. Currently, most Rana women are responsible for both traditional domestic housework and agricultural work. Another Beldandi Rana woman from a landless family shared the same feelings:

Nowadays, I have more time working outside the house. For example, if someone asks me to help with the fieldwork, besides my husband, I also need to go. When inside the park, I had always enough food but today I also need to work for others.

The second change referred to the recent park policies and increased political insurgency. After the establishment of the park, Ranas lost their traditional right to use natural resources. Lacking alternative sources for fuelwood and grass, Ranas had to use their own labour instead of bullock carts to collect fuelwood illegally from the Park in order to minimize the risk of arrest by game scouts and the army. However, because of the Maoist insurgency in this region, males were identified more easily as rebels and therefore the task of fuelwood collection shifted from males to females. This particularly had an impact on the daily life of most Iymilia and Jhilmila Rana women (see Plate 8.8 below).¹⁰⁵ They carried the fuelwood from the Park for nearly 10 years. A thirty-five year old Iymilia Rana woman said:

I feel angry about having to carry the wood from the Park because it is too heavy for me. My old life was very good. My duty was mainly cooking *DalBhat* and the rest of the time I could always chat with my friends. Now my life is really harsh. I have to wake up early each morning to clean houses, wash pots and cook food. Recently, the government has organized daily study classes for our village women and I like study so I attend the class. However, I can only have three classes per week because I need to go to the forest. If I don't need to go to forest to collect fuelwood, I can attend the class every day.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 208 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.8 Although the government launched classes to improve the literacy of Rana women, few of them are able to attend regularly due to their heavy workload.

¹⁰⁵ The situation in Dhokka Block was that the park management along the Dhokka Block region provided opportunities for Rana to use oxen to collect fuelwood illegally so Rana males were still responsible for this activity.

Some Iymilia and Jhilmila Rana women even felt physical and mental fatigue concerning the dramatic changes in their lives. One Iymilia Rana woman remarked:

I need to work very hard. Still, I always manage to provide enough food and clothes to my children. For example, if my family needs 2 kilos rice for survival, I will cook bit less than this. You know, after the establishment of Park, I had to carry fuelwood about 10 to 15 kilos every time and the job was too hard for me and I felt pain everywhere in my body. I stopped carrying wood three years ago when other younger women in my household carried on my work.

Fuelwood collection has been a part of everyday life for all Iymilia and Jhilmila Rana women (see Plate 8.9 below). To understand the difficulties and risks involved in this duty, I participated in the fuelwood collection activities. Seven of us including five females from Jhilmila and my research assistant spent almost 1.5-hours going to the Singpur army post after crossing the river and through the forest. An old Rana lady representing the group asked permission to collect wood. Her daughter told me that she had carried wood since she was 10 years old. After five years she could now carry 15 kilos of wood. Her mother felt sad about this, 'I feel pain everywhere and exhausted. I am not happy but I can't share this with others and can only keep it in my heart. Anyway, I have no choice, we need to survive'. Some Rana husbands had the same concerns and one said, 'I am always worried about her [my wife] because she may be attacked by wildlife or caught by the army. But I can't do anything, we need fuelwood.'

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 209 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 8.9 Fuelwood collection has become the job of a new generation of Rana women since the establishment of the Park.

Thirdly, I noted that shortage of fuelwood also increased difficulties for cooking and the burden was on the shoulders of Rana women. Taking the Bhajandra Rana family as an example, Bhajandra and his son were responsible for fuelwood collection. However, one time when they met the Army inside the park they were mistakenly identified as Maoists and attacked by drunken soldiers and seriously injured. The family decided to use dung cake mix with dry grass as a fuelwood substitute for cooking. His wife complained that dung cakes were not as good as wood; it took her twice as long to cook. She faced another dilemma and asked, 'The dry grass is for feeding our animals; if we use it for cooking, what can our animals eat?'

During my fieldwork, I noted that while Rana women worked more often outside their homes, many Iymilia and Jhilmila Rana males apart from working in the field were afraid to go outside because of the political insurgency. Spending more time in the home did not mean that Rana men became more involved in home chores. Many Rana women felt upset because their workload outside the home had increased but men did not do any work inside the home. One Rana woman commented:

My husband never tries to help me even though he is at home. For Rana males, before they need to plough the land but nowadays they can use a truck. It seems to me that men do not need to work as hard as before. Many new generation males even lose their skills in making beds, fishing nets, etc.

These examples indicate that the nature of gender division of labour can be very dynamic to the broader processes of social, economic and political transformation on the one hand, yet it can be strictly practised on the other hand. Because of subsistence realities, many traditional male tasks had shifted to the shoulders of Rana women. In contrast to this, Rana men not only showed their reluctance in doing women's tasks but they also consistently highlighted their control over women in the pursuit of higher status in front of others, particularly Pahaaris.

I noted that all of my male Rana informants emphasized that their absolute control over their women extended to both the social and economic spheres. Economically, they claimed that Rana women were totally reliant on men. Rana males also pointed out that the mobility of women was culturally controlled by men. On the other hand, Rana women mentioned that – until recent decades - they experienced more pressure and domination from their husbands.

What were the reasons for this change in women's perceptions of their social consciousness?

Why did Rana men highlight their control over women to others like Pahaaris?

The major reason was that Rana men had more opportunity to contact new people than Rana women. The outsiders' image of their inferior social status in the family and in society made them embarrassed, particularly when they interacted with Pahaaris. They felt that they were insulted and dominated. The argument about food serving customs that was discussed in Chapter Six was a good example of this. They therefore wanted to 'reportray' their domination over women to enhance their self-esteem. In my observation, relatively wealthier and younger Rana men tended to show this trait while poorer and older Ranans displayed more equality between the sexes. They used traditional social institutions such as the land inheritance system, the *Mukhiya* system and gender division of labour to justify their undoubted domination of women.

Most Rana women pointed out that they suffered more at the hands of male authority than in the past. The level of control significantly increased particularly after marriage and being mothers. Rana women had to follow a set of traditional regulations: 1) women needed to wear black-coloured scarves¹⁰⁶; 2) women could not talk to sisters' husbands directly; 3) when husbands were present, wives could never sit or sleep on the bed, and 4) they needed permission from their husbands if they planned to go somewhere. In most cases, conflicts arose due to the last rule.

During the festival the wife from my host family went to see a dance just 1 km from her home. Later, her husband found out and scolded her. On another occasion, there was the regional festival '*Dasharaa*' in which people worshipped the god of rain before they started planting rice and went to a celebration. After the husband finished his farming work, he went there by himself in the evening and stayed until next morning. I asked his wife why she and her husband did not go together. She was first surprised at my question and later she explained that if she requested him to bring her and children to go, she would be rebuked for this. She said that

¹⁰⁶ In the past, all Rana females had to wear scarves as a mark of respect to other people. Nowadays, only married Rana women wear scarves.

Rana males from Andaiya control their wives very strictly. She told me that before she was married she went to the festival every year.

Another incident occurred close to my host family. Although the young married Rana woman was from a rich and influential family, she told me she was afraid of her husband and she had to obey him in all matters. I noticed whenever I visited her that if her husband was out, she always smiled and talked to many people. When he was there she turned into another person and seldom talked. One time, when we discussed the topic of husband-wife relations, she shared her feelings:

I always need to follow my husband. This seems to be our present culture. I must follow when I got married. I don't have any freedom. Everything belongs to my husband. However, I know that in older generations, when women say something, men easily followed and did it. I'm different from my mum's generation, I am really scared and must all the time respect my husband.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the new transformations in production, kinship and gender relations of Ranas and demonstrated how these changes relate to social changes and affect the practice of sustainable livelihoods. The agency of Ranas in these social relation transformations should not be neglected. For example, due to the loss of substantial landholdings and household transformation, most Ranas were now heavily dependent on household members as the major source of labour for household activities. One immediate effect of this new strategy was that it led to further deterioration in *Kurmaa* relations. *Kurmaa* kin was no longer an important social security net for Ranas to maintain sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, the practice of *Kamaiya* system was completely undermined by the rising poverty. In the past, poor Ranas livelihoods were often secured by working as *Kamaiyas* however nowadays the rich Ranas were not able to hire any *Kamaiyas*. In order to survive, poor Ranas had to search for new livelihoods. My ethnographic data showed that some of them chose to form new social and economic alliances with Ranas and even Pahaaris. They shared labour for agricultural work and exchanged information regarding job opportunities. However, for most poor Ranas who had no alternative, they could only work as tenants for Pahaari landowners and this new Rana tenant-Pahaari landowner relationship had created many conflicts socially, economically and politically (see discussion in Chapter Six). It might be too early to comment on the efficiency of new production

relations in the maintenance of Rana livelihoods, but there is no doubt that the Ranas have lost two important social safety nets - *Kurmaa* relations and the traditional *Kamaiya* system.

While household subsistence entirely reliant on household labour, gender relations at the household level were often the most vulnerable. The ethnographic analysis in this chapter illustrated that factors such as the Park policies, increased poverty, household transformation, changes in kinship and production relations resulted in a substantially increased workload for Rana women. Economic and social confrontations between Rana men and women have become significant. Most Rana women felt and experienced their lower status due to increased economic dependency on their men despite the fact that they actually participated more in activities such as working in fields and collecting fuelwood. Their work was constantly underestimated by their men and Pahaaris. My ethnographic data also shows evidence that Rana men have increased control over women during the last few decades because they wanted to gain more social status and better self-esteem. Rana men's reclamation of control over women was in fact a process of regaining their identity. In her analysis of relationships between gender and caste in Nepal, Cameron (2005: 56) points out that the imitation of upper-caste ritual and social behaviour by lower caste groups often involves greater control of women and it is part of caste climbing - or 'Sanskritization', the term often used by scholars. In the next chapter, I will thus shift my analytical perspective from the household level to the wider Rana society and discuss how Ranas perceive themselves in the context of the dramatic social changes wrought by the changes in landownership, the Park and hill migration. This will emerge as a critical issue in this study.

CHAPTER NINE

LAND, LIVELIHOOD AND RANA THARU IDENTITY TRANSFORMATIONS

Introduction

The increased hardship in livelihoods caused by the emergence of the Park and social changes had also invoked Ranas' consciousness of ethnicity. This chapter intends to understand the recent development of ethnic movement in Rana society. In the other words, the chapter focuses on the relationships between Rana society and the hill-dominant State through an exploration of Rana identity and how it has changed. The importance of exploring Rana identity lies in the interlocking relationships between ethnicity and livelihood. An examination of the impacts of recent social changes on Rana society from a holistic perspective will enable us to understand the ways in which Ranas interpret their new social world and their reactions to it.

The current social scientists' work on ethnicity is an important point of departure for discussion. Many political and historical studies have argued that the formation and transformation of ethnicity is shaped by social changes (Barth 1969; Brass 1991; Cohen 1969; Eriksen 1993). For example, Eriksen's (1993) study on migrants to the United States shows that the dramatic changes in economic environment after the Second World War resulted in migrants creating an increasing identity consciousness. Supported by an in-depth analysis of the development of ethnicity in Nepal, Gellner (1997) concludes that when more radical social changes occur, the more active ethnic identity is found in a social group. More recently, Kort and Silva (2003) even proposed that different forms of ethnicity are in fact strategies to retain a livelihood. In their study of the impact of civil war in Sri Lanka, they clearly demonstrate how ethnicity reflects the ways people internally experience and interpret social changes and how this has developed into coping strategies. Furthermore, an increasing number of ethnographic studies have found that changes in land control are a critical factor for contemporary ethnic movements in Nepal (Caplan 1970; Jones 1967), particularly Tharu communities (Guneratne 2002; Odegaard 1997).

While the social reforms and ethnic movements in Nepal are the basis of the discussion in this chapter, the influence of ideologies concerning 'Sanskritization' and 'Indigenoussness' should not

be overlooked. Sanskritization refers to the social mobility of non-high caste groups by emulating Hinduism ideologies and practices. On the other hand, Indigenoussness describes social movements which are anti-Hindu and anti-caste. Instead of adopting these conventional analytical approaches, I find that a 'multiple identities' perspective (Cohen 1978: 378) is more relevant to the Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. My ethnographic data supports the contention that Ranas actively used multiple identities and cultural practices to achieve an equal social footing as the dominant Pahaari settlers. They imitated hill cultures on the one hand but also clung to some of their traditional customs and were proud of 'being Rana'. The motivation behind this was linked to the aim of obtaining a better livelihood. This identity and cultural management was the major force in the transformation of Rana society. In his study of the ethnic movement of low caste communities in northern India, Jaffrelot (2003) concludes that Sanskritization is part of an alternative strategy for these communities to emancipate themselves from socio-economic deprivation. Therefore there are no structural changes within the caste system itself.

This chapter is organized into three parts. The first part demonstrates the importance of ethnicity in studies on social change. The mutually embedding relationships between ethnicity and livelihood are discussed. In the second part a historical review of ethnic movements in Nepal is provided. The relationships involving land and livelihood changes and different social movement strategies are highlighted. The final part of this chapter examines the identity transformation of Rauteli Bichawas Ranas. The discussion shows that the changes in control over land not only shaped the Rana livelihoods but also the ways they position themselves with the wider society.

Ethnicity and Livelihood

The Formation of Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a term often used in academia and public media channels since the mid-1960s (Eriksen 1993). Ethnicity has gradually become a word meaning 'tribe', 'aboriginal' and 'minorities' (Cohen 1978; Eriksen 1993: 8).¹⁰⁷ The current use of ethnicity often implies social

¹⁰⁷ The concept of ethnicity in contemporary polity is discussed in Thomas Eriksen's influential book *Ethnicity and nationalism: anthropological perspectives*. According to Eriksen (1993), the emergence of ethnicity is closely related to new ways of thinking about social anthropology after World War II. Many anthropologists notice that the tribal societies they study have more contact with the outside world and other people. They feel the old term tribe which implies meanings of isolation and primitive is no longer

rankings and competitive inter-ethnic relationships even though these meanings are not originally part of the word 'ethnicity' itself. Taking the definition provided by Eriksen (1993: 4), ethnicity refers to 'aspects of relationship between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive.'

Ethnicity has also become a research focus in many different disciplines since the mid-1960s, especially history, political science, sociology and social anthropology (Eriksen 1993). The discussion has focused on the nature of ethnicity and its meanings. Two positions are conventionally taken. In the primordialist approach, ethnic identity has been treated as an aspect of social identity. It is assumed to have persisted over long periods of time (Gellner 1997) and 'given' naturally (Korf & Silva 2003). For example, Smith (1986: 22-31) summarises there are six characteristics of an ethnic group: people share a collective name; a common myth of descent; a shared history; a distinctive shared culture; an association with a specific territory; and a sense of solidity.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, the instrumentalist approach conceptualizes 'ethnicity as a highly malleable social, political and cultural resource mobilized by various interested groups, including the political elites and the masses' (Korf & Silva 2003). The influential work was done by Barth (1969), Cohen (1969) and Brass (1991). Barth suggests that an ethnic group is not a static social group; it is subject to change. Cohen attacks primordialism-based scholarship by arguing that:

Ethnicity is thus basically a political and not a cultural phenomenon, and it operates within contemporary political contexts and it is not an archaic survival arrangement carried over into the present by conservative people.

(1969: 190)

Similarly, Brass points out that the fundamental nature of ethnicity is the polity. He believes that people have played an active role in making their identity, which has created a new research direction for contemporary studies on ethnicity:

suitable to describe these people. Nepal is no exception. The term 'ethnic group' has replaced the term 'tribe' and is often used to denote culturally distinct groups. Some scholars even use it as an antonym of the term 'caste' (Odegaard 1997).

¹⁰⁸ A critique of Smith's theory concerning ethnic groups can be found in Gellner (1997). In his work, many ethnographic studies in Nepal have shown that the formation of ethnicity does not mesh with these six criteria.

Consequently, whether or not the culture of the group is ancient or is newly-fashioned, the study of ethnicity and nationality is in large part the study of politically-induced cultural change. More precisely, it is the study of the process by which elites and counter-elites within ethnic groups select aspects of the group's culture, attach new value and meaning to them, and use them as symbols to mobilize the group, to defend its interests, and to compete with other groups.

(1991: 75)

The relationship between ethnicity and social changes are emphasized by pro-instrumentalist scholars. In her study of ethnic formation in Nepal, Levine (1987: 86) concludes that 'Ethnicity in Nepal cannot be understood apart from the external political factors that have impinged on villager's lives'. Guneratne (2002: 12) also argues that 'ethnicity is a response to the process of cultural and economic transformation'. I therefore cannot exclude the formation and transformation of Rana identity from my present discussion. However, while the recent interpretation of ethnicity is noted at the national political level, its local perspective remains unexplored because its relationship to local livelihood has not been well highlighted until recently. This study therefore intends to mitigate this shortcoming by exploring the interplay between ethnicity and social changes from the local perspective.

The Engagement of Ethnicity and Livelihood

I argue that ethnicity is one of the most important aspects of livelihood, which is important in that people experience and practice it in daily social life. By understanding it, we are able to examine the impact of state policy-induced social changes on the people. The relationships between ethnicity and livelihood are bi-directional. Firstly, the emergence of ethnicity is an important concomitant of the changes in livelihood. People will be more aware of themselves and their relationships with others when they experience new economic environments. Therefore, the development of ethnicity is often found to occur in specific historical contexts. This kind of relationship has been evident in many studies which attempt to assess the influence of modernization and nationalism on people's identity. Gellner (1997: 8) points out that when a group of people is 'large enough to dominate a given political unit', a nation is therefore formed and people will be more sensitive to their ethnic identities. Studies have shown that after World War II, many migrants to the United States faced new hardships and this increased ethnic consciousness (Eriksen 1993). In Nepal, many studies have also demonstrated to us that ethnicity is dynamic during different political periods (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997; Sharma 1997; see

the discussion in the following section). It is likely that when more violent social changes occur, the more active ethnicity in a social group is found.

In the case of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, their livelihood is adversely affected due to substantial loss of land as a result of the government's conservation policies and hill migration. They have also experienced great cultural threats from the invasion by hill cultures. Facing these social changes, they are now at the crossroad. It can be assumed that a new wave of ethnicity is happening in the Rana community. However, this important theme has not been noted in contemporary studies of park-people interactions.

Secondly, I argue that ethnicity is not simply a strategic tool for sharing more political power (Brass 1991; Cohen 1969), but is also an important currency for the people to achieve a better livelihood. The focus of my present work is particularly relevant to the latter idea. What does ethnic consciousness exactly mean? According to Kort and Silva (2003), in the process of ethnic consciousness, every person is trying to understand his/her 'defenselessness within a given socio-economic environment' and to 'develop some coping mechanisms against perceived threats'. In their detailed study of the impact of civil war in Sri Lanka, they further point out that ethnicity is used by people to fight for their basic economic livelihood. They say:

While ethnicity may be "imagined" in the sense of being an important basis of self-consciousness that often simplifies and, at the same time, exaggerates the issue involved, it is "real" in the sense of guiding thinking and action of people concerned and it is somehow rooted in the real problems faced by conflicted-affected populations in the dry zone...Ethnicity is the lens through which the affected populations understand their overall suffering, articulate collective grievances and work out their individual and collective responses and coping strategies.

(2003: 17)

This chapter therefore examines how Rauteli Bichawa Ranas think about themselves in the context of the dramatic land-based social changes and how this self-identity affects their relationships with others and finally turns to specific social reform strategies. Before this is explained further, a brief history of ethnic movements in Nepal and in Tharu society will serve as a basis for the Ranas' current social movements.

A Historical Perspective of Ethnic Movements in Nepal

Ideologies of Sanskritization and Indigenusness

Sanskritization and Indigenusness are two influential ideologies which have long led the direction of ethnic movements and the analysis of ethnicity in Nepal. Despite their differences, they are both closely related to livelihood/economic contexts, particularly the changes in land. Land has long played a key role in influencing ethnic relations in the middle hill and Tarai regions of Nepal where agriculture remains a dominant economic activity. This is typical of the relations of both high-caste and ethnic group¹⁰⁹ (Caplan 1970; Jones 1967: also see discussion in Chapter Six) and interethnic groups (Campbell 1997; Odegaard 1997). The more contact there is with other cultural groups, the more ethnic groups are aware of their positions in society. In the process of ethnic consciousness, most ethnic groups tend to perceive themselves as backward and uneducated compared to the high Hindu caste groups. They see these shortcomings as the major attributors to their poverty and the transformation of landownership. Therefore, ethnic consciousness has provoked a series of social reforms and movements¹¹⁰ in ethnic communities. The reform approach is often described by scholars as 'Sanskritization' or more recently as 'Hinduization' and 'Nepalization'.

The concept of Sanskritization was first developed by Srinivas (1962) and widely used in describing the social mobility of non-high Hindu caste groups. According to Jones (1967: 63), Sanskritization serves to 'describe a process by which a lower caste or non-Hindu group adopts the ideology or parts of ideology of Hinduism in an attempt to raise its economic, political, and social status in the caste hierarchy of a given area'. The existence of Sanskritization can be traced back to when the twice-born castes Brahmins and Chhetris became the dominant group in the country's administration. Jones in his study on the eastern Limbu community (1967) argues that the acceptance of caste is the first step in Sanskritization although the ethnic group may interpret the concept of caste completely differently from the high caste Hindus; the

¹⁰⁹ I use the term 'ethnic groups' as distinct from the high Hindu caste groups because this helps us to differentiate the dominant and subordinate groups in Nepal. On the other hand, I agree with Gellner's (1997) argument that the high caste Hindu groups such as Brahmins and Chhetris can be categorized as ethnic groups because of their small population. As Eriksen (1993) points out, in the broad sense ethnicity is the way people distinguish themselves from others.

¹¹⁰ In this chapter's discussion I do not include one of the most influential social movements in Nepal's contemporary history - the Maoist movement. This movement is more motivated by the class struggle rather than ethnic concerns even though its supporters mainly derive from different ethnic groups such as the Magar (Sales 2002).

concept of caste is a way of creating social exclusion. Jones points out that the adoption of high Hindu castes' language, dress and religious practices is the core process of Sanskritization. Levine (1987) further argues that economic and political issues are the underlying motivation for ethnic groups choosing Sanskritization. For example, Thakatsase villagers (Thakalis) adopted Nepali Hindu norms and distanced themselves from Tibetanized Thakalis in an attempt to keep closer relations with high Hindu caste government officials. Levine (1987: 75) comments that using ethnic names for economic and caste advantage is a long-standing practice in Nepal. The earlier social reforms of many other ethnic groups such as the Newar, Gurung, Tamang, Rai, Sherpa and Tharus are inevitably understood in terms of caste-climbing.¹¹¹

However, Sanskritization is not the only strategy that ethnic groups use to respond to the domination of high Hindu caste groups. Another approach is the term 'Indigenusness'¹¹², which is found more relevant in explaining the new wave of ethnic social movements of recent decades. Sanskritization can be understood as a product of the early stage of nation building (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1997; Sharma 1997), while Indigenusness seems to be a social product that responds to global social movements¹¹³ and in particular the post-1990s Nepal. According to Wilmer and Martin's (2006) analysis, the indigenous rights movement emerging in the 1990s has seriously influenced minorities, resource-poor groups and local activists from every corner of the world. There is no exception in Nepal. Influenced by this global trend, the first nationwide social movement *Jan Andolan* (the People's Movement) arose in Nepal in 1990 and the campaign resulted in ending the monarchical Panchayat system. Instead of being known as the 'Hindu kingdom', the 1990 Constitution declared Nepal a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state (Gurung 1997). This new polity has provided an opportunity for many socially deprived ethnic groups to 'discover pride in their ethnic identity' and become 'conscious that they can take the

¹¹¹ See Gellner Pfaff-Czarnecka and Whelpton (1997). Many scholars argue that it is too simple to say that those groups are being Sanskritized. Comprehensive ethnographic studies of different ethnic groups have shown that the approaches taken by various social movements are much more than Sanskritization.

¹¹² I am reluctant to use ethnicity to represent this approach. According to Eriksen (1993), the broad meaning of ethnicity is the identity-consciousness of the group itself and its relationships with other groups. It does not imply that there is resistance to the dominant social groups and their cultures. The view is shared by Odegaard (1997). She points out that there is no distinction between the terms 'caste', 'Hindu' or 'ethnic groups'. The distinction was introduced into South Asia by Western research and administration practices.

¹¹³ Barnes et al. (1993) argue that the term 'Indigenous' is a political category which closely corresponds to the results of contemporary international legal and institutional activities.

advantage of democratic situation and bargain for a good share in the political and economic pie' (Sharma 1997: 482).

Many ethnic groups realized the advantages of claiming indigenous status and preserving their traditional customs. Instead of emulating higher Hindu castes, initiators (usually elites) of ethnic groups had chosen to disassociate themselves from the higher Hindu castes. The establishment of *Janajati Mahasangh* (Federation of Nationalities), which includes twenty-two ethnic groups¹¹⁴ mainly from Mongol and non-Hindu groups, had led the ethnic social movement in a new direction. In a 1994 meeting, it further made a sharp social differentiation between ethnic groups and Hindu caste groups. It defined 'Indigenous people' as non-Hindu, animist believers; possessing territory and language; deprived of tribal resources; devoid of policy-making role and egalitarian, opposed to caste (Gurung 1997: 527). In the new ethnic social movement, most ethnic activists use anti-Hindu and anti-castes as their campaign slogans and the promotion of indigenous language, religious practices and dress is highlighted in these social campaigns. Ideologies that are either Sanskritization or Indigenism in origin have deeply influenced the Tharu social movements (Odegaard 1997).¹¹⁵

Ethnic Movements in Tharu Societies

The extensive studies done by Guneratne (2002), Krauskopff (2002) and Odegaard (1997), inform the genealogies of the Tharu social movement in Nepal. In general, the mainstream Tharu social reforms can be divided into two periods: before the 1990s and after the 1990s. These reforms are all linked to livelihood issues and the Tharu elites are major activists. However, the strategies for these reforms differ according to political environments. Furthermore, an alternative social movement exists in Rana society.

The earliest Tharu social movement emerged in 1949 when the first Tharu organization - the Tharu Welfare Society (TWS) - was formed by the elites of eastern Tharus (Guneratne 2002; Krauskopff 2002; Odegaard 1997). Its establishment was mainly a response to increased

¹¹⁴ These include Chepang, Chantel, Danuwar, Dhimal, Dura, Gurung, Jahangar, Jirel, Jyapur, Kirat, Magar, Majhi, Meche, Newar, Rai, Rajhanshi, Shepa, Sunuwar, Tamang, Thakali, Thami, and Tharu.

¹¹⁵ Odegaard (1997) divides the contemporary Tharu social movements into two categories: caste-climbing and ethnic incorporation.

contacts with the hill population and their cultures. The early strategy of TWS was much like Sanskritization because the campaign specifically focused on emulating high Hindu caste behaviour. Through the promotion of alcohol abstinence, women wearing blouses and saris instead of traditional dress, TWS sort to raise the social status of Tharus. Many Tharu groups also claimed they were descendents of high Hindu castes. For example, Tharus from Chitwan believed that they had blood relations with Rajput and Dangauras traced their origin to the Thakurs¹¹⁶ in Ayodhya and to King Ram Chandra.¹¹⁷ Besides this, TWS noticed the increased poverty among Tharus so it also advocated the reduction of life-cycle ceremony expenditures as an attempt to improve people's economic status. TWS, however, was perceived as an elite organization which failed to gain complete support from the different Tharu groups throughout the Tarai belt, particularly those from western Tarai like Dangauras and Ranas. They had not even heard of TWS (Odegaard 1997). The strategies also contradicted local Tharu cultural practices.¹¹⁸ As a result, the campaign did not make any significant impact.

The breakthrough was the appearance of another Tharu organization called the Backwards Society Education (BASE) in 1985. Its formation was a reaction to the rising conflict over land resources, which most Tharu communities experienced for nearly a half century. The founder of BASE was a Tharu *Kamaiya* (lit. bonded labourer) known as Dilli Bahadur Chaudhary from Dang district. His family lost substantial land to Pahaaris and was in serious indebtedness and they ended up as bonded labourers. Dilli thought illiteracy was one of the most important reasons for the subordinate position of Tharus (*Kamaiya* problem) so the promotion of education was BASE's top priority.¹¹⁹ As BASE focused on transforming landownership as the most crucial issue Tharus faced, it rapidly received thousands of western Tharus' support. This was the first grass-roots Tharu social movement. Dilli also successfully portrayed the indigenous status of Tharus as part of the ideology of the global indigenous rights movement. His endeavor to release bonded labourers not only attracted great financial support from foreign

¹¹⁶ Both Ranas and Dangauras claim the term 'Tharu' is a misnomer of 'Thakur'. Thakur refers to the descendants of kings, particularly Rajput descendants (Odegaard 1997).

¹¹⁷ The term 'Rajput' refers to plain caste (lit. 'Kings' sons') (Gellner et al. 1997: 547). The claim of being descendants from Rajput is a common strategy for many low castes and ethnic groups wanting a higher caste position (Odegaard 1997).

¹¹⁸ Most Tharu groups used to consume much alcohol and a large variety of meats. The imposed non-alcoholism and vegetarian policies were seldom found at the local level.

¹¹⁹ For the impacts of BASE on Tharu communities see Odegaard (1997; 1999).

aid agencies but he was also granted the Rebok Human Rights award in 1994 (Odegaard 1997).

On the other hand, TWS realized that this strategy did not work. Influenced by the new democratic reality invoked by the 1990 people's movement and the global indigenous movement, TWS developed new social reform strategies. According to Odegaard (1997), in order to become linked to the international indigenous movement and obtain more foreign donor agencies, the leaders of TWS thought about how to portray the indigenous image of Tharus. The brotherhood of all Tharus and their indigenous status was therefore highlighted in the new ideology. TWS rejected the caste ideology and became affiliated with the anti-Hindu, anti-Brahmin organization *Janajati Mahasangh*. In 1993, a well known Tharu leader of TWS, Ramnanda Prasad Singh, even wrote a book called *The Real Story of the Tharu*. He claimed that Tharus were descendents of Buddha. It was expected that this claim would not be accepted by all Tharu groups but its importance lay in raising consciousness of Tharu identity. Several national Tharu conferences were held during the 1990s and all participants from different Tarai areas were aware of the importance of cultural preservation. Speaking the Tharu language, wearing Tharu clothes, and practicing Tharu rituals were symbols of being Tharus. The campaign was summed up as a 'pan-Tharu movement' by Odegaard (1997).

McDonaugh (1989) and Gurneratne (2002) analyzed the appearance of contemporary Tharu movements as being associated with the problem of unequal land distribution. Gurneratne (2002: 68) concludes that 'Tharu ethnic identity is formed not on the basis of shared cultural features but in terms of particular structural relationship to the State'. His comment has also clearly shown the close relationships between ethnicity, social movement and livelihood:

Elite groups which strive to organize their communities into ethnic groups must have some basis on which to do so. There must be some political or social issue that people find relevant to their experience and on the basis of which they may be mobilized; when people imagine communities, they do so based on something and in response to something. That something must be sufficiently powerful to subordinate all other issues. *Where Tharus are concerned, it is access to and control of land.*

(2002: 18 Emphasis added)

An Alternative Rana Reform Movement

My analysis of Rana identity has shown that ethnicity is a product of specific political circumstances, but its nature varies. It is a strategy that human agencies can utilize and modify on the basis of their histories. It has explained the social phenomenon that Tharus from different parts of Tarai experienced similar social changes (e.g. the transformation of landownership, the introduction of dominant hill cultures and conservation policies) no matter how differently they reacted. Rana social movements serve as an alternative to the mainstream pan-Tharu movement. The most extensive study of Rana social reforms was done by Odegaard (1997), who observes that 'contrary to the pan-ideology which rejects the hierarchical caste structure, the Ranas' strategy to optimize social status first in what is commonly referred to as caste-climbing.'

The most critical obstacle for Ranas in Nepal affiliating with the pan-Tharu movement was their 'caste' status.¹²⁰ Like the Ranas in India, they claimed they were descendents of Rajput. They strongly felt they were not indigenous people of Tarai and believed that they were originally from Chittogarh in India (Odegaard 1997). Their belief hardly fitted into the new ideology of the pan-Tharu movement. Moreover, Ranas lived in remote western Tarai and this separated them from the other Tharu groups. They had very few opportunities to participate in the pan-Tharu movement. For example, when the first International Tharu Culture Conference was held in 1995, participants included all Tharus from both India and Nepal except for Ranas from Kalaili and Kanchanpur (Odegaard 1997). The Rana elites blamed the problems of distance and non-existence of well-established Rana organizations as the two major reasons for social exclusion. As Odegaard records, one of the influential Rana elites queried the unity of all Tharu groups in one social movement:

Since there are so many Tharu groups differing in several aspects, a collective reform movement becomes difficult. Each group has to start with itself.

(1997)

In fact, the Rana reform moment in Nepal was more likely a part of a pan-Rana movement in India. The Rana social movement in India had started in the 1930s (Odegaard 1997). The Rana community was aware of its own social and economic backwardness so 18 rules were set up to

¹²⁰

The Rana interpretation of caste is discussed in Chapter Six.

improve their social status. For example, alcohol and meat (particularly pork) were prohibited and social prestige was not attached to old social practices like bride price, intercaste marriage and sharing water pipes with lower castes. Also, Ranas wore the holy cord as twice-born castes did. Later, the reform focused on adopting high Hindu castes' socio-religious practices. The Rana elites advocated that Ranas should use Brahmins for various ceremonies and Rana women should behave like high Hindu caste women (see Chapters Six and Eight). However, the reform did not achieve much at the local level, as many Ranas still practiced their old customs. Until 1967, the Ranas with other five tribes in Uttar Pradesh successfully got themselves declared as a 'scheduled tribe', which meant they had certain privileges in education and political participation. The better-off Ranas in India were admired by the Ranas in Nepal (Odegaard 1997).

Motivated by the success of Ranas in India and sharing an origin myth encouraged Ranas in Nepal to participate in the pan-Rana movement, rather than the pan-Tharu movement. According to Odegaard (1997), the Rana social reform movement in Nepal started in 1991 and an elite-based organization *Rana Samaaj Sudhaar* (Rana Reform Society) was formed. Instead of struggling for more political power, it emphasized modernization of Ranas as the first priority. Two large Rana meetings were held in Kalaili and Kanchanpur in 1993 and 1994 respectively. More than 250 Rana delegates attended the meetings and most of them were educated elites who owned much land. They wanted to be more 'developed' and share equal social status with the other castes of Nepal. The reform activists strongly felt that Ranas should abandon their old concerns of simply living to eat and sleep. They advocated the abolition of bad customs like *Magani* (child arranged marriage system), and taking up learning Nepali and providing a good education for children. These approaches were similar to the pan-Rana movement in India.

A Critique of Analytical Approaches to Ethnic Relations in Nepal

Before I turn my focus to the identity of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, I would like to comment on the analytical approaches that have been used in discussions about ethnic relations in Nepal. I feel that neither Sanskritization nor Indigenoussness can explain the complex ethnic identity issues. When one approach is adopted by scholars to explain the ethnic character of a social group, other approaches are often completely ignored. The problems of dichotomous analytical

perspectives in understanding social relations in South Asian literature has been increasingly pointed out by scholars (Dahal 1979; Fisher 2001; Gellner 1991; Gellner et al. 1997; Jaffrelot 2003; Levine 1987). Dahal (1979) critiques that no cultural group in Nepal can be neatly defined as a tribe and that adopting the Hindu-tribal perspective is only imagined by scholars and not the people they are studying. Levine's study (1987) of the ethnic identity of three ethnic groups in Humla district has shown that the classical social categories were not the key determinant of ethnic relations. More realistically, economic and political motivations could shape ethnic relations. Fisher strongly criticizes the dichotomy perspective that is deeply rooted in South Asian literature:

.....terms such as *tribe, caste and ethnic group* that have been inadequately defined and ambiguously applied.....These terminological problems are not peculiar to the literature on the Thakali or on Nepal but relate to broader questions in South Asian studies concerning the relationship of caste, tribe, and social mobility and in the general anthropological literature concerning the emergence and evolution of group identity.
(2001: 192-193 Emphasis added originally)

Fisher's twenty-year-long study of Thakali made him realize that cultural changes are not identical. He points out that dichotomous analytical approaches can provide scholars only with superficial comparisons, but they also limit one's understanding of the complex processes of cultural transformation. He says that 'overuse and unexamined acceptance of the terms obscures complicated processes and motivations for change' (Fisher 2001: 197). An ethnic group's reactions to the new culture often include both resistance and acceptance. In Gellner's study of the Newari community (1986), he observes that the assimilation, abandonment or preservation of Newari cultures are the strategies which Newaris use in response to the invasion by hill cultures. The multi-dimensional nature of a social movement is well illustrated in Jaffrelot's insightful analysis on the Yadav community in northern India. Inspired by other scholarly work, he questions the underlying motivation and meanings of Yadavs' choice of Sanskritization,

He [Rao]¹²¹ argues 'the Yadavs were not imitating the "twice-born castes" when they were donning the sacred thread, but were challenging their monopoly over this privilege'. Sanskritisation may amount to a form of social subversion..... The practices of Nadars' associations have suggested that it may be part of a strategy of emancipation; but in that case Sanskritisation was a means of reconciling low ritual status with growing socio-economic assertiveness of taking the first steps towards an alternative, Dravidian identity. Do we find the same combination in the case of the Yadavs?
(2003: 192-193)

¹²¹ The detailed argument see Rao's book (1979), *Social movements and social transformation: a study of two backward classes movements in India*.

Although Odegaard (1997) realizes the complex strategies of the Tharu social movement, she emphasizes the differences between different groups and overlooks the differences within a group and between individuals. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa, the formation and transformation of Rana identity is far beyond the single approach (Sanskritization or Indigenosity) to explain. Their self-identity and ethnic relations with others are in many forms. The term 'multiple identities' first used by Cohen (1978: 387) is thus appropriate to describe this social phenomenon. In addition, there is a tendency for scholars to rely too much on ethnicity that is focused at the national level and on the elite classes. If we try to adopt a bottom-up perspective by viewing ethnicity at the local level, we will find that the nature of ethnicity is not a fixed historical and cultural product but it can be interpreted, modified and transformed (Eriksen 1993: 16). In this process, the livelihood issue has significantly influenced the formation and transformation of ethnic identity. Now I will use Rauteli Bichawa as an example to illustrate my above arguments.

Identity Transformations in Rana Society

The identity of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas was closely related to territories, common origin and shared cultural practices. They believed that their ancestors came from India and they were descendants of Rajputs. The Moghul invasions forced their ancestors to flee and settle in *Sukala*, which became their homeland for a few generations. They spoke the Rana language, wore traditional dress and practiced the same customs. All of these made them a distinctive ethnic group (Smith 1986). However, Rana ethnicity was not solely bound with cultural and historical factors. Its development was often shaped by different social contexts. My discussion of Rana identity is therefore focused on the latter. My following ethnographic data demonstrates how multiple identities are formed and practiced in Rana society in particularly their relations to the livelihoods.

Multiple Identities as Social Climbing Strategy

My ethnographic data has shown that caste ideology had significantly influenced the self-identity of Ranas and their relationships with other Tharu groups. A detailed look at the myth of Rana origin allows us to look more closely at how Ranas thought and valued themselves. Fisher (2001) comments that the origin myth has different versions in order for people to adapt

to different socio-political environments. An absence of written histories about Kanchanpur Ranas was one of the major difficulties of my fieldwork; Ranas created histories of origin that favored their interests. The discussion of myth of origin should therefore not focus on historical reliability but on understanding what Ranas claimed themselves to be and their motivation for this claim.

Using the version provided by an ex-village Rana leader of Rauteli Bichawa Vagat Rana, Ranas were not Tharus.¹²² He explained that Ranas had become Tharus today because people did not know much about their own history:

Our ancestors moved from India to here to escape the Muslim enemies. At that time, they were scary to be killed. Later, they realized that their features were similar to Tarai people Tharus. With a consideration of defence, they started to introduce themselves 'Tharus'. After time by time, people often call us 'Tharus'. Actually, we are very different from 'Tharus', we are Rana.

He also argued that Ranas were in fact the same caste as the Chettri (see Plate 9.1 below). His evidence was that Rana males used to wear the sacred thread, which was the most important symbol of people from twice-born castes. He blamed the disappearance of this particular tradition on security concerns. In the past, wearing the sacred thread made their ancestors defenceless in the face of Muslim attacks. Therefore, they chose to take off their threads. After that, Rana males did not wear sacred thread any more.¹²³

¹²² Although most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas could not provide me with a detailed history of their origin, they strongly denied they were Tharus. They consistently stated that Ranas were Ranas; they were not related to other Tharu groups.

¹²³ As mentioned in earlier sections, practicing twice-born caste culture was one of the major strategies used by the pan-Rana movement in India. Although there was no evidence that Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were influenced by the pan-Rana movement, they adopted similar approaches as the Ranas in India.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 229 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 9.1 During the marriage ceremony, the Rana groom still holds a knife (right hand) to symbolize the warrior status of ancient times.

Similar findings are noted by Odegaard (1997). She observes that Ranas from Kalaili district insisted on the belief that Ranas were descendants of Rajputs. They criticized the version that Ranas were descendants of the queen and her servant as being incorrect and this assertion insulted Ranas.¹²⁴ According to one of the most influential Ranas in Kalaili Hari Lal Rana, Ranas were descended from a Rajput and a Brahmin. This version was the same as the one I heard from Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. He further claimed that Ranas were descendants of the glorious and famous Hindu hero Maharana Pratap Singh.¹²⁵ He said:

We Ranas are not indigenous.....We came from India, from Rajasthan.The Rana Thakurs are thus descendents of Rajputs and Brahmins. We always wearing the white turban (phagya) and we always had a knife (talwar) in our belt (like Rajputs/ warriors).....We also take our purification baths together with people from Rajasthan and not with other Tharus and Nepalese people.

(Quoted by Odegaard 1997)

Hari Lal Rana' statement clearly demonstrated that Ranas utilized the caste ideology and the myth of origin to identify themselves as high caste people and disassociated themselves from

¹²⁴ For a detailed argument on different versions of the myth of Ranas' origin see (Odegaard 1997).

¹²⁵ Maharana Pratap Singh remains a great hero in the eyes of most Indians because he never compromised his honour and he fought the Moghul invaders bravely.

other lower caste groups, particularly the Tharus. This happened in the relationship between Rauteli Bichawa Ranas and Dangauras. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were reluctant to accept the name 'Tharus' because Tharus meant lower caste groups in the eyes of most Ranas. Many old Ranas still felt that Dangauras were backward people and they did not share the same hygiene concerns as the Ranas did.¹²⁶ Even though the Dangauras had experienced significant social and economic development¹²⁷ and this was widely recognized by Ranas, deeply-rooted prejudices affected the ethnic relations between Ranas and Dangauras. A comment made by a young and educated Rana clearly illustrates the sharp caste and cultural boundaries between these two groups:

We are different. We don't practise intermarriage.¹²⁸ I think Rana is better than Dangaros. But the government only calls us 'Tharus'. Dangaros are from eastern part of Nepal and close to the government so they are smarter than us. I don't think there is any domination between us, however I never can agree we are the same caste. We write our name Rana and they write Dangaros or Chaudhary. Although I know we are both categorised as the second lower caste under the caste system, we have our own cultures. Dangaros are always socially lower than Ranas.

It was apparent that Ranas' acceptance of caste ideology and social exclusion of 'lower caste' Dangauras fit into the typical caste-climbing approach called Sanskritization. However, we cannot reject the existence of egalitarian concepts in the formation of Rana identity. It was ironic that twice-born Pahaaris and Ranas had different caste positions under the *Muluki Ain* (national legal code). When these Pahaaris were higher castes and granted great social prestige, Ranas were categorized as the second lowest caste *Masinya Matwali* (enslavable alcohol-drinkers). This imposed social hierarchy might not be accepted by Ranas and it influenced their ethnic relations with Pahaaris. Most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas in fact felt that they shared the same social status as Pahaaris. They interpreted castes in a different way. They thought different castes meant different *Jaats* and did not imply any social ranking (see Chapter Six). They did not feel themselves inferior to the Pahaaris. One wealthier Rana expressed his feeling of being a Rana in this way:

¹²⁶ I observed that the Ranas were very concerned about cleanliness so their houses always looked very tidy compared to those of other ethnic groups.

¹²⁷ The Dangaros were very adaptable and many of them were more economically and educationally advanced than Ranas.

¹²⁸ In the analysis of relationships between hierarchy and endogamy, Quigley (1993: 112) points out that strict control over affiliation by marriage is one of the ways that one cultural group prevents another group entering their ranks.

My parents were born in this caste. I grew up in this culture. I don't have any feeling that I want to be of other castes. I love my own culture. I feel that there are no differences between Brahmins, Chhetris and Ranas. The only problem is that different caste people will try to dominate others. Just like some people will easily say that you are Ranas or Brahmins to justify your social position. I don't like this kind of domination.

Similar feelings were shared by another poorer Rana:

I never feel sad to be a Rana. Maybe Brahmins will think they are big people. Pahaaris will think they are big people. I think I am (Rana) also big people. I feel there is no difference between Ranas and other caste people. Probably, the only difference is that we are poor because we can't give education for children.

Ranas did not passively accept caste ideology and it did not determine the self-identity of Ranas. The formation of Rana identity was a process of negotiation between local histories, local power structures and the caste system. This view is shared by Russell (1997). He argues (1997: 326-327) that 'rather than seeing people as passive recipients of the forces of modernization, Hinduization, or nation-state, prefers to see them as potentially active manipulators, negotiators and transformers of the cultural forms'. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa, Ranas selectively used and modified the caste system and articulated it into their histories and finally a local caste category was established whereby Ranas had a higher social ranking than Dangaras and the same caste position as Pahaari Chhetris. It is important for us to understand what caste means to the people themselves. As Hocart puts it:

We must search for that principle not in our minds, but in the minds of those people who practice the caste system, who have daily experience of it, and are thus most likely to have a feeling for what is most essential in it.

(Quoted in Dumont & Pocock 1958: 46)

Odegard also comments that:

There exists no single caste system, but local and regional variations of communities which arrange themselves hierarchically in relation to one another within a particular territory.

(1997)

Ranas and Pahaaris positioned themselves as higher caste groups and Dangaras as inferior to them. The multiple identities of Ranas became their management strategy¹²⁹ to deal with everyday ethnic relationships. However, similar to the situation of Dangaras, no matter how

¹²⁹ For the concept of 'management identity' see Allen (1997) and Russell (1997). For example, Allen (1997) points out that the Thulung community has its own interpretation for the difference between untouchable castes, higher Hindu castes and themselves. Russell also notes (1997:331) that the identity labels of the Yahka group in Nepal are changing in terms of home, village, the nation-state, the world beyond, and the spirit world.

Ranas reclaimed their high caste status, they were not treated as such by the twice-born Pahaaris. A comment made by an Iymilia Pahaari woman indicates that different caste status remained a deep-rooted demarcation for Ranas and Pahaaris. Another version regarding the origin of Ranas was provided by her, and this story was generally believed by most old Pahaaris settlers:

Ranas are Tharus. This is the fact. Long time ago, those Tharus worked in the palace. Later, the Rana king was killed and his daughter fled with a group of Tharu. Finally, she got married to one of the Tharus. After that, their descendants become 'Rana Tharus'. Fundamentally, they are no different to Tharus. Like my father, he even perceives Ranas as an 'untouchable caste' and refuses to accept their water.

Cultural Adaptation and Preservation and Identity Consciousness

Cultural practice is an important aspect of ethnic identity because it helps to maintain identity and its loss often implies identity crisis (Smith 1986). In the following paragraphs, the focus shifts to relationships between the transformed Rana cultures and their identity consciousness.

Over the last few decades, due to the influence of hill cultures, Rauteli Bichawa Ranas have made significant changes to their own cultural practices to fit the high caste model. These included changes in gender relationship (see Chapter Eight) and many customs. For example, some Rana elites promoted the prohibition of pork consumption and followed the high Hindu castes by only eating goat meat. In tradition, *Dipalwaali* was not only a Hindu festival but also a special time for Ranas' ritual ceremonies to honour their ancestors. Unlike the Pahaari customs, Ranas' *Dipalwaali* was not a five-day-long festival. They would only celebrate one special day which was the last day of *Dipalwaali* (*Bhaaitikka*). On the night before *Bhaaitikka*, they would kill many chickens to worship their gods before sunrise. For the poor Ranas, they would make flour-chicken for worship. After that, sisters would give *tikka* (red powder on the forehead means blessing) and flower necklaces to their brothers (see Plate 9.2 below). Nowadays, most relatively wealthier Rauteli Bichawa Ranas emulate Pahaari cultures by worshipping dogs and cows (see Plate 9.3 below).



Plate 9.2 Traditionally, on the day of *Bhaaitikka*, Rana females will give hand-made flower necklaces to their brothers for blessings.



Plate 9.3 Influenced by Pahaari culture, Ranas now also pray to cows during the *Dipalwaali* festival.

Furthermore, more Ranas spoke Nepali and gave up their traditional dress. One old Rana man blamed the loss of Rana tradition on the moving-in of Pahaaris: 'when we wore our traditional clothes, Pahaaris would find it easy to say "how nice" (*kati raamro*). We men felt very uncomfortable and finally gave up wearing our clothes any more' (see Plate 9.4 below). On the other hand, Rana women turned to wearing more saris because they were cheaper and more comfortable to work in the field (see Plate 9.5 below). It was difficult to establish that the transformation of Rana culture was due to Sanskritization¹³⁰ because the new Rana cultural practices might not attach the same meaning as Pahaari cultures may do. On the contrary, often they were a form of articulation of the cultures of both Ranas and Pahaaris. A similar observation is found by Buggeland (1994) in her study of Kali worship among the Santals of Nepal. She finds that although the ways Santals worshipped Kali are similar, Santals interpret the ritual differently as part of their own cosmological ideology. Russell (1997: 370) also comments that scholars' recognition of 'culture itself may be subject to change' is important for understanding the formation of ethnicity.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 234 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 9.4 Few young Rana males wear traditional clothing (long-white dress with red decoration) when performing the Holi dance on the last day of the festival in Iymilia. This was the only time I saw the male traditional clothing throughout my one and half year long fieldwork period.

¹³⁰ Allen (1997: 318) argues that cultural assimilation or process of Sanskritization may not necessarily be decided by non-Hindu castes and Hindu castes because these cultural practices are deeply embedded in their daily interactions.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 235 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 9.5 Most Rana women now wear saris, even during the largest festival - *Holi*.

Rauteli Bichawa Ranas incorporated many new cultures into their own in order to make themselves fit into the wider society. However, when such cultural adaptation occurred in Rana society, a sense of cultural preservation emerged synchronously. This was a challenge in retaining ethnicity. In the identity management process, the more Ranas adopted the new cultures, the more they were aware of their own cultures. This happened with Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. Speaking the Rana language, wearing traditional dress *Gangriya* and celebrating the *Holi* festival all became symbolic of being Rana. This cultural revival might not help Ranas resist the continuous influence of hill cultures and their more powerful cultural identity. However, when opportunities were available to Ranas, their traditional cultures would be a powerful weapon to reclaim the value of the group within a complex and hierarchical society. A few examples help to illustrate this argument.

Firstly, language was a key element in maintaining the Rana identity. In my observation, many older generation Rauteli Bichawa Ranas hesitated in claiming to be Nepalese because of different languages. One old Rana said to me that 'I feel good be a Rana. I don't know why I have this feeling. You know, we have one national language – Nepali - but I can't speak it.' The story of a young Rana demonstrated how the Rana language prevented the Ranas from 'falling

into' the cultural melting pot to some extent.¹³¹ Krishanna Rana was thirteen years old and completed class 4 level. He found it very difficult to continue his studies because he could not speak Nepali very well. In his class, only less than 10% students were Ranas. He was shy about learning and speaking Nepali and finally he decided to quit his studies. He said that because he spoke the Rana language, he felt himself a Rana rather than a Nepalese:

I feel good when people call me Rana. I really feel myself a Rana. I never think I am a Nepalese and I have no intention of being a Nepalese also. Probably, the basic criterion for being a Nepalese is to learn Nepali. I can't write and speak Nepali well. I always feel uncomfortable when speaking Nepali. I prefer to speak Rana language if the choice is available.

Secondly, the Rana identity was also reflected in the *Holi* celebration. Although most displaced Rauteli Bichawa Ranas were not enthusiastic about celebrating *Holi* due to economic hardship, the symbolic meaning of *Holi* to most Ranas should not be neglected. Celebrating *Holi* was not simply a matter of praying to the Hindu gods; it represented the solidarity of Rana society and ethnic identity. Today, its continuation symbolizes the survival of Rana cultures. I recalled an instance that happened in the March 2005 *Holi* festival in Dhokka Block. A few dancing groups formed as usual but the festival atmosphere was strained among the Dhokka Block Ranas. Only a few Rana families planned to invite dancing groups and organized *Holi* parties. My host family in Dhokka Block was one of the wealthiest Rana families but they did not plan to do so. Three nights of celebrations passed and by noon on the fourth day, I still did not hear any news. Ranas felt sad that this year's *Holi* celebration activities lasted only three days. Suddenly, a celebration was held by my host family and the decision was made by the elder son who had just come back from Sudarpur. That night, the family used almost 50 kilos of rice and 30 kilos of potatoes. Later, the son explained that the *Holi* celebration was one of the most important Rana customs and they used to have a one-month long celebration, so he felt very upset when he heard the celebration had to stop on the third day. He pointed out that increased poverty and displacement had weakened the cultural identity of Ranas:

¹³¹ On the other hand, language is one of the main reasons for increasing social exclusion because it often prevents powerless social groups from integrating into mainstream society (Gaige 1975).

Of course, nowadays we can't celebrate festivals together because all of us are getting poorer than before. When it was inside the park, we were always together. Today, we are resettled in different areas and we are far from each other. People also get less food than before so everyone just looks for their own family how to survive and not interested in celebrating festivals together. If we were not moved out, we would have big *Holi* celebration like those Ranas in old settlements. Also, now the new generation is really not interested in celebration, they can't sing Rana *Holi* songs. In my place (Sudarpur), there are only a few Rana families, so I need to bring back my children to Dhakka Block to see how Rana celebrate *Holi*. I feel if Ranas only look after themselves, many changes will happen in the future. Like my son, he never knows what Rana or *Holi* are. 10 years ago, I celebrated *Holi* and it was really very nice, may be after 10 years, all these traditions will disappear.

He also mentioned that Ranas were proud of their culture and would like to continue religious performances such as *Holi* dancing if opportunities arose. After hearing that, I told him that even though film makers might be interested in shooting a film regarding the *Holi* celebration, it would be too late because Rana culture was disappearing rapidly. He disagreed with me by saying, 'If we were informed earlier about the film maker's visit, we would prepare and perform our cultures to him, particularly our women would wear the local dress *Gangriya* again.' One educated Rana knew I was planning to write a book about Rana society; he repeatedly requested me to include the Rana *Holi* celebration.

The third example was in relation to Rana dress. As I mentioned in previous sections, traditional Rana dress was completely replaced by the mainstream Nepalese dressing for social and economic reasons. However, this transformed culture did not necessarily mean the abandonment of the old culture. Both new and old cultures existed simultaneously but served different functions. Wearing traditional dress had become a cultural performance (see Plates 9.6 and 9.7 below). During my fieldwork, I was asked many times to photograph Rana women. They would emphasize that they were wearing the traditional *Gangriya*. Obviously, they were aware of the uniqueness of their clothes to others and were confident that this tradition would attract outsiders like me. As most Rana women did not know how to sew their own *Gangriya* as older generations did, they had to borrow *Gangriya* from friends. They all felt that *Gangriya* was beautiful. After taking photos, one Rana women said to me that the photo was a good memento of her life. Realizing the value of *Gangriya*, a Rana woman even sold this 'tradition' to me. She made a new *Gangriya* and sold it to me for Rs 3,000. Although I thought the price reasonable, including materials and labour cost, I would have paid Rs 2,000 for it. A similar finding is expressed by Odegard (1997). She was requested to take photos many times by Dangaros and Ranas during her fieldwork. She shares her feelings in this way:

When Tharus in Geti saw that 'important people' and foreigners were interested in Tharu culture, their apprehension of 'their culture' also changed. The fact that they were urged to 'protect' their culture' has engendered a new self-understanding and a new relation to their cultural identity.



Plate 9.6 No matter how difficult it is to wear *Gangriya* and to put silver rings on their legs, Ranas still showed their great excitement and enthusiasm in showing their custom to me.

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 238 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 9.7 Wearing *Gangriya* has become a cultural performance symbolizing the Rana identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the interdependent and dynamic relationships of ethnicity, cultural practices and changes in livelihoods. The above discussion has not argued that Ranas have a strong sense of cultural preservation. Instead, it demonstrated that after extensive contacts with others, the formation and transformation of Rauteli Bichawa Rana ethnic identity and cultural practices were so complicated that one single approach could not explain it. The ethnographic data supported the contention that the Rana reform movement was neither one of Sanskritization or Indigenism. They resisted the 'Tharu' label and strongly claimed to have the same caste status as the high Hindu caste Pahaaris. Regarding cultural changes, Rana did not accept all hill cultures but they selected and modified aspects of them into their own (e.g. *Dipawaali* festival). Meanwhile, the disappearing culture particularly *Holi* and traditional dress might be caused by many factors such as conservation-induced displacement and poverty. Therefore they had to adjust to these cultures as a response to these economic realities. When cultural reforms were found in Rana society, Ranas' self-consciousness of their own culture's values increased simultaneously. Indeed, these practices became a cultural performance and a new meaning emerged.

My finding echoes that of Oakdale (2004) and Turner (1991). Their studies have clearly shown that people from traditional societies like the Indians in Brazil are having their cultures modified or recreated after contact with outside world. In the process of cultural change, instead of being completely assimilated, they actively negotiate and manage their identity and cultural practice. For example, Turner observes that in 1960s, almost all Kayapo Indians wore full Western clothing. However, since the 1990s, they have chosen 'half-and half' with long pants or shorts and no shirt or jacket. Their faces and upper bodies are painted and they wear traditional shell necklaces and bead earrings. The reason for this change is the global indigenous movement; Kayapo Indians increasingly value the social, economic and political traditions of their own cultures. It is thus predictable that the Rana culture will be further transformed in this way. The articulation of growing ethnic identity and the new national and global political environments are an opportunity for Ranas to remodel themselves and avoid dissolving into the 'national melting

pot'.¹³² However, it is too early to comment because cultural survival is often closely associated with the Ranas' livelihoods.

To sum up, previous chapters have demonstrated that the Ranas have made many adaptations as a response to the economic changes caused by the Park, hill migration and State landownership policies. So what are the implications of all these social transformations for the Ranas' livelihoods and the conservation policies? Can these changes help Ranas achieve better economic security and park management? This will be the core theme of the following and concluding chapter.

¹³² Russell (1997: 329) comments that Yakha should establish a stronger Yakha identity to avoid dissolving into the 'national melting pot'.

CONCLUSIONS

.....the fate of protected areas is tied to the support, and hence the fate of local peoples.

(West & Brechin 1991: xix)

NOTE:

This plate is included on page 241 of the print copy of the thesis held in the University of Adelaide Library.

Plate 10.1 A group of Rana children in Dhokka Block were happily performing the traditional Holi dancing. However, the continuation of cultural practices in the future is uncertain while their livelihoods are under serious threat.

CHAPTER TEN

LOSS OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS:

A CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY CONSERVATION PRACTICES

This chapter touches on one of the most critical and radical questions in the contemporary conservation debate: the effectiveness of the PA establishment as a solution for ecological preservation. Asking this question does not imply that I am only concerned with the anthropological dimension and have neglected environmental concerns. Rather, I fully agree with the idea of conservation because it represents the major global benefit - the survival of future generations (Schmidt-Soltau 2005: 303). My primary concern is the hidden economic and social impacts of conservation-induced displacement on local communities. In most situations, they are the poorest and the most vulnerable group (Schmidt-Soltau 2005). Equal attention and respect should be paid to the life of these communities. Indeed, making a detailed examination of these impacts is an essential step for making park management policies more pragmatic and relevant. In McElwee's study of the park dislocation program in Vietnam, she asks: 'do we have any evidence that relocation actually has a positive effect on the conservation of protected areas?' (2006: 396). To answer this, conservation professionals should take the livelihoods of park-affected communities into serious consideration. Only when the local livelihood is secured, is it more likely that the modern PA management approach can successfully achieve 'double sustainability': the sustainability of people's livelihoods and sustainability of biodiversity (Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau 2006). In a study of the impacts of the park on the Yolmo residents, Bishop clearly points out that with high population densities and very limited cultivable land, 'it is nearly impossible to have a park without people in Nepal' (1998: 160). She concludes that for park residents 'this is not an aesthetic or ethical consideration—it is life or death' (1998:162).

My study focuses on the social impacts of the establishment and expansion of RSWR on Rana society. I argue that the recognition of the linkages between PAs and local livelihoods have not yet transferred in policy practices. There is no adequate understanding of these linkages and this causes the continuation of problematic dislocation programs throughout the PAs in developing countries. When attention might merely be paid to economic loss of displaced

communities, the social costs such as social exclusion, loss of cultures, and alienation depression, are rarely addressed in the dislocation programs. My study therefore intends to contribute to this knowledge gap by examining the social dimensions of park-people relationships. This allows us to better understand the implications of the park establishment on people's livelihoods. To do so, I have utilized social theories of practice, power and agency because they offer a unique perspective on Rana livelihoods in relation to the establishment of RSWR and the new socio-economic environment. The ethnography has offered evidence that recent social changes had caused significant changes in Rana livelihoods but Ranas also actively responded to all these changes.

The ethnographic chapters in this thesis demonstrated the high economic and social values of RSWR to Ranas because the park was a rich site of economic production and social relations. Living near a fertile forest, having a cooperative household, kinship, gender and neighbouring relations had all contributed to the subsistence economy of Rana society before the establishment and expansion of the park. Due to these interlocking relationships, changes in landscape (the park creation) implied changes in Rana lives. In fact, substantial transformations in Rana society were recorded in this study. Nonetheless, these transformations were neither the direct product of social changes nor the Ranas' agency. Rather, they were bonded to each other. The park was therefore a site where social transformations and reproductions occurred concurrently. The outcome was that the conservation-induced dislocation caused immediate and long-term livelihood hardships for Ranas. The negative social effects included the destruction of Ranas' sustainable livelihood system, increased their impoverishment and further social marginalization in Nepalese society.

In this concluding chapter, I will first highlight the social values of the RSWR. With the support of ethnographic data, it was obvious that the park was not only a highly ecologically valued place but it was also a rich site of changing social relations. The discussion then shifts to the implications of these transformed social contacts on Ranas' future livelihoods. My concern is whether these social transformations have strengthened or weakened the Ranas' livelihood system. Finally, learning the lessons from the Rana stories, certain policy recommendations to improve present park management practices are made.

The Park as a Site of Economic Production and Social Relations

My ethnographic investigation of Ranas had clearly reinforced the view that the material relationships between the park and the local communities were intertwined. The discussion in Chapter Four showed that in the pre-park period, controlling abundant amounts of land allowed Ranas to enjoy the fruits of a diverse subsistence agricultural system that consisted of a multiple crop planting system, animal husbandry and home gardening. Meanwhile, rich forest resources, in particular non-timber products, also provided them with fodder, furniture, fuel, handicrafts and food (fruit, meat and fish) to meet their daily needs. Eventually, this specific non-monetary subsistence economy meant that the Ranas avoided seasonal food deficits and high market prices for food.

The inquiry into what the land means to Ranas indicated that they valued land as their most important asset, not solely in material terms but also as the embodiment of economic and political power. Removing the Ranas from their land therefore implied changes in these power practices. As West and Brockington (2006: 611) point out, one of the material effects of the PA establishment is increasing conflicts over land rights and land use. This was particularly relevant to the Ranas' experiences. Owning substantial land resources not only provided them with subsistence wealth, but also an avenue for them to share political power at the local level during the pre-Park period. Some Rana elites were appointed as *Jimidaris* and won the position of village leaders. Ranas' influential economic power was also reflected in their dominant role in production activities. Affluent Ranas were used to hiring poor Ranas and Pahaari migrants as their agricultural workers. However, the loss of landholdings and customary rights to access forest resources has completely undermined the Ranas' political influence. Today, Ranas have experienced further economic and political marginalization. According to the ethnographic data, most Rauteli Bichawa Ranas no longer enjoyed food security throughout the year and there were very few Rana representatives in government offices or the public sector during my fieldwork. As these hidden economic and political values were embedded in specific places, they could not be compensated in a monetary way. Worse, the reality was that they were not even addressed in the dislocation program.

While material losses caused by displacement were central issues in the rehabilitation programs, the same concern was not paid to social costs. My examination of the social significance of the park to Ranas clearly showed that complex social networks were attached to the old land and these relations played a critical role in maintaining Rana livelihoods which policy makers should not neglect. The finding has echoed the growing scholarly work on cultural landscape. According to this scholarship, the PAs are socially created landscapes (Campbell 2005a; Campbell 2005b; Krauss 2005; Mahanty 2003; Sandy 2006; West & Brockington 2006; West et al. 2006). Two concepts are particularly relevant to illustrate the relationships between the park and Ranas, Ranas themselves and with others. Firstly, as West and Brockington (2006: 609) suggest, the nature of the PA is 'not just as rich sites in biological diversity but also as rich sites of social interactions'. Campbell's comment makes clear the nature of the inextricable human-environment relationships. He claims that 'people-land relations vary enormously in how human identity is conceived, how dwelling is lived socially' (2005a: 295) and 'the social qualities of place are constituted through activity and participation' (2005a: 299). Secondly, these social relations are dynamic in relation to the introduction of park management policies. Krauss's study on the social impacts of otter conservation in Portugal (2005) demonstrates how human relations are shaped by conservation projects. She concludes that 'the implementation of nature conservation strategies is changing the relationship not only between man and nature, but between people themselves' (Krauss 2005: 354). In his study on three PAs in Nepal, Campbell (2005b) demonstrates that conservation ideas have not affected identity in local communities because people have different levels of power and personal capacity. He concludes that PAs are the 'social landscape of power relations' (2005b: 326). I therefore first argue that the RSWR is a rich site of social relations. The extensive discussion of social organizations of Rana society in relation to the land and their cultural perceptions of old and new land in the chapters that focused on ethnographic themes, supports this argument. A discussion about the changing landscape and social relations will be provided in the following section.

Chapter Seven illustrated in detail the relationship between land and the Rana household structure. With abundant land resources, Ranas were able to form undivided and joint-type households *Badaghars*. They could pool all resources and share the workload. The traditional

household management system *Mukhiya* was thus established to manage huge *Badaghars*. At the inter-household level, there was a clear gender-space based work arrangement: while Rana males were responsible for work outside the household in particular to agricultural work and forest resources collection activities, females managed all household chores. This inter-household relationship not only fulfilled labour needs but also secured the mutual security for every household member. Land also influenced kinship relationships. Although the formal labour exchange system was not practiced (both patrilineal and matrilineal), kin did offer help either in the form of labouring, money or spiritual support. As the ethnographic data shows in Chapter Eight, during critical farming periods, patrilineal kin (*Kurmaas*) was the major form of free labour. People would visit each other often to chat. According to my Rana informants, this close *Kurmaa* relation served a good and flexible safety net for most Ranas. At the intra-household level, the interactions between poor and wealthy Rana families were frequent over the old land. In tradition, many wealthier Rana families hired someone to work for them. They were usually young boys who came from poor families. The practice of this traditional patron-client system, *Kamaiya*, provided a secure labour force for the rich while the subsistence of poor Ranas was guaranteed. Accordingly, the practice of social contacts in Rana society was indispensably linked to specific plots of land. Due to this linkage, land to Ranas meant more than a place to live or for production activities as shown in Chapter Five.

In Chapter Five, I further explored the meanings of old and new land for Ranas from a cultural perspective. The findings indicated that stronger social networks were attached to a particular place where Ranas had resided for a long time and had frequent contacts with each other. This explained the reason why different perceptions of old and new land were expressed by the displaced Rauteli Bichawa Ranas. For them, old land brought comfort but in contrast their new home was one of poverty, helplessness and danger. The ethnographic data revealed that Dhokka Block Ranas did not show any interest in interacting with others. Most of time, they concentrated on their farming work and day-by-day survival was their top priority. There were no more festival celebrations and gender and household conflicts increased. Most Rana women felt and experienced their lower status due to increased economic dependency on their men despite the fact that they actually participated more in activities such as working in the fields and collecting fuelwood after the introduction of the Park. Their work was constantly

underestimated by their men and Pahaaris. The increasing arguments concerning control over land-related resources increased household conflict. The break up of many *Badaghars* and tense *Kurmaa* relations were observed. Worse, because of increasing impoverishment among the Rana community, the poor lost their dependence on the rich Rana landlords and the *Kamaiya* system diminished gradually. Facing increased economic difficulties and the dissolution of social networks, most Dhokka Block Ranas suffered deep depression and symptoms of nostalgia spread to every Rana after the displacement. Consequently, the new land was culturally perceived as one of loneliness, poverty and danger. The reality was that although having friends and relatives around was welcome, there was no guarantee displaced Ranas could get support in times of need or distress. In fact, close and supportive household, kinship, neighbourhood and community relationships were completely undermined when Ranas ceased to participate in social activities.

The Park as a Site of Social Transformations and Reproductions

When the economic and social relationships of the Park and Ranas were intertwined, these relationships were not static but dynamic and were shaped by different social contexts. The ethnographic data in Chapters Six to Nine clearly demonstrated that changes in land and social relations happened simultaneously. Ranas did not accept new livelihood pressures caused by the Park and recent social changes passively. Rather, they developed new forms of social relations as strategies to react to the deteriorating economic environment caused by recent social changes. I thus argue that failure to recognize this interactive process between conservation practices and Ranas' responses (particularly the implications of these social adaptations to livelihoods) was a major reason that the social effects are often underestimated in dislocation programs. In the case of Rauteli Bichawa Ranas, they modified their social practices in many ways because of the Park and these social transformations damaged their future livelihoods.

Chapter Seven showed that Ranas and especially the young generation tended to abandon the practice of traditional *Badaghar* households because they felt this old household arrangement could not respond to increasing poverty. They pointed out that the old system which emphasized resources sharing and labour cooperation generated inequalities and conflicts

between household members. Forming a smaller and more nuclear family was thus perceived as a new ideal household structure for most Ranas. They believed that the new household arrangement could offer them better utilization of limited land resources and more secure livelihoods. Influenced by the violent household partitions and keen competition over land resources, the mutually trustful *Kurmaa* relationships were broken up. Nowadays, Ranas have to rely on new social alliances (either with patrilineal kin of daughters or wife or with other caste groups, see Chapter Eight) to get occasional help. My ethnographic inquiry into social transformations in Rana society also clearly documented dramatic changes in gender relationships. Rana women not only did most household chores but also agricultural work and forest resources collection activities. Increased workload and lower social status widened the inequalities and conflicts between Rana males and females.

The transformations of social relations not merely happened among Rana society but the changes in land also stimulated new social relationships between Ranas and other social groups, particularly Pahaaris. Chapters Six and Nine highlighted that since the hill migration, contacts between Ranas and Pahaaris became frequent and these contacts made Rana realize that their lower social status was caused by the caste system. Instead of accepting this imposed social position, Ranas chose to interpret caste as their being a different cultural group. Meanwhile, they disassociated themselves from other Tharus groups by claiming they were descendants of Rajputs. The motivation behind this was linked to achieving an equal social footing and obtaining a better livelihood. To do so, they imitated hill cultures in many ways such as learning Nepali, celebrating the national-wide festivals *Dashain* and *Dipalwaali* and replicating higher Hindu' castes' gender practices, such as women being inferior (see Chapter Eight). They also gave up wearing traditional dress to avoid social embarrassment. However, no matter how Ranas reclaimed their high caste status, they were not treated as such by the twice-born Pahaaris. Different caste status remained a deep-rooted demarcation for Ranas and Pahaaris. The outcome was that these social transformations at the local level had reproduced the existing social and economic inequalities in the wider society. Adopting the view of Mysore Narasimhachar Srinivas, Jaffrelot (2008) argues that 'the mobility associated with Sanskritization results only in positional changes in the system and does not lead to any structural changes' because all groups have to admit the values of the upper castes as

encapsulating a legitimate value system. In other words, one of the unexpected effects of social transformations was the emergence of social reproductions. As Li comments, the nature of hegemony is 'the routine and intimate compromises through which relations of domination and subordination are *lived*' (1999: 316; emphasis added). These social transformations and reproductions had implications for the Ranas' long term livelihood which I will discuss below.

Hope for the Ranas' Future

The fundamental objective of this study is to have a deeper understanding of recent economic-political changes in Rana society. The previous two sections revealed the dynamic interrelationships between land and the Rana community where land was the rich site of economic productions, social transformations and reproductions. The changing social process was never linear but interactive and complicated. I realize that one year's research work is not enough for me to make a definitive conclusion regarding the Ranas' future; further longitudinal ethnographic studies are needed. Nonetheless, this study was supported by the ethnographic data that transformed social relations had ruined the Ranas' livelihood or economic security mechanism.

For example, the joint-typed household, *Kurmaa* relations, traditional patron-client *Kamaiya* system had guaranteed material and social support during livelihood difficulties. The celebration of the *Holi* festival not only joined Ranas together physically but also strengthened their identity and the same symbolic value attached to traditional dress. In a study of the impacts of colonialism on indigenous Australians, Goodall noted that traditional social practices like hunting are not only for nutrition provision but 'more important was the social learning which occurred in the gathering and hunting process' (2006: 388) and it was only one dimension in the continuing reproduction of identity for the Gamilaraay communities. Although the nature of these social transformations was to make individual decisions to pursue better livelihoods, the result was that Rana society faced a severe socio-economic crisis. Most Ranas experienced impoverishment, the community disintegrated and many cultural practices declined. The situation was similar to many powerless social groups around the world. In Turnbull's influential book *The Mountain People* (1972), he clearly demonstrates how the establishment of Kidepo Valley National Park in Uganda impoverished and dehumanized the life of the indigenous

hunter-gather group known as the Ik. According to his in-depth anthropological inquiry, in order to survive, Ik abandoned many social values which Turnbull refers as the basic qualities of human life. In his conclusion, he says:

The Ik have relinquished all luxury in the name of individual survival, and the result is that they live on as a people without life, without passion, beyond humanity. (1972: 295)

The longitudinal study on the Ladakh community also allows Norberg-Hodge (1992) to understand the hidden social impacts of modern development, where she states:

.....I have watched population levels soar, fuelled by a variety of economic and psychological pressures; I have watched the disintegration of families and communities; and I have watched people become separated from the land, as self-sufficiency is gradually replaced by economic dependence on the outside world.....The intrusions of the modern world might seem ugly and inappropriate, but surely they brought material benefits. It was only after several years that I began to piece these individual instances together and see them as aspects of a single process: the systematic dismantling of Ladakhi culture. (1992: 142)

The Ranas' situation may differ from the Ik and Ladakhis. The Ik story shows the most extreme social effect of park creation. It is too early to comment whether or not the Ranas will abandon all their traditional cultures like the Ladakhis. However, during my year long stay with them I felt their unhappiness, anxiety and selfishness.

In my last ethnographic chapter, I demonstrated that the seeds of cultural preservation and identity consciousness were planted in Rana society. Some Rana elites started to realize the underlying value of cultural identity to their livelihoods. They knew that more integrated community networks could assist them to adapt to more changes in their livelihoods such as those caused by the Park and recent socio-economic changes generally. This explained the reason why they wanted to celebrate the *Holi* festival and wear traditional dress. These cultural practices not only reinforced the Rana identity but they also enhanced Ranas' political currency in gaining international aid agencies' attention. This was how Ranas related to the global indigenous movement. However, it will not happen until this attitude becomes widespread in Rana society.

It is uncertain whether or not Ranas will face cultural losses or if they can strongly resist those external social forces in the future. Clearly, if no action is taken by both Ranas and conservation

policy makers, sooner or later, the fate of Ranas is doomed to be one of failure and they will likely suffer further economic, social and political marginalization due to the dislocation program. I understand I am not in a position to tell Ranas what is good or bad and this is also not the main theme of this thesis. Through this ethnographic inquiry into the dynamic interdependent relationships of land, livelihoods and cultures in Rana society, I can obtain a holistic understanding of the social impacts of conservation practices on rural communities. To minimize the negative impacts, Ranas should rethink the importance of traditional social networks for their livelihoods. It is possible that these networks are able to provide them with an alternative path to improve their capacities to cope with economic change. The appropriate selective use of traditional social networks and cultural practices can in fact help Ranas recover from the social and economic shocks caused by the Park. More Ranas are aware of the values of traditional social practices to assist in making their livelihoods sustainable.

Implications for Conservation Policies

Rana stories have shown that dislocation did not only physically separate Ranas from their home, it also took away their previous social networks which resulted in their further impoverishment. Their experiences had also illustrated that relying on Ranas' efforts in changing, modifying and negotiating their social practices will not lead to sustainable livelihoods. It seemed naïve to assume that Ranas had absolute control over their ability to retain their livelihoods. The reality was that asymmetrical power relations existed between Ranas and other social groups as well as Ranas and the State. As a consequence, conservation policies had many unexpected social impacts on local communities. Harmon argues that 'even if the move is only a short distance to a place with close resemblance, can have devastating effects on their culture' (Harmon 1998: 233). Therefore, in order to achieve the goal of sustainable livelihoods and alleviate the on-going park-people conflicts, the input of policy makers is important. There is an urgent need for a thorough evaluation of the efficiency of preserving nature by excluding people. The key question is: can this conservation strategy balance the sustainability of both biological diversity and local livelihoods which is recognized as the key step towards successful park management?

The implications of Rana experience helped to understand this problem. Without any consideration of the social meanings of the Park to Rana society, the forced dislocation program was carried out in the name of conservation. The case study showed that an unplanned and insensitive rehabilitation policy did not properly address the economic and social losses of displaced Ranas; their livelihoods became more vulnerable. One immediate effect was that displaced Ranas tended to extract more forest resources illegally whenever the opportunity arose. This lose-lose situation happens throughout developing countries. Recently, a social study regarding the impacts of conservation-induced displacement programs in twelve African PAs was conducted by Cernea and Schmidt-Soltau (2006). They point out that many long-term negative social effects go hand in hand with dislocation, such as landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common property and social disarticulation. All these can hardly be mitigated by any mere compensation schemes. They thus call for an abandonment of dislocation in contemporary conservation practices, and they state:

.....it [conservation dislocation] is contrary to donors' policies, to poverty reduction commitments and to morality to continue displacing and impoverishing weak and vulnerable populationsas long as restorative policies and laws are not enacted, forced evictions from parks must be stopped and discontinued as a regular strategy.
(2006: 1825-1826)

They also reason that if dislocation is inevitable because of potential risks in species extinction and fragile nature environment, detailed and rigorous scientific and social assessments on biodiversity and local communities must be carried out in advance to ensure the implementation of social safeguard policies. I fully agree with their view. This is the direction for making more humane and pragmatic conservation policies. Unfortunately it is too late to withdraw the dislocation program of the RSWR and the social changes that have happened in contemporary Rana society. However, learning lessons from the Rana experience, it is time for conservation policy makers to seriously consider the potential social risks caused by dislocation and search for alternative conservation approaches which can achieve the 'double sustainability' (Cernea & Schmidt-Soltau 2006: 1810): the sustainability of people's livelihood and that of biodiversity. To do so, instead of introducing dislocation as an essential conservation strategy, I strongly urge that comprehensive scientific studies must be first conducted to justify the need for wildlife conservation. As Redford and Sanderson (2006: 381) note, many conservation professionals

have failed to justify what to protect in PAs and how to develop the political and social bases to legitimate conservation goals. Meanwhile, social impact assessments must be carried out such as the investigation of the complex relationships between the park and local livelihood systems. Only when these two steps are taken can policy makers judge on a case by case basis whether it is worth displacing people from their land to conserve the environment. The social impacts are substantial and they can destroy the daily social practices of local communities.

APPENDIX –THE QUESTIONNAIRE SAMPLE

Questionnaire 1: Rautail Bichawa Ward 7-8

Personal details: Name, family members, age, sex and education level

Topic 1: About your life

Q1 How do you survive? (e.g. agriculture, fishing, grazing animals)

Q2 Where can you get wood for cooking? Where can you get grass for animals?

Topic 2: About changes in your life

Q3 Can you tell me what do you think are the biggest changes in your life in the past 20-30 yrs?

Q4 How do you feel your life is now? Become easier, happier or become harder, difficult? Why?

Q5 When the government set up the park, did this affect your life? How?

Topic 3: Life adaptation

Q6 You mention there are many changes; how do you deal with these changes?

Topic 4: Idea of Conservation

Q7 Do you know why the government set up the Shulkaphanta Wildlife Reserve?

Q8 What do you think about Shulkaphanta? Do you think the park can really protect the forest and wildlife?

Q9 Do you think there is another way to protect the forest?

Q10 Do you know your village is inside the buffer zone?

Q11 Before the park, did you or any of your family members go inside Shulkaphanta?

Q12 After the park was established, have you or your family members ever been inside?

Questionnaire 2: Rampur and Beldandi Ward 9

Personal details: Name, family members, age, sex and education level

Topic 1: Residential years

Q1 Which ward did you live in before?

Q2 When did your family start to know that the government would move out the people from the park, including your family?

Q3 When inside the park, did your family get any land?

Q4 Did your family get any land compensation from the government? When did your family get this land?

Q5 When did your family move here?

Topic 2: About your life: before and now

Q6 How did your family survive before and now?

Q7 Where did your family get wood for cooking before and now?

Q8 Where did your family get grass for animals before and now?

Q9 Besides wood and grass, can you tell me any other thing that you could get from the park but is now difficult to obtain?

Topic 3: Your feelings about new home

Q10 Can you tell me your feeling about this new home's environment and people? Are they all very different from your last place?

Q11 What difficulties are your family facing here?

Q12 Here, do you have any relatives and old friends living around you?

Q13 Nowadays, if your family needs help, who will you talk to?

Q14 Have you ever felt lonely or helpless after you moved here?

Q15 How do you feel your life is now? Happy or unhappy?

Q16 How do you deal with these life changes?

Q17 What is your main hope for your future?

Topic 4: Your feeling about Shuklaphanta?

Q18 Before, did you use the resources from the park and visit the park very often?

Q19 After moving out from the park, have you ever been inside the park again? What do you do inside?

Q20 After moving out from the park, do you feel you have lost something?

Topic 5: Idea of conservation?

Q21 Do you know why the government needs to extend the park?

Q22 Do you think now the park can really protect the wildlife and forest?

Q23 Do you know your village is inside the buffer zone?

GLOSSARY

Badaghar	Rana language word for undivided and big households
Bigha	Equivalent to 0.67 hectare
Chamal	Husked rice
Cyaa	Nepali milk tea
Daalu	Rana word for alcohol
DalBhat	Curry and rice
Dashain	Dashain is the longest and the most auspicious festival in the Nepalese annual calendar, celebrated by most Nepalese castes
Dhan	Unhusked rice
Dipalwaali	Festival of lights
Gaas	A kind of grass which is the main material for making roofs in the Tarai region
Gangriya	Female Rana traditional dress
Holi	Festival of water and colours, the biggest festival in Rana society
Jaats	Different caste of people
Jan Andolan	The People's movement which arose in Nepal in 1990 and its campaign resulted in ending the monarchical panchayat system
Jimidars	Local functionary tax collectors
Kamaiya	Bonded labourers
Katta	Equivalent to 0.0335 hectare
Khanna	Eating
Kurmaas	Rana word for household partition, separated households called Kurmaas, patrilineal kin
Magani	A system of arranged marriage in Rana society
Masinya Matwali	Enslaved alcohol drinkers
Mukhiya	The traditional household management system in Rana society
Muluki Ain	The National Legal Code
Namaste	The common Nepalese greeting, meaning 'God bless you'
Raksi	Local wine
Raikar	State-owned land
Ram Ram	Rana's greeting

Roti	Wheat-made bread
Roti	Rana word for funeral rites
Rupee	Nepalese currency
Sanskritization	Refers to the social mobility of non-high caste groups by emulating Hindu beliefs and practices

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