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FACING GLOBALIZATION
in the HIMALAYAS

Belonging and the Politics of the Self

Facing Globalization in the Himalayas: Belonging and the Politics of the Self

GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT, AND CIVIC ACTION: VOLUME 5

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Preface

Seven years ago, a team of anthropologists, historians, linguists, sociologists, and geographers was invited to participate in a collaborative project geared at grasping the present-day dynamics of belonging in the Himalayan region. While launching this project, we anticipated the need to understand the notion of belonging and to inquire into its dynamic nature under present-day globalized conditions of mobility and rapid social change. In the meantime, 'belonging' has emerged as a key concept in academic research and in public debates.

Our team met for a first round of discussions in March 2007 in New Delhi at the India International Centre (IIC). Out of this meeting resulted our well-received book, *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas: Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics* (2011), published in this series. The present volume is the result of a second round of deliberations that took place in August 2008 at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) conference centre in Fréjus, France. The organizers of this second round, including the editors of this volume together with David Gellner from the University of Oxford, ensured continuity within the team, while inviting some new colleagues to cover a broad range of Himalayan subregions. We also brought in additional expertise to help us grasp the current globalization processes that thoroughly affect the constellations of belonging. Most chapters constituting this volume are based on the papers given in Fréjus. Two of the authors, Blandine Ripert and Mitra Pariyar, did not attend the conference, but were subsequently invited to submit a paper.

We are very grateful to our contributors for taking part in the in-depth Fréjus discussions and for expanding on their contributions based on their initial presentations. A number of colleagues played an important role in shaping our project by chairing sessions, in their capacity of discussants, as well as by joining in the discussions. They were Véronique Bouillier (CNRS), Martin Gaenszle (University of Vienna), Gisèle Krauskopff (CNRS), Keshav Maharjan (University

Chapter 1

Introduction

Globalization and Belonging in the Himalayas and in Trans-Himalayan Social Spaces

GÉRARD TOFFIN AND JOANNA PFAFF-CZARNECKA

INTRODUCTION

This book explores the new horizons produced by ongoing global-
ization around the world and the impact of these processes on the
repertoires and practices of belonging in the Himalayan region as
well as in trans-Himalayan social spaces in Asia and in the West.
It is widely accepted today that forces of globalization significantly
affect Himalayan peoples' lives. We know little, however, about the
present-day reconfigurations in human sociability resulting from its
impact on this region and its inhabitants. Similarly, little is known
about collective dynamics in translocal and transnational social
spaces and we are, to a large extent, ignorant of the resulting tensions
involved in personal choices, longings, and aspirations in individual
confrontations within collective constellations of belonging. Scholarly
preoccupations with globalization usually privilege top-down macro
perspectives. If interpersonal relations, local solidarities, and attach-
ments are perceived at all, they are seen as mostly helplessly adjusting
to the powerful wind of change brought about by international and
national politics, by neo-liberal forces as well as by development and
humanitarian interventions. Individual and collective rationalities
and strategies as well as politics that are geared towards expanding
the individual and collective room for manoeuvre have so far received
insufficient attention in Himalayan research.[1]

This volume, building on our previous edited collection, *The Politics of Belonging in the Himalayas*: *Local Attachments and Boundary Dynamics*,[2] published in this same series in 2011, reflects the recent dynamics of globalization and transnationalization in Himalayan societies by observing and analyzing how Himalayan people make sense of the changes that are radically transforming their lives. We are mainly interested in social practices, including the ways in which changing values, norms, and ideas are at work, and how social practice shapes an implicit or explicit change of ideas. We pay particular attention to the personal life chances and to the intimate and emotionally charged forms of socializing in collective constellations. These are of interest in localized Himalayan contexts, but we also observe their expansion into transnational social fields.

This volume's inquiry focuses on the notion of belonging. We propose this concept as an analytical tool for reflecting upon the modalities and the interplay of commonality, mutuality as well as the diverse emotional and material attachments under conditions of rapid social change (for a thorough outline of these concepts, see Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2011; Pfaff-Czarnecka and Toffin, 2011; and Croucher, 2004). By analyzing both individual and collective trajectories, the chapters collected here seek to uncover the implicit and explicit politics of the individual and collective self in processes of (trans)migration, in activism responding to global challenges, and within the particularly dynamic religious sphere where different belief systems and modalities of *Vergemeinschaftung*, that is, different ways of incorporating people into social constellations, come to compete with each other in the quest to win over followers.

Through the prism of belonging, we are able to uncover crucial shifts in the meaningful collective constellations reproduced and evolving in the global era. The individual chapters delve into the realm of local Himalayan life-worlds and show how their horizons have stretched far beyond the confines of particular villages and regions. Numerous chapters document the tremendous scope of the Himalayan mobilities produced through travel, work, trade, the use of new communications media, and by new forms of knowledge, possibilities, and aspirations.

The volume's emphasis on mobility, change, flux, and social reconfigurations does not ignore the durable nature of social ties, their strength, and their persistence (see Lien and Melhuus, 2007).

Indeed, it conceptualizes belonging, that is, the emotionally charged social location, as perennially in tension between stability and change. The value of belonging lies in the continuity of cultural models, with people sharing norms, networks, and practices, and relying on routines. Such groupings as a 'family', 'village', 'neighbourhood', 'religious community', and 'ethnic group' build on long-lasting solidarities, histories, as well as aspirations pointing towards the future. The factual force of belonging stems from the well-established modalities of interaction—that goes without saying—and from shared values that are considered perennial. But they are challenged by globalizing forces, rendering them weaker and more fragile, while simultaneously also buttressing their resilience. In any case, under the current conditions of rapid social change, belonging has come under siege: it is challenged; it loses its self-evident property; it appears to be invaluable and therefore instigates protective measures.

The authors of this volume bring to light the fact that the Himalayas are still regarded as very remote, if not peripheral, regions of today's world society. The following chapters reveal how confrontations with the 'external world' occur under conditions characterized by significant impediments and restrictions. Yet, this region is rapidly changing and increasingly connected to the rest of the world through a series of links investigated in the following chapters. The states and societies located in this mountain range in particular have undergone major changes in terms of openness, interconnectedness, and transnationalization (see our 2011 Introduction). The authors report pronounced power differentials, social (including ethnic) boundary-marking, and societal hierarchies that shape individual and collective choices and practices. Several contributions describe how marginality and exclusion impinge upon collective processes and how they shape the overt and covert politics of social positioning.

This opening chapter introduces the main notions and concepts at work in analyzing these processes and gives an account of the chapters collected in this volume—written by eminent scholars who have been carrying out research in this region for many years. It also presents an overall synthesis of the phenomena of globalization in the Himalayan range in connection with various forms of belonging, both old and new. As a first step and before focusing on these remote regions, we turn to the concept of globalization.

REPERTOIRES AND MODES OF GLOBALIZATION

Globalization (in French, the term 'mondialisation' is often substituted) describes processes through which closer contact is established between human societies and which generate a *wider circulation of goods, money, people, ideas, and cultures across national borders.* The concept may be defined in several ways, but the most accepted designation emphasizes the *integration of economic, political, and cultural systems across the globe.* The links between local or national social relations as well as global ones, in other words local/global relationships and entanglements, have intensified. According to Steger (2009: 15),[3] globalization can be defined as "the expansion and intensification of social relations and consciousness across time and space, while time and space themselves are dramatically compressed". Or, more succinctly, it may be thought of as a long-term but accelerating historical process of growing worldwide interconnectedness (Pieterse, 2009).

Globalizing forces are sometimes considered to be an all-powerful process, totally undermining the importance of local and even national boundaries. Some analysts foresee a world where a growing variety of social activities will take place irrespective of the geographical location of participants. Everything will have to be thought of as global. Such a view, of course, is inadequate. We are far from the idyllic vision of a global village in which everyone is connected to everyone else. Globalization does not mean that the world economy is now integrated into a single space. Homogenization is at best superficial. Macro-studies which tend to formulate such types of generalization pay insufficient attention to ethnographic particularities or to changes and continuities that exist below the global level on a local, regional, or national scale. A world without boundaries is a naïve concept. Even in the West, the European Union, one of the most advanced examples of regional integration, has not established long-lasting, salient forms of solidarity and a sense of collective belonging among Europeans.

The globalizing process also covers reactions against the ongoing homogenization buttressed by globalizing forces, resulting in a persistence of old-established forms of attachment, to an ethnic group, a region, and a country. *Globalization is therefore a multifaceted process*, encompassing a large range of fields, geographical, demographic, political, technological, linguistic, religious, and cultural.

The definition of such a broad term, with multiple and fluid meanings, is obviously problematic. Globalization covers such a wide range of phenomena that it has rapidly become a blanket notion easily cited for all sorts of things that are indeed sometimes quite different. Some even speak of a cliché, "an all-purpose catchword in public and scholarly debate" with multiple connotations (Lechner and Boli, 2000: 1).

However, when broadly understood, globalization does apply to a distinctive transformative process which can be ascertained in the field whether by an economist, a geographer, a sociologist, or an anthropologist. Connectivity and interdependence between human societies across national borders are among the key notions conveyed by the term. Improved transportation as well as the rapid surge in the use of new communication media, in particular the Internet, now widely used in South Asia and almost all over the Himalayas, even in remote rural zones, is one of the most striking examples of how space is being compressed. Among the urban middle classes, whether Indian or Nepalese, mobiles and the Internet-based social networking site Facebook, with its hybrid English–Nepali or English–Hindi fluid language employed by its users, are much sought-after and much-used modalities of situating oneself and of communicating with others. These phenomena have transcended old boundaries and imposed new types of links. The new circulatory dynamics of the contemporary world have also produced new patterns of migration, a globalizing labour market, and a number of ideological shifts. The influence of external cultural models is multifarious: the Bollywood cinema industry coexists with Westernized forms of cultural consumption as well as with an increasing influence of South-East Asian or Hong Kong products. In the same way, western and far-eastern TV channels are a powerful means of spreading foreign cultural models and expenditure. All these vehicles for globalization compete with each other and also interpenetrate each other. They are part of a wider *cultural politics of globalization*.

Manifold 'local responses' to globalization have been recorded in social science research. A great deal of attention was geared towards grasping cultural forms of incorporation that impinge upon individual and collective positioning. After lengthy debates over the question of whether globalization instigates cultural homogenization or rather heterogenization, academic writing has devoted a lot of space to the notions of 'hybridization' (Bhabha, 1994) and

'vernacularization' (Merry, 2006), that is, the process of translating external notions into a local cultural canon (e.g. explaining human rights norms through local values), and in particular, its modalities. The analyses collected in this volume allow us to conceptualize these processes more accurately. We suggest four repertoires or options of cultural translation or *vernacularization* and argue that the main interconnected repertoires of cultural globalization oscillate between the following:

- *Universalization*: Defining particular cultural elements as 'fitting' into global repertoires or as expressing universal values. Peter Brook's mise en scène of the Mahabharata can be interpreted as such a claim. Universalization also takes place when local grievances turn into claims drawing upon global legal repertoires. With the expansion of human rights, particularist claims—for example, claims to ethnic monopolies over specific territories or resources—can be expressed in a universal language highlighting democratic values.
- *Particularism*: Stressing the uniqueness of one's culture. Examples of particularism are claims of the uniqueness of traditional value systems such as the 'Asian Values'—as embraced by the Malaysian government at the end of the last millennium and thought incompatible with universal human rights. This claim accorded well with the American Anthropological Association's critique of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (starting in 1947 in reaction to a draft document) that resulted in the debate over universalism versus relativism.
- *Cultural reform*: For instance, abandoning rituals involving blood sacrifices in order to appear 'more civilized'. Cases are reported in many regions of the Himalayas, especially in Nepal, where new concerns about animal welfare and the pointless suffering of animals have emerged, for instance, under the influence of various strands of both Buddhism and neo-Hinduism. Other examples can be mentioned, such as movements for the replacement of expensive 'superstitious' rituals making way for new forms or types of practices or beliefs, and today's trend among many Himalayan people (as elsewhere in the world) towards new types of therapists, undermining traditional priesthoods. UNESCO's concern for 'heritage' protection, whether

material or immaterial, has also had a tremendous impact on all these regions.

- *Revivalism*: Highlighting cultural elements considered essential for the continuity of a collective group and of its cultural and religious forms while incorporating new elements vital for their survival under changed circumstances. The revival of Theravada Buddhism, the invented traditions by ethnic groups in relation to their history, and discourses on ethnicity can be mentioned as examples.

We make this set of distinctions for its heuristic value. In fact, these phenomena and forces are, for the most part, interconnected. Take, for instance, the Hindutva movement in India that stresses pride in Hinduism and claims a dominant position for this religion in Indian and Nepalese cultural, religious, and political affairs. In many ways, it embodies a plainly chauvinistic anti-globalist trend, rejecting Western influences and values, attacking Christianity and its converts, and acquiring particularistic overtones. Yet, historically, the rise of this Hindu nationalist current and of its political party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, is concomitant with economic liberalization in India, the gradual breakdown of state control, and the increasing integration of the country into the global economy. Some analysts associate Hindutva's success directly with the cultural and political assertion of the growing urban middle class, favoured by the expanding market economy. This parochial manifestation of culture can be seen as a reaction against globalizing forces in India. Moreover, its leaders do not hesitate to use modern media and electronic equipment to communicate and spread their message throughout the Indian diaspora, considered here in the sense of spreading of people originally belonging to one nation or having a common culture over the world. What we have here is therefore a combination, full of contradictions, comprising universalization, Hindu revivalism, and religious reform. Interestingly enough, the Hindutva movement is very strong in the western Himalayas, particularly in Uttarakhand, and it has played an important, more or less hidden, role in the monarchical Shah rule in modern Nepal.

This example also indicates that globalization is closely intertwined with modernization (see Choedon, 1995), both processes being two sides of the same coin. Globality is often seen as time-space-compression (Harvey, 1989; Giddens, 1990) made possible

by the availability of modern infrastructures. The spread of values of modernization has been greatly buttressed by modern means of transmission and by the power of the Western centres to utilize them. Recent debates on 'multiple modernities' (Eisenstadt, 2002) and 'entangled modernities' (Therborn, 2003) take up the complex interrelation between globality, modernity, and Westernization. As the example of Hindutva reveals, its success came about partly through opposition to Westernization while simultaneously taking advantage of modernization: in particular new communication channels improving the expansion of ideas and contacts, but also the openness of the public sphere.

GLOBALIZATION IN THE HIMALAYAS: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE BOOK

The 16 chapters of this volume are organized in five thematic sections, following our inquiry into the widening scope of globality and its increasing bearing upon local contexts. It starts off from the local social spaces in the Himalayan region towards their widening aperture on to the global level. The first section, "Shifting Horizons of Belonging", probes the opening up of Himalayan societies to the world, concentrating here upon local contexts from where supra-local interconnections (see Chapters 2 and 4 by Ripert and by Dollfus) as well as the interdependencies with other local social spaces in the Himalayan region are forged (see Chapter 3 by Shneiderman).

The second section, "Migrant Experiences in South Asia and Beyond", points out translocal processes developing well beyond the scope of the Himalayan region. The chapters analyze relations of belonging that are re-shifted but also reinforced through economic interdependencies. Chapters 5 and 7 by Sharma and Bruslé show that migrant social formations are not confined to the economic sphere. Through interrelating with foreign employers and through connecting with other workers, new perceptions and positionings come into being. For many migrants from the Himalayas, their sense of belonging is challenged and comes to light during encounters with fellow-workers while abroad. It is furthermore reinforced by jointly engaging in ritual practice, as Pariyar, Shrestha, and Gellner demonstrate (Chapter 6).

The chapters by Bruslé and Pariyar et al. are also important bridges for capturing Himalayan transnationality going well beyond the South Asian region. The section "Creating Transnational Belonging" takes this reflection further. The chapters inquire into the global scope of workers' (Hausner's Chapter 8) and students' (Sijapati's Chapter 10) migrations from the Himalayas; the localization of migrant practices at the places of arrival as, for instance, in the form of communal politics (see Campbell's Chapter 9) and the enfolding of transnational social spaces forged by migrant organizations (see Hangen's Chapter 11).

While some of the previous chapters draw our attention to the influence of transnational processes on Himalayan localities, the chapters comprising the fourth section, "Globality and Activist Experience", definitely reverse the direction from 'local-outward' to 'local-inward' and address the local effects of globalization forces. Chapters 13 and 14 by Subba and by Arora, respectively, discuss the impact of external interventions bearing upon local societies when infrastructural projects result in dispossession and displacement of local populations. The local contestations are to be seen, here, as engagements in global dynamics through local interactions and negotiations, instigating internal conflicts and drawing upon transnational activists' networks. Letizia's Chapter 12 also progresses from the global to local, showing how indigenous activists work towards religious change within their constituencies while simultaneously connecting to global religious movements and operating their organizations transnationally.

The final section, "National Reconfigurations", focuses upon the state as mediating between the global and the local and as decisively shaping globalization processes. Chapters 16 and 17 (by Mills and Hutt, respectively) demonstrate the persisting power of states, either guarding their borders and controlling territorial allegiances, or organizing their populations in 'joint' national projects of collective becoming. In Turin's Chapter 15 in this book, the state is the addressee of ethnic politics that—among other things—critically addresses doctrines of common belonging through linguistic homogenization.

Throughout the book, three mechanisms—*connectivity*, *interdependence*, and *openness*—are important features of globalization impinging upon the relations of belonging. *Connectivity* is an omnipresent feature of contemporary Himalayan societies. The collected contributions discuss the main domains where connectivity

increasingly shapes social practices. Connectivity evolves within transnational social spaces of ethnic communities that increasingly stretch across continents (see Hangen, Pariyar, Shrestha, and Gellner, Sijapati). Another dimension of connectivity has emerged in transnational activist networks in the field of critical social movements opposing large infrastructural projects (Arora, Subba). Also, Campbell's discussion of the cultural politics of representation (Chapter 9) indicates how Nepalese activists forge ties with local municipalities in order to accentuate their presence in the United Kingdom. Chiara Letizia's chapter demonstrates the substantial intensification of connectedness of believers in the religious realm. At the same time, she shows how religious belonging instigates connectivity far beyond national borders, that is, between people from different ethnic backgrounds and from different regions of the world.

Interdependence is apparent especially in the economic realm. Labour migration thrives and reinforces economic relations. Bruslé (Chapter 7), Sharma (Chapter 5), Shneiderman (Chapter 3), and Hausner (Chapter 8) provide accounts of economic entanglements coming about as Himalayan people join companies abroad as a labour force. Transnational work relations are accompanied by the forging of new social ties. These ties bridge national boundaries, as workers from different regional and national backgrounds are thrown together, and find themselves dependent on each other. Critical protest movements, relying upon the division of labour, also create interdependencies.

Both connectivity and interdependence enhance the *openness* of Himalayan societies. Blandine Ripert's account of Christianization among the Tamangs of central Nepal in Chapter 2 reveals the scope of openness to external influences in this very remote social world. Her study brings to light the fact that external influences have already been a characterizing feature of this society for centuries. According to her, new communicative channels are not a precondition for external influences to 'enter' a remote Himalayan world; they just intensify the process of cultural interpenetration. Ripert also clearly shows the importance of local reflection as well as local practices for mediating social and cultural change. Therefore, our notion of 'openness' of local Himalayan societies does not mean a total exposure to supralocal impacts and inspirations—as also other chapters reveal (Dollfus, Pariyar, Shrestha, and Gellner).

EARLY FORMS OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE HIMALAYAS

The novelty and the uniqueness of the present globalized trend is a subject of debate. Historians insist on the continuity between the contemporary configuration and the premodern period. Others (mainly geographers and economists) stress the novelty of the present-day situation: for them, contemporary globalization is an entirely new epoch mainly defined by market capitalism and the consequent weakening of the nation state. Whatever the case may be, early forms of globalization cannot be denied. One can argue, for instance, that *ancient forms of cosmopolitanism* (i.e. inclination to accept the other and endorse diversity within traditional social spaces)[4] *and hybridization* have only been exacerbated and generalized by the new transnational forces, especially with the new forms of communication and high-speed transportation from one place to another. Still, the contemporary magnitude in the flow of goods, information, and capital across huge areas of the earth's surface has no parallel in previous eras.

In order to understand the current global reconfigurations it is important to historicize the present realities and to acknowledge the existence of early forms of globalization. In the 1960s–70s, Fernand Braudel already stressed the emergence of an 'économie-monde', or a 'modern global system', connecting all regions of the world from the 16th century onwards. Mobility and circulation are nothing new in the Himalayan region. Trade has always linked different regions, sometimes situated very far from each other. Since ancient times, exchanges between the arid north Tibetan plateau and the luxuriant southern plains of the Indo-Gangetic valley over the passes crossing the Himalayan range have been a conspicuous feature. Over the centuries, they have induced considerable interconnectivity and acculturation processes between different Himalayan communities. Ideas, people, and goods were exchanged on these routes, crossing more or less fixed political boundaries, and corresponding to various historical periods.

Naturally, these initial links were framed by the mountainous topography. It must be recalled within this context that the Himalayas are characterized by a series of steep north–south valleys separated by mountain ranges, all of which have allowed

little contact between adjacent population settlements, especially in high-altitude regions. Over the centuries, these physical aspects have tended to favour vertical communication, from north to south or south to north, to the detriment of horizontal exchanges, from east to west, and vice versa. The Himalayas are thus connected to the Indo-Gangetic plains and to the Tibetan plateau by old trading routes, along which important market and political centres flourished long before the unification of Nepal in the 18th–19th centuries or long before the expansion of the British Raj into South Asia. Three of these routes may be mentioned: the one passing through Ladakh in the west, the Kathmandu Valley in the centre, and Sikkim in the east. They have all played a primary role in various fields, economically, politically, and culturally.

One could also and perhaps more topically stress the transnational links in premodern Nepal, especially in the case of the Kathmandu Valley, on the lines of what has been written by Serge Gruzinski (2004), the French historian of Latin America, about the globalization of the world in the 16th–17th centuries. Obviously, during the Malla period the Kathmandu Valley formed a plural world in terms of language, society, and culture. Maithili, a language from the low plains, distant from the Malla kingdoms, was chosen by the kings as one of the literary languages, even if it was not understood by local people. Even today, some local theatrical plays dating from this period use dialogues in this language, interspersed with Hindi. The Malla civilization of the 16th–17th centuries was based on a wide circulation of ideas, people, and texts, differing greatly from a totally enclosed and insular territory. Catholic missionaries, Tibetan monks and scholars, and people from the hills (farmers, mercenaries, etc.) were present and intermingled with Brahmanical gurus and *shastri*s from the Indian border districts. Kings frequently called upon these different priests and intellectuals. They themselves took their wives mainly from small neighbouring kingdoms to the south, in particular from Kooch Bihar, in today's Indian State of West Bengal and some districts of present-day Assam. Here we witness, as in many parts of India, the meeting of a cosmopolitan Sanskrit culture (spreading over many parts of the Indian subcontinent and beyond in the East) and an original local, indigenous tradition (see Pollock, 2006). It is noticeable that the creation of such interconnected and intermixed social and cultural spaces owes little or nothing to the expansion of Western civilization throughout the world. It has evolved according

to its own logic, unaffected by European forces. When speaking of globalization, we are thus addressing a phenomenon that has spread dramatically over the last two decades and can be better viewed as an acceleration of former processes. We need to recognize and compare these ancient traditions of cosmopolitanism (Nandy, 2002) with present-day changes, in particular in matters of attachment to collective forms of belonging.

During the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, places such as Varanasi, Calcutta, Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Dehradun evolved as significant centres distinguished by a heterogeneous range of cultures. Structurally, these areas were characterized by pronounced ethnic and cultural boundary lines. These inter-mixed urban spaces have been crucial in the course of the overall modernization of the Himalayan economy, the process of democratization, and the diffusion of new ideas. They have transmitted modern notions of social justice and equality, and have been important sites for creating national and regional identity. In addition, such early external centres of migration have introduced complex forms of banking procedures, the raising of funds, market-ing, and trade structures, all of great import to the economy. By and large, they have played a decisive role in the political history and in the socio-economic changes taking place in the remote kingdoms of the Himalayas.

Such geographical and historical traits have to be taken into account when considering today's Himalayan countries. They have engendered early forms of globalization with regard to ideas, trade and goods, religion, and civilization. Two chapters of this book address some of these issues directly or indirectly: Mark Turin, in his chapter on linguistics (Chapter 15), and Martin Mills (Chapter 16), on previous forms of globalization in 17th- and 18th-century Tibet.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF GLOBALIZATION IN THE HIMALAYAS

Globalization does not apply everywhere in the same way and with the same strength. There are major differences in this respect between, say, rural areas and cities, Bhutan and Nepal, remote areas and Tarai or the Kathmandu Valley. Consequently, the impact of globalization has to be studied in historical as well as spatial terms.

Each Himalayan country has had its own past and configuration in these matters. The studied region must be considered in plural terms. The Tamangs studied by Blandine Ripert (Chapter 2) and the Thangmi analyzed by Sara Shneiderman (Chapter 3) are not exposed in the same way to globalization as the Gurungs living in the United States discussed by Susan Hangen (Chapter 11) or Nepali nurses in the United Kingdom (Hausner, Chapter 8).

India has opened her borders to overseas markets and Western influences for a long time, and more decisively since the colonial period. Yet, as an independent country, she liberalized her economy only from the 1990s onwards. Its impact on the world is now as important as the impact of the world on her.[5] After being secluded for more than one century, Nepal opened most of its territory to the world in the 1950s. Its exposure to foreign aid and tourism[6] since that period has accelerated the process of globalization considerably. Bhutan still lags behind in terms of connectivity with the outside world, since this small country lays emphasis on its own cultural values (e.g. the 'Gross Happiness Index') with a peculiar strength and restricts access to only a small number of outsiders (Hutt, 2003). Yet it has adopted a more democratic political system recently (2008), a process sponsored by the palace. As far as Tibet, annexed by China in 1959, is concerned, globalization in many ways still equates with a progression of Sinization, that is, supra-local influences. However, the Tibetan diaspora in the Himalayas, India, and all over the world results from transnationalization.

In each of these countries, the flow of capital and goods is extremely uneven according to the areas, mountainous or plains, rural or urban, etc. People living in urban areas of Kathmandu and the Pokhara valleys of Nepal, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Gangtok of north-eastern India, to limit the scope to some areas, are much more enmeshed in the processes of global modernity than other regions, even if they receive remittances from migrant workers abroad. Many other groups or communities remain isolated and marginalized, in the rural and mountainous regions of Far Western Nepal, for instance. Global interconnectedness is thus not experienced by all people to the same extent or in the same way. What strikes one, on the contrary, is a *fragmented and partial globalization*, where urban settlements are more affected by the new forms of interconnectivity, while rural areas are far behind. This applies to the Himalayas as to other regions of the world.

To take just one example of the unequal pace of globalization, Pyangaon—an archaic village in the Kathmandu valley—regularly visited by G. Toffin from the 1970s, could be mentioned. This locality is an example of a *lasting traditional community and territory* within a region undergoing tremendous change. Though social rules have become more fragile, social boundaries as well as familial ties are still preserved. To supplement their income, Jyapuni peasant women now weave sweaters with wool imported from New Zealand, while still observing basic social rules, such as territorial endogamy. The dialect spoken exclusively within the boundaries of the village is still in use by local children, despite schooling links with neighbourhood Newar and high Parbatiya Nepali-speaking castes living in the locality. In this village, as in many others of the Himalayan range, more localist forms of belonging are still extremely active and determine social and cultural life. Globalization is present in Pyangaon, through television, mobile phones, schooling, Westernized clothing, etc. But it affectsthe younger generation more than the older members of the community and it remains limited to some sectorsof social life. Remarkably enough, this village is located only 16 km from the large city of Patan.

Globalization tends to marginalize former ways of life and old techniques. In the village of Pyangaon, the male population formerly specialized in making bamboo containers used to measure mainly cereals. This activity was closely linked to the identity of the village (the Nepali name of the locality itself was derived from it), and was associated with an old economy of bartering handicraft bamboo products against grain. This speciality has nearly collapsed, as have many other aspects of their material life and of the traditional dress, which is worn at present only during festivals and ceremonies, as a testimony to the old times and tradition. However, the forces of globalization transform also these old lifestyle elements in their own way. Pyangaon is at present quoted by the Nepali newspapers as an exemplary model tourist 'heritage' village (*paryatakiya kshetra*) (*Kantipur*, 10 June 2010). Its inhabitants are invited to maintain their own craft tradition in order to attract foreigners and be included in tours. Very recently, a local Development and Conservation Committee (*Pyangaon Bikas tatha Sanrakshan Samiti*) has been created. It aims to train young local people in the making of bamboo measuring boxes in order to revive this ancient technique and old-fashioned artefact.

BELONGING AND GLOBALIZATION: RECONFIGURATIONS AT WORK

Our central purpose in this book is a better understanding of the new forms of attachments at work. We are also concerned by the nature of the social links in the modern changing societies characterized by a persistence of 'traditional' social forms—that most Himalayan dwellers seek to maintain.

The main objective is therefore to study the *reconfigurations of local Himalayan societies* that have been instigated by the recent years of general globalization, as well as the new patterns of exchange and movements of population. Translocal and transnational trends have progressively opened up the local and more or less enclosed societies situated more often than not in remote regions, which are difficult to access owing to their mountain environment. These dynamics have changed local perceptions and generated shifting horizons of attention and attachment, with their own specificities. Interestingly enough, the external, mostly Western, elements have been reinterpreted, translated, and reincorporated in the traditional social world. There is a continuous conversion of global cultural forms into vernacular ones, and vice versa. Hybridization and intermingling are ubiquitous in these translocal contexts.

Some chapters document new types of choices, resulting, for instance, in embracing a new religion (Ripert, Chapter 2). Through the lens of belonging, this author is able to demonstrate how individual conversions coalesce into a collective pattern. When increasing numbers of individuals embrace a new religion, established patterns of communal authority are called into question—as her example from the Tamang community indicates. Individual decisions to migrate have also created collective patterns of change as Bruslé's (Chapter 7) and Sharma's chapters (Chapter 5) reveal. Bruslé's data show that, quite unexpectedly, the Nepali migrants in the Gulf come to reflect upon their belonging to their ethnic and caste groups, to their regions and to Nepal. Sharma (Chapter 5) reveals how the strategic responses of Nepali migrants to Mumbai to livelihood insecurities in the hills are shaped by local perceptions of belonging on the one hand and a quest to experience life outside their village on the other. The individual explorations of modernity (in the young men's understanding) become intertwined with their attachments to their natal villages, families, and friends. Individual room for manoeuvre is explored

against the backdrop of filial loyalties and obligations. Hausner (Chapter 8) describes individual migrations of Nepali nurses to the United Kingdom, and highlights the numerous restrictions imposed on Nepali workers by legislation imposed on particular national categories of migrants depending on their national 'regimes of membership'. While concentrating on comparatively privileged migrants going from Nepal to the US for study, Sijapati (Chapter 10) explores the individual options of students coping with financial restrictions, social boundaries, traditional codes of conduct, and longing for home in Nepal, while seeking incorporation as newcomers into the American society.

The studies by Hangen (Chapter 11) and Pariyar, Shrestha, and Gellner (Chapter 6) endorse the collective trends narrated in the literature on transnational social spaces. Migration tends to alter, but often also to enhance collective ethnic, religious, or national constellations. Away from home in the Himalayas and in new homes in the Himalayan diaspora all over the world, collective belonging is, for instance, reinforced by religious practice and simultaneously shaped by ritual requirements, bringing members together through ritual performance. Religious transnationality appears as a highly dynamic, instigating ritual invention. Religious belonging has become a vehicle for reinforcing social ties and for coping with the difficult question of not being socially displaced while abroad. As Pariyar et al. argue, religion intersects with other dimensions of individual and collective socialization such as citizenship and organization along caste or ethnic lines.

Reconfiguration can also be studied more specifically from the viewpoint of spaces and territories, which is a major source of belonging. For instance, political conflicts and diverse governmental decisions have displaced over recent years a number of individuals dwelling in the Himalayas. New spaces, especially configured for them, have been allocated to these migrants. Such territories are characterized by dramatic changes from the traditional type of settlements from where the persons in exile were coming from. Among these refugees, one can mention the Tibetan people who fled Tibet after annexation of their country by the Chinese (1959), the Nepali Bhutanese (Lhotshampas) who were expelled or fled from Bhutan after new policies on national culture and citizenship were implemented by the authorities in the 1990s,[7] and the Nepali nationals displaced during the Maoist armed conflict in Nepal (1996–2006). In

the last case, the displaced people (called *bisthapit* in Nepali) settled in cities and district headquarters where security was supposed to be well managed. The refugee camps which have been established here and there[8] have caused considerable alterations in the experience of life and give rise to fundamental changes in the spatial contours of social existence of these people in exile. One intriguing example is provided by exiled Tibetans in western India through the interconnections with transnational Buddhist activism (Peot, 2005: 21).

In her chapter on Tibetan nomads, Pascale Dollfus (Chapter 4) highlights the importance of territory for the sense of belonging among Changpas of Ladakh who pursue a mixed agricultural and pastoral livelihood. As non-nomadic agriculturists, they fall within a territory and occupy a *yul* (territory) protected by its own territorial gods. She describes their dramatic shift over the last decades from a mobile existence to a settled and urban lifestyle. She focuses mainly on a village 10 km from Leh, the capital of Ladakh, named Kharnaling, where they have established a permanent urban settlement. In this new space, which is not described as a 'village' but as a 'colony', the former nomads try to invent a new lifestyle, and to free themselves from the stereotypes of ruthlessness and filthiness associated with them in common Ladakhi discourse. Some of them, however, have to earn their money playing the role of true Changpas nomads disguised in folk attire and performing on stage for cultural exhibits.

Labour migration towards the urban centres as well as various conflict-induced waves of migration have also created new settlements located mostly in marginal places and border zones. These peripheral spaces introduce new forms of spatialization. For the sake of analysis, these peripheral spaces can be called *outplaces* (Toffin, 2010). Among such sites are slums, squatter settlements, resettled enclaves, and so forth. Labour camps in Gulf countries where migrants live in buildings or camps provided by their employers also belong to this category (Bruslé, 2010). The key features of most of these spaces are their non-permanent and transitory nature, the vulnerability and poverty of the populations as well as the new forms of belonging characterized by the wider inter-ethnic and inter-caste connectivity that they generate, and often by a high degree of politicization. Their uncertainty has a serious impact on education, economic conditions, and the exercise of citizenship rights. More often than not, the people settled there are urban or national pariahs.

They are prone to conflictive situations and are easily manipulated by political leaders and organizations.

Shneiderman's chapter provides deep insights into economically marginal and socially fragile circular existences. Spatial marginalization is reinforced by the precariousness of material endowment of those dwelling away from their original home. Her chapter is particularly valuable in showing individual families' ways out from the state of manifold exclusion. Transnational activism along with politics of 'social inclusion' embraced by development agencies have buttressed the collective sense of the self (also translating into 'identity politics' in the Indian framework of affirmative action), while labour migration increasingly contributes towards ending economic exploitation and social exclusion.

PATTERNS OF MIGRATION: PAST AND PRESENT

Today, migration is part and parcel of the Himalayan social landscape—as the Nepalese example reveals. It is estimated that between 4 and 6.5 million Nepalese people nowadays work permanently or temporarily outside the country (Bruslé, 2010: 16). In the Nepalese hills, every family has a relative who has migrated, either temporarily or permanently, either abroad, to Kathmandu, or to the Tarai. Mountain and hill villages are incapable of feeding their growing number of inhabitants. Simultaneously, consumerist expectations, often relating to modernization and Westernization, increase the importance of remittances all the more. Today, migration is an even more important component of the livelihood strategies in most Himalayan villages than it was it the past centuries. The subject is so extensive and significant that an outstanding special issue of the *European Bulletin of Himalayan Research* was recently devoted to probing these questions (2010: 35–36). The present volume is devoted in large part to this multifarious phenomenon.

Again, these transregional and international migrations are nothing new. Mobility has pervaded the life of almost all Himalayan people for years (see Messerschmidt, 1976; Sagant, 1978; Lewis, 1993; Riaboff, 2002; and Strawn, 1994).[9] An itinerant form of living—travelling from one place to another—is reported from various regions in ancient periods. For a long time now, the Himalayan mountains and hills have been a region of intense migration from

north to south (and sometimes the reverse), as well as from west to east (see Rizvi, 1999). There has been substantial seasonal migration to the plains in order to make up for the low income of mountainous areas and to cover the needs of local rural societies throughout the year. Such a quest for food and additional sources of income has created durable exchanges across the Himalayan region.[10] In addition, rulers in Nepal have repeatedly provided inducements to encourage people to migrate to under-populated areas and to transform forests into arable land, especially throughout the 19th century (Regmi, 1976)—which resulted in the high degree of ethnic intermixing in the north-eastern parts of India. These old forms of relationship have linked the mountains and hills to the plains in many economic, political, and cultural fields. Old and more recent migrations have connected Himalayan areas across national borders. The chapters written by Shneiderman (Chapter 3) and Pariyar, Shrestha, and Gellner (Chapter 6) in the present volume document this phenomenon. Yet, the migrations from the hills to southern districts have increased dramatically over recent years (Shrestha, 1990). In Nepal, permanent migrations to the Tarai and to urban areas have been constantly on the rise since the 1970s so that the once mountainous Nepalese population is today mostly made up of plain-dwellers.

Among the destinations of Nepalese migrants abroad, India has been the foremost and remains a major one, while Nepal, at the same time, was receiving a number of Indian migrants and workers. Historically, the British colonial authorities have recruited 'Gurkha' soldiers in Nepal from the early 19th century onwards (Caplan, 1995). These recruitments, which reached a peak during the two World Wars, have been a first step towards a globalization of manpower. Later on, from the second part of the 19th century, if not earlier, a number of Nepalese have established themselves in Darjeeling, Sikkim, southern Bhutan, and in other regions of northeast India, for economic (but also sometimes political) reasons, for instance, to work in tea estate companies. Others were recruited (and are still employed) as cooks or guards (*chaukidar*), in the fast-growing urban areas of the plains (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1993; Thieme, 2007; Sharma, this volume [Chapter 5]). Over the last two decades (1990s and 2000s), new destinations have opened up: the Gulf region and Malaysia, but also South Korea, Japan, the US (between 80,000 and 150,000 Nepalese individuals and increasingly also Lhotsampas in the US alone) as well as a number of Western countries. The United

Kingdom continues to be a very popular destination for Nepalese nurses, despite its increasingly restrictive policies and regulations (see Hausner, Chapter 8). A growing number of Nepalese are now migrating abroad. The number of Nepalese seeking work abroad had considerably increased during the Maoist conflict (1996–2006), which caused the local people to flee and owing to the declining carpet industry, which employed a great number of persons until the early 1990s.

THE 'HIMALAYANS' IN THE WEST

With the Himalayan people travelling farther and farther, migrations to the West present some specific characteristics which need to be investigated in present and future research (cf. Hangen [Chapter 11] and Sijapati in this volume [Chapter 10; Gellner, 2013]). The effects of remittances in the economies of the various countries concerned are considerable. The Nepalese working abroad sent 4,500 millions of US dollars to Nepal through various channels in 2011–12 alone. This figure represents, according to the Nepal Rashtra Bank, more than 25 per cent of the gross domestic produce. This figure represents, according to the *Nepal Rashtra Bank*, more than half of the national income. It would go up significantly if legal and banking provisions were made to facilitate foreign remittances for deposits and investments in the country, as asked by for by non-resident Nepali associations.

Though the life of the migrants residing in Europe and North America seems to be easier than those in the Gulf or in some parts of India, because of the economic development of these countries, the level of employment is restricted mainly to low-qualified economic sectors, restaurant, hotels, domestic service, and so forth. It is noticeable that migrants in these countries find it necessary to organize themselves in groups. The network of Nepalese associations overseas plays a vital role in maintaining a sense of dignity and a deeper sense of connectedness among the migrant community. Its members periodically organize social and cultural events such as picnics, conferences, Dasain parties, Losar, that is, New Year celebrations, etc., which bring the Nepalese immigrant diaspora together. In this manner, migrants preserve their culture or even work towards its revitalization and new inventions of tradition, and their children rediscover

their 'roots' and rearticulate their identities as members of diasporic communities. Also, Nepalihood or Nepaliness (*nepalipan*) is often recreated through these links in such a way that original *places* and *cultures* are totally dissociated, though frequently reinforced in the diasporic imagination (sometimes translating into indigenous activism) or forging new spaces of belonging (see Campbell, Chapter 9). "These networks serve as a form of social capital that recent arrivals draw upon to receive assistance, including in finding housing, gaining access to employment, and understanding the ins and outs of life in America" (Sijapati, 2010: 144). Moreover, all over the world the migrant minorities have created de-territorialized 'homelands' abroad, sometime on ethnic lines, such as the Gurung Association described by Susan Hangen in her chapter on the US (Chapter 11). In this case, ethnic identification and the sense of belonging are strengthened through migrant practices.

One of this volume's chapters narrates migrant practices in less collectivist terms though. Hausner's (Chapter 8) inquiry into a number of Nepalese nurses (all female) repeatedly uses the term 'solitude'. Unlike the overwhelming body of migrant literature, Hausner highlights the female migrants' sense of alienation. These women not only find it difficult to socialize in the places of 'arrival', but also suffer under pressures from home where they cannot engage in care activities they offer strangers in the United Kingdom. The analysis points to difficulties in entering or establishing networks and in finding access to communities where they can engage in religious practice and festive activities. At the same time, Hausner suggests that an important dimension of identity and belonging comes to life through professional standing and commitment. Thus-achieved commonalities and attachments—that are likely to create a strong sense of belonging—have not yet been discussed in detail in the literature.

The advancement of communication technologies and electronic mass media plays a crucial role within these migrant communities. Skype, low-cost overseas phone lines, email, capital transfer and flows, instantly linking different places in different countries or continents, are widely used to maintain a link with the native country. They create a new space—a cyberspace—where borders and boundaries are overcome, producing a virtual de-territorialized space. For its users, the Web is a source of new expectations, new interests, and new prospects. The annihilation of distance goes together in this case with a contraction of time (see also Inda and Rosaldo, 2002).

Such combined compression implying simultaneity and instantane-ousness contain far-reaching implications for human experience of life. For instance, the Internet allows migrants settled in the Western countries to sustain and nurture ties with their families dwelling in Nepal or in India. Both sides regularly send each other photos or video clips of ceremonies and other familial meetings (Sijapati, 2010: 139). Relatives thus participate vicariously in familial events. In addition, the Internet has become a site of political engagement among Nepalis living abroad. It has been used in the past and is still used today to create awareness among both Nepalis and non-Nepalis about political causes, such as pro-democracy movements, protest against the 2005 King Gyanendra's takeover, families affected by the Maoist conflict, and so on. While geographically distant, the Nepali diaspora is thus able to play a role in the current political affairs and changes in Nepal.

These population movements, therefore, create new regional and transnational links, connecting distant countries. They impinge considerably upon the parameters of belonging and their changing nature, in terms of religious and political allegiances. We can contrast these more fragmented and fluid experiences with the traditional bounded sense of attachment to a locality felt in most rural socie-ties of the Himalayas. Diasporic contexts alter traditional forms of belonging. Migrations abroad tend to change the patterns of mutual-ity and interaction between kin, friends, and neighbours. The new networks, the channels and the routes of migrations, the ways people speak of their migrations, and how they feel about it are particularly interesting to study in this context. The collected chapters answer a number of questions: What are their impressions of the old and new places where they stay abroad? How do migrants get together abroad? How do they choose their companions? What happens if they lack contact with their countrymen? What difference does it currently make that kinship and communal ties stretch over very long distances? How are new loyalties forged and old ones maintained? How do migrants cope with regard to political and civic involvement at home as well as at their place of residence? The experience of new territories and social spaces felt and faced by migrants abroad has been particularly important to document in the following chapters. In other words, the changing Himalayas opened up social and cultural possibilities, as well as a reconceptualization of the very notions of spatiality and territory.

STATE BOUNDARIES

Under the conditions of globalization, the persistence of national boundaries is a remarkable phenomenon. In the Himalayas as everywhere, the process of globalization still largely takes place within the framework created over the centuries by the historical emergence of the nation state. The tenacity of national boundaries is sometimes fortified by the forces of globalization. It can be seen as a sort of counterpoint to the global, but is in fact one of its consequences. Four chapters in this volume illustrate this tendency.

One important instance where state boundaries continue to reinforce collectivizing effects is in the field of *linguistic nationalism*. Mark Turin's chapter in this book (Chapter 15) concurs with Paul Brass who sees language movements as "inherently and necessarily associated with the modern state and modern politics" (2004: 353), but brings to light yet other types of effects—that equally take place within national confines. In his view, Brass's statement holds both at the level of national state-building around a language (sometimes even more than one), as well as the counter-assertion by language activists that citizenship and nationhood need not be predicated on a sole speech form. In fact, he argues, if the process of nation formation were not so linguistically homogenizing, local language movements would probably not have emerged with such force and vigour. His chapter is a fascinating account of recent linguistic dynamics in everyday practices as well as in ethnic activists' conscious attempts to revive their native languages. As he contends, the resultant amalgam is a heterogeneous blend of linguistic forms and elements, and a performative strategy that is rapidly gaining ground in Sikkim as well as in Nepal's urban centres. Such linguistic fusions have a bearing upon peoples' (multiple) belonging, allowing for reflecting upon one's own 'origins' through a preoccupation with one's mother tongue, while shaping one's own minority position within a national space.

Hutt's contribution (Chapter 17) focuses upon belonging in relation to an institution (monarchy) and the individual (the monarch) who embodies that institution. This reflection takes national boundedness as a point of departure, simultaneously admitting that fewer and fewer states in the world derive their unity and common belonging from the power of the monarch and the relationship to the monarch. From among the last Himalayan monarchies the kings of Ladakh, Sikkim, and several other once-autonomous Himalayan

realms are now mere figures of history. Until 2008 the Shahs of Nepal and the Wangchucks of Bhutan were the sole survivors; now only the Wangchucks remain. His discussion seeks to demonstrate that concepts of belonging can help us understand why the monarch of one Himalayan nation state (Nepal) has been dethroned and socially displaced, while another (that of Bhutan) appears to have secured the future of his line for at least another generation.

Tibet's case, discussed by Martin Mills (Chapter 16), also closely relates to the question of national boundaries, their location and their enclosing and encompassing nature. Within the confines of China's boundaries, the status and the scope of the Tibetan Autonomous Region continues to be a highly conflictive and polarizing topic—as the scholarly debates also reveal. Mills presents the Tibetan question as a puzzle and addresses two concerns. First, he examines the relationship between the idea of the Greater Tibet, the spread of its borders, and the understating of the constructions of its commonalities and the broader distribution of Tibetan solidarities. Second, he embarks upon the question of how such ideas of belonging—through commonality and solidarity—relate to actual events in Tibet's past. He is interested in the genesis and meaning of historical claims and processes of thought and practice impinging upon the sense of territorial belonging. He suggests that *belonging* is a mode of performance that acts as the necessary precondition for identity claims. The identity claims act, in turn, to obscure the conditions of their own genesis, by legitimizing them on the grounds that particular people, practices, and places intrinsically and always (or at least for a very long time) have 'had' a certain quality. These claims can be understood as acts of distancing vis-à-vis the overpowering collectivization enforced by the Chinese state.

Nepalese nationalism, sustained formerly by royalty, would be another instance of persistence of national boundaries in this time of globalization. The belongingness of Nepali citizens to their country is a quite strong and widely shared feeling among the population, especially in the hills, even if the issue of federalism is presently on the forefront of the political scene and a crucial demand for a number of ethnic minorities as well for the Tarai's inhabitants (cf. *infra*). This feeling is sustained by communist political parties, such as the Maoists (UCPN (M.)) and CPN (UML), and often used as a political means for gaining electorates. Nationalism in Nepal is mostly associated with the notion of 'Nepaliness', *nepalipan*, in opposition

mainly to Indian and Madhesi people from the Tarai plains belt. It is reminiscent of the 19th-century period of Nepalese history and its prevailing xenophobic way of thinking against everything coming from abroad. The suspicion towards 'non-Nepali' is still at work in discussion within the Constituent Assembly, especially in relation to rules of citizenship, in case of one of the parents being a non-Nepali citizen. It is also at stake for issues related to double citizenship, a core demand of Non-Resident Nepalis (NRNs) living abroad. These Nepalese were until very recently nearly ignored. The 'Non-resident Nepalese Association' has been officially recognized only in 2011 and it is only after years of consisting lobbying that the government finally promulgated the Non-Resident Act in August 2007 (Sijapati, 2010). Yet this Act remains silent on the question of dual citizenship. Nepalese authorities hesitate mainly because they fear giving Nepalese citizenship to Indians through distorted and illegal means.

As far as transnational migrations are concerned, they seldom encourage a sense of world citizenship, but rather reinforce local nationalist feeling. This applies also to religious feelings: despite the rise of new Hindu sects displaying more general and syncretistic forms of beliefs and practices, Hinduism has been increasingly manipulated during recent decades by national political parties, in the Gangetic plains as well as in the Himalayas, under the Hindutva movement. In other words, the erosion of national boundaries within SAARC countries is extremely limited.

Sondra Hausner's analysis reveals yet another important aspect of state boundaries reinforced by national immigration policies and legal regulations. The Nepali nurses—unlike professionals from India or from the Philippines—do not fit into national contingents allowed to enter the United Kingdom and join its labour force. Under these legal constraints, highly qualified Nepali nurses can only enter the United Kingdom under the pretence of being students and find employment far beneath their expertise. This results in lower pay and, equally importantly, in a reduced chance of forging meaningful social bonds while abroad.

THE DISCOURSE OF ETHNICITY

Another aspect of 'deglobalization', characterized by collective closure, is the widespread wave of entrenched communalism and

ethnicity discourses all over the globe. Ethnic revivalism has become a successful mobilization formula and a permanent element of political communication, discouraging other unitary or more citizen-oriented initiatives. In India and Nepal, ethno-separatist movements have been increasingly vocal. As in other parts of our globe, the rise of ethnic voices and autochthonous movements in the Himalayas is one of the major phenomena in the last decades and an important aspect of changes in local contemporary societies (see Geschiere, 2009; Li, 2000, spoke of a "global conjuncture of indigeneity"). Since the early 1990s, ethnic groups, labelled locally *Adivasis/Janajatis*, have been at the forefront of the political scene. In Nepal, ethnic groups represent a large part of the population (about 37 per cent). In India, the number of ethnic minorities is significantly smaller, but ethnic activism is still on the rise, especially targeting the affirmative action and quota system. In the former kingdom of Nepal, the shift from the former Shah/Rana assimilationist policy to a democratic regime more receptive to cultural diversity has opened a space for ethnic groups to put forward their claims for better self-representation and 'state restructuring' (see Gellner et al., 2008). The ethnic *Adivasi/Janajati* organizations demand separate autonomous units, based on ethnicity, even if the population realities of the concerned territories—with their much more intermixed and heterogeneous populations—are different from those asserted by ethno-activists. Such demands have been increasingly acknowledged in the new nation-building process ('New Nepal') and have become an intrinsic element of the political debate. These topics invite us to reconsider the relationships between ethnicity and the nation state that involve embattled spatial dynamics. These dynamics are crucial for understanding the present-day reconfigurations in new constellations of belonging. Ethnic activists' claims to localized territories are buttressed by depictions of strong communal solidarities and a persistence of traditional values, norms, and practices. These depictions stand in a very interesting relationship to the ethnic horizons stretching globally. In this vein, ethnic self-representations and solidarities work as global infrastructures for maintaining social ties while drawing upon new ideas and networks for maintaining the traditional forms of life (Rycroft and Dasgupta, 2011).

The *ethnic idiom*, based on old-fashioned ethnographic concepts and ideologies born in the 19th century, tends to portray each ethnic group as a *collective self*, with its own territory, its own language, its

own culture, and so on. These ethnic communities highlight mutuality, relations of reciprocity within the group, common history, a sense of equality (as opposed to the caste system), autochthony, as well as indigeneity. The last aspects suggest special rights of ethnic groups towards certain territories, despite early migration movements from elsewhere and the diversity of the populations living in nearly every geographical zone. Ethnic activists celebrate difference and the strength of the self-organization of their 'communities'. Their leaders are aspiring to reshape the state after centuries of what they call the 'internal colonialism' or the 'imperialism' of the high Hindu castes. Numerous attempts at rewriting history have occurred, sometimes inventing new *vamshavali* chronicles or searching for indigenous scripts. By and large, such revisionist narratives have resulted in downplaying the role of other groups as far as the rights to the land are concerned, in particular. Some such cases have been documented in the previous volumes of this Governance, Conflict, and Civil Action series, in particular in Volume 2. In northeast India and in Nepal, these indigenous claims are or were more or less explicitly associated with various insurgency movements, in conflict with the central state.

This *return of the local* in the Himalayas—a process echoing Geschiere's and Li's observations in other parts of the world (2009)—is a fascinating phenomenon for understanding present-day preoccupations with the ways that feelings of belonging are created (Robertson, 1995). Seen in a wider context, there is an interesting contrast among the apparent compression of space at the international level, the assertion of ethnic territories (through the federal system in the political agenda), and the reinforcement of ethnic boundaries. Local histories and world histories are becoming increasingly intertwined (Trouillot, 2001). The dream of a global world is accompanied by praise in favour of bounded homogenous territories. These forms of communalism and violent discourses of ethnicity obviously represent a new quest for belonging, in reaction to current streams of globalization and the wide encompassing changes affecting most of areas in Asia.

Ethnicity, which is vocal all over the world, increasingly thrives upon *transnational connections*. The upsurge over the last three decades of the notion of *autochthonous* ('born from the earth') and of *indigeneity* in global political arenas is a remarkable phenomenon. These two notions have become a globally dominant discourse.

Ethnicity and minority rights are on the agenda of the United Nations and a part of their policy in favour of endangered local cultures. This international organization apparently may not have realized that in supporting such causes, they are in fact backing basic distinctions between autochthons and others, that is, perpetuating a form of exclusion. Indigenous tribal identity and world recognition are closely interconnected.

CHANGING RELIGIONS, NEW TRENDS, AND TRANSNATIONAL ASPECTS

All over the Himalayas, *religion anchors identity*. It shapes personal and group forms of belonging more than any other traditional bonds crossing national and political boundaries. Religion is therefore an important field of inquiry to ponder when addressing contemporary sociopolitical transformations that affect shifts of identities and belonging. Changes in this domain have been considerable over the last decades: they operated simultaneously in many spatial and temporal registers. New religious movements or trends were established in the Himalayas, sometimes with great success. Although conversion to other religions is not yet recognized and legalized in Nepal, freedom of beliefs and practices is at present much better protected and enshrined than ever before in this country. Since the fall of the absolute monarchy in 1990, Christianization—proseltiyzation was traditionally banned—is on the rise in Nepal. The return of the democratic political model and the new freedom of conscience and self-organization have given Christianity new opportunities in the districts and among diverse ethnic groups and castes. As in India, Christianity's egalitarianism is particularly attractive to people belonging to lower castes or to marginalized ethnic groups. Christianity is the fastest growing faith community in Nepal (though its followers still represent less then 1 per cent of the population according to the much-challenged 2001 census). In this book, Blandine Ripert (Chapter 2) gives the example of the Tamangs of Nuwakot and Dhading, where a significant number of conversions have taken place in recent years.

The spread of the Theravada form of Buddhism is another significant example of religious change over recent decades. Theravada expanded in Nepal first among the Newars of the Kathmandu valley

(in the 1930s), benefiting from multiple strands of communication between Nepal and Thailand (and sometimes Burma). For decades, there was a constant movement of leaders, money, and literature, particularly between the two countries. Buddhist high-caste Newars thought by this means to 'purify' their own Mayahanist and Vajrayanist traditions and priestly practice, which after centuries of existence had been moulded in Newar culture and adopted to local exigencies (LeVine and Gellner, 2005). In this book, Chiara Letizia (Chapter 12) documents the spread of this religious movement among Tharus and Magars, two ethnic groups mobilized in *Janajati* politics. Such a conversion represents an important shift as these two ethnic groups do not have any traditional link with Buddhism themselves, at least in recent histories, but rather with Hinduism. The promoters of Buddhism in the Tharu and Magar districts of Nepal insist on the need to stop calling on Brahman priests for rituals. As a matter of fact, for many *Janajati* intellectuals, Buddhist modernism offers a strong and positive response in a pan-Indian and modernizing form to the domination of the high cases, particularly the Brahmans, in all spheres of Nepalese society (Krauskopff, 2009: 251).

It is worth mentioning another religious trend linked to trans-national movements: the growing importance of some Hindu sects (Sai Baba, Iskcon, Pranami) to the detriment of more traditional and ritualistic forms of popular Hinduism in Nepal. These sects, whose adherents put more emphasis on a universalistic religious discourse (uniting, for instance, Christian, Muslims, and Hindus), prosper in the contemporary Himalayas, particularly in its central and eastern reaches. Some of them highlight a reformist aspect of Hinduism, more respectful of women's roles and much opposed to the caste system, for instance, fitting the democratic atmosphere and present preoccupations of society. Here, as in other domains, links between India and Nepal still prevail. Indian religious leaders affiliated to a specific sect, or famous yoga teachers tour Nepal to instruct and encourage followers. Large sums of money are transmitted across the border to support religious activities in India or Nepal, especially the building of schools, medical clinics, and other social welfare projects (Toffin, 2012).

Finally, our volume also highlights the *development of new forms or religiosity* and religious practices, less focused on temples, statues, and rituals. Some are linked to a guru, such as Ram Dev, Vikasananda, and Ravi Shankar, to mention but a few. But others,

especially the Japanese sects of Reiki and Jorei, which are very influential in Nepal urban areas, do not place the founder of their organization at the centre of their community. Most of these groups are open to all religions and castes. They insist on meditation, yogic exercises, what they called the 'art of living', naturotherapy, spiritual powers, and sometimes massage. They are also linked with healing practices that challenge traditional Himalayan therapists and old categories of priesthood. These examples indicate that select supralocal influences such as religious innovation are welcomed by larger sections of local populations. They are often in contradiction with the political defiance between Nepal and India and the resilience of political borders between the two countries. In some cases, these external influences are appropriated and reformulated in more local or national terms.

Globalization is involved in these religious changes in at least two aspects. First, such transformations highlight a wide circulation of ideas beyond state boundaries that are facilitated by modern forms of communication, TV with its specialized religious channels in particular. Second, people's new aspirations in these matters reveal a shift in the politics of the self. They are less encapsulated within traditional bonds of caste, ethnicity, and family. They are more exposed to external trends from abroad and more open to syncretic ideas, which have often been identified by specialists of religious issues as New Age worldwide Hinduism. Urbanization, for instance, detaches young people, men and women, from their families, and gives rise to both opportunities and challenges with respect to the direction of livelihoods independent from one's relations. At the same time, these new influences tend to reinforce communal ties.

RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION

Other globalizing forces have raised numerous forms of protest throughout the Himalayan range. Many movements have positioned themselves as explicitly 'anti-globalization' (Baviskar, 2008). Well-known protests include those against dam-construction and other hydropower projects, as well as fighting efforts by international companies to impose patent rights over Himalayan plants. These Himalayan contestations and the individual as well as collective bearers of such protest movements have become famous (and even

notorious) throughout the world. Himalayan protest movements are of particular interest because locally instigated actions in small mountain villages have become known throughout the South Asian subcontinent and well beyond this region. The Chipko protests (India, western Himalayas), providing the most famous example, have served as a role model for protest movements in other parts of the world. This example reveals that globalization cannot be perceived as a one-way process, initiated in some remote locale and simply pressing upon local life-worlds. Local microcosms can be a source of dynamics that eventually acquire a transnational or global dimension.

Another important field of inquiry lies in people's perceptions of how global forces impinge upon their circumstances and how local life-worlds are to be protected against external intrusion. The chapters written by Arora and by Subba (Chapters 13 and 14, respectively) indicate which rationales and what political language are in the forefront when villagers and their leaders express and attempt to justify their dissent and their demands. In the Himalayan contexts they discuss, embattled perceptions of the 'local' come to light. How is local belonging related to commitment, and how do the exponents of the movements assess what is 'good' and what is 'bad' for the well-being of their communities? The chapters show that we cannot expect one answer, but many.

Local social spaces are significantly altered by development interventions, in particular, by large-scale projects. The Himalayas, lacking many types of natural resources found in other regions of the world, are rich in water. Governments in all the adjacent Himalayan states have partnered either with international funding bodies (such as the Asian Development Bank) or with transnational corporations and national business entrepreneurs in transforming water into power. These efforts resulted in numerous infrastructural projects of so far unknown magnitude. In order to make such projects possible, plans were developed to build huge water dams, roads, and channels. This altered the availability of water—an already scare resource. Populations were asked to move elsewhere, providing financial compensation in exchange for lands and homesteads, and above all, for the loss of local belonging. The chapters by Subba and Arora document these changes, causing internal conflicts, loss of properties, displacement, loss in command over the collective homelands, and instigating critical movements challenging these overwhelming measures (see also Pfaff-Czarnecka, 2007). Both contributions examine

these measures and struggles, and analyze them from the perspective of belonging. They indicate how in times of stress, local attachments become all the more meaningful, and how struggles against gigantic projects encourage local societies to grow together.

These Himalayan *anti-globalization protest movements* also shed light upon the channels, networks, and interrelationship with external allies. Who plays an intermediary role in coining ideas and in designing modes of action? Do villagers and city-dwellers throughout the Himalayan region partner with each other and do they exchange information on the possible impact of projects, on demands to be made as well as on the most effective forms of protest action?

Subba and Arora's contributions reflect upon how seemingly local projects that overtly resist globalization in fact derive their resources externally. In particular, movements geared at protecting minority cultures, local languages, and religions often thrive on transnational networks, engage in international human rights forums, and derive funding from international institutions such as development agencies. After all, resistance to globalization may also be found in covert forms. The chapters reveal how villagers, eager to maintain their established relationships to external actors such as international donor agencies, feign consent to their action plans, while pursuing their hidden agendas that may aim at impeding projects from successful implementation. Subba's chapter (Chapter 13) gives a startling account to what extent such external interventions undermine local consensus. Whatever internal conflicts and rivalries existed before infrastructural interventions were planned, these have been significantly aggravated recently.

More generally, anti-globalization and pro-globalization lobbies have emerged in South Asia, as in other parts of the world. For the former, globalization is taken as being synonymous with economic liberalization, of Westernization and Americanization. It includes environmental group struggles for nature preservation. Pro-globalization lobbies argue, on the contrary, that such a process brings far more opportunities for practically everyone. Some people hold that the interconnected and globalized world facilitates their fight against social inequalities and discrimination. For instance, the Vice-Chancellor of Pune University (Narendra Jadhav), a Dalit himself, frequently claims in a most convincing manner how helpful the liberalization of his country was in dealing with caste discriminations and its fight for better social integration (Paris, 2007).

THE POLITICS OF THE SELF AND MULTIPLE VOICES

In studying the various processes of globalization, it is worth considering the psychological aspect of individuals and their personal trajectories. Based on ethnographic data, this method introduces a more personal and inner approach of the experiences of globalization/belonging than the more abstract concepts of society and culture. Without documenting what can be called 'persons-in history' and the subjectivity of action's repertoire, important aspects of the all-pervading social transformations, their significance for people, would be beyond the scope of this volume. The aim is to give more comprehensibility to the social *through the* individual—its positionality and situatedness as well as the social horizons as unfolding from an individual standpoint.

To defend this viewpoint, it is important to remember that, in traditional contexts, the self is more or less encapsulated within cultural particular patterns. It is formed by practices and discourses within a larger sociocultural ensemble created by the end of childhood through rituals and other socializing practices that distilled cultural principles for the neophyte. That is not to say that in such so-called traditional societies persons do not exist from the sociological point of view: they do resist, suffer, oppose each other, but even then, the stress is on the group, on relatedness, on norms and stereotypes to be respected, on rules established by ancestors to reproduce, etc. In a premodern Newar town of the Kathmandu Valley or in a Magar village of the Nepalese hills, daily living time is, for instance, greatly predetermined by religious and social notions.

On the contrary, in diasporic, modern urban settings and other globalized social contexts, selves are less fixed and more exposed to change (Liechty, 2010). The networks of former students, of neighbours, sport, human rights and cultural groups, political parties, and professional associations are generally more informal and fluid than the former corporate groups based on primal forms of belonging. They disseminate more individual-centred values. One can thus observe a sharp proliferation of identity discourse and claims in post-1990 Nepal in light of broader structural transformations. To take an example, Nepalese urban modernist middle class, especially Newars, are much more exposed than before to new forms of Buddhist meditation (*vipassana*) that invest ethical agency in the individual conceived as a bounded and autonomous whole. These new

religious trends tend to transform subjectivities and selves. They illustrate in a powerful manner a shift from personhood defined collectively or by ritual in the Newar Vajrayana Buddhist life-world to the individual sphere (Leve, 2011: 852).

By and large, when societies are in transition, when conditions of flux dominate, individuals are more open to conflicting values and more reflexive regarding the force of collective boundaries. Less subjugated to collective and communal rules, they are constantly negotiating their places in new cultural economies and normative systems. Nepalese migrants in Qatar recreate a network of relations with their other national companions in a way not so dissimilar from former village bonds, but at the same time different. They invent solidarities matching new necessities and responding to new forms of interest. As stressed here by Tristan Bruslé (Chapter 7), they experience new types of interdependence. These migrants are *in between*: between several positions and humanity, between citizenship and its denial. Working abroad is in many ways a process of disidentification or declassification. Migrants experience a feeling of dishonour (*beijat* in Nepali), they endure painful experiences abroad, disillusion, and a sense of loneliness (see also Hausner's chapter). People are thus in the process of reworking objectification and a sense of themselves vis-à-vis others, forging identities from available resources. "Individuals are engaged in creating, maintaining, switching, or changing their personal and cultural identities to meet various needs and life strategies" (Ghimire, 1998: 195).

Reconstructions of personal identities in response to globalization make up a wide and appealing field of research (Skinner et al., 1998). Current changes have introduced greater opportunities for realizing individual goals free from old forms of belonging. In addition, people increasingly formulate notions of themselves—they appropriate, contest, or resist certain identities. They potentially have more freedom to choose as individual actors in relation to new circumstances. This is what we call here *the politics of the self* and this implies that more attention is to be paid to *agency* in relation to culture and society. The basic fact of individuals being socially constructed in all types of situations has to be recognized. Though a person is always shaped by others and the encompassing world, self has not to be seen as only an embodiment of cultural forms. This may sound like a truism, but too many publications continue to engage in methodological collectivism. A range of various contentious situations sometimes

engender behavioural disorders, unpredictable conduct, narratives of suffering, as well as protests against cultural and political systems. This has happened in the past, in premodern time, but it is far more frequent in the present day. In other words, it is crucial to link the debate about globalization to the politics of the self and to place these interrelations at the centre of the inquiry. The interplay between individuals and others, self and culture, between the subjective and the social, in the process of forming solidarities, obviously opens fresh windows of inquiry and understanding. Discourses continually shape and reshape human subjectivities. Volumes 2 and 3 of the present MIDEA series dealing with the personal trajectories of activists, politicians, and rebel leaders are particularly remarkable in this respect (Gellner, 2009; 2010).

Yet, in most cases, there is no clear divide between culturally expected rules and the new experiences of life among individuals living in globalized situations. Most Himalayan people living in a Nepalese urban or a diasporic context feel attached to a family, a caste, a neighbourhood, with expected rights and duties, even if they live temporarily far from these collective units. They are in permanent contact through modern means of communication with friends and relatives remaining at home. At the same time, they adopt a more wandering type of life, working in an unusual climate belonging to a different culture. Such bonds, celebrated at every familial event and in daily life, and experienced during every social occasion with people from outside, have powerful emotional appeal. However, the same persons see themselves as being alienated individuals whose identities are not essentially tied to groups and communities, floating in an anonymous whole constituted by other persons. In other words, the selves are more often than not the source of multiple voices, a source of multiplicity. This confrontation between a communal world view, linked with traditional values, and a more individualistic world view, is not new. Yet it is strengthened by modern conditions of life and ongoing globalization.

BELONGING TO THE HIMALAYAS

A final question remains to be addressed: the attachment of local people to the Himalayas as a regional entity. Do persons living within the Indian, Nepalese, or Bhutanese borders have the feeling,

beyond their national sensitivity, to be attached to the 3,000-km-long Himalayan range? The question is difficult to answer. As with most mountainous regions of the world, the Himalayas, first of all, are constituted of fragmented, compartmentalized geographical zones, with little communication between the various adjacent valleys. The account of national sentiment in Nepal has a long history of enduring divisions, separateness, and military conquest. It can be designated as a quest towards unity since only the end of the 18th century, namely, over the past 200 years. This quest is far from being achieved. It can even be claimed that the unitary forces towards national integration are undergoing, in the present situation, a crisis of decomposition of what has been unified over the last decades.

Second, this question highlights the opposition between upland and lowland regions. Studies of specific mountain areas have almost invariably been contextualized within an integrated picture of highlands in contrast to an 'other', the lowlands. Himalayan societies are markedly different from the adjacent lowlands of South Asia, in the same way as the people of highlands Southeast Asian differ from those of the plains. This plains–mountains dichotomy persists despite globalization and the manifold translocal dynamics resulting in a significant influx of mountain populations to the adjacent plains. It is still deeply rooted in everyday life, in discourses and in widespread stereotypes. In the plains, the Himalayas are often synonymous with backwardness, political underdevelopment, anachronism, and marginality on the world stage. A form of distinctiveness is attached to the two geographical milieux, with identificatory referents from both sides. However, each Himalayan country has a lowland area, characterized by a higher potential of resources and the existence of different populations than those inhabiting the mountains or the hills. In India, the regional capital of the Uttarakhand state is, for instance, Dehradun, located in the valley and not in the hills. In the same way, in the eastern part of the range, Darjeeling district includes one tarai subdivision, and Kalimpong's main administrative centre, Siliguri, is located in the plains. Such inclusion within regional or national borders raises a number of conflicts where the notion of belonging to the mountains, to *himal* or *lek* as it is called in regional languages, plays an important role.

Third, the question of belonging to the Himalayas, as a source of identity and assertiveness, raises the issue of the attachment of these populations to wider political or regional zones, such as to South Asia

or to the Asian world, for instance, as opposed to Western countries. This sense of awareness is obviously more developed in urban areas, among the middle class, than among peasants living in the hills. It plays a role in the process of globalization, even if it cannot be opposed, as some authors claim, radically to a an alternative process of what can be called 'asiatization'. In other words, in the urban areas (and sometimes also in rural zones), globalization comes as much from the East as from the West.

From a geographical and ethnographic viewpoint, there is no doubt that the Himalayas can be defined as a periphery, a marginal space between China and India, or Central Asia and South Asia. Though it has been for long a zone of passage through several passes between these wider geographical and cultural ensembles, its mountainous structure has maintained this region at most as a 'global periphery'. Yet, as will be shown in the following pages, this periphery is now quickly being transformed by the intensified contacts and globalized interconnection with the rest of the word. The shifting relations of belonging within trans-Himalayan social spaces make this possible.

NOTES

1. We would like to thank David Gellner, Michael Hutt, Tanka Subba, and Mark Turin for helpful comments on a draft of this introduction.
2. The title of the book can be translated into Nepali as: *Himalaya Bhekma Sampradayik Rajniti.*
3. Cf. also Fisher (2011: 4).
4. See Nandy (2002: 160–61); for a wider contemporary reflection on cosmopolitanism, see Vertovec and Cohen (2002).
5. On globalization in India, see Assayag and Fuller (2006). On collective identities, see Jodkha (2001).
6. "Tourism seemed to have encouraged conservation of the physical environment by introducing ecological awareness to the permanent residents and by promoting cleanliness" Ives (2004: 166).
7. On Bhutan, see Rinzin (2006: 22):

> Bhutan is in a critical phase of transition. As a formerly closed society it is opening up to the global world. Internally a process of decentralisation and political democratisation has been set in motion. A draft constitution is currently discussed all over the country. As a consequence the hierarchical structure of power will change into a more egalitarian one.

8. The Maoist armed conflict in Nepal has displaced an estimate of 600,000 people, of which 250,000 still live in the country (Ghimire, 2010: 91). *Bisthapits* displaced persons live mostly in Dang, Banke, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, and Bhaktapur, sometimes in riverside settlements.
9. On the Tibetan migration in Kashmir, see Riaboff (2002).
10. Cf. Strawn (1994: 25–36) and Hutt (2003).

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